became famous at Selig for his **westerns,** especially beginning with *The Law and the Outlaw* (1913). Next to G.M.**Anderson** and William S.**Hart,** Mix became a wildly popular, flamboyant cowboy star. Yet like Buffalo Bill **Cody,** many of his legendary deeds were in fact fables he himself had invented. Although never a cowboy in real life, he was an outstanding marks-man and rodeo stuntman in his numerous movies.

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NANNA VERHOEFF

modernity and early cinema

Modernity refers to the conditions of the modern world; while this can indicate the whole of western history since the Renaissance (or the Enlightenment, or the French Revolution), in the context of early cinema the term most often refers more narrowly to the period since the industrial revolution, and specifically the changes in **transportation, communication,** and **urbanization** occasioned by such new inventions/innovations as: the railway, telegraph, telephone, **electricity, photography, imperialism** and worldwide markets, mass marketing and the rise of a consumer culture, as well as the new importance of scientific research for industry and society. In other words, it refers to "the second industrial revolution" in the latter part of the 19th century, and the innovations on which the emergence of early cinema was dependent.

Consideration of early cinema and modernity attempts to place cinema as an industry and form of entertainment, as well as a narrative and aesthetic form, in relation to the historical and cultural context in which it developed, especially fitting it into the novel patterns of modern life. As an aspect of a cultural history of cinema, the relation between modernity and early cinema would seem to be an obvious topic, unless one maintains a strict formalist position that art as an autonomous form cannot be subjected to social analysis. Clearly, patterns of early cinema exhibition in cities must be looked at in terms of urbanization, reform legislation, and class tensions. Even the non-urban **fair/fairground** exhibitions that formed the most frequent venue for cinema in Western Europe before the 1910s changed in relation to the industrialization of the fair, the introduction of electricity as a marvel, and the display of modern devices (including X-rays and electrical generators) as attractions in themselves. Early film production, especially by international companies (such as the various branches of the **American Mutoscope and Biograph Company** in the USA, Great Britain, and continental Europe at the turn of the century, or **Pathé-Frères** after 1904), must be approached in terms of new international systems of trade. The technology of the cinema itself depends on modern production of precision machinery and innovations in photographic chemistry, not to mention cinema's origin in scientific research via **chronophotography**. In terms of technology, distribution, production and exhibition, early cinema makes constant use of

the new conditions of modernity; indeed it could be said to exemplify them as a new means of mechanical art and entertainment.

Short of abandoning (or radically narrowing) the project of film history, it would seem that early cinema must be investigated in terms of modernity. While certainly some issues in film history may not relate directly to the themes of modernity, nonetheless issues of imperialism, gender, and race or ethnicity all take specific forms in the period of early cinema and are dependent on the economic, technical, and social transformations of the era. Work in investigating cinema and modernity has made use of a Germanic tradition closely associated with the term, including works by Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Georg Lukacs, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodore Adorno. More recent theorists such as Linda Dalrymple Henderson, Stephen Kern, Anson Rabinbach, Jonathan Crary, and Wolfgang Schivelbusch also have been influential in defining modernity for film history. Although there is considerable overlap in the themes and even some of the conclusions of these authors, there also are enough differences that it should not be assumed that everyone dealing with the issue of modernity and early cinema necessarily share all the same assumptions.

For the earliest period of film production and exhibition, reception of the new marvel almost universally invoked not only the wonders of modern technology, but also new experiences of unfamiliar and even uncanny effects this new technology spawned. Further, many early films featured aspects of modern life: the movement of crowds in big city streets, workers emerging from factory gates, trains arriving at stations. Images of speeding locomotives stimulated perhaps the greatest excitement from commentators on the first film programs. Thus they saw such programs as offering a view of a new life as well as a new invention. Although scenes of modern life did not exhaust the repertory of early films, which included **vaudeville** acts, scenes of everyday life, and picturesque images of nature (ocean surf, Niagara Falls), modern images undeniably characterized early film programs.

