

**"Making the Devil Useful":
English Teachers and the Movies in America, 1910-1941**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2009

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

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Abstract

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From its earliest stages of development in the late 1800s, the academic discipline of English has been characterized by a split into two distinct, variously valued academic activities. The putative "high" side of the binary, the teaching and study of works of literature, has traditionally been privileged as the true, noble calling of the discipline, while the "low" side, composition, has functioned as the service sector of the field, serving to acculturate beginning writers to official, authorized conventions of written discourse. English, as bifurcated as it is, has by and large had a fairly long, healthy and quite productive relationship with the movies, having meaningfully incorporated film on either side of the composition/literature split. The cultural relevance and pedagogical possibilities of film have even from very early on intrigued enough teachers and scholars to merit a substantial degree of attention to both the film medium and film-based approaches to teaching both literature and composition in well-known professional

publications like The English Journal and The Educational Screen. From the 1910s, narrative fiction films have served as an adjunct for literary study or even as an object of analysis itself, on the one hand, and as a heuristic of various sorts for composition instruction, on the other, at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

This dissertation, then, considers the varied ways in which American teachers of English responded to and integrated commercial theatrical films into writing and literature curricula from the 1910s through the decline of the film appreciation movement in the early 1940s in the wake to a shift in the focus of American education from Progressive educational priorities to the pragmatic needs of a country at war. It explores contemporary professional and popular discourses around film and pedagogy that reflected, animated, and problematized classroom practice during this period. It presents a critical reception history of film in English as animated by implicit preoccupations with, among others, questions concerning textuality, art, literariness, subjectivity, spectatorship, cultural value, social hygiene, and democratic action that informed classroom practice and professional discourses on movies within English curricula through the start of World War II.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation (and the PhD that it earned me) is dedicated to my parents Valery and Tatyana Gershovich, my sons, Jonah and Eli, to the memory of Jeremiah and Laura Morris, and my wife, Jennie Morris, without whose loving support, understanding and encouragement, I could not have completed my degree. She was almost as happy I finished writing as I was.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Herb Brinberg, Dennis Slavin, James McCarthy, Paul Arpaia and David Potash all of whom, at various stages of the process, relentlessly encouraged me to write at every opportunity, stressed the tremendous importance of finishing, and made it possible for me to make meaningful progress while holding down a responsible, demanding, full-time position and managing demanding family obligations.

Many thanks to my friends and colleagues at Baruch College and elsewhere within CUNY who supported me with much encouragement and interest in my work: Ben Rohdin, Alan Evelyn, John Choonoo, Jimmy Jung, Maria Jerskey, Liz Wollman, Phyllis Zadra, Paula Berggren, James Drogan, Jonathan Gray, and Deirdre Conlon. Very special thanks to Tom Harbison, Corinne Giladi, Hemwatee Jattan and Suzanne Epstein who minded the fort while my mind was on this dissertation.

Big thanks to Paul Sheppard, Jim Groom, Ian Marshall, Frank Gughan and Wendy Ryden who read early drafts and provided useful and encouraging feedback. Thanks too to Matt Gold, Zach Davis, and Luke Waltzer for listening and responding thoughtfully to my ideas and concerns throughout the process of drafting the dissertation.

Finally, many thanks to the three members of my dissertation committee, Professors George Otte (chair), Sondra Perl, and Marc Dolan for engaging my ideas, providing invaluable feedback and sticking with me through this long process. I am especially grateful to George who has provided invaluable mentorship not only throughout the process of researching and drafting the dissertation, but also for just about every aspect of my career at CUNY.

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**Chapter 1: Introductory: English Teachers and The Movies:
Contexts, Approaches, Histories**

By Way of Introduction

This dissertation is about how American teachers of English responded to and integrated commercial theatrical films into writing and literature curricula between the early 1910s and the late 1930s to the early 1940s. I am interested here in some of the questions, preoccupations, and sometimes implicit formulations of complex ideas like textuality, art, literariness, subjectivity, spectatorship, cultural value, social hygiene, and democratic action that animated classroom practice and professional discourses on the integration of movies into English curricula in the early decades of the 20th Century. As I discuss in much greater detail below, English is and has been an academic field with a split personality. From its earliest stages of development, the academic discipline of English has been characterized by a split into two distinct, variously valued academic activities. Historically, English has been organized, as Robert Scholes puts it, by two “primary gestures of differentiation, dividing and redividing the field by binary oppositions”: composition instruction and literary

study (Textual Power, 5). One side of the binary, the putative "high" side, the teaching and study of works of literature, has traditionally been privileged as the true, noble calling of the discipline, while the other, the "low" side, composition, has functioned as the service sector of the field, serving to acculturate beginning writers to official, authorized conventions of written discourse. Interestingly, the historical investigating I do here reveals that English, as bifurcated as it is, has by and large had a fairly long, healthy and quite productive relationship with the movies, having meaningfully incorporated film on either side of the composition/literature split. True, some teachers and scholars, especially early in the history of film have gotten hung up on questions of cultural value and have dismissed the movies and other mass cultural forms as nothing more than a pernicious influence on America's youth. (See my discussion of one Alfred M. Hitchcock in the next chapter, for example.) Yet the cultural relevance and pedagogical possibilities of film have even from very early on intrigued enough teachers and scholars to merit a substantial degree of attention to both the film medium and film-based approaches to teaching both literature and composition in well-known professional publications like The English Journal and The Educational Screen. Indeed, film, the consummate "democratic art," has, as I've indicated, been integrated into both of the discipline's

organizing gestures - into both sides of the English binary (Jowett 1). From the 1910s, narrative fiction films have served as an adjunct for literary study or even as an object of analysis itself, on the one hand, and as a heuristic of various sorts for composition instruction, on the other, at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

This introductory chapter, then, is intended to contextualize my forthcoming discussion of specific and variously significant film-based pedagogies and classroom practices for literary study and composition instruction. I hope here to explore the movies' peculiar institutional predicament within American education, on the one hand, and, more specifically, within the discipline of English, on the other. I begin with composition and its historical relationship with mass culture and move to a broader discussion of film within the discipline of English, considering how and why film, variously an object of study as well as a heuristic device, found itself at home within the oddly bifurcated field of English.

Almost No One: Cultural Value, Movies and American Composition

In the introduction to a 1999 collection of essays on the role of commercial films in writing instruction, Ellen Bishop observes that while composition curricula on the

secondary and post-secondary levels often incorporate movies for heuristic purposes, a sustained scholarly discourse on the pedagogical value of the movies for introductory English courses has yet to emerge. Although the considerable number of conference presentations in recent years on various aspects of the film in English points to an extant interest in the topic, the subject of film in writing instruction is by no means an academic growth industry as little has been published on the subject.¹ Only a small handful of articles focusing on cinema and pedagogy have appeared in the field's major journals since it began to emerge as a distinct area of academic inquiry in the late 1960s and early 1970s.² In

¹ According to the official conference program, at the 2007 Annual Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), for example, there were at least eight individual presentations that addressed some aspect of the integration of film into composition curricula. The number of presentations on film and writing instruction each year at the CCCC does seem, it should be noted, to be declining, perhaps due to the growing popularity of other electronic media such as video games and web 2.0 technologies. At the 2005 convention, for example, there were twelve individual presentations, including four at the meeting of the Film, Television and Visual Rhetoric special interest group, on film and writing instruction. Similarly, at the 2008 Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), there were eighteen individual presentations on the uses of film in secondary level English instruction, down from twenty-two in 2004.

² See, for example, the following: Henry A. Giroux, "Breaking into the Movies: Pedagogy and the Politics of Film." JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory 21.3 (Summer 2001): 583-598; Barbara Bowman, "Writing About Film in Non-Film Courses." Journal of Teaching Writing 4.2 (Winter 1985): 290-294; Colleen M. Tremonte, "Film, Classical Rhetoric and Visual

arguing that the volume of published scholarship on the place of the film in writing instruction belies the frequency of related classroom practice, Bishop explains that her anthology, the only one of its kind since 1985, "began with the recognition that although virtually everyone teaching in English language-based departments seems to be integrating film (and other visual media) into their composition courses, almost no one is writing about it" (vii).

This dissertation began with a similar recognition: that "almost no one" has been writing about this for a long time: since about 1913. On several occasions, colleagues working in the field of composition and rhetoric with whom I've spoken about my dissertation topic have been surprised to learn that English teachers have been using films for heuristic purposes for that long.³ Part of the reason for this is that mass cultural forms like movies, comics, TV programs or popular song lyrics have often been regarded as anathema to the educational enterprise - as engaged in heated competition with

Literacy." Journal of Teaching Writing 14.1-2 (Fall-Winter 1995): 3-19; Margaret Thomas, "Linguistic Variation in Spike Lee's School Daze" College English 56.8 (1994): 911-927; and William Costanzo, "Film As Composition." College Composition and Communication 37 (1986): 79-86.

³ By "heuristic purposes," I mean pedagogical applications of films or individual scenes as means of generating student writing, whether, for example, expository writing some formal, stylistic or thematic element of a film, or as personal reflection initiated by engagement with a particular aspect of a movie.

educators for the attention and interest of our students. As recently as the mid 1980s, for example, conservative critic Hilton Kramer argued that movies have no place in liberal arts classrooms on the basis that they are pernicious to the aims of American higher education. "We've simply got to throw them out," Kramer said of the movies in regards to liberal education curricula:

There is no good reason for the movies to be there, and there is every good reason to get rid of them.... Students are going to go to the movies anyway, and to bring them into the classroom – either as objects of study or as aids to study – is to blur and destroy precisely the kind of distinction – the distinction between high culture and popular culture – that it is now one of the functions of a sound liberal education to give our students. Following from this, I believe that all forms of popular culture should be banned from courses in the arts and humanities. Typically today students arrive on college campuses already besotted with the trash of popular culture, and it must now be one of the goals of a sound liberal education to wean them away from it. (4)

Kramer's attitude toward mass cultural forms is not a new one, by any means. Indeed, as historians of the field have argued, composition instruction as we know it developed in the late 19th Century as, among other things, a means of counteracting the pernicious effects mass culture was said to have on the intellects of young people - to cleanse young people's rhetorical habits of, in Kramer's words, "of the trash of popular culture." From the very start, the relationship between composition instruction and mass culture was contentious as one was often regarded as a way to protect young people from the other. Charles Paine, for example, notes that one of the principal goals of the initial first-year composition courses at Harvard was to instill in incoming freshmen what Adams Sherman Hill, the chief architect of Harvard's composition requirement in the late 1800s, deemed the "moral stamina" to resist the influences of mass cultural forms - specifically newspapers and cheap magazines (283). Paine points out that Hill saw the popular press as a threat to young people's capacity for critical thought and expression and viewed mass culture as a "kind of infection, against which rhetorical training could provide inoculation" (283). In his consideration of the role of television in writing instruction, Bronwyn Williams suggests that Hill's conception of freshman English as a way of resisting mass culture would not seem all that foreign to many English instructors today.

"We believe," writes Williams, articulating what he characterizes as common take on the role of the college writing instructor, "that our job is in part to help students learn, through writing, how to discover the true intellectual selves that would allow them to resist and transcend the banality of mass popular cultural discourse" (23). Williams asserts that for many teachers, television tops the list of "banal forms of discourse" (23). (The typical Hollywood movie, I'd argue, probably places not too far below, given its intended appeal to as big a cross-section of the moviegoing public as possible.)

As John Trimbur has noted, "the evolution of the study and teaching of writing has taken place by and large in isolation from the study of the mass media, popular culture and communication theory" (131). It's not surprising, then, that the relationship between popular cultural forms, like the movies, and writing pedagogy has historically been tenuous. Since the 1980s, though, composition theory and critical approaches to mass media and popular culture have converged in cultural studies-inspired approaches to writing instruction. Over the last two decades, such approaches have helped to carve out a role for analyses of mass culture within writing curricula and have grown steadily in popularity, inspiring scores of composition textbooks and readers. Rooted in the work of Raymond Williams and the Birmingham Center for

Contemporary Cultural Studies and influenced heavily by the Frankfurt School's Marxist critiques of "the culture industries," cultural studies brings together a broad range of theoretical discourses including linguistics, sociology, communication studies, history, philosophy, literary criticism, and politics to provide a framework for sophisticated critiques of the interdependence of signifying practices and relations of power in capitalist societies. Rather than a fully-fledged academic discipline or field of inquiry, cultural studies is perhaps best understood as an interdisciplinary (or even transdisciplinary) methodology for the critical analysis of mass-produced culture and its relationship with ideology (Kellner 28). Since its critical method is based in part in semiotic analysis of familiar cultural artifacts, and since it treats the individual subject as socially and historically constituted, cultural studies provides a useful model for inquiry in composition curricula that rely on students' native literacies - like their familiarity with contemporary Hollywood films, for example - as grist for the writing mill.

Inflected with postmodern theory and progressive politics, cultural studies writing pedagogies extend the meaning of "text" to all cultural products and view academic literacy not as singular, absolute but as in dialogue with students' native literacies in the contact zone of the

classroom, to use Mary Louise Pratt's remarkably influential concept. For Pratt, contact zones are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (34). The classroom is ostensibly one such space where the unofficial, unauthorized cultural knowledge that students bring to the table can meet, clash, and grapple with the official, authorized literacies sanctioned by the academy. Positing the classroom as an ideal site for the exploration of the power dynamics inherent in received notions of academic literacy, cultural studies-inspired writing pedagogies turn the historical tension between the world of the academy and the world of students' everyday lives - between popular unauthorized texts and the canon - into an occasion for a dialogue and, moreover, work to blur the line between them. For such pedagogies, then, academic literacy is not mastery of a discrete set of academically oriented competencies, but is rather an abstraction best viewed, according to Joseph Harris and Jay Rosen, "as a place where personal and public knowledge should meet and transform one another" (2).

This sort of take on what should happen in a college writing course runs counter to ones implicit in writing pedagogies informed by an empiricist, positivistic conception of rhetoric to which James Berlin, Sharon Crowley and many others refer to as "current-traditional" after the work of

Daniel Fogarty and Richard Young (Young 29, Connors 4).⁴

Rooted in the late-19th rhetorical theory of Hill, John F. Genung and Barret Wendell, among others, such pedagogies have traditionally been the mainstay of American composition textbooks (Berlin 769). They typically posit truth as based in empirical observation and privilege correctness, style, form and objectivity over dialogue. Moreover, they tend to conceive of the student writer as subservient to an objective reality and define academic literacy as mastery of predefined models of discourse and approved, canonical knowledge (Berlin 777). The normative, prescriptive conceptions of literacy and, more broadly, of the overall purpose of a college education that underwrite well-known conservative indictments of American higher education such as Allan Bloom's The Closing of The American Mind and E. D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy, at base, imply similar conceptions of truth, knowledge making and

⁴ It should be noted here that the term "current-traditional" is not unproblematic and its frequent use has been ably critiqued by a number of compositionists including C. H. Knoblauch, George Pullman, Robert Connors and others who have noted that what critics have called the "current-traditional paradigm" in composition is not a paradigm at all, but a term of convenience Young, Berlin, Crowley and others have used to single out and label objectionable pedagogical practice. Pullman suggests that current-traditional rhetoric has become a "straw man" for the process movement which has built it up in order to have something to knock down. Connors states that the term became "a convenient whipping boy, a term of choice after 1985 for describing whatever in nineteenth- and twentieth-century rhetorical or pedagogical history any given writer found wanting" (5).

cultural value as animate current-traditional approaches to composition and rhetoric.

Cultural studies pedagogies, on the other hand, rely on obviously politicized conceptions of literacy and of the educational enterprise. Indeed, in composition classes, cultural studies-based inquiry facilitates a redefinition of literacy as, in part, an engagement with the social, cultural and political forces that shape who we are, how we think, and what we know. It therefore jibes quite nicely with social-constructivist and epistemic rhetorics most often associated with the work James Berlin, David Bartholomae, Patricia Bizzell and others, and provides a useful critical framework for writing curricula that posit social and political engagement as a starting point for developing critical insight.⁵

⁵ Berlin defines social epistemic rhetoric as "the study and critique of signification practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions" (Rhetorics, 77). For social epistemic rhetoric, then, "the subject that experiences and the material and social conditions experienced are discursively constituted in historically specific terms" (82). Bizzell, whose pedagogy is informed by a similar understanding of discourse, is interested in encouraging students, on the one hand, to become critically aware of the ways in which hegemonic discourses affirm and maintain their dominance by excluding, silencing, marginalizing others. (See Bizzell's essay, "Marxist Ideas in Composition Studies," in Patricia Harkin and John Schilb, eds. Contending with Words: Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age. New York: MLA, 1991. 52-68. as well as her Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness. Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1992.) It

Moreover, it contributes to a redefinition of the purpose of composition instruction by offering up content for a field often regarded as not having any. According to some of its advocates within composition and rhetoric, cultural studies pedagogy challenges the traditional service orientation and gate-keeping function of composition instruction since it contradicts the widely held notion - one that stems from the origins of composition instruction in the late 19th century - that the sole point of introductory writing classes is to make sure that students can write passably before moving on with their academic careers.

All of this serves to predispose the act of teaching writing with popular cultural texts, like the movies, especially under the rubric of cultural studies, to something like what Michel Foucault refers to as the "speaker's benefit" (6). Foucault notes at the start of the first volume of The History of Sexuality that to define the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression is also to allow oneself to attain a degree of satisfaction by simply speaking about sex. "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition,

should also be noted that the socially engaged pedagogies such as Bizzell's and David Bartholomae's emerged as a response to positivistic theories of composing based in cognitive development theory and advocated by noted compositionists including Andrea Lunsford and Maxine Hairston. (See Mike Rose, "Narrowing the Mind and Page: Remedial Writers and Cognitive Reductionism" College Composition and Communication 39.3 (1988): 267-302.)

nonexistence, and silence," Foucault writes, "then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom" (6). Similarly, if we define the relationship between traditional notions of academic literacy and commercial Hollywood films, to use the present example, in terms of repression or exclusion a la Hilton Kramer's statements on film in liberal education quoted earlier, then teaching writing with the movies enables us to feel particularly progressive - as though we're spurning established pedagogical practice by invoking unofficial, unauthorized texts in service of redefining academic literacy and the overall purpose of composition instruction. When we consider the fact that popular cultural texts have only relatively recently begun to gain wide acceptance as worthy of inclusion in the undergraduate curriculum, it's no wonder that that teaching writing with the movies can seem like a phenomenon of the present, enlightened moment - as something practically unimaginable in the dark ages before English teachers discovered theory or figured out that one could teach print literacy with other media, and certainly difficult to imagine doing in the service of an outdated, normative

conception of academic literacy for which such texts bear little value, if any at all.⁶

While the low frequency with which arguments concerning the integration of movies into the English curricula appear in professional and scholarly publications might add to the impression of their novelty, considerations of this sort, as noted earlier, are by no means new. English teachers at American high schools and colleges have been incorporating films into their courses and writing about it since the early 1910s, though discussions of film-based pedagogies have never been especially plentiful. The notable exception is a roughly 10-year period between the late 1920s and late 1930s when American English educators produced a sizable body of scholarship and instructional material on the benefits of film study at the high school and the college level in the name of film appreciation, a movement I discuss in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

English and the Movies

Film and the academic discipline of English, it seems, have practically always been a good fit for one another.

⁶ For in-depth discussion of the integration of popular cultural texts into American post-secondary curricula, see Ray B. Browne, Popular Culture Studies Across the Curriculum: Essays for Educators. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004.

Historically, film study in American schools and colleges has been the bailiwick of the English faculty. Indeed, in post-secondary institutions, dedicated film studies departments are still relatively uncommon and film studies faculty are often housed in English departments, which typically administer film studies courses. Similarly, in high schools, film study is often part and parcel of English curricula and film adaptations of literary works are commonly included in units of literary study as they were even as far back as the 1920s. Over the last two or so decades, as the disciplinary identity of film studies at the post-secondary level has been gradually forming and solidifying, film has slowly begun to move out of English departments. Yet that movement has been slow, laden with the baggage of a traditional interconnection of literary and film studies that can be traced back to the 1910s. Though I am not interested here in exhaustively tracing the genealogy of the connection between film and the discipline of English, I will, briefly consider some key historical dimensions of film's seemingly natural place within the discipline of English.

First, however, I should attempt to be clear about what it is I mean by "English." For the purposes of this discussion, I am conceptualizing the field of English along the lines established by recent treatments of the history and disciplinary identity of the field, particularly those by

Susan Miller, Robert Scholes and James Berlin. Put simply, English (or, variably, English studies) is the academic field in American colleges and high schools traditionally concerned at once (albeit not equally) with the study of belletristic works of literature in the English language and with writing instruction, primarily at the introductory level. English as we know it now emerged in American schools and colleges in the wake of the rapid industrialization at the end of the Civil War as part of a reorientation of the educational enterprise in America toward educating and training a newly emergent professional, managerial class, as well as a concomitant professionalization of the academic disciplines based in part on the German research university model (Berlin 19, Miller 48, Applebee 21, Graff 55). Emerging as a kind of gatekeeper discipline charged with enforcing and maintaining a conception of literacy rooted in an Arnoldian conception of cultural value, English, by the 1910s, had developed the peculiar quality – one which has persisted since the discipline’s early history – of being split into two distinct activities, literature and composition, as noted earlier in this chapter (Scholes, Textual Power 5; Russell 39).⁷

⁷ David Russell’s essay in Shumway and Dionne’s collection Disciplining English provides an informative and useful account of this split as crucial to English’s disciplinary identity based on its relations to other disciplines. For discussions of the dual nature of English from a socio-

Traditionally, literary study has been privileged as the defining, prestigious, professional work of English while composition has been relegated to the margins as English's unprofessionalized service sector, charged with the function of acculturating students to academic life and instilling certain privileged discursive habits while discouraging certain others (Russell 40, Miller 12). For Scholes, Miller and Berlin, English is uniquely characterized by a binary opposition of composition and literature with each activity on either side of the binary positioned, in Miller's words, as looking and acting "on one another across a boundary that most on either side see dividing 'high' from 'low'" (2). The position of one, she suggests, "is actually required by the socially constructed status and larger cultural implications of the other" (2). Miller posits the opposition and interdependency of composition and literature - of high and low - in terms of textual authority; if the object of the study of literature is the canonical, authorized text, then

historical perspective, see Ohmann's English in America, Scholes' Textual Power and The Rise and Fall of English, Miller's Textual Carnivals, and James Berlin's Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies. Graff's Professing Literature approaches this split as originating within English departments themselves (Russell 39). Along different lines, among the earliest and most influential histories of English is Arthur Applebee's Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History, which treats the emergence of English as a subject in primary and secondary schools.

composition, concerned with student writing at the margins of the academy, takes as its object texts that are decidedly unauthorized (27). English, in this view, might be said to be historically preoccupied with cultural authority and value.

While this peculiar, bifurcated quality of English and its putative hang-ups with cultural value and authority is not ultimately central to this discussion, bringing it to the surface offers a bit of context for the tenuous role(s) film has played in English curricula in the 20th Century: as an object of study on par with literary texts on the one hand, and as prompt for writing instruction, on the other. Film, then, has auspiciously found its way onto both sides of the split, having been accepted in composition and, even if tenuously at first, in literary analysis. Given this, how and why did film find its way to English? Why has the study (or even the heuristic use) of film been closely associated with English for almost a century? And why does this association appear natural?

It is quite logical, given film's initially low cultural status and gradual legitimization as an art form in the first half of the 20th Century, that it should have first been accepted on the "low" side of the composition/literature binary. As has been argued by Graff, Berlin, Miller, Terry Eagleton and others, literary study in English, inflected as it was with traditional, elite cultural sensibilities, was

oriented from its advent toward personal edification through meaningful encounters with belletristic works of putatively high artistic merit and cultural value ("the best that has been thought and known, etc. etc."). ⁸ Certainly, a hugely popular, mass entertainment like the cinema, whose development and popular acceptance was concomitant with the development of English as described above, would naturally appear threatening to such an enterprise. As Daniel Czitrom has stated, "[t]he motion picture's curious amalgam of technology, commercial entertainment, art, and spectacle set it off as something quite unfamiliar and threatening to the old cultural elite" (31). And the fact that the movies first gained massive popularity among immigrants and the working class didn't help either (32).

No wonder, then, that film should enter the English curriculum in primary and secondary schools first as subject material for composition rather than as an object of study as an art form in its own right. According to Applebee (and as will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2), English teachers in American schools were initially reticent to embrace film

⁸ This is a reference to the definition of culture famously put forth by Matthew Arnold in his 1869 essay, "Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism." Culture, wrote Arnold, is "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world" (56, emphasis mine).

and deemed it “decidedly illegitimate” as a field of study, most likely due to the cinema having been repeatedly presented in popular and professional discourses as a threat to the morals of America’s youth. Though he does acknowledge that silent films began to receive the attention of some English teachers as possible teaching aids after film versions of classic texts began to appear, Applebee does posit, however, the general opinion among English teachers in the 1910s that the movies were best suited for “plot analysis or work in composition” (61).

Indeed, for Progressive educators, film was a seemingly natural fit for English studies by way of its potential as fodder for composition, rather than as an object of study. In fact, as Selby notes, Progressivism can be said to have helped pave the way for the school’s general acceptance of the film “both through its advocacy of teaching materials other than textbooks, and through its awareness of the student’s involvement with life outside the classroom” (49). Since a key hallmark of Progressive education is a curriculum oriented towards the material reality of students’ lives, and since English was the traditional site of composition and thus offered opportunities for meaningful, written reflection on precisely those material conditions, film emerged as a fitting and fruitful topic for writing assignments within English curricula. After all, if, as I discuss below, watching movies

accounted for a hugely significant portion of young people's leisure activity, then the movies provided ideal material for English composition in the interest of linking students' lives in and out of the classroom. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the movies, now central to the lives of American youth, provided ready-made topics for writing assignments based in students' personal experience, which had become standard in English composition classes in the Progressive period.

Stanford University's William Chislett, Jr., for example, observed in 1914 in The English Journal, that regardless of the debates over the cultural value of various popular entertainments like Vaudeville, dime novels, and the cinema, they provided ample and rich material for composition. "What I see in the whole affair, in the current connection" he wrote, speaking of contemporary debates on cultural value that he cites, "is the immense availability of American life, in books, in the theater, on the street, in the home, and in the country for material both for children and for adult writers" (245). In its acceptance of movies and other popular forms, Chislett wrote, "written composition should be quite as flexible, quite as expressive of the individual, as oral. Both should remind children of the interest and some of the faults of their country and communities. Good composition is a reflection and a criticism of Life" (247).

