1. Unstable constellations: Recognizing cinema out of place

Abstract

The transition to digital has exacerbated the fragility of existing definitions of cinema. This chapter lays out the working definitions that will be used throughout the rest of the book, offering a way beyond medium specificity that still recognizes cinema as a meaningful category. Taking elements from apparatus theory, in a materialist rather than metaphysical sense, the chapter describes cinema as a contingent alignment of space and practice, both a physical configuration and a social protocol. The chapter contrasts the perspectives of several authors, including Elsaesser, Gaudreault, Friedberg, Casetti, Bellour, and Gitelman, to arrive at ten elements that can be assembled flexibly into something recognizable as cinema. This lays the groundwork for the empirical case studies in the chapters that follow.

Key words: Dispositif, apparatus theory, post-cinema, medium specificity, protocols.

I.

'Never thought I would bring sunglasses to the cinema', says someone behind me. We are in Glasgow's Winter Gardens, a large Victorian glasshouse at the back of the popular history museum. It is a Friday in the middle of May, the end of a warm week, which is always a novelty in the West of Scotland: everyone is still enchanted with the sun. But here people are impatient for it to go away, willing the Earth to turn just a bit faster. A large screen in a metal frame has been put up amongst the lush palms and trees that stand in unwitting homage to British imperialism. Beyond the glasshouse, Glasgow's oldest public space extends to the margin of the River Clyde, its bright lawns now abandoned by the couples, children and dogs who have

gone home for tea or headed to a city centre pub. Inside, the café is open and the organizers have just announced everyone can get a free beer. The film was meant to have started half an hour ago, but the sun has not set. We sit with our pints on the conference chairs arranged looking south and listen to a panel discussion with one of the actors and the creator of the soundtrack. They measure their answers to avoid spoiling the film's plot and watch the slow progression of the sun towards the horizon on our right-hand side. The projection team stand by their crates and cables, knowing that even their top-quality equipment cannot compete with the sunshine pouring in.

Eventually, the sun disappears behind the west of the city and the film starts. A dark Belgian forest is the setting for *Couple in a Hole* (Geens, 2015), and its foliage joins our greenhouse plants, spilling beyond the hard frames of the screen. The surrounding open skies, the humidity, the spindly plant life thriving around us amplify the anguished mood of the film, its earthiness. The screen in the greenhouse forges an alliance between the diegetic world and the spectator's embodied experience that can be described as immersive or atmospheric. And yet this almost failed, simply because it lacked darkness.

II.

Exterior, night. A street corner. Rain. A crowd huddles under the marquee of a department store. We are staring at a round breezeblock structure across the road, the most distinctive feature of the bland retail block that encases Argyle Street railway station. On the curved wall, a rectangle of light holds a space of familiar proportions: an approximation of the golden ratio. Some volunteers in fluorescent vests are herding people from the station, off the road and onto the safety of the wide pavement, while others hold umbrellas over the projector and speakers. A short animated film is shown, and then there is a flurry of unplugging and rolling cables so that the equipment can be carted off to the next location. Another department store marquee, this time in a busier pedestrian street. The projection on a shop front attracts the attention of some of the passers-by. These new audience members are neither particularly sober nor primed for the sort of experimental fare that has transformed their streets into an arthouse spectacle for urban tourists. There is a palpable distance between the cinephile crowd and these casual viewers, but for a moment they become part of the audience.

The show continues to move – to a shabby dead-end street, an advertising hoarding above a beer garden, a couple of shipping containers at a building site, and a multi-storey carpark. With each move, the size and surface

of the screen changes, and the audience ebbs and flows. People join and leave, but also people bring in or withdraw their attention, stepping aside to take a phone call or a picture, chatting, smoking, petting dogs. The last screening site is the back of a very old building, standing alone at the edge of a demolished block. There have been rumours that this survivor of many waves of Glasgow's reinvention will be knocked down soon, as the area gets consumed by private student housing. We are standing on the last un-regenerated bit of land on the edge of Strathclyde University's campus, between trendy glass-and-chrome university buildings and a fledging community garden, itself made to be temporary: a passing use of a space waiting for a property speculator. It is still raining.

