Part Three

The formulation of the classical style, 1909–28

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We are the last who grew up with the movies. We saw Nazimova's films as they were made, not when they were revived, Academically; we sat in draughts and put up with fire, flicker, breaks, scented disinfectant—for what? For delight, magic, pleasure. Early Swedish and Sennetts and Italians were not early then. Rooms were naturally orange at night, and the country deep blue. It was part of the magic. Our companions were men who got rolled into doormats by fire engines. We heard of cinema first, and Chaplin came after. We are the last, as we were the first, to grow with it unprejudiced. We experienced something that will never be possible again. We gave to it and took from it, and we know that its secret is pleasure.[1]

<div align="right">Robert Herring, 1932</div>

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From primitive to classical

The cinema knows so well how to tell a story that perhaps there is an impression that it has always known how.[1]

André Gaudreault, 1980

In looking back to the silent cinema, it is all too easy to consider the period as remote, alien, and crude. The addition of sound, color, widescreen, and a panoply of recent developments seems to have hopelessly outdistanced the achievements of the early films. Yet it is remarkable that one must go back very far to find films which are so fundamentally different as to be incomprehensible today.

Historians have called these very early years of film production the 'primitive' period. This period is generally assumed to have begun with the cinema's commercial origins in 1894 and lasted until somewhere between 1906 and 1908. During most of the primitive period, films appealed to audiences primarily through simple comedy or melodrama, topical subjects, exotic scenery, trick effects, and the sheer novelty of photographed movement. Non-fiction films outnumbered narratives, at first, and the latter were usually imitations of popular theatrical forms of the day. According to the traditional account, the primitive style began to disappear as individual innovators like Edwin S.Porter and D.W.Griffith introduced devices such as crosscutting, the closeup, and so on. These devices are said to have influenced other filmmakers.[2*]

Most historians would agree that between the primitive period and the sophisticated studio production of the twenties, the US cinema moved from a narrative model derived largely from vaudeville into a filmmaking formula drawing upon aspects of the novel, the popular legitimate theater, and the visual arts, and combined with specifically cinematic devices. I do not propose here to challenge that general notion. Clearly there was a profound shift in both narrative and stylistic practices. But this shift did not come about because a few prominent filmmakers happened to decide to move their camera in or to break their scenes into more shots. When they did such things, these men and women were not creating isolated strokes of genius, but were responding to larger changes within a developing system. Not all of the many experiments that were tried in the early teens became part of Hollywood's paradigm. Only those solutions which held promise to serve a specific type of narrative structure caught on and became widely used. The predominance of narrative structure over the systems of time and space within the classical film can thus be seen as one result of early attempts to harness cinematic time and space to a storytelling function. Filmmakers quickly came to share certain assumptions about films, narratives, techniques, and audiences that guided them in their experiments.

I shall be suggesting that the formulation of the classical mode began quite early, in the period around 1909–11, and that by 1917, the system was complete in its basic narrative and stylistic premises. During the

early and mid-teens, older devices lingered, but classical norms began to coalesce. The stylistic patterns which characterized the primitive period eventually disappeared. This was in part due to the fact that innovation was not simply a matter of a few daring filmmakers influencing others. It occurred within a set of institutions which were capable of controlling new ideas, fitting them into an existing model, and making them into normative principles. As Part Two has shown, trade journals, handbooks, and reviews disseminated and developed the norms of the classical model, while standardized studio organization was putting those norms into effect. Individual innovations were certainly important, but people like Griffith and Maurice Tourneur changed production practices and filmic techniques in limited ways, governed by the overall production system.

Nor was the shift from the primitive to the classical cinema a matter of either a growing sophistication or a discovery of a natural 'grammar' of the medium. The term 'primitive' is in many ways an unfortunate one, for it may imply that these films were crude attempts at what would later become classical filmmaking. While I use the word because of its widespread acceptance, I would prefer to think of primitive films more in the sense that one speaks of primitive art, either produced by native cultures (e.g., Eskimo ivory carving) or untrained individuals (e.g., Henri Rousseau). That is, such primitive art is a system apart, whose simplicity can be of a value equal to more formal aesthetic traditions. The classical cinema, then, was not a development directly out of the early primitive approach; the primitive cinema, as André Gaudreault puts it, cannot be considered 'the humus and the soil of which the sole virtue was to allow the germination of the other form.'[3] Rather, the classical cinema resulted from a major shift in assumptions about the relation of spectator to film and the relation of a film's form to its style.

As many historians have noted, the primitive cinema largely assumed that the spectator was equivalent to an audience member in a theater. Mise-en-scene often imitated theatrical settings, and actors behaved as if they were on an actual stage. The framing and staging of scenes in constructed sets placed the spectator at a distance from the space of the action, looking into it. Devices like crosscutting, montage sequences, and dissolves for elliding or compressing time were not in general use. The spectator witnessed either a continuous stretch of time over a whole film or discrete blocks of time in one-shot scenes with ellipses or overlaps between. Filmmakers provided few cues to guide the spectator through the action; there was little of the redundancy of narrative information which the classical cinema would habitually provide.

The classical cinema, on the other hand, assumes that the narration places a spectator within or on the edge of the narrative space. As we shall see, a variety of stylistic devices combined to extend that space out toward the plane of the camera, as well as to move the spectator's viewpoint periodically into the narrative space. This increasing depth of the playing area, in combination with greater three-dimensionality in the sets themselves, promoted that specific conception of verisimilitude which, as Chapter 9 has shown, was valued in the early classical period. While presenting to the spectator a more three-dimensional narrative space, however, the film now contained a set of cues to underscore the story action at all times. These two demands, a verisimilitude and narrative clarity, helped create the classical style of Hollywood filmmaking. Part One has already presented this system in its complete form. In this part, I shall be dealing with the early formulation of the classical system and its refinements in the late teens and twenties. This will not be a history of the 'first times' that given devices appear in the cinema. So many films from the silent period are lost or inaccessible that such a project would be doomed. But more importantly, an emphasis on first usages does not inform us about the wider impact of a device. To understand the classical cinema, we need to know when its techniques became normalized on a wide scale.

Even more importantly, we cannot look at devices in isolation from their typical functions. Techniques contribute to the creation of systems of causality, time, and space. A device already in use during the primitive period may continue to be used in the classical system, but may change its function.

In a study of standard practice, a concentration on filmmakers traditionally considered major— Griffith, Tourneur, Thomas H.Ince—would create a skewed impression of the norms. Rather, a variety of genres, filmmakers, and studios should contribute to create a broad picture. I have included films of the early teens from many studios—from the larger Patents Co. members, like Essanay, Vitagraph, and Edison, to the major independents, like Imp, Bison 101, and Thanhouser, to the smaller independents, like Crystal, Rex, Solax, Reliance, and Yankee. (Unfortunately some studios' outputs have virtually disappeared, so a complete sampling is impossible.)

A study that focused entirely on the most famous filmmakers and studios would run the risk of giving undue prominence to certain devices which might in fact have been limited or idiosyncratic. For example, most historians who study the early history of crosscutting devote their attention to the last-minute rescue situation, since they derive most of their examples from Griffith. Yet I shall be claiming that once crosscutting became standardized, it gained several other equally important functions. A cross-sectional survey of the type attempted here provides a tool for judging the actual importance of any given technique in the history of the American cinema.

An important question throughout will be the degree to which filmmakers and critics of the period were aware of newly formulated film techniques. We cannot always be sure that a device's appearance in a number of films implies that filmmakers were beginning to consider it a standard way of doing things. Fortunately, there exists a set of evidence paralleling the films themselves—contemporary discussions of filmmaking practice in how-to columns and books and in various theoretical and critical writings. These materials reveal that filmmakers and critics at the time recognized many of the changes in the continuity system, in acting style, in lighting practice, indeed in most of the areas we are exploring in this book.

With these sources—films and contemporary accounts—we should be able to survey the formulation of norms of narrative and stylistic structure in American filmmaking during the transitional years 1909 to 1917. The primitive and classical periods were not, of course, entirely different from each other nor unchanging within themselves. We may find at least two distinct phases within the primitive period itself: the earlier (1895–1902) includes primarily one-shot films, with documentaries more numerous than fiction films; after about 1902, multiple-shot films and the increasing use of staged narratives created a more complex approach to filmmaking. Then, from about 1909 to 1916, the transitory phase toward the classical cinema occurred, with the classical paradigm in place by 1917. From that point on, silent cinema history became mainly a matter of adjustments, not basic changes.

The primitive film's relation to vaudeville

The early film's economic dependence on vaudeville, discussed in Chapter 10, helped determine the genres and formal norms of the primitive cinema. Exhibition circumstances, short length, and small-scale production facilities dictated the creation of films which modeled themselves largely on types of stage acts: the variety act, the fictional narrative, the scenic (views of interesting locales), the topical (presentations of current events), and the trick film.

These genres were recognized as such in the primitive period; they reflect the type of appeal the producers and exhibitors exploited in selling them—the trick film's technical novelty, the variety acts' presentation of famous vaudevillians to farflung audiences. In practice, however, many trick films and variety acts contained brief fictional narratives, so the categories overlap somewhat. For my purposes here, the most important groupings are general ones: documentary films versus fictional narratives.

Before 1903, most films shown on early vaudeville programs were documentaries. The early views were usually a single shot, taken from a static tripod or involving a pan or track from a moving vehicle. Brief, in

black and white, and with little explanatory material, they seem of minimal interest today. The apparent crudity of these early documentaries has helped foster the myth that films were used to drive patrons out at the ends of vaudeville programs, or the notion that audience demand spurred the shift to narratives.

Before 1903, the typical film resembled a very simple vaudeville skit. The stage skit usually involved a couple of comics performing verbal and sight gags in a relatively static situation.[4] Early films are even simpler; while the vaudeville skit usually leads to a pay-off, the brief, single-shot film usually employs a more static narrative situation—a potential cause which never leads to an effect. For example, *The Old Maid in a Drawing Room* (1900, Edison) consists entirely of a medium shot of an elderly woman in evening dress seated and talking animatedly, facing a space off front; the film's entire interest arises from her comic appearance and gestures. There is no development. Some of these skit-like films are difficult to distinguish from motion-picture records of actual vaudeville comedy performances —a circumstance that reflects the indebtedness of the early narrative film to its stage mode.

Beginning about 1903, the film's single action became part of a brief series of causally linked events. This resulted in part from the increasing length of each film; there was also a greater complexity of production methods, which might mix interior and exterior shots within the same film. But greater lengths and heterogeneous material did not fundamentally change the narrative model derived from the skit. Films still depended upon an initial, often accidental event, rather than upon character motivation. In 1903 and 1904, the chase film, staged in a series of exterior locations, was becoming one of the most popular narrative genres.[5] Rather than confining itself to a simple, brief slapstick fight, the film might prolong its action by having one combatant flee, with the other chasing and passersby joining in. A relatively complicated film, like *The Life of an American Fireman* (Edwin S.Porter, 1903, Edison) or *The Runaway Match* (1903, AM&B) would incorporate a chase as part of a larger series of events. Through the period 1903 to 1908, simple narratives that follow one action—a chase, a rescue, a fight—in linear fashion dominate narrative filmmaking.

The second major vaudeville form from which film derived narrative principles was the playlet. When writers on this period assume that film imitated full-length nineteenth-century legitimate drama, they overlook the fact that there was this more accessible form closer at hand. Vaudeville initially adopted the playlet during a period of intense competition among entrepreneurs in New York in 1893–4. Wishing to book famous attractions to enhance drawing power, a few producers hired stars from the legitimate theater, who performed in condensed, twenty-minute versions of their original dramatic successes. This practice eventually brought such stars as Sarah Bernhardt and Ethel Barrymore to the vaudeville stage in the early teens.[6] Authors began writing original playlets, and the form developed into one specific to vaudeville. At the beginning, however, when film was most closely linked to vaudeville, the condensed plays were highly episodic series of highlights from existing works. They were in a sense the opposite of the skit, since instead of prolonging the effects of one initial cause, the playlet packed a great deal of causal material into a short playing time.

When film producers began basing films upon lengthy literary works, they also tended to structure them as series of selected scenes from the originals. Porter's 1903 version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Edison) no doubt imitated the popular stage productions of the novel, which had toured the country during the last decades of the nineteenth century.[7] But the condensation of the narrative into an episodic set of fourteen tableaux suggests as well the playlet form. A series of tableaux, often with explanatory phrases between, became a standard way of presenting a narrative in the later portion of the primitive period (e.g., *The Unwritten Law, c.* 1907, Lubin).

The playlets and the plays upon which they were based were frequently melodramas, and familiar melodramatic subject matter appears in primitive-period films. *The 100 to One Shot* deals with a man who

wins on a long-shot bet at the track to save his fiancee and her father from eviction. Other popular motifs in primitive films were gypsies who steal a child and the father who disapproves of his son or daughter's choice of a marriage partner. Moreover, the episodic quality of the stage melodrama continues in films of the primitive period (and into the teens as well). Coincidence was permissible at virtually any point in the narrative, either to keep the story going or to provide a resolution at the end.

Neither the skit nor the playlet fosters the weave of causes from scene to scene which Part One has shown to be typical of the classical narrative. The primitive scene does not usually begin by closing off dangling causes or continue by creating new ones for scenes to come. Rather, the same cause lingers on, resulting in more and more effects (the skit), or each scene sets up a new set of premises to be worked out in one relatively self-contained stretch of action (the episodic playlet). As we shall see in the next chapter, this difference is a crucial one for distinguishing the classical from the primitive cinema.

Between 1906 and 1908, the sudden nickelodeon boom made film in many cases vaudeville's rival for audiences. The enormous success and quick spread of nickelodeons, combined with vaudeville's continued use of films, created a demand for more releases from the producers. Robert C.Allen has shown that the producers responded, increasing their output from 10,000 feet weekly in November of 1906, to 28,000 feet by March, 1907; even this did not meet the demand.[8] As a result, filmmaking followed a trend which had begun about 1901–3: the production of larger proportions of narrative films in relation to documentaries.[9*] Initially comedies formed the greater part of the fiction output. Allen has persuasively shown that this increase was *not* in response to public demands—that in fact audiences regretted to some extent the replacement of scenics and topicals by narratives. Indeed, Allen found that sales in magic lantern slides showing exotic locales surged in 1908, at the point when producers went over decisively to narrative.[10] But with a steady demand established first by vaudeville theaters and later by nickelodeons as well, producers had to find some way of guaranteeing a regular flow of releases. This, as Chapter 10 has explained, resulted in a mass production of staged, narrative films.

The move to narrative was a key factor in encouraging a shift from primitive cinema to classical filmmaking. Certainly the early vaudeville structures held on for some years, partly because filmmakers had been trained under them, partly because films were still shown in vaudeville situations, and partly because the classical paradigm took several years to be formulated and to be widely accepted as a norm. But why was there a shift away from the approach to narrative prevalent in the primitive period?

The rise of the classical model

> With the considerable elevation of public taste in the past two years and the still greater desire
> to do better things on the part of the film manufacturers, the 'trick' film, and the merely
> farcical, or horse play, pictures have taken a secondary place.[11]
>
> Walter Prichard Eaton, 1909

One of the main causes in the shift from primitive to classical cinema involves a change in influences from the other arts, from an initial close imitation of vaudeville, to a greater dependence on short fiction, novels, and legitimate drama. But film narrative and style were not simply the sum of several inter-arts influences. However directly film may have imitated existing devices from theater or fiction, we must always ask how the device and its function changed when incorporated into works in the film medium.

Only in the first phase of the primitive cinema, when films were one shot long, were they nearly direct imitations of existing forms. Topicals and scenics were very similar to magic lantern slides and photographs. Records of vaudeville acts made little attempt to change the act for the screen. The abstracting functions

which films performed— reducing their subjects to black and white, rendering them for the most part silently on a two-dimensional surface—were already familiar to audiences from other photographic media.

But with the steady demands by vaudeville and later by nickelodeons for more product came a tendency for the manufacturers to increase the length of the films, usually by adding shots. This greater length had two vital implications for the types of narratives used in the films.

On the one hand, greater length, whether in longer takes or in multiple shots, would allow more time for characterization and the development of psychological traits. The filmmaker could have simply added more characters and physical action to expand a skit-like situation, but this would tend to provide little change in the course of the film—the longer the film, the more apparent would be the static quality of the situation. Providing traits for the characters could motivate a changing situation; then it would be the characters, rather than the situation, which remained stable, unifying the string of events. A few simple traits could motivate a whole variety of circumstances, while at the same time providing a narrational thread to guide the spectator.

On the other hand, while characters could be a unifying force, cutting could be potentially disunifying. Yet technological restrictions like limited camera-magazine capacities and production circumstances like the lack of a written script, might tend to discourage lengthy one-shot films. In fact, during the rise of the narrative film, from 1902 to 1908, the multiple-shot film gradually became the norm, although film lengths varied considerably during these years. At first, the association of shots with whole films was strong: 'Above all, the inventors of the cinema invented the shot, and this shot was at the time the alpha and omega of cinematographic expression.'[12] Indeed, sometimes producers would copyright every shot of a multiple-shot narrative as a separate film. In this way the title of each film/shot could serve as an explanatory inter-title, and the separate shots became self-contained tableaux. Producers also began to make series of scenic views of a single locale, each of which could be copyrighted separately; these could be exhibited individually or as a set.[13*] The initial reluctance to put several shots into a single film suggests a recognition of the potentially disruptive qualities of the cut. Unless the filmmaker finds cues for conveying the spatio-temporal relationship between shots, the effect of the cut is a perceptible break between bits of subject matter.

We have seen that the manufacturers realized how suitable fictional narrative films were for profitable mass production. Because of film's success, more footage was needed, and it proved more predictable to manufacture staged films than documentaries. In addition, all other things being equal, a longer narrative film was proportionately cheaper than a short one, since the same sets and personnel could be used to create a greater amount of footage.[14*] So the trend toward longer narratives continued throughout the silent period.

The spatio-temporal problems innate in the construction of the multiple-shot film helped guide the filmmakers' formulation of a classical narrative model. This is in one way a somewhat traditional view of film history—that the discovery and increasing use of cutting brought cinema from its initial dependence on theater into a more independent, 'cinematic' period. Yet historians have usually treated this change as an untroubled evolution—with editing freeing Porter, Griffith, and their followers to explore the 'grammar' of film. What I am suggesting here is that cutting was not entirely a liberation; it posed tremendous problems of how to maintain a clear narrative as the central interest of the film, while juxtaposing disparate times and spaces. The continuity rules that filmmakers devised were not natural outgrowths of cutting, but means of taming and unifying it. In a sense, what the psychological character was in the unification of the longer narrative, the continuity rules were in the unification of time and space.

Filmmakers found themselves dealing with an increasingly disruptive set of devices as their films became longer and their narratives more complicated. When no standard way of conveying narrative information existed, experimentation was necessary. In the primitive period, films sometimes display anomalous devices. The famous repeated action in the last two shots of Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (made in

late 1902, Edison) has caused debate among historians, as to whether Porter's film indeed could have been released with such a problematic repetition of an entire scene. To argue that the repetition could not have been in the original assumes that the later norm of smooth story-telling was in existence by 1902 and that Porter must have known that overlapping time would disturb an audience. But in fact such repetitions of actions from different vantage points occur in other films of the period. These include *A Policeman's Love Affair* (1904, Lubin)—where the maid's greeting to the policeman is seen both from the street and from inside the house—and *The Tunnel Workers* (1906, AM&B)—where the foreman and the protagonist both go through a door and are seen repeating this action from the other side of the door.[15] The point here is that disruptive devices abound during the late primitive period and occasionally crop up in the early teens.[16*]

Time, space, and logic did not fit together unproblematically at this early point. The relationships among these systems were probably the same in the primitive period as in the classical—that is, narrative was the dominant consideration, with time and space subordinate to it. And many of the same techniques were in use during both periods—cut-ins, characters, inter-titles, linear causality, and the like. The main changes that occurred in the shift from primitive to classical cinema took place *within* the individual systems of causality, time, and space.

The main vehicle for the change was a radically different conception of narration. During the primitive period, the narration usually remained omniscient, with actions placed in a block before the viewer—played out in long-shot view for the most part. (Even dreams, visions, and memories were seen in superimposition over only part of the frame, with the character still visible in the long shot, thus minimizing the subjective effect and keeping the narration omniscient.) As Gaudreault suggests, 'The narrator was not *conscious* of being a narrator.'[17] Inter-titles of neutral, non-self-conscious tone summarized action and introduced characters. But the narration seldom attempted to guide the spectator actively. The rare early cutins or camera movements which occurred stand out in this context as moments of more self-conscious narration aimed at shaping the onlooker's perception. (Later, when such moments became part of the norm, they would call considerably less attention to the process of narration, with continuity principles foregrounding narrative flow and making cutting unobtrusive.) In short, classical narration tailored every detail to the spectator's attention; the primitive cinema's narration had done this only sporadically.

In the shift away from primitive cinema, filmmakers found ways to control the disruptive spatio-temporal effects of multiple shots and locales; they accomplished this by constructing a totalized model, making a unified narrative the top priority, and using guidelines within the model to control the spatial and temporal problems created by the film medium. With such a unified structure as the grounding for the entire film, cutting, ellipses, repetitions of events, could all come to serve a clear function. Such a film would not be difficult for a spectator to grasp.

Directly or indirectly, the cinema found models of unified narrative in other arts—the unities of drama, the single strong impression created by the classical short story, and the well-made play. But because the film medium had its own demands as well, not one influence came through unchanged, and classical film narrative was more than the sum total of the devices it borrowed.

Novel, short story, drama

The conditions for influence

As films grew longer, the status of the individual film on a program changed. Initially, eight or so short films might fill a twenty-minute slot in a vaudeville program of several hours. The overall emphasis was on variety, and the disparate films formed an act. As a consequence, no individual film was expected to stand

by itself. But with the advent of the nickelodeon and the standardized 1,000-foot reel, a program would typically consist of only three or four films; each occupied a distinct place within the complete show, separated by song-slide presentations and possibly other live acts. Internal coherence became a more central issue. And when the feature film came to occupy virtually an entire evening's program (with overture and other entertainment often tailored to the film), it had to carry the burden of sustaining audience interest. Expanded length and the change in viewing circumstances undoubtedly played a large part in turning filmmakers away from a vaudeville model of narrative toward fiction and the drama.

In the early years, films had competed only with other vaudeville acts for a place on a program in an art form that had an established audience. But with the phenomenal growth of the film industry, its product began to vie with other entertainment commodities for customers. By the first half of the teens, films were competing with inexpensive popular fiction—short-story magazines and novels, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's,* for instance, offered 'one or two nights' enjoyment of the best serials and short stories for five cents.'[18] To lure those readers in at a similar price for a shorter period, film producers felt they had to raise the quality of their offerings. Thus, for the short film at least, the popular short story offered an existing model to be emulated.

The feature film, on the other hand, offered a more expensive, often lengthier evening's entertainment, one directly comparable to that offered by a play, and entrepreneurs showed early features in legitimate theaters with prices based upon live-drama admissions. The situation in the theater industry of the early teens gave film a competitive advantage and probably fostered the industry's move into features during that period. That advantage derived from the organization of the theatrical business around the turn of the century.

The legitimate theater in the early years of this century operated as a cluster of touring troupes, controlled by a small number of entrepreneurs centralized in New York. This centralized touring system had replaced the country's earlier theatrical organization, the individual local professional repertory company, around 1870. Theater historian Jack Poggi sums up the changes in the theater industry:[19]

> What happened to the American theater after 1870 was not very different from what happened to many other industries. First, a centralized production system replaced many local, isolated units. Second, there was a division of labor, as theater managing became separate from play producing. Third, there was a standardization of product, as each play was represented by only one company or by a number of duplicate companies. Fourth, there was a growth of control by big business.

The characteristics which Poggi lists have obvious parallels to the development of the film industry as described in Part Two. Film was able to compete successfully with legitimate drama because it provided a more efficient, more centralized system for staging a performance only once, recording it, and reproducing it for the mass audience with minimal transportation costs.[20*] Because of its success in competing with the drama, the film industry was able to standardize the multiple-reel feature, which in turn encouraged the move to a classical continuity system. But again, in order to compete with the drama for its audience, filmmakers realized the necessity of raising the quality of their offerings.

To a considerable extent, raising the quality of films to attract consumers of short fiction, novels, and plays required drawing directly or indirectly upon these other arts. Chapter 12 has shown that the film companies did this by adapting plays, stories, and novels. So for sources of subject matter, films turned definitively away from vaudeville skits. Producers also wanted to lure personnel, particularly established stars, away from the theater; adaptations of drama and literature, plus a general elevation of film's status among the arts, helped accomplish this.

But film drew upon these other arts in ways other than the direct appropriation of stories and personnel. The original scenarios used by the companies, whether done by their own staff writers or by freelancers, already felt the indirect impact of existing literary models. The film industry was fortunate in being able to tap a huge marketplace for popular fiction and drama. The writers working in this marketplace were often trained in popularized versions of traditional rules, and they could apply these rules to film scenarios as well.

The large freelance market for novels and short fiction had arisen only a few years before the invention of film. The development of a widespread native fiction had been discouraged by the lack of an international copyright law. Publishers tended to bring out editions of European novels and stories, which they could obtain without payment, rather than to pay American authors to write for them. Before 1891, when an international copyright law took effect, there had been only a very limited output of American short stories.[21] From about 1824 into the 1840s, literary annuals, ladies' magazines, and later gentlemen's magazines, fostered a brief flowering of the tale or sketch; these were generally considered hack work, although at their best such periodicals brought out the works of Hawthorne, Irving, and Poe. The 1850s were a fallow period for short fiction, but the tremendous commercial successes in America of Dickens's novels and of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) marked the rise of the popular novel in America. With the founding during the 1860s of *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation,* short fiction became increasingly respectable, and by the mid-1880s, the writing of short stories was becoming lucrative. The number of writers increased steadily.[22]

After the new international copyright law of 1891, popular fiction underwent a huge growth. Brander Matthews, a leading critic of the period, commented in 1898: 'This is perhaps the most striking fact in the history of the literature of the nineteenth century—this immense vogue of the novel and of the short story. Fiction fills our monthly magazines, and it is piled high on the counters of our bookstores.'[23] Novels were relatively easy to sell but took more time to write. Also, short stories were so popular at the time that a payment for a single story often was as great as the total royalties on a novel. For the vast number of part-time or casual writers, the short story proved attractive. By the late 1890s, there were so many weekly magazines and newspaper supplements that the writing of short stories could be considered an industry. And by 1900, syndicates existed to write, buy, and sell stories.[24]

There were also freelance playwrights, although this market was much smaller. A writer could not sell a play nearly so easily as a piece of fiction; the financial rewards, however, were potentially greater:[25]

> Although there is far more pecuniary profit to the author from a successful play than from the average successful novel, and although in some countries, notably in France, the authorship of a play brings more instant personal recognition, playwriting demands a long and arduous period of apprenticeship. Even after years of familiarity with technical stagecraft, it is far more difficult to get a manuscript play accepted than it is to secure publication for a manuscript novel. Most authors choose, or are forced to follow, the easier path.

Authors could mail plays directly to managers or to stars, but many worked through agents. Chances of a sale were relatively slim. One 1915 playwriting manual described how an author could expect to wait while his or her manuscript languished for months on a manager's shelf.[26] Once a playwright succeeded in getting one play produced, however, she or he usually would be considered a professional, receiving reasonably high, regular royalties. There was also a small market for freelance writers of vaudeville playlets.[27] Again, the procedure involved royalties rather than outright sales.

The film industry entered the literary market in part by hiring established writers and in part by inviting submissions of synopses and scenarios. Staff writers and scenario editors came to the studios from a variety of backgrounds, but the most common previous occupations were journalism and popular-fiction writing. Journalists were presumably well-suited to the task because they had professional experience in writing and editing synoptic narratives. A trade journal noted in 1916: 'The best school for the would-be photoplay writer is the newspaper office. Many who were formerly newspaper men are now successful as writers for the silent drama. They know life, a good story, and the value of a gripping situation.'[28] Edward Azlant's examination of screenwriting before 1920 discusses several dozen prominent scenarists at the studios.[29] The largest number of this group came from journalism, followed by magazine-fiction writing, novel writing, and playwriting. These divisions are not hard and fast, however. Many writers worked in several or all of these fields. Given the huge, lucrative freelance story market, few writers of any type failed to submit something to the magazines. Reporters, copy readers, and editors working for magazines and newspapers wrote short stories. (Stephen Crane, Edna Ferber, Willa Gather, James Cabell, Irwin Cobb, and Sinclair Lewis were among those who got their starts this way.)[30] Writers who worked at the studios or sent in their freelance efforts would usually have some experience with the popular fiction forms of the period.

Historians have dealt extensively with the impact of the drama and the novel on film form and style.[31] The concomitant influence of the short story, however, has been largely overlooked. An examination of the close relations between the freelance short story and scenario markets will demonstrate some of the conditions which encouraged narrative principles from all of these arts to enter the cinema.

In order to make narrative films on a regular, efficient basis, producers began to use the detailed division of labor described in Part Two. Narrative filmmaking necessitated a steady source of stories, a need which eventually resulted in the scenario staff. These workers performed specialized tasks: among other things, they wrote many of the original stories used and read the freelance synopses or scenario-scripts submitted to the studio. Chapter 12 has suggested that the heyday of the amateur scenarist was actually brief (from about 1907 to 1914), but these were important years in the transition from primitive to classical filmmaking. Vast changes took place in ideas about how a narrative film should be constructed. The backgrounds of both studio and freelance writers, as well as the normative advice they received, helped shape those ideas.

By 1910, the methods of obtaining stories for filmmaking purposes resembled those of the popular fiction magazines, which, as we have seen, had become popular in the 1890s. The prominent *Black Cat* magazine, for instance, started a trend toward using contests to encourage submissions of short stories. Motion-picture companies followed this strategy, and there were scenario contests conducted through the trade journals in the early teens.

Whether encouraged by prizes or by flat-fee purchases, amateur and professional freelance writers flooded the studios with scenarios. Usual estimates in the trade journals and scenario guides suggest that only about one in a hundred scripts was actually accepted, and scenario editors frequently complained about the poor quality of the material they had to plow through. Very quickly, the studios' dependence on such submissions declined. By 1912, copyright problems and the expanding production of multiple-reel films made unsolicited stories less attractive; contract writers in scenario departments proved a more reliable, efficient source, and the most promising freelancers could be hired. Amateur scenarios were used almost exclusively for one- or two-reel films, the production of which declined as the feature became the standard basis for production in the mid-teens.

Little direct evidence indicates what proportion of the freelance material came from writers who had also tried their hand at short stories. Few films of this period credited their scenarists. But some indirect evidence suggests the importance of popular short fiction as a model for film narrative. For one thing, some of the books on how to write scenarios of the period came from authors who also provided advice on short-story

writing.[32] In addition, a few major scenarists of the time have recalled their beginnings as short-story freelancers. Frances Marion wrote fiction until requests for the screen rights to her stories led her to try doing scenarios; she eventually became a staff writer for several West Coast companies. Clifford Howard, who later became scenario editor for the Balboa and the American companies, wrote of having turned his outlines for short-story plots into scenarios when he heard how easy they were to sell. Others who had written short stories (usually in addition to work in other prose or dramatic forms) include: Roy L.McCardell, Lloyd Lonergan, Emmett Campbell Hall, Epes Winthrop Sargent, James Oliver Curwood, Eustace Hale Ball, Mary H.O'Connor, Beulah Marie Dix, and Clare Beranger.[33] There were undoubtedly others, but most freelancers remained anonymous, and their backgrounds are now untraceable. At least some scenarists, however, had learned their craft from magazine freelancing, rather than from the stage.

Most explicitly, trade journals recognized a parallel between the scenario and popular short-story markets. These comparisons tend to come a little later in the period, during the middle and late teens, but they indicate an awareness that writers were often working for both markets. By about 1915 the industry began to realize that it was competing with the popular fiction magazines for good stories. *Motography* noted in early 1915: 'An able and recognized short story writer can command from five to ten cents a word for his manuscript. To such a writer an average short story of three thousand words brings a check for one hundred to three hundred dollars.' The article contrasted this with the average payment for a scenario, which ranged well below $100, and pointed out that 'at present the short story writer is only tempted to submit something made over from an oft-rejected story manuscript.' The author concluded: 'The film producers can afford to pay better prices than the magazines. Encourage the writer to try his ideas in scenario form first; he can make over his rejected scenarios into magazine articles as easily as he can do the opposite.'[34] A *Motion Picture News* editorial pointed out that fiction magazines attracted a large middle-class audience and educated it to appreciate good stories:[35]

> They are sharp critics, these readers. They want pictures up to their established fiction standards.
>
> It is regrettable, but it is a fact, that up to a few years ago, the large percentage of pictures released were of the same ordinary adventurous, or sentimental or funny character of the fiction in our popular publications of *thirty years* ago.
>
> What is to be done then to get good stories?
>
> Simply this: Pay the price….
>
> Go directly to the best magazine writers and get their work by *paying at least what the magazine will pay*.

Throughout 1915 and into 1916, similar articles in the trade press called for the producers to raise their fees for scenarios, to attract something beyond the leavings of the fiction magazines.[36]

The possibility for influence from the short story, then, came in part from the contact with writers who sold stories in both the magazine and film markets. In addition, many of the writers who were employed as permanent staff members came from a similar background. Along with the novel and the drama, the short story provided classical models upon which the early film could draw.

Narrative principles

The length of a text has a great deal to do with how critics and writers perceive that a specific literary mode —a novel, a short story, a play— should be treated. The modern short story in a sense gained a distinct identity when Poe pointed out that its basic difference from the novel was that the short story could be read

at a single sitting, and thus should convey a unified impression quite different from the principles of unity governing the longer form. Ever since, theorists have repeated the idea that the short story is not simply a story which is short.

In the same sense, the feature film was not simply an expanded one-reeler. The lengthier films —initially 1,000 feet, then two or three reels, then five—demanded new structural principles. In the other arts, full-blown sets of classical dicta on formal matters already existed. By drawing upon drama and literature for stories, the film industry also drew upon these dicta.

The short story, novel, and drama all had something to offer film. Like the short story and the drama, films (excepting serials) were consumed in a single stretch of time; hence filmmakers could use ideas of unity of impression, of a continuity of action rising to climax and falling, and so on. Yet films tended to move about in space more than most dramas or short stories; they dealt with more characters and lines of action in many cases, compressing a great deal of material into the brief span of two hours or less. Ideas of how to organize this material were available from theories of novel construction.

Cinema emerged in the middle of a reformulation of classical notions of unity in the literary arts. The very definition of the short story as Poe originated it (and as it has continued to the present day) was based upon unity. In the nineteenth century, the novel began to be considered a set of carefully interwoven lines of action. The drama, having passed through an emphasis on perfect structure in the nineteenth century, was now adjusting this notion to accommodate the character psychology of new 'realistic' trends.

These issues might well have remained concepts only for scholarly discussion, had it not been for the sudden rise in the 1880s and especially the 1890s of the huge literary market. With so many authors or potential authors trying to sell their works, there began a dissemination of simple guidelines for literary creation. We have seen already how in film, the freelance market of the teens gave rise to dozens of writing manuals. The same was true in other literary arts. The biggest boom in manual-publishing was for the short story, for here the market was largest. According to one literary historian, lesser critics seized upon the most important discussions of short fiction and quickly made them into a set of rules for the novice writer: 'These laws they proceeded to codify and promulgate. The first decade of the new century was the era of the short-story handbook.' The first appeared in 1898, and many others followed.[37] A number of other guides covered fiction in general, and a few concentrated on the novel; there were also manuals of playwriting. Such works reveal the popularization of classical aesthetic principles, many of which coincide with the traits of the developing classical paradigm in film.

The handbooks' discussions of drama and fiction invariably assume that 'Of course the prime structural necessity in narrative, as indeed in every method of discourse, is unity.'[38] Unity was most stringently demanded in the short story. The short story gained its modern definition in 1842, in Poe's famous review of Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales;* in a passage universally quoted by aestheticians and manual-writers alike, Poe declared that the good short story, being designed to be read at one sitting, should be characterized by 'the unity of effect or impression.'[39] Although Poe's discussion had little impact in America at the time, it was revived in 1885 by Brander Matthews, a Columbia drama professor, whose writings on literature contributed greatly to popularizing Aristotelian canons of classical structure.[40] Thereafter writers, whether scholarly or popular, referred to the Poe/Matthews view as the ideal.

In order to achieve a unified short story, the general assumption went, the writer arranged every element of plot and character around the single strong impression which the story should create on its reader: 'The plot should revolve around a single, central, dominant incident, which in many cases will be the nucleus (in the mind of the author) from which the story originally developed.'[41] In 1904, another major critic, Clayton Hamilton, refined the Poe/ Matthews formula: 'The aim of a short-story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis.'[42] Everything in the

narrative must function to build up toward the climax, which comes close to the end and creates the strong effect. This idea fed directly into the film scenario manuals; compare the following instructions, one from the Home Correspondence School's 1913 manual on short stories, the other from Phillips's scenario guide (1914):[43]

> Steps: (1) Determine at the outstart [sic] what tone you wish to strike, what effect you wish to produce. (2) Do not put into your story a single word, or action, or bit of description, or character, or *anything* that does not in some direct or indirect way help to produce the effect you desire. (3) Do not omit anything that may help to bring about the same result.
>
>   The climax resolves itself into a definite purpose to guide the playwright; for he writes every scene with a view to its influence on the climax; if it has no influence on the climax, that is sufficient evidence that it is not necessary for his play purposes.

Virtually any manual on story writing offered a variant of this same advice. This was particularly applicable to the one- or two-reel films, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, short films tended to follow the short story's pattern of a steadily rising action leading to a climax late in the plot.

   The short story was supposed to be unified in the extreme. Critics and theorists realized that the length of the novel tended to preclude its having such rigorous coherence; yet they still assumed that this trait was applicable and desirable in the longer form. 'Unlike the short-story, the novel aims to produce a series of effects—a cumulative combination of the elements of narrative—and acknowledges no restriction to economy of means.'[44] This does not mean, however, that the novel should be episodic, for unity implied threads running through the whole that connected every part. Although the novelist might use more characters, more incidents, and more lines of action than the story-writer, all these still had to bear upon the entire plot. The novel should not fall into distinct episodes with separate climaxes, but should rise and fall with an overall ascent toward a final major climax. Again, no extraneous material was permitted, such as the stories interpolated into episodic novels (e.g., *Don Quixote, Humphrey Clinker, Pickwick Papers*).

   These ideas about the novel were never as simply and distinctly codified as were the 'rules' for the short story, and hence their influence on film was perhaps less direct. But as scenarists adapted lengthy novels into feature films, they undoubtedly learned ways of sustaining multiple lines of action throughout an extended story. And indeed the episodic feature-length film is rare, outside the particular mode of the continuing serial. Films which deal with many characters and which cover lengthy time spans still manage to keep a core of causal lines which bind the elements together.

   In the field of drama, practitioners and critics alike were still strongly under the influence of the 'well-made play' of the nineteenth century. The major French plays by Scribe, Sardou, Dumas *fils,* and others had been translated and were frequently performed in the United States around the turn of the century.[45] Dumas *fils* and especially the leading German proponent of the well-made play, Gustav Freytag, were to the drama of this period what Poe was to the short story; Freytag's *Technik des Dramas* was translated in 1894, but was quoted frequently before that by drama critics and theorists. Many of the most popular English-language playwrights of the day—Pinero, Shaw, Wilde—had been influenced by the well-made play, as had Ibsen. In the 1890s, books on dramatic structure typically reiterated Freytag's rigid, pyramidal schema (rising action, climax, falling action, catastrophe), which would guarantee a perfectly unified play.[46] This schema would produce a symmetrical play with the traditional five acts forming mirror-image parallels across the whole; *Othello* and *Macbeth* were considered excellent examples.

Critics of this period did not agree with the traditional French interpretation of the three 'Aristotelian' unities; the unities of time and space, in which the play's story was supposed to take place within twenty-four hours and in one locale, were dismissed. Instead, these writers focused on the unity of action:[47]

> This has been variously interpreted, but the most sensible view is, that all the incidents of the story must be made to cluster about a single central animating idea. One purpose must be seen to run throughout the whole series of incidents. If there are two series of incidents, they must be so woven together that, at the end of the story, it will be evident that one could not have taken place without the other. This constitutes the *unity of action*.

This passage suggests that unity in the drama was conceived in terms somewhat similar to Poe's 'unity of impression' for the short story. But here 'a single central animating *idea*' is the basis for the whole; as we shall see shortly, this 'central idea' became codified as the 'theme.'

After the turn of the century, the rigid structure derived from Freytag was dropped by critics, and there was a general reaction against the well-made play (and perhaps a tendency to underplay its continuing influence). The well-made play was derided as shallow, with empty structure overriding considerations of character psychology, realism, or social comment. One prominent expert on playwriting, William Archer, refused to use the standard term *dénouement* ('untying'): 'The play of intrigue being no longer the dominant dramatic form, the image of disentangling has lost some of its special fitness.' Archer also poked fun at Sardou for his overly complex exposition and situations.[48] Archer and his contemporaries abandoned the placement of the climax at the center of a play with a long falling action, or denouement, leading to a 'catastrophe.' Instead, for them the climax should come near the end, with all action rising generally in stages toward this moment—a model much closer to the literary structure assumed for the short story and novel of the period. Critics jettisoned the 'catastrophe' altogether. A 1915 playwriting manual gives the typical listing of parts of a play: exposition, development and complication of the intrigue rising toward the climax, the climax itself, and ending.[49] Critics of this period go directly back to Aristotle's requirement that every play's action must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.[50]

Like the unified novel, the play should not be episodic. Archer commented on the play without unity: 'No part of it is necessarily involved in any other part. If the play were found too long or too short, an act might be cut or written in without necessitating any considerable readjustments in the other acts. The play is really a series of episodes.'[51] Here, as with the other literary forms, unity implies that all elements are necessary, and no necessary ones are missing; all the elements pertain to the main line(s) of action, rather than to separate incidents. Poe's 'unity of impression' is not, however, the basis for the play's coherence. Instead, critics considered the core of a play to be its 'theme': 'It appears reasonable that a play that is actually developed from a definite theme is most likely to possess both the unity and the simplicity, to say nothing of the freshness, which good drama requires.'[52] But this thematic center served the same unifying function as the single impression in short fiction. Everything in the play related to it, and hence could not be superfluous.

Theories of playwriting stressed one additional aspect of unity which was relevant to the cinema: thorough motivation and a resulting continuity of action. Plays, like films, occur in a steady temporal progression. The reader of a short story or novel can go back or can pause to ponder causes and effects, but the audience in a theater must understand the drama as it proceeds. Hence the importance of motivation. Archer quotes Dumas *fils:* '"The art of the theatre is the art of preparations,"' and advises dramatists to[53]

Place the requisite finger-posts on the road he would have us follow.… It is in nowise to the author's interest that we should say, 'Ah, if we had only known this, or foreseen that, in time, the effect of such-and-such a scene would have been entirely different!' We have no use for finger-posts that point backwards.

This passage invites comparison with the classical cinema's tendency to direct audience attention forward by frequent 'priming' of future events in the plot.

The careful preparation for events throughout the plot would help eliminate coincidence. Coincidence had been a staple of melodrama and the popular nineteenth-century theater in general; but with the growing emphasis on realism around the turn of the century, coincidence became passé. A 1915 playwriting manual stated:[54]

Time was when important coincidence was accepted in the theatre as a matter of course, or even of preference. To-day, however, it has been for the most part consigned to that limbo of antiquated devices and conventions which, for the present at least, has swallowed up the soliloquy, the 'apart,' and the 'aside,' along with eavesdropping behind portieres and letters fortuitously left lying about.

The elimination wherever possible of 'important coincidences'—especially coincidences to resolve plots— was desirable in the classical cinema as well.

Chapter 6 examined the scene-by-scene structure of the classical film, as causes are left dangling and picked up in alternation; this effect guarantees that the action never slackens between scenes. This, too, was noted as a desirable trait in drama; in 1912 Archer discussed how to maintain interest from act to act:[55]

The problem is, not to cut short the spectator's interest, or to leave it fluttering at a loose end, but to provide it either with a clearly-foreseen point in the next act towards which it can reach onwards, or with a definite enigma, the solution of which is impatiently awaited. In general terms, a bridge should be provided between one act and another, along which the spectator's mind cannot but travel with eager anticipation.

The 'clearly foreseen point' or the 'definite enigma' are comparable to the dangling cause; by setting these in place at the ends of acts, the playwright avoided the episodic structure inimical to a unified whole.

Although conceptions of unity differed somewhat for the short story, novel, and drama, they boiled down to a similar notion. The artwork was to be organized around a single central factor— an intended impression, a theme. No unrelated elements were admissible, and the elements that were present should be motivated. Such ideas were common currency by the time that studios began hiring professional writers from other fields, buying the rights to literary works, and soliciting freelance scenarios from the public.

The same was true of the classical cinema's concept of character; it derived in part from a growing interest in the other arts during the same period in character psychology. Influenced by European Positivism in the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially by studies of human behavior, writers were increasingly interested in portraying realistic characters and their environments. Few were willing to go to the extremes of Zola's theory and approach their characters with a strictly scientific attitude, but critics and theorists were certainly aware of the French naturalist's work. In popularized form, they were willing to apply it. A concentration on character psychology could provide the motivational material necessary to a unified work. The two main issues concerning character revolved around character *development* and *psychology*.

In the short story, both were considered necessarily limited. The short story dealt with fewer characters than the novel or drama. To gain the maximum effect, one or two central characters were held to be ideal.[56] Since the story-writer had a limited time to create characters, they must be immediately striking and colorful, developing swiftly if at all, and 'that development must be hastened by striking circumstances.'[57] Such strictures could be of use to the film, particularly the one- or two-reeler, and even a feature film had far less time than a novel to develop character. In the classical cinema, our first impressions tend to be lasting ones, and the characters seldom have a complex set of traits.

In the novel, on the other hand, character development was considered paramount; it, rather than theme or impression, was often the major source of unity. Over the course of hundreds of pages, the author could slowly acquaint the reader with a whole set of central figures and could change their traits in a leisurely fashion. Character became the wellspring of the action, rather than an agent reacting to a series of incidents. Zola's naturalistic theory can be detected in Brander Matthews's 1898 summary:[58]

> The best fiction of the nineteenth century is far less artificial and less arbitrary than the best fiction of the eighteenth century. Serious novelists now seek for the interest of their narratives not in the accidents that befall the hero, nor in the external perils from which he chances to escape, but rather in the man himself, in his character with its balance of good and evil, in his struggle against his conscience, in his reaction against his heredity and his environment.

The novels of George Eliot, and in particular *Middlemarch* (1872), were considered exemplars of the complex portrayal of developing characters.

Given an average feature length of five reels, the early classical film could hardly hope to create characters as complex as those of the Victorian novel. At most, an epic film could bring together large numbers of characters and events and suggest character development: Ben Cameron's change in *The Birth of a Nation* from a simple Southern gentleman to an avenging leader as a result of the war; Trina's gradual deterioration under the effects of her desire for money in *Greed*. On the whole, however, the quick, relatively simple characterizations of the classical film resemble more closely those of the period's drama.

The drama provided less time for character development than most novels would, and simplicity was necessary: 'Our people should be sufficiently rounded to appear human. Yet if they be developed with anything like the completeness of a George Eliot treatment, no time will be left for the fable. Therefore the need of economy. Character must be shown in swift and telling strokes.' A 'roundness' in the characters implied some complexity; characters with single traits were appropriate only to the broadest comedy or melodrama.[59] In general, then, the characters of a play frequently resembled those in a short story: established quickly with a few clear traits, changing minimally in the course of the action.

Dramatists and critics realized by the 1890s, however, that by covering only a brief span of time in a plot, the playwright could concentrate on character more closely and at the same time could promote unity: 'The greater emphasis…on the inner rather than the outer aspect of the dramatic situation may have something to do with the simplification of setting and compactness of treatment that marks the work of at least some groups of modern dramatists [e.g., Sudermann, Hauptmann, Ibsen].'[60] Ibsen was perhaps the most extreme instance of a severe compression of time-span and locale for the sake of character revelation; to some critics, especially Archer, he was the ideal to which the playwright should aspire. (Here we find perhaps a greater lingering influence of the well-made play, modified by contemporary conceptions of realism, than some critics at the time would acknowledge.)

But again, the narrational means of the film did not encourage an imitation of such complex characterization methods as Ibsen's. Without spoken dialogue, detailed character revelation was difficult. Instead, the film stuck to simpler classical features of dramatic characterization:[61]

1 The characters must be suited to the story— the story to the characters.
2 The characters must be clearly distinguished from one another.
3 The characters must be self-consistent.
4 The characters must be so selected and arranged that each one may serve as a foil to another.

(The last dictum reflects the strong influence of Brunetière, whose views were universally quoted in the turn-of-the-century period. He had proclaimed that all dramatic conflict should result from a clash of wills.) All four of these statements could be used unchanged to describe characterization in the classical cinema. They indicate a complete balance between action and psychological delineation, with neither taking precedence.

Besides unity and characterization, several other elements familiar in popular contemporary fiction and drama reappear in the classical cinema's paradigm. In both fiction and the drama toward the end of the nineteenth century, an unobtrusive narration was increasingly considered desirable. Critics insisted upon a distinction between direct and indirect character presentation, preferring the latter:[62]

The modern writer no longer makes pages of statements about his characters, but he much more cleverly leads his reader to form his own opinions of them.

Characters in fiction may be made to reveal themselves in this more forcible and convincing, but less direct fashion, by telling what they say and what they do, by disclosing their thoughts and describing their acts and gestures.

What held for characterization was also true of other stylistic aspects of fiction: 'In the art of the story-teller, as in any other art, the less the mere form is flaunted in the eyes of the beholder the better.'[63] In the drama as well, stage effects would seem like mere tricks if not 'intimately related to the main theme of the play'; they should not 'distract attention to themselves.'[64] Unobtrusive technique tending toward the suppression of the narration began to be a trait of the early classical cinema; as we shall see, this principle guided changes in inter-titles, editing, and other devices.

In addition, beginning *in medias res* was a trait of both plays and short stories. The novel, with its more expansive period for development, could use this device or not. But for those arts consumed in Poe's 'single sitting'—the story, drama, and film —the quick opening allowed economy of means and created an immediate strong impression. A 1913 story manual suggests that Poe's tactic of beginning in the middle of the action's crisis was a strong one: 'In whatever part of the plot the story opens, the first and chief commandment for the short-story writer of today is to waste no time in beginning.'[65] In a play, the opening in the middle of events might provide a way of concentrating intensely on a complex psychological situation: 'The method of attacking the crisis in the middle or towards the end is really a device for relaxing, in some measure, the narrow bounds of theatrical representation, and enabling the playwright to deal with a larger segment of human experience.'[66] A film, too, by launching in at a point well into the story events, could engage the spectator's attention quickly, with the attendant benefits of concentrating and developing a few characters and events extensively.