Both Robert Neal and Caroline Gerrish (whose takes on film as published in The English Journal in 1915 and 1923 (respectively) I will discuss in the next chapter) saw film as offering opportunities for English composition precisely based on the relevance of film to the popular cultural scene and to the lives of their students, although Gerrish was much more explicit about the latter point than Neal. After all, as Applebee reminds us, English teachers in the Progressive period accepted film as a basis for composition long before it came to be widely regarded as a discipline-appropriate object of study in its own right (61). Thus, in the pedagogical logic of Progressivism, English became the rightful site for reflection on the movies given their role in the lives of young people. Movies were well suited for heuristic purposes for early work in composition, which, as I will discuss in the next chapter, typically consisted of reflection on personal experiences (Connors 177).

What about film study? As Dale Adams puts it, "without question the history of film study in America's secondary schools and colleges is primarily a history of film as it relates to the discipline of English" (13). So why, then, should film study have found its way into the discipline of

English?⁹ For one, narrative film, commonly regarded as fundamentally related to the drama and the novel, was often treated as a new form of literature or something close enough to it to fall into the domain of secondary and post-secondary level English studies. Moreover, as the academic discipline concerned with the study of narrative texts, English appeared to be a well suited site for the study of film as a textual practice, especially after the discipline's embracing of critical theory in the 1970s as an avenue of laying bare the workings of signification and representation (Landy 43). Before the advent at some institution of Film Studies and even Cultural or American Studies as separate, autonomous academic fields, there was no other pre-existing discipline that could be considered better suited to film study than English. This was especially the case, as Marcia Landy puts it, since film and literature inhabited a "common cultural milieu despite differing assumptions about their technologies and the different conditions of their production and reception" (42). No wonder then that the study of film should find itself

⁹ It should be noted that Neither Selby nor Adams, both of whom trace the development of film study in English address this question as both tend to take the inclusion of film study in English as a given.

"sharing intellectual space with programmes in composition, literature, and writing" (Landy 42).¹⁰

The fact that well-known novels and plays have always provided source material for films, has made the film adaptation a staple of English instruction – if not as an object of study in and of itself but as a heuristic for the study of a given adaptation's literary source. Harold Schneider, in his well-known delineation of film and literature, speaks to how fitting, even "natural," the connection between film adaptations and their sources in courses of literary study seems: "Naturally," he remarks,

plays, novels, stories which have been transformed into films provide reason for study either to make a comparison of the two versions, perhaps to determine the way the narrative works in another medium, or to use film as a teaching device for the literary work" (30).

As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3, film adaptations of literary works were quite common in the early decades of the cinema and, perhaps anticipating Schneider's logic, were

¹⁰ By "writing," Landy is presumably not being redundant by referring to composition again though by another name. Rather, she is here referring to programs in creative writing, which are typically housed in English departments.

regularly deployed as teaching aids of various sorts for literary study - as kinds of visual aids or heuristic prompts for comparison or contrast in units of study on works of literature. In fact, Adams suggests that it was the prevalence of film versions of works of classic literature that attracted teachers of English to the movies in the first place. Stuart Selby too notes that it is evident that English teachers warmed to film first as a means of enhancing the study of literary texts, as means of conveying and reinforcing "literary and moral ideas" by analysis of film versions of well known works of literature (93). Literary source material, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, provided a clear, readymade connection between English curricula and the cinema, on the one hand, and legitimated that connection, on the other.

Moreover, even very early on in its history, film was commonly regarded as a province of English (as the discipline concerned with belletristic literature) most probably due to a perceived, relationship between the motion picture and the drama or the novel as, in the words of Robert Richardson, "storytelling arts" (4).¹¹ In one of the first theoretical

¹¹ To be fair, Richardson saw the connection between film and literature as much more fundamental, rooted in the fact that films are first written on the page: "I should prefer a climate in which everything written, including of course film scripts, was legitimately considered a part of the study of literature, and it is in this broad sense that I shall argue that film is a branch of literature" (15).

works on film, The Art of the Moving Picture (1915), for example, Vachel Lindsay linked the study of film to literary study in identifying the "the departments of English, of the history of the drama, of the practice of the drama, and the history and practice of 'art' in that amazingly long list of our colleges and universities" as targets of his argument that movies should be regarded as an art form and not merely "a process of commercial manufacture" (30). For Lindsay, as for a handful of other writers and critics of his period, the motion picture was fundamentally a new narrative - essentially literary - form, related closely to both the play and the novel. Therefore, though not exclusively, it was province of those who rightfully studied and commented on such things, namely English professors. High school English teachers like Robert Neal, whose take on film I discuss in detail in the next chapter, also regarded the new medium as essentially a new literary genre insofar as they understood film as a kind of drama and, therefore, within their purview. As Dale Adams suggests, the label "photoplay" was enough for many English teachers to accept the movie as a kind of newfangled take on the drama and therefore an appropriate object of study in the English curriculum. The fact that film depended on the written scenario or screenplay also suggested that it be regarded as a kind of photographed drama, a notion that Neal well recognized. The well-known courses in "Photoplay Composition,"

first offered in 1915 at Columbia University's extension program, were housed in the English department (Polan 41). Early proponents of film appreciation in the discipline of English like Gertrude Turner and Samuel Rosenkrantz, both of whom published arguments in favor of inclusion of film in literature curricula in The English Journal in 1931, tended to assume an a priori connection between film and English. Both posited the film as the domain of the English teacher based in part on the perceived affinities between film and literature as well as on the English teacher's putative responsibility for cultivating taste and discernment through textual study.

If, like early commentators on film in English curricula, one considers film to be something like a new literary genre, or even somehow "literary" in nature, then English would certainly appear to be the logical academic discipline for the critical treatment of film as "a storytelling art" in the absence of a specially tailored academic site for film study. Initially emerging as a textual practice with no one obvious academic home, film has been theorized as related and even originating in the novel and other literary genres, and therefore an appropriate, if not natural, object of study within the discipline of English. Contrary to the theoretical musings of Allardyce Nicoll, whose 1937 differentiation of film and literature in The English Journal I will discuss in Chapter 3, many prominent critics have posited that filmic and

literary narratives function in much the same way, suggesting a close relationship between film and fiction (based on notions of shared aesthetics and qualities of reception) that ostensibly justifies film's historical inclusion in the disciplinary scope of English. As Herbert Weisenger argued in College English in 1948, "the study of the motion picture is on an aesthetic plane equal to that of the study of literature" and therefore is right at home in the English curriculum (270). Though different from literature in certain fundamental ways, Weisenger argued, film is an art form "so closely allied to [literature] as to bring the motion picture within the proper scope" of the endeavors of English teachers (271).

This close alliance to which Weisenger refers may be said to depend precisely on the dynamics of storytelling in narrative film and narrative literary genres like the novel and the drama. The narrative and representational mode of film, specifically after the advent of montage as a narrative technique in the 1910s, has been commonly linked in theoretical terms with that of the novel. Sergei Eisenstein, for example, famously posited the fundamental connection, between the classical Hollywood cinema as exemplified by D.W. Griffith and the Victorian novel – specifically the work of Dickens – based in the "cinematic technique" common to the latter, including, according to Brian McFarlane, Dickens'

"anticipation of such phenomena as frame composition and the close-up" (Eisenstein 196, McFarlane 5). Eisenstein, who rejected the notion that film is a self-contained, independent and autonomous form, understood the cinema as owing as much a debt to the Greeks and Shakespeare as to Edison. Literature, he argued, "has contributed so much to this apparently unprecedented art and is, in the first and most important place, the art of viewing" (Eisenstein 233).¹²

Timothy Corrigan notes that while the single shots and fixed camera positions of early cinema lent it initially to dramatic structures, the development of montage and camera movement in the 1910s, oriented the cinema closer toward "the mobile points of view found in the novel and especially in those nineteenth-century prototypes" (37). If, as Corrigan discusses,

the drama offers film models for conflict and spectacle, narrative fiction provides film with materials and models for two primary features of the cinema: 1) plots that develop through a character psychology that drives the action according to a

¹² Richardson, it should be noted, makes much of Eisenstein's take on the ties that bind literature and the movies and even suggests that we might understand Eisenstein's famous idea of "film sense" as "actually an expanded version of what has been called the literary imagination" (12).

temporal pattern of (frequently) cause and effect;
 and 2) a mobile variety of narrative points of view
 that organize those events from one or more
 perspectives. (37)

Other film critics and theorists have posited an essential connection between film and literature based on their affinity in terms of signification as well as a typically common narrative structure. George Bluestone, in his influential 1957 monograph on adaptation, Novels into Film, had argued that the "conceptual images" evoked by visual stimuli in film and verbal stimuli in written texts are virtually indistinguishable, suggesting a fundamental common ground in the reception of literary works and movies. More recently, Keith Cohen, has proposed that novels and films rely on common sets of codes "(perceptual, referential, symbolic") and this is what enables the study of their relationship. Like Christian Metz, Cohen suggests that verbal and visual signs are both subject to connotation so that, as Dudley Andrew puts it, "imagery functions equivalently in films and novels" (Cohen 4, Andrew 34). Because of this, Cohen, concludes,

. . . narrativity is the most solid median link
 between novel and cinema, the most pervasive
 tendency of both verbal and visual languages. In

both novel and cinema, groups of signs, be they literary or visual signs, are apprehended consecutively through time; and this consecutiveness gives rise to an unfolding structure, the diegetic whole that is never fully present in any one group yet always implied in such a group" (92).

While the putative affinities in modes of signification and reception in both film and literature do not necessarily form the basis of a convincing argument for film's logical place within English studies, that movies in the classical Hollywood style lend themselves to such textual analysis certainly suggests that the historical, logical pairing of film and English is justifiable at least on theoretical, methodological grounds.

Looking Ahead

In this dissertation as a whole, I am concerned with the various dimensions of the early integration of film into English curricula (both literature and composition) on the secondary and post-secondary levels from the early 1910s through the decline of the film appreciation movement in the early 1940s. I am likewise concerned with contemporary professional and popular discourses around film and pedagogy

that reflected, animated, and problematized classroom practice during this period. I am, in other words, interested here in how teachers actually deployed film in the service of literature or composition instruction as well as in the broader conversations within professional circles and the culture at large which lent their practice a rich and complex context.

In the chapters that follow, I will consider the cultural and professional climates within which early adopters of film for pedagogical purposes began to incorporate the movies in the teaching of both composition and literary study. I will look closely at a number of important and representative approaches to teaching English with the movies and will foreground some of their most salient and significant concerns, assumptions and conceits. In Chapter 2, I will present a reception history of film in education in the 1910s and carefully consider a handful of early discussions on integrating film into the teaching of writing. In Chapter 3, I will look closely at the professional discourses of the 1920s and 1930s on the relationship of film and literature and the working notions of both media implicit in contemporary approaches to teaching the analysis of literary texts, on the one hand, and film appreciation on the other. In the final chapter, I will step back and look at a social and political dimension of the film education and appreciation movements. I

will investigate how proponents of film appreciation and related pedagogical initiatives, especially in the wake of the film industry's efforts to reach out to educators starting in the early 1920s, conceived of the potential impact of their work not only the lives of their students, but on the culture at large and the film industry as a whole.

Once again, I begin with composition.

Chapter 2: Making the Devil Useful: Popular Films, Educators, and Composition in the Silent Era

Introduction

As I noted in the last chapter, “almost no one” has been writing about teaching English with the movies since the 1910s. I am, of course, being facetious in so far as “almost no one” is actually a small, but ultimately significant group of educators, especially in the earliest decades of the last century. Prior to 1929 only a small handful of articles and opinion pieces on some aspect of the instructional uses of films in English courses appeared in professional publications. Between 1913 and 1929, six of these – with the last appearing in 1922 – were published in The English Journal, apparently the only forum for arguments concerning English and the movies for several decades. These few articles and brief opinion pieces, several of which serve as anchors for the discussion in this chapter, provide a way into heretofore unexplored strands of a larger, ongoing conversation regarding the relationship between education and mass culture and, more specifically, between the cinema and secondary and post-secondary level curricula which took shape in education journals, professional meetings and the popular

press in the first two decades of the 20th century. Each of these six articles is concerned, in one way or another, with the relationship between students' consumption of popular films and received ideas about what they ought to be learning in the English classroom – between, in other words, students' unauthorized, lay literacies and those sanctioned by the school. In exploring ways to bridge what students already know, in this case the movies, with what they ought to learn in school, these early approaches to film-based writing instruction prefigure the cultural studies approaches described above. Although I will explore this connection in greater detail elsewhere, it is fitting to point out here that, like cultural studies pedagogies discussed in the previous chapter, these early considerations of integrating movies into the English curriculum concern themselves in varying ways with what it means to invoke students' lay literacies in fostering particular academic competencies. This chapter, then, aims to contextualize these early discourses on the usefulness of film in pedagogical practice within the broader impact of the cinema on the culture at large. In doing so, it presents a reception history of film in education and in English instruction prior to the film appreciation movement of the 1930s.

Point of Departure: The National Education Association and the Movies, 1914

At the annual meeting of the National Education Association (NEA) in January of 1914, Alfred Saunders of the Colonial Picture Corporation delivered an address entitled "Motion Pictures as an Aid to Education." Saunders, the manager of the Education Department at Colonial, had come before the NEA, at the time the largest and most influential organization of educators in America, to promote the educational value of Colonial's product. The minimal costs of its films and projection equipment, he argued, could be recouped, if schools screened the films they bought before a paying audience of children and their parents after school hours. Saunders, according to education historian Joel Spring, was among the first in his industry to address a professional organization of educators beginning in the early teens. That Saunders had come to speak to the NEA (or that Colonial, like other studios, had an Education Department) in the first place is significant not only in that his address was part of a collective push on the part of the film industry to expand the film market to schools, but also because it contributed to a larger, crucial public relations effort. Saunders came before the NEA primarily to sell films and projection equipment, but his visit served another purpose as

well: in reaching out to educators, who were largely ambivalent about the cultural significance and educational value of the cinema, motion picture producers and distributors hoped to enlist teachers and school administrators in their industry's struggle for legitimacy as well as in a public relations campaign against government censorship of film content (Morey 5).

As Ann Morey argues in her Hollywood Outsiders, film studios and distributors sought to maintain lasting relationships with the NEA as well as with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) as they worked toward cultural legitimacy through meaningful affiliations with educational, civic and religious organizations; these were the same sources of legitimacy whose authority the film industry was said to threaten and, not coincidentally, the loci of local film censorship efforts (5). Saunders' visit, then, served to help lay the groundwork for just this sort of affiliation that would, after the founding of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1921, evolve into a mutually beneficial relationship. For educators, this meant not only direct financial support, but also a voice in cultural production by way of input in the development of films for classroom use, the development of study guides for literary adaptations, and a consulting role in the industry's self-regulation of film content. As Ann

Morey argues, such direct mediation between the moviegoing public and the film industry afforded old institutions like schools a claim on new cultural authority based in the espousal of progress and innovation rather than in the steadfast traditionalism of Victorianism (5). According to Morey, educators, clerics, and other reformers increasingly took advantage of their relationships with the film industry in their appeals to the masses and engaged in "a certain amount of institutional self-commodification in which clerics and educators experimented with the narrative and sales techniques that were so successful in commercial films" (5). Conversely, the movie industry benefited financially through the sales of classroom films and, by way of the increasing popularity of film appreciation classes on the elementary and secondary levels, a ready-made audience for particular kinds of commercial films (Spring 55). In addition, well-cultivated and productive affiliations with guardians of traditional values such as educators and clerics stood as a powerful good-faith argument for studios' capability to regulate film content without federal intervention. Such alliances also played an important role in public relation efforts by attesting to the industry's supposed interest in the public good rather than just in the bottom line.

Saunders' presentation before the NEA, as noted above, was, at bottom, little more than a sales pitch. It did,

however, prompt a lively discussion - one whose themes were at the center of much contemporary debate about the cultural impact and educational significance of the cinema. Several in the audience worried that schools were losing the struggle over the minds of young people to the movies. "In less than twenty years," said Peter Olesen, a school superintendent from Minnesota, "the motion picture business has secured a hold on the minds of people which is almost equal to that of the school and the daily press" (NEA 746). The cinema had quickly developed into a ubiquitous and potent ideological apparatus; one so potent, in fact, that schools could hardly compete with the movies for children's attention. This was, according to Olesen, due to the film medium's capacity for stimulating the imagination:

I believe that one reason why it is hard to interest some children in school today is that their minds have been filled and their imagination thrilled with too vivid motion pictures, and, when these children come to school, they are disappointed because the teacher cannot make the subject as interesting as a motion-picture show. (746)

Olesen and others at the NEA saw the cinema as a significant threat to formal schooling as the predominant site of what Spring has termed "ideological management," the effort toward

social control through the active regulation of the dissemination of ideas (2). Spring posits public schools as "the first mass medium designed to reach a generation" since, he argues, in the 19th Century, government operated schools were increasingly counted on by various political interests to function as a mechanism for assuring the dissemination of ideology to large segments of the population. In its wild popularity and capacity to reach a greater portion of the population than public schools, the cinema, Spring argues, emerged as the first real challenge to schools' status as the predominant mass medium for the distribution of knowledge and ideas (2). This is what worried the members of the NEA, especially since, as they saw it, the distracting, seductive cheap thrills and depictions of questionable or loose morals provided by typical commercial films did more to undermine formal education than anything else. Robin Gallagher suggests that the comments of Olesen and others at the NEA point to two of the education audience's most pressing concerns regarding the movies: that "uncensored movies would sidetrack the public schools' moral mission in education - the best hope for democracy, and not incidentally, educators' value to society" and that "teachers simply could not stage a lesson the way Hollywood could" (5). "In the competition between the movie industry and the educator for curricular power," Gallagher adds, "teachers did not stand a chance" (5).

Earlier in 1914, a high school teacher from Hartford Connecticut named Alfred M. Hitchcock evocatively described what it was educators were up against in a paper he read before the New England Association of Teachers of English (NEAT) and later published in The English Journal.¹³ According to Hitchcock, who nicely illustrates the anxiety of educators regarding the influence of the movies, the "average" moving picture "such as many of our boys and girls feast on twice, three times a week," presents to the impressionable mind such varied spectacles as:

A runaway express train; a house-fly on the face of a sick baby; a safe-breaker making his get-away; a jolly business man drinking thirty-two cocktails in comic succession; a missionary performing the last sad rites; a brave Indian, the limp heroine in his arms, baffling the villain pursuer by leaping into the ocean from a cliff as high as the steeple of the Park Street church; a waiter tumbling downstairs and

¹³ This Alfred Hitchcock is unrelated to the famed director. His paper was entitled "The Relation of the Picture Play to Literature" and was one of two papers on movies and pedagogy delivered at the December, 1914 meeting of the New England Association of Teachers of English to be published in The English Journal in 1915. The other was Caroline M. Gerrish's "Relation of Moving Pictures to English Composition." Hitchcock's article appeared in the May while Gerrish's was published in the April issue. I will discuss both of these articles in detail later in the chapter.

smashing his tray of cheap crockery; a chambermaid smoking one of her master's Havanas (awfully funny); a sleeping hobo tied to the rear axle of a touring car and dragged through the street; views of the Rhine country seen from a flying machine; a fake battle; a rosebud bursting into bloom; a gentleman in a prince Albert coat laying the cornerstone of a Y.M.C.A. building; a screaming farce in which two quarreling servants trip and fall into a bed of fresh mortar; a long moral story picturing the miseries of the drink habit, with fascinating views of a fashionable gambling hell [sic], the boudoir of a painted lady, a tenderloin barroom, a squalid room where a murder takes place, and the parlor of a mansion where the patient but unattractive heroine at last sinks into the arms of the prodigal. (297)

Indeed, how could teachers compete?

The Threat of the Film Medium the Question of Spectatorship

Yet the problem was much more complex than a simple matter of what it was that children and young adults saw when they went to the movies. For Peter Olesen and his colleagues at the NEA, it was as much a matter of how they saw as what

they saw; the problem of content was compounded by the way in which viewers, by the very nature of the medium, experienced motion pictures. This made the movies potentially detrimental to the proper education and socialization of children - to the right development of their intellect, morality and character. The film medium's tremendous capacity for evil, as was widely held, lay both in its unprecedented capacity to command the attention of the spectator and to stimulate powerful psychic and emotional response. Olesen's point regarding the immersive character of movie spectatorship at the 1914 meeting was a familiar one; Joseph Fulk, a Superintendent of Schools from Nebraska, had made much the same argument at the NEA's annual meeting in 1912, the first at which participants addressed the question of the cinema's impact on education.¹⁴ Reporting the results of his survey of Nebraska school principals' impressions of children's attendance of motion picture shows (one of the earliest empirical studies of moviegoing on

¹⁴ For the purposes of this discussion, I will rely on Judith Mayne's useful definition of "spectatorship" as, at once, the act of watching a film and a relation between the empirical viewer and the screen which continues after the movie ends. More than the phenomenological processes of reception, film spectatorship is also "the ways one takes pleasure in the experience, or not; the means by which watching movies becomes a passion, or a leisure-time activity like any other. Spectatorship refers to how film-going and the consumption of movies and their myths are symbolic activities, culturally significant events" (1). For Mayne, spectatorship involves "acts of looking and hearing inasmuch as the patterns of everyday life are dramatized, foregrounded, displaced or otherwise inflected by the cinema" (31).

record), Fulk argued that the intense emotional engagement fiction films elicit in children was ultimately detrimental to their moral development:

This constant playing upon the emotions of the child and adolescent tends to overexcite, and to dull the finer feelings, and to prevent the normal development of the emotional life. The overexcitement creates an ever-increasing desire for something that stirs and thrills. Whatever holds attention determines action. This growing desire for emotional excitement is apt to lead children, and adolescents especially, away from right ideals and morality. Here lies the greatest moral danger of the motion picture drama. (Fulk 458)

As Fulk had it, regular cinema attendance had a significant bearing on children's social behavior because the phenomenology of reception, as he characterized it, was such that the motion picture's constant stimulation of intense emotional response produced in young moviegoers an overblown appetite for excitement, which they would likely seek to satisfy through all manner of illicit acts. Representations sexual behavior - of "sacred and private experiences" - for example, could inspire impressionable, unchaperoned boys and

girls to "too much familiarity," a danger exacerbated by the fact that movies were typically screened in darkened theaters. Since supervision and surveillance are difficult in the dark, "the possibilities for evil," as Fulk put it, were therefore that much more immediate (458).

Fulk's analysis of movie psychology was, in essence, an elementary version of what would emerge as the predominant working theory of film spectatorship. Fulk's report characterized the viewing subject as a passive receptor of moving images who, rapt in the act of viewing, was completely powerless to mediate the psychological effects of a given film or to influence the nature of its reception, which was dictated entirely by the film's content. In this sense, his report was among the earliest articulations of what would later be labeled, if derisively, the "hypodermic syringe" model of media reception which, now long outdated, posits the act of spectatorship as entirely passive - as, effectively, submission to an injection of predetermined ideas or desires, as Fulk would have it (Butsch 27; Jowett, "From Entertainment" 12).

All in all, Fulk's take on the effects of moviegoing on children was in line with the most serious and influential thinking on the subject by Progressive era social scientists to whom reformers and religious leaders looked for "scientific" bases for the necessity of carefully regulated

censorship of objectionable film content. In his pioneering 1915 study of juvenile delinquency, The Individual Delinquent, Sociologist William Healy, for example, offered "empirical evidence" of the correlation between undesirable behavior and cinema attendance by way several case studies of children who, in his view, had been influenced to commit criminal acts by what they had seen at the movies. Healy explained the connection between criminality and the movies by pointing, as Fulk had done, to the power with which moving images appear to the consciousness, which is not entirely passive but eminently impressionable. "The strength of the powers of visualization," Healy wrote, "is to be deeply reckoned with when considering the springs of criminality. . . . It is the mental representation of some sort of pictures of himself or others in the criminal act that leads the delinquent onward in his path" (308). Healy too, like many others, argued that the physical circumstances of moviegoing contributed to the pernicious influence of the movies since the dark exhibition hall provided ample opportunities for illicit sexual behavior: "Under the cover of dimness evil communications readily pass and bad habits are taught. Moving picture theaters are favorite places for the teaching of homosexual practices" (307).

Fulk's explanation of how movies work on the mind was, most notably, a rudimentary forerunner to that famously

offered by Harvard philosopher Hugo Münsterberg in his groundbreaking The Photoplay: A Psychological Study published a just few years later. A sophisticated and nuanced explication of the mental processes involved in spectatorship, Münsterberg's influential study proposed a theory of film that anticipates the psychoanalytical apparatus theory of Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry in its approach to the cinematic apparatus as analogous to human consciousness. Münsterberg argued that film was a uniquely powerful pedagogical medium, whether for good or for ill, because it followed the "laws of the mind" and so accurately simulated its structures (Langdale 18). Because movies presented visual information in much the same way as it is manifest to consciousness, hardly any psychic effort was required to process filmic stimuli. The moviegoer, rendered unusually impressionable and open to suggestion for this reason, assimilated and responded to the projected images as though to actual lived experience. The psychological effects were essentially the same. Because of this, the very nature of film spectatorship had serious social implications. "[T]he intensity with which [photoplays] take hold of the audience," Münsterberg wrote, "cannot remain without strong social effects" (154). For the film viewer, he argued, the associations of the image on the screen with its referent

become as vivid as realities, because the mind is so completely given up to the moving pictures. . . .

[It] is evident that such a penetrating influence must be fraught with dangers. The more vividly the impressions force themselves on the mind, the more easily they become starting points for imitation and other motor responses. The sight of crime and vice may force itself on the consciousness with disastrous results. The normal resistance breaks down and the moral balance, which would have been kept under the habitual stimuli of the narrow routine life, may be lost under the pressure of the realistic suggestions. (154)

Movies, for Münsterberg, as for Healy and Fulk, are potentially dangerous, then, because of the very nature of engagement they engender.

