

appeared to lie in eliminating the screen as a mediator from the process. Front projection replaced the screen with a concave mirror, and a projector placed in the same position the camera occupied, throwing the *image* thus created onto a highly reflective screen (much improved with the invention in the 1950s of Scotchlite, a reflective material invented and manufactured by 3M). A beam-splitter was placed equidistant, and at 45°, between the camera and projector, which were situated at 90° to each other. **Matte shots** also combine multiple images into a single shot: static mattes, such as matte painting, replace a portion of the frame with an imaginary world superimposed upon it, while traveling mattes, frequently created through bluescreen processes, allow the actors to interact with the imported setting. Within a single shot, worlds combine.

EDITING

Thus far I have concentrated my discussion on the single shot, itself composed through choices in the areas of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography. Very few films, not even *Wavelength*, contain only a single shot, however; most join many, many shots together. Aleksandr

BOX 2.2: COMPOSITING: BLUESCREEN

A special form of compositing involves the bluescreen technique, in which foreground action is shot against an evenly lit blue background, then replaced by a separately shot background plate through optical compositing. Used most routinely by television weathermen and women (and parodied hilariously in *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* [Adam McKay, 2004]), bluescreen works well for human subjects because human skin has very little blue (or green) color in it, and computer-generated weather maps easily substitute as the background plate. Inventor Petro Vlahos founded his company Ultimatte to build upon his original 1964 version of bluescreen processes and is now producing sophisticated compositing hardware and software for the film industry.

Sokurov's film *Russian Ark* (2002) indeed bears mention as the first feature film shot in a single, unbroken take, while at the other end of the continuum most Hollywood films employ shots fewer than ten seconds in duration. Scholar David Bordwell clocks the shot duration of most Hong Kong action films – typically featuring “spitting, vomiting, nose-picking and vistas of toilets and people’s mouths” – at seven seconds (Bordwell 2000: 6). Editing is the general term designating the techniques and logic of joining shots together into larger strings or sequences; there are five different types of edits. The most common is the **cut**, in which the first shot cleanly ends where the second begins; the shots are spliced together using tape or cement. A **dissolve** joins two shots together by blending them, so that the end of the first shot and the beginning of the second shot are superimposed upon the screen for a period of time specified by the filmmaker to the laboratory. A fade may work in either of two directions: a **fade-in** lightens a shot from a black or otherwise colored screen, while a **fade-out** darkens to black. Fades often open and close films: fade to black, the end. The fourth type of edit, a **wipe**, involves a boundary line replacing the first shot with the second: it may be vertical or horizontal or some other sort of whimsical graphic. And you have already encountered the last type of edit, the **iris**, an opening or closing of the screen to a circle: that's all, folks.

It's not a bad idea to practice noticing editing, both watching for the presence of edits and learning which ones generally do what. Artificial though it is, I ask my students to say the word “shot” whenever they notice an edit while watching clips for a few days; others suggest clapping or tapping a pencil or your shoe. Whatever your preferred method, once you're able to distinguish edits and their functions, you'll discover that you can gain a feel for the pace of editing, thereby accessing the rhythmic possibilities of combination, and for the *function* of graphic, spatial, and temporal relationships between shots. These four areas (rhythmic, graphic, spatial, temporal) provide the framework for most discussions of how filmmakers shape sequences, and it's worth noticing how they work differently across different types of movies. Most films, for instance, conjoin shots of differing lengths together, but some films, and some sequences within films, create *patterns* of combination, producing recognizable rhythms with varying effects. Fore-

while lengthening them can allow for release, meditation, or contemplation. Abstract films rely almost entirely on rhythmic editing and graphic editing to build their temporal and spatial worlds, while principles of graphic combination drive only some decisions in narrative films (although any juxtaposition of one image to another creates a graphic relationship between them). One dominant graphic basis for combination in narrative films is the **graphic match**, where graphic similarities in two shots provide the edit's justification. In narrative films, the temporal and spatial logics of combination tend to predominate, since narrative films build imaginary worlds that are more or less coherent in space and time.