III.

The first Saturday of September is mild and pleasant, a good day to sit outside and drink tea. Our host welcomes a handful of visitors into the garden, a small plot between his house and the railway tracks in suburban Glasgow. A young woman sits on the drystone wall, reading the list of DVDs the host has chosen for the screening. The films come from the travelling bookshop of anarchist materials that our host has run for over a decade, and which has now been retired from touring. He comes back with more tea and gives us updates about the garden, a permaculture demonstration planted with native and non-native species, designed to support habitats for animals. He brings fresh figs from the greenhouse. I share the fruit with another visitor as we consider the list of films. A friend and her daughter emerge from the small, handmade shed in the corner of the garden, having finished watching their chosen films.

The event is part of Scalarama, a UK-wide season of DIY film screenings, and it is run under the banner of Radical Home Cinema, an initiative to help people organize public film events in their homes. One of the promoters comes around and checks with the host whether those who have registered to attend have turned up, so she can offer the available slots to two young women who have come to see the garden. The screening space is big enough for two folding chairs with the projector and a laptop on a shelf behind them. The walls of the shed are made of loose bits of wood to provide an optimal habitat for bees and wasps, which also makes it warm with the heat of the projector. Our hosts give us a couple of quick instructions and I put the DVD in the drive to start the screening. The young woman next to me is in charge of controlling the volume. She has to leave halfway through the

film, so I finish watching a short documentary about a local pirate radio DJ on my own. When I come out of the shed, other friends have arrived, and I end up staying for a vegan dinner cooked by our host.

This book is about moments like these, which have little more in common than the presence of a film and an audience. What these situations share is what makes them recognizable and understandable to those taking part. This minimal and provisional recognition is what this book calls cinema. This is not a fixed category with borders to be drawn and policed, but a constellation of emergent patterns. These patterns are situated in relation to normative definitions of cinema as the *minor* is to the major: As a process of substraction and reassembly. Considering cinema from a minor position offers a critical opportunity to break it down into its constituent elements, and observe the shifting configurations and protocols in which they appear. Starting from classical versions of the cinematic dispositive, this chapter will untangle some of the strands needed to weave into patterns in later chapters. By engaging sceptically with ontological debates, it seeks a way to make visible the hybridity and incompleteness that make any categorical definition absurd and unnecessary, while explaining our ability to mean something by 'cinema'.

In the last two decades or so, definitions of cinema have been plunged into an ever more acute state of crisis by the weakening hold of medium specificity. The idea of 'post-cinema' has gained traction, particularly in those boundary areas of the art world that had previously been named 'expanded' or 'exploding' cinema, where the moving image has entered gallery spaces or become part of mixed-media installations (Connolly 2009; Koch, Pantenburg, and Rothöhler 2012; Lord and Marchessault 2007). As Erika Balsom argues, it would be historically short-sighted to see this instability as a new phenomenon, since 'the cinema's ontology has always been diverse and variable' (Balsom 2013, 14). However, digitization and convergence, with the destabilizing effect of meta-media and re-mediation, have exacerbated anxieties about medium specificity. Immersed as we are in the rush of images, surrounded by screens and virtual realms, piecing together narratives across platforms, what sense does it have to speak of 'cinema'? What purpose does it serve to use the same word for three moments as different as the ones described above?

Current debates around post-cinema or the death of cinema are struggles between descriptivist and prescriptivist definitions of cinema. On the one hand, a search for ontological anchors has produced various lists of 'non-negotiable features'. In their introduction to *The State of Post-Cinema*,

Malte Hagener, Vinzenz Hediger and Alena Strohmaier tackle this discourse of crisis, situating it in relation to 'cinema' as an art form distinguished by its indexical relationship to reality, and 'cinema' as a dispositive (Hagener, Hediger, and Strohmaier 2016, 4). Photographic indexicality seemed like an urgent matter during the transition to digital, but it has receded so far from production practice and audience expectations that it seems inadequate as a defining characteristic. Throughout this book, the vast majority of the moving images and sounds I write about were projected from digital files rather than celluloid. The three examples above include a narrative feature, a short animation, and a 40-minute documentary. These three digital video works have different relationships to indexicality and technical support; they pursue contrasting aesthetic strategies and address the spectator in particular ways. It would still be pedantic to deny that they are all instances of film, but the presence of a film is not enough to produce cinema.

