

British Silent Cinema

Jon Burrows

Introduction

Trying to establish even a very basic summary of key facts and events in the history of silent cinema in Britain, one is confronted with historiographical controversies and ambiguities at every turn. It was at one time an orthodox stance to claim that the first truly viable moving image camera and projector was invented in Britain by William Friese Greene (e.g. Allister 1948); a monument erected at his grave in Highgate Cemetery calls him 'The Inventor of Kinematography', and *The Magic Box*, an expensive feature-length Technicolor biopic celebrating Friese-Greene's 'achievements', was produced for the Festival of Britain in 1951 (Figure 1.1). Following a comprehensive critique of the merits and practical feasibility of Friese Greene's patents (Coe 1969a, b, c) this presumption has now come to seem ridiculous, but chronicling the introduction of cinematography in Britain is still not straightforward. It has become canonical practice to date the birth of cinema in Britain to 20 or 21 February 1896, which were the dates of the first public performances of the Lumière Cinématographe at the Polytechnic in London's Upper Regent Street for – respectively – an invited group of journalists and then the first paying audience. The compilers of reference works do not appear to have noticed an essay published in 1996 to coincide with the official centenary of cinema in Britain, which convincingly argued that a successful demonstration by Birt Acres of his own projector to the Lyonsdown Photographic Club on 10 January 1896 should be recognised as Britain's first public film screening (Brown 1996).

There is no small matter of controversy involved in choosing to celebrate the first instances of film projection as the birth of the cinema. Before the publication of Gordon Hendricks's ground-breaking work on Thomas Edison (1961), most



Figure 1.1 Robert Donat as William Friese-Greene in *The Magic Box* (1951).

film historians seem to have been unaware that the Kinetograph camera and Kinetoscope viewing cabinet developed by the Edison Company in New Jersey were photographic moving image technologies which used 35 mm celluloid film. One might consequently argue that the history of cinematography in Britain was effectively launched when two Americans, Franck Z. Maguire and Joseph D. Baucus, opened a Kinetoscope parlour in London's Oxford Street to the public on 17 October 1894. The Kinetoscope was illicitly replicated by Robert W. Paul later the same year, and by March 1895 Paul and/or Birt Acres (both claimed sole credit) had managed to reverse engineer a moving image camera similar to Edison's Kinetograph and shoot the first British 35 mm films.

Until 1908, moving image entertainment in Britain was effectively an adjunct to the music hall and fairground industries. Long film shows were strictly the domain of travelling showmen and dedicated fixed-site 'cinemas' were very few and far between outside of London. This essentially replicates the pattern of development experienced throughout the western world, though it is an under-explained peculiarity that the emergence of significant numbers of cinemas in Britain occurred three years later than was the case in America, France, and Germany. A cinema investment boom did not gain momentum in the UK until late 1909. The synchronicity here with the passing into law of a piece of national legislation (the 1909 Cinematograph Act) enforcing safety regulations at film screenings

appears to be more than coincidental; the establishment of a standardised licensing system seems to have directly stimulated confidence in the sector (Burrows 2004a, pp. 69–71, 82–84). An intensive phase of cinema building ensued in the short period leading up to the First World War, although the precise scale of growth has never been reliably established. Estimates of the number of cinemas operating in Britain by the end of 1914 have ranged from 3500 (Low 1949, p. 23) to 5000 (Hiley 2002, p. 121).

The cinema was thus established as a medium of mass entertainment in Britain by the early 1910s, but it is a striking fact that in the present day there is very little knowledge of, or familiarity with, silent British films, directors, and stars among the general public and even many cinephiles. A 1995 documentary – *Typically British: A Personal History of British Cinema* by Stephen Frears – commissioned from one of the country's leading contemporary directors by the British Film Institute, to celebrate the centenary of cinema, straightforwardly concluded that 'To all intents and purposes there'd been no silent film industry in Britain'.

Scholarship dedicated to rectifying this collective lacuna is not, however, a recent phenomenon, and any reflection on the study of British silent cinema must engage in some way with an 'official' four-volume history of the subject written by Rachael Low, which was originally commissioned in the late 1940s by the newly established British Film Academy (known today as the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, BAFTA) and subsequently supported by the British Film Institute over the following four decades (see Nowell-Smith 2012, pp. 26–27). There will be numerous observations made in various parts of this commentary concerning the strengths and limitations of this undertaking – still the standard reference work on the topic, and twice republished. But it should first of all be noted that the basic organisation of the text which follows is itself a direct legacy of Low's project. Low identified distinct chronological phases of development of the British film industry that she felt merited study in separate volumes: 1896–1906; 1906–1914; 1914–1918; 1918–1929. This periodisation was very astute, and continues to be widely regarded as useful and important. The equivalent multi-volume history of American cinema, published from 1990 onwards, elected to carve up the silent era in much the same way (albeit without a separate study covering the First World War). Moreover, Low's divisions essentially correspond to the timeframes subsequently associated with some of the most influential critical concepts used to categorise different stages of early film history, e.g. the 'cinema of attractions', 'transitional cinema', 'classical cinema'.

This chapter will consider the critical study of silent British cinema in three sections, first covering work which predominantly addresses the 1894–1906 period, then the 1907–1918 period, and, finally, 1918–1929. It is by no means the case that these boundaries are always studiously respected and maintained. A lot of scholarship in the field has been published as part of anthologies (typically consisting in the main of conference proceedings) which address specific themed issues across the entire range of British silent film history (e.g. Burton and Porter 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; Higson 2002; Brown and Davison 2013). Some articles and

monographs not only cover more than one of these periods but also claim important continuities between them (e.g. Kember 2009). Nonetheless, the silent era witnessed a series of particularly dramatic evolutionary changes at the level of film form and also fundamental structural transformations of its industrial organisation, and there are consequently distinct issues and methodologies that have predominated in respective debates about these three sub-periods.

1894–1906

There is a strong case for arguing that British cinema has never been as internationally prominent, successful, and influential as it was between 1900 and 1906. Surviving British films from this period frequently stand out – in formal terms – as highly innovative and sophisticated in comparison with their French and American peers. One particularly systematic and meticulous analyst of the global development of filmmaking styles has noted that ‘at the beginning of the [twentieth] century the work of British filmmakers was important in a way that was not to be the case again for thirty years’ (Salt 1978, p. 149). This claim has been frequently echoed: ‘Seldom if ever again would British film-makers make so substantial a creative contribution to world cinema,’ writes Richard Maltby (1997, p. xi). Recognition by contemporaries of the quality of early British film production is evidenced by the extent to which it was often directly imitated. The Brighton-based filmmaker G.A. Smith, for example, has been credited with having ‘played an essential role in the early evolution of the edited film in Europe and America’ (Gray 2004, p. 51). Even *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), that most iconic of American films of the early 1900s, is acknowledged by one of the leading historians of early American cinema to have been heavily influenced by *A Daring Daylight Burglary*, produced earlier in the same year by the Mottershaw company of Sheffield (Musser 1991, p. 256). The legendary French film historian Georges Sadoul declared in the 1940s that, in the ‘brief but brilliant flash’ of British filmmaking pre-eminence in the early 1900s, one could find the origins of montage technique, close framing, and the chase sequence (1946, p. 251).

