

The Cinema of Attractions as *Dispositif*

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I.

Raymond Bellour once characterized Christian Metz's *Grande Syntagmatique* as an "*opérateur théorique*," a theoretical operator, because to him this widely discussed model of a cinematic code actualized the possibility of a semiotics of cinema "by bringing its virtualness onto a material level."¹ In a similar, though obviously different manner, the concept of "cinema of attractions" has become such a theoretical operator by creating a framework thanks to which early cinema could be seen as an object different from classical narrative cinema, as something which was not just *early* cinema, that is an earlier form of what cinema was to become, a primitive forerunner of film as an art form, interesting only in the way it already "announced" the immense possibilities of the new medium.² By contributing to its constitution as an object *sui generis*, defined by a certain number of distinctive traits, the concept of "cinema of attractions" helped to profoundly change the study of the early years of cinematography.³

For whoever has followed the developments in research on early cinema since the late 1970s, this certainly is a fact that can hardly be denied. But it is a much more complex question to determine what exactly the theoretical status of this concept is. In the entry he wrote for the *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, Tom Gunning in fact stresses two different aspects of this term:

The phrase "the cinema of attractions" [...] characterized the earliest phase of cinema as dedicated to presenting discontinuous visual attractions, moments of spectacle rather than narrative. This era of attractions was followed by a period, beginning around 1906, in which films increasingly *did* organize themselves around the tasks of narrative.⁴

According to this definition, "cinema of attractions" firstly refers to a certain period in the history of cinema, and secondly it describes a mode of (re)presentation where visual attractions and spectacular moments dominate, followed by another period centered on narrative. Thus it serves two purposes: it produces a periodization, and it defines a mode of representation by establishing an opposition between attraction and narrative. Both these points have been contested by Charles Musser, stating that the period of a genuine "cinema of attractions"

should probably be limited to the so-called “novelty period,” and that narrativity quite early on was a much more important aspect of cinema than Gunning admits.⁵

With regard to periodization, however, one has to be aware of the fact (here I am using the poignant remark made by Jonathan Crary about continuities and discontinuities⁶) that there are no such things as periods in history, only in historical explanation. Periodizations, in other words, are always the result of historiographical constructions, and thus it is much more their usefulness and productivity that is at stake than their “correctness.” In any case, the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (non-simultaneousness) that one can observe at all levels during the years up to the First World War (and even beyond that) make clear-cut distinctions between historical periods in cinema history a rather hazardous undertaking. As for the second issue, the opposition between attraction and narrative, I have argued elsewhere⁷ that the way Tom Gunning (and André Gaudreault) use these two phrases (“cinema of attractions” and “cinema of narrative integration”) strongly suggests that they should not be read at a narratological level – which distinguishes this pair quite radically from the narratological couple of concepts “monstration” and “narration” proposed by Gaudreault⁸ – but rather as two different modes of spectatorial address. Then the issue of whether or not there is a *narrative* in films such as Méliès’s *VOYAGE À TRAVERS L’IMPOSSIBLE* (1904) becomes rather less important than the question of the function the narrative fulfils in the overall structure of the film. In this specific case, for instance, the catalogue description quite systematically highlights the spectacular effects that the different *tableaux* present, and much less the unfolding of an engaging story line.⁹

21st *tableau* – A Bitter Pill

The train arrives full-steam and runs into the sun’s mouth. After a series of comic grimaces, the latter starts to fret and fume as a result of the indigestion caused by this unforeseen bitter pill.

22nd *tableau* – A Formidable Crash

Fantastic solar landscape providing a most striking effect. The train falls on the sun. The locomotive, the tender, and the carriages pile up upon one another in an indescribable chaos. This catastrophe produces on the solar surface a volcanic outburst with blazing fire and the emission of sparks giving a superb decorative effect. (This trick is an absolute novelty.)¹⁰

Thus attraction and narration should not be seen as mutually exclusive terms, when used in terms of structural properties of the film text. For Gunning the opposition between them concerns the different modes of address which they imply. In that respect it might be preferable to rather conceive this conceptual

couple in terms of a “cinema of narrative integration” *versus* a “cinema of *attractional display*.”¹¹