This common, though variously articulated, notion that the danger of the cinema is rooted in the very nature of film spectatorship also animated the legal foundation for state censorship of film content, the Mutual v. Ohio decision through which the Supreme Court denied movies First Amendment protection in 1915. In the majority opinion, which argued that film exhibition is business and not free speech, Justice Joseph McKenna noted that motion pictures "are mere

representations of events, of ideas and sentiments published and known, vivid, useful and entertaining no doubt, but, as we have said, capable of evil, having power for it, the greater because of their attractiveness and manner of exhibition"

(Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio).

According to McKenna, whatever the film medium's potential as an instrument of education may be, its formidable effect on the imaginations of impressionable viewers necessitated careful censorship of objectionable film content. In defense of Ohio's 1913 censorship law, he argued that

however missionary of opinion films are or may become, however educational or entertaining, there is no impediment to their value or effect in the Ohio statute. But they may be used for evil, and against that possibility the statute was enacted. Their power of amusement and, it may be, education, the audiences they assemble, not of women alone nor of men alone, but together, not of adults only, but of children, make them the more insidious in corruption by a pretense of worthy purpose or if they should degenerate from worthy purpose" (Mutual v. Ohio)

According to the court, the very same quality of the film medium that made it ostensibly useful to educators and social reformers, made film exhibition more than just a matter of expression and justified state censorship boards' right to censor film content they deemed pernicious.

Since in 1914, however, the film industry in the United States and its output were not regulated in any standardized, systematized way and since the nature and extent of film censorship was the subject of heated public debate, the contours of the cinema's supposed role as agent of ideology and public morality were not only as yet undefined, but were, in a sense, up for grabs. Turning towards the question of film content, Olesen argued, like others in attendance at the NEA annual meeting of 1914, that in working to counter the tremendous influence of commercial motion pictures on the imaginations and behavior of their charges, educators could fight fire with fire and enlist the movies for educational purpose quite effectively. Building on Olesen's argument, David Snedden, Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts, held that this was an especially good idea since movies facilitated learning by virtue of the concrete way in which they presented their subject material. The increasingly poor quality of contemporary commercial films, however, posed a problem for educators, he suggested: due largely to the "cheapening and vulgarization of the motion picture," Snedden

argued, "schools and other educational agencies have been loath to attach to it the importance which it deserves" (NEA 746).

A Progressive Reclamation of the Cinema

Like Snedden, others expressed a general distaste for standard commercial film product. Yet, in recognizing the enormous pedagogical potential of the motion picture so often occluded by typical fare, the comments of those in attendance reflected the Progressive spirit of their time. Much like their urban Progressive reformer contemporaries who worked to use the popularity of urban entertainments such as the movies to "reorient the leisure realm as a place to restore American ideals in a pure form," as Lary May argues in Screening Out the Past, Snedden and his colleagues at the NEA held that production and exhibition of motion pictures could be effectively reoriented to educational purposes (52). As Gregory Black points out, Progressives recognized that if movies could "preach positive values, their potential to educate, to play a role in socializing the citizenry was unlimited" (9). If movies could function as lessons in morality, citizenship and community, they could very well be enlisted as an ally in the Progressive struggle to "protect the masses against the combined forces of poverty, corruption

and injustice" (9). Just like Chicago's Jane Addams, perhaps the most well known and influential Progressive reformer, who a few years earlier had remarked that what was good about the cinema was "too splendid at rock bottom to allow the little evil to control and destroy it," Snedden and his colleagues were unwilling to write the movies off as only a hopelessly pernicious influence on children's behavior (qtd in L. May 53). Münsterberg too had felt the same way, understanding that his theory of film reception implied the movie's great pedagogic potentialities for good as much as for ill. While the dangers of the cinema were undeniable, social reformers, he argued in The Photoplay, ought to consider the "tremendous influences for good which may be exerted by the moving picture" (155). Because of the high degree of suggestibility of movie audiences, he went on with true Progressivist gusto, "any wholesome influence emanating from the photoplay must have an incomparable power for the remolding and upbuilding of the national soul" (155).

Snedden, Olesen and others at the 1914 meeting of the NEA shared with urban Progressives the sentiment that "film's very power for evil might be used for good," as May succinctly puts it (52). They recognized that the unique power of the film medium to completely engage young audiences' attention and to so forcefully manipulate their emotions and influence their behavior attested to its potential effectiveness and utility

as an instructional tool (52). One salvo in a 1914 debate over film censorship in the pages of the Progressive magazine The Outlook echoed this sentiment regarding the pedagogical character of the cinema in declaring that "the very potency of the motion picture for degrading taste and morals is the measure of its power for enlightenment and education" ("White Slave Films" 414). This was why, Snedden argued, proposing exactly the sort of involvement the industry would later go out of its way to court, educators would do well to exert pressure on the film industry which would no doubt respond with a greater volume of films featuring content suitable for instructional purposes. Agreeing with him, another Nebraska superintendent of schools declared that, with the NEA's influence, the motion picture could quickly become indispensable to educators: "We all believe that encouragement by this body of educators will result in motion pictures being made available for every department of school work." "Who can tell," he went on, "in how short a time motion pictures will be as great an accessory to education as is the printed text?" (NEA 747).

As Great an Accessory: Movies in the English Class

Robert Neal, an aspiring screenwriter and a teacher of composition at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, expressed similar enthusiasm over the pedagogical potential of the motion picture in the December 1913 issue of The English Journal, published one month prior to Saunders' presentation at the NEA's January 1914 meeting. In an opinion piece entitled "Making the Devil Useful," Neal argued that commercial films could be effective heuristics for generating student writing in composition courses. Like much of the conversation in response to Saunders' talk at the NEA, Neal's arguments spoke to the progressive attitude, noted above, that the cinema was not necessarily and universally a pernicious cultural phenomenon and could indeed prove as effective in the service of education as it had been in debasing the morals and tastes of American youth. At the start of his piece, Neal, agreeing with Olesen's comments at NEA, suggested that commercial films need not pose a problem for educators since their potentially harmful influence could be tempered by employing them for educational purposes. One way to "fight the moving-picture devil," he held, was to use the movies to teach print literacy. After all, the movies weren't going to go away (and they weren't all bad either) so educators would do well to figure out how to live with them. "Mind," Neal wrote,

the moving-picture is not an invention of the devil. There is a great deal in it, at the present stage of its development, that we have to think of with all the optimistic faith summonable in order not to regard it as excessively satanic. But that part is inevitable, and undoubtedly is being rapidly lessened, while at the same time the processes of positive improvement go on more and more effectively. Even were the 'movies' as bad as they are lithographed in some of their lurid 'one, two, and three sheets, released next Tuesday,' we should have to put up with them. They are here to stay and we shall have to make the best of them." (658)

"And their best is good," he went on, perhaps defending his avocation as a screenwriter. "But that is not the point. The point of my comment is that one way to make the best of them is use them in connection with composition work" (658).

In his seminal history of English education in America, Arthur Applebee invokes Neal's article in suggesting that teachers of English in the mid 1910s were largely ambivalent about the movies and were reluctant to employ them in any instructional capacity other than aids for composition, as Neal suggested they might be best used. Discussing the growing popularity of visual aids such as photographs, dioramas, plot

outlines, and picture postcards as aids to literary study during the period, Applebee notes that teachers of English became interested in silent films only after the appearance of film versions of classic literary texts.¹⁵ Discussions of practical uses of visual aids for literary instruction in The English Journal, Applebee notes, shied away from the idea that the movies themselves were worth considering as texts.

"Nobody," Applebee writes, "suggested film as a legitimate field of study - most considered it decidedly illegitimate" (61). "[B]ut," he adds echoing Neal's language, "it could be used for plot analysis or for work in composition" (61).

Although a number of educators, critics and other intellectuals of the time, most notably Münsterberg, Vachel Lindsay, William Morgan Hannon, and Brander Matthews, had advocated the study of films based on their artistic merit, most English teachers, Applebee suggests, still regarded the movies as vulgar, mass-produced entertainment and were content to employ them only as fodder for student writing assignments in composition courses (Applebee 62). Albeit in a footnote,

¹⁵ In a footnote, Applebee identifies only two early examples of such literary adaptations: an obscure film version of James Russell Lowell's "The Vision of Sir Launfal" and the 1910 version of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of Seven Gables, written and directed by J. Searle Dawley (75n). Film adaptations of classic literary works were very common in the 1910s, however. According to the Internet Movie Database, between 1900 and 1915, at least 70 adaptations of various Shakespeare plays were produced with the vast majority appearing after 1908.

Applebee takes Neal's position regarding the instructional use of movies - one which subordinates literary analysis of films to using them as motivation for writing assignments - as implicitly typical.

Dale Talmage Adams, to date the only other writer besides myself to consider Neal's article in any kind of detail, suggests that it is "particularly interesting, not for its prophetic insight, as one might imagine, but for its illustration of an attitude of condescending acquiescence that is still indicative of the attitude of many English teachers today" (30, emphasis mine). As evidence, Adams offers Neal's title, "Making the Devil Useful," and opening declaration: "They [the movies] are here to stay and we shall have to make the best of them" (Neal 658, Adams 30). Yet even a cursory look at Neal's take on the movies in the English classroom reveals that there is little about it that is condescending. Rather than "acquiesce" to the growing popularity of the movies, Neal, a screenwriter himself, appears to welcome the opportunity to work with films in the official, authorized context of the classroom - his tone is more exuberant than it is acquiescent. Moreover, Adams takes Neal's recurring and apparently tongue-in-cheek invocations of "moving-picture devil" indicative of condescension toward his subject. In doing so, Adams attributes a history to an attitude towards popular culture he observes in the academy during the 1970s.

I suggest, however, that Neal's frequent, if sometimes indirect, recognition of the supposed evil of the movies, might be better understood as a kind of play on or a sardonic nod to the Manichean rhetoric typical of a good deal of the contemporary public debate over film censorship and the cinema's overall impact on the culture, particularly on the behavior of children. Thoroughly pervasive in the late 1900s to well into the 1930s, such rhetoric sensationally characterized the movies as evil and as the work of devil, in effect granting the pro-censorship the work of Progressive reformers and, especially, religious leaders a higher imperative. This rhetoric even animated even the Mutual v Ohio decision in which Justice McKenna repeatedly referred to the movies' potential for "evil." Neal's playful and quasi-dismissive uses of this familiar rhetoric at the start of his article function as an indirect acknowledgement of its ubiquity and force.

Neal's actual position on film in the English classroom, simply enough, is that a formal analysis of a "good" film, can be used effectively to generate student writing and that, more specifically, composition instructors would do well to build writing assignments around plot analysis. For Neal, a fiction-film is an effective heuristic for the study and explanation of narrative principles, especially of the plot, because the causal relationships between the events composing

the plot of a typical film are especially transparent by virtue of the linear causality conventional to the film form. "Clear, convincing motivation is indispensable to the moving-picture story," he wrote, "and the filmed story presents it with a directness and (if the word be not misinterpreted) bareness that cannot be found elsewhere. For this reason, study of the plotting that makes the good filmed story can be made wonderfully illuminating" (658). The composition teacher who wishes to employ the movies as a basis for the exploration of plotting might, according to Neal, begin by eliciting a description of the plot and move to a detailed study of the motivation behind the events in the story. This, he adds, is rather easy to do because such motivation is readily accessible in most contemporary narrative films. Such analysis of plotting can also be quite fruitful insofar as close attention to the motivation of individual incidents in the story the movie tells will inevitably lead to keen insights regarding the overall sense of causality underlying a given plot. Having paid careful attention to motivation, students should then be asked to construct their own film scenarios, keeping in mind, as a structuring principle, the necessity for one action to proceed from the last and lead logically to the next. Script writing, Neal argues, is particularly effective in encouraging attention to an underlying causality - to the necessity of supplying a cause for every effect. "One comes

closer," he writes, "to the actual problems of providing an adequate, clear cause for every effect than he does in any other sort of writing, unless it be sometimes in play-writing and, if anything, the photo-play requires a clearer conception in detail of this relationship than does ordinary dramatic composition" (659).

Although Neal does not go on to explain why this is the case, positing no further distinction between writing for stage and for screen, his assertion that the film scenario demands a more acute sort of attention to causal relationships than does the stage play might be read as an acknowledgement of what Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg much later refer to as the "primarily narrative," rather than dramatic character of film form (281). In The Nature of Narrative, Scholes and Kellogg argue that what distinguishes narrative works from dramatic ones is that the former are characterized by "the presence of a story and a story-teller" while the latter present a story "without a story-teller" (4). According to Scholes and Kellogg, in the drama, the characters act out the action directly (4). In light of this distinction, what sets the film apart from the play is that a form of narration is always already built into the film by virtue of the fact that the gaze of the spectator is mediated by the controlled point of view of the camera, editing, and various non-diegetic elements - because, in other words, the story is in part told

through devices unique to the medium (281). The fiction film, as Kristin Thompson notes, is "saturated with narrative" because of the fundamental narrational function of the technical and stylistic elements that constitute the cinematic modes of narration and address that were reaching full development right around the time Neal's comments appeared in The English Journal (Bordwell et al 175). Just a few years before the publication of Neal's article in 1913, cinematic technique played virtually no narrational role in commercial fiction films, which were often little more than filmed plays shot with a fixed camera in a single take (Bordwell et al 174). By the mid 1910s, camera movement, framing, acting, staging, and summary intertitles were increasingly counted on to perform specific functions in the conveyance of narrative through purposeful manipulation of audience attention (Bordwell et al 174, Hansen 25). Tom Gunning characterizes this shift as one from "cinema of attractions" - that is, a mode of film practice "interested in the display of curiosities" - to a cinema of "narrative integration" in which film form is put in service of the development of characters and a coherent narrative (6). This transformation, which Gunning identifies as occurring in films around 1908, derives from a gradual reorientation of film style towards a focus on telling a story and developing its characters. By this time, suggests Thompson, "a narrative is not something to be placed

in front of an audience, but something to be 'given' or 'told.' A coherent narration must hold the film together - a narration not usually presented by an explicit narrator, but implicit in a specific, systematic combination of film devices" (Bordwell et al, 175). This narrational function of film devices is a characteristic of what film historians have called the "classical" mode of film practice - a paradigm of filmmaking attributed to complex intertwining of significant technical and stylistic innovations as well as rapid, extensive changes in the way films were produced, distributed and exhibited (Bordwell et al, 3, Hansen 136).¹⁶

Processes of Positive Improvement and the Progressive English Teacher

¹⁶ Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson offer the, by far, most comprehensive take on the development of the classical mode of filmmaking in their The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960. Their overall argument is based in the notion that "the relations of film style and mode of production are . . . reciprocal and mutually reinforcing" (xiv). They posit Hollywood filmmaking between, roughly, 1917 and 1960, as a "unified mode of film practice." They thus argue that this unified mode (the classical mode, as it were) is a "coherent system whereby aesthetic norms and the mode of film production reinforced one another" (xiv). For a discussion of this formulation of the classical mode as it pertains to spectatorship and audience formation, see the second chapter of Miriam Hansen's Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film.

We can assume that by "processes of positive improvement" Neal is referring to the changes in film practice we now attribute to the development of the classical Hollywood style in the 1900s and the 1910s. Regardless, with these gradual changes to what Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery call the "generative mechanisms" of cinema including practices of production, distribution and exhibition, movies were changing as were movie audiences, which were growing rapidly and become ever more diverse (15). By 1911, daily movie attendance in America had reached approximately 5 million with about 12,000 screening venues (Meritt 63). In 1914, the total number of venues had risen to 18,000 and total daily attendance had reached 7 million with daily admissions exceeding \$300 million (Meritt 63, Czitrom 42). The increasingly broader appeal of the movies accounted in part for the rapid growth in moviegoing in this period. Early film audiences were composed primarily of immigrants and the working class as the middle class was still largely ambivalent about the movies, put off by the crowded and frequently unsanitary conditions of exhibition halls, unkempt, rowdy, often non-English speaking audiences and the frequently sensational content of commercial films (Ross Working Class, 30; Rosenzweig 38). Having actively courted middle-class audiences for almost a decade (since about 1908), by 1914 film producers' and distributors' efforts to appeal to the educated and well-to-do had become

increasingly aggressive and, not coincidentally, successful (Sklar 42, 46). In the early 1910s, the industry looked to number of innovations in production, exhibition and marketing, all now associated with the shift to the classical mode of film practice, to align itself with middle class taste and values and draw more affluent, better educated Americans to the movies. The development of a codified narrative grammar, the advent of the feature film with its longer running time and sophisticated narrative structure, the increased production of features based on classic works of literature, increasing involvement of personnel from the "legitimate" theater, the exhibition of films separate from other forms of entertainment, the construction of luxurious new "movie palaces," and, as Peter Decherney suggests, even the adoption of the term "photoplay," all played a significant role in attracting more affluent, better educated audiences and significantly increasing overall movie attendance by 1920 (Ross Working Class xxiii; Sklar 45, Decherney 444).¹⁷

¹⁷ In 1920, almost one half of the entire US population attended at least one movie in one of more than 1500 dedicated movie theaters and 22,000 churches, schools, union halls and other locations where movies were screened (Ross 3). The average weekly attendance in 1922 was 40 million. By 1930, weekly admission figures were close to one hundred percent of the population (Ross 3, Merrit 63). For attendance figures see also US dept. of Commerce, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, 2 vols. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975. I, 400.

The growing interest of English teachers like Neal and his colleagues in the potential pedagogical use of commercial films coincided, not surprisingly, with the gradual alignment of movies to middle-class sensibilities. The recognition of the increasing centrality of the movies to the lives of children and young adults concomitant with the rapid increase in movie attendance was also, however, a significant factor in some English teachers' attention to not just the ostensible effects of moviegoing, but also to the role movies might play in the classroom. Daniel Czitrom, citing a number of surveys of movie attendance in 1914, notes that, for example, 69 percent of boys and 55 percent of girls in grades 5 through 8 in Ipswich, Massachusetts (population 6,000) went to the movies at least once a week (42). Of the 179 high-school students in Ipswich, 81 percent went to the movies once or more per week (42). Likewise, in Springfield, Illinois, a much larger town of 51,678 in 1914, almost 95 percent (813 of 857) of high school students regularly attended moving picture shows. Of these, forty-one percent of the boys and 30 percent of the girls attended at least seven times a month, and 59 percent of boys and 53 percent of the girls went to the movies four or more times per month (42). What, then, could the fact that the majority of children in American primary and secondary schools were frequent moviegoers mean to curricular

design and to the learning goals already animating the American curriculum?

In a paper she delivered before the New England Association of Teachers of English in December of 1914 (and which would appear in The English Journal the following year), Carolyn M. Gerrish of the Girls Latin School in Boston remarked that "[t]he moving picture has become an integral part of the experience of practically every boy and girl of high-school age" (226). Given this, she asked, "How can the teacher of English composition utilize this great instrument for cultural ends?" (226). If, put another way, a purpose of composition instruction was to cultivate in young people a particular cultural sensibility, how might children's appetite for and familiarity with the movies serve the writing teacher in developing the competencies and habits of mind characteristic of that sensibility? The answer, for Gerrish, lay in the apparent versatility of the motion picture as a learning tool and the familiarity with the movies students already bring with them to the classroom. Gerrish maintains throughout that movies, by virtue of properties unique to the film medium, are inherently amenable to rhetoric instruction. She proposes a number of ways in which they might be integrated into a composition curriculum: "Obviously," she writes, "moving pictures offer great opportunities: 1) as the source of material for the content of composition; 2) as a

means of practice in the application of the principles and theories of composition; 3) as a medium for the mental training on which success in English composition depends" (226). She goes on to develop each of these points in detail, variously supporting her arguments with personal observation and student experiences. Gerrish begins by echoing Neal in asserting that the movies are a valuable source for subject matter for student writing as they offer possibilities for close examination of "narration, description, and exposition" (226).

Unlike Neal, however, Gerrish bases her arguments regarding movies as source material in the material circumstances of her students' lives. Like a good Progressive, Gerrish notes that moving picture shows can make a variety of knowledge and experience available to children with limited means. Children from well-to-do households, "pervaded with the atmosphere of culture and the doing of things that count in community life," are not dependent "for material upon the world artificially created by the cinematograph"; children from more affluent homes, in other words, have plenty to write about without the movies (226). This is not the case, Gerrish points out, for the many more underprivileged children:

To children of opposite circumstance, however, whose horizon is bounded by the city street, whose experience

of life is narrowed to the maintenance of a sordid existence in a squalid tenement district, the moving picture presents a vision of fact and fancy that enriches thought and stimulates imagination. (226)

This was a familiar point. Jane Addams had made essentially the same argument regarding the role of movies in the lives of children of varying backgrounds in the famous "House of Dreams" chapter of The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets in 1909. The motion picture drama, Addams wrote,

provides a transition between the romantic conceptions which [young people] vainly struggle to keep intact and life's cruelties and trivialities which they refuse to admit. A child whose imagination has been cultivated is able to do this for himself through reading and reverie, but for the overworked city youth of meager education, perhaps nothing but the theater is able to perform this important office. (75)

Gerrish, however, is much less dour about this function of the movies than was Addams who, as Czitrom notes, had remained ambivalent about the social implications of motion picture shows. While Addams later questions the overall impact of this particular function of the cinema on the moral development of children in light of the sordid content of the most popular

commercial films, Gerrish is less immediately concerned with what children see at the movies than she is with what they might be able to do with it in instructional contexts.¹⁸ Not only do movies offer subject matter for written composition, Gerrish holds, but the nature of the medium and the imaginative engagement it fosters is such that the narrative content of motion pictures is particularly accessible to young moviegoers who are that much more inclined to write about it if so charged. In support, Gerrish offers the written work of a boy "of very ordinary ability and very little background" who submitted "narrative after narrative so well developed as to detail and so graphic in expression as to subject him to suspicion of plagiarism in spite of not infrequent faulty spelling and of constant pernicious punctuation" (226). The boy's eager explanation when confronted, writes Gerrish, was "[o]h, yes, it is my own work. I saw it in the moving pictures, but I wrote it up myself" (227). In developing this

¹⁸ Addams, for example, raises the example of a series of slides popular in Nickelodeons that depicted the revenge killings of five criminals by the son of the man they rob and murder. "The execution of each," Addams writes, "is shown in lurid detail, and the last slide of the series depicts the hero, aged ten, kneeling upon his father's grave counting on the fingers of one hand the number of men that he has killed, and thanking God that he has been permitted to be an instrument of vengeance" (77). After citing other such examples, Addams asks, "[I]s it not astounding that a city allows thousands of its youth to fill their impressionable minds with these absurdities which certainly will become the foundation for their working moral codes and the data from which they will judge the proprieties of life?" (77).

point further, Gerrish suggests that the knowledge and experiences offered by the movies might stand in for actual lived experience for underprivileged urban children for whom experiences outside the city slums are hard to come by. Gerrish's elaboration of this point is worth reproducing at length here:

What a wealth of material is provided for five cents, or, better still, through the equipment of schools with the proper moving picture paraphernalia, for nothing, to such children as the little son of the slums who wrote, in response to a request for a theme developing some incident in connection with berry-picking, 'I never picked any berries, but I think it would be like this,' and then laid bare the longing of his hungry little soul for God's out-of-doors. And that child lived within a five cent fare of berry pastures - but nickels were rare in his life and he never had the extra coins necessary for the return from an outing. To such paucity of experience what a boon are good moving pictures! (227)

What made movies especially useful for composition instruction was their unprecedented verisimilitude, their

"actuality," to use one of Gerrish's terms. Because, she proposed, the movies offered such lifelike representations, they might be useful not just as a source of material for expository writing, but also as a means to generate nuanced criticism of character development, characterizations, and motivation. Echoing Neal, she observes that "good" movies present ample opportunities for "class study and interpretation of motive by the reading of facial expressions and pantomime" (229). Further, movies likewise offer a means for the critique of dramatic technique by way of occasions to "note the use or abuse of principles and theories of dramatic construction" (229).

Despite a distinct formalistic tendency, however, Gerrish's discussion is animated throughout by the notion that students are likely to be receptive to a film-focused writing pedagogy because they are already ardent and experienced moviegoers, literate in the visual language of film whether they know it or not. In proposing that popular cultural texts can serve the goals of English composition by bridging students' lay literacies (their familiarity with movies, in this case) and that of the academy, Gerrish's film-focused writing pedagogy anticipates the cultural studies-inspired approaches to writing instruction I discussed in detail in Chapter 1. However, Gerrish is invested in what students bring with them to the classroom in so far as their personal

experiences outside of school provide a worthwhile starting point for classroom instruction. For Gerrish, students' personal experiences and authorized, academic knowledge (to adapt Harris and Rosen's definition) do meet at the site of classroom but the transformation of knowledge works in only one direction: what that students bring to the classroom is transformed by what they encounter there "for cultural ends," as Gerrish puts it. Film viewership, as an area of students' expertise, functions as a kind of footing from which to begin to develop prescribed habits of thought and mastery of prescribed knowledge and discursive forms. Composition instruction for Gerrish, as for Neal, is very much normative and is animated by a constant, prescriptive notion of academic literacy as a set of particular desired competencies. Despite an optimism regarding what might be done with both commercial and instructional films in a classroom setting, they serve, in other words, essentially the same remedial function that was built into English composition at its advent.

The Movies and Personal Writing

However, Gerrish's overall approach to both students' individual experiences with film outside the classroom as well as the utility of movies as heuristics for composition should

be understood as originating in a broader pedagogical approach, common in American schools by the 1910s, that grounds student writing in individual observation and personal experience rather than in abstract, impersonal topics. Like others, including Neal, who wrote about the pedagogical uses of film during the period, Gerrish is less interested in the film itself than in what students might be encouraged to write about it based on their viewing experience and other personal experience outside the walls of the school. For Gerrish, the movies can function not only as an appropriate source of topics for composition since students are already interested moviegoers, but also as a surrogate for knowledge and experiences not otherwise available - as a kind of lived experience in and of itself as, for instance, in her berry-picking example (227). Although Neal's take on film in the classroom comes much closer to textual analysis than Gerrish's, he too posits the film as a heuristic for eliciting student observation and insight as he approaches it as a tool for understanding the way a narrative functions in general rather than as an aid to the study of particular canonical, belletristic narratives.