In sum, models for structuring a film came, not from drama and fiction in general, but specifically from late nineteenth-century norms of those forms —norms which lingered on in popular stories, plays, and

novels of this century. The cinema tended to avoid the more innovative, contemporary forms of drama and fiction. Strindberg, Ibsen, and Shaw, or Hardy, Conrad, and James figure very little in the formation of the classical cinema, either as narrative models or as direct sources for scenarios.

But while the film took principles of unity, of characterization, and of narration from the other literary arts, these principles were modified in actual usage by specific qualities of the medium. The film's classicism, while traditional, was unique.

For example, where prose fiction could provide a written narration to reveal internal states of the characters, the Hollywood film showed mostly gestures and facial expressions. Inter-titles might briefly characterize the figures, but the bulk of the action occurred in pantomime. As a result, the film created an objective, omniscient narration, moving occasionally toward the points-of-view of the characters; this type of narration is equivalent only to that portion of short-story narration which confines itself to descriptions of appearances.

Again, the expansion into features stimulated the creation of more leisurely scenes that linger over character traits. Some early features simply expanded the structure of the short film by adding more story material. *The Scarlet Road* (1916, Edison), for example, covers many years of an inventor's life as he strays with a nightclub singer, reforms, and finally makes good. Yet the individual scenes are nearly as brief and condensed as if the film were a one-reeler; the characters are still the stock figures of melodrama. (The protagonist's fiancée is characterized at the beginning with a brief scene of her hugging some tame rabbits, and we learn nothing more about her; we see her at intervals waiting patiently for her lover to return.) But some films display what Chapter 2 calls a 'balance between the fixed types of the melodrama and the dense complexity of the realist novel.' *The Wishing Ring* (Maurice Tourneur, 1914, World) and *The Eagle's Mate* (James Kirkwood, 1914, Famous Players) both linger over their characterizations. The first sequence of *The Wishing Ring* shows the comic details of the hero's drunken carousing with his fellow students—the neighbors waking up, the heroine appalled at the group's bad singing, a donkey braying along with the song, and finally the arrival of the local constabulary. A one-reeler would be likely to show the carousing in one shot, followed by a scene at the father's home as he receives the letter expelling the son from school. *The Wishing Ring* even finds time for tiny subplots among the villagers, helping to establish the quaint Victorian atmosphere that realistically motivates the central story line. These are no doubt rare among mid-teens films, but by 1917, many features were using stories with fewer, longer scenes and with fewer lengthy gaps of time between scenes.

Aspects of the mode of production helped mediate the effects the literary arts had upon unity and characterization in film plotting. The scenario script, and later the continuity script, with their accompanying scene plot, encouraged the use of multiple locations; the filmmaker could make several shots in one setting, then cut these in at intervals in the final film, at reasonable shooting costs. Hence throughout the teens, films contained increasing numbers of shots and moved about freely among locations. Since individual shots provided minimal chance for the various kinds of narration available to the fiction writer, one assumes that the filmmaker would want to provide variety by cutting away from the static take. Analytical editing and crosscutting could create an omnipresent narration, constantly guiding the spectator's attention to story events. In keeping with their compression of long time spans into a brief plot, one- and two-reelers tended to move around more in space than a unified short story might. Increasingly, a combination of circumstances—feature-length films, the star system, the ability of the script format to allow this stylistic complexity— encouraged more cutting within and between scenes. This in turn gave rise to the continuity editing system, explicitly formulated in the period 1909–17; we shall examine this system in Chapter 16.

With the rise of the feature, producers turned increasingly to staff writers experienced in adapting all sorts of material into film scripts. The scripts they turned out followed a standardized narrative form specific to cinema. One would be hard put to look at *The Eagle's Mate* (Kirkwood, 1914, Famous Players) next to *The Girl of the Golden West* (Cecil B.DeMille, 1915, Lasky) and tell from internal evidence which came from a novel and which from a play. The script format in itself would not guarantee such similarity, of course; it basically broke the existing work into shots. But the adaptation process would help iron out the differences in narratives taken from disparate sources in the other arts. Working from a synopsis rather than from the original play or book would tend to rearrange events and isolate them from their dramatic or fictional forms, while the devices of cutting and framing would create a specifically filmic mode of narration.

Ultimately, the film medium used the influence from the literary arts for its own purposes. In spite of a growing dependence on dialogue inter-titles, films presented most of the action visually. This meant not only pantomime, but the transmission of information through objects, figure placement, lighting, and camera techniques. The classical system increasingly relied on editing, so that, by 1917, films often used separate shots for virtually every item of narrative information. This rapid juxtaposition of views differed significantly from either fiction or the drama; the film's narration could constantly shift in relation to the action, as in the novel, but the action could be visual, as in the drama. The resulting omniscient, omnipresent narration differed from all other art forms, for none could assemble disparate moving images. And as a result, the material that needed unifying was different for film than it was for other media. Based originally upon nineteenth-century conceptions of unity, the classical system remained consistent— answering on the one hand the need for efficient large-scale production and on the other the desire for a set of norms easily assimilable to a broad audience.

15
The formulation of the classical narrative

Cause and effect

During the primitive period (1894–1908), films tended to present narratives in such a way that they were minimally intelligible. Given a camera fixed for the most part at long-shot distance, actors simply performed with large gestures, holding up relevant objects briefly to give the spectator a better view. So long as an action was performed within the frame, its narrative function was apparently considered to be fulfilled.

Primitive framing and action did not always aid intelligibility, however. Sometimes a less important gesture at another part of the screen might cause the audience to miss the main action. *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1905, AM&B) contains an elaborate first shot full of moving people, in which the relevant action—the theft of the pig— is all but unnoticeable; this now-famous example is an extreme one, yet other films of the pre-1909 period show a tendency to present several actions at once. Even a brief, one-shot narrative like *The Dude and the Burglars* (1903, AM&B) keeps all its actors constantly gesturing, effectively dividing the small playing area into three centers of attention. In *The Pickpocket* (1903, AM&B), one shot in a chase structure places the fugitive in the background, with a minor character in the foreground looking on. By accident, the foreground woman blocks the central actions—the pickpocket knocking a policeman off his bicycle and the ensuing struggle (see fig 15.1). Then the woman turns front, obviously responding to the cameraman/director's warning that she is in the way, and she moves left to give us an unimpeded view (see fig 15.2). The fact that this shot was not redone for the finished film indicates the early assumption that as long as the events were on the screen, it was up to the audience to follow them. As late as 1909, Griffith uses a busy, illegible bustle of action for the stockmarket shot in A *Corner in Wheat* (Biograph). Indeed, Griffith was later to refine this chaotic mise-en-scene into a characteristic framing with multiple points of interest, as in *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912, Biograph). There, when one gangster pours a drug into the Little Lady's drink at lower center, our eye is also drawn to her at the right reading the postcard and to Snapper Joe's cigarette smoke puffing suddenly into the upper left. In the teens, Griffith was somewhat atypical in his tendency to avoid centering.

But with the general shift to the classical model, the status of narrative changes. Devices like editing, camera distance, inter-titles, and acting function more specifically to narrate causal information as clearly as possible. Cinematic technique, rather than remaining a novelty or means of recording, began to be considered a way to convey narrative through careful manipulation of audience attention. David Hulfish summarized this new conception in 1909:[1]

> To secure art in a motion picture, there must be an end to be attained, a thought to be given, a truth to be set forth, a story to be told, and the story must be told by a skillful and systematic arrangement or adaptation of the means at hand subject to the author's use.

By this point, a narrative is not something to be placed in front of an audience, but something to be 'given' or 'told.' A coherent narration must hold the film together—a narration usually not presented by an explicit narrator, but implicit in a specific, systematic combination of film devices.

In order to present a clear narrative, filmmakers turned away from the primitive-period device of building a story around either an extended incident or an episodic series of tableaux. Chases did not disappear, but they occurred only in the context of a larger narrative, after careful preparation. One 1913 scenario guidebook offered this advice, derived from notions of unity in the novel, drama, and short story: 'Each scene [i.e., shot[2*]] should be associated with its purpose, which is to say that the outline of a play should comprehend: First, "cause" or beginning; secondly, development; third, crisis; fourth, climax or effect; fifth, denouement or sequence.'[3] This structure led away from both the extended incident (essentially a single drawn-out effect following an initial cause) and the episodic narrative. Now the ideal required a unified chain of causes and effects, varied by complicating circumstances (the development), concluding with a definite action which resolves the chain into a final effect (the climax) and which lingers to establish a new situation of stasis at the end.

Aside from slapstick comedies, many films in the early teens follow this pattern. *Her Mother's Fiancé* (1911, Yankee) is a relatively low-budget, unexceptional one-reeler, yet it is quite unified in its plot: 1) 'Cause,' the mother's fiancé, whom she has not seen in years, arrives to marry her; 2) 'development,' the mother's attractive daughter comes home from school; 3) 'crisis,' during a garden party the daughter and fiancé are in a rowboat caught in a storm and are marooned for the night; 4) 'climax,' they fall in love; and 5) 'denouement,' the mother forgives them both.

By the early teens, a compressed set of causes and effects of this type had replaced the primitive narrative structure almost completely. Eileen Bowser has concluded that comedies were the most popular fiction genre of the years 1900 to 1906, and that 'A very large number of them consisted of practical jokes.'[4] A how-to scenario column in a 1912 *Photoplay* dismissed the earlier form:[5]

> The moving picture play has altogether outgrown themes of single individuals in a series of incidents that have no relation to one another except for the presence of the main character. For instance, the mischievous small boy in a series of pranks; the victim of sneezing powder in various mishaps, the near-sighted man, etc. They are all passé.

To some extent the advent of the feature film necessitated finding a means of constructing a lengthy narrative, one which could extend beyond such simple events. But the move toward causal unity was well under way already in the one-reel film. The feature film simply intensified the need which arose with the advent of the multiple-shot films in the early years of the century—to find a means of unifying an extensive series of disparate spatial and temporal elements in the plot in such a way that the spectator could grasp the story events.

The chain of separate events linked by causes and effects provided the answer. Again, this was recognized quite early; a 1912 scenario guidebook suggested that a scenario begin with a central idea and add 'a series of causes on the front end of it and a series of consequences on the other end.'[6] The chain of cause and effect would be so tightly constructed that no extraneous event could enter the film's plot. The basis of the American classical cinema's narrative aesthetic was compositional unity rather than realism.

Reality might be full of random events and coincidences, but the filmmakers sought to motivate as much as possible causally. A contemporary review of Raoul Walsh's 1915 feature *The Regeneration* (Fox) was in general highly favourable about the acting and other aspects of the film; the reviewer was therefore inclined to forgive a fault he found: 'the fact that the ship is burned for no definite reason whatsoever. It was a series of wonderful scenes [shots], staged with the utmost realism, but it would have taken better effect if a cause had been given.'[7] For the reviewer, realism was not a matter of chance events; rather, it consisted of little 'touches,' bits of business or props added to scenes. But for the classical mode, even this realism must always be subordinate to a thorough-going compositional motivation.

Causality and motivation became especially important as fiction films became longer and more complex, with multiple lines of action. Most one-and two-reelers tended to follow the same characters fairly consistently with an omnipresent, objective narration. Crosscutting among several groups might occur, but often because of spatial separation, not because the characters were involved in separate lines of action. In *The Lonely Villa* (Griffith, 1909, Biograph), we never see the father engaging in any activities unconnected with his family after his departure— he simply goes away and then starts back on his rescue mission.

A few short films do introduce at least minimal second lines of action, however. In *The Loafer* (1911, Essanay), the drunkard protagonist has two aims. First, he vows revenge upon the leader of a masked mob that has beaten him up; secondly, after he has been given some plow-horses by a neighbor, he determines to reform. These lines come together when it is revealed that the leader of the mob was the same man who gave him the horses. *A Friendly Marriage* (1911, Vitagraph) involves a newly rich miner's daughter who enters into a marriage of convenience with an impoverished English nobleman. The two lines of action involve the husband's growing love for his wife and his secret attempts to earn a living by writing. At the end, it turns out that the wife also loves her husband and that her father's mine has failed, leaving them to live happily on the proceeds from the husband's successful novel. These two films and others like them stand out as having more complex narratives than the standard one-reelers of the day. Some of Griffith's most complicated Biograph shorts combine several story lines through crosscutting.

The dual line of action becomes common in the multiple-reelers. *The Cheat* (Cecil B.De Mille, 1915, Lasky) deals both with the husband's struggle to make a fortune and with the irresponsible wife's flirtation with the Japanese businessman. In *The Case of Becky* (Frank Reicher, 1915, Lasky), our concern lies both with the young doctor's attempt to rid a woman of a split personality and with the villain's efforts to exploit her condition in his hypnotism act.

Aside from encouraging the addition of lines of action, the multiple-reel film militated against a simple linear construction in another way. For a few years, exhibition practices bolstered this change. As Chapter 12 has shown, multiple-reelers were released one reel at a time, so that the parts would often be shown a week apart. Even after the studios began releasing all the reels as a unit in late 1911, theaters would typically show the second reel after a pause, and this custom continued into the mid-teens. Standard wisdom for scenarists at this point was to maintain an overall story, but to structure each reel with its own point of highest interest at the end, to maintain audience attention. Scenarios longer than one reel were considered more difficult, and advisors often warned beginners to avoid them. In 1913, experienced scenarist Capt. Leslie Peacocke described the difference: 'The plot of a two-reel must necessarily be stronger than that of a one-reel story and must carry a big "punch" to close the first part of the story and then work up stronger and stronger toward the climax.'[8] This practice held even into longer films. In general, this emphasis on structuring strong lines of continuing action into a series of climaxes would tend to make film narratives more complicated. With features comes a move away from the compressed 'single impression' narrative style of many one-reelers.

During the mid-teens, these multiple lines of action begin frequently to involve a romance plot. The young doctor in *The Case of Becky* (1915) falls in love with his patient, giving him the determination to cure her when others fail. One-reelers had usually included romantic relationships, but unless the love interest was the main action, it was simply assumed and given little attention. With little time for an epilogue, many short films resolved the entire plot in the final shot, with only a few seconds at the end reserved for the conventional embrace. But the greater length of multiple-reelers gave the romance more prominence. A separate shot or even sequence might be devoted to the final clinch (a device which became considered clichéd by the second half of the teens).

The classical narrative settled into a pattern of linear causality with multiple lines of intertwined actions. But there was at least one alternative narrative model which filmmakers could theoretically have adopted— a model based upon parallelism. A film may follow several lines of action which are not causally related, but which are similar in some significant way. American filmmakers of the silent period did occasionally experiment with parallelism. Porter's *The Kleptomaniac* (1905, Edison) and Griffith's *A Corner in Wheat* (1909, Biograph) and *One is Business, the Other Crime* (1912, Biograph) all use contrasting lines of action to create a conceptual point. The fact that all three of these films involve social criticism may suggest why parallelism proved such an unlikely option in the classical paradigm: it lends itself readily to ideological rather than personal subject matter. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) revived the parallel narrative, which proved too abstract for widespread use. The causal chain with an interweaving of lines of action won out easily over parallelism as the basis for the classical film.

The growing complexity of the plot reinforced the tendency toward a system of narration which could present information clearly. In general, films of the transitional period attempted to integrate narration into every aspect of the film— self-consciously at beginnings of films and scenes, unself-consciously within scenes. This was a departure from primitive-film practice.

Many primitive films did use expository titles at the beginnings of scenes to summarize what would happen in the upcoming action. But often other things happened as well, and the spectator was left to notice those unaided. Within the shot, framings and staging did not always single out the salient actions for the spectator. The exposition of primitive films often depends on presenting a situation which is apparent at a glance. The masked gunmen in *The Great Train Robbery* are obviously the robbers, the telegraph man's identity is equally evident, and so on. At the opposite extreme are films which are virtually unintelligible, because little narration of any sort aids our understanding. *The Unwritten Law* (*c.* 1907, Lubin) presents an enigmatic series of events without identifying characters or situations; an audience of the day could presumably grasp it only by being familiar with the Stanford White murder case upon which it is based. And there are mixed instances, where some events are obvious, yet the films leave certain information unclear. *The Policeman's Love Affair* (1904, Lubin) is a simple story of a policeman calling on a maid and being chased out by the lady of the house. The bulk of the action occurs in a long shot depicting the kitchen and an adjacent room where the lady sits. Yet only the edge of the wall between the two rooms is visible; we cannot see either side of it, and it appears as a stripe on the backdrop. As a result, the two rooms appear to be one, and the audience might be puzzled as to why the lady sits calmly reading as her maid gives food to the policeman and kisses him, apparently right under her eyes. Only when the lady opens the door between the two rooms does the wall become apparent. A slightly different framing would have made the space clear from the start, but we are left on our own to figure out the scene's layout.

The primitive film's presentation of narrative makes things both simple and difficult for the viewer. The stories are simple because causality occurs on the level of external action; we usually need not infer characters' motives in order to understand what it is happening. Summary titles sometimes help make things

clear. The difficulties arise from the fact that framing, staging, and editing play only a minimal narrational role. These films are not saturated with narration the way the classical cinema is.

With the transition to classicism, narration gains a distinct structure. The classical film begins *in medias res*. This helps distinguish it from the primitive film. In the early films, there is virtually no difference between story events and the way they are presented in the plot. We seldom learn of any event we have not seen—characters do not recall events earlier than the film's opening scene. (Flashbacks generally repeat a shot seen earlier in the film.) By contrast, the classical film adds a limited dependence on events in the past, the ability to refer to the past verbally, and especially a sense of habitual actions. In the primitive film, we seem often to have stumbled on characters we know little about, and we witness their actions out of context. The classical film sets up characters by positing that they are certain types (they have lived in a certain environment, have done certain kinds of things habitually), then goes on to begin the action.

Character psychology, then, forms the basis of numerous changes that distinguish the classical from the primitive cinema. It serves both to structure the causal chain in a new fashion and to make the narration integral to that chain.

Traits, visions, and desires: the psychologically based character

> Once you have created an appealing, heroic central character there will naturally spring up in your mind other characters with whom he or she comes into conflict. In that relationship lies the genesis of your plot.[9]
>
> Frederick Palmer, 1921

In seeking models of characterization, the classical cinema turned away from vaudeville, with its stock figures, toward the short story, the novel, and the drama; in these media, characters had multiple traits from which actions could arise logically. In most genres, random incident became an unacceptable way of getting a plot moving or of resolving it. In 1911, *The Moving Picture World* declared that 'In farce-comedy alone can characterization be *subordinated* to incident and action,' adding that the most interesting stories were those which lead 'to some readjustment of the characters in action.'[10]

Director James Kirkwood wrote in 1916 about the desirability of basing narrative on character rather than situation:[11]

> I believe that the most desirable sort of play today is modern and American, whether a swift-moving drama with strong, human characterization, or a comedy devoid of extravagance, its incidents growing out of the foibles of human nature rather than produced by one of the characters smiting another with what is commonly called a slapstick.

So, for example, a one-reel film, *The Girl at the Cupola* (1912, Selig) begins rather elaborately, setting up the fact that the heroine Jessie's fiancé is returning to her and that he is now known as 'the Business Doctor' for his skill at reorganizing failing businesses. Further, we discover that Jessie's father's steel mill has received a spate of cancelled orders. After the fiancé helps reorganize the business, we see the workers receive lower wages and decide to go on strike. Jessie sympathizes with the men and supports the strike; the bulk of the film depicts her and the men's conflict with the fiancé. Finally she succeeds in getting her father to restore fair wages. Although the characterization in this film is not elaborate, every action arises from the characters' traits and desires, and the ending involves a change of heart on the part of the father.

Yet, as this example shows, characters were not typically given traits beyond what was necessary to the drama. Again, the use of realistic motivation in the classical model is severely limited, serving the workings of the story. As Henry Albert Phillips wrote in 1914: 'Characters are subservient to climax. We have no use for any manifestations of their character outside the needs of properly developing the big moment of the story. Character is the most effective means to our photoplay end.'[12] In the mid-teens, American filmmakers became adept at disguising dramatically necessary actions as realistic touches. An apparently casual or random gesture occurring in one scene will most likely turn out later to have been 'planting' an important bit of motivation for a later scene. In *The Wishing Ring* (Maurice Tourneur, 1914, World) the heroine's little dog appears in several comic scenes, seemingly peripheral to the plot; but later in the film it plays a key role by leading the search party to the heroine lying injured after she has fallen from a cliff. Less prestigious films also 'plant' material. *An Ill Wind* (1912, Universal, one reel) begins with a party held by some office workers; the hero Tom frightens the heroine with a toy mouse. Later a jealous co-worker arranges for Tom to be falsely accused of stealing a check from his employer. Tom spends three years in jail; upon his release he becomes a thief, breaking into the home of the heroine, who is now rich. She screams upon finding a man in her room, and police respond to the sound. But the heroine has learned of Tom's innocence in the check theft; she saves Tom by holding up the toy mouse and telling the police it was what caused her to scream. After the police depart, the brief epilogue shows Tom kneeling and thanking her for saving him. (In a later classical film, the fact that she had kept the mouse for three years would be used as a sign of her secret love for Tom; as it is, the film ends with no definite suggestion of renewed romance.) In these and other films, realism in character is primarily a means of reinforcing compositional motivation.

In the early transitional period, the move toward character psychology manifested itself mainly in the assigning of additional traits. The compressed action of the short films and early features did not permit the extensive use of repeated gestures and subjectivity. Instead, films continued to depend on stock characters, developed somewhat more fully than in the primitive period. Donald Crisp's *The Warning* (1914, Majestic) presents a character study, with the introductory inter-title describing the central figure as a 'wilful, indolent country girl.' The heroine is tempted by a salesman to go with him to the city, but a dream in which she sees herself abandoned provides 'the warning' she needs. At the end, she tells her mother she will not be wilful again. This use of the 'wilful' trait at beginning and end suggests that a film could occasionally be unified entirely by character. Even a film which would have been considered a minor effort in its day, a Lubin split-reel[13*] called *The Gambler's Charm* (G.Terwilliger, 1910) makes an effort to characterize the gambler briefly. At the beginning, the gambler Randall is attracted to a small child and gives it his lucky charm; later, in the saloon he shoots the child's father when the father tries to gamble with the charm as stakes. This film, only about seven minutes long, depends on the strongly contrasted traits of kindliness and vengefulness in Randall's character. With the rise of the feature, both acting and the repetition of characteristic gestures had more time to develop. An early scene in *Wild and Woolly* (John Emerson, 1917, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corp.) lingers over the comic business that establishes the hero's fanaticism for things Western.

But the growing dependence on character psychology went beyond external signs of traits. Films sometimes represented mental states visually. Dreams, visions, and memories became narrative staples around 1915. There had been isolated visual representations of mental events from almost the beginning of narrative filmmaking. The sleepwalking incident that ends with the heroine falling off a building in *The Somnambulist* (1903, AM&B) turns out to have been a dream; in the final shot, the heroine is back in bed and wakes up, gesturing in reaction to the nightmare. Porter used vignetted superimpositions for the vision scene in *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903, Edison) and separate shots for the dream in *The Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906, Edison; in this film, superimpositions and whip pans suggest the mental condition of

the drunken hero). Similarly, in *The Unwritten Law* (*c.* 1907, Lubin), the jailed protagonist has a dreamed flashback to earlier events, represented by a vignette superimposed on the cell's window (see fig 15.3). Visions and dreams continued to appear in occasional films throughout the primitive period and early teens: in *The Girl in the Armchair* (1912, Solax) a young man dreams of his gambling debts, and superimposed cards whirl around his bed (see fig 15.4). But the compressed structure of the one- or two-reeler was perhaps an inhibiting factor in the use of subjective effects. They tend to appear either when the subjectivity is the basis for the whole film *(The Somnambulist, Dream of a Rarebit Field)* or when the narrative absolutely depends on showing the character's inner state. (In *The Girl at the Armchair,* the hero must undergo a considerable change of character as a result of his gambling experiences.)

Feature films permitted more leisurely characterization and hence more extensive use of subjective effects. Of the fourteen ES films examined from 1914, five contained dreams or visions, and three of these were features. By 1915, just over half of the ES films examined contained a vision, dream, or flashback. After this year— approximately the point at which features became the standard—short films tended more and more toward slapstick comedy; hence the visual representation of subjectivity crops up mainly in features. Some flashbacks do occur without subjective motivation, but most are prefaced by a character pausing to recall an earlier event.

Aside from subjectivity, a variety of other devices helped individualize the classical character. In the primitive period, few figures receive names, unless they represent historical personages or famous fictional characters. But the various central characters after 1909 do receive this additional touch. They do not, however, gain distinctive motifs, or 'tags,' until the mid-twenties: the tattoo in **A Woman of the World* (Malcolm St Clair, 1925, Famous Players-Lasky), which identifies the heroine as a sophisticated woman; or Harold Meadows's stammer in *Girl Shy* (Fred Newmeyer and Sam Taylor, 1924, Harold Lloyd Corporation); or Chico's repeated declarations in *Seventh Heaven* (Frank Borzage, 1927, Fox) that he is 'a very remarkable fellow.' Chapter 2 also discussed how the star system aids in distinguishing characters in the classical cinema. The parallel rise of that system and the classical cinema itself indicates the importance of stars for early characterization. In 1914 it was already unthinkable for Theda Bar a to don Mary Pickford's golden curls or for 'Little Mary' to play a vamp. Stars were to a considerable degree the basis for the personae they played. In 1927, Jesse L.Lasky estimated that 'three-fourths of the material is picked to suit the personality of the star and one-fourth is picked for the material of the story itself and cast to suit that material.'[14] Even in the early teens, trade journals frequently advised freelance scenarists that studios were looking for stories for particular stars. These factors—subjectivity, proper names, 'tags,' and star personalities—all contributed to the increasing individualization of central characters.

But no matter how many traits they might possess, isolated characters were inadequate to initiate and sustain a unified, developing narrative line. Early in the transition toward the classical model, characters' goals began to be motivated by their traits. This was a considerable change from many early films, where characters simply react to situations that occur around them. (If a man's pocket is picked, he chases the thief.) No doubt some films of the primitive period present characters with goals, but these don't typically arise from a clear-cut trait of the character; it is given that a character-type wants something. In *The Widow and the Only Man* (1904, AM&B), we see that the man and the widow want to marry, but we get little sense of their backgrounds or motivations for their actions. The fact that he is really a poor clerk seeking her money is only revealed in the last shot, as the punch line of the comedy.

By the early teens, scenarists seem to have been aware of the goal-oriented protagonist, if not by that name; a 1913 guidebook advises writers:[15]

> It should be remembered that 'want,' whether it be wanting the love of a woman, of a man, of power, of money or of food, is the steam of the dramatic engine. The fight to satisfy this 'want' is the movement of the engine through the play. The denouement is the satisfaction or deprivation of this desire which must be in the nature of dramatic and artistic justice.

Early goal-oriented protagonists tended to have rather simple, direct desires—marriage, paying off gambling debts, and so on. In *A Race With Time* (1913, Kalem) a railroad president and his son need to deliver a pouch of mail by a certain time in order to win a contract. Since they desire the contract, they proceed, hindered by the traps set for them by a rival line.

Goal orientation was common in early adaptations and historically based narratives. This suggests that the idea came from existing literary models, and Chapter 2 has shown that the late nineteenth-century dramatic theory of Brunetière had formulated goal orientation for characters. The protagonists of *Cinderella* (1911, Thanhouser), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1912, Thanhouser and 1913, Imp), *Damon and Pythias* (Otis Turner, 1914, Universal feature), and *The Coming of Columbus* (Colin Campbell, 1912, Selig feature) have obvious goals, all suggested by the source material.

Soon protagonists with strong desires were central to many films. The young doctor in *The Case of Becky* (Reicher, 1915, Lasky) falls in love with his patient, giving him the insight and daring to cure her split personality when others had failed. In *The Social Secretary* (John Emerson, script Anita Loos, 1916, Triangle-Fine Arts), the heroine sets out initially to get a secure job, then to prove that her employer's daughter's fiancé is a scoundrel. To some degree, certain star personalities helped to popularize the goal-oriented protagonist. Charles Ray, Douglas Fairbanks, and their imitators tended to play young men with clear-cut aspirations. In his comedies—especially those written by Anita Loos —Fairbanks typically played a character with an obsession of some sort. In *The Matrimaniac* (Paul Powell, 1916, Triangle-Fine Arts), he uses a variety of modern technological devices to reach his fiancée when her father spirits her away to avoid their marriage; in *Wild and Woolly* (Emerson, 1917, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corp.), he wants to be a cowboy. With a less comic tone, in film after film Ray played the same earnest country boy with dreams of higher things. The beginning of *The Hired Hand* (Victor Schertzinger, 1918, Ince) characterizes the hero Ezry quickly: he pauses while working in the field and gazes off into the distance (see fig 15.5). A title (fig 15.6) speaks of his 'vision' of 'bigger, finer things.' After the mid-teens, it becomes difficult to find a film without a protagonist striving for something.

Without obstacles, the goal could not sustain the film, and so classical narratives also set up conflicts. As one screenplay manual puts it:[16]

> A story is the record of a struggle—a history of a conflict which has occurred or that might have occurred. Man's never-ending conflict with nature; the conflict of one man, as an individual animal, against another; the struggle of the individual against society as an institution; man's inner conflict of the 'good nature' against the 'bad nature'—of conscience against evil inclination—these and other general classifications embodying innumerable variations, contain the history of Life itself.

Yet character conflict was typically favored, since it gave priority to goal orientation. In *The Hired Hand,* for example, the hero's goal is to attend the state agricultural school; early in the film he finishes earning the $500 he needs for his freshman year. He also falls in love with the farm-owner's daughter. But her brother Walter, a wastrel bank employee, pressures Ezry into loaning him the money to replace a sum he has embezzled. This leads, as an inter-title puts it, to 'The broken bridge of dreams,' and Ezry goes back to

working as a hired hand on the farm. Eventually, through his heroism, Ezry wins the daughter's hand, and at the end is well on the way to the career he had been striving for.

Character conflict was not a device created by the classical system. Primitive films, with their chases, comic romances, and robberies, had dealt in clashes of will. But as the transitional period went on, characters were increasingly individualized—through the names, traits, associations arising from their stars' personalities, and opposing goals. The greater complexity of character relationships that followed could sustain a multiple-reel film with a considerable variety of action.

Character and temporal relations

Each scene should be a step *forward* in the story, for there can be no such thing as going back.[17]

John Nelson, 1913

The advent of the feature film intensified the problem of temporal relations. Few films after 1908, aside from the simplest chase and trick narratives, would make plot time identical to story time, presenting an uninterrupted stretch of time across the whole. In proceeding from one high point in the causal chain to another, certain intervals would be eliminated, repeated, or reordered in the plot.

Similarly, temporal gaps between scenes needed distinct markers. This was relatively easy in the silent period, since inter-titles could specify the passage of time and set up the situation of the new scene. During the teens, time-covering inter-titles became something of a cliché, as we shall see. The narratives of early features often covered great spans of time; some compressed their action as much as a two-reeler would, rather than spreading it out and spending more time on individual scenes. As a result, the films added more story material, covering many years rather than days or weeks. Some features of the mid-teens would have gaps of years' duration at several points. But the increasing tendency was toward narratives covering briefer time-spans and containing lengthier scenes with more character development.

By attaching causality—and hence the spectator's attention to the flow of events—to the characters, the classical film gained a method for insuring a clear temporal progression. For example, character memory could motivate flashbacks. And by concentrating so thoroughly upon character actions, the film could make its narration less self-conscious as well. In contrast, unexplained ellipses or overlaps in time, such as the repeated rescue scene in *Life of an American Fireman* (see p. 162), would tend to call attention to the process of narration. In the primitive, and to some extent in the transitional period, situation was paramount; hence overlaps and gaps in the characters' movements were unimportant so long as the individual incidents fitted together into a comprehensible sequence. The spectator's continued expectation of a forward progression of action would lead him or her to overlook small discontinuities.

The classical cinema began to dictate that any deviations from chronological order be clearly marked as such. The early signal for a flashback was a superimposed vignette, as in *The Unwritten Law* example above (see fig 15.3). *After One Hundred Years* (1911, Selig) uses a superimposition over the entire frame for a flashback. All the 1912 ES films with flashbacks present the past events as separate shots. In both *The Cry of the Children* (Lois Weber, Thanhouser) and *The Deserter* (Thomas H.Ince, Bison '101'), for example, single-shot flashbacks are bracketed by dissolves; in each, there is a character present who may be recalling the earlier scene—the subjective cues are not clear. *The High Cost of Living* (1912, Solax) frames its protracted flashback as the hero's courtroom testimony, marking its beginning and end with dialogue titles. (This film has dialogue inter-titles throughout the flashback, forming a sort of 'voiceover narration.')

After 1912, visions continue to be shown mostly as vignettes, but flashbacks and dreams are separate shots. Both fades and dissolves function interchangeably to introduce and end flashbacks; sometimes both will

appear within the same film for this purpose. *The Regeneration* (Walsh, 1915, Fox), for example, has two flashbacks, a brief one set off by dissolves, a longer one by fades. In any case, however, flashbacks figure in the classical cinema as distinct interruptions of the chronological flow; motivation by character memory, as in *The Regeneration,* minimizes flashbacks' disruptive effects.

Chapter 4 has shown that deadlines are an important way of limiting and structuring the temporal span of a narrative, as well as of creating suspense; characters are almost invariably the source of deadlines. The deadline seems to have come into occasional use from the beginning of the transition to the classical mode. In *The Dynamiters* (a 1911 Imp split-reel), a drunken man joins an anarchist group and is given a time bomb to plant, set to go off at noon. When he sobers up, he races around trying to get rid of the bomb, finally leaving it in the anarchists' own hideout. Inter-titles punctuate the action, informing us that it is '20 minutes to 12,' '10 minutes to 12,' '5 minutes to 12,' and '12 o'clock.' A one-reel drama of the same year, *A Daughter of Dixie* (1911, Champion), handles a deadline situation somewhat more subtly. During the Civil War, a southern woman's Yankee boyfriend is caught by Confederates. The heroine holds the soldiers at bay with a rifle and promises her lover to delay them until four o'clock while he escapes. There follows an intercut scene, with shots of the fleeing soldier alternating with views of the heroine and soldiers watching a clock approaching four (see fig 15.7). The intercutting considerably compresses the passage of time, and the unknown director suggests the omitted intervals by rearranging the group's positioning in the room at each return (see fig 15.8). Finally, as the clock reaches four, the Confederate soldiers point suddenly to it, and the heroine lets them leave (see fig 15.9). *Cinderella* (1911, Thanhouser) has a built-in deadline structure, carried through in this case with cutaways to a clock tower.

In the early teens, the occasional deadlines that appear are used to motivate an entire film. *A Race With Time* (1913, Kalem) sets up its deadline thoroughly, then works clocks into the setting of the scenes in a more casual way. A railroad owner receives a telegram: 'Test for mail contract to be held Dec. 17, 1912. Pouch must be in Stevenson at two o'clock or you forfeit in favor of Union Central.' When Union Central tries to sabotage the run by knocking out the engineer, the girlfriend of the owner's son leaps into the engine and takes it to Stevenson. Crosscutting builds suspense, as we see the officials and the son at Stevenson awaiting the train's arrival. The intercutting begins as follows:

1 Title: 'Stevenson'
2 LS: Group of men on platform, all with watches (fig 15.10).
3 MS: Man with stopwatch and pistol to signal end of race (fig 15.11).
4 LS: The moving train (fig 15.12).
5 MCU: Inside the cab, the heroine looking at the clock, which reads three minutes to two (fig 15.13).
6 MS: She stokes the fire.

And so on, alternating these elements, with the train clock later showing nearly two o'clock; a title announces 'On time,' just before the train pulls into the station.

By the time the principles of the classical cinema become fully established in the late teens, deadlines are an occasional local device within the longer structure of the feature. In *His Mother's Boy* (Schertzinger, 1917, Ince), the deadline is established only in the twelfth of thirteen scenes, when the villain, Banty, tells the hero, Matthew, to leave town by seven the next morning or face him in a shoot-out. Matthew has been characterized as a mama's boy, and he agonizes over whether to flee or get a gun. His fiancée, deploring his apparent cowardice, returns his engagement ring and the scene ends. The next, final scene irises in on a close-up of a clock, reading 6:44, and the scene continues in a boarding-house diningroom. Soon, the drunken Banty comes in, announcing that Matthew has ten minutes left. Matthew is finally driven to fight

Banty, and after he wins, the heroine puts on his engagement ring; two lines—the cowardice problem and the romance—are resolved at once, and the film ends.

By the mid-twenties, the deadline was standard enough to be parodied. *Exit Smiling* (Sam Taylor, 1926, MGM) centers around a theater troupe performing a cliché-ridden melodrama in which the play's heroine must disguise herself as a vamp, seduce the villain, and keep him with her. As the play ends (in the second scene of the film) the heroine declares: 'Ten o'clock! My lover is saved!' Later on the film's heroine, Violet, imitates the play and uses the same trick to save the man she loves, with comic consequences, as her vamping turns into a tussle to prevent the villain from leaving before midnight. As the deadline passes, Violet poses dramatically, says, 'Twelve o'clock! My lover is saved!' and pulls a set of curtains in a doorway to imitate the stage finale. The gesture fails as the curtain rod falls on her head. This film not only makes fun of the deadline device, but acknowledges its origins in nineteenth-century popular theater.

Narration: the functions of inter-titles

The shift in the early teens toward a more psychologically based narrative also affected the types and uses of inter-titles. The two basic types of inter-titles were expository and dialogue. An expository title would either describe the upcoming action—a 'summary' title—or would simply establish the situation and allow the action within the images to present causes and effects. Moving away from the primitive period's considerable dependence upon summary titles, filmmakers gradually began to employ a higher proportion of establishing expository titles and dialogue titles. The dialogue title was one of the many devices which made narration less self-conscious and less overtly suppressive in the classical period; it helped characters take over more of the functions that expository inter-titles had performed.

The earliest films had no inter-titles. Their action was so simple that the main title could establish the basic idea clearly enough to sustain the entire film. Films with titles like *The Dude and the Burglars* (1903, AM&B), *Hold-up in a Country Grocery Store* (1904, Edison), and *A Policeman's Love Affair* (1904, Lubin) need no further explanation. But even at this point, some titles indicate the need for more expository matter. The officially copyrighted title of a Lubin 1905 chase comedy, *A Dog Lost, Strayed or Stolen $25.00 Reward Apply Mrs. Brown, 711 Park Ave.* must be one of the longest in American film history. In effect, it serves as a summary inter-title to set up the action of the first few shots, as we see the dog stolen, Mrs Brown placing a want ad, and the resulting crowds of people bringing dogs to her home. Other films of this period copyrighted each shot separately, and the titles that preceded each could serve as expository inter-titles.[18*] For example, *Parsifal* (Porter, 1904, Edison) has eight shots, with titles such as 'Interior of the Temple' and 'Return of Parsifal.'

But most films were copyrighted as a whole, and in these the summary inter-title eventually became standard. Kemp Niver, who has surveyed the entire collection of films preserved as paper prints, concludes that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Porter, 1903, Edison) is the earliest such film to have titles between shots.[19] In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the title, 'Tom Refuses to flog Emal'ine,' is followed by a lengthy tableau shot of this action. By about 1910, the text of summary titles had expanded. In *Her Mother's Fiancé* (1911, Yankee), one title states: 'Home from School. The Widow's daughter comes home unexpectedly and surprises her mother.' By this point, however, these titles are not appearing between every shot, but often set up the action for a series of shots. Griffith's film *Fate's Turning* (1911, Biograph) has brief summaries ('Smitten by the waitress he neglects his fiancée'), but has only nine titles to thirty-four other shots. Summary titles of this sort are an extremely overt and redundant form of narration. They often present the spectator with an explicit hypothesis for upcoming action, rather than guiding him or her to form hypotheses on the basis of the actions themselves.

During the early transitional period, inter-titles came to have other functions than setting up action to come. Most importantly, they could cover temporal gaps between scenes, indicating a specific length for the lapse. In 1911 and early 1912, two scenario columns gave similar advice, using the current terms 'leader' and 'sub-title' to refer to the inter-title:

Leader is also used to 'break' scenes where required. It may happen that two scenes are to be played in the same setting with an interval between. Without the leader the two scenes would follow with nothing to show the lapse of time. The action would appear continuous and the characters would either leave the stage to reappear immediately or another set of characters would fairly jump into the scene. A leader stating that it is 'the Next Day. The Quarrel is Renewed.' serves as a drop curtain to separate the scenes.[20]

It may be employed to indicate the lapse of time, as 'Two Years Later.' It may be used to define the relationship between two characters, as 'The Jealous Husband.'

But it is not the legitimate function of the sub-title to tell the whole story in anticipation of the characters' movements. Write no such leaders as 'Helen, detecting and understanding her lover's falseness, resolves to teach him a lesson by breaking their engagement.'[21]

The first passage recommends using the inter-title to avoid an elementary continuity error later to be known as the 'jump cut' (and indeed the author describes the problem using the word 'jump'). Jump cuts of the kind described occurred occasionally in primitive films, but they disappear once the transitional period begins about 1909. The second passage deplores lengthy summaries that give away action to be shown visually; in effect, the author advises against the use of overt narration, preferring to let the characters present information directly. Such advice was necessary; early teens films frequently use complicated titles of the type quoted.

But while expository titles came into narrative cinema quite early, dialogue titles were extremely rare in the primitive cinema. *The Ex-Convict* (Porter, 1904, Edison) uses one (without the quotation marks which would become standard as indicators of characters' speech). There are undoubtedly other such films. Dialogue titles do not appear consistently until around 1910, and from this point the functions previously performed only by summary expository titles become divided between expository and dialogue titles.

In a silent film, character dialogue can be cued by any of three factors: placement of the dialogue title, lip movements of the characters, and quotation marks in the title. While the early transitional years experimented with various alternatives, by 1915 usage had hardened into a redundant schema. Some early instances insert the dialogue titles where they are spoken (always returning to the same framing). In *The Unexpected Guest* (1909, Lubin), for instance, we see a woman in long shot pacing after reading a letter which reveals that her fiancé has fathered an illegitimate child. She does not move her lips and the title that follows lacks quotation marks ('I must know the truth'). Griffith's *Faithful* (1910, Biograph) also inserts a title at the moment of speech and lacks lip movements, but uses quotation marks. Other films from 1910 use quotation marks *and* lip movement, with the dialogue title placed at the point in the shot where it is spoken: *Brother Man* (Vitagraph) and *The Gambler's Charm* (Lubin).

By 1915, filmmakers would settle upon a standard approach to all three cues—placement, lip movement, and quotation marks. During the approximate period 1911–13, however, an alternative practice existed, in which the title, with quotation marks, could appear *before* the shot in which it was to be spoken; then, partway through the shot, a character would speak, with the lip movement and the narrative context cuing us that this is the moment when the line occurs. Here the dialogue title not only takes on the function of the summary expository title, but also occupies the same position, preceding the scene. Until 1913, both alternative

placements occur about equally.[22]* Some films stick to one or the other placement throughout, while others use both.[23]*

This even mixture suggests that for a few transitional years, two different approaches were equally acceptable, but it does not necessarily imply that filmmakers were unaware of principles of title placement. Indeed, the delay in standardizing one placement arose from the fact that filmmakers saw different functional advantages in each approach. Various reviews and screenplay manuals debated function and placement of all titles, whether dialogue or expository.[24]* In a 1911 column, Epes Winthrop Sargent favored explanation given later in the scene; his reference here is to expository titles:[25]

> For one or two seconds following the return of the picture to the screen the mind of the spectator is still busy with the import of the leader, and any important action occurring immediately following the leader is apt to be overlooked.
>
> For this reason many directors hold the action slow for a moment following the leader, just as they refuse to let in a leader in the middle of a scene [shot].… Sometimes the line is flashed before the scene opens, but this is objectionable in that it removes the element of suspense.

Another advisor on the writing of photoplays, A.R. Kennedy, gave other reasons for not breaking up a shot by titles; he wrote in 1912:[26]

> There is much to be said against throwing a leader into the middle of the scene [shot]. The spectator gets the effect of the actors' 'holding the pose' while he reads the leader. One often has a feeling of irritation at having a scene interrupted, and when the scene is resumed, it often takes an appreciable time to readjust one's mind. The continuity of the scene is broken and the illusion is spoiled.

Kennedy favored the use of titles mainly for time lapses. Specific discussions of where dialogue titles should go began at least as early as 1913, when a photoplay manual advises that 'whenever such leaders are employed, they should be made to *follow* the action and not to precede it.'[27]

In 1914, the dialogue title was increasingly placed at the point where the character spoke the line. The prevalence of one alternative may have had several causes. First, as some of the aforementioned scenario advisers imply, the anticipatory dialogue title would impair the suspense of a scene. Secondly, a cut from a speaking character to the written dialogue would make it easier to discern who was speaking and when the line occurred; this furthers the psychological individualization of characters. Thirdly, such a cut would make the character's lip movement motivate the title, which would in turn create a less self-conscious narration. Fourthly, by placing the title at the moment when it was spoken, the film could preserve the temporal flow of the actions uninterrupted. Placement before the shot would present a story event (the line of dialogue) out of order (before its actual delivery within the shot), and this unmotivated rearrangement of chronology would prove unacceptable under the classical system. There were probably other reasons as well. The dialogue title is an interesting example of the classical cinema's having two possible devices which could become standard and weeding out the one which fits less well into its overall system of relations among causality, time, and space.

The eventual elimination of the dialogue title at the beginning of a scene follows a general movement toward suppressing excessive summarizing of action. 'The Reviewer' wrote in a 1912 *New York Dramatic Mirror*:[28]

> The insertion, therefore, of titles explaining something is about to be done and then following with a scene in which the characters do the action indicated, is not only ridiculous to the average spectator, but a procedure which spoils the dramatic sense and strength of the plot, since it ultimately destroys suspense and possibly the making of a dramatic climax.

Through the early teens, paralleling the rise of the dialogue title, the expository title tends to become less a summary of action. Instead, it introduces characters, gives an indication of the situation, and tells how much time has elapsed between scenes. The classical expository title does not preview action, but provides the concentrated, preliminary exposition described in Chapter 3. For example, *The Fatal Opal* (1914, Kalem two-reeler) sets up the initial situation with an expository title: 'Frank, Judge Morton's nephew, is in love with Alice Grey, an actress.' This laconic attempt to introduce as many facts as possible reflects the effort to begin the film's forward action *in medias res*. Titles in this film avoid summarizing, resembling instead chapter headings in fiction: 'The crowning insult' or 'An opportunity for revenge.' Even longer titles try to avoid giving away the events to follow: 'Not wishing to further antagonize his uncle, Frank says nothing of his marriage.' Here the title suggests Frank's thoughts and points out what is *not* done (something difficult to convey visually) in the following shot, in which Frank enters a room where his uncle is reading. From this, however, the film cuts directly to an escape scene at a nearby prison, avoiding altogether an expository title, since we can infer the situation from information given in earlier scenes. Finally, *The Fatal Opal* contains time-lapse titles like 'The following morning.' This sort of title had become a cliché by the mid-teens.

The title beginning 'Not wishing to further antagonize his uncle…' suggests the increasing use of expository titles to aid the presentation of psychological material, rather than simply to summarize action. In 1914 a scenario guide commented: 'Captions are not labels, but means of suggesting beyond the visible action and of furnishing deeper motives than those on the surface.'[29] Thus from about 1913 on, writings on film construction increasingly emphasized the reduction of the expository title to only those bits of information which could not be conveyed visually. Standard limits began to come into play. *Photoplay* critiqued a sample scenario in 1913: 'We have 53 words on the screen already, and 50 is about the limit for one reel.'[30]

Indeed, during the period from 1913 to 1916, there was a widespread belief that the film with no inter-titles was the ideal. Scriptwriters seemed to assume that every title in a film betrayed a weak point where its author had failed to convey the situation properly through images. In 1913, Famous Players' president Adolph Zukor was reported to be working toward eliminating titles from his company's films:'"We are trying to let the story tell itself so far as possible," said he; "to do this we are introducing more scenes and connecting links." '[31] There were indeed some films that contained no titles, such as *Broncho Billy and the Greaser* (G.W. Anderson, 1913, Essanay).

But while a one-reel Western might be simple enough to follow unaided, filmmakers began to be convinced that the feature film necessitated at least occasional inter-titles. From 1916, when the feature film was standardized, the desire for titleless films yielded to an approach that emphasized cleverly written inter-titles. Anita Loos helped popularize the idea that inter-titles could actively contribute to the film. Having written scenarios for Griffith shorts, she did only the inter-titles for *Intolerance* (1916). In that film, little jokes, elaborate descriptions, and asides to the audience make the narration more overt—as when the Boy is 'intolerated' away into prison or in the famous 'When women cease to attract men they often turn to reform as a second choice.' Loos went on to write many of the witty scripts and titles of Douglas Fairbanks's comedies. In such films, the inter-titles come to represent a narrating voice which goes beyond the neutral stating of facts. Loos utilized the possibility that certain genres— especially comedy—could motivate highly self-conscious narration. One transitional title between sequences in *Reaching for the Moon* (John

Emerson, scripted by Emerson and Loos, 1917, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corp.) states simply 'But things are always darkest before the dawn.' This title adds no tangible information, but guides the viewer to expect both climax and resolution. Another Fairbanks film of the same year, *Wild and Woolly,* seems to come to an end as the hero gets on a train for the East, leaving the woman he loves standing tearfully on the platform. A title breaks in: 'But wait a minute, this will never do. We can't end a Western romance without a wedding. Yet—after they're married where shall they live? For Nell likes the East, And Jeff likes the West. So where are the twain to meet?' This leads into a brief epilogue where we see the couple leave an eastern-style house, stepping out into a western landscape. The specific appeal to genre—'a Western romance'— combines with the film's comic tone to justify a playful narration that bares the device of the happy ending.

Loos-style inter-titles quickly became the fashion. They were, in a sense, the incorporation into the film of a narration, such as that in Dickens and Thackeray, which could flaunt its omniscience. *Hoodoo Ann* (Lloyd Ingraham, 1916, Triangle-Fine Arts) inserts this into the middle of one scene: 'A casual and mysterious stranger, whom we advise you to remember.' In *The Ghost of Rosie Taylor* (Edward Sloman, 1918, American), a title intervenes at one point to flash the action back to the point in time when 'The story, as it really happened, begins.' The tendency to use cleverly written titles is especially apparent in the comedy features of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd; there almost every expository title that begins a scene also makes a verbal joke of its own.

Still, the narrational intrusion through titles usually comes at codified moments—such as the openings of sequences, for a preliminary, concentrated exposition. Inter-titles making poetic generalizations often act as brief preludes in features of the late teens and the twenties. *Hoodoo Ann* prefaces its narrative with this statement: 'The greatest heart throbs of life are not always quickened into being by violence, sensation or thrills. Laughter, bitter tears and even tragedy frequent the humblest paths and create drama in the most obscure and peaceful corners of the earth.' The opening of a Mary Pickford feature, *Suds* (Jack Dillon, 1920, Mary Pickford Co.), sets up comedy with a plethora of inter-titles:

1	Title:	Oh, this is no tale of gay romance,
		Of storm-swept shores, adventure-girt,
		Of bold, heroic circumstance,
		Of daring deeds, of luck, of chance,
		Of purple pain, of hectic hurt—
2	Title:	No! no!
		NO! NO!
3	Title:	No hero here with passion pants—
		This is *the tale* of a *shirt!*
4	MS. Pixillation:	Shirt in laundry wrap
		stands up and bows.
5	Title:	What ho!
		Let's go!