This being the case, it may appear surprising that the body of work specifically dedicated to the study of this pre-1906 ‘Golden Age’ of British cinema is not particularly extensive: within the last 15 years only five new monographs focused squarely on this territory have been published, and none of these deal with the canonical figures of early British fiction filmmaking, such as Robert W. Paul, Cecil Hepworth, William Haggar, Frank Mottershaw, James Bamforth, or the members of what Sadoul famously – if perhaps misleadingly – called the ‘Brighton School’ (Figure 1.2). We might explain this apparent neglect with reference to changing methodological and conceptual paradigms which have held sway in the field of early cinema studies. For one thing, the poor and essentially random survival rate

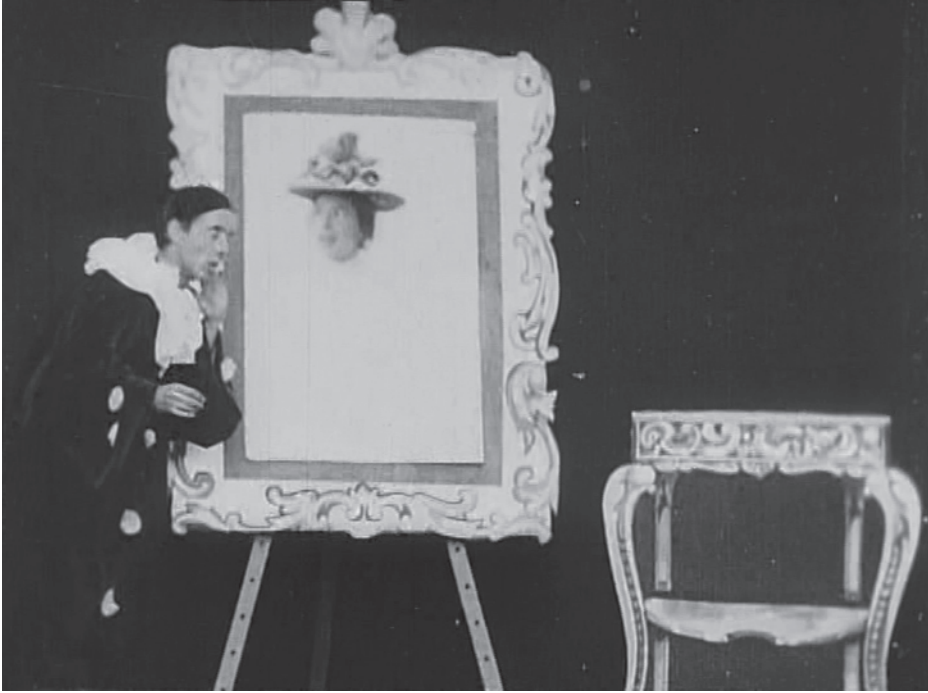


Figure 1.2 Early British filmmaking: R. W. Paul's *Artistic Creation* (1901).

of films made in the first 10 years of photographic moving image technology can make it very difficult to reliably establish patterns of influence among filmmakers. As historians became more aware in the latter part of the twentieth century of just how much is irrevocably lost, so the game of trying to identify first instances in the lexicon of early film technique – once a key form of validation for early British filmmakers – fell out of fashion somewhat.

There has also been heightened awareness in recent decades of the profoundly transnational character of early film culture. Writing in the 1970s, Noël Burch identified (and endorsed) a very different consensus view which had hitherto prevailed: 'All the historians who have discussed the cinema of the 1896–1914 period concur in recognising a very pronounced national specificity in the production of each of the three Western countries [Britain, France and the USA] which between them more or less shared out the world market' (1990, p. 43). It is now widely acknowledged that the 1978 annual conference of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), held in Brighton, which brought together film archivists and scholars to collectively survey as many surviving fiction films made between 1900 and 1906 as possible, acted as the catalyst for a revitalisation of early cinema studies and the emergence of a new 'revisionist' history of silent cinema. This revisionism was largely driven by a change in methodological emphasis – most notably a more systematic approach to both film analysis and the discovery and

scrutiny of pertinent empirical sources. Another crucial aspect of this methodological shift stemmed from the congress organisers' policy of screening contemporaneous films from around the world alongside each other. Abiding concepts of national cinema had traditionally remained wedded to the model first established in Paul Rotha's (1930) book *The Film Till Now: A Survey of the Cinema*, which mapped out a history of the cinema dominated by distinct artistic trends pioneered in different national contexts. The Brighton screenings, however, revealed profound affinities between early filmmakers working across Europe and the US – typical of a time when films circulated very freely across national borders, and ideas and innovations were quickly shared. The first published work of post-Brighton scholarship declared that as important as British filmmakers of the pre-1906 period were, 'it would be futile to try to consider their work in isolation, since film production was already truly international, with complex interconnections between films made in the only significant producing countries' (Salt 1978, p. 149). These interconnections are prominently demonstrated in the structure and content of several more recent monographs on early British cinema. For example, Martin Sopocy's and Luke McKernan's studies of the films and careers of James Williamson (1998) and Charles Urban (2013), respectively, must perforce explain their subjects with very extensive reference to parallel developments in, and direct connections with, the American film industry.

Another post-Brighton development which has surely served in some way to discourage a dedicated British focus in scholarship on the pre-1906 era is the continued influence of Tom Gunning's theory of the 'cinema of attractions'. Gunning argues that pre-1906 cinema shares relatively few of the preoccupations of succeeding generations of filmmakers and is predominantly uninterested in constructing any kind of coherent narrative experience. Instead, it is geared towards delivering unadulterated bursts of diverting visual pleasure, often with the aim of surprising the spectator with spectacular trick effects or the shock of unfamiliar views (Gunning 1990, pp. 56–60). The reputation of British filmmakers of this period had previously been premised upon their role in establishing the basic grammar of narrative cinema, so their importance will inevitably appear less apparent within the parameters of this paradigm. Moreover, where earlier generations of film historians mapped out strict dividing lines between different schools of filmmaking practice in the 1890 and the 1900s (e.g. the fantasy fictions of Georges Méliès were typically contrasted with the observational realism of the Lumière brothers), Gunning emphasises overriding similarities between all camps in their shared commitment to providing non-narrative sensations (1990, p. 57). He has increasingly defined the cinema of attractions in relation to a broader social experience of modernity – chiefly characterised by transformed modes of visual perception – which he identifies as having been acutely felt in all the major industrialised nations at the same time and in essentially similar ways (2005, p. 441). The implications of this compelling and widely adopted conceptual framework are still being absorbed, and it is not difficult to see how it might (unintentionally) serve to discourage explorations conducted along national territorial lines.

