16

Technologies and identity

Getty Images/Ricky Kresslein

9780170423601

NARRATIVE FILM MOVEMENTS AND TECHNOLOGIES

According to film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, whether or not a film belongs to a film movement depends on two criteria:

1 Does the film share features and characteristics of other films from a particular time period or nation? For example, consider any Hong Kong martial arts film made between 1979 and 1989. If it is similar to other Hong Kong films of the 1980s, then it may be part of the 'Hong Kong New Wave'.
2 Do the filmmakers share a belief about what makes a good film with a circle of other filmmakers who work in a similar system? For example, after 1945, a group of French film writers discussed good and bad films, and then went out and filmed their own. Their films became part of the 'French New Wave'. Their ideas and writing still influence filmmakers today.

Soviet montage cinema

Soviet montage cinema was a film movement in Russia during the 1920s that developed around an editing technique called **montage**. Editing styles developed in the early Soviet cinema are still used in most modern films.

Soviet montage cinema is based on the experiments of Lev Kuleshov. In one experiment in his film workshop, Kuleshov edited together camera shots of an actor's face with shots of a bowl of soup. Audiences assumed that the man was looking at the soup and was hungry. In a later experiment he cut together separate shots of a Russian man in Moscow pointing, the White House in Washington, DC, and the steps of a church in Moscow. Audiences concluded that the man was in Washington pointing at the White House and about to walk up its steps. This false connection created in the minds of the audience is called the Kuleshov effect. The idea underpins all modern editing.

Sergei Eisenstein used Kuleshov's findings to come up with his own ideas about **collision of images** or montage. Eisenstein believed that if one shot was 'collided' or juxtaposed with conflicting shot, the audience could infer a third meaning. For instance, when a shot of a man holding his shoulder is collided with a shot of a gun being fired, audiences will commonly derive a third meaning (which is not shown in either shot): that the man has been hit by a bullet.

Eisenstein's collision of images idea was a product of his culture – revolutionary communist Russia. The idea was based on the Marxist theory of the dialectic, one of the foundations of communist thinking. The dialectic theory states that when opposite forces of history clash, they create a third way that is new and different from either.

Films of the Soviet montage cinema

The best-known examples of Soviet montage include the following films.

Table 16.1 Soviet montage films

SOVIET MONTAGE FILM	DETAILS
Battleship Potemkin (1924)	Sergei Eisenstein's film is based on the true story of a mutiny on board the *Potemkin* in Saint Petersburg in 1905. The Tsar's soldiers later opened fire on the ship and its supporters on shore. The use of collision of images in the 'Odessa Steps' sequence (see chapter 2, page 40) makes the scene the most famous example of editing technique in cinema history, with the exception of the shower scene in *Psycho* (1960).
The End of St. Petersburg (1926)	Images of soldiers dying in the muddy trenches of the First World War are intercut with shots of the share market in Saint Petersburg in Vsevolod Pudovkin's film. The point is made that the war was for the profit of capitalists.

Features of Soviet montage cinema

Key elements of early Soviet filmmaking include the following.

- **Editing for emotions.** Soviet cinema used innovative editing techniques to manipulate the emotions of the audience. Collision of images (A + B = C) editing was used by Eisenstein. Linkage editing (A + B = AB) was used by Vsevolod Pudovkin.
- **Types, not stars.** Communist philosophy favoured the action of groups over that of individuals. Soviet films of the time did not have individual film stars. *Battleship Potemkin*, for instance, does not even have a main character. Instead, the film focuses on types of people – those who are typical

of and can be used to represent a group. A **protagonist** appears in some films but only as a representative of a group.

- **Social forces, not individual stories.** In keeping with early communist thinking, Soviet films do not have narratives that focus strongly on individual lives. Instead, stories are about groups of people who take collective action. Events in the story are not motivated by the individual actions of the hero.

Technologies and dialectic montage

Technologies in this movement of film are closely connected to the experimentation with and use of editing techniques. By placing two unrelated images together, filmmakers were able to build sequences that featured dual meanings, and in many cases symbolic suggestions. This was often called dialectic montage.

German Expressionism

German Expressionism was a style of film production that emerged in Germany just after the First World War I (1914–18) and persisted into the mid-1920s.

Like the Expressionist movement in visual art, Expressionist films sought to convey human emotion and feeling rather than to depict conventional reality. One of the most famous Expressionist works of art is Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893). Just as that painting uses a distorted image to express human feeling, German Expressionist film used distorted narratives, sets and *mise en scène* to show emotional truths.

Several factors contributed to the decline of the movement and its disappearance by the early 1930s. The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler's Nazi Party led to censorship and stronger controls over filmmakers. The persecution of Jewish people, artists and intellectuals forced many to leave Germany. Large numbers of filmmakers migrated to Hollywood in the 1930s, and they took their style of filmmaking with them. Expressionism reappeared as an influence on American ***film noir*** (see page 217) and horror (see page 218).

Expressionist films

The best-known examples of German Expressionism include the following films.

Table 16.2 German Expressionist films

GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST FILM	DETAILS
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919)	Robert Wiene's film is the first and one of the most famous German Expressionist films. A psychotic hypnotist uses a murderous zombie to kidnap a beautiful woman.
Nosferatu (1921)	F.W. Murnau's film was one of the first vampire films to feature Count Dracula. Later, Murnau moved to Hollywood.
Metropolis (1926)	Fritz Lang's film is set in the year 2000. An inventor creates an evil girl to incite a revolt in a futuristic city. Lang fled Germany and moved to Hollywood in 1935, leaving behind his pro-Nazi wife.