This prologue in turn leads to two additional, more neutral inter-titles that establish the London locale of the action. Lois Weber begins her film *The Blot* (1921, Lois Weber Productions) more succinctly: 'Men are only boys grown tall.'

The Loos-style title, what we might term the 'literary' inter-title, became the norm for both comedies and dramas by the twenties (when it was commonly poked fun at as the 'rosy-fingered dawn' style of title writing). Although this style made the narration of the inter-titles more overt, it also provided an advantage

that overrode that small problem. Apart from simply conveying information, such titles seemed to contribute something extra to the film; they were more than tacked-on labels. This appearance of double functioning helped motivate inter-titles. Filmmakers no longer aimed at title-less films. When Charles Ray made one in 1921, *The Old Swimmin' Hole* (Joseph De Grasse, Charles Ray Productions), it was met with indifference by reviewers and public.

Another means of motivating expository titles was adopted in 1916. Rather than printing the white letters on plain black or bordered cards, filmmakers painted scenes over part or all of the background, thus creating the 'art title' card (see figs 3.2 and 15.6). Triangle was one of the earliest companies to use this device; in keeping with the central producer system's methodical breakdown of labor, the company had a department for painting the cards (fig 15.14; the same department supplied the paintings that hung on the walls of sets). A 1916 review of *The Aryan* (William S.Hart, 1916, Triangle) remarked that: 'The subtitles of Triangle productions have been worth attention for some time. At first they were pleasingly decorative; later they aided in interpreting the mood of the play. The text of the subtitles not only advanced the story, but when conversation was used, helped the characterization; and the skillful word pictures aided and completed the scene.'[32]

Art titles added considerable flexibility to the written texts. With a painting of a building or locale as if in 'long-shot' distance, the title could serve to establish the space of the scene to come. This might even mean that a set would not have to be built; the next shot could more directly to an interior. Victor Fleming's *When the Clouds Roll By* (1919, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corp.) shows few long shots of buildings or exteriors, but conveys a sense of various parts of New York City through art titles. One title shows the Washington Square arch, then cuts to a shot of Fairbanks walking along a path that could be in almost any park; similarly, a painting of a Greenwich Village street leads directly to interior shots of the heroine's studio apartment.

The art title could also contain a symbolic, sometimes non-diegetic object to convey an idea. Spiders, cupids, flowers, and all manner of clichéd imagery adorn the titles of silent films in the late teens and twenties. A 1916 commentator recognized the new function of the inter-title: It has grown even in its logical and consistent place, from a simple explanatory note, to a cleverly fitting link in the given chain of events, presented with a decorative background that conveys the force of the immediate situation in unmistakable symbols.'[33] The art card in effect made the inter-title into an extra shot, providing visual material as well as verbal. This additional material either supplemented or reinforced the information coming from the words and surrounding shots. Both art cards and 'literary' texts made inter-titles seem less disruptive to the narrative's flow. They also helped the narration go beyond the simple neutral summaries of the primitive period.

But during these same years (1914–17), filmmakers realized the advantages of motivating inter-title texts as lines spoken by the characters. One advisor critiqued a sample scenario in 1916, concluding: 'Note the strength gained by inserting the subtitle in the action and having it a speech by one of the characters.'[34] In general, filmmakers worked to replace expository inter-titles with dialogue wherever possible. A Lubin serial of 1915, *Road o' Strife,* reportedly had only one expository title in its fifteen episodes—reading 'A Week Later.' Its director, Emmett Campbell Hill, described how he tried to blend in the dialogue titles to minimize any interruption of the action: 'Some dissolve in and out, others appear abruptly and slowly fade, still others merely flash on and instantly disappear, as a sharp, explosive "No!" seems to do. We have undertaken to visually approximate sound effects.'[35] The use of type size and other means to simulate sonic qualities was not uncommon, by the way; many silent films have small letters to suggest whispers and large ones for shouts. In *'Beau' Revel* (John Griffith Way, 1921, Thomas H.Ince), words with their letters out of line suggest a drunken man's speech. With or without such effects, dialogue titles were motivated as coming

from a source within the scene, and hence were preferable to expository titles. Partly because of this, filmmakers seldom used art cards for dialogue titles.

Certainly by the late teens, dialogue titles outnumbered expository titles. Typically, expository titles come between scenes to set up new situations, but most titles within scenes tend to present dialogue. Fleming's *When the Clouds Roll By* (1919, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corp.) has seventeen scenes, four of which have no expository titles at all, and seven of which have only one or two. In all, of the 216 inter-titles in the film (not counting credits and end titles), only thirty-three are expository. In James Cruze's *Hawthorne of the USA* (1919, Artcraft), every scene has at least one expository title, but 80 per cent of all the titles are dialogue.

In the mid-twenties, many films limit expository titles severely. Almost every film would use at least a couple at the beginning to introduce characters and situations. But frequently later scenes would contain one or no expository titles.[36*] By the middle and late twenties, the predominance of dialogue titles combines with the general handling of scenes to create films which were prepared for the introduction of sound. (Sound was far from a surprise to filmmakers and writers. Throughout the teens and twenties, the almost universal assumption was that sound, color, stereoscopy, and widescreen processes would eventually be adopted.) Dialogue titles also insured that most of the spectator's understanding of the narrative came directly from the characters themselves—from their words and gestures— rather than from an intervening narration's presentation.

A similar effect of placing verbal narration within the story space resulted from a related device—the insert. Inserts were not, strictly speaking, inter-titles; they were any written material in the space of the action which was shown in a separate shot—'inserted'—within the main long view of the action. Letters, photographs, and newspaper headlines were commonly used for inserts. Inserts appeared occasionally in primitive-period films, but began to occur with greater frequency in the transitional period. Of the ES films from 1909 to 1916, 62 per cent have inserts. Many one-reelers begin with a person receiving a letter, which we then see in close-up in the second shot. Letters were a convenient way of beginning *in medias res:* 'Inserts should never be used in front of the first scene.'[37] After a short initial view of the main character and situation, the writing rapidly fills in past events and sets up causes for action to come.

Letters made versatile inserts, since they allowed the characters to give a variety of information about personal traits and travels, and to set up appointments. But newspapers proved useful as well, in conveying more general and public events. As Part One pointed out, the newspaper became a universal device in Hollywood, motivating written texts realistically and compositionally as coming from the world of the story. This advantage was realized by Sargent in 1911: 'A deal of information may be conveyed in a headline and the spectator seems to read the item over the character's shoulder rather than to have been interrupted by a leader.'[38] Numerous other scenario guides of the next few years recommended the use of headlines or short clippings for conveying information.[39] Other written texts could serve similar functions. In *Stella Dallas* (Henry King, 1926, Samuel Goldwyn), passages from a diary repeatedly appear in places where an expository inter-title might ordinarily be used. As with the dialogue inter-title, the insert seemed to come from within the story, helping make written narration less overt.

The 'American' style of acting

Few aspects of silent films seem so alien to the modern viewer as the performances of their actors. Yet all 'silent acting' was not the same. A more discriminating look reveals striking differences. Consider, for example, two films released almost exactly two years apart.

Figures 15.15 through 15.17 are frames from *The High Cost of Living* (October, 1912, Solax); the second example, figures 15.18 through 15.22, comes from *The Warning* (September, 1914, Majestic). The earlier film illustrates the pantomime style of silent acting. In this shot, the younger workers want to strike, and they invite the hero, Old Joel, out for a drink to talk over the situation. The man at the right gestures 'drinking' to him (see fig 15.15). Joel points to his own body, then to his grey hair (fig 15.16), as if to say, 'I'm too old for such things.' The other man then holds up a single finger and smiles persuasively ('Just one?'); then Joel also holds up a finger (fig 15.17), smiles, and agrees to go. No inter-title explains this bit of action.

The Warning is a one-reeler directed by Donald Crisp and starring Dorothy Gish. In a mediumlong shot of a small apartment, the heroine receives a note from her lover telling her he has left her. In despair, she sits, and there follows a cut-in to a medium shot (fig 15.18). She sits staring numbly for a moment, then glances up at the gas lamp fixture at the upper left (fig 15.19). Her eyes widen as she realizes that she could commit suicide (fig 15.20). She reaches over and turns on the gas (fig 15.21), gets up, and exits right. Off-screen, she sits in another chair, with her face reflected in the mirror at the center rear (fig 15.22). Played in the long-shot framing of *The High Cost of Living,* Gish's performance would hardly be discernible.

The difference in acting styles and framing distance in these two films is considerable. Between approximately 1909 and 1913, acting styles in the American cinema underwent a distinct change: an exaggerated pantomime gave way to a system of emphasizing restrained gestures and facial expression. *The High Cost of Living* is typical of its period, yet by 1914, the year of *The Warning,* the telegraphic style usually occurs in combination with the facial style (except in slapstick comedies). This change was to a large degree responsible for the development of a broader range of camera distance, which in turn contributed to the development of continuity editing.

The codified pantomime style is readily apparent in films of the very early teens. Stock gestures that rely only minimally upon facial expression, and then only for reinforcement, are everywhere. Indeed, these films, which may seem to be somewhat confusing at first, become comprehensible once one watches for these gestures. In the three-reel *A Tale of Two Cities* William Humphreys, 1911, Vitagraph), the second sequence introduces Dr Manette, who has been called in by the evil Marquis to examine a peasant woman whose lover has been killed. Manette comes into the room, kneels by the woman, then stands and makes several brief gestures: he points to the woman, places the tips of his fingers, with palms open, to his own forehead (see fig 15.23), moves his hands out about a foot in front of his head, flutters them, then lowers his hands in a helpless gesture while shaking his head. No dialogue title accompanies this, nor was there a summary title at the beginning of the scene. We rely entirely upon these gestures to interpret something like, 'Her reason is gone' (hand gestures) and 'There is nothing I can do' (shaking of head). One could catalogue many standard gestures in films before 1913. For example, when characters place an open hand palm down about three feet from the floor, that indicates 'child.' The child's growth can be shown by raising the hand to an appropriate point higher off the ground. In *Tangled Lives* (1911, Kalem), the hero, who had rescued the heroine years before in an Indian massacre, tells her he has fallen in love with her now that she has grown. There is again no inter-title, but he makes the 'child' gesture, raises his hand to about her height and then places it over his heart, while speaking emotionally to her. (Even here, the gestures are often smaller and more restrained than they would have been in a film five years earlier, and one must be on the lookout to catch them.)

During the transitional years of 1912 and 1913, the pantomime style was in the process of modifying into a more naturalistic approach to gestures. Still framed in long shot or *plan américain,* the actor used facial expression and non-conventionalized gestures, but with enough exaggeration that they would be visible. The increasing dependence on dialogue inter-titles aided in the formulation of this new acting style by

taking over some of the informational functions of the codified gestures. The feature film would also promote it, by allowing, even encouraging, more time for character development. There may have been a small genre of character-sketch films, exemplified by *The Warning* and some of Griffith's early-teens work like *The Painted Lady* (1912, Biograph). By 1914, the new acting style had combined facial expression in closer shots with muted pantomime in the more distant framings. Technical improvements in lighting equipment, focusing devices, film stock, and make-up practice aided in the process by making it easier for the spectator to see details at a distance.

The change to closer framings and facial acting was apparently a two-step process. In the early teens, some critics noted a new style in Vitagraph productions; a French filmmaker, Victorin Jasset, described it in 1911:[40]

> The Americans realized the interest that could be given to the play of the features in foreground shots and they served it, sacrificing the decor, the whole of the scene when it was necessary in order to present to the audience the figures of the characters who stay a bit more immobile.
>
> Rapid acting horrified them, and the acting was calm, exaggeratedly calm.

James Morrison, an actor at Vitagraph, recalled the closer framings:[41]

> We were the first to use the nine-foot line. When I started, they would frame the scene as in a theater, a long shot with everyone shown full length. We were the first ones to bring people up to within nine feet of the camera. The nine-foot line was a line of tape on the floor; if you came any closer, you'd go out of focus. The next innovation in the movies was when Griffith did the close-up. We thought of the nine-foot line, but we didn't think of the closeup.

The 'nine-foot line' would yield a framing with the actors cut off at the knees. This would hardly be enough to 'sacrifice the decor,' as Jasset claimed, but the effect on the figures was striking enough that the French termed this the 'American foreground' shot. The larger figures would make possible a more restrained pantomime—a first step toward the facial style of acting.

It has become a commonplace of film history to admit that D.W.Griffith did not invent the closeup, but to claim that he used it better than those who came before, thereby establishing it as a basic part of filmmaking practice. This may be the case, but the standardized close shot can be considered a by-product of a true Griffith innovation, the new acting style. With the advent of the multiple-reel film, better actors were drawn to the cinema because the firms could now afford to pay competitive salaries. Griffith drew together a repertory company of actors, in particular very young women, beginning with Pickford in 1909, and adding the Gish sisters, Dorothy Bernard, Blanche Sweet, and others. With them, he worked out a method of sustained performance centering on the face, the shot being held while a series of muted expressions come and go. Griffith himself described the process of 'learning' this method with his actors, in a 1914 interview:[42]

> It is this learning step by step that brought about the 'close-up.' We were striving for real acting. When you saw only the small, full-length figures, it was necessary to have exaggerated acting, what might be called 'physical' acting, the waving of the hands and so on. The close-up enabled us to reach real acting, restraint, acting that is a duplicate of real life. But the close-up was not accepted at once.

Griffith's new method was not, of course, a duplicate of life. It was a stylized system, like the one before it; but it did involve restraint—the transmitting of feelings and thoughts through a series of facial suggestions.

The new approach to acting was widely recognized at the time and even labeled as specifically American. Exaggerated pantomime, although used in virtually all American primitive films, was considered to be of European origin. After all, European films, primarily French, Italian, and Danish, were numerous on American programs before World War I. As early as 1911, however, a reviewer found the influence beginning to run the other way; in discussing a Danish three-reeler, Great Northern's *The Temptations of a Great City,* a *Moving Picture World* reviewer commented on its lack of a 'foreign style of acting.' He compared the film's acting to 'the palmy days of the Biograph Company, when tense situations were worked up entirely with the eyes and slight movement.' The Europeans were, the review claimed, beginning to use the 'American style of acting.'[43] Many commentators of the 1911 to 1915 period speak of pantomime as the older style and of facial expression as more modern.

With the new acting style came closer framings. These were not actually close-ups; at this point, a distinction existed only between close and long shots. Any shot that cut off part of the human figure would be considered 'close.' Griffith's 'close-ups' were actually medium and medium-long shots. Films shot consistently using such framings, in addition to *The Warning* (1914), include *The Painted Lady* (1912) and *The Mothering Heart* (Griffith, 1913, Biograph).

Griffith's comments that the close shots were resisted at first are not without basis. There were a number of published attacks on framings which cut people off at the knees or waist. But such attacks did not, as historical myth would have it, accuse the shots of incomprehensibility. Instead, some contemporary critics felt that the closer framings violated traditional aesthetic principles. *The Moving Picture World* carried on a controversy over the subject. In 1911 the scenario columnist, Epes Winthrop Sargent, defended 'bust pictures' (as these close shots were sometimes called in the early teens): 'Many points may be cleared in a five-foot bust picture which would require twenty to thirty feet of leader to explain, and the bust picture always interests.'[44] But another writer of that same year attacked close shots, since the actors' figures 'assume unnecessarily large and, therefore, grotesque proportions.'[45]

Another participant in the *Moving Picture World* controversy was H.F.Huffman, who wrote a diatribe against close shots in 1912. Here he specifically attributes these shots to the shift in acting styles and gives a description of the two styles which is worth quoting in full:[46]

> Facial expression—that seems to be the dominating influence that brings about this inartistic result. The American producers, after they learned the rudiments of their craft, uncovered an entirely new school of pantomime. In the heyday of the business, when exhibitors were making fortunes out of small investments, the European picture had the call. Pantomime to the old world was an exact science. Every known gesture and expression had for years been labeled and catalogued as definitely as the rows of bottles in a chemist's shop. With the play-going public of America, the European school of pantomime at one time found favor over our crude home-made productions. Exhibitors clamored at the exchanges for foreign films. This was disheartening because it really did seem that the American product would never catch up. But at last the American producer found himself. He evolved a school of pantomime that swept away the antiquated formulas and proved to be such a revelation as to eclipse the Europeans themselves.
>
> The difference between the two schools is broad and plain. The European school is based more upon bodily movements than upon the mobility of the face. The American school relies more upon the expression of the face and the suppression of bodily movement. It remained for the Americans to demonstrate that more dramatic emotion is the keynote of American pantomime.

Again, this shift is not a matter of a new and better style entirely replacing a crude style. During the teens, pantomime acting primarily in long shot shifted its function; with modifications, it became generically motivated in the work of silent comedians such as the Keystone company, Charles Chaplin, and Keaton.

The 'European' style was too telegraphic to remain the dominant acting method as films became longer and more psychologically based. Far from being cruder than the later style, 'European' pantomimic gestures briefly conveyed a good deal of information to the audience. One striking aspect of the early one-reelers is how much action they managed to pack into about sixteen minutes. This was in part due to those films' considerable dependence upon physical rather than psychological causality; causes were immediately obvious from the situation. The films also compressed the duration of the story events, either by using ellipses between most shots (with a one-shot-per-scene structure in many cases) or by presenting several actions simultaneously or in quick succession. But during the transitional period, filmmakers learned to sustain plots based upon fewer events, with less compression of story time, within or between scenes. At that point, a more leisurely acting style became desirable. If the camera could linger on the mobile face of a Lillian Gish or a Blanche Sweet, individual incidents, and especially psychological states, could now provide major causes and sustain whole segments of the film.

Unity and redundancy

The crystallization of these various temporal, causal, and character-oriented devices into a classical model of narrative in 1917 suggests the considerable impact that the feature film had on their development. Virtually all the traits I have discussed here appeared in short films during the transitional period. But one- and two-reelers usually built their narratives around a few key devices; a deadline, or incident, or character study could dominate the film. As features became the norm, however, individual devices were integrated into the whole; they could serve a localized function, permitting other devices to come in as needed. A feature might contain elaborate character exposition at the beginning, with visions, *and* flashbacks, *and* a deadline, *and* a chase, and so on. This is not to suggest that features were simply strung-out one-reel narratives. Rather, the story's tight causal chain would create a more complex weave of events, motivating each new device in its place. While the chase in *Personal* (1904, AM&B) starts simply as the result of too many women answering an ad placed by a rich man,[47*] in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the ride of the Klan results from a lengthy and dense weave of events—the death of the little sister and the formation of the Klan, the southern family's proud defiance of the carpetbaggers, Stoneman's encouragement of Lynch's aspirations, and so on. Similarly, the flashback in the next-to-last scene of *Hoodoo Ann* (Lloyd Ingraham, 1916, Triangle-Fine Arts) brings to a climax two separate lines of action. The main line concerns Ann, who has been established in a series of scenes as a naive girl fond of play-acting. She fires a pistol while imitating a Western movie she has seen and thinks she has accidentally killed a man living next door. The subplot involves this man, a drunkard henpecked by his wife. He has been missing since Ann fired the shot, but he returns and describes how he ran away and hid from his wife—with his story shown as the flashback. This clears up the mystery, and the epilogue depicts Ann's wedding.

The feature film also permitted a greater amount of redundancy. A narrative might be easy to follow if the procedure for laying it out presented each event and trait clearly. But in its effort to help the spectator understand completely, the Hollywood cinema repeats information. The feature's length allowed time for developing parallelisms and motifs of behavior; it could linger over information and encouraged the shift to the new acting style.

By the 1920s, redundancy and thorough motivation were fully in place. *His People* (Sloman, 1925, Universal-Jewel) involves a Jewish couple and their two sons living in the ghetto of an American city. The

father, David, favors Morris, who is a lawyer; but Morris has secretly concealed his ghetto origins from his rich Jewish boss, Judge Stein, and from his fiancée, Stein's daughter, Ruth. David rejects his other son, Sammy, when the latter becomes a boxer, even though Sammy remains loyal to his family.

This narrative is motivated in a prologue when Sammy is seen as a boy, winning a street fight and bringing home groceries he buys with the money given to him by an onlooker. David, established as a peddler with a street stall, beats Sammy for fighting. Initial impressions formed in these scenes are crucial in determining the pattern subsequent events will take. After a ten-year interval, the film stresses the contrast between the two grown sons' actions by repeatedly juxtaposing their behavior: Morris courts Ruth, while Sammy has a romance with Mamie, the daughter of an Irish neighbor. (As with the choice of careers, Sammy transgresses family tradition by choosing a non-Jewish woman, yet he does not become a social-climber, as Morris does.) Morris asks for money to buy a dress suit, while Sammy fights for prize money to help his ailing father. The film also provides causal motivation for its effects. When Morris asks for money, David takes his own overcoat out to pawn; when David goes to his stall in the snow without his coat, he falls ill. This in turn leads Sammy to win the money so that his father can recuperate in a warmer climate. Ultimately Sammy's selflessness, in combination with the revelation of Morris's secret rejection of the family, leads David to realize the relative worth of his two sons and to reconcile with Sammy. The careful balance among elements and the thorough motivation evident in *His People* were common by the twenties.

The classical narrative, then, came to place more emphasis upon character, and to construct tightly organized causal chains. The 1917 cinema had not eliminated every disruption of time or causality throughout every film. But the basic principles had become dominant. In early 1918, actor and director Henry King summed up the changes he had observed in filmmaking:[48]

> There was a period when nearly every producer thought that action made a photoplay. Every scene and incident was full of restless movement. Then came the day of characterization, as opposed to and superceding the 'action' period, and this method has come to stay.
>
> Nearly all of the melodramas and westerns of two years ago raced through from two to four reels of film and there was little reserve force or character acting brought out. The hero was always distinctly heroic and good looking, the heroine was just that, and the supporting cast, as a rule, acted all over the shop, and if you will remember the general run of photoplays ran to periods, with the title 'several years later' showing up with tiresome frequency.
>
> In other words, we were satiated with swiftly moving action and did not really get acquainted with the characters of our stories. Nowadays the directors 'place' their characters so that an audience actually knows who and what they are and what sort of lives they lead, which makes what they do and how they do it understandable and real. You will also notice that many of the most entertaining stories cover comparatively short intervals of time.

Note that King even uses a specific term, to 'place,' in describing the more thorough establishment of character traits and background. All through the transitional and into the classical periods, the idea of a film's unity centered around the narrative—and, more specifically, character psychology.

16
The continuity system

If you have a diamond in the shape of a plot, give it the proper setting of continuity. Do not sink it in the tar of unmatched action.[1]

<div align="right">Epes Winthrop Sargent, 1915</div>

The concept of continuity

We have seen how the move to longer multiple-shot films and later to multiple-reel films brought about a shift in narrative models. Filmmakers used the short story, drama, and novel as sources for new conceptions of causal and temporal unity. At the same time, they needed to find means of creating a unified spatial structure in which story events could take place. To a limited extent, these means could also come from the other arts: the film frame is analogous to the proscenium of a stage; the sudden leaps of time and space achieved by editing resemble the freedom of movement enjoyed by the novel's narrator.

But again, the filmic medium imposed its own unique demands. The filmmaker juxtaposes a series of disparate spaces, building from them an overall narrative space. That space is concrete, not the verbal construction of the novelist. Hence the filmmaker must be able to guide the spectator's understanding of spatial relations if the film's causal actions are to be clear. Editing, with its instantaneous changes of vantage point, presented a new aesthetic challenge, and filmmakers had to a considerable degree to thrash out their problems on their own. The resulting guidelines became the continuity system.

The formulation of the continuity editing system was not a direct development of devices from the primitive period. Classical films of the teens did not involve more complex, more correct usage of the same devices available to earlier filmmakers. Rather, fundamental changes in the systems of causality, time, and space brought about a profoundly new approach to filmmaking, and the functions of individual stylistic devices changed as well. Some techniques used infrequently in the primitive period—the cut-in, point-of-view and eyeline structures, dialogue inter-titles, and so on—became central means of constructing space and conveying narrative information in the teens. Key devices of the primitive cinema changed in their function. The lengthy tableau shots became establishing shots; expository titles which formerly anticipated action now merely established situations. The classical system is a change from the earlier one, not necessarily an improvement upon it.

With the growing emphasis on calculating how a film could be understood came new normative systems within the production sector. The growth of a trade press after 1907 (brought about by the nickelodeon boom and regularization of production) contributed to making these norms uniform across the industry. Almost from the beginning trade papers and instruction books emphasized a specific conception of what

constitutes a good film. In one of the earlier scenario books, Herbert Case Hoagland, of Pathé Frères, gave this advice to writers:[2]

> *Let one scene* [shot] *lead into the next scene wherever possible*. Motion picture theater goers don't yearn for mental gymnastics and shouldn't be kept guessing as to who the characters are or why they are in the story at all.… Keep your scenes in a sequence easily followed by the onlooker.

Increasingly, the conception of quality in films came to be bound up with the term 'continuity.' 'Continuity' stood for the smoothly flowing narrative, with its technique constantly in the service of the causal chain, yet always effacing itself. Later, 'continuity' came specifically to refer to a set of guidelines for cutting shots together, but the original implications of the term lingered on. The 'continuity system' still connotes a set of goals and principles which underlie the entire classical filmmaking system.

One of the best descriptions of continuity was written before the term was being applied commonly to film. In 1910, a commentator in *The Nickelodeon* outlined what constituted great films:[3]

> Their greatness has been established through the medium of a strong story, interpreted by artistic players and illuminated by splendid photography. Invariably the stories have been easily defined and followed and every gesture correctly interpreted. The director who knows his dramatic technique, that subtle, indiscernible thread or mesh, binding and blending scenes [shots] and parts into a harmonious whole is, perhaps, the greatest influence in making the story thoroughly convincing; thrilling us when we should be thrilled, making us laugh or cry at the appointed times, and leaving us, at the end of the film, in a beatific frame of mind, without a doubt to be cleared, without the jar of a false gesture.

The basic principles of Hollywood film practice are here already: the story as the basis of the film, the technique as an 'indiscernible thread,' the audience as controlled and comprehending, and complete closure as the end of all. Moreover, these ideas soon came to be accepted as a set of truisms. This remark might have appeared in virtually the same terms at any point in Hollywood's history since 1910.

This is not to say that the continuity system was conceived of by 1910. Most of its principles were set forth and tested in the years up to 1917. But given this set of goals for narrative filmmaking, each new technique or device could easily take its place within an overriding formal system.

The term 'continuity' itself soon came into common usage. Initially it occurred in the scenario columns and books. Filmmakers assumed that if a scenario were correctly constructed, shot by shot, they could simply follow it literally in production, and their film would automatically have a continuously coherent narrative. So, until the late teens, references to 'continuity' are usually addressed to scenario writers and refer to a flow of story across changing shots. Compare these bits of advice:[4]

> [From a 1912 *Photoplay* scenario column:]
> Continuity of events is a feature of the best pictures ever made. Avoid these 'twenty-year after' stories.
> [A 1913 definition of 'continuity of action':]
> While unity of action is one of the fundamentals of a model dramatic action, this unity must be *visibly continuous* to render it distinctly and easily perceptible.
> [A 1914 scenario book:]
> Unbroken continuity or perfect cohesion of story unity—of which every intelligent audience is ever conscious—that knows no such things as gaps, breaks or retrogressive movement.

[And a 1917 essay on the topic in *Photoplay:*]

It is the placing of the many scenes that go to make up the photoplay in a logical sequence, so that the play may run perfectly smoothly, without breaks or jumps which otherwise would have to be covered by wordy and explanatory subtitles.

Some of these advisors were themselves also scenario editors for the production companies; their guidelines would help determine the kinds of material accepted for filming. In late 1913, Epes Winthrop Sargent's column in *The Moving Picture World* informed freelance writers that Phil Lang, at Kalem, wanted 'continuity' in the scripts submitted to him; these should have no 'jumps,' where the character in one shot appeared in the next one in a new locale.[5] By about 1915, trade journals like *Motography* began publishing 'how I did it' articles signed by filmmakers. In one of that year, William Desmond Taylor modestly characterized his direction of a serial, *The Diamond From the Sky,* saying that 'Its continuity is as near perfection as it is possible to obtain.'[6] In 1917, Ince described how films from his studios were always viewed many times, 'with the one idea of avoiding inconsistencies in continuity and technique.'[7]

'Continuity' quickly developed from a general notion of narrative unity to the more specific conception of a story told in visual terms and continuing unbroken, spatially and temporally, from shot to shot. This led to the word's being applied to the shooting script itself. As Chapter 12 has described, the continuity was a numbered list of shots used as a means of planning the entire production. Thus the shot became not a material unit but a narrative one (as evidenced by the almost universal use of the word 'scene' for a 'shot'). The implication here is that filmmakers took the narrative of a film to equal the sum total of all its shots. This procedure of decoupage precludes any notion of using segments of time and space for their own sake, of elevating them above the narrative at any point. A scenarist at Huffman-Foursquare Pictures described good continuity scripting in 1917: 'No scene [shot] which does not advance the action can be allowed to have a place in the script. Every scene must be in its proper place.'[8] Most of the rules or guidelines that were gradually formulated during the teens had as their common purpose the subordination of devices to a dominant narrative. Not just shots, but everything, had to serve its narrative function. In 1914, Phillips wrote: 'We employ nothing—property, actor, scene [shots], spectacle, spoken word, insert, incident or device —in the perfect photoplay that has not a bearing on the climax of the play.'[9] In this chapter, we will see how editing rules were introduced during the teens and assimilated into the dominant filmmaking system.

Establishing shots

The long framing was the earliest device for creating and maintaining a clear narrative space. When other spatial devices were introduced— cut-ins, multiple spaces—the long shot ceased to present virtually all the action. Instead, it acquired a more specific function, that of establishing space. (The long shot can also have other functions, such as displaying spectacular mise-en-scene or suggesting a character's isolation in a vast space, but these usually occur in addition to the basic establishing function.) Multiple spaces involve cutting together shots that show entirely different locales, whether at a distance from each other or contiguous; analytical editing cuts to portions of a single space. In the classical system, the establishing shot is so important that these other devices usually are organized around it. A film can have multiple spaces without analytical editing, and vice-versa; but to maintain 'correct' continuity according to the classical system, both multiple-space cutting and analytical editing depend on establishing shots.

The earliest staged films of 1893 and several years thereafter were tiny scenes, single events hardly long enough to be narratives. Edison Kinetoscope films usually ran less than a minute; one 1893 Kinetoscope

film shows a drunken man in medium-long shot, stumbling in a park; a policeman approaches and they struggle. In such films, there is automatic narrative continuity— one event entirely visible throughout.

With the increasing length of films, an extended narrative action might be played out, still within a single locale; historians have termed this one-shot scene the *tableau.* A one-shot film, *Street Car Chivalry* (1903, Edison), for example, shows a row of men sitting in a street car; they move to accommodate a pretty woman, then refuse to do the same for a homely woman until she tricks them. Here we have several events forming a brief narrative, but still played in long shot within a single space; without cuts, shifts in space and time do not occur, and hence continuity is not yet a factor.

But occasional films in the years 1897 to 1903 introduced multiple spaces. In most cases, such films string a series of tableaux together, with each scene acted out completely within the space of the image and without any movement of the action into a contiguous space. In some cases, each is preceded by an inter-title, as in the most famous example of this type, Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903, Edison). There was no clear-cut progression from one technique to another during the primitive period. Single-shot films *(Street Car Chivalry)* and series of tableaux *(Uncle Tom's Cabin)* continued to exist side by side, lingering into the phase of films involving multiple spaces and cut-ins.[10]

Later, in the teens, when scenes were regularly cut up into multiple shots, the single long shot showing initial spatial relations became one portion of the scene, usually coming at the beginning. Its function then became specifically to establish a whole space which was then cut into segments or juxtaposed with long shots of other spaces. Early cut-ins to closer framings were rare and always came after longer views of the same space and before a return to the same long view— a re-establishing shot. There was thus little need for filmmakers to specify the placement and function of the establishing shot.

But in the mid-teens, close-ups were becoming standard: only a third of the ES films from 1912 had cut-ins, and only one had two of them; of the 1913 films, slightly over half had cut-ins (several with two or three, and a couple with cut-ins involving a distinct change of angle); by 1914, every ES film had at least one cut-in.

Now that filmmakers were regularly dealing with more than one shot per scene, they formulated guidelines specifying the placement of the establishing shot, cut-in, and re-establishing shot. Sargent commented in 1914 on the increasing use of close-ups: 'Lately we saw a subject in which a setting room was used. At various times three portions of this room were used for close-up pictures, instead of always using the full set.' Sargent approved the close view, but cautioned that 'it should be used sparingly, where the close-up is but a part of a scene, the opening and closing of which uses the full stage.'[11] This advice suggests that filmmakers in the early teens still thought of the long shot as the basis of the scene, with the cut-in an occasional, effective variant.

But in the second half of the teens, Hollywood's discourse sometimes assigned a more limited, specific function to the long view. Now it became a part of an overall scene consisting of many shots, and it served to establish spatial relationships. A 1918 trade-paper review of Lois Weber's *For Husbands Only* recommends 'a long shot placing the locations of the various situations during the time Miss Harris overhears the conversation between Cody and Miss Kirkwood.'[12] In the four years between Sargent's statement and this review, the conception of cutting had changed considerably. Earlier, a scene consisted of long shots, book-ending one or more close shots. After 1917, filmmakers would build scenes up from a variety of different angles, with the long shot often no more important than any other. Around 1920, Hollywood usage dubbed the long shot's function as that of 'establishing' characters' relations in space.[13*]

By the mid-teens filmmakers had so normalized the establishing shot's function that they could systematically vary its placement within the scene. A film might begin its first scene on a close shot of a character's face, then later show an establishing view. Often an inter-title precedes the close shot, describing

the character we are about to see for the first time. The first shot of *The Fatal Opal* (George Melford, 1914, Kalem) frames a man in medium shot, then cuts back to a long shot of him in a courtroom, revealing the man to be a judge. Some films insert a brief series of analytical close shots before establishing the whole space. In the opening of *The Case of Becky* (Frank Reicher, 1915, Lasky) we see the villainous hypnotist Balzano in medium close-up after a title introduces him; a cut to a *plan américain* shows him to be onstage doing his act. Only later in the scene does a long shot frame both the audience and the stage. Another 1915 film, *The Woman* (a one-reeler, production company unknown) starts with a shot/reverse-shot conversation between a couple, before a *plan américain* shows that they are at a party. We quickly learn the situation, while seeing the two characters' appearances. In all these cases, the function of beginning on a close shot is to show the appearance of the characters and create first impressions about them. An initial close view would also support the new acting style and would emphasize character as a source of narrative causality. None of these films, however, begins on a close shot in any scene after the opening, and all move to an establishing shot fairly soon.

In the later teens, filmmakers occasionally delayed the establishing shot for other purposes. A scene may mislead the spectator for comic effect, as in the second sequence of *Wild and Woolly* (John Emerson, 1917, The Douglas Fairbanks Corp.). The scene begins with a medium shot of Jeff seated in cowboy clothes by a teepee; a track back to long shot shows us that the 'campsite' is actually inside his bedroom. Here we get not only a clear view of a new character, but the delayed establishing view humorously undercuts our first impression. Another function of beginning on a close shot is to emphasize important details which reveal the narrative situation of the scene more clearly than a long shot would. In all these functions of the delayed long shot, compositional motivation justifies the use of the less predictable schema; the variation on the standard opening is not arbitrary.

Many films of the 1920s make subtle use of the delayed long shot. The opening of *Mantrap* (Victor Fleming, 1926, Famous Players-Lasky) provides an example of a quick revelation of narrative situation through detail. Without any introductory in ter-title, the credits lead directly to a medium close-up of a woman's foot touching a man's, which he moves away (see fig 16.1); a tilt up shows the woman speaking to a point off right front (fig 16.2). The dialogue title that follows gives the situation: '—and he said I flirted. A clever lawyer like you should get me heaps of alimony!' After the title, we see a medium closeup of the woman, who raises a make-up case to cover her face (fig 16.3). The next shot shows her point-of-view of her own face in the mirror, which she then lowers to reveal the lawyer, with an annoyed expression on his face (fig 16.4); we later discover that his experience in handling divorces has led him to mistrust all women. Finally a tight long shot establishes them at his desk, with law books prominently visible to confirm that this is a lawyer's office (fig 16.5). The delayed establishing shot, while not the most probable schema, would remain a common alternative to the analytical breakdown of the scene.

Analytical editing

> An insert is filmed matter which is inserted in appropriate place in a scene, the film being cut for this purpose. This matter must appear and be known as an insert to the writer and manufacturer only; to the audience, it becomes the normal, logical, and only natural phenomena that could be presented under the circumstances.[14]
>
> Henry Albert Phillips, 1914

In primitive films, cut-ins occurred rarely and served a number of different functions. Most frequently, the move to a closer framing allowed the viewer to see facial expression more clearly,[15*] although the

expression might be broad comic mugging rather than the later 'American'-style acting discussed in the previous chapter. Another common function for the closer shot would be the revelation of a detail not sufficiently visible in the main tableau shot. But the cut-in could also simulate the point-of-view of a character within the scene, and occasionally it aided in the creation of a trick photographic effect.

Some of the closer shots to show facial expression were not, strictly speaking, cut-ins. Following the lead of *The Great Train Robbery,* quite a number of films of 1903–5 begin or end with medium shots of the characters; these may introduce the characters before the action proper begins, as in *The Widow and the Only Man* (1904, AM&B), where we see the two title characters in separate shots posing against a white background. *The Bold Bank Robbery* (1904, Lubin) begins similarly with a medium shot of the three smiling robbers in evening dress and ends with a cut-in within a prison scene; now the three are in convicts' stripes, frowning. Here the close shots structure the beginning and ending, providing a 'crime doesn't pay' moral for the whole. Some close shots for facial expression may constitute the entire action of a brief film, with no long shots to frame them, as in *The May Irwin—John C. Rice Kiss* (1896, Edison) and *The Old Maid in a Drawing Room* (1900, Edison). So the close shot for facial expression could either comprise a whole scene or come before a longer shot of the same action.

From its earliest occurrence until the early teens, the cut-in for detail comes between two long shots taken from the same camera set-up. Barry Salt has pointed out an early cut-in in *The Sick Kitten* (1903?), which he identifies as a rerelease of *The Little Doctor,* a 1901 British film.[16] (Urban's 1903 catalogue in fact describes *The Sick Kitten* as an abridged version of *The Little Doctor,* offering both versions for sale. *The Little Doctor,* possibly originally entitled *The Little Doctor and the Sick Kitten,* was apparently made c. 1901. Only the shorter version is known to survive, but the Urban catalogue specifically mentions the cut to a closer view in *The Little Doctor.*) This brief film begins with a medium-long shot of two children preparing to administer a dose from a bottle marked 'Fisik' to a kitten sitting in the girl's lap (see fig 16.6). The cut-in to a medium close-up of the cat (fig 16.7) shows clearly the action of the cat lapping at the spoon's contents. Such small actions would have been indiscernible in the original framing. *The Sick Kitten* ends after a cut back to the medium-long-shot framing. A similar pattern occurs in *The Gay Shoe Clerk* Porter, 1903, Edison), in which the central medium close-up emphasizes the detail of the customer raising her skirt to reveal her ankle; the cut-in thus explains to the audience why the clerk impulsively kisses her in the third shot, a reestablishing view of the store. In both these cases, the motivation for the cut-in is compositional, for without the closer view, we could not follow the action adequately.

Some early films motivate cut-ins as subjective shots. The subjective shot almost invariably is at least partly motivated realistically, since the camera lens is assumed to be imitating what a character's eye would see. In *Grandpa's Reading Glass* (1902, AM&B), a series of long shots shows some children examining objects with a magnifying glass. These shots alternate with close framings, masked as if from the children's point-of-view through the glass, of unmoving people or objects. In *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906, Vitagraph), there is a long shot of a grassy area in which horses are being walked before a race; the hero enters and finds a paper dropped by a rich bettor (see fig 16.8). A cut to a medium close-up, point-of-view shot shows his hands unfolding the paper (fig 16.9).

The earliest examples of point-of-view cut-ins occur in films which depend almost entirely upon the novelty effect of the close view. *Grandpa's Reading Glass* contains no other action and minimal causal progression; the whole thing consists of the children's series of examinations of objects and people. The cut-ins are motivated realistically (the children would see the objects from these points in space) and artistically (the close views are of interest in themselves), but not compositionally (they give us no new story information). But *The 100-to-One Shot* embeds its subjective shot within a larger narrative chain, motivating it compositionally by giving it causal functions; the paper in figure 16.9 contains a tip on a horse,

which the hero reads and uses to win his bet. This compositionally motivated point-of-view cut-in later becomes the norm in the transitional period 1909–17.

Besides enlarging facial expression, providing details, and representing optical subjectivity, cutins during this period could construct a more limited space within which special effects could be created. Two American Mutoscope and Biograph films which use extended and intricate pixillation shots are *The Tired Tailor's Dream* (1907) and *The Sculptor's Nightmare* (1908). In each, the basic space of the scene is established, then cutins eliminate the human figures in order to facilitate the lengthy stop-motion process of animating objects. Vitagraph's *Princess Nicotine* J.Stuart Blackton, 1909) cuts in numerous times to tiny figures cavorting on a table. Here the special effects were mainly accomplished by building over-sized matches and cigarettes, with actresses playing the parts of the princess and her friend. When trick films declined after about 1909, so did the use of cut-ins for this purpose. But certain special effects would always depend on cutting to a new view of the scene's space.

Through most of the pre-1909 period, films seldom matched action or position between the long and close views. At the end of the first shot of *The Sick Kitten* (fig 16.6 is the last frame of this shot), the girl reaches for the bottle of medicine; at the beginning of the close shot (fig 16.7 is the first frame), her hand is already holding a spoon to the cat's mouth. There is no attempt to match on action or position, since the girl had not even begun to pour the medicine before the cut. A similar mismatch on her arm's position occurs at the cut back to the third and final shot. In the cutin from *The 100-to-One Shot* (see figs 16.8 and 16.9), the close shot shows the hands and paper against a light, neutral background; given the surroundings visible in the long shot, the paper should be seen against grass. Here the mismatch is one of setting rather than position or action. *The Gay Shoe Clerk* does match the clerk's hand movement at one of the cuts. This may have been an accident, but at least the film successfully conveys a continuous event over the cuts by matching on position; *The Lost Child* (1904, AM&B) does the same thing on a cut-in to a pursued man holding up a guinea pig. The only other example of a match on action in the early years of the ES occurred in a much later film, *The Unexpected Guest* (1909, Lubin). In long shot, a man moves to a desk; then a cut to a medium close-up has an imprecise match on his hands cutting the PS away from a letter. There are undoubtedly other cut-ins with matches, but the usual use of a cut-in in the primitive period was to a static object or character. *The Unexpected Guest* is moving toward a conception of skilled matching which would become one sign of a well-executed classical film.

On the whole, however, before 1911 or so, cutins were not common for any purpose. Even when closer shots became more acceptable, most filmmakers initially sought to avoid cuts within a space. Frequently staging could render a cut-in unnecessary. If a filmmaker wanted to insure that facial expression was visible, the actors simply moved closer to the camera. In the first shot of *After One Hundred Years* (1911, Selig) a group of characters stand outside an inn; the innkeeper comes out to greet them (see fig 16.10). One man and the innkeeper come forward to talk, thereby identifying the film's central character (fig 16.11). This practice contrasts sharply with the more decentered framings of earlier years; compare the stock market shot from *A Corner in Wheat* (Griffith, 1909, AB) in which the bustling characters all claim equal attention. No framing or staging device guides the spectator's eyes to the most relevant actions in that shot. Similar framings with the characters stepping forward occur frequently in the early teens. In *Cinderella* (1911, Thanhouser), the Prince picks up the lost slipper in long shot, carries it forward, and extends it toward the camera, then goes back up the palace steps. *A Tale of Two Cities* (William Humphrey, 1911, Vitagraph) opens with a long shot of a party at the Marquis's home, with the Marquis in the depth of the shot (see fig 16.12). He comes into medium-long shot to give orders to a servant (fig 16.13). *At Old Fort Dearborn* (1912, Bison '101') contains a more elaborate example, with a long shot framing a soldier who comes out of a saloon and accosts an Indian woman (see fig 16.14). As an officer and the woman's father

enter to stop him, the whole group moves forward (fig 16.15). After the Indians go out, the two men take one more step forward into *plan américain* as the officer berates the soldier (fig 16.16).

The practice of moving characters toward the camera has never entirely disappeared. But by the mid-teens the cut-in had become an equally important way of providing a closer view of the characters. At the same period, movement toward the camera was handled in a less obvious fashion, with a deeper setting extending the acting space forward. Movement toward the camera became part of the realistically motivated staging of the scene, rather than a movement made solely to allow the spectator a better view. In *The Cheat* (Cecil B.DeMille, 1915, Lasky), for example, the husband and his friend stroll slowly and casually forward in the parlor after dinner. Here the movement is motivated by their desire to discuss their investment plans out of the earshot of guests in the depth of the room. There is no sense here, as there is in the earlier examples just described, of the actors crossing an empty foreground space simply to get closer to the camera. As with other devices, realistic and compositional motivation combine to make the mechanics of film style less noticeable.

In spite of attempts to use staging to avoid cutins, after 1910 filmmakers increased their dependence on closer shots. Sometimes the narrative situation necessitated a view of a detail which for some reason could not be brought forward to the camera. In the first scene of *After One Hundred Years,* as we have seen, the actors move into closer view. Later, in the last scene, the hero discovers a bullet-hole in the mantelpiece of his inn room (see fig 16.17). As he inspects it, there is a cut-in with a match on action (fig 16.18). *Shamus O'Brien* (Otis Turner, 1912, Imp) contains a *plan américain* in which the fugitive Shamus's family read a letter from him. Barely visible outside the slatted window is listening a treacherous neighbor who will turn Shamus in (see fig 16.19). There follows a close-up of the neighbor (fig 16.20), partly in order to catch his gleeful expression, but primarily to guarantee that we see this important bit of narrative information, which is partly hidden by the window in the long shot. In each case, the cut-in emphasizes a detail associated with a fixed portion of the set.

The *Shamus O'Brien* example shows how set construction could also necessitate a change of angle at the cut. But once the cut-in had come into general use, filmmakers did not always need such a pretext to vary the vantage point on the scene. *The Girl of the Cabaret* (1913, Thanhouser) establishes the hero, at foreground right, sitting at a table watching a cabaret violinist (fig 16.21). A cut-in catches his reaction, moving nearly 180° to the other side of the table from the long shot (fig 16.22). But most cut-ins still moved straight in to capture detail.

By the mid-teens, cut-ins routinely function not only to guarantee the visibility of narrative action, but to aid characterization as well. We saw in the previous chapter how the new facial acting style encouraged closer framings. This style may have been a major cause of the steadily increasing cutting tempo during the teens. Cecil B.DeMille, commenting in 1923 on the increase in the number of shots over the past ten years, attributed it to an increasing emphasis on character psychology:[17]

> In the old days we would have 'shot' a struggle scene in a 'long shot,' showing, perhaps, two men fighting on the floor with a woman at one side. In the long shot we could get only a suggestion of the emotions being experienced. The physical action, yes, but the soul action, the reaction of the mentalities concerned, the surging of love, hate, fear, up from the heart and into the expressive muscles of the face, the light of the eyes, that, indeed, is something you can only get by a flash to a close-up or semi-close-up.
>
> And it is these flashes, short but telling, that have caused some scenario writers to increase scene numbers.

A more regular use of crosscutting and contiguous spaces would also tend to increase the average number of shots per reel during this period. Along with the acting shift, the rise of the star system also encouraged the use of closer framings. Filmmakers moved in upon the famous faces in order to allow spectators to gaze upon their favourites. These closer shots were not the lingering glamor shots of the twenties and thirties, but they served somewhat the same function. Pickford's first appearance in her early feature *The Eagle's Mate* (James Kirkwood, 1914, Famous Players) epitomizes this usage. We see her first in a medium-long shot, emerging from the forest (see fig 16.23). Even though she is clearly recognizable from this view, a cut-in to a medium shot follows (fig 16.24). Here Mary plays with a bird on a branch—an action which helps to characterize her, but which also allows the camera to dwell on her. These actions could have been handled in one shot, but the division into two prolongs Pickford's entrance.

During the mid-teens, the cut-in quickly changed from an occasional necessity to a standard device in creating an omnipresent narration. For a few years, from about 1914 to 1917, practitioners seem to have conceived of cutins as a way simply to add variety and interest to a scene. Scenario guidebooks advised using cutins to speed up a scene, whether or not there was any specific reason to change framings. Consider the following statements:[18]

> [1914] The close-view has no rival for breaking dangerously long scenes in a manner so natural and potential that oftentimes it makes a brilliant presentation of something that would in all probability have become tedious.
>
> [1917] Main scenes must not be too long. If they threaten to be so, they must be broken up by close-ups or flash-backs [i.e., cutaways].

The cut-in thus contributed to the increasing tempo of editing in the teens. But after 1917, most writers advocated the use of close shots for specific narrative purposes—not just to liven up a scene's rhythm. A 1921 scenario manual echoed the earlier writers, saying: 'Occasionally the close-up is used to "break up" a sequence that would be too long and monotonous were the action therein contained shown in one lengthy and sustained long-shot'; however, the same writer specified that the usual uses of the close-up are 'to show a close, detailed view of that which is not sufficiently clear or which lacks emphasis in a more distant and general scene. In the case of a human face, it is occasionally necessary or desirous to show the details of expression, conveying an emotion.'[19] After 1914, no UnS or ES films lacked cut-ins, and about 1916, the cut-in with a match on a moving object was almost as frequent as the static match. Certainly by 1917, the advent of the classical period, filmmakers had formulated the analytical presentation of a scene through establishing, cutting in, and re-establishing.

Moreover, by 1917, the cut-ins could be taken from a variety of angles, as the films of Fairbanks, Ray, and Pickford show. A scene from a 1918 Ray film, *The Hired Hand* (Victor Schertzinger, Thomas Ince Corp.), begins with an establishing shot of mother, daughter, and servant in a kitchen (see fig 16.25). A medium shot of the mother follows; she looks off left and speaks (fig 16.26). This leads to a reverse medium shot of the daughter looking right, listening (fig 16.27), and then to a re-establishing shot from a new angle, emphasizing the servant as she comes forward to speak with the mother (fig 16.28). Here the back wall provides a spatial anchor from shot to shot (note how the three lanterns on a shelf recur in each shot), but the filmmakers no longer conceive of the space as a flat, frontal tableau. Rather than simply cutting straight in, the filmmakers have created a new angle on the space for each shot. Guiding spectator attention through frequent shifts in vantage point, analytical editing became a familiar schema that aided easy comprehension of all classical films.

