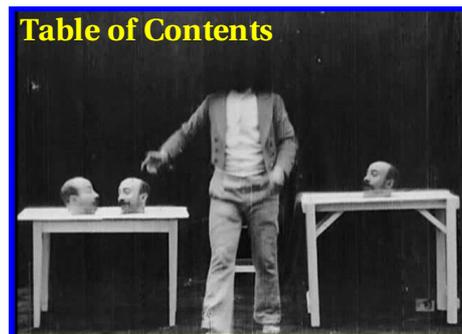
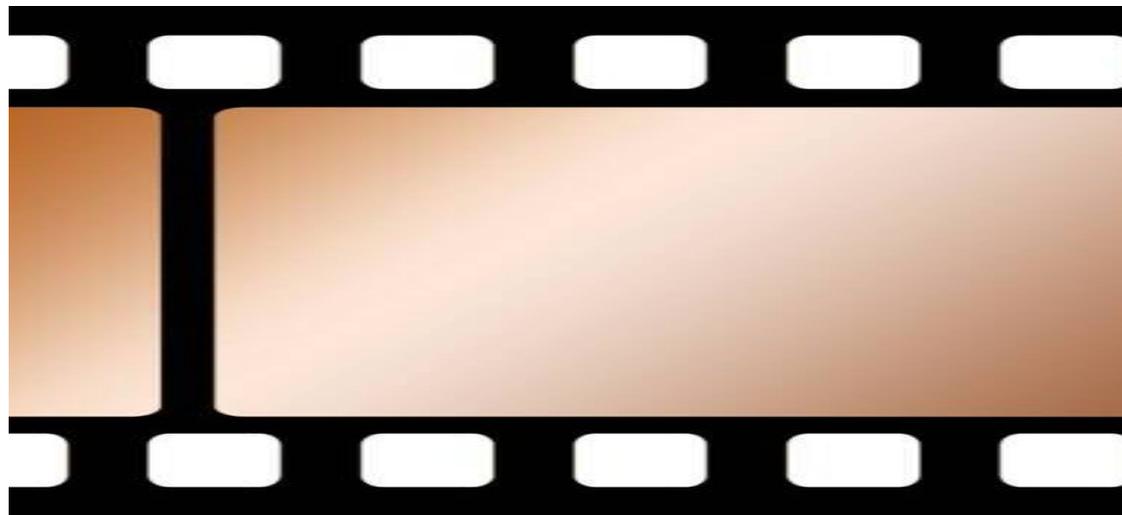


CHAPTER 8 / Part 2

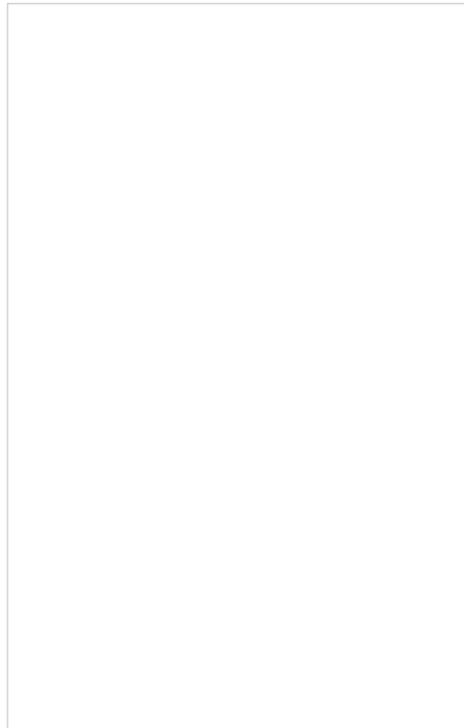
THE STATE OF THE ART, 1900- 1909



NARRATION AND TEMPORAL LOGIC, 1907-1909

EILEEN BOWSER SINGLES OUT A

1907 VITAGRAPH FILM called **THE MILL GIRL** as an illustration of “the point reached by film narrative on the verge of its great [post-1907] expansion.” [39] The story concerns a pair of young lovers who work at the same textile mill. When the girl is subjected to the unwanted advances of the boss, the boy comes to her rescue. The boss then hires two thugs to eliminate the boy, but the hero defeats them, twice, by dint of strength, courage, and nimble thinking. The boss then fires the boy, but when a fire breaks out in the mill, the boss is killed and the hero rescues the heroine.



Poster for *The Mill Girl*, Vitagraph, 1907

“Alternate Editing in Its Basic Form”: *The Mill Girl (I)* THE MILL GIRL contains one intertitle and 31 shots (a fairly high number for its date). There are no closeups; practically the entire story is told at so-called “stage distance”—from long shots that show space in front of the actors’ feet and leave inactive space above their heads. Among its virtues, however, is a sequence featuring what Bowser calls “alternate editing in its basic original form, inside and outside a building.” [40] The sequence actually displays what, in CHAPTER 4.1, we defined as *parallel editing*—a form of *crosscutting* in which shots made of different actions and/or in different locations are edited to suggest that events are occurring simultaneously (see FIGURE 4.17). [41] Bowser describes in detail the following sequence of nine shots, which occurs when the two thugs, led by the factory boss, arrive to attack the hero at his home: [42]