Features of German Expressionism

German Expressionist films are highly stylised and unrealistic looking. They have many of the following features in common:

- **Settings and *mise en scène*.** Bizarre and odd-looking settings with distorted buildings create a disturbing impression that seems the stuff of nightmares rather than reality. *Mise en scène* is an important off-balance element in these films. Objects are misshapen or exaggerated in appearance.
- **Characters and actors.** People in these movies are often eccentric or even mentally ill. Actors are heavily made up and their whitened faces and dark lips give them a ghoulish appearance. Characters move with odd jerky actions or overly fluid, floppy gestures. The actors' bodies are part of the graphic design. They seem to be part of the landscape or artistic backdrop – and every bit as weird!
- **Camera work.** The camera uses unusual angles to create the feeling that the world is off balance. There is very little depth in the focal length. Everything appears to be two-dimensional, which is the opposite of Hollywood's deep focus.
- **Lighting.** **Chiaroscuro** or high-contrast lighting is preferred. A shaft of light illuminates the action while deep shadows surround it. This type of lighting is also called **low key**.

9780170423601

- **Narratives.** The subject matter of German Expressionist films often concerns unnatural acts or disturbed psychologies. Gothic horror is also a common theme.

Technologies and set design

The way in which set design functioned is one way of thinking about technologies. Sets were uniquely designed in accordance with the general mindset of German Expressionism – strange shapes for even stranger stories. For many scholars, the set was a physical expression of a psychological subtext in the story. Much of the work was highly innovative for the time, which gave the body of work more value.

Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore Collection

Figure 16.1 A scene from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). German Expressionist films used odd angles and perspectives and unusual proportions to express an emotional state rather than portray a realistic view of the world.

Realism

More than other media, film is seen as the medium of realism. This is because audiences believe the camera reproduces what is 'there'. In more innocent times, audiences used to say, 'the camera does not lie!' Nowadays we know better, but the desire for realism in the cinema has never gone away.

The aim of realism is to capture on camera life as it really is. This may sound simple, but it causes much argument. What does a film have to do to be 'real'? More film movements have been born out of the question of what is real than out of any other debate in cinema history. The growth of digital effects and computer-generated imagery will probably only intensify the arguments.

A realist film aims to project onto the screen actual experience as it is lived by the characters in their own environment. The film convinces its audience that it is presenting a direct and truthful view of life in the real world. A realist fiction film is a drama that seems to be true to life. A realist documentary captures life experience as it happens in front of the camera, as in cinéma vérité.

Types of realism

Two main types of filmic realism have been identified:

- **Seamless realism.** The purpose of seamless realism is to hide from the audience any sense that things are 'just made up'. The construction, sets, camera work and editing all conspire to make you think that what you see is real. There should be no visible joins or 'seams' stitching the different elements together. Most Hollywood movies take this approach.
- **Aesthetic or artistic realism.** Aesthetic realist directors try to make the film 'super-real' – for example, by replacing actors with authentic non-professionals. Sometimes a director will purposely let the audience know that the film is

'Film is truth at 24 frames per second.'

'Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world.'

'Cinema is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of the reflection.'

Jean-Luc Godard, French New Wave director and critic

9780170423601

a construction; a jump cut might be deliberately inserted, for instance. The idea behind this is usually to allow the audience greater flexibility to make their own decisions about how much 'reality' the movie has captured.

Features of realism

There is limited agreement among film writers as to what constitutes realism. However, many agree on the following four aspects:

1 **Surface reality.** The film needs to look real to convince the audience to **suspend disbelief**. Period dramas, for example, need to look authentic, with nothing out of place that could disrupt the realism. Some directors go to extraordinary lengths to achieve authenticity. To film *All the President's Men* (1976), the entire newsroom of *The Washington Post* newspaper was re-created in a film studio – right down to the scattering of original waste paper from the *Post*'s office!

2 **Realistic acting and characters.** The actors' inner emotions need to be believable. In the Australian war film *Kokoda* (2006), realism is achieved when the actors allow us to feel what it must have been like to have been there fighting in the jungles of New Guinea. But for some of the First World War generation watching this film, realism was disrupted when the language used by the soldiers sounded too modern.

3 **Plausibility.** A film will be accepted as realistic if it coincides with generally accepted ideas about what is and is not believable. For example, the plot of the film should not have too many unbelievable coincidences. What the audience will accept as believable determines the standard. For instance, if 70 per cent of people say they do not believe in ghosts, then a film about ghosts cannot be a realist film – irrespective of whether or not ghosts exist.

4 **Technical and symbolic codes.** Films use technical and symbolic codes to communicate meaning. Over time, audiences have come to accept certain codes as realistic. For instance, we accept music playing in the background. However, in a realist film, we might not accept fades to white because they tend to represent dreams or other unreal experiences. Similarly, we might not accept certain lens filters or colour saturations.

Aesthetic realism

Aesthetic realism may have some of the following features (in addition to those previously discussed):

- **Locations, not studios.** Many directors make a point of shooting only on location and never using studios.
- **Natural lighting.** Hollywood studio lighting, traditional three-point lighting, is abandoned in favour of natural lighting with its shadows and imperfections.
- **Non-professional actors.** Certain aesthetic realists choose their actors from people in the street. Their reasoning is that it brings greater authenticity. Says director Bruno Dumont, 'I choose actors who resemble the characters I've written. I take their physique, I take their psychology. I don't need to discuss with them if they understand the character.'
- **Real-life camera.** Some realist directors place cameras at random and then edit footage based on what they have been lucky enough to capture. What happens on film is left to chance. The Italian movie *Rome, Open City* (1946) tells of the Italian resistance's struggles with the Gestapo in occupied Rome. The film uses footage of life in Rome, filmed in secret, just as the Nazis are leaving and the city is liberated. The shots are of streets filled with a mixture of exhausted and demoralised citizens and panicking German soldiers.
- **Unmediated shots and deep focus.** It is common for realist films to use a lot of long shots and long takes of these shots. This demonstrates the authenticity of the scene, because the illusions created by editing are reduced to a minimum. **Deep focus** (see page 26) is used because it resembles the natural focusing power of the human eye.

Italian neo-realism

Italian neo-realism first appeared in the mid-1940s, and the movement remained popular until the mid-1950s. The movement came to an end partly because the government film sponsorship body refused to fund films that might give Italy a bad name.

