



英美电影赏析

主 编 张 军

副主编 李宗阳 卢 俊 黄 海



WUHAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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前言

电影是一门综合艺术，它包含文学、戏剧、绘画、建筑、音乐、舞蹈等艺术元素，但电影的综合性并不是各种艺术元素的简单累加，而是将各种艺术形式所包含的艺术元素融汇成的一种新的表现形式。正因为如此，作为艺术的电影，是诞生于众多古老传统艺术之后的最新、最年轻的艺术，但也是迄今为止唯一可以让我们知道其诞生日期的艺术。1895年12月28日，卢米埃尔正式公映自制的影片，一炮成功。这是世界上最早诞生的影片，距今仅百余年历史。而今，最年轻的艺术——电影，以其无可比拟的艺术魅力，非但闯进了世界艺术之林，甚而一跃成为雅俗共赏、影响至深、最生气蓬勃的艺术巨擘。

作为当代社会的大众文化艺术，影视艺术的渗透力、包容性和覆盖面均为其他艺术所不及，它通过作用于人的思想、观念等对社会生活产生影响。英文电影作为一门课程，旨在激发学生的语言学习兴趣，使语言学习和文化陶染同步进行，并进而全面提高其听说读写综合能力。英语影片是外国文化和生活栩栩如生的反映，以真实的语境、鲜活的人物、生动的语言及异域的风情让学生耳濡目染、如临其境，并使学生谙习各种词汇，了解当下的流行语以及口语体的特殊用法，学习交际语的适用情景、语言节奏，以及肢体语、表情和符号等，从而使学生能听聪视明，全方位地感受语言，弥补传统英语教学注重书面语的不足。

不仅如此，设置英语影视课程还可使学生了解主要英语国家影视发展概况、英语影视类型以及英语影视文化在主要英语国家大众文化发展中的地位。此外，相关课程还意在使学生熟悉影视语言，掌握影视评论的基本方法，能够理解并用英语口述电影的故事、人物、主题；同时可通过论文写作的形式，加深他们对英语国家的政治、经济、社会、文化等方面的认识和了解，从文化层面上更好地驾驭英语这门语言。

影视赏析不仅能提高大学生的审美情趣及艺术鉴赏能力，而且还在大学生素质教育方面发挥着重要作用。相关课程通过解读影片，既能让学生学习西方文化的思想精华、电影艺术的美学价值、英语语言的风格特点，将艺术欣赏、语言学习和人文素质的提高有机地结合起来，又能实现学科相互交叉、东西方文化相互交流。总之，影视是文化交流的前沿，也是语言交流和全球国际化的先锋。熟悉和了解影视文化，会让人们有更充足的储备面对全球化浪潮的挑战。

《英美电影赏析》教程由上海第二工业大学外国语学院英美经典影片赏析课程组成员编写，本课程为上海第二工业大学校级重点课程、校级精品课程。本书编写过程中，编者参考了大量相关书籍、文献资料，以及部分网站的内容。在此表示衷心的感谢。同时，我们还得到了实验实训处、教务处的全力支持，武汉大学出版社领导和谢群英编审

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本书的主编兼总策划是上海第二工业大学张军，哈尔滨理工大学李宗阳负责资料的删减、调整与统稿，编写人员：第一章黄海；第二章李宗阳；第三章卢佼；第四章胡贞；第五章黑黉；第六章张军、胡贞、黑黉。

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编者

2014年4月

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Chapter One American Film History

The history of film cannot be credited to one individual as an oversimplification of any history often tries to do. Each inventor added to the progress of other inventors, culminating in progress for the entire art and industry. It can date back to 1878, when Eadweard Muybridge showed how to capture motion from photography. In 1894, Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope played a key role in the world's first commercial motion picture exhibition that year. In the following decades, the United States became the bellwether of sound film development. Based in and around Hollywood since the early 20th century, its cinema industry has kept on the upgrade as a whole.