Early films, consequently, represented aspects of modern experience in both themes and forms. Approaches to defining "experience" vary from theorist to theorist, from the more phenomenological claims of Tom Gunning to the cognitivist investigations of Ben Singer or the more psychoanalytically shaped theories of some of the feminist historians (Miriam Hansen, to a degree). However, these differences do not interfere with a shared assumption that films reflect changes in historical experience as well as relying on basic cognitive consistencies. Historical experience appears in the way films are received (understood and discussed) by **audiences** as well as in the way they are made. Thus Hansen's work emphasizes cinema's role as an "alternative public sphere" for early audiences, especially the women and recent immigrants who made up a significant proportion of the **nickelodeon** audience in urban theaters. Movies, due to low ticket prices, created working-class audiences mixed in gender, ethnicity, and age. And working-class audiences, as social historians such as Ralph Rosenzweig have shown, treated the nickelodeon as a social club as much as a place to view films. Film provided food for discussion and a reference point for processing new experiences.

More controversial, perhaps, is Gunning's argument that the format of cinema's first decade, which he terms the **cinema of attractions** (brief non-narrative doses of visual pleasure—unusual scenes, gags, acts, tricks, or scenic views), can be related to the experience of modernity. Gunning claims the presentational modes of attractions

paralleled the shocks that Benjamin saw as typical of modern experience (and of cinema). A great proportion of early films took confrontational and exhibitionistic stances towards their viewers, as opposed to the more traditional absorption and contemplation called for in the traditional arts. Thus, the brevity of these films and their frequent use of surprise (explosions, tricks appearances and transformations, or display of visual curiosities) created a fast-paced, unpredictable, and even nerve-shaking experience. The direct address to the audience found in many early films (either through actors addressing the camera—as in the outlaw firing at the audience in **Edison's** *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)—or through the **phantom train rides** which, as Charles Musser puts it, position the "spectator as a passenger") aggressively seized audience attention with a sensation more closely related to the attractions of **fairgrounds** and carnivals than the traditional aesthetic experience offered by legitimate **theater,** the classic novel, or the art museum.

While hardly a modernist or avant-garde technique, the cinema of attractions exemplified the confrontational and often absurdist energy that avant-garde artists in the 1910s appropriated from the popular arts—the **music hall,** the circus, the **comic strip**—as well as the cinema. The specific forms of the cinema that attracted many modernist artists—especially their fast pace and compression of time—also repelled many middle-class reformers of the era who very specifically related these aspects to the effects of modernity that they found pernicious.

Thus, in 1911, Hermann Kienzl, a German theater critic, launched an attack on cinema saying:

> The psychology of the triumph of cinema equals the psychology of the metropolis […] because the metropolitan spirit—constantly rushed, staggering from fleeting impressions, curious and impenetrable—is exactly the soul of the cinema […] And because the city dweller is as accustomed to nervous stimulation as an arsenic eater to his poison, he is especially thankful when a film gives him an exciting cops and robbers story in about a minute.

Likewise, a Brazilian journalist writing in 1909 used cinema as the emblem for this speeded-up pace of modern life brought on by new technology:

> The great symbols of our era, the automobile, our delight, and the phonograph, our torment, collapse distances and preserve voices just to avoid wasting time. In the future, if our planet does not hurry to its finish and end up carried off on the tail of a comet, the man of our era, I speedily declare, will be classified as the "*homo cinematographicus*."

Examples of such reactions to cinema as the epitome of modernity could be multiplied and, as the examples cited show, are international.

