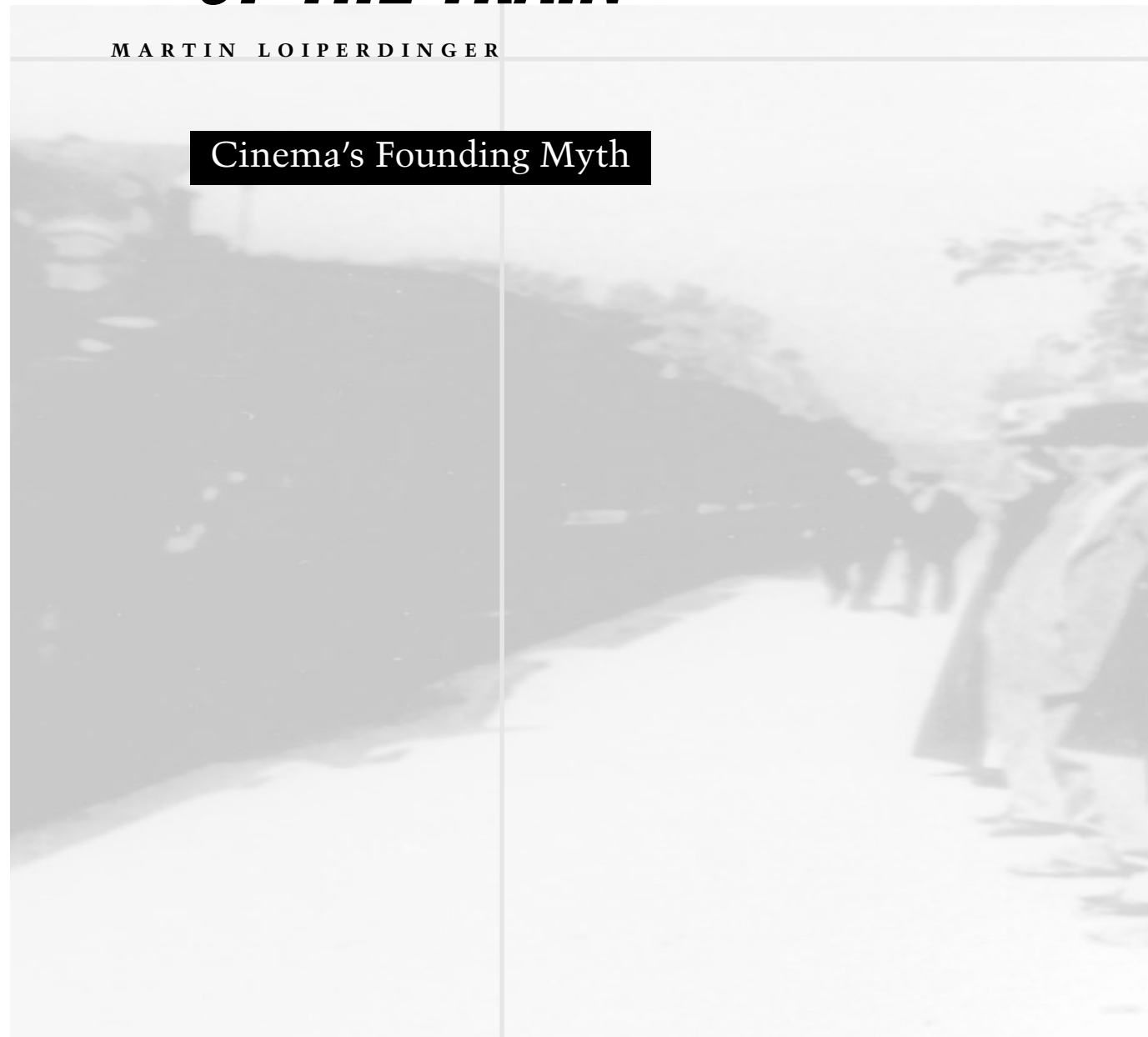# LUMIÈRE'S *ARRIVAL OF THE TRAIN*

MARTIN LOIPERDINGER

Cinema's Founding Myth

Today, we cannot comprehend the terror that gripped the 1895 audience facing the Lumière brothers' arriving train — this first film with which they gave birth to documentary film.[1]

Louis Lumière's film *Arrival of the Train* shows, in only fifty seconds, an everyday occurrence, a familiar experience for spectators: a train pulls into a station, the passengers go back and forth on the platform. Despite its brevity and the banality of its subject matter, this film has attained fame, entering film history as an icon of the medium's origins. Just how important the film had become in constructing the founding myth of cinema's birth became clear during the centenary of cinema, which provided ample opportunity to recall the film. In Germany, as well as in other countries, numerous television and press reports attested to cinema's undiminished vitality, using this film as evidence: already pronounced dead several times, cinema was said to be capable of resisting even new electronic media by asserting its peculiar power to fascinate the senses and to appeal to audiences. In this context, Lumière's cinematographic locomotive and its startling effect is mentioned repeatedly as an illuminating example from the first days of cinema. Thus, Hellmuth Karasek writes in *Der Spiegel:*

> One short film had a particularly lasting impact; yes, it caused fear, terror, even panic. . . . It was the film *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de la Ciotat* (Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station). . . . Although the cinematographic train was dashing toward the crowded audience in flickering black and white (not in natural colors and natural dimensions), and although the only sound accompanying it was the monotonous clatter of the projector's sprockets engaging into the film's perforation, the spectators felt physically threatened and panicked.[2]

Even the German Railway's customer magazine picks up the gag, visually embellishing the supposedly panicky reaction: "The spectators ran out of the hall in terror because the locomotive headed right for them. They feared that it could plunge off the screen and onto them."[3] The Munich *Abendzeitung* purportedly knew that "at the time, people, appalled by *Arrival of the Train,* were said to have leaped from their chairs."[4]

These journalistic claims are of course backed up by the standard works of film history. In Gregor and Patalas we can read that "according to handed-down knowledge, the locomotive terrified the audience."[5] In connection with the menacing effect of *Nosferatu,* Lotte Eisner recalls that "the spectators in the Grand Café involuntarily threw

themselves back in their seats in fright, because Lumière's giant locomotive pulling into the station seemingly ran toward them."[6] Georges Sadoul, in his French classic of film history, writes: "In *L'Arrivée d'un train,* the locomotive, coming from the background of the screen, rushed toward the spectators, who jumped up in shock, as they feared getting run over."[7]

It is beside the point that these standard works were written thirty to forty years ago. The audience's terror in view of the arriving train is still passed on as a proven fact by film historians today. Bernard Chardère laconically notes, "The locomotive frightened the spectators."[8] In the German edition of Emmanuelle Toulet's *Birth of the Motion Picture,* one can read under the heading "Beginning with Terror": "The amazement at seeing windswept trees and stormy seas is followed by naked horror when the train approaching the station of La Ciotat appears to move toward them."[9] Noël Burch also asserts that in 1896 the spectators "jumped up from their chairs in shock."[10] Finally, Jean-Jacques Meusy simply assumes that these audience reactions are known and presents *Arrival of the Train* as the spectacular beginning of the medium's affective power: "The overwhelming realism of this film is proof of the complete identification of the spectator's gaze with the camera's point of view and prefigures all shocking sequences to come."[11]

The story of the audience's terror circulates as a generally agreed-upon rumor.[12] Mainstream film historiography has provided neither evidence nor even references to contemporary sources. Film historians repeat without examination the claim that, viewing the locomotive approaching the camera, spectators at the time mistook the images on the screen for reality. Such a tale of more or less drastically amplified panic assumes naïve viewers who had the wool pulled over their eyes and therefore succumbed to a filmic delusion of reality.