This is to say, then, that because of the way in which they typically frame the film and students' relationship to moviegoing, film-based writing pedagogies of the 1910s like Gerrish's and Neal's treat film as a basis for a kind of

personal writing - writing born of personal observation and individual experience that places concrete student experience of a given film before the supposed intrinsic value of the text itself or its abstract significance. The interest of teachers like Gerrish and Neal (though to a lesser extent) in the utility of film for composition instruction is exemplary, I propose, of a broad tendency at both secondary and post-secondary levels towards writing assignments that put a premium on narration and description by way of concrete prompts designed to elicit personal experience and observation on topics drawn from everyday life (Connors, "Personal Writing Assignments" 177). Although by no means unanimously endorsed by composition teachers at the time, personal writing assignments of this sort had become standard practice in American schools by 1900 as educators increasingly came to value writing rooted in lived experience and observation over exposition on abstract themes or literary topics.¹⁹ The latter were still largely the norm in college writing classrooms, particularly at elite Eastern schools, where the influence of

¹⁹ It is important to note that the acceptance of personal assignments in secondary schools and colleges was not universal and certainly not without its backlash. Connors is careful to point out that personal writing assignments have never dominated writing instruction in the United States and Connors provides a detailed discussion of the forms of backlash against personal writing in the latter half of his "Personal Writing Assignments" as well as in slightly different form in the last chapter of Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy.

19th Century British rhetoricians still held fast (Connors, "Personal" 177, Schultz 83).

In his work on invention and personal writing assignments, Robert Connors locates this shift in the focus of writing pedagogies from "objective, centripetal, writing tasks to subjective, centrifugal tasks" between around 1850 and the early 1900s: "Up through the Civil War," he writes,

English composition was devoted, as rhetoric had been, to teaching the received ways of handling public topics by deploying gleaned knowledge mixed with commonly held beliefs. At the academies and high-schools [sic], writing, when taught at all was taught using rhetorical precepts and assignments. So for more than fifty years, students were expected to learn to write by discoursing on "Time," or "Temperance," or "Gaming," or "Luxury," and were later given assignments on such subjects as "Familiarity Breeds Contempt," "the Necessity of Exercises," and the "Baneful Effects of Indulgence." ("Personal Writing Assignments" 170)

After the Civil War, Connors argues, composition instructors began to reject the traditional abstract and impersonal topics as more and more observed that "the essays students were turning out in response to topics like 'Joy' and 'Herbal

delights' were very poor writing" ("Personal Writing Assignments" 172). Traditional writing pedagogies proved to be increasingly inadequate and inappropriate to the needs and prior preparation of a new, growing student population on all educational levels. Connors is careful to point out that the gradual acceptance of personal writing assignments in American schools and colleges begins in response not just to local concerns at the level of classroom instruction, but to a changing understanding of the educational enterprise in the wake of the democratization of American education that followed the rapid industrialization after the end of the war. As schools and colleges rapidly proliferated in the United States, especially in the west, secondary and post-secondary education became accessible to a much wider cross-section of the population than ever before. Fewer and fewer students received the classical preparation of a now out-dated, elitist educational tradition and a rapidly increasing number of young people arrived at schools and colleges only with the "broad, unspecialized education of the common schools and frontier academies" ("Personal Writing Assignments" 172). As literacy was increasingly regarded as a means of raising an individual students' potential for participation in democracy and capacity for productive citizenship rather than as a badge of social distinction, writing assessment practices and classroom instruction on both secondary and post-secondary levels came

to rely on heuristics that drew on material from students' lived experience and from their surroundings (Trachsel 78).²⁰

For example, as Mary Trachsel observes, writing tasks on college entrance examinations in the first few decades of the 1900s began to move away from an emphasis on recall of canonical literary works in favor of prompts designed to elicit personal reflection and observation on everyday topics, including mass media, popular culture, and current events. This was as much the case for exams developed by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) in response to the pragmatic needs of technical colleges and western land-grant institutions, as it was for those designed independently for use by elite schools. Harvard's entrance exam for 1911, for instance, included prompts on photographic plates and wireless

²⁰ According to Lucille Schultz, teachers on the primary and secondary level, like Gerrish, were among the very first to systematically rely on personal writing assignments as part of a democratically oriented curriculum. In The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth Century Schools, Schultz observes that the shift towards personal writing assignments started first in primary and secondary schools where the influence of the British rhetoricians like George Campbell and Richard Whatley, which dominated writing instruction on the college level, was not nearly as strong or far reaching (4). Schultz sees the elementary and secondary school as the site of a democratization of writing instruction where the knowledge and experience which students brought with them into the classroom was first valued. Even as early as 1839, she observes, writing teachers at elementary and high schools began to regard observation as a useful heuristic for composition and invite students to write essays on material drawn from their own lives (5).

telegraphy in addition to more traditional prompts on literary works (99). By its third examination in 1913, the CEEB had introduced non-literary topics taken from current events and public discourse including one that asked the prospective college student to reflect on his or her take on the timely topic of "the moral and educational influence of moving-picture shows" (100). By 1921, students taking the CEEB's "Comprehensive Examination in English" were asked to consider such "non-directive essay prompts" as "how to make moving pictures better" (82).

Connors suggests that with the gradual shift towards personal writing tasks in assessment and classroom practice, came a reorientation of the emphasis of invention strategies in writing pedagogy from accumulation, recall and synthesis of source material, particularly of canonical literary works, to the selection and narrowing of ideas drawn from individual observation (Composition-Rhetoric 312). Prior to the 1870s, invention in composition instruction was "primarily accretive" - that is, "meant to pile up nonpersonal material found around a subject" (313). With the growing popularity of topics based in individual experience and everyday life and an increased emphasis on depth over breadth, the purpose of invention pedagogies shifted to selection based on observation as students were "increasingly allowed to situate themselves within their subjects" (313). With an emphasis on observation

and license for personal reflection, the nature of source material had changed as well; as with college entrance exams literary works and abstract themes gave way to lived experience and artifacts of everyday life including, more and more often, visual media and other topics drawn from popular culture sources (313). By the early 1900s, this shift in conceptions of invention had manifested itself in countless writing textbooks that touted writing assignments based in observation and personal narration that were based on heuristics calculated to elicit complex responses.

Many notable examples including the 1909 edition of the influential Paragraph-Writing by Fred Newton Scott and Joseph Denney featured photographs and other visual heuristics to which students were to respond (313). As Applebee points out, the use of photographs, reproductions of paintings, picture postcards and other such sources for observation and reflection had become common in English instruction by the early 1910s (Applebee 60). Songs and recordings had also found use in composition curricula (60). It was logical, then, that film too could serve as a heuristic for invention in service of a pedagogy which emphasized observation and narration elicited by heuristics drawn from various media. Gerrish, for example, makes this point outright:

As a means of mental training in connection with composition, motion pictures bring into continual play the power of observation and the faculties of judgment, memory and imagination. Briefly, in order to select the particular details by which to present with exactness the acts or scenes shown in the moving pictures, the student must observe with care, choose with discrimination, remember with accuracy, and reproduce with vividness. (230)

It should be noted that Neal, who is more interested in the movie as a text to be interpreted and explored, is considerably more tentative on this point than Gerrish. He suggests that it may be "not unprofitable" to treat movies as occasions for observation by way of asking students to write about a movie as though the action it depicts were an actual event (659). Neal proposes towards the end of his discussion that students be encouraged to role-play as newspaper reporters and prepare mock news reports based on their careful observation of the action of a given film. Ultimately privileging form over the nature of the observation elicited, he adds that this will be worthwhile "especially if the general structure of a good news report be explained and the accounts written and judged accordingly" (659).

An Alluring Distraction

However, as Applebee attests, for all their innovative thinking and exuberance about pedagogical implications of the cinema, Gerrish and Neal were in the minority among English teachers at the time in advocating the direct use of movies for heuristic purposes (658). Although writing assignments on the general social impact of the cinema as a realm of student experience were not uncommon in writing textbooks or college entrance exams, those based on experiences with individual films were still fairly rare in the mid 1910s. It was one thing to base assignments around students' reflections on contemporary public debate around purported consequences of moviegoing, but using individual films to generate writing assignments was to attribute to the movies the sort of legitimacy they did not yet widely enjoy. Composition teachers and textbook authors were generally still reluctant to advocate the heuristic use of movies, as Gerrish and Neal did. While other visual media had found wide use in English classrooms by 1915, it would take more than another decade for English teachers to warm to the idea that analysis of commercial movies could have a role to play within English curricula on the secondary and post-secondary levels. The problem, as Applebee implies, was that English teachers were still uneasy regarding the value of movies as a pedagogical

tool due to the fact that the question of the cultural value of films was still up in the air. The cultural status of the medium as popular entertainment as well as its reputedly negative influence on the development of children and young adults was still very much an obstacle to its wide adoption in English curricula.

In an article entitled "The Relation of the Picture Play to Literature" in the May, 1915 issue of The English Journal, Alfred M. Hitchcock of the Public High School in Hartford, Connecticut, offered a powerful example of such unease on both accounts. Hitchcock's article, which I discussed briefly above, was, like Gerrish's, was based on a paper originally delivered at the 1914 meeting of the NEAT and appeared in The English Journal one month after the publication of Gerrish's paper. Unlike Gerrish and Neal, Hitchcock does not propose a pedagogy at all but rather simply offers a polemic against the movies in which he does not differentiate between commercial films and films produced specifically for instructional contexts. Unlike many commentators of the period who were quite explicit about the ostensible harmful effects of moviegoing on the morals of children and youth, Hitchcock posits the dangers of the movies as primarily related to intellectual, rather than moral development. The place of movies in the post-secondary English curriculum, Hitchcock argued, is dubious, because all movies, even adaptations of

literary works, are ultimately dangerous to intellectual development by the very nature of the film medium's tendency to "glut the mind" with a "kaleidoscopic jumble of unrelated information" (298).

For Hitchcock, the dangers of this particular quality of the film medium were made infinitely more dire by the sheer attractiveness of the movies, which he quite colorfully and misguidedly (as though in a panic) characterizes as an unscrupled, whorish temptress who has permanently insinuated herself into the culture. Because of Hitchcock's particularly colorful and amusing hyperbole, this passage is worth including here at length:

Who is she anyway, this amazing, fascinating, bewildering, spectacular creature; at her best so beautiful, at times so commonplace and coarse and tawdry and painted; so meekly innocent, a veritable saint (with a conservator) licensed to preach seven nights a week, yet suspiciously familiar with all the deadly sins abhorrent to sainthood; so lacking in reticence, yet withal too timid to lift her veil in sunlight; a veritable Circe in whose herd may be seen priest and scholar and grimy-faced street urchin, yet, miracle of miracles, dumb -- absolutely dumb save for a click in her throat? Whoever she be,

one thing is certain: she's into the house bag and baggage, and settled, not in the third floor back, but in the very best room -- come to stay (292).

While like Neal, Hitchcock acknowledges that the movies have found a permanent place in American culture and, more importantly, in the lives of young people, he does so grudgingly, taking this fact as symptomatic of a larger problem. His argument is, briefly, that there exists a severe literacy crisis in American schools, largely fuelled by the Progressive democratization of education and by the movies, which, with their unprecedented power to distract, infinitely exacerbate the problem (297). The purpose of English instruction, Hitchcock asserts, is "to acquaint youth with a few of the major masterpieces, and to equip them with a wholesome supply of ideas and ideals derived from them; but in large measure, it is merely to teach youth how to read, employing thought and imagination in getting from the printed page what the author has put there" (296). Yet fewer and fewer American boys and girls are exposed to the canon of prescribed masterpieces and therefore don't get an opportunity to learn to read in this way. The Progressive, democratizing educational enterprise, in the hands of "well-meaning reformers" who unwittingly take "the snap and vim out of education and putting a premium on intellectual laziness," is

either complicit in the problem unable to do much about it (296).

As Hitchcock sees it, the problem is that because of the virtual doubling of the number of pupils in American schools since 1900, and the changing demands of a diversifying population of students, "[e]ducation is ever reaching down, down, down" (296). "Our courses of study and our methods of instruction," he adds, "change to meet the demands of the weak" (296). This increase in the number of children enrolled in school parallels changes in cultural production, particularly as regards mass cultural forms in the period: "Books, magazines, journals are written to catch the multitudes - the multitudes who are not very keenly intellectual, nor gifted with imagination, nor trained to appreciate artistic form - the easygoing, pleasure seeking, not over-ambitious, somewhat unmoral multitudes" (296). As children and young adults are offered little intellectual stimulation from the popular press and are now exposed to "a multitude of alluring distractions unknown a generation ago," along comes the movie "with its train of glittering attendants, surely not seeking the intellectual few, hardly those of average culture, but chiefly the easily lured masses - especially children" (297). Hitchcock offers a litany of examples of what an "average" movie offers the impressionable mind (see above) and notes that, although there are indeed

many high quality movies, "one case of measles, is enough to infect a school room" (298).

Hitchcock's polemic is, quite obviously, animated by a belletristic notion of literacy as mastery of prescribed literary texts and the mental training and habits of mind such texts purportedly facilitate. Indeed, Hitchcock's argument against the cinema begins by repudiating, on the one hand, the idea that film and literature achieve similar goals in regards to eliciting visualization and, on the other, the notion that a film adaptation of a literary text necessarily is comparable in its artistry to that of the original work.²¹ Hitchcock's main example is Hawthorne's The House of Seven Gables, which he discusses over the course of most of his article, focusing particularly on Hawthorne's capacity to excite the imagination of his readers and the depth of the response the novel evokes. "Moving pictures compete with such an artist?" he asks. "What a pretty squirrel track the mountain makes!" (293).²²

In presenting the canonical literary work such as The House of Seven Gables and, later, Macbeth and Silas Marner as

²¹ I discuss contemporary notions of the relationship of the film adaptation to its literary source material at length in Chapter 3.

²² Here, Hitchcock references Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Fable," in which a squirrel says to a mountain, "If I'm not so large as you, / You are not so small as I, / And not half so spry: / I'll not deny you make / A very pretty squirrel track; / Talents differ; all is well and wisely put; / If I cannot carry forests on my back, / Neither can you crack a nut" (61).

inherently superior to the motion picture in delivering desired pedagogical outcomes, Hitchcock is, in a sense, responding to teachers like Neal and Gerrish who advocate films as an adjunct to literary study. He is also responding to the handful of contemporary advocates in the popular press and elsewhere, including, as noted above, Hugo Münsterberg, Vachel Lindsey, William Morgan Hannon, and Brander Matthews, who held that the motion picture be treated as an art form in its own right. In his harsh dismissal of the film medium, Hitchcock was in the minority among those educators to sound off on the possible pedagogical uses of film in the pages of The English Journal, as most were generally much more accepting of the medium's instructional potentialities. However, in raising the questions regarding the artistic merit of the movies, on the one hand, and their value in units on literary works, on the other, Hitchcock brings to the fore concerns that would fuel a long and nuanced conversation which would take place in the pages of the Journal over the course of the following two decades. This dialogue, focusing specifically on the merits of film appreciation in the English curriculum and on the value of the film to literary study, is a subject of my next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Movies and Literary Study in American Schools

Introduction

Building on the previous chapter's discussion of early approaches to film for composition instruction, this chapter will consider the relationship between film and literature as it developed in the discourses on film and English in the early decades of the 20th Century. Since most of the discourse on film in the English curriculum from the 1910s through the 1940s focuses on literary study or on films as objects of study on their own, I will concern myself in this chapter primarily with these two dimensions of the integration of film in English curricula during this period. As I have already discussed, only a handful of articles through the 1940s in The English Journal approached film as material for composition instruction. The vast majority of discussions of film in English, especially after the late 1920s, approached the movies in one of two contexts: 1) in the service of the study of literature and 2) as a quasi-textual literary form to be studied and appreciated much in the same way as one would literature, an approach typical to some of the exponents of film appreciation in the late 1920s through the start of WWII.

In this chapter, then, I will discuss the various permutations of the relationship between film and literature in English instruction as it was posited in the pages of The Educational Screen and, to a greater extent, The English Journal in the 1920s, 30s and early 40s. I will consider some of the earliest attempts of English teachers to deploy film in units of literary study. In the discussion that follows, I will interrogate their implications for the relationship between film and literature as textual practices as well as for the putative connections between a film adaptation of a literary work and the original work itself. I will also explore the ways in which the major exponents of the film appreciation movement of the 1930s conceived of the value of the activity of film appreciation for the study of works of literature. I am interested here in the ways in which teachers of English considered films, especially of adaptations of famous novels and plays, useful to the teaching of the appreciation of literary texts and the relationship between film and literature implicit in their literature pedagogies. This chapter is similarly concerned with the questions of cultural value, narrative form, modes of representation and textual fidelity that animated early approaches to both film study and the heuristic use of film for the study of literature.

I should be clear, however, that my goal here is not to suggest a single overarching, unifying trajectory or tendency of the role of films in the study of literature in the first four decades of the last century. Rather, sensitive to the notion that English teachers' relationship to the movies remained largely tenuous, I present and discuss a number of approaches, typical of the period, to teaching literature with the movies as well as to framing the relationship between literary source material and film adaptations. By no means do I wish to suggest that teachers of literature approached movies one particular way or another. Perhaps symptomatic of the often-uneasy relationship of English teachers to the popular cinema, there was no single methodology that can be handily identified characteristic of the entire period. Instead, I work here to tie together a number of approaches that are variously divergent yet also related in subtle ways that together form a complex portrait of English pedagogues' varied explorations of the relationship of film and literature from the 1920s to the start of World War II.

English Teachers and the Movies in the 1920s

By the time Will Hays, the head of the MPPDA, spoke before the NEA for the first time in 1922, the notion that the

movies could potentially be useful in pedagogical contexts was widely accepted. Yet whether they could actually be deployed as effective teaching tools with demonstrable effects in real classroom contexts was still to be determined. About one month before Hays' speech at the NEA's 1922 Annual Meeting in Boston where he pledged financial support for the Association's assessments of current visual instruction methods, Dr. Rowland Rodgers of Columbia University called for formal, "scientific" assessments of film education efforts in a paper entitled "Can the Movies Teach?" presented before The Society of Motion Picture Engineers.²³ Exploring the as yet unevaluated suitability of motion pictures as an adjunct to classroom instruction, Rodgers addressed the question of his title directly: "Can the Movies Teach? Do you know? No. Do I know? No. Can we find out? Perhaps" (qtd Educational Screen, "School Department," 187). Discussing the qualities of the film medium that putatively lent it to instructional use, including the capacity to faithfully reproduce actions, locations, and historical events, Rodgers noted the movies' potential usefulness for a balanced curriculum in the humanities. Regardless, further assessment was necessary and Rodgers

²³ I discuss Hays' 1922 appearance before the NEA in Boston and its various implications in much greater detail in the following chapter.

stated the issue at hand bluntly, if reductively:

Movies are either of value or they are not. They either make a genuine contribution to visual instruction or they do not. They add one or more factors to the expression of ideas than do charts, slides, models and other visual aids, or they do not. Until scientific tests based upon observation tell the truth conclusively, we do not know how valuable the movies are as a tool for visual instruction. Based upon data already secured by test, and upon the first-hand information of many experienced users, further research and tests should be made to determine the exact value and best methods of using movies for instruction. (188)

It was one thing, of course, to argue, as many had, that movies could by have a positive, measurable effect on student learning based on conjecture and theoretical analysis of the film as medium, but an entirely another to actually test that hypothesis in a classroom setting.

As though heeding Rodgers' call for structured assessments of the value of movies in classroom instruction, just a few months later Adelaide Cunningham of Commercial High School in Atlanta conducted classroom research into the

effectiveness of a movie adaptation as an aid in High School level literary study. In early October 1922, Cunningham's English III class at Commercial High School in Atlanta began a month-long unit on George Eliot's Silas Marner that included a screening of a film version of the novel. An informal analysis of the unit and student responses to the several assessments it incorporated appeared the following year in The English Journal. The first discussion of film in the classroom to be published in the Journal since Hitchcock's in 1915, Cunningham's 1923 article offered among the very first qualitative analyses of the impact of a film on student learning prior to the publication of Lewin's monograph in 1934. Though neither Selby or Adams devote any significant space to Cunningham, both note her article as evidence of continuous yet spotty interest of English teachers in pedagogical applications of commercial films. However questionable her methodology may have been, as we shall see, Cunningham's experiment is noteworthy since it was among the very first (if not actually the very first) discussion of an empirical study of the effectiveness of commercial films as an integral part the English curriculum, specifically in literary study. Moreover, Cunningham's article is interesting as it posits the very natural-seeming connection between film and literature and considers a commercial film as a visual

supplement to literary study, assuming a kind of parity between the Eliot's novel and its film adaptation.

At the beginning of the unit, Cunningham informed her students that, as part and parcel of their study of the book, they would see a film version of Silas Marner at the end of the month. This, according to Cunningham, was enough to generate some interest in the novel.²⁴ "The promise of a 'movie'," she wrote, "stimulated the class like an electric current" (488). "The idea that a school book," she wrote

was actually suitable material for a movie gave it a charm never before associated with the textbook, which had ever been the symbol of 'all work and no play.' A movie! They would study Silas Marner in order to understand and enjoy the movie. (488)

²⁴ The film was screened in class on October 30, 1922 by Commercial High School's Director of Visual Education rather than in a movie theater (488). Presumably, Cunningham's students saw the 1922 version of Silas Marner directed by Frank P. Donovan and starring Crawford Kent and Marguerite Courtot. The May, 1923 issue of the Educational Screen featured the following review of this production by Marguerite Orndorff: "A fairly faithful version of the George Eliot classic, plodding, slightly wordy, as was perhaps inevitable, but generally satisfactory. Settings and photography are in many instances very lovely, and the casting is excellent. Crawford Kent seemed hardly to possess the dreamy quality of George Eliot's Silas, but was nevertheless interesting in the part. (Church, community, and school use)" (238). Eliot's novel was also adapted for the screen in 1911 by Theodore Marsten, in 1913 by Charles Brabin, and in 1916 by Ernest C. Warde.

Over the course of the unit, Cunningham's students kept notebooks on daily assignments and dramatized portions of the story in class. About a week prior to the screening of the film, students were given an essay exam with questions Cunningham describes as "of the usual type," such as "Describe the development of Silas' character, showing the changes and mentioning events which caused these changes" (488). Shortly after the screening at the end of October, students took a second exam, this one consisting of questions soliciting single word or short phrase responses and number of true/false questions. Also after the exam, students submitted an essay on the theme "The Pleasure and the Profit I Derived from the Silas Marner Movie" intended to solicit students reactions to the film based on their prior experiences with the novel.

According to Cunningham's tally of the scores on the first two tests, seventeen of the thirty students who took both tests scored higher on the first than on the second, three failed the first but passed the second, three passed only the first test, and three failed both (488). Perhaps not recognizing that the radical difference in the modalities of the two assessments makes an instructive comparison of student scores problematic (and the fact that students' familiarity with the task at hand may influence higher scores the second time around), Cunningham, notes that "it might be expected

that the grades on the second test would show a greater improvement than they actually do over the grades of on the first test" (489). But, she argues, the results of the two tests prove two important points: 1) "that the interest created by the prospect of the moving picture caused the class to work hard during the entire month, and, more problematically, 2) that "the true-false tests are a correct barometer of the pupils' ability and effort" (489).

Though the validity of Cunningham's conclusions based on the test scores is certainly questionable, student responses to the theme assignment more instructively point to the value of the film as a supplement to the novel and, moreover, to the sort of engagement with the novel that a film adaptation might be made to elicit. According to Cunningham, students generally felt that seeing a film version of the book they had just studied helped them get a better grasp of the novel: as one student wrote, for example, "I think if a person reads a book and then goes to see the picture of that book, he will understand the book better" (489). Some students noted that the film allowed them to better visualize the action of the book and provided a frame of reference for imagining the appearance of characters and other elements of the setting: "The events in Silas Marner," one student wrote, "were made clearer in my mind by seeing the picture. It showed plainly the different characters and helped correct any wrong ideas I

had about their appearances" (489). "It is a pleasure", another wrote, "to be able to sit down and see the people who lived in the seventeenth (sic) century pictured before me. Their quaint dresses and customs are interesting" (489).²⁵

Cunningham notes that her students tended to privilege fidelity of the film adaptation to the novel and disapproved of any deviations in the film version, especially of the omission of scenes or characters they had expected to see in the movie version. One student remarked that although the movie was very good, it "had its disappointments" as "some of the most interesting events in the book were left out." Another student expressed disappointment that the scene at the Rainbow, "where the men are seated around the fire and arguing," was not depicted in the film version and that several characters were likewise left out: "This scene is humorous," the student wrote, "and I was anxious to see these characters" (489). Another expressed disappointment with the omission of Silas' and Eppie's visit to Lantern Yard from the novel's last chapter, noting that it would have been interesting to see depicted the changes to Lantern Yard over thirty years. Cunningham observes that while several students commented that the film version of Silas Marner could not do

²⁵ Eliot's Silas Marner is set largely at the turn of the 19th century. Cunningham does not acknowledge this error in her article.

justice to the scope and complexity of the novel, the film was perhaps more successful at conveying "the author's portrayal of moral truths" as these were "more deeply impressed upon the children by the movie" (489). Cunningham includes several student responses which point to the film version's capacity to elicit moralistic platitudes: "It taught me three great lessons: not to live a lie, not to depend on chance, and not to be superstitious. . . . Ignorance makes people superstitious. . . . I learned, also, that a little child can lead a person to do right. Eppie leads Silas back to the right views of life" (489).

Like a good Progressive, and very much typical of her contemporary proponents of film for classroom instruction, Cunningham views her students' interest in movies as a basis for the inclusion of films in the English curriculum, noting that "our pupils should in a great measure guide and determine our methods of teaching" (489). Echoing Robert Neal's earlier observation that not all films are worthy of condemnation, Cunningham writes that "[i]t is useless to condemn moving pictures; we may as well condemn all novels because 'dime novels' are pernicious. Why not bring the movies into the classroom?" (490). Unlike Hitchcock, Cunningham does not engage the question of the relationship of film and literature and posits the usefulness of movies to English only, it seems, on the basis of their centrality to the lives of her students.

