

New Cinema Histories

RICHARD MALTBY[†]

History is not yet what it ought to be. That is no reason to make history as it can be the scapegoat for the sins which belong to bad history alone.

Marc Bloch (1953, p. 66)

Whenever I hear the word cinema, I can't help thinking hall, rather than film.

Roland Barthes (1986, p. 346)

Over the past 10 years, an emerging international trend in research into cinema history has shifted its focus away from the content of films to consider their circulation and consumption, and to examine the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange.² This shared effort has engaged contributors from different points on the disciplinary compass, including history, geography, cultural studies, economics, sociology and anthropology, as well as film and media studies. Their projects have examined the commercial activities of film distribution and exhibition, the legal and political discourses that craft cinema's profile in public life, and the social and cultural histories of specific cinema audiences. Many of their projects have been collaborative, facilitated by computational analysis and the opportunities for quantitative research offered by databases and Geographical Information Systems, which allow for the compilation of new information about the history of cinema exhibition and reception in ways that would previously have been too labour intensive to undertake.³ Having achieved critical mass and methodological maturity, this body of work has now developed a distinct identity, to which we have given the name 'the new cinema history' (Bowles *et al.*, 2011). The aim of this collection is to showcase recent work in the field, and to illustrate the questions that the new cinema history asks. As well as providing a guide to the individual contributions, this introductory essay seeks to explain what the editors believe is new about new cinema history, and what is distinctive in its approach.

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In calling this body of work new cinema history, we are deliberately distinguishing it from film history. Film history has been predominantly a history of production, producers, authorship and films. It is most often evaluative, classificatory or curatorial in its remit, and primarily concerned with understanding the complex economic, aesthetic and social systems that might cause particular films to assume the shape that they do. This activity, which has engaged historians already located within the discipline of film studies, has greatly expanded our understanding of the 'proximate forces' influencing the development and uses of the medium (Keil, 2004, p. 52). Borrowing its methods and rationale from the practices of art and literary history, historical work of this nature helps to decipher the complex aesthetic codes of the wide range of different cinematic traditions across the globe, drawing out both regularities and irregularities in the ways in which these different cinemas imitate or critique each other's stylistic habits. It can, for example, explain 'why we have dialogue hooks, montage sequences, goal-oriented protagonists, and a switch from orthochromatic to panchromatic film stock' in Hollywood movies of a particular period (Bordwell, 2005). In its close attention to the formal and ideological properties of film as a signifying system, this form of film history can reveal the ways in which the precise and subtle conventions in this system evolve over time, or change in response to external circumstances.

Placing films into a wider historical context has proven to be more problematic, however, in part because of the sceptical attention of some other historians concerned to show that films themselves do bad historical work or fail to meet adequate analytical standards to pass as works of history. As recently as 2006, the *American Historical Review* (AHR) removed its regular film review section, on the grounds that movies 'although undoubtedly useful as teaching devices, do not always contribute to an analytical, sophisticated understanding of history'.⁴ Sceptical historians have dismissed film as a form of historical evidence on a variety of grounds: firstly, for what Ian Jarvie has described as its 'poor information load', a 'discursive weakness' that renders it a 'very clumsy medium for presenting argument' and disables it from participating in debates about historical problems. Lacking historiographical complexity, film is at best, according to Jarvie, 'a visual aid' (Jarvie, 1978, pp. 377–8). For many historians, moreover, it is too often an inaccurate visual aid, its imitation of the past fatally compromised by the inevitable distortions of fiction and anachronism. As Robert Rosenstone summarises this critique, films 'fictionalise, trivialise, and romanticise people, events, and movements. They falsify history.' (Rosenstone, 1995, p. 46). Carla and William Phillips complain that films commonly

treat the historical record as mere raw material, to be adapted to the needs of the screenplay. Chronology is expanded, compressed, reversed, or falsified to suit the dramatic trajectory. Historical personages are revised, deified or demonized, conflated or created from whole cloth to serve the director's will. (Phillips and Phillips, 1996, p. 63)

Stephen J. Gould observes that we 'cannot hope for even a vaguely accurate portrayal of the nub of history in film so long as movies must obey the literary

conventions of ordinary plotting' (Gould, 1996, p. 35). Contemplating this litany of complaint, Peter Miskell has suggested that some historians more covertly object to history films because these representations of the past are both out of their control and reach far wider audiences than historians do. To some professional academic historians, Miskell argues, 'film is a disturbing symbol of an increasingly post-literate world (in which people can read but won't)' (Miskell, 2004, p. 249). Worse still, the historical film's implied defence calls for support on the poststructuralist argument that all narrative forms, including traditional histories, deploy equivalent processes of emplotment, speculation and selection (White, 1973).

Countering the dismissal of films as impoverished and unreliable sources of information, film historians have insisted on film as a different form of evidence, requiring special training in its decoding. Haydon White has argued that the practice of 'historiophoty', the historical analysis of visual images, requires a manner of 'reading' quite different from that used in assessing written evidence, so that historians need to learn the 'lexicon, grammar and syntax' of imagistic evidence (White, 1988a, p. 1194). James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper similarly insist that the film historian must understand 'that films are cultural artefacts with their own formal properties and aesthetics', and must therefore acquire 'skills of formal and visual analysis that are specific to the discipline' (Chapman *et al.*, 2007, p. 1). From these premises, the sympathetic treatment of film as evidence has been placed firmly on the poststructuralist side of debates over the critique of history-writing in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Film theory's practical postmodernism, offering a multiplicity of ways to arrive at 'the familiar conclusion that the "text" under analysis is full of contradictory tensions, requires active readers and produces a variety of pleasures', has naturally aligned itself with a poststructuralist questioning of the presumption that historical truth can escape the constraints of narrative convention (Willemsen, 1986, p. 227; Stone, 1992, p. 194). In the face of this alliance of confident uncertainties, many historians have simply baulked at what John E. O'Connor has called the heavy 'theoretical apparatus of film studies' and the apparently unbridgeable 'chasm' it creates between the two disciplines (O'Connor, 1990, p. 8; Guynn, 2006, p. 14).

Historians' disinclination to engage with film has combined with film studies' enthusiasm for interpretation to ensure that the most common approach to film history has been one in which films are treated as involuntary testimony, bearing unconscious material witness to the *mentalité* or *zeitgeist* of the period of their production (Guynn, 2006, p. 6). Marc Bloch, co-founder of the *Annales* School, described unintentional historical evidence of this kind – artefacts from a medieval midden, the commercial correspondence of a sixteenth-century Florentine merchant – as signs that the past unwittingly drops onto the road, from which we can discover 'far more of the past than the past itself had thought good to tell us' (Bloch, 1953, pp. 62, 64). The idea that films, along with other forms of mass or popular culture, are 'eloquent social documents' reflecting the flow of contemporary history has been an implicit assumption of much writing about cinema, but explanations of how 'the film-making process taps some reservoir of cultural

meaning' have remained relatively unformulated and untheorised (Barry, 1939, p. vii; Jarvie, 1978, p. 380). In the late 1940s, Siegfried Kracauer proposed that some movies, or some 'pictorial or narrative motifs' reiterated in them, might be understood as 'deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimensions of consciousness' (Kracauer, 1947). Kracauer's proposition has remained central to what his contemporaries Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites (1950, p. 11) called a 'psychoanalytic-mythological' mode of interpreting film's relationship to culture. Historian Marc Ferro, for example, has encouraged historians to treat films as historically symptomatic, suggesting that they examine the 'unconscious' of a filmic text to reveal the biases, tastes or secret fears of the cultural moment in which it was produced.⁵ While such methods are readily compatible with the interpretive practices of film studies, they remain vulnerable to an empirical scrutiny of the basis on which some movies are selected as historically symptomatic while others are not. Writing in 1947, Lester Asheim questioned John Houseman's analysis of 'tough' films such as *The Big Sleep* or *The Postman Always Rings Twice* as symptoms of a postwar malaise in which 'the American people, turning from the anxiety and shock of war, were afraid to face their personal problems and the painful situations of their national life' (Houseman, 1947, p. 163). Asheim complained that Houseman was generalising from a particular example, without having demonstrated its representativeness. If historians were instead to examine *The Razor's Edge*, a big-budget production from the same year, he argued,

they will deduce that our generation was an intensely earnest group of mystical philosophers who gladly renounced the usual pleasures of this world in order to find spiritual peace. From *State Fair* they can conjure up a nation of simple agrarians whose major problems centered around the prize hog and spiked mincemeat. And what would they make of a generation reflected in *Road to Utopia*? (Asheim, 1947, p. 416)

The concept of film as 'objectified mass dream', consensual myth or 'barometer of ... social and cultural life' has nevertheless retained considerable seductive power, as has the idea of reading cultural history through textual interpretation (Nash Smith, 1950, p. 91; Landy, 2001, p. 1). Instinctively, this mode of analysis reaches for metaphor and allusion as clues to the kinds of contemporary political or moral conversations the film in question might address. As everyday film consumers, we can use films in this way by drawing on references within our cultural milieu: for example, we might consider whether *Avatar* (2009) provides an allegorical critique of either multinational capitalism or US foreign policy. Shifting this interpretive speculation into the scholarly historical register sends historians to the archives that house the textual history of public cultures, to search for correspondences between a film and the discourses that surrounded it at the time of its release. Although this is historical work, its mode of analysis often remains that of symptomatic interpretation, in the expectation that an intertextual account that juxtaposes the film's content with a different text or texts plucked from the same historical milieu 'will reveal something about the cultural conditions that produced them and attracted

audiences to them'.⁶ Such analyses tend to favour films that respond to their quest for allegorical or symptomatic meaning, and risk ascribing to individual films a representational significance that may be disproportionate to their capacity for historical agency. Houseman's premature invocation of what would later become *film noir* is a case in point: *film noir* has, in the main, been understood very much in Houseman's terms, while Asheim's counter-examples have remained starved of the oxygen of historical analysis.⁷

When this *zeitgeist* analysis of individual films aggregates into the study of filmic phenomena (histories of genres, authors or national cinemas, or films on particular topics and so on), the result is a series of compartmentalised thematic accounts largely detached from the circumstances of their consumption, and yet heavily dependent for their significance on the assumption that these textual encodings would have had some kind of social or cultural effect. The post hoc selection and highlighting of films that reward analysis turns the movies themselves into proxies for the missing historical audience, paying little attention to their actual modes of circulation at any time. While it may claim that films demand the historian's attention because of the cinema's mass popularity, this symptomatic approach is capable of simultaneously overlooking even the most obvious and readily available indices of that popularity. Robert Ray (1985, pp. 140–1) has noted that in the postwar period there was 'an enormous discrepancy ... between the most commercially successful movies and those that have ultimately been seen as significant. Ray exaggerates only the uniqueness of this period: film history has been written almost in its entirety without regard to, and often with deliberate distaste for, the box office. Nowhere is film studies' genetic inheritance from literary analysis so much in evidence than in the deformities of attention that this produces. We need to be aware of the historical cost of this approach, and of how much has been omitted in the effort to construct film history as the story its historians want to tell: a story of crisis, innovation, anxiety, turbulence, and the elevation of the junior branch. As a means of writing the history of production, this symptomatic approach omits from serious consideration the great majority of cinema's most commercially successful products – in the case of Hollywood history, for example, the films of Janet Gaynor, Nelson Eddy, Betty Grable or Shirley Temple – perhaps because few of its historians have wanted to write the history of a cinema of complacency.