This is not to suggest that the dedicated scholarship on pre-1906 British cinema which does exist is insubstantial or outdated, though it must first be acknowledged that this is the one period in British silent film history for which the official 'History of the British Film' project delivered something less than a vital resource. Volume 1, covering 1896–1906, was jointly written by Rachael Low and Roger Manvell, then the Librarian and Secretary General, respectively, of the British Film Academy, and published in 1948. In marked contrast to the rest of the series, which Low worked on alone, it is a short and sketchy volume, consisting of brief portraits of 17 individuals/ companies active in the period (with others – wrongly – said to have 'left little trace') and a basic typography of common genres based on catalogue synopses. Later volumes in the series relied primarily on specialist film industry trade papers as their main source of information, and the absence of weekly journals before 1907 may help to explain this 'false start'. The outstanding reference work for this period is instead John Barnes's five-volume study of 'The Beginnings of the Cinema in England,' from 1894 to 1900, published at intervals between 1976 and 1997 (Barnes 1976, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1997). Barnes, along with his twin brother William, had been a collector of early cinema equipment and ephemera since the 1930s. Their collaborative research, conducted over many decades, more than matched the rigorous standards advocated in the wake of the Brighton FIAF congress, and they brought into clear relief a film industry that existed on a much greater scale than their predecessors had realised, and also demonstrated the rich value and importance of a wide range of hitherto neglected sources, such as local newspapers, and specialist photographic and fairground trade papers. While the value of this work – not least as a filmographic resource – remains undimmed, it must be understood as the product of a particular long-standing paradigm of film historical research. Much like the first substantial histories of American cinema (e.g. Ramsaye 1926), the Barnes books are preoccupied with patent records and establishing an order of primacy in the sphere of technological innovation. They present a linear narrative of development in which technology is presented as the main driver of change, and while Barnes was never fooled like many of his predecessors into chauvinistically promoting the serial patentee Friese-Greene as the true inventor of cinema, his books do seek to nominate an alternative hero figure who deserves recognition as the dominant figure in the creation of the British film industry. In this account, Robert W. Paul takes the prize by virtue of his perceived superiority in the technical domain:

Paul himself later admitted that the results obtained with the Lumière machine were 'superior in steadiness and clearness' to his own. But in its defence it must now be admitted that Paul's machine was much superior in principle and provided the prototype for the modern film projector. (1976, pp. 47–48)

More recent work has sought to demonstrate how the emergence of the film industry in Britain was shaped by broader cultural and economic forces. Michael Chanan, for example, situates the development of celluloid film in the context of

Britain's overseas investments in the sodium nitrate fields of Chile, and argues that many key commercial, aesthetic, and ideological film industry practices may be attributed to the influence of the 'dominant form of popular urban entertainment in Britain': the music hall (1996, pp. 98–100, 132–134). Richard Brown and Barry Anthony (1999) have produced an extraordinary case study of a single early film company, the British Mutoscope and Biograph Syndicate Ltd. – the European fulcrum of a vast multinational conglomerate – which places its history in a wider economic context and examines how its considerable ambitions can be more fruitfully explained and understood with reference to orthodox, late nineteenth-century managerial practices and the protocols of appealing to capital markets. An underlying aim of their book is to demonstrate the rapid maturity and sophistication of the early film industry, in contradistinction to the nomenclature adopted by film theorists like Noël Burch, who classes cinema of the 1890 and 1900s as a 'Primitive Mode of Representation', as opposed to the 'Institutional Mode of Representation' which is seen to dominate thereafter (1990, pp. 186–199). This opposition is also firmly challenged in Joe Kember's (2009) analysis of early British film culture, which argues that the first filmic systems of representation and spectatorship were organised in accordance with deep-rooted 'institutional' structures previously established in performance traditions associated with illustrated lectures and fairground showmanship.

Kember is quick to stress that the cultural frameworks he identifies share clear 'equivalences with the institutional configurations existing in the USA, France, and other countries' (2009, p. 7). This returns us to the question of whether a nationally specific study of early British cinema can identify important nationally specific trends. Sadoul's perception of a distinctive 'Brighton School' does still retain some influence. It received its most substantial elaboration in Martin Sopocy's research on the film production career of James Williamson, which argues that the magic lantern background of many important British pioneers grounded them in a photographic conception of the medium which differed from the prevailing 'aphotographic bias that equated the projected picture with a theatrical stage' in other countries (1998, p. 27). Sopocy's contention that Williamson's filmmaking philosophy was so distinct from his continental rivals that in some films he actively parodies their representation of space (1998, p. 47) is highly speculative and debatable, but he presents persuasive evidence that Williamson was conscious of significant differences between British and American exhibition practices, and tailored the prints he exported across the Atlantic accordingly (1998, pp. 87–131).

Burch (1990) has argued that it is not so much the lantern experience of early British filmmakers as their 'class origins' which 'lay behind the astonishing inventions in which their work abounds'. He suggests that being 'steeped in middle-class culture', they had conservative ideological motivations to try and shape the thoughts and behaviour of the working-class audiences they exclusively catered for (1990, pp. 96–97). This formulation is undoubtedly far too crude, and

the broader class composition of film audiences in the 1900s has been repeatedly demonstrated in recent years (see, for example, Brown 2004; Burrows 2010). However, the study of early British cinema in relation to issues of class and ideology has enjoyed a revival of late. Maurizio Cinquegrani (2014) has analysed the representation of urban space in early British non-fiction films as the product of an imperialist mindset. Vanessa Toulmin's (2006) study of the recently discovered collection of over 800 non-fiction titles produced by the Blackburn firm of Mitchell and Kenyon interprets the many films taken of public parades and ceremonies as considered interventions into a broader process of affirming and renegotiating the concept of community, which was taking places in certain areas of the industrial North in response to the pressures of modernity. Richard Brown (2005) has emphasised the significance of local context to an even greater degree, arguing that certain stylistically pioneering films made by the Bamforth Company can be understood in part as responses to particular issues of current civic concern in the small Yorkshire town of Holmfirth where they were produced. There is surely considerable scope and need for further work of this nature.