1. Early Cinema

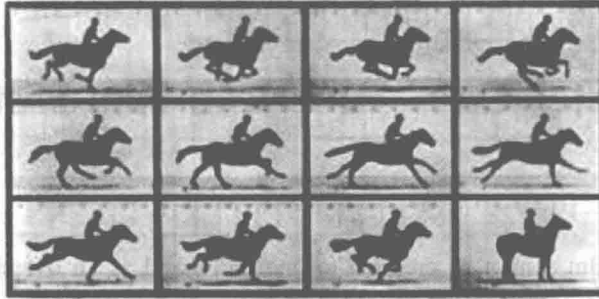
The history of World Cinema, to a certain degree, is a history of American cinema, with Hollywood interacting with a range of national and transnational cinemas, from German Expressionism to Hollywood and Chinese film. The American film industry has dominated all others in last and this century. For this reason, the chapter that follows largely centers on it.

American cinema (often referred to as Hollywood) has had a far-reaching influence on cinema of the world since the early 20th century. Its history is separated into four main periods according to this book: the early period, the classical Hollywood period, the new and post-classical period, and the contemporary period.

1.1 Motion Pictures

A recorded instance of photographs capturing and reproducing motion was a series of photographs of a running horse by Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), an American photographer. He made a pioneering series of photographs on glass plates, using twenty separate cameras placed in a row, in order to show precisely how a horse ran. Muybridge's accomplishment led inventors everywhere to attempt to make similar devices that would capture such motion.

In the United States, Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931) was among the first to produce such a device, the kinetoscope. He completed with his assistant Dickson the design of an electrically controlled camera, the Kinetograph, and a peep-show machine called the Kinetoscope, giving viewers the thrill and novelty of perceiving life-like movements of



Horse Jumping (circa 1877), sequential photographs by Eadward Muybridge.

vaudeville performers and boxing exhibitions. The Kinetoscope was patented in 1891 and heard by an entrepreneur named Norman Raff two years later. Under Edison's name and Raff's manufacture, the first Kinetoscope parlor opened in 1894.

Edison was one of the determining figures for the early development of motion pictures as an industry, while his French competitors, the Lumiere Brothers, had taken the lead due to their ability to project motion pictures in front of an audience. Louis Lumiere (1864-1948) invented the Cinematographe upon Edison's design of the Kinetoscope. It combined moving images with front projection using intermittent movement. In contrast to early Edison's large and cumbersome Kinetograph, the camera was portable, lightweight, and thus free from studio restrictions for easy outdoor use as a cinematic recorder of "actualities" of life. The Lumiere Brothers had his new Cinematographe exhibited in public for the first time in Paris in December, 1895. The immediate successes of the exhibition won the enthusiastic support and wonder of the public and made 1895 the official birth year of the cinema as we know it today.

1.2 Edison and the Nickelodeons

What gave impetus to the extraordinary rise in the movie business in the United States was the innovation of a theatre which only presents movies—the nickelodeon.

Thomas Edison led the way of nickelodeon boom in America between the late 1890s and early 1900s. Kinetoscope parlors, named as "penny arcades", opened by 1895, in large cities throughout the country. In 1896, Edison successfully had motion pictures projected in vaudeville theatres as part of the bill of performances. There was an equal mix of films of actuality (news and documentary films) with films of comedy, drama, and magic. Such a mix guaranteed a constant stream of attractions. But the novelty of these short films soon faded away when compared with actual live vaudeville acts. Learning that Lumiere's public show of their "actualities" in small cinemas was developing into a success, Edison decided to duplicate it in America. Edison soon had his own machine, the Vitascope, capable of film

projection, to which he obtained the rights from Thomas Armat.

In fact, Raff & Gammon, Edison's agents in the 1890s, had entitled some folks to rent storefronts to show movies there. A nickelodeon was generally a converted storefront or a dance hall with cheap folding chairs. A white sheet or square of muslin served as a screen. The projection booth was often enclosed in a homemade hut. The heat it radiated with the heat from hundreds of warm bodies in the narrow and confining theaters made a nickelodeon a potentially rank experience. It was normal that the movies were considered coarse and distasteful. Movie theatre at that time was even not allowed within two hundreds of feet of a church.

