

# FILM STUDIES

## FILM FORM AND ANALYSIS

### CINEMATOGRAPHY

**Cinematography** describes the process by which a filmstrip is exposed to light to create an image. It encompasses many factors: the camera's distance from the action, camera angle and direction, type of lens, camera movement, and lighting, among others. The art of cinematography also includes **mise-en-scène**—the arrangement of objects and movements in the frame.

#### SHOT TYPES

The amount of visual information included in the image depends on the **distance** of the camera from the action and on the **focal length** of the camera lens. Throughout the history of cinema, filmmakers have favored certain combinations of camera distance and focal length, or **shot types**.

- **Extreme long shot:** Captures a scene in its entirety, used for establishing location in **exterior shots**. Used frequently in epic genres such as westerns and war films, it reduces human beings to mere dots on the screen.
- **Long shot:** Accommodates at least the entire bodies of figures (if that is all the shot includes, it is called a **full shot**). Captures movement, background, and broad gestures and expressions.
- **Medium shot:** Contains a figure from the waist or knees up. It is a functional shot, favored in classical Hollywood editing, often used for scenes with dialogue.
- **Close-up:** includes very little if any background, concentrating on an object or, if an **extreme close-up**, a fragment of an object, such as the human face. Close-ups often accord great significance and symbolic value to the objects they portray.
- **Deep focus shot:** A variation of the long shot that keeps objects in the foreground, middle ground, and background in focus all at once. Realist filmmakers favor it because it preserves spatial unity and lets the viewer scan the image for meaning.
- **Shot-reverse shot** and **over-the-shoulder:** Two types of shots used during dialogue scenes to give the sense that two or more characters are conversing with each other.
- **Point-of-view shot:** A shot framed in a way that prompts viewers to believe they are looking from a specific character's point of view. These shots can often contribute to the process of audience **identification** with one or more characters in a film.

#### CAMERA LENSES

The camera **lens** is a curved piece of glass that refracts the light it receives onto a strip of film that records the visual information, creating the film image.

- **Normal lens:** Creates a minimum of distortion, approximating the way that objects are perceived by the human eye.
- **Telephoto lens:** Used to capture crowd scenes or when the camera operator wants to remain far away from the action. A telephoto lens collapses distances between foreground and background, dampening the effect of movement within the frame. It also keeps background elements out of focus, which allows a single element to be emphasized and isolated.
- **Wide-angle lens:** Captures a wider field of vision than a normal lens. Deep-focus shots use wide-angle lenses, exaggerating movement and shapes (especially in close-up). Lines and shapes are distorted at the edges of the frame.

#### CAMERA ANGLES

The direction in which the camera is pointed in relation to the action being recorded is called the **camera angle**.

### SOUND AND EDITING

#### SOUND

**Sound design** in film involves the arrangement of **live sound** (primarily the voices of actors), **sound effects**, and **music**.

- Sound effects and live sound usually are **synchronized** with images to achieve a realistic representation of the action.
- Sound effects can also be used to direct the viewer's attention offscreen or trigger camera or character movement.
- When sound and image do not match, the sound is called **contrapuntal** or **asynchronous**.
- **Music** establishes genre conventions (such as the eerie music in horror films) and has emotional effects on the viewer. It also contributes to the rhythm of narrative and can be used repeatedly to establish motifs.
- **Perspective sound** regulates sound volume to make it seem as if the sound originates at a certain distance from the camera.
- **Dialogue overlaps** and **sound bridges** are used to minimize the disruption caused by visual transitions at the shot level and the scene level, respectively.

#### EDITING

A contiguous scene or segment of a scene shot on film is called a **take**. The process by which portions of different takes are connected together to organize the film into its final form is called **editing**. The connections between takes are called **cuts**.

- **Bird's-eye view:** Camera is positioned high above the action, looking down on figures, who seem powerless or vulnerable.
- **High:** Camera is positioned above eye level, reducing the size of figures and suggesting stasis and weakness.
- **Eye level:** Camera is positioned at eye level, a neutral vantage point that does not impose meaning on the action.
- **Low:** Camera is positioned below eye level, increasing size of figures and rendering them powerful, even threatening or heroic.
- **Canted:** Camera is tilted to one side, creating a diagonal composition that suggests tension or impending movement.

#### CAMERA MOVEMENT

The camera can remain motionless or may be moved, rotated, or zoomed. **Camera movement** involves physical movement of the camera from one location to another. **Camera rotation** keeps the location of the camera the same but shifts the direction in which the camera is pointed. **Zooming** involves the adjustment of the camera's focal length so that more or less visual information is included in the film image.

- **Pan:** Side-to-side rotation of the camera, often used to follow the movement of figures and keep them within the frame.
- **Tilt:** Top-down rotation of the camera, often used to view an object that extends above or below the frame.
- **Tracking:** Movement of the camera in any direction, often used to follow the movement of figures and retain their positions and proportions within the frame.
- **Crane:** Movement of the camera above ground level, often involving a vertical rise or drop, used to reveal elements at different heights. Variations of this shot position the camera on an airplane or helicopter.
- **Shaking:** Use of a handheld camera to express a psychological state or to generate a documentary-like aesthetic, as opposed to usual placement of a camera on a tripod to prevent shaking.
- **Zooming:** Adjustment of the camera's focal length. A filmmaker who wants to emphasize a portion of the image can **zoom in**, which increases that portion's relative size within the frame and signals to the viewer that whatever it contains is of significance. A filmmaker wants to expose the environment around a figure or action can **zoom out**, revealing the larger context.
- **Rack focus:** Adjustment of focus within a shot in order to change the portion of the image that is in sharp focus. Rack focus guides the spectator's attention from one area of the screen to another or from one object to another. It is possible because in most shots (that do not use deep focus), only certain portions of the image are in sharp focus.

#### LIGHTING

Most interior scenes are naturally too dark to generate a clear, discernible film image, requiring the use of artificial **lighting**. The intensity, position, and direction of lights in relation to the action have significant effect on the look and mood of a shot.

- **Lighting intensity:** Intense lighting, or **hard lighting**, creates stark shadows and lines of contrast; **soft lighting** creates a diffuse illumination.
- **Natural vs. artificial lighting:** Realist directors often avoid the use of artificial lights and choose instead to rely on natural light that more closely approximates reality.
- **Lighting setups:** The principal light illuminating the scene is called the **key light**. A **fill light** is often used to cover the shadows created by the key light. Typically, a **three-point**

- **lighting** setup is used in order to light a scene evenly.
- **Lighting effects:** A **high-key** lighting scheme minimizes the contrast between darker and brighter parts of the image. A **low-key** lighting scheme creates a **chiaroscuro** effect, with dark shadows and stark contrasts.
- **Lighting direction** creates an array of effects by manipulating the size and directions of shadows.
  - **Frontal lighting** eliminates shadows.
  - **Side lighting** accentuates features (of the face, for instance).
  - **Backlighting** creates silhouettes.
  - **Top lighting** creates a benevolent "halo" effect.
  - **Underlighting** makes a figure look sinister or even horrific.

#### MISE-EN-SCÈNE

**Mise-en-scène** is the arrangement of objects and movements within the **frame**—the rectangular border of the film image. Although analysis of mise-en-scène involves close inspection of the film image, keep in mind that film images are always open to a variety of different interpretations. The meanings and effects of film images are a function of the broader contexts within which they operate: those of narrative, representation, genre, history, and culture.

**Blocking** refers to the arrangement and movement of actors on the film set.

- Filmmakers often use blocking to express the **psychological and social relationships** between characters.
- For example, a shot of two characters in which each shares an equal proportion of the frame, at equal heights and depths suggests a balanced relationship in which neither of the characters has power or advantage over the other.

**Framing** refers to the placement of people and objects within the rectangular frame of the film image. Typically, the center of the film image contains the most important visual information. Filmmakers who want to make framing as unobtrusive as possible use **centered compositions**.

- The top of the film image carries more intrinsic weight, so balanced compositions usually keep the **horizon line** above the middle of the frame. A low horizon line can lead to a top-heavy composition, emphasizing the threatening or oppressive nature of the sky or of figures situated in the top part of the image.
- The edges of the image carry less intrinsic weight optically, so figures placed there can seem insignificant or marginalized.
- **Open framing** refers to compositions that situate the action depicted in the film within a broader context, suggesting that there is an "outside" to the "inside" of the film narrative.
- **Closed framing** is used when the filmmaker wants the film image to express the totality of reality, to keep the viewer focused on the action of the film, or to express claustrophobia and entrapment, such as in prison films.
- Framing that creates **diagonal** lines of composition emphasizes a scene's anarchic, unsettled, or dynamic nature. **Horizontal and vertical** lines suggest order, balance, or stability.