When considered in the first instance as a specific form of address, other characteristics of the cinema of attractions – the gaze and gestures of actors directed towards the camera, the temporality, the frontality¹² – appear to be directly linked to this general orientation towards the spectator. In a (neo-)formalist perspective, one could say that the “attractional” mode determines these formal features quite similarly to the way in which the classical mode of narration is built upon a system of narrative causality, time, and space.¹³

In an often quoted definition of the cinema of attractions he gave in 1986, Gunning quite clearly presents this mode in opposition to the cinema of narrative integration, referring explicitly to film theoretical concepts of the 1970s:

What precisely is the cinema of attractions? [...] Contrasted to the voyeuristic aspect of narrative cinema analyzed by Christian Metz, this is an exhibitionist cinema. An aspect of early cinema [...] is emblematic of this different relationship the cinema of attractions constructs with its spectator: the recurring look at the camera by actors. This action, which is later perceived as spoiling the realistic illusion of the cinema, is here undertaken with brio, establishing contact with the audience. From comedians smirking at the camera to the constant bowing and gesturing of the conjurers in magic films, this is a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator.¹⁴

This somewhat incidental reference to what in the English speaking countries has become known as “apparatus theory” in fact opens up a possibility to consider the cinema of attractions not just as a period in film history, a mode of address, or a mode of representation, but as a *dispositif*. In the remaining part of this essay I develop some ideas on how the re-reading of the cinema of attractions as a *dispositif* can be of use for film historical (and even more generally media historical) research.¹⁵

II.

In the early 1970s, Jean-Louis Baudry published two seminal essays that often are seen as the founding texts of the so-called “apparatus theory”: “Effets idéologiques produits par l’appareil de base” (1970) and “Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l’impression de réalité” (1975).¹⁶ The first of these two articles in fact does not yet use *dispositif* as a central concept; the term appears rather *en passant* when Baudry describes the effects produced by the “*disposition*” of the screening situation:

La disposition des différents éléments – projecteur, “salle obscure,” écran – outre qu’ils reproduisent d’une façon assez frappante la mise en scène de la caverne, décor exemplaire de toute transcendance et modèle topologique de l’idéalisme, reconstruit le dispositif nécessaire au déclenchement de la phase du miroir découverte par Lacan.¹⁷

It is only in the second article that Baudry actually theorizes the screening situation in terms of a specific *dispositif*, but already in the passage quoted above there clearly is a reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave. In “Le dispositif” Baudry elaborates this point and establishes an analogy between the film spectator and the prisoners in Plato’s cave:

Le prisonnier de Platon est la victime d’une illusion de réalité, c’est-à-dire précisément ce qu’on appelle une hallucination à l’état de veille et un rêve dans le sommeil; il est la proie de l’impression, d’une impression de réalité.

[...] Platon [...] imagine ou recourt à un dispositif qui fait plus qu’évoquer, qui décrit de manière fort précise dans son principe le dispositif du cinéma et la situation du spectateur.¹⁸

The usual English translation of *dispositif* by “apparatus” poses a twofold problem: first of all it does not render the idea of a specific arrangement or tendency (*disposition*), which the French term implies, and secondly, it makes distinguishing between two concepts in Baudry’s theory difficult, namely the “*dispositif*” on the one hand, and the “*appareil de base*” on the other. In a footnote, Baudry gives the following definition of both terms:

D’une façon générale, nous distinguons l’*appareil de base*, qui concerne l’ensemble de l’appareillage et des opérations nécessaires à la production d’un film et à sa projection, du *dispositif*, qui concerne uniquement la projection et dans lequel le sujet à qui s’adresse la projection est inclus. Ainsi l’*appareil de base* comporte aussi bien la pellicule, la caméra, le développement, le montage envisagé dans son aspect technique, etc. que le dispositif de la projection. Il y a loin de l’appareil de base à la seule caméra à laquelle on a voulu (on se demande pourquoi, pour servir quel mauvais procès) que je le limite.¹⁹

Thus, the *dispositif* is but one aspect of the *appareil de base*, the latter term covering all of the machinery necessary to produce and to screen a film. *Dispositif* refers exclusively to the viewing situation, i.e. the situation which, according to Baudry, seems somehow prefigured in Plato’s allegory of the cave. In order to avoid any confusion, and also to mark a difference of the position I would like to present here with the 1970s apparatus theory, I will continue to use the French term *dispositif*.