The introduction of the cut-in as a standard device and the resulting breakdown of a single scene into multiple shots bring up the question of screen direction (later to be called the 'axis of action' or '180° rule'). The maintenance of screen direction from shot to shot is one of the basic principles which American filmmakers would use to orient the spectator to the story action. There never was a period in the history of the US cinema when screen direction was random. Originally the tableau staging and framing precluded the need for any question of direction; space was presented whole. Furthermore, early cut-ins failed to disturb the clarity of this space. There was seldom any question of moving to the other side of the action. The standard painted sets had only a backdrop and perhaps two small segments of other walls at the sides. In order to keep the setting in the background of the closer shot, the camera had to stay on the same side of the characters. Since filmmakers usually did close-ups directly after the long shots, by simply carrying their cameras forward, problems seldom arose, even in exteriors done without sets.

Occasionally, in later films, there are closer shots, especially of characters, taken from the side of the action opposite to the vantage of the establishing shot. Such breaks in continuity are rare, and probably result from successive shots being done at different times from the long shot. (We have seen how shooting 'out of continuity' was necessary to maintain efficiency in the production process.) In *Girl Shy* (Fred Neumayer, 1924, Harold Lloyd Corp.), close-ups of Harold's typewriter after each fantasy scene, a close-up of the villain stroking the maid's hand, and a medium shot of Harold pulling the lever to dump a workman from the back of a wagon, are all filmed from the opposite side to the establishing shot. Only one of these disjunctive cuts is compositionally motivated: since the villain conceals his gesture with his hat, we can see it only because the camera crosses over the axis of action. In the other two cases, we must assume either that the staff confused the direction when making the close shots or were willing to overlook a few irregularities. On the whole, however, violations of screen direction were so rare that contemporary writers did not refer to screen direction as a problematic aspect of cutting in, but only in relation to scenes of multiple contiguous spaces.

There can be little doubt that the concept of screen direction stems from the primitive period, when the spectator viewed the action from a distance, as if in a theater seat. In a play performed on a proscenium-arch stage, one does not suddenly see the action from the other side; stage right and left remain consistent. Later, as analytical editing became more common, the film spectator ceased to see the bulk of the action from a fixed point. The shifts created at the cuts by the narration do not imply that filmmakers conceived of the spectator as a disembodied spirit capable of moving anywhere within the space.

Analytical editing, Hollywood commentators tell us, follows the 'natural attention' of the spectator. First the onlooker surveys the scene (establishing shot); as the action continues, he or she focuses upon a detail (cut-in), or glances back and forth at the participants in a conversation (shot/reverse shot), or glances to the side when distracted by a sound or motion (cutaway). But while the attention may flit here and there, it never departs from the physical ties of the spectator to the degree that it crosses the line to view the opposite side of the action. Arbitrary as this conception of the spectator is, it has governed Hollywood practice from the earliest years.

By 1917, analytical editing was used consistently through whole films. And as early as 1915, Sargent offered a remarkable summary of the closer shot's use in a hypothetical scene:[20]

It is worth while noting the growing tendency to use the close-up. This was very intelligently handled in a recent Kalem when, to borrow an expression of a writer, 'they shot all over the darned room,' and got strongly effective results.

For an illustration let us say that the scene is laid in the Senate Chamber in Washington. Hawkins, a newcomer, is trying to force through a bill 'for the relief' of his sweetheart's father. Jorkins, one of

the old Wheel horses and senior senator from the same state, seeks to defeat the bill because of his dislike for the girl's father. Hawkins is to make his big speech.

To show the matter adequately would require a tiresome stay in the same big set. One or the other of the leading players would be too far from the camera to show up well. In this case the large scene would show the floor of the chamber, but instead of holding the action there it would flash back and forth between the two men, to the girl and her father in the balcony, and perhaps to the press gallery where Hawkins' friend, a correspondent from the home paper, helps to swing the tide. All of the players would be seen in the occasional big set, but there would be a succession of close-up pictures of the principals, with an occasional return to the big scene. It would be perhaps a threehundred-foot scene, yet divided up into perhaps twenty-five or thirty sections, avoiding monotony.

Sargent's description could almost apply to the filibuster scene of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Frank Capra, 1939, Columbia). His reference to 'the occasional big set' advocates the periodic return to a re-establishing shot, but no longer does Sargent consider the close-up as a brief interruption of the basic single long shot comprising the scene.

Analytical editing breaks a single locale into different views; cutting to create multiple spaces expands the narrative space outward. There are two basic patterns for editing multiple spaces together: joining contiguous spaces and crosscutting (i.e., joining non-contiguous spaces). I shall examine the former first, since it was the first to develop into a standard way of constructing space.

Multiple spaces

Movement between spaces and screen direction

> The film cutter must know continuity, have a slight knowledge of directions, and an eye keen and embracing.[21]
>
> Frank Atkinson (cutter at Universal), 1924

When a film presents contiguous spaces in separate shots, it needs some method for showing the viewer that these spaces are indeed next to each other. There are different ways of providing cues: a character or object moving from one space to another might link them together; or a character looking offscreen in one direction might lead the viewer to surmise that the next shot shows the space that character sees.

Character movement was the most common cue for linking contiguous spaces in the early cinema; it appeared widely from about 1903. In *The Somnambulist* (1903, AM&B), we see the interior of a bedroom and three shots of various parts of a rooftop outside as a woman gets up and sleep-walks across the roof. There is a match on the action of her coming through the door that gives a strong cue for contiguous spaces; at the other cuts, she exits to and enters from offscreen. *A Search for Evidence* (1903, AM&B) presents several segments of a hotel corridor, shifting laterally two doors at a time, as a woman and man move through from right to left, peeking through each keyhole. *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903, Edison) contains a pair of shots in which the robbers move from their hold-up of the passengers by the side of the train to the engine, in which they make their escape.

The year 1903 also saw the release of some early chase films. The chase, with its characters moving from shot to shot, became one of the standard ways of using multiple spaces in subsequent years. *The Pickpocket* (1903, AM&B) begins with a long shot as a thief robs and beats a man. The thief runs out at the foreground. Other people run in to help the victim; then this group runs out at the foreground as well. There follow

thirteen more shots of various spaces, with characters in different combinations running through, usually toward the front and from left to right (the main directional variation being that sometimes they exit to the right of the camera, sometimes to the left). The multiple spaces even include locales above and below each other as several policemen chase the pickpocket over high stacks of lumber.

The movement from shot to shot in such films is usually fairly comprehensible, as long as the characters are recognizable. This is true whether or not they keep constant screen direction. In the case of *The Pickpocket,* screen direction is not always strictly maintained. But again, films tended from the start to keep the characters moving from space to space in a reasonably consistent direction. These chase films were probably the earliest to standardize a dependence on screen direction to link multiple contiguous spaces. As in *The Pickpocket,* all the characters in such films would exit entirely, and a cut would reveal a new space nearby, with the characters entering after the cut. In most outdoor chase shots, the characters moved diagonally from the rear to exit in the foreground, just to one side of the camera. Examples occur in the first film to popularize the chase genre in this country, *Personal* (1904, AM&B). Here a group of women pursue a man through each of the eleven shots; they exit variously left and right, but always move toward the front, passing close to the camera. Similar chases occur in the same company's *The Lone Highwayman* (1906), *Her First Adventure* (1908; see fig 16.29), and *Trying to Get Arrested* (Griffith, 1909).[22*] During the decade, movements through contiguous spaces appeared more frequently in non-chase situations as well.

As with analytical editing, the conception of screen direction between contiguous spaces probably derives in part from the fixed position of the spectator in proscenium theater. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, spectacular productions sometimes employed a series of perspective backdrops to change locales quickly; at times, characters might move across the stage repeatedly through several represented settings, suggesting a progress through contiguous spaces. For instance, Nicholas Vardac describes an 1887 production of *David Copperfield* which staged the famous shipwreck scene in which Steerforth dies. A series of three settings, all changed without the curtain being closed, moved the characters through space: beginning in 'The Ark Interior,' as the characters rush out to the rescue, moving to an area 'Near the Beach' as the rescue party runs across the stage, and finally to 'the Sea in a Storm' with the ship sinking and the characters rushing in to attempt the rescue. According to Vardac, the changes of backdrop were accompanied by 'sound effects, offstage noises, and the action itself running continuously.'[23] For Vardac, the three scenes resemble a series of film shots, with 'dissolves' between. But beyond this, one significant aspect of this staging is the fact that the actors run across the stage to the left, exit, run across toward the left again, and so on. Were they not to maintain this constant direction, it is not clear that the spatial relationships among the Ark, Beach, and Storm backdrops would be apparent. There is but a small step from such a series of contiguous spaces on the Victorian stage to the series of shots in a primitive chase film.

The early use of screen direction depended on the fact that there were few shots, and that the same framing seldom recurred elsewhere in the film. But filming numerous shots which would later have to fit together with other shots done in different locales, on different days, made screen direction harder to control. After 1909, with the introduction of the shooting script and its attendant scene plot, it became more convenient to shoot out of continuity. In 1911, Frank Woods commented upon inconsistent screen direction and its possible production causes:

Attention has been called frequently in *Mirror* film reviews to apparent errors of direction or management as to exits and entrances in motion picture production.… A Player will be seen leaving a room or locality in a certain direction, and in the very next connecting scene, a sixteenth of a second later, he will enter in exactly the opposite direction. Now it may be argued quite logically that this need not necessarily be inartistic, because the spectator himself may be assumed to change his *point*

of view, but (oh, that word!) the spectator will not look at it that way. Any one who has watched pictures knows how often his sense of reality has been shocked by this very thing. To him it is as if the player had turned abruptly around in a fraction of a second and was moving the other way.

Woods suggests that: 'It is probable that the trouble is due in some instances to the fact that interior scenes are made first and exteriors cannot always be made to accommodate themselves.'[24] Indeed, most changes in screen direction in films of the early teens seem to result from shooting in different locales, then trying to match up the results. Particularly problematic are movements between interior and exterior locales. There are also instances where the different interior sets were not planned to take entrances and exits into account, so that the character repeatedly changes direction between the two settings. Allan Dwan's *The Fear* (1912, American) shows an instance of a reversed screen direction which must have resulted from out-of-continuity shooting. Throughout the film, we see shots made on a rocky beach; in one such shot, a character exits toward the left front (see fig 16.30). In the next shot, he should approach from the right side of the frame, but he comes in left (fig 16.31). Since these two spaces are never seen in a single framing, we can assume that Dwan's unit probably filmed in two locations far separated from each other and that no one kept track of this particular movement. As a result, several movements and eyelines between these two spaces are regularly mismatched in the same way.

Despite such occasional inconsistencies of screen direction, both films and contemporary writings indicate that most filmmakers considered it an important factor. Of all the ES films for the period 1910 to 1915, inclusive, about two-thirds contained structures of multiple contiguous spaces through which characters moved. Of these, less than one-fifth contained any violations of screen direction. Charles G.Clarke, who became a cameraman in 1915, confirms that screen direction was a rule in force when he began to work. He describes the belief current at that time: 'If they exit left and enter left, they're bumping into themselves.'[25]

A 1912 Vitagraph one-reel film, *Alma's Champion,* exemplifies the standard adherence to constant screen direction. At the end of one shot the hero runs out front left (see fig 16.32), leaving the frame entirely. The cut reveals a nearby space, into which he runs from the right (fig 16.33). Note here the carefully balanced reverse angles, with the camera at the same basic mirror-image vantage in relation to the railroad tracks in each shot. In *The Warning* (Donald Crisp, 1914, Majestic), the heroine runs out left, again exiting entirely (see fig 16.34); in the next shot she runs in from the right (fig 16.35). This pattern is typical of the use of movements to cue contiguous spaces in the early teens.

In 1914, an occasional film avoided the complete exit and entrance by using frame cuts (that is, cutting with the character passing over the frameline itself). This sort of match is more difficult technically than simply cutting when no figures are visible onscreen. *The Eagle's Mate* has a cut as the Pickford character moves away from the sick man she has been tending. The cut comes exactly as she is halfway out of the frame (fig 16.36); in the next frame (fig 16.37), the new shot begins with her already halfway into the image. (As we shall see, these shots lead directly into a shot/reverse-shot conversation; this, combined with the sequence's initial establishing shot, constitutes a fairly complex construction of the scenic space.)

After 1915, quite a few films continued to violate screen direction in relation to movements, but often only once or twice in an entire feature film—no more than might occur in a film of the thirties or forties. One reason that violations of screen direction occurred at all is that there was no established method for avoiding them until the late teens, when the 'script girl' began to be a regularly assigned position. In the early teens, there seems to have been some attempt to solve the problem by specifying screen direction in the continuity script, extending its function as a blueprint guiding all aspects of production. Two 1913 screenplay advisers give the following instructions:[26]

> Describe *where* each character *enters* or *exits* when necessary and *how* and *with whom,* i.e., tell where he enters or exits—whether from the house, garden, or door—tell how he enters or exits—whether arm-in-arm, frightened, walking, running, mounted, breathlessly, etc.
>
> Describe when and where the characters are to enter the scene, giving the entrance, or the direction. If they are to be in the scene at the beginning of the film, state that they are 'discovered' and give their position.

In each case, the authors seem anxious to get the scenario writer to specify as much as possible about the characters, not only to maintain screen direction, but also to aid in matching on action.

This attempt to make screen direction part of the written plans apparently did not work, however. While some published specimen scenarios of this period mention directions of entrances, most fail to do so. And set designers went on making an occasional set that did not allow for the matching of exit and extrance from one locale to another. *The Italian* (Reginald Barker, 1915, New York Motion Picture Co.), for example, consistently mismatches movements from the outside of Gallia's house to the inside. Planning, then, did not always ensure proper screen direction.

In the mid-teens, the task of watching for directions of entrances and exits fell to someone on the set during shooting. A 1913 account suggests that it was perhaps partly the cinematographer's job; he 'must keep accurate account of every motion made during the run of the film. In this way he is also an assistant stage manager.'[27] When asked who was responsible for keeping track of the directions of the actors' movements in the mid-teens, Clarke also credited the cinematographer: 'I knew what the next shot would be and kept track of exits and entrances.'[28] Cameraman Hal Mohr confirms that at least some cinematographers watched for screen direction. Mohr had worked as an editor during the teens, but was behind the camera by 1921. Asked if his editing experience had helped him as a cameraman, Mohr replied:[29]

> It helped me a lot. Script girls used to get kind of mad at me, because they'd never have a chance; I'd put pictures together, so I knew instinctively that the man had gotten off the horse and gone into the saloon on camera left, so he had to come in the next scene from camera right, or from center down. So I'd set up accordingly.

Clearly some cinematographers would be better at keeping track of continuity than others; all would have other duties that would preclude their devoting complete attention to screen direction.

As Chapter 13 has pointed out, directors and assistant directors also tried to watch for this. When the number of shots increased and screen direction became a normative rule, firms added a specific production role—the 'script girl,' or continuity clerk—to keep continuity notes during the shooting. Apparently the role of the script person emerged between 1917 and 1920.

By the late teens, not only did filmmakers watch for screen direction in shooting, but editors had developed tactics for correcting problems when they arose. Helen Stair's major 1918 *Photoplay* article on editing discusses screen direction:[30]

> The matter of progression is most important. If an actor is seen in a dining-room set and if he goes out a door on the left of the set, it is obvious that when we next 'pick him up' in the parlor he must be seen entering the parlor at the right of the screen. But sometimes the cutter finds that the director has made a mistake in this regard. If so he can turn the film negative over.[31*]

Note Starr's assumption that the need for maintaining screen direction is 'obvious.' William Hornbeck, an editor who began as an assistant cutter at Keystone in 1917, discusses other ways of covering a problem; in describing how an editor would cut together two shots in which the screen direction was reversed, he recalled:[32]

> You'd try to get a movement that would excuse it, a turn of the head or something—there were various tricks that you could try. You'd go to a closer shot or a longer shot. Oh, there's dozens of things you could devise. Make an insert even; if they were handling something, put an insert in.

In some cases, editors might even arrange to have shots redone—especially a close shot which would cost little to make and which could cover an error.

By the late teens, filmmakers counted on audiences' 'reading' screen direction in specific ways. Starr discussed how an editor could save money on a production; using a recent battle scene as an example, she quotes the editor's description of how the sequence was done:[33]

> 'There were only seventy real soldiers in that scene,' explained the cutter. 'We cut the picture so that it seemed as if thousands took part— first a long shot of the seventy fighting amid battle smoke on one side, then closer shots of a dozen or two soldiers running in from the right, another dozen running in from the left, another long shot of the seventy soldiers but now wearing the uniforms of the enemy and fighting on the opposite side, then back to a shot of the hero and his forces and so on throughout the picture.' It was just a matter of reverse camera shots and joining them together so carefully that any audience would be deceived.

In spite of Stair's casual conclusion, the passage (with its use of the term 'reverse camera shot' to mean basically what it means today) indicates an extensive grasp of the principles of continuity editing. The filmmakers understood and were putting into practice the effects of opposed screen direction and eyelines that the Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov was to study in his famous experiments on editing conducted during the early 1920s. Screen direction, we may assume, had virtually reached the status of a rule by 1917.

The eyeline match

If character movement can cue contiguous spaces, so does character glance. Quite early, around 1902, filmmakers began using glances to create optical point-of-view (POV) shots, placing the camera in the spatial position of the character. Then, during the early transitional period, after about 1909, eyeline matches appear in films; in this device, the character glances to a point offscreen in one shot, and a cut reveals the seen space, but not from the spatial position of the character.

The POV shot can show either a portion of the space seen in the establishing shot, or it can show a contiguous space. Filmmakers who first employed the POV shot used it in both ways. In the early years, the POV shot was usually indicated not only by position but also by a mask. *Grandpa's Reading Glass* (1902, AM&B) uses a series of round masks to represent a magnifying glass; the POV shots show details of the larger space of the establishing shot. Similarly, the hero's view through binoculars in *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906, Vitagraph; see figs 16.38 and 16.39) shows a space already seen in the first shot. But in *A Search for Evidence* (1903, AM&B), POV shots done through a keyhole mask reveal a contiguous space, a series of hotel rooms behind closed doors.

In rare instances, an unmasked POV shot might be used in these early years. *The Runaway Match* (1903, AM&B) even contains a POV tracking shot. When the pursuing father's car breaks down, the camera continues tracking back from him along the road; he stands angrily gesticulating toward the camera as it moves to extreme-long shot. A reverse medium-long shot tracks forward following the car containing the eloping daughter and her fiancé, who wave and laugh directly into the camera; the preceding view of the father is revealed as their POV shot. *The Runaway Match* provides a good example of a device which was later to become a recognizable part of Hollywood's repertory of devices, but which at the time was more likely an isolated experiment.

The unmasked POV shot occurs more regularly from about 1911. Since most camera angles were at this point nearly horizontal, they were not particularly serviceable as POV cues. Nor had filmmakers developed a set of other cues for indicating that the camera occupied the character's place. The glance through a window provided virtually the only such cue, since the window frame within the image placed the character spatially. Thus *A Friendly Marriage* (1911, Vitagraph) contains a shot of the wife stopping by a church and looking off left front (see fig 16.40), followed by a view of her husband through the rectory window (fig 16.41). *A Tale of Two Cities* (1911, Vitagraph) also contains a window POV, with the bank clerk looking out a window in *plan américain,* followed by a *plan américain* of the mob outside. Lois Weber's *The Cry of the Children* (1912, Thanhouser) ends with a scene of the factory owner and his wife looking out a window, followed by an extreme-long shot of the factory. Other spatial cues soon began to appear. In Kirkwood's American Biograph drama, *The House of Discord* (1913), the heroine stands by the gate of an estate and watches her daughter ride past with a groom; there follows a POV shot of the pair going away down the road. Here the position of the road and the direction of movement of the couple on horseback tell us that the camera has been placed in the heroine's position in the second shot. In *Behind the Footlights* (1916, Vim Comedies), the hero looks out from behind the curtain of a vaudeville stage (see fig 16.42) and sees his girlfriend in the audience (fig 16.43). Here camera angle as well as the placement of orchestra members in the lower part of the frame signals POV. By 1917, most of the UnS and ES films use POV at least once, usually employing continuity cues of spatial relations from shot to shot to indicate POV, only occasionally including windows and binocular or keyhole masks.

By the late teens, the masked POV shot returned, but not with shapes suggesting binoculars or keyholes. Instead, masking became a conventional means of marking POV shots as such. In *Love and the Law* (Edgar Lewis, 1919, Edgar Lewis Productions), one scene contains a lengthy series of POV shots as the hero stands by a parked wagon, turns slowly around, and sees a series of shop signs; there are five shots of him looking in various directions, each followed by a masked shot of a sign (see figs 16.44 and 16.45). The sophistication of POV usage by the late teens is apparent in this series: each sign is at the precise angle and distance it would be in relation to the character's position, those on his side of the street being closer than ones across the street or further down the street. In accordance with Hollywood's growing use of redundancy, the spatial and masking cues supported each other in indicating POV. In later years, additional POV cues reinforced the principles formulated in the teens.

The eyeline match, where the second shot shows a space seen, but not from a character's spatial position, came into occasional use about 1910–11. In *The Gambler's Charm* (1910, Lubin), the gambler runs to the door of a saloon and fires his gun at a man running away outside, offscreen right (see fig 16.46). The cut leads to a shot of the man falling, with the gambler's stare offscreen giving us one important cue as to where this second space is (fig 16.47).

Of the 1912 ES films, one-fourth had eyeline matches. Only one violated screen direction: Dwan's *The Fear,* in the same situation described on page 205. At the end of the film's first shot, the father looks off front left (see fig 16.48) and sees his daughter by their house (fig 16.49). We assume at this point that in the

second shot the father is offscreen right. As we discover later when the other character moves between the two spaces (see figs 16.30 and 16.31), the father really had been offscreen left. In contrast, *The Girl at the Cupola* (1912, Selig) maintains screen direction in a scene of a labor strike: the first shot shows the workers and the sympathetic boss's daughter looking off front left (fig 16.50), with the cut revealing her fiancé, who is trying to keep the factory running with scab labor (fig 16.51). This second shot suggests that the group looking on is offscreen to the right, and indeed they are, as we discover when characters move between the two spaces.

Of the 1913 films examined, nearly half used eyeline matches, with only one across the line. By 1914, the majority of films have them, and by 1917, only an occasional film is without an eyeline match. *Weights and Measures* (1914, Victor) has a scene in which a man in a car is being followed by a woman in another car; he stops to get a drink at a well, with his car in the background facing left (see fig 16.52). The cut to the woman, who has stopped her car and is watching from a distance, matches correctly on the direction of her gaze. Being behind him, she should be off right in the first shot, and the direction of her gaze—off left— confirms this (fig 16.53). In *The Wishing Ring* (1914) the couple looks off right (fig 16.54), and the cut reveals that they see a gypsy camp (fig 16.55). They should be off left here, and indeed they are, as their subsequent entrance from that direction proves. These examples are typical of eyeline usage in the teens.

Shot/reverse shot

> Scene 202—Close-up of John's face, smiling at the wrongful accusation. He casts a glance toward the jury box. Scene 203—Fairly close-up of the members of the jury looking fixedly in the direction of John.[34]
>
> Capt. Leslie T.Peacocke, 1917

If a single eyeline provides a strong spatial cue, then a second eyeline on the other side of the cut should create an even stronger spatial anchor for the spectator. This principle is commonly used to create the shot/ reverse-shot (SRS) schema, one of the most prevalent figures in the classical Hollywood cinema's spatial system. The SRS also depends on screen direction.

As we have seen, the concept of the eyeline match existed by 1913–14. Cuts that change screen direction after a glance were distinctly in the minority. The same is true of the shot/reverse-shot pattern. (It is true that several early SRSs in the ES crossed the line, but these are from 1911 and 1912, when writers were just beginning to refer to screen direction.) No doubt one can find occasional violations throughout the teens. But this does not indicate the absence of a guideline— filmmakers in the thirties occasionally crossed the line on SRSs as well.

SRS was introduced near the beginning of the transitional period. Early instances of this technique show it already performing its classical function of presenting a conversation situation; balanced pairs of shots form the centerpiece of a scene that contains other contiguous cuts as well. Barry Salt has pointed out[35] an early example of SRS in Essanay's *The Loafer* (1911), a film which is generally remarkably advanced in its application of classical principles. The shots he describes come in the middle of a classically constructed sequence which opens with an establishing shot of the hero by a buggy (see fig 16.56). He has been a drunken loafer, was given a loan, and now is a respectable farmer. After the shot begins, the camera pans right to reframe a stranger approaching the hero to beg for money (fig 16.57). After the hero refuses him, the tramp goes out right (fig 16.58). A cut reveals a grassy stretch of ground, and the tramp comes in from the front left, turns, and begins to berate the hero (fig 16.59). In the next shot, we see the hero's reaction (fig 16.60); then he runs out right threateningly. Cut to a shot of the beggar (as fig 16.59), as he runs out

right. There follows a long shot of the field, and both men dash in from the left. The scene continues with the hero running out left after the struggle. Next we see a shot of a farmhouse door, and the hero comes into frame from front right. This relatively extended sequence of nine shots (including a dialogue title and return to the same framing as fig 16.59) combines several movements to contiguous spaces maintaining screen direction, plus a SRS framed three-quarters on each figure, again obeying screen direction. An establishing shot and two reframings give further indication of careful planning along the lines of continuity principles.

SRS is rare in the early and mid-teens, typically used when characters are so far apart that an ordinary two-shot is not feasible. Here SRS serves to indicate that characters are close enough to see each other. *In Old Madrid* (Ince, 1911, Imp Co.) has a scene in which two groups converse across a river. The shots of both are *plan américain,* and in each the characters face off left. (The movements through contiguous spaces in this film do obey screen direction, however.) In Solax's 1913 *A Comedy of Errors,* a wife waves to her husband as he departs for work (see figs 16.61 and 16.62).

SRS became more frequent around 1914, now occurring in some cases between people who are close to each other; a two-shot could easily have been used in these cases, but the director cut in for a pair of closer shots to catch reactions during conversations. *The Eagle's Mate* (Kirkwood, 1914, Famous Players) has a couple of SRS patterns. In one, a *plan américain* establishes the heroine taking care of an injured relative. A cut-in to medium-long shot shows her by the bed; she then moves to the foot of the bed in the frame cut illustrated in figures 16.36 and 16.37. Returning to a medium shot of the man, the film sets up a SRS between the two, with two shots of each (figs 16.63 and 16.64).

SRS was still minority practice in 1914, but many films use it more than once and in ways which are quite sophisticated in terms of the continuity system. *The Wishing Ring* has several instances of SRS, one in the comic first scene as two old men lean out different windows of the same building to talk to each other. Here the medium shot of the man in the higher window is taken from a low angle (fig 16.65), that of the man on the ground floor from a high angle (fig 16.66). Later SRSs involve the young couple in situations where they are not spatially separated, as the figures in this example are.

A remarkable scene from a 1914 film, *Detective Burton's Triumph* (a Reliance two-reeler) shows how subtle some filmmakers could be by this point in their application of eyeline directions in SRS. The scene occurs near the end of the film, when Burton and two other detectives go in disguise to a bar to spy upon the three robbers they have been trailing. An establishing shot (see fig 16.67) shows the robbers at the rear table, Burton alone at the center left, and his colleagues at the foreground table. In the medium shot that follows, Burton looks front, then glances off right at the crooks (fig 16.68). Next we see the two other detectives, one of whom glances off left, at Burton (fig 16.69). The cut returns us to the framing of Burton, who looks front at his friend and covertly signals to him (fig 16.70). In the next shot, the same framing as figure 16.69, the man at the right returns the signal. A shot of the robbers follows, with the one at the right glancing front and left at Burton, then drawing the center crook's attention to the signals; he, too, looks front and left (fig 16.71). There then follows an extended SRS series of fourteen additional medium shots with these framings, as the detectives glance at the robbers and at each other, exchanging signals, while the robbers look at both other tables and become more suspicious. Finally, after a total of nineteen medium reverse shots among the three tables, there is a return to the establishing shot, and a gun battle breaks out (fig 16.72). This sustained control of six eyeline directions is certainly not typical of its period; yet it is difficult to imagine the creation of such a scene if the basic principles of the eyeline match and SRS were not known by this point. Their widespread use would soon follow.

By 1915, SRS had become majority practice, and I found no film from 1916 and 1917 that lacked it. Films of 1915 that use the device range from the most prestigious features (*The Cheat* [Cecil B.DeMille, Lasky]) to extremely clumsy comedy shorts (*Cupid in a Hospital* [an L-KO Chaplin imitation]), indicating the

widespread adoption of the SRS pattern. Not a single one of the SRS patterns in 1915 ES films violated screen direction.[36*] There are probably films from the late teens which avoid SRS, but certainly the pattern is almost universally accepted by this point. Figures 16.73 through 16.77 show other examples from the late teens, demonstrating how uniform this device had already become. Feature films were now using SRS throughout, and not only for distantly separated characters. These examples show characters who are within a few feet of each other and who have previously been seen together in establishing shots.

There is one striking difference between SRS in the teens and SRS as practiced in the 1930s. Sound films often place the camera behind the shoulder of one character when framing the other; shoulders provide one more spatial cue to orient the spectator. Occasional silent films do use shoulders or other portions of the body for such a function, although this remains minority practice until the sound period. Maurice Tourneur's *Victory* (1919, Tourneur) provides an early example (see figs 16.78 and 16.79), and *Mantrap* (Fleming, 1926, Famous Players-Lasky) uses compositions very similar to those of sound films (figs 16.80 and 16.81). Such framings show up not infrequently during the twenties. Thus SRS became one of the most basic devices of the late teens and twenties classical cinema, appearing in most scenes. We may be surprised to find this particular device so common in a cinema in which characters' speech could not be heard, but passages built around dialogue (only partially conveyed through dialogue inter-titles) were an important basis of many silent films. By the late twenties, the handling of conversation situations was schematized in a way which would barely differ from that of sound films.

The classical cinema's dependence upon POV shots, eyeline matches, and SRS patterns reflects its general orientation toward character psychology. As Part One stressed, most classical narration arises from within the story itself, often by binding our knowledge to shifts in the characters' attention: we notice or concentrate on elements to which the characters' glances direct us. In the construction of contiguous spaces, POV, the eyeline match, and SRS do not work as isolated devices; rather, they operate together within the larger systems of logic, time, and space, guaranteeing that psychological motivation will govern even the mechanics of joining one shot to another. As a result, the system of logic remains dominant.

Crosscutting

Part One has defined 'crosscutting' as editing which moves between simultaneous events in widely separated locales. 'Parallel editing' differs in that the two events intercut are not simultaneous. Interestingly, crosscutting was seldom used before 1910. In *The Great Train Robbery,* Porter's narration returns from the robbers' flight to the situations at the telegraph office and dance hall, but he does not alternate shots in these locales. Similarly, in *The Kleptomaniac* (1905, Edison), Porter first shows the rich woman's actions and then the poor one's, in order to contrast the treatment of the two when they are arrested for stealing, but he does not alternate between them. In *A Corner in Wheat* (1909, AB), Griffith suggests cause and effect by cutting between the Wheat King and the poor people in the bakery.[37] Here the time scheme is unclear; Griffith's editing device could be crosscutting or parallel editing. But as Chapter 15 discussed, the classical narrative seldom depended entirely upon parallel construction; *A Corner in Wheat* is one of the rare exceptions. On the whole, parallel editing, with its non-simultaneous lines of action, was also rare in American filmmaking from its earliest years.

The more conventional 'rescue' pattern of crosscutting, involving two persons or groups who eventually meet, occurs at least as early as 1906, in *The 100-to-One Shot* (Vitagraph). In this film, the hero goes out and wins money on a long shot to aid his fiancée and her father, who are about to be evicted. As they are being thrown out of their house by the landlord, the following brief series of shots creates suspense:

29 ELS: A street. A car in the distance drives straight forward and out right fore-ground.

30 LS: Interior of the house, as earlier, but with furniture gone. The landlord enters from the right, and, with the help of two officials, starts to lead the father out right.

31 ELS: A road. The car comes in from the background, drives forward, stops, and the hero gets out and runs out right.

32 As 32: The hero enters from the right (a violation of screen direction), tears up the landlord's paper, and pays him. The villains leave, and the film ends with rejoicing and an embrace.

Another example occurs in *Her First Adventure* (Wallace McCutcheon, 1908, AM&B), which is generally handled as a conventional chase until toward the end. Then a few shots alternate between pursued and pursuers. From 1909 on, Griffith begins to use the device occasionally and was probably responsible for popularizing it.

Crosscutting did not become widespread immediately, however. By 1912, slightly fewer than half the ES films used any crosscutting. Some of these include chases, as in *The Bandit of Tropico* (1912, Nestor) and *The Grit of the Girl Telegrapher* (1912, Kalem). Others simply use crosscutting to show two related events occurring in separate spaces. In *The Haunted Rocker* (1912, Vitagraph), there is one instance of crosscutting when the disapproving father goes to his club while his daughter's lover visits her secretly at home. The following sequence occurs:

13 LS: The steps outside the house. The father goes out, then the lover goes to the door.

14 MLS: The parlor. The heroine sits in the rocking chair. Her lover enters and they embrace.

15 MLS: Interior of a men's club. The father comes in, has a drink, and leaves.

16 MLS, as 14: The heroine sits on her lover's lap in the rocker.

17 MLS: The front gate of the house. The father comes in, drunk.

18 New MLS: The rocker. The lovers stand hurriedly and hide behind a screen. The father enters, sees the moving chair, and is puzzled.

One noticeable trait of this sequence is the considerable compression of time made possible by the crosscutting. At each return to the previous action, a move forward in the narrative has occurred. The crosscutting represents simultaneous events, but also creates large ellipses which are less obvious because of the move away to another line of action. As crosscutting became more common, this ability to shorten plot duration remained one of its most important functions.

Contemporary writers recognized that cross-cutting could condense narrative material, as well as create suspense. A 1914 scenario manual referred to the 'cutback' (as crosscutting was known at the time) as being 'employed to accelerate action and maintain suspense.'[38] In 1923 the *American Cinematographer* described how an editor could reduce an excess of footage to a finished film:[39]

By careful cutting and recutting the editor can establish all the preliminary motivation necessary and yet do it in a simple manner both entertaining and retaining the full values. This is usually handled by 'splitting sequences' or in other words, handling two sequences at one time, hitting the highlights or important parts of each one yet telling it in the same amount of film required to handle one of them if cut individually.

Thus by elliding the relatively inessential moments of each story line, the omnipresent narration guides the spectator's attention through a string of the most salient actions.

In a sense, this compression through crosscutting carried on the basic approach of the early teens, when short film lengths led to highly condensed presentations of action. At that point, summary titles, telegraphic pantomime gestures, and other devices had combined to pack a great deal of action into a short span. Now crosscutting could create a similar effect, but in a less obtrusive way.

With the feature film, such extreme condensation of action was not always necessary. Sometimes the opposite problem arose: how to sustain an action through a whole sequence. Some filmmakers found crosscutting to be the solution. Crosscutting permitted the action of a single sequence to be drawn out, where showing the actions in separate short scenes might make the film episodic. Cecil B.DeMille's feature *The Whispering Chorus* (1918, Artcraft) is an example. This seven-reeler has thirty sequences, eleven of which employ crosscutting between two lines of action which do not come together within any one sequence (as well as two others which juxtapose action in two locales without cutting between them). The story covers a long time span and involves a large number of separate locales and incidents. Without crosscutting, the film would consist of a string of brief scenes; with it, there is less sense of choppiness.

By 1914, most ES films used crosscutting, and after 1915, only a few films avoided it. Once crosscutting had been established, filmmakers continued to add more and more lines of action, the most famous instances being the multiple simultaneous rescues near the ends of *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance.* Griffith, who was universally assumed at the time to have invented the cutback, was the prime experimenter in this. But apparently even he went too far; a review of his 1918 feature *The Great Love* (now lost) comments:[40]

> With the genius that Griffith alone commands, three almost separate stories have been carried through this picture. And in this point we think he went a trifle too far. In several places he is carrying as high as six different situations along simultaneously by means of cutbacks.

Crosscutting became standardized as the interweaving of two or three lines of action— seldom more.

The crosscut scene had become a staple of the silent cinema by the late teens and twenties. More often than not, crosscutting provided a simple way of constructing an exciting story without the script writer's having to sustain a single line of action. It seems to have reached its most frequent usage for this purpose in the few years after 1915. By the twenties, script writers had gained more experience at creating situations which could sustain themselves for whole sequences. Crosscutting did not disappear, but became a more localized device, occurring mainly in scenes where the narration demanded the juxtaposition of multiple lines of action.

Parodies of continuity

Contemporary writings and stylistic usage in the sample films suggest that the continuity guidelines were known and widely accepted by 1917. But beyond this, there are a small number of films from the teens and twenties which parody various continuity guidelines and 'mistakes.' Artists are not likely to parody something which is not already established and familiar. Hence the existence of such films helps confirm the idea that the continuity system was in force at this early stage.

The earliest continuity-parody among the ES films is the extraordinary 1915 split-reel comedy, *Ye Gods! What a Cast!* Made by a very minor independent company, Luna, this film is an extended joke on the eyeline match. In the opening scene, the impoverished Hardluck Film Co. assigns the various roles in its new film to a woman and a man: she is to play the heroine, while he takes all six male roles. The man tries on all six costumes in this first scene, in order to establish the various characters' appearances in the

audience's mind. The bulk of *Ye Gods! What a Cast!* consists of the resulting film, with the male actor, as six different characters, chasing himself, looking at himself, and conversing with himself in SRS. *Ye Gods! What a Cast!* contains 103 shots, all of which maintain screen direction. Here not only does the whole film depend on the eyeline match, but the humor in the situation would be incomprehensible unless we assume the audience could understand the play with eyelines.

Other films make fun of inconsistent mise-enscene over the cut. In *Hoodoo Ann* (Lloyd Ingraham, 1916, Triangle-Fine Arts), Ann and her boyfriend attend a Western, *Mustang Charlie's Revenge,* at their local cinema. The film is a parody of old-fashioned, New-Jersey-made Westerns (its producer is The Hoboken Film Co.'), done in a deliberately crude style that contrasts sharply with the remainder of *Hoodoo Ann.* At one point, a title announces 'Father's Dear old tin pale' (a reference to the not infrequent misspellings of early-teens inter-titles), followed by a shot of the heroine inside a shack, going to the door while swinging the pail. A cut to the well outside follows, and the woman comes in carrying a wooden bucket, which she holds up prominently. Later, when she runs back into the shack, she has the tin pail again. This delightful film-within-a-film demonstrates Hollywood's awareness of its own changes in the space of a few years.

Other films made similar jokes. In 1918, *Photoplay* described *Nut Stuff,* another story about a filmmaking establishment, the 'Hardly Able Feature-Film Company'; this comedy short parodies 'the careless direction that permits a player to enter a room in one costume and leave it in another.' The film also contains exaggeratedly stock character types and canted framings which simulate bad cinematography.[41] Finally, a 1923 comedy short, *Uncensored Movies* (Hal Roach, 1923, Hal Roach) has Will Rogers imitate various movie stars of the day. As Tom Mix, he repeatedly tramples, rips, or dirties his elegant white hat, yet puts it on again in pristine condition after the cut.

There are undoubtedly other such parodies. Clearly filmmakers felt that at a simple level at least, audiences could notice and appreciate the humor of continuity errors.

The ready-made center of interest

The various continuity rules—establishing and re-establishing shots, cut-ins, screen direction, eyelines, SRS, crosscutting—served two overall purposes. On the one hand, they permitted the narrative to proceed in a clearly defined space. On the other hand, they created an omnipresent narration which shifted the audience's vantage point on the action frequently to follow those parts of the scene most salient to the plot.

Two statements from the twenties summarize these purposes succinctly and demonstrate that Hollywood practitioners understood their editing system as fully then as have practitioners ever since. A former editor for Ince wrote in 1922: 'The value of every scene and sequence must be carefully weighed and the man who attempts to do this must most surely be able to prepare and smooth the production for audience consumption.'[42] The second statement comes from a lecture given by actor Milton Sills in 1928; he begins by discussing how developing methods limited the length of shots:[43]

> This limitation proved desirable. It was found that by telling the story in flashes [contemporary term for very short shots], flitting from spot to spot in the fields of action, eliminating irrelevancies, isolating and emphasizing the significant moment, the film could do what the eye does naturally; namely, select and focus on the quintessential drama. The eye of the spectator did not have to seek the center of interest. It was there ready-made for its pleasure…. This practice spelt economy in attention, vividness of effect, and dramatic intensity. The close view, the medium shot, and the long shot could be intermingled by the skill of the director and the mechanics of the cutting room in such a way that the narrative was constantly moving from high light to high light.

Thus continuity editing constantly organizes the spectator's attention. In doing so, it acts in concert with other principles of the classical cinema— principles of depth and centering that guide the eye within shots.

17
Classical narrative space and the spectator's attention

The knot hole in the fence

In the shift from primitive to classical film practice, the spectator's implicit spatial relation to the action changed significantly. During the primitive period, the camera usually remained at a distance from the action, framing it in a way that suggested a stage seen by a spectator in a theater seat. Later films also have long shots, of course, that place at least some elements of the mise-en-scene far away from the camera. But primitive films combine this distant view with a relatively flat playing space which creates a gap immediately in front of the implicit viewer. Even when a crowd is supposedly milling about, jammed together, the figures typically do not stray into the foreground zone (see fig 17.1). In chases and other similar situations, the characters may move diagonally forward and exit close to the camera; but they appear in the foreground space only briefly at the end of the shot, usually after we have watched them move in from the extreme background. On the whole, the primitive cinema keeps the spectator looking across a void into an action in a separate space. A few exceptions, like cut-ins or track-ins, occur in rare situations where either essential narrative information or novelty dictates the closer view.

Classical film practice, on the other hand, removed the empty foreground between the spectator and the space of the narrative action. During the transition period (1909–16), several changes placed the spectator's vantage point directly on the edge of the playing area: the staging of the action in depth, changes in set design, considerable depth of field, and directional lighting. No longer was the action played out before the spectator in a shallow, removed area. Rather, the space extended outward. Like editing, cinematography, and other devices of the classical system, the boundaries of narrative space became unnoticeable. Primitive-period mise-en-scene created a flat playing area within a box-like space, seldom suggesting space behind the set or to the sides. But classical staging and sets suggested space receding into the distance, and cut-ins foster a sense of additional space on the sides, by showing only portions of the whole area. Space now apparently stretched out indefinitely, appearing to include the viewer.

As we have seen, the primitive cinema's placement of the spectator at a distance did not always provide the best view for grasping important narrative information. But the omnipresent narration of the classical cinema situates the spectator at the optimum viewpoint in each shot. Staging, composition, and editing combine to move that viewpoint instantly as the action shifts. There arose the enduring Hollywood image of the spectator as an invisible onlooker present on the scene; filmmakers and theorists have invoked this idea to the present day in explaining the shot/reverse-shot pattern (an onlooker at a conversation turning the head back and forth), the cut-in, reframing (both of which follow the 'natural' attention of the onlooker), and virtually any other standard technique. This notion of the invisible spectator provides a neat reversal of the actual reason for the whole continuity system; while the classical cinema claims to follow the attention of

the spectator, it actually guides that attention carefully by establishing expectations about what spatial configurations are likely to occur.

Although this idea came up only occasionally in the silent period, the basic idea of creating the spectator as an invisible onlooker at the ideal vantage point underlies the development of the classical system. One of the best formulations of this idea appeared in 1913; the author is des cribing the difference between the loose causality of comedy and the tighter structure of drama:[1]

> In the tragedy-form of the drama there is always a cause, a deed, and an effect. In the photo-drama, the film must create the impression among the audience that they are witnessing the three elements of the action, unknown to the characters of the play. They should be put in the position of being at the 'knot hole in the fence' at every stage in the play.

The 'knot hole in the fence' irresistibly brings to mind the concept of linear perspective; according to Renaissance perspective theory, the spectator could see the depth effect created by a painting's vanishing point by looking at it with one eye, from a single point in space. The space of the scene, both in the painting and in the classical film, is organized outward from the spectator's eye. But the knot-hole image specifies other aspects of the classical approach as well—the spectator looking directly into a space from its edge, unseen by anyone within that space. In the continuity system, however, the knot hole is not stationary, but moves to the ideal place for viewing. The displacement may be gradual in the case of camera movement, or instantaneous at a cut. The author's conception of the audience being 'put in the position' in relation to the narrative's causal events would be inconceivable in the primitive period, for it implies a fundamentally different approach to narration. The change helps define the basis of the classical cinema.

Staging in depth

Part of the impulse to place the action closer to the camera resulted from a desire to show the facial expressions of the actors. As we have already seen, filmmakers tended initially to have the actors move forward into *plan américain* or medium-long shot, avoiding cut-ins (see fig 16.10 through 16.16). This expanded the shallow playing area and utilized the empty space between set and camera. Increasingly, filmmakers avoided the awkwardness of such unmotivated movements; instead they placed the figures in several planes between the back of the set and a spot closer to the camera. In 1911 *The Moving Picture World* claimed that 10 to 15 feet was the standard camera-subject distance, or 8 feet 'with those who amputate the lower limbs to show us facial expression.'[2] The main motive for moving the actors forward was probably to provide the spectator a better view of facial expression; incidentally, however, the practice of utilizing the foreground also brought the narrative space out toward the viewer. A 1912 review drew upon the 'invisible spectator' notion in defending the close shot; it is 'natural, as in life one does not see the entire form of a person with whom he is in close relation.'[3] Thus the close framing places the spectator on the edge of a deep playing space, looking primarily at the actor, but aware as well of a setting beyond.

But the 'American foreground,' as this closer framing came to be known, was not simply a matter of single figures moving forward. Several characters who might have stood side by side in a primitive staging would be likely, from the early teens on, to occupy several planes. *The Loafer* (1911, Essanay) opens with a shot of a drunkard arguing with his wife in a cabin (see fig 17.2). The set is a flat wall behind them, but the placement of the wife at the right foreground creates a conversation at a slight diagonal into depth away from the camera. The result does not display facial expression to the best advantage; in fact the actress playing the wife must turn a bit away from the camera to address the man. But it does eliminate to some

degree the sense of an empty space in the, foreground. Another, more striking example occurs in *A Friendly Marriage* (1911, Vitagraph). In one shot, a woman sits in the foreground as another woman brings a man into the scene (see fig 17.3). The two standing figures come forward and sit, forming a triangular grouping. At no point do we see the foreground woman's face; again, the motivation is realistic rather than compositional—to create a more three-dimensional playing space rather than to reveal expression. The grouping imitates how people would sit in a room, but the result impairs the scene's clarity. Later, analytical editing would permit the realistic motivation of groupings in space, combined with an optimum view of all narrative action.

Films of the early teens are full of examples of staging in depth; it would be hard to find a film done entirely in shallow tableaux. *The Bandit of Tropico* (1912, Nestor; fig 17.4) has a shot with the bandit waiting in the foreground and a stagecoach appearing suddenly in extreme depth through a gap in the trees; in *Weights and Measures* (1914, Victor; fig 17.5), the protagonist sits close to the camera at the left as the woman he awaits enters at the rear. By the late teens, staging in depth appears frequently; with deeper sets, the placement of the figures has come to appear casual (**Love and the Law,* 1919, Edgar Lewis; fig 17.6).

Staging in significant depth began at the period around 1910 when scenes still usually avoided analytical editing. But cut-ins added a sense of moving right into the space. The combination of multiple planes of action with multiple views from different distances was a powerful means of absorbing the viewer within the action. Mae Marsh's 1921 acting guide discusses the standardization of this approach by the late teens:[4]

> Most of the dramatic action is now played at three-quarters length; that is from the face to the knees. As we weave in and out of a scene, very often the entire body is shown…but the majority of the intermediate shots through which the dramatic action is conducted cut off the lower part of the body.

As this passage suggests, in the post-1917 classical period the establishing (and reestablishing) shot is the only point in the scene at which the viewer is at a distance from the totality of the narrative space. Once we have a view of the overall situation, analytical editing moves us inside, where the 'dramatic action' primarily occurs in a medium-distance view. The Hollywood cinema seldom used close-ups or extreme closeups; but by the late teens and twenties, the medium close-up (showing shoulders and face) was common. Used for details, reactions, or intense emotions, the medium close-up often isolates the single figure from both the setting and from other figures. Depth, after all, implies that the spectator sees several objects in different planes. When only one item is dramatically relevant, a tight framing prevents our noticing the surrounding space, sometimes in combination with a mask at the edges of the frame to cut down the prominence of the background (as in fig 17.7, from *A Temperamental Wife*). In the analytical editing system, the close shot becomes the extreme degree of the viewer's placement within the narrative space. Aware of the surroundings from the establishing shot, the viewer nevertheless sees the character filling most of the frame.

Thus each shot scale in the early classical period gained its own general functions not only for laying out narrative space, but also for drawing the spectator into and out of that space. This expansion from back to front tended to force a change in the shape of the set itself.

Settings and depth

Until about 1909, sets in narrative films resembled those of the legitimate theater and vaudeville. A painted backdrop stood perpendicular to the camera, with perhaps a few pieces of real furniture for use in the action. Figure 17.8 shows such a backdrop in use, with fireplace, doorframe, corner, window, sunbeam, and

flowers all painted. Only the chair and table are three-dimensional. Such sets contrasted considerably with the depth of location shots, which would often be cut in beside them in the same film.

Since the characters remained at long-shot distance, in front of the backdrop, the resulting playing space was shallow, but wide, stretching the width of the frame. Let us assume that the *Moving Picture World* figures quoted earlier are accurate, and that the actors stayed about 10 to 15 feet away from the camera for a standard long view.[5] The backdrop in figure 17.8 is perhaps 14 feet wide. Thus in this case the actors have 14 feet in which to move back and forth, but only about 5 feet forward from the backdrop. A larger backdrop, placed further from the camera, would enlarge the playing space into depth. Such expansion, however, was limited: 'When a large stage setting is required the figures of the actors are made small upon the screen, which is objectionable.'[6] To understand why, one need only watch the 1904 *Parsifal* (Edison), where tiny figures move about, dwarfed by huge backdrops. Both this statement and *Parsifal* suggest that the actors would play directly in front of the back-drop, however far back from the camera it was situated.

The stage also used backdrops, although in combination with wings at the sides to mask the backstage area, to hide lighting instruments, and to suggest depth. (The film's frame served similar purposes and eliminated the need for wings.) In vaudeville, the depth at which the backdrop was placed defined the playing area, from a shallow space downstage for comic skits, to a deep, full stage for playlets and more elaborate acts.[7] Theaters had a stock set of backdrops for use in all situations. The box set had gradually become more prominent from the 1840s on, but as one theater historian put it in 1928, 'This present progressive century was well begun before all theatres had relinquished the old practice of representing closed rooms with open wings and borders.'[8] Large playhouses could afford to convert their setting practices, but smaller ones had little choice about retaining existing equipment. Vaudeville acts and touring legitimate troupes needed simple, portable scenery which could fit on any provincial theater's stage. Box sets finally replaced drops and wings on a widespread basis in the first decade of this century.