These small theatres offered brief programs of just film entertainment for a small admission charge of a nickel. But the number of nickelodeons had never grown large before vaudeville established the popularity of the movies as an entertainment form. As movies like *The Great Train Robbery* lifted films out of the realm of the peep shows, Kinetoscope parlors gradually converted into nickelodeons. People could appreciate an hour's worth of short films for a nickel. Most nickelodeons were located near large working-or middle-class populations. Overhead was low, turnover was high. Theatrical empires like that of the Warner Brothers began in modest theaters like these.

By 1910, there were more than ten thousand movie-only theatres, signaling the success of the innovation of movies. The vaudeville theatres had done their job. Movies had become a permanent part of the mass-entertainment landscape. The nickelodeon would signal the beginning of the diffusion of the movies in the United States.

1.3 Porter and Early Narratives

Films shot in documentary style from 1895 to 1905 were not edited. Like the Lumiere films, they "rendered the world as it is" in their presentation of news stories of the day. Meanwhile, the development of fantasy films by Georges Melies, with "in-film", stop-motion editing, enabled some directors to create "magic realism" for their fictional narratives. These films recreated the world according to the filmmaker's imagination. Both tendencies influenced other directors in film production as the demand to tell simple narratives held the interest of the audience and helped them identify with characters in the filmed events.

To profit, moviemakers turned to dramatic stories. Though the growth of this genre was slow, some dramatic films proved exceptionally popular. Edison hired Edwin S. Porter as projectionist and director when his new studio was built in New York. Porter directed two important films, *The Life of an American Fireman* (1902) and *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), which proved to be a complete revolution for the narrative structure of motion pictures.

Porter built his short film narratives from the sensational stories carried by daily

newspapers and skillfully reconstructed these stories into one-shot films showing one continuous action from beginning to end staged without a moving camera. His skill in reconstructing the actions of major characters had been revealed in films like *Capture of the Biddle Brothers* (1902) and *Fun in a Bakery Shop* (1902). When directing *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902), Porter imitated the structure of theatrical story-telling that French director Georges Melies had improved. And he playfully experimented and capitalized on the essential connection between documentary films shot in real time and studio scenes shot within a theatrical space. Therefore, he managed to expand the linear narrative with the introduction of simultaneous actions through cross-cutting one scene with a different one. His cutting back and forth from one scene to another developed tension or suspense within the narrative.

In Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman*, this editing technique was utilized to heighten the dramatic effect of the last-minute rescue. At the start of the film, the first shots show the thoughts of a fireman through a "balloon", borrowed from comic strips. The fireman imagines his family in a fire; the film then cuts to a close-up of a fire alarm and a hand pulling the alarm. Documentary footage follows of fire fighters answering the alarm. Porter then combines these scenes with staged events of firemen entering the building by ladder and parallel shots of the dramatic rescue of the woman and child trapped inside the burning building. In some versions of the film the editing of the rescue scenes shows intercutting from the exterior arrival of the firemen at the building to the interior room where fire men break down the door, creating a new narrative dimension.

In 1903, Porter made *The Great Train Robbery*, which took a few more steps in evolving a film grammar. This film is one reel of action, violence, frontier humor, special effects (a very effective matte shot of a train passing as seen through a stationhouse window), and, as a final filip, a full-screen close-up of a bandit firing his pistol at the audience. Porter's camera angles tend to emphasize the realism of the exteriors. In fourteen scenes, he told a complicated (at that time) story and told it visually and vividly, with virtually no titles. *The Great Train Robbery* was not only the most famous film produced by Edison Studios; it was also the single most famous American movie until it was displaced twelve years later by *The Birth of a Nation*. *The Great Train Robbery* made Porter the leading filmmaker of his day.