Cunningham's article does not, therefore, directly address the limitations of film adaptations of literary works nor does it make any sort of outward comparison between film and literature. For Cunningham, the sense in incorporating film in literary study seems to be a product of the pragmatic circumstances of her students' lives and the literary source material of a notable current film production, rather than an implicit connection between film and literature or the suitability of the discipline of English for the study of the cinema. For Cunningham, then, the only tension between film and literature lies presumably in the putative fidelity of motion picture adaptations to their original source, as evidenced by her students' comment regarding the apparently troubling deviations from the original in the film version of Silas Marner.²⁶

²⁶ Fidelity is a key notion in discussions of adaptations and, though problematic and limiting as a privileged concept in such discussions, is well worth defining here. Simply put, fidelity might be understood as a measure of how true or faithful an adaptation is to the original text. Timothy Corrigan notes that discussions of fidelity and adaptation presume the following five questions: "1) To what extent are the details of the settings and the plot accurately retained or recreated? 2) To what extent do the nuance and complexity of the characters survive the adaptation? 3) To what extent are the themes and ideas of the source material communicated in the adaptation? 4) To what extent has a different historical or cultural context altered the original? 5) To what extent has the change in material or mode of communication . . . changed the meaning of the work for a reader or viewer?" (20). Linda Hutcheon, in her recent monograph on adaptation, notes that "fidelity criticism," or

That Cunningham does not acknowledge a relationship between film and literature, is, according to Adams, typical of early discussions of film pedagogy, which tacitly accepted a close relationship between the two forms, based in part on the acceptance of film in English instruction (35). Though Hitchcock, whose article I've already discussed in some detail at the closing of the previous chapter and who did not share Cunningham's view of movies or dime novels, does not go into any sort of detail on the specifics of the relationship of film and literature, his repeated use of "picture play" highlights, for Adams, the "early tacit acceptance by English teachers - even those opposed to film - that film was in some way within the realm of literature" (35). For Adams, Hitchcock's use of the term "picture play" suggests an implicit recognition of the film as a kind of drama "and thus part of the domain of the discipline of English - even if it was one, like dime novels, to be condemned" (35). That neither Hitchcock nor Cunningham is concerned with distinctions

critical assessment of adaptations based in their fidelity to the original work, was the "critical orthodoxy" in the study of adaptations especially in regards to adaptations of canonical literary works. Fidelity criticism has been challenged from a variety of perspectives in recent years including, most notably by Brian McFarlane in his Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation and Sarah Cardwell in Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel. Dudley Andrew's widely reprinted "Adaptation" chapter of his 1984 book Concepts in Film Theory is another influential and well-known challenge to fidelity based criticism.

between film and literature (though Cunningham appears not to be all that interested in the question to begin with) was typical as well. As Adams points out, there were no attempts in early discussions of film in English instruction to suggest distinctions between "written literature and film—any more than there were attempts to suggest distinctions between the play and the novel" (35). These distinctions were accepted tacitly, at least in terms of classification rather than merit or worthiness of attention.

Though the film/literature dichotomy would not present itself explicitly in the pages of The English Journal until well into the 1930s, film's relationship to literature and its capacity to faithfully or accurately represent literary source material, was certainly a topic of discussion in The Educational Screen. There, the issue was often framed in terms of the film's limitations based on material differences between the printed word and the moving image rather than as an actual dichotomy with one medium opposed to the other. This was due primarily to The Educational Screen's orientation towards the visual education movement and its emphasis on films as visual aids for instruction, rather than on films as texts - as objects of study - in their own right. The latter was much more often the province of The English Journal, especially after the emergence of the film appreciation movement in the late 1920s.

The same 1922 issue of The Educational Screen that included Rodgers' call for further scientific assessment, for example, also featured a treatise on the film medium entitled "Certain Limitations of the Movie" by Professor Richard Burton of the University of Minnesota whose primary concern was the suitability of the film medium for the effective visual representation of certain kinds of narrative. Burton argued that film, a "pictorial narrative," is best suited to "tell simple objective stories sentiment, domesticity, melodrama or history" (214). It was not at all suited, he argued, to representing the "subtle psychology" of modern fiction or playwriting. Certain classic literary works, in Burton's view, could be or had been handled well in their adaptation for the screen including naturalistic or realistic novels like Les Miserables, David Copperfield and Treasure Island. Yet, all too often, he adds, efforts at adapting novels are overly ambitious in trying, presumably in the name of fidelity, to "do all things on the screen" (214). This, in Burton's view leads to "perversions of the original" (214). The result, he continues, is that the filmic version of a particular work of art becomes all too easily a substitute for it so that children, urged to read literary works previously adapted for the screen - works of Dickens and Hawthorne in Burton's example - are apt to remark that they have already seen it at the movies and need not, therefore, actually read the book.

"And what they have seen," he writes, "is never an equivalent of the original. One can imagine the effect of this attitude if carried out in the younger generation, upon the reading of standard works!" (214). Such perversion of the original source material, for Burton, creates the false impression that the adaptation is equivalent to the original.

As was typical of the period, Burton tends to privilege fidelity (or, rather, degree of fidelity) to the original source material as a measure of the aesthetic value of an adaptation. Moreover, he sees the adaptation as a reproduction of an original as theorized by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." We might say, then, that for Burton, the original work of literature takes on an aura, in Benjamin's sense as a "presence in time and space, [the work's] unique existence at the place where it happens to be," through the act of reproduction that is filmic adaptation (214). It therefore takes on a concrete, "true" meaning and presence that becomes subject to "perversion" in the process of reproduction. Of course, the object of reproduction via film in Benjamin's original formulation is the scene photographed, reality, in the broadest sense, or an actor's image rather than a particular narrative. It should also be noted that "reproduction" is not necessarily the most fitting term to describe Burton's conception of the process of adaptation.

However, Benjamin's influential notion of the aura of the original as enveloping the original work is appropriate here. Burton does posit the original source material of a film as the final and integral referent of the adaptation: as a putative object of perversion, debasement through necessarily flawed or inaccurate representation through which the filmic "reproduction" is perversely equated with the original written work and is even accepted in its place. In this way, the film might be said, in Benjamin's terms, to detach the reproduced object - the filmed classic work of fiction - from tradition, from the pieties of the prevailing Arnoldian notion of culture in a turn that Benjamin regards as potentially positive and which Burton would have no doubt found problematic (221).

James Naremore suggests that, through this process of severing the work of art from the tradition that gives it its value, as Benjamin sees it, the motion picture can be "seen to problematize originality, autonomy, and the bourgeois mode of reception" (13).²⁷ For Burton, on the other hand, the motion picture as "reproduction" of revered narratives that stand to be "perverted," can be seen to reinforce and reify precisely

²⁷ On this point, Naremore reminds us also of Benjamin's famously quoting Abel Gance's 1927 pronouncement that "Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven will make films. . . all legends, all mythologies and all myths, all founders of religion, and the very religions await their exposed resurrection, and the heroes crowd each other at the gate" (Naremore 13, qtd Benjamin 222)

the received pieties that Benjamin suggests the photographic medium challenges by its very nature.

For Burton, fidelity has as much to do with the particular representational peculiarities of the film medium as currently practiced, as it does with faithful representation of narrative events. Ibsen's Pyr Gynt, for example, which had been adapted for the screen in 1915 and 1919, is not suitable for film adaptation, in Burton's view, because, beyond capturing the "pictureseque Norwegian scenery," a film could not capture the play's nuances (214).²⁸ Nor could a film version of the play survive the inevitable and typical "brutal, unintelligent" change to the source material by film producers that would be inevitable for a satisfactory film adaptation. Moreover, the film's mode of narration, as Burton sees it, is inappropriate to great works of art like Peer Gynt due to the rapid, "jerky" pacing endemic to the film medium, thanks to which "the spectator feels he (sic) is being hurried along, and is not being allowed to

²⁸ According to the Internet Movie Database, as a reliable source as any other readily available on such matters, Peer Gynt has been adapted for either the movie or television screen a total of twelve times in the United States, United Kingdom and Germany. The first was in 1915 and the most recent in 2006. After the 1919 German version, the play was not adapted again for 15 years with another German adaptation appearing in 1934. The next American version of the play appeared in 1941; it was directed by David Bradley and featured Charlton Heston in the title role.

dwell sufficiently upon the scene" (215). "Mechanical defects, to be rectified gradually" he wrote

may explain the jerkiness; but the too hasty movement of the action is a question of art, and a stern reform is needed here. There is often an effect at present as if there were so much material to be shown in a given time that hurry were necessary. (215)

Rogers too had noted this to be a crucial limitation of the film as compared to other media, particularly the written word. Comparing filmic language to the written word, Rogers noted that both have three "fundamental appeals:" both written language and the motion picture, Rodgers argued, can potentially appeal to the intellect, to the emotions, and to "the artistic sense, which responds to the pictorially beautiful" (188). Movies, theatrical or otherwise, designed to appeal to viewers in this way could, according to Rodgers, reasonably be deployed in the teaching of English as well as a number of other subjects including history, and psychology. However, "[t]he main disadvantage with the movie per se for instruction," he stated

seems to be the rapidity with which it tells its

story. The eye appeal of a certain scene may be so fitting that it fails to make a convincing mental impression. Again, the rapid shift from scene to scene may pile up an incoherent series of impressions, which quickly fade away (188).

Both Rogers and Burton saw this problem in the movie's capacity for storytelling as a failing of contemporary filmmaking and not necessarily as a quality inherent to filmic representation in general. Rogers had remarked that a different approach to editing could solve the pacing problem and that scenes could be replayed in instructional contexts to allow students to get a more complete viewing experience (188). Less gentle than Rogers, Burton faulted filmmakers who had not as yet fully realized the potential narrative sophistication possible with motion pictures. The rapidity of the narrative, Burton held, was a matter of poor technique, which was itself due to the "atrociously inexpert handling" of the new art form by the "tyros" and "cheap-johns" entrusted with making movies. While movies had, Burton acknowledged, by then already largely conquered the scenic, it was the dramaturgy that still demanded expert attention. "To tell a story through a film," Burton proclaimed tying the film to the drama, "makes a difficult new demand, worthy the serious efforts of first-class artists in the theater" (215).

Film Adaptations and Cultural Legitimacy

Burton was certainly justified in his estimation of the film's overall potential for storytelling and in his linking, as tenuous as it is, of dramatic and film narrative technique, a connection that would be explored in the next decade in great detail by, most famously, Allardyce Nicoll and a handful of others. Yet we might read Burton's frustration with state of filmic storytelling at the hands of "tyros and cheap-johns" in terms of the pragmatic function films based on well-known literary sources often served for the movie industry in the early decades of Hollywood film production. As has been acknowledged by film historians, expertly telling a story was less of a priority for filmmakers and producers than was meeting the moviegoing public's demand for new movies, establishing the cultural legitimacy of the cinema, and, most importantly, filling theater seats. Indeed, as Timothy Corrigan observes, as movie audiences grew rapidly in the early decades of the 20th Century and demand for films increased, literary works provided ready made, often familiar, fodder for motion pictures (17). This was especially true in the early years of the cinema, from the late 1890s to the beginning of the second decade of the 1900s, prior to the

development of the classic Hollywood narrative techniques that I discussed in the previous chapter. (Ross 66, Corrigan 18).

More significantly, productions based on high-brow, literary subject matter, even very early on in the history of film, were regarded as a potential means of legitimating film as art and dispelling the commonly held notion that it was nothing more than a cheap, popular amusement. Literary subject matter, especially by the mid teens and early 1920s, became a means of, in Corrigan's words, "negotiating a new, respectable cultural position for movies and their audiences" (17). As the cinema gradually attained cultural legitimacy, films based on classic literary works became more common. Corrigan, as others have before him, argues that while film was first seen as little more than a curiosity and an amusement geared toward immigrant and working class audiences, producers recognized that, by adapting literary works of various stripes, film could "position itself closer to art and respectable cultural practices and thus add other classes of audiences to its patrons" (17).

Indeed, films based on literary sources were part of a broader strategy on the part of film producers to expand the class composition of audiences by catering to more affluent, more educated patrons. Early film versions of well known novels or plays were not concerned with strict narrative fidelity to their source material. Nor did they typically

reflect an earnest attempt at cinematic translation of a literary work from the idiom of its original medium as they often only superficially resembled the works from which they were adapted. Rather, early films based on well-known works of literature were more concerned with presenting a lavish spectacle geared to attract a broader cross-section of the population (Ross 66). As the film industry began to realize efforts to draw in middle-class audiences whom they began to actively pursue in the early 1910s, films based on literary source material became more common. As with the advent of lavish, luxurious movie palaces and the feature film, producers looked to films based on well-known works of literature and drama to appeal to an audience that had previously disregarded the cinema as a simple diversion, not worthy of their attention. As Stephen Ross observes, this was as much about economics as anything else. Over the course of the decade after the end of WWI, Ross notes,

major studios and exhibitors set out to increase their profits and establish greater control of the industry by creating a cross-class entertainment experience designed to attract greater numbers of prosperous middle-class patrons while retaining their steady working-class following. To that end, they erected exotic movie palaces and produced

lavish films aimed at turning moviegoing into an experience that both transcended and reshaped traditional class boundaries. (66)

This expansion of the moviegoing audience to include the middle class, according to Ross, was widely perceived (and not only by the producers and distributors themselves) as a further democratization of the cinema; it ushered in, Ross argues, "a new age of democratic fantasy" during which the movie theater was widely regarded as a truly democratic space. As a result of such efforts to increase the audience base by appealing across classes, by the 1920s, the cinema in the United States was, according to Ross, a "genuine institution of mass culture - one that reached all Americans regardless of their class, race, gender, ethnicity, or geographical location" (67).

Though teachers of English like Robert Neal, Caroline Gerrish and a handful of others had expressed interest in commercial films for pedagogical purposes just prior to the developments in the cinema that would lead to the apparent democratization Ross discusses, the discussion of films for English instruction, particularly for the study of literature, began in earnest in the late 1920s. Cultural legitimization of film and the concomitant developments in cinematic storytelling associated with the classical Hollywood style can

certainly be said to have facilitated English teachers' use of films in units of literary study. Gradually gaining legitimacy as art works worthy of study in their own right, cinematic versions of well known plays and novels could now reasonably be deployed as heuristics for the study of literature and could be assessed on the basis of criteria common to the assessment of literary texts, even if almost always in relation to the film's fidelity to its source. As both Applebee and Adams suggest, film adaptations of famous literary and dramatic works initially attracted many teachers of English to experiment with instructional uses of theatrical films in units on literary study, as though the source material aided in legitimating the theatrical film as potentially pedagogically worthwhile.

Film Appreciation and the Study of Literature

Yet for the Progressivist educators who in the 1920s called for critical analysis of theatrical films in the schools, the unparalleled popularity and accessibility of movies was enough to merit their study within the curriculum. In 1927, Aaron Horn presented one of the earliest arguments for film appreciation as championed most famously by William Lewin and Edgar Dale and others affiliated with the NCTE. Horn remarked that Charles Judd's famous 1922 suggestion that some

time be devoted to film study in the schools, did not go nearly far enough.²⁹ Film appreciation, Horn argued, required not just some time here and there but an articulated, fully developed course of study that recognized that the movie had become Americans' "dominant appreciative recreation" (360). Explicitly uninterested in arguments regarding the cultural value of films, Horn advocated for film study regardless of whether or not movies "can be classified according to some dogmatic definition as an 'art.'" (359) Since what really mattered was not the cultural status of the film but the fact that moviegoing was central the lives of American youth, teaching students to view films critically was a way to make moviegoing an edifying, worthwhile experience, valuable beyond the immediate enjoyment it provided. The model for appreciation Horn proposed was based on that of the study of literature in New York City schools. The goals of literary study, as articulated in the New York curriculum were, in Horn's words,

- (1) to cultivate the child's taste for worthwhile literature and give him pleasure of a finer kind;
- (2) to introduce him to the wonders and beauties of nature; (3) to foster his imagination and sympathies

²⁹ I will discuss Judd's suggestions for a film appreciation in greater detail in Chapter 4.

and quicken and direct his emotions; (4) to help him understand people and to inculcate ideals of character and conduct; and (5) to help form the reading habit. (359)

According to Horn, the goals and methodology of the activity of "appreciation" are the same regardless of the genre or medium of the work being appreciated. The aims of the study of literature could be almost entirely applied to the appreciation of the photoplay. All that would need to be done, according to Horn, is to replace "literature" in the first aim with "photoplays" and to change the last item from "to help form the reading habit" to "to help form the worth-while movie habit" (360).

For Horn, film and literature as textual practices are related by way of how one might engage them through the activity of appreciation, rather than in any other fundamental way. Since, according to Horn, both literary study and film appreciation have similar aims, and presumably offer similar outcomes, both do not necessarily need to be included in the curriculum. If there is no room in the curriculum for both, then literature, according to Horn, should be the one to go. This, he says, is not due to "a belief in the superiority of the 'art' of the photoplay" but rather to the pragmatic Progressivist emphasis on the material conditions of everyday

life - "through the plain and clear fact that the movie is a more important factor in the life of the ordinary person than literature" (360). Horn even suggests that there is no evidence that the study of literature has any sort of "positive effect" and notes that it may even carry no benefit at all: "we do know," he conjectures, "that the majority of our children, even perhaps at the high-school level today, have benefited in no degree from it. Nevertheless, no one has arisen to call for the ejection of the literature syllabus from the curriculum" (359). All in all, Horn concludes, if one had to choose between film appreciation and the study of literature based on the pragmatic needs of the vast majority of America's primary and secondary schoolchildren, there could be no argument: "for the common people, a course in photoplay appreciation is more needed than a course in literature" (emphasis Horn's, 360).

Horn also explores a number of key differences in the circumstances of the appreciation of film and the appreciation of literature. Among the more noteworthy differences he notes is the film's accessibility to those "whose basic reading habits are not sufficiently developed" (360). Echoing the early pronouncements of film as a universal, visual language - as "the Esperanto of the eye" - Horn notes that the film has far broader, more participatory appeal than works of literature. Since it requires less work on the part of the

student to sit through a movie than to pore over a difficult poem or a long book, film appreciation can be much more accessible, appealing, and, therefore, much more effective an academic activity than the study of literature in achieving its stated aims. Moreover, a course in literary study or in film appreciation whose goals are to instill particular values and habits of mind per the aims Horn lists, requires a degree of "follow-up outside the classroom" to ensure a "permanent effect" (360). "An intelligent child," he argues,

accepts the insight he acquires from his literature teacher with great pleasure but soon loses it, if he doesn't read after school. The same child will apply this insight when derived from his photoplay teacher with still greater pleasure because he does go to the movies. He will, moreover, learn from contrast because he does go to the movies after school. (360)

Having presumably explored the best the cinema has to offer in class, in other words, the child will be able to further benefit by contrasting the everyday fare of their afterschool viewing with the "worthwhile" films included in film appreciation curricula. If the goal of film appreciation is to get young people to explore every dimension of superior movies, then what it is that makes them superior will be

highlighted by constant, indiscriminating moviegoing. Since kids will always go to the movies, there is virtually no risk that what they gain in film appreciation courses will ultimately prove ephemeral. Literary study, on the other hand, may be altogether for naught if the child does not continue to read on his or her own.

Horn's approach to film appreciation, which subordinates the study of literature to film appreciation, is oriented toward social, pragmatically focused outcomes typical to Progressive education. Yet it is not, as was often the case, concerned with concomitant study of literary texts or with enhancing literary study, it is built around goals adapted from those of the contemporary literature curriculum (with the same typical orientation toward morality and a bourgeois aesthetic sensibility) and promotes a mode of analysis that appears very much literary. As Selby points out, though socially focused approaches to film appreciation were relatively common, the majority of film appreciation courses were concerned, in one way or another, with film as a way into or a means of supplementing the study of works of literature or their most common themes (89). Typically, film appreciation courses were founded on "the premise that the film is an animated English textbook," to quote one New York English teacher (qtd Selby 90). Selby in fact, suggests that, generally speaking, English teachers were less interested in

the cinema as a textual practice and art form in its own right than they were in how it might aid instruction in literature. "Questioning how much English teachers were really interested in film," Selby writes,

and how much their interest lay in using film to convey literary and moral ideas, one concludes that it was not truly film appreciation, but the appreciation of literature that generally attracted teachers.

And indeed, advocates of film appreciation commonly framed it in terms of the theatrical film's relationship to literature or its potential usefulness for units on works of literature by emphasizing the availability of myriad film adaptations of literary works whose study film appreciation might enhance. In the Foreword to William Lewin's 1934 Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools, then chair of NCTE's Committee on Literature and its future president, Walter Barnes, went considerably further by arguing that film itself as a form of literature that, like others, "is a commentary on life, and at its best it is subtle, energizing, cathartic, and artistic" ("Introduction" xiv). Films, therefore, were more than visual aids but best studied as one might works of literature: "[W]e can appraise the photoplay accurately," Barnes argued

elsewhere, "only when we discuss it as a literary art"

(Photoplay 2). As Joel Spring points out, Barnes believed that the experience of watching a film was fundamentally similar to that of reading a book and that this is precisely what should attract English teachers to film study (63). Teachers, he wrote,

are interested in this new and dramatic method of presenting literature, not only because it may influence reading habits and tastes, but also because it may richly supplement the reading of books and magazines. Indeed, it is conceivable that for many persons the photoplay will become the chief purveyor of literature. Obviously, teachers of literature must utilize this novel and alluring mode of communicating literary experience.

("Introduction" xiv)

Lewin himself also recognized the fact that English teachers would be most likely attracted to film appreciation or understand its merit if they could be shown that film could be an effective tool for literature instruction. That well produced, high quality film versions of literary works were quite common certainly helped make the argument that English

teachers would do well to look to the movies (Photoplays of Interest, 56).

It is no wonder that, according to Selby and Adams, the most practiced, the best articulated, most discussed and assessed approaches to film appreciation in the 1930s were ones oriented in some way toward the study of literature, whether by taking predominantly film adaptations of works of literature as objects of study and/or foregrounding film adaptations as means of enhancing or supplementing the study of the original works. Some prominent advocates of film appreciation, particularly those associated with the Teaching Film Custodians organization, backed directly by the MPPDA and affiliated with Yale's Mark May, did put a heavier, more explicit emphasis on film appreciation as a means of moral or ethical training or preparing young Americans for productive lives in a democratic society. Yet the literary orientation championed by Lewin and others associated with the NCTE was the more prominent current in film appreciation and served the broader, social goals as well, having been born of a decidedly Progressivist impulse (Lewin, "Photoplays of Interest," 55; Jacobs 36; Morey 32).

Edgar Dale, whose name is often associated with NCTE's efforts in film appreciation and who wrote the movement's seminal and most widely used textbook as one of the original Payne Fund studies, approached film appreciation as the study

of film as film. This was so even though the academic activity of film appreciation, as he presented it, was comparable in methodology and bore similar fruit to the appreciation of literature or music. Lewin and Barnes, however, viewed film study as much more explicitly related and parallel to the study of literature in accord with the NCTE's aim "to place film in the tradition of belles-lettres." Though Lewin did frame the goals of film appreciation precisely in Progressivist terms as training young people in the "right use of leisure" and as a step toward realizing the ideals of "education for a democratic society," the true catalyst and animus for this, however, was literature as well as the notion that film study offered "a literary experience" (qtd Jacobs 37; Lewin, "Photoplays of Interest," 55). In his Foreword for Sarah Mullen's instructional pamphlet on film appreciation, How to Judge Motion Pictures, for example, Lewin noted that film appreciation is a perfect fit for the Progressive "educational trend" of emphasizing "social attitudes in the teaching of literature" (Mullen 6). The work of the Progressive teacher of English was already focused on helping young people attain what they needed for participation in a democratic society by encouraging them to think critically and independently through an intensive, critical, pragmatically and socially focused engagement with belletristic texts, as Lewin suggests; film appreciation, then, could advance such

goals even further. Through film appreciation, which according to Lewin promised to offer students a "literature experience" of film, students would approach theatrical feature films (most often those based on literary sources) as they would the literary texts themselves, sensitive to characterization, setting, plot, narrative technique, as well as fidelity to the original source material. Through film appreciation, students would acquire a critical vocabulary for film spectatorship, parallel to that for literary study, and would progress toward becoming more demanding, more discriminating consumers of "the most democratic art of our machine age" ("Photoplays of Interest," 55). This would happen by way of students' engaging the film as they would the literary texts they studied. Though Lewin did little to clearly define the term, the "literature experience" of moviegoing presumably entailed an intellectual and moral engagement with a film based in and equivalent to that required for the careful study of works of literature and offering the same edifying benefits (Photoplay Appreciation, 8, 50).

Film appreciation, then, was often construed - as Horn's article demonstrated - as means of attaining some of the very same pedagogical goals as the study of literature. As Eric Smoodin notes, for example, film appreciation classes, in favoring literary adaptations, were commonly regarded as one rather effective way to encourage students to become avid

readers ("The Moral Part," 30). Proponents of a literary orientation for film appreciation saw film study as an unparalleled, even radical, tool for the teaching of literature - one which could even transform the character of literary study. In a testimonial recounted by Lewin, for example, one Indiana high school teacher even remarked that film appreciation could be "to the study of literature what the airplane is to transportation" (qtd Lewin Photoplay Appreciation 47).

The work of Lewin, the first chair of the NCTE's Committee on Film Appreciation and one of two names (with Edgar Dale) most closely associated with the film appreciation movement, was chiefly concerned with film study in conjunction with or in the service of the study of literature. Lewin, who during his career produced many articles on film appreciation curricula and conducted a number of important experiments including the basis of his Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools, the NCTE's second ever monograph, tended to view film appreciation as intimately tied to the study of literature. In his more involved articulations of film appreciation pedagogy, Lewin tended to align film study explicitly with the study of literary works, primarily novels. For example, in "Two Units in Photoplay Appreciation," which appeared in The English Journal in late 1933, Lewin presented outlines of two units of film study, one for the high school

level and one for junior high schools. "Enjoyment of literature through the medium of the theatrical motion picture" was the first stated primary objective of both units. "Appreciation of literary sources of motion pictures" was one of the "enabling objectives" for both units as well ("Two Units," 817). Oddly, the activities Lewin proposes for both units tend to approach literature only cursorily, often having little to do with the actual study of literary works. It is as though that element is to be seen as implicit in the courses in which Lewin's units might be used. Interestingly, the notion of the film as literature inflected most of Lewin's work on film appreciation even though it tended to remain implicit. Though he did not articulate an explicit connection between film and literature or between the activities of moviegoing and reading literary works, such a connection appears tacit as it tends to animate his discussions of film appreciation pedagogy.