Symptomatic film history has also largely been written without acknowledging the transitory nature of any individual film's exhibition history. Both the US motion picture industry and those industries created in competition with Hollywood are built on business models that require audiences to cultivate the habit of cinemagoing as a regular and frequent social activity. From very early in their industrial history, motion pictures were understood to be consumables, viewed once, disposed of and replaced by a substitute providing a comparable experience. The routine change of programme was a critical element in the construction of the social habit of attendance, ensuring that any individual movie was likely to be part of a movie theatre audience's experience of cinema for three days

or less, with little opportunity to leave a lasting impression before it disappeared indefinitely. Sustaining the habit of viewing required a constant traffic in film prints, ensuring that the evanescent images on the screen formed the most transient and expendable element of the experience of cinema. During the course of every year in the 1920s, for example, somewhere between 500 000 and 750 000 separate contracts covering approximately 11 million film bookings were written between distributors and exhibitors in the United States. For every actor, writer, electrician or painter employed in Hollywood's production industry in 1939, there were five distribution company salespeople, projectionists, ushers and box-office clerks employed in the business of despatching and exploiting motion pictures, and around 2000 people whose regular habit of ticket-buying greased the wheels of the entire operation.

Figures such as these may give some sense of scale to the larger socioeconomic system implied in Jean Mitry's 1973 proposal for a film *histoire totale*, which would be 'simultaneously a history of its industry, its technologies, its systems of expression (or, more precisely, its systems of signification), and aesthetic structures, all bound together by the forces of the economic, psychosocial and cultural order' (Mitry, 1973, p. 115). From within the *Annales* tradition of socio-cultural history, Michèle Lagny has followed Mitry in describing her version of a preferred film history located 'as part of a larger ensemble, the socio-cultural history ... conceived as an articulation among three types of analysis, dealing with cultural objects, with the framework of their creation, making and circulation, and finally with their consumption' (Lagny, 1994, p. 27). The turn to reception histories has at one level begun to address the issue of the socially specific audience, and the local, national and global networks of business entrepreneurs, managers and theatre employees whom cinemagoers encountered each week at the movies (Staiger, 1992). But even histories of reception originating from within a film studies paradigm have been marked by a tendency to insist that the films themselves remain central to film history. In her 1997 *Screen* essay, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', Barbara Klinger describes 'a cinematic *histoire totale*' that would place 'a film within multifarious intertextual and historical frames' to produce a '*Rashomon*-like effect where the researcher uncovers different historical "truths" about a film as she/he analyses how it has been deployed within past social relations' (Braudel, 1967, pp. 441–442; Klinger, 1997, p. 110). As Lagny puts it, 'the core is the film text ... Working from the cinema or on the cinema means starting from the film, and going back to it' (Lagny, 1994, p. 41). Chapman, Glancy and Harper similarly insist that the primacy of 'the film text', as both source document and object of enquiry, is what differentiates film history from other forms of historical enquiry (Chapman *et al.*, 2007, p. 8).

This presumption is less likely to drive the new kinds of cinema history that are represented in this volume, in part at least because scholars in this emerging field come from more diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Cinema has become a matter of historical interest to researchers who have not been schooled in the professional orthodoxy that the proper business of film studies is the study of films. From the perspective of historical geography, social history, economics, anthropology or

population studies, the observation that cinemas are sites of social and cultural significance has as much to do with the patterns of employment, urban development, transport systems and leisure practices that shape cinema's global diffusion, as it does with what happens in the evanescent encounter between an individual audience member and a film print.

The new cinema history's preoccupations with the cinema as a commercial institution and with the socio-cultural history of its audiences may seem to risk abandoning the medium-specificity of film history to what Charles Musser has warily described as 'a broader and more amorphous cultural and social history' (Musser, 2004, p. 105). The authors represented here would, however, follow Richard Abel in arguing that as mass entertainment, cinema 'has to be conceived in terms that reach beyond the production of film texts and exhibition practices' (Abel, 2006, p. 6). New cinema history offers an account that complements and is informed by many aspects of film history, particularly by investigations of global conditions of production, of technical innovation and craft and of the multiple and interconnected organisational cultures that characterise the film production industry. To these it adds knowledge of the historical operations of distribution and exhibition businesses worldwide, and of ways in which these interconnected networks of global corporate interests, local franchises and other small businesses have together managed the flow of cinema product around the world's theatres and non-theatrical venues. It uses quantitative information, articulated through the apparatus of databases, spatial analysis and geovisualisation, to advance a range of hypotheses about the relationship of cinemas to social groupings in the expectation that these hypotheses must be tested by other, qualitative means. In demonstrating the range of archival materials specific to these core areas of cinema's operational and institutional history, the new cinema history cautions strongly against the adequacy of a total history of cinema founded on the study of films.

At the same time, the new cinema history offers a counter-proposition to the assumption that what matters in the study of the audience experience should be restricted to 'reception' – that is, to what happens in the moments in which audiences are primarily focused on the screen, or are thinking afterwards about the film and its possible meanings. As Kate Bowles has suggested, film studies has most often imagined its spectators as captive and captivated creatures of its texts,

stumbling into the theatre out of nowhere ... and then vanishing back out into the crowded street and a life imagined chiefly as the place that the escapist is escaping from, not as a life furnished with other media, other pressures, or other people. (Bowles, 2009, p. 84)⁸

Oral histories with cinema audience members, on the other hand, consistently tell us that the local rhythms of motion picture circulation and the qualities of the experience of cinema attendance were place-specific and shaped by the continuities of life in the family, the workplace, the neighbourhood and community. Stories that cinemagoers recall return repeatedly to the patterns and highlights of everyday

life, its relationships, pressures and resolutions. Only the occasional motion picture proves to be as memorable, and as Annette Kuhn discusses in Chapter 4, it is as likely to be memorable in its fragments as in its totality.

Kuhn's chapter seeks to address the methodological distance between the critical and theoretical analysis of individual films and the study of cinema as a social and cultural institution by examining cinema memory as a form of discourse with identifiable thematic and formal attributes, which can be analysed using 'the textual and psychoanalytic procedures familiar to most film scholars'. She develops a typology of cinema memory, distinguishing between three distinct modes in which the personal, the collective and the social intersect to different degrees and in different combinations: remembered images or brief scenes from films, situated memories of films; and memories of the activity of cinemagoing.

Remembered scenes or images from films are distinctive in being brief, fragmentary, detached from any memory of the film's plot, and still resonant and intense, evoking strong emotions or bodily sensations on the narrator's part. A common instance is a memory of having been frightened at the cinema at a very early age, but these 'private' memories are most often displaced from any recollection of the circumstances in which they took place. Victor Burgin describes such a vivid and dreamlike memory:

I can recall nothing else of this film – no other sequence, no plot, no names of characters or actors, and no title. How can I be sure the memory is from a film? I just know that it is. Besides, the memory is in black and white. (Burgin, 2004, p. 16)

These qualities, Kuhn suggests, align this type of memory with the 'interior', pre-verbal psychological processes of the 'raw' dream, daydream or fantasy. Like dreams, these fragmentary memories are transformed and 'somehow diminished' when they are pressed into verbal or narrative form, 'as if the process of articulation takes the *shine* off the unspoken, unarticulated, memory image' (Burgin, 2004, p. 15).

The second type of cinema memory that Kuhn identifies is more situated, involving the recall of a film or a scene within the context of events in the subject's own life. I can, for example, recall with some precision the concern my nine-year-old self felt, on a visit to the Shirley Odeon for a friend's birthday, at the number of horses that seemed to be killed in the climactic battle in *The Commancheros* (1961).⁹ I can also remember discovering my parents' expectations of cinemagoing when, in 1964 we saw a double bill of *Son of Captain Blood* (1962) and *Dr. Syn, Alias the Scarecrow* (1963). We had arrived halfway through *Dr. Syn*, and when we reached the same point in the movie three hours later, they firmly announced that 'this is where we came in', and declared that we were leaving with the narrative incomplete.¹⁰ As Kuhn suggests, these types of cinema memories share an anecdotal rhetoric, in which the narrator is both protagonist and observer, and the story is commonly embellished with extraneous detail.

The largest category in Kuhn's typology comprises memories of the activity of cinemagoing, which are normally recounted entirely separately from memories of

particular films, as recollections of a communal activity, often with repeated themes: “‘We used to’ is the characteristic introductory turn of phrase here ... in a manner that melds the personal with the collective, or frames the personal within a collective experience.’ The comparative abundance of such recollections in the discourse of cinema memory has led Kuhn and others to conclude that, in the memories of the vast majority of the cinemagoers she interviewed, ‘the essentially *social* act of “going to the pictures” is of far greater consequence than the cultural activity of seeing films.’ Although these accounts may sometimes underestimate the impact of particular movies on individuals or audiences at the time, they surely remind us that unlike key life events, the vast majority of films do not seek out landmark status for themselves, but are designed to fade back into the overall field of our cultural experiences. Like individual dreams that may be vivid and impressive at the time and briefly on waking, most individual movies receive little subsequent support from the processes of long-term recall and re-narration that characterise the building of our memories of significant life events. It seems that we are habituated as consumers to clear them from our memories and make way for more, and in this respect, at least, we may resemble the spectator that Roland Barthes describes leaving the movie theatre as if he were awakening from hypnosis (Barthes, 1986, p. 345).

Kuhn has elsewhere described memory as neither pure experience nor pure event, but ‘always already a text ... an account, always discursive’ (Kuhn, 1995, p. 161). Cinema memories, like other memory texts, ‘create, rework, repeat and recontextualise the stories people tell each other about the kinds of lives they lead’ (Kuhn, 1995, p. 165). Each of the three types of cinema memory that Kuhn describes perform different functions across a range of private and public purposes. Putting such memories to use inevitably involves decontextualising them from their site of origin and inserting them into some other narrative or argumentative sequence. Those affective personal memories that serve to recall an emotion or its expression are least likely to circulate as public narratives, but perhaps we also remember cinema in fragments because memories of whole movies are not particularly useful in constructing our own narratives, whereas stories of cinema-going are very readily turned into narratives in which we are at the centre of events as creators of our own world (Kuhn, 1995, p. 166).

Our use of cinema memory as a component in understanding audiences and their behaviour must acknowledge the deliberately engineered ephemerality of cinema, both as a property of its commercial existence and as a phenomenon of memory. The patterns formed by individual memories of cinema, echoing those of its commercial flow, invoke less a sense of an *histoire totale* focused on an individual film text than another concept central to Fernand Braudel’s historiography: the ‘dialectic of duration’ through which he sought to describe the simultaneous plurality of historical time (Braudel, 1980, p. 26). Social time, Braudel argued, ‘does not flow at one even rate, but goes at a thousand different paces, swift or slow, which bear almost no relation to the day-to-day rhythm of a chronicle or of traditional history’ (Braudel, 1980, p. 12). While the mere century of cinema’s

existence hardly provides a timeframe that engages the geographical time of Braudel's *longue durée*, his distinction between the cyclical, social time of 'the major forms of collective life' and the individual time of particular events provides a temporal framework within which we can examine patterns of cultural consumption (Braudel, 1980, pp. 10–11; Santamaria and Bailey, 1984).¹¹ Disposing of the fiction that time is homogeneous frees us from the obligation to assume that people living through periods of rapid change naturally felt disorientated; this liberation may enable us to develop a more nuanced understanding of cinema's various relations with 'modernity' in the early twentieth century (Passmore, 2003, p. 129).