Mise-en-scène and cinematography contribute to the sense of a film's world, but it is spatial editing that literally constructs film space for us, since films join shots together that may have been recorded in wildly different places to construct a sense of connection present only in the film. The continuity, in other words, is produced by and through film itself, an illusion, similar to the illusion of movement produced through the persistence of vision, first discovered before 1920 by the Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov. He undertook a series of experiments in a short film in which shots of the face of Ivan Mozhukhin (who was a Tsarist matinee idol) are juxtaposed with various other shots (a plate of soup, a girl, a child's coffin). The film's initial audience testified to Kuleshov that the expression on Mozhukhin's face was different each time he appeared, depending on whether he was responding to the plate of soup (he appeared hungry), the girl (he appeared happy or desirous), or the child's coffin (he appeared sad or grieving), when in fact each instance of his appearance was identical (and the actor was meant to be blank, without expression). The "**Kuleshov effect**" has come for film scholars to describe the fact that, in the absence of an establishing shot, the audience will infer a spatial whole from a portion of space. The broader point, however, is that audiences create connections and combinations from fragments, retrospectively generating cause and effect logics or explanations where none was on offer, or creating continuous space from discrete images. Even in the presence of an establishing shot, such as that of an office building in Los Angeles in *Speed*, which precedes a sequence in which office workers go about their business, there is no reason to believe that the offices are located in that building in the actual world. The elevator, the workers, the

exterior police cars, the interior SWAT team all may have been filmed in different locations or on different sets but edited together to generate "the office building" in the film's first suspenseful episode.

That sequence in *Speed* is an example of a pattern common in commercial narrative film: establishment, breakdown, re-establishment. In this pattern, the film offers a locale, the space in which action is to occur, and subsequently breaks down the space into its component parts, and then re-establishes the locale before moving to a different space. Another pattern, used to suggest simultaneous action in different spaces, is **cross-cutting**, or **parallel editing**, that moves from the action in one space to the action in another and back and forth. Commonly used to generate suspense, "cross-cutting" is the visual equivalent of "meanwhile." These commonplaces of spatial editing, as you can see, also therefore embed temporal relationships, which are augmented by editing that deliberately orients us to a film world's time. For narrative films present us with stories that take place over centuries, over decades, over years, over weeks, over days. Few films, that is, unwind in **real time**, in which screen time corresponds precisely to plot and **story time**. Chantal Akerman's 1976 film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* does so to make an ideological point, as it records many real-time activities of a Brussels widow going about her chores, producing for the spectator a painful and mind-numbing experience, ultimately then awakening them to this woman's oppression. Screen time, usually ninety to 120 minutes for a feature film, more often drastically condenses **story time** (where "story" is the whole world of the film, involving events both given and implied), so that what we actually see and hear (called the film's **plot**) cuts out huge swaths of a film's story. Those swaths constitute temporal ellipses, and temporal editing is both what controls them and what renders plot time intelligible for viewers. Temporal editing, then, is not simply to do with the ordering of events in the plot, though filmmakers do, of course, make decisions about the sequencing of events, the use of **flashbacks** (in which events that took place in the plot past are interwoven with those of the plot present) and **flashforwards** (the opposite case). Like framing, temporal editing invokes exciting questions about inclusion and exclusion, about what kind of cut in time the film seeks to make. Austrian *avant-garde* filmmaker Peter Kubelka remarks of his two-minute

1957 *Adebar* (a structural study of dancers at a Vienna disco set to Pygmy music) that it is a film not to be studied for its meaning but rather memorized; his interest lies in an interval without beginning or end but which is nonetheless seized and experienced as a temporal unfolding.

Most narrative films, by contrast, rely on very explicit beginnings, middles, and ends, and, as I have been suggesting, obey certain conventions in order to keep spectators oriented in time and space so that the narrative may unfold without distraction. The last area that therefore requires discussion with regard to editing, particularly the spatial and temporal editing I have been discussing, is the system of **continuity editing**, the name for the ensemble of those conventions solidified over time and so naturalized that one frequently only observes it as a system when it is violated. This is the system that solidifies in the classical Hollywood cinema, the name for a style of films that obey the strictures of continuity editing and that, furthermore, were produced under the Hollywood studios' profit-driven mode of film production by "serial manufacture" (involving the contributions of many differently skilled makers). Most viewers know its habits or its rules, then, even if they don't have names for them: the **axis of action** and **180° rule**, the **30° rule**, principles of shot combination based on spatial orientation such as the pattern of **shot–reverse shot** or the **match on action** or the **eyeline match**, and control of temporal ellipses through conventions associated with different types of edits and patterns of juxtaposition.