Neo-realism was a reaction against the Fascist domination of the film industry under the dictator Benito Mussolini. An ally of Hitler, Mussolini used propaganda techniques in much the same way as

9780170423601

Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels did. When the US liberated Italy in 1944, filmmakers found a new freedom to tell the truth about life.

Features of neo-realism

Neo-realist filmmakers felt they had a mission – to produce films that told audiences about the harsh realities of life in modern society. Their films had the following characteristics:

- **'Slice of life'.** The Italian filmmakers believed their films should focus on everyday life and give audiences a taste of what it was like to live in the cities of Italy as the war ended.
- **Natural dialogue.** To reflect life as it was, people should talk naturally without the advantage of clever scriptwriting that could hide the real message. Often people 'just talked' in these films, even improvising at times.
- **Non-professional actors.** To really capture ordinary life, the Italian directors dispensed with highly paid actors and instead recruited people off the streets.
- **Location shooting.** Even though the films are fiction, the directors used documentary-style location shooting with random camera placement and sometimes even handheld cameras. Lighting is natural and without the benefit of studio lights.

Neo-realist films

The most widely available and best-known Italian neo-realist film is Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). It is the story of a poor man whose job is putting up posters around the city. When his bicycle is stolen, he and his young son begin a search for it. The film is about the father–son relationship, but it is also about the causes of poverty and despair in postwar Italy.

Technologies and natural lighting in realism

Technologies in production suffered a process of reduction so that only certain basics were utilised. Amateur actors were employed for films, but they did not step out onto a staged area: sets were the available local spaces. Lighting was dismantled, as were other 'unneeded' technologies such as second or third cameras. The omission of technologies in this cinematic space was an attempt at drawing closer connections to reality.

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 16.2 *Bicycle Thieves*, also known as *The Bicycle Thief*, was one of the most influential European films of the immediate postwar era. It demonstrates most of the attributes of Italian neo-realism.

French New Wave

The **French New Wave** (also called French *Nouvelle Vague*) was a youth-oriented film movement that came about when an influx of young directors took over from France's old-style movie makers in the late 1950s. About 170 new directors came onto the scene at this time. At least half of them had no previous film experience, so they broke all the old rules. With so many new filmmakers, funding was spread thinly, so their movies were nearly all made on very low budgets.

A number of the most famous directors were young film critics who worked for the magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* (cinema papers). Having begun writing about films, they decided to make their own. As a result, many French New Wave films are experimental and very intellectual. Best known among these critics-turned-directors are Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut.

The French New Wave had two stages: the first wave from 1958 to 1962, and the second wave from 1966 to 1968. The second wave was very political. It coincided with the student demonstrations and riots across France that almost came to a revolution in 1968.

Features of French New Wave

The French New Wave became a major international influence in filmmaking. French New Wave movies tend to have the following characteristics:

- **Inexpensive and democratic.** The expensive sound stages and studio post-production of the

old cinema were seen as belonging to *cinéma de papa* (old fogey cinema). The new directors shot films quickly on cheap, portable equipment.

- **Disjointed stories.** The narratives of French New Wave movies often lack a clear ending and sometimes even a beginning. The directors rejected the old storytelling techniques. The characters in these movies are complex and serious young people wandering around 1960s France.
- **Broken codes.** Many of the long-established codes and conventions of the cinema were challenged by the French New Wave. The editing style was very fast. Traditional seamless editing was abandoned. Jump cuts were purposely inserted. Even **establishing shots** were often left out.

French New Wave films

Jean-Luc Godard's movie *Breathless* (1959) is regarded as one of the best examples of French New Wave. It is the story of a young delinquent in Paris who falls in love with a visiting American student. Towards the end of the movie she betrays him to the police. Filmed during the same year, and also featuring a young petty criminal, was François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959).

Technologies and mobile cameras

Technologies in the French New Wave movement were more associated with accessibility and aesthetics. The invention of portable, handheld cameras changed the ways in which storytelling functioned. Cinematographers could now find access to spaces that were previously too difficult for a larger rig, expanding the scope of narrative and changing the kinds of stories being told.

British New Wave

The British New Wave was a movement in the British social realism tradition. It dealt with the issues of the early 1960s: rising youth culture, changing sexual values and changes in music and fashion. It also focused on the difficulties of ordinary life for working-class people in postwar Britain. The British New Wave developed in 1958 and continued until Hollywood's export push into Britain decimated the local film industry in the mid-1960s.

The British New Wave movement grew out of the 'kitchen sink' drama movement of the mid-1950s. A group of writers called the 'angry young men' wrote gritty plays about working-class people and the dramas of their domestic lives. They angrily expressed the disappointment of a generation of people who had come of age during or just after the war. The promised new society was failing to deliver. That wouldn't come until the 'Swinging Sixties' and the era of the Beatles.

The British New Wave was controversial by the standards of the 1950s and early 1960s. For the first time in British film, characters had sex lives and money worries, and faced major social problems. Themes included abortion, workplace bullying, unhappy marriages, runaway teenagers, the urban poor and depression.

A typical protagonist was a young working-class male. As traditional industries closed down and the old working-class culture was lost, the hero had to cope as best he could and find a new identity and way of living.

Some British New Wave films

Some important films in the British New Wave movement are the following.

Table 16.3 British New Wave films

BRITISH NEW WAVE FILM	DETAILS
Room at the Top (1959)	Based on John Braine's novel, this film tells the story of an ambitious young man who seeks to escape his working-class background in a bleak northern factory town.
Look Back in Anger (1959)	This film was based on the play (and early experiences) of another of the 'angry young men', John Osborne. It is about working-class life and class friction in a dreary one-bedroom Midlands flat.
The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1962)	While running a race against a team from an exclusive private school, a borstal (British reform school) boy thinks about his depressing, poverty-stricken life, comparing it with their privileged lives.

Much later, in the 1980s and 1990s, the concerns of the British New Wave found new relevance. With the restructuring of traditional British industry and coalmine closures, many working-class people lost their jobs and their hopes

9780170423601

Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore Collection

Figure 16.3 Unemployed former steel workers decide to form a male striptease act in *The Full Monty* (1997). The British New Wave was a film movement of the 1950s and early 1960s whose style and concerns were echoed in the new wave of British films of the 1990s.

for the future. Two movies were made in the style of British New Wave during this time: *Brassed Off* (1996) and *The Full Monty*.

