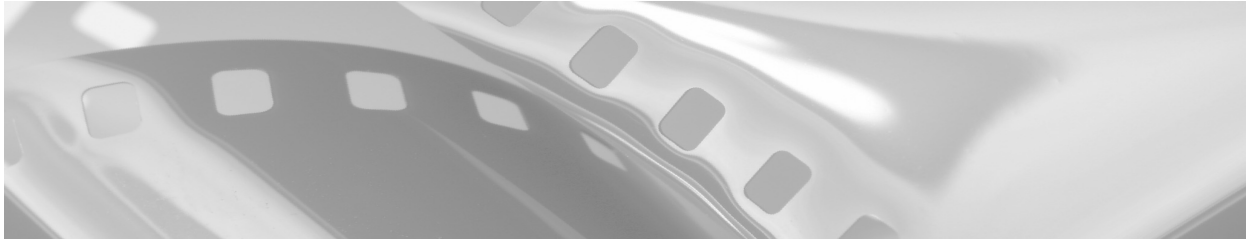


SECTION I

Mapping Traditions



The concept of national cinemas is a familiar, if not uncontested, one in the academic study of film. It represents the proposition that certain bodies of film can speak for, as well as to, a national population and so help to invent that population as a nation, to articulate an identity for a mass of people that is always in fact extraordinarily diverse and more often than not characterized by internal tensions and antagonisms.

The chapters in this section of the Handbook address a related but less explored set of issues. One is simply to ask whether the history of the emergence of Film Studies as a distinct academic discipline, an intellectual field or at least a familiar title in university timetables is similar in all geographical and cultural circumstances. Without giving the story away, we can say that it is not. This then leads to the question of what socially and historically specific factors have shaped the development of cinema cultures, systematic thinking about film as an aesthetic form and cinema as an economic and cultural institution (commonly known as ‘film theory’) and the formal study of film through research and teaching. What emerges is not only an indication of the intriguing differences between the various national and regional traditions surveyed here but also a sense of the very different ways in which – and the reasons why – the phenomenon of cinema has been taken seriously.

Our sense is that these various reflections on where we as Film scholars came from and how we got to where we are pick up on a broader consensus that Film Studies has reached a stage of maturity in its development that makes such reflective institutional histories timely, not least to ensure the knowledge and memories of those involved in them at first hand are available for future generations of researchers.

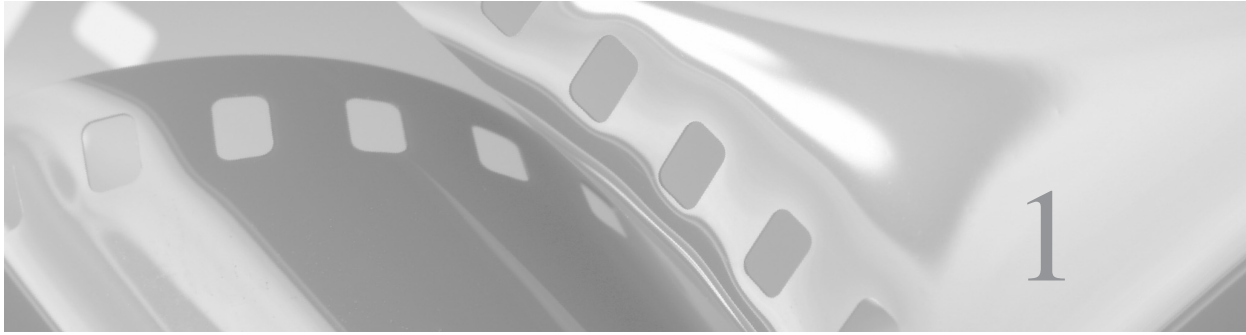
It is important to be quite clear about two points.

First, and to repeat, this section offers not an overview of national or regional cinemas, but rather a synoptic survey of different histories of Film Studies and of the traditions of thinking about cinema from which they emerged. The question of whether there are any hypotheses to be proposed or conclusions to be drawn about possible links between the ethos, orientation and style of national cinemas, national film cultures and the emergence of formal Film Studies in national educational systems is left open for speculation and further research.

Second, these case studies in the genealogy of Film Studies are intended to be indicative rather than comprehensive. As the chapters presented here represent – so far as we know – the first attempt at this kind of mapping, it will be no surprise if some readers feel that the cases included may not be the right ones in terms of global significance

or personal interest, that some cases not included may be sufficiently compelling to merit inclusion, or that in some instances we may have drawn the boundaries too broadly, too narrowly, or simply in the wrong place. As the bodies of work addressed in

Bhaskar Sarkar's contribution imply, borders are always in question and subject to dispute. In that spirit, if we have helped to initiate a continuing conversation about such topics, we shall be content that the section has served its purpose.



North America

Dana Polan

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS AMERICAN FILM STUDIES?

In outlining the trajectories of American Film Studies, it can be productive to approach the object of our history in particularly literal terms. That is, it is useful to consider what in such Film Studies is specifically American insofar as it invokes and enacts particular national preoccupations. To what extent does the development of twentieth (and now twenty-first) century inquiry into moving images projected on a screen serve in its own way as an articulation of US self-definition (and perhaps self-critique), especially in the area of culture? Does a field of study which at times has become intensely specialized nonetheless reflect – in however mediated a fashion – the concerns of the nation as it confronts modernity and offers symbolic responses to it in the form of aesthetic representation? Is there something specifically American about American film study?

Such questions can seem surprising since it is not customary to think of a body of disciplinary knowledge – especially for one so specific, small, and specialized within the

larger academic context, let alone within the social context – as somehow reflective of a national identity. Instead, the tendency is to imagine that the individual contributions by this or that thinker to the particular field somehow have their identity as moments of a specific and internally constituted tradition in which each critical work influences the next and all of them form an ideal and coherent whole – a discipline, precisely. And, it must be said, this image of disciplinary history is not entirely false: disciplines do proceed at their own historical pace and do form internally coherent traditions that only indirectly could be related to the social time. But the question of any field of study is also the question of how its object of study gained legitimacy as an object of study and that specifically is a question about the larger academic context and about the cultural context in which certain areas are felt to be amenable to critical thought – and others aren't. In its own way, for instance, Film Studies plays out pressing questions that the American university faced as it moved into the twentieth century: the necessity or not of higher education for the masses, rather than a privileged elite; the extent to

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which modern education should devote itself to vocationalism and/or professionalization, rather than to the inculcation of general values (perhaps to be found in a canon of great works of Western culture); the degree to which humanistic inquiry still could offer valuable lessons in an age geared to an increasingly instrumental reason that might seem better addressed by social sciences than by the looser culturalist interpretations of the humanities.