To preserve spatial continuity, editors rely upon patterns such as the establishment, breakdown, re-establishment pattern, but they also build spatial relationships through the maintenance of perspective on the action as it unfolds. Imagine filming a martial arts fight, in which the master and his challenger duel on the side of a lake (as in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* [2000]). In order to preserve the spectator's understanding of **screen direction** (what's left, what's right, who's who in the space, and who's heading in what direction), encircle the space with a line, then draw a line dividing the circle into two hemispheres. Now film all of the action on one side of your line, on one side of the axis of action: each time the master kicks, she will move from screen left, unless we see her switch places with the challenger. Each time the challenger jumps, he will jump from screen right, with the same exception. By following the 180° rule,

always filming from one side of the axis of action, you will keep the spectator oriented, thereby warding off puzzlement that might interrupt his or her immersion in the story. The 30° rule suggests that changes in camera angle ought to be greater than 30°; otherwise, a cut between angles too similar to one another will result in a **jump cut**, an effect exploited by the French New Wave in which a character appears to jump slightly in the frame. Similarly also to the pattern of breaking down space, conversations between characters follow patterns, in which two characters appear in a shot together before an editor will alternate shots of individual characters, returning now and again to the two-shot. This **shot–reverse shot** pattern reminds the spectator that the characters, even if shown alone, occupy the same space (or have a virtual connection, so that telephone conversations work through cross-cutting). And if a character looks toward space that is offscreen, an **eyeline match** dictates that the next shot will show us what the character there sees, uniting expanding screen space and locating characters within it simultaneously. Finally, also to expand screen space, a **match on action** follows a character's action into a new space: we see a character from a home's exterior, responding to a doorbell and opening the door. In a match on action, the following shot finds us inside the home, watching the guest enter the hallway. The goal, again: to orient, to allay anxiety over discontinuity that might detract from the story. It's the same house, the film says; don't worry, we're just inside now.

Continuity editing also works to dispel worries about temporal ellipses. Explicit cues signal shifts in time. Flashbacks may require editing cues such as dissolves or graphic matches (a house now and then), if not titles on screen ("Eight years earlier"). The passage of time forward also follows conventions in the use of edits: cuts tend to suggest continuous, linear action unfolding in time, whereas dissolves and, more dramatically, fades move us from an evening to a morning, or from one week to another. Props help, of course: the old fan-blowing-on-a-calendar trick helped to communicate the passage of significant amounts of time, just as the bold LED display on a ticking bomb helps us understand just how much time our hero has to defuse it. Another way to condense time involves editing together shots of sufficient similarity to create a sense of repetition over time; in a **montage sequence** (as distinct from Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage) a series of news headlines, or a

BOX 2.3: FAMOUS CONTINUITY ERRORS

Fans track continuity errors more effectively than do directors, apparently. Websites devoted to "movie mistakes" keep count (145 for *Spiderman* alone on www.moviemistakes.com!), and clearly the ability to spot errors in continuity develops early on as one learns the grammar of narrative cinema. There is, no doubt, a certain pleasure in mastery involved in noticing a window magically intact after being shattered in the previous shot, a knowingness that is perhaps augmented by the additional awareness of the vast sums of money spent in the making of films meant to wow us with their flawlessness and their capacity for manipulation of the image. A few spotted and reported by fans in *Spiderman* are:

Continuity: The intact windows mentioned above – in the scene where Mary Jane is being mugged by four men, Spiderman throws two of the men into two windows behind Mary Jane. Then the camera goes back to Spiderman beating up the other two guys. When the camera goes back to Mary Jane the two windows are intact.

Continuity: When Peter shoots his web at his bedroom lamp and pulls it across the room, it smashes against the wall and breaks. But when Aunt May is talking to Peter from the door seconds later, the lamp is back on the dresser in one piece.

Continuity: In the scene where Norman is getting ready to test himself he lays down on the bed, fastens himself in and the doctor goes to the computer. However, when it shows him being brought into the chamber he has several electrodes connected to his chest and head.

Visible crew/equipment: When Peter stands up after being bitten by the spider, there's the reflection of the cameraman with headphones on the television set behind him.

Continuity: In the final cemetery sequence, Peter and Mary Jane square off for a little heart to heart, with her touching his face tenderly with her black leather

gloves. The camera cuts between front views of both: in hers, her fingers are touching his ear lobe, in his, they are an inch below his ear lobe. In one quick cut of hers, the hand has disappeared completely, then in midsentence, as they cut back to Peter, it's there again.