1.4 D. W. Griffith and His Cinematic Language

Labeled as the "father of the American cinema", David Wark Griffith (1875-1948) was the first American director who established the cultural significance of motion pictures. Griffith's cinematic practices influenced all future filmmaking and directly revolutionized the impact of motion pictures upon audiences to become the foremost cultural art form of the 20th century.

From 1908 to 1913, Griffith made some 485 films, mainly one-and two-reel films for

Biograph Studios in New York. He showed interests in headline stories about the courage of single, young women caught in the dynamics of city life and a world of street crime and corruption. Many of these films highlighted themes relating to an assault on values and moral wisdom. Griffith focused on sharp contrasts in the melodramatic adventures in his early films, from *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), *The Lonedale Operator* (1911), to *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912) and including his biblical drama *Judith of Bethulia* (1913).

Griffith's filmmaking apprenticeship at Biograph Studio perfected his talent for transforming sentimental melodramas into exciting and suspenseful film narratives. It was during this period that Griffith developed a film language to help him tell his narratives cinematically. He developed a complex use of parallel editing and innovative acting techniques. The major film techniques he created to manipulate screen times and space included innovative camera placement movement, dramatic interior lighting, and parallel or cross-cutting that enhanced the dramatic tensions within the scene. His *The Sands of Dee* contained sixty-eight scenes when a half dozen competing firms used only from eleven to forty-six in their films.

Griffith's achievements in these years were not merely technical. Technique served his employment of principles of narration in the Hollywood cinema, and his passion for the gesture and the moment that would reveal a human soul. In *The Mothering Heart* (1913), he let the heroine Lillian Gish thrash madly at the bush around her to reveal the seething emotion of a woman overcome by her child's death, by destroying the strong green life around her.

The peak of his directing career came with the films he made between 1915 and 1920, among which, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Intolerance* (1916), *Hearts of the World* (1918), *Broken Blossoms* (1919), and *Way Down East* (1920) are the most memorable ones.

There are several starting points for cinema, but it was Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* that fired the starting gun for the American cinema. *The Birth of a Nation* proved a firestorm success. An investment of less than \$110,000, the film produced returns of 10 to 14 million dollars, which affirmed that the cinema was commercially a sleeping giant newly sprung to its feet.

Thomas Dixon's novel and later successful stage play *The Clansman* gave Griffith the material he needed to connect his own ideological message with this epic film narrative, *The Birth of a Nation*. Covering the war year and the turbulent Reconstruction period, this three-hour-long masterpiece reveals a full view of the history of the Civil War and its aftermath as reflected by two families, the Stonemans of the North and the Camerons of the South. The eldest Cameron son founds a racist organization known as the White Knights, or Ku Klux Klan, and makes the streets of the defeated South safe from the ravage of wild-eyed Negroes and white carpetbaggers.

Because of the racist politics in the film, Griffith was faced with public outrage from

liberals and black American organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). *The Birth of a Nation* was denounced and boycotted in various northern American cities. Within the American debate, Griffith achieved his goal. He brought the power of the film to the middle class, and persuaded them that movies could not only appeal to the emotions of a wider audience, but that films also could reconstruct and reinforce certain cultural values and beliefs of that audience.

Griffith decided to produce a film of epic scope to strike back and overwhelm his critics. He took eighteen months to make *Intolerance* (1916). Moving far beyond what even he had done, he refused the easy alternative of telling the four stories of the film one by one. Rather, he chose to tell them concurrently and alternatively. In other words, he cross-cuts from exposition of one story to that of another, from development to development, and breathtakingly, from climax to climax. The film was three hours and ten minutes long. It failed, forcing Griffith to spend the rest of his professional life backtracking. However, many theories have been advanced for the financial failure of *Intolerance*. They range from the film being ahead of its time to audiences not being able to follow the plot.