All historical work, Braudel insisted, 'is concerned with breaking down time past, choosing among its chronological realities according to more or less conscious preferences and exclusions'. Traditional history, predominantly concerned with the individual, the event and the proximate explanation, has 'accustomed us to the headlong, dramatic, breathless rush of its narrative'. By contrast, the 'new economic and social history' associated with the *Annales* sought to transcend particular individuals and events in order to examine the rhythms and 'rates of respiration' of economies, institutions and social structures (Braudel, 1980, pp. 10–11, 27, 129). A segmentation of cinema history according to its economic and social phases might, for example, distinguish between the period in which cinema was available only through an act of what Robert Allen has called 'social convergence' and subsequent periods in which sociality became an optional component of the experience of cinema.

Against these larger movements of social and cultural experience, the brief life (both commercially and in memory) of individual films resembles Braudel's description of events as instants in history, 'surface disturbances ... short, sharp, nervous vibrations ... waves stirred up by the powerful movement of tides' (Braudel, 1980, p. 3). Braudel acknowledged '*l'histoire événementielle*' as the form of history that is 'by its nature the most exciting and richest in human interest', but he insisted on its capriciousness and limited explanatory power:

I remember a night near Bahia, when I was enveloped in a firework display phosphorescent fireflies; their pale lights glowed, went out, shone again all without piercing the night with any true illumination. So it is with events; beyond their glow, darkness prevails. (Braudel, 1980, pp. 10–11)

The lacunae of memory form part of the prevailing darkness of cinema's social history, and this history is not recovered by ascribing a disproportionate historical agency to the most transitory and ephemeral component of the social experience of cinema, by making the movies themselves stand in as proxies for the missing historical audience. Finding more satisfactory ways to accommodate the culturally normative process of forgetting and moving on that so aptly mimics the rapid cycling of movies through theatres is, however, only one of the methodological issues that faces the historian of the audience experience. Writing the social history of audiences is inevitably an activity circumscribed by indeterminacy. Because

audiences are evanescent, unstructured social agglomerations who assemble for each event, dissolving without apparent trace on each occasion, it is tempting to generalise the elusive empirical reality they constitute into abstract but stable social categories (Allen and Gomery, 1985, p. 156). Thus a great deal of writing on film refers to 'the audience', or sociologically derived subcohorts within this imagined totality: the female audience, the gay audience, the child audience, the Nigerian audience and so on. This abstraction has more in common with film studies' previous imagination of a hypothetical spectator crafted by the psychosexual operation of his or her ego, who nevertheless floats above the specifics of social history, and who manifests symptomatically in much the same way wherever the same movie plays.

As Robert Allen argues, film history's assumptions have inverted the accounts of popular memory, reducing the experience of cinema to an abstracted, uneventful, individual act of textual engagement. Substituting theories of spectatorship for social histories, film studies 'has invested a great deal in conceptualizing what was involved aesthetically, ideologically and sexually in playing the role of spectator', but has left largely unexplored the social preconditions that determined any instance of that role: how attendance at this or that cinema defined a class or caste identity, or how a racial or religious affiliation determined access to the apparent democracy of entertainment through social negotiations that took place outside the theatre as well as inside it. To write about historical audiences, we have to replace these imaginary spectators with ones of our own creation, located more specifically in space and time, as Richard Abel does at the beginning of *Americanizing the Movies and 'Movie-Mad' Audiences*: 'Imagine you are a young woman who has decided to join one of your store clerk or stenographer friends going to the movies after work in downtown Des Moines, Iowa, in the spring of 1913' (Abel, 2006, p. 13).

As Stephen Hughes observes in Chapter 17, exhibition histories 'tell specific stories about local people, institutions, events and communities'. This is the second challenge confronting the new cinema historian interested in the appropriate scale of an audience study: can microhistorical research from one location generate findings that are usable by others? To paraphrase Abel's remark that the study of cinema exhibition and its audiences 'generally succeeds as social or cultural history more than as cinema history', this historical work at the village level may indeed succeed best as local history (Abel, 2004, pp. 108–9). Specific stories about local people stand a long way from Mitry's and Lagny's ambitious scoping of a prospective *histoire totale* for the cinema. But the fact that the larger comparative analysis that new cinema history can provide will rest on a foundation of microhistorical inquiry requires its practitioners to work out how to undertake small-scale practicable projects that, whatever their local explanatory aims, also have the capacity for comparison, aggregation and scaling. With common data standards and protocols to ensure interoperability, comparative analysis across regional, national and continental boundaries becomes possible as each 'local history' contributes to a larger picture and a more complex understanding of what Karel Dibbets, in his Dutch 'Culture in Context' project, has called 'the infrastructure of cultural life' (Dibbets, 2007).

The methodological toolkit underpinning this approach and, indeed, the ambition to enlarge the scope of what has previously been dismissed as merely local or community history is not, of course, limited to the study of cinema, but it is particularly suited to the examination of transitory cultural events, such as movie screenings. Audiences bring their individual and collective social circumstances with them to the social event that is the cinema screening, and those dispositions condition their interpretative response. The examination of context therefore needs to be both detailed and refined in order to begin to understand the interpretive frameworks likely to have been available to particular audiences. Because these occasions leave only residual contextual traces of their evanescent existence, this form of enquiry is the only way to 'capture' the cultural 'object' and weave it into a web of cultural and social relations.

While one aim of such projects is to develop broader descriptions from the aggregation of the small-scale and specific studies, the evidence seldom allows us to assume that one case study can simply stand in for others that seem like it. Far from discovering that one small town, urban neighbourhood or shopping mall is interchangeable with another, ethnographic cinema history frequently suggests that a more complex mapping of relationships is necessary. Close historical investigations of the everyday nature of local cinemagoing reveal how the resilient parochialism of individuals and communities incorporated and accommodated the passing content that occupied their screens to their local concerns and community experiences. Rather than pursuing a totalising account, the contributors to this collection would argue that the strength of cinema exhibition history lies in its aggregation of detail, in a way exactly analogous to the proposition that the more individual films we unearth and study, the more we know about films in general.

Several chapters in this collection address these methodological questions of microhistory and scale. In Chapter 13, Arthur Knight explores the limits of our knowledge of African-American moviegoing in the non-metropolitan US South, which constituted the most conspicuous instance of racially segregated cinema. His chapter charts the spectral existence of the Apollo Theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia, which made its elusive appearance in the *Film Daily Yearbook's* lists of 'Negro' cinemas between 1936 and 1940, but is otherwise missing from the town's documentary archive or the recorded memories of its citizens. While other historians have suggested that moviegoing was more likely to have been an occasional rather than a regular activity among African Americans before the desegregation of movies theatres in the 1960s, Knight examines the 'compelling, if not quite conclusive evidence' that especially after World War II, African Americans in many places in the Southern states had 'regular and increasing access to the movies and that at least a substantial number made use of this access' despite the objectionable conditions under which their moviegoing took place. Indicating how trade data may have significantly under-represented the size of black audiences, Knight suggests that 'long before we might have suspected, there was at least a desire amongst African Americans for moviegoing to be a part of black life in the small-town South'.

In pursuing the Apollo Theatre and the possible venues that it might have been, Knight recognises the difficulties of constructing an authoritative history from hearsay. Instead, he provides an account of 'the conditions of possibility' for African-American cinemagoing in Williamsburg from the late 1930s to 1969, when the first cinema that had never been a site of segregation was built. His discussion is as much concerned with seeing and analysing the nuances of the inevitable evidentiary gaps in the audience histories that we can construct as it is with creating as full a picture as possible of black cinemagoing. The issues raised by his chapter about the representativeness of individual case studies and the extent to which generalisations can be made from them are of crucial significance to the microhistorical methodologies of the new cinema history. So is the manner of his engagement with the paucity of evidence. Even if we can establish the existence of the Apollo Theatre, we cannot know what it played, or what relationship its audiences had to what they saw, or how that relationship might have differed from those of other audiences. These gaps in our knowledge are precisely what compel us to look for new and different clues to the social experience of cinema, and to seek other ways in which we might connect this particular case to others that might seem equally marginal from the point of privilege that has been film history's normal viewing position.

In Chapter 17, Stephen Hughes explains that Indian cinema history has also largely been 'written without reference to anyone who might have watched films'. Relatively little attention has been paid to the historical composition of local film audiences in India, and until recently there have been no sustained attempts to study exhibition as a pivotal institution.¹² Under these circumstances 'the Indian audience' is particularly liable to the kind of distorting abstraction discussed earlier. For distributors and exhibitors operating in this highly diversified market, however, sensitivity to the divisions within audiences was critical to business success. Adopting a sociological rather than a formalist approach to genre, Hughes' chapter demonstrates how south Indian exhibitors in the 1920s classified film genres as part of their business practice to help them 'imagine, cultivate and socially differentiate' their cinema audiences.¹³ By constructing a hierarchy of genres that blended questions of taste with social differentiation, exhibitors could operate a hierarchy of venues catering to different castes, classes and religious groups without explicitly segregating the social space that cinema provided. In conjunction with the economic hierarchy of ticket prices, exhibitors used their sociology of genre to constrain the democratic promise of a socially equalised audience by creating a space in which existing relations of caste and class could be simultaneously enacted and transgressed (Liang, 2005, p. 369). Hughes suggests that in India, just as in the United States and Europe, histories of exhibition are likely to lead scholars 'away from the main metropolitan areas into district cities, smaller market towns and rural hinterlands', to places that are not currently on any maps of film history: places in which the exercise of consumer discretion, which was a hallmark of cinema's appeal in US cities, was often reduced to choosing whether or not to go to the one available show in the community's only cinema.

Bemboka, a village of 300 people in the rural south of New South Wales, is certainly one of those places beyond the limit of existing cinematic maps. Exemplifying the way in which microhistorical studies can question dominant accounts of national cinema, Kate Bowles in Chapter 18 uses the history of the volunteer-operated weekly picture show that entertained the Bemboka community from 1956 to 1967 to reassess the long-standing belief among Australian media producers and scholars that Hollywood's dominance of their exhibition market was the outcome of coercive business practices, that Australian audiences were unwilling accomplices to America's success, and that Australian communities were culturally diminished by this. Bowles identifies the segmentation of the Australian market as lying in its challenging geography rather than in ethnic, linguistic or religious diversity. In the immediate context of her analysis, the 'tyranny of distance' in Australia meant that the effect of key transitions such as the availability of television diffused at an uneven pace, complicating any sense of what could be regarded as typical of national exhibition. The Bemboka picture show opened for business in the same year that television broadcasting began in Sydney and Melbourne, and closed in 1967 at least in part because its immediate purpose of raising funds to build a new Memorial Hall for the community had been achieved. A television signal of sorts reached Bemboka in 1961, but reception was poor and unreliable for another decade.

Given the difficulties involved in ensuring a regular supply of good quality 16-mm prints to a location as small, remote and economically marginal as Bemboka, Bowles' research is bound to ask why both the distributors and the Memorial Hall Fund Committee maintained their commercial relationship despite the obstacles of cultural incompatibility. For the distributors, she suggests, the answer lay less in the insignificant financial return than in the reputational benefits that could be gained by demonstrating their commitment and service to rural and regional Australia as a counter to the perennial complaints of Australian producers. For the schoolteacher and general store manager who ran Bemboka's picture show, the venture was a practical demonstration of community maintenance at least as much as it was an attempt to bring the modernity of *Rock Around the Clock* to its country audience. It is, Bowles suggests, salient to bear in mind how little the intentions and purposes sustaining the Bemboka picture show had to do with the films themselves.