**Offscreen space** is the area outside the confines of the frame.

- Offscreen space often is a crucial component of visual composition, with characters pointing to, moving toward, or looking at something that is outside the frame.
- Filmmakers can use offscreen space to create mystery or to encourage viewers to use their imagination.

- A typical Hollywood film contains over 1,000 cuts—a number that has increased steadily over time.
- Realist or art films often contain fewer cuts, such as in Theo Angelopoulos's *Thiasos* (only 80 cuts in nearly four hours).

**Optical effects:** The editor can use a number of optical effects to connect different shots together.

- A **fade-in** gradually lightens the beginning of a shot from black; a **fade-out** gradually darkens the end of a shot to black.
- In a **wipe**, the initial shot is replaced by the subsequent shot through a horizontal motion, as when one piece of paper is gradually slid over another.
- In a **dissolve**, the subsequent shot is briefly superimposed over the initial shot. Dissolves often denote the passage of time.

**Continuity:** The dominant style of editing in Western narrative film is called **continuity editing**. Continuity editing, which tries to keep the aesthetic qualities of images before and after a cut the same, is designed to minimize the distraction and disorientation caused by cuts and to establish narrative causality.

- Continuity editing follows the **180° rule**, the practice of keeping the camera on one side of the action to retain consistent spatial relations between figures from shot to shot.
- Editors commonly use **establishing shots** to familiarize audiences with a given space and **matches on action** to present movement from multiple angles.

**Spatiotemporal effects:** Whereas continuity editing seeks to present events in chronological order and show events only once, editors often deviate from these norms.

- **Flashforwards** and **flashbacks** present events out of sequence or show events more than once (such as a persistent memory or nightmare).
- **Crosscutting** enables editors to show events at two or more locations simultaneously by cutting back and forth between them. This technique disrupts spatial continuity but establishes temporal simultaneity.
- Often, a film presents an event in a shorter amount of time than its actual duration. This effect is achieved by letting a character move out of frame and then, after a cut, showing the character move into frame at a new location. This effect may also be accomplished through the use of fades and **cutaways**.

**Other editing techniques:** With continuity editing, the primary site of meaning is the scene. By contrast, a **montage** sequence, such as the newsreel passage in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, uses rapid juxtaposition of images to create meaning at the shot level. Experimental filmmakers often break the rules of continuity editing, such as through the use of unexpected **jump cuts** to disorient the audience and undermine the realism of their representation.

# FILM STUDIES

## NARRATIVE

The majority of commercial films have a **narrative**—a series of events that make up a story. While most people use the terms **story** and **plot** interchangeably, in film studies these two terms have different meanings.

### STORY AND PLOT

The **plot** of a film consists of all the events and characters that are represented directly during the course of the film; the **story** is a broader set of events and characters, some of which are contained within the plot and others that are alluded to but not shown in the film.

- For instance, a detective film often begins at the scene of a crime. The criminal act is not shown in the film, so it is not part of the plot but *is* part of the story.
- Elements of a film that take place within the world of the film's story are called **diegetic**. Elements of the film that exist outside of that world (such as music heard by the audience but not the characters in the film) are called **extradiegetic** or **nondiegetic**.

### NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Film **narrative** usually is linear and driven by cause-and-effect relationships among characters and events.

- To stimulate interest in the narrative, films typically present **characters** with whom viewers can identify. The characters

are assigned certain **traits** and **motivations** that propel the events of the film to their conclusion.

- Although most films are character-driven, other forces can affect the course of the narrative, such as the **natural world**, **societal structures**, and **historical events**.
- The beginning of a film often establishes a **conflict** that is then **resolved**, after a **turning point** and a **climax** at the conclusion of the narrative.
- Films that follow this normative pattern of conflict resolution (common in Hollywood films) are said to have a **closed ending**.
- A film with an **open ending** never fully resolves the conflicts it initiates.

### NARRATION

**Narration** is the process by which the film reveals relevant information to the viewer.

- Since in most cases the audience initially knows nothing about the world of the film, early scenes typically involve **exposition**, wherein a large amount of information about characters and events is provided.
- If a film reveals *all* the relevant information required to understand the story, and the audience knows more than the characters in the film do, the film is using **omniscient narration**.
- If a film allows the audience to know only as much as, or less

than, the characters in the film do, the film is using **subjective narration**.

- Films sometimes employ a **narrator**, whose voice can be heard on the soundtrack in the form of a **voice-over**, to deliver critical information to the audience.

### NARRATIVE MEANING

Films are not self-enclosed entities but make statements about the world in which we live. Films create meaning through the use of **symbols**, **metaphors**, and **motifs**, which are repeated techniques, objects, or thematic ideas.

- In **allegorical** films, plot events take on meanings that are greater than their function within the logic of the narrative. Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, for example, can be interpreted as an allegory of American militarism in Vietnam.
- Contemporary film narratives are often highly **intertextual**, referring to previous cultural works, whether in the cinema, television or the other arts.
- Films depend on a **willing suspension of disbelief** that allows audiences to believe temporarily in the events and characters of the films' fictional narratives.
- Filmmakers who want audiences to take a more critical position use **alienation effects** to remind viewers of the constructedness and unreality of their narratives.

## FILM GENRES

The profit motive driving Hollywood studios leads producers to repeat, with some variation, formulas that prove financially successful. This practice has led to the establishment of familiar categories of films, known as **genres**, some of which are first developed in literature and then adapted for the screen. Some genres, like the western and the screwball comedy, are quintessentially American, while others, like the musical and the melodrama, are popular around the world.

### GENRE THEORY

- As audiences become acquainted with particular genres, they come to expect a specific type of viewing experience from films of that genre.
- Genres typically have a **life cycle**, progressing from uncertain beginnings to stable maturity and parodic decline.
- Though generic similarities between films have existed since the beginning of cinema, it was the advent of **semiotics** and **structuralism** that gave scholars a sophisticated methodology with which to analyze film genre (see Film Theory, next page).
- Jim Kitses defined genre in terms of structuring **oppositions**, such as the wilderness-civilization binary found in westerns.
- Rick Altman divided genre into the **semantic** (iconographic elements such as the cowboy hat) and the **syntactic** (structural and symbolic meanings).
- Recent genre theory has emphasized the postmodern mutation of genres toward **hybridity** and **reflexivity**.

### GANGSTER

The **gangster** genre emerged during the Depression era with sound films such as Mervyn LeRoy's *Little Caesar* (1930), William Wellman's *Public Enemy* (1931) and Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932). These films embodied Americans' ambivalence with law and order, chronicling the spectacular criminal exploits of Prohibition-era gangsters in ways that enabled audiences to both identify pruriently with them on their rise to power and cheer moralistically at their inevitable downfall.

- In the 1940s and 1950s, gangster films became much darker, adopting a **film noir** style that was defined by low-key lighting, a claustrophobic urban setting, a morally compromised protagonist, and seductive, deceptive female characters known as **femme fatales**. In these psychologically complex films, such as Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat* (1953), the line between criminality and law and order is blurred beyond distinction.
- The Hollywood **blacklist** during the McCarthy era (see Postwar Period, other side) shifted the thematic emphasis of the genre away from social criticism, as in Abraham Polonsky's *Force of Evil* (1948), toward anti-Communist paranoia, as in Samuel Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* (1953).
- Contemporary gangster films have focused almost exclusively on Mafia families, most notably in **Francis Ford Coppola's** *Godfather* films (1972–1990) and **Martin Scorsese's** *GoodFellas* (1990) and *Casino* (1995).

### WESTERN

Whereas gangster films explore the moral corruption of contemporary urban American society, **westerns** mythify the European colonization of the American heartland. Both genres conceive of law and order as the only thing that stands between civil-

ization and chaos. In the western, the villains are often Native Americans, who were portrayed in many films through the unflattering, inaccurate stereotype of the violent savage threatening the "innocent" white settler community.