Factual error: When Harry is talking to Mary Jane on the phone, she hangs up on him and his cell phone produces a dial tone. Cell phones do not have a dial tone.

series of performances, or a series of breakfast table conversations (all of which Welles uses in *Kane*), efficiently compress story time, using, however, little screen time. Keeping spectators oriented in time, these devices insure the smooth unfolding of the story in whatever order seems best suited for its purposes.

SOUND

The fan's final example of an error in continuity in *Spiderman* alerts us to the construction and manipulation not only of visual worlds but aural ones, in all forms of film, and these worlds interact dynamically. Sound, however, engages a distinct sensory realm worth attending to with some specificity, even (or perhaps especially) when silence seems to prevail. Sound, as many critics have taught us, functions in a variety of different ways. Not mere accompaniment to the image, sound actively shapes how we perceive and interpret the image. It directs our attention within the image, and it cues us to form expectations. Just as elements of the image function as motifs, so too do elements or types of sound. Just as images harden quickly into clichés, so too do elements or types of sound: thunder cracks to announce a storm, car tires squeal to signal a criminal getaway, explosions in space make "kaboom" noises, and so on.

Although these examples suggest a wide range of sound elements, in the language of formal analysis there are only three types of film sound: speech, music, noise (effects). Speech is not restricted to dialogue, although dialogue is one of narrative film's most compelling devices, stitching the actor to the character and

rendering that character knowable through the texture of the voice to the audience. Speech in film can serve other masters than naturalism, too: as the great Soviet director V.I. Pudovkin understood, sound may offer a counterpoint rather than an accompaniment to an image, a subjective route to understand an objective visual presentation. Likewise, dialogue links human speech to the broader acoustic world in which we live, to the “vast conversational powers of life,” as film theorist Bela Balazs puts it. Speech brings us closer to the subtlety of emotion: a quiver in a child’s voice, or an acoustic “close-up” on a belly laugh bring us into intimate association with the lifeworlds the screen portrays.

Since speech frequently emanates from onscreen characters, it is most frequently **diegetic** sound; that is, sound whose source belongs to the imaginative world of the film, sound that is understood to issue from that world rather than ours. Examples of **non-diegetic** sound include **voice-over** commentary (that is, commentary that issues from another world than that depicted on the screen), music that accompanies the image from without rather than from a source within the world of the film (music, that is, which we presume the characters do *not* hear), or noises on the soundtrack likewise there for the ears of the audience alone. The distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound helps us to understand how sounds in narrative film are motivated, how the sound design is constructed. Music can be understood to be non-diegetic, laid over the image for our ears alone as in Cameron Crowe’s music-filled *Elizabethtown* (2005), until a shot of a car radio alerts us to the fact that what seemed non-diegetic was in fact diegetic sound (Tom Petty, Elton John, Ryan Adams, Patty Griffin) important to our understanding of the film’s characters and their emotional journeys. Music, then, may serve in similar fashion to speech to cue us to emotion, and it can devolve just as easily into cliché; in melodrama, for example, the short, sharp bursts of orchestral music that cue the villain’s entry are called “stings.” But music may also serve to complicate a film’s narrative, such as the paranoid search for the origins of sound in Francis Ford Coppola’s film about surveillance, *The Conversation* (1974), or the illegal possession of the woman’s voice in Jean-Jacques Beineix’s *Diva* (1981). And finally, a musical **score** might stand on its own, as director Sidney Lumet, who generally believed that a score should serve a picture,

BOX 2.4: MAKING SOUND WORK

Another moment from Lumet’s chronicle of movie-making illustrates how carefully editors construct sound (and how, sometimes, sound and image *don’t* work together):

The sound editor on *Murder on the Orient Express* hired the “world’s greatest authority” on train sounds. He brought me the *authentic* sounds of not only the Orient Express but the Flying Scotsman, the Twentieth Century Limited, every train that had ever achieved any reputation. He worked for six weeks on train sounds only. His greatest moment occurred when, at the beginning of the picture, the train left the station at Istanbul. We had the steam, the bell, the wheels, and he even included an almost inaudible click when the train’s headlights went on. He swore that all the effects were authentic. When we got to the mix (the point at which we put *all* the sound tracks together), he was bursting with anticipation. For the first time, I heard what an incredible job he’d done. But I had also heard Richard Rodney Bennett’s magnificent music score for the same scene. I knew one would have to go. They couldn’t work together. I turned to Simon. He knew. I said, “Simon, it’s a great job. But, finally, we’ve heard a train leave the station. We’ve never heard a train leave the station in three-quarter time.”