Anyhow, Griffith's reputation rests with *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. One is a racist defense of a pre-civil war Southern life-style, the other a plea for universal understanding. Griffith seems to be a tradition-bound bigot in the former, crusading liberal in latter. Yet these two epics share some characteristics. They both imply that history serves best as a chaotic background for a fictional drama of separation and unification.

Griffith moved away from Hollywood and returned to New York to direct a number of feature films from 1919 to 1931, among which, *Broken Blossoms* (1919), *Way Down East* (1920), *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), *The White Rose* (1923) and *Isn't Life Wonderful* (1924) thematically attempt to depict their heroines overcoming the ordeals of racial intolerance and strife in one form or another and to triumph over the shortcomings of life itself. However, Griffith framed each film within his older melodramas, offering the audience a "shallow sentimentality" that was deemed by critics as old-fashioned and biased. Yet with *Isn't Life Wonderful*, Griffith shot the film in Germany using "actualities" or found locations for most of the documentary filming. At the end of the silent period in 1927 Griffith's artistic methods were considered too extravagant for financial backing. He attempted two sound films, *Abraham Lincoln* (1930) and *The Struggle* (1931). Each film was found wanting an audience, but *The Struggle* appeared to be more than a fictional story since it conveyed Griffith's own battle with the demons of alcohol.

1.5 Charlie Chaplin

Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) was undoubtedly Sennett's greatest gift to cinema. Surely one of the most popular figures of his day, Chaplin was that rare star who by the 1920s had total control over his work. This English-born vaudevillian came to the United States in 1913

and apprenticed with Sennett for two years. His first film, *Making a Living* (1914), was well received, but it was in his second, *Kid Auto Races at Venice* (1914) that he adopted the costume which made him a household name: the undersized jacket, the baggy pants, oversized shoes, derby hat, cane, and mustache.

Once Chaplin struck out on his own, he became a great star and through a series of deals progressed to longer films and more and more control of what he turned out. By 1919 he was a full partner in the new United Artists and would produce, write, and direct all the films he would make during the next forty years. He was the cinema's first true international superstar, a filmmaker who caused millions of waiting fans to flock to theatres.

The first universally loved character he established was the Little Tramp, a little guy and easy target for the bullies of the world, agile, quick-witted and good at using found objects. While the complex Chaplin character began to take shape with *A Dog's Life* (1918). In this film he developed social satire by drawing contrast between the Little Tramp and his faithful friend. *Shoulder Arms* (1918) poked fun at the First World War, and *The Kid* (1921) presented a world of poverty in a contrasting funny and tragic way.

But only with the end of his obligations at First National did Chaplin begin to turn out his best work. *The Gold Rush* (1925) was Chaplin's favorite among his own films. In *The Gold Rush*, Chaplin took his Tramp to the frozen gold fields where human endured great hardships in search of even greater wealth. The Tramp has invited some girls to a New Year's party, for which he slaves for weeks to earn money. But the girls never really intended to come to the party. The Tramp stands alone in his little hut, listening sadly to the distant strains of happy "Auld Lang Syne". It skillfully alternates sequences of comedy and drama, acceptance and rejection, cold and warmth, effectively simulating the ebb and flow, the pleasures and pains of life itself. Chaplin made more perfect films than *The Gold Rush*, but he never made one that was more human or poignant. The Little Tramp remains one of the most famous images in the history of the movies.

1.6 Headquarters to Hollywood

Competition in film industry was fierce because of the temptingly high profit. In 1908, Edison formed the Patents Company, allied with nine other leading companies including Vitagraph, Selig, Biograph, etc., claiming 16 patent rights. The Company strangled all those companies not allied with them. By 1910, it had monopolised the production, distribution and exhibition in America. To free from its monopoly, independent producers left the filming centers of New York and Chicago and filmed in Hollywood, a little village several miles away from downtown Los Angeles. D. W. Griffith shifted his filming place to Hollywood and there he made hundreds of films and gathered a favourable number of outstanding actors.

After the *Treaty of Versailles* was signed in 1919, which formally ended World War I,