A history that addresses itself to the place that cinema exhibition attendance came to occupy in specific communities cannot, however, confine itself to the idiosyncrasies of the local microhistorical narrative. Films might seem to arrive at the local theatre out of the blue, and it is certainly the case that audiences were shielded from many of the business dealings that constitute the contractual history of the distribution industry. Ethnographies of cinemagoing provide only a very weak account of how distribution might have operated, often based on guesswork and patchy observation. Nevertheless, every screening was the successful outcome of negotiations exchanged by mail, telegraph or telephone, and a sequence of physical journeys by air, sea, road and rail, in order to enable the audience's cultural

encounter with a film's content through the delivery of a film print. This is a logistical and strategic history that expresses itself archivally in multiple discursive forms of involuntary testimony: theatre records, newspaper reviews, the trade press and business correspondence.

Much of the existing literature on the history of exhibition in the United States has tended to separate exhibition from production-distribution, or otherwise reinforce the perception that it is the junior partner in the industry. Histories of both the conversion to sound and the Paramount case, which ended with the divorcement of the major companies' theatre chains from their production and distribution operations, are most frequently written from perspectives that emphasise the activities of the production studios and disregard the role of exhibitors in precipitating or resisting these events, or the consequences of these events for exhibitors or audiences (Conant, 1960; Izod, 1988; White, 1988b; Crafton, 1997; Gomery, 2005). Throughout its history, however, the US cinema industry has been fundamentally structured by the continually hostile relationship between the major companies and the independent exhibition sector. This tension was in part an inevitable commercial opposition between wholesaler and retailer over the division of profitability and risk, and over the exercise of economic control. This conflict was intensified by the particular nature of the business, where products were leased rather than sold, and where the wholesale price was determined more by the location and condition of the theatre than by the quality of the picture. From 1915 onwards, as the major companies sought to concentrate audiences in the most profitable tiers of the exhibition chain, the more or less continuous restructuring of the exhibition industry repeatedly exacerbated the tensions in this relationship. One perennially divisive issue revolved around the extent to which production and distribution companies could transfer some of the financial risks of production to exhibitors. In the early 1920s production companies sought to do this through advance booking payments; after this practice was abandoned, studios adopted the mechanisms of block booking and clearance as means of both ensuring the circulation of all their product and regulating exhibitors' access to pictures. Exhibitor resistance to these practices and the control they gave the major companies over the profitability of exhibition was central to the US government's antitrust suit in the Paramount case.

Extending the history of distribution practice beyond the Paramount decision, Deron Overpeck in Chapter 10 examines the relationship between US exhibitors and the major studios in the 1970s, when the growth of pay cable television stations threatened to reduce the supply of both films and audiences to US movie theatres. In the post-Paramount period, the principal instrument by which producers passed on risk to exhibitors was through the practice of blind bidding, in which exhibitors paid in advance for the licence to show a film in their theatres, effectively obliging them to invest in the movie's production and share in its risk. Blind bidding became a critical part of studio business planning after 1948, providing the studios with an advance income stream that minimised their dependence on bank loans to finance production. It remained a cause of bitter dispute between

studios and exhibitors for more than two decades after the Paramount case was settled. From the mid-1970s, the exhibitors' trade organisation, the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO), campaigned vigorously for the abolition of blind bidding, initially asking the Department of Justice to pursue an antitrust case, and then turning to individual state legislatures to prohibit it. Despite the studios' fervent resistance, by October 1979 16 states had outlawed blind bidding; by 1984, when the distributors effectively conceded defeat after the last appeals of the studios' various lawsuits were rejected, 24 states had enacted anti-blind-bidding legislation.

As Overpeck argues, the battle over blind bidding stands as one instance in which exhibitors successfully fought back against studio domination. It was not, of course, the only such instance: exhibitor campaigns were the key component in the elimination of previous anti-competitive behaviour by the major companies, including advance booking and the Paramount case. By improving exhibitors' cash flow, the exhibitors' success facilitated the renewal of the country's theatre stock in the 1980s, but as on previous occasions, the exhibitors' victory also had perverse consequences. The President of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), Jack Valenti, had warned in 1979 that without the financial guarantees provided by blind bidding, the studios would become more conservative in their production policies, producing 'fewer big budget blockbusters, fewer imaginative films, and more and more sequels and remakes'.¹⁴ Overpeck argues that in removing the financial safety net that encouraged studios to support more challenging film-making, the exhibitors' defeat of blind bidding contributed significantly to the growth of high concept film-making in the 1980s. But he also concludes that, since the expansion of the exhibition sector in that decade came via movies such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1982), *Flashdance* (1983) and *Top Gun* (1986), exhibitors were more likely to welcome the shift to adaptations and other popcorn fare than they were to lament the decline in Hollywood's aesthetic ambition.

Complementing Overpeck's business history, Deb Verhoeven's more sociological approach, in Chapter 14, uses the example of the circulation of Greek films for Greek diasporic audiences in Australia, to examine the interplay between the space and time of film distribution. The business of film distribution, she argues, is founded on the establishment of temporal hierarchies: it relies equally on the continuous supply of new products and on the predictable obsolescence that moves them through the supply chain. In achieving its commercial purpose of maximising the financial return from a limited number of prints being exposed to the largest number of people over a defined period of time, a system of distribution uses its temporal regulation of the exhibition market to construct hierarchies of access that are both spatial and social. Temporal differences are also distances. On a global scale, the greater the distance from a film's domestic market, the longer the delay in its arrival. Within a region, access spreads from the metropolitan centre to the suburban hinterlands, with the product losing value as it passes through time and space. The print bears the signs of its physical journey in 'the uneasy splices, the perceptible hiss or mismatched dialogue of a damaged soundtrack, the

palimpsest of green, yellow and white lines that run amok over the drama', and these visible scars position and address its audiences, informing them of their place in a socioeconomic hierarchy entirely unrelated to the content on the screen.¹⁵

In her account of Greek cinema in Australia, Verhoeven stresses the possibility of other, qualitatively different, temporalities of distribution that resulted, at least in part, from the distinctive social function that Greek cinema had for its diasporic community, to 'bring our country to us'. Exhibitors understood their audiences to be using cinema to recover past experiences in another country, and constructed their programming policies accordingly. As a result, distributors felt little obligation to rush new films to market, and accommodated their audiences' preferences for film revivals, in the process ensuring that successive waves of migrants arriving in Australia would have access to common cinematic memories of their homeland. Along with several other authors in this collection, Verhoeven suggests that a consideration of this diasporic audience encourages us to redefine our understanding of 'national cinemas' as politically, linguistically or geographically bounded entities. Australia's Greek diasporic cinemas, she argues, did not operate in 'opposition' to Hollywood – indeed, they conventionally played subtitled Hollywood movies as the second item in their double bills. Rather, they suggest a way of thinking about the globalisation of cinema, and the constitution of its audiences as communities of belonging, that is, not simply contained by an account of cultural imperialism.

In his discussion of the spread of cinema exhibition and the beginnings of everyday moviegoing in Ontario in the early twentieth century (Chapter 15), Paul Moore argues that the region is a neglected transitional scale between the locality and the mass market for cinema, just as it also constitutes a site at which microhistorical and macrohistorical levels of enquiry intersect (Peltonen, 2001, p. 348). Moore demonstrates that the emergence of mainstream cinema was not simply an urban phenomenon but a metropolitan one, in that it almost immediately included the surrounding region in the creation of a mass market. What made cinema modern, he suggests, was not so much its apparatus, its commerciality or its sensationalism as its creation of a form of consumption that connected all places in a region, not to each other so much as to the mass market of modern metropolitanism, most frequently expressed in local newspapers' claims that the arrival of cinema in an Ontario town was proof that its town was 'up-to-date'.

Moore's extensive study of the newspaper coverage of early cinema in Ontario reveals that the daily newspapers of small cities and towns recorded their local cinema history with far more accuracy and detail than the press in larger urban locations where nickel shows – the entertainment equivalent of corner stores – opened almost anonymously, without advertising, reporting or building permits. Addressing a diverse, dispersed and fractious readership, major metropolitan daily papers did not treat cinema with the same promotional zeal until years later, when the movies had become a much more culturally homogenised mass culture. Cinema was much more likely to make an appearance in the metropolitan press when it was 'newsworthy'; as a result, much of the metropolitan coverage was

negative, dwelling on fires, accidents or moral dangers. The primary function of a small city daily, on the other hand, was to advertise its local business to its readership, and in this setting, picture shows were 'adworthy' from their first appearance. The advertising columns of these papers provide some of the most comprehensive records available for documenting the history of early cinema.

From this material, Moore develops both a methodology for the use of newspaper coverage of early cinema, and an analysis of the variable relationships between cinema and locality that were embedded in and dependent on the social purpose and scope of the town's newspaper. As he points out, looking for information in the wrong place – for advertising in village weekly papers, for example – can easily mislead the researcher into believing that cinema was absent from locations in which it actually flourished. The mass market for movies was, he suggests, created by the independent activity of thousands of small entrepreneurs who responded to the opportunities presented by the mass production of celluloid entertainment. By creating a radically decentralised exhibition system, these showmen integrated their activities into the local norms of their communities, fitting cinema into existing social and cultural routines. As a result, the appearance of cinema 'did not immediately change how local publics congregated, how local businesses promoted themselves, or how local news was communicated'. But as a more elaborated distribution system of runs and clearances established itself in the 1910s, this pattern of information and promotion was replaced by one more firmly determined by production-distribution companies and focused on movie stars and film titles. The disciplines of a more centralised distribution system gradually eroded the distinctive character of disparate exhibition venues, stripping away their cultural specificity in favour of a much more highly concentrated economic model for cinema's mass market. It was on the foundations provided by this model, Moore argues, that the classical Hollywood system of production was established.

Like Moore, Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, in Chapter 16, examines the appearance of early cinema in a non-metropolitan venue, Cooperstown, a village of 2500 in rural upstate New York, focusing on the village's Centennial Celebration in August 1907. Using accounts of this event, Fuller-Seeley discusses the recognition of films as suitable entertainment for provincial viewers. Unlike the World's Fairs being held in major cities in this era, the Cooperstown Centennial did not celebrate new inventions, manufacturing progress or developments in consumer culture. Instead, it commemorated the town's history, literary heritage and mythical pioneering past. The Cooperstown event prominently featured a motion picture show presented by the Cook and Harris High Class Moving Pictures Company, which had as its centrepiece an Edison historical drama, *Daniel Boone: or Pioneer Days in America*. The Cooks' two-hour show, which was advertised as '100% moral' and containing 'Nothing to offend', also included patriotic actualities, romantic melodramas, light comedies and songs. According to local newspaper reports, it proved to be 'one of the most popular of all the attractions' at the celebration, entirely in keeping with the 'dignified and commendable manner' in which the week's events were conducted.¹⁶ Whatever concerns were being raised about the physical and

moral safety of the new nickelodeon entertainment in the cities, the Cooperstown event demonstrated that moving pictures could be acknowledged as an acceptable accompaniment to the celebration's more traditional spectacles of parades and concerts, as well as being a source of historical representation, education and amusement fit for provincial families, women, and children.¹⁷

Although microhistorical enquiry frequently considers cases that seem marginal or have been overlooked, it is not perforce confined to accounts of the suppressed and the precarious (Peltonen, 2001, pp. 347–359). One consistent if unplanned aspect of this kind of microhistorical enquiry is that its precise objects rarely emerge as an interest shared by more than one scholar. Two essays in this collection, however, examine different aspects of the exhibition history of one cinema, the Rialto, in New York's Times Square, by focusing on the discursive constructions of its audiences in press reports and critical commentaries on the cinema and the films it screened. Tim Snelson and Mark Jancovich (Chapter 11) trace the career of its notorious manager, Arthur Mayer, who took control of the Rialto at the height of the Depression, converting it from a failing movie palace into an upmarket grind-house cinema playing 'mystery, mayhem and murder': sensationalist movies to a surprisingly upmarket, bourgeois audience 'slumming' it. Rebuilt in 1935 in Art Moderne style, the Rialto was far from the 'flea-pit' it represented itself as being, and Snelson and Jancovich argue that the theatre's significance lay in the effectiveness with which it branded the films it showed from the late 1930s to the 1950s with its own distinctive identity. Positioning itself as the 'cinematic chamber of horrors' in New York's imagination in the 1930s and 1940s, the Rialto provides a prime illustration of the claim that different cinemas not only had meanings that exceeded their function as places to show films, but could also transform the meanings of the films shown within them.