Technologies, and black-and-white footage

Most British New Wave films were shot in black and white to place emphasis on the serious and artistic nature of the work. Termed 'pseudo-documentary' these films used black and white to create a gritty tone that felt like historical record. It qualified unfolding action in a more engaging manner.

Classical Hollywood narrative

Classical Hollywood narrative films have plots that progress through time in a linear way, are based on character-driven action and use the continuity editing style (see chapter 2, page 41).

The style is classical because it is based on the classical principles of literature and art. A work is described as classical if it has perfect balance and symmetry. It must also be clear, simple and free of excesses of emotionalism or irrelevant detail. From beginning to end, all elements must be integrated, and the resulting sense of harmony should reassure and satisfy the audience.

Features of classical Hollywood narrative

The Hollywood style takes advantage of the contract people make with the filmmaker when they pay their ticket price – they willingly want to suspend disbelief. Deep down, people know it is tomato sauce, but they really want to believe it is blood. In a conspiracy with the audience to make movies believable, classical Hollywood narrative has developed the following features:

- **Three-act narrative.** Hollywood plots are set out according to the three-act structure of orientation, complication and resolution (see page 131). A situation is presented, a disruption is introduced and then the resolution ties everything up in a strong closure. Real life is not so simple, and actual events rarely have such neat starts or finishes. Even so, the word **realism** can be applied to Hollywood style because it is based on classic literary narrative realism.
- **Objective storytelling.** The audience in a Hollywood film knows more than the characters do. We are able to see what is happening in other places at the same time, and we can see what other characters are doing. In this respect we are God-like – we can see everything. This makes the style of storytelling objective, according to film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. It also allows us to accept **simultaneous time** or parallel editing (see chapter 2, page 41).
- **Character driven.** The US style of cinema is almost exclusively concerned with individual characters (and stars). This contrasts sharply with the Soviet montage style of filmmaking. The objective of the Hollywood movie is to relate what happens to the characters and whether or not they get what they wanted. The films have strong individual characters who struggle to fulfil their hopes and goals. These characters are arranged in a hierarchy, from hero or protagonist to antagonist and then down to minor characters and supporting cast.

> 'Classical Hollywood cinema possesses a style which is largely invisible and difficult for the average spectator to see. The narrative is delivered so effortlessly and efficiently to the audience that it appears to have no source. It comes magically off the screen.'
>
> **John Belton**, film scholar and Professor of English at Rutgers University

While earthquakes, alien invasions or cyborgs may act as catalysts to events, the stories generally focus on the personal choices of individuals, say Bordwell and Thompson. To confirm this point, Susan Hayward gives the example of Vietnam War movies. Many movies take an anti-war stance, but in Hollywood movies we learn about the impact of the war only by seeing how it affects our main 'G.I. Joe' character. Only a few other surrounding characters suffer. We don't get to see how the war affected society, or what caused the war, or what its long-term effects were. Even if a cause for a war is proposed, it tends to be marked down as the responsibility of one individual. For example, in Hollywood movies, Hitler is shown to be solely responsible for the Second World War.

- ***Mise en scène.*** One of the most important aspects of Hollywood style is the *mise en scène*, the sole function of which is to manufacture realism.
- **Time and space.** Hollywood movies have a strong sense of movement – either through time or through geography. The story movement through time most often follows a straightforward line of episodic events. Flashbacks or flash-forwards may be used, but the overall linear direction is strongly maintained. Whether through time or space, movement is totally subordinate to the action, say Bordwell and Thompson. Only the bits that are important to the story are shown.
- **Classical continuity editing.** A typical feature film has between 800 and 1200 shots. Editing is designed to render all these shot changes invisible or imperceptible. Editing in the invisible style serves to hide any jumps or discontinuities that would alert the viewer to 'non-reality'.

Most people are very familiar with classical Hollywood films. Examples include timely classics such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), and musicals such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). Contemporary examples include blockbuster films such as the *Star Wars* franchise.

Technologies and continuity editing

One way to think about technologies is through editing and multi-camera shooting. In general, narrative was constructed through continuity editing that relied quite heavily on match-on-action. This is a simple editing process where an action in one shot is matched to the action of the following shot, so that the transition of action across the edit point appears consistent and seamless. Multi-camera shooting enabled continuity to function across shots more efficiently, making the editing process much quicker.

New Hollywood

New Hollywood presented stories that were wildly popular precisely because they were never seen before. Its chief films included *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Graduate* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969). New Hollywood marked the end of the studio system, and the rise of new approaches to representation and spectacle.

In some ways a response to the social upheaval of the time, New Hollywood refers to a film movement that began in the early 1960s and lasted for over a decade. It is qualified by changes to industry context, particularly the removal of the studio system's power, along with the rise of the director's creative vision as a key function of visual storytelling. As a result, New Hollywood is viewed by many critics as a shift in the style of filmmaking.

Creative vision was not a prescribed mandate of New Hollywood film production. Nor does it imply that earlier film directors were not capable of some kind of creative vision in their own productions. Under the new system, creative vision experienced more flexibility and was therefore realised in dynamic new ways simply because studio system's controls had been stripped away. Executive producers and their respective studios no longer controlled filmmaking in the same way – it was almost as if directors were given free rein over production. Thus, creative vision became a by-product of industrial contexts of the time, and amazing new visual imagery began to surface.

Creative vision affected the screen in multiple ways. Firstly, representations were grounded in a strict kind of realism. Narrative structure suffered significant change, particularly in the manner

9780170423601

of endings. For many years, Hollywood had produced a number of films whose narratives were informed by romanticised endings. The protagonist always achieved their goals – happy endings were common, as was marriage and fruitful relationships.