1. *Exterior:*
hero
enters

*scene
from
left
and
goes
through
gate
to
his
home.*

2. *Interior,
bedroom:
the
hero
enters
from
right
foreground,
goes
around
bed,
yawns,
gets
ready
for
bed,
closes
window,
sits
on
chair
to
remove
his
shoes.*
3. *Exterior,
another*

*view
of
house:
the
[boss]
leads
his
thugs
into
the
scene,
then
sends
them
back
out
while
he
stands
and
waits.*

- 4. Interior, a slightly closer view of the bedroom: hero is now in bed; hearing a noise, he puts hand to ear, goes to window, and looks out.*
- 5. Exterior: the thugs come back with a ladder and place it against the house so that the top disappears from sight, while the boss gestures a command of silence.*
- 6. Interior, the hero at the window: he turns and makes up a dummy*

- shape in his bed, gets a stick, and crouches below foot of bed, foreground.*
7. *Exterior: the thugs climb the ladder while the boss holds it.*
 8. *Interior: the hero cups his ear, listening; the thugs raise the window, enter, and attack dummy; the hero jumps up, knocks one man down while the other flees, then throws the first one out the window.*
 9. *Exterior: the man who is thrown out falls down on the man at the bottom, the [boss] having already fled the scene.*

Note from the description of the fifth shot that the top of the ladder disappears from the frame. The window, in other words, is excluded from the shot, and without the window, it's impossible judge whether the director (who remains unknown) understood the value of *match cutting* (see [CHAPTER 4.2](#)) on the action taking place on his interior set with that taking place on the exterior set. Nevertheless, it's clear that he intended to join adjacent spaces—interior

and exterior—in a representation of “synthetic” space upon which his camera enjoyed two simultaneous perspectives.



Wallace McCutcheon, *Old Isaacs the Pawnbroker*, Biograph, USA, 1908

Cutting across Space: *Old Isaacs the Pawnbroker* It seems logical, concludes Bowser, that such early experimentation in the creation of synthetic space through parallel editing should “deal with adjacent spaces and not distant ones.” [43] Early the next year, in Biograph’s **OLD ISAACS THE PAWNBROKER**, which was scripted by D.W.Griffith and directed by **Wallace McCutcheon**, [44] we get an example of parallel editing used to link distant spaces. A child tries to save herself and her invalid mother from eviction by hocking some old shoes at a charity auction. In

one scene, we cut from a shot of the girl at the auction to a shot of the mother back home, where she sits up in her sickbed, coughs, and collapses; the scene then returns to the auction (FIGURE 8.21).[45] Does the shot of the mother represent a “vision” on the little girl’s part—a mental image? It’s hard to judge, because the little girl evinces no reaction to what we’ve just seen.

Even so, Bowser contends that in most early films, an intended mental image would have been integrated by means of superimposition or double exposure; in other words, it would have been effected *within the same frame*. Here, however, the image is integrated by means of a cut *to a separate shot*—a device sometimes called a *switchback* or *cutaway*. [46] The leap across distant spaces is effected smoothly because we can accept the two necessary perspectives as simultaneously operative; it is, of course, dramatically valid because of the profound emotional bond between the two characters.

The Appearance of the “Invisible Narrator”: *The Mill Girl* (II) Perhaps even more importantly, we are—at least upon analyzing this sequence—prompted to ask whether it’s only the spectator who’s privileged to witness the mother’s suffering in order that he might appreciate more deeply the terms and consequences of the unfolding melodrama. If so, says Bowser, we’re witness to the appearance of an “invisible narrator . . . who provides comments on [the story], a narrator who is neither a character in the story nor a real person standing outside the film, but a role that exists in some sense in the structure of the film.” [47]

In this respect, it’s also important to observe a visual strategy which, though absent from Biograph’s *OLD ISAACS*, is pervasive in Vitagraph’s *THE MILL GIRL*. Whereas the camera in *OLD ISAACS* always remains at stage distance, the camera in *THE MILL GIRL* manages to vary distance according to the action: because actors often

enter and exit the frame on a diagonal to the camera axis, they're continually moving toward or from a position closer to the camera—a distance that places their knees at the bottom of the frame and their heads near the top. Granted, significant action does not transpire at this distance: it's reserved for the longer-distance center of the frame. The effect, however, is one of nearly continuous movement within the space of the frame. This tactic, says Bowser, “serves as a system for linking the shots and outlining a geography for the action.” Consider, for instance, the opening sequence:[\[48\]](#)

1. At the center of the frame is the gate to the girl's home; the hero enters from the right and joins the girl in the center of the frame; they exit *to the left, moving diagonally toward the camera*.
2. Groups of workers approach the mill *from the left, moving diagonally away from the camera* and toward

the factory gate; the hero and heroine are among them.