In a somewhat simplified form one could summarize the configuration that Baudry describes with the aid of the concept *dispositif* as follows:

1. a material technology producing conditions that help to shape
2. a certain viewing position that is based upon unconscious desires to which corresponds
3. an institutionalized film form implying a form of address trying to guarantee that this viewing position (often characterized as “voyeuristic”) functions in an optimal way.

Given the central assumption in Baudry’s theory, that the *appareil de base* (that is both the production and the reception side of the cinematic institution) is in fact the realization of an age-old desire, the apparatus theory quite generally has been criticized for presenting this *dispositif* as a transhistorical norm.

However, Gunning’s definition of the *dispositif* of the cinema of attractions hints at the fact that this interrelationship between a technology, a specific film form with its mode of address, and a specific positioning of the spectator can and should be historicized. At different moments in history, a medium can produce a specific and (temporarily) dominating configuration of technology, text, and spectatorship. An analysis of these configurations could thus serve as a heuristic tool for the study of how the function and the functioning of media undergo historical changes. Presupposing, for instance, different intentionalities (“to display spectacular views” or “to absorb into a narrative”) one could analyze film form and filmic devices with regard to their mode of address in a given historical context (a close-up fulfils a different function in an “attractional” film than in a “narrational” film). Similarly, technological choices could be analyzed in terms of different intentionalities with regard to spectator address and exhibition contexts.²⁰

Pushing this idea a little further, a historical analysis based on the concept of *dispositif* re-interpreted in a pragmatic perspective could actually take into account different uses of one and the same text within different exhibition contexts, or different institutional framings.²¹ As Roger Odin has argued in his semio-pragmatic approach, a fiction film will not be viewed (or read) in the same way when it is presented in a movie theater (where it will dominantly be read within a fictionalizing regime) and in a class-room situation in a film studies program (where it may be read within a documentarizing regime, i.e. as a document of a specific historical or national style or movement, as documenting a specific filmmaker’s personal style, or as an example for the use of a specific filmic device, etc.). Similarly, in the 1910s a travelogue about Africa could function as an exotic attraction in a moving picture theater, and as colonial propaganda when screened by the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft.²² A historical investigation of historical and present *dispositifs* would thus have to take into account the different viewing situations, institutional framings, the modes of address

they imply, as well as the technological basis on which they rest. In a recent article, Gunning argues for such a view as well:

Particularly realizing the protean, even elastic, nature of early cinema, film scholars had to admit that there was no single essential film text that underlay film history. Rather films must be approached as texts whose meaning derived through a complex process of making meaning in the interaction of films with viewers and institutions.²³

Another implication of such an approach is that the notion of both textual and medial identity becomes problematic. On the one hand, any given text may trigger a number of different readings, depending on the context in which it is embedded, and on the other hand one can argue that in spite of a continuity in *naming* a given medium (cinema, television, telephone, etc.) its functions and its functioning can vary so much over time that it would be more accurate to describe the different *dispositifs* in which it takes shape, rather than to look for the “identity” or “specificity” of that medium.²⁴ The cinema of attractions may thus use a technology quite similar to the one used by the cinema of narrative integration, but as the mode of address and the textual forms are in fact quite different, one should, as André Gaudreault argues, avoid thinking about both in terms of a continuity, or identity.²⁵

III.