The cinema, with its initial close links to vaudeville, used its own version of the backdrop method. In addition to their conventional familiarity, flat drops offered economic advantages; they were cheaper than solid sets and took up less room on the small studio stages. Producers continued to use backdrops only as long as the film industry remained relatively small. Economic growth and stability followed in the wake of the nickelodeon boom and the formation of the MPPC. As soon as filmmakers were financially capable of introducing more elaborate, three-dimensional sets, they did so. The rising fortunes of the film industry are paralleled by the increasing importance of set design, until the heyday of the art director in the early twenties. The film industry's conversion to more threedimensional sets also came at about the same time that the smaller theaters were converting to the use of box sets. Although not in the forefront in this change, neither did the film industry lag seriously behind the popular theatrical practice of the day.

By the time that the transition to the classical cinema had begun, around 1909, there are signs that commentators were becoming discontented with painted sets. Compare these three remarks from the period:[9]

(1909) Is there any verisimilitude or truth in a picture of a woman weeping amidst the ruins of her home, when the canvas door evidently shakes and the flood of light which surrounds her obviously cannot come from the all-too-obviously *papier mâché* chandelier above her?

(1911) Artificial stage methods have been discarded by every successful company. Everywhere the tendency is toward truthful and compelling simulation of real life [i.e., building of actual sets and going on location].

(A 1911 review of *The Scarlet Letter* [Herbert Brenon, Imp]) The scene of the public street showing the stocks seemed rather flat and shallow. A street scene, above all others should convey the

idea of depth or distance, which this scene did not. It is very obviously a painted drop upon which shadows fall, and it was also very easy to see the line of connection it made with the stage.

During the same years that these expressions of dissatisfaction appeared, filmmakers were beginning to alter set design in several important ways. Walls became more solid and now appeared at an angle to the camera. Three-dimensional trimmings were attached to the walls. Furniture was moved forward toward the camera. Moreover, whenever possible sets were built on location, so that real landscapes rather than painted flats frequently appeared outside windows in the early teens. All these devices give a greater sense of depth, and some also move the playing space out toward the camera. In conjunction with the placement of the actors in the foreground, this new approach to setting helped to place the spectator within or on the edge of the narrative space.

Even in using backdrops, filmmakers of the primitive period had sometimes attempted to create depth by the suggestion of a second wall. By placing a corner at the side of the frame and showing a bit of a wall extending forward, they avoided the completely flat drop effect. See figure 15.3 for an example. As should be clear from this shot, however, the second wall did not extend the playing space forward substantially.

One of the most famous early examples of a deep playing area is the banquet scene in *A Corner in Wheat* (D.W.Griffith, 1909, Biograph), where the long table juts directly forward; as a result, the group of well-wishers face the Wheat King at the right foreground, creating a dynamic composition. But other less startling examples occur in that same year. Lubin had abandoned the busy painted drops that characterized his earlier studio product. He put out several films in 1909 that faced the camera into a corner: *She Would Be an Actress* (the opening scene in the couple's dining room) and *An Unexpected Guest* (both the nurse's home and the young doctor's study). Another example is Griffith's *Faithful* (1910, Biograph), in which the hero's dining room has a centered corner, functional French windows, and several real pieces of furniture against the wall, as well as the dining table and chairs at the center (see fig 17.9). All three of these examples use painted flats rather than backdrops, to achieve a three-dimensional corner (as opposed to the painted corner in fig 17.8 above). The set in *She Would Be an Actress* contains a real china cupboard which is present purely for realistic effect; it never figures in the action. The *Faithful* set is substantial enough to hold a mirror. It is still possible to see the canvas rippling in the breeze in some films done in the open air during the teens, but this distraction soon disappears.[10*]

During the early teens, filmmakers began consistently placing furniture in the foreground, often extending out of sight at the lower frameline. This practice has several advantages: It could motivate a character's move forward, and it could maintain the sense of deep space even when the characters remained at a distance. In one shot from *The Bells* (1913, Edison), the characters are not close to the camera, but the cluttered desk, the hat on the chair, and the table with its bowl, all convey a sense of the room extended forward (see fig 17.10). Note also that the back wall has several corners, placing the actors more firmly within a three-dimensional locale.

In addition to expanding the action forward from the back wall, there were attempts to suggest depth beyond that barrier. Real trees and vistas outside windows and doors were one solution, created by constructing the set outdoors, in front of the appropriate landscape. The multiple-room set was another solution. In the primitive period, the small size of stages would prevent the construction of a second room beyond the main one. But as larger permanent studios were built and outdoor filming became more feasible (due to the moves to warmer climates and the acquisition of studio lots), some filmmakers in the early to mid-teens began to place a large doorway at the rear of the set. Beyond, a substantial portion of another room would be visible.[11*] This enhanced the representation of spacious homes and made for a greater variety of staging possibilities. *The Girl in the Arm-Chair* (1912, Solax) contains a set with a parlor in the

foreground and a hallway with staircase at the rear (fig 17.11). This set creates several distinct major playing spaces in depth, with the armchair at foreground right figuring in several key scenes, the safe at the left of the door doing likewise, and the hallway beyond providing dramatic entrances and exits (as in the frame shown). In fact, this set appears in many shots in the film; possibly its greater expense limited the total number of sets the film could use.

Expense was certainly a prime consideration in the early teens. Scenario guidebooks cautioned their readers that a narrative calling for too many sets could lead to a rejection slip. In 1913, one writer suggested that six was the usual limit, and another gave a formula: 'No one-reel picture should require more "sets" than would approximate one-third of the total number of scenes, feature and out-door pictures excepted.'[12] (One-reelers of this period contained perhaps fifty to sixty shots. Given that some of these were titles and exteriors, a figure of six sets is reasonable.)

By about 1913, it is likely that producers had reached the maximum expense for sets that could be supported by one-reel filmmaking. Longer films, however, made it possible to spend more lavishly on at least one set per film. Warning scenarists against narratives that demand expensive sets, one columnist used the cabaret set of *The Mothering Heart* (Griffith, 1913, Biograph) as an example; he explained that Biograph could afford such a set because it habitually sold a larger number of prints, and because 'it is a multiple-reel, so that the cost is partially distributed through two reels.'[13] The same principle would hold true for longer features. Fox reportedly built a six-room set for a Theda Bara feature in 1916. An estimate of that same year suggests that the cheapest sets would cost several hundred dollars, while 'a good restaurant or cabaret scene may cost from $2,000 to $5,000, depending on its elaborateness and size.' Chapter 9 has also noted that publicity played up the extravagant costs of the sets as 'production value.' Promoters claimed that the Babylon set in *Intolerance* cost $50,000 and that $35,000 was spent on one set in *Civilization* (1916, Ince).[14]

The growing expense of set-building went not simply into general enlargement but specifically into greater dimension in depth. Figure 17.12 from *The Eagle's Mate* (James Kirkwood, 1914, Famous Players), shows a typical teens 'box' set for a feature film. Such a set is like a rectangle with the invisible wall placed at one of the short sides. The principle is a functional one, since in a very large, wide set the side walls would not be visible within the frame, and the set would resemble a flat backdrop placed at a distance. The result is a deep playing area rather like an Italian Renaissance stage, but with solid walls replacing the layers of flat wings at the sides. As Chapter 13 points out, contemporary designers recognized that they were creating sets to suit the perspective limitations of the motion-picture lens. One of Hollywood's top art directors, Hugo Ballin, wrote in 1921: 'A lens represents one eye, it may be the right or the left. Therefore it is important in sets to get *depth,* not width. The depth of a motion picture is infinite, its width finite.'[15] Aside from the deep rectangular box set, there was the L-shaped set with two walls. The longer wall extended toward the foreground, and the camera filmed obliquely along it into the corner. This method also creates a sense of depth, while eliminating the need for building the third wall.

By itself, deep set design would not be enough to place the spectator within the playing space. But in combination with multiple planes of action and deep focus, the deep set contributed to the extension of that space forward toward the camera. Thus the set's depth perspective would be visible mainly in the establishing shot, while analytical editing would place the spectator's vantage point within the set. Set designers took the camera's placement into account; a 1922 commentator described the planning stages:[16]

Once the requirements of the sets have been established, the art director instructs members of his staff as to those requirements, the approximate size, the placing of such buildings as will be used, their use,

the angle at which the camera will view the set and the distance at which it will be placed from the foreground in the long shots.

Planning promoted efficiency, preventing the crew from building more of the set than would appear within the frame. But it also helped create the optimum view. The camera would still stand outside the front boundary of the set in the establishing shots, but the front edge would extend just far enough to be outside the camera's field. (Such planning also encouraged standardization of lens lengths, so that the set designers could easily calculate the lens's exact field.) The spectator's vantage point is located on the scene's edge, poised to move into the space on the cut-in.

Studio set design in the mid- and late teens in a sense attempted to reconcile the split between painted backgrounds and location shooting that had existed during the primitive period. Primitive films often cut together shots done in shallow interior sets with those shot in the unlimited depth of real exteriors; for a classical film, such a disjunction would create a break in continuity. So classical design for the most part tried to suggest that settings had the depth of real locations and buildings.

The studios' ideal for authenticity and depth was location shooting itself. With no backdrop to cut off the spectator's view, the location shot could create a considerable sense of depth. In *Rory O'More* (Sidney Olcott, 1911, Kalem; filmed in Ireland) one framing places British soldiers in the foreground taking aim at the tiny figure of Rory, visible in the depth of the shot on the next ridge (see fig 17.13). In the location shot, there is less sense of looking across a neutral zone and into a delimited, rectangular space. Instead, the camera seems to be picking out one section of an expanse that goes on in every direction. The depth of most location shots helped place the spectator almost automatically at the edge of the narrative space.

But location shooting at great distances from the home studios proved excessively expensive. By the mid-teens, the elaborate construction of foreign locales was taking place habitually in the studios. *Scientific American* treated travel abroad as a thing of 'years ago'; it found that: 'To-day, in marked contrast, the producers find it easier to bring the foreign or distant spots to the studio, literally speaking. Accuracy enables them to convince the audience that the scenes are laid in the country called for by the story.' The advantages in studio shooting are that 'the producers have better laboratory facilities, understand the light better, can secure experienced players—and save time.'[17] Chapter 12 has described the increasing breakdown of the studios into specialized departments, including the art department. By using their own facilities, the producers could get better quality and more efficiency. With longer films, more actors, sets, and crews were involved in the shooting process; any savings of time saved commensurately large amounts of money in salaries. Add to this the traveling costs themselves, and the economies of all-studio-made shooting became considerable.[18]

From the mid-teens on, the switch from location shooting to large, deep studio sets was made possible by the acquisition of back lots and the erection of standing sets. Sets representing interiors were typically built either on indoor studio stages (especially in the eastern studios) or on outdoor stages (in the West and other sunny climes; see figure 17.14, Universal's stages c. 1915 in Universal City, near Los Angeles). But larger buildings would not fit on such platforms; filmmakers built them on plots of land adjacent to the studio buildings—the 'back lot.'[19*]

The introduction of the back lot, in combination with the growing prosperity of the larger companies, gave rise to some lavish settings. In the early teens, historical epics imitated the successful Italian features. The palace set in *The Coming of Columbus* (Colin Campbell, 1912, Selig three-reeler; fig 17.15) was considered by *Motography* to be the largest interior ever constructed for a film.[20] Later films contained sets that dwarfed this one. Figure 17.16, a production still from *The Queen of Sheba* (J.Gordon Edwards, 1921, Metro), shows the kind of spectacle which could be achieved on the studio back lot (note the echo of the

Cabiria temple in the building at the right). Such large sets served all of Hollywood's aims, adding novelty through spectacle and placing the spectator on the edge of a playing space much deeper than that possible on a theater stage.

It is worth noting that during the mid-teens, Hollywood set design decisively parted ways with theatrical practices of the period. At that point, the 'new stagecraft' of Gordon Craig, Max Reinhardt, Adolphe Appia, and other European producers and designers was having a major impact on American theater. The naturalistic design which had dominated for several decades under such people as David Belasco, gave way to a simplified, more stylized and atmospheric approach. Yet one could scarcely infer that this major change was going on by watching the films of the teens. Maurice Tourneur made an isolated pair of films using painted, stylized sets—*The Blue Bird* and *Prunella* (both 1918, Famous Players-Lasky)—but their dismal box-office showing ended his attempt to align Hollywood with the current theatrical scene. In general, Hollywood set design has developed its own methods, remaining true to its origins in the turn-of-the-century realist approach.

Chapter 13 has described the addition of staff members to design and supervise settings for film studios. First, during the approximate period 1907 to 1915, there was the stage manager, a role replaced by that of the art director. Art directors were expected on the one hand to create designs of great beauty or spectacle, and on the other to be expert enough to insure historical and geographic accuracy.

But as with other elements of the classical Hollywood film, beauty, spectacle, and historical accuracy were generally subordinate to narrative function. Harold Grieve, art director for the Marshall Neilan Studios, summed up this belief in 1926:[21]

> The day of sets for sets' sake is passed. For a successful picture, there must be coordination of a most intimate nature between sets and story, for the sets must help get over the feeling of the story. Mere realism or beauty alone is not sufficient. The sets must be built to harmonize with the intention of the director. They must always remain in the background, but they must fit the plot just as exactly as paper fits the wall of a room.

In order to coordinate set designs with the narrative, the art director had to be aware of other aspects of the planning. As even the California studios began increasingly to use artificially lit interior stages in the late teens, the art directors came to concern themselves with the total visual look of the shots. These art directors were coming from backgrounds in theater, in art, and in architecture; they would be accustomed to controlling or considering the effects of lighting. The art director would be likely to encourage his company to use studio interiors for greater flexibility of composition. The perpetual Hollywood comparison of setting and lighting design with painting (specifically, the Old Masters) came into being in the mid-teens. Increasingly, the art director collaborated with the director and cinematographer to plan the effects of lights and lenses. Famous Players-Lasky's art director, Wilfred Buckland, who had been trained as an engineer and architect, wrote in 1924:[22]

> By approaching screen settings from the standpoint of the pictorial artists and not the architect leading art directors are revolutionizing the building of photoplay backgrounds.
>
> Heretofore, the majority of art directors have been architects rather than artists. The setting has been made all-important and constructed with no thought of the action to take place within it….
>
> In building our settings around our characters, instead of first constructing our setting and then forcing the players into it, we are substituting for the old method an arrangement which aids and intensifies the movements of the actors—we concentrate the attention on the dramatic interest.

> We also study our backgrounds, not only for pictorial composition, but for the relation of the tonal values to the figure....
>
> We are applying to our screen pictures the same laws and principles that the old masters applied to their paintings—laws which are as definite as those of physics and mechanics.
>
> Our new school of screen artistry in settings considers also the lighting of our pictures, for on the camera's sensitized film we can paint with light and shade as an artist paints with pigment upon canvas.

This approach reached a high level of sophistication by the late silent period, with the work of William Cameron Menzies. Menzies made numerous sketches of shots, incorporating lighting, camera angle, and even lens length into the drawings (as in fig 17.17, from *The Beloved Rogue* [Alan Crosland, 1927, Feature Productions]).

By the late teens, as classical film practice had become standardized, deep sets containing multiple planes of playing area were the norm for American films. They aided in the general process of placing the spectator within the narrative space. The final touch in this process was the clear presentation of these planes using deep focus cinematography.

Deep focus cinematography

Through much of the silent period, filmmakers assumed that a considerable photographic depth of field was desirable for most shots. Critical attention to depth of field was evident as early as 1908:[23]

> Motion-picture people will tell you—some of them—that you can't have foreground sharp with the distance. And they use lenses of a couple of inches in focal length! The trouble is they sometimes use lenses of too long focus with too large openings, and do not distinguish enough between a bright day and a cloudy one, a well-lighted spot and a dim one and consequently, do not diaphragm their lenses enough when, as it is frequently possible to do, in bright lights a prominent foreground is to be included.

The principles of achieving depth of field were certainly known from still photography. A fan's review of Essanay's 1910 *The Price of Fame* remarked in *The Nickelodeon:* 'Here the makers have secured a good depth to the picture without a loss of detail.'[24] Throughout the teens and twenties, the numerous guides to cinematography almost invariably assume that the greatest possible depth of field is the proper goal. They give clear instructions for achieving deep focus through the manipulation of f-stops, lens lengths, and lighting conditions.[25]

Many films from the teens suggest filmmakers were aware of such principles and could apply them. In most shots with multiple planes of action, the foreground character will be in medium shot, with the background kept in sharp focus. In 1913, Kalem's *A Race With Time* contains a shot (see fig 17.18) taken from behind a telegraph operator as his daughter appears in the distance and walks up to the window to give him his lunch. All planes are kept in focus throughout. There are several compositions in an early feature, *Damon and Pythias* (Otis Turner, 1914, Universal), that place characters near the lens, with other characters in planes beyond (fig 17.19). *The Case of Becky* (Frank Reicher, 1915, Lasky) shows how characters could be juxtaposed against rather busy backgrounds, which still remained in clear focus (fig 17.20). A similarly cluttered background appears behind the shot/reverse-shot passage in *Field of Honor* (Alan Holubar, 1917, Butterfly; figs 16.73 and 16.74). Such background objects, kept in sharp focus and brightly illuminated, tend

to compete with the main figures for attention; a few years later, such background planes would be lit more dimly to minimize their distracting effects. A dance scene in *Love and the Law* (1919, Edgar Lewis) contains a shot with the camera moving close to one couple, while the band remains in clear focus beyond (fig 17.21).

As these examples show, the depth of field achieved in this period would not be of the type later associated with Gregg Toland, with the foreground character or object placed very close to the lens. But the characters could be in medium-shot framing, with the background kept sharply in focus. The avoidance of extreme depth of field may have resulted as much from aesthetic considerations as from technical ones. Most cutins still framed the actors in medium shot at this point; tight facial close-ups seldom appeared in films. In addition, some commentaries of the period suggest that the distortion caused by short focal-length lenses was considered disturbing and undesirable. A 1911 *Moving Picture World* article advised: 'Experienced photographers know that to get naturalness of effect in a picture a short focus lens should be avoided, otherwise you get distortion, that is unnecessary enlargement in parts of the pictures.'[26] Three years later a British cinematography guide suggested that foreground figures would seem grotesquely large in relation to the background:[27]

> The use of too short focus lenses and the consequent excessive nearness of the camera to the scene is the cause of those unpleasant pictures that we sometimes see, which are apt to suggest to the flippant-minded Gulliver among the Pygmies.

The suggestion here is that the distorting properties of the wide-angle lens—which enlarges foreground objects and diminishes those in distant planes—would make Toland-style deep focus distracting for audiences in the teens.

By the late silent period, however, exaggerated depth was appearing occasionally. The increased use of occasional tight close-ups, added to the greater variety of lens lengths in use, combined to make the large foreground object less incongruous, as figure 17.22, from *The Magician* (Rex Ingram, 1926, MGM) demonstrates. The villainous hypnotist looks down through an upper window, at the heroine in the courtyard below, visible in crisp focus. Depth functions narrationally here to suggest the hypnotist's mental control over the heroine. In general, an obvious separation of planes of action with deep focus was rare in the silent period, nor do whole films use the technique throughout. Yet the basic technology was clearly available, and filmmakers drew upon it occasionally for specific narrative purposes.

Aside from contemporary accounts and the films themselves, we know that the technology had to be available. Cinematographers began using glass shots in the early twenties; these involved placing a large glass sheet with a partial painting on it in a frame or clamp between the lens and the scene to be filmed. If properly aligned and lit, the painting blended in with the scene beyond.[28] But less attention has been given to the fact that glass shots implied a command of depth of field. A 1922 account describes how they depend upon the fact that:[29]

> with a 2-inch lens working at f-5.6, an average operating condition, the depth of field is so great that objects placed at close range and far away are all rendered sharply enough for practical purposes. The hyperfocal distance (based on a 100th inch circle of confusion) of a 2-inch lens at f-5.6 is 6 feet. In practice all objects from 5 feet to infinity are rendered sufficiently sharp.

We must dismiss, then, any lingering notion that the silent period used only a crude, unintentional deep focus resulting from 'contrasty' orthochromatic film or from crude, slow lenses.[30*] If filmmakers did not

place great stress upon deep focus, it was because such a basic assumption of their practice did not need reiteration: that one would seek as great a depth of field as shooting conditions permitted. In Chapter 21, we shall see that even after the growth of a soft style of filming, depth of field remained a concern.

Deep focus cinematography worked in combination with staging in multiple planes and with depth in set design. The spectator would not look across a space toward distant figures and setting. Instead, the larger foreground figures or setting elements would give an impression of nearness— the spectator would look past them into the deeper layers of the scene. Some shots would employ deep focus and multiple planes; other shots in the same sequence would not. The cut-in could seem to move the spectator's vantage point past the foreground elements, toward a portion of the space that had been clearly visible in a previous shot.

Together, staging, set design, and depth of field contributed to the extension of narrative space forward, with all its planes kept clearly visible. But without a change in lighting styles, the effect could be problematic. If a deep-focus composition keeps the background plane brightly lit, objects of minimal narrative significance may draw our eye away from the central action. We have already seen how in figures 16.77, 16.78, and 17.20, the busy walls at the rear attract an undue amount of attention. One additional technique, that of directional, selective lighting, was necessary in order to downplay the less significant areas of visible space within the frame.

Lighting for clarity and depth

During the teens, the adoption of arc equipment moved American film lighting practice away from a dominant use of diffused, overall illumination toward a concentration on 'effects' lighting. Effects were generally directional patches of light realistically motivated as having a specific source within the story. During the primitive period, diffused lighting had been a part of the mise-enscene which did not function narratively. It was the same whatever the narrative situation (excepting the occasional cases of fireplaces and windows). But with the classical drive to subsume every technique within the overall motivation of the narrative, there came an interest in varying lighting to suit the situation—to have the lighting issuing realistically from narrative space and varying with circumstances.

A 1918 article defined light effects:[31]

> A sign of the increased artistry on the part of motion picture producers was the introduction, some years ago of 'light effects' in their interior scenes, a 'light effect' being broadly defined as that manner of lighting a scene which would produce in the resultant photographs the appearance, or effect, of the various objects or characters in the scene being lighted to an extent which would be expected under the natural conditions which the scene was intended to represent, and with the light on any given object coming from the direction which, likewise, would be noted under the natural conditions supposed to be duplicated in the scene.

Figures 17.23 and 17.24 show a light effect from *Shamus O'Brien* (1912, Imp). Shamus is hiding in a loft from his British pursuers. As he raises a trapdoor, a beam of light from below picks him out starkly. He raises the door further and, through a stop-motion effect, dim fill light falls on the wall behind. This is an early application of the principles described in the above definition.

With the technical improvement in arc lighting during the teens, light effects became easier to execute. In 1917, Kenneth MacGowan commented favorably upon the growing tendency toward effects lighting, citing an Ince production called *Chicken Casey:*[32]

Light becomes atmosphere instead of illumination. Coming naturally from some window, lamp, or doorway, it illumines the center of the picture and the people standing there, with a glow that in intensity, in volume, or in variety of sources has some quality expressive of the emotion of the scene.

Lighting still retained its invariable function of illuminating the scene enough for it to be photographed, of course. But as MacGowan suggests, 'natural' light sources and atmospheric enhancement of the narrative came to be important considerations as well.

As an illustration of the kind of lighting MacGowan is talking about, consider a four-shot segment from *The Clodhopper,* a 1917 Ince-produced feature (directed by Victor Schertzinger). In the first shot of the scene (see fig 17.25), we see the hero's shadow on the wall as he sits sewing late at night. An eyeline match shows his mother looking at the shadow; a stark light falls on her face, motivated by the candle she holds (fig 17.26). She looks around, and another eyeline match reveals the hero, also starkly lit, the lighting now motivated by the lantern at his elbow (fig 17.27). The fourth shot is an establishing shot of the whole, with more general lighting (fig 17.28). Here much of the effect of the mother discovering her son sitting up late to repair his old clothes is created by the use of light effects, which not only create the sense of lateness, but also help prolong the moment by motivating the mother's gradual discovery of her son's activities.

Light effects initially served a novelty function as well. Occasionally during the teens, advertisements in trade journals stressed special light effects in films, sometimes using illustrations from relevant scenes. Figure 17.29 shows an advertisement for an early 1912 Imp release, stressing the fireplace effect in the still as the main selling point of the film. In 1917, *Reel Life* ran an advertisement for the Signal Film Corp.'s production, A Lass *of the Lumberlands* (a Helen Holmes serial released through Mutual); the description in the advertisement mentions the film's 'unusual lighting effects' and says:

In Lighting effects, the new Mutual chapterplay, 'A Lass of the Lumberlands' is as unusual and superior to other serials as it is in plot, action, and enactment. Some of the wonderful night 'effects' are positively startling. It is almost uncanny to behold flashing headlights, brilliantly lighted Pullmans and tremendous bonfires, depicted on the screen with such reality.

This advertisement contains a still of three men in a car at night, picked out against the black background by a single low light source within the car.[33] Thus light effects fulfilled both stylistic and economic functions— verisimilitude, atmosphere, and product differentiation.

This tendency toward the motivation of light effects from within the diegetic space was not the only impulse behind the creation of a classical lighting style, however. Paralleling this tendency was a move away from diffusion toward modeling of figures and objects through selective lighting. These two tendencies go hand in hand, since selective lighting could draw upon naturalistic sources within the story space for its motivation. Yet the specific purpose of selective lighting was not so much an impression of naturalism as it was an aesthetically pleasing image and an illusion of greater depth.

Because filmmakers sought more and more selectivity in illumination, different lighting types gradually emerged. A 1915 writer indicates that a distinction between key and fill lights was common knowledge: 'It may be laid down as a safe rule in studio practice that there shall be, first, a primary source of light…and in addition a secondary source, used to accentuate portions of the scene or action which it is desired to bring out in sharp relief.'[34] After 1910 the principles of back and side-lighting were employed to enhance the beauty of shots and to separate figure from background. In figure 17.30 from *The Loafer* (1911, Essanay), the camera has been placed in an exterior so as to keep the sun to the left and rear, behind the figures,

outlining them partially with backlight. (See Appendix D, Diagram 2, for a contemporary illustration of how sidelighting could be done.)

Several types of lighting were in at least occasional use, then, before the mid-teens. But a great shift in American lighting practice started in 1915, with lighting effects and selective lighting becoming widespread in the various studios in succeeding years. There can be little doubt that the change is in large part due to the practices of the Cecil B.De Mille unit at the Lasky studio. In 1915, De Mille and his cinematographer, Alvin Wyckoff, used spotlights provided by art director Wilfred Buckland to produce low-key lighting effects in several productions: *The Warrens of Virginia* (released February), *Carmen* (November), and, most noticeably, in *The Cheat* (December). Jesse L.Lasky used the lighting as a means of gaining publicity for his films; he wrote to *Motography* just before the release of *The Cheat,* saying: 'The picture should mark a new era in lighting as applied to screen productions.'[35]

Contemporary sources invariably credit this innovation to De Mille and his colleagues, and motivated low-key lighting arrangements soon came to be known as 'Lasky lighting.' One review of *The Cheat* commented on 'the development in the Lasky school of the purely photographic part. No school has attained greater achievements in this respect. We would have to admire the purely photographic part even if it were not subordinated to the plot. When it is thus subordinated the lighting effects may well be called a new dramatic force.'[36] This review articulates clearly the developing classical conception of lighting usage. Selective lighting adds a pleasing aesthetic quality to the image, but can be justified as having a source within the scenic space. Hence it enhances the narrative effect while providing a modicum of spectacle in its own right.

Figure 17.31 is from the famous opening scene of *The Cheat;* placed against an entirely dark background, the figure stands out in a single-source spotlight motivated as coming from a window offscreen right. Several major scenes, usually involving the Japanese businessman, use effects depending on directional spotlights. Other films from 1915 and 1916 copy Lasky lighting in a fairly direct way. In *His Phantom Sweetheart* (April 1915, Vitagraph), there is a shot with a figure illuminated starkly from the side by light coming from the next room (fig 17.32). *Dolly's Scoop* (Joseph De Grasse, 1916, Rex) has a scene with the heroine and her mother eating at a table lit by a single source, motivated as a hanging lamp; the rest of the room is in total darkness (fig 17.33).

Yet such extreme contrasts of light and dark, highly praised though they were at the time, did not become the standard way of creating a selective lighting set-up. The majority of films that used selective lighting after 1915 mixed key and fill, often adding a touch of backlight. De Mille's composition of one shot from *The Girl of the Golden West* (1915, Lasky) typifies the softer modeling of faces that became standard; the shot also shows a subdued lighting on the background that renders it unobtrusively visible (fig 17.34). Other directors at Lasky used light effects less dramatically than De Mille had in *The Cheat,* demonstrating a combination of motivated sources and selective illumination (see fig 17.35).

Within a few years, other studios had adopted the two principles of motivated light sources and selective lighting, making these the basis of the classical approach to lighting. In 1917, studio head Edwin Thanhouser declared the changes in lighting practice over the past few years to be an innovation second in significance only to that of the feature film:

A subdued shadow for an unimportant background, the accentuating of some individual face or expression or some particular action, the reflection of sunlight or moonlight through an open window, the definite sphere of radiation from an electric light, the soft glow of a fireplace, and hundreds of effects of light and shadow, all these have been perfected now, although but a few years ago, they were still in the category of crude experiments. By centering lights at different points, and subduing

or omitting them altogether at others, the entire science of motion picture photography has been revolutionized.

By the end of the teens, films often extended and refined backlighting by using it to surround the entire figure—creating what was called 'rim' lighting. The accompanying frames from *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, 1921, Metro) and *A Cumberland Romance* (Charles Maigne, 1920, Realart Pictures Corp.) demonstrate how figures were carefully picked out against a subdued background by a set of lights pointing in from a variety of directions (figs 17.36 and 17.37). As Thanhouser concludes:[37]

> For the old style of diffusing light evenly over an entire scene has given place to the newer and better method, and it is now not uncommon to see a succession of Rembrandt-like pictures, the light effects of which rival, in that respect, some of the best conceptions of the Old Masters.

Filmmakers and writers were aware of the ability of selective lighting, and especially backlighting, to produce a greater impression of depth. By outlining figures in light, the filmmaker could make them stand out against a subdued background. This in turn was desirable because it kept the eye from wandering to the set and away from the main narrative action. In 1921, Frederick S.Mills, Lasky's electrical illuminating engineer, wrote:[38]

> By focusing a spotlight on the back of the heads of the principals, the image or images are caused to stand out from the background and the figures are more pronounced and thus better depth is obtained. If this were not done, the figures would go dead against the background, no matter how far out they stood in the perspective.

Later, in 1925, a presentation to the Society of Motion Picture Engineers demonstrated the effects of backlighting. The lecturers compared two stills from *Night Life of New York* (Allan Dwan, 1925, Famous Players-Lasky; see fig 17.38), showing three actors in medium shot against a dark background. In the first, backlighting is used:

> Note how the spotlight has been used to bring up each of the characters. These highlights on the heads of each of the two men separate them from the dark background at the same time revealing the position of Mr. Kelly's left arm. The dark coat of Miss Gish has been revealed in the same manner.

The second picture is the same composition, but with all the lighting coming from the front:[39]

> Here the dark heads of the men disappear into the background and there is no suggestion of the left arm position. Obviously spotlighting of this kind is necessary…. This effect and more especially that obtained from back lighting has been done in the last few years.

This careful modeling was especially important for glamor lighting. A set-up with a key light from the left, fill from the right, and a strong backlighting is evident in one medium close-up of Mary Miles Minter from *The Ghost of Rosy Taylor* (Edward Sloman, 1918, American; see fig 17.39). The use of backlighting on blonde hair was not only spectacular but necessary—it was the only way filmmakers could get blonde hair to look light-colored on the yellow-insensitive orthochromatic stock.

Figure 17.40 shows how a close shot would combine a variety of lights, with arc floodlights at the sides, mercury-vapors and a reflector for fill light in front, and an arc spot at the rear to highlight the actress's blonde hair. The same basic types of lighting were used for long shots. The lighting set-up for *Mr. Billings Spends His Dime* (1923, Famous Players-Lasky; see fig 17.41) demonstrates the use of large floodlights in the foreground for overall illumination, with a considerable amount of sidelight coming from arc broadsides in stands. Note also the pairs of spotlights shining down from the tops of the set's walls at the rear. This combination tends to outline the figures in glowing light, as in figures 17.36 and 17.37.

The move away from diffused to selective light is apparent from lighting plots published in contemporary accounts. (The lighting plots and descriptions in Appendix D show shifts in approach through the period 1914 to 1925.) These various lighting set-ups represent the basic principles of arrangement; filmmakers could of course alter them according to circumstances. But the arrangement of lamps was the single greatest consumer of time during shooting; other personnel were paid for doing nothing while technicians changed the lights. So practice would tend toward standardized lay-outs for lighting. Usually only the larger budget films under imaginative directors, designers, and cinematographers, would display atypical effects.

As with other stylistic devices, lighting was ultimately judged by its contribution to the narrative. In spite of the many claims that Hollywood had an aesthetic of realism, filmmakers would always sacrifice realism if this was necessary for a clearer understanding of the story. In 1924, cinematographer Norton F.Brodin summed up this distinction between realist and narrative functions:[40]

> People often ask if eventually the screen lighting will not be exactly like natural lighting —people in a room, for instance, being lighted through the one window of the room. It does not seem that this condition will ever arrive. What the screen loses in voice it must make up in gesture and traveling as it must always, at a steady, fast rate, there must not be anything lost that will aid the plot and the development of it. Furthermore, it seems more important to photograph scenes advantageously from the angle of the subject, and the audience, too, rather than to be just correct in lighting. Every day we come closer to photographing scenes as they really are but never will we discard the art of photographing people and objects in the backgrounds for certain pleasing effects.

Brodin touches upon one recurring rationale for the classical narration—to show things 'advantageously' for the audience. In the primitive cinema, lighting helped the spectator to see; later, filmmakers began to consider light as it could function to help the spectator to understand more and more. By picking important figures out more brightly than their surroundings, selective lighting could emphasize them and could establish their position in the depth of the scene. Beauty and realism were additional functions, designed to make the viewer's understanding pleasurable and its technological sources in filmmaking unobtrusive.

Framing as a guide for the spectator

Depth placed the spectator on the edge of the narrative space and lighting helped pick out the salient objects in that space. But lighting was only reinforcing another strong cue for the spectator's attention—framing. Centering, the balanced composition, and the mobile frame to follow or reveal action could all work with or without selective lighting to guide the eye and to create expectations about the most important elements in a scene.

The principles of composition Chapter 5 has described as characteristic of the classical Hollywood cinema are in evidence from the early teens. Important characters and actions draw our eye because they occupy the center of the screen. The area about one-third of the way down from the top of the frame is a

privileged one for faces; whether the framing is distant or close, the heads tend to line up there (see fig 17.42). A glance through the other illustrations in this section will confirm that this practice was widespread early in the classical period.

When two figures are present, they usually balance one another, standing about equidistant from the center. (Again, fig 17.42 and other frames in this section demonstrate this.) In the primitive period, important actions sometimes took place at the extreme sides or corners of the frame. In *The Skyscrapers* (1905, AM&B), for example, the villain plants a stolen watch in the foreman's house for revenge; the foreman's daughter watches this from a hiding place and later is able to confront the villain in court and reveal his guilt. But in the planting scene, the daughter's hiding place is in the extreme upper left of the frame; even granting that original prints probably would have shown more than we see in modern ones, the framing still emphasizes the villain's gestures more than the daughter's, because he is at the center of the frame. The classical composition took care to guide the spectator's eye to the pertinent actions without effort.

One of the main impulses toward the mobile frame, or moving camera, came from the effort to maintain centering. By far the greatest number of films that used camera movement before the mid-twenties used it strictly to reframe rather than to track or pan with an extended movement. Jon Gartenberg has shown that occasional primitive films use panning or tracking.[41] Certainly the possibility of moving the camera was well-known almost from the beginning of cinema. But in the primitive period, the moving camera was associated more with scenics and topicals. These would often consist of shots in which the camera surveyed a location by panning in a circle or by moving while mounted on a vehicle. In such films, camera movement often created the main action or change by providing additional depth cues. Without camera movement, such films as Edison's series of views of Kicking Horse Canyon (1901) would show an unmoving landscape; they would offer little novelty value beyond that of a simple lantern slide of the same sight.

But the fiction film usually needed no such added motion. Figure movement provided the main interest, and in most cases staging could be done within the limits of the camera's range. Undoubtedly the static framing of most early narrative-film shots arose from the camera's imitation of a spectator in a theater seat. The flat back wall of the set did not extend much beyond the edges of the frame, and hence panning was often impossible—there was no new space to reveal. Certainly shots done out of doors use camera movements more frequently than those made in studio settings. (They occur, for example, in *The Great Train Robbery* [Porter, 1903, Edison], *A Bold Bank Robbery* [1904, Lubin], *The Skyscrapers* [1905, AM&B], and *Her First Adventure* [1908, AM&B].) Brief reframing pans became common in the teens; they occurred in about half the Extended Sample films from 1911, and they remained at about that frequency through the teens.

In spite of this common use of reframing, few films went on to employ lengthy pans or tracks. Some writers found panning distracting. One 1914 script guide commented: 'Theoretically, the eye of the camera never moves, excepting in the disillusioning practice of some operators to follow the movement of energetic characters by "panoram-ing."'[42] This opinion suggests that there was some resistance to camera movement, just as there had been to close framings. A moving camera would call attention to the frame itself, rather than the action within it. With the growing emphasis on centering the action, however, reframings were inevitable; if a figure moved partially out of the frame, there was no way to make the action visible but by re-centering. Commentators and practitioners soon realized that a small camera movement would be less distracting than a figure partially concealed by the frameline.

Reframing was not always a matter of casual adjustment to the vagaries of figure movement. Many reframings, especially from the mid-teens on, show strong evidence of planning. Figure 17.43 shows the situation at the beginning of a shot in *The Hired Hand* (Victor Schertzinger, 1918, Ince). The actors sit with

their heads at the classical point, one-third of the way down from the top of the frame. Suddenly the camera tilts up, to a position where there seems to be too much space above the characters' heads (fig 17.44). In a classical film, this can imply only two things. Either the characters are about to stand up, or another character will enter the frame; whichever the case will be, the camera adjusts the balance of the composition to anticipate the change. In this case, the characters stand up (fig 17.45). Such anticipatory reframings occur occasionally in the silent cinema; usually, however, the cinematographer tries to coordinate the reframing exactly with the figure movement, to make the camera shift less noticeable. In either case, the reframing soon became common enough not to be distracting to an audience accustomed to the device.

While the main use of camera movement was to center action, cinematographers made limited use of other functions for movement as well. Occasionally a film of the teens employs the mobile frame for a dramatic or comic revelation of new space. This coincides with the transitional period, in which films began to display more self-conscious narration; here the plot delays our knowledge of story events in order to increase their impact on us. In *At Old Fort Dearborn* (1912, Bison '101') a long shot shows a band of Indians on a hill (fig 17.46), then tilts down to show the results of a battle that has just taken place—a ruined wagon with dead driver and horses (fig 17.47). The second sequence of *Wild and Woolly* (John Emerson, 1917, Douglas Fairbanks Corp.) introduces the hero in medium shot, apparently seated at a campfire in front of a teepee; then the camera pulls back to reveal that the teepee is in fact in the hero's Manhattan apartment bedroom. Another common function for tracking or panning shots was to follow a vehicle's or figure's extended movement. Griffith helped popularize placing the camera on a platform attached to a car (as in *Intolerance*) or moving the camera back from racing horsemen (as with the galloping Klan members in *The Birth of a Nation*). Following a moving subject was undoubtedly the most common application of the tracking shot during the silent period.

Under the influence of the Italian epics that were popular in this country in the early to mid-teens, some directors and cinematographers tried using tracking and even crane shots for still other purposes. *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914, Italy) especially caught filmmakers' attention, and the slow track independent of figure movement came to be known as the '*Cabiria* movement.' Several directors used such tracking shots. For *Intolerance,* Billy Bitzer recalled filming the Babylon set with the camera mounted on a pyramidal dolly 140 feet high, with an elevator to move the camera up and down; in addition, the dolly was on a set of six parallel railroad cars that moved it toward and away from the set.[43] Lois Weber directed an intricate tracking shot for a battle sequence in *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (1915, Weber). Figures 17.48 through 17.50 show how the camera tracks directly to the right along a row of pillars, past the action; then the camera moves diagonally backward and to the left, across the room and away from the pillars. In both these films, the camera moves independently of the action, displaying the epic proportions of the sets and the staging. Movement is an important depth cue, and a mobile framing guaranteed that huge sets like the *Intolerance* and *Dumb Girl of Portici* palaces did not appear as flat, painted surfaces. The studios would want to show off the large volumes of the decor they had paid for. At least one observer of the period noticed tracking shots as a trend:[44]

> There is in vogue at some studios now a method of filming a large scene without losing detail that may be adopted generally. This consists in mounting the camera and tripod upon a rubber-wheeled platform, and moving camera and operator about the scene. Thus, first a corner may be photographed; then the camera moves and more of the scene enters the field of vision. Finally the lens may point only to the chief character in the scene.

In this there is the advantage of holding the connection between the different parts of the scene without interruption. At present, however, there is a sense of mechanics which to some may destroy the illusion of the picture.

There were no commercially made camera mounts for such movements, and each studio had to devise its own when the occasion arose. Nevertheless, most seemed to hit upon the same solution—an automobile frame and wheels with rubber tires to cushion the jolts occasioned by moving over rough ground. This apparatus served to make tracking shots, either following action or showing off a set. Several filmmakers have spoken of using such vehicles in the mid-teens,[45*] and by the end of the teens, the terms 'truck-up' and 'truck-back' were in use.[46]

Tracking, panning, and reframing movements remained in occasional use into the twenties. They were relatively infrequent, however. Most films show such extensive planning that the mobile frame is not necessary. One carefully balanced and beautifully lit composition follows another. The cutting rate was typically so fast that each individual action had its own shot; there was little impulse to combine several actions by adjusting the framing within a shot. Ernst Lubitsch's films, such as *The Marriage Circle* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1924 and 1925, Warner Bros), offer good examples of how to avoid reframing. *The Marriage Circle* begins with a tilt up to reveal a character's reaction and contains a few later tracking shots that follow action, but the camera never reframes. One of the most skilfully photographed films of the early twenties, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, cinematographer John F.Seitz, 1921, Metro), employs some impressive tracking shots during Valentine's tango scenes, but otherwise has only a couple of tiny reframing movements. On the whole, aside from tracking shots following chase scenes and the like, camera movement was a relatively minor part of Hollywood's stylistic repertory until late in the silent period.

The influence of German films in the mid-twenties—especially *Variety* (E.A.Dupont, 1925, Ufa) in 1926 —was considerable. Some cinematographers began to move their camera as freely as they could, once again devising many sorts of elevators, cranes, and elaborate dollies to imitate the German visual acrobatics. The new freedom of movement fitted well into Hollywood's existing practices. Mobile framing could function to display character perception through point-of-view shots, to substitute for editing in the creation of an omnipresent narration, to display the volume of large sets, or to aid in other specialized effects tailored to the needs of a given narrative situation. In *Hotel Imperial* (Maurice Stiller, 1926, MGM), Bert Glennon mounted his camera on an elevator which in turn hung from a set of overhead rails (fig 17.51). Charles Rosher claims to have learned the technique of the dolly suspended from tracks in the ceiling when he was observing the filming of *Faust* in Germany in 1926.[47] He and Karl Struss used it to spectacular effect in the famous camera movement through the swamp in *Sunrise* (F.W.Murnau, 1927, Fox). For *Seventh Heaven* (Frank Borzage, cinematographer Ernest Palmer, 1927, Fox) the camera was mounted on a large elevator to follow the characters vertically up several flights of stairs (fig 17.52). This sudden emphasis on mobile framing undoubtedly contributed to the sense many observers had during the early sound period that the camera was imprisoned in its soundproof booth. Actually, as Chapter 23 will show, early sound filming encouraged a return to reframing.

Continuity editing and the various devices discussed in this chapter—staging, set design, deep focus, lighting practices, and camera movement—combined to tailor space moment by moment to the demands of the narration. In the primitive period, space had been presented in a series of large blocks which kept the spectator at a distance, scanning the entire space to follow the action. By the late teens, films provided multiple cues to guide the eye and the understanding. In effect, omniscient narration began to manipulate the plot relations to a greater degree. The techniques of narration were unobtrusive because films thoroughly

motivated their mise-en-scene and framing and matched their shots to create an uninterrupted flow. However strange or difficult silent films may appear to us today, we can still look at works from the late teens and twenties and find a standard classical presentation of causally relevant space and time.

18
The stability of the classical approach after 1917

Standard form is not an arbitrary Detail of a passing Mood, but a composite Assemblage of all that has proved effective in past Expression.[1]

Henry Albert Phillips, 1921

At the beginning of Part Three, I suggested that the classical cinema gained its full formulation in 1917. The initial coalescence of all the elements of classical filmmaking came at that particular time because a variety of practices in the industry had recently become dominant. New subdivisions in the work process created production roles like those of the art director, the master cutter, and the assistant cameraman, leading to a greater emphasis on specialization and denned procedures. Feature films forced more concentration upon a variety of techniques and permitted more money to be invested in each film. The supervisory segment of the studios fostered a division of labor and an attention to efficiency that would further support a systematic approach to filmmaking. Finally, a wide range of industry institutions were disseminating a normative description of the quality film.

I do not wish to imply that all films from 1917 on were complete or correct in their utilization of the classical system. Many drew upon it in a tentative or clumsy way; others could easily be mistaken for mid-twenties films. But few entirely fail to draw upon the system. And by the mid-twenties, classical filmmaking had reached a relative stability.

Undoubtedly a film of the mid-1920s is likely to look somewhat different from one of 1917. During the interval, filmmakers were assimilating the guidelines, which had reached the status of rules. Custom and practice made it easier to match on action smoothly, to light every interior scene with the same overall look, to motivate the movements of characters into various planes, and so on. Such practices were matters of skill; the use of classical guidelines could be more or less correct, but films of the late teens and of the twenties would appeal to the same basic principles. Films of the twenties frequently have a technical and stylistic perfection and an apparent ease missing from most teens films. To some extent this may be due to the fact that a new generation of directors and other filmmakers was already emerging. These people had made their first important films during the mid- to late teens, when the continuity system, effects lighting, and other central aspects of the classical style were being explicitly discussed as the way of doing things. Among directors, John Ford, Raoul Walsh, Edward Sloman, Victor Fleming, Clarence Brown, John Stahl, James Cruze, W.S.Van Dyke, Alan Crosland, Henry King, King Vidor, Rex Ingram, Frank Borzage, William C.deMille, Fred Niblo, and Malcolm St Clair were all expert in the classical system of the twenties, and all made their first major films during the period 1915 to 1920.

By the 1920s, directors, cinematographers, and other filmmakers had a range of models of the classical style to follow. As one 1928 commentator, referring to scenarists, suggested: 'What the trained writer of

twelve years or more ago laboriously sweated over and figured out in continuity form, most young men who grew up with the movies (using the screen's evolutionary efforts for their main entertainment) know instinctively today.'[2] After 1917, a filmmaker's attempts to give his or her work a distinctive look would take place within well-defined limits. Filmmaking now was guided by a set of standards and norms often codified in print. A budding filmmaker could be taught the system and would be likely to receive basically the same advice from any experienced practitioner.

Learning standard style

There were no schools or classes held by the studios to teach newcomers how to make films, nor does there appear to have been any formal apprenticeship program at any studio. Certainly the system of assistants to directors, cinematographers, editors, art directors, and the like must have functioned as an informal apprenticeship program. Similarly, filmmakers usually had to work their way up, starting on less important films and moving on to the higher budget features. In 1920, Carl Laemmle described the system in force at Universal:

> Our directors and cameramen, and we hire only the most experienced, go through a new school when they join our organization. They have to work up from the one-reel pictures. Then they graduate to the serials and from there to the special attraction class. They are learning all the time. When they get in the special attraction class they have profited by their previous work. As a result, a Universal special attraction is not marred by a 'serial-ish tone.'

Finally, according to Laemmle, filmmakers would 'graduate' to making Uni versal-Jewels, the studio's highest line of films.[3]

A variety of practitioners have recalled their early experiences, and, given the absence of primary documentation from the period, these reminiscences are the best evidence we have as to how filmmakers learned their crafts. Young employees were sometimes willing to work long hours, learning skills not called for in their regular duties at the studio. Several have mentioned getting help from more experienced filmmakers who guided them along. Karl Brown worked as an assistant to Bitzer and Griffith, eventually going on to be a cinematographer and director on his own. Margaret Booth has recalled learning editing by watching director John M. Stahl: 'I used to stand by him while he cut, and he used to ask me to come in with him to see his dailies in the projection room. This way he taught me the dramatic values of cutting, he taught me about tempo—in fact he taught me how to edit.' On her own time, Booth practiced editing outtakes until Stahl promoted her to doing his first cut.[4] Dorothy Arzner, a script typist at Famous Players in 1919, got similar help from a cutter, Nan Heron, who eventually recommended her for promotion to script girl and editor. William Hornbeck tells a similar story about getting 'advice and tips' from F.Richard Jones at Keystone; Hornbeck has also recalled that when he began as a projectionist at Keystone, he 'kept watching and each runthrough I'd see what had been done to the film. I would learn from the others that were ahead of me.' The similarity of these stories suggests a pattern that may have been common—with young hopefuls either observing the procedures of more experienced filmmakers, or getting direct advice from them. The same sort of thing apparently happened with writers. When Clarence C.Badger joined the writing staff at Lubin about 1913, the head of that department taught him 'how to split up a story into scenes, in other words, how to write a shooting script.'[5] This method of learning technique would promote standardization of each specialized task. Such learning would be especially necessary in the areas most dependent upon technological knowledge, such as cinematography and laboratory work.

But aspiring filmmakers seem also to have learned the classical style quite simply by watching films. Compare these two remarkably similar accounts of learning style from a theater seat. The first, written long after the fact, is King Vidor's description of his attempts to learn how to direct, the night before he was due to shoot his first film, a freelance newsreel; this was about 1912. The second comes from a 1914 article in which a freelance scenarist told *Photoplay* readers how she had succeeded in selling forty scenarios and winning Vitagraph's scenario contest:[6]

> (Vidor) That evening I tried to increase my knowledge of motion-picture technique by going to the movies. I sat with a stop watch and notebook and tried to estimate the number of cuts or scenes in a thousand-foot reel, the length of individual scenes, the distance of the subject from the camera, and various other technical details.
>
> (Sterne) I went to the movies, pencil and paper in hand, determined to master the technique by study at close range…. Before long I had a rough idea of how many scenes constituted a comedy— how many a drama. I discovered what style of pictures various companies required. Even now I find myself unconsciously counting inserts and scenes as a matter of habit.