This perception of film audiences attending the cinema's first screenings has a long tradition. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, films were being made that presented the story of the cinematographic train and its naïve spectators for the amusement of a knowing audience. In 1901, the British film pioneer Robert W. Paul shot *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures: A Farmer Viewing the Approaching Train on the Screen Takes to His Heels.* Obviously, this film idea was quite successful, since it was plagiarized several times, e.g., Edwin S. Porter's *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902). What had been a joke about country rubes soon morphed into a nostalgic recollection of the "good old days." Looking back to his start as a projectionist in spring 1896 in Berlin's first film parlor, Unter den Linden 21, director Gustav Schönwald left the following record in 1916:

The audience generally still played along then and reacted to all events in the films; they cried out when a horse reared, or fled from their seats because they thought the approaching train would run right into the hall. Well, one still had a completely naive attitude toward film at that time.[13]

Today's journalists take up the story to illustrate the affective power that cinema is principally thought to exert over its spectators. In his centenary contribution to the previously mentioned *Spiegel* issue, Hellmuth Karasek clearly articulates this idea in the context of *Arrival of the Train:*

Cinema—as its first premiere made clear—knows, thanks to the camera's power of suggestion, how to conflate the audience's fantasy with reality; the reality of fear and danger, as well as the reality of emotions. From the very beginning, film demonstrated its sweeping force, its propagandistic power.[14]

The cinema's first audiences are interpreted as being unable to distinguish between the film image and reality. *Arrival of the Train* **thus is not simply used as an icon of cinema's birth, rather this one-minute film by Louis Lumière stands as a striking example of the manipulative power allegedly inherent in cinema since its beginnings. It serves to illustrate cinema's inherent suggestive forces, elevated to a basic principle. While the fear and panic of the audience facing Lumière's locomotive is retold in the form of an anecdote, its status reaches much higher: reiterated over and over again, it figures as** *the* **founding myth of the medium, testifying to the power of film over its spectators.**

In terms of cinema *theory,* it is not hard to refute this myth. First, the historical reminiscence of audience reactions during film screenings a hundred years ago cannot claim to be evidence of the cinema's affective characteristics, as a matter of principle. Second, in terms of logic, the myth of Lumière's locomotive is subject to contradictions inherent in all theories of manipulation: the affective power ascribed to the medium is postulated to operate suggestively; that is, the medium is supposedly capable of deactivating spectator consciousness, inevitably drawing all under its spell. Miraculously, only the inventor of this theory and his/her enlightened readership are immune to this ostensibly irresistible emotional mechanism and see through it!

In terms of cinema *history,* we should separate factual truth from myth. What really were audience reactions to *Arrival of the Train?* Can contemporary sources and visual representations yield insights into the actual behavior of those spectators who viewed the arriving locomotive on the screen?

PANIC AMONG THE AUDIENCE—FACT OR LEGEND?

Let us first look at a poster from 1896, depicting the subject of our inquiry. The cinematograph's audience, represented by two ladies, view *Arrival of the Train* (Figure 1). An exposition catalog comments on this poster:

> The depicted arrival of a train suggests simultaneously the film's action, content, and seductive potential. The cataclysmic promise of the train, emerging from the depths of the screen and, unable to stop, rushing right into the audience, is compressed by Truchet [the poster artist] in the rails extending out of the screen.
>
>   The sensation that this film caused, and its yet unfamiliar illusion of reality, going beyond any previous scope, become surprisingly manifest in this extended pair of rails. As narrative thread, an energetic beam of light and the projector's ray invade the auditorium. The perceptual shock that the new medium has in store is looking for its audience.[15]
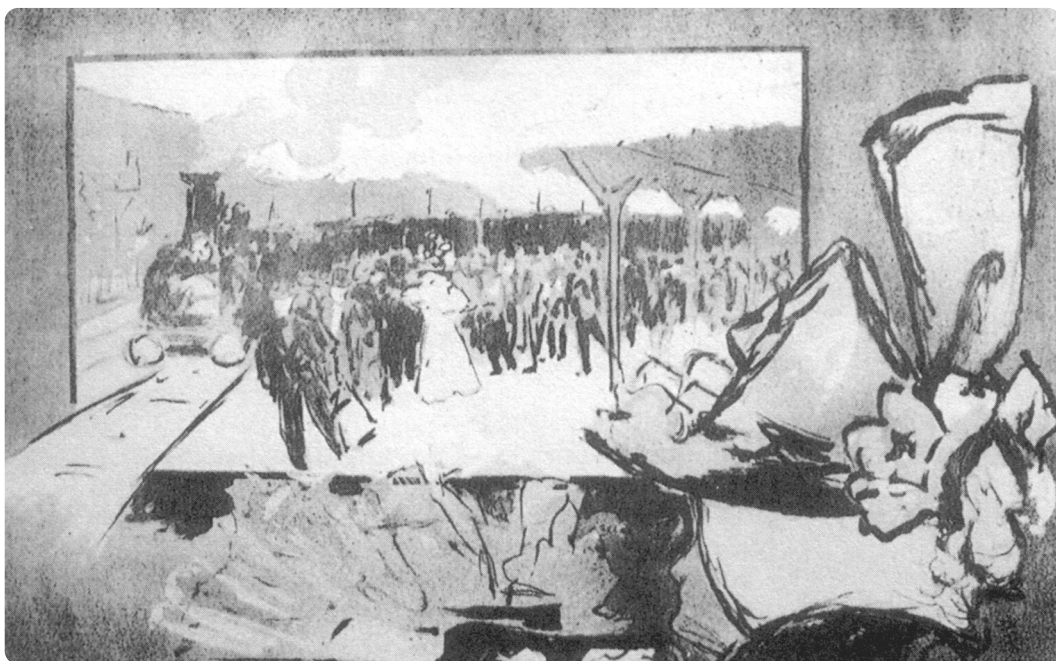

**Figure 1. Truchet's poster for
the Cinématographe Lumière**

This interpretation of the poster's scene is selectively based on the fact that the rails protrude beyond the film screen. But what about the audience? Do they leap up and look for salvation in a panicked flight? Not at all. Indeed, nothing indicates that the two ladies with their large hats are suffering a "perceptual shock." They calmly stay seated and follow with concentration the events on the brightly illuminated screen. A "cataclysmic promise" would demand of the poster's artist a wholly different representation of the two ladies. By the way, depicting a frightened reaction in the gestures of these two spectators would by no means run counter to the promotional intention of the poster.

From the image composition of the advertising poster as a whole, it becomes apparent that the image of protruding rails supports a simpler intention: it tries to visualize that the new invention, the Cinématographe Lumière, doesn't project a stationary image but displays continuous movement, unlike the well-known magic lantern. The rails protruding beyond the screen indicate that the locomotive is *in motion.* They graphically illustrate the movement of the train, nothing more, nothing less. Interpreting the image as "cataclysmic promise" can't be justified by evidence in the source alone, the advertising poster. Rather, this reading is retrospectively inferred from the audience's rumored fright and panic. The potency of the founding myth, which film historiography anecdotally links to *Arrival of the Train,* thus even colors evidence to the contrary.