Among the textual forms that can be considered as emblematic for the cinema of attractions, the different types of trick films undoubtedly take a prominent position. Here one finds quite regularly various forms of the direct address to the audience which Gunning, in his first definition of the cinema of attractions, sees as one of the main features of this “exhibitionist” cinema.²⁶ Furthermore, Gunning also has shown that the stop trick requires a frontal and fixed framing for the illusion of a single shot to function.²⁷ The trick films, and especially those by Georges Méliès when considered within the context of his own theater, could, in other words, serve as an almost obvious illustration of the claim that the institutional framing, the viewing context, and the textual form, come together in an attractional *dispositif*, which indeed can be seen as being in an almost diametrical opposition to the *dispositif* of classical narrative cinema. There are, however, much more complicated cases such as the one that I would like to discuss in the third section of this article, where the idea of a “cinema of attractions” (or “attractional display”) can serve as a useful heuristic tool in order to understand the strange combination of elements in the surviving print of a Gau-

mont film from 1910 about a fire which destroyed a large part of the World Fair held in Brussels that year.

The print of *INCENDIE DE L'EXPOSITION DE BRUXELLES* (Gaumont, 1910) held by the Netherlands Filmmuseum in Amsterdam quite curiously appears to be an "extended" version of the film originally released by the French firm.²⁸ It contains a number of shots that visibly "do not belong here," that have been inserted by someone at a later stage, presumably by an exhibitor at the time the film was shown as a topical news film. The fire at the Brussels exhibition occurred on 14 August 1910, around 9 pm, which indicates that the actuality film made for and distributed by Gaumont had to be shot after the facts and essentially depicts the smoldering ruins of several pavilions which had fallen victim to the flames.²⁹ The Amsterdam print, however, also shows, among others, scenes of firemen rushing out of their quarters, the fire brigade riding in the streets, a rescue action, the latter being clearly staged, as well as numerous shots of actuality footage of a burning furniture factory, possibly taken from a Scandinavian film, since the word "Møbel" (furniture) can be distinguished on the façade of a wooden building.

The additional scenes are inserted right after the opening shot of the film and are preceded and followed by views of the parts of the exhibition affected by the fire. The heterogeneity of this material, even at the level of its visual qualities, is quite obvious, and one can safely assume that not even a naive spectator could have failed to notice the differences within the texture, the style and the thematic content. These additions to the Gaumont print appear to be elements inserted in order to "spice up" the comparatively less spectacular views obtained by the firm's cameramen after the actual fire had occurred – and this is indeed a quite valid explanation. At first glance, this material seems to have been selected more or less at random, on the sole basis that these scenes depict burning buildings and firemen at work. Nevertheless, a closer look at the events of the evening of August 14th shows that there are reasons to believe that the choices made here were in fact rather less arbitrary. According to several newspaper reports the fire actually also touched some residential areas bordering the terrain where the exhibition was held,³⁰ thus the scenes showing a fireman rescuing a child and a woman jumping out of a window into a safety net can be seen as referring to this aspect of the events. Also, a Dutch paper reports that a lot of valuable furniture was destroyed when the English pavilion went up in flames.³¹ The images of a burning Scandinavian furniture warehouse or factory may have served to illustrate this fact. There is, however, no indication that this footage was chosen for precisely that reason, so rather than seeing here a direct reference to the actual events this should be regarded as being a sheer coincidence. In any event, and most likely so, these images could serve to show the

effects of the flames, with the building's final collapsing functioning as a climactic attraction.

My hypothesis here, in the light of a contextualization on the basis of contemporary newspaper reports, is that a local exhibitor put this additional material into the Gaumont print in order to offer his audience a more adequate version of the events.³² The scenes that were added can function, on the one hand, as attractions, showing images that are much more spectacular than the ones taken by the Gaumont cameramen. On the other hand, they help in creating a stronger narrative, since they can be referred to events, which had taken place that night and which were potentially known by the audience through the newspaper reports.