Note: in all that follows, I use 'American' as a short-hand for 'United States' in large part because the former is easier to use in adjectival form – it seems more euphonious – and because it has become a conventionalized way of speaking about the nation. Clearly, though, the term 'American' is a fraught one in its projection from one nation to an entire continent. The question itself of a discipline's 'Americanness' might seem to beg some important questions of its own. What does it mean, for instance, when there is the slippage from reference specifically to the United States to the imperial gesture in which the condition of that one country is assumed to apply to the whole of North America? To take just one example, it is worth suggesting some of the difference of some Canadian film scholarship from equivalent work in the United States. For instance, one could argue the context-specific critical force of the Toronto-based journal, *CineAction*, and the writers around it, such as Robin Wood, in articulating a complex analysis of the complicated ideological operations of Hollywood cinema: there is awareness here of the hegemonic status of mainstream Hollywood cinema, but interest also in finding those works, Hollywood and otherwise, that offer sites of resistance to dominant Hollywood and US ideology. Likewise, it has been a strong concern of a number of Canadian scholars to theorize imperial relations of Canada and the United States through the articulation of a political economy approach to North American mass media, including film. And it might not even be pushing things too far to note how a group of scholars in Montréal especially have been instrumental in articulating a theory of early cinema as a mode

of representation not reducible to the narrative forms that would come later to characterize dominant, US-based feature filmmaking.

One aspect of this theorization, most evident in the 1980s and after André Gaudreault's work studying editing patterns in pre-feature cinema, has centred on formalistic elaboration of structural patternings and stylistic regularities in earliest film. At the same time, just as central to the work of the Québécois scholars of early cinema has been attention to local exhibition practices in the early period. It is more than tempting to understand such research as a form of regionalism in which the broad impositions of cinematic ideology on the public are tempered by local viewing practices and regionally differential practices of spectatorship.

In this respect, the pointed decision by the authors of *Global Hollywood* to use 'yanqui' (Miller et al., 2001) as their term to describe the nation is tempting in its recognition of the imperial nature of US politics and culture. But insofar as 'American' reiterates the nation's own grand design and ambition at self-definition, I will use the term here.

CAVEATS IN THE STUDY OF AMERICAN FILM STUDIES

But to offer the history of 'American' film study as somehow inextricably linked to the nation's own history requires several caveats. First of all, there needs to be a certain modesty to the enterprise. From within a field of study, it is tempting for the discipline's practitioners to imagine that the stakes and resonances of their work are high – that what they are doing has consequences beyond the boundaries of the discipline in the society at large. Certainly, indeed, there have been moments in film study in which its proponents have claimed ambitiously that their efforts have greater cultural and social ambition. Certainly, too, it is possible that efforts in pedagogy and in writing beyond the coterie of academic practitioners can mean that the concerns of the discipline have extended beyond its scholarly borders. The cinema obviously has

been a resonant force of popular culture, and it would seem inevitable that the concerted articulation of insights about it by scholars would thereby have some larger impact. For example, there are now several generations of cultural workers in the film industry who have come to it from film schools and bring to their creative efforts an awareness of film history and film theory. To take just one case, it is likely – although the exact lineage would be hard to trace – that the fundamental insight in Laura Mulvey's breakthrough essay from 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', that in popular film the gaze of the camera comes to center on the image of woman, fetishized as object, is an insight that has impacted on everyday understanding of filmic meaning. When, for instance, Brian de Palma's 1981 thriller *Blow Out* (US) begins with a long-take shot from the first-person point-of-view of a psycho killer moving through a sorority house and then reveals the scene to be a sequence from a horror film being worked on by the film's protagonist, a sound editor, it is easy to imagine that de Palma's work is responding to a concept that is in the air – that began from rigorous theoretical elaboration (Mulvey indicates that her argument was first presented in the French department at Northwestern University in the US) and then spread to become general currency.

Nonetheless, we shouldn't overestimate the importance of any particular scholarly field. To the extent that any discipline can be tied back to a social and even national context, film study has no special privilege in this respect (even the hard sciences have their cultural belonging, as the meta-discipline known as 'social studies of science' reminds us). And this connects to a second caveat: even as fields of study have a cultural standing and participate in the world at large, it is necessary to realize that they do so in their own way, at their own momentum and according to their own rules. There is a temporality to disciplinary practices that is not directly mappable onto the flow of social history. Disciplines bear what we might, following a concept elaborated by the Marxist philosopher

Louis Althusser for the analysis of human practices, term a 'relative autonomy' in which they move at their own rate and are shaped by their own internal laws even as they also mediate the deeper laws of the society they derive from.

A final caveat brings us closer to the specific object at hand. To the extent that we wish to trace the history of American film study, we need not only to know what we mean by 'American' but also by 'study'. If the hard sciences often seem very disciplinary in their confinement of knowledge to the laboratory, the research institute, the specialized journals and colloquia, it seems clear that film study is much more porous as a discipline, much messier in terms of its boundaries. On the one hand, the porosity of the field means also the work that did – and does still today – go on in academia under the name of film study is itself often belletristic, impressionistic, and lacking in the rigor and distance that we might expect in a scholarly field. That films are a source of personal affect and pleasure has sometimes meant that so-called scholarly work has actually been a disguised form of guilty-pleasure confessionality in which the cinematic delights that one holds dear are hidden beneath the rationalizations of critical discourse: in recent years, such blurring of academic analysis and personal taste – which is not necessarily a bad thing – has been reinforced by emergent topics for study like stars, fandom, and cult and exploitation cinema.

On the other hand, for much of its history, serious analysis of film took place outside academia (for instance, in the work of cultural commentators or critics who had ambitions to go beyond mere judgment of individual films, such as Andrew Sarris who through the 1950s and 1960s set out to elaborate a theory and classification of directors as the veritable auteurs of films). Even as late as the 1960s, Film Studies found its useful literature not in the efforts of film scholars (one of the rare published books on film by a university instructor of the art was 1960's *Motion Pictures: The Development of an Art from Silent Films to the Age of Television*

by Purdue professor Albert Fulton) but in works of criticism (for example, the writings of Pauline Kael or Sarris [who later would go on to have an academic career]) or in scholarly writings by people in other fields (for example, Erwin Panofsky who gave the first keynote talks for the newly founded Society of Cinematologists at the end of the 1950s).