However, an advertising poster, even one from 1896, only has limited explanatory power as far as the spectators' actual reactions to Lumière's locomotive are concerned. What about direct sources? Are there credible reports from eyewitnesses that document the panicked behavior of the spectators? Apparently, nothing of the sort exists. Neither do the relevant files of the Paris Police Prefect contain any records of such incidents,[16] nor is there in the abundant literature on the Grand Café screenings a single reference to contemporary press reports from which a panic could be inferred, nor can anything be found on the topic in the published letters of Auguste and Louis Lumière.[17]

Asked the other way around, should we expect to find contemporary reports by policemen and journalists, if we assume there had in fact been a panic at the front entrance of the Grand Café's Salon Indien, which had direct access to the Boulevard des Capucines? The answer is clearly "yes" because, given the crowded room and documented rush, an outbreak of panic would inevitably have led to injuries. A prominent eyewitness to cinematograph shows in the basement of the Salon Indien is the Cologne chocolate manufacturer, Ludwig Stollwerck, who visited Paris in late March 1896 in order to acquire the general license of the Cinématographe Lumière for the German Reich. Later Stollwerck reported to a business partner in New York:

Mr. Lumière has rented an underground billiard hall at the Grand Café in Paris, to which one needs to descend some rather steep and unpleasant stairs. It is a room of about 12 x 8 meters [about 39 by 26 feet]; every fifteen minutes, ten different views, each of them lasting 50 to 60 seconds, are projected to a wall, which is 280 cm wide and 2 meters high [about 9 by 7 feet]. He demands a one-franc entry fee. There are 180 seats and standing room for maybe 30 to 40. The hall is filled almost the whole day. In the beginning, he earned 600 francs a day in revenue, then he increased it to 800 and 1,000 francs, and when I was in Paris three weeks ago, he earned 2,500 to 3,000 francs every day. Now, with the nicer weather and heavy tourism, the daily revenue even amounts to 4,000 francs.[18]

Stollwerck's data confirms the oft-cited memories of photographer Clément Maurice, which he communicated almost thirty years later.[19] Maurice had been put in charge of the film screenings in the Grand Café by Antoine Lumière, the father of brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière. Reportedly, only a couple of weeks after the December 28 premiere, he had to hire security guards to prevent crowds from jostling at the front door of the Salon Indien. Thus, one would have to imagine the situation more or less as it is painted on the well-known first advertising poster for the Cinématographe Lumière, designed by Brispot: the audience of the projection that has just ended swells out of the door, while, in front of it, the closely crowded spectators of the upcoming screening are already waiting; a gentleman has his top hat knocked off his head; those pushing from behind, headed by a priest, are rebuffed by a security guard; in the background, two policemen are watching the scene.[20]

Apparently, the poster's advertising image was indeed taken from reality: The screenings in the Grand Café began every half hour. The projections took twenty to twenty-five minutes. During the remaining five to ten minutes, the audience turned over. The spectators of the completed show had to leave the hall rapidly, while those waiting at the entrance had to take their seats quickly. Conservatively, we can assume an average of one hundred spectators per screening. As a result, at least two hundred people forced themselves in a jostling crowd through the entrance of the Salon Indien every half hour. During the projections, meanwhile, a line was forming outside, ready to plunge. Under these conditions, an outbreak of panic in the hall would inevitably have led to injuries, all the more so because the exit to the sidewalk of the Boulevard des Capucines led up "some rather steep and unpleasant stairs," as Stollwerck reports. Given these circumstances and the inevitable half-hour rush, it is extremely unlikely that a panic among spectators would not have left traces in police and press reports.

The screening situation itself also mitigates against any outbreak of panic in the Salon Indien, since film projections with the Cinématographe Lumière can be most closely compared to a screening of Super 8 home movies. While Lumière films are today almost exclusively shown by film museums and cinematheques under excellent technical projection conditions, flicker-free and on a large screen, historic screenings of the Cinématographe Lumière in the Grand Café were a far cry from these standards. Indeed, the author's own experiences, performing film projections with an original Cinématographe Lumière apparatus, confirm respective accounts in the contemporary press. First, the most favorable distance between projector and screen is only sixteen feet. At this distance, the projected image is about eight feet wide and five feet high. The light intensity of the arc lamp does not suffice to illuminate a large screen. Thus, the Cinématographe is not actually suitable for large halls, rather its construction is designed as an *appareil de salon,* i.e., for amateur needs.[21]

The projected image flickers heavily because the shutter of the Cinématographe functions to interrupt the projection beam during film transport. While the projection speed of 16 to 20 fps allows the illusion of continuous movement, since human perception fuses single-phase images at this frequency, the unpleasant flicker effect is eliminated only at a frequency of at least 48 fps, unless a three-bladed shutter is attached. The Cinématographe Lumière was equipped with a two-bladed shutter.[22] Moreover, one needs to consider that, during the projection in the Grand Café, the rattling apparatus was placed right behind the audience, not in a separate projection cabin. With regard to the alleged effect of an illusion of reality, one must finally take into account that the films lasted only fifty seconds, that they had no sound of their own, and that the recorded subjects were represented in black-and-white.

Taking all of these bits of evidence together, it seems unlikely that the screening of *Arrival of the Train* caused a panic in the audience:

The moving images projected onto the screen with the Cinématographe Lumière could hardly be mistaken for reality. Contemporary reports of panic reactions among the audience cannot be found. The repeatedly reiterated anecdote that the contemporary audience felt physically threatened and therefore panicked must be relegated to the realm of film historical fantasy. The myth's dissemination thus serves to ascribe manipulative power to the film medium and thereby fulfills a need that seems to be widespread among film journalists and even film historians. A historically untenable claim, a panic *legend,* became the founding myth of the medium.

FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE OF FAMILIAR REALITY

Now, if a panic is not verifiable, was there not at least a momentary fright, an anxious amazement, a perceptual irritation of whatever kind when first viewing Lumière's locomotive? After all, it was the *first time* that a contemporary audience saw the familiar everyday world on the platform, represented as a continuously moving photographic reproduction, as "living photographs in natural size and motion," as they were advertised by the daily newspapers of the time. To obtain information about the first spectators' screening experiences, we must turn to direct primary sources. The most fruitful of these are the contemporary reports handed down by journalists and scholars describing their first encounter with the Cinématographe Lumière.

Before projecting a film with the Cinématographe Lumière, the framing had to be adjusted and the film locked into place after it had been inserted, during which one saw a still image, i.e., one projected frame, similar to a slide show. As soon as the framing was correct, the projectionist started cranking, setting the image on screen in motion. Many commentators described this transition from a still to a continuously moving image as a surprising, even thrilling, perceptual experience. The exact reproduction of the movement of smoke and other banal, yet fleeting appearances, had a particularly stunning impact. Journalists clad their enthusiasm in a formula that soon became an advertising slogan: "La vie prise sur le vif" (Life caught in the act). Typical of this perception is the summary that concludes a popular scientific article on the Cinématographe Lumière's penultimate chronophotography in *L'Illustration,* then undisputedly the leading magazine of Paris. The author, Félix Regnault, a physicist and astronomer at the Collège de France, also takes the opportunity to describe his perceptual experience of the cinematographic locomotive:

> We repeat what has often been said about the nature and life of the scenes that Lumière presents us: In the game of piquet, where one of the players is smoking, one can see the smoke escape and ascend in real motion. The beer foams that the waiter at the coffee-house pours, and the glasses are emptied when the men drink. The locomotive appears small at first, then immense, as if it were going to crush the audience; one has the impression of depth and relief, even though it is a single image that unfolds before our eyes. During the bath in the sea, the waves spume and form ridges, children dive in and swim: you'd think you were there.[23]

Regnault praises the Cinématographe Lumière for the astounding illusion of reality that this device achieves. In no way, however, does he raise the impression that the

photographic reproduction on the screen could be confused with the reality being represented. On the contrary, objectionable deficiencies of the projection are criticized at length:

> Have we reached perfection? Far from it. The enlarged film material shows its flaws; every now and then, the glaring spots shock the eye. The isochronism is not yet perfected, certain scenes jitter, some scenes are brusquely cut off. To achieve a good result, the scene should represent gestures slowly; hasty movements do not leave a satisfying impression. The film material is hardly longer than 13 meters [43 feet]; the spectacle ends at the most beautiful moment.[24]

Despite these limitations, however, Regnault explicitly suggests that the cinematic locomotive underwent a sudden metamorphosis as it rushed toward the audience. It is very obvious that we are dealing here with a primal text of the panic legend. It is therefore of crucial importance *how* the author introduces the spectators' quid pro quo confusion, which later evolved into the founding myth. Regnault's concern is clearly evident. He wants to convey by means of language his perceptual experience of *Arrival of the Train* to the millions of readers of *L'Illustration*. This experience is characterized by an "impression of depth and relief," a kind of 3-D effect, even though the image projected by the Cinématographe Lumière is a two-dimensional, flat image. In order to express his experience of the surprising spatial effect of the film image, Regnault resorts to a comparison with the fantasy: "The locomotive appears small at first, then immense, as if it were going to crush the audience."