In their work on the serial births and deaths of cinema, André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion hold on to an embattled sense of medium specificity, but they recognize it as porous and itself intermedial. In that sense, thinking about 'what people have called "cinema"' reveals the limits of the language of post-mediality (Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 3): To speak of post-cinema in the context of post-mediality is to confuse cinema for a medium, when the medium is only a component of a system that has its own historical inflections.

Those who lament the death of cinema often identify a different body: cinema as public, collective experience, in a dedicated space, perhaps using a certain technology. Socially valued forms of spectatorship, from mass popular audience 'innocence' to cinephile commitment, have been invoked as boundary conditions for cinematic experience (Sontag 1996). On the other hand, pragmatic or relativistic approaches are supported by the observation that 'there has never been an unified phenomenon called 'cinema' [but] a diversity of *dispositifs* through which moving pictures could be experienced' (Kessler and Lenk 2016, 307). By making the dispositive plural, it can be historicized, but this requires some revision of the theoretical roots of the concept.

Dispositif is one of the most productive and sometimes contentious words in film studies. The French word, used by Foucault in the *History of Sexuality* to mean a system of relations between heterogeneous elements, was introduced into film studies by Jean-Louis Baudry, notably in a 1974 article which describes the cinematographic *dispositif* as part of the 'basic cinematographic apparatus' (which also includes the means and processes of production of the film). Baudry describes the projection room as a close

relation of Plato's cave, which already expressed a 'desire which haunts the invention of cinema' (Baudry 1985, 697). The key power of this parallel thinking is to infer from the architectural similarities between cinema and cave a similarly subjected/enslaved viewer. In presence of 'the darkened room and the screen bordered in black like a letter of condolences', those in it 'find themselves chained, captured, or captivated' (Baudry 1974, 44). From Plato's allegory, Baudry moves on to Lacan's 'mirror stage' as a process of constitution of the subject through acceptance of an imaginary order. This idea, with different theoretical inflections, is at the basis of various versions of so-called apparatus theory, which claimed that the material basis of production and consumption of moving images (the camera, the projector) was aligned with a psychic apparatus, a mechanism that allowed the individual to fantasize a sense of self through their seamless positioning in the film's machinery of vision. Its conceptual moves are summarized by Thomas Elsaesser as,

> the enforcement of the laws of Renaissance perspective; the Cartesian mind-body split; the fixed geometrical arrangement of the three main elements: screen, projector, spectator; and finally, the metaphoric association of this arrangement with Freud's (or Lacan's) concept of misrecognition [...], and philosophical analogy with Plato's parable of the cave (Elsaesser 2011, 34).

As Elsaesser goes on to argue, the political suspicion of 'illusion' implied in this analogy is a form of 'cinephobia'. It discounts the realness of the experience. There is, however, a material core to apparatus theory, which offers a useful starting point for a materialist definition.

Subject-positioning theory has been mostly superseded by more empirically-informed theories of spectatorship that recognize both the audience's agency and their already overdetermined positions in ideological systems that are much bigger than the cinematic apparatus, such as patriarchal and colonial domination. The ascendancy of cultural studies as a dominant influence within film studies privileged these historically and socially grounded accounts of spectatorship over both materialist and psychoanalytical ones. In more recent years, however, the rise of media archaeology has led to a resurgence of interest in material bases and object relations. In this context, the dispositif is ready to make a comeback.

The most productive understanding of the term moves away from the deterministic implications of 'apparatus', instead going back to a notion of dispositif as *arrangement*. This use is consistent with Foucault's use of the term as a 'system of relations' between 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions'

(Foucault 1980, 194). This relational approach is a useful way to look at the question of what cinema has been, because it brings together a physical materiality and a sense of history and process. It is concrete without being natural. So, what is this arrangement that has been called cinema? Elsaesser offers an idea of 'tactical alliance' where 'a *dispositif* of sound and vision is predicated on three elements that work together without being tethered together': a site, an extension in time, and a mode of address (Elsaesser, 2011, pp. 38–39). This sense of unfixed convergences is also proposed by Miriam de Rosa and Vincenz Hediger, who propose cinema as one of many configurations of the moving image, amongst a 'living multiplicity' of forms that defy obituaries (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 17–18). It is this notion of configuration that allows us to retain the material base without giving in to essentialist impulses for definition.