1907–1918

British film pioneering reached a summit of achievement at such an early age that its subsequent decline must form the embarrassing theme of this second period ... The infant prodigy's promise had led not to a glorious maturity but to a state of arrested development, and the years 1906 to 1914 show two phases, first a humiliating period of stagnation, and after 1911 a noticeable but only partly successful effort, broken by the coming of war, to re-establish the former status of British production ... Film producers in America, Italy and France, chasing the future with all the zest the British had previously shown, put this country to shame, and by 1911 British production was oppressed by a feeling of inferiority which subsequent efforts had not succeeded in removing when they were interrupted by the war. (Low 1949, pp. 92–93)

Rachael Low's (1914–1918) volume of the *History of the British Film* has nothing more positive to say about British film production in the war years either, claiming that it was 'unfortunately of a very poor quality, and both the increasing number of companies in production and the mass of inferior films on the market were repeatedly deplored' (1950, p. 50).¹ It would take another 50 years before any further monographs on the subject of British cinema in the 1910s were published. This long gap can be partly attributed to the quality of Low's research and the fact that it could not be easily superseded. But it is also no doubt a consequence of the depressing picture Low painted of the failure and incompetence of British filmmakers in this period, which gives the clear impression that their work simply would not merit revisiting.

A concerted effort to ascertain if this verdict was fair began in earnest in the aftermath of the centenary of cinema commemorations. Partly in response to the reluctance of the Giornate del Cinema Muto (the annual international silent cinema festival held in Pordenone, Italy) to programme British films, an annual festival of British silent cinema was launched in 1998 in Leicester. It has continued in some form (in a variety of locations) every year since, and reached its 18th edition in 2015. Most of the events have involved a mixture of screenings and research papers, and six volumes of proceedings have been published (Burton and Porter 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; Porter and Dixon 2007; Hammond and Williams 2011). This process of re-appraisal has applied different evaluative criteria to those used by Low. In common with many of her generation – whose introduction to film theory came largely via the translated writings of Soviet directors of the montage school – Low proceeded from the assumption that editing constitutes ‘the essence of film as an art form’ (1949, p. 248). She consequently showed little patience for films which failed to emulate the systems of parallel and analytical editing being developed by contemporaneous American directors like D.W. Griffith. The first significant critical challenge to Low’s assessment emerged in Andrew Higson’s work on influential constructions of the idea of national cinema within British film history. Higson suggests that British filmmakers have persistently prioritised ‘the reproduction of literary texts, artefacts, and landscapes which already have a privileged status within the accepted definition of the national heritage’ (1995b, p. 27), and have consciously developed particular stylistic strategies to prominently foreground these elements. He has applied this framework to British cinema of the 1910s in a number of essays (e.g. 1995a, 1998) and has argued that a preference for long takes and abjuration of narrative economy are often the hallmarks of a considered pictorialist aesthetic rather than evidence of incompetence.

Low expressed particular exasperation at the close relationship between British cinema and theatre in the 1910s, and protested against ‘the ultimate harm resulting from this unnatural dependence’ (1949, p. 131). This assessment was made from a mid-twentieth-century perspective which saw the cinema as a radically new cultural enterprise, whose medium-specific formal traits ought to make it autonomous from all other existing art forms (and thereby justify its dedicated study). More recently, however, scholars have proposed a view of the emergence of cinema internationally as a profoundly ‘intermedial’ process and encouraged the writing of ‘a history of cinema that takes into strict account... the dependence of cinema on other mediums and cultural spheres’ (Gaudreault 2000, p. 14). The development of intermediality as a critical paradigm has helped to encourage an unashamed focus on the study of silent British cinema’s many imbrications with the stage (e.g. Fitzsimmons and Street 2000). Burrows (2003) argues that the prolific involvement of leading theatre stars in British films of the 1910s did not simply entail a deferral to established traditions, and that it was used to facilitate experimentation, expansion, and an exploration of various possibilities which the technology of cinema offered for reconfiguring the circulation and consumption of culture. The impact of these kinds of films has been shown to be significantly more extensive than

previously imagined, for example, Musser (2004) shows how Ernst Lubitsch's (1925) film version of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* is profoundly indebted to a forgotten British film adaptation of the same play made in 1916.

In other respects, however, Low's work has remained an important model for research on this period. From the second volume onwards, the most striking aspect of the *History of the British Film* series is arguably its very catholic understanding of what constitutes film history. Unlike any contemporaneous studies, Low's sought to document British film culture in its broadest sense, rather than simply as the story of film production. Thus, one finds extensive and carefully researched sections dedicated to the evolution of the film exhibition and distribution sectors, the internal politics of the industry, and also the public reputation of the cinema (encompassing observations and campaigns by moral reform movements and leading educationalists). Judged simply by volume of work, it would appear that most modern scholars share Low's conviction that the most interesting fields of investigation concerning British cinema in the 1910s lie outside of native studios: the majority of books, journal articles, and doctoral theses dealing with this period focus upon the kinds of changes in industrial organisation, exhibition practices, and forms of audience reception which occurred as the cinema in this country acquired a mass following. There have been detailed studies dealing, for example, with the provision of music in British cinemas (Brown and Davison 2013), regional film distribution (Vélez-Serna 2012), the regional exhibition of Kinemacolor films (Jackson 2011), the importance of the cinema for the Italian immigrant community in London (Ercole 2008), early British film fan magazines (Bryan 2006), and the impact of cinema as a new cultural institution on British modernist writers (Shail 2012).

The transformation of film exhibition and audience engagement in the late 1900s and 1910s has for some time been a particularly vibrant area of research in the study of silent American cinema, and the equivalent scholarship in Britain has started to closely mirror its trans-Atlantic counterparts by concentrating upon regional case studies. Three large Arts and Humanities Research Council grants have funded studies of Edwardian film exhibition in regional contexts within the last 10 years, in addition to existing studies of 1910's film exhibition trends in London (Burrows 2004a, b), Southampton (Hammond 2006), and Scotland (Griffiths 2012). There is a compelling methodological logic behind this trend: as the silent era cinemagoing experience was more profoundly shaped by local exhibition practices than in later decades, one universal model definitely cannot be applied in all cases, and the time and effort required to adequately survey regional newspapers can make it unfeasible to widen the research net on a single project. Nonetheless, it could be objected that insufficient work has been conducted in recent years on the broader national picture to help recognise and measure the significance of regional variations.