Ottomar Volkmer, president of the Vienna Photographic Society, describes the impact of *Arrival of the Train* very similarly:

> A train station; from afar one can see the tiny locomotive of an express train approaching at full speed. It gets bigger and bigger, the chimney smoking, the only thing missing is the puffing and the rumble of the wheels. At last the train arrives, the locomotive appears tremendous; it seems as if it were going to run into the spectators. Then, all of a sudden, it vanishes to the left edge of the brightly illuminated screen, one can see the cars, the train stops; the conductors get off, the passengers step out on the platform to get on the train.[25]

Simply replace the description of the illusion with grammatical indicatives, and there it is, the panic legend. Apparently, its beginnings originate in hypothetical "it seems

as if" accounts that attempt to give readers an understanding of the film image's projected spatial effect in *Arrival of the Train*. At this early date, then, inventive exhibitors used the notion of the locomotive running into the auditorium strictly for exploitation purposes. Before projection started, spectators were "reassured" that the showing was not at all dangerous. In a New York publicity stunt, for example, paramedics with a stretcher were positioned at the entrance of the screening hall, so as to be able to immediately provide "first aid" to the more sensitive minds.[26] Because of an emerging ideological need to discover the dangers of manipulation in the sensuality of a visual medium, this fantasy, which originally served as a stylistic device, a figurative trope describing the perceptual experience of *Arrival of the Train,* eventually mutated into a factual statement about audience behavior.

The quoted texts are at the origin of the panic legend. This legend can at the very least be rebutted by a close philological reading of its sources. At the same time, however, these texts also reveal a grain of truth in the legend. Through their drastically graphic comparisons, they indicate that the perceptual experiences of contemporary audiences were clearly different from the reception of photographic realism, a characteristic of the perception of documentary films later. In 1896, we are dealing with spectators that have not yet developed viewing habits for moving images. It is the first time that they experience continuously moving projected photographic images, which surprise and bewilder them. In early July 1896, the young Russian journalist, Maxim Gorky, who later achieved world fame as a narrator and dramatist, deals with his first impressions of "living photographs" in two feature articles and a literary sketch.[27] He begins the depiction of his perceptual experience with the confession: "I was at Aumont's and saw Lumière's cinematograph—moving photography. The extraordinary impression it creates is so unique and complex that I doubt my ability to describe it with all its nuances."[28]

For his readers, Gorky painted the cinematographic locomotive as a physical threat. He has been unjustly deemed an early propagator of the panic legend, but Gorky immediately thwarts his fantasy of destruction. Rendered completely, the relevant passage in Gorky's feature article reads:

> A train appears on the screen. It speeds right at you—watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones, and crushing into dust and into broken fragments this hall and this building, so full of women, wine, music and vice.
>
> But this, too, is but a train of shadows.

Noiselessly, the locomotive disappears beyond the edge of the screen. The train comes to a stop, and gray figures silently emerge from the cars, soundlessly greet their friends, laugh, walk, run, bustle, and . . . are gone.[29]

Gorky reports on the Cinématographe Lumière shows at Charles Aumont's Théâtre Concert Parisien on the occasion of the All-Russian Exposition at the Nizhniy Novgorod Fair. The soundless grayness of life on the screen appears ghostly to him. The shadowy images of the Cinématographe Lumière flitting over the screen depress him. Addressing the readers of the newspaper, he writes: "This mute, grey life finally begins to disturb and depress you. It seems as though it carries a warning, fraught with a vague but sinister meaning that makes your heart grow faint."[30] In his second feature article, Gorky expresses himself similarly: "It is terrifying to see this gray movement of gray shadows, noiseless and silent. May not this already be an intimation of life in the future? Say what you will, but this is a strain on the nerves."[31]

In this somber mood, Gorky envisions a railroad disaster in the auditorium, as if imagining a retribution on the decadent guests of Aumont's establishment. Unlike his French colleagues, Gorky in no way celebrates the "perfect" reproduction of life on the screen; he misses color and sound too much. In his reflections on the Cinématographe Lumière, he focuses on the film images' loss of reality, which he feels is depressing. Gorky's text does not allow for the confusion of reality with its cinematographic shadow, rather his imagination of the deathly locomotive starts with the depressing difference between image and reality.

The loss of color and sound need not reduce the realistic impression of film images, and it can increase it. Very similar to Gorky, the author of the first English film review shows himself unimpressed by the silent shadows. Signing as O. Winter, he writes under the headline "Ain't It Lifelike!":

The pictures are different, but their impact is always the same: It is the frightening impact of life — but of a very different life. This life is deprived of sound and colors. Although you can notice the sunlight, the image is dominated by a drab and unfathomable gray. And although the waves, as one may assume, crash against the coast, they do so in a silence that makes you shiver all the more.[32]

Gorky explicitly speaks of "strange, fantastic impressions" created by the cinematograph.[33] Like Winter, he experiences the cinematic image's loss of reality as super-

natural. Other observers, like Regnault and Volkmer who, unlike Gorky and his English colleague, show themselves surprised by the "depth and relief" of the approaching locomotive, also experience the film projection's verisimilitude as supernatural. Thus, differently accentuated perceptual experiences meet in the reception of Lumière's locomotive: in one way or another *Arrival of the Train* leaves contemporary commentators with an impression of *hyperrealism*. In her contribution to the centennial of cinema, Susan Sontag calls this *perceptual pattern* a "fantastic experience":

> For those first audiences, the very transcription of the most banal reality — the Lumiere brothers filming *Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station* — was a fantastic experience. Cinema began in wonder, the wonder that reality can be transcribed with such immediacy.[34]

It must have been this "fantastic experience" of everyday reality that drove hundreds of thousands of Parisian citizens to the "living photographs" in the basement of the Grand Café. During the belle epoque, arts of illusion of all kinds were in vogue: not only painting and photography, but also lifelike figures in the wax museum; the dissolves, fades, and other special effects of the magic lantern; the moving dioramas of historic battles, landscapes, and city views; and, last but not least, the elaborately manufactured panoramas, those huge circular paintings that achieved the illusion of three-dimensional space through perspective drawing and indirect lighting. Spatial depth could also be experienced with the widespread stereoscopic slides, which audiences viewed in automatically operated peep shows, the so-called *Kaiserpanorama*.

The curiosity of seeing familiar and well-known scenes through a new technological invention in an unfamiliar way and to experience them differently appears to be the central motive for visiting the Cinématographe Lumière in the spring and summer of 1896.

Fifty years later, the French philosopher Edgar Morin speaks of the "charm of the cinematographic image" and remarks with regard to audience motives:

> What attracted the first crowds was not the change of shift in front of the factory, not the arrival of the train at the station (to see this, it would have sufficed to go to the station or the factory), but an image of the train, an image of the factory gate. It was not because of the real, but because of the image of the real that people crowded before the doors of the Salon Indien.[35]

Paradoxical as it may appear today, the audience's interest in the projected *documentary* images of the Cinématographe Lumière was of a primarily *fantastic* nature.

Spectators did not want to see reality on the screen, but rather images of reality, which were different from reality.

What was offered in the basement of the Grand Café were "living photographs," in "natural size and motion." Soon, oral reports of the Cinématographe Lumière shows circulated the Paris boulevards. From the outset, the organizers dispensed with newspaper ads and relied on word-of-mouth publicity. Their success proved them right. The circles of the well-to-do flaneurs in the cafés apparently valued the projections of the novel apparatus in the Grand Café as a sensation that one had to have seen in order to participate in boulevard chat.

Yet, the *fantastic reception of the documentary image* not only was the result of the sensational needs of Parisian boulevard culture, but also had its basis in the characteristics and perception of film images themselves.