The aspirants may have been more systematic than most, but their attention to precise and quantifiable factors accorded well with the studios' ideals.

Early scenario manuals sometimes urged writers to attend films to learn technique. A professional scenarist wrote in 1917:[7]

> Every scenario writer should practice continuity writing persistently and should follow carefully the continuity of productions he sees upon the screen, and then he will readily pick the flaws in other writers' work and see where they themselves could better it if given the opportunity. Continuity writing is largely a matter of practice and keen observation.

Professionals within the industry were advising amateurs to do much the same thing they habitually did themselves. Various organizations encouraged filmmakers to gather and see each other's work. In the twenties, industry clubs and professional organizations often had projection rooms or special screenings. The studios themselves had access to prints, which they might show to their employees. Charles G.Clarke, who worked at Fox in the mid-twenties, recalls that the personnel regularly attended dinners which would be followed by screenings of films that studio officials wished them to be aware of. In 1922, the Chicago laboratory of the Rothacker company held a 'cutters' convention,' where a number of editors screened the films they were currently working on.[8]

Cinematographers saw each others' films frequently and influences passed freely among them. Arthur Miller recalled that 'cameramen were copycats; one copied the other, I copied someone, someone also copied me.' Clarke agrees that cinematographers could learn more about lighting, for example, from seeing other people's films than from experimentation. Asked about visually influential films of the period, he named *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Broken Blossoms,* and *Way Down East* 'The only way that you could know what was going on was to go to the movies and see.'[9] The speed with which any innovation became diffused across the industry tends to confirm these recollections.

Although the Hollywood production system favored a certain degree of innovation on the part of its employees, it generally rewarded their conformance to its established filmmaking approaches. As we have seen, an innovation had to be adaptable to the existing guidelines of narrative and stylistic construction

before it could enter the system. Even a relative nonconformist would have to know the basic filmmaking paradigm in order to depart from it acceptably.

The contemporary recognition of stand ardization

> All our directors are not great. There would be no fun for the picture audiences if they were. Fans would be deprived of that greatest of all pleasures, writing to the magazines to point out that Marie wore silk stockings going in the door and lace filigreed hose coming out of it.[10]
>
> <div align="right">Peter Milne, 1922</div>

Films and writings of the period demonstrate that certain devices and functions were consistent practice in Hollywood. But beyond this, there is written evidence that Hollywood considered itself standardized. Practitioners did not find the image of factory production detrimental; standardization was conceived as a positive force.

By the late teens and twenties, Hollywood writings were separating off the early years of filmmaking as a crude stage which had been surpassed. Although fond at all times of repeating the old saw that the movies were still in their 'infancy' (and hence capable of continual, rapid progress), people within the industry seem also to have believed that the art had reached a sort of plateau by the late teens. Writers referred especially to the older chase and trick films as typical of the crude material that would be unacceptable to modern audiences. Austin C. Lescarboura summed up this view in 1920:[11]

> There is a vast difference between the photoplays of the present and those of a decade ago. But during the past two or three years progress along this line has been somewhat limited and not so obvious. The photoplay of today leaves little to be desired; motion-picture acting and story-telling technique and photography appear pretty nearly perfect.

In a sense Lescarboura's statement seems naive, for there were to be frequent changes in filmmaking devices in the years to come—most notably the introduction of soft-style cinematography and sound during the twenties. But he was also remarkably quick to pick up on the classical formula's transition into a period of relative equilibrium. The notions of rapid progress which writers had set forth in the midteens now took a back seat to a more tempered approach to change within a standardized system.

Even as early as the late teens, many writers and historians assumed that Griffith had single-handedly brought about the transition to the classical cinema. A 1917 account credited him with having 'wrought out the grammar of this new language in the world of art,' and with having 'established such well-defined rules of technique that nearly all the works in motion pictures can be traced in some manner to certain developments of his. The universal school of cutting, the closeup, the cutback…' This account also traces the formula used in comedy films to Mack Sennett, and concludes that 'the rules invented by these men are as inviolable as the rules of harmony, classified from the works of Mozart, Wagner and others.'[12] One could scarcely ask for a better summary of the Hollywood cinema as a 'classical' system.

There were numerous statements during the twenties, both praising and attacking Hollywood's standardization. Harold Lloyd recognized the balance of standardization and differentiation which characterized Hollywood when he described his films in 1926:[13]

> If they are designed from slightly different angles, so that in a series of three pictures we can offer our whole bag of tricks and vary our appeal, then we have done what we aimed to do. And this will make

for a certain standardization of comedies. Of course by this I do not mean that we create a rubber stamp or formula by which we make pictures. It is rather a standard of appeal from slightly different points, or a blending of average tastes.

This description seems overly modest in relation to Lloyd, whose silent features surely rank among the most polished and varied (and lucrative) works turned out by a single artist within the Hollywood system during the twenties. Yet the passage also suggests the power of that system to allow someone as inventive as Lloyd to turn out quality films quickly—films which would appeal predictably to a broad audience.

Hollywood practitioners and writers at least professed to believe that the system of norms was a response to the desires of audiences. Contemporary accounts paint the viewer as quick to pick up on anachronisms or inconsistencies of mise-en-scène from shot to shot. The 'Why do they do it?' letters column of *Photoplay* encouraged readers to send in descriptions of errors they spotted. Invariably the letters referred to the handling of mise-en-scène (an 1887 model gun in a Civil War scene, an object switched from right to left hand at the cut). In 1916, *Photoplay* reported that fans also wrote in to the studios when they spotted errors:[14]

> The same discriminating public which is responsible for the creation of art and technical directors is the *bete noir* of those officials, for technical flaws are quickly discovered by the 'outsiders' and some of the more enthusiastic fans do not hesitate about writing the producer to 'set him right.' Then the art director hears from the 'big boss.'

Although fault-finding on the part of the audience sometimes appears to be a headache for the studios, Chapter 9 has shown that Hollywood has a stake in promoting such an activity. By focusing spectator attention on nitpicking, the industry could enhance the publicity value of the art director's work; historical and geographical accuracy became a saleable aspect of the films.

The *Photoplay* column and other popular sources give no hint that ordinary moviegoers noticed violations of screen direction or other continuity rules. Yet practitioners still assumed that a spectator would sense flaws. Compare these two accounts of spectator to continuity.[15]

> (1917) Ninety-nine picture fans in every hundred can instantly tell whether the continuity in a picture is good or bad. They will not stop to analyze it; that isn't necessary. They feel instinctively whether it is rhythmical or not; whether the scenes follow one another in proper sequence, and whether the correct values of each to the other are maintained.
>
> (1918, speaking of a fan who has found a film's story hard to follow) But its faults were intangible. Had an English house been flashed on the screen as an old Southern homestead, or a girl shown playing tennis in an evening gown, then she could have explained the faults. The public are location and wardrobe wise by this time but they are not yet 'cutting wise.'

As a result of the idea that audiences were not consciously aware of cutting, the fan magazines tend to refer to it seldom; the second passage quoted above is a rare exception. Usually *Photoplay* and the other popular journals concentrated on art direction, costumes, special effects, and other techniques of mise-en-scène—hence perpetuating audience interest in them and not in editing. This bias, which has remained in force to the present, helps keep attention on spectacle while allowing editing to remain unobtrusive and unnoticed.

These opinions from the period leave little room for doubt that Hollywood was aware of its own standardization as it occurred. There are references to the various techniques as 'rules' and appeals to the

norms of classical systems in other arts to justify those rules. Moreover, most practitioners saw the standard style as an aid to filmmaking rather than as a restriction. (Those for whom the norms *were* constraining—principally Erich von Stroheim, and to a lesser degree Rex Ingram, Maurice Tourneur, and Josef Von Sternberg—eventually left the American industry proper.)

From the late teens on, Hollywood's narrative and stylistic approaches would receive relatively small adjustments. One issue may serve as an indication of the degree of sophistication the classical filmmaking system had reached by the end of the teens. Beginning around 1920, a few contemporary writings discuss strategies for avoiding 'eye fatigue' for the viewer. So clear were the basic rules concerning spatial and temporal construction, that writers could turn their attention to such a minor problem. The solution was more continuity—of tonality and of composition. In 1920, Lesqarboura summed up this solution; eyestrain, he wrote, was caused by:

> sudden changes on the screen, either in the composition of successive scenes or in the degree of illumination. For instance, if in one scene the eyes have been drawn to a figure on the extreme left, and in the next the point of interest lies to the extreme right, the onlooker is immediately disconcerted and his eyes seek out the new point of interest only after suffering eyestrain and momentary confusion. Again, if one scene has been made in the open, in bright sunlight, and the next is uniformly dark, the quick change from a bright scene to a dark one and particularly vice versa is quite trying.
>
> Already producers have given much attention to the matter of scene changes on the screen. The more advanced producers at this moment have more or less overcome all sudden changes in either light or points of interest. Where successive scenes do not match up sufficiently close to permit of going directly from one to the next, the various devices such as the 'fade-in' and 'fade-out,' the various vignettes, and so on are employed. In this manner the eyes are gradually removed from one scene and introduced to the next.

Lescarboura adds that tinting, toning, and art cards for titles all aid in achieving an even visual quality from shot to shot.[16]

A later observer in the Hollywood studios echoed these remarks in 1927, concluding:[17]

> Pictorial rhythms must seem to sway from scene to scene, must pick up naturally from one to another, and must vary enough to avoid monotony.
>
> Consider three consecutive scenes, A, B, and C. If at the close of A the interest is placed on the right, then scene B, although perhaps quite unconnected in subject matter with A, must begin with the interest concentrated almost at the point which the eye was watching at the close of A, or it must continue a movement suggested by A. Again, whatever the action may be that runs through B, scene C must pick up the interest at the local spot where B ceases. So that the eye is danced about insensibly, but is never steeplechased.

This concern with graphic continuity carries forward concepts upon which the classical system was based. As with temporal and spatial relations, no breaks or shocks should jar the eye, lest attention be momentarily shifted from the narrative to the film's technical aspects. This notion is perhaps a minor one, but that is precisely the point; the major changes had taken place by the late teens. In the twenties, filmmakers could work at perfecting an existing system.

A summary example: *Code of the Sea*

In the course of Part Three, we have seen that by the 1920s the stylistic devices of classical filmmaking were in use and that their range of functions was well-established. We have also seen to some degree that the systems of time and space were subordinate to that of causality. But in examining Hollywood's devices in a somewhat atomistic fashion, I have not yet shown that classical silent films drew thoroughly and exclusively upon these systematic relations. Only an analysis of a typical film can demonstrate that Hollywood had indeed created a stable, pervasive classical approach by the twenties.

*Code of the Sea (Famous Players-Lasky) is in many ways a typical 'A' feature of 1924. Made by a relatively major but non-auteur director, Victor Fleming (who had already completed a dozen films since his switch from cinematographer to director), the film was a starring vehicle for Rod La Rocque.

Code of the Sea contains a unified cause-effect chain which reaches closure at the end, leaving no lines of action unresolved. An event in the past— the earliest event referred to in the film— provides the main cause. Bruce McDow's father, John, had been in charge of a lightship which warned vessels away from a rocky coast. During a storm, John had lost his nerve and sailed the lightship into shelter, thereby allowing an ocean liner to crash and its passengers to drown; John subsequently died, branded a coward. This all happens before the film's action begins. Bruce has grown up believing himself to have inherited his father's cowardice, and, as the film opens he loses his first job on the crew of a ship by being too scared to climb the mast. His girlfriend Jenny Hayden urges him to try again. Her father is the owner of a line of steamships, one of which had been in the fatal accident caused by John. Captain Hayden forbids Jenny to see Bruce, and favors another suitor, Stewart Radcliffe. This basic situation leads Jenny to help Bruce obtain a post aboard the same lightship his father had commanded. During a gale, Bruce proves his courage by saving the passengers aboard Captain Hayden's sinking yacht, including Jenny and Radcliffe. Bruce falls into the sea as the yacht goes under, but he is washed ashore unconscious the next morning, where Jenny finds him.

This story line is extremely simple; the film fills it out through variations on the elements of Bruce's despair and Jenny's urging him on. The characters provide the basis for most of the film's action. Each has a severely limited number of traits which we learn at his or her first appearance. An inter-title introduces Bruce by saying that this is his first sea voyage, and the shot that follows this title frames Bruce's apprehensive face. The captain orders him aloft, but he is too frightened to go and instead ends up peeling potatoes in the galley. Everything emphasizes Bruce's cowardice, and he behaves in a consistent fashion until he overcomes his fears. First impressions of the other characters are also valid and lasting. We initially see Jenny as she greets Bruce on the dock at his return. She obviously is in love with him, delighted at his return, and disappointed when he reveals his failure. Jenny will be the main causal impetus behind Bruce's character change. The inter-title that introduces Captain Hayden declares that he hates the name McDow, having lost his ship years before through John's cowardice. Within a few shots, Hayden forbids Jenny to see Bruce; later, after she fails to accept Radcliffe as a suitor, Hayden sends her on a yacht trip to forget Bruce. Radcliffe first appears taunting and bullying Bruce, and he continues to be a cad throughout. Except when some change of traits is clearly motivated, the characters remain true to our initial impressions of them.

Chapter 2 has mentioned that the star system reinforces the rapid construction of consistent characters and can prepare for 'plausible' character change. The only real star in the film is Rod La Rocque, who had risen to fame during the years before the release of *Code of the Sea*. La Rocque was among the 'Latin lover' types who became prominent after Valentine's success in 1921 with *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Like Valentine, La Rocque had a general image of glamor, with a slightly foppish or flighty quality. He was more a sensitive than a he-man type, being quite capable of portraying weak or erring men who redeemed themselves eventually. Although he had played the villain in DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* the year before, La Rocque was, by mid-1924, a leading man. At the beginning of *Code of the Sea,* his star persona

would lead the audience to believe in his doubts and fears, but to realize that Bruce McDow is probably not 'really' a coward. There is a strong hypothesis from the start that he only thinks he is, and this sets up later scenes where he overcomes his weakness.

This problem with cowardice sets up one main line of action; the second, following the frequent classical pattern, is a romance. The two lines initially are linked by the past connection between the two fathers. In the film's action, the romance with Jenny provides the incentive for Bruce to keep trying to overcome his fears. In the second scene, Jenny tells Bruce she knows of a way for him to 'conquer' himself. Later, she says his salvation will be to think of others. Although he has further doubts along the way, Bruce eventually does behave bravely, risking his life to save the passengers aboard the yacht.

Along the way to this goal, most of the causal agents are human. Jenny aids Bruce, Radcliffe and Hayden oppose him, and Bruce's own hidden strength pulls him through. The storm that provides him with his big chance is the only natural agent that intervenes, and it is there simply as a means of throwing Bruce into action. He, not the storm, determines the outcome.

The film's narrative is usually careful to provide motivation so that individual causes will not appear coincidental. The storm, although described as 'the worst gale within the memory of man,' could be expected in a geographical area that needs to keep a lightship on constant duty offshore. Bruce ends up working on the same lightship that had proved so disastrous for his father, but again a reason is supplied. The basic motivation is compositional; Bruce must reverse his father's mistake, so Jenny provides the assignment letter. And her ability to do so is in turn motivated realistically; as the daughter of a rich ship owner, she knows the various maritime officials in the area, and she gets one of them to arrange for Bruce's assignment. Indeed, virtually the only cause not motivated in any way is the sudden placement of Bruce in command of the lightship after two months on the job. An intertitle abruptly informs the viewer that the captain has been transferred and that Bruce is now in charge. Classical unity would dictate some early mention of this transfer; this minor lapse is the only irregularity in the film's overall causal chain.

Not only is the narrative of *Code of the Sea* fairly simple and unified, but the film provides considerable redundant emphasis on the most basic causal factors. Bruce's cowardice is reiterated time and again. In the opening scene, he is apprehensive before given the order to go aloft; he is unable to obey and ends up in the galley peeling potatoes while the cook lectures him—'Leap before you look.' In this scene the sailors taunt him, and in the second scene they come ashore and sing a song about the 'boogeyman' to him. (The intertitles reinforce this point still further with 'shaky' lettering.) Everyone who meets Bruce subsequently mentions his cowardice in some way. Alone, he has visions of superimposed 'Fears' which taunt him similarly with repeated references to his weakness (see fig 18.1).

Finally, several motifs function redundantly to reinforce this already obvious trait of Bruce's personality. Aside from the 'Fears' that appear in a couple of scenes, Bruce's timidity becomes associated with the potatoes he peels in the first scene. Later, seeing a bowl of potato peels in his mother's kitchen, Bruce becomes upset. But most consistently, the film uses Bruce's dog as a parallel for him. The dog meets Bruce on the pier in scene 2; an inter-title characterizes it as the only one who believes Bruce to be 'all that was good—and brave—and true.' Later in the scene, Radcliffe's fierce dog chases Bruce's dog, which turns tail and runs. Radcliffe then taunts Bruce as a 'cur' (stooping immediately after to pick a stray potato peel out of Bruce's cuff). Much later in the film, Hayden vows to take his daughter away from that 'mongrel,' Bruce. When Jenny assures Bruce she loves him, the dog apes Bruce's determination, barking to banish a superimposed phantom of Radcliffe's dog (paralleling Bruce's 'Fears'). So important does the dog parallel become that the epilogue continues after Bruce and Jenny's final embrace. In the film's final shots, Bruce's dog spots Radcliffe's dog and chases it off down the beach.

The narration presents the film's causality in a clear, straightforward fashion; the narration begins with credits over a live-action shot of waves on a rocky shore confirming the title. Early in the first scene, several expository inter-titles introduce characters and give information about them; the tone of these titles is neutral, creating a minimally self-conscious narration even at the opening. These expository titles are able to drop out of the scene quickly, since the film begins *in medias res*. We see Bruce behave in a cowardly fashion; then one of the sailors taunts him: 'Yer as yellow as yer father was!' Thus the major relevant past action—Bruce's father's cowardice—is introduced not by a self-conscious narrator, but by a character. Only later, at the end of the scene, does an expository title step in to inform us what the father's specific action had been (and this title is compositionally motivated by Bruce's glimpse of the lightship his father had commanded). Several subsequent scenes have no expository inter-titles, and the titles that do occur tend to come early in their respective scenes.

Code of the Sea contains extreme redundancy, but for the most part, repetition arises from the characters' actions rather than from restatements of information by the omniscient narration. A variety of devices repeatedly stresses Bruce's cowardice: the sailor's taunts, the cook's lecture in the first scene, Bruce's own ruminations and visions of his 'Fears,' Jenny's several exhortations to him to conquer himself, and especially the parallel scenes of his dog's timidity. Yet the expository titles barely mention this subject, functioning primarily to name characters and situations, or to indicate at one point that two months have passed. The narration remains essentially unself-conscious even at the film's end. The final shot is motivated as Radcliffe's point-of-view as he watches Bruce's dog chasing his along the beach into the distance. Hence the narration subordinates itself to the actions of the characters.

But even though the characters present much of the causal chain, the film's narration remains intermittently omniscient. Bruce carries much of the action and the audience's sympathy, yet we know things that he does not. The third scene takes place in the Haydens' home, concentrating upon Jenny's family and her father's wish for her to marry Radcliffe. Later, in the party scene, Bruce tries to save Jenny, whose dress has been accidentally set on fire. Just as he overcomes his fear and rushes to her aid, Radcliffe pushes him down. Bruce hits his head on a rock and doesn't remember that he had tried to help; instead he sees Radcliffe take credit for the rescue. In this segment the audience sees Radcliffe toss the careless match that causes the accident, even though Bruce and Jenny do not see this; and we know that Bruce did try to act bravely, while he thinks he held back. The extra knowledge the audience gains in this scene is important in motivating Bruce's eventual heroism in the storm scene. Even from the second scene onward, the audience senses that Jenny's faith in Bruce is justified (he is, after all, the star). Yet nothing in the film tells us overtly that Bruce is really brave; the omniscience of the narration is not apparent. Indeed, at times we seem very close to Bruce's subjective experiences. As with many Hollywood characters, he talks about his feelings frequently —with his mother and with Jenny—and we even see his mental images (fig 18.1). Thus the film keeps a balance between our sympathy with Bruce's worry that he will fail and our basic belief that he will succeed. In this way the film maintains suspense until the end, but also guarantees that the final triumph will not seem unmotivated.

Code of the Sea is unexceptional in its maintenance of clear temporal indicators. Most scenes are continuous, with fades between them to mark time lapses. The temporal relationship of each new scene to the preceding one is made clear early on. The first scene shows the ship approaching land, and the second takes place later the same day as Bruce comes ashore and meets Jenny. The third shows dinner at the Hayden household, with Radcliffe blaming Jenny's tardiness on her talk with Bruce; we can easily infer that only a little time has elapsed since scene 2.

Appointments mark off several intervals. Jenny invites a friend to a party to take place the next night; later she sets up a rendezvous for nine o'clock that same night. Although no durational limits are specified

during the storm scene, there is the constant suggestion that the. yacht will sink with Jenny aboard unless Bruce gets there in time. Crosscutting compresses time in two different scenes: Bruce's preparations for and walk to Jenny's party, intercut with the party's progress; and the extended rescue scene during the storm, which cuts among the yacht, Hayden's liner, the lightship, Bruce's launch, and the rescue party on the shore. In addition, faster editing rhythm during the storm scene marks this as the climactic stretch of the film's narrative.

The film's space remains true to Hollywood's continuity guidelines. *Code of the Sea* employs analytical editing in the conventional pattern, as in the shot/reverse shot from the opening scene (figs 18.2 and 18.3). Here the frontality of the classical cinema is apparent, as each character's body is turned toward the camera, with only the face angled toward the offscreen character. Both heads occupy the privileged spot, two-thirds of the way up the frame in the center. The same is true in figure 18.4, as Bruce talks to his mother. This shot shows a depth effect, with rim lighting picking out the figures against a darker background plane; three-point lighting models their faces. Overall there is little that departs from the various spatial rules of editing or framing; the few cuts that violate screen direction are decidedly exceptional.

Decoupage in *Code of the Sea* is similarly exemplary. In a period for which Chapter 6 claims the average number of shots was 750–900, the film has 871, with 133 inter-titles (15.2 per cent of the total—again matching the average of 15 per cent). Its number of sequences is relatively small —eleven, as opposed to the silent-period average of fifteen to sixteen. This disparity arises from the unusually lengthy rescue sequence.

But such correspondences to the norm are to be expected—*Code of the Sea* is one of the Unbiased Sample films from which these figures were derived. More importantly, the film's internal scene-by-scene organization already follows the pattern Chapter 6 has described as typical of the classical cinema as a whole. The film shows that by 1924, filmmakers were constructing scenes with brief initial expository passages, followed by developmental sections which close off an old dangling cause and set up at least one new cause for a future scene. The important central party scene (number 7) begins with the party already in progress, echoing the *in-medias-res* opening of the whole film. An inter-title briefly states that it is 'party time'; then a long shot shows the living room of the Hayden house where the party is occurring. After only a few seconds of establishing material to set up the situation, time, and space, the action begins as Superintendent Beasley (the friend Jenny had invited earlier) enters to give Jenny a paper. This is the appointment for Bruce to a position aboard the lightship; at the end of scene 5, Beasley had promised Jenny he would obtain it. This closes off one previous cause. An intercut scene follows, setting up Bruce at home, preparing for the party. He reads a letter from Jenny arranging to meet him at nine o'clock; this prepares for the main action which will form the bulk of the scene. After he meets her, the development section of the scene occurs; Jenny gives him the letter, and the dress burns accidentally. The scene ends with two dangling causes. First, Hayden threatens to send Jenny on a yacht voyage; we will see this happen in scene 9. Secondly, Bruce sends the lightship-assignment letter back to Jenny, in despair over what he assumes is his own cowardice; this becomes the cause taken up in scene 8, as Jenny comes to Bruce's home and talks him into taking the job. Scene 8 in turn ends with the unanswered question of whether Bruce will succeed, and the two dangling causes come together in the climactic rescue sequence. Indeed, they represent the film's two lines of action—Bruce's cowardice and the romance.

No one film is the classical cinema, for no one film can explore every possibility the paradigm allows for. *Code of the Sea* is typical of classical usage in the mid-twenties, however, because it remains within the paradigm, using its principles in varied and flexible ways. While it adheres to classical guidelines almost entirely, we can find a couple of distinctive aspects about this film. Its climactic rescue-at-sea sequence is lengthy, taking up a larger portion of the whole than most Hollywood films would allot to a single scene.

And the hero's repeated visions of his 'Fears' take symbolism further than might be typical— although they are by no means unique. Many films of the late teens and twenties show such inventiveness—often to a considerably greater degree than does *Code of the Sea*. But by this point, unlike in the early teens, inventiveness is a regularized part of the system—guided, limited, controlled. The classical cinema is now firmly in place,
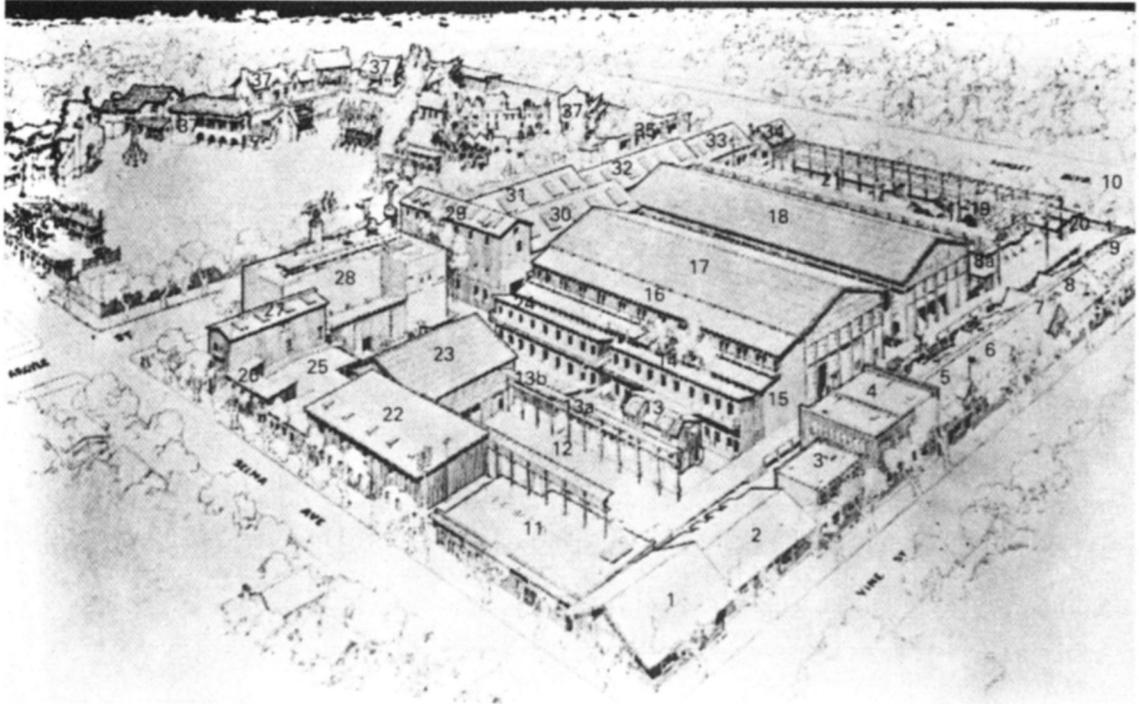
1	Property room		over dressing room used	of Stage No. 4	removed and addition to
2	Outgoing property room		by Geraldine Farrar	21 Sail boat in tank	laboratory erected
3	Star dressing room	13a	Title department, and	22 Dark stage	29 Paint frame
	building		printing plant, and	23 Small glass stage	30 Fitting room
4	Wardrobe building		electrical department	24 Extra dressing rooms and	31 Carpenter shops
5	Engaging department	13b	Projection room No. 2	hospital	32 Planing [sic] Mills
6	Executive offices	14	Extra dressing room	25 Stock room	33 Property construction
7	Cecil B. De Mille's office	15	Scene docks	26 Purchasing department.	department
8	Director's offices	16	Principal dressing rooms	Press photographer's	34 Plaster shops and black-
9	Scenario department	17	Stage No. 2	rooms	smith shop
10	Mary Pickford's dressing	18	Stage No. 3	27 Old paint frame now	35 Garages
	room	18a	Company dressing rooms,	upholstering and wall	36 Douglas Fairbanks' offices
11	Incoming property room		entire length of stage	papering department	and dressing rooms
12	Stage No. 1	19	Stage No. 4	28 Laboratory. Frame build-	37 Exterior sets built for
13	Wilfred Buckland's office	20	Scene docks, entire length	ing under number now	productions

13.1 (above) The Lasky studio in 1918

13.2 (below) A firm's production chart, 1918
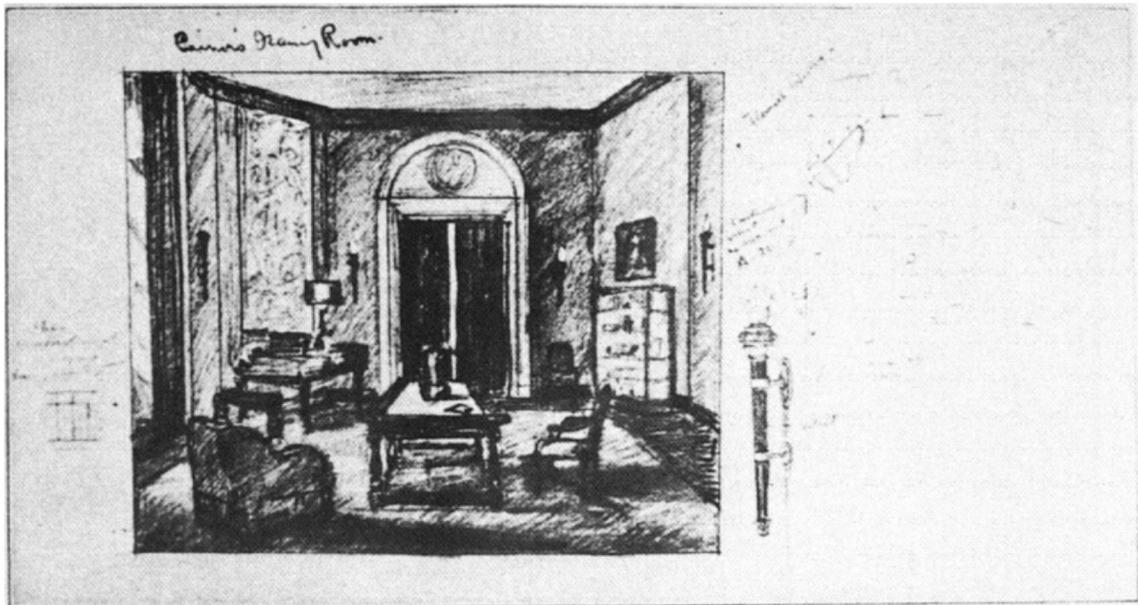
13.3 Art designers started set production with detailed sketches (1918)
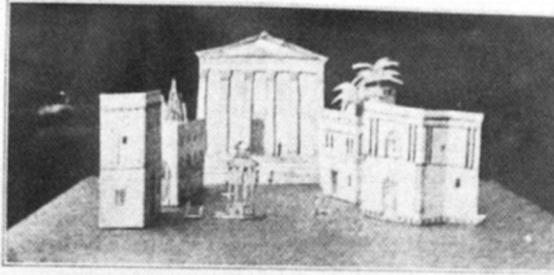
THE MINIATURE CARDBOARD MODEL, ON A TABLE, FROM WHICH THE LARGE
SETS ARE TO BE MADE.
The scene is from "Thais," and the street is one in Alexandria, Egypt.
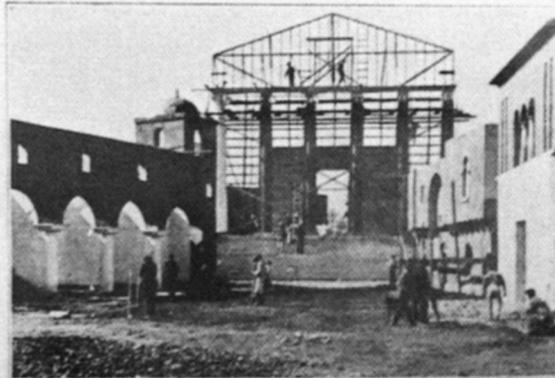
THE BUILDINGS UNDER COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION FROM THE MODELS
JUST SHOWN
At the far end is the temple wherein Thais worships.

13.4 Models of the sets might be prepared before construction began (1918)
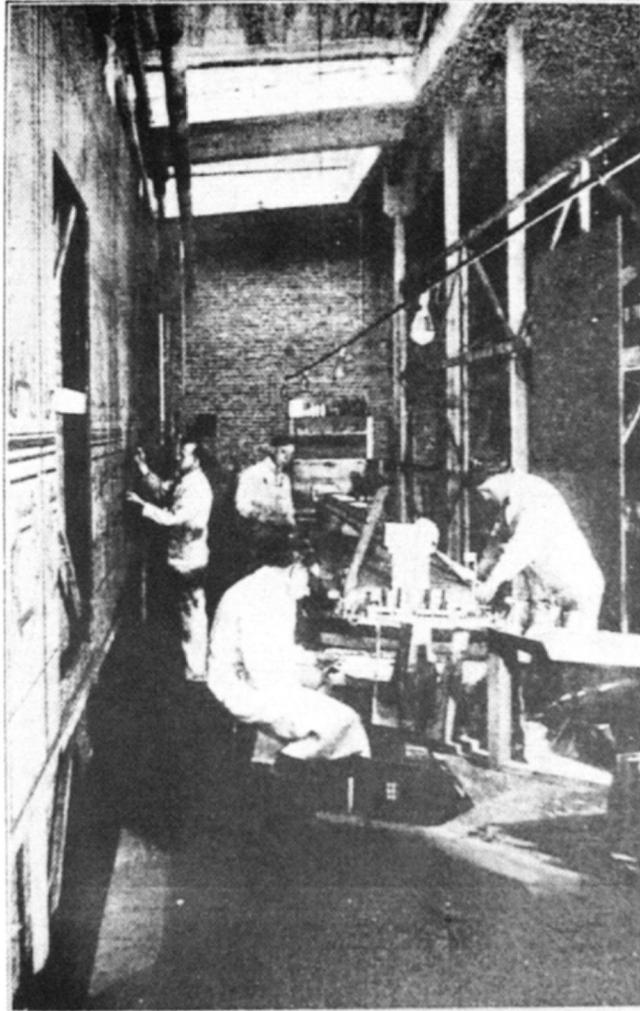
13.5 Sketches also supplied information for scene painters (1918)
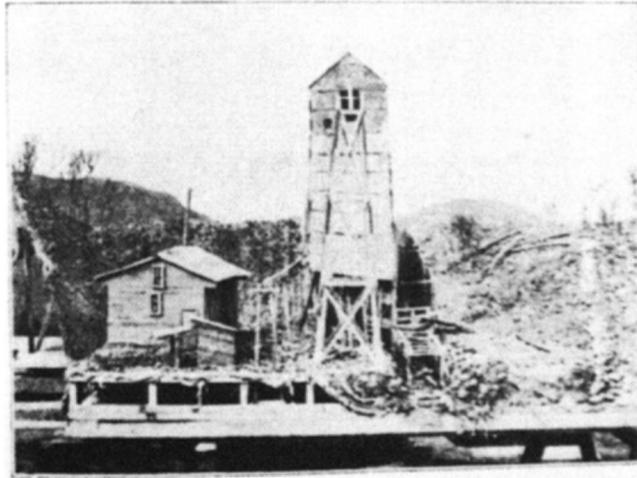
13.6 Miniatures (1918)

15.1–15.2 (above) *The Pickpocket* (1903)
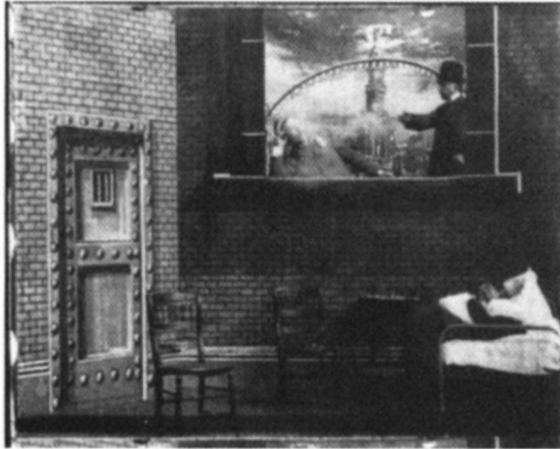
15.3 (centre left) *The Unwritten Law* (*c.* 1907)

15.4 (centre right) *The Girl in the Armchair* (1912)

A vision that carries him far beyond the golden dust-haze into the future. A future of bigger, finer things.
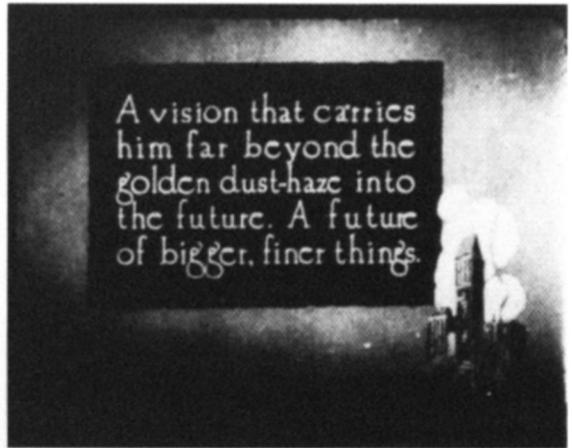
15.5–15.6 (below) *The Hired Hand* (1918)

15.7–15.9 *A Daughter of Dixie* (1911)
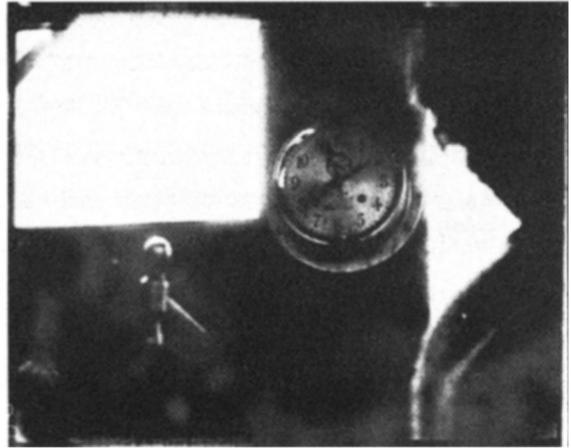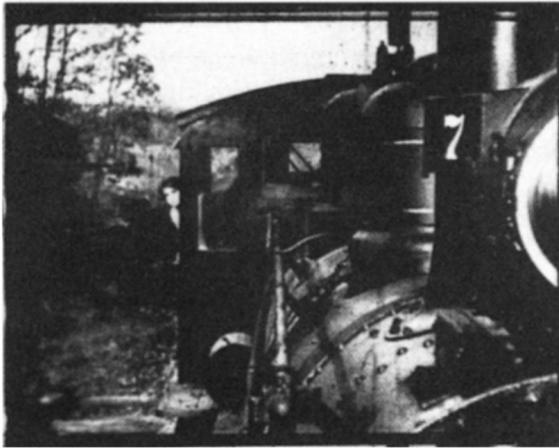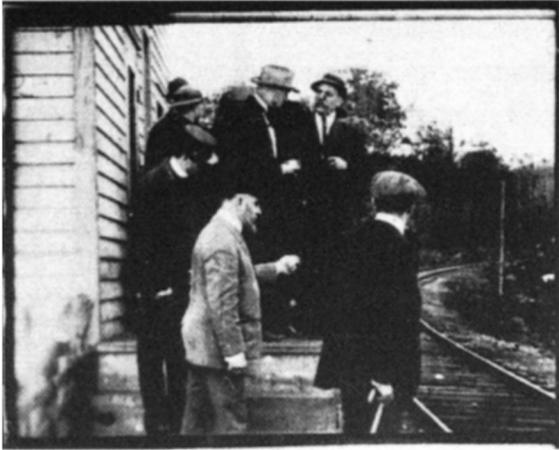
15.10–15.13 *A Race With Time* (1913)

15.15–15.17 (opposite page and left) *The High Cost of Living* (1912)
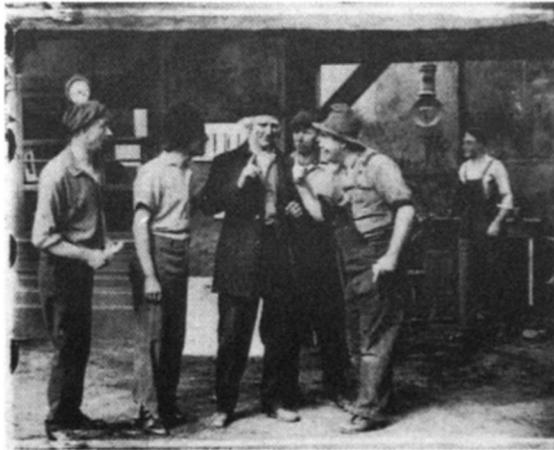
15.14 Art backgrounds for inter-titles being made in the Ince Art Department in the late teens
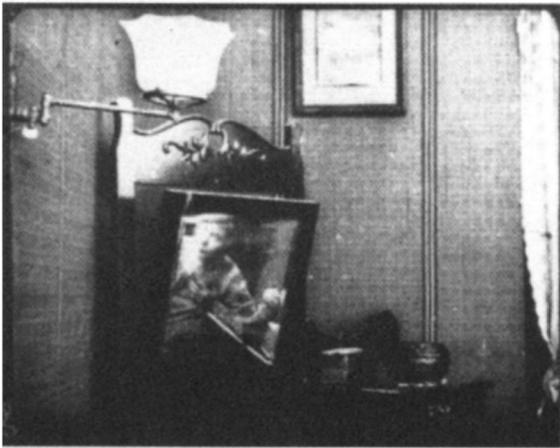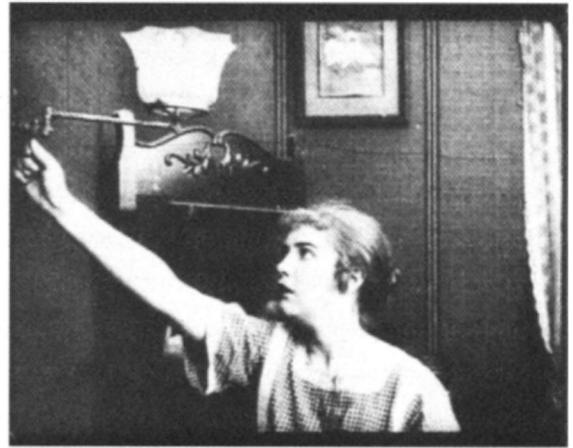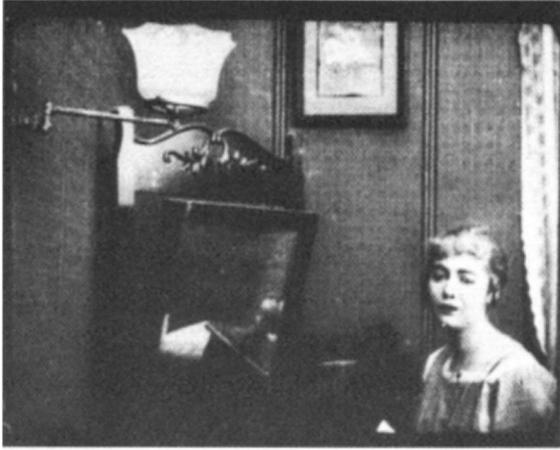
15.18–15.22 *The Warning* (1914)

15.23 (below right) *A Tale of Two Cities* (1911)

16.1–16.5 *Mantrap* (1926)
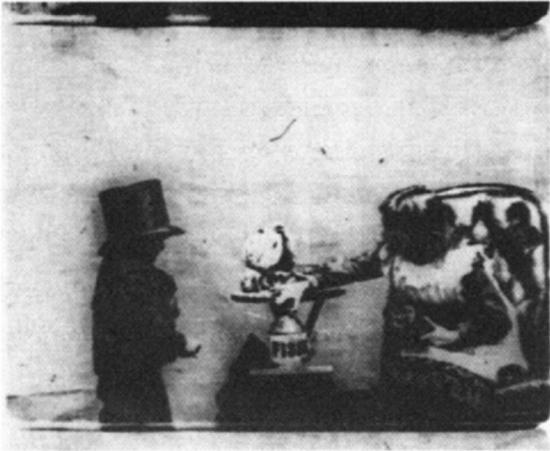
16.6–16.7 (above) *The Sick Kitten* (1903?)
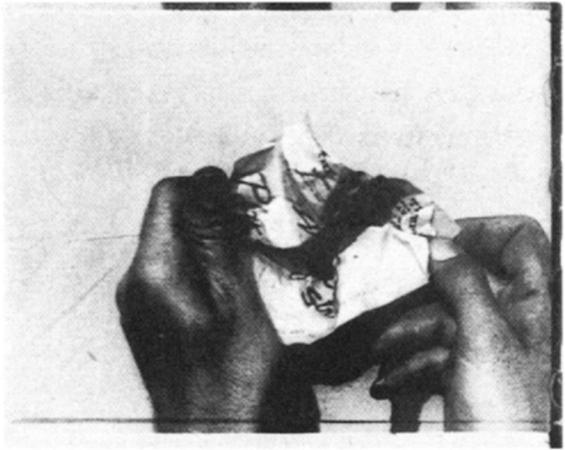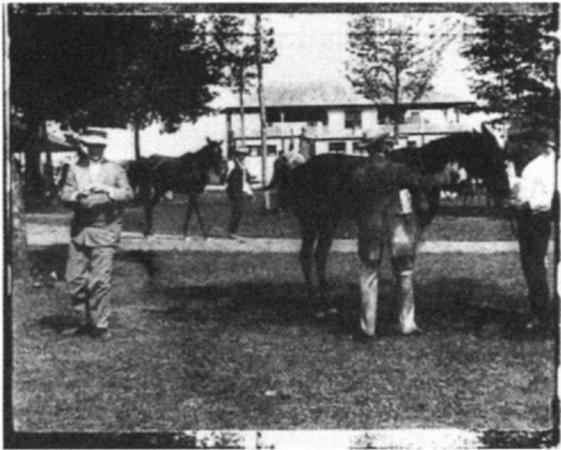
16.8–16.9 (centre) *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906)

16.10–16.11 (below) *After One Hundred Years* (1911)

16.12–16.13 (above) A *Tale of Two Cities* (1911)
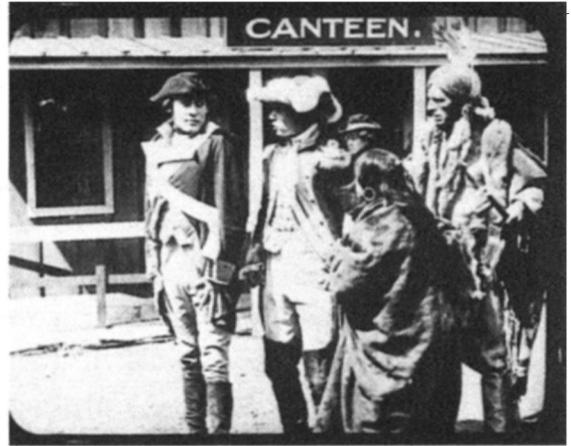
16.14–16.16 (centre and below) *At Old Fort Dearborn* (1912)
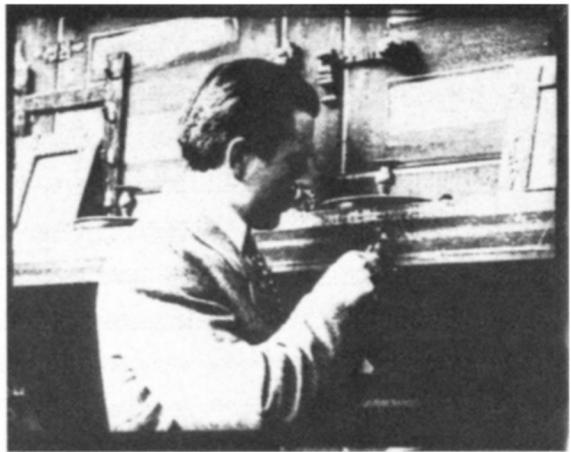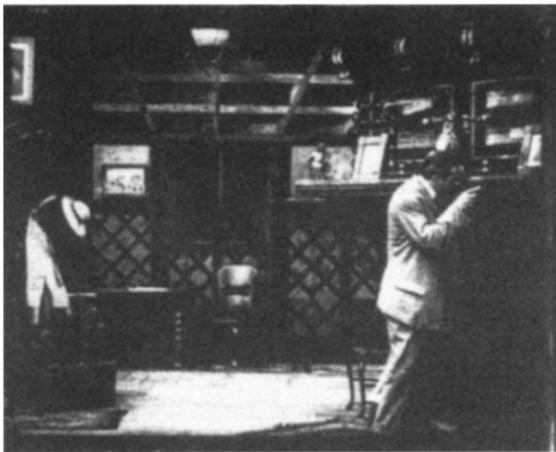
16.17–16.18 (above) *After One Hundred Years* (1911)

16.19–16.20 (centre) *Shamus O'Brien* (1912)

16.21–16.22 (below) *The Girl of the Cabaret* (1913)

16.23–16.24 (above) *The Eagle's Mate* (1914)

16.25–16.28 (centre and below) *The Hired Hand* (1918)
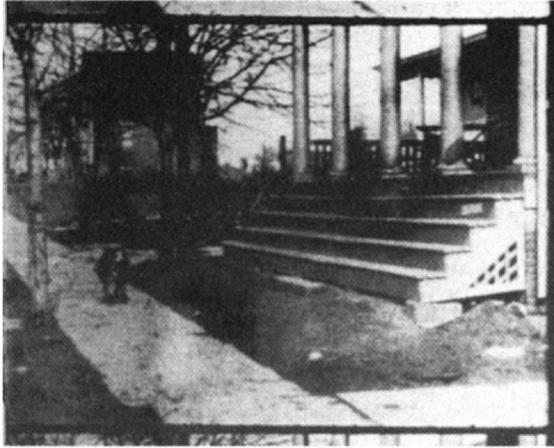
16.29 (above) *Her First Adventure* (1908)

16.30–16.31 (centre) *The Fear* (1912)

16.32–16.33 (below) *Alma's Champion* (1912)

16.34–16.35 (above) *The Warning* (1914)
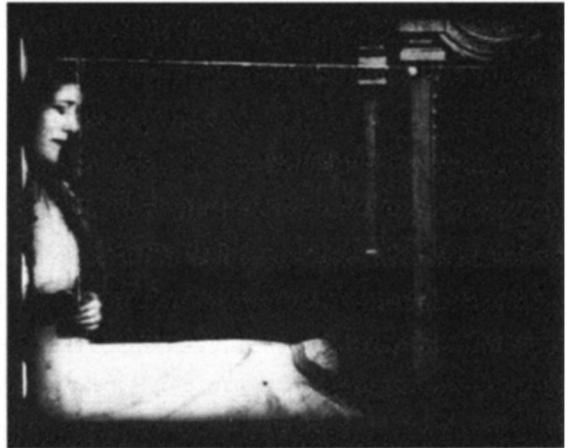
16.36–16.37 (centre) *The Eagle's Mate* (1914)