The most extensive and influential work to date on dominant nationwide trends in the evolution of the film exhibition sector in Britain in the 1910s is a series of essays written by the newspaper historian, Nicholas Hiley (1995, 1998, 2002). Hiley has

generated a significant array of statistical data (mostly via conjectural extrapolation) about the volume and geographical spread of cinema building. He has utilised these figures, in combination with sceptical coverage of the industry found in popular newspapers of the time, to advance a very striking hypothesis: that prior to the First World War the scale of provision of cinemas in Britain was considerably in excess of the level of public demand for this form of recreation. Hiley contends that the eagerness of middle-class investors to speculate within the entertainment industry capital market led to their exploitation by unscrupulous company promoters, who secured finance for thousands of cinemas that the public had little interest in visiting. According to this account, by 1914, 'most British exhibitors must have been showing to largely empty halls' (2002, p. 122), and it was only the outbreak of war which saved the industry by creating a large surge in patronage as a result of changed social conditions. This provocative argument has been happily accepted as fact by many scholars (e.g. Hanson 2007; Shail 2012), though it has been objected that available data concerning cinema company registrations and liquidations does not support such extreme conclusions (Burrows and Brown 2010), and a ground-breaking study of Scottish film culture in the first half of the twentieth century disputes the idea that major spikes in wartime attendance are widely evident (Griffiths 2012, pp. 98–103).

One important study of the reception of certain key genres among wartime audiences does make a persuasive case that this period witnessed various momentous changes for the film industry in other respects. Hammond (2006) suggests that for the first time the programme content of fixed-site cinemas was arranged with a confident and justifiable expectation of attracting patronage from a very wide range of social classes. He shows, furthermore, that during this period the cinema was definitively accepted by influential legislators, regulators, and moral watchdogs as a valid national pastime – this, paradoxically, in spite of the fact that, during the Great War, American films began for the first time to overwhelmingly dominate the British market. Hammond also suggests that this legitimisation of the cinema's social role was accompanied by a shift in the way that it was conceptualised: influential expectations that it was naturally fitted and tideologically obliged to assume a utilitarian role as a medium of information dissemination and education were overshadowed by overwhelming evidence that its dominant use had become fixed as that of a medium of entertainment and distraction; this function was nevertheless seen as a helpful and useful one at a time of national crisis.

1918–1929

Rachael Low's assessment of the merits and achievements of silent British film production in the post-war era finds similar cause for regret and embarrassment as the two preceding volumes of her historical survey. Older firms which survived into the 1920s are seen to have lacked sufficient capital to compete effectively with

imported Hollywood productions, while newer, larger enterprises which came to prominence, such as the Stoll Film Company, placed too much faith in adapting successful novels for the screen and 'good equipment could not overcome unsuitable stories mechanically adapted' (1971, p. 125). A particular low point was reached at the end of 1924 when it was reported that production had ground to a halt in every studio, and the industry appeared to stand on the brink of complete obsolescence. A revival of hope and investment followed in the wake of the 1927 Cinematograph Act, which sought to protect the home industry by implementing a mandatory quota of British films which distributors and exhibitors had to handle, but Low suggests that this created new problems by simply 'providing an opening for many producers of inferior calibre' (p. 157).

For a further three decades following the publication of the fourth volume of the 'History of the British Film' project, the only British filmmaker of the 1920s to receive serious scholarly attention was Alfred Hitchcock. Low's criticisms were more emphatically embellished in a relatively recent book-length study of British film production in the 1920s. Kenton Bamford argues that the native industry condemned itself to abject failure through its own 'wearisome litany of middle-class prejudices' (1999, p. 74), which prevented any meaningful engagement with the tastes of a mass audience. Bamford seems to have based his analysis on the evidence of selected hostile newspaper reviews rather than any film viewing, and it must be said that his critique is significantly less balanced and nuanced than Low's. Writing when François Truffaut's notorious claim that Britain and cinema were somehow fundamentally incompatible was still fresh in the mind, Low was careful to provide a considered and sympathetic explanation of the manifold structural and economic handicaps with which the British film industry wrestled. She identifies class prejudice as part of the problem, but only in the sense that it helped to create a situation in which British filmmakers faced incessant vitriol from influential voices at home. The 1920s saw the emergence of a new generation of writers and critics who took the cinema very seriously as a means of artistic expression, but Low suggests that 'because of their background and upbringing they tended to have a certain veneration for abroad as the natural home of taste and culture, and an attitude of condescension to the predominantly lower and lower middle-class British film industry' (1971, p. 305).

Considerable scholarly attention has since been paid to those in Britain who were concerned to develop early forms of film theory, in the form of essays (e.g. Samson 1986; Turvey 2002; Wasson 2002), books (Marcus 2007; Sexton 2008), and a critical anthology of important writings (Donald et al. 1999). Low's characterisation of such writers as a patronising elite coterie has been increasingly challenged in this work. Sexton focuses on experimental forms of film production in this period, but argues that 'alternative film culture did have an effect on commercial British cinema, which demonstrates how the "alternative" and "mainstream" are not mutually exclusive spheres' (2008, p. 164). Marcus's study observes that some of the most important women who wrote about the cinema in the 1920s,

like Iris Barry, C.A. Lejeune, and Dorothy Richardson, occupied shifting positions when it came to documenting the tastes and experiences of popular female audiences, alternating between haughty disapproval and sympathetic identification (2007, pp. 292–310).

Michael Williams's (2003) study of the star persona of Ivor Novello, the leading British matinee idol in this period, also identifies a complex interplay between high cultural discourses and the promotional mechanisms of the commercial film industry. Williams explains the appeal of Novello's characteristic blend of luminous beauty and abject suffering in his star image with reference to a pronounced contemporary interest in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and, in particular, the latter's interpretation of the mythological figures of Apollo and Dionysus as symbolic icons through which Ancient Greek society articulated trauma and suffering. Williams argues that these twin polarities became important reference points in post-war British society, and numerous cultural acts of commemoration of the horrors of the First World War were thus structured around them. Similar imagery is traced in several of Novello's film roles; a fascination with the Apolline qualities of Novello's 'luminously' beautiful face is linked to discourses surrounding the introduction of cosmetic surgery after the war, while the Dionysal strand in Novello's films – his typically wracked, suffering body – is seen to connect to specific post-war fears about the nature of 'feminised' British masculinity and contemporary attempts to understand the phenomenon of shell-shock. This work has been followed by a series of rich and fruitful reflections on various different ways in which forms of memorialisation and remembrance of the war were undertaken in British cinema of the 1920s (e.g. Gledhill 2011; Haggith 2011; Napper 2011; Sargeant 2011b; Williams 2011; Botting 2015).