Film has been a cultural practice so engrained in everyday life that many people can feel they have important opinions about it, and there is a strong and consequent discourse – some of it quite learned in appearance – on the movies that occurs quite outside the borders of an established discipline. To take just one example, the discourse of cinephilia – of extreme lovers of movies, of what we call the film ‘buffs’ – has often had its own degree of studiousness in the lists, the filmographies, the rigorous acts of collecting, and so on that surround intense devotion to the art form. With etymology reminding us that the notion of the ‘amateur’ has its origins in love (‘amour’), we can note how sometimes the critical distance supposedly necessary for study falls back into a closeness in which one’s love for the object is proudly displayed. In some cases, then, cinephilia has tipped over into academic practice as when certain cinephiles have come to have university careers in which they can enthuse over their filmic passion with their students. (One classic example: at New York University, William K. Everson turned a lifetime of film collecting, often centred on very obscure titles, into a pedagogy closely focused on the movies he had lovingly amassed.) In looking at film study, then, we need as much to note its continuity with non-academic approaches to the art as its separation from them.

POROUS BOUNDARIES IN THE HISTORY OF ACADEMIC ATTENTION TO FILM

No doubt cinema’s assumed status as an object of popular taste about which everyone has

opinions has meant that much of the available writing on film has been non-scholarly, but it is still striking to encounter an important field of critical attention where for so much of its history, the respected discourse on the object has been offered by figures other than those who actually study the object academically. It is noteworthy that one of the very first consequential works on film aesthetics, 1915’s *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (Münsterberg, 1916) (a work still cited favorably in the critical literature on cinema), was written by an academic, Harvard professor Hugo Münsterberg, but that Münsterberg engaged in his theorization of film outside of his primary academic research and pedagogy and clearly saw it as something that didn’t bear important connection to his scholarship. It is perhaps equally noteworthy that the first university press book on film – *Motion Picture Continuities*, published in 1929 by Columbia University Press, and edited by Columbia University adult-education instructor Frances Taylor Patterson – is an anthology of film scripts, not an authored critical study, again showing that the study of film, and the recording of that study in books and articles, generally was slow to find a place within the specifically academic context.

Motion Picture Continuities is revealing in another way. Frances Taylor Patterson put the volume together to offer exemplars of the finest work in screen art so that the reader, imagined logically as a consumer of films, might both witness the sort of uplifting quality works he/she should demand at local theaters and, as a potential maker of films him/herself might have models to emulate in the quest for Hollywood success. Patterson was the second ever teacher of film in a university setting, having taken over an adult education course, *Photoplay Composition*, from its first instructor, Victor Freeburg, who taught it at Columbia from 1915-17 before going into the army at the outbreak of world war and then retiring from academic life upon his return home. Both Patterson and Freeburg intended the term ‘Composition’ in the title of their course to imply several things. Most ambitiously, it

suggested a parallel or even assimilation of the new art of cinema to established arts – especially, music and painting – in which there would be an emphasis on films as achievements of rhythm, pattern, tonality, balance, and so on (not for nothing was one of Freeburg’s books on film entitled *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* [1923]). As the feature film was gaining in cultural legitimation in the mid-teens, comparison to the fine arts became a way of promoting the newer art’s artistic potentials, and in this respect both Freeburg and Patterson took strong inspiration from poet Vachel Lindsay’s well known book of film aesthetics, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915), which equated each genre of film with a different high art. Interestingly, though, where Lindsay saw the ‘composer’ of film images and stories as most likely being the film’s director, both Freeburg and Patterson tended to focus on the photoplaywright, whom they saw as the veritable author of a film’s narrative and of its visual style.

But there was also a more specific meaning to the notion of ‘Composition’. For Freeburg and, even more so, Patterson, an education in film was not only to be cultural – to improve appreciation at the point of consumption by teaching the ways in which film was like the (other) fine arts – but also practical: Composition here referred to the nuts-and-bolts hands-on work of actually crafting photoplays that students might eventually submit to studios as the first steps in lucrative careers. Even as they imagined a necessary feedback loop between consumption and production – wherein a training in appreciation would lead spectators to demand better films and thereby, consequently, to have a salutary impact on film producers – Patterson and Freeburg held out the possibility that through training their students could become producers and cinematic composers, too.

In other words, from the start, film study as aesthetic appreciation was mixed with practical instruction in filmmaking. The teaching of film has always been caught, in variable and fraught ways, between critical study of the art and professional training in it. If in the best of moments – as in Freeburg’s and Patterson’s

notion of the feedback loop – the ideal has been held out of a necessary relationship between studying films and making them, there have also been sometimes legendary cases of non-communication or even rivalry and conflict between filmmaking instructors and cinema scholars. Indeed, Patterson’s own desire to hold the two sides of the equation together in a productive relationship may have itself seemed a problem to those who wanted to maintain boundaries: when in 1926–7, Columbia undertook to create a full-fledged degree-granting professional program in film production, Patterson’s concern to maintain a place for film appreciation and aesthetics within a photoplay composition course could only seem too belletristic and she was not included in any discussions of the new program (which, for its worth, never got off the ground).

PROGRESSIVISM AND THE RISE OF ACADEMIC FILM STUDY

In fact, if Freeburg and Patterson included a strong hands-on component to their course, to the extent of writing aesthetics of film that were also veritable manuals rich in practical advice, this was due in large part to the cultural context in which they operated, one in which humanistic learning in skills of art appreciation and manual training in skills of craft and practical application were seen as overlapping forms for cultivation of the whole human being.