- In the **silent period** (see next page), many of the most successful and prominent directors, such as Cecil B. DeMille and D. W. Griffith, made westerns.
- In the 1930s and 1940s, **John Ford** became the genre's leading practitioner. His films reveal the gradual transformation of the western toward ever more benign (if still inaccurate) portrayals of Native Americans, such as in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). In Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), the protagonist is as morally flawed and complex as his film noir contemporaries.
- The postwar **adult westerns** of Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, and John Sturges highlight psychological drama over epic spectacle.
- Italian director **Sergio Leone's** violent, stylized **spaghetti westerns**, such as *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), revitalized the genre briefly, as did later self-reflexive and unglamorous westerns like Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973) and Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992).

### HORROR



Nosferatu (1922)

The **horror** film is organized by the division between self and other, which can be defined in sociopolitical or psychoanalytic terms. The emblematic figure of the genre is the **monster**. Monsters such as vampires and zombies often straddle (and therefore unsettle) binary oppositions that are used to define human existence, such as life/death, man/woman, domestic/foreign, and healthy/degenerate. While exemplary horror films, such as James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), portray the psychology of the monster sensitively, most cast the monster into **abjection**, expelling it from the world of the narrative in order to restore order and normalcy. More than any other genre, horror is defined by its effect on audiences, who expect to be frightened, shocked, or disgusted.

- German expressionism provided the silent period's greatest horror films, such as F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). Classical Hollywood films, such as Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942), used offscreen sound, character reaction, and shadows to evoke a monstrous presence without violating the **Production Code** (see Classical Period, other side).
- American independent films such as George Romero's *The Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and Larry Cohen's *It's Alive* (1974) combined horror conventions with social and political analysis.

- Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) accorded the horror genre mainstream respectability.
- In the late 1970s and 1980s, teenage horror subgenres like the **slasher film**, as in John Carpenter's *Halloween* series, introduced the genre to a new generation.
- Some of the most innovative horror films of recent years have been made in East Asia, such as Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998) and Miike Takashi's *The Audition* (1999).

### SCIENCE FICTION



2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

The threat of nuclear holocaust and the promise of space travel led to the postwar emergence of the **science fiction** genre, which is concerned with the impact of technology on the future of human existence.

- Early science fiction films, such as Gordon Douglas's *Them!* (1954), were **B-movies** that used alien invasion to express anti-Communist paranoia. Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) is exemplary in that it has been alternately interpreted as critical of Communist infiltration and xenophobic mass hysteria.
- François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1971) accorded the science fiction genre mainstream respectability and artistic legitimacy.
- Contemporary science fiction films, such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), have constructed **dystopic** visions of the **near future** as a form of social and political critique.
- Hollywood also has combined science fiction conventions with those of other genres, such as family drama, in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of a Third Kind* (1977); horror, in James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986); and action, in Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990), to create successful blockbusters that appeal to a wide audience.

### OTHER GENRES

Other commonly identified genres include musical, melodrama, romantic comedy, action/adventure, fantasy, biopic, war, historical, teen comedy, animation, biblical, mystery, crime thriller, suspense, parody, mockumentary, blaxploitation, disaster, political, court drama, social problem, and pornography.





## FILM THEORY

**Film theory** is a collection of interpretative frameworks developed over time in order to understand better the way films are made and received. Film theory is not a self-contained field: it borrows from the disciplines of philosophy, art theory, social science, cultural theory, psychology, literary theory, linguistics, economics, and political science. Some of the major approaches and movements in film theory appear below.

**Medium specificity:** Early film theorists had two main concerns: to legitimize cinema as an art form and to identify its unique properties and effects. Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim considered (silent) film to be art because it does not merely mechanically record reality but rather *transforms* the normal ways in which the human eye perceives, through editing, camera angles, and black-and-white photography. These theorists made an attempt to understand the ways in which cinema differed from the other arts: Jean Epstein identified this difference as cinema's **photogénie**; Bela Balázs attributed it to the unique, even spiritual, expressiveness of the close-up. These concerns were revisited by later theorists such as Christian Metz.

**Realism:** Realist film theorists valued cinema for its ability to record reality without authorial intervention—a reversal of Münsterberg's and Arnheim's positions. This reversal was caused in part by the development of cinema itself, which increasingly resembled reality with the introduction of sound, deep-focus photography, and Italian neorealist aesthetics—a progression that André Bazin called the **myth of total cinema**. Siegfried Kracauer, a critic of authoritarian aesthetics, argued that cinema should focus on the unpredictable, unplanned events of everyday existence. André Bazin preferred films that use depth of field and long takes to emphasize *mise-en-scène*, preserving the spatiotemporal integrity of the scene and empowering the spectator to scan the image for meaning.

**Auteur theory:** This movement, initially championed by postwar critics working for the French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, was introduced to America by Andrew Sarris. Auteursim considers the film director not merely a mechanical recorder of reality but rather a legitimate artist whose personal vision battles the institutional limitations imposed by industrial modes of film production. Influenced by romantic notions of the artist and by canonization studies in the other arts, auteurist critics hailed previously neglected Hollywood directors, such as Nicholas Ray and Samuel Fuller, as exemplary art-

ists whose personal experiences, convictions, and obsessions imbue each of their films with an idiosyncratic style.

**Semiotics and structuralism:** Influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of **semiology** and Claude Lévi-Strauss's **structural anthropology**, Umberto Eco and others tried to define film language as a set of codes and structures that organizes meaning in ways predetermined by the medium itself rather than by individual filmmakers. In analyzing narrative cinema, Christian Metz identified the presence of eight principal **syntagmas**—combinations of sounds and images that are organized into units of narrative autonomy. Peter Wollen, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, and others integrated structuralism, genre studies, and auteurism into what came to be known as **auteur-structuralism**.

**Ideology theory:** Influenced by Lacanian **psychoanalysis**, Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, and student revolts in France in May 1968, film scholars began to analyze the cinema as an ideological apparatus that **interpellates** spectators into misrecognizing their relation to the real conditions of their existence.

- According to scholars such as Jean-Louis Comolli and Stephen Heath, films elicit **consent for the dominant order** by giving the viewing subject the illusion of freedom and agency, naturalizing and legitimizing the existing exploitative class structure. Althusser asserted that, in order to unmask what the dominant ideology obscures, one must perform **symptomatic** readings that identify a text's **structuring absences and constitutive lacks**. The critics at *Cahiers du Cinéma* famously applied this type of **textual analysis** to John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939).
- Writers at another French journal, *Cinétique*, argued for a **self-reflexive** film aesthetic that would consciously make audiences aware of the devices of its own construction and the illusory nature of the film image. These critics attacked realism as a **bourgeois** construct that leads audiences to mistake subjective representation for objective reality.
- **Apparatus theorists** such as Jean-Louis Baudry claimed that film's technological characteristics, as well as the conditions of spectatorship (such as the darkness of movie theaters and the silence and motionlessness of theater audiences), have inherent ideological effects.

**Feminist film theory:** Early feminist film scholars, such as Molly Haskell and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, focused on **stereotypes** of women in Hollywood and art cinema and drew attention to previously neglected women filmmakers. Later schol-

ars sought to describe the **patriarchal** dynamics of cinematic spectatorship. Laura Mulvey argued that classical Hollywood films invite a masculinist **gaze** that aligns itself with active male characters and voyeuristically looks at or fetishizes passive female characters. According to Mary Ann Doane, female spectators have few options: they may either empower themselves (at the expense of their gender) by identifying with the male protagonist or identify (masochistically) with the female victim. Feminist theorists encouraged women filmmakers to create alternative film aesthetics, which Claire Johnston said should channel female desire. Laura Mulvey said should destroy spectacular (and hence sexist, patriarchal) pleasure, and Luce Irigaray said should be based on the unique properties of the female body and feminine subjectivity.

**Cultural studies:** Cultural studies scholarship goes beyond apolitical investigations of medium specificity and film language and tries to situate film texts within broader **social, cultural, political, and industrial networks of power**. Rejecting previous theorists' high-art elitism and blindness to racial and sexual difference, cultural scholars consider all aspects of popular culture (such as daytime television, punk clothing, and hip-hop music) as valid objects of study. Unlike apparatus theorists, cultural scholars like Stuart Hall argue that spectatorship is an **active** process of textual **decoding**. Cultural studies is often concerned with the demographics and sites of cinematic spectatorship, revealing how certain groups in certain reception contexts and historical moments are capable of reading films subversively, against the grain of their dominant ideology. This approach has led to a proliferation of queer, feminist, and racial reinterpretations of classical and contemporary Hollywood films.