PROPORTIONS AND DEEP FOCUS

Let us now turn to the film *Arrival of the Train* itself. As a preliminary remark, it should be noted that the cinematographic locomotive of which Regnault, Volkmer, and Gorky speak cannot be assigned to a particular film title. This is because we have no clear evidence of which *Arrival of the Train* was shown in Paris, Vienna, and Nizhniy Novgorod. Up to now, we have deliberately used the vague English title *Arrival of the Train* to refer to a *type of film* showing what the title says. During the earliest years of cinema, many films of this type were made. In reference to Lumière's film production, three different titles found in the company's film catalog possibly match the above-mentioned screening reports, notwithstanding the films not listed in the catalog:

No. 8:   *L'arrivée d'un train en gare* (de Villesfranche-sur Saône)

No. 127: *Lyon, l'arrivée du train à perrache*

No. 653: *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat*

Neither at the presentations of the Cinématographe Lumière in professional circles between March and November 1895, nor at the first commercial screening on December 28, 1895, was a film with a title similar to *Arrival of the Train* shown. The first mention of such a film, in the *Lyon républicain,* dates from January 26, 1896, and names

L'arrivée d'un train en gare d'un chemin de fer. The catalog does not contain a film of this title. It could be no. 127, no. 8, or an unlisted title.

To complicate matters, three versions of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* are known to have existed: Louis Lumière shot the first probably during his stay in La Ciotat between January 16 and February 3, 1896. Frame enlargements from this version illustrate a scholarly article about the Cinématographe Lumière that appeared on March 13, 1896. The framing and the locomotive's direction of motion are the same as in the third version.[36] Of the second version, which was obviously shot in winter, no particulars can be determined. The third version is the famous and universally known *Arrival of the Train,* distributed in numerous prints and shown as a reference whenever Lumière's cinematographic locomotive is mentioned. Not until the summer of 1897, however, did Louis Lumière shoot this version. The title *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* appears for the first time in the program announcements of the *Lyon républicain* on October 10, 1897. It is this version that we are now going to deal with in detail.

Of all the films showing the *Arrival of the Train* that are listed in the Lumière company catalog and that have been preserved, no. 653, *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat,* offers the most effective vanishing point for the arriving locomotive, its diagonal rails disappearing exactly in the lower left corner of the frame. From frame right the train comes diagonally toward the camera, passes it, and continues toward the left front. The visual reproduction of the locomotive's motion is paradoxical, a fact we easily miss because we are accustomed to dealing with moving images on a daily basis via film, television, and computers. Every object is reduced in size by the square of its actual distance from the camera's lens and, conversely, increases in size in proportion to the square of its distance to the lens. Objects filmed close up appear larger; those filmed from afar seem smaller than we are used to from human spatial perception. On the subject of cinematographic locomotives, Rudolf Arnheim writes:

> Everybody has seen a railway engine rushing on the scene in a film. It seems to be coming straight at the audience. The effect is most vivid because the dynamic power of the forward-rushing movement is enhanced by another source of dynamics that has no inherent connection with the object itself, that is, with the locomotive, but depends on the position of the spectator, or—in other words— of the camera. The nearer the engine comes the larger it appears, the dark mass on the screen spreads in every direction at a tremendous pace (a dynamic dilation toward the margins of the screen), and the actual objective movement of the engine is strengthened by this dilation.[37]

This cinematic effect makes the approaching and seemingly rapidly growing locomotive on the screen appear to be accelerating while, in reality, the locomotive arriving at the station is slowing down. For spectators who do not yet know the distortion of proportions on the screen, this can result in an irritating perceptual experience.

Contrary to their expectation that the arriving locomotive will reduce its speed, it seems to increase it. That the two-dimensional locomotive has such a plastic, three-dimensional effect on contemporary commentators can be explained by the on-screen loss of the familiar constancy of size.

However, the reputed cries of fear among the audience can hardly be attributed to a confusion of reality and projected image. According to Tom Gunning's assessment, the film experience of arriving trains can rather be compared to the experience of a roller coaster ride:

> The on-rushing train did not simply produce the negative experience of fear but the particularly modern entertainment form of the thrill, embodied elsewhere in the recently appearing attractions of the amusement parks (such as the roller coaster), which combined sensations of acceleration and falling with a security guaranteed by modern industrial technology.[38]

Yet, the onrushing locomotive is only seen at the beginning of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat*. In the mythical transfiguration of this short film through film history, the spectacular first seconds have pushed any analysis of subsequent scenes into the background, even though, quantitatively, these constitute the body of the film. The image of passengers moving back and forth on the platform have not received nearly as much attention as the train's arrival has, due to the panic legend.

While the cars of the train are gradually coming to a halt, the people waiting on the platform start moving in the direction of the train's motion and come toward Louis Lumière, who is turning the crank of the Cinématographe (Figure 2). The car doors fly open and passengers disembark the train, while those who have been waiting for its arrival are now running back and forth to welcome arriving passengers or to find a vacant compartment and board the train (Figure 3). From the left, two passengers who have just gotten off the train step in front of the camera and briefly obscure the view, further increasing the scene's complexity. Suddenly, the film ends in the middle of the scene: the capacity of the Cinématographe Lumière is exhausted after fifty-six feet of film stock in the cassette are cranked through.

Figure 2. Frame enlargement from *Arrival of the Train* (1897). At left, little Marlene Koehler looking at uncle, Louis Lumière, who is cranking camera; at right, Louis's mother, Joséphine Lumière, in tartan pelerine.

As soon as the train stops, two different crowds mingle on the platform: those waiting and those arriving crisscross before the camera lens, which remains static. The impression of hyperrealism is increased because of the image's deep focus. Again, we note a difference to habitual human perception: while our eyes continually adjust focus on objects at different distances, the Cinématographe Lumière Zeiss lens keeps everything before it from three feet to infinity in focus. Along the diagonal axis of the rails, the viewer perceives the long, extended spatiality of the platform at one glance. From the extreme foreground to the background, everything is equally in focus, a cinematic effect that cannot be achieved by the naked eye. The fixed frame and the deep focus make the back-and-forth on the platform appear even more complex than it actually is. The audience in the darkened projection room lacks the familiar spatial orientation in reality that is achieved by constantly refocusing the eyes, by changing visual fields through head movement, and, let's not forget, by hearing. Thus, it is not only the distorted proportions of the train's arrival that offer contemporary audiences unfamiliar perceptual experiences.

In retrospect, the above-mentioned characteristics of cinematic reproduction, which are particularly prominent in *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat,* are celebrated as an

Figure 3. Frame enlargement from *Arrival of the Train* (1897). Women of Lumière household, acting with backs to camera; at right, in tartan pelerine, Louis Lumière's mother.

anticipation of later film aesthetic concepts. The Lumière connoisseur Vincent Pinel names three aesthetic characteristics that make this film by Louis Lumière a cinema classic:

> This short film of only 50 seconds unites with disarming effectiveness three achievements of modern cinema: the "realism" of deep focus, the dramatic impact of the sequential shot *[plan-séquence]* with a fixed camera, and the random principle of *Direct Cinema*.[39]

In making this assessment, Pinel can draw on prominent advocates of concepts of realism in film theory without explicitly naming them. Thus, Georges Sadoul remarks, "Louis Lumière deserves the credit for intuitively recognizing, in *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat,* the full dramatic impact of deep focus" and, in this regard, places the French pioneer's one-shot film close to Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*.[40] And, entirely in accordance with his theory of film as "redemption of physical reality," Siegfried Kracauer remarks on Louis Lumière's first films:

Their themes were public places, with throngs of people moving in diverse direc-
tions. . . . It was life at its least controllable and most unconscious moments, a
jumble of transient, forever dissolving patterns accessible only to the camera.
The much-imitated shot of the railway station, with its emphasis on the confusion
of arrival and departure, effectively illustrated the fortuity of these patterns.[41]

As Kracauer indicates, this impression owes to the peculiarities of the film cam-
era's reproduction, as they are brought to bear in a particularly striking way by means of
altered proportions and continuous deep focus. Even if the "jumble" on the platform
may point to a randomness in the film's *effect,* as Kracauer writes, a question nonetheless
remains with regard to the process of production: Is the "jumble" a function of random-
ness, or does it only signify it? Is the back-and-forth on the platform to be understood as
randomness, even though it possibly did not come about by chance? In other words, is
the platform in La Ciotat really ruled by serendipity or not?