Freeburg and Patterson can be seen as part of the moment of Progressive reform in which intellectuals and professionals attempted to deal with new conditions of modernity – especially, the influx of immigrant populations who then come into contact with potentially corruptive influences ranging from contagion to alcoholism to the immoralities of popular entertainment – not so much by condemnation as by the ameliorative wish to find moments of uplift and aesthetic goodness within the very heart of popular culture and everyday life. The Progressive reformers realized, at the very least, that mass culture could not be wished

away and, at the very best, that it might be turned to effective and positive ends. In this respect, filmmaking instruction ceased, in the case of Freeburg and Patterson, to be imagined as mere technical training to tap instead into a larger valorization in Progressivism of human acts of making (especially of art-making) as valuable demonstrations of human achievement and accomplishment. Throughout the age of Progressive reform, there was a constant ode to workmanship or craftsmanship as the idea that in the act of making things, human beings would make themselves better. Not for nothing was Patterson's first book of photoplay composition entitled *Cinema Craftsmanship* (1920) ('craftsmanship' and its allied 'workmanship' were keywords of the Progressivist valorization of skilled acts of doing as personal amelioration). Patterson outlined there how aesthetic appreciation of the finer films along with refined training in the best aspects of high-class photoplay-making were both superior exercises of human creativity. Interestingly, Patterson also spoke of human creative potential as a form of 'industry', and she sometimes pointedly contrasted that personalized sense of industriousness to the large-scale and fairly anonymous operations of the film 'industry' which she saw as not always giving sufficient space to individual and personal creativity and allowing it to flourish. If, from the start, film study was caught in a tension between appreciation and hands-on practical instruction, it also had to navigate the tensions between art and commerce.

THE TURN FROM HUMANIST APPRECIATION TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

I have noted, however, that in 1926–7 when Columbia University administrators came to envision a program in practical training in film, their vision was so dominated by notions of professionalism that Patterson's earlier humanistic mediation of art and craft could only seem irrelevant to them. In fact, the

administrators set out to create a cinema production curriculum at the behest of the film industry itself, and Columbia University was actually only one such venue in which the industry's own administrators sought to outsource the training of their own workings by calling up the world of academia. Here, the date of the enterprise explains a lot: 1926–7 was the moment of the coming of sound, a technological development of portentous implication but one that also consolidated ongoing trends in the business and craft of film toward rationalization, laboratory research, regularization of production, articulation of industry standards and practices, and so on. All of this required rigorous, intensely applied training in occupations and professional aspects of industry-based filmmaking. It was also at this time, in 1926–7, that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) was founded, geared to combating labour unrest by liberalist adjudication among branches of the industry and by also professionally inscribing workers into the Hollywood system in ways that would make them team-players rather than resistant labour activists. Additionally, this was a time in which the Hays Office, the censorship and public relations service for the film industry, was proactively engaging in betterment of the film industry's image by presenting it as a well-run and salutary business that was good for America. Will Hays himself saw industry association with academia as providing both rationalized professionalization and an aura of respectability and profundity of purpose that he felt could only benefit the film business.

Consequently, these years reveal a series of initiatives between academic institutions and the film industry to create fully professional programs of film training. Early on, then, not merely do we have film study linked to filmmaking, but caught up in sponsorship by Hollywood forces, the implications of which major film programs on both coasts of the US still grapple with today.

I have already mentioned Columbia University. Here in 1926–7, Will Hays negotiated with administrators (such as his Republican Party friend, Nicholas Murray

Butler, President of the University) for a three-track curriculum in practical work in film (the tracks were cinematography, screenwriting, and set design and staging) to be based initially on existing courses at the university (for instance, cinematography could start from physics department courses on optics) but to then expand into offerings expressly created for the curriculum. The Columbia initiative seems to have fallen apart simply because the university administrators realized that film industry leaders were hoping not to put money into the endeavour and were instead counting on the university itself to come up with the resources. Interestingly, a virtually identical three-track curriculum was also floated as an idea at the University of Southern California (USC) whose president, Rufus Von KleinSmid, was a fencing partner of AMPAS's first president, Douglas Fairbanks, and got to talking with the actor about industry-academia cooperation. In the event, however, USC's plans for a multi-track major that would have required lots of support (both financial and material) from the film industry foundered and the initial idea was scaled back into one general course, Introduction to Photoplay, where professors and industry representatives talked about the art and industry of Hollywood cinema.

Meanwhile, Will Hays was also instrumental in another professional venture: with financier Joseph P. Kennedy, he arranged for the Harvard School of Business to run a Business Policy course on the film industry that centered around lectures given by luminaries from the industry (for example, Marcus Loew, William Fox, Harry Warner, Adolph Zukor and Hays himself). Where the Columbia and USC initiatives focused on on-set aspects of the filmmaking process, the Harvard course concentrated, as befitted a professional program of business training, on financing, distribution, marketing, and so on. The hope was that this first course would lead to regularly offered instruction in the business of film, but soon Kennedy withdrew his financial support as he left the film industry and turned to other areas of investment. The course idea died.

Even though none of these initiatives in professional training went according to plan, they are revealing of an interest at the end of the 1920s in developing a film pedagogy geared toward practical ends. (In any case, it is worth noting that the professional initiatives were all not completely without consequence: although it had to be scaled back, the USC idea of a film production program endured, and in the 1930s it gradually expanded into a curriculum that constituted the first degree-granting major in film in the country.) Industry support and practical intent did not mean, however, that attention to film's cultural or humanistic status dropped away completely. In fact, to the extent that the initiatives in film professionalization had to do in no small part with public relations efforts to make the industry of film seem rational, ethical, and reasonable, it was important for curricula of hands-on training in filmmaking to also acknowledge the special value of the 'thing' made, the films themselves. Cinema might be a business like any other – for example, Harvard's Business Policy course concentrated each year on a model industry and followed its typical item of manufacture from production to distribution to consumption – but it was essential to also suggest that its exemplary productions were ones that radiated cultural and aesthetic value and had a core of humanistic uplift. Thus, Harvard's business course was directly conjoined to an effort in Fine Arts to set up an annual award for artistic excellence in film production, while at USC, the head of the film curriculum, Boris Morkovin, offered courses both on the fundamentals of motion picture production and on the great directors who, in his view, made film a fundamental force for aesthetic cultivation.