Consequently, an approach establishing a simple dichotomy between attraction and narration fails to grasp the complex functioning of a print such as this one: the strengthening of a narrative line with the help of additional footage does not necessarily modify its predominantly attractional character, since the heterogeneity of the material rather blocks the effect of narrative integration that the classical narrational mode tries to achieve. So if the original Gaumont version informs the viewer about the terrible devastation caused by the fire, showing the ruins of, respectively, the pavilions of Belgium and England as well as the *Alimentation Française*, all three clearly identified by intertitles, and (possibly, since there is no confirmation by an intertitle) the *Bruxelles Kermesse*, it presents a formal structure based on a juxtaposition of views relating the disastrous effects of the flames, thus conforming to the representational mode which Gunning has called "aesthetics of the view" and which can be considered the non-fictional equivalent of the cinema of attractions as it addresses the viewer by displaying the views, rather than structuring them in a rhetorical mode.³³ This is in fact one of the reasons why Bill Nichols claims that in early non-fiction films "the voice of the filmmaker was [...] noticeably silent"³⁴ (neglecting, however, the fact that even such a seemingly "neutral" juxtaposition of shots still does result in a particular structuring effect, and that, in addition, a screening could be accompanied by the actual voice of a lecturer).³⁵

The *dispositif* within which the Amsterdam print (presumably) functioned is a slightly more complex one. Here, according to my hypothesis at least, by inserting this additional material an exhibitor addresses an audience he or she is quite probably familiar with, and which is either familiar with the details of the events, having read the newspaper reports, or is given additional information by, for instance, a lecturer anchoring the heterogeneous visual material in a narrative framework provided by those newspaper reports.

The question now is how to conceptualize the obvious differences between the prints and thus the way they may have functioned historically. How can the pragmatic difference, which I postulate, be described? For this I shall turn to a

couple of concepts proposed by the art historian Michael Baxandall. In his analyses aiming at the historical explanation of paintings, he distinguishes between what he calls the “charge” and the “brief,” both concepts referring to what one might call the “intentionalities” that literally shape the formal aspects of an art work. These concepts may be helpful also to clarify the functional difference between the Gaumont print and the “extended” version. Baxandall’s overall goal is to show how “historical objects may be explained by treating them as solutions to problems in situations, and by constructing a rational relationship between the three.”³⁶ In this perspective, the “charge” can be described as the general problem or the “generic and institutional intentionality” (building a bridge, painting a portrait), while the “brief” concerns the ever changing and historically specific determinations under which the charge is to be fulfilled.³⁷

When looking at *INCENDIE DE L’EXPOSITION DE BRUXELLES* by using Baxandall’s terms, the original Gaumont version gives a description of the consequences of the a-filmic event, corresponding to the charge of a topical film (an *actualité* in the original French meaning of the word), while the brief here concerns the specific circumstances under which the film could be shot (after the facts, because of the impossibility to film at night during the actual fire). Gaumont could also have produced an *actualité reconstituée*, but in that case the film form would doubtlessly have respected the norms of an internal coherence, which the Amsterdam print so obviously lacks. Another aspect of the brief here concerns the fact that Gaumont wanted to sell, or rent, the film to the largest possible number of exhibitors, providing them with a product fulfilling the quality standards of the firm. For Gaumont, the *dispositif* within which the films are going to function is determined mainly by the general parameters characterizing non-fiction cinema at that time: the display of a series of views depicting phenomena of interest without constructing an internally structured rhetorical or narrative discourse.

For the anonymous exhibitor, the charge is indeed the same: screening a film referring to an a-filmic event, while his brief appears to be (to have been) somewhat different. Having control over the situation (the *dispositif*) within which the film (this specific print) will be screened, he can actually insert the heterogeneous material implying not only a reference to the a-filmic events, but also to some extent an account of them.³⁸ Aiming at a specific thrill he wants to provide his audience with, he inserts among others the rescue scene that bears a generic resemblance to films such as Williamson’s *FIRE!* (1901) or Porter’s *LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN* (1903).

As this case study tried to show, individual films – or rather: prints – may be difficult to place within a binary opposition between attraction and narration. By trying to reconstruct the specific *dispositif* within which this print may have

functioned, one can, however, arrive at hypotheses helping to explain its particular form, using the general idea of a “cinema of attractional display” as a guideline. Without any doubt, thus, the concept of the “cinema of attractions” can continue to function as a powerful theoretical operator, but it will be increasingly important to specify the theoretical status it has in the film historian’s argument. Looking at it as a *dispositif* may prove to be a fruitful way to do this.