**Cognitive theory:** In contrast to psychoanalysis, cognitive film theory tries to understand how audiences interpret films in terms of rational, conscious processes. Using **Russian formalist** terminology, David Bordwell divides narrative into the **syuzhet** (the order in which the narrative events are presented) and the **fabula** (the actual chronological order of events). According to Bordwell, spectators use the syuzhet to reconstruct the fabula in their minds—an example of how meaning is created through cognitive rather than emotional or unconscious processes. Cognitive theory assumes that perception and cognition are universal human characteristics, so it does not take cultural or historical differences into account. This approach puts weight on intellectual rather than emotional aspects of watching film.

## FILM HISTORY

### SILENT PERIOD (1895–1929)

The earliest American films, which appeared around 1895, were primarily a **working-class** pastime. Because they told stories without words, they appealed to the large, mostly illiterate immigrant population in the United States. After 1900, film became a more middle-class phenomenon, as filmmakers exploited film's storytelling potential by adapting bourgeois novels (which incorporated middle-class values) for the screen.

Until 1914, the major **national film industries** resided in Italy, France, and the United States. However, World War I devastated the Italian and French film industries, allowing American producers to gain the upper hand on the global market. The major American production companies pooled their film technology **patents** and used their patent leverage to impose **block booking** on **exhibitors** (movie theater owners), which forced exhibitors to buy lower-quality product along with high-quality product.

Exhibitors fought back, **vertically integrating** by buying small production companies, and eventually managed to beat out the major producers because they were quicker to adopt **feature-length films**, which proved more commercially successful than the earlier **shorts**. From 1907–1913, many production companies moved from New York City to Los Angeles to take advantage of the warm weather that allowed for year-round outdoor production, giving birth to the **Hollywood** film industry. The costs associated with vertical integration forced Hollywood studios to seek investment from Wall Street financiers. This development, along with the industrial modes of production pioneered by Thomas Ince and the bourgeois storytelling conventions introduced by Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith, turned Hollywood into a **profit-driven enterprise** and its films into commercial commodities.

### MAJOR MOVEMENTS

**German Expressionism:** Influenced by the art movements of expressionism and constructivism, German filmmakers working for the Berlin-based mega-studio Ufa created a series of important films from 1919–1933, until Hitler came to power. These films sought to express the individual and collective **subjectivities, desires, and fantasies** of their characters through *chiaroscuro* lighting; irregular, perspectival set design and camera angles; bold costumes and make-up; and melodramatic gestures and movement. Films of the period featured characters with regressive personalities, motivated to rebel against authority and tradition yet alienated by the chaotic social world of sensual excess and deception that surrounds them. The films' *mise-en-scène*,

though psychologically expressive, often threatens to reduce the characters into props, their actions into impersonal patterns, and their concerns into romantic abstractions. Key films include Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924), and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

**Soviet montage:** Soviet filmmakers saw **editing** as the foundation of film art and therefore used the shot, not the scene, as the primary unit of film language and meaning. Influenced by D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), the Lev Kuleshov Workshops, and the futurist and formalist avant-gardes, Soviet filmmakers used **dialectical montage** to create dynamic juxtapositions aimed at eliciting specific intellectual and emotional responses. Their films sought to portray both the inhumanity of czarist rule and the revolutionary potential, daily labors, and communal bonds of the Soviet people. Key films include Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927), and Dziga Vertov's *A Man With a Movie Camera* (1929).

**French avant-garde:** Influenced by Dadaism, surrealism, and poetic naturalism, French experimental filmmakers made a series of innovative films that explored the medium as a purely visual form, constructed surrealist non-narrative dreamscapes, and used symbolism to externalize the psychology of their characters. Key films include Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1922), Germaine Dulac's *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (1922), Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924), and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

### MAJOR DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS

**Lumière, Auguste and Louis:** In 1895, the Lumière brothers invented a machine, the **Cinématographe**, that could shoot, print, and project moving pictures. It was superior to Thomas Edison's **Kinetograph** (1891) because it was portable, allowing for easy transportation and outdoor use. On December 28, 1895, a date widely considered the birthday of cinema, the Lumières held a public screening of five of their first films, including *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* and *The Arrival of a Train at the Station*. As the titles suggest, the Lumière films were primarily **nonfiction recordings** of everyday occurrences, although some also included staged comedic and dramatic elements. The Lumières sent camera crews abroad to shoot and exhibit films, inspiring the birth of film industries around the world and garnering them international fame. The

Cinématographe used **35-millimeter film** and had a projection speed of 16 frames per second—technical specifications that would become industry standards in the silent period.

**Méliès, Georges:** While the Lumière brothers demonstrated cinema's documentary function, Méliès is considered the first to explore the medium's potential for **fictional storytelling**. In films such as *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Méliès created whimsical adventure stories that were shot on elaborate stage sets and that became popular for their sight gags and otherworldly imagery. Méliès was a pioneer in the use of optical effects, editing, *mise-en-scène*, and lighting design. His inventive and fantastical films revealed the medium's ability to convey artistic creativity and imagination.

**Porter, Edwin S.:** Porter's two 1903 films, *Life of a Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery*, feature groundbreaking **editing techniques** such as simultaneous parallel action, elliptical shifts in time and location, and cutting away from scenes before completion. These films were the first to use the shot, rather than the scene, as the primary unit of composition, as well as the first to establish causality and meaning between shots. *The Great Train Robbery* was the most successful film made before 1912, establishing cinema as a viable profit-making enterprise.

**Griffith, D. W.:** Griffith is a controversial figure whose career combined unrivaled technical ingenuity with highly objectionable political views. During his most productive period, 1908–1913, Griffith directed 450 one-reel films. He is considered the principal architect of **classical Hollywood editing**, with innovations such as accelerated, associative, and parallel montage; psychological editing with cuts from medium to close shots; and use of flashbacks and switchbacks. Griffith also pioneered new compositional techniques, such as tracking shots, high- and low-angle shots, and realistic lighting. His film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is technically brilliant and emotionally gripping but also ideologically insidious in its racism and historical revisionism. The film was very successful financially, accorded the medium of film great prestige, and swayed later Hollywood production toward emotional, melodramatic, and sensational narratives.

**Ince, Thomas:** Ince directed over 100 films but is better known as a producer who in 1912 founded **Inceville**, the first modern Hollywood studio. Ince established firm hierarchies, supervising all aspects of production and retaining authority over the

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE

## SILENT PERIOD (continued)

final cut of all films. The studio used five self-contained shooting stages, production units each headed by a different director, and detailed shooting scripts with strict timetables that planned out production shot-by-shot. Inceville became the model for Hollywood's **industrial mode of film production**.

**Sennett, Mack:** Sennett was the founder of silent-screen **slapstick comedy**, producing thousands of one- and two-reel films and hundreds of features between 1912 and 1935. Sennett's films depict an anarchic universe in which logic of narrative and character falls victim to purely visual humor. Influenced by vaudeville, circus, burlesque, pantomime, comic strips, and Max Linder's French chase films, Sennett's signature style features rapid-fire editing, violent yet harmless gags, last-minute rescues, and parodies of other films. Many of the silent era's comedy greats, such as Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Harry Langdon, and W. C. Fields, began their careers working with Sennett.

**Chaplin, Charlie:** Between 1914 and 1918, Chaplin became the first international film superstar when he wrote, directed, and starred in short films as "the Tramp," a comic figure with baggy pants, oversized shoes, cropped mustache, derby suit,



Modern Times (1936)

and cane. For Chaplin, comedy was not an end in itself but a means to examine the impact of social forces and structures on individual freedom and happiness. The Tramp is full of contradictions: pragmatic, courageous, and ingenious but also romantic, vulnerable, and socially awkward. Chaplin's criticism of authority figures, moral and political orthodoxies, and material and psychological divisions between classes and genders reached its peak in later feature-length works, such as *City Lights* (1931) and *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947).