(Lumet 1995: 184–5)

observes of the great Prokofiev score for Eisenstein’s film *Alexander Nevsky*:

The only movie score I’ve heard that can stand on its own as a piece of music is Prokofiev’s “Battle on the Ice” from *Alexander Nevsky*. I’m told that Eisenstein and Prokofiev talked about it well before shooting began and that some of the composing was started before shooting. . . . Even when I hear the music on a record today, I start remembering the sequence visually. The two, music and picture, are indelibly linked: a great sequence, a great score.

(Lumet 1995: 171)

Finally, “noise” encompasses a world of sound beyond those sounds we think of as “special” effects. As I show in Chapter 3, the world of noise is an intricately built scaffold supporting the broader feel of a film’s world. Every footstep, every door slam, every pin drop is engineered in order to produce an acoustic landscape in a given film; not a single element of noise is simply natural or given. If the sound coming from the floor above in a hotel room is audible, it is meant to be audible in order to give our hero and heroine the chance for an accidental encounter; if we hear the voices of our stars rising above the din on a crowded street, it is so that we eliminate the buzz of real human noise to concentrate on their plight. Even ambient sound is recorded in order to be manipulated at the editing stage so as to answer to the sound designer’s conception of the final product, whether that conception is edgy or predictable.

Film analysis has terms to characterize variations in acoustic properties common to speech, music, and noise: loudness (changes in volume, sometimes indicated by the perceived distance of the sound source), pitch (the perceived “highness” or “lowness” of a sound), timbre (the texture or feel of a sound; a “nasal” or “whiny” quality of a voice, for example). Further dimensions of film sound include rhythm (beat, pulse, pace, tempo, or pattern of accents), fidelity (the extent to which film sound is faithful, according to our conventional expectations, to its source), and space (not simply whether a sound is diegetic or non-diegetic but how sound shapes the space of what is filmed, how sound creates and defines space). Sound designers and editors manipulate all of these dimensions of film sound through principles of selection, combination, and alteration. Just as you might watch a sequence in order to describe elements of its *mise-en-scène* or the rhythm of its edits, so you might repeat a sequence several times over to begin to understand the principles undergirding its sound construction. And now that you have most of the tools you’ll need to undertake formal analysis, put them to test all together: begin to use them to develop an *argument* about the film’s formal construction. To do so, you’ll want also to situate a film historically, a task I discuss in Chapter 3.

BOX 2.5: SUMMARY

The language of film analysis aids in our task of watching films closely to notice their construction. We may isolate six elements of what is “put in” to a given shot, or of *mise-en-scène*: setting, lighting, costume, hair, make-up, and figure behavior. Cinematography encompasses all that is to do with the camera: framing, angle, focus, movement, and compositing. The five types of edits (cut, dissolve, fade, wipe, and iris) serve different functions in different contexts, whether within the system of continuity editing associated with the narrative form of classical Hollywood cinema or other cinematic contexts. Finally, the three types of sound (speech, music, and noise) actively shape how we work with images. Experiment with readings of brief sequences to practice the terminology: once it comes quickly and easily, start to put it to use!



THE HISTORY OF FILM

The aim of this chapter is to present film history while simultaneously understanding film *as* history. The practice of film history, in other words, is not understood as itself a transparent or linear march of progress as charted by critics but instead as a practice by filmmakers and scholars alike of *generating* history. This approach provides the best way I've been able to come up with for addressing the imbrication of film *with* history, with historical understanding as an engagement with the past. It is necessary perhaps to say this right up front, since it's an unorthodox emphasis in introductory approaches to film history, most of which simply survey crucial moments in the development of the cinema as a modern art form, industry, and social institution.

What I seek to emphasize alongside, not in place of, such an overview, first, is the way that we see image *as* history and recall history *as* image. Much of what we know of the past, in other words, we access through the vast archives of the cinema. In terms of the ontology of the cinema (outlined in Chapter 1's discussion of André Bazin), we watch with the knowledge that what appears had *been there*, had actually stood before the camera. In one way or another, every film from 1977, whether *Star Wars*, *Saturday Night Fever*, or

at *Obscure Object of Desire*, records "the 1970s," insofar as R2D2, John Travolta, and Fernando Rey stood before the camera to be recorded in time. Similarly, as David Forgacs remarks in his book on the film, Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) and subsequent films by that director evocatively function as a documentary record:

It includes photographic evidence of Rome at the end of the Second World War. It shows what the city and its inhabitants looked like in 1945 and it shows something of what the war did to the city, notably in the various shots of bomb-damaged buildings. In Rossellini's next two films his camera crews would again photograph cities just after the war: the second episode of *Paisà* shows Naples, with the rubble of a bombed building and the cave of Mergelina where displaced families were housed; the fourth episode shows ruined buildings in Florence with the dome of San Lorenzo in the distance; *Germany Year Zero* photographs the devastated center of Berlin (the exteriors were filmed in the French Sector) where organ music drifts from a half-destroyed church, children play football in front of ruins and make their hideouts in the cavities of gutted buildings.