In response to this, New Hollywood stories were shaped more by reality than idealism. Lead characters experienced disillusionment, failure and even died in some cases. The moral integrity of lead characters was also subject to change. The cowboy characters in Westerns, such as those played by John Wayne, gave way to characters who expressed uncertainty, doubt and even violence. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* is a good example of displacing romanticised endings in narrative. Where conventional Hollywood film would have seen the heroes survive against incredible odds, the characters in this film died at the end – because reality demanded it.

Alamy Stock Photo/Photo 12

Figure 16.4 The iconic final moments of the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* where the two protagonists race out of a saloon to face the Bolivian army. Instead of surviving against insurmountable odds like in older, romanticised Hollywood films, the two lead characters die instantly. Viewers are left contemplating this cold, hard reality.

Another way in which creative vision affected New Hollywood film production was at the level of film style. New Hollywood style has been described as a departure from the classical system of Hollywood narrative filmmaking. What this means is that Hollywood conventions, like continuity editing, are intentionally displaced in preference for new and interesting visual designs. Final cut privilege was often handed over to directors who then experimented with the flow of story. Spectacle came to more prominence and served to interrupt narrative coherence so that viewers could luxuriate in spectacular big-screen experiences. Breaches in continuity editing (largely inspired by French New Wave) became more common in the process of storytelling via techniques such as rapid-cutting or experimenting with montage.

Technologies and spectacle

One of the many ways in which technologies were used in New Hollywood films is special effects. The importance of special effects became paramount because of the growing emphasis placed on spectacle as a means to tell story. Large explosions, buildings collapsing, stunt tricks and performances – all of these developing technologies became more valuable. New Hollywood filmmakers came to realise this importance and shaped their production practice around the use of effects.

Dogma 95

Dogma 95 (*Dogme* in Danish) is a radical film movement originating in Denmark in 1995. In Paris, at the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of motion pictures, the Danish director Lars von Trier announced the rules for Dogma 95 films. These rules were referred to as the filmmaker's 'Vow of Chastity'.

The Dogma 95 film movement is a kind of anti-Hollywood movement that sets out to do the reverse of what is expected in classical Hollywood narrative films. All the techniques of the Hollywood style are regarded as 'cosmetics' that hide the truth and turn films into mindless entertainment.

> 'In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple that washed ashore and turned to muck. The movie had been cosmeticised to death, they said; yet since then the use of cosmetics has exploded.
>
> The "supreme" task of the decadent filmmakers is to fool the audience. Is that what we are so proud of? Is that what the "100 years" have brought us? Illusions via which emotions can be communicated? By the individual artist's free choice of trickery?'
>
> **Dogma 95**, Filmmakers' Collective, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1995

9780170423601

Audiences of Dogma 95 films cannot ignore the fact that films are constructed. Whereas Hollywood uses the invisible style to hide the 'machinery' of filmmaking, Dogma 95 films put the machinery on show. 'Dogma 95 is very visible in that it disappoints audience expectations and prevents automatised reception,' says the Danish academic Ove Christensen.

Technologies and Dogma 95

Dogma 95 had a strict approach to the use of technologies. Cameras were permitted, but virtually everything else included in film production technologies were abandoned in favour of a particular approach to film. Instead of relying on three-point lighting, for example, available light sources such as the room light was used. If the lighting was not enough, then production had a choice – proceed anyway, or find another location.

Dogma 95 films

Very few films in the movement have managed to conform to all the dictates of the Dogma 95 manifesto. Between 40 and 80 films that follow at least some of the rules are believed to have been made worldwide. However, most of these are not available in Australia. Films that are available and give some idea of the movement include the following.

Table 16.4 Dogma 95 films

DOGMA 95 FILM	DETAILS
Mifune (1999)	This Danish film is the third Dogma 95 film to be made. During the accreditation process, the director made several confessions about rules he had broken. Among other wrongdoings, he confessed to having chased some chickens onto the set and having moved some furniture in the house to better suit the filming!
Dancer in the Dark (2000)	Starring Björk and directed by Lars von Trier, *Dancer in the Dark* is about a poor factory worker whose desire to save her son from blindness leads to tragedy. This is not an official Dogma 95 movie, but as a founding member of the Dogme 95 Collective, von Trier has followed some of its principles.
Dogville (2003)	Starring Nicole Kidman and directed by Lars von Trier, this movie is not an official Dogma 95 film but shares some of their characteristics. The film breaks a key rule – that shooting must take place where the action takes place. However, it does reflect other aspects of Dogma 95.

Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore Collection

Figure 16.5 *Dancer in the Dark*, starring Björk and Catherine Deneuve, is directed by one of the founders of the Dogma 95 movement, Lars von Trier. The film has divided critics, who either love it or hate it. For instance, on *The Movie Show* at the time, Margaret Pomeranz awarded it five stars while David Stratton gave it zero!

9780170423601

16.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Some of the experiments conducted by the Soviet montage directors are fun to try yourself.
Construct a reproduction of the Kuleshov effect by filming action in one location and then linking it to another. Use well-known locations so your audience will feel the Kuleshov effect but will know it isn't true. For instance, film inside the principal's office and open the door to leave. Cut to an exterior shot outside a door at the tuckshop and walk away. Your audience will be led to believe the principal's office is in the tuckshop – even though they know better.
Construct in storyboard form or shoot some collision of images sequences. In a short action sequence of about three or four shots, use collision of images to **suggest** to the audience that something occurred when no shot actually shows it happening. **Systematically arrange** the shots so that the codes make the meaning clear. For instance, show a close-up of a gun, and then a long shot of a body; or show a close-up of a fist, and then someone on the ground.

2 View the 'Men and the Maggots' sequence in the Soviet film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).
Explain Eisenstein's use of group motivation instead of Hollywood-style individual motivation to move the narrative forward, **identifying** a series of shots in the maggot sequence in which he has done this to illustrate the idea.
Analyse the sequence together with the 'Odessa Steps' sequence, **breaking each down** into their constituent parts and **making comparisons**. **Make judgements** as to whether or not Eisenstein does use individual characters in this sequence. **Compare** the 'Odessa Steps' sequence with the way you think Hollywood would treat the subject matter.