With the complicity of the New York press, Mayer self-consciously defined the Rialto as an oppositional, even offensive, space, in revolt against mainstream Hollywood's 'safe', 'censored', bourgeois and feminised sensibility. Snelson and Jancovich argue, however, that the theatre's image as luridly lowbrow, the last, disreputable 'refuge of the oppressed sex', was heavily ironic: the Rialto and its policy of 'no hits, no runs, just terrors' were consciously marketed to middle-class audiences searching for an alternative to middlebrow culture. Even the misogyny of the theatre's publicity was attached to a discourse of connoisseurship and sophistication in subcultural capital that circulated widely in press discussions of Mayer and his cinema. Focusing on the discursive construction of the Rialto's audience in Mayer's promotional strategies and in the observations of other commentators, Snelson and Jancovich argue that the Rialto's exhibition practices would become central to the emergence of cult film, particularly in the ways in which it constructed a culture of alternative film consumption through discourses of transgression, urbanity, masculinity and active spectatorship.¹⁸

Peter Stanfield (Chapter 12) uses the Rialto as his entry-point for a consideration of the cultural discourses surrounding underground film and its audiences, in which he tracks the move from the 'underground cinema' identified by the critic

and painter Manny Farber to that defined by film critic, publisher and filmmaker Jonas Mekas. In his 1957 essay 'Underground Films: A Bit of Male Truth', Farber used the term 'underground' to describe the work of American film-makers who 'tunnelled' inside the action movies at which they excelled. But for Farber, going underground also implied a climb down the social and cultural ladder, to discover a more vital and essential film-making than that offered in first-run theatres. The hard-bitten action movies in which he discovered 'expedience and tough-guy insight' found their natural home in the murky, congested 'grind-house' theatres in big cities, where they were screened in what Farber called 'a nightmarish atmosphere of shabby transience' (Farber, 1957, p. 489).

Farber's authentication of his moviegoing experiences 'as a steady customer in male-audience houses', and his acts of discrimination between Hollywood's commercial products, was a form of slumming (Farber, 1953, p. 405). He provided an intellectual defence for the bourgeois patrons of the Rialto. Farber's search for an authentic cinemagoing experience was shared with a group of critics who were writing during the 1930s: Mayer Levin, Otis Ferguson and James Agee, who identified the 'poor, metropolitan, and deeply experienced ... West Times Square audience' as 'probably ... the finest movie audience in the country', validating a male proletarian audience's taste over and above the acts of distinction performed by an educated elite (Agee, 2005, p. 105). Farber's 'Underground Films' essay was an elegy for the 'literate audience for the masculine picture-making', able to discriminate between 'perceptive trash and Thalberg pepsin-flavored sloshing', which had 'oozed away ... during the mid-1940s when the movie market was flooded with fake underground films – plush thrillers with neo-Chandler scripts and a romantic style that seemed to pour the gore, histrionics, décor out of a giant catsup bottle' – precisely those *films noir* subsequently celebrated for their *zeitgeistigkeit* (Farber, 1957, p. 496).

Although Jonas Mekas also celebrated the films and filmgoing experience of the fleatrap of 42nd Street, he played a key role in shifting the meaning of the underground film experience, to describe American avant-garde film practice, 'a cinema that is anti-bourgeois, anti-patriotic, and anti-religious, as well as anti-Hollywood', and more likely to be screened in Greenwich Village or the Lower East Side than 42nd Street (Tyler, 1994, p. v). Critics championing action films or the avant-garde might argue that one contested Hollywood from within while the other did so from without, but Stanfield also invokes Pauline Kael's critique of the 'peculiar emphasis' placed by both groups of critics on 'virility', as well as their common resort to 'the language of the hipster' (Kael, 1963, pp. 12–26). Exhibitors' motives were equally ambiguous. As early as 1947, Arthur Mayer changed the Rialto's programming policy to show imported films, complaining that the studios had largely abandoned the opportunities for technical and aesthetic experiment provided by B-feature production (Mayer, 1947–48). *Variety*, however, explained that Mayer hoped 'to latch on to foreign pix which are steeped in a reminiscent flavor of action and sex so that the drop-ins continue to haunt his theatre'.¹⁹ *Rome Open City*, which Mayer distributed in the United States with his partner Joseph Burstyn, was

advertised in Chicago as featuring a ‘Savage Orgy of Lust’, and double-billed with *Romance of the Rio Grande*, a five-year-old Western starring Cesar Romero.²⁰ Barbara Wilinsky’s meticulous history of the emergence of art house cinema in postwar America essentially confirms Mayer’s observation in his 1953 autobiography that the most successful European imports were ‘pictures whose artistic and ideological merits were aided and abetted at the box office by their frank sex content’ (Mayer, 1953, p. 233; Wilinsky, 2001, p. 37). The postwar American film culture that Wilinsky describes relied to a material extent on the disreputable venues that played both sets of underground cinema, and where audiences in the 1950s and 1960s could see European art cinema interspersed with the ‘lowest action trash’ that even Kael found ‘preferable to wholesome family entertainment’ (Kael, 1970, pp. 115–129).

These discursive identifications of a disreputable audience suggest further avenues of inquiry. Farber’s ‘Termite Art’ and the ‘subversive gestures’ that Kael found in trash were not created solely to play in underground, male-audience cinemas; elsewhere they might perhaps occupy the bottom half of double bills, satisfying the ‘masculine escapist urge: adventure, horror, blood’, of suburban males-in-revolt, who might only read about the lurid pleasures of the Rialto in their newspapers. Can we attach an economic or demographic identity to the audience described by Ferguson and Farber as resisting the dominant post-Production Code culture of wholesome middlebrow entertainment respectability? To what extent was the ‘male revolt’ that Arthur Mayer advertised and the *New York Times* publicised a discursive invocation of a more broadly dispersed phenomenon? Was Farber right about this audience’s demise, or does it form part of the ‘gray flannel rebellion’ against ‘conformity’ that Barbara Ehrenreich describes in *The Hearts of Men* (Ehrenreich, 1983, p. 40; Fraterrigo, 2009, pp. 28–36)?

In asking these questions we are explicitly following the line of historical enquiry suggested by the microhistorical detail, which then requires the tools of more complex large-scale analysis to understand how and why audience behaviour might be both locally idiosyncratic and at the same time attached by complex cultural practices to other sites, other imagined audiences and other imagined mores. To understand what audiences have chosen to do in terms of cultural and economic relations across sites as well as in their relationships within venues, we need different tools and different kinds of data. Surviving box office records have, for instance, attracted the attention of economic historians undertaking large-scale analysis. In this field John Sedgwick’s pioneering development of tools with which we can gauge film popularity based on cinema attendance has drawn attention to the opportunities afforded to cultural history by statistical instruments capable of detecting significant variation across large datasets.

Sedgwick’s chapter in this collection (Chapter 7) extends his earlier work on the POPSTAT Index of Film Popularity to examine the multiple markets for cinema products and the distinctions among the products supplied to those markets (Sedgwick, 2000). Examining first-run and suburban filmgoing in Sydney, Australia, in the mid-1930s, Sedgwick identifies distinctive patterns of film tastes among the geographically specific audiences attending different types of cinemas, and

establishes the extent to which cinemagoing preferences in the suburbs differed markedly from those of city centres. From this he demonstrates that the city centre market was designed to absorb the enormously variable popularity of different movies. Sedgwick's data suggest that 12% of the movies screened in metropolitan Sydney earned half the total box-office revenue generated by those cinemas in 1934. This pattern, in which a very small number of hit films earned disproportionate amounts of first-run box-office, was also common to first-run exhibition in the United States and Great Britain, and provides the underlying economic explanation for the industry's reputation as a high-risk environment (Sedgwick and Pokorny, 2005, pp. 15–16).

The suburban market operated quite differently, however. The overwhelming majority of programmes screened in Sydney's suburban cinemas in 1934 were double bills, with a twice-weekly change of programme. While the first-run cinemas allocated screen time according to a movie's popularity, these suburban theatres, screening 200 movies a year, sought to maintain admission levels regardless of any individual movie's popularity. In these conditions of circulation, the difference between one movie's earnings and another's was far less variable than in the metropolitan cinemas. Because a popular movie would have already received extended exhibition in the first-run market, middle-ranking movies received much greater exposure in the suburban market than in first-run cinemas. First-run exhibition aimed to recruit as large an audience as possible to pay the highest prices to watch a single attraction for as long as possible. The circulation of movies through the suburban market, on the other hand, much more closely resembled a long tail, in which retail business was generated by selling relatively small quantities (seats in individual theatres) at relatively low prices on a regular basis (Sedgwick and Pokorny, 2010). This pattern of retail activity emphasised a schedule of regular changes as the mechanism by which audiences were continually attracted back to the cinema, and by which distributors ensured the circulation of all their stock.

In Chapter 6, Clara Pafort-Overduin also considers patterns of film distribution in the mid-1930s: in this case in The Netherlands, where her enquiry concerns the viability of a Dutch film production industry and the appeal of Dutch films to a Dutch audience. The received history of Dutch national cinema bears a striking similarity to that of other small national cinemas: a story in which the principal villains are an improbable combination of invasive American capitalists and neglectful national audiences. Analysing the evidence of demand available from the remarkable *Cinema in Context* database, Pafort-Overduin's research uncovers a more complex narrative, in which domestic productions were far more popular with audiences than was indicated by the hostility of the Dutch film press to 'low class' productions.²¹ As she observes, a film's critical failure did not by any means result in a failure at the box office.

Although Pafort-Overduin describes the extent to which US and German product dominated the supply of film to the Dutch market, she also points out that two-thirds of these films circulated with only one copy. While Dutch films

comprised only 1% of the total number of films in circulation, they occupied a much higher proportion of the total number of screenings, with five of the ten most frequently screened movies in the period being domestic productions. One in five Dutch productions secured a place in the top 20 most screened films, compared with less than 1% of American, German or French films. The successful Dutch films – optimistic comedies with music, featuring local theatre or vaudeville stars – regularly outperformed German films of the same type and Hollywood's most extravagant productions.