(Forgacs 2000: 22)

But what, we now need to ask, do we make of how these films seize and respect the real? What do we know and what are we to make of these moments in their social, aesthetic, consequential dimensions?

We also recall history through images. Think of the 1950s. What do you see? A Technicolor suburb? Black-and-white footage of school integration? A rousing musical? Or think of Hiroshima or Nagasaki: a black-and-white mushroom cloud, grainy and brief? Think of industrial labor, and you perhaps witness molten steel pouring in a darkened factory, or their smokestacks bellowing, or workers streaming into factory gates. If you were not there, the camera was, and it enables your intimacy, proximity, witnessing of history's unfolding.

Second, film shapes history as much as it records or reflects it. Most directly, propaganda films – those films produced directly by the state – rally troops for war, advocate for sweeping national policy changes, stitch empires together, quell dissent. So, too, do commercial films, if less overtly, if less didactically, if less visibly intertwined with state power. Commercial films undergo

ensorship, often receive governmental subsidies, enter into labyrinths of legal regulation and intellectual property restrictions: all axes of state control. Experimental and *avant-garde* films, too, oftentimes give voice to what the commercial cinema suppresses; as scholar David James argues about American 1960s films, even the most abstract works, therefore, situate themselves in and of their times as “allegories” of cinema more broadly understood (James 1989). To recall film history, then, is to recall *our* history, as well as moments of particular brilliance and technological innovation. It is to recall how upbeat musicals, such as the vehicles for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, provided relief and distraction to some from the woes of the depression in the 1930s. It is to recall how images of extreme violence, such as those in Quentin Tarantino’s *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), rendered worried parents into activists, intervening into the distribution of rap music and music videos alongside commercial films. It is to recall how nations devastated by war rebuild their webs of popular connection through films such as Emir Kusturica’s celebration of Serbia, *Life is a Miracle* (2004). And it is to recall how everyday gestures, acts, feelings, and responses feed from the cinematic machine and recycle through our own perceptions and senses.

To tell the story of the history of cinema, this chapter is organized into two sections, each of which generates different critical questions by investigating a different method of writing and filming history. The first, “Periodization,” presents a schematic overview of several key moments in the history of cinema according to the paradigms that govern scholarly approaches to film history: invention, periodization according to decades, periodization by event, and industrial periodization via technological innovation. Each moment is meant both to stimulate deeper thinking about how viewers, makers, and critics systematize and organize historical understanding and to cast a critical glance at the generalizations that tend to emerge from such periodizing. The second section, “National cinemas,” introduces the other significant paradigm that organizes film history, and it takes several key national cinemas as instances to illustrate the benefits and also the perils of the national model: British (Hammer) horror, the Nigerian video film, Italian “spaghetti” westerns, and the Indian (Bollywood) popular cinema. The second section is less an argument about the limits of national cinematic paradigms in an “age of globalization” than it is a demon-

stration of how knowledge of the politics of nation enriches one’s understanding of films that *move*, that *circulate* internationally. It is nonetheless true that the global nature of the colonizing process (co-eval with the first half-century of cinema) and, as critics Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it, “the global reach of the contemporary media virtually oblige the cultural critic to move beyond the restrictive framework of the nation-state” (Shohat and Stam 1994: 6). In emphasizing the benefits and drawbacks of a model of film history as waves of successive national movements, this section opens routes for understanding previous formations as transnational or international ones, and for recognizing new political, social, and cultural formations (i.e. European popular film and the European Union, Latin American cinemas and issues of cultural policy, and Asian popular cinemas, to name a few).