3 **Construct** a set design proposal, using sketching as a pre-production technique, for a film in the German Expressionist style. Design your set so that it reflects a state of mind rather than a strictly realistic rendition.

4 **Analyse** the appearance of the city in *Metropolis* (1927) and the city imagery for the science fiction film *The Fifth Element* (1997), together with the sci-fi neo-noir film *Blade Runner* (1982). **Break** each design **down** into its **constituent parts** and **examine** the meaning of each component.
Explain the influence of German Expressionism on contemporary cinema. Select a fiction film you are familiar with.
Analyse the film to determine its degree of realism using the four standards used to determine film realism as **criteria**. The standards are: surface reality, realistic acting and characters, plausibility, and technical and symbolic codes of realism.

5 The Italian neo-realist director Vittorio De Sica used non-professional actors in his film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). View a sequence from the film.
Appraise the worth of this technique, **making judgements** about whether non-professionals improve or detract from the film.

6 View a sequence from the French New Wave film *Breathless* (1960).
Construct a list of the standard Hollywood codes that Godard deliberately breaks (for example, jump cuts).
Appraise the effectiveness of Godard's anti-Hollywood approaches in the film, **drawing conclusions** about their impact on subsequent films.

7 Research some of the social issues facing British youth in the early 1960s just before the advent of the Beatles.
Construct a list of these concerns and then view a film from the British New Wave of social realism.
Analyse the film to report on the extent to which the concerns are evident in it.

8 **Analyse** a contemporary Hollywood film using the basic standards of classical Hollywood narrative as the set criteria. **Make judgements** about the extent to which classical style is still being used, considering aspects of plot, objective storytelling, character causality, linear time and continuity editing.

9 Some critics have accused the Dogma 95 collective of hypocrisy. It is said they seem to believe in some types of technology but not others. They seem to believe in some 'cosmetics', but not all. They have been accused of just being anti-technology (but only modern technology).
Appraise the principles as they apply to some Dogma 95 films you have viewed. In small groups, discuss whether or not you believe the Dogma 95 principles are hypocritical.

10 **Synthesise** a short fiction sequence in the style of one of the film movements discussed in this section. Follow the basic principles of the movement and use the techniques favoured by its followers. **Solve conceptual and technical problems** to create a moving-image media product.

9780170423601

DIRECTORS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Filmmaking is not done in a vacuum. It is not something that is created separately to current trends and thinking about production practices. Directors today frequently make choices in response to the various contexts of production when approaching their stories. Technologies are a major part of this context. Much of the film practice is guided by the ways in which technologies are made accessible to filmmakers. Many directorial identities are shaped in response to technologies. Aesthetics are also shaped by the ways in which technologies are employed. It is almost as if technologies are the backbone of the entire film process – after all, without the simple technology of the camera, film would not exist.

Directors and new aesthetics

Whenever filmmakers experiment with new technologies, new aesthetics are inevitably constructed that present exciting new directions in cinema. However, sometimes new technologies become a point of contention. The emergence of digital technology in filmmaking has become one of the biggest issues at the moment for filmmakers. This is primarily expressed as the shift away from celluloid film in preference for capturing with digital technologies. This new production practice – digital technologies – can be described as both a technological practice and a stylistic trend.

It is technological because it relies on new and emerging hardware and software specifically designed to create a digital image using pixels. It is also stylistic because it conjures up new kinds of aesthetics that change the nature of the image, the screen itself and its reception. Many directors find the shift challenging. This is not because it is difficult for them to manage, but because digital technologies are an issue that is affecting the director's identity and the nature of the visual image.

At a surface level, there appears to be no right or wrong in the choice to use or not use digital imagery. However, among elite directors who have influence in Hollywood, the gap between the two technologies could not be larger. Directors such as Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan, among others, promote the idea that there is a gap in quality between the two approaches, suggesting that the digital image is far inferior to the aesthetic of the celluloid image. However, other directors such as David Lynch are currently promoting digitally acquired imagery precisely because of its aesthetic differences to film. For Lynch, the gap in quality is a good thing. It appears that the wider film industry, and Hollywood in particular, are largely ignoring the debate, remaining fixed on establishing a completely digital film industry.

Currently, the push for cinema conversion toward digital projection is in its final stages of completion. Almost all cinemas in the US and above 60 per cent globally have made the change away from celluloid film projection. The shift in projection and the subsequent changes in the dynamics of viewership have left celluloid directors with little choice about the craft. While shooting in celluloid is still an option, thanks largely to companies like Kodak, the option to project in celluloid is becoming harder and harder to achieve. This has far-reaching implications.

Celluloid directors feel that the idea of cinema is constrained and being corralled in only one direction at the expense of art. These technological changes are considered a threat to the idea of identity because the artistic quality (and property) of the image is based on aesthetics. Their visualisation of story cannot be separated from image acquisition, particularly when utilising the relationship between light and shadow, colour or shooting in black and white. The software used to create the digital image makes subtle changes to these qualities and properties, which is dramatic for certain filmmakers.

How Steven Spielberg uses technologies

Steven Spielberg's use of technologies has helped shape a particular identity across his career. Much of this identity is connected to aesthetics and ideas about art in film. For Spielberg, aesthetics is a key part of not only film production, but film appreciation as well. He is prudent about shooting practices, and just as invested in projection. The digital versus celluloid divide has greatly affected his personal view of aesthetics, and threatens the nature of his identity in screen space.

Spielberg fights against the rise of digital technologies. His concern stems from the shift in aesthetics that comes out of them. It is not a question of quality, as much as it is about

9780170423601

haptic visuality – or the material presence and texture of the celluloid film. What is interesting are the various implications that stem from Spielberg's persistence with celluloid in his filmmaking. In a time when the film industry is defined by digital filmmaking, Spielberg refuses to conform. Digital cinema projection has been a solid presence in the film industry for over 10 years. Audiences have grown accustomed to the current state of the image – they are very familiar with the digital aesthetic.