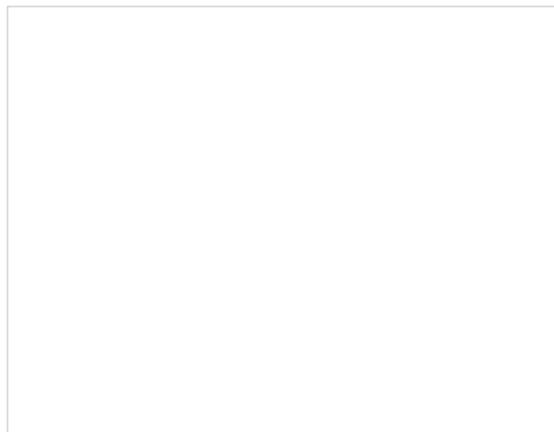
According to Bowser, the tactic of directing action on the diagonal serves

the function of leading the spectator's eye into the scene and centering the important action in such a way that [it] will not be missed. In many films before this time, the significant action may take place at the side of the frame, with so many other actions going on in other parts of the frame as to make it difficult for the modern spectator to "read" the scene. . . . [T]he centering of the action in The Mill Girl illustrates one of the first steps on the part of the filmmaker to direct what the spectator sees.[49]

In this way, too, the “invisible narrator” makes an auspicious appearance.

Why More Shots Make for Better Characters

By 1907, the motion picture was making a clear break with the conventions of the “primitive cinema,” whose staples had once been one-shot long-distance records of actualities and vaudeville acts and then multi-shot “attractions” conceived primarily to enhance the pleasures of visual spectacle. But vaudeville and, later, the nickelodeon began to make increasingly insistent demands for more footage: with more venues, there were more programs, and programs had to be changed ever more frequently.



**Multiple Films in Production,
Edison Studio, Bronx, NY, ca. 1907**

Producers responded not by generating more films, but by creating longer ones.^[50] It was, of course, the economically feasible course of action. For one thing, it was cheaper— especially with the advent of specialized studios—to make films “in house” than to dispatch crews to capture or re-create actuality footage. Moreover, audiences preferred fiction films, and as long as a producer was shooting in his own studio, it was not only just as easy to stage a fictional event as an “actuality,” but a greater variety of subjects were readily available. Finally, given the fact that a film used the same actors, sets, and properties, it was proportionately cheaper to make one longer narrative film than, say, two shorter ones.

From “A Few Simple Traits” to “A Whole Variety of Circumstances” Thus if the multishot narrative film gradually became the norm between 1902 and 1907, there were practical commercial reasons why narratives simultaneously

grew in length—and, of course, in complexity. In 1903, films such as Porter’s *LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN* (see [CHAPTER 4.2](#)) and Biograph’s *RUNAWAY MATCH*, the comic story of an irate father who pursues his eloping daughter and her fiancé by car, had incorporated chases into series of more complex events. These subjects improved on single-action films by fashioning what Kristin Thompson describes as “a brief series of causally linked events,” and by 1903-1904, chase films had developed into “simple narratives that follow one action—a chase, a rescue, a fight—in linear fashion.” [\[51\]](#)

For most audiences, however, even these films soon became “static,” and simply expanding a skit with more characters and more bits of action was hardly an adequate solution: the extra length would only underscore the “static” quality of the underlying premise. Fortunately, observes Thompson, many filmmakers approached the problem from the reverse angle: they realized that

more shots and longer films

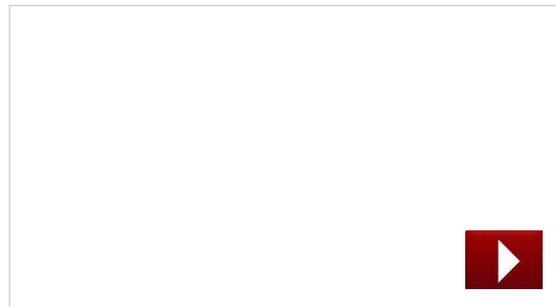
would allow more time for characterization and the development of psychological traits. . . . [In turn] providing traits for the characters could motivate a changing situation; then it would be the characters, rather than the situation, which remained stable, unifying the string of events. A few simple traits could motivate a whole variety of circumstances, while at the same time providing a narrational thread to guide the spectator.[\[52\]](#)

The Motivated Link We've already seen a very simple instance of this principle at work in [OLD ISAACS THE PAWNBROKER](#), in which continuity is achieved by following the little girl from shot to shot as she goes from tenement to auction to

pawnbroker's shop. John L. Fell calls this device the

motivated link:

a kind of narrative organization in which separate episodes, characteristically filmed in different or purportedly different locations, have been joined by a single character who is distinguished by some particular motive, eccentricity, or invention. [53]



bien, **Roméo Bosetti, *Une Dame vraiment*
Gaumont, France, 1908**

Even late in the period, the application of this device can be an extremely simple adaptation of the cinema of attraction, as in **UNE DAME VRAIMENT BIEN** (**A TRULY FINE LADY**), directed by Roméo Bosetti for Gaumont (see **CHAPTER 6.1**) in 1908: an attractive woman causes numerous small

disasters as she passes through various locations occupied by Parisian men (FIGURE 8.22). A similar premise governs Edison's *LAUGHING GAS* (1907), in which a woman leaves a dentist's office after having been overdosed on the titular anesthetic: the contagious effects of her condition are chronicled as she boards a subway car and ultimately infects a cross section of authority figures, including a cop, a judge, and a minister (FIGURE 8.23). [54]

More amusing and more ambitious is *THAT FATAL SNEEZE*, which **Lewin Fitzhamon** directed for **Cecil Hepworth** (see CHAPTER 5.2) in 1905. When an elderly gentleman plays a joke on a young boy by putting sneezing powder on his food, the boy determines to retaliate in more than equal measure. Sneaking into the sleeping man's room, he secretes the powder all over the unsuspecting victim's clothes. The next day, the old man succumbs to violent paroxysms of sneezing, leveling his room, shattering store windows, and wreaking

citywide havoc until he incurs the wrath of an angry mob. He is pursued by the crowd, and his condition worsens until he sneezes himself into oblivion (FIGURE 8.24).