THE 1930s AND THE RESURGENCE OF CULTURAL APPROACHES TO FILM APPRECIATION

The need to justify film culturally actually strengthened in the 1930s even as there was

a drive toward professional needs of the film curricula, and the period can be seen as one in which there was a propitious (if sometimes calculated and tactical) alliance of industry and academia around cinema as a vital form of American cultural life. One rallying point ironically was the research project of a number of social scientists funded by the Payne Fund, a religiously inspired foundation that worried about the seemingly deleterious impact of popular culture on ordinary citizens. As the authors of a history of the Payne Fund efforts in the area of cinema clarify (Jowett et al., 1996), the religious leaders behind the research project realized that mere moral condemnation of the movies would not seem rigorous enough and they turned to the social scientists for experiments and analyses that they hoped would confirm their sentiment as to the danger of films. Despite the facts that much of the efforts of the Payne Fund researchers relied on dubious procedures and that, in any case, many of their conclusions were not in unambiguous support of the religious leaders' assertion of the movies' capacity for evil, the Payne Fund Studies still matter as the first concerted attempt by the social sciences to deal with cinema, and the initiative is still cited for its precedence in the critical literature on the history of mass media research. At the time both supporters and detractors took the implications of these studies very seriously. In particular, for our purposes, the findings encouraged strong response from humanists who either were disdainful of those specific moments when the Payne Fund researchers did criticize the movies or were doubtful more generally about the wisdom of letting social scientists think that their work could say anything useful about a popular cultural form like the cinema.

Two cases in which the humanities response was to reaffirm cinema's transcendence of mere social or sociological influence so as to constitute a vital form of cultural uplift and aesthetic refinement are particularly noteworthy. At New York University, sociologist Frederick Thrasher had in fact been commissioned by the Payne Fund sponsors

to work on a project volume on the impact of movies on delinquency. Thrasher, who had published a book on gangs with a chapter on the impact of movies on delinquent behaviour, seemed a logical candidate for the Payne Fund proponents but soon he came to realize that he liked the movies – liked them for himself (by the 1940s, he would edit a coffee-table celebration of Warner Bros. talking pictures, *Okay for Sound* [1946]) but also liked them for their potential cultural value vis-à-vis the general public, both young and old, who he imagined could find in the movies a form of 'informal education' that could compensate for failings of the official educational system. Having begun his efforts at film pedagogy with a Payne Fund inspired course on worrisome media effects of the movies, Thrasher now began teaching a course on film appreciation little different from the ones currently taught in so many humanities programs and film study departments.

The other important humanities reclamation of the movies came from within the heart of Payne Fund research territory. At the University of Chicago, from which a number of Payne Fund social scientists had been recruited, philosopher Mortimer Adler had engaged in a vicious battle to reclaim knowledge of realms of human achievement away from the social sciences and for the humanities. Adler took his social scientist colleagues – especially those who conducted research for the Payne Fund – to task for what he saw as their category error in assuming that the realm of culture could be accessible to the positivist modes of knowledge of the sciences. A convert to Catholicism but also a fervent defender of the Western philosophical tradition starting with the Greeks, Adler imagined a hierarchy of humans in their relation to ultimate truth. Catholics were closest to pure spirit through their inner and intuitively felt possession of grace, below them were the philosophers (the models here were Plato and Aristotle) who could achieve spirit through the dialectic work of reason. Below them were, in descending order, the artists who transcended the crass materiality of the world through creativity (but not

through philosophers' reason); those citizens with enough time and talent to understand (or to be taught) the insights of philosophy and to intuit the deepest accomplishments of the fine arts; and, at the bottom of the hierarchy, the mass consumers for mass art, the public, who could participate vicariously in the imaginative creations of popular artists and who by means of catharsis would purge themselves of earthy and earthly inclinations. Strikingly, even if it assumed gradations of mind, intellect, and taste, Adler's hierarchy also assumed that for each population in the society, there were corresponding works of human creation that spoke trenchantly and appropriately to the group. Philosophers had philosophy to raise them up; ordinary audiences had popular culture. While Adler became an intense propagandist for the so-called Great Books of the Western World – those seeming pinnacles of complex philosophy and elevated literature that seemed ready-made for philosophers and elite taste communities – he also militated strongly for a rich popular culture that he felt would provide the mass public with a vital art at its own level of appreciation and to its own benefit and uplift. For Adler, there was no conflict between high and low culture since each met needs of its particular audience that the other couldn't.

In the mid-1930s Adler was commissioned by the Hays Office to defend the popular art of cinema against detractors like the proponents of the Payne Fund and, for that purpose, he produced a massive (over 600 pages) aesthetics of cinema, *Art and Prudence* (1937). Certainly, the fact that Adler was paid to write a philosophical defense of the movies might imply that his interest in that art wasn't pure, but the very extent to which he devoted himself to the assignment, reading a vast number of works on the art of film and fashioning such a big book of patiently argued points suggests conversely that he was quite caught up in his project. Indeed, in *Philosopher at Large* (1977), his autobiography, Adler spoke of his great love of the movies, and it is clear that *Art and Prudence* represented more than a

professional assignment that devolved to him from the film industry. His book was one of the most concerted attempts up until that time to argue for the worthiness of cinema as a popular art.

As a follower of the ideas of Saint Thomas, Adler took an Aristotelean approach to art, seeing film as a poetic form that diverged imaginatively from everyday reality thereby to arouse emotions but in a purely fictive and controlled fashion that enabled their ultimate purgation. Hence, film raised its viewers from the purely carnal realm of appetite and desire to give them a glimpse of the finer potentialities the human mind was capable of. Quite strikingly, Adler's ode to cinema as the ultimate democratic art – the art most readily resonant with the demos – would inspire his philosopher friend, Scott Buchanan, another fervent defender of the Great Books to see film study as a logical companion to – and indeed culmination of – a curriculum fully based on Great Books study that he was proposing for the newly revamped St. John's College in Maryland. (St. John's still functions as an institution of higher education in which students spend their four years reading the Great Books in chronological order from the Greeks to more recent dead, white males – with now a few token women thrown in.)

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AS A DIVIDING LINE IN THE HISTORY OF SERIOUS ATTENTION TO FILM

Interestingly, the increasing concern of a cohort of intellectuals such as Adler, Buchanan, along with their friends Robert Maynard Hutchins (president of the University of Chicago) and critic-poet Mark Van Doren, among others, to militate for the Great Books canon overlapped temporally with a 1930s canonization of a singular, and supposedly great, tradition in cinema. In 1935, New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) opened its film section which, among other activities, put into circulation a collection of high-points

of cinema history, organized chronologically but also thematically. The MoMA films were, at first, rentable only as series (not as individual titles) and came with program notes and introductory explanatory titles that inscribed each film within a larger seemingly authoritative history. The history that the MoMA collection of films told seems an eminently logical and predictable one but only because the MoMA series became so popular that it was rented widely and basically established the basic story of film history for years to come. The story it told was, for instance, that of crude single-take actualities hovering in a pre-artistic state until individual geniuses like Georges Méliès or Edwin Porter discovered the creative powers of editing and transcended the single image for complex narratives.