PERIODIZATION

In Chapter 1, you saw how cinema emerged from dazzling experiments in motion at the end of the nineteenth century, congealing into forms familiar to us very quickly after its birth around 1895. Birth, origins, invention; perhaps because cinema remains a relatively young medium, having just celebrated its centennial, scholars and makers return repetitively, if not obsessively, to the origins of cinema in search of its *essence*. Is it, at its core, motion? Is it memory? Mortality? Illusion? Vision? Perception? Storytelling? Love? Fantasy? In a marvelous experiment of the celebration and exploration of these origins, forty filmmakers worked with the original camera of the Lumière brothers (the box, if you recall, they dubbed the Cinématographe) for a 1996 film called *Lumière et compagnie / Lumière and Company*, well worth the effort made to screen it. Spike Lee, Neil Jordan, Liv Ullman, David Lynch, Gaston Kaboré, Sven Nykvist, Zhang Yimou; the leading lights of the modern cinema returned to the simple box the Lumière brothers invented to record and then to project films slightly shorter than a mere minute. What emerges in this homage to cinema’s invention? A sense of cinema’s possibility, a sense of wonder, a sense of awe: almost anything can unfold in a fifty-two-second interval. But also a sense of repetition with endless variation on the early films made

by the Lumières: a kiss (but now between two young people with Down syndrome), a story (but now an elaborate dream spun from the singularly bizarre and midget-obsessed imagination of David Lynch), a myth (but now shifting from Western classicism to Burkina Faso), a crowd (but now peering into the camera reflexively and aware). If film historians seek to capture this stream of repetition and innovation, their task is to correlate these complex syncopations and counterpoints with the histories with which they intersect (that is, histories of nations, of individuals, of industries) and with flows that frequently evade the writing of history (those everyday or aleatory events elided by the stories of grand events and historical breaks).

Cinema's youth lends itself to periodization by decade, a useful, even, and symmetrical way of carving up a century-plus of film history, if a method we also ought to contest precisely for its reliance on these seemingly equivalent chunks of the past. How to approach a decade, then? The critical school called **historicism** (more specifically in literary studies called the new historicism) posits that a work of art can best be understood contextually, rather than as an autonomous product of an individual mind or hand. By locating an artwork in its time, place, and circumstance, historicists tend to explain its particular features as indebted to its milieu, its influences, and its local peculiarities. Unlike **Marxists**, who tend to see a cultural work's features as tied tightly to the **mode of production** (such as the studio system) under which it emerged, or to the economic system (such as late capitalism) in which it is located, historicists find multiple (and sometimes diffuse) determinations that help to mold an artwork's form and destiny. By way of example, the "Screen Decades" project characterizes each decade of American cinema with an overarching set of themes or preoccupations, some of which link to industrial history, others of which act as narrower frames for reading particular films. The following blurb encapsulates an idea of "the 1950s" in American cinema:

From cold war hysteria and rampant anticommunist witch hunts to the lure of suburbia, television, and the new consumerism, the 1950s was a decade of sensational commercial possibility coupled with dark nuclear fears and conformist politics. Amid this amalgamation of social, political, and cultural conditions, Hollywood was under siege:

from the Justice Department, which pressed for big film companies to divest themselves of their theater holdings; from the middleclass, whose retreat to family entertainment inside the home drastically decreased the filmgoing audience; and from the House Un-American Activities Committee, which was attempting to purge the country of dissenting political views. In this difficult context, however, some of the most talented filmmakers of all time, including John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray, and Billy Wilder, produced some of their most remarkable work.

(promotion material for Rutgers University Press's "Screen Decades" series)

While this view of the 1950s in America seems reasonable enough on first glance, even the landmarks upon which the volume relies to chart its monumental moments beg our attention. If the Justice Department enforced anti-monopoly legislation commanding studios to shed their theater chains, it did so by virtue of the 1948 Supreme Court *Paramount* decision, which came after more than twenty years of intensive anti-trust pressure. If the middle class retreated to the home, it was in large measure a white middle class who left the inner cities and now-decaying movie palaces to those African-Americans who settled in northern cities after the Great Migration of the 1920s and who had been banned from the suburbs by restrictive covenants (real-estate ownership and leasing agreements that preserved white residency). And if the House Un-American Activities Committee stepped up its pressure on Hollywood filmmakers, the McCarthy Senate hearings represented only the tail end of governmental pressure on left-wing organizations, since culture workers from the 1920s and 1930s faced red-baiting and sabotage, too, and McCarthy's hearings furthermore resulted in precisely zero convictions or criminal prosecutions for espionage. If "the 1950s" acts as an heuristic, a useful way to get started in thinking about patterns and contexts, it also immediately reveals strong connections both forward and backward that unravel its coherence. Film scholar Wheeler Winston Dixon's book *Lost in the Fifties* in fact explores through more esoteric films – such as *The Bigamist* (1953), directed by that rarity in Hollywood, a woman (named Ida Lupino) – a darker side of the decade than that glorified by Hollywood or many of its critics. Similarly, "the 1960s"