Despite the strong demand for domestic films, the Dutch film production industry nevertheless remained economically extremely fragile and ultimately unsustainable, as its high degree of fragmentation made it impossible to develop a continuous mode of production. With no vertically integrated spine to the industry, producers had to raise new finance for every production, and the small size of the market set producers the near-impossible requirement that every film be profitable. Pafort-Overduin's conclusions align with those of other scholars looking at the popularity of national films from the perspective of distribution and exhibition, and it seems clear that a closer attention to demand, measured by the frequency of a movie's screenings, will provide us with a significantly more accurate analysis of the market relationship between Hollywood and domestic productions. This, in turn, may well modify our view of the nature and extent of Hollywood's cultural dominance of its foreign markets.²²

Like Pafort-Overduin, Mike Walsh (Chapter 8) provides a critique of the idea of a 'national cinema' as equating with its production sector. He argues that such a framework allows distribution and exhibition to occupy roles only as either 'victims or ... *compradors* in the hegemonic dominance of Hollywood'. His analysis of Australian distribution and exhibition in the 1920s and 1930s calls into question some long-standing assumptions about the practices that underpinned the circulation of Hollywood movies. Against the conventional wisdom that blames the domestic production industry's repeated failures on the industrial dominance of the major American companies, Walsh argues that until the late 1960s, Australian governments made a clear decision to import and tax entertainment films rather than subsidise a production industry. This policy ensured that the Australian film industry was dominated by local corporations that chose to invest in exhibition and exploit the availability of low-cost high-quality foreign imports. The demand that these decisions generated provided a stable market in which American distributors competed with each other for access to Australian screens.

Distributors did not follow a single pattern either in their negotiations with exhibition circuits or in the ways in which they moved a small number of prints around a large territory such as Australia. Walsh demonstrates that distributors were as likely to collude with exhibitors – particularly the dominant Union Theatres chain – to gain advantage over their rivals as they were to conspire together against local interests in either production or exhibition. Even local exhibitors were not without effective bargaining power. While first-run exhibitors demanded long 'clearance' windows before distributors made films available for suburban theatres,

distributors were anxious to keep the prints of each picture working as hard as possible. This aligned their interests with those of suburban cinemas like the independently owned Colonel Light Gardens cinema (CLG), in a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia, which was anxious to show movies as soon as possible after their first run, so that locals would wait to see them in their neighbourhood rather than journey 'up to Adelaide'. The major threat to the CLG's business in the 1930s did not, however, come from competition with the city cinemas, but from the introduction of Saturday night harness racing at a nearby racetrack, drawing large crowds and undermining the theatre's profits.

Although the Colonel Light Gardens cinema showed single-feature programmes rather than the double bills that were standard in the Sydney market, its screening pattern confirms Sedgwick's emphasis on the long tail in subsequent runs. Despite only screening three days a week, the CLG showed 225 films in 1936 – slightly more than half the total number of films released in the country that year. Even with films usually playing to quarter-capacity houses, the CLG's management could bargain effectively with distributors. The theatre was not, as nationalist legends conventionally report, tied into undifferentiated block-booked contracts and forced to take whatever was 'dumped' on it. Rather, the CLG had contracts with virtually all the US distributors, and these contracts left room for considerable negotiation over price and other terms. Walsh's fine-grained analysis reveals the oversimplifications of generalised discussions of film policy. As he concludes, only after we have discarded the notion that American distributors were to blame for the repeated failures of the Australian production industry can we write a history of Australian cinema in which Australians – industry personnel and audiences alike – occupy positions of agency. As historians elsewhere also shift the focus of their investigations from production to exhibition, they may reach similar conclusions about other national cinemas.

Given the long-standing debates about Hollywood's role as an instrument of US cultural imperialism, surprisingly little research has been conducted on the actual success of Hollywood films in particular countries, especially in those countries where the majority of the world's population lives and the majority of worldwide ticket sales take place. While Hollywood has supplied a substantial share of films released in industrialised countries since the 1910s, there is considerable evidence that in most of these countries American imports have only come to dominate annual box office charts since the 1970s. Peter Krämer points out that since then, more than three-quarters of Hollywood's international theatrical rental income has come from only eight countries: Japan, Canada, Australia and the five most populous countries of Western Europe. Together, these markets constitute less than 10% of the world's population, and account for only a small fraction of worldwide paid cinema admissions. They have much lower rates of cinema attendance than markets such as India, Singapore and Hong Kong, in which Hollywood product has had only a minor share. Following Joseph Garnarcz, Krämer argues that the claims for Hollywood's international success have traditionally relied on figures relating to supply – that is, to Hollywood's share of all films released in a particular

country – rather than to demand, expressed as Hollywood's share of total ticket sales in that country (Garncarz, 1994, p. 96). Drawing attention to the extent to which a statistical emphasis on the dollar value of ticket sales distorts our understanding of world cinema by excluding most of the world's population and most of the world's cinema consumption, Krämer argues that Hollywood's often dominant share of film supply in countries around the world has rarely translated into an equivalent share of ticket sales. His speculative analysis of the broad categories of movie that have proved most successful in different markets suggests that the similarities and differences between the hit films in different countries warrants a more extensive examination of the patterns of relative popularity across a range of international markets, and indicates a framework in which we might reconsider Hollywood's role in the processes of international cultural exchange.

Together, these analyses begin to identify a specific role for much of Hollywood production circulating in international markets, as something akin to a form of commercial ballast, the function of which was to occupy a sector of the market with a steady supply of product.²³ While both risk and profitability were concentrated on the performance of a small number of high-budget movies in first-run cinemas, the volume production of Hollywood's studio system serviced the outer tiers of the cinematic institution and secured their economic stability. Because of its economies of scale, which were themselves a consequence of the size of its domestic market, the American cinema could service the large but relatively unprofitable lower runs of the exhibition system more effectively than its domestic rivals.

In its focus on titles and genres, the quantitative analysis of box office as an index of consumer behaviour inevitably underplays the significance of the multiple contextual factors that influence spectators' decision-making. Assertions based on distribution and demand for particular titles must be qualified by remembering that the act of choosing to buy a theatre ticket is a practice that is always framed by complex physical and discursive constraints, reverberating between the micrological and the macrological realms. The socio-spatial dimension to this kind of everyday decision-making behaviour is familiar to geographers and anthropologists, but has only recently been appreciated as a significant factor in the diverse and often perverse stories of survival, closure or transition within cinema exhibition histories. In short, because the effect of film-centred film history has been to overlook local irregularities at the microhistorical level in cinema markets (and, indeed, mostly to overlook cinema markets altogether), this has driven an historical account that has significantly elevated the temporal over the spatial or ecological. As a result, while the ideological interpretation of film texts is an established standard in the repertoire of film studies, consideration of the ideological segmentation within the market – the orientation of individual venues to particular populations at particular times – has been slower to emerge. Moviegoing may have been claimed as classless, at least in the sense that it was demonstrably a social phenomenon that unsettled the common patterns of leisure segregation by class, particularly in cities, but like all forms of consumption it also acted as a source of social

fragmentation, providing new opportunities for discrimination, exclusion and distinction. Cinema attendance was locally specific. For much of its history it involved the cultivation of highly parochial habits of loyalty exercised within a very small territory of choice, in ways that were nevertheless critical to the survival of the industry as a whole. The sociality of this experience was at no stage meaningfully separate from other locally prevailing patterns of social segmentation, and the cultural boundaries that these conventions of social geography constructed were more than strong enough to determine the parameters of a leisure activity such as cinemagoing, regardless of the choice of film title on any particular occasion.

As part of a large-scale investigation into the social role of film exhibition and consumption in Flanders from 1895 to 2004, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers and Lies Van de Vijver (Chapter 5) have explored the extent to which Belgium's 'pillarized' social organisation affected the structures of film exhibition and the experience of cinema, focusing on the industrial city of Ghent in the period after World War II. Pillarisation describes the form of social and political organisation that emerged in several European countries in the nineteenth century as a response to industrialisation. In pillarised societies, religious or ideological divisions were embedded in parallel institutional structures performing similar social and political tasks. Overlapping with more traditional class conflicts, pillars formed 'vertical' social segregations, with each pillar maintaining a network of separate social institutions – banks, trade unions, newspapers, schools, hospitals – and individuals might live their lives almost entirely within the institutional framework of their pillar. Belgium was a particularly pillarised society, with Catholic, socialist and liberal pillars competing for the allegiance of the population through leisure and entertainment activities as well as by conventional political and economic means.

Belgium's dense provision of cinemas was in part a consequence of pillarisation, as commercial exhibitors in small towns found themselves in competition with Catholic venues. In the major cities, however, the ideological orientation of most cinemas was much less explicit, and other forms of social, cultural and commercial distinction also influenced audience behaviour. Venues that explicitly targeted a specific audience segment were generally regarded as operating at the margin of entertainment cinema, while Ghent's most prominent socialist cinema, the Vooruit, operated as a low-price commercial cinema, attracting a broader audience.

Arguing for what they call a 'triangulation of data, theory and method', Biltereyst, Meers and Van de Vijver explore ways in which a range of methodologies – longitudinal databases that track programming and exhibition patterns, ethnographic and oral history research into audience behaviour and memory, archival research in corporate records and local and trade press – can be integrated in the production of a social geography of cinema. The substantial oral history component of their research, in which respondents discussed the social composition and behaviour of different cinemas' audiences, allows them to layer a subjective component, expressed in terms of audience manners, dress codes and language as well as venues' programming styles, onto their map of cinema in Ghent. This

evidence describes how the choice of venue reflected people's sense of social and cultural distinction, the strength of their attachment to community and their awareness of geographical stratification. Regular attendance at a neighbourhood cinema was an act of belonging, to family or community, while seeking a 'better' film experience in the burgundy velvet seats of Ghent's most prestigious cinema was an act of social aspiration expressed through the desire for conspicuous comfort or higher projection quality.

Along with the work of several other contributors to this collection, the research of Biltreyst, Meers and Van de Vijver demonstrates the centrality of databases to research in new cinema history as well as the utility of the empirical data they synthesise. Jeffrey Klenotic has pioneered the use of a geospatial component in the compilation of exhibition databases, and in Chapter 3 he reflects on some of the possible uses of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for film historians exploring the spatial and geographic dimensions of movie distribution, exhibition and audiences. Klenotic envisages GIS as a research tool rather than as an instrument for making maps: mapping the location of cinema is only a starting point for the spatial analysis of cinema, not the end product. GIS, he argues, is a form of *bricolage*, in which knowledge is constructed through a trial-and-error research process of rearranging layers of spatial and temporal information 'to facilitate the difficult task of seeing, representing and theorizing the simultaneous multiplicity of social and historical experience in spatial terms and from a variety of partial perspectives'. It allows for the interaction of quantitative and qualitative methods, and provides a platform on which marginalised voices and competing historical perspectives can be presented, compared and tested. As well as its utility as a tool with which we can historicise space, this open, multiple and fluid approach to using GIS makes it, he argues, 'good to think with'.²⁴

Klenotic's goal is to generate a 'landscape of inquiry' that maps the networks of interrelationships forming the cinema culture of a particular place and time, in order to investigate 'what these networks meant to people and the role moviegoing played in shaping those meanings'. He describes, for example, how he has built on the work of Harlan Paul Douglass in the 1920s and 1930s to recreate a thematic mapping of the social and spatial relationships between people and places in Springfield, Massachusetts, in order to examine the immediate social, cultural and economic context of individual acts of cinemagoing. In this landscape, a critical inquiry concerned the extent to which the major companies' economic consolidation and vertical integration of exhibition venues had produced a standardised experience of moviegoing. Did the socioeconomic variations embedded in the geographic locations of specific theatres continue to influence their significance as sites for cultural assimilation, negotiation or resistance? Klenotic argues that the iterative process of thematic mapping that GIS enables makes it possible to deconstruct Douglass's assumptions in the formulation of his key concept of 'social quality', and thus to relate Douglass's understanding of the social geography of Springfield to both quantitative demographic data and the qualitative information provided by moviegoers' oral histories. Although the Franklin Theater in

Springfield's North End was within easy walking distance for many city residents, most of them travelled much farther afield to theatres in other parts of the city, because the Franklin was in a neighbourhood with a 'bad' reputation for its low 'social quality'.²⁵

Klenotic advocates the use of a framework he identifies as 'grounded visualization'. This is a critical, empirical and interpretive approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative sources of information and draws upon the resources of grounded theory, ethnography and GIS visualisation. Grounded theories of historical explanation begin with the evidence, and induce theoretical explanations from the patterns and themes disclosed by its analysis. A spatial history of cinema must map both the routes by which films circulated as commodities and the geographic constraints and influences on the diverse set of social experiences and cultural practices constituted by going to the movies. In such a map, movie theatres are themselves configured as the nodal points at which cinema takes on material form, to constitute a 'network of time-space relations with socially embedded and physically embodied audiences'.