Spielberg's aesthetics represent a change in the way the digital image has come to shape cinema. Spielberg is presenting a new aesthetic in screen space through the use of outdated technologies. Very rarely does a film appear as a product of the celluloid process. Spielberg's films are offering the viewer a unique change to that status quo. So not only are viewers watching an esteemed filmmaker, but they are also seeing new ways of representing the world.

Much of Spielberg's discussion around the benefits of celluloid arrives back at aesthetics. But what does this mean exactly? Many have offered different explanations of specific digital aesthetic and how it differs from celluloid. Explanations range from how grain functions as a part of the form of the image, to the image being likened to television video as seen in television dramas. Advances in the digital image have developed now to the point where there appears to be no quality difference between the two (or at least to the average person). However, industry figures like Spielberg still claim to be able to see a marked difference.

The implications that stem from these beliefs seem to have a significant affect upon visual culture. Celluloid directors have made celluloid image acquisition popular again – there is a growing market for celluloid photography and filmmaking. This popularity has resulted in an **analogue renaissance**.

Old technology companies such as Kodak have managed to recover from a near disastrous exit from the industry. Kodak is capitalising on the growing interest in celluloid products by releasing a new Super 8-mm camera that makes use of celluloid film. They have marketed this new product suggesting that old technologies are gaining momentum in spite of the digital era. This will likely introduce significant changes in not only amateur filmmaking, but also in visual spaces such as You Tube, whose aesthetics have always been inclined toward the digital image. Other companies such as Lomography are also re-introducing celluloid photography and filmmaking via their range of new analogue cameras and scanners.

Alamy Stock Photo/Zuma Press Inc

Figure 16.6 The new Kodak Super 8-mm camera makes use of celluloid film to capture imagery, but also uses digital technologies via an LCD screen similar to DSLR cameras. It is the first of its kind in the recent 'analogue renaissance' that is currently sweeping through visual culture. It is also a strong indication that there is a legitimate interest in the quality that comes from the use of celluloid film.

Spielberg has at many times claimed that shooting on celluloid is a far superior practice than shooting with digital technologies. When film is considered an art form, part of that artistic merit is connected to the disciplines that come out of celluloid filmmaking. Mastering those disciplines is what gives the activity of filmmaking a special quality that appears removed when using digital cameras. For example, with digital filmmaking, mistakes can be tolerated. You need only switch on the camera and shift and shoot (through trial and error) until what is needed is created. Any mistakes can be easily deleted when required. However, with celluloid film there is a certain precision to the shot that constrains the practice of filmmaking. Errors cannot be tolerated in the same way as with digital technologies. There are a number of reasons for this, but it is mostly because film is expensive, and errors in judgement usually equate to an increased expenditure for production.

Spielberg connects the idea of mastering the use of a celluloid camera with highly artistic work. There is a precision to the image, it is highly

articulated, and it is planned before it is executed. He suggests that digital filmmakers are not acquiring the skills necessary for being recognised as an *auteur*.

Somehow, through digital technologies, filmmakers are being robbed of a specific art form. There is a specific drive to work with and master the association between art and analogue photography. Celluloid now appears to carry a certain notoriety, since the words 'aesthetic' and 'art' have come to be associated with it.

Alamy Stock Photo/Malcolm Brice

Figure 16.7 Spielberg's insistence on using analogue film cameras often results in interesting combinations and mixtures of technologies. Here on the set of *Ready Player One* (2018), Spielberg lines up a shot using a camera loaded with celluloid film but mounted on the latest cranes that technology has to offer.

How Quentin Tarantino uses technologies

Tarantino is outspoken about his ideas regarding digital technologies. Like Spielberg, his identity is inevitably connected to choices regarding the aesthetic of the celluloid image. Any threat to the continued use of celluloid film represents a threat to his directorial identity. However, apart from the visual look of the image, Tarantino also makes connections between reception and celluloid film.

The experience of celluloid is as much a part of the filmmaking practice. This is not so much a discussion about art as it is about a kind of visual culture. Tarantino actually despises both digitally acquired imagery and the projected digital film. He feels that the audience is robbed of a particular experience that can only be attained through celluloid. Again, this comes down to aesthetics, but it is also about how the illusion of movement is lost in the digital image.

Film is shot and projected at a certain rate of frames per second. In Australia, it is usually 24 frames per second. The camera does not actually record movement, but instead takes a series of photos that offers the illusion of movement when projected. When a viewer is seated and watching a celluloid film projection, what the viewer witnesses is the 'magic of movies' – that illusion of movement that stems from the physical rapid movement of photos whizzing through the projector. The flicker and sudden movement of the photo, in combination with the physical presence of it, is what Tarantino qualifies as the magic of cinema motion.

With the digitally acquired image, that illusion of movement is lost. It is not there at the point of acquiring the image, and it is not there during projection. It is more like an illusion. For Tarantino, the 'magic' that was created with the first film camera over 100 years ago is being removed from viewership by digital technologies. For him, this is more than just a significant loss – it is a profound repositioning of the relationship between viewer and screen.

Tarantino typically employs the use of older cameras such as Panavision for the wide-screen image it offered. This 2.76:1 aspect ratio was made famous by earlier classics such as *Ben-Hur* (1959). In some of Tarantino's productions, he has even resorted to sourcing antique lenses that haven't been in circulation since the film *Khartoum* (1966). Tarantino's choice to shoot this way reflects not only his interest in the experience of celluloid film, but also an aesthetic that seems to be dissipating more and more from the film landscape. But Tarantino is not about resurrecting technologies or embracing some kind of zombie formalism merely for the sake of it. His position is similar to that of Kodak, 'not nostalgia, but appreciation', and is based on his desire to project the film in 70-mm print, 'for people who care' as he puts it.