Two points should be stressed. Although the modern forms of technology and commerce clearly shaped the processes of early film production, the claim that cinema had an intense relation to the experience of modernity was repeatedly articulated as a theme in the reception of early cinema. Critics (and, putatively, audiences) understood cinema as an essential part of the novelty of modern life. Its images, its principle icons,

and its forms, especially its temporal structure, presented scenarios that seemed tailored to people attempting to inhabit this brave new world. Secondly, although cinema's first decade corresponds to certain aspects of the experience of modernity (brevity, confrontation, shock), the more narrativized cinema of its second decade just as obviously inhabits and reflects upon this modern world. Indeed, the greater expansion of cinema after 1906 arguably heightened its association with modern life.

Some critics, doubting the value of relating early cinema to modernity, have claimed that such a relation cannot in itself explain stylistic change, especially given the strong transformation of cinema from the attractions mode of the first decade to the greater reliance on narrative structures and psychological characters after 1906. Yet no one has claimed that modernity supplies the total explanation for film style. Indeed in his work on D.W.**Griffith** at **Biograph,** Gunning emphasized the role such factors as changing audiences, industry re-organization, pressure from cenregularize production contributed to the increased narrativization of cinema and the stylistic forms that took in the period around 1909. However, this sorship boards and reformers, and attempts to is not to say that modernity cannot be related to different styles and their success with audiences. Aspects of film style in 1903 as well as 1911 can be related to modernity, although often to different aspects. From 1903 to 1910, the fast-paced aspect of early cinema, so often compared to the tempo of modern life, moved from the brevity of individual films, the rapid succession of attractions, and the variety of the early film program, to a new use of fast-paced editing, a quick succession of gags within slapstick films, and the thrilling death-defying stunts in **serials**. The desire articulated after 1908 to attract "respectable, middle class audiences" does lead in some instances to films which seem to reflect more traditional cultural values, especially as opposed to the ribald humor and outright anarchy of certain films of the first decade. But the popularity of slapstick comedies, action serials, and sensational **melodramas** into the early feature era shows that film audiences still demanded the new dramaturgy based in shocks, one which can be related to modernity in terms of temporality, technology, new concepts of gender, and the ongoing pursuit of thrills and excitement.

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TOM GUNNING

modes of production: issues and debates

Marx used the term "mode of production" to analyze different economic systems with respect to methods of organizing labor, allocating power, controlling material and financial resources, distributing profit, and so on. In general, the modes of production Marx examined were very broad and distinct economic structures such as slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. More than just an issue of material or economic activity, Marx saw modes of production as intimately tied to larger social and ideological manifestations, whereby, as he wrote in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life."

In cinema studies, the term has been used rather more narrowly, generally sidestepping the social-reflectionist implications of Marx's base/ superstructure paradigm and focusing not on broadest-level economic structures but rather on different ways of organizing the film-production process with respect to divisions of labor and authority. For cinema historians, a "mode of production" refers to a particular set of production practices—a particular system by which financial and material resources are mobilized, decisions are made, and work functions are divided in the manufacture of films. Technically speaking, a distinction can be made between a "mode" and a "system" of production—the latter being a specific configuration or articulation of the former. So, for example, recent scholars can discuss *the* "Hollywood mode of production" (as a mode based on the detailed division of labor) while describing historical shifts in the specific systems of divided labor constituting that mode. In practice, however, the terms "mode" and "system" are generally used interchangeably.

The most fully elaborated analysis of modes of production in silent cinema has concentrated on the US industry. Janet Staiger's groundbreaking work in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* mapped out four dominant production systems that developed more or less sequentially in the silent era: the "cameraman" system (1896–1907); the "director" system (1907–1909); the "director-unit" system (1909–1914); and the "central producer" system (1914–1930).

In Staiger's breakdown, the initial "cameraman" system was a mode with little or no division of labor. The filmmaker was a Jack-of-all-trades craftsman, conceiving and executing virtually all parts of the production process. The same person selected subject matter, decided upon technological and photographic options (cameras, lenses, raw stock, etc.), handled staging (manipulating lighting, setting, people), photographed scenes, developed and edited the film. The cameraman may or may not also have been the owner/manager in charge of capital direction, but in any case he was a "unified" artisan