STAGING THE DOCUMENTARY

It goes without saying that Louis Lumière staged the scene *in* camera, as all cameramen
and women do during filming. He or she sets the camera position, camera angle, and
framing, and determines the time of the recording. As a trained photographer, Lumière
carefully reflected on the parameters of film exposure open to him. The rails open diag-
onally toward the front left, so that the foremost track exactly cuts the lower left corner
of the frame; in the top left, the canopy of the opposite station building runs parallel to
the rails, as does the line of passengers waiting on the platform on the right edge of the
frame (Figure 4). Thus, graphically, a strand of diagonal lines is laid out that converge on
one point in the image's right background.

Is it possible to determine from the behavior of the people whether the film pio-
neer Lumière influenced the events on the platform? Besides the inevitable staging *in* the
camera, are we also dealing here with a staging *before* the camera? Right in the beginning
of the film, one is baffled by an exact timing that could only owe to an extremely fortunate
coincidence—if we assume that there was no deliberate staging. Partly cut off by the
right edge of the frame, a porter pulls his empty baggage cart toward the right and out of
the frame; he reveals the full view of the platform just in the moment when, in the back
right, the locomotive of the arriving train becomes discernible in the vanishing point of
the converging diagonals.[42]

Figure 4. Frame enlargement from *Arrival of the Train* (1897)

A clear sign indicating that we are dealing with a staging of the profilmic scene is provided by the behavior of the stationmaster. First, several women in the background with children step out of line and begin walking in the same direction as the slowly rolling train. The stationmaster has kept eye contact with this group and now promptly steps forward himself, as soon as he sees the women in motion. The remaining people follow the uniformed official. This seems obviously prearranged, although coincidence cannot be completely ruled out.

However, there is an unmistakable indication that such shots of everyday scenes were staged *for* the camera. Nobody looks directly into the camera! For spectators to accept the events projected onto the screen as an illusion of reality, their involvement must not be disrupted by visible references to the shooting situation. Thus, the audience mustn't notice anything that points to the presence of a recording apparatus, such as people looking into the camera during shooting. Persons staring at the camera destroy the illusion of reality and make the audience laugh. Cameramen generally find gapers most undesirable. During on-location shooting, however, they can be kept out of the film only with difficulty. The novel apparatus, the handling of the crank, and the crackling noises of the Cinématographe during the shooting inevitably arouse the curiosity of

passersby who look around while walking or even stop and gape. This spontaneous be-
havior can be observed in many Lumière films of busy streets and public places. Con-
versely, the mise-en-scène of some topics, particularly parades, which were a favorite in
the first years of cinematography, can be understood in terms of the avoidance strategies
of operators seeking to minimize the presence of gapers during shooting.[43]

In *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* none of the passengers looks curiously into the
camera. This is very unusual. Considering the local circumstances, one can rule out that
Louis Lumière filmed the scene on an open platform with a hidden camera. Actually,
Louis Lumière and his Cinématographe were well-known to the local passengers cavorting
on the platform. Louis Lumière is one of the honorable citizens of La Ciotat, a small town
situated not far from Marseille on the Côte d'Azur. The Lumière family owned a country
estate here: 222 acres, including a nearly two-mile stretch of private beach and a spa-
cious, newly built stately mansion.

If the passengers in the film had not been prepared for the situation, they would
have reacted completely normally by stopping to watch Lumière and his rattling appara-
tus on the platform. Yet no one shows such a spontaneous reaction. Nobody gapes; no-
body looks curiously into the camera—though some do it furtively, like the young woman
whose eyes are covered by the shadow of her large hat; like the man with the cigarette
butt in the corner of his mouth who, getting off the train, casts a quick glance at the cam-
era only to turn away from it immediately; and like other men, who have their hats pulled
down strikingly low over their foreheads.

**In fact, the people waiting on the platform and those getting off the train are extras in
a performance staged by Louis Lumière. They have been instructed not to look into the camera
during the shooting, and they follow these instructions. The apparent naturalness of the passen-
gers who pay no attention to Louis Lumière and his Cinématographe is an artificial achievement.
The impression of documentary authenticity, which film historians emphasize with regard to this
film, is achieved by the extras strictly following Louis Lumière's direction. As in a feature film,
the passengers rushing back and forth on the platform are not really passengers but perform-
ers impersonating passengers on the platform.**

There is only one exception, a child. Taken by the hand by one of the first women
in line, she is hurriedly led past the Cinématographe. This child keeps looking into the

camera, though not in a particularly curious or even alienated manner. This child has been in front of the camera many times and knows both the apparatus and the man who is turning the crank, who is her uncle. It is two-year-old Madeleine Koehler, Louis Lumière's niece, holding the hand of one of her aunts, Rose or Marguerite Lumière, who, with her eyes downcast, hurries past the Cinématographe with the little girl (Figure 2).

Rose Lumière is Louis's spouse, Marguerite his brother Auguste's wife. The two women, both daughters of the brewery owner Winckler, are of similar build. In *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat,* they cannot be distinguished from each other because their facial features are not visible. Besides the two sisters and the two nannies, there are other members of the Lumière family taking part as extras: three-year-old Suzanne Lumière, Louis and Rose's daughter, and five-year-old Marcel Koehler, Madeleine's brother, both children of "Aunt Jeanne," Louis and Auguste's sister; finally, Joséphine Lumière, the mother of Louis, Auguste, and Jeanne, easily recognizable by her tartan pelerine.[44]

In view of the participation of so many family members, should not *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* be regarded an amateur film? The film's title indicates that the shooting took place not far from the Lumière family's country estate. Also, it has been known for a long time that Louis Lumière's daughter Suzanne, as well as his mother, appeared in this film. The pioneer himself communicated this information in his final interview, explicitly mentioning his mother's tartan pelerine.[45]

L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat has never been examined as an amateur film, possibly because it doesn't have the typical characteristics of that form. Events don't take place in a private space, but rather in public; numerous people participate, while family members are not recognizable by gesture or other identification. Consequently, *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* has been categorized as belonging to the typical Lumière subgenre of *actualités,* views of busy streets and public places. Film history has overlooked the fact that the profilmic scene is staged. Kracauer mistakenly cites *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* as a prime example of his film theory of the "redemption of physical reality," according to which the film camera is said to be predestined to capture "life at its least controllable and most unconscious moments" and to reproduce it.[46] The back-and-forth on the platform during the production of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* is not due to chance. The production of this film was carefully planned, the action to be filmed consciously arranged and set up.

How was Louis Lumière able to stage successfully the profilmic scene *in front of* the camera, so that it was readily received as unstaged randomness because its impression was so authentic? Why doesn't this scene come across as contrived, since most of the participating performers were used to acting in front of a camera? Did Louis Lumière

really want to present the audience with the anonymity of a crowd getting on and off a train? Why then did he mobilize his spouse, his sister-in-law, his mother, three little children, and two nannies as participants and place them on the platform?

"FAILED AMATEUR FILM" OR "SUCCESSFUL ILLUSION"?

What did Louis Lumière really want to stage on the platform of La Ciotat, and did the mise-en-scène turn out the way he intended it to? As no statements by Lumière himself or participants survive, we must content ourselves with the sequence of events in the film itself. Let us try to follow precisely in the thirty-five seconds after the arrival of the train the behavior of five women from the Lumière household. Their behavior can be divided into two phases. Without question, phase one takes place within the context of a prearranged staging. So as to avoid looking into the camera, the women ignore Lumière behind the Cinématographe, the son, spouse, brother-in-law, and *patron,* respectively. The women walk with the children toward the camera in the same direction as the slowly rolling train, past it, and out of frame. It is not apparent from their behavior whether they want to get on the train themselves, or if they are waiting for passengers getting off. Except for Joséphine, Louis Lumière's mother, everybody is in a hurry: they know that the scene in which they appear must be captured on fifty-six feet of film in fifty seconds.