16.38–16.39 (below) *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906)

16.40–16.41 (above) *A Friendly Marriage* (1911)

16.42–16.43 (centre) *Behind the Footlights* (1916)

16.44–16.45 (below) *Love and the Law* (1919)
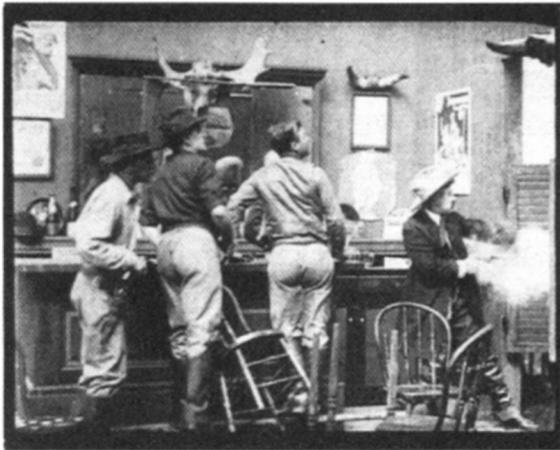
16.46–16.47 (above) *The Gambler's Charm* (1910)

16.48–16.49 (centre) *The Fear* (1912)

16.50–16.51 (below) *The Girl at the Cupola* (1912)

16.52–16.53 (above) *Weights and Measures* (1914)
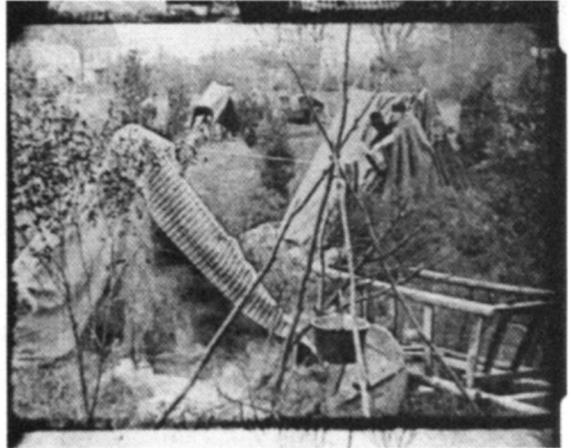
16.54–16.55 (below) *The Wishing Ring* (1914)
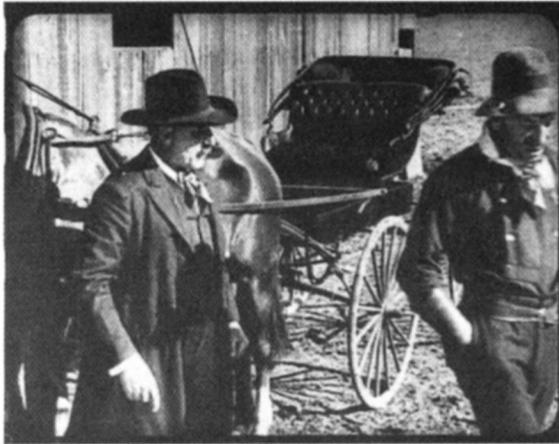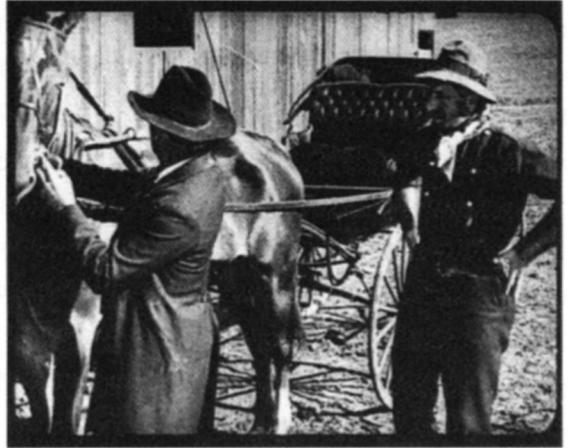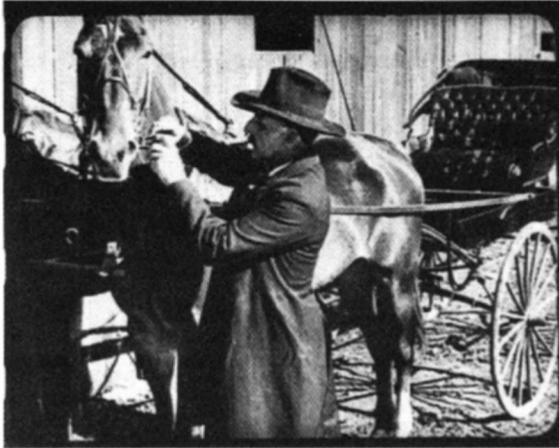
16.56–16.60 *The Loafer* (1911)

16.61–16.62 (above) *A Comedy of Errors* (1913)
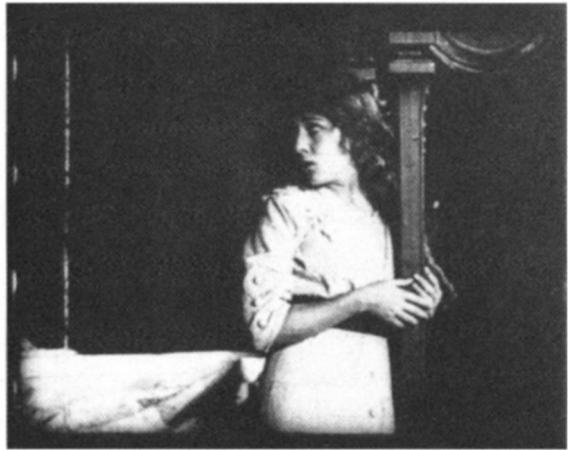
16.63–16.64 (centre) *The Eagle's Mate* (1914)

16.65–16.66 (below) *The Wishing Ring* (1914)

16.67–16.72 *Detective Burton's Triumph* (1914)

16.73–16.74 (above) *Field of Honor* (1917)

16.75–16.77 (centre and below) *The Ghost ofRosie* Taylor (1918)

16.78–16.79 (above) *Victory* (1919)

16.80–16.81 (below) *Mantrap* (1926)

17.1 (above left) *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906)
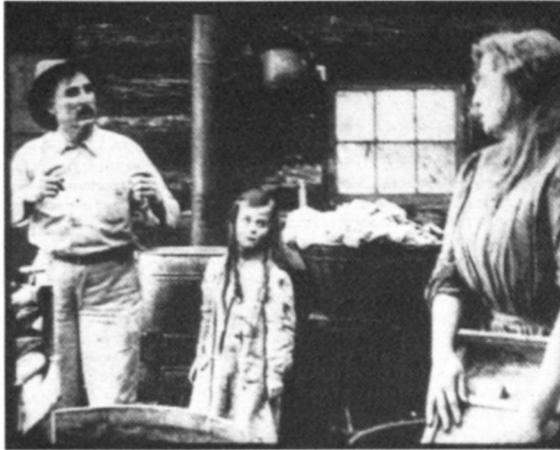
17.2 (above right) *The Loafer* (1911)

17.3 (centre left) *A Friendly Marriage* (1911)

17.4 (centre right) *The Bandit ofTropico* (1912)

17.5 (below left) *Weights and Measures* (1914)

17.6 (below right) *Love and the Law* (1919)

17.7 (above left) *A Temperamental Wife* (David Kirkland, 1919, Constance Talmadge)

17.8 (above right) *The 100-to-One Shot* (1906)
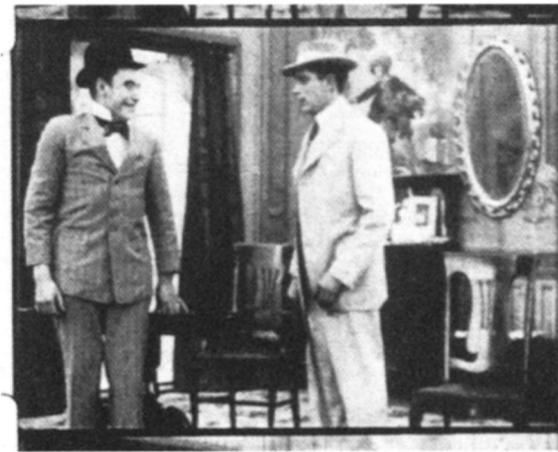
17.9 (centre left) *Faithful* (1910)

17.10 (centre right) *The Bells* (1913)

17.11 (below left) *The Girl in the Armchair* (1912)

17.12 *The Eagle's Mate* (1914)

17.13 *RoryO'More* (1911)

17.16 Production still for *The Queen of Sheba* (1921)
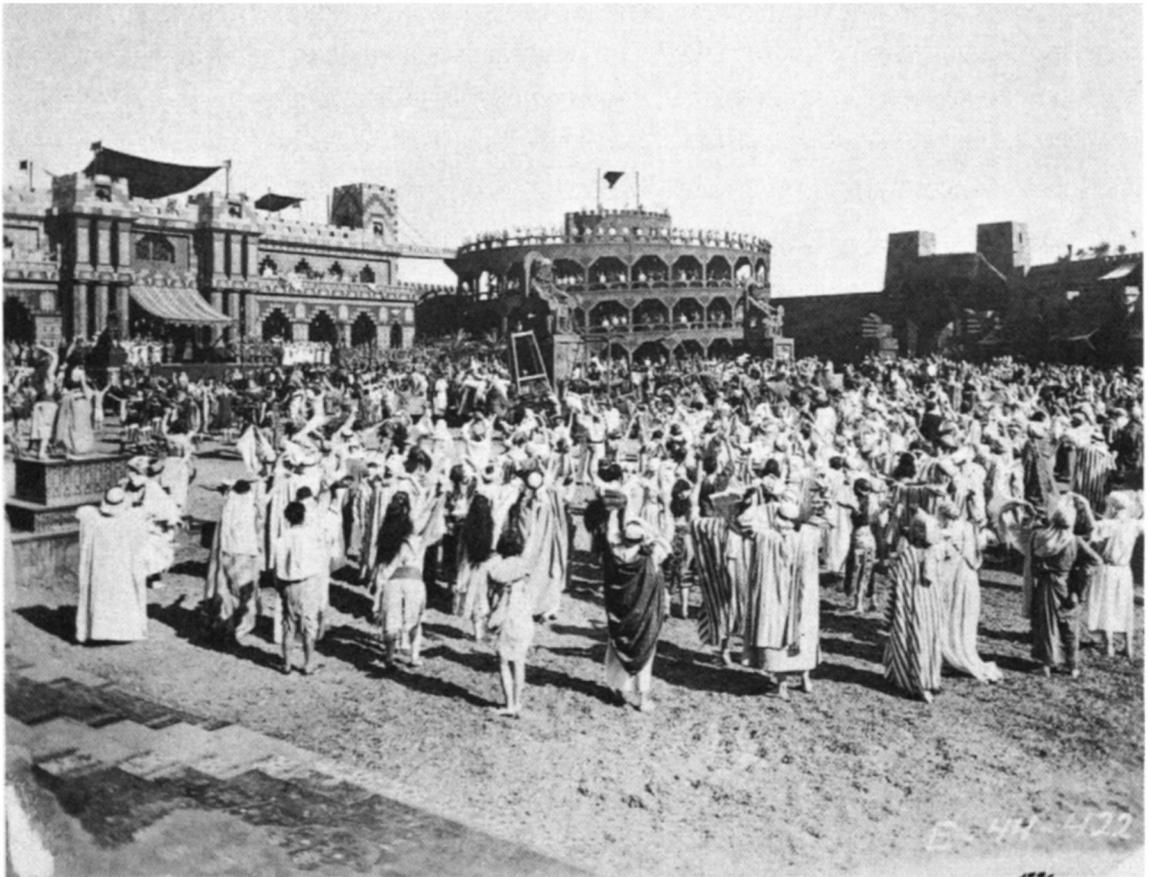
17.15 *The Coming of Columbus* (1912)

17.14 A row of outdoor stages at Universal at about the time of the studio's opening in 1915
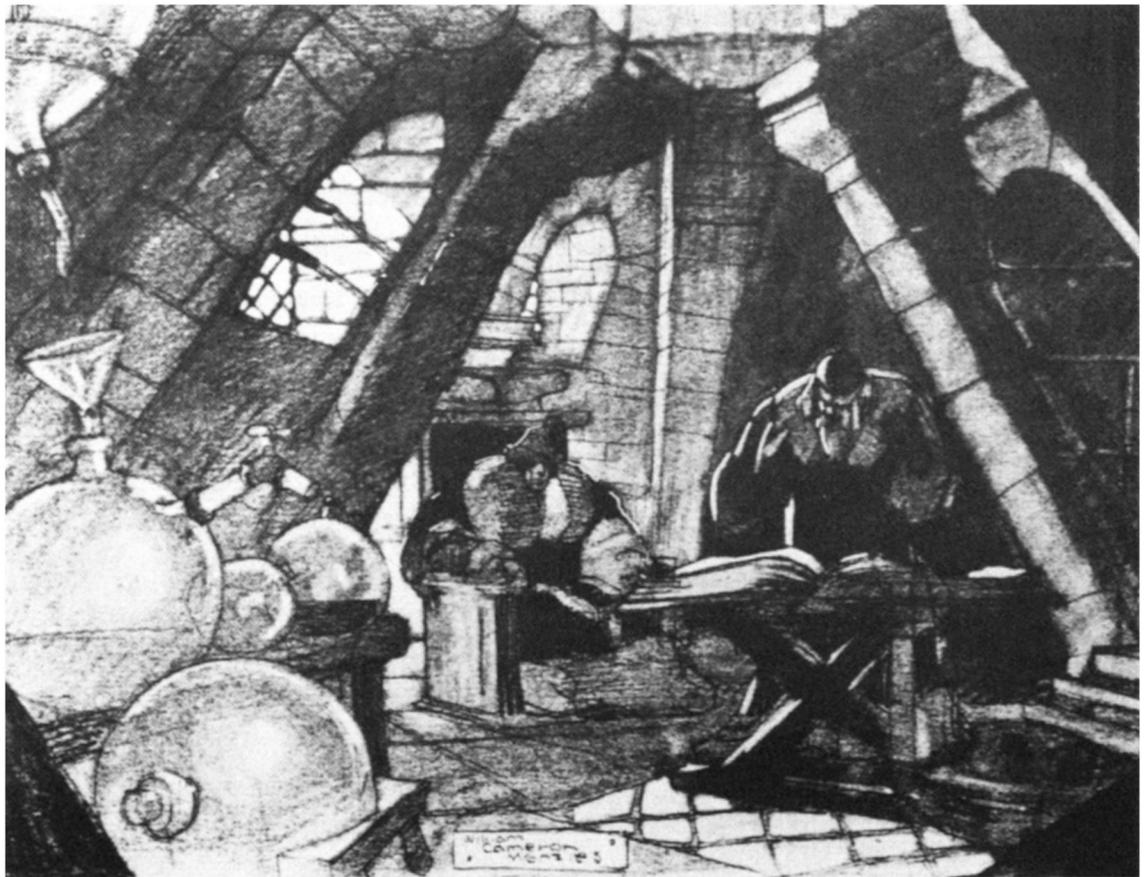
17.17 William Cameron Menzies's design for the astrologer's chamber in *The Beloved Rogue* (1927)

17.18 (above left) *A Race With Time* (1913)

17.19 (above right) *Damon and Pythias* (1914)

17.20 (centre left) *The Case of Becky* (1915)

17.21 (centre right) *Loue and the Law* (1919)

17.22 (below) *The Magician* (1926)
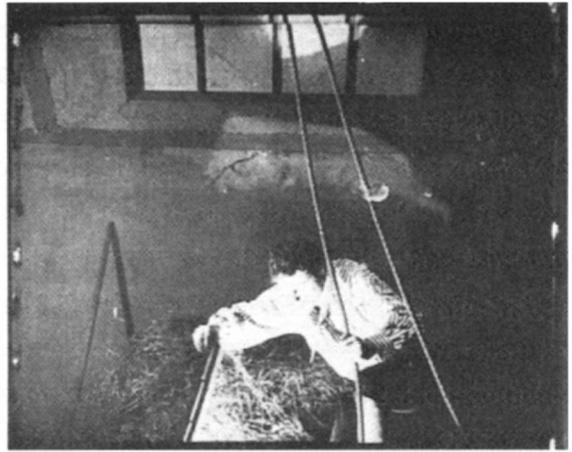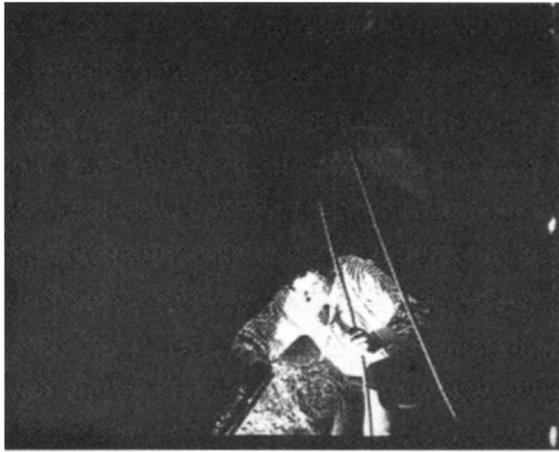
17.23–17.24 (above) *Shamus O'Brien* (1912)

17.25–17.28 (centre and below) *The Clodhopper* (1917)

17.29 A 1912 *Moving Picture News* advertisement stressing light effects in the IMP release *The Power of Conscience*

17.30 (above left) *The Loafer* (1911)

17.31 (above right) *The Cheat* (1915)

17.32 (centre left) *His Phantom Sweetheart* (1915) 1917, Lasky)

17.33 (centre right) *Dolly's Scoop* (1916)

17.34 (below left) *The Girl of the Golden West* (1915)

17.35 (below right) *Forbidden Paths* (Robert Thornby,

17.36 (above left) *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921)

17.37 (above right) *A Cumberland Romance* (1920)

FIG. 9.—Spotlighting is used in this set to separate the characters from the background and to accentuate the predominating features.

FIG. 10.—The value and necessity of highlights are appreciated when this illustration is compared with Figure 9.

17.38 A comparison of the same composition *from Night Life of New York* (1925), with and without backlighting

17.39 *The Ghost of Rosy Taylor* (1918)
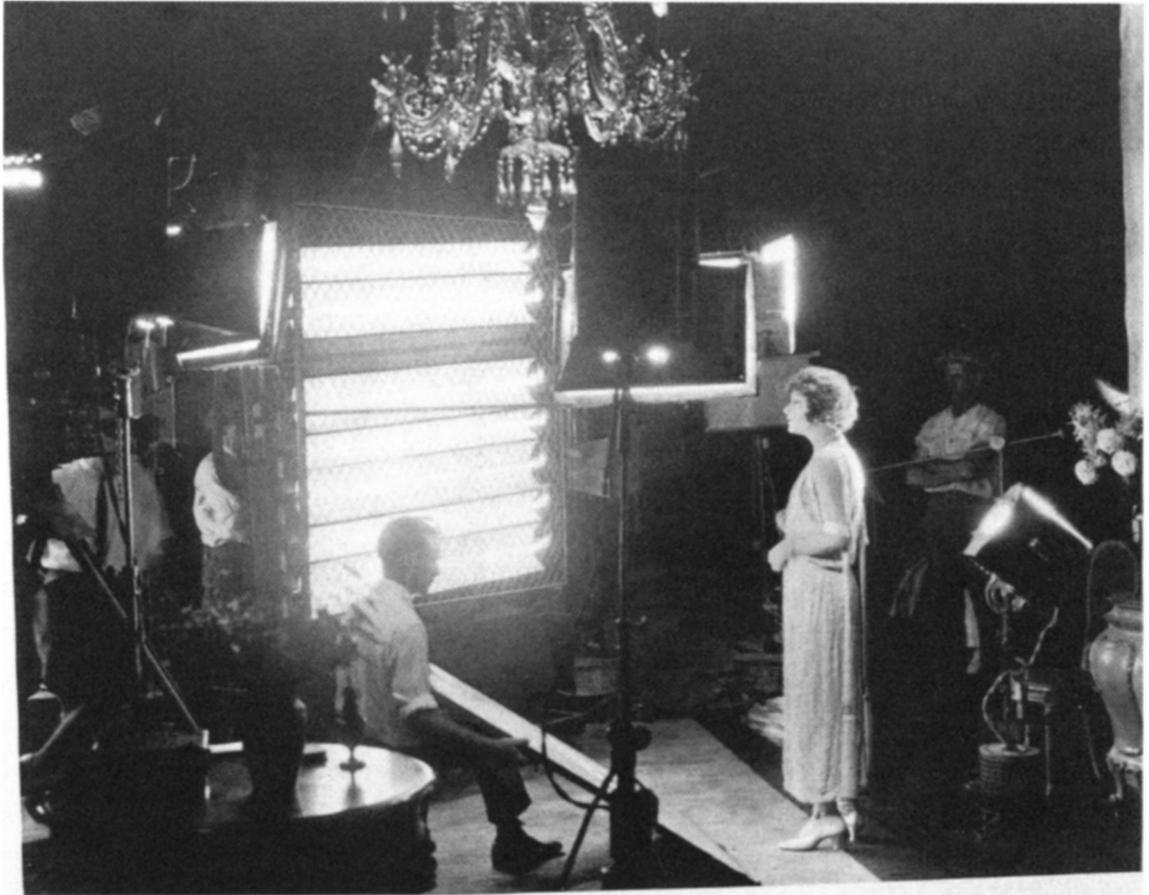
17.40 Norma Talmadge in the United Studios, around 1923
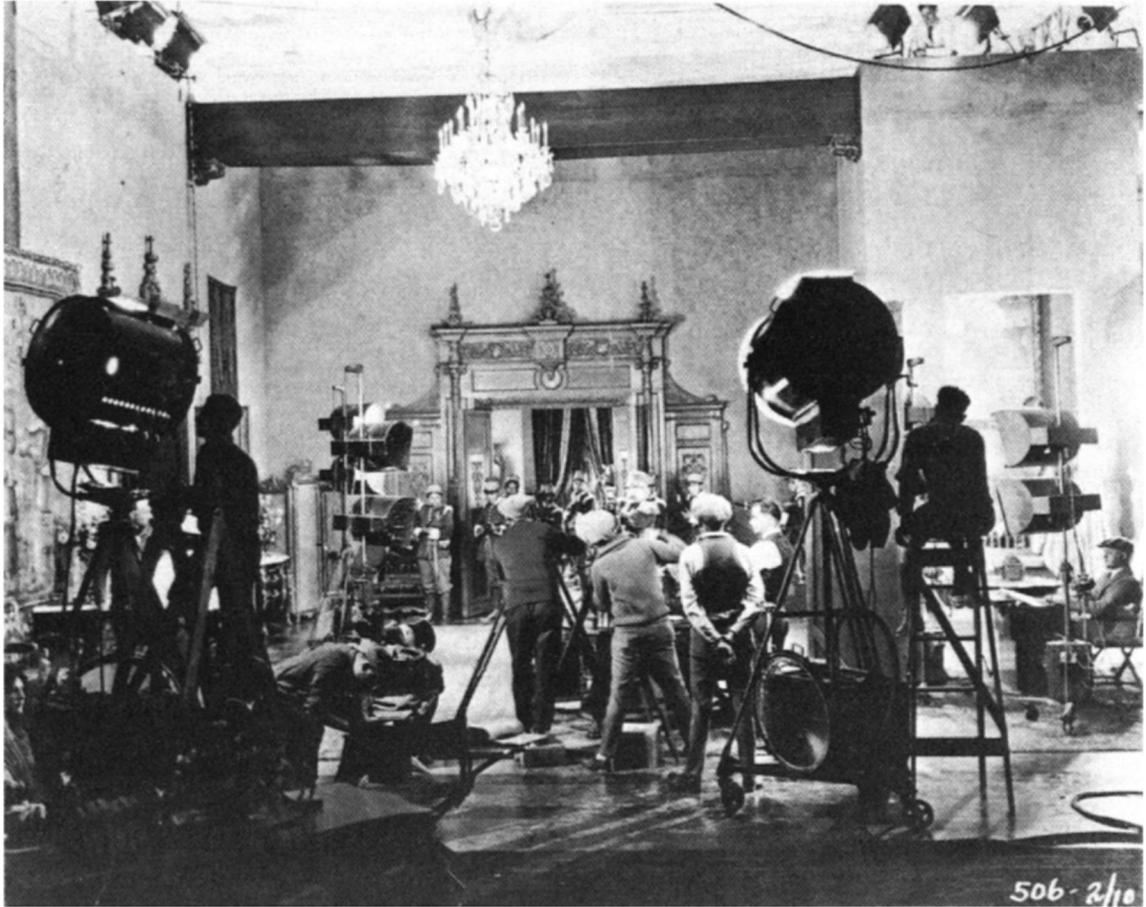
17.41 Filming George Fawcett (center, with epaulettes) in *Mr. Billings Spends His Dime,* at Famous Players-Lasky (1923)

17.42 (above left) *Her Code of Honor* (John Stahl, 1919, Tribune-United)

17.43–17.45 (above right and centre) *The Hired Hand* (1918)

17.46–17.47 (below) *At Old Fort Dearborn* (1912)

17.48–17.50 *The Dumb Girl of Portics* (1915)
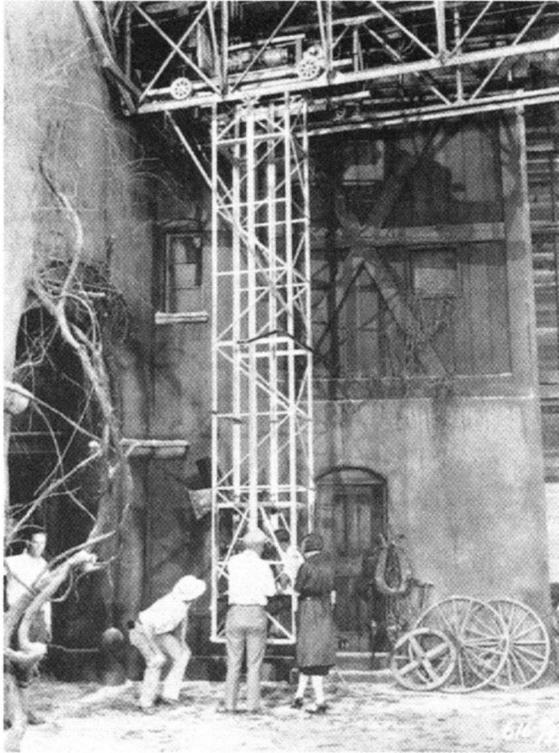
17.51 The camera elevator used for *Hotel Imperial* (1926)
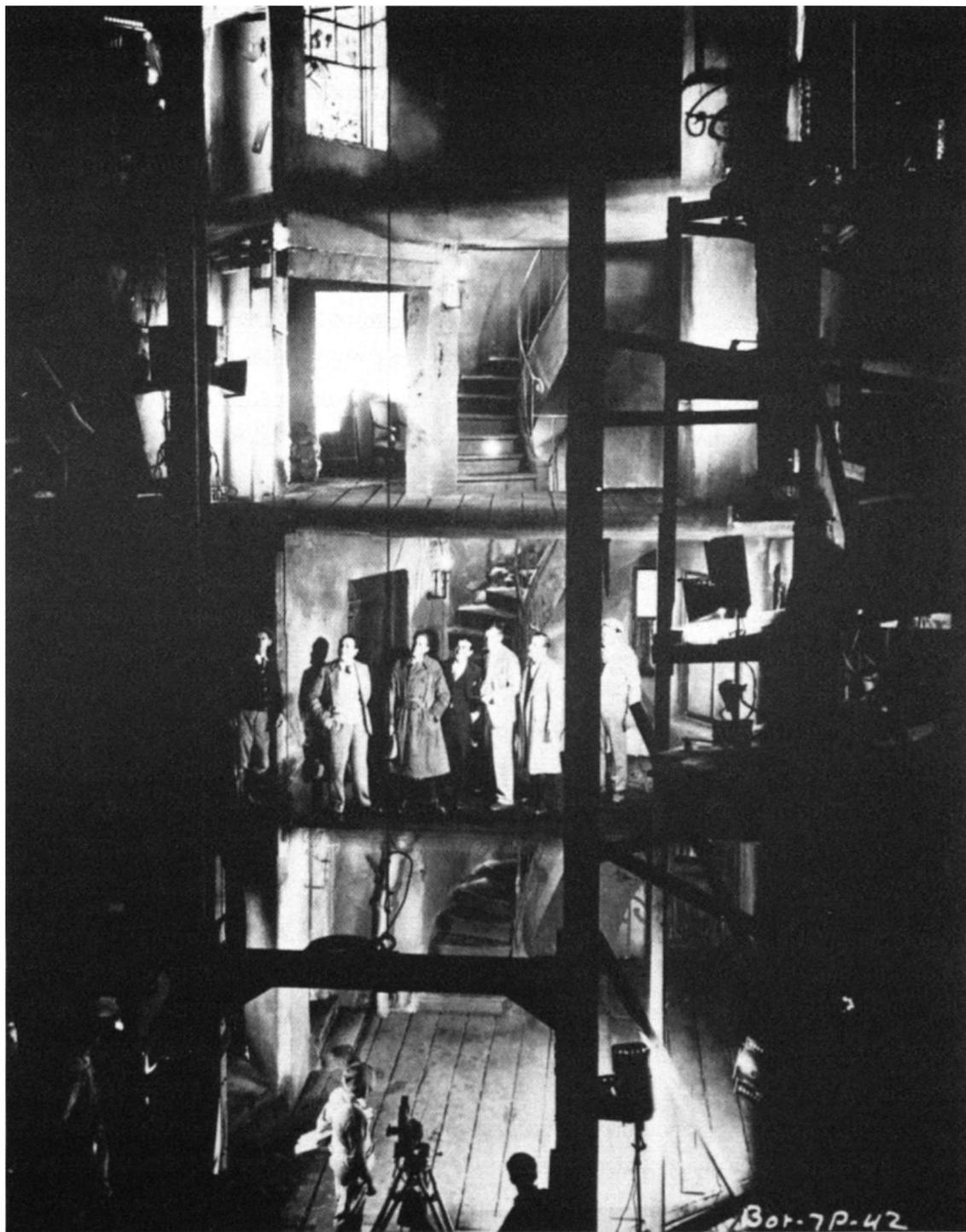
17.52 A cutaway set and elevator permitted the camera to follow Chico and Diane during their ascent to *Seventh Heaven* (1927)

18.1 (above left) Four gruesome, superimposed faces represent Bruce's 'Fears' in *Code of the Sea* (1924)

18.2–18.3 (above right and below left) Bruce confronts the ship's cook in shot/reverse shot *(Code of the Sea)*

18.4 (below right) Classical guidelines of composition and editing in a shot from *Code of the Sea*

Opposite page
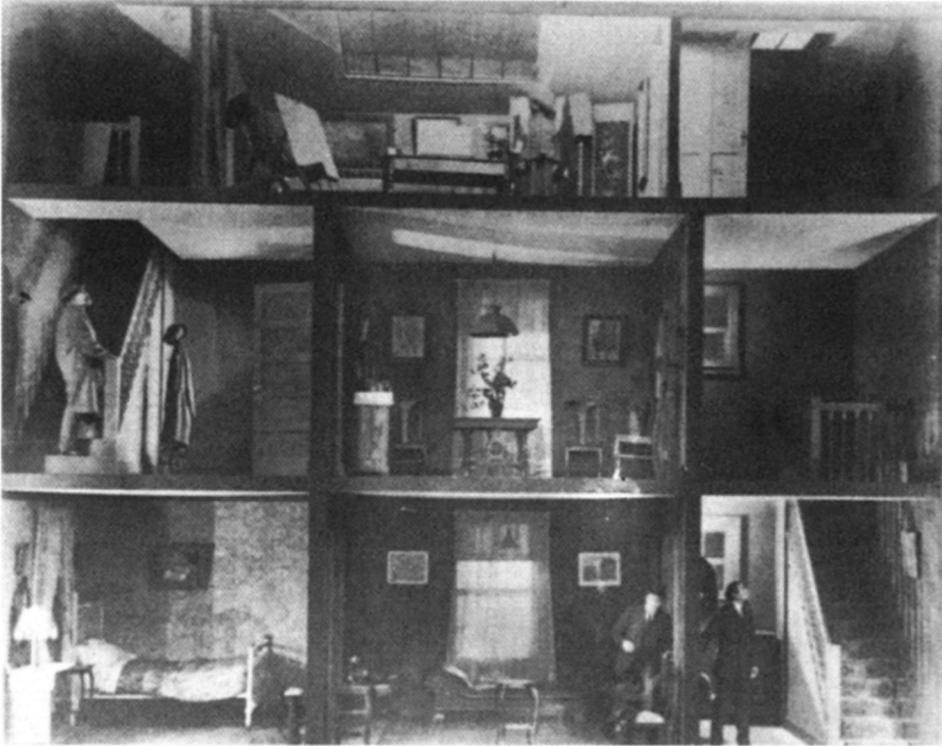
20.1 (above) A publicity photograph of the cutaway set from *The Hand of Peril* (1916)
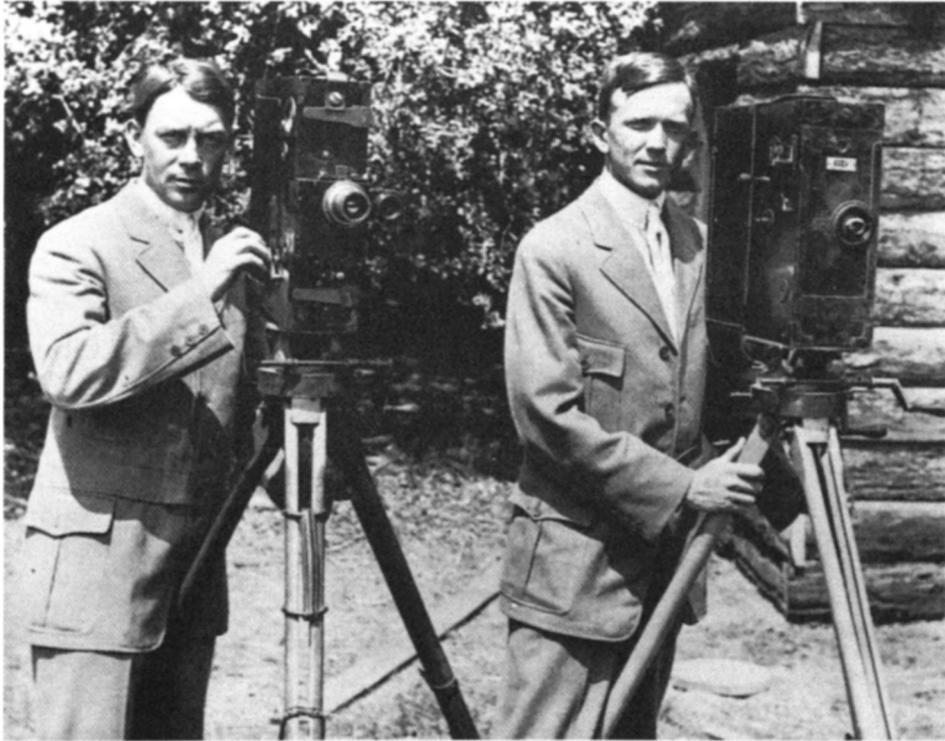
20.2 (below) Allan Dwan's cinematographers at the American Film Co. in 1911: at left, R.D. Armstrong using a Moy camera, and Roy Overbaugh with a Williamson
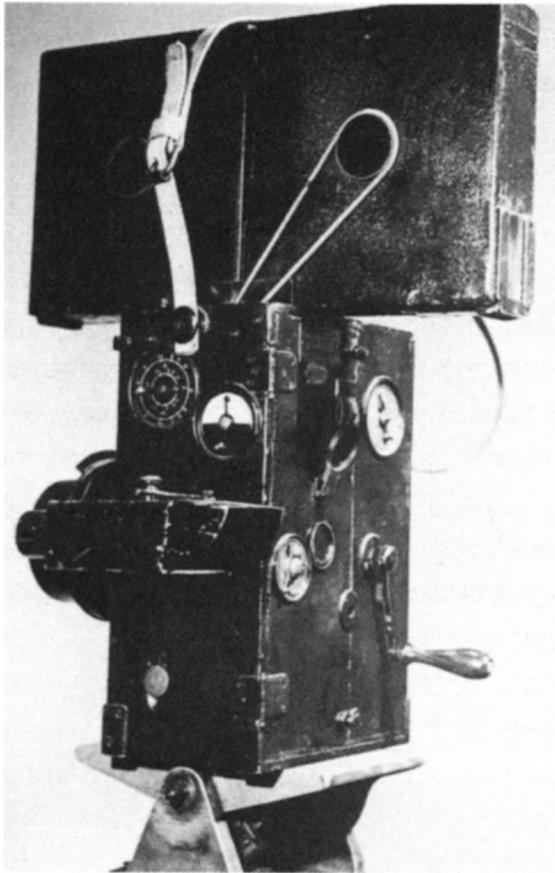
20.3 (above left) The Pathé studio model, with its distinctive placement of the crank on the back of the camera body. The eyepiece for sighting through the lens between shots is to the left of the crank; its cover is open, but would be closed during filming to keep light off the film
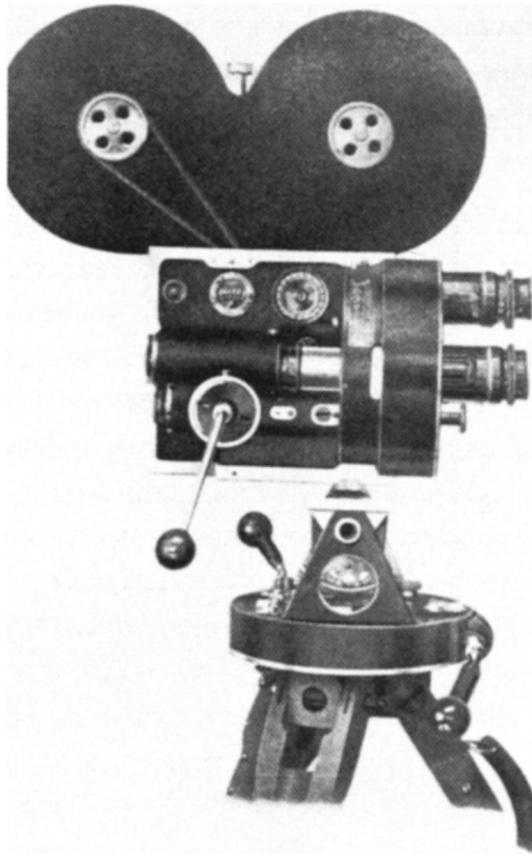
20.4 (above right) A 1920 illustration of the Bell & Howell camera, showing its cranking-speed indicator, footage dial, and chart of shutter openings and f-stops

20.5 (above) Universal newsreel cameraman Norman Alley and his Akeley

20.6 (below) A Paramount Famous Lasky Western on location in the late twenties— probably for *The Last Outlaw* (1927). First cameraman James Murray, at right with his Bell & Howells, is backed up by another Bell & Howell with a long lens, as well as by an Akeley. Cary Cooper sits by the script clerk, behind Murray

20.7 (above) Charles Rosher and Mary Pickford pose by the prototype Mitchell camera in 1920

20.8 (below) Sol Polito, right, and director Albert Roper, with a Mitchell camera, at the First National Studio
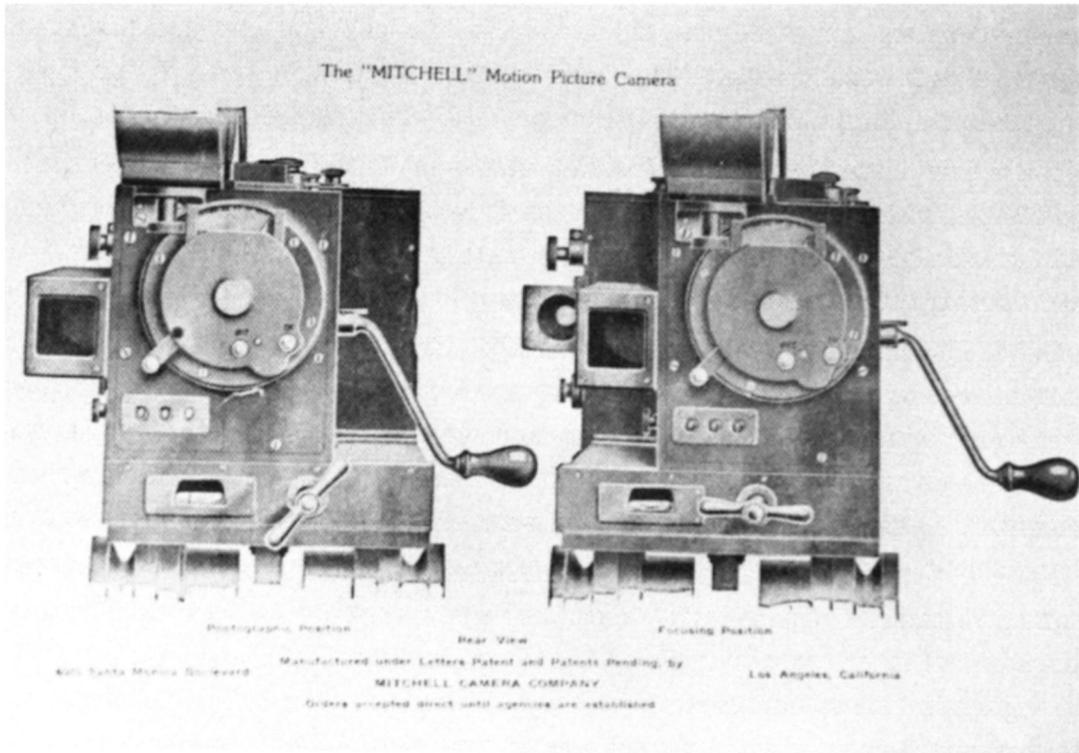
20.9 A Mitchell advertisement shows the back of the camera, with the body in filming position in the right view and in focusing position in the left view
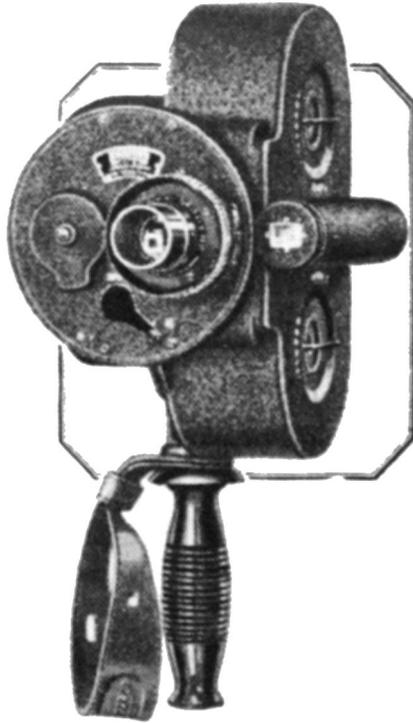
20.10 The first Eyemo model, with handle attached for handheld shots

Opposite page
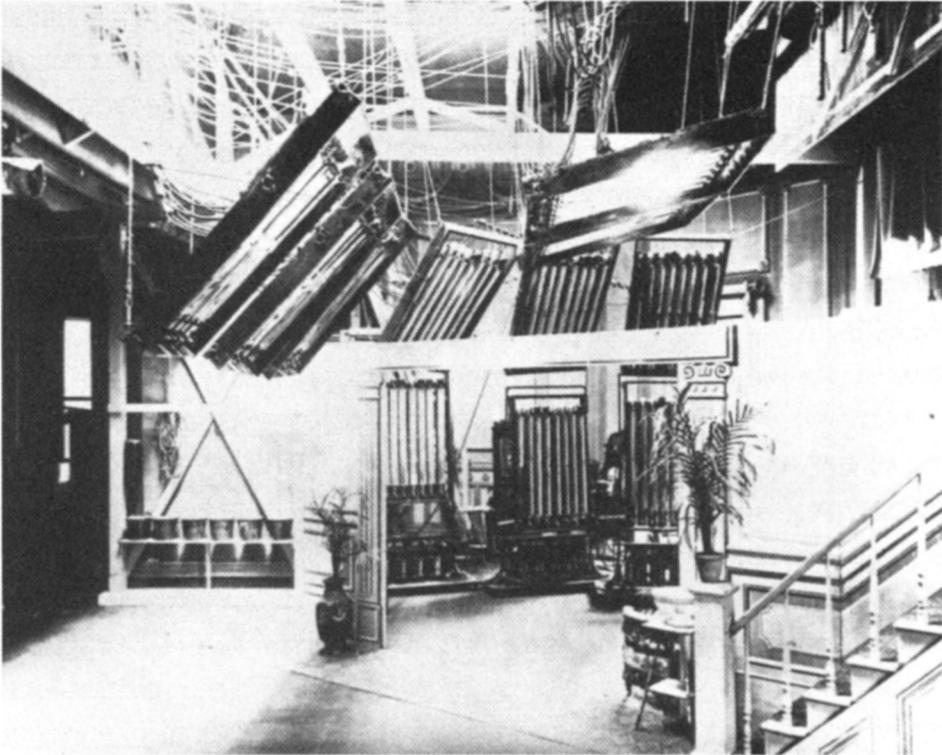
20.11 (above) The interior of the New York Biograph Studio in 1909. Banks of hanging and floor units of mercury-vapor tubes provide the only illumination

20.12 (below) Diffusing cloth draped above an outdoor stage at Essanay in 1912; cameraman Jack Rose is in dark pants and white shirt
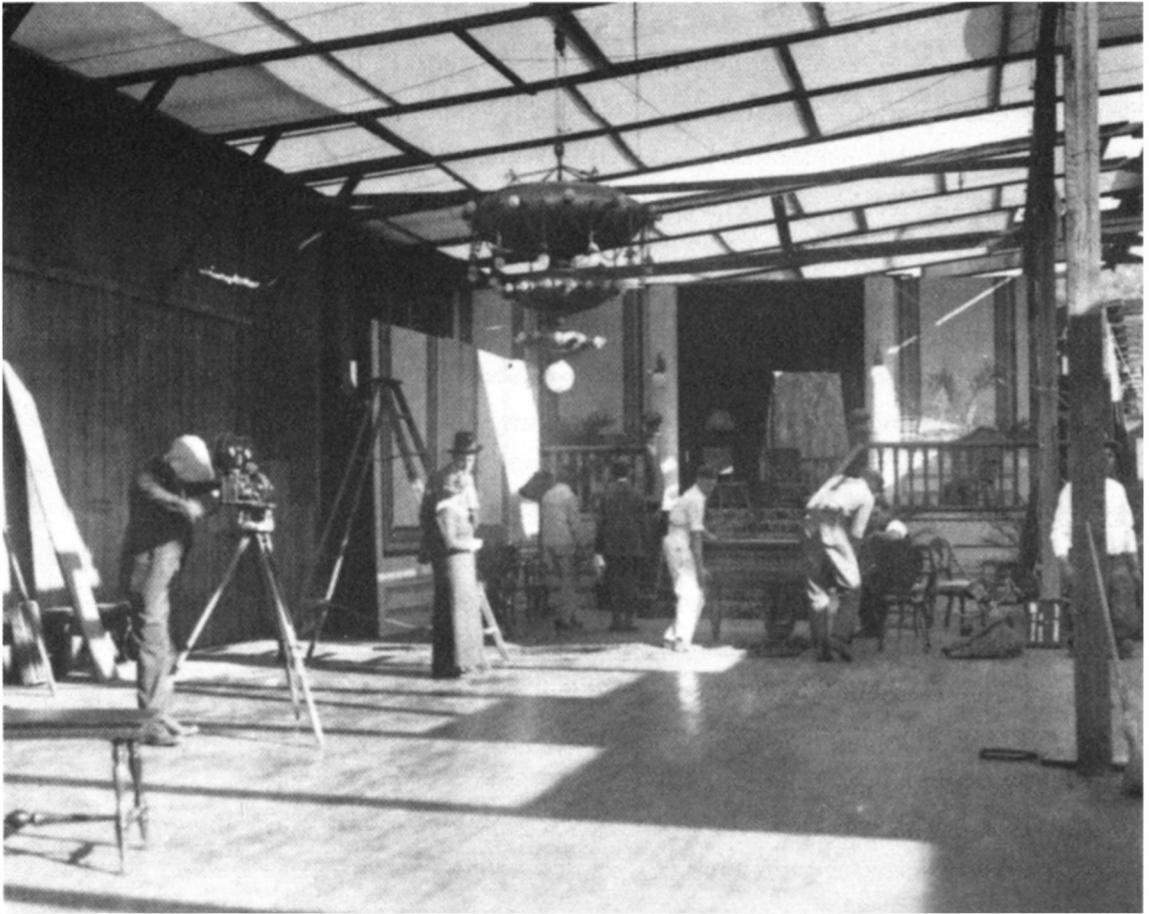
20.13 A corner of the main outdoor stage at Inceville
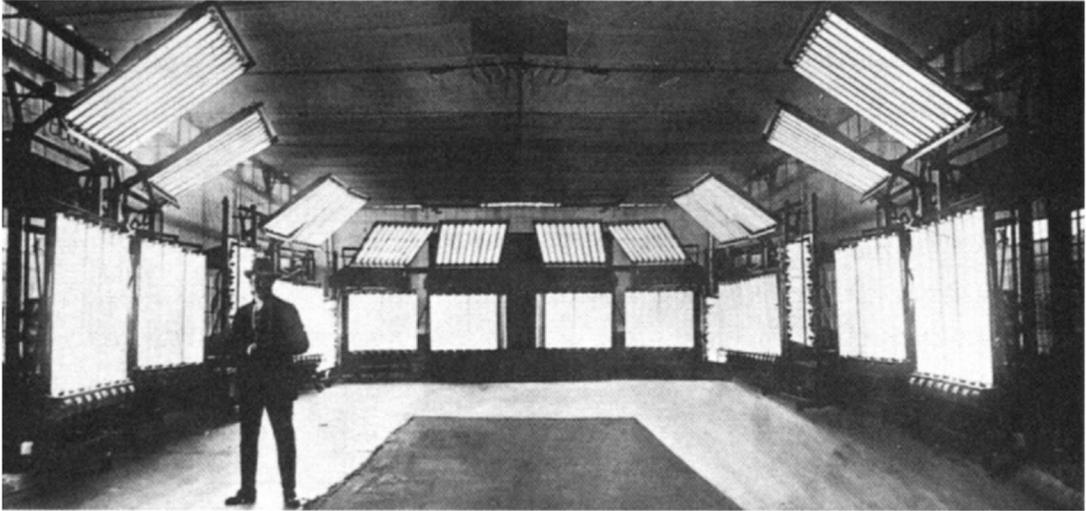
20.14 Thomas Ince in the Triangle Studio at Culver City, 1916, showing off an array of Cooper-Hewitt units. The glass studio roof and walls have been covered with cloth to facilitate artificial lighting. A floor stand of mercury-vapors is in the center at each side, surrounded by a dozen wheeled goose-neck units