Three elements, not tethered together: an arrangement of things in space (including tools and information carriers); an arrangement of activity in time; and a discursive practice that produces a public. Because the articulations of that system have never been singular or stable, there is no need to invoke a historical or conceptual break to accommodate changes in material supports or institutional contexts; as De Rosa argues, 'the ontological interpretation of post-cinema [...] is based upon a sense of permanence and immobility which I now think is inherently extraneous to cinema' (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 10). Furthermore, whatever has been 'stabilized' in the operations of major cinema is what is substracted by its minor forms. The new assemblages may not end up being recognizable as cinema at all.

While resisting its potential essentialism, I am interested in the notion of dispositif as a way to push back against the de-materializing effects of some post-cinema or post-media writing. After all, the problematic ideological extrapolations of apparatus theory were predicated on a material base; unfortunately, that material analysis was limited and ahistorical. Much richer historical descriptions of the material base of cinema as a dispositif (an arrangement, that is to say, a configuration) are available, and I now turn to some of these in order to tease out some terms of analysis. By proposing a number of characteristics that can be observed empirically, I explain the emergent heuristic behind the mapping of various configurations of moving image exhibition in further chapters.

1.1.   Configurations

In order to disentangle the material characteristics that may underpin these emergent impressions of cinema, let us start with a hegemonic definition:

cinema is 'a film projected in a movie theatre in the dark for the fixed duration of a screening that is to varying degrees collective' (Raymond Bellour quoted in Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 20). This has six salient elements: the content (a film), a visual technology (projection), an environmental condition (darkness), a socially demarcated, architecturally specific space (a movie theatre), an extension in time (the duration of a screening), and an expectation of co-presence with other spectators. This is, then, an understanding of cinema predicated on a mix of material and social features. Anne Friedberg offers a more abstracted but similar definition of the cinematic experience, requiring a 'dark room with projected luminous images' (darkness + projection), a single viewing opportunity (time), a framed image on a flat screen surface, and an immobile spectator in a non-interactive relationship with the image (Friedberg 1993, 133–134). The 'collective' is replaced in this version with the individual, which reflects the latter author's concern with spectatorship at a time of social atomization, but the space and technologies are equivalent.

Gabriele Pedullà gives a very similar account of six characteristics of the 'cinematic viewing model', including the strict separation of the auditorium, controlled darkness, and a large screen as some of the material underpinnings of a behavioural code, now in crisis (Pedullà 2012, 32–34). Francesco Casetti reflects on Tacita Dean's installation, *Film*, finding in it 'all the principal elements of cinema, those that characterize its material basis': a projector, a screen, a dark room, a bench, and 35mm film stock (Casetti 2015, 17). Across these disparate theoretical works, a core of material conditions starts to emerge. Superimposing these descriptions reveals five common *spatial* characteristics, from which the sprawling tangle of moving image practices I discuss in later chapters divert by substraction. Taking a probabilistic approach to this cinema ontology, a situation is more likely to be described as 'cinema' the more it involves these physical configurations:

1. *Separation* from the outside
2. *Projection* of moving images
3. Darkness
4. Screen – a framed image on a flat surface
5. A bench or space for an immobile spectator

There are many other elements invoked by different authors, and indeed in vernacular definitions. Pedullà, for instance, defines the spectator as silent as well as still. Perhaps out of respect to silent cinema none of the accounts list amplified sound as a requisite, but this may also be a product of film

studies' long-standing visual bias. In contrast, I consider sound insulation a key part of the auditorium's separation, and the amplification of recorded sound as part of the process of projection. The conditions for a big screen image and amplified sound are governed by multiple technical standards that change and proliferate over time, without necessarily replacing each other fully. Over the course of my research I have watched films projected from 16mm and 35mm celluloid, a variety of video formats shown on large TVs, consumer-grade projectors, 4K digital projectors, and giant LED screens. Some of them have had digital surround sound, some a stereo soundtrack, some have no synchronized sound and instead open up a space for live sound creation, from the Wurlitzer organ to beatbox sampling. All these technologies of cinema can exist at the same time and they can all be part of an experience that is recognizable as cinema. This does not mean that the differences between them do not matter to the overall phenomenon.