Historical engagements with the circumstances of individual cinemas such as Klenotic's analysis provides suggest the rich possibilities that an historical geography of cinema can provide, by comparison with a reliance on such apparently ahistorical and non-geographical generalisations as 'the city' and 'the urban sensibility' (Lury and Massey, 1999, pp. 230–1). A spatial analysis of cinema can help us understand the shifting forms of exhibition and moviegoing, and how the location of emerging, disappearing or residually surviving forms of exhibition have been related to the flow of other resources within and across the geography of ruralities, small towns, cities and metropolises.

The contributors to this collection share a number of propositions that are forcefully articulated by Robert Allen in Chapter 2. Beginning with a description of theatrical moviegoing from the perspective of a contemporary teenager, unenthusiastically constrained by 'paying nearly the equivalent of buying a DVD to see a film once in a dark room without wireless internet connectivity with strangers at a time determined by someone else's schedule', Allen argues that the present generation of teenagers and young adults – always the most frequent and reliable moviegoers – no longer experience theatrical moviegoing as more 'authentic' than any other way of consuming cinema. For the first two generations of movie audiences in the first world, the experience of cinema was available only as a social activity, while for their children, the baby boom generation, 'the big screen' and the regular 'social convergence under the sign of cinema' remained the preferred mode of consumption. Allen argues that the present generation, however, 'understands cinema as a textually disintegrated phenomenon experienced through multiple ... sites and modalities'. For them, the sociality of the experience of cinema is merely an option, and not necessarily a desirable one; they now experience cinema from the other, post-moviegoing side of what Allen considers to be 'an epochal divide'.

Allen's central proposition is that the subject of what we are calling the new cinema history is the experience of cinema. That experience, for most of the

history of cinema, has been 'social, eventful and heterogeneous', so that the history of the experience of cinema is ineluctably a social history. As Klenotic argues, this social history is also a spatial history: each event of cinema was, as Allen suggests, a unique convergence of multiple individual trajectories upon a particular social site, and as such, it was both an unpredictable and unreproducible conjunction of undocumented purposes and meanings.

If the individual significances of these events are largely irrecoverable, some broader purposes and meanings are more susceptible to representation. Allen's mapping of the sites of North Carolina movie theatres reveals that in town after town, the emergence of cinema was a phenomenon of the formation and growth of urban central business districts. Rather than providing the alternative public sphere suggested by some accounts of cinema as vernacular modernism, cinema-going was 'part of the experience of the spaces of downtown social, cultural, commercial and consumer life' (Hansen, 1991, 2000). Throughout the 1920s and beyond, the majority of movie theatres in the United States were in small towns where the community's only cinema was likely also to be its largest secular meeting space, functioning as a multipurpose venue, tightly woven into not only the community's social and cultural life but also its civic life. Exhibitors were embedded in their communities, boosting the town and its retail enterprise as members of the Chamber of Commerce and cooperating with the churches, the Women's Club and the PTA (Gomery, 1992, p. 216). Just as oral histories of cinema have consistently alerted us to the social significance of the routines and rituals of cinemagoing – 'who sat where each week, and with whom, and what they wore' – the picture show also provided an occasion at which existing social, economic and religious distinctions could be projected onto the informal social segregation of cinema seating arrangements (Huggett and Bowles, 2004; Allen, 2007; McKenna, 2007).

Finally, do we need another 'new' history? Apart from editorial hubris, what justifies the claim to novelty of the work presented here? Like many rhetorical claims to the new, we are in fact advocating an historical return to the prevailing concerns of some of the earliest studies of cinema as an object of sociological and psychological enquiry, rather than the object of aesthetic, critical and interpretive enquiry that has ensued from the construction of film studies as an academic discipline in the humanities. These earlier studies, from Hugo Münsterberg and Emilie Altenloh to the Payne Fund research, concerned themselves with what Frankfurt School theorist Leo Löwenthal called 'the underlying social and psychological function' of cinema as a component in the modern urban environment; their methods were those of the 'human sciences', and their objects of enquiry were people, rather than artefacts.²⁶ This research tradition has remained much stronger in television studies, where questions of industrial organisation and product circulation, qualitative approaches to audience research and a concern with culturally inscribed conditions of reception have persisted in offering a counterpoint to textual interpretation.²⁷ In some respects, at least, the focus of the new cinema history represents an application to cinema of questions already familiar to the broader field of media studies.

From another perspective, an overview of the Euro-American historiography that has influenced the new cinema history would register the extent to which historians have, in Krzysztof Pomian's phrase, 'shifted their gaze from the extraordinary to the everyday', from history's exceptional events to the large mass of its commonplaces (Pomian, 1988, pp. 115–116). For more than the last half-century, the questions that we ask about the past, about experience and about culture have become more democratic as they have diversified. This broad development has occurred in waves, with each oscillation responding to its predecessor by seeking to rebalance the scales between a social history that, in Braudel's words, studies 'the deep currents in the lives of men', and the more immediate and specific engagement provided by 'for one man in poring over the fate of another' (Braudel, 1980, p. 20).

Braudel's dismissal of '*l'histoire événementielle*' sought to correct what he saw as an excessive tendency among his immediate predecessors to allow themselves 'to be borne along by the documents, one after another', following a narrative of events step by step (Braudel, 1980, pp. 28–9). The founders of the *Annales* began as heretics, publishing manifestos for a 'new kind of history' that required collaborative, interdisciplinary analysis of structures and *mentalités*.²⁸ After their heresy achieved orthodoxy, its quantitative, serial approach, once valorised as a 'history without names', was criticised by others as a 'history without people' (Comte and Andreski, 1974, p. 203; Le Roy Ladurie, 1979, p. 285). As 'la nouvelle histoire' begat 'new social history', the latter in turn engendered 'history from below' in reaction to the anonymity of quantitative data, in which, as E.P. Thompson wrote, 'working people are seen as a labour force, as migrants, or as the data for a statistical series' (Thompson, 1963, p. 12). Thompson sought to restore the agency of such people, by recognising 'the degree to which they contributed by conscious efforts to the making of history' (Thompson, 1963, p. 13). If his methodology dismissed the quanta of serial history as 'the mumbo jumbo of those latter-day astrologers ... who for 200 years have been trying to persuade us that nothing is real that cannot be counted', his insistence that historians understand 'how past generations experienced their own existence' was entirely in keeping with what Peter Burke has identified as the philosophical foundation of the new structural history identified with the *Annales*: 'the idea that reality is socially or culturally constituted' (Thompson, 1972, pp. 48–49; Burke, 2001, p. 3).

In seeking to examine the social experience of cinema, the new cinema history can claim a close affinity with the new histories described by Burke as studying topics not previously thought to possess a history: childhood, death, madness, climate, cleanliness, reading. Like many of these other versions of the socio-cultural history of experience, the new cinema history raises problems of definition, evidence, method and explanation, problems that are explored but not necessarily resolved in the chapters that follow. Some film historians will, no doubt, continue to dismiss this history as gossip-column trivia in the same way that *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of everyday life, was once dismissed as trivial. But if, as Burke suggests, the challenge for social historians is 'to relate everyday life to great events like the Reformation or the French Revolution, or to long-term trends like westernization

or the rise of capitalism', then the new cinema history provides an exemplary instance of what Max Weber called *Veralltäglichung*: 'routinization', or more literally, 'becoming like everyday'.

Moviegoing, as Robert Allen reminds us, was an everyday encounter with the extraordinary – in Weber's terms, an *alltägliches* encounter with the *ausseralltäglich* (Swedberg, 2005, p. 93). Despite the extraordinary content of the events that cinema presented to its audiences – 'Each Day a Rendezvous with Peril! Each Night a Meeting with Romance!' – their everyday occurrence rendered these encounters customary; like the leopards breaking into the temple in Kafka's parable, when the extraordinary events of the movies were repeated so often that they could be reckoned on in advance, they became part of the ritual, or of what Juri Lotman (1984) called 'the poetics of the everyday'.²⁹ As Paul Moore demonstrates, these rendezvous were seldom newsworthy; when they were, as in the 1940 Elizabeth City, NC, riot that Allen describes, it was more often for events unconnected to their extraordinary content, which also went largely unrecorded in the memories of their audiences.

The methodological challenges of writing histories of the experience of cinema remain: at one level, that of Annette Kuhn's first type of fragmented cinema memory, we seek to capture (or at least record) something as insubstantial as dreams; at another, equally irrecoverable, we pursue the heterogeneous purposes of the unidentified participants in a myriad of undocumented events. As Allen argues, an historical perspective that seeks to engage with the social experience of cinema rapidly makes it apparent that this experience cannot be reduced to 'some reified notion of spectatorship', any more than the abstraction of 'the movie audience' can serve as an object of empirical historical inquiry. This perspective also makes clear how arbitrary it is to select the film text as a representation of the cinematic event of which it is a constituent part, and how important it is to qualify the analysis of any individual film's meaning within the limits of what we can recover about the times and places where it circulated; to accept, in other words, the modest scope of the textual microstudy for what it is.

As part of a public relations campaign promoting movie attendance for 'Motion Pictures' Greatest Year' in 1938, the American film industry ran a full-page advertisement in 2000 newspapers in the United States and Canada. Under the headline 'The Average Movie-Goer Speaks His Mind', a family patriarch declared that despite occasional family disagreements about the merits of individual movies,

Taking them all together, I figure that the 'movies' give more pleasure to more people at a lot less cost than most anything the mind of man was ever responsible for – and have done the human race more downright good than all the medicines concocted since creation.³⁰

Histories that seek to argue that by improving the general quality and availability of entertainment at a low admission cost, cinema contributed positively to the stock of social well-being in the same way that low-cost electric street lighting did

by markedly improving the quality of illumination, must go some distance beyond the confines of the film text or the screen itself (Sedgwick *et al.*, personal communication, 2004). As the findings of the research contained in this collection make clear, these histories are likely to pay more attention to questions of circulation than questions of production, questions of agency and brokerage rather than questions of authorship, to consider cinema as experience rather than film as apparatus, and to examine the heterogeneity and social construction of cinema audiences rather than the textual construction of spectatorship.

We are, however, not proposing to replace one master narrative of cinema history with another; as the variety of the case studies presented here makes clear, the new cinema history is a quilt of many methods and many localities. Many of its methods, particularly those involving computation, mapping and other forms of data visualisation, are collaborative, and its project is inherently interdisciplinary. As a practice of historical enquiry it is decentred, exploratory and open, requiring that the subjectivities of oral history converse with the quantitative data of economic history and the resources of the archive to answer the apparently simple question 'What was cinema?' We do, however, recognise the extent to which a pursuit of the new cinema history will require some considerable practical reskilling for many film historians, in learning to recognise new kinds of relevant data in the archives, involving distance, demography, topography and environment; in learning to represent research in terms of spatial databases and maps as well as conventional historical narratives; and in embedding within our histories the understanding that social subjectivity is always shaped by the particularities of place as much as epoch. Part of the intellectual challenge that humanities scholarship in general faces in the next decade is the development not just of the research capacity to integrate quantitative information within qualitative analysis, but also to devise curriculum strategies and models that enable our students to traverse the methodological boundaries that currently Balkanise our fields of study. In engaging the historical and historiographical challenges I have been describing, the new cinema history has much to offer this larger project.