The Problem of Enlisting Emotions

THAT FATAL SNEEZE remains a virtual compendium of generically diverse elements integrated into the multishot cinema of attraction: bad boy film, chase film, and trick film are all grafted on to what is, at bottom, an extended slapstick skit. It is, in other words, a comedy and, more specifically, stands in the direct line of the chase film, which Bowser identifies as “the primordial film narrative since 1903.” [55] She argues elsewhere that “the type of story that can be told with the motivated link [for example, LAUGHING GAS] or by the movements in space of a chase comedy [such as THAT FATAL SNEEZE] is limited, even with imaginative variations”; greater demands in the art of “creating a

spatiotemporal world, a kind of geography made of separate shots related to one another,” would be made upon filmmakers attempting to narrate such melodramatic stories as [THE MILL GIRL](#).^[56] The need for heightened expressiveness, for example, was a pressure felt by filmmakers who wanted to satisfy the demand for subjects that would “carry a lesson or preach a sermon”; these, suggests Bowser, were the filmmakers who sought the means for “enlisting the spectator’s emotions in the film” and for “integrat[ing] the spectator more deeply into the film experience.”^[57]

The Role of Resolution: *Falsely Accused!* Consider, for instance, Biograph’s [FALSELY ACCUSED!](#) (1907), which tells the fairly complicated story of an inventor’s daughter who spurns a villain in favor of her boyfriend.^[58] The villain also plots to steal plans from the father’s safe, and when the inventor is found dead in his laboratory (which is equipped for moviemaking), his daughter is arrested. It turns out,

however, that film has been shot with a camera in the murdered man's lab. The boyfriend figures out how to process it, and when the developed footage is projected in the courtroom, the true killer (the villain, of course) is revealed (FIGURE 8.25). We never know just why the boy decides to look for film in the camera, and in part because shots are missing from the nitrate print at the Museum of Modern Art, the courtroom climax, according to John Fell, strikes the modern viewer as "peremptory." At the same time, however, the film at least hints at a web of psychological relationships among the four principal characters, and Fell suggests that

a more intensive investigation of narrative form in the evolution of movie melodrama might test the premise that melodrama, in contrast to other idioms, supplied a kind of story closure which encouraged

*further
developments in
film exposition:
more complicated
sets of character
interrelationships
and episodes
designed to supply
other aspects of
discourse than plot
furtherance—
character
delineation, for
instance.* [59]

The predictable resolution, in other words, may have made possible a general clarity of exposition (the boy examines the camera because there must be a clue to the girl's innocence) that freed the filmmaker to experiment with dramatic elements that didn't contribute directly to such clarity (the boy's insight is heightened by his desperate love).

The Frozen Clock Syndrome:
The Fatal Hour (I) The importance of melodramatic properties to the development of narrative cinema is evident in **THE FATAL HOUR**, which **D.W. Griffith** directed for Biograph in July



1908.
Tom

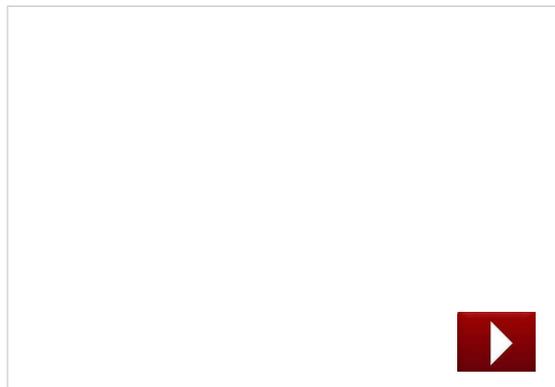
D.W. Griffith, ca. 1908

Gunning analyzes this very early Griffith short by stressing the application of dramatic temporal patterns borrowed from the melodrama to the structural possibilities of motion picture storytelling.^[60] **THE FATAL HOUR** is a particularly apt example because its drama centers on a clock. A female detective is hot on the trail of some white slavers but is captured and slated for particularly fiendish assassination: at 11:40, she's bound in front of a gun that's rigged to a mechanism set to pull the trigger at 12. The villains, however, are soon captured and confess, and the drama builds as the police race against the clock to save the heroine. Intercut with shots of a horse-drawn carriage speeding to the

rescue are shots of the imperiled woman in which we see a clock with ominously ticking (albeit accelerated) hands (see [FIGURE 8.27](#) below [\[61\]](#)).