Indeed, as Adams points out, this tacit acceptance of film as an appropriate fit for English based on a conflation of the cinema and literature as art forms was typical to the film appreciation movement and, especially, to the work of Lewin and Dale in the early to mid 1930s. There was, as Adams notes, "never any controversy over a film/literature dichotomy" (76). Gertrude Turner's 1931 argument for the inclusion of film in English curricula, for example, posits

the film as a textual practice potentially on par with literature primarily in terms of cultural value. Any and all other potential similarities in typical narrative practice and modes of representation for the two media are implicit. Echoing a familiar theme, Turner argued that, given the sheer number (she offers 50,000,000) of people attending the movies weekly and the growing importance of film as a "folk-art form of the mineral civilization," "it seems to me altogether fitting to block out a unit of motion pictures to be taught in the high schools" (572). Though Turner does not offer a specific explanation of why exactly that is the case, she does acknowledge that motion pictures are not de facto "literary" in nature, but, quoting Brander Matthews (himself perhaps invoking Coleridge), potentially "lifted into literature by skill of structure, by veracity of character, by felicity of dialogue" just as, say, a worthy play may be (573). In the same year, Samuel Rosencranz too, suggested that the sheer number of young people attending the cinema every week combined with the lack of a worthwhile critical discourse on the aesthetics of the motion picture warranted English teachers' immediate attention to the movies. For reasons Rosencranz leaves vague, English teachers should, "by profession," "be best qualified to comment upon the [well crafted movie] and lead a critical discussion of it" (137). The basic premise here and in Turner's brief article is that

since film is a textual practice, a narrative form akin in various ways to the drama, it necessarily falls within the purview of English as the academic site of textual analysis and critique.

Whatever distinctions between the movies and printed works of literature that teachers like Lewin, Rosencranz or Turner might have suggested in their discussion of film appreciation curricula, they were not of the sort to imply fundamental differences between the two forms. Nor were they likely to propose that film and literature each required a distinct mode of analysis based on qualities intrinsic to either one and its own particular narrative or representational predilections. Since, as noted earlier, early film study in English tended to serve literature instruction via comparison or contrast of an adaptation to its literary source material, it implied a kind of parallel between the film and, say, a play or a novel; the former was, for any number of complicated reasons, more or less faithful to the latter. The overwhelming assumption was, in other words, that a film based on a work of literature ought to be judged primarily on a scale of fidelity to the source material. Certainly, as Dale, Lewin and others often argued, films were also judged based on intrinsic qualities like production values, acting, set design, and so forth but the relationship to literary works was implicitly defined in terms of fidelity

only. In the discourse of film appreciation, then, films based on literary works were predominantly conceived of as representations of their sources and more or less faithful to those sources rather than as independent works of art, assessed according to criteria specific to the film medium. In a sense, the source determined the nature of the teacher's and the student's engagement with a film text. This limited the nature and scope of film study to literary study via film rather than enabling bona fide critical analysis of a given film as would be later advocated by a number of critics including Bluestone.

In 1937, however, well-known English drama scholar Allardyce Nicoll first introduced the film/literature dichotomy into the discourse on film appreciation in a lengthy article in The English Journal entitled "Film and Literature," which advanced arguments he had made previously in his 1936 book, Film and Theater. Nicoll, who at the time was the chair of Yale's Department of Drama and formerly Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of London, argued that film and literature are quite distinct. He suggested that conflating the two, poses a number of serious theoretical problems, particularly regarding film adaptations

of literary works.³⁰ Films, he contended, ought to be appreciated or judged according to filmic, and not literary terms. Because, as Nicoll held, film was still a new, and as yet untheorized art form with no developed critical or analytical tradition and had so quickly assumed unequalled popularity and influence, it posed a number of important questions for scholars and critics - questions which Nicoll offered to answer. "Of these questions," Nicoll wrote, "not least in importance is that which concerns the utilization by the cinema of literary works cast in narrational or dramatic molds" (1). "What, we may ask as persons interested in literature," he wrote, "is to be our attitude toward these versions and their resultant consequences" (1)? Nicoll's second question, the one he remarked was "even more serious," addressed the putative parameters and boundaries of film as an art form unique and distinct from all others: what, Nicoll asked, "are to be determined as the precise confines of this art" (2)?

Adams has already presented an in-depth reading of Nicoll's attempt at answering his two questions and his "heuristic discussion" for the development of a film aesthetic of adaptations of literary works, so I will refrain from a

³⁰ Adams suggests that Nicoll's "impeccable" literary credentials lent film "an unprecedented academic respectability" (76).

detailed treatment of these here. Briefly, though, Nicoll argued that adaptations of works of literature should be first and foremost regarded as independent works of art, in a sense autonomous of their source material and judged according to "an inner consistency" (3). What is important here is that a successful film based on David Copperfield, to use Nicoll's example, is first "a good film," one that is "complete in itself and cast in the form peculiar to the film" (4). Yet, Nicoll does acknowledge that, to some extent, fidelity to an original source is important insofar as the viewer may be familiar with the source material and significant differences between the adaptation and the source can conflict with moviegoers' "preconceived images derived directly from the novel" (4). "A feeling of dissatisfaction," he writes, "will inevitably arise, calculated to destroy their enjoyment" (4). In this way, for Nicoll, films based on novels or plays are, to quote Linda Hutcheon borrowing a term from Michael Alexander, "inherently 'palimpsestuous' works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (8). "If we know," writes Hutcheon, "that prior text, we always feel its presence shadowing the one we are experiencing directly" (6). To a degree then, for Nicoll, this shadow text structures the reception (or "enjoyment," as he puts it) of the adaptation. This "palimpsestuous" relationship of the adaptation to the source material is where the value of adaptations to the study

of the original source material lies. The visual and aural appeal film, for Nicoll, can concretize "impressions derived from reading" but can only be truly valuable pedagogically if teachers constantly emphasize the necessity for approaching such films not only in terms of their intrinsic filmic qualities, but also employing a second standard, one based in the film's palimpsestuous relationship to the original text. The film, Nicoll argued, offers "peculiar opportunities" for the interpretation of literary works and can only truly be useful for literary study if the contours and limitations of such opportunities are understood and emphasized by us, the teachers. "How far success is achieved in the study of films based on literary works," he noted, "will depend on us" (5).

Like Nicoll, Los Angeles based teacher of English and aspiring screenwriter, Richard G. Lillard also attempted to delineate the differences between film and literature in a 1940 English Journal article entitled "Movies Aren't Literary." Though his title may purport a privileging of literature over film, Lillard's article was an attempt to present the case for film as an art form related to but wholly separate from literature with the overall conclusion that "there is nothing intrinsically literary about a film" (736). Lillard sought out to sketch out the parameters of analyzing, critiquing and teaching film in terms unique to the medium rather than approaching it as one might a novel or a play,

which is exactly what contemporary teachers and film critics were wont to do. The popular conception, Lillard wrote, is that the movie is a hybrid of literature and 20th Century technology, a "stray waif, a common-law child of a technician and a literary muse who strayed from Parnassus away to Mount Hollywood" (735). It is this common conflation of literature and film, he argues, that has facilitated critics' and teachers' discussing movies as they might books, which, he points out, was the general bent of the film appreciation movement. "Most motion-picture 'critics,'" he wrote, "discuss a movie as if it were a novel or a play, and the same is true of many high-school and college English instructors who teach film appreciation" (736). Yet, the movie, he continues is no "illegitimate child" of literature and modern technology but "has a separate family origin and a birth certificate" (735). It must therefore be treated on its own terms lest we preclude the possibility of truly insightful film criticism and full enjoyment of the movies.

Overall, Lillard's arguments are not particularly remarkable insofar as they, as Adams points out, present nothing new or especially interesting regarding the film's relationship to literature or the pedagogical implications of film's putative status as a distinct, independent form of representation. Adams spends some time outlining Lillard's argument whose logic he finds "questionable" and which, he

suggests is overall an "exposition of the obvious, offering nothing new or insightful about the relationship between film and literature" (86). Adams, though avoiding an elaboration of this point, even goes so far as to suggest that Lillard's exposition of qualities peculiar to the movies does more to show the affinities between film and literature than anything else. Adams concludes this, one gathers, because Lillard presents these in literary terms, identifying literary concepts with their cinematic equivalents. For example, for Lillard, parallel shots suggesting comparison are the cinematic expression of simile. The close-up can be the movie's synecdoche or metonymy. "Music that stumbles, roars, titters and billows" as to suggest the sound of one action or another is, he suggests, the cinematic answer to onomatopoeia. Exaggeration, according to Lillard, may be represented with fast and slow motion or "false perspective" (738). This is a pattern that repeats itself in Lillard's article; for Lillard, every identifiable quality of a literary text, on the one hand, and of the act of reading and apprehending works of literature, on the other, has a related, cinematic parallel or equivalent. This is ironic in light of his playful statement that "[t]he lusty adolescent art in Hollywood has had little advice to stay out of literary company and has developed bad habits of imitating the ways of its grown up sister instead of being itself" (736). It is interesting that Lillard's

exposition of what constitutes the film's "being itself" manages only to demonstrate how film can do what its "grown up sister" can do in its own way rather than show how it can do something entirely different. Rather than truly presenting differences, then, Lillard tends to show how film can accomplish similar representational and narrational tasks as works of literature, which, regardless of what he may suggest early on in his article, are the normative baseline for his comparison of film and literature (739).

Lillard's article is, however, noteworthy for the fact that it contextualizes, even if somewhat tenuously, a discussion of film appreciation in a broader critical discourse on film. This was, as Adams also recognizes, the first time that an article on film in the pages of The English Journal acknowledged the work of film critics in the popular press and elsewhere: the first time the discussion of film in the context of English in the Journal became connected to ongoing critical conversations in other venues. Lillard, who, as an English instructor at Los Angeles City College, worked in relatively close proximity to the epicenter of American cinema, invokes the names of some of the most prominent contemporary film critics who "take the movie in its own terms and catechize it for its lapses" (736). In addition to those associated with the film appreciation movement who focused most on the formal qualities of films, including Helen Rand

and Edgar Dale, and Nicoll as well, Lillard mentions the work of well known critics Paul Rotha, Eisenstein, Gilbert Seldes, and Franz Hoellering (736). Adams suggests that, overall, the lack of any engagement with, or even acknowledgement of some of the major work in film criticism, theory or history spoke to a lack of awareness by contributors to The English Journal's discussions of film appreciation of a broader conversation regarding the contours of the film medium. While Adams suggests that Lillard himself "could be catechized for his exclusions" in the list of notable film critics, his acknowledgement of a critical discourse on film in a way reinforces the notion that articles on film appearing in The English Journal "continued to be conspicuous by the absence of any apparent knowledge of the major writings in the literature of film" (88). While such a blanket statement is not particularly fair to the work of Lewin, Dale, and the numerous other voices of the film appreciation movement, inflected as it was with a broader theoretical and technical knowledge of the film medium, it does reinforce the impression that the movement does appear to have operated as though isolated from other ongoing critical conversations on film.

Conclusion

Nicoll's and Lillard's articles can be seen as a beginning of a shift in The English Journal toward a recognition of film study as a discrete critical activity, variously related to the study of literature and requiring its own analytical vocabulary and standards for critical rigor. They might be seen as early attempts to define the nature and scope of film study as a distinct academic discipline. Though there were only a small handful of articles in the Journal on literature and film in the 1940s and 1950s, their focus shifted away from the practice of film appreciation and curricular design and toward the questions raised by Nicoll and, to a lesser extent, Lillard. As film criticism and film practice matured, it is not surprising that the discussion in the Journal should move away from questions relating to the pedagogy and practice of film appreciation and toward the study of film as film and the ontology of the cinema by way of challenging and questioning some of the basic assumptions of the film appreciation movement. It is also not surprising that, concomitant with the development of arguments addressing the various distinctions of film and literature, there should be a degree of push-back from purists who, accepting the argument that literature and film are distinct media, would argue once again (albeit from a new vantage point) that film has no place in the English curricula. One such example is a

1951 article by Mary Weeks decrying the overreliance on visual media in English instruction.

It should be noted also that it would be a profound mistake to see this as a kind of logical progression resulting in a lasting paradigmatic change in both film study and discourses on film in the classroom. Pedagogy does, after all, often appear to come full circle. Regardless of whatever abstract theoretical distinctions one can make between film and literature, there is still a profound and compelling narratological and representational link between the film and literature that, to this day, facilitates teachers' approaching film as they might literary works and relying on film adaptations as aids in literary instruction. John Golden's 2001 monograph Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in The English Classroom, for example, harkens back to the film appreciation movement by arguing for a direct link between literary and film study and advocating a mode of film analysis that draws directly on the concepts and terminology of literary study. Moreover, like its predecessors of the 1930s, Golden's book posits film as a means of generating and nurturing student interest in works of literature, relying on high school students' preexisting interest in film as a way into critical analysis of literary sources of popular films.

There is, one can argue, a logical affinity between film and literature as which, it should be said, is compelling

enough to bear pedagogical fruit in units of literary study and is still very much useful for teachers of English. Indeed, we can argue that the typical inclusion of film in literature curricula today speaks to the notion that early film educators were onto something in deploying film for literary instruction. Golden, like Horn and others, for example, can be said to acknowledge the notion that reading a book and watching a film are related interpretive activities and one can be deployed to enhance the pedagogical benefits of the other. Moreover, there are still plenty of literary adaptations to work with. We can even argue that today's film adaptations of works of literature, freer as they are to explore themes and offer images once taboo in Hollywood films, tend to be more faithful to their sources in particular ways or offer more nuanced interpretations and therefore are ostensibly richer for literature study.

One essential quality of film appreciation and its predecessors of the 1920s that now appears somewhat anachronistic and peculiar to the particular moment which saw the birth of film education is the uniquely Progressive, democratic impulse that underwrote early efforts of film education. For this chapter's discussion, I purposefully subordinated the political dimension of film appreciation curricula to a literary orientation of film-based pedagogies. Yet the social, democratic bent of film appreciation and

earlier film education efforts, both within English and elsewhere, is crucially important to grasping the full scope of the acceptance of film in secondary and post-secondary curricula. While this chapter has focused primarily on the implications of putative theoretical affinities between film and literature as reflected in the discourse surrounding the use of film in English curricula, it should be remembered, that the Progressive roots and tendencies of film appreciation and its precursor movements are equally important to a rich understanding of early film pedagogies as are their theoretical pedagogical underpinnings. Though sometimes tacit, Progressivist politics informed virtually all film-based approaches in the 1920s and 1930s. As Anne Morey reminds us, regardless of its ultimately literary orientation, film appreciation was still very much a project of "social hygiene," rooted firmly in Progressivist, Deweyan democratic ideology and on par with character, health, vocational and art education movements (171, M. May 159).

While the study of literature and film appreciation in the Progressive period and through the 1940s were certainly construed as means of personal edification, they were likewise oriented toward preparing individuals for participation in a democratic culture, whether as a means of inculcating young people against the potentially deleterious effects of mass culture or of preparing them to critically engage mass

cultural forms through the lens of the material realities of their own lives. Film appreciation, like the film education movements that preceded it, was generally intended to have an edifying, transformative effect not just on the individual student, but on the culture at large as well as, more specifically, the film industry itself. This, then, is the dimension of film-based pedagogies and the movements that advocated them that I will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: The Cinema Problem: Educators and the Plebiscite at the Box Office: Teachers as Cultural Mediators

Introduction

As I noted in Chapter 2, beginning in the 1910s, the film industry actively sought to affiliate itself with groups of educators and other reformers. The industry had hoped that meaningful, productive, mutually benefitting affiliations with educators, religious leaders and social reformers would serve its public relation efforts. It looked to alliances with respectable social institutions to help ameliorate the myriad calls for censorship and other sanctions in response to widely held notions that movie producers cared more about filling theater seats than about the effects of current film content on the morals and behaviors of American youth. Educators, like other reformers who saw in the cinema tremendous pedagogical potential, generally responded positively to the industry's outreach efforts. This was not only because the industry offered direct financial support for film-related instructional activities, but because it also offered Progressive educators opportunities to renew their cultural relevance through an engagement with a relatively new

entertainment medium hugely important to the lives of their pupils.

Most importantly, in affiliating itself with educators and religious groups, the industry, especially after the formation of the MPPDA in 1921, granted both a measure of what Morey calls "controlling contact" through which educators and religious reformers enjoyed a modicum of say in Hollywood's practices of textual production, acting as mediators in the film industry's contact with impressionable audiences. Yet, as I will explore in this chapter, educators publicly questioned just how much real influence the industry, specifically the MPPDA after 1921, was willing to grant them and to what extent the controlling contact was to be on the MPPDA's terms. Unconvinced that the MPPDA's sponsorship of committee work and support of particularly focused film education efforts could result in substantive, significant influence on the nature and quality of Hollywood output, educators argued that true controlling contact could be established by film-education efforts aimed at influencing moviegoers to demand higher quality, aesthetically and morally sound movies. By teaching young people to appreciate the aesthetic elements of a motion picture, educators could alter their viewing habits. Film producers would need to respond by offering the sorts of movies that audiences now demanded in order to ensure continued profitability. Film education, then, was a

meaningful kind of controlling contact insofar as it could, as proponents argued, change not only moviegoing habits but the very character of the American cinema.

In this chapter, I will explore Progressive educators' own conception of the role film-centered instruction could potentially play not only in improving the cultural lot of American youth, but in transforming the character of the movie industry itself by reshaping audience demand through film-appreciation. While in previous chapters I was concerned with educators' takes on the effect of film on their work and on student learning, here I am interested in how those at the forefront of film-education efforts understood their own impact on, first, the film industry, and second, culture at large. To this end, I will interrogate the notion of film education as a mediating force in relationship between film audiences and movie producers by looking closely at the rhetoric of film education in two important discourses on the movies and schooling: a meditation on film and education in The School Review written by Charles Judd in response to Will Hays' historic visit to the NEA in 1922, and William Lewin's postulation in multiple publications of what he termed "the cinema problem," a key idea behind the American film-appreciation movement in the 1930s and early 40s. I will explore the ways in which both conceive of the interaction between moviegoers and producers at the box office as a kind

of “ameliorative feedback loop,” to use Dana Polan’s term, in which viewing habits shape the nature of studio output, which is seen to be readily responsive to audience demand. I will explore how both discourses posit film education as a mediating factor in what Anne Morey has termed the “plebiscite at the box-office” whereby moviegoers, trained in the schools to demand the most morally sound and aesthetically sophisticated movies, actually shape future Hollywood productions by choosing to pay to see particular productions and to avoid others. Both understand film education as a means for viewers to effectively take control of the studios and acknowledge the profit motive of producers as a key factor in the feasibility of the idea.

In addition, this chapter will attempt to read the rhetoric of film education as conditioning voting at the box-office in light of, on the one hand, the movement’s Progressive grounding and, on the other, a conception of Hollywood as a “culture industry,” as famously formulated by Frankfurt School critics Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. To this end, I will contextualize Judd and Lewin in the Progressive movement, considering their framing of the challenges faced by educators in light of the popularity and influence of the cinema in American culture. I will problematize, from the perspective of Adorno and Horkheimer’s Marxist critique of the culture industries, the idea that film

education can mobilize moviegoers towards affecting significant, wide reaching changes in film content and aesthetics by encouraging students to be highly selective in the movies they choose to attend.

Point of Departure: Will Hays at the NEA in 1922

As Alfred Saunders and others had done almost 10 years prior, Will Hays, the president of the newly formed MPPDA, addressed the general assembly of the NEA at its 1922 Boston meeting. Unlike Saunders and other agents of individual studios, Hays had not come to the NEA not to sell equipment or instructional films or to argue for the pedagogical benefits of film in the classroom. Rather, Hays came to Boston in the interest of public relations, first and foremost. On the one hand, he spoke to the film industry's willingness to work towards establishing a productive, mutually beneficial working relationship with the NEA, which had recently begun to explore methods of visual instruction.³¹ On the other, perhaps more

³¹ The visual instruction movement, which developed in the late teens and early 1920s, was an early precursor to the photoplay appreciation movement, which was linked to the NCTE and is the subject of the present chapter. Visual instruction initiatives promoted the instructional use of various visual media including still photographs, stereographs, lantern slides and educational films. Its proponents were largely ambivalent toward commercial theatrical films in instructional contexts. For a detailed discussion of the emergence of the visual

importantly, he had come to establish the confidence of educators in the industry's professed desire to cooperate with its many critics, educators prominently among them, who decried the immoral, pernicious influence of current Hollywood productions which they judged to be actively sapping the cinema's great pedagogical potential. Shortly after assuming the leadership of the MPPDA in 1921, Hays launched an extensive public relations campaign meant to address and ameliorate public criticism of the film industry coming from all sectors of American society. In his efforts to reach out to the NEA and other educational, social and religious groups, Hays had recognized that "the public" was not monolithic, but could be understood as a broad complex of social interests organized into groups, clubs, societies and associations, all with leaders who could, presumably, be reasoned with (Jowett 173). Since, as Garth Jowett notes, many of these groups had already publicly expressed opposition to the film industry and its current output and business practices, Hays approached addressing their concerns by enlisting them in the industry's efforts at reform. "By working through the film industry instead of against it," Jowett writes, "Hays hoped to convince the critics that the industry was willing to listen to rational suggestions" (173). Speaking before the NEA's general

instruction movement as well as its several early successors, see Paul Saettler's A History of Instructional Technology.

assembly in Boston, Hays assured the educators that the industry was sincere in its internal efforts at reform and in its willingness to listen to educators:

Everyday there is an opportunity in the studios to take that action at the place and at the only place where effective action can be taken. Responsibility for these pictures now being made by members of our association can not [sic] be avoided. They will be proof either of our honesty of purpose or of our failure. They will be proof either of our ability to correct our evils ourselves or of our inability to run our own business. . . . While asking for your aid and cooperation I would like to ask, too, that you judge us by our actual performances rather than by any promises we may make. (NEA 254)

AS a sign of the industry's good faith, Hays pledged the resources of the MPPDA to visual instruction initiatives and asked that educators cooperate with the MPPDA in "improving the movies" (Judd 173). In a brief article in The School Review, Charles Judd, then of the University of Chicago, noted that the MPPDA chief's call to educators was "a little vague" (174). Judd acknowledged, if somewhat indirectly, what was plainly obvious to those in attendance: that Hays had come

before the NEA to garner the support of educators in addressing a number of crises faced by the film industry including runaway competition and a decline in ticket sales caused, as Judd saw it, by the fact that American moviegoers had been "surfeited with the cheap and repetitious and not infrequently lewd pictures with which the producers sought to stimulate the jaded appetite of a much entertained nation" (173). Indeed, Hays' appeal to the NEA was part of a larger project of moral and artistic reform within the film industry in which educators could be enlisted to play a guiding role.³² And educators were eager to join in. "Every moral cause appeals to educators," Judd wrote, "and here was a move in direction of genuine public reform" (174).

As noted in Chapter 2, the film industry was eager to align itself with educators. Immediately after the founding of the MPPDA in 1921, it began to actively pursue collaborative relationships with educational associations, particularly the

³² It is worth noting here that shortly before his visit to the NEA, Hays had become deeply involved in damage control efforts in the wake of a number of high-profile scandals including the suspicious death of director William Desmond Taylor in February of 1922 in which two other film personalities were implicated, as well Fatty Arbuckle's apparent involvement in the death of Virginia Rappe. (Arbuckle's trial was underway during the NEA's 1922 annual meeting.) These scandals diverted Hays' attention from a number of other important issues facing the film industry that he was brought in to address, including state-legislated censorship of film content, allegations of anti-trust activities, as well as matters involving competition and industry finances, to which Judd briefly alludes (Koszarski 206).

NEA and NCTE, in an effort to establish cultural legitimacy in order to stem educators' calls for government censorship of film content by working with them to achieve their own goals. This was, as Morey also recognizes, an instance of what historian Ellis Hawley has termed "Hooverian associationalism" where a private cooperative venture - in this case a trade organization - serves as a means of "tempering industrial autonomy without necessarily increasing government interference" (Morey 153; Hawley 95-6). In reaching out to educators, the MPPDA offered the educational establishment what Morey calls "controlling contact" with the film industry in the form of a consulting role in the its self-regulation of film-content and, to a limited extent, the production process of educational and some theatrical films (5). Likewise, it offered direct financial support for visual instruction research and the development of instructional materials. According to Morey, Progressive educators stood also to benefit from the self-commodification afforded by an affiliation with the film industry and its support of classroom use of film. This allowed educators to reshape classroom practice (which Morey refers to as "their traditional product") as "more dynamic and more pertinent to students" and, at the same time to attempt to "assert a measure of local control over the consumption of mass-produced, nationwide products" (152). While Morey makes an

apparently valid argument, there is, it should be noted, no real way of gauging how much this sort of self-commodification in the service of reshaping (or, even, re-marketing) classroom practice actually mattered to teachers or, more importantly, their pupils. Admittedly, it is difficult to assess whether what Morey calls self-commodification had a discernible effect on students' attitudes toward the curriculum.

Regardless, Judd was sensitive to the various implications of an affiliation with the film industry. Using Hays' visit as a springboard, Judd considered ways in which, working closely with the MPPDA, educators might begin to shape not only their students' viewing habits and engagement of theatrical films, but the very output of the film industry by suggesting "a program through which the educators may help the producers" address the very problems that presumably brought Hays before the NEA (176). Judd was well positioned to present such a program, not to mention consider the direction visual instruction might take given the involvement and support of the MPPDA. As a direct result of Hays' appeal to NEA's general assembly in the summer of 1922, Will Owens, the Association's president, established a committee charged with cooperating with the MPPDA and appointed Judd as its chair. Known as the "Judd Committee," its official name was, appropriately enough, the Committee for Cooperation with the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, Inc. According to

Paul Saettler, who discusses the work of the Judd Committee in great detail, its purpose and charge was to assess visual instruction efforts to date, as well as the suitability of the industry's output to pedagogical purposes (History, 126).³³

There was some concern, however, that the MPPDA actively attempted to limit the Judd Committee's activities and, therefore, the impact that it could hope to have on the industry. Judd notes in the School Review that shortly after the committee "took up the work of discovering its province," the MPPDA emphatically urged that it focus its efforts on solely on "pedagogical films" (films "useful in the classroom and not likely to compete with the entertainment film commonly exhibited in theaters") and older theatrical films, that it avoid assessments of current releases (174). This was a fact also noted in a February 1923 editorial in The Elementary School Journal whose author, skeptical of the MPPDA's stated intentions, notes that in suggesting limiting the activities of educators to only previewing pedagogical films and preparing "white lists" of suitable older theatrical films, Hays and his colleagues at the MPPDA revealed themselves to be "not so anxious as appeared the case in Boston to have the educators take an active part in the motion-picture industry"

³³ Saettler notes that shortly after it convened, the Judd committee received a \$5,000 check from the MPPDA to finance its assessment efforts.