Notes

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1. Raymond Bellour, *L'Analyse du film* (Paris: Albatros, 1979) 248.
2. Two key publications here are André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, “Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l’histoire du cinéma?,” *Histoire du cinéma. Nouvelles approches*, ed. Jacques Aumont, André Gaudreault and Michel Marie (Paris: Sorbonne, 1989) 49-63, based on their 1985 lecture at the Colloque de Cerisy; and Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde [1986],” *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990) 56-62. Both articles are reprinted in the dossier of this volume.
3. One might ask why Noël Burch’s distinction between PMR (“Primitive Mode of Representation”) and IMR (“Institutional Mode of Representation”) did not turn out to be as successful as the terminological couple “cinema of attractions”/“cinema of narrative integration.” Noël Burch, *Light to those Shadows* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990) (Burch in fact started working on early cinema already in the late 1970s.) One explanation might be that the phrase “cinema of attractions” stresses more intensely the “otherness” of early cinema, and that the use of the word “primitive” still seems to suggest a teleological argument (see also the contributions by Gaudreault and Strauven in this volume). However, the importance of Noël Burch’s work for the exploration of early cinema after the Brighton FIAF conference of 1978 cannot be underestimated. See also the homage to Noël Burch in *KINtop* 12 (2003), particularly the contributions by Thomas Elsaesser and Charles Musser.
4. Tom Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London/New York: Routledge, 2005) 124.
5. Charles Musser presented his criticism of Gunning’s ideas in 1993 at two conferences: “The Movies Begin: Film/History/Culture” at Yale University, and “Les vingt premières années du cinéma français” at Sorbonne University. These papers were published as “Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.1 (1994): 203-32 (reprinted in the dossier of this volume) and “Pour une nouvelle approche du cinéma des premiers temps: le cinéma d’attractions et la narrativité,” *Les vingt premières années du cinéma français*, ed. Jean A.

- Gili, Michèle Lagny, Michel Marie and Vincent Pinel (Paris: Sorbonne Nouvelle/AFRHC, 1995) 147-75.
6. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge/London: MIT P, 1990) 7.
 7. Frank Kessler, "In the Realm of the Fairies: Early Cinema between Attraction and Narration," *Iconics. International Studies of the Modern Image* 5 (2000): 7-26.
 8. André Gaudreault, *Du littéraire au filmique. Système du récit* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1988).
 9. The catalogue description is reproduced in Jacques Malthête, *Méliès. Images et Illusions* (Paris: Exporégie, 1996) 226-29. See also Gunning, "Cinema of Attractions" 124, where he remarks: "Furthermore, some films could use a story as an excuse to present attractions."
 10. Malthête 228.
 11. I would like to thank Britta Hartmann for her suggestion to reformulate the conceptual couple in such a way.
 12. Gunning, "Cinema of Attractions" 124-25.
 13. See David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985) 156-204.
 14. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions" 57.
 15. See also my "La cinématographie comme dispositif (du) spectaculaire," *CiNéMAS* 14.1 (2003): 21-34.
 16. "Effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base" was published in *Cinéthique* 7-8 (1970) and "Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité" in *Communications* 23 (1975). Together with another article and several interviews with filmmakers, these two articles were subsequently turned into a book with the title *L'Effet cinéma* (Paris: Albatros, 1978).
 17. Baudry, *L'Effet cinéma* 23 ["The arrangement of the different elements – projector, darkened hall, screen – in addition from reproducing in a striking way the mise-en-scène of Plato's cave (prototypical set for all transcendence and the topological model of idealism), reconstructs the situation necessary to the release of the 'mirror stage' discovered by Lacan." Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 294.]
 18. Baudry, *L'Effet cinéma* 30-31. ["Plato's prisoner is the victim of an illusion of reality, that is, of precisely what we know as a hallucination, if one is awake, as a dream, if asleep; he is the prey of an impression, of an impression of reality. [...] Plato [...] would imagine or resort to an apparatus that doesn't merely evoke but precisely describes in its mode of operation the cinematographic apparatus and the spectator's place in relation to it." Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* 302.]
 19. Baudry, *L'Effet cinéma* 31. ["In a general way we distinguish the *basic cinematographic apparatus* (*l'appareil de base*), which concerns the ensemble of the equipment and operations necessary to the production of a film and its projection, from the apparatus (*le dispositif*) discussed in this article, which solely concerns projection and which includes the subject to whom the projection is addressed. Thus the *basic cinematographic apparatus* involves the film stock, the camera, developing, montage considered in its technical aspects, etc., as well as the apparatus (*dispositif*) of projection. The basic cinematographic apparatus is a long way from being the camera itself to