**Keaton, Buster:** Raised on a tradition of vaudeville, Keaton began directing features in 1923. Unlike Sennett's brand of comedy, Keaton's is never ridiculous and does not undermine the dramatic logic of his narratives. His humor is based on a brainy, at times philosophical, use of irony that explores the inexorability of catastrophic actions threatening human existence. Keaton's style is defined by his "stoneface" persona (in contrast to Chaplin's sentimental expressiveness) and the kinesthetic energy and precise synchronization of his stunts, whose danger is part of their appeal. Keaton's *The General* (1925), a box-office failure now considered a masterpiece, explores the linearity of narrative and the primacy of visual over verbal communication in silent cinema. It displays the same distrust about technology's impact on human labor that is found in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936).

**Micheaux, Oscar:** Micheaux was one of the most important American independent filmmakers of the silent era. He established the Micheaux film company and, between 1918 and 1948, wrote, directed, produced and distributed more than 30 films. An African-American, Micheaux made films with black casts targeted at black audiences, seeking to counter the prejudiced, historically inaccurate, and disempowering representations of racial minorities in the Hollywood cinema of the period.

**Dreyer, Carl Theodor:** The Danish director Dreyer directed what many consider to be the greatest silent film ever made, *The Passion of Joan Arc* (1928), a triumph of realism and spiritual expressiveness. Depicting the trial of Joan of Arc, the film's courtroom scenes are shot almost exclusively in close-up, situat-



The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928)

ing all the film's meaning and drama in the slightest movements of its protagonist's face. Dreyer continued to investigate the power of faith in a world of skepticism and hardship and the connection between the material and spiritual realms in acclaimed sound films such as *Day of Wrath* (1943) and *Ordet* (1945).

**Flaherty, Robert:** Considered the founder of the **documentary** form, Flaherty rose to prominence with his first film, *Nanook of the North* (1922). It was the first feature-length documentary to become a commercial hit and inspired a generation of documentary filmmakers around the world. Flaherty's principal innovation was to organize nonfiction events into a narrative that told a compelling story. Like many documentaries and ethnographic films, *Nanook* contains fictional elements, reflecting Flaherty's admiration for Inuit culture but also his desire to cast it as a primitive society without any material relation to the modern Western world. The scrutiny over *Nanook's* factual accuracy has been applied to many other documentaries over the years, reflecting the increased ethical burden that documentary filmmakers bear in the presentation of their work.

**Other major directors:** Cecil B. DeMille, Ernst Lubitsch, King Vidor, Erich von Stroheim.

## CLASSICAL PERIOD (1930-1945)

The transition from silent to **sound films** caused great upheaval in the film industry, requiring costly renovation of production facilities and movie theaters, ending the careers of many silent film stars, and making it more difficult to market films abroad. Hollywood took some time to overcome the artistic and technical challenges of sound film production, and the result was several years of mediocre output. For European filmmakers, production costs skyrocketed because Hollywood studios owned the patents to the new sound technology and licensed it at an exorbitant price.

By the mid-1930s, Hollywood entered a period of unparalleled success and stability, with five major **studios** (Paramount, Warner Brothers, MGM, RKO, and Twentieth Century Fox) and three minor studios (Universal, Columbia, and United Artists) cultivating distinct styles, genres, and stars. In 1934, under pressure from religious organizations such as the Legion of Decency, Hollywood enforced a **Production Code** that censored the content of its films, screening out foul language, depictions of "deviant" sexuality, narcotic use, and graphic violence. During World War II, Hollywood contributed enormously to the war effort through the production of **propaganda** films.

### MAJOR MOVEMENTS

**French poetic realism:** This movement, which emerged in the 1930s, is characterized by expressionistic, sublime imagery; fluid camera movements; deep-focus photography; and symbolic mise-en-scène. Its films show an understated humanism and profound empathy for their characters, who find themselves trapped between their desire for spontaneity and freedom and the social customs and hardships that constrain them. With World War II looming on the horizon, these films, while often whimsical and joyous, seem haunted by a sense of loss and impending doom. Key films include Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* (1933) and *L'Atalante* (1934), Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (1939), and Marcel Carné's *The Children of Paradise* (1945).

### MAJOR DIRECTORS

**Capra, Frank:** Capturing the optimism of New Deal America, Capra became one of the most successful directors of the studio



It Happened One Night (1934)

era through a series of well-crafted **social dramas** and **comedies of manners**, such as *It Happened One Night* (1934), that feature "everyman" protagonists, witty dialogue, and populist themes of justice and redemption. Many of Capra's films make reformist political statements in the liberal tradition, featuring ordinary people who attempt to redress personal or systemic injustices by appealing to existing societal institutions: legal institutions in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), governmental in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and media in *Meet John Doe* (1941).

**Von Sternberg, Josef:** Like his German compatriot Fritz Lang, von Sternberg moved from Ufa to Hollywood in the 1930s after Hitler came to power. Known primarily for the seven films he made with **Marlene Dietrich**, including *Blue Angel* (1930) and *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), von Sternberg created a visual style defined by intricate and crowded mise-en-scène; spectacular and sexually suggestive sets, costumes, and props; and expressionistic lighting. Von Sternberg assailed the moral puritanism of American society through sophisticated visual symbolism and innuendo, integrating classical myths of female sexual power over men with Dietrich's decidedly modern gender-bending persona and performances.

**Hawks, Howard:** In a career spanning more than 50 years, Hawks wrote and directed films considered among the best in their respective genres, notably the gangster film *Scarface* (1932), the screwball comedy *His Girl Friday* (1940), the detective film *The Big Sleep* (1946), and the western *Red River* (1948). Hawks's films embody a quintessentially American and Protestant perspective, exploring the power of individual will and faith to overcome extreme natural conditions and social pressures. Hawks also created numerous strong, witty female characters, showcasing the talents of some of Hollywood's finest actresses such as Lauren Bacall and Katherine Hepburn.

**Ford, John:** The director of over 125 films, Ford is one of the most influential and written-about directors in cinematic history. He gained greatest acclaim for his **picturesque and epic westerns**, including *Stagecoach* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), and *Rio Grande* (1950). In these films, Ford explores the moral and psychological dilemmas facing individuals and communities on the border between civilization and wilderness. A cultural conservative, Ford's vision of American history is steeped in the **mythology of the frontier**, where courage, loyalty, and honor fuel the drive toward survival and progress. Unlike von Sternberg and Welles, Ford worked successfully within the studio system, sharing its emphasis on expert storytelling and populist values, as well as its racism and historical revisionism.

**Deren, Maya:** Trained as a professional dancer and choreographer, Deren became the most important practitioner, theorist, and promoter of **American avant-garde film** during the 1940s and 1950s. In "poetic films" such as *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and *At Land* (1944), Deren expressed the metaphysics of movement and action—the **vertical** meanings and feelings associated with a given moment rather than its place within the **horizontal** logic of narrative. Influenced by Freud's **psychoanalysis** and Jung's ideas of **myth and ritual**, Deren's films are full of dreamlike, surrealist imagery that explores the relationship between conscious and subconscious states.

**Other major directors:** George Cukor, John Grierson, John Huston, Leni Riefenstahl, Preston Sturges, Billy Wilder, William Wyler.

## POSTWAR PERIOD (1946-1959)

World War II left the European film industry in ruins, as only Italy's production facilities avoided devastation. The war also affected American filmmakers and audiences, leading to the production of dark, morally ambiguous and socially critical films in the **film noir** style. As a result of the **House Un-American Activities Committee** (HUAC) hearings, many of Hollywood's most talented actors, directors, and screenwriters were **blacklisted** by the studios because of suspected ties to the Communist Party. Some moved to Europe, some continued to work by using colleagues' names as **fronts**, and others saw their careers and lives ruined.

In response to competition from the new medium of **television**, Hollywood made films that showcased cinema's distinctive qualities: stereophonic sound, large screen size, and color images, benefiting from the emergence of **widescreen technology** and better **color film stock**. By the mid-1950s, the

blacklist and new technologies led Hollywood to concentrate on apolitical, spectacular films such as biblical epics, westerns, and musicals. A 1948 Supreme Court decision forced Hollywood studios to end their vertical integration policies, making the marketplace more competitive and increasing opportunities for independent and foreign producers.

### MAJOR MOVEMENTS

**Italian neorealism:** After World War II, Italian filmmakers had to work under adverse conditions, facing a scarcity of film stock, studio space, lighting and editing equipment, and professional actors. The most talented of these directors turned these disadvantages into an aesthetic that came to be termed **neorealism**—a style characterized by on-location shooting; non-professional actors; natural lighting; grainy, documentary-like imagery; long takes; and stories about ordinary people. In the wake of the

war's devastation, neorealist films articulated the social, political, and economic problems facing Italy's most disadvantaged and neglected citizens. Key films include Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) and *Paisà* (1946), Luchino Visconti's *La Terra Trema* (1948), and Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948).