One of the most intriguing attempts to position British cinema of the 1920s within changing matrices of class and culture is Lawrence Napper's (2009) study of how and why native filmmaking in the interwar period came to be informed by a 'middlebrow' sensibility. Napper sees the formation of a perceived middle ground between high and lowbrow art as a phenomenon central to various other areas of cultural activity in Britain during this period, and the book is structured as a series of case studies which examine how British cinema both adapted and catalysed ideas about national identity and cultural taste that were concurrently being explored in the spheres of literature, radio, theatre, and early television. Several of these case studies concern films of the 1930s, but the book begins by examining the debates about national cinema which led to the implementation of the 1927 Cinematograph Act, and explores the relationship between the film and publishing industries in Britain via a study of *The Constant Nymph* (1927) – the film adaptation of a bestselling novel about the friction between artistic ideals and social responsibilities. Napper argues that the dominant retrospective perception of middlebrow cinema as a highly reactionary production trend fails to recognise that the idea of the middlebrow first emerged in this period as a radical concept which progressively revolutionised the ways in which traditional forms of art were consumed.

In this account, it served to blur the boundaries both of different media and existing class-based stratifications of taste. It would undoubtedly be of considerable benefit to the future study of this period if Napper's understanding of the middlebrow were to become as habitual a reference point as the notion of heritage cinema.

The most extensive and ambitious attempt to rehabilitate the reputation of British cinema in the 1920s has been undertaken by Christine Gledhill, who has sought to provide a 'cultural poetics of British filmmaking' (2003, p. 2) and thereby identify a nationally distinct aesthetic paradigm. She does not attempt to displace or contest the status of Low's book as the standard factual reference work in the field. But where the latter perceived a straightforward deficit of nerve and skill, Gledhill argues that British silent filmmakers did not so much fail to emulate the brisk continuity editing, expressionist *mise-en-scène*, and popular star systems of their overseas rivals as they actively resisted such trends in favour of a quite different set of stylistic principles. She contends that theories of the cinematic shared by native filmmakers and critics were shaped by culturally embedded aesthetic ideals drawn principally from the legacy bequeathed by popular Victorian theatre and also the nineteenth-century representational tradition of pictorialism, which, before colonising the cinema, had previously forged important intermedial alliances between the dramatic, literary, and figurative arts. Gledhill marshals a wide range of evidence to suggest that British cinema of the 1920s cannot be adequately understood or appreciated without an awareness of these cultural reference points. Various individual case studies dotted throughout the book serve to represent previously reviled or substantially ignored film directors and actors such as Maurice Elvey, Graham Cutts, George Pearson, Guy Newall, Henry Edwards, and Matheson Lang as screen practitioners of substance who demonstrated no little thoughtfulness and flair in the way that they negotiated a fusion between the specificities of the newer medium and the deep-rooted representational principles of stage melodrama and a broader pictorialist inheritance.

The field of silent film studies has for some time been concerned to reiterate and flesh out Walter Benjamin's characterisation of the medium as one of the most conspicuous symbols and transformational agents of modernity, so in this context it is a rather non-conformist step on Gledhill's part to emphasise continuities with a nineteenth-century worldview rather than radical upheavals in taste and perception, and to suggest that any seemingly retrogressive return to preceding traditions 'must be investigated as itself a response to modernity, rather than a failure of modernist imagination' (2003, p. 2). There are inevitably contentious elements in such an undertaking. In historiographical terms, Gledhill takes a very long view in contextualising her subject: the first half of the book spends considerably more time explicating aesthetic and ideological debates in the era from c. 1850 to 1900 than it does situating British film production within equivalent discourses of the early twentieth century, and thus it does not clearly explain how pictorialism may have continued to appear as an attractive and meaningful visual

paradigm for both filmmakers and audiences. There is also a disconnect between this account of an apparently confident and fully realised national style of filmmaking and Gledhill's acknowledgement of the fact that the system of industrial production in this period was itself 'extremely unstable' (2003, p. 123).

Although Gledhill emphasises the fact that 'no study of a national cinema can assume a hermetically sealed cultural space' (2003, p. 5), there are no analogies or references made in the book to any contemporary European films or broader developments on the continent. This is somewhat surprising given both that a powerful influence of theatrical pictorialism has previously been identified in European cinema of the 1910s (Brewster and Jacobs 1997), and also because, as Low first pointed out, this period of British filmmaking was prominently characterised by 'a new form of internationalism' in which native directors made films in European studios to try and absorb new techniques and help secure overseas distribution, and 'more foreign stars and technicians came to swell the output of the new British studios, Continental visitors to a large extent replacing the Americans of earlier years' (1971, p. 159). Some of the most illuminating literature on the British film industry in the 1920s is consequently to be found in an important anthology on the fashion for European co-productions in this era (Higson and Maltby 1999; see also Bergfelder and Cargnelli 2008).

One of the most underdeveloped areas of scholarship as far as the post-war period is concerned is the study of mainstream British film culture beyond the sphere of production. There are some significant essays on trends in film exhibition and reception (Hiley 1999; Griffiths 2012), along with detailed studies of film censorship practices (Kuhn 1988; Lewis 2002), British Pathé's cinemazine for women, *Eve's Film Review* (Hammerton 2001), and the place of cinema in the everyday lives of both ordinary women and female writers (Stead 2011), but the volume of such work is still relatively small compared with equivalent research on the 1910s. The film exhibition and distribution sectors underwent significant change and tribulation in the 1920s. It is reported in the film industry trade press of the time that 'the worst slump [in audience attendance] in the history of the business' was experienced in Britain in 1921–1922 (Tilley 1922), yet at the time of writing one struggles to find so much as a passing reference in the current literature to this apparently momentous crisis, let alone an adequate investigation of its causes and effects.

The above discussion has outlined two basic paradigms which are operative in the study of the British film industry in the 1910 and 1920s: one consists of attempts to rehabilitate its reputation as an important and accomplished producer of mainstream films, while the other has effectively identified the analysis of Britain as an important market for the consumption of films as a more fruitful avenue of enquiry. One way of examining a meaningfully linked circuit of production, exhibition, and reception in silent-era Britain would be further research into what has been called 'useful cinema' (Acland and Wasson 2011), i.e. the educational and propagandistic employment of moving images by social institutions and business

organisations to serve particular instrumental aims. There is obviously a voluminous literature on the Documentary Movement in Britain, but comparatively little research has been undertaken on pre-Grierson actuality filmmaking in the UK, and much of this is the work of two individual scholars ploughing a lonely furrow (e.g. Bottomore 1980, 1995, 1997, 2002; McKernan 1992, 2000, 2009, 2013). There are signs of a productive shift towards a more concerted examination of ‘useful cinema’ produced in Britain during the silent era in some of the outputs of the Colonial Film project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) (Grieverson and McCabe 2011) and an equally recent study of William Lever’s use of advertising films (Sargeant 2011a). There were extensive reflections published in Britain throughout this period on cinema’s potential as a medium for education (e.g. Horne 1919; Marchant 1925) and the scope for further research within this particular field is considerable.