- which some have wanted to say I limited it (one wonders what bad arguments this can serve)." Baudry, "The Apparatus" 317.]
20. This is what I attempted in "La cinématographie comme dispositif (du) spectaculaire," see in particular 26-31.
 21. See Roger Odin, "Pour une sémio-pragmatique du cinéma," *Iris* 1.1 (1983): 76-82, and "A Semio-Pragmatic Approach to the Documentary Film," *The Film Spectator. From Sign to Mind*, ed. Warren Buckland (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1995) 227-35. See also my "Historische Pragmatik," *Montage/AV* 11.2 (2002): 104-12. Odin in fact uses the term "institution" in a relatively broad sense and does not limit it to social institutions.
 22. See Wolfgang Fuhrmann, "Locating Early Film Audiences: Voluntary Associations and Colonial Film," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22.3 (2002): 291-304.
 23. Tom Gunning, "A Quarter of a Century Later. Is Early Cinema Still Early," *KINtop* 12 (2003): 17-31.
 24. See my *Het idee van vooruitgang in de mediageschiedschrijving* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2002).
 25. André Gaudreault, "Das Erscheinen des Kinematographen," *KINtop* 12 (2003): 33-48.
 26. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions." These forms of address are particularly frequent in the films by Méliès; for a more detailed analysis, see Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, "L'adresse-Méliès," *Georges Méliès, l'illusionniste fin de siècle?*, ed. Jacques Malthête and Michel Marie (Paris: Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997) 183-99.
 27. Tom Gunning, "'Primitive' Cinema. A Frame-up? Or The Trick's on Us," *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* 95-103.
 28. According to a presentation of this film on <http://gaumontpathearchives.com> it consisted of nine views showing indeed only the consequences of the fire. The length of the print is given here as 6' 15" (not specifying at what projection speed), the video copy of the Amsterdam print runs about 12'.
 29. *The Times* 16 August 1910. The documentation that I use for this section partly comes from a seminar paper written by Sonya Baalti, Ingrid Hoofd and Susanne van Kooij for a course on early non-fiction cinema which I taught during the academic year 1998-99. I also would like to thank my research assistant Eva Baaren for tracing other contemporary press reports.
 30. According to the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* 15 March 1910, late ed., more than forty buildings in a residential area next to the exhibition were affected by the fire.
 31. *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* 17 March 1910, late ed.
 32. The nitrate material held by the Netherlands Filmmuseum does indeed appear to have been spliced together from different sources and thus seems to be a unique print. This is why I presume that the material was edited together by an exhibitor rather than a distributor, even though the latter hypothesis cannot be excluded, especially since this title can be found in numerous ads for second-hand films. I would like to thank Nico de Klerk for providing me with information about the nitrate print.
 33. Tom Gunning, "Before Documentary: Early nonfiction films and the 'view' aesthetic," *Uncharted Territory. Essays on early nonfiction film*, ed. Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997) 9-24.

34. Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001) 86.
35. Obviously, such a lecturer could have narrated also the dramatic events the Amsterdam print is referring to, the difference being, however, that there would have been no visual equivalent of this on the screen, whereas the Amsterdam print does show images which can be read as illustrating these events, though not as depicting them, given their textual heterogeneity with regard to the other images.
36. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven/London: Yale UP, 1985) 35.
37. Baxandall 25-36. The reformulations of Baxandall's definitions are mine, see my "Regards en creux. Le cinéma des premiers temps et la construction des faits spectaculaires," *Réseaux* 99 (2000): 73-98.
38. In this respect the Amsterdam print cannot be considered a fake, unless the exhibitor actually claimed that the images were taken during, and at the site of the fire.