as an international phenomenon bursts at its own seams, trying to capture films of anti-colonial struggles from the 1950s in Africa and Latin America; popular culture phenomena from the Beatles to surf movies to the seeds of "blaxploitation" (a portmanteau of the words "black" and "exploitation" used to characterize a genre of black-cast action films); counterculture; and feminism, the anti-war movement, the Black Power movement, the New Left, and so on. In terms of experimental film, the 1920s bleed into the 1930s. In terms of films about AIDS, the 1980s spill into the 1990s. And countless others ooze similarly beyond the confines of their ten-year barriers.

Marking periods by parameters other than decade yields other, oftentimes more fruitful, ways of understanding context. Studying the cinema of the Third Reich or of Italian fascism, for example, raises questions about the relationship between the state and civil society when the totalitarian or authoritarian government nationalizes or partially nationalizes a film industry in order to promote its vision. Certainly propaganda films emerged from both regimes; the images of stormtroopers, fascist salutes, and brownshirts are etched deeply in the historical record and in widespread recollections of the period. Even Hitler and Mussolini, however, nourished genres and stars many of us would be surprised to associate with fascism: Germany's melodramas and musicals starring Zarah Leander (even one, *La Habanera*, directed by the man who would become Douglas Sirk when he Americanized his German name, Dietlef Sierck) or the Italian comedies known as the *telefoni bianchi* (for, in order to showcase the comforts of the bourgeois household, there frequently appeared a white telephone). The co-existence of films easily understood as propaganda, producing and reproducing the people's allegiance to the ruling government, and films less easily understood as dogmatic or univocal helps us to complicate our understanding of how fascism itself works, how consent is manufactured, how resistance is coded, and how popular culture contributes to social and political analysis. In other words, studying an epoch's films sheds light on the larger phenomenon, while isolating an epoch for film history may reveal coeval film practices/that generate greater understanding of film's *function* at any given moment.

To use a metaphor drawn from cinematography, if one racks one's focus slightly to address films of the Second World War, a similar unevenness in national film production prompts questions

about how the war shaped ideas about homeland and freedom. In the United States a government-sponsored film program emerged in the late 1930s that sponsored documentary films associated with the benefits of Roosevelt's New Deal, the massive program of government investment and employment created to offset the devastations of rampant unregulated finance and the Great Depression. When the U.S. entered the war, Pare Lorentz and his documentaries of rural life ceded the film department to Hollywood types recruited to explain to Americans "why we fight." Frank Capra's seven-part series of that name, shown to every recruit in the armed forces, enlisted everything from Disney animation to clips of Nazi film to Soviet spy footage in order to generate a plain picture of the enemy for American soldiers. In Britain the government-sponsored documentary unit, the Crown Film Office, also continued to produce documentaries in the tradition begun by the lionized director John Grierson in the 1930s, but the British films, by contrast, paint a picture of the home front, stolid and pragmatically "taking it" while also exuberantly alive and civil. In Humphrey Jennings' beautifully poetic film *Listen to Britain* (1942) a carefully mixed asynchronous soundtrack animates a series of images of civility amidst the bombing, of pleasure amidst the hardship, of nature and industry in tandem withstanding the challenges put to Britain by the Axis. Capped off by a piano recital by pianist Myra Hess in the fortified National Gallery, the film cultivates the British spirit, democratizing taste across class and region, and it further showcases an appreciation for Jewish talent in the face of the enemy's hatred. Even the British "re-enactment" film about Royal Air Force bombings in Germany, *Target for Tonight* (1941), lays heavier emphasis on the jovial contributions of the Scottish navigator MacPherson ("Mac") than on the horrific risks of the bombing missions and the (admittedly later) annihilation of cities on the ground. By studying films comparatively across an epoch, one does not have to make recourse to the generalities of "national character" in order to see extraordinary variation in national-popular discourse as it seeks to enlist the support of the people for war.

Listen to Britain, like its Griersonian precursor *Song of Ceylon* (1934), also experiments with the atmospheric and evocative powers of sound. Both films precede British experiments in recording natural sound from speaking subjects *without* the use of scripts on