Note

- 1 It should be noted that these were somewhat revisionist claims in the 1940s: it had been alleged earlier in the decade – against a background of bitter post-war trade disputes between Hollywood and the British Treasury – that Britain had only been demoted from a well-earned position of international pre-eminence in the film industry by the economic disruption caused by the First World War and the unfair eagerness of American companies to exploit this moment of weakness.

References

- Acland, Charles R and Wasson, Haidee (eds.) (2011). *Useful Cinema*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Allister, Ray (1948). *Friese-Greene: Close-up of an Inventor*. London: Marsland.
- Bamford, Kenton (1999). *Distorted Images: British National Identity and Film in the 1920s*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Barnes, John (1976). *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.
- Barnes, John (1983). *The Rise of Cinema in Great Britain*. London: Bishopsgate Press.
- Barnes, John (1988). *Pioneers of the British Film*. London: Bishopsgate Press.
- Barnes, John (1993). *Filming the Boer War*. London: Bishopsgate Press.
- Barnes, John (1997). *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England 1894–1901 – Volume 5: 1900*. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Bergfelder Tim and Cargnelli, Christian (eds.) (2008). *Destination London: German-Speaking Emigrés and British Cinema, 1925–1950*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Botting, Jo (2015). “A war film with a difference”: Adrian Brunel’s *Blighty* and negotiation within the British studio system of the late silent period. *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 12 (2): 151–171.

- Bottomore, Stephen (1980). Frederic Villiers – war correspondent. *Sight and Sound* 49 (4): 250–255.
- Bottomore, Stephen (1995). “An amazing quarter of moving gold, gems and genealogy”: filming India’s 1902/03 Delhi Durbar. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 15 (4): 495–515.
- Bottomore, Stephen (1997). “Have you seen the Gaekwar Bob?”: Filming the 1911 Delhi durbar. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 17 (3): 309–345.
- Bottomore, Stephen (2002). Projecting for the Lord: the work of Wilson Carlile. *Film History* 14 (2): 196–209.
- Brewster, Ben and Jacobs, Lea (1997). *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Julie and Davison, Annette (eds.) (2013). *The Sounds of the Silents in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Richard (1996). Marketing the cinématographe in Britain. In: *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future* (ed. Christopher Williams), 63–71. London: BFI Publishing/University of Westminster Press.
- Brown, Richard (2004). New Century Pictures: regional enterprise in early British film exhibition. In: *The Lost World of Mitchell & Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (ed. Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell), 69–82. London: BFI Publishing.
- Brown, Richard (2005). Film and postcards – cross-media symbiosis in early Bamforth films. In: *Visual Delights Two: Exhibition and Reception* (ed. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple), 236–251. Eastleigh: John Libbey.
- Brown, Richard and Anthony, Barry (1999). *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Bryan, Jane. (2006). ‘The cinema looking glass: the British film fan magazine, 1911–1918’. PhD diss., University of East Anglia.
- Burch, Noël (1990). *Life to Those Shadows* (trans. and ed. Ben Brewster). London: BFI Publishing.
- Burrows, Jon (2003). *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Burrows, Jon (2004a). Penny pleasures: film exhibition in London during the nickelodeon era, 1906–1914. *Film History* 16 (1): 60–91.
- Burrows, Jon (2004b). Penny pleasures II: indecency, anarchy and junk film in London’s “nickelodeons”, 1906–1914. *Film History* 16 (2): 172–197.
- Burrows, Jon (2010). West is best; or, what we can learn from Bournemouth. *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8 (4): 351–362.
- Burrows, Jon and Brown, Richard (2010). Financing the Edwardian cinema boom, 1909–1914. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30 (1): 1–20.
- Burton, Alan and Porter, Laraine (eds.) (2000). *Pimple, Pranks & Pratfalls: British Film Comedy Before 1930*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Burton, Alan and Porter, Laraine (eds.) (2001). *The Showman, the Spectacle & the Two-Minute Silence*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Burton, Alan and Porter, Laraine (eds.) (2002). *Crossing the Pond: Anglo-American Film Relations Before 1930*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.

- Burton, Alan and Porter, Laraine (eds.) (2003). *Scene Stealing: Sources for British Cinema Before 1930*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Chanan, Michael (1996). *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain*, 2e. London: Routledge.
- Cinquegrani, Maurizio (2014). *Of Empire and the City: Remapping Early British Cinema*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Coe, Brian (1969a). William Friese Greene and the origins of cinematography I. *Screen* 10 (2): 25–41.
- Coe, Brian (1969b). William Friese Greene and the origins of cinematography II. *Screen* 10 (3): 72–83.
- Coe, Brian (1969c). William Friese Greene and the origins of cinematography III. *Screen* 10 (4–5): 129–147.
- Donald, James, Friedberg, Anne, and Marcus, Laura (eds.) (1999). *Close Up, 1927–1933: Cinema and Modernism*. London: Cassell.
- Ercole, Pierluigi. (2008). 'Ethnic audiences and film culture: Italian immigrants, cultural identity, and the distribution of Italian films in London at the beginning of the 20th century'. PhD diss., University of East Anglia.
- Fitzsimmons, Linda and Street, Sarah (eds.) (2000). *Moving Performance: British Stage and Screen, 1890s to 1920s*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Gaudreault, André (2000). The diversity of cinematographic connections in the intermedial context of the turn of the 20th century. In: *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century* (ed. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple), 8–15. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Gledhill, Christine (2003). *Reframing British Cinema, 1918–1928: Between Restraint and Passion*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Gledhill, Christine (2011). Remembering the war in 1920s British cinema. In: *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams), 94–108. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gray, Frank (2004). *The Kiss in the Tunnel* (1895), G.A. Smith and the emergence of the edited film in England. In: *The Silent Cinema Reader* (ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer), 51–62. London: Routledge.
- Grieveson, Lee and McCabe, Colin (eds.) (2011). *Empire and Film*. London: BFI/Palgrave Macmillan.
- Griffiths, Trevor (2012). *The Cinema and Cinema-Going in Scotland, 1896–1950*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.
- Gunning, Tom (1990). The cinema of attractions: early film, its spectator and the avant-garde. In: *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker), 56–62. London: BFI Publishing.
- Gunning, Tom (2005). Modernity and early cinema. In: *Encyclopaedia of Early Cinema* (ed. Richard Abel), 439–442. London: Routledge.
- Haggith, Toby (2011). The dead, battlefield burials and the unveiling of war memorials in films of the Great War era'. In: *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams), 145–159. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hammerton, Jenny (2001). *For Ladies Only? Eve's Film Review: Pathe Cinemagazine, 1921–33*. Hastings: Projection Box.