**Japanese art cinema:** Influenced by both Western film aesthetics and Eastern artistic and philosophical traditions such as Zen Buddhism and Noh theater, several Japanese directors became the first non-Western filmmakers to gain international prominence. Noted for their technical brilliance, they ably chronicled the postwar transformations shaping Japanese society. **Akira Kurosawa** used sophisticated tracking shots, widescreen composition, and fast-paced editing to create epic allegorical recreations of Japanese history in the samurai era. **Yasujiro Ozu** employed long takes and a low-angled, motionless camera to make acute observations about generational tensions in post-



## POSTWAR PERIOD (continued)

war Japanese families. **Kenji Mizoguchi** combined Ozu's use of the long take with Kurosawa's fluid camera movement to shed a critical light on Japan's feudal history and the circumscribed role of women within it. Key films include Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and *Seven Samurai* (1954), Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953), and Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (1953).

### MAJOR DIRECTORS



The Lady from Shanghai (1948)

**Welles, Orson:** Unlike many of his contemporaries, Welles gained international prominence on the basis of only one film, *Citizen Kane* (1941). The film is full of technical innovations, including crane shots, overlapping dialogue, multiple audio tracks, purposely grainy film stock, and low-angle photography. It explores themes that Welles would revisit throughout his career: the corruption of power and wealth, the fine line between desire and obsession, the precariousness of knowledge, and the limits of ego and ambition. Welles's use of deep focus, long takes, and chiaroscuro lighting, which located meaning in mise-en-scène rather than editing, influenced a generation of filmmakers working in the postwar film noir and realist styles. Though rejected by audiences and undermined by studio executives throughout his career, Welles still managed to make several more highly acclaimed films, including *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948) and *Touch of Evil* (1958).

## TRANSITIONAL PERIOD (1960–1979)

By the 1960s, Hollywood was in decline, unable to keep up with the radical political and cultural developments transforming American society. European films, however, fueled by government funding of film production, achieved unprecedented levels of critical acclaim and box-office success. The sophistication and creativity of these films led to the recognition of cinema as an artistic medium, not simply a form of mass entertainment.

By comparison, Hollywood output in the early 1960s seemed old-fashioned, uninteresting, and irrelevant. Fewer and fewer studio films were profitable. Hollywood reacted by cutting costs, entering into partnerships with independent and foreign producers, and allowing greater levels of experimentation. In 1968, the decades-old Production Code was scrapped, and the **Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)** began to issue movie ratings, which enabled the industry to make more daring and challenging films. These changes, along with a middle-class migration to the suburbs that left urban movie theaters in disarray, led to new genres such as **blaxploitation**, **sexploitation**, and **hardcore pornography**.

The political consciousness and formal innovation of the period was nowhere more dynamically represented than in the burgeoning film industries of **Latin America** and **Africa**.

### MAJOR MOVEMENTS

**French New Wave:** The French New Wave was the most influential postwar movement. Its practitioners were loosely divided into two camps: those who had formerly been critics for the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, and Claude Chabrol) and the more political "Left Bank" filmmakers (Agnes Varda, Alain Resnais, and Chris Marker). The *Cahiers* filmmakers combined whimsical tales of youthful rebellion and capriciousness with political and philosophical investigations of cinematic language. The Left Bank filmmakers engaged in rigorous formal experimentation to explore the relationships among cinema, memory, history, and politics. Key films include Godard's *Breathless* (1960) and *Weekend* (1967), Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1961), Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) and *Muriel* (1963), Varda's *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962), and Marker's *La Jetée* (1964).

**New Italian cinema:** In the 1960s, Italian directors began to deviate from the tenets of neorealism, creating autobiographical, fantastical, and mythical films that unabashedly celebrated the artistic imagination. These filmmakers turned their attention away from the urban and rural poor and toward the alienation of the cosmopolitan middle and upper classes. What was lost in political content was gained in stylistic innovation: films of the period featured groundbreaking uses of symbolic mise-en-scène, allegorical narratives, elliptical editing, and expressive cinematography. Key films include Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1959), Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968), and Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970).

**American underground cinema:** In the early 1960s, the **Greenwich Village** neighborhood in New York City hosted the most vibrant artistic community in America. There, avant-garde dance and theater, the Fluxus movement, and pop art flourished

**Hitchcock, Alfred:** In a career spanning half a century, Hitchcock won success in both his native Britain and Hollywood and directed some of the most memorable films of all time, including *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Vertigo* (1958), and *North by Northwest* (1959). Influenced by German expressionism (he was an assistant to F. W. Murnau at Ufa) and Soviet montage, Hitchcock used detailed visual and aural compositions to express his protagonists' feelings of paranoia and claustrophobia, along with sophisticated editing to create suspense. With a fine-tuned sense of irony, Hitchcock examined the abnormal perversions and obsessive desires lurking beneath the surface of ordinary lives and societies, enabling him to become an astute observer of America in the 1950s, the decade during which he directed his greatest films.

**Sirk, Douglas:** Another transplant from the Ufa studios, German director Douglas Sirk came to prominence in the 1950s with a series of lush **melodramas** such as *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) and *Imitation of Life* (1959). His films were rediscovered in the 1970s and acknowledged for their semiotic complexity, which enables them to function as both sentimental, visually resplendent genre pictures and radical critiques of the artificiality and hypocrisy of middle-class suburban culture.

**Ray, Nicholas:** Along with Sirk, Ray was the most incisive observer and critic of 1950s American culture, creating taut psychological dramas like *In a Lonely Place* (1950) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). Embracing the new widescreen technology, Ray imbued his mise-en-scène with symbolism that points to the hollowness and restrictiveness of middle-class suburban domesticity. Talented actors such as Humphrey Bogart and James Dean ably expressed the psychological torment and moral ambiguities of Ray's protagonists, whose rebellion against social structures and mores never quite manages to coalesce into active politics.

**Kazan, Elia:** One of the most successful directors of the postwar period, Kazan is known best for his collaboration with **Marlon Brando**, the method actor considered the greatest of his generation. However, Kazan's legacy was forever compromised by his decision in 1952 to cooperate with HUAC and reveal the names of colleagues who were suspected communist sympathizers. Many of Kazan's films are attempts to justify

his actions at HUAC: *Viva Zapata!* (1952) portrays revolutionary leadership as inherently corrupt and doomed to failure, *Man on a Tightrope* (1953) feeds anti-communist paranoia, and *On the Waterfront* (1954) attempts to justify the act of informing.

**Bresson, Robert:** The French director Bresson emerged as a singular talent with an idiosyncratic style and strong moral vision upon the release of films such as *Pickpocket* (1959), *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1966), and *Lancelot du Lac* (1976). A devout Catholic, Bresson made films that represent the fragility of innocence, purity, and selflessness in a world corrupted by greed and cruelty. With an austere, **minimalist** visual style, Bresson expresses the moral dilemmas of his protagonists through complex sound design, novelistic narration, and restrained dialogue and acting.

**Bergman, Ingmar:** Throughout a prolific career in film and theater, Bergman, the son of a pastor, was interested in the impact of an alienating, modern world on human psychology and faith. In *Persona* (1966), Bergman uses an experimental, self-reflexive style to explore the ways in which film and other media contribute to our difficulties in recognizing material reality from illusion, self from other, eros from death. Bergman's somber and portentous films express the agony of human existence through stillness and silence, often punctuated by moments of intense passion or despair visualized through searing, unforgettable images, such as the clock without hands in *Wild Strawberries* (1957) or the scene of self-mutilation in *Cries and Whispers* (1972).

**Ray, Satyajit:** Educated amid the vibrant Bengali intellectual community and influenced by Italian neorealism and the films of Jean Renoir, the Indian director Ray burst onto the international scene with the *Apu* trilogy (1955–1958), which chronicles a Bengali boy's growth into adulthood. Abandoning the mythological tales and song-and-dance productions of Indian commercial cinema, Ray focused on the subtle power dynamics and intimacies of domestic life. Accused by some of failing to address India's pressing social and political problems, Ray instead used location shooting, naturalistic acting, and long takes to convey sensitively and carefully his characters' reactions to the events shaping their lives.