As cinema scholar Haidee Wasson (2005) has chronicled in a recent account of the MoMA Film Library, virtually overnight the US study of film changed. Teachers of film art now had easy access to a set of exemplary works whose arrangement in thematic and chronological series did much of their curricular planning for them. In consequence, film appreciation and film history courses sprouted up at an explosive pace. To give just one example, until the mid-1930s, Stanford University had been offering a half-hearted course on Photoplay Appreciation based on the AMPAS-sponsored lecture series at USC. When AMPAS indicated a desire to make the content of the USC course available to other universities, the USC Dean of Arts and Sciences, Karl Waugh, who was additionally the convener of the Introduction to Photoplay course, had contacted the chair of Stanford's Psychology Department since that was Waugh's field and the two were friends. A junior professor of applied and experimental psychology was assigned to teach the class but he had no enthusiasm for it and it died quickly. However, when MoMA announced the availability of its circulating library of films – which clearly framed cinema as cultural form and aesthetic achievement – it became easier for Stanford to entertain the idea of a film appreciation class and one came

into existence in Fine Arts where it would remain until at least the 1950s.

Just as Frederick Thrasher at NYU's School of Education had found his admiration for the movies leading him away in the early 1930s from a more strictly social science concern with the sociological effects of film to an humanistic interest in studying film as an Art that in its best moments transcended mere social effect, so too did the re-location at Stanford of the cinema from Psychology to Fine Arts appear to signal an increasing annexation of the movies to the province of the humanities insofar as they now would be defined as higher forms of cultural value. MoMA's Film Library had an increasingly important role to play in this shift. Indeed, if Thrasher had had initially to learn the history of film on his own (amusingly, he wrote to the National Board of Review, the film uplift organization that sponsored his class, to ask them about *Potemkin* [Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1925] which it had been recommended he show in class but which he had never heard of), MoMA did much of the preparatory homework for budding film pedagogues from the moment of the mid-1930s on. Thus, another NYU professor, Robert Gessner in English, who had been teaching film with the rubric of a course on literary adaptation, now started in the mid-1930s to offer classes on classic traditions in motion picture art, directly facilitated by MoMA rentals. Soon, Gessner was ambitiously conceiving of an NYU degree program in Cinema, one that, unlike USC's more filmmaking track, would emphasize the cultural study of movies rather than their production.

But the dream of a curriculum of film as canonic fine art – and the larger dream of cinema taking up an appropriate, respected place in the humanities – would be deferred. Advertisements for Gessner's program appeared in 1940 and it is (now) evident that this was not a propitious moment for leisurely study of a newly discovered branch of culture: with the looming threat of war and mobilization, new curricula in the humanities would have to be placed on hold (especially as they required new budget lines).

Not until the end of the 1950s would Gessner come back to the idea of a critical studies film degree at NYU.

WORLD WAR II PUTS FILM APPRECIATION CURRICULA ON HOLD

Much of what passed for an education in film during the Second World War was training in filmmaking for military purposes: for example, with strong sponsorship from the Signal Corps, USC's program – already geared to a practical pedagogy in hands-on production rather than cultural appreciation of cinema – became a veritable branch of the state. (This was an alliance that would continue into the post-war period with the enlistment of documentary in the battles of the Cold War. Not for nothing did the USC film school win its first Oscar for the documentary, *The Face of Lincoln* [Edward Freed, US, 1956], in which a USC sculptor bit by bit shapes the face of the president. The film has its own filmic documentation of the sculpting process coincide with the sculptor's demonstration of that process so that film and sculpture alike are seen to participate in a Cold War celebration of great American statesmen.)

The coming of war had signalled that the very idea of treating film favourably as a humanistic democratic art above the fray of combat and politics would come under challenge. To a certain degree, the Payne Fund Studies had served earlier as the last gasp of a religious-inspired condemnation of mass art for its supposedly deleterious impact on morals: in this respect, Adler's *Art and Prudence* easily demolished the Payne Fund's fuddy-duddy conservatism and showed just how antiquarian its moralism was. But there was a newer critique of mass culture coming into play in the late 1930s on into the war period and its impact was more consequential. Here, the suspicion of the impact of the popular arts was not so much a moral one coming from religious custodians worried about culture's impact on ethical standards as a more trenchant and seemingly grounded

fear about mass culture's role in the formation of political attitudes, especially in times of social upheaval and global threat. In fact, if the Payne Fund Studies are the last gasp of religious moralism, they also hint at a growing concern through the decade of the 1930s with mass communication as a form of political persuasion, a concern that other detractors of cinema would engage in but without the bothersome remnants of religious outrage. Whether it be the threat of Fascist/Nazi propaganda all too clearly conveyed by mass communication organs such as radio, or the more home-grown revelation of similar public vulnerability to media in the case of Orson Welles' 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast, the late 1930s were run through by a concern with intellectuals and academics about the potentially worrisome effects of communicational forms. Most revealingly, Mortimer Adler himself ended the decade with a best-selling volume, *How To Read a Book* (1940), which, despite the seeming general purview of its title, was actually a privileging of the reading of Great Books particularly and now came to see time spent on lesser forms of culture (such as cinema) as a waste, if not an impropriety, in a time of world crisis. Specifically citing the movies as one of the wasteful forms of mass leisure, Adler asserted that the coming of war required that American citizens had to defend Western civilization and that the 'great dialogue' across time that he felt was contained in the Great Books offered the strongest cultural tool in that battle. Not merely was popular culture a distraction, but it was itself a potential enemy in its propagandistic tendencies to speak loudly and seductively and thereby overwhelm public opinion.