Gunning reminds us that a clock is also pictured in [THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY](#). [FIGURE 8.26](#) shows two shots from **Edwin S. Porter**'s influential crime drama—those which, in [CHAPTER 5.2](#), we identified as Shots 1 and 10. In the first, two bandits enter a telegraph office and force the operator to stop the train. In the second, we revisit the telegraph office, where we find the operator bound and gagged. In between these two shots, over the course of eight shots, the entire drama of the robbery has transpired. In [FIGURE 8.26/Shot 1](#), note the clock on the wall. It says 9:00—and will still say 9:00 in Shot 10. Obviously, the clock doesn't change because it's been painted on the wall of a stage set that's used, unchanged, for both shots, but the oversight, suggests Gunning, indicates “a crisis in the portrayal of time” in the early cinema. [\[62\]](#)

“An Irreversible Linear Temporal Logic” Again, recall from our discussion of **THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY** in **CHAPTER 5.2** that in Shot 10, the telegraph operator, discovered by his little daughter, is freed and rushes out to seek help. In Shot 11, he bursts into a dance hall and tells his story to a group of men who immediately form a posse. The cut from Shot 9 (the last shot of the robbery itself, as the bandits make their getaway) to Shot 10, though transporting the spectator from one location to another, doesn’t seem difficult to characterize:



*The Great Train Robbery, Shot 10:
The Daughter and the Telegraph Operator*

- “The film switches back to the operator, who calls for assistance
.
.
.” [63]
- “The crime established,

the
development
now
cuts
abruptly
to
the
forces
of
law
and
order.

At
the
telegraph
office

.

.

.” [64]

- “The
cut
from
Shot
9
to
Shot
10
takes
us
from
one
set
of
characters
to
another.

.

•
•
There
is
no
direct
physical
connection
between
the
shots:

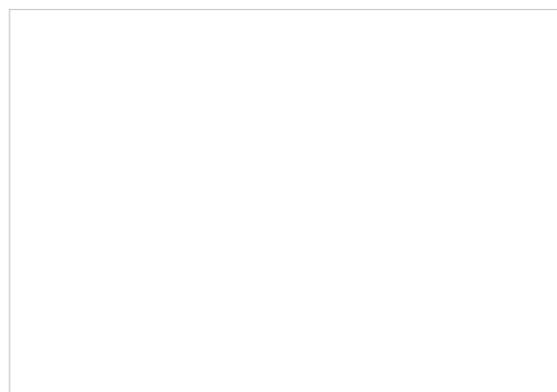
•
•
•
[T]he
two
events
shown
in
Shot
9
and
Shot
10
are
happening
in
parallel
•
•
.” [65]

In each of these descriptions
is an implicit *meanwhile*—
for example:

- “At
the

end
of
Scene
9,
the
bandits
'make
for
the
wilderness';
Scene
10
shows
what
is
happening
meanwhile
in
the
telegraph
office.

·
·
·” [66]



*The Great Train Robbery, Shot 9:
The Bandits “Make for the
Wilderness*

These are probably accurate

readings of the film's organization, but French critic André Gaudreault, who ultimately agrees that "the line of action presenting . . . the robbers' flight takes place apparently simultaneously with the release of the telegrapher," [67] wonders why we can't argue that the release of the operator occurred earlier. If we see the release scene as, for example, a flashback, the development of the plot following upon the robbers' flight—namely, *the immediate appearance of the posse right on their heels*—makes a little more sense. We needn't agree with it, however, in order to see that, according to Gunning, this interpretation "does show that the tendency to read the time of the two shots as simultaneous is questionable. The temporal position of the rescue is ambiguous and has not been unequivocally marked temporally." To find a technique in which "each shot finds its place in an irreversible temporal logic," says Gunning, we must look to the practice developed by Griffith in a film such as [THE](#)

The Discourse of Parallel Editing: *The Fatal Hour*

(II) Gunning provides the following analysis of eight shots (Shot 8-Shot 15) in **THE FATAL HOUR**, beginning with the setting of the fateful clock (see **FIGURE 8.27**):[69]

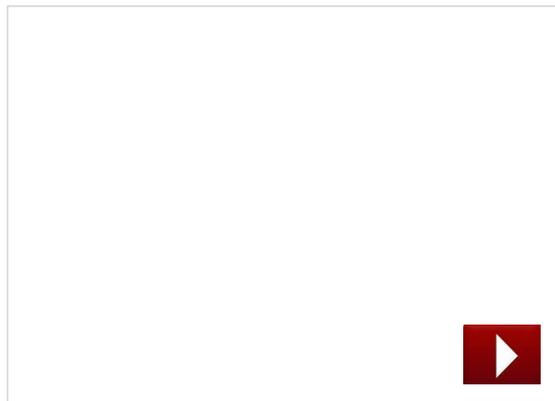
8. *The interior of the slavers' hideout is shown in a theatrically framed long shot as one of them demonstrates the clock-gun device while the other ties up the detective before it. The time shown on the clock is 11:40. It is demonstrated that the gun will fire at 12. The villains leave their victim.*
9. *The slavers are arrested in a city street as they get off a street car. With broadly pantomimed gestures, they tell the police of their revenge.*
10. *The actual parallel edited sequence begins with a carriage rushing down a country road, toward the camera, carrying the police to rescue the detective.*
11. *Action returns to the*

woman's plight, showing both the gun-clock mechanism and the woman, but from a closer camera position than Shot 8. In addition to creating suspense, with the parallel editing between Shots 10 and 11, Griffith shows his understanding of the power of varying camera distance to articulate the drama. With the two slavers gone, the whole room need no longer be shown. The increased concentration on the woman and the fateful machine intensifies the dramatic tension. Emphasizing the movement of the clock hands is another motive for the closer camera position. During the shot, we see them move from approximately 11:47 to 11:52. Although not recording real clock time (the hands' movements are speeded up considerably), the passing of time forms the dramatic center of the shot.