There are, beyond this seemingly common-sense material basis, a few elements that do not overlap: Bellour's terms 'a movie theatre' and 'collective' ('communal' in Pedullà), and Friedberg's 'non-interactive' relationship to the image. 'Movie theatre' itself could be taken to mean a physical arrangement (four walls and roof, dark, rake, with seats, a screen, sound amplification, a box office) or a socially designated use of space, so it is ambiguous. Broadly speaking, this is the 'Plato's cave' model of cinematic spectatorship that underpinned apparatus theory. The theoretical model emerged precisely at the time when a specific historical configuration of the apparatus was in decline, and this formalization and essentialization may have been a defensive move. However, as Casetti goes on to argue while reflecting on Tacita Dean's work, it produces the experience of an art installation, not of cinema. These material configurations, therefore, are only half of the story.

Against these first five dimensions of paradigmatic cinema experience, we can test the three screenings from the start of the chapter and find them lacking. They all feature projectors and moving images, but that is the extent of their compliance. The event at the Winter Gardens came closest to a classical situation but we were forced into self-consciousness through the lack of darkness. The mobile outdoor projection described in the second example runs under the title of *A wall is a screen*, while playing on the fact that a wall is *not* really a screen: It exploits the irregularities of the surface to bring this anomaly into the experience, and it does not offer an enclosed space nor a place for viewers to sit and watch. The third screening, taking place in a tiny garden shed, comes paradoxically closest to ticking all the boxes, but the enclosure of the space does not result in a forgetting of the location. The awareness of being in a garden, the intimacy of the enclosed

space, and the interaction with other viewers and with the projector, all make this a very unusual assemblage of those elements.

This is then a question of recognition. Casetti's insistence in the survival of cinema as a form of experience moves away from technological definitions to point out that different material elements can be re-arranged into something recognizable, that is, a cinematic attentiveness. This move against apparatus theory is consistent with other revisions of it that come from cultural studies and new cinema history. This is the insistence that whatever power the cinematic experience can exert upon us does not come only – or at all – from an arrangement of physical elements that replicates a geometry of subjectivity. Instead, Casetti considers cinema as both a material base and a 'cultural form', the activation of a type of experience. He reaches the definition of 'a kind of central nucleus':

> At the cinema, we face screened moving images; these images surprise us and take hold of us; they lead us directly to living reality, forcing us to see it again in its fullness. Simultaneously, they feed our imagination, opening us up to the possible; they provide a knowledge and an awareness, and they make us live in unison with other spectators (Casetti 2015, 24–25)

This is an experience-centred definition of cinema, and it shares much with the accusations of absorption and illusionism that Elsaesser criticizes in Baudry. However, the last line there makes an important shift: *other spectators*. Co-presence or collectivity are mentioned in several of the accounts above as a distinguishing feature of cinema vis-à-vis other forms of moving image consumption, especially those that now constitute the majority of screen interactions. The cinema as a shared space may be imbued with a sense of the public or the communal, identified as a site of intimate encounters or external displays of cultural capital, felt as an arena of communion or distinction. In many of these accounts, however, a crucial aspect of this sociability is overlooked: the labour. The material and sensory definitions offered above are the consequence of decisions, practices and behaviours, that is, the result of collective labour, formal and informal, paid and unpaid, which allows cinema to crystallize as an emergent phenomenon. Cinema is something people do, as much as a place they go to. The social dimension of cinema is imbricated with its spatiality, but it draws attention to other vectors; it forces us to think about time and process, and about the intersubjective agreements that allow it to happen. The 'imperfection' of non-theatrical exhibition is productive because it makes those 'supporting protocols' less transparent.