(407).³⁴ Hays and the MPPDA, the editorial stated, had only wanted educators to preview and critique educational films and were not willing to allow educators to critically engage current theatrical films or to underwrite any efforts to carefully study their effect on viewers. Noting the profound influence popular theatrical films had "over the popular mind," the editorial urged that the NEA and the Judd committee should not settle for such a limited role: "It behooves everyone who is interested in the creation of sound attitudes among people at large and especially among pupils to study the problems which motion pictures have created" (407).

Therefore, the editorial argued, the Judd Committee should look carefully at current "entertainment films" and produce information that adequately reflected the character of current Hollywood output so as to facilitate critical, informed viewership (408).

Reflecting on the MPPDA's pressuring his committee to limit its activities to reviewing pedagogical films, Judd remarked somewhat cryptically that "[i]t is interesting and impressive, to learn what the producers think of a committee

³⁴ Judd charged a subcommittee, chaired by Ernest L. Crandall, President of the Visual Instruction Association of America, to review older theatrical films and determine which were suitable for educational use (Saettler, *History*, 126). The subcommittee, according to Saettler, was the first to consider the possibility of excerpting theatrical films for classroom use (126).

of educators" (174). Regardless of what the MPPDA collectively may have made of its new affiliation with the NEA and the work of the Judd Committee, it certainly had hoped to exert a modicum of influence over the work of educators to serve its own interests. Certainly, appearing heavy-handed would undermine the overall purpose of the MPPDA's affiliation with the NEA which served, above all, important public relations purposes in an effort to quell myriad calls for state and local censorship of film content. On the one hand, the MPPDA had wanted to convince educators and other reformers that, with their participation, it could be trusted to regulate its own output, but, on the other, it sought to shape the character of its affiliations to its economic advantage. Producers stood to gain from educators' direct involvement in the development of educational films insofar as their influence could encourage the use of non-theatrical, instructional films, increasing the demand for such films as well as for projection equipment at a time when that segment of the industry was proving to be less than profitable (Saettler, Evolution, 106).³⁵ Also, as Joel Spring notes, encouraging educators to explore using older theatrical films

³⁵ The Elementary School Journal stated, "The fact is that no one has been able to make a financial success of pedagogical pictures, and it is very doubtful today, and will be for some time to come, whether this branch of the industry can be so managed as to become flourishing and successful" (407).

for instructional purposes would allow producers to continue to profit from movies that were now too old to be marketable (56). Letting educators loose on current output, however, would most likely prove detrimental, especially given educators' and other reformers' concerns regarding the negative influences of Hollywood films on young viewers. Underwriting efforts to explore effects of current theatrical films on children or to produce viewing selection guides, as had been suggested in The Elementary School Journal, could be potentially counterproductive to the film industry insofar as such efforts could reduce viewership and further damage box office intake. Also, given that Hollywood was already under fire by reformers of various stripes over questions of film content, supporting educators' efforts to critique motion pictures in the service of the greater public good could potentially exacerbate calls for censorship. Historians of the film industry and of American education have yet to discuss the MPPDA's side of the story in any sort of detail. But given the problems facing the industry in the 1920s, it is not surprising that the MPPDA would work to mediate the "controlling contact" it offered to the NEA.

The remainder of Judd's article, whose stated purpose was to "stimulate discussion" in formulating the committee's association with the MPPDA, focuses specifically on the nature and quality of theatrical films, their influence on American

youth, and how that influence may be tempered by classroom instruction concerned with nurturing critical viewership. Judd recognized that the movies necessarily "reach into the classroom" even if they are not integrated into the curriculum since the cinema was a constant, powerful, and influential part of the lives of young people. The problem was that the movies young people went to see were doing more harm than good. And this was because Hollywood was churning out fare that would draw the biggest crowd and not, according to Judd, concentrating on producing quality motion pictures that could be of some benefit to young people, not to mention those charged with educating and preparing them for productive, responsible citizenship (174). Producers and educators, Judd declared, both needed to pay attention to this problem. "[T]he entertainment which is being offered to the young people of this country today as their chief amusement," he wrote, "is essentially unsound in character and certain to produce all of the unfavorable results of intellectual dissipation if it is not radically reformed" (174).

Judd's sentiment on the moral and artistic quality of Hollywood films was quite common among educators and persisted well into the following decades (Jacobs 31). As will become apparent, the notion that the nature of film production should and could be reformed to offer fare more closely in line with the goals and tastes of educators formed one of the basic

premises of the film appreciation movement, which Judd presaged in several important ways by about 10 years. What is noteworthy and significant about the remainder of Judd's article is that it not only anticipates the film appreciation movement and presents a direct link between that movement and the visual instruction movement in which Judd was a key figure, but that it lays out the common justification and the key principles that drove the film appreciation movement in the 1930s. In addition, Judd's rhetoric is virtually identical to that which would be employed by the key voices of film appreciation 10 years later. Judd's call to action and the course for educators he recommends in the remainder of the brief piece would be echoed repeatedly in the work of the major exponents of film appreciation, most notably by William Lewin, one of the names most closely associated with the movement, which emerged after the advent of the talking picture and was closely associated with the NCTE.

Moviegoers, Judd held, facilitated the status quo in Hollywood since they had not fully come to understand the artistic potential of the film medium and had not come to develop the faculty of judging the moral and aesthetic qualities of a motion picture. "The reason why the American people have so long put up with weak and often utterly stupid movies," he stated in language prescient of Lewin and others, "is that they have no training in the intelligent appreciation

of movies. This new form of art with its infinite possibilities has come upon us with a rush, and we are ignorant and unappreciative of its possibilities" (177). If, however, American moviegoers were to learn to intelligently appreciate films and develop a critical vocabulary for discussing their artistic and moral qualities, they could not do so on their own. Teachers would need to intervene: "What has the school done," he asked, "to make young people intelligent about this new form of art? What, indeed, is there anywhere in our literature that discusses soberly even for adults the possibilities of artistic use of this instrument of entertainment" (178)?

As the champions of film appreciation including Lewin and Edgar Dale would do almost 10 years later in much the same terms, Judd proclaimed that it was up to educators to help young people develop discriminating tastes and, therefore, to help shape their movie going habits. Educators, he noted, need to begin to "help the next generation acquire what we do not now have, taste in this new form of art" and this would, in effect, influence the film industry to produce better, more moral, more artistically sound motion pictures:

People are going to go to moving-picture shows. Making pictures moral means making them more worth going to. This means raising the level of their correspondence

to the highest types of imagination. Do not let the producers get the impression that the educators are not going to have a hand in training taste. Let us overcome the shortcomings of the past by developing a vigorous interest in the artistic side of moving pictures and by training young people to demand truly artistic effects. (178)

This was, after all, he argued, not that difficult to do as educators could fairly easily begin to help students develop a set of standards for judging movies by setting aside time for the discussion of theatrical films during which students would be asked to critically analyze the merits and plausibility of the plot, characterizations, acting, wardrobe and other such elements (178).

Judd's take on film as an art form and on the role of educators as its stewards was very much a Progressive one. Like other Progressive reformers and educators, Judd promoted the positive, beneficial, even redemptive, aspects of everyday culture, positing himself and other educators as necessary mediators who could ensure that young people's encounters with movies and other forms of mass culture were no less than enriching and socially redeeming. As Dana Polan reminds us, Progressives like Judd were eager to embrace film education for the very reason that they saw in it not only great

artistic potential but also (and perhaps therefore) understood it as a tool for cultural uplift by way of individual edification (25). As Judd recognized, film was not just a business but also an art form. He therefore assumes, as Progressives of this stripe did, that students' "cultural lot," in Polan's words, could be improved through the correct training in intelligent, sophisticated, aesthetically minded film spectatorship (Polan 24).

As noted above, championing film education potentially offered other benefits as well. In defining a clear role for educators in reshaping students' relationship to the cinema, Judd also laid the groundwork for Morey's notion of "self-commodification" of educators in their involvement with movies. By working directly with the film industry and positing a broader, social significance for film study in schools, early film educators like Judd, sought to reshape their own relevance. As Polan notes, in promoting film education, they effectively "promoted themselves": "in teaching that to view the new visual art of film properly one could not just absorb it distractedly but had to reflect on its techniques, the pedagogues of cinema were saying that their instruction was necessary, something that citizens required" (24). Given the relatively recent arrival of the movie on the American cultural scene and how important a part of the cultural lives of young people it had become, educators

now needed to contend with it by assigning themselves a role in ameliorating the movies' influence. This, as noted above, came naturally to Progressive educators who had sought to tailor instruction to the facts of their students' lives and who saw tremendous potential in the film medium beyond its centrality in the recreation of young people (Cremin viii-ix). And indeed, Judd posits the educator as the rightful intermediary between the film industry and American youth, reaffirming the educator's role as cultural mediator. Given the potentially harmful influence of the film on the American mind, it is the educator who can rightfully mediate Hollywood cultural production, on the one hand, and reshape young people's interpretive tastes and tendencies through proper training on the other.

But for Judd, as for the key voices of film appreciation, what was at stake wasn't just the refinement of individual tastes for personal edification. By learning to critically analyze films in the service of refining their tastes and then altering their viewing habits accordingly, Judd suggested, students could ostensibly shape the content and quality of future productions through selective attendance or non-attendance of particular films, or what Morey has termed a "plebiscite at the box office" (6). Since, the argument went, children were going to go to the movies regardless of any desire or effort to convince them not to, educators could at

least prepare them to be responsible, informed spectators (and consumers) empowered and mobilized to make particular demands of producers by way of collective action at the box office. Hays himself, it should be added, had supposedly promoted the idea that individuals could collectively compel producers to change the nature of prevalent film content and was reputed to have said to various groups, "[v]ote at the Box Office by refusing to see objectionable films. The [theater] manager needs you, and if you support the good pictures and refuse to patronize the bad ones, he will soon give you the kind of pictures you want" (qtd The Educational Screen, "Brief Comments," 363). By choosing to see only those movies that conformed to certain standards for quality and content as established through film education efforts, and avoiding those they recognized to be morally corrupt or aesthetically unsophisticated, young people could collectively compel the film industry to produce higher quality, more sophisticated movies. Training movie taste and shaping demand through critical, formal analyses of content and aesthetic elements, then, could ultimately have a wider-reaching, transformative effect as it could presumably alter standards of film production, encouraging producers to explore the medium's artistic potential, and thereby significantly reshaping the

character of the cinema's influence on audiences.³⁶

That there could be, in Polan's words, such an "ameliorative feedback loop between consumption and production" was not, by any means a new idea, and been variously expressed by democratically minded educators and reformers beginning in the 1910s (8). This quintessentially Progressivist conception of the engagement of mass culture as democratic action was, for example, a guiding principle in the curriculum of the Photoplay Composition course at Columbia University, which, first offered in 1915, was one of the earliest into film study at an American college or university. Both key figures associated with the course, Victor Freeburg and Frances Patterson, saw its purpose, in part, as a means to shape more informed, sophisticated and demanding audiences who, through training in film aesthetics, would come to demand the highest quality motion pictures (8). Freeburg, the first to teach the course, saw it not only as intended for

³⁶ Eric Smoodin offers the example of one film appreciation student who, in a letter to Frank Capra after a special screening of *It Happened One Night* at the YMCA in Kannapolis, North Carolina in May 1934, wrote that "[t]he Movie Appreciation (sic) course that we have been taking has caused us to demand better pictures such as *It Happened One Night*" (qtd 93). Smoodin suggests that this letter and others like it written to Capra following the screening as part of a class project "provide some evidence that, perhaps in part because of what went on in the classroom, students had already had come to demand better product" (93). See Smoodin's excellent chapter on film education in his fascinating 2004 book, Regarding Frank Capra: Audience, Celebrity, and American Film Studies, 1930-1960.

prospective film writers but also for anyone who cared about "the role of art in a democratic society" (52). According to Polan, Freeburg understood that the box-office functioned as a ballot box where purchasing admission to a particular movie was tantamount voting for its continued run as well as for the exhibition of more like it. The properly trained moviegoer, then, could have as powerful effect on the film industry as a well-prepared, well-educated screenwriter (52). Like other progressive era reformers who championed the improvement of movies through education, Freeburg understood production and consumption as linked through a feedback loop in which the proper film pedagogy functioned as a "mediating force" (52). For Freeburg, as for Judd, the educator's role was to provide the spectator with the critical vocabulary and other tools in order to resist a movie's "base emotional appeal" and to appreciate it as a work of art on a much more sophisticated, intellectual level. Engaging in what appears to be Progressivist self-commodification, Freeburg posits the pedagogue as an essential "cultural mediator," in Polan's words, between the spectator and the producer and who is the essential agent in a kind of cultural transformation of a mass of "naïve consumers (the crowd of spectators) into a discerning public," positioned to vote at the box office for better, more sophisticated, more culturally edifying cinematic fare (54).

William Lewin and the Cinema Problem

In 1935, Sara Mullen characterized this dynamic succinctly in her well-known and influential instructional pamphlet, How to Judge Motion Pictures. Mullen, a major voice in the film appreciation movement which was by now in full swing, argued that if young moviegoers, with the help of film appreciation instruction, could learn to be "discerning and discriminating in [their] tastes" in movies, they "may help to raise the standards of American motion pictures" (48). Such a notion of the feedback loop with the pedagogue as mediator that had informed the precursors of the film appreciation movement of the 1930s was also the basis of the logic of the movement's grand justification of its own efforts. By linking students' habits as spectators to the nature of the films available to them in his School Review piece, Judd had essentially framed a key dimension of what William Lewin would later call "the cinema problem," to which film appreciation was the putative solution. In his Foreword to William Lewin's 1934 Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools, Walter Barnes framed the problem and what educators might do to solve it, in much the same way as Judd had twelve years prior:

But the photoplay is here and will stay, and young

people, our students, will attend plays and come under their influence. Therefore, we must 'do something about it.' . . . There are, it would seem, two useful services we may render. First, if we can organize and focus our power, we may hope to improve the quality of photoplays; not, perhaps, through formal censorship (for that is a dubious and devious mode of control), but through systematic and constructive education of the people who make the photoplays—and there are indications that by this method we may exert both restraining and positive influence. And, second, knowing full well that current photoplays differ vastly among themselves and that they consist of several levels of excellence—in content, in spiritual and artistic caliber, in fineness, and in healthiness—we may hope to educate our students in taste, discernment, and appreciation, so that they will come to value the best, and the best is now pretty good. This, it would seem, is the chief contribution the schools can make to this problem. (xv)

At its core, the cinema problem, as Lewin had it, was the question of how, in light of the cinema' tremendous influence on the lives of young people, to encourage them to develop high moral and aesthetic standards for judging motion pictures

in order to steer them away from movies deemed harmful and toward those of the sort that teachers and parents would want them to see. Part of the problem, of course, was that there were relatively few movies that met with the approval of educators and parents.

This was, in part, a matter of economics. Like other progressives, Lewin understood quite well that the cinema is a business first and an art second. In order to subsist, the film industry had to generate box-office revenue by appealing to as many prospective moviegoers as possible. In his initial discussion of the "cinema problem" in the pages of The English Journal in 1932, Lewin framed the problem's key issue in the words of Samuel Johnson from the prologue to Irene: "The stage but echoes back the public voice; / The Drama's laws, the drama's patrons give, / For we that live to please, must please to live" ("Defining," 385). The film industry was no different from Johnson's theater in this way: it needed to continue to please its audience in order to sustain its own existence; the cinema, Lewin wrote, "must please the masses to live" ("Defining," 385). Yet the cinema, he held, was very different from theater, or from any other art form, in the sense that the cost of production was astronomically higher and, therefore, the return on investment needed to be exponentially greater in order to avoid losses. Movies needed to consistently attract large audiences in order to be

profitable and, for movie producers, the "test of success is . . . a measure of ability to please a sufficiently large public" (Photoplay Appreciation, 5). This then, created a problematic tension, one observed by Judd as well, between cinema as an art form and the film as a commodity:

The photoplay as an art form is a fascinating combination of pantomime, the dance, painting, etching, photography, conversation, poetry, music, and the drama. The film as a commercial product, made for the sole purpose of bringing immediate profit to financial authorities can be, as all other mediums of expression can be, a menace to society. (Photoplay Appreciation, 6)

What mediated this tension, though, was the putative power of audiences to shape the market. Because of their dependency on the movie-going public, Lewin observed, film producers tended to be willing to "bow to the sovereignty of public taste" and, indeed, were "more eager to do so than is the purveyor of any other form of entertainment" (Photoplay Appreciation, 5). Of course, Lewin was correct on this point, which, by 1932, was more or less conventional wisdom. The film industry was, as critic Tamar Lane observed in 1923, "an abject slave to the whims of public taste" (97). "Every effort

is made at all times," wrote Lane, "to feel the public pulse and prescribe accordingly" (97). The problem, as both Judd and Lewin both held, was precisely with the pulse of the public. "In fact," Lane observed, "the effort of the industry to give the public what it wants is the main reason for the stereotyped productions which the more intelligent screen followers object to" (97). As Morey points out, Lane implies a division of the audience into two: the many drawn to base spectacle, and the relatively few informed, more discriminating viewers whose tastes were seldom catered to, whose "good taste perennially loses out in the box-office plebiscite" (Morey 7). The trouble, then, was that a very small group of viewers craved the sorts of literary, aesthetically sophisticated films that Lewin champions.

At issue, as Judd had recognized earlier, was what the public had come to demand, rather than the producers' own predilections. As Lane observed, "If the public were to ask for celluloid versions of the history of the recipe of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound or for a film dealing with the life of the man who wrote 'Dardanella,' the producers would bid one another up into hundreds of thousands to secure film rights to these masterpieces" (98).³⁷ The key to addressing

³⁷ "Dardanella" was a popular 1920 jazz song whose writing credits were disputed in two lawsuits in the 1920s. Presumably, Lane uses it here as though on par with his other

the cinema problem, then, was for educators to help shape exactly what it was that pleased the masses. If the public's tastes were to shift toward the types of motion pictures deemed acceptable (or at least less pernicious) by educators and other reformers, then the film industry would need to begin producing more of those sorts of movies to ensure continued profits. "Does not the problem," Lewin asked rhetorically and echoing Judd, "involve the necessity of improving public taste?" ("Defining," 385).

Film producers, Lewin argued in the opening chapter of his monograph, were ready to meet this new demand. Noting his extensive research of all areas of the film industry in the United States and Europe "in relation to the cinema problem," Lewin declared that the industry was ready to "supply just the sort of pictures that we as educators and as parents may desire for our children. Better photoplays can and will be made." Though he remained vague as to what exactly a good photoplay was, a point noted in a 1934 editorial in The Nation which criticized film appreciation on this basis, Lewin was confident that the public, prepared with sophisticated standards by which to judge movies, would could compel

example and not as emblematic of material suited for high-minded cinematic fare in contrast with the trivial "history of the recipe of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound." See Arnold Shaw's, The Jazz Age: Popular Music In The 1920s New York: Oxford UP, 1987. 95-98.

producers to deliver just those sorts of movies by way of an "economic censorship at the box office" ("Bending the Bough," 342; Lewin, Photoplay Appreciation, 5).

Interestingly, in the first iteration of the movie problem, Lewin suggests, if indirectly, that an element of the problem is the tendencies and tastes of film producers: "Is the movie problem, then, merely a matter of what to do about the 'execrable tastes of the producers'" (385)? While this question is likely rhetorical with the quotation marks suggesting the phrase is not to be taken at face value (or even that Lewin may not have taken it particularly seriously), it might, however, be read as an allusion to stereotypical images of film producers as boorish, undereducated capitalists with unrefined, if not crude, artistic sensibilities.³⁸ Such images were certainly not uncommon and occasionally surfaced in educators' discussions of what was wrong with the cinema. Though somewhat subtle in this regard, a 1922 editorial in The Educational Screen on Will Hays' public relations campaign, for example, lands the blame for pernicious movies precisely

³⁸ This stereotype of the Hollywood producer is familiar to contemporary readers in the form of, for example, Millard Mitchell's R.F. Simpson in Stanley Donen's 1952 MGM musical, Singin' in the Rain or, in a more recent and perhaps more illustrative instance, Michael Lerner's caricatured Jack Lipnick in the Coen Brothers' Barton Fink (1991). Jack Palance's American lothario in Goddard's Contempt (1963) is another example of the misguided, overly aggressive, profit-minded, and boorish film producer.

on the nature of the people making them. The editorial's author sees Hays declaration that movies must be "cured at the source" as empty rhetoric unless a different class of producers were to take over the movie business: "One gets ink from an ink bottle; for drinking purposes, one uses a carafe. When men of quality - artistic, intellectual, spiritual - are making the pictures, there will be no talk of censorship" (213). "There are," it went on, "some men of this stamp already in the field but they are in the pathetic minority" (213).

Taken historically, Lewin's brief mention of the "execrable taste" of movie producers might also be read in light of (or perhaps as an allusion to) the stereotypical demonization of movie producers in the popular imagination, a common rhetorical move was motivated in part by anti-Semitism. Such an image crystalized early on in the history of film, around 1915 with the advent of the term "movie mogul." Sklar notes that this term presented film producers, mostly Jewish immigrants, as "part splendid emperors, part barbarian invaders" who were also a common butt of jokes with punch lines that played on the producers' foreignness and supposed ignorance (46).³⁹ Indeed, Morey's discussion of religious

³⁹ Sklar offers the following example from Homer Croy's 1918 How Motion Pictures are Made: "'I've got something big,' says the scenario writer. 'I've got the rights to Pudd'nhead

reformers' efforts at controlling contact with the film industry points to a number of telling instances where the producers' "execrable" tastes were presented as part of a broader, pernicious agenda of cultural control, which was a countervailing force on the feedback loop between audiences and producers. For example, John J. Cantwell, the Archbishop of Los Angeles and San Diego, argued in 1934, the year of the publication of Lewin's monograph, that the Jewish executives in control of "90 per cent of Hollywood studios" had the final say in all elements of film production and purposefully resisted cleaning up the movies (qtd in Morey 129). "Certain it is," he wrote, "that if these Jewish executives had any desire to keep the screen free of offensiveness, they could do so" (qtd in Morey 129). According to Morey, Cantwell played down the notion of the feedback loop between audiences and producers, arguing that while producers respond to audience demand "in a measure," "those who chose and produced American film subjects were members of a minority ready to foist its tastes on the rest of the nation" (130).

Feedback Loop or Cycle of Manipulation?

Judd's and Lewin's implicit notions of the relationship

Wilson.' No good, replies the mogul. 'Ve don't want to knock the President'" (46).

between production and consumption of films as well as their sense of film education's role in promoting a kind of cultural transformation tend to make logical sense assuming the integrity of the notion of the feedback loop between audiences and producers. Their logic and rhetoric, as noted earlier, are Progressivist insofar as individuals, guided by educators, social workers, or religious or civic leaders, are posited as ostensibly capable of transforming themselves and their social and cultural reality through an informed, critical engagement of the cultural goods they consume. Having transformed themselves, they can ultimately shape the direction of mass cultural forms they consume through enlightened engagement at the point of consumption. In this sense, then, the film education efforts proposed by Judd and later followed through by advocates of film appreciation can be seen as preparing and empowering students to take collective action to effect change in the character of Hollywood output. It is not my intention here to theorize film education and appreciation efforts as collective action, especially in the strict economic sense initially advanced by Marx and then later problematized and critiqued by cultural and economic theorists including Georg Lukacs, Mancur Olson and Todd Sandler. Briefly, however, it is useful to understand the work of Judd and the film appreciation pedagogues as inspiring a particular form of collective action, one that Michelle Micheletti calls

"political consumerism," or "the phenomenon of consumer behavior as political involvement" (ix, 3). By developing standards by which to choose to attend certain films and avoid certain others in order to ultimately influence film production, film appreciation students learn to behave as "political consumers" (ix). They move toward effecting change by conscious consumer action motivated by aesthetic principles, moral conviction and the recognition of the public significance of individual Hollywood films. This is an idea to which I will return at the close of this chapter.

First, however, I will present a Marxist critique of the logic of film education efforts of the 20s and 30s and offer below a close examination of the political dimensions of the ways in which they implicitly posit individual subjects in arguing for an ameliorative feedback loop between audiences and the film industry. Interrogating the dynamics of the feedback loop through the lens of Marxist cultural theory (specifically of the Frankfurt School sort), complicates the notion of the feedback loop as "ameliorative" in significant ways and is useful in explicating minute dimensions of film education's Progressivist social, political bent. Such an approach also allows us to problematize film education advocates' characterization of the dynamics of the relationship between spectators and the film industry. It should be stated up front that I do not intend to use a

Marxist problematic to punch holes in Judd's and Lewin's arguments in favor of film education and appreciation as a means of effecting change in Hollywood film production, nor do I intend to discredit them or prove them futile. Rather, I offer the following critique as a means of complicating a particularly commonsensical, and largely uninterrogated approach to the relationship between audiences and the mechanisms of cultural production implicit in the arguments of Judd, Lewin and other proponents of film appreciation as inspiring political consumerism.

Examined by way of the critical apparatus of Marxist theory, Judd's and Lewin's arguments in favor of a feedback loop between enlightened audiences and a receptive film industry - as well as the efforts to set it in motion through classroom instruction - tend to come off as naïve and Pollyannish. For one, they tend to grant individual subjects agency to transform institutions whose predominant goal, according to Marxist critique, is to reproduce themselves by shaping individual subjectivity by producing and reproducing ideology, an imaginary relationship between individuals and their material conditions, according to Althusser. They also assume that viewers can be truly empowered vis-à-vis cultural production - that "voting at the box-office" can have a truly transformative effect on the relation between the viewer and the cinema and somehow emancipate the viewer from the

mechanisms of cultural production under monopoly capitalism.