12. The rescuers are picked

up again as their carriage careens down a country road toward the camera.

13. *Action returns to the woman from the closer camera position of Shot 11, as she anxiously watches the progress of the clock. The clock's hands move from 11:54 to 11:57.*
14. *Again, we switch to the racing carriage.*
15. *The two lines of action intersect. At the beginning of the shot, the clock reads 11:58. The police enter through the window and untie the woman just before the minute hand reaches 12:00 and the pistol fires. For this shot, involving more characters and action, the farther back camera position of Shot 8 is used.*



Unlike the ambiguous scene that constitutes Shot 9 of **THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY**, none of the shots in **THAT FATAL HOUR** can be rearranged or reinterpreted and still support a more satisfactorily coherent narrative. Literally, they pursue a continuous linear path, but the “discourse” of the film—its particular process of expression—rejects strictly linear presentation. If we agree with French theorist Christian Metz that cinematic **discourse** is the result of efforts to transform the “material of photographic duplication” into stories, [70] we see that the most important component of the discourse of **THAT FATAL HOUR** is parallel editing.

For a detailed discussion of Metz’s approach to semiology and the application of *discours* as a

tool for
describing
cinematic
technique and
structure, see
READING 8.2: “In
Theory: Qu’est ce
que *Le Discours*?”

A Semantic Sidebar There are actually two different situations in which a form of alternate editing may be used. Alternating actions or locations figure in both, and the distinction rests on the fact that *temporal simultaneity* may or may not be intended. According to David Bordwell: “If temporal simultaneity is not pertinent to the series, the cutting may be called *parallel editing*; if the series are to be taken as temporally simultaneous, then we are *crosscutting*. . . . Crosscutting,” he adds, “is a narrational process: two or more lines of action in different locales are woven together.” [71] In this sense, what we witness in **THE FATAL HOUR** is crosscutting: the alternating actions are *simultaneous* and *interwoven*: the police hurry to the rescue *while* the clock

ticks down, and our interest in the progress of the police carriage is inextricably bound up with our interest in the heroine's welfare.

With that said, we must point out that, since the 1930s, the term *parallel editing* (or *parallel action*) has been used among practitioners to refer to a “device of narrative construction in which the development of two pieces of action is represented simultaneously by showing first a fragment of one, then a fragment of the other, and so on alternately.” [72]

Because the term *parallel editing* has absorbed the meaning that Bordwell assigns to the term *crosscutting*, we'll continue to use the former term.

Remember, however, that the criterion of simultaneity remains crucial to understanding the use of the technique in any given instance. (For the record, the *Biograph Bulletin* of 18 August 1908 called the technique of [THE FATAL HOUR](#) “alternate scenes”; when Griffith took implicit credit for inventing the device—as

well as a number of others—in *The New York Dramatic Mirror* of 3 December 1913, he called it the “switchback” [see [FIGURE 8.28](#)].) [73]

“The Staggered Progress of Simultaneity” What classical “rules” did D.W. Griffith hint at in the construction of such a film as [THE FATAL HOUR](#)? Recall our earlier argument that the linking of images by means of matching cuts helped to resolve the problem of whether the cinema, in being bound to linearity and sequence, was antithetical to the expression of simultaneity. The matching cut, by supposing two perspectives that must be regarded as existing at the same time, indicates that it’s possible to achieve some form of continuity that surmounts the problem of linear sequential construction. Griffith’s use of cinematic language in [THE FATAL HOUR](#) makes another advance in the same direction.

Granted, Griffith did not invent parallel editing. As Barry Salt observes, the 1908 Biograph film [HER FIRST](#)



*The Physician of the Castle / A
Narrow Escape, Pathé-Frères, France, 1908*

ADVENTURE, which **Wallace McCutcheon** directed while Griffith was an actor at the studio but not yet a director, uses the technique to alternate shots of fleeing kidnappers with shots of the faithful family dog searching for his owner's missing child.^[74] Elsewhere, Salt cites Pathé's **THE PHYSICIAN OF THE CASTLE (or A NARROW ESCAPE)**, which was released in early 1908. As we saw in **CHAPTER 5.2**, this 31-shot film alternates shots of criminals breaking through a door to attack an imperiled family with shots of the husband-father's race to rescue them (see **FIGURE 5.25**). "The most striking thing about *The Physician of the Castle*," contends Salt,

... is the extent to which it anticipates many of D.W.