- Hammond, Michael (2006). *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914–1918*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Hammond, Michael and Williams, Michael (eds.) (2011). *British Silent Cinema and the Great War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hanson, Stuart (2007). *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen: A History of Cinema Exhibition in Britain Since 1896*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hendricks, Gordon (1961). *The Edison Motion Picture Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Higson, Andrew (1995a). The victorious recycling of national history: Nelson. In: *Film and the First World War* (ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp), 108–115. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press.
- Higson, Andrew (1995b). *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Higson, Andrew (1998). Heritage discourses and British cinema before 1920. In: *Celebrating 1895: Proceedings of the International Conference on Film Before 1920* (ed. John Fullerton), 182–189. Eastleigh: John Libbey.
- Higson, Andrew (ed.) (2002). *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930*. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Higson, Andrew and Maltby, Richard (eds.) (1999). “Film Europe” and “Film America”: *Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920–1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Hiley, Nicholas (1995). The British cinema auditorium. In: *Film and the First World War* (ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp), 160–170. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press.
- Hiley, Nicholas (1998). “At the Picture Palace”: the British cinema audience, 1895–1920. In: *Celebrating 1895: Proceedings of the International Conference on Film Before 1920* (ed. John Fullerton), 96–103. Eastleigh: John Libbey.
- Hiley, Nicholas (1999). Let’s go to the pictures: the British cinema audience in the 1920s and 1930s. *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 2: 39–53.
- Hiley, Nicholas (2002). Nothing more than a “craze”: cinema building in Britain from 1909 to 1914. In: *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930* (ed. Andrew Higson), 111–127. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Horne, Mary C (1919). *The Cinema in Education and as an Amusement and Entertainment*. London: The Challenge.
- Jackson, Victoria. (2011). ‘The distribution and exhibition of Kinemacolor in the UK and USA, 1909–1916’. PhD diss., University of Bristol.
- Kember, Joe (2009). *Marketing Modernity: Victorian Popular Shows and Early Cinema*. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Kuhn, Annette (1988). *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909–1925*. London: Routledge.
- Lewis, Sian (2002). ‘Local government and film censorship: the control of film exhibition in England and Wales, 1909–1939’. PhD diss., University of Bristol.
- Low, Rachael (1949). *The History of the British Film: 1906–1914*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Low, Rachael (1950). *The History of the British Film: 1914–1918*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Low, Rachael (1971). *The History of the British Film: 1918–1929*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Low, Rachael and Manvell, Roger (1948). *The History of the British Film: 1896–1906*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

- Maltby, Richard (1997). Introduction. In: *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England 1894–1901 – Volume 5: 1900* (ed. John Barnes), xi–xxxii. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Marchant, James (ed.) (1925). *The Cinema in Education: Being the Report of the Psychological Investigation Conducted by Special Sub-committees Appointed by the Cinema Commission of Enquiry*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Marcus, Laura (2007). *The Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McKernan, Luke (1992). *Topical Budget: The Great British News Film*. London: BFI Publishing.
- McKernan, Luke (2000). The great white silence: Antarctic exploration and film. In: *South: The Race to the Pole* (ed. AT Kearney), 91–103. London: National Maritime Museum.
- McKernan, Luke (2009). “The modern elixir of life”: Kinemacolor, royalty and the Delhi Durbar. *Film History* 21 (2): 122–136.
- McKernan, Luke (2013). *Charles Urban: Pioneering the Non-fiction Film in Britain and America, 1897–1925*. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Musser, Charles (1991). *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Musser, Charles (2004). The hidden and the unspeakable: on theatrical culture, Oscar Wilde and Ernst Lubitsch’s *Lady Windermere’s Fan*. *Film Studies* 4: 12–47.
- Napper, Lawrence (2009). *British Cinema and Middlebrow Culture in the Interwar Years*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Napper, Lawrence (2011). Remembrance, re-membering and recollection: Walter Summers and the British war film of the 1920s. In: *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams), 109–117. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey (ed.) (2012). Foundation and early years. In: *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933–2000* (ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin), 14–27. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Porter, Laraine and Dixon, Bryony (eds.) (2007). *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema Before 1930*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Ramsaye, Terry (1926). *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rotha, Paul (1930). *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Sadoul, Georges (1946). Early film production in England: the origin of montage, close-ups and chase sequence (trans. Yvonne Templin). *Hollywood Quarterly* I (3): 249–259.
- Salt, Barry (1978). Film Form, 1900–06. *Sight and Sound* XLVII (3): 148–153.
- Samson, Jen (1986). The Film Society, 1925–1939. In: *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (ed. Charles Barr), 306–313. London: BFI Publishing.
- Sargeant, Amy (2011a). Lever, Lifebuoy and Ivory. *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9 (1): 37–55.
- Sargeant, Amy (2011b). “A victory and a defeat as glorious as a victory”: *The Battles of the Coronel and Falkland Islands* (Walter Summers, 1927). In: *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams), 79–93. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sexton, Jamie (2008). *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Shail, Andrew (2012). *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism*. New York: Routledge.

- Sopocy, Martin (1998). *James Williamson: Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative*. London: Associated University Presses.
- Stead, Lisa. (2011). 'Women's writing and British female film culture in the silent era'. PhD diss., University of Exeter.
- Tilley, Frank A (1922). The story of the year. In: *Kinematograph Year Book 1922*. London: Kinematograph Weekly.
- Toulmin, Vanessa (2006). *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Turvey, Gerry (2002). Towards a critical practice: Ivor Montagu and British film culture in the 1920s. In: *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930* (ed. Andrew Higson), 306–320. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Vélez-Serna, Maria. (2012). 'Film distribution in Scotland before 1918'. PhD diss., University of Glasgow.
- Wasson, Haidee (2002). Writing the cinema into daily life: Iris Barry and the emergence of British film criticism in the 1920s. In: *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930* (ed. Andrew Higson), 321–337. Exeter: Exeter University Press.
- Williams, Michael (2003). *Ivor Novello: Screen Idol*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Williams, Michael (2011). "Fire, blood and steel": memory and spectacle in *The Guns of Loos* (Sinclair Hill, 1928). In: *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams), 118–133. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.