THE IMPACT OF THE INTELLECTUAL CRITIQUE OF THE AMERICAN MASS ARTS

As the 1930s drew to an end, the alliance between American intellectuals and democratic popular culture, including film, began

to fall apart. One strong symptom was the (in)famous 1939 essay by budding art critic Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'. Greenberg argued that popular culture betrayed formal qualities of art to wallow in contents rife with sentimentalism, formula and cliché, pre-governed simplicity of response and so on. Likewise, the threat of fascism brought to the United States a slew of refugee intellectuals, a number of whom both lamented what they saw as fascism's destruction in Europe of the vital high culture they had grown up with and now confronted an American popular culture that they saw as no less destructive of reason and refinement in its crassness, its omnivorous omnipresence, its surrender to ideology, and so on. In the most famous – or, depending on one's view, infamous, example, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer sought to continue, once they managed to escape to the United States, the work of critical theory they had been elaborating under the guise of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. After a sojourn in New York, where they honed their analysis of popular culture through conjoined studies of Fascist ideology and of mass media as conveyor of standardized, popular thought, Adorno and Horkheimer moved west to, as it were, the belly of the beast – Los Angeles, centre of what they came to term the 'culture industry'. Here, they wrote a sharp, even curmudgeonly, critique of what they took to be the deadening acceptance of mass reason in the Western tradition, of which they argued the most recent avatar was American mass culture. Just at the end of the Second World War, Adorno and Horkheimer's 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' (1972), published as part of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, virtually established the fundamental terms by which post-war intellectuals in the US would look at the popular culture of the nation.

Indeed, as world war was superseded by Cold War, it became ideologically useful to many such intellectuals to single out mass culture as an especially noxious form of social ill. Whether Cold Warriors like Robert Warshow – who wrote an intensely nasty

critique of the letters of the condemned, alleged atomic bomb spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on the grounds that even in their most seemingly intimate and heartfelt moments their missives exemplified the unthinking internalization by *hoi polloi* of the dead and empty formulae of popular thought – or former Communist fellow-travellers like Dwight MacDonal – who wrote virulently against the middlebrow nature of much mass-produced American arts – the intellectuals needed to affirm a faith in the American way of politics even as they recoiled in their heart of hearts from what they took to be the vulgarity of its media. (To be fair, Warshow could admit the possibility of an authentic American folk culture, traces of which survived in artificially produced mass culture. Warshow famously wrote two important essays on the movies, 'The Westerner' and 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', but these served as odes to indigenous art against the kind of formulaic ersatz culture he felt the Rosenbergs revelled in. In any case, Warshow's career was cut short by early demise, and full assessment of his attitudes toward popular culture remains difficult.)

The critique of mass culture served the Cold War intellectuals' needs perfectly: by so overwhelming but exclusively assailing a superstructural aspect of American society, they could insist that they were in no way impugning the deeper infrastructure of American economics and social value itself. Indeed, by delving in detail into the intricacies of the culture industry, such critics could reiterate that theirs was a quite specific object of disapprobation that in no ways could be generalized to the rest of the society. For instance, when at the beginning of the 1950s, anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (1950) undertook a sojourn in Hollywood, so that she could try out the possibilities for an ethnography of a modern community, her ultimate conclusion was that Hollywood was such an artificial, empty, mind-numbing locale that she hoped never to return.

In like fashion, within the ideological space of the Cold War, more reactionary intellectuals than the liberal Powdermaker

could still maintain a critical edge – by virtual definition, intellectuals have to be dissatisfied with some aspect of the status quo! – while parading their loyalty to the US political system. As American studies scholar Andrew Ross trenchantly argues in his renowned *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (1989), the 1950s became the period of, in his term, a ‘failure’ of encounter between American intellectuals and the popular culture of the day.

1950s AND 1960s INTIMATIONS OF MODERN FILM STUDY

And yet, the period was also one in which the broken lineage of serious study of film was being mended and would eventually be re-established in ways that more directly set the terms for the film study we still know today in much of US higher education. Beneath the blanket condemnation of mass culture, there were rumblings and rumours of a somewhat surreptitious cult valorization of an often cheesy popular culture that would encourage new writing – and new appreciations – of a vernacular American tradition in lowbrow arts. In his book on the emergent affirmative film study of the 1950s, *Artists in the Audience* (1999), film historian Greg Taylor treats the new glimmerings of film criticism as a veritable underground culture which he ties to the parallel groping for new means of expression by experimental and bohemian artists of the time (thus, Taylor’s title intends to treat critics as virtual creators themselves, evolving a discourse that allowed a new appreciation of film to be constructed).

Manny Farber, who also honed a career as an abstract expressionist painter, and Parker Tyler, who worked as a poet, were part of the new generation of film writers who found in American film an energy and a rawness that they could appreciate and admire, in contrast to the Cold Warrior naysayers. Taylor goes so far as to argue that the affirmative critics were in the process of refining a camp aesthetic – in which low culture is valorized precisely because it gains no respect in

the dominant taste hierarchy. Thus, although Andrew Sarris exhibited less of the precise attention to details of *mise en scène* that were so masterfully on display in Manny Farber’s close analysis of the look and feel of the films of ’50s action directors, there is also a lineage around auteurism in which Sarris became the prime 1960s typologizer of directors according to their perfection of crafts of Hollywood story-telling. Sarris’ voracious mastery of American cinema – he seemed to have seen everything, both big studio extravaganza and B-movie alike – had its own camp dimensions. He could wax eloquently about the kitsch oeuvre of an Edgar G. Ulmer or a H. Bruce Humberstone – names that even sounded cheesy. But this omnivorous quality also brought an aura of rigor, and therefore scholarly respectability, in the form of cataloguing and classification, careful evaluation, and unification of expressive style and expressed themes.

Likewise, it is indeed easy to see a lineage from Tyler and Farber in the 1950s to such an influential 1960s figure as Susan Sontag, whose 1964 ‘Notes on Camp’ (1966) became a veritable manifesto for a new rethinking of all categories of high and low in the arts. In contrast to Sarris, Sontag was no mere apologist for kitsch culture of the vernacular. She was a veritable cosmopolitan who took it as much of her intellectual mission to introduce Americans to recent developments in European experimentation; she wrote revered essays on such topics as Jean-Luc Godard or Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona* (Sweden, 1966), for example. In doing so, she was typical, after her own fashion, of another glimmering set of forces that through the 1950s and on into the 1960s that would also encourage affirmative attention to film as an object worthy of serious study. Here, the decisive factor was growing interest by urban professionals in new European (and to a lesser degree, Japanese) art cinema. Where the works of the American auteurs for the most part had to be discovered from within a Hollywood past that was pretty much over – and to this extent, later auteurism is not fully

an example of Taylor's argument about a temporal overlap between the creative work of critics and that of cutting-edge artists contemporaneous to them – the oeuvre of Godard, Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, François Truffaut, Andrzej Wajda, Akira Kurosawa, and others were fully of their moment and resonated a creativity, a richness of theme and self-reflexive style that energized young intellectuals.