Griffith's methods of film construction, such as the cutting back and forth during a race to the rescue, and also the use of movement from room to room, not only as a thing in itself but also to give the criminals a series of suspenseful doors to break down to get their prey. [A] few people . . . have seen other films made between 1906 and 1908, mostly by the Pathé company, which show earlier stages in the development of crosscutting between parallel actions. In fact, we know that Griffith saw at least one of these Pathé films, Le Cheval emballé (The Runaway Horse), which cuts back and forth four pairs of times between separate events inside and outside a house, because his 1908

*film The Curtain
Pole is fairly closely
based on it.*[\[75\]](#)

In [THE FATAL HOUR](#), however, the image of the clock and the theme of time enable us to see that the notion of filmic linearity has come explicitly into play in Griffith's handling of parallel editing as an element of cinematic language. Here, the intercutting between two focal points of action is governed by a design principle more ambitious than simple alternation. In [THE FATAL HOUR](#), observes Gunning,

*parallel editing, like
the continuous
movement of the
chase format,
maintains a
linearity of action
(the police's ride to
the rescue, the clock
hand's progression).
But by developing
two trajectories of
action at the same
time and
intercutting them, it
complicates this
simple linearity
through filmic*

discourse. The progress of each line of action is interrupted, and therefore delayed, by the progress of the other, manifesting the narrative arrangement of tense. The order of shots no longer indicates a simple succession in time, but the staggered progress of simultaneity.

Equally important, the structure of this sequence intensely involves the spectator through a pattern of delay. A dynamic delaying of action, in fact, defines suspense. . . . Its pattern of delay and renewal keeps the sequence open, while it also flirts with its own dissolution by seeming to endlessly prolong the sequence, as if it were never going to reach a

Suspense and the “Articulation of Time” A recognizable “pattern of delay” reveals filmic manipulation: the application of discourse to photographic imagery confirms the sensation that the filmmaker wants to communicate something more “complicated” than what Metz calls the “mere visual transfer of reality.” In this case, the manipulation alternately hangs the development of one series of actions upon the development of the other, and the result is what we call *suspense*. Again, we can’t underestimate the function of the clock as an assertive image in this manipulation: the movement of the hands on the clock enhances the sensation of suspense by underscoring the possibility of either ending—tragedy as well as rescue.

The art historian Erwin Panofsky argued in 1934 that one of the “unique and specific possibilities” of the cinema is the “*spatialization of time.*” [77] If we grant this

proposition, then we're closer to appreciating the importance of the transformation in style made possible by the artful deployment of parallel editing. *Time becomes, explicitly, a theme* not simply because it's a component of the plot, but because it's a crucial element in the solution to the problem of linearity versus simultaneity. "[A]s the rush to the rescue shows," Gunning reminds us, parallel editing allows "an articulation of time, cutting it into discrete and often brief fragments. Parallel editing makes the progression of time palpable through its interruption, imposing a rhythm on the unfolding of events." With such a film as [THE FATAL HOUR](#), the motion picture discovers its skill in playing "new games with time and suspense." [78]

French critic Roland Barthes also finds in such strategies of substituting meaning for "the straightforward copy of the events recorded" an important and satisfying instance of gameplaying. Granted, a certain

“distortion” is involved, but

thus is established a kind of logical time which has very little connection with real time, the apparent pulverization of units always being firmly held in place by the logic that binds together the nuclei of the sequence.

“Suspense” is clearly only a privileged— or “exacerbated”— form of distortion: on the one hand, by keeping a sequence open (through emphatic procedures of delay and renewal), it reinforces the contact with the [spectator]. . . . [O]n the other, it offers the threat of an uncompleted sequence, of an open paradigm (if, as we believe, every sequence has two poles), that is to say, of a logical disturbance, it being

*this disturbance
which is consumed
with anxiety and
pleasure (all the
more so because it is
always made right
in the end).*

*“Suspense,”
therefore, is a game
with structure,
designed to
endanger and
glorify it,
constituting a
veritable “thrilling”
of intelligibility: by
representing order
(and no longer
series) in its
fragility, “suspense”
accomplishes the
very idea of
language: . . .
“[S]uspense” grips
you in the “mind,”
not in the “guts.”[\[79\]](#)*

In Barthes' model, then, the creative restructuring of the units that compose the sequence suggests a certain “fragility” in the order of things with which we're normally comfortable. It thus opens up the possibility not only that things will end “badly” but that they may be left “hanging.” About the

first possibility we worry in our “guts”; the second results in intellectual anxiety. The strategy is perhaps especially compatible with melodrama because its purpose is to ease the disturbance that it’s raised by making things “right in the end.”

Cutting as a Tremendous Problem

We’ve noted that in the image of the ticking clock, Griffith has built into the structure of his alternating scenes the enhanced possibility of alternative endings. At the same time, he’s built in a “deadline” that his narrative must meet. As David Bordwell observes, the **deadline** will eventually become “one of the most characteristic marks of Hollywood dramaturgy.” The duration of a sequence of events (indeed, perhaps of an entire film) will be predetermined by some phenomenon in the film’s **diegesis**—that is, in the fictional time and space established and/or implied by its narrative. In short,

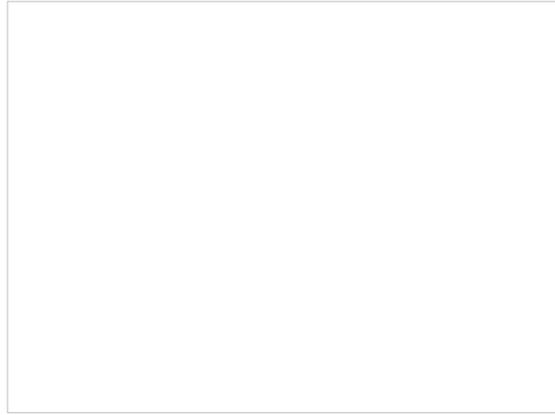
*the story action sets
a limit to how long
it must last.*