**Other major directors:** Robert Aldrich, Jean Cocteau, Samuel Fuller, Vincente Minnelli, Michael Powell, Otto Preminger, Jacques Tati.

as artists challenged accepted notions of sexuality, gender, and race and reconceived art and life as play. The American underground cinema emerged out of this cultural environment, emphasizing transgressive performance over standard narratives and characters. The movement heavily influenced Hollywood, most notably the **countercultural films** of John Schlesinger, Dennis Hopper, and Arthur Penn. Key films include Adolfo Mekas's *Hallelujah the Hills* (1963), Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963), Ron Rice's *The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man* (1963), Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1963), Mike Kuchar's *Sins of the Fleshpoids* (1965), and Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* (1966).

**Feminist film:** Influenced by second-wave feminism, psychoanalytic film theory, and avant-garde aesthetics, feminist artists in this period made films that emphasized **female subjectivity**, portrayed all-female relationships positively, and assailed **patriarchal conventions** of representation. Key films include Carolee Schneeman's *Fuses* (1968), Yvonne Rainer's *Film About a Woman Who . . .* (1974), Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1976), Ulrike Ottinger's *Madame X* (1977), Barbara Hammer's *Double Strength* (1978), and Sally Potter's *Thriller* (1979).

**Direct cinema:** In response to the semi-fictional documentaries of Robert Flaherty and Pare Lorentz, 1960s American documentary filmmakers made a series of films with the goal of **minimal authorial intervention**. These documentaries, which profiled famous and ordinary people alike, eliminated interviews and voice-overs and minimized graphic superimpositions on the image, employing long takes, unobtrusive editing, and multiple cameras to capture events as objectively as possible. These films came to be known as **direct cinema**, although they are often erroneously referred to as *cinema vérité*, which was a separate documentary tradition founded by Jean Rouch in France. Key films include Richard Leacock's *Primary* (1960), Allan King's *Warrendale* (1967), Frederick Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* (1967), D. A. Pennebaker's *Monterrey Pop* (1969), and David and Albert Maysles's *Gimme Shelter* (1971).

**Structural film:** Influenced by conceptualism, structuralism, and minimalism, structural filmmakers were concerned with film's inherent material properties, such as the flicker and looping of the projector, the mechanics of the camera, and the texture of the film strip. For these artists, film was not a means merely to tell a story and show recognizable images of the world but rather a universe of meaning and experience in and of itself. Key films include Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1960), Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967), Joyce Wieland's *La Raison Avant la Passion* (1968), Ken Jacobs's *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1969), Paul Sharits's *S:S:S:S:S* (1970), Hollis Frampton's *Hapax Legomena* (1972), and J. J. Murphy's *Print Generation* (1973–1974).

**Third-World cinema:** With few exceptions, Third-World cinematic production developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Africa and somewhat earlier in Latin America and Asia. It was shaped by **decolonization** and **Marxist revolutionary politics**, resulting in a level of sustained **political engagement** that was unprecedented in film history. Third-World filmmakers sought to find radically new forms of cinematic language that could better articulate

the particular cultural traditions and political problems of their societies. They rejected the notion that cinema was meant simply to distract and entertain, managing instead to educate, instigate, politicize, encourage a critical spectator, historicize, counter stereotypes, establish an "aesthetics of poverty," and expose the lingering injustices of neocolonial domination and exploitation. Noteworthy directors include Djibril Diop Mambety (Senegal); Gaston Kaboré and Idrissa Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso); Souleymane Cissé (Mali); Glauber Rocha and Nelson Pereira dos Santos (Brazil); Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Humberto Solás (Cuba); Hector Babenco, Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino (Argentina); and Arturo Ripstein (Mexico).

**Other important movements:** Two regions responsible for some of the greatest films of the 1960s and 1970s were **West Germany** and **Eastern Europe**. Important German directors of the period include Werner Herzog, Alexander Kluge, Margarethe von Trotta, Wim Wenders, Jean-Marie Straub, and Danièle Huillet. The period's noteworthy Eastern European directors include Andrzej Wajda and Roman Polanski (Poland), Vera Chytilová and Miloš Forman (the former Czechoslovakia), Miklós Jancsó and István Szabó (Hungary), Andrei Tarkovsky and Sergei Paradjanov (former Soviet Union), and Dušan Makavejev (former Yugoslavia).

### MAJOR DIRECTORS

**Cassavetes, John:** Considered the founding father of **American independent cinema**, Cassavetes was also a talented actor who accepted roles in Hollywood in order to fund his own films. His commitment to making films outside of the studio system became legendary and influenced a generation of American independent filmmakers. Cassavetes rejected the formulaic plots, essentialist characterizations, and tidy narrative resolutions of Hollywood cinema. His most powerful films, *Faces* (1968), *Husbands* (1970), and *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974), feature virtuoso acting performances that reveal the raw emotional energy of human interaction, chronicling the struggle of characters to express themselves honestly and fully under the pressure of stultifying social and moral conventions.

**Penn, Arthur:** One of the few filmmakers to connect with the American counterculture was Penn, whose *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) became the emblematic film of its generation. Influenced



Bonnie and Clyde (1967)

## TRANSITIONAL PERIOD (continued)

by the style and politics of the French New Wave and American underground cinema, Penn sought to overturn Hollywood's staid representational conventions. *Bonnie and Clyde* incorporates many of the characteristics that would define American cinema for the next decade: romantic **anti-establishment heroes**, explicit treatment of sexual and psychological issues, a negative portrayal of authority figures and societal institutions, graphic depiction of violence, genre hybridity (often a mixture of comedy and drama), and a refusal to resolve narrative conflicts tidily.

**Peckinpah, Sam:** Along with Penn, Peckinpah was responsible for revolutionizing the modern representation of **cinematic violence**. In westerns and war films such as *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and *Cross of Iron* (1977), Peckinpah uses slow-motion, precisely choreographed montage sequences and graphic bloodletting to emphasize the anarchic, excessive, and senseless nature of violence. In his films, death is protracted, shocking, and visceral, suffered by combatants and innocent civilians alike. Peckinpah focused on historical periods in which society is corrupt and in decline, creating powerful allegories that captured the American public's ambivalence with government and military institutions during the Vietnam and Watergate era.



The Godfather (1972)

**Coppola, Francis Ford:** The director of four of the most important American films of the 1970s—*The Godfather* (1972), *The Godfather Part II* (1974), *The Conversation* (1974), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979)—Coppola is also an accomplished producer and writer. Along with George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, and Brian De Palma, he was part of the first generation of filmmakers to attend **film school**. His training enabled him to combine stunning visual imagery, compelling storylines, and dynamic editing in order to create epic portraits of American enterprise, whether at home or abroad. Coppola is renowned for his astute analysis of the power dynamics of individual and family ambition amid the corrupting influence of American capitalism and imperialism.

**Altman, Robert:** Early in his career, Altman attempted to debunk the founding myths of American history by **deconstructing genre conventions**, notably of the western in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971) and the detective film in *The Long Goodbye* (1973). He won critical acclaim for his satirical films with large ensemble casts, such as *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970) and *Nashville* (1975), which capture both the intimacy and spontaneity of human interaction and the corrosive influence of societal institutions like the media. Like many of his contemporaries, Altman did not present clear moral distinctions between good and evil, heroism and cowardice, charity and greed. Through what some have seen as a pessimistic view of human nature, he shifted the blame for society's ills away from individuals and toward systems and institutions.

**Brakhage, Stan:** A leading theorist and practitioner of **American avant-garde cinema**, Brakhage was both a Romantic concerned with personal states of consciousness and a modernist who experimented with the materials available to him as an artist. In films such as the epic *Dog Star Man* (1961–1964), he explored different forms of vision, from the purely cinematic surfaces of the film strip and the effects of projected light, to things that normally are invisible to the human eye, such as medical footage of internal organs. Brakhage combined mythic interpretations of human existence with deeply intimate portrayals of his body, his family, and his natural environment.