The find-yourself/express-yourself bent of the 1960s also nourished a growing culture of cinema in which both artists and audiences turned intensely to the art form as a site for cutting edge experimentation and up-to-date relevance. This was the period, for instance, in which the film schools really took off as bold visionaries – from George Lucas at USC to Francis Ford Coppola at UCLA to Martin Scorsese at NYU – began to use practical coursework to give the technical know-how that personal vision could be based upon. And ironically, it was also a moment in which some of the old Hollywood auteurs realized that there were advantages to being flattered as rediscovered artists who stood out from Hollywood regularity. For example, Alfred Hitchcock began to retool himself, as Robert Kapsis (1992) chronicles in a sociological study of the changing fate of Hitchcock's own image as artist, as a sort of European creator whose seemingly visceral efforts in suspense and fright actually were but the mere surface for deeper reflections on art and the human condition. As Kapsis shows, Hitchcock specifically tried to make and then promote his 1963 film, *The Birds* (US), as a European art film with scenes of alienation à la Antonioni, an ending that resisted closure (the characters drive off into a horizon filled with birds and there is pointedly, according to Hitchcock's wishes, no title that indicates 'The End'), and a premiere at the Museum of Modern Art. Hitchcock's apotheosis came in 1967 with a book-length interview conducted with him by French critic and film director François Truffaut. Quickly translated into English, *Hitchcock* by François Truffaut (1967) became a widely read – and reread – volume for budding

analysts of the art of film, a veritable bible for anyone interested in the creative potentials of cinema.

Truffaut's vastly influential volume would soon be complemented by others. Quite consequential, for instance, was Jerome Agel's *The Making of Kubrick's 2001* (1970) which came out three years after Truffaut's tome and which more than suggested that a single film could merit the sort of close interpretive attention that previously had been reserved for the established narrative arts such as literature. Significantly, there had been several serious books on single films in previous decades – 1952's *Picture*, Lillian Ross' study of the making of John Huston's *The African Queen* (UK/US, 1951) is probably the most famous example – but none set out to examine the meanings, influences, critical reception, and metaphysics of a film in the way that Agel did. Despite its title, *The Making of Kubrick's 2001* was fully a critical analysis which, for the most part, eschewed technical details of the film's production and opted instead for deep interpretation and hermeneutic commentary, which Agel assembled from essays and long letters that fans had written about the film. Like Truffaut's book, Agel's would be much pored over by budding cinephiles and it suggested to them that film appreciation was a rigorous, serious activity marked by patient and close attention to the particularities of film style and structure.

To the extent that we can define the concretization of a discipline by such signs as the rise of professional societies, the legitimation of some critical practices and a concomitant de-legitimation of others, deemed to be less scholarly, rigorous, or scientific, the regularization of practices of credentialization such as the granting of degrees and diplomas, the garnering of academic respect through the publication of books that become standard points of reference, the crystallization of networks of dialogue and interchange among credentialed practitioners through such venues as conferences, the perfection of channels for the dissemination of disciplinary research in the form of scholarly journals, and so on, then the 1960s are

indeed the period when Film Studies as an academic field did begin to take on disciplinary solidity and regularity. The year 1960, for example, would see the inaugural meeting of the newly founded Society for Cinematologists at which Society president Robert Gessner would welcome guest speaker Erwin Panofsky, the art historian, who gave film analysis more than a patina of disciplinary respectability.

EUROPEAN INFLECTIONS OF AMERICAN FILM STUDY

But the very extent to which 1960s film, 1960s film culture, and film study alike were invested in an understanding of the creative potentials of the language of cinema opened them up to a forceful influence that would change them in dramatic fashion. Specifically, the 1960s were also the great moment of the discovery of French Theory, particularly in the area of the analysis of the signs, including cultural signs, of contemporary society. To take just one example, in 1964, French film theorist Christian Metz (1990) published a long critique of metaphoric references to cinema as language that ignored the growing literature in semiology and linguistics that might make the reference to film language quite literal.

The decisive introduction of English-language readers to Theory came in 1969 with the publication of Peter Wollen's *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. Wollen's book included not only an outline of the semiology of cinema (which he argued had its specifically artistic complement in the cinema work of Godard on the signs of cinema) but also a rethinking of auteur theory away from directors as expressive figures to structures of meaning to be extracted from works and assigned, in a posteriori fashion, to the director seen now as little more than a convenient fiction to describe structural regularities. Wollen's volume had tremendous impact as a manifesto for a new analytic rigor in film study (even if it didn't always match its call for anti-impressionistic precision with an objective

exactitude of its own: when, for instance, Wollen asserted that John Ford rendered the conventions of the Western complex in ways that Howard Hawks didn't, it is hard not to see that what is claimed as a structural point – there is more variety in structure in Ford – is also an old-style example of personal judgement). But for our purposes, what is most significant is that Wollen was a Britisher writing from the UK both to re-evaluate American cinema and to call for European derived theories in the elaboration of that re-evaluation. Wollen was one of the figures who in the 1970s would be associated with the decisive English-language journal of film theory, *Screen*, and much of the inspiration for US Film Studies would now, for at least a decade, be continental in nature, even if UK inflected.

No doubt, there would still be indigenous forms of American study of film – the last decades, for instance, have been marked by an immensely rich rethinking of the history and historiography of US cinema by US scholars – but it can also be argued that from the 1970s on, US Film Studies becomes cosmopolitan in ways that make the study of it as a 'national' tradition less appropriate. Not for nothing does the present volume begin with a 'Mapping of Traditions' that is then succeeded by sections whose contributions are far from inevitably national in orientation. Perhaps the most tempting way to map the US tradition of film study is not only to outline its formation but also suggest its dissolution – a dissolution of geographical preoccupations that parallels perhaps the dissolution of the object of cinema itself in a new age of the audio-visual.

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