1.2.   Protocols

Protocols are 'a vast clutter of normative rules and default conditions, which gather and adhere like a nebulous array around a technological nucleus' (Gitelman 2006, 7). If the configuration of screen, sound, and spectator – the apparatus – gives us a core, cinema as a protocol cannot be defined simply as an alignment of these material elements. These make sense only when embedded in the cloud of social expectations that define what is happening as cinema, and that bring into existence the behaviours that sustain it. If these are 'normative' expectations around 'default' configurations, it follows that they are neither natural nor existing to the exclusion of all else.

Having described the material *configuration* of objects and conditions that clusters around the cinematic apparatus, moving on to a notion of protocol helps historicize it. The protocol draws attention to the production of these material conditions, and furthermore to the aspects of the dispositif (the arrangement) that are not tangible. If the notion of configuration draws attention to space, protocol conditions are time-based. Moving images are a time-based form, and the cinematic experience self-evidently unfolds over time. Alongside this sensory and narrative time, however, the activity of watching films also occupies and intersects with the everyday, with social time, and it is in these interactions that useful analytical differences emerge. The cinema protocol establishes temporal and spatial boundaries to the experience of the medium, which are different from those that one may establish for the same kind of object in another environment. Amongst the possible relationships, some normative characteristics of 'cinema' include:

1. Protected time
2. Public address
3. Division of labour
4. Behaviour codes
5. Discursive marking

Cinemagoing, like some spectator sports and other leisure pursuits, offers audiences a sense of appointment, the ability to disconnect from the everyday for a controlled and predictable amount of time. This sense of appointment also structures sociability around cinema times, as it enables local and global forms of synchronization (Acland 2003, 62). The temporality of normative cinema is connected to the way it addresses an imagined public, and thus it enables the emergence of a self-organized collective of strangers through shared attention (Warner 2002, 76). When people share a screening

space, they enter into an empirical relationship with strangers, but also into an imagined one as part of a public. This imagined stranger-relationality is inscribed in how the event is framed and promoted. For instance, one of the ways in which Radical Home Cinema is different from watching films at home with friends, is that there are specific screening times and dates, which are published, and for which people can sign up. This invokes the temporal protocol of the cinema screening in order to set controlled boundaries to the opening up of private space. However, the fragility of the protocol is also evident when the film finishes. As compared to a commercial cinema where protocol indicates that the auditorium is to be vacated as soon as the credits roll, the overlap between the film screening and the social visit protocols blur the temporal edges of the event. Just getting up and leaving is rude – in the cinema, the opposite would be true.

Like time, space is also demarcated through discourse and convention. A cinema setting often involves paying for access to a space made semi-public. However, the exchange of money is not a defining characteristic of cinema in itself, but one of the possible ways to organize access to spaces, and, importantly, to establish a division of labour. In the normative cinema situation, roles are clearly divided. There is the patron and the worker. Their interactions follow a simple script, and few deviations are expected. Amongst the staff, there is the front of house/projection booth divide, as well as the management/staff split. The audience are not supposed to do any work in the production of the show, and indeed their contributions would be unwelcome. This crosses over into a code of behaviour for the audience. There is no need to posit a single, overarching code of cinema etiquette to understand that there is always *some* form or forms of code being negotiated. When and how one should go in and get a seat; when and how one can talk, laugh, look at one's phone, or walk out; these are contextual and group-sensitive rules, but staff and customers may become disgruntled if they are broken.

Finally, cinema can be a performative word, a use of language that de-marcates aspects of experience. The fact that something has been *named* as cinema communicates expectations and therefore informs the behaviour of those who take part. Just as documentary can claim a connection to reality even if the photographic index is broken, cinema as a *categorical intention* can operate across many breaks in concrete practice (Nannicelli and Turvey 2016, 38). The garden shed screening was part of a series called 'Radical Home Cinema', which sets up a different expectation than, for instance, 'home video'. In this case, naming this 'cinema' produces for the event the associations with publicness and protected time that adhere to

the theatrical context. Its gesture challenges the privatizing underpinnings of 'parlour cinema', as discussed by Barbara Klinger, and it resignifies the phrase 'home cinema' by placing emphasis on the collectivity of 'cinema' rather than the isolationism of 'home' (Klinger 2006).