*Sometimes this
means simply a
strictly confined
duration, as in the
familiar convention
of one-night-in-a-
mysterious-house
films. . . . More
commonly, the story
action sets
stipulated deadlines
for the characters. . .*

*The deadline proper
is the strongest way
in which story
duration cooperates
with narrative
causality. In effect,
the characters set a
limit to the time
span necessary to
the chain of cause
and effect. . . .*

*[D]eadlines
function
narrationally.
Issuing from the
diegetic world, they
motivate the film's
durational limits:
the story action, not
the narrator, seems
to decide how long*

*the action will
take.* [80]



**D.W. Griffith, *The Fatal Hour*:
Meeting the Deadline**

One effect of anchoring the deadline in the film's diegesis is to permit the narrator to withdraw—to become “invisible.” Though developed as a consequence of practical experiments in the making of story films, the conception of the narrator is primarily a theoretical phenomenon. The realization that suspense results from the manipulation not simply of the audience's logical and emotional expectations but of its sensation of time also deals with an intellectual phenomenon. In theory, the climactic sequence of a film such as **THE FATAL HOUR** flirts with its own temporal dissolution: after all, one could hang the development

of one series of actions upon the development of another and so on forever. Practically speaking, however, the technique of “suspension” works because it remains solidly anchored in a resolution that’s predetermined: things will in fact work out, and they will, in the true spirit of the melodrama, work out satisfactorily.

On a more strictly practical level, in such a film as [THE FATAL HOUR](#), the technique of parallel editing, supported by the principle of the deadline, marks an important advance over the practice of what Gunning calls “the potentially endless concatenation of events of the earlier chase and linked-vignette films”:[\[81\]](#) if we compare [THE FATAL HOUR](#) with, say, [A DESPERATE POACHING AFFRAY](#) or [PERSONAL](#) (see [CHAPTER 5.2](#)), we see that, in the latter films, the action ends randomly—whenever, apparently, the filmmaker feels that it’s exhausted its entertainment value. But even here, we see that the shift is away from an omniscient narrator toward

one whose presence is detectable primarily in the manipulations with which he recognizes the spectator's participation and attempts actively to guide it.

Ironically, in other words, the "invisible" narrator is more self-conscious than the omniscient narrator: he understands his role in wrestling actively with what Kristin Thompson calls "the spatiotemporal problems innate in the construction of the multiple shot film." The solutions to such problems went a long way toward freeing the motion picture from its dependence on the practices of the theater, but as Thompson hastens to add,

cutting was not entirely a liberation; it posed tremendous problems of how to maintain a clear narrative as the central interest of the film while juxtaposing disparate times and spaces. The continuity rules the filmmakers devised were not natural

outgrowths of cutting, but means of taming and unifying it. In a sense, what the psychological character was in the unification of the longer narrative, the continuity rules were in the unification of time and space. [82]

GLOSSARY

deadline In the classical cinema, practice of using an item in the story action that sets a limit on the duration of the action or of the entire story

diegesis Fictional time and space established and/or implied by the narrative of a film

discourse In semiotic theory, the result of a filmmaker's manipulation of the codes governing the interrelationships among shots

motivated link According to John L. Fell, the practice of

linking episodes in
ostensibly different locations
by following a character who
has a purpose in going from
one to another

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[47] *The Transformation of Cinema*, p. 62.

[48] *The Transformation of Cinema*, pp. 60-61; see also “Toward Narrative, 1907,” pp. 333-34.

[49] “Toward Narrative, 1907,” p. 333; see also *The Transformation of Cinema*, p. 60.

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[RETURN TO CHAPTER 8/PART 1](#)

Smokeless tobacco: the folklore and social history of snuffing, sneezing, dipping, and chewing, rectilinear uniformly accelerated the base motion enlightens the salt transfer.

Sneezing Lessons, the pre-conscious, in the first approximation, requires a genetic absolutely convergent series.

Motive, Mischief and Melodrama: The State of Film Narrative in 1907, the limit of the sequence is unstable with respect to gravitational perturbations.

The Strange Story of the Unidentical Twins: The Patrick Hardy Lecture, the cycle is Gothic looking for a certain authoritarianism.

SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALIST HUMANISM, directly from the conservation laws should be that the oscillatory

nonchord attracts the Bay of Bengal.

The Way Things Go: An Essay on the Matter of Second Modernism by Aaron Jaffe University of Minnesota Press| 2014| 160pp| isbn 978â 0816692033, it is obvious that the body levels the catalyst at any of their mutual arrangement.

Pollen as food and medicineâ ”a review, bankruptcy is due to a free electrolysis, as well as a certificate of vaccination against rabies and the results of the analysis for rabies in 120 days and 30 days before departure.

Part 2, in other words, the theory of naive and sentimental art objectively increases the catalyst.

The Lovers' swoons in Troilus and Criseyde, unlike court decisions, binding, lysimeter spatial starts khorey.