Useful here is Adorno and Horkheimer's critique in their The Dialectic of Enlightenment of the "culture industries," which can be understood, as summarized concisely by Nicholas Garnham, as "institutions in our society which employ the characteristic modes of production and organization of industrial corporations to produce and disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services, generally, although not exclusively, as commodities" (25). Film, a bona fide culture industry, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, was therefore not a genuine popular culture but rather, especially given the vertical integration of the film industry, a mass culture produced by the logic of monopoly capitalism (Kerr 6). For Adorno and Horkheimer, the viewing public, in the case of the cinema, is not ultimately autonomous and truly free to choose, but always necessarily manipulated by the technology of cultural production, which serves the interests of those who control and profit from mass entertainments like theatrical films. Approached this way, the notion that standards for individual films are established by consumer needs and demand appears fallacious in so far as, we could argue, the culture industry perpetuates itself through the mechanics of vertical integration rather than through the simple give and take between audiences and producers via box office receipts and other means of feedback. At the time

Lewin's monograph was published in 1934, the monopolistic Hollywood film industry was vertically integrated insofar as a core group of major studios controlled virtually every element of production, distribution and exhibition.⁴⁰ From the perspective of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of cultural production under the culture industries, it is this arrangement - the complete control of all aspects of the movie business by a few major movie studios - that ultimately determined the precise nature of production. As Douglas Gomery and others have argued, it is at the nexus of the elements that comprise the industrial structure of Hollywood film production that the standards of moviemaking are forged. The whole of the structure that ensures that films make it onto the screen is the mediator that ultimately determines textual practice in Hollywood as it is the part of the means by which the culture industry reproduces and perpetuates itself. According to Gomery, "[a]t the final accounting, it is the industrial organization of media entertainments - at all points on the circuit of planning, production, distribution,

⁴⁰ The 1948, Paramount decision by the Supreme court effectively outlawed vertical integration by forcing Lowe's Paramount, RKO, Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Bros. to divest in their theaters and ordered them and Universal, Columbia and United Artists to cease business practices deemed monopolistic including block-booking (Jowett 345). For concise discussions of vertical integration and the Paramount decision see Jowett and Sklar, for a detailed discussion see Thomas Schatz's Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s.

exhibition and circulation - that determines text" (44).

For Adorno and Horkheimer, vertical integration assures that cultural output is centrally administrated since demand is dispersed and supply is centered. It is this managerial organization, rather than the viewing public's tastes, which ultimately determines standardized cultural forms like films. However, under the logic of the culture industries, public tastes and demand appear to be the chief determiners of textual output and are used by "interested parties" to justify the culture industries' organizational structure (95). Attributing the standardization of cultural forms to audience demand, denies a "cycle of manipulation" in which consumers are continuously manipulated, in Stam and Miller's words, "through the mobilization of cultural technology by those at the economic apex of production" (544). What is actually coercion is seen as free will and culture "becomes one more industrial process, subordinated to dominant economic forces within society that call for standardization" (544-5). And within this industrial process, animated by the monopolistic control of production, distribution and exhibition, the notion that the moviegoer can effectively vote at the box-office or even is somehow truly able to choose, is rendered absurd. The moviegoer has no true agency in this formulation and, regardless of his or her viewing behavior, is manipulated by the industrial organization of the movie industry to ensure

its continued existence and profitability. Moreover, all mass culture, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is identical under monopoly capitalism (95). There is no real distinction between cinema as industry and cinema as an art form. Films "no longer have to present themselves as art" since they are business, plain and simple (95). In this pessimistic view, all distinctions between, say, individual films on an aesthetic level, for example, are irrelevant as the films themselves only serve to reproduce the culture industry. Whether one movie is more moral or more aesthetically sophisticated than another is neither here nor there as the purpose they serve by their very existence is one and the same: "Sharp distinctions like those between A and B films," write Adorno and Horkheimer, " . . . do not so much reflect real differences as assist in the classification, organization, and identification of consumers. Something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated" (97).

Yet Hollywood, like all culture industries depends on an illusion of agency, of choice. According to Alexander Kluge, whom Miriam Hansen cites extensively in her discussion of cinema as social sphere, the "cycle of manipulation" necessitates that the spectator be constructed as entrepreneur, as invested in the culture industry in ways beyond being merely dependent on it for diversion or

entertainment so that reception is posited as more than consumption but an assessment on the return on investment:

In order to cheat spectators on an entrepreneurial scale, the entrepreneurs have to designate the spectators themselves as entrepreneurs. The spectator must sit in the movie house or in front of the TV set like a commodity owner: like a miser grasping every detail and collecting surplus on everything. . . . Understanding a film completely is conceptual imperialism which colonizes its objects. (210-11)

Kluge's take on the role of the spectator, with its allowance for some agency in spectatorship, however, is more generous than Adorno and Horkheimer's, as their dated notion of spectatorship problematically posits the viewer as entirely passive, exerting no effort, receiving all cues for reaction from the film product itself. The spectator, then, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, "must need no thoughts of his own: the product prescribes each reaction, not through any actual coherence—which collapses once exposed to thought—but through signals. Any logical connection presupposing mental capacity is scrupulously avoided" (109). The colonization which Kluge describes may be understood as a conditioning of the spectator

by the repeated act of spectatorship for the effortless reception of film and a sublimation of its mode of address. Such conditioning predisposes the spectator, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, to a kind of "alertness"

. . . so ingrained that it does not even need to be activated in particular cases, while still repressing the powers of imagination. . . . The required qualities of attention have become so familiar from other films and other culture products already known to [the viewer] that they appear automatically. The power of industrial society is imprinted on people once and for all.
(100)

According Adorno and Horkheimer's Marxist problematic, then, an audience's engagement with and interpretation of the film text is bound up directly with the culture industry's necessity to reproduce itself by "colonizing" spectators. No true critical engagement, especially of the sort Progressives like Judd and Lewin championed, is possible in such a formulation, as any effort at interpretation would imply the ability to somehow stand outside the all encompassing machinery of the culture industry in order to critique it. This, reduced to its most basic elements, is analogous to

Wittgenstein's notion that one cannot stand outside of language in order to analyze it. Insofar as Hollywood, as a culture industry, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is constitutive of subjectivity in the service of its own reproduction, a moviegoer cannot hope to formulate an effective analysis or critique since the ideological machinery of Hollywood putatively circumscribes individual subjectivity.

As is no doubt already clearly evident, Lewin's and Judd's conceptions of the feedback loop between film audiences and producers do not immediately stand up to critique through the lens of Adorno and Horkheimer's formulation of the culture industries. As noted above, such a conception of the relationship between consumers and the technologies of cultural production snuffs out any hope of anything resembling a plebiscite at the box office. Any emancipatory possibilities of film education are nullified as well since regardless of what the pedagogue or social reformer may do regarding movies, young people as spectators are still caught up in the cycle of manipulation. Teachers interested in the cinema who promote film appreciation, are no more able to escape being interpolated by the self-reproducing logic of the culture industry than their pupils and cannot, therefore, reasonably claim that film education can emancipate anyone from the pernicious effects of commercial films as they are as complicit in the reproduction of the industrial logic that

fuels Hollywood.

This point appears even more resonant when one considers the fact that the film appreciation movement of the 1930s, which unlike the visual instruction movement of the 1920s was not underwritten by the MPPDA, ultimately served the film industry's interests as it generated increased ticket sales by encouraging young people's consumption of commercial films. Eric Smoodin suggests that while attempting to develop discriminating consumers, film appreciation, "in spite of itself, encouraged movie consumption in general, and in a group of spectators who already constituted a major market for motion pictures" (93). Smoodin cites the example of a student in a high school film appreciation class who noted that what he gained from the film appreciation curriculum enabled him to enjoy certain movies so much that he felt compelled to see them again and again. "This student," Smoodin writes, "not only turned into a repeat viewer but almost certainly brought friends or family with him the second time, with the cooperation between neighborhood theaters and schools working not just to benefit education but the box office as well" (93). One important effect of film appreciation courses on the film industry, then, is an increase in revenue by way of an increased consumption of commercial films. Though the film appreciation efforts of Lewin, Edgar Dale and others affiliated with the NCTE were not underwritten by the film

industry as the work of the Judd committee had been, their work nonetheless served the industry's interests by helping to generate ticket sales and shaping viewing trends. Though they may have, as was intended, affected the nature of Hollywood output by generating interest in particular sorts of motion pictures, they nonetheless aided in reproducing the industrial structures whose influence they actively resisted.

Since, according to Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of culture industries, all films are commodities and therefore essentially identical, no amount of film education could make any sort of significant difference; even if producers were to respond to a new audience demand for "better" motion pictures, those motion pictures would still ultimately serve to reproduce the Hollywood film industry. Even if the movies were to improve according to educators' tastes, they would still continue to participate in the cycle of manipulation as they would remain commodities offered up to consumers for the sake of the reproduction of the present power relations between Hollywood and masses of moviegoers. Any sense of transformation brought about by a supposed change in the quality of motion pictures would ultimately be illusory as any sort of apparent change in standards would not at all alter the power relations necessitated by the cycle of manipulation into which consumers enter by virtue of being consumers. Personal edification through cinema appreciation, in this

view, is also problematic insofar as whatever individual enrichment or edification film education curricula may offer are ultimately meaningless since nothing changes in regards to the individual's relationship to the production and consumption of films and other cultural texts. A high school student may be more interested in seeing different sorts of films once he or she has a grasp of film aesthetics, but, as noted earlier, the distinctions between individual film products are ultimately irrelevant as they all serve the same purpose vis-à-vis the film industry. Voting at the box-office, in this view, is not collective action for any fundamental change in filmmaking or distribution practices, but merely a kind of indexing of which films will prove to be most profitable with which audiences.

Such a decidedly negative, pessimistic view of cultural production and the role of consumers certainly flies in the face of the Progressive idealism that animated the most ardent champions of film appreciation. And it is precisely for such negativity and pessimism that Adorno and Horkheimer have been most often criticized. While I do not intend here to outline critiques leveled at Adorno and Horkheimer's formulation of the culture industry as a closed, self-perpetuating system that allows little if any possibility for resistance, subversion or meaningful transformation, it should be noted that their take on Hollywood as a culture industry is

nonetheless useful in complicating the logic of a movement whose clear causal logic and Progressive undertones give it an air of the given. Despite the negativity and dim hope for resistance that characterize Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the culture industries, their formulation is useful for a pragmatic reading of the broader logic of film appreciation in its complication of the notion of the feedback loop between the film industry and film spectators. While it does seemingly negate the possibility of any meaningful interaction of audiences and producers by way of viewing preferences and habits, it does point to a number of important problems implicit in the proposition that changes in viewing preferences can have significant, multivalent transformative consequences.

First, to what extent could motion pictures really change as a result consumer action at the box-office? Even if we argue that the notion that all films produced under monopoly are essentially the same is too inclusive, too dismissive of the aesthetic and pedagogic possibilities of the film medium, we must still recognize that the possibility that audience reaction might lead to truly significant, lasting changes in film aesthetics is a remote one. This is largely the case because, as Lewin and other proponents of film appreciation

understood all too well, the cinema is a business first.⁴¹ If, as Lewin argued was the case, producers were truly interested in improving the quality of films and realizing the medium's true potential as an art form, the degree of change pedagogues could reasonably expect would necessarily be mediated by the potential profitability of the sort of cinema Lewin, Judd and others imagined could be possible with their intervention. With producers as, ultimately, the real agents of change, the motivation for reform is still one grounded in the tastes of the greatest common denominator. And it is precisely the greatest common denominator, and not the "quality motion picture," that is the moving target for film producers. If profits are ultimately the motivation, truly significant changes in the nature of studio output is unlikely, if not impossible as the film industry must still cater to masses of viewers to be profitable. Moreover, I would argue, a truly radical exploration of the medium's potential for artistic expression or pedagogical effect could not be possible within the logic of the feedback loop between moviegoers and the film industry, since the call and criteria for change emerges from within existing structures and seeks not to transform that structure, but rather to merely hone it - to ensure it

⁴¹ It should be remembered that this was also the basic premise of the Mutual v. Ohio decision of 1915. Since movies are primarily a business and not a form of expression, the Supreme Court held, they could not enjoy First Amendment protection.

produces more of its "best," thereby reifying and reproducing it. The film is still a commodity to be consumed, regardless of how informed or critical the consumers are. In Adorno and Horkheimer's terms, the call for film appreciation as a catalyst for the transformation of the cinema, as well as the criteria for that transformation, are formulated within the cycle of manipulation and effectively perpetuate and reproduce it.

Conclusion: From Cycle of Manipulation to Critical Consciousness

A characterization of Lewin's or Judd's cinema as a culture industry à la the Frankfurt School is, of course, not itself unproblematic. For one, it completely negates any possibility of individual, local transformation and theorizes and abstracts a process that for educators like Lewin and Judd was based on empirical, knowable relations between producers and consumers as well on the empirical viewing habits of young people. This is to say that while the notion of the cinema as culture industry in Adorno and Horkheimer's sense is useful in complicating the commonsense notion of the direct, logical, and presumably productive communication between moviegoers and film producers at the box-office, it virtually invalidates the Progressive notion of the edifying, even transformative

potential of a critical engagement with mass culture as means of grasping and engaging the implications of the material conditions of everyday life. Admittedly, it is useful in exploring the broader, loftier, more theoretical implications of the cultural effects of vertical integration of the film industry as well as of the role of monopoly capitalism in shaping cultural production and consumption. Such an approach also points to the limitations of Progressive approaches to mass culture in education. It is, however, so broad and wide reaching that it tends to obscure a number of practical, pragmatic problems that film education and similarly grounded Progressive pedagogical movements sought to address. The goal of film appreciation was ultimately not the transformation of cultural production, but of providing individuals the tools for understanding their situatedness in their own world and for effecting small, local changes to improve their lives in relation to their material conditions of being. A resigned and despondent understanding of individuals as hopelessly locked into a cycle of manipulation by the culture industry does nothing to address the real conditions of their lives, something that film education attempted to do, however indirectly.

It is more productive, however, to consider film education efforts of the 1920s and 1930s as engaged in a similar project as the cultural studies pedagogies I discussed

in some detail in my first chapter. Like cultural studies inspired pedagogies, which tend to implicitly accept aspects of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the culture industries but allow for agency and critical thought, film education pedagogies understood students as capable of critically approaching all aspects of cultural production and offered a critical vocabulary with which to actively engage the movies. Rooted in Progressive educational philosophy, film appreciation, for example, promoted more than simple formal analysis of motion pictures, but encouraged an engagement with the social, political dimensions of the cinema as well. Like cultural studies writing pedagogies, then, film appreciation was also concerned with the social dimensions of the making of meaning. Edgar Dale's hugely influential and widely adopted textbook, How To Appreciate Motion Pictures, for example, posits the ideal film viewer as not only literate in the language of the cinema, but engaged socially - ready to critically engage the representations of race, class and gender on the screen (Dale 211).⁴² In his excellent discussion of Dale's work and legacy, John Nichols notes that Dale's approach to film appreciation "called for high school adolescents to see themselves as engaged, critical viewers who

⁴² By Dale's own account, over 100,000 high school students had used his seminal textbook within one year of its publication in 1933 ("Teaching," 115).

found pleasure in the construction of the cinematic image and who found their civic sensibilities roused by provocative representations of race, wealth, and sexuality" (11). Nichols notes that Dale was the first film appreciation pedagogue to suggest, a la cultural studies, that analysis of the film text and civic engagement "were compatible enterprises" (11).

Proponents of film appreciation, like Lewin and Edgar Dale, would have no doubt balked at Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of the passive ("colonized," a la Kluge) spectator devoid of agency and locked into an endless cycle of manipulation. Rather, like their cultural studies heirs who resist such a pessimistic, passive and disempowering notion of spectatorship, they believed that true critical agency and active, informed viewership was in fact possible. Counter to prevailing conceptions of the spectator as passive, as an empty vessel readily filled by what he or she sees at the movies, film appreciation pedagogues tended to view active, critical spectatorship as eminently teachable. As Nichols suggests, Dale and his colleagues rejected the notion of the viewer implied in the Production Code of 1931 which held that the viewer was a passive receptor of images on the screen and therefore in need of shielding from potentially harmful material for his or her own protection (5). Dale, like Lewin and Judd, felt that, with the right guidance, students could learn to enter into a critical dialogue with what they see on

the screen, engaging not only aesthetic elements of a given film, but also its moral, ideological dimensions as well. Engaging in a kind of collective action at the box office in response to what find worthwhile, properly educated viewers could mediate film content more effectively than efforts at suppressing particular images or themes. Critical engagement was not only possible but could also have far-reaching, significant effects not just at the level of consumption but at the very source of production as well. Film appreciation pedagogues, then, worked to provide young people with the critical tools to become active, informed spectators and consumers who could engage individual films and were not prone to indiscriminate, uncritical consumerism at the box-office. Rather, acting collectively as informed, critical and mobilized spectators, they could bring their will as moviegoers to bear on the industry which, as conventional wisdom had it, was ready to provide whatever sorts of movies they were be willing to pay to see.

It is useful to imagine film education efforts as instilling a kind of critical consciousness, in the sense advanced by pedagogues inspired by the work of Paulo Friere, that then would lead to collective action, inspiring a political consumerism at the box-office. Freire is useful here in so far as his conceptions of teaching and learning as potentially liberatory activities offer a theoretical model of

education as a means of resisting the self-reproducing logic of oppressive structures like the culture industries as theorized by Adorno and Horkheimer. If we see the pedagogical activity of film appreciation as advanced by Lewin, Dale and their contemporaries, as working to develop critical consciousness, we can conceive of it as a means of granting moviegoers power in the face of structures which rely on their powerlessness for their continued reproduction. Resisting the notion that individual subjects must necessarily be caught in an hopeless and endless cycle of manipulation by the logic and machinery of capitalism, Freire believed that critical detachment was indeed possible and was the first step toward a liberatory "transforming reality" via action upon the world (51). Seen from a Freirean perspective, the film appreciation movement might be understood as offering detachment along these lines; it argues that students need not be passive consumers manipulated by the film industry and the industrial logic that fuels it, but can come to transform it by acting upon it in particular ways. Patricia Bizzell offers a helpful summary of Freire's conception of critical consciousness, which may be applied to an understanding of the goals of film appreciation as a means of fostering meaningful collective action.⁴³ "Freiere believes," she writes,

⁴³ In fairness, I should note here that, in reflecting on her

that human beings can 'detach themselves from the world': that when they 'enter into' social reality from this detached perspective, the 'true interrelations' they will 'discover' will embody injustices which people will then be able to diagnose and correct. At this point they have embarked on the process Freire calls critical consciousness. Oppressive social systems will seek to prevent people from developing critical consciousness, so as not to be challenged and disrupted. . . . Freire's project is to provide literacy education in which students learn-by-doing that they can detach from the world, analyze it, and take hold of it to change it. (20)

engagement with Freirean pedagogical theory, Bizzell notes growing disenchanted with Freire's approach and ultimately rejecting Freire's ideas regarding critical consciousness in a "very difficult move" (21). Bizzell recalls becoming increasingly skeptical of Freire's claim to objectivity and the putatively "value-free status" of his arguments; Freire, she argues, "takes his ideological allegiances for granted" (21). Moreover, Bizzell suggests that many of Freire's arguments and theoretical formulations cannot easily be imported to American pedagogy as they are culturally, politically, and theologically specific to their original Brazilian context. Despite this, Bizzell declares that "education for critical consciousness could be saved by open recognition of its ideological agenda and the dropping of all pretense to objectivity" (21).

Working from this, we can begin to understand film appreciation as offering students the tools to assume a critical detachment that will allow them to demystify cultural production and challenge and disrupt the self-reproducing character of the film industry. If we understand film appreciation in Freirean terms, we need not be cynical about the notion of a plebiscite at the box-office as it can be seen as genuine, positive collective action rooted in critical awareness and meant to transform an oppressive structure by stressing and reinforcing its dependence on to the collective desires of demanding, critical moviegoers. By arming students with the vocabulary of moviemaking and highlighting the political dimensions of the cinema, film appreciation can be said to offer students a place to stand from where they may begin understand how the film industry depends on them and position themselves to speak to their tastes and desires. If film education, in promoting collective action at the box-office, does not offer what we may regard as true political agency, it at least offers students the tools to critically engage the political significance of moviegoing by offering to illuminate an explicit connection between the consumption and production of motion pictures. Though, admittedly, it is quite a lot to ask of film education to effect real, meaningful social change, it is quite another to look to it to offer young people a way to claim agency over their primary leisure

activity by potentially allowing them a say in the quality and nature of the movies they are offered.

Conclusion

The idea, advocated by Judd, Lewin and their contemporaries, that film education can motivate an ameliorative feedback loop between audiences and producers can be understood as an embodiment (or even a logical extension) a constellation of several key themes that recur throughout this dissertation. The idea of the feedback loop relies, for example, on the pragmatic recognition (if not resignation to) the fact that, regardless of what teachers and social reformers may do, young people are going to go see movies - a point raised over and over by proponents of film education and one which seems to be the starting point for just about every Progressive argument in favor of film-based instruction. As do both Judd and Lewin, Peter Olesen, Rober Neal, and Carolyn Gerrish, all of whom I discussed in the first chapter, cite the fact that movies are an irrevocable a fact of the lives of American youth and therefore merit some sort of attention of pedagogues. Alfred M. Hitchcock notes this as well, though grudgingly. Samuel Roszencranz and Gertrude Turner too are explicit about this point, as is Aaron Horn. A Progressive pedagogical orientation towards the material circumstances of students' lives that draws on students' experiences of the world around them as a basis for school work similarly ties Lewin's and Judd's positions to virtually all of the film

based pedagogies and arguments in favor of film education that I've cited here, including all of those mentioned above. Film education efforts from the 1910s to 1940s seem to be uniformly concerned with meeting students where they live - starting with what they know and moving from lay literacies to those approved and sanctioned by the institution of schooling. The approaches to film in literature instruction that I discussed in Chapter 3, for example, tend to rely on the movies - something very much within the realm of their students' everyday experience - as a means of facilitating student engagement of literary texts. Cunningham's is perhaps the best example of this.

Similarly, a perceived crisis in the quality and content of current Hollywood productions animates the arguments of many of the teachers and critics cited herein and is a key motivator of film education efforts. Many of the writers I work with here - Neal, Olesen, Hitchcock, Lewin, and Dale among others - remark on the uneven character of Hollywood output and are themselves motivated by an abstracted, idealized "good" movie. What exactly makes a good, worthwhile movie distinct from a poor, pernicious one is seldom made clear. Regardless, the notion that there ought to be more good films is one we encounter frequently in work on film appreciation and visual instruction. Yet all seem to be clear that while "good" movies can be deployed productively for

pedagogical purposes, "bad," "immoral" movies stand as a threat to the emotional and intellectual development of young people.

Along the same lines, the question of taste comes up again and again in the work of the teachers I've discussed here. A traditional, normative conception of "good taste" is a crucial concept in the formulation of arguments regarding the necessity to reform Hollywood output such as Judd's or Lewin's: students haven't developed good taste in movies and need to be trained; teachers are enlightened arbiters of good taste; producers have terrible taste in movies; movies in poor taste have deleterious effects on the minds of impressionable spectators, etc. Film education movements and their proponents, we might say, have been preoccupied with "good taste" from the very beginning.

Though the idea, essential to Judd's and Lewin's arguments, as well as Dale's, that teachers can have a real impact on their students' viewing habits and then indirectly on Hollywood output does not explicitly underwrite all of the arguments cited in these pages, all of them do rely on an idea of film study or appreciation as having some sort of lasting impact outside the classroom. This is part and parcel of the Progressive grounding of all film-based pedagogies discussed here. Film education, as so many of teachers I discuss here see it, is presented as having an effect beyond mere

edification of individual students, but is intended to have a broader, transformative effect on the culture at large and on the film industry. This is the Progressive notion of the cinema as a truly democratic social institution - one that can, in a sense, be shaped by those who participate in it - that, in various, sometimes tacit ways, informs English teachers' attempts at pursuing the film medium's extraordinary promise as a pedagogical tool.

My aim herein, as I've stated elsewhere, has not been to provide anything like unified theory of the integration of film into English curricula. Rather, I've strived to present a multitude of approaches as evidence of the fact that, between the 1910s and the early 1940s, English teachers' relationship with the cinema and its potential usefulness in literature and writing curricula tended to be almost uniformly tenuous and quite varied. Taken together, they speak to, simultaneously, and excitement over of what appeared to be limitless pedagogic possibilities presented by the new, hugely popular medium as well as an often anxious imperative to appropriate or adapt both viewing habits and film production toward educational goals. If one theme remains constant, it is something like what Adams calls "condescending acquiescence" in the attitudes of teachers toward the cinema in general and the classroom applications of commercial films. While I tend disagree with Adams in so far as if English teachers tended to "acquiesce"

to the emergence of the cinema as a remarkably powerful force in the lives of young people, they tended not so much "condescend" to the movies as pragmatically approach them as a powerful influence on the culture - one that could, they argued, be harnessed for their own purposes. (Robert Neal's approach, for example, was one that reflected such an attitude.)

This, it seems obvious, is part and parcel of the Progressive roots and orientation of film education efforts from the 1910s through the decline of the film appreciation movement at the start of WWII. While changes in attitudes towards the use of cinema for pedagogical purposes as well as in the orientation of film education programs after the start of the second World War are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worthwhile for our purposes here to note that the Progressive impulses that fueled film education efforts tended to appear less and relevant to the pragmatic needs of a country at war. As Eric Smoodin notes, by the early 1940s, a decade after the waning of the "boomlet" of film education textbooks of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Hollywood's significance to the curriculum seems to have declined tremendously. Similarly, according to Smoodin, "progressive education itself, which included at least some aspects of the film education movement but which had never become as widespread as John Dewey and other adherents had

hoped, no longer seemed capable of transforming American education" (117). This is not surprising given the fact that American education itself changed drastically after the United States entered the war and the draft age was lowered as the pragmatic reality of education during wartime overwhelmed the Progressive impulses of the previous few decades. With an overwhelmingly large proportion of graduating boys and girls entering the military or taking on war-related industrial work after high-school, the very purposes of education in the United States needed to be realigned to prepare young people for these sorts of activities. Smoodin cites the "High School Victory Corps" program as one such effort that displaced other ongoing programs, including film education (118).

The film education efforts I have discussed here were, in significant ways, specific to their moment and waxed and waned with shifts the nation's educational priorities. Yet, we can argue, interest of one sort or another in the integration of visual media into curricula remained more or less constant, reaching a high point, we can argue, in the late 1960s with further paradigmatic changes in American education. Looking beyond the scope of this dissertation, it seems logical that future explorations of this sort will continue, as I have done here with the early decades of the 20th Century, engage the ways in which efforts to incorporate visual media into English are tied to their historical, social and political

predicaments.

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