Phase two doesn't necessarily follow a prearranged staging. Off-screen, either beside or behind the cranking Louis Lumière, the women turn around, wait six to eight seconds, then run hectically into the frame, approach the train, and open the doors of two compartments. Except for one nanny, they then all go a little to the back without doing anything, apparently looking for passengers whom they expected to be on the train; the film ends.

The danger of looking into the camera does not exist in phase two, because the women predominantly act with their backs to the camera. They don't move toward the camera, but away from it, and therefore are not obliged to mind the presence of the Cinématographe. The behavior of the women of the Lumière households in phase two thus allows for two very different interpretations. The first interpretation is that we are dealing here with a mishap, deviating from the originally planned staging. In this scenario the women open the compartment doors because they are actually looking for passengers, but the arrivals can't be found in the compartments from which they were expected to emerge. The women then irresolutely turn toward the back of the train and continue looking. This interpretation takes the women's behavior at face value and presumes that Louis Lumière's "script" had envisioned for this scene the arrival of passengers who were

to be welcomed by the women and children of the family. The intended course of action is taken for granted as a self-contained scenario: arrival of the train, exit of passengers, welcoming scene. This would correspond to an amateur film with a title such as "The Arrival of the Holiday Guests." Thus, following Louis Lumière's direction, the women are waiting behind the camera to let the arriving holiday guests get off the train and then to run back into the picture and welcome them in front of the camera. A woman and two children, who meanwhile get out of the compartment, cannot be the awaited guests, since she and her children are ignored.

Whose arrival do the women and children of the Lumière family expect at La Ciotat station? Maybe the two children André and Henri with their father Auguste Lumière? Or perhaps with their grandfather, Antoine Lumière? Or is it Jeanne Koehler, Marcel and Madeleine's mother, who is to be welcomed? Have the travelers been sitting further back in the train, in the wrong compartment, or are they not on the train at all?

We may never know. The end of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* is open. This first interpretation assumes that, through a mishap, the originally intended self-contained "Arrival of the Holiday Guests" became *The Arrival of the Train.* This topic appears very "modern," with attention initially shifted to the arrival of the locomotive. Likewise, the ambiguous ending reinforces the absence of an event in-between, and, due possibly to an accidental mishap, has a documentary character. Within this logic, the women's behavior at film's end is not staged, since they are indeed looking for somebody whom they cannot find, hoping to welcome someone who hasn't arrived. But is this what they want to do? Are they really looking for someone when they open the compartment doors? Or are they simply pretending to look for someone?

The second interpretation of this scene assumes that the back-and-forth on the platform is, from start to finish, a performance staged by Louis Lumière. According to this scenario, the women follow instructions to pretend that they are looking for passengers whom they expect on this train, providing some "action" before the Cinématographe's lens.

These two possible interpretations mutually exclude each other. Which of the two actually applies remains a secret that the film *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* does not reveal. No matter how often we watch this film, we do not learn from looking at its images whether the five women of the Lumière household are really waiting for holiday guests in order to welcome them for Louis Lumière's camera, or if they are performers impersonating five women waiting for holiday guests. They do not let on that they are amusing themselves with hoaxing future spectators. Are the Lumière brothers' spouses, together

with their mother-in-law and nannies, performing a comedy and *just pretending* to look for someone on the train, or, surprised by a mishap during the course of the staging, are they hectically trying to find the expected guests, thus "saving" the planned welcoming scene? What we see yields no clues to this question.[47]

CONCLUSION

As the first film classic, *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* takes a prominent position in film history. Paradoxically, *Arrival of the Train* has come to represent both the modernity of Louis Lumière's first documentary films, their visual power to shock audiences, and a precursor of Direct Cinema. However, neither attribute really stands up to film historical analysis.

First, no one has yet proven the existence of a panic among the audience for the cinematographic locomotive pulling into the station of La Ciotat. Persistently reiterating this panic *legend,* film history has ascribed a founding myth to the medium that categorically assigns the power to manipulate spectators to the film on screen.

Second, the retrospective assessment of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* as a precursor of direct cinema is completely misbegotten. The belated enthusiasm for the realism of "randomness" is derived from the visual surface of the film. It ignores the fact that Louis Lumière staged the profilmic event, something that direct cinema's conception of documentary film strictly rejects.

Now, whether the film has been directed to the end, i.e., whether the women of the Lumière household deceive the audience in phase two of their appearance, or whether a mishap occurred and they were actually looking for somebody in the train whom they could not find, can't be determined by just watching the film. That such a question is asked at all implies an understanding of documentary film that postulates clearly distinguishable parameters, separating staged and unstaged footage, in order to separate the authentic reproduction of reality from its staged falsification. Let us remember that it was perfectly acceptable for documentary filmmakers to stage reality *in front of* the camera, with legitimation only required in exceptional cases, when Griersonian concepts dominated nonfiction film production. Only with the emergence of direct cinema in the 1960s have much stricter criteria for evaluation been applied to documentary films.[48] Using *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat* as a paradigmatic example for present-day film theoretical musings about the medium's power to manipulate obstructs a view that would see the film for what it once was on-screen, a media event of immense historical consequence.

What is needed is a historical reconstruction of *L'arrivée du train à La Ciotat*'s reception history. The spectators' perceptual experiences and the contemporary perceptions of this film formed from these experiences are not inscribed into the film footage and cannot be deduced from the objectivity of the film images, but come about respectively through specific interactions between spectator and film.

Dealing with the panic legend, we drew on contemporary depictions that perceive the events on the screen as a form of hyperrealism. This reception pattern is fed by a wide spectrum of differently accentuated individual perceptual experiences, as seen from comparing Maxim Gorky's and Félix Regnault's articles. Apart from those described, it seems that reception patterns have been far from uniform, as demonstrated by a screening report from a Dresden journalist who effects the attitude of a flaneur during the projection of *Arrival of the Train,* simply out to catch a glimpse of intimate affection in the anonymous jumble on the platform:

> The images are of an impeccable sharpness and admirable depth. It is superfluous to highlight details. Nonetheless, we would like to dedicate a few lines to the "on-rolling railroad train." The station lies there, bleak and barren; the usual mail cart appears; the train gets bigger and bigger, clearer and clearer. The car doors fly open, the conductors hurry busily back and forth on the wooden platform, and just in the moment when a gentleman with his arms outstretched hastens to a lady who is about to exit the car, it's getting light. Too bad, we would have *liked* to see the welcoming kiss.[49]

NOTES

This is a revised and updated version of an essay first published in *KINtop,* no. 5 (1995).

Translated from German by Bernd Elzer.

1. Quote from Kunsthaus Zürich, *"100 Jahre Kinobiscum": Die 7. Kunst auf der Suche nach den 6 anderen,* exhibition brochure for visitor information, section C, "Pioniere," November 10, 1995, through February 25, 1996.
2. Hellmuth Karasek, "Lokomotive der Gefühle," *Spiegel* 52 (1994): 154.
3. Peter Gsellmann, "Wenn die Stars zum Zuge kommen," *ZUG: Für Menschen unterwegs* (Deutsche Bahn) 11 (1994): 51.

4. Angie Dullinger, "Veränderungen fangen immer wieder im Kopf an: 100 Jahre Kino: Was das Filmmuseum zum Jubiläum bietet," *Abendzeitung* (Munich), January 14–15, 1995.

5. Ulrich Gregor and Enno Patalas, *Geschichte des Films,* vol. 1, *1895–1939* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1976), 13.

6. Lotte Eisner, *Die dämonische Leinwand,* German translation from the original French (Frankfurt am Main: Kommunales Kino Frankfurt, 1975), 100–101. This passage is missing from the English translation, *The Haunted Screen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 104.