Notes

- 1 No introductory essay is, or should be, an island. The ideas expressed here have been honed and shaped by discussions with my co-editors, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, with the contributors to this collection, particularly Robert Allen and Jeff Klenotic, and as always with Ruth Vasey. Most influentially, Kate Bowles and I have been trading ideas, phrases and paragraphs on the new cinema history for the best part of a decade. This chapter owes its best turns of phrase, as well as the absence of locomotives, to Kate.
- 2 This work builds on a tradition of social enquiry into cinema that includes Margaret Thorp, *America at the Movies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art: A Social History of American Film* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1976) and Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (London: British Film Institute, 1992). Recent key works in the field include Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gregory A. Waller,

- Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville/London: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Martin Barker and Kate Brooks, *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, Its Friends, Fans and Foes* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1998); *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*, eds Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999); *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies*, eds Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999); John Sedgwick, *Popular Filmgoing in 1930s Britain: A Choice of Pleasures* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000); *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, eds Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002); *Moviewalking in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition*, ed. Gregory A. Waller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange*, eds Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes (London: BFI Publishing, 2004); Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs, eds, *Watching the Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, eds Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes and Robert C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007); and Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby and Philippe Meers, *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity: New Perspectives on European Cinema History* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 3 Much of the information produced by these projects is available on their websites, as are a range of tools for the presentation and analysis of their data. The HOMER (History of Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception) website maintains a list of web pages examining the social history of cinemagoing: <http://icarg.wordpress.com/links/>. For examples, see *Going to the Show*, documenting moviegoing in North Carolina from 1896 to 1930 (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/>); *Cinema in Context*, an encyclopaedia of film culture in The Netherlands from 1896 (<http://www.cinemacontext.nl/>); *The London Project*, examining the film business in London from 1894 to 1914 (<http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk/>); *The Siegen Cinema Databases*, documenting film exhibition in Germany from 1896 to 1926 (<http://fk615.221b.de/siegen/start/show/index.php?language=en>); *The Williamsburg Project*, a portrait of moviegoing in Williamsburg, VA, from 1900 to the present (<http://moviewalking.wm.edu/wtp/>); *Film Culture in Brno (1945–1970)*, documenting filmgoing in Czechoslovakia (<http://www.phil.muni.cz/dedur/index.php?&lang=1>). For a discussion of methodological issues involved in the production and analysis of these data, see Michael Ross, Joseph Garncarz, Manfred Grauer, Bernd Freisleben (eds), *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research. An Overview* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009).
 - 4 Among other reasons given for the decision was the comment that 'the dominant approach of reviewers has been to assess the historical accuracy of a film, paying little attention to the specificity of film as a language or mode of representation (something which those with a deep interest in film are quick to point out). When historians review films, they usually write about what they know about – accuracy, verisimilitude, and pedagogical usefulness. These are not inconsiderable as commentary, but it is a far cry from what we expect from them in a book review.' Robert A. Schneider, 'On film reviews in the AHR', *Perspectives*, May 2006, online at <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2006/0605/0605aha2.cfm> (accessed 1 February 2010).
 - 5 'The historical and social reading of film ... has permitted us to reach nonvisible zones in the past of societies – to reveal self-censorship or lapses (which remain in the unconscious of participants and witnesses) at work within a society or an artistic creation ... These lapses of a creator, of an ideology, or a society constitute privileged significant signs that can characterise any level of film, as well as its relationship with society. Discovering them, seeing how they agree or disagree with ideology, helps to discover what is latent behind what is

- apparent, helps to see the nonvisible by means of the visible.' Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, trans. Naomi Greene (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, pp. 30–31). The cardinal example of an analysis of the unconscious of a filmic text is 'John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*', a collective text by the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, trans. Helen Lackner and Diana Matias (1972) *Screen*, 13 (3), 5–44: see in particular pp. 30, 36, 41.
- 6 Belton. For a critique see Janet Staiger (2004) The future of the past. *Cinema Journal*, 44 (1), 128–129.
 - 7 The critical literature on film noir is very extensive. The best guide remains James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).
 - 8 Roland Barthes famously writes of leaving the movie theatre as 'coming out of hypnosis'. In the same 1975 issue of *Communications*, Christian Metz writes that 'spectators, on leaving, brutally expelled from the black interior of the cinema into the vivid and unkind light of the lobby, sometimes have the bewildered face ... of people just waking up. Leaving the cinema is a bit like getting out of bed: not always easy.' Roland Barthes (1975) Leaving the movie theatre. *Communications*, 23, 345. Christian Metz (1975) Le film de fiction et son spectateur. *Communications*, 23, 119.
 - 9 While subsequently regretting that my concern did not extend to the horses' Indian riders, who were shot in equal profusion by John Wayne and Stuart Whitman, the fact that *The Comancheros* was directed by Michael Curtiz, notorious for his disregard for equine casualties, may give my 9-year-old self's selective concern some justification.
 - 10 *Son of Captain Blood* was an Italian production starring Sean Flynn, the son of Errol Flynn, who subsequently became a war photographer and died in Cambodia in 1970. *Dr. Syn, Alias the Scarecrow* was a Disney production starring Patrick McGoohan, originally conceived as a three-part television series but re-edited for British and European theatrical release.
 - 11 Ulysses Santamaria and Anne M. Bailey have argued that Braudel's distinctions between the long term, the conjuncture and the event are theoretically inconsistent, and provide a 'bricolage' of durations rather than a dialectic. See Santamaria and Bailey (1984), pp. 78–83.
 - 12 For a study of contemporary Indian audiences, see Adrian Athique and Douglas Hill, *The Multiplex in India: a Cultural Economy of Urban Leisure* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
 - 13 The American film industry's development of a comparable typology of audiences is examined in Richard Maltby, 'Sticks, hicks and flaps: classical Hollywood's generic conception of its audiences', in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies* (eds Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby), British Film Institute, London, 1999, pp. 23–41.
 - 14 'Friedberg's discount excludes blind bid films', *Boxoffice*, 29 October 1979, p. 1.
 - 15 These observations echo Manny Farber writing of 'murky, congested theaters, looking like glorified tattoo parlors on the outside ... showing prints that seem overgrown with jungle moss, sound tracks infected with hiccups,' where 'the screen image is often out of plumb, the house lights are half left on during the picture, the broken seats are only a minor annoyance in the unpredictable terrain.' See Farber (1957), pp. 489, 492.
 - 16 'Cooperstown celebrates centennial', *Otsego Farmer*, 9 August 1907; *Cooperstown Freeman's Journal*, 15 August 1907.
 - 17 'Cooperstown historically', *Utica Daily Press*, Tuesday 6 August 1907, p. 8.
 - 18 Mayer occupied a complex position in the industry. Formerly head of Paramount's publicity department, he began distributing foreign films in the United States in partnership with Joseph Burstyn in the 1930s. Their company was responsible for distributing most of the Italian neo-realist films to play in the United States in the 1940s, including *The Miracle* (1950), the film involved in the legal challenge to the constitutionality of New York's state censorship. During World War II, Mayer served as Assistant Coordinator of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, and he subsequently supervised the Motion Picture Association's experimental educational project, Pilot Films. In 1964, aged 77, he began a teaching career, and taught film courses

- at Stanford, USC and Dartmouth College. He died in 1986.
- 19 'Rialto, Broadway horror showcase, may switch to class lingos', *Variety*, 29 October 1947, p. 5.
 - 20 Advertisement for *Open City*, *Chicago Tribune*, 13 October 1946, part 6, 19. Reproduced in Wilinsky (2001), p. 126.
 - 21 The Cinema in Context database documents film distribution and exhibition in The Netherlands from 1896 to the present, through four data collections on films, cinemas, people and companies, derived from carefully researched data on nearly all films exhibited in Dutch cinemas before 1960. Produced by a research team under the direction of Karel Dibbets of the University of Amsterdam, the collection is available at <http://www.cinemacontext.nl/>.
 - 22 This issue is also discussed, for example, in *Hollywood in Europe. Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, eds David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); *Hollywood Abroad. Audiences and Cultural Exchange*, eds M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 2004); *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945–1995*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: British Film Institute, 1998); *European Cinema. Face to Face with Hollywood*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).
 - 23 Writing in 1944, George Orwell invoked an idea of cultural ballast in decrying the process of Americanisation that he attributed, in part, to the influence of what he called 'Yank Mags', which were imported into Britain literally as ballast in the holds of ships. According to Orwell, this mode of transport 'accounted for their low price and crumpled appearance'. Since the war, he added, 'the ships have been ballasted with something more useful, probably gravel'. George Orwell, 'Raffles and Miss Blandish', in *Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965, p. 72).
 - 24 The phrase comes from Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, p. 89). Robert Darnton and Marjorie Garber explore the idea in ways that are relevant to this book's project. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999, pp. 3–7); Marjorie Garber, 'Good to think with', *Profession* (New York: MLA, 2008, pp. 11–20).
 - 25 For a full history of the Franklin Theater in its social and cultural context, see Jeffrey Klenotic, "'Four hours of hootin' and hollerin'": moviegoing and everyday life outside the movie palace', in *Going to the Movies*, eds R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R.C. Allen, pp. 130–154.
 - 26 Leo Löwenthal, quoted in Lee Grieveson, 'Cinema studies and the conduct of conduct', in Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (eds), *Inventing Film Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008, p. 25). The history of the 'disciplinaryization' of film studies, and in particular its establishment as a critically based humanities subject and its divorce from earlier connections to the social sciences and communication studies, is traced in several essays in *Inventing Film Studies*, and in particular in Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson's Introduction, 'The Academy and motion pictures'. See also Dana B. Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). See also: Emilie Altenloh (2001) A sociology of the cinema: the audience, *Screen* 42 (3), 249–293; Hugo Münsterberg (1970) *The Film: A Psychological Study: The Silent Photoplay in 1916*, New York: Dover; Garth Jowett, I.C. Jarvie and Kathryn Fuller-Seeley (1996) *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd (1965) *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, New York: The Harvest Book (originally 1937).
 - 27 See, for example, David Morley, *The "Nationwide" Audience* (London: British Film Institute, 1980); Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991); Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Roger Silverstone and Erich Hirsch, *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces* (London: Routledge,

- 1992); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); John Corner, *Television Form and Public Address* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995); Ellen Seiter, *Television and New Media Audiences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*, eds Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); *Convergence Media History*, eds Janet Staiger and Sabine Hake (New York: Routledge, 2009); Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill, eds, *The Television Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- 28 Lucien Febvre, the co-founder of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, declared in his inaugural lecture in 1933 that "it is necessary to be a heretic". Lucien Febvre, *Combats pour L'histoire* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1953, p. 16). Quoted in Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–89* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990, p. 31).
- 29 Poster for *Only Angels Have Wings* (Columbia Pictures, 1939), reproduced in Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999, p. 5); Franz Kafka, 'Leopards in the temple', *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken, 1961, p. 93).
- 30 "The average movie-goer speaks his mind", *New York World Telegram*, 31 August 1938; *The Daily News*, Luddington, Michigan, 1 September 1938. I am grateful to Catherine Jurca for drawing this advertisement to my attention: see Catherine Jurca (2008) Motion pictures' greatest year (1938): Public relations and the motion picture industry. *Film History*, 20 (3), 344–356.

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