**Sembene, Ousmane:** An accomplished writer before becoming a filmmaker, Sembene is a renowned master storyteller and satirist. Influenced by Third-World revolutionary writers and his involvement with the French Communist Party, Sembene has attacked the exploitation of African workers in *Black Girl* (1966), government corruption in *Xala* (1974), and religious persecution in *Ceddo* (1977). His incisive, allegorical films expose the hypocrisies and injustices of **neocolonial power relations**, in which the West retains a destructive influence over African governments and societies. Sembene rejects the individualism of Western narrative cinema by stressing the importance of **collective solutions** to Senegal's social and political problems, which he believes can come only from the disenfranchised and impoverished masses rather than the bourgeoisie. In order to reach Senegal's multilingual population and encourage active spectatorship, Sembene emphasizes symbolic and metaphorical meaning over dialogue.

**Buñuel, Luis:** Throughout his prolific career, Spanish director Buñuel attacked the major institutions of modern European society—fascism, the Catholic Church, and the bourgeoisie—and became one of the great satirists in the history of cinema. Like Hitchcock, Buñuel exposed the perversions lurking beneath the surface of middle- and upper-class propriety. He began his career with a series of **surrealist films** such as *L'Age d'Or* (1930), then after a long hiatus moved to Mexico, where he gained acclaim for films such as *Los Olvidados* (1950) and *Él* (1952), which combined social realism, black humor, and psychological analysis. In his later career, Buñuel produced his greatest films, *Viridiana* (1961), *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), and *Belle du Jour* (1967), in which characters attempt to escape the hypocrisy, false idealism, and conformity of their lives.

**Other major directors:** Woody Allen, Shirley Clarke, Brian De Palma, John Frankenheimer, Stanley Kubrick, Joseph Losey, George Lucas, Sidney Lumet, Terrence Malick, Nagisa Oshima, Nicolas Roeg, Martin Scorsese.

## CONTEMPORARY PERIOD (1980–present)

In the 1970s and 1980s, **multinational corporations** bought and merged many movie studios, ending the period of artistic experimentation in Hollywood. The industry has returned to financial success and global dominance through the development of **blockbuster** franchises, large-scale marketing campaigns, and content aimed at children. It also has placed increasing emphasis on spectacular **special effects** in order to draw audiences into movie theaters. The emergence of affordable **digital video** cameras and the growth of the **film festival circuit** have expanded the possibilities for independent filmmakers around the world to produce, distribute and exhibit films.

Some have described the prevailing style of the period as **postmodern** because many contemporary films are apolitical, ahistorical, intertextual, and less tied to the conventions of a single genre or culture. The transnational circulation and genre hybridity of contemporary films is exemplified by the increasing global popularity of Indian **Bollywood** cinema, the largest film industry in the world. Bollywood films combine musical conventions with elements of drama, comedy, tragedy, action-adventure, fantasy, and romance.

## MAJOR MOVEMENTS

**American independent cinema:** American independent film has flourished in the past 25 years, emerging as a voice for those who do not identify with the image of America that Hollywood has projected. Independent films often contain explicit treatments of sexual, political, and psychological issues and avoid formulaic plots with happy endings and clearly defined characters. They are made by and for **women** (Susan Seidelman, Julie Dash), racial and ethnic **minorities** (Charles Burnett, Lourdes Portillo), **gays and lesbians** (Todd Haynes, Su Friedrich, Julie Zando), **working classes** (Michael Moore, John Sayles) and other groups who are not adequately represented in mainstream cinema. Harmony Korine, John Waters, Jim Jarmusch, David Lynch, Terry Zwigoff, and Todd Solondz make films full of dark humor that explore the lives of social misfits who are often ignored or ridiculed in Hollywood films. The success of the independents has led many Hollywood studios to establish **subsidiaries** that distribute smaller-budget films, blurring the lines of distinction between industrial and independent cinema. Key films include Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise* (1983), David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), Steven Soderbergh's *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989), Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989), Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), and Wes Anderson's *Rushmore* (1998).

**East Asian cinema:** Since the late 1980s, East Asian cinema has seen success both commercially and on the film festival circuit, spawning influential genres like the **Hong Kong action film** and **Japanese anime**. Key films include Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), and Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993), from China; Katsuhiko Otomo's *Akira* (1987) and Takeshi Kitano's *Fireworks* (1997), from Japan; Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), Tsai Ming-Lai's *The Hole* (1998), and Hou Hsia-Hsien's *The Flowers of Shanghai* (1998), from Taiwan; and John Woo's *The Killer* (1989) and Wong Kar-Wai's *Happy Together* (1997), from Hong Kong.



Raise the Red Lantern (1991)

**Iranian cinema:** Iranian film has been one of the most celebrated national cinema movements of recent years. Initially noted for its restrained **realist narratives** featuring children, whose humanism transcended cultural boundaries, Iranian film has become increasingly **political** as more female directors have emerged to tackle issues such as women's rights. Key films include Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (1990) and *Taste of Cherry* (1997), Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Once Upon a Time, Cinema* (1992), Jafar Panahi's *The White Balloon* (1996), Marziyeh Meshkini's *The Day I Became a Woman* (2000), and Tahmineh Milani's *The Hidden Half* (2001).

**New British cinema:** British filmmakers became radicalized in the 1980s, responding to conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher's attacks on labor unions, social programs, and arts funding. Their films chronicle the mass evictions, police brutality, and institutional racism of the period. Like American independent filmmakers, they give voice to **marginalized groups**, whether through a queering of history (Derek Jarman and Isaac Julien) or through sensitive portrayals of immigrant and working-class communities (Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, John Akomfrah, and Stephen Frears). Though often thematically bleak and stylistically sparse, their films are also characterized by humor, visual innovation, and narrative sophistication. Key films include Frears's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), John Akomfrah's *Handsworth Songs* (1986), Jarman's *The Last of England* (1987), Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1988), Loach's *Riff Raff* (1990), and Leigh's *Naked* (1993).

**Personal documentary:** Challenging the tenets of direct cinema, many recent documentary filmmakers have included autobiographical and subjective elements in their films. Michael Moore and Marcel Ophuis insert themselves prominently into the fabric of their social and historical documentaries, both as on-camera interviewees and through voice-over, presenting themselves as near-mythical pursuers of truth and justice. Ross McElwee and Sadie Benning make introspective, essayistic films about their lives. Chris Marker and Marlon Riggs combine autobiography with political and philosophical analysis. Key films include Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983), McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986), Ophuis's *Hôtel Terminus* (1988), Moore's *Roger & Me* (1989), Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1990), and Benning's *It Wasn't Love* (1992).

## MAJOR DIRECTORS

**Spielberg, Steven:** Spielberg has been at the forefront of Hollywood's reemergence as a dominant global industry. His 1975 film *Jaws* became the first modern blockbuster, revolutionizing the way Hollywood films are distributed and marketed. *Jaws* was released simultaneously in over 400 theaters, marketed extensively on national television, and timed for release in the summer, which linked thematically with its subject matter. In the 1980s, Spielberg showcased his storytelling talents with a series of hugely successful science fiction and adventure films such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), which explicitly appealed to younger audiences. These films brought families back into theaters with compelling stories that were in line with Reagan-era ideals of family values and American moral and technological supremacy.

**Stone, Oliver:** Unlike that of Spielberg, Stone's controversial career has been defined by its antithesis to contemporary American values and trends. In a period when American films have become less historical and oppositional, Stone has made four of the most important political films of his generation, *Salvador* (1986), *Platoon* (1986), *Wall Street* (1987) and *JFK* (1991), in which he looks critically at America's military-industrial complex, capitalist institutions, and foreign policy. In an era defined by minimal political dissent, Stone has managed to produce controversial, instigating films because his considerable storytelling abilities have made many of his films commercially successful.

**Von Trier, Lars:** Von Trier gained international prominence when he released his *Dogme 95* manifesto, which established a set of filmmaking rules for the digital age, aimed at eliminating stylistic excess and emotional manipulation from cinema. Like many of his contemporaries, he has reconfigured a variety of genres to his own specifications, including historical drama in *Zentropa* (1991), tragedy in *Breaking the Waves* (1996), and musical in *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Many view Von Trier as a thorn in the side of Hollywood because of his confounding, experimental style and his political deconstruction of American myths of moral superiority, social progress, and economic equality.

**Other major directors:** Pedro Almodóvar, Theo Angelopoulos, Jane Campion, David Cronenberg, Jonathan Demme, Claire Denis, Atom Egoyan, Peter Greenaway, Michael Haneke, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Jon Jost, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Emir Kusturica, Mira Nair, Lynne Ramsay, Ridley Scott, Alexander Sokurov.

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