The retro technology of cameras and lenses not only preserved an aspect ratio that reaches the width of *Ben-Hur*, but also gave the film's perspectives a look and feel similar to the Golden Age of Cinema. It is, in sum, a unique combination of qualities and properties that (even now) cannot be replicated when shooting with digital cameras. Actors in Tarantino's films often find the experience enchanting for those reasons – an opportunity to work with something other than digital. The cast of *The Hateful Eight* (2015), for example, supported the choice, stating that 'we weren't in a hard drive, we're in a movie'. In many ways, the imagery produced by Tarantino functions

as a new aesthetic, similar in nature to what Spielberg is producing in cinemas. This uniqueness elevates the value of the production. The saturation of digital cinema in the industry means that deviations like this present exciting new challenges and directions for viewers, especially generations born post-2000s who might not be familiarised with older cinema aesthetics.

Tarantino says that the digital image resembles the video imagery of television, and that, in terms of aesthetics, shooting in digital merges television with the big screen. In other words, the silver screen is cheapened by the presence of the digital camera at the point of production and at the level of projection. Tarantino is not speaking from a position of ignorance – he experimented with digital imagery while shooting a scene in Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* (2004). Many of his opinions are derived from this experience, he says.

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 16.8 Tarantino's use of celluloid film and antique lenses in his productions changed the way in which his aesthetic functioned in screen space. For many contemporary viewers, this was a new aesthetic since the technologies used to create it have not been in circulation for nearly 50 years.

How David Lynch uses technologies

On the opposing side to both Tarantino and Spielberg, filmmaker David Lynch argues in favour of the digital image precisely because of the difference it offers in image quality. Lynch acknowledges how the digital image is aesthetically different, and also acknowledges that this is part and parcel of what comes from the underpinning software used to create the image. Unlike his counterparts, Lynch prefers the digital image precisely because of the issues it presents in aesthetics.

For Lynch, the fact that it imparts blemishes into the story is the most attractive quality about the digital image. These imperfections mark the story as slightly more interesting. While Spielberg and Tarantino feel that the digital image chips away at industrial aspects such as reputation, Lynch sees a fascinating opportunity to build a unique directorial body of work. Lynch likens digital video to 1930s film, where some information is lost as a result of the image quality or aesthetic but this gives him more 'room to dream', as he calls it, to convey particular symbolic qualities in story.

Another way in which the digital image is desirable for Lynch is the degree of control it provides at all levels of production. Colour correction was always a difficult process when working with celluloid film, and one that Lynch never enjoyed. The way that the technology functioned meant that it was a very laborious process. This was mostly because while viewing the edits, it wasn't possible to pause the film efficiently enough to discuss ideas regarding the colour palette. Lynch often had to 'shout opinions and instructions' over the top of the film while it was running, while his editors frantically tried to keep up by taking notes.

Digital technologies unhinged the dependence that film had on projection. It affords an opportunity to pause the film in post-production without risking damage, which means that colour correction can be done frame by frame at any pace desired. This allows Lynch to really explore the potential for colour in the practice of storytelling, opening up new ways in which he can experiment with the visual aesthetic of his films. Because of the advantages it offers in practicality, Lynch now exclusively shoots in digital.

Alamy Stock Photo/Everett Collection

Figure 16.9 David Lynch shooting with digital technologies on the set of *Inland Empire* (2006). Lynch intentionally used a Sony camcorder set with standard definition in order to generate a slightly lower standard in visual quality. For Lynch, this was part of the desired aesthetic to convey not only story, but also to construct his directorial identity.

How James Cameron uses technologies

James Cameron is a leading figure in the film industry and in the use of filmic technologies. Cameron has a unique gift in creating and executing significant changes in the industry. This also informs the nature of his experimentation. Cameron could be described as not only highly innovative, but also a very big risk-taker. Risk informs his experimentation in film. This stems from his continual interest in raising the quality of the digital image by exploring emerging technologies.

In the mid-2000s, Cameron began advocating for a change in cinema projection to cater for digital cinema and 3D projection. Shortly afterwards, many cinemas across the world found themselves spending money accordingly. In 2011, Cameron attended a cinema convention and advocated for increased frame rates in production. He pitched the discussion around an improvement in aesthetics and the quality of the digital image. He stated that more and more filmmakers will be opting to shoot in increased film rates during production, and that this was the future of filmmaking. Cameron then aired a showreel he had put together that demonstrated his own experiments in conveying action through increased frame rates: 48 frames per second (fps) and 60 fps. He then advocated for cinemas to invest money in changing projection to cater for increased frame rates. Again, shortly afterwards, cinemas across the world paid a lot of money to install new hardware that could project film at specific frame rates, in accordance with the technical specifications of certain films being released. Cameron is planning on using 60 fps to convey action in his sequel to *Avatar* (2009).

Cameron states that he has always been a risk-taker. He says that for him, the prospect of experimenting with the visual image by dabbling in emerging technologies is not a scary undertaking. In his early career, he explored new ways to create spectacle in his films. The exploding buildings and liquid figures in *Terminator 2* (1991) was just one of the many ways in which his experimentation changed the way the visual image functioned in screen space. In 2009, Cameron achieved new innovation again by partnering with Industrial Light & Magic to produce the stunning CGI objects of *Avatar*.

Cameron can be seen to be quite calculating as well. *Avatar* sat on the ideas shelf for nearly 10 years because he wasn't satisfied with the state of technology and software to produce the required aesthetic. He waited until software became more efficient before deciding to produce the film. Cameron's recent push for 60 fps stems from a desire to shift aesthetics into a more immersive experience for the viewer. Coupled with 3D technologies, Cameron intends to redefine cinema yet again.

16.2 ACTIVITIES

1 Reduce the resolution size of the default image in your DSLR camera down to 720 × 576.
Experiment with the effect by shooting a scene outside in the sunlight, and then shooting a scene in the darker areas of a classroom. Upload the footage to a computer.
Construct an edited sequence out of the footage.
Analyse the footage for visual imperfections, **dissecting** each aspect of the shots and **examining** the aesthetics. This might be in the form of pixilation or other effects that appear in the aesthetic of the image.
Explain how you think these imperfections either interfere with or enhance the story.
2 **Experiment** with resolution sizes to see if you can find a unique aesthetic that could be used to convey story.

9780170423601