7. Georges Sadoul, *Geschichte der Filmkunst* (1956; Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982) 27. In slightly weakened form, but still clinging to the confusion of reality and film image, Sadoul expresses in his Lumière monograph "that the spectators themselves participated in the action by imagining that the locomotive of La Ciotat would run right into the 'Salon Indien'" (que les spectateurs participaient à l'action en s'imaginant que la locomotive de La Ciotat allait pénétrer dans le "Salon Indien"), Georges Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès,* ed. Bernard Eisenschitz (Paris: Lherminier, 1985), 45. Norbert Grob explicitly refers to Sadoul in *Die Formen des filmischen Blicks: Wenders: Die frühen Filme,* Edition Filme 2 (Munich: Filmland Presse, 1984), 36.

8. Bernard Chardère, caption to *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat,* in *Les images des Lumière* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), n.p.

9. Emmanuelle Toulet, *Pioniere des Kinos* (Ravensburg: Ravensburger, 1995), 17; rpt. of *Cinématographe, invention du siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988). The corresponding chapter in the English version, *Birth of the Motion Picture* (New York: Abrams, 1995), is titled "The Beginning of a New World."

10. Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 39.

11. Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Paris-Palaces ou le temps des cinémas, 1894–1918* (Paris: CNRS, 1995), 27.

12. The exception proves the rule. Three authors in particular take a critical stance toward the founding myth of the arriving train; at this point, I would like to explicitly thank them for their inspiring contributions to this topic: Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Films,* ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 114–33; Yuri Tsivian, "La réception de l'espace mobile: *Anna Karénine* et *L'arrivée du train en gare de La Ciotat,*" *Études de lettres* 2 (1993); Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception* (London: Routledge, 1994), 135–50; Stephen Bottomore, "The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect,'" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 19, no. 2 (1999): 177–216.

13. Gustav Schönwald, "Wie einst im Mai! Aus den allerersten Tagen des deutschen Kinos: Erinnerungen Eines, der dabei war," *Kinematograph* [489], May 10, 1916.

14. Karasek, "Lokomotive der Gefühle," 154.

15. Jörg Magener, *Das Filmplakat,* ed. Wolfgang Beilenhoff and Martin Heller (Zurich: Museum für Gestaltung, 1995), 9.

16. I am indebted for this information to Anne Gautier (Paris), who specially checked the relevant files of the Police Prefect (communication to the author, April 2, 1996).

17. Cf. Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet, ed., *Auguste et Louis Lumière: Correspondances, 1890–1953* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1994).

18. Ludwig Stollwerck (Cologne), letter to John Volkmann (New York), April 16, 1896, Stollwerck-Archiv, Cologne; quoted from Martin Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade: Stollwercks Geschäfte mit lebenden Bildern,* KINtop Schriften 4 (Frankfurt am Main and Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1999).

19. Maurice is quoted at length, without source references, by Jean Mitry, *Histoire du cinéma: Art et industrie,* vol. 1 [1895–1914] (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1967), 75; and Vincent Pinel, *Louis Lumière, inventeur et cinéaste* (Paris: Nathan, 1994), 59. Thanks to Anne Gautier (Paris) for pointing out the following source: Victor Perrot, *Une grande première historique* (Paris: Librairie de Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1939), 10–11. This is a letter of 1924 that Perrot requested from Maurice; for his project to affix a commemorative plaque to the house of the first commercial screening of the Cinématographe Lumière, Perrot searched for sources of the premiere in the basement of the Grand Café, but could find hardly anything (9).

20. Cf. reproductions of the poster in diverse books, e.g., in Pinel, *Louis Lumière,* 56.

21. This statement is of far-reaching significance in terms of both film history and film theory. See Deac Rossell, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 150–51; see also Rossell, "Die soziale Konstruktion früher technischer Systeme der Filmprojektion," *KINtop* 8 *(Film und Projektionskunst)* (1999): 53–81.

22. On the flicker and its consequences, cf. Jean Châteauvert, "Das Kino im Stimmbruch," *KINtop* 5 *(Aufführungsgeschichten)* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1996).

23. Félix Regnault, *L'Illustration* (Paris) [2779], May 30, 1896; qtd. in Martina Müller, *Cinématographe Lumière 1895/96* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1995), 38.

24. Ibid.

25. Ottomar Volkmer, *Der Kinematograph oder die lebende Photographie,* offprint from *Herbstblüten* (Jahrbuch des Pensions-Unterstützungsvereines der Mitglieder der k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei und der kais, Wiener Zeitung) 11 (Vienna, 1897), 25.

26. See Bottomore's references in his insightful article, "The Panicking Audience?"

27. Cf. the translation of all three Maxim Gorky articles from Russian into German: "Maksim Gor'kij über den Cinématographe Lumière (1896): Drei Texte mit einer Vorbemerkung von Jörg Bochow," *KINtop* 4 *(Anfänge des dokumentarischen Films)* (1995): 11–25.

28. I. M. Pacatus (i.e., Maxim Gorky) on the cinematograph, in *Nizhegorodski listok* [Nizhniy Novgorod] [182], July 4, 1896; quoted in Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (London, Boston, Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 407.

29. Ibid., 408.

30. Ibid.

31. A. P(esko)v (i.e., Maxim Gorky) on the cinematograph, in *Odesskie Novosti* (Odessa) [3681] July 6, 1896, 2; translated into English in *New Theatre and Film,* March 1937; quoted in *New Theatre and Film, 1934 to 1937: An Anthology,* ed. Herbert Kline (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 229.

32. O. Winter, "Ain't It Lifelike!" introd. Stephen Bottomore, *Sight and Sound* 51, no. 4 (1982): 294–96; rpt. of *New Review,* May 1896; so far it has not been possible to identify O. Winter (communication from Stephen Bottomore to the author, April 2, 1996).

33. P(esko)v, quoted in *New Theatre and Film, 1934 to 1937,* ed. Kline, 229.

34. Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times Magazine,* February 25, 1996, 60–61.

35. Edgar Morin, *Le cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire: Essai d'anthropologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1956), 23.

36. See "Le cinématographe," *Science française* (Paris) 6, no. 59 (March 13, 1896): 89; for this reference and all further information in this paragraph, I am indebted to Anne Gautier and Jean-Marc Lamotte, Paris.

37. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 60–61; originally published as *Film als Kunst* (1932; repr., Munich: Hanser, 1974), 84–85. Arheim's elaborations on size constancy can be found on pp. 24–29.

38. Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 122.

39. Pinel, *Louis Lumière,* 46.

40. Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès,* 44. There one can also find Sadoul's explanation of the idea to grant *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* the status of a *plan-séquence* (sequence shot), which we cannot discuss in more detail here.

41. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 31. New edition with a new introduction by Miriam Bratu Hansen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

42. All descriptive information is based on a print of *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* of 804 frames held at the Munich film museum. We would like to thank the Association Frères Lumière for their permission to reproduce the frame enlargements made from this print in the present article.

43. On the first cameramen's quarrels with gapers, see Livio Belloï, "Lumière und der Augen-Blick," *KINtop* 4 (1995): 27–49.

44. For the identification of the participating family members, I am indebted to Anne Gautier and Jean-Marc Lamotte, Paris.

45. Louis Lumière in his final interview with Georges Sadoul, February 6, 1948, printed in Georges Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès,* 94.

46. Kracauer, *Theory of Film,* 31.

47. The question could possibly be decided if we knew for what purpose Louis Lumière originally shot the film at the station of La Ciotat in the summer of 1897, after he had sold the patents for the Cinématographe Lumière to Pathé.

48. Cf. Martin Loiperdinger, "World War I Propaganda Films and the Birth of the Documentary," in *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Non-Fiction Film,* ed. Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands

Filmmuseum, 1997), 25–31. Based on "Die Erfindung des Dokumentarfilms," paper delivered at the conference "Die Botschaft der Bilder: Aspekte des dokumentarischen Stummfilms," Haus des Dokumentarfilms, Stuttgart, September 25–27, 1995.

49. "Locales und Sächsisches," *Neueste Nachrichten* (Dresden) 239 (August 29, 1896).