20.15 (opposite below) Cameraman Ned Van Buren filming in the Edison studio with a Moy camera, with director John Collins seated on the bed railing talking to the actors. Diffusers hang below the glass roof, while hanging enclosed arcs and broadside arcs on floor stands provide additional light
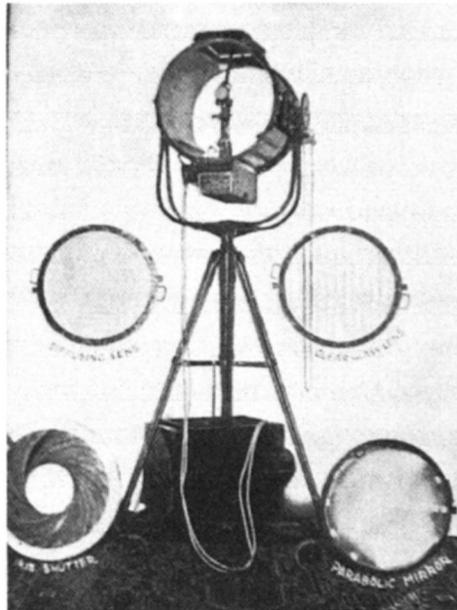
20.16 (right) The sunlight arc and its accessories

20.17 Transferring film from a rack to a drying drum at the Bloom Laboratory in Hollywood in 1918
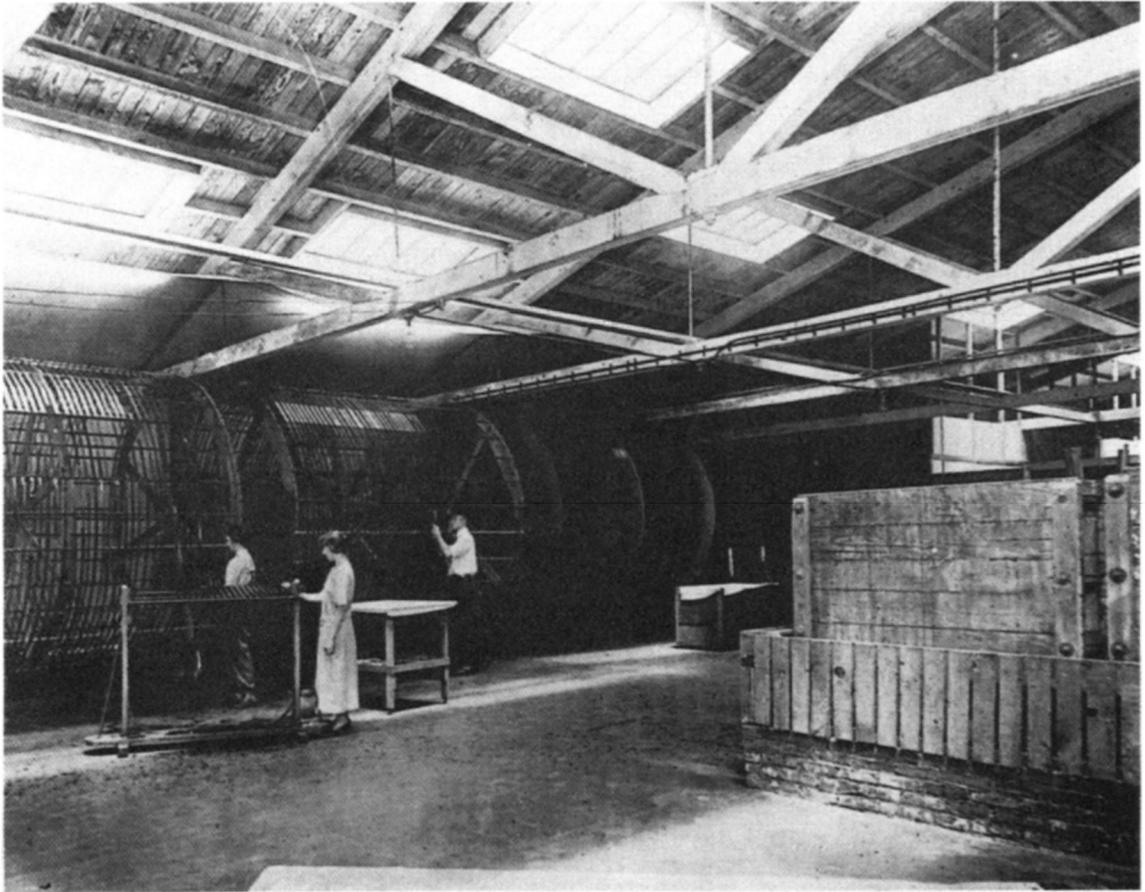
21.1 (above) Cinematographer Joe La Shelle wears a blue glass around his neck, using it here to set up a shot of Colleen Moore. His camera is a Mitchell

Opposite page

21.2 (above left) A film editor at MGM, *c.* 1928, poses for a publicity shot. The small machine with the rounded top between the rewinds on his table is a Moviola Midget
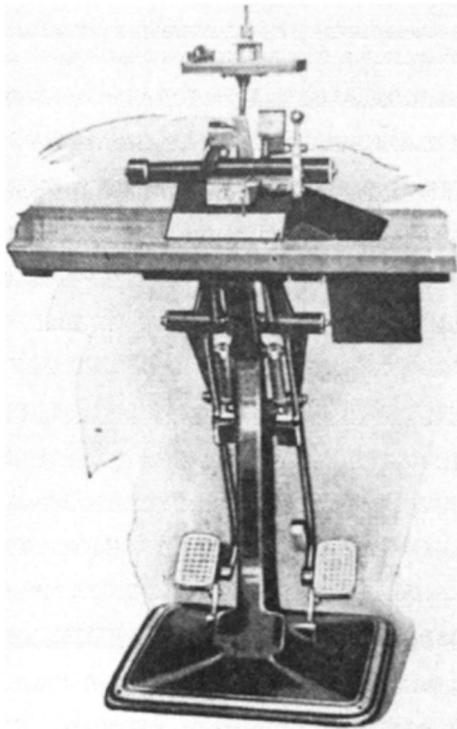
21.3 (above right) The 1918 model Bell & Howell automatic splicer, with foot pedals to run the film through and clamps to apply pressure to the splice.
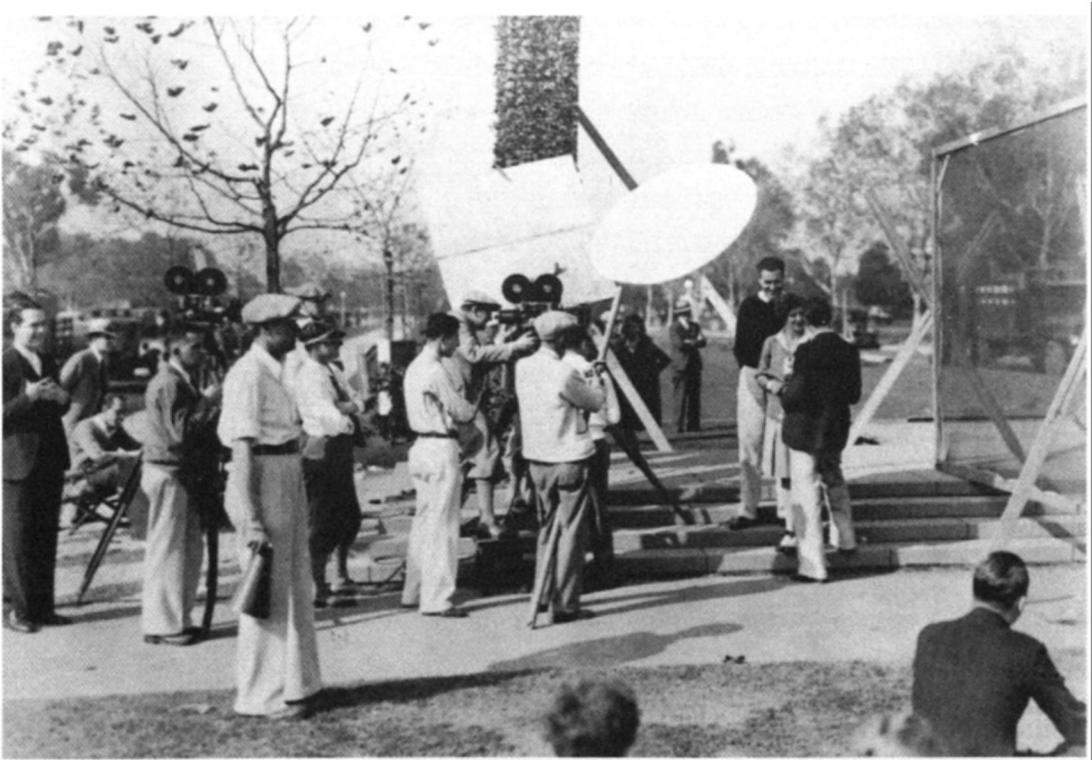
21.4 (below) Shooting a scene with Joan Crawford for *Duke Steps Out* (James Cruze, 1929, MGM). The Bell & Howell camera at center has a long lens and has been moved back to get a soft look, in combination with the diffusion disk overhead and diffusion screen behind the couple

21.5 Henrik Sartov's portrait of D.W.Griffith

21.6–21.7 *Way Down East* (1919)

21.8 *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921)

Opposite page

21.9 (above) Henrik Sartov, at the camera, sets up a shot of Lillian Gish for *La Bohème* (1926), while director King Vidor and producer Irving Thalberg look on

21.10 (below) The camera crew for *Sparrows* (1926): Charles Rosher stands at right (white shirt, dark tie) with his Mitchell, with Karl Struss (in glasses) at center behind his Bell & Howell, with gauze box attachment. Hal Mohr (with glasses and mustache) is behind Struss, and director William Beaudine sits in the lower center (holding a megaphone)

21.11–21.12 (above) *Foolish Wives* (1922)

21.13 (left) *Sparrows* (1926)

21.16 *Way Down East* (1919)

21.17 *Foolish Wives* (1922)

21.14 (above left) Clarence White's 1905 landscape photograph, 'Morning'

21.18 (right) A gum bichromate process was used to give texture to a turn-of-the-century photograph—'Cigarette Girl—A Poster Design'—by Robert Demachy

21.15 (below) 'Mrs Eugene Meyer,' a portrait by Edward Steichen
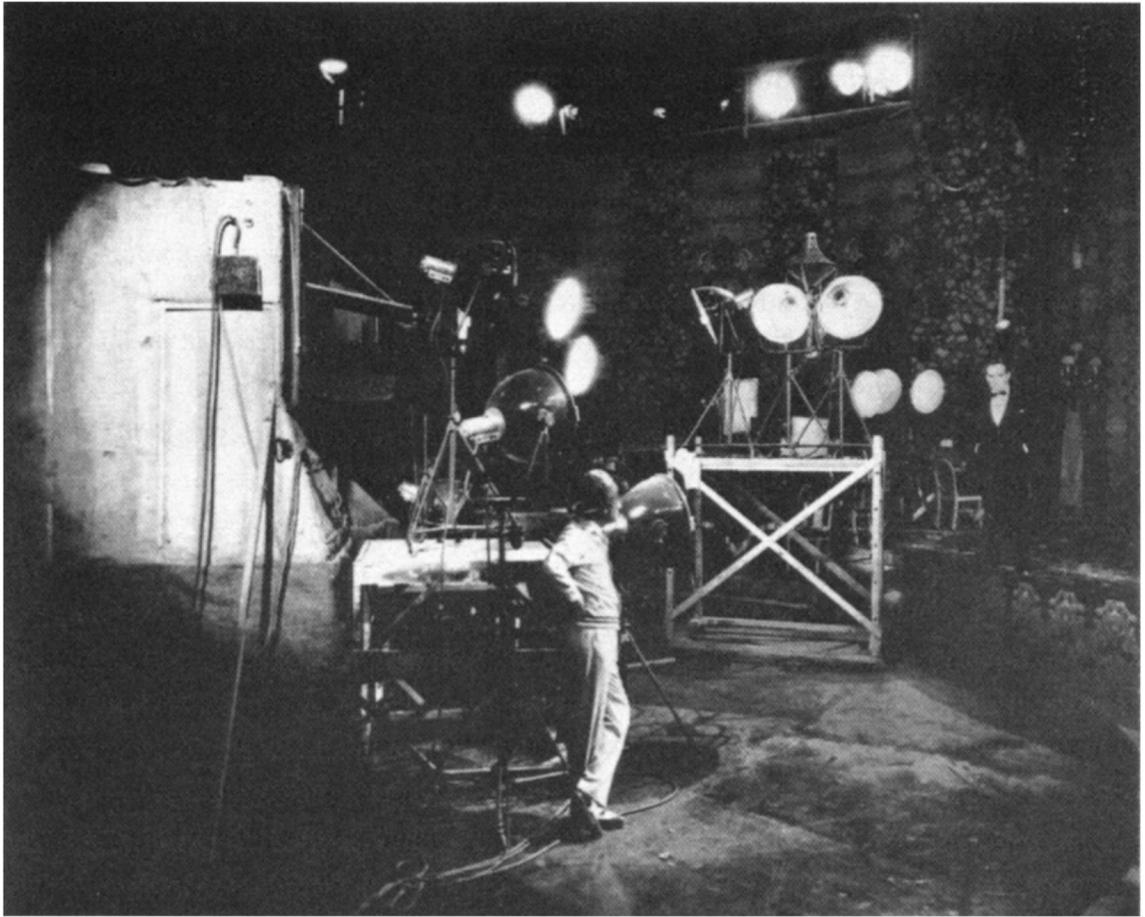
22.1 Lighting Warners' *Singing Fool* (1928) with incandescent lamps. Al Jolson is on stage
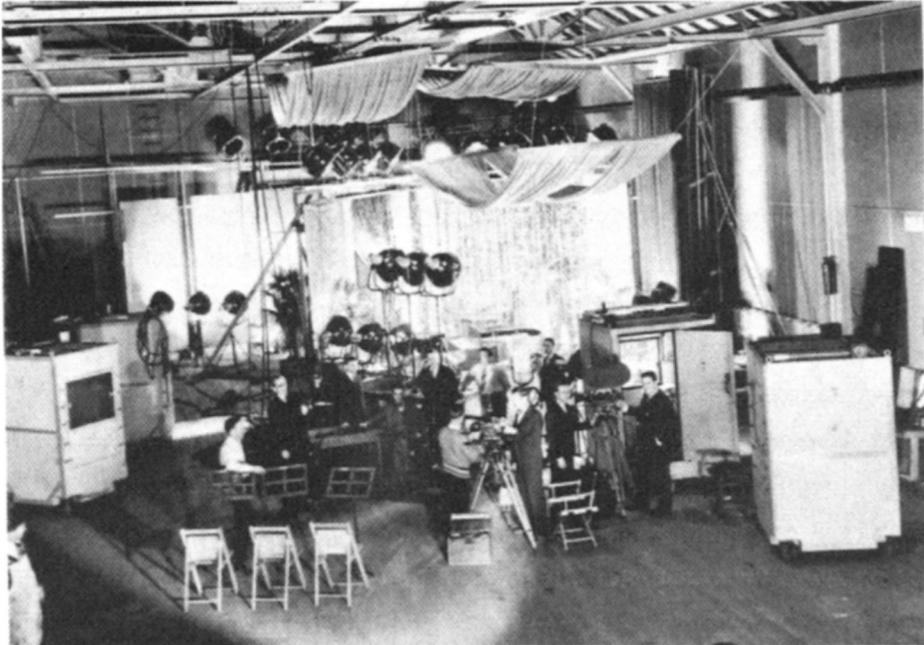
23.1 (above) Several cameras and booths in Warners' Vitaphone Studios, Brooklyn (1926)

23.2 (below) A posed shot showing multiple cameras and a single microphone for *Gentlemen of the Press* (1929) in Paramount's Astoria, Long Island studio

23.3–23.10 (this page and opposite above) *The Lights of New York* (1928)
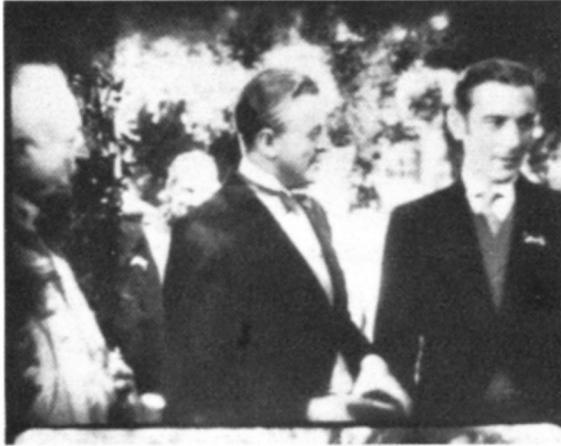
23.11–23.12 (centre) *Downstairs* (1932)
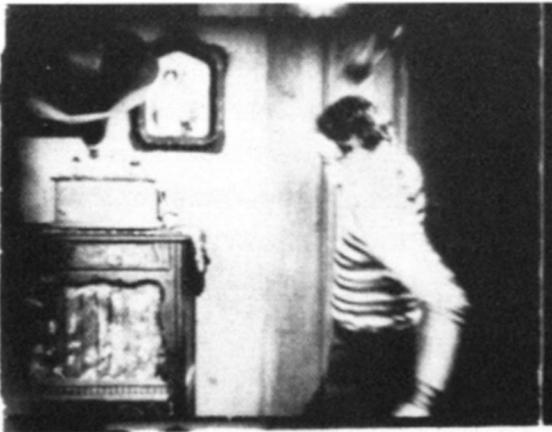
23.13–23.14 (below) *The Show* (1927). Cock Robin is on the left side of the room, Salome on the right. When he throws a record to the lower left, Salome turns to look sharply to our right. We are thus between the two, with the action occurring 'around' us. This volumetric space would become rare in early sound films
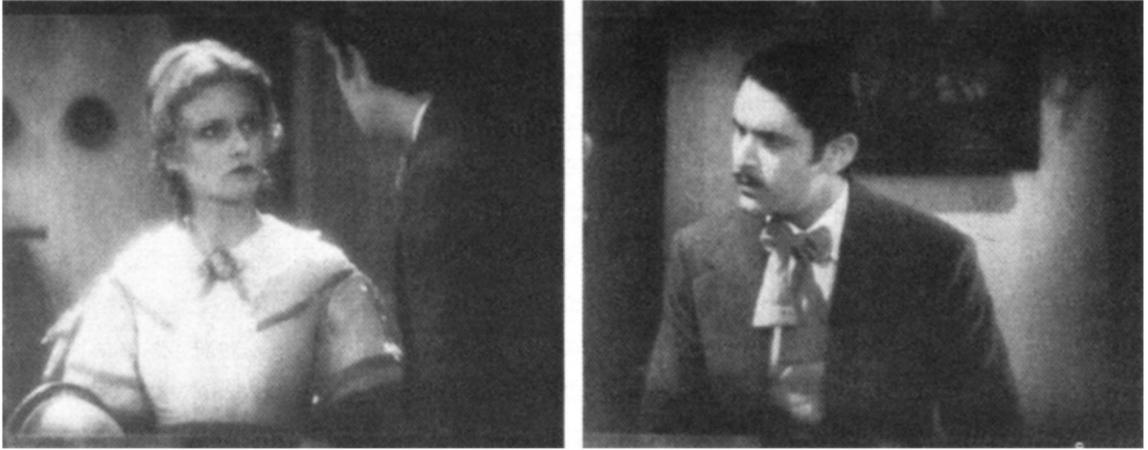
23.15–23.16 (above) Shot/reverse shot with multiple cameras: *Moby Dick* (1930)

23.18 (below) The 28-ton steel crane used to film *Broadway* (1929). The arm was over 30 feet long
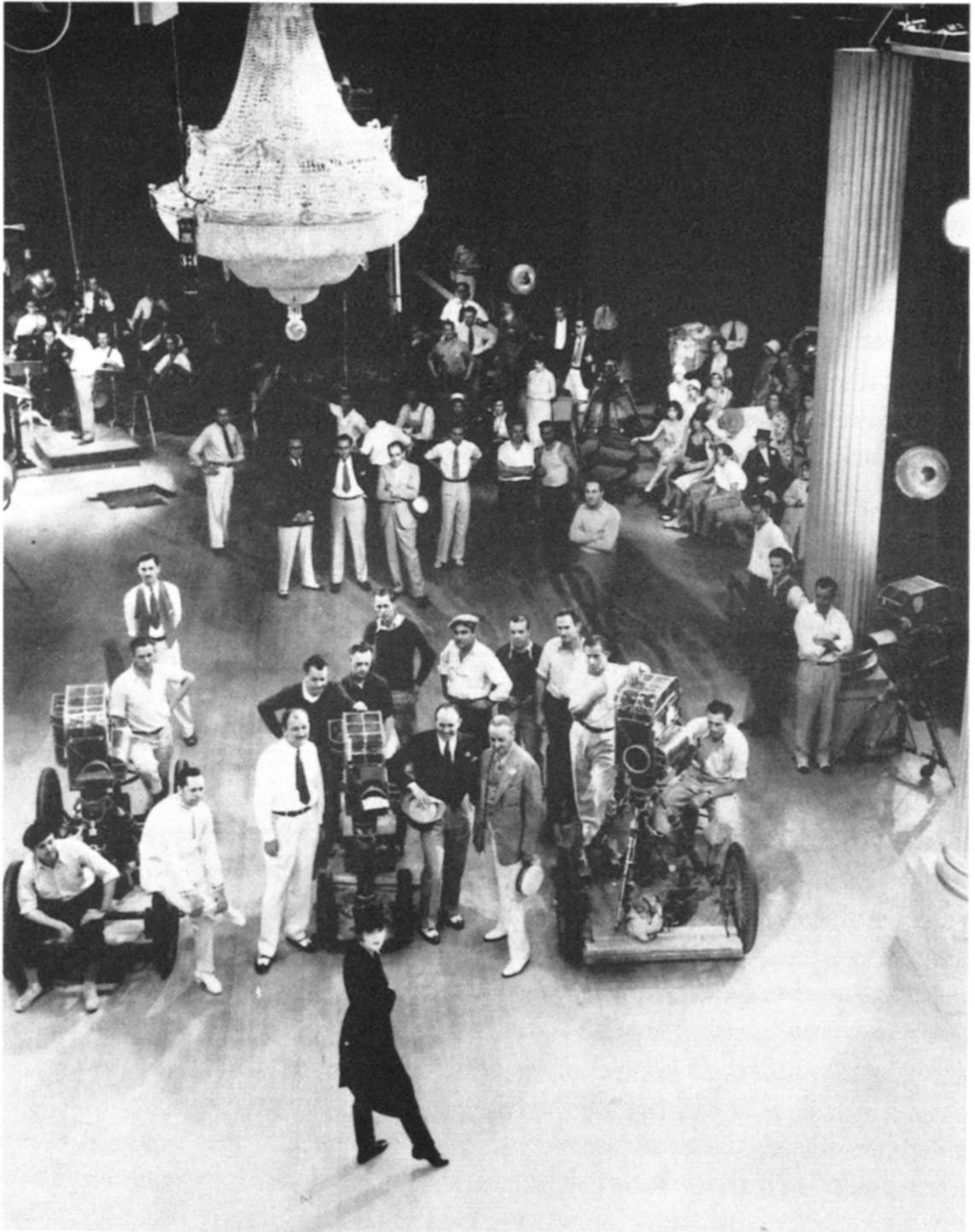
23.17 Blimped cameras on various carriages for filming First National's *Sunny* (1930). Note the rolling tripod attached to the camera on the far right

RELIANCE

SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFERING

"THANKSGIVING"

By the Well Known Author, FORREST HALSEY

"In Search of Their Child, the Divorced Couple Meet"

WEDNESDAY   **NOVEMBER 27th**

A POWERFUL DRAMA WITH BEAUTIFUL HEART INTEREST

START TO ADVERTISE THIS NOW—ANOTHER SPLENDID TWO-REEL FEATURE
RELEASED WEDNESDAY, DEC. 4th

"OLD MAM'SELLE'S SECRET"

IT NEEDS NO BOASTING—IT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

THE RELIANCE STUDIOS, 540 West 21st St., New York

24.1 A 1912 Reliance advertisement credits the author of the story

11/11/38
17.

41 (Cont.)

CORPORAL:
Make your mark...
(pointing)
... here!

The peon marks and returns the board to the private.

CORPORAL:
What is your father's name?

PEON:
Doroteo Albengo.

The private writes and hands back the board again.

CORPORAL:
Mark here!

PEON:
But my father is dead, Senor.

CORPORAL:
Mark here! --

As the peon does.

DISSOLVE TO:

42.
AN ASSEMBLY OF PEONS AND POORER-CLASS TOWNSFOLK
listening to a speaker who is standing on a bench in a
public plaza.

SPEAKER:
...You are being tricked, Companeros...
Do not write your names or make
your marks... The paper says we
want an emperor to come from Europe
and rule over us... We do not want
an emperor. We have a president,
Benito Juarez, who helped us poor
people to get lands to farm.... If
an emperor comes, he will take
the away. Then we shall starve
and be slaves again....

A clatter of hoofs begins to SOUND OVER the scene. The
listeners turn, break and run in all directions, as
soldiers ride over them and close in on the speaker.

DISSOLVE TO:

25.2 Scriptwriters for *Juarez* included John Huston, Aneas MacKenzie

32 (Cont.1)

11/11/38
3.

Changes
"JUAREZ"

NAPOLEON:
    (continuing)
...millions have been poured into the
Mexican conquest... millions for men and
more men -- ships - munitions. I could
have conquered half of Europe at less
cost.

He stops, whirls on his heel to face them, and grinds
out the coal of his cigarette on the polished table.

NAPOLEON:
    (continuing, to de Morny)
You and your banker friends got me
into this mess...

DE MORNY:
Your Majesty is unfair... The collection
of Mexico's debt was of secondary impor-
tance... Your Majesty intervened in
Mexico to block the spread of American
democracy.

NAPOLEON:
Democracy!... The rule of the cattle by
the cattle for the cattle... Abraham
Lincoln -- bah! Parliaments and plebi-
scites and proletarians -- A mob intox-
icated with ideas of equality -- cattle!
    (he almost foams at the
    mouth)
Well, am I to be destroyed by such filth...
Am I?

He looks from one minister to another, each of whom
evades his glare and turns questioning eyes on the re-
maining members of the Council... with no results.

NAPOLEON:
    (continuing)
Well, what do you advise now: Shall we
evacuate Mexico... permit the humiliation
of French Imperialism by Benito Juarez -
an Indian bandit... and be engulfed by
a revolution here at home?... Or shall
we wait for the Yankees to destroy us
on the Rio Grande?

DE MORNY:
If we evacuate Mexico now, we are cer-
tain to have trouble here at home. As
I see it, there is everything to lose
by an immediate withdrawal.

(CONTINUED)

25.1 Two pages from the final script for Warner Bros' *Juarez* (1939) Wolfgang Reinhardt, and Abem Finkel
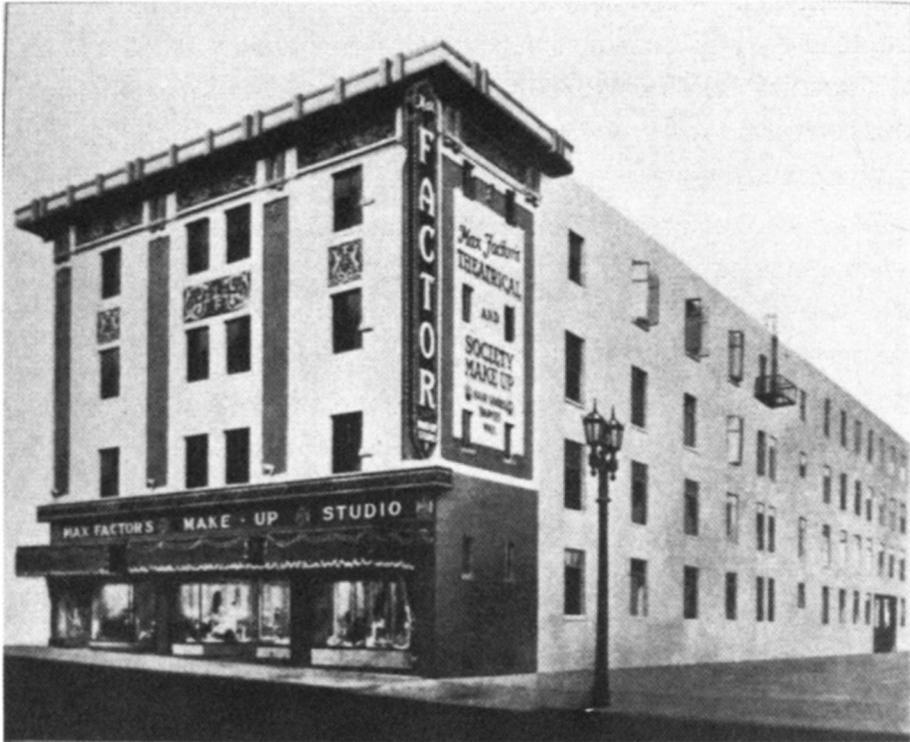
25.3 (above) Max Factor's new building (1929) for research in make-up

The drawing illustrates the way Paula Stone's corrective make-up is planned.
The photo shows how she looks in that make-up.
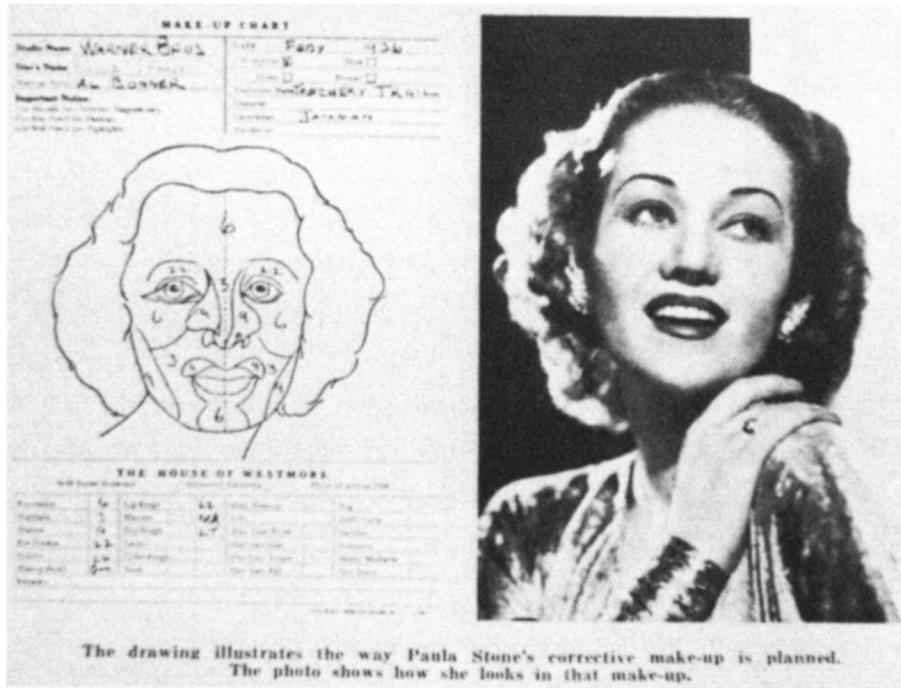
25.4 (below) A 1937 make-up chart at Warner Bros

25.5 An optical printer matted in the ceiling on this set (1932)
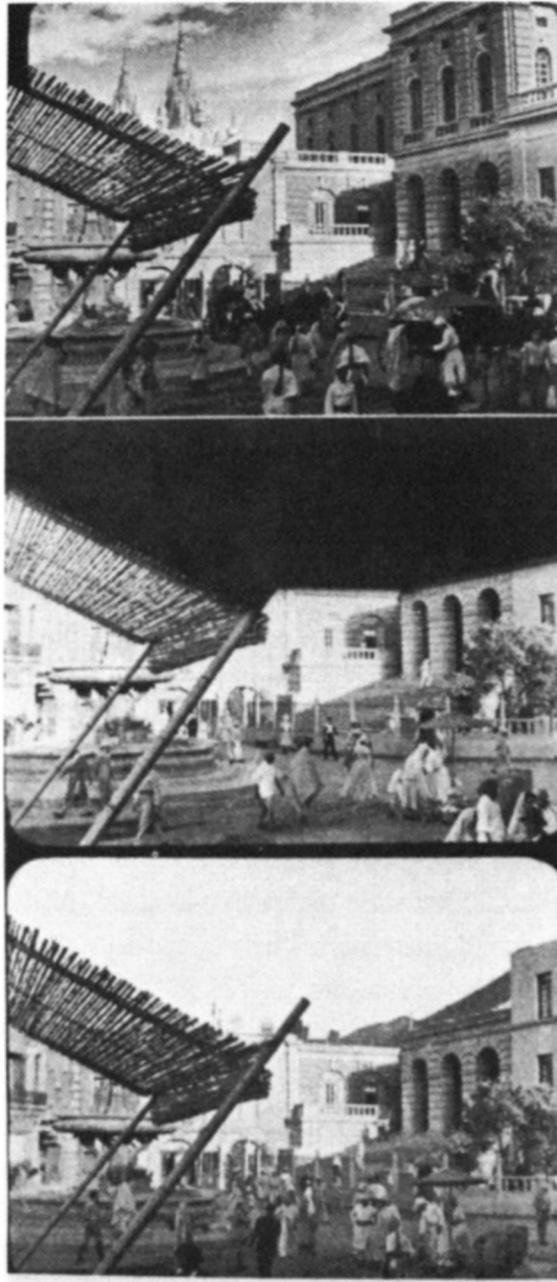
25.6 In a November 1939 *American Cinematographer* article, Byron Haskin described matte shot work at Warner Bros. The bottom photograph showed the set as built; the middle photograph was the negative with its matte line; and the top photograph illustrated the completed matte shot
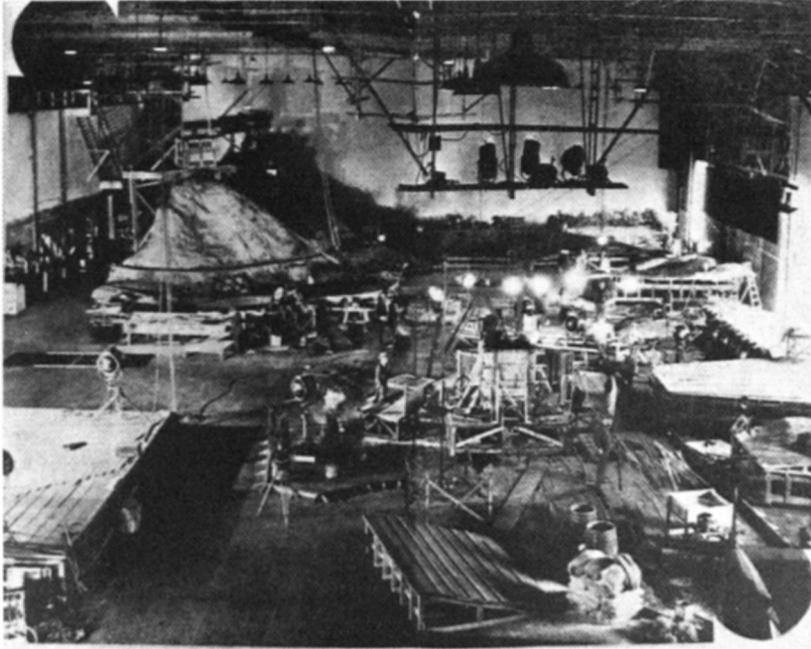
25.7 (above) In 1929, Warner Bros claimed that its Scientific Research Department worked in 'the largest building in the industry devoted exclusively to special process and miniature work.' The 150 × 300 foot stage included optical printers and enough room to shoot up to two dozen miniatures
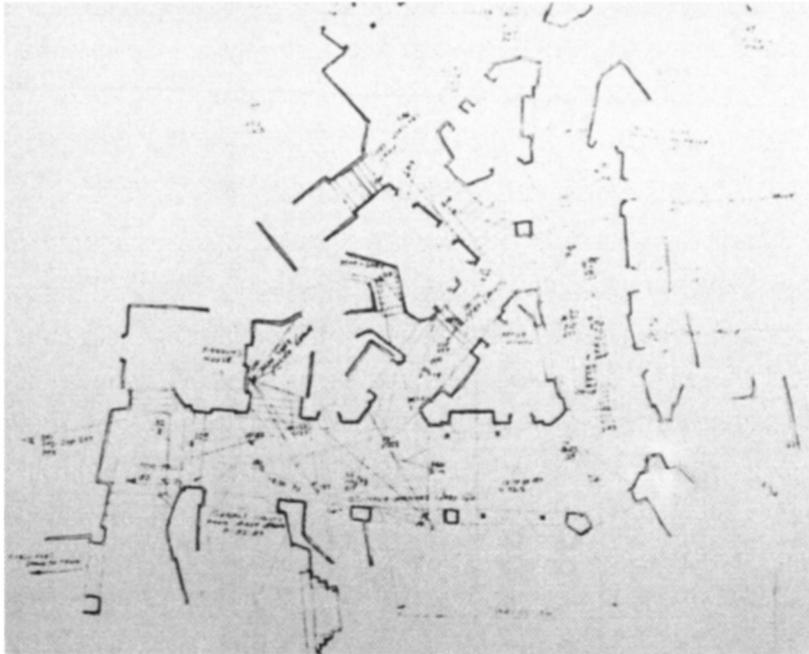
25.8 (below) The floor plan of the Casbah set for *Algiers* (1938). After art director Alexander Toluboff designed the set, camera angles and movements for every scene were carefully planned

25.9 Several production stills from publicity about *Juarez*

25.10 Part of Warner Bros' 1939 staff of cinematographers with their ten new Studio Model Mitchells. Front row, left to right: E.B. McGreal; Charles Rosher; Ted McCord; Arthur Edeson; James Wong Howe; Sol Polito; Bun Haskin. Rear row, left to right: Sid Hickox; Warren Lynch; Arthur Todd; Lou O'Connell; Ernie Haller
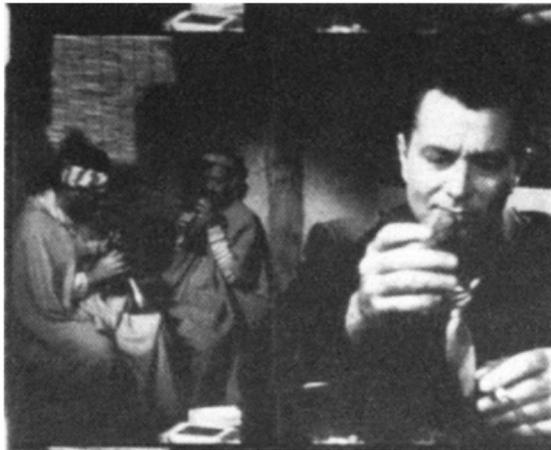
27.1 (above left) *Casbah* (1948)

27.2 (above right) *The Kid Brother* (1927)

27.3 (centre left) Deep staging with fairly sharp focus in the rear planes: *Greed* (1924)

27.4 (centre right) Deep focus with a strong foreground and employing a wide-angle lens: *The Show* (1927)

27.5–27.6 (below) The hard-edged image in the late silent era: So *This Is Paris* (1926)
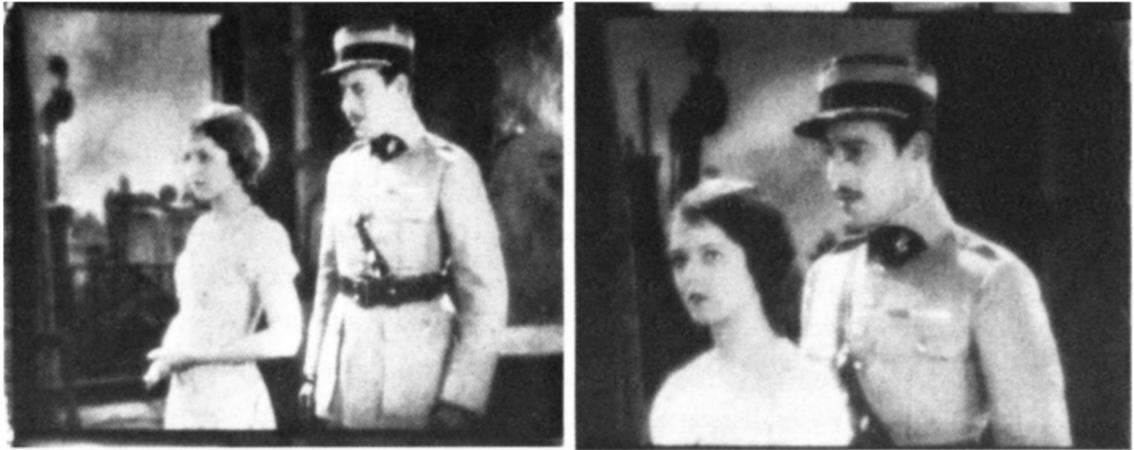
27.7–27.8 (above) The soft style in the late silent film: *Seventh Heaven* (1927)

27.9 (centre left) *Moby Dick* (1930)
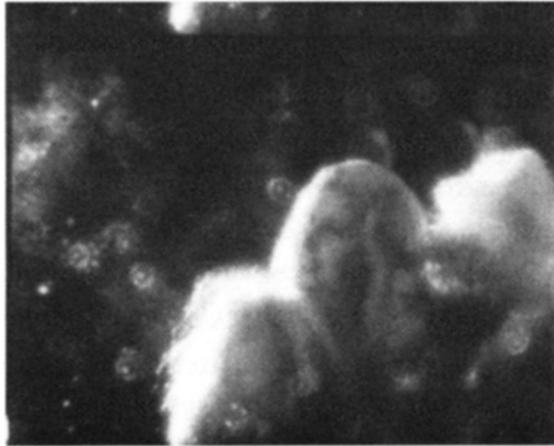
27.10 (centre right) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935)

27.11 (below left) *The Enchanted Cottage* (1945)

27.12 (below right) Wide-angle distortion in *Each Dawn I Die* (1939)

27.13 (above left) *Bulldog Drummond* (1929)

27.14 (above right) *A Farewell to Arms* (1932)

27.15 (centre left) *Anthony Adverse* (1936)

27.16 (centre right) *All That Money Can Buy* (1941)

27.17 (below left) *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)

27.18 (below right) *Our Town* (1940)
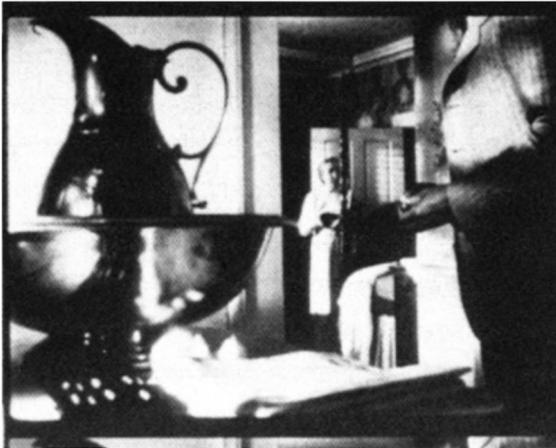
27.19 *Kings Row* (1941)

27.20 A drawing by William Cameron Menzies for *Alibi* (1929)

27.21 (above left) *Jezebel* (1938)
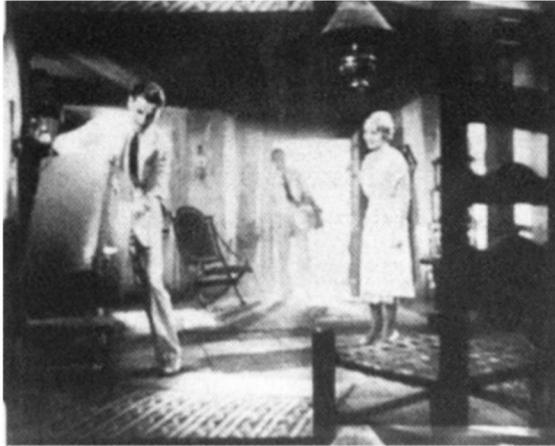
27.23–27.24 (below) Deep space shot/reverse shot in *Our Town* (1940)

27.22 (above right) *Arrowsmith* (1931)

27.25 (above) Gregg Toland (far left) and Howard Hawks (far right) using the Mitchell BNC to film *Ball of Fire* (1941)

27.26 (below left) Use of a wide-angle lens in *Dead End* (1937), shot by Toland for William Wyler

27.27 (below right) *These Three* (1936)

27.28 (above left) *These Three* (1936)

27.29 (above right) *Dead End* (1937)

27.30 (centre left) *The Long Voyage Home* (1940)

27.31 (centre right) *Dead End* (1937)

27.32 (below left) *Dead End* (1937)

27.33 (below right) *The Long Voyage Home* (1940)

27.34 (above left) *Citizen Kane* (1941)

27.35 (above right) *T-Men* (1948)

27.36 (centre left) *Gun Crazy* (1949)

27.37 (centre right) *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)

27.38–27.39 (below) *Kings Row* (1941)

27.40 (above left) *Ball of Fire* (1941)

27.41 (above right) *The Little Foxes* (1941)

27.42 (below left) *Manhandled* (1949)

27.43 (below right) *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)

27.44 (above) *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)

27.45–27.46 (below) *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)

28.1 (left) *At Sword's Point* (1952)

28.2 (right) *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938)

Rodgers and Hammerstein's **"OKLAHOMA!"**, filmed in **TODD-AO**
Directed by Fred Zinnemann   Produced by Arthur Hornblow   Distributed by Magna Theatre Corporation
Printed in U.S.A.

29.1 Filming *Oklahoma!* (1955) with two Todd-A0 cameras. The size of the lens was due to its extreme angle of coverage. The film was also shot in CinemaScope; the Scope camera is center right



29.2 (above) *Carmen Jones* (1954)

29.3 (centre) A slightly off-center Scope composition, balanced by the glance: *Tip on a Dead Jockey* (1957)
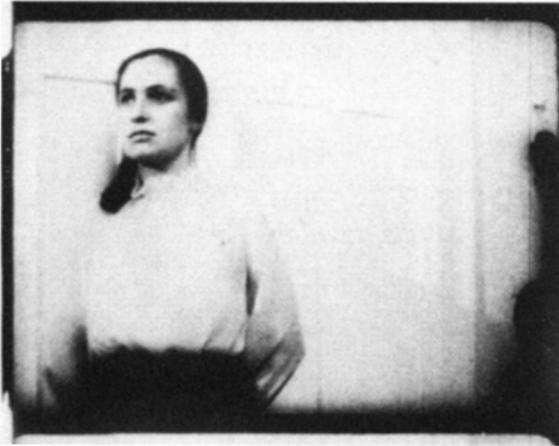
29.4 (below) *Not Reconciled* (1964)
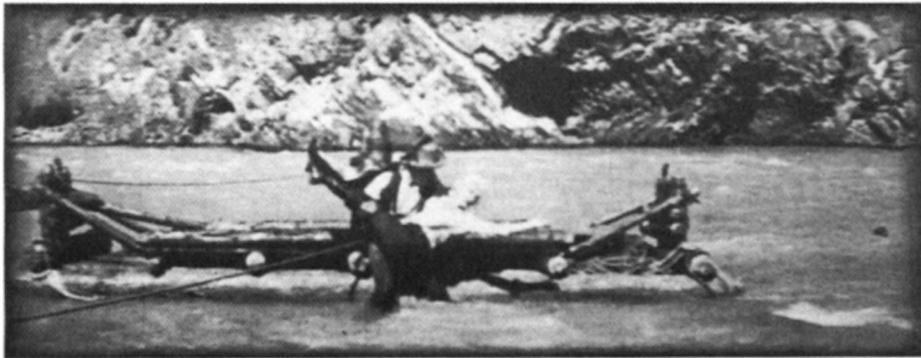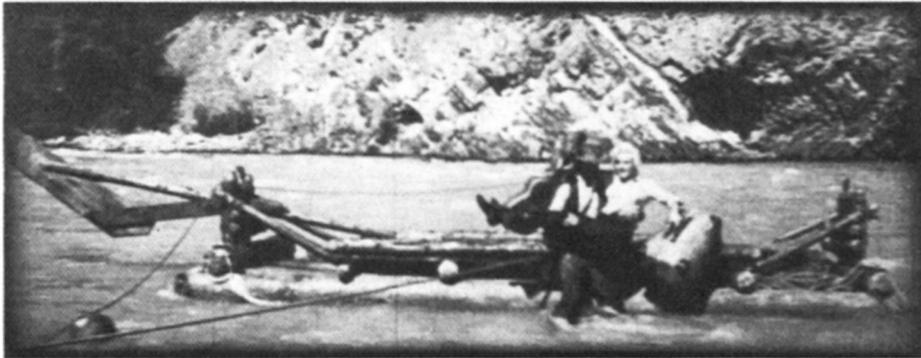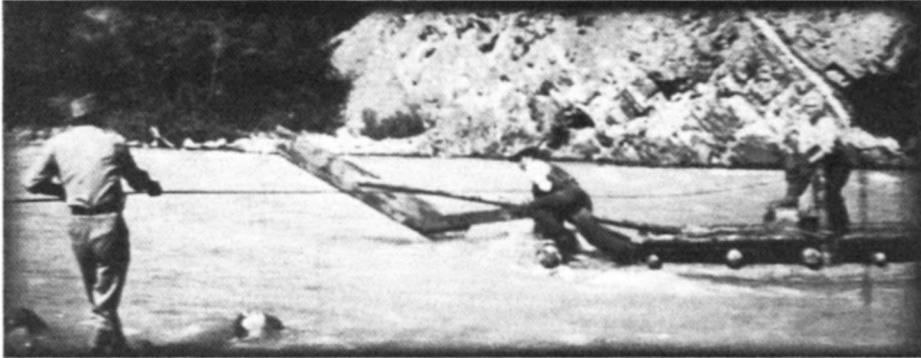
29.5–29.11 (this page and overleaf) *River of No Return* (1954)
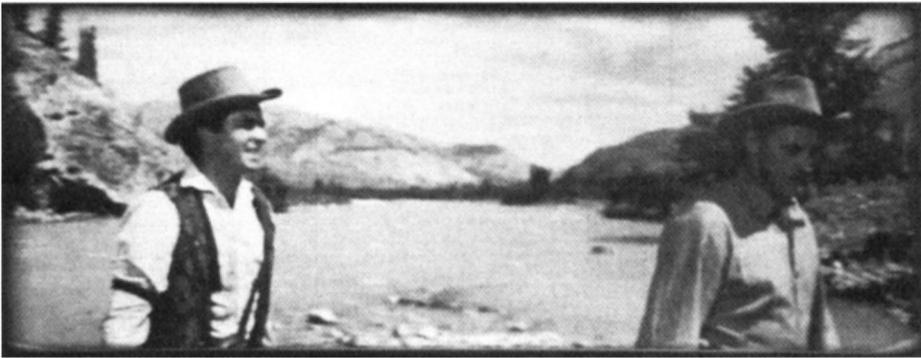
29.9–29.11 (above) * River of No Return* (1954)

29.12 *Pierrot le fou* (1964)