The discursive construction of something as cinema does not need to be verbal. Visual and aural cues that reference the classic theatrical experience are often used: images of velvet curtains and analogue projection equipment, or the fanfare of Pearl and Dean adverts or the Twentieth Century Fox ident. There are established shorthand signifiers that can be drawn upon to label an event as cinema. In fact, these signifiers of the 'classic viewing situation' have acquired an even greater power, with obsolescence serving as an irritant that helps stabilize a system (Elsaesser 2011). Film festival livery and all the discursive scaffolding of such events serves to bring new films, and even new media forms, into the fold of 'cinema'. But the most assured sign that something is promised to the audience as cinema is the presence of a *film*. People attend with a disposition and expectations shaped by previous encounters with the moving image, with its different genres and qualities. Therefore, the type of text placed at the centre of the event is part of its symbolic construction, rather than an independent variable. In other words, film is defined by cinema as much as cinema is defined by film. The presence of something that conforms more or less closely to expectations of a film is part of the broader protocol through which an event can be branded discursively as cinema.

Placing the film at the very end of this series of considerations is intended to help denaturalize the patterns observed. It moves attention towards assemblages rather than objects or categories. Reframing ontological discussions around this pragmatic focus, a combination of (spatial) configurations and (social) protocols will serve as the baseline against which the minoritarian exerts its substractions and reorderings. They can be summarized for analytical purposes, even though they do not describe historically-existing experiences or modes of practice (Table 1):

Table 1: Configurations and protocols

Configurations	Protocols
Separation from the outside	Protected time
Projection of moving images and sound	Public address
Darkness	Division of labour
Screen (a framed image on a flat surface)	Behaviour codes
A space for an immobile audience to sit	Discursive marking

If ever these ten conditions occurred at the same time, it was a rare occurrence. The closest example may have been Peter Kubelka's 'invisible cinema', a 'machine designed for film viewing', seeking to protect viewers from any distraction (Sitney 2005, 103). It was a 'dark cube', a direct relation of the 'white cube' gallery space that had such a crucial role in the establishment of modern art. Kubelka's idea of an absolutely black space where only the screen was visible, and where spectators were discouraged from any interaction, is connected to his interest (shared with a large sector of the film avant-garde) in the 'essence' of cinema, that which cannot be communicated in any other way. This modernist desire to enter into a pure, disinterested communion with the work of art still underpins modes of spectatorship associated with the arthouse.

The 'invisible cinema' was, however, a countercultural gesture. This modernist ideal of undivided attention remains a niche pursuit. Perhaps, as Hediger argues, channeling Latour's claim that 'we have never been modern', cinema has never existed as a pure, distinct and autonomous phenomenon, that is, as an art form in the modernist tradition (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 10). The cinema as 'a black and silent room in which there are no noises or other sounds from the outside world' where people 'remain seated doing nothing else for two hours' (Kubelka, interviewed by Korossi 2013) is a historical anomaly, and minoritarian in its own way.

The diversity of exhibition sites throughout the history of moving pictures is already well known. Travelling cinema in fairgrounds across Europe, or trains in the Soviet Union, or Chautauquas in the United States are vivid examples (Kepley 1994; Loiperdinger 2008; Rossell 2000; Waller 1990). There are the various types of outdoor screens from the World Fairs to the drive-ins, and in many waves of advertising strategy from the sponsored show to the electronic billboard. Projectors have found their way into schools, hospitals and prisons; on boats and airplanes; at the battle front and in the religious mission. As Wasson and Acland write, '[m]ovies seem to appear everywhere [...] they are integral to our experience of institutional and everyday life.'(2011, 2) As with the digital cinema transition, the digitally-enabled proliferation of public screens may be more a question of degree rather than a historical rupture.

In Scotland, fairgrounds, music halls and public halls were the key sites for early cinema, but not the only ones by any means. In the big houses of the landed estates, lairds organized Hogmanay (New Year) celebrations that often included a film show, provided by a traveling lantern lecturer, for the tenants' children (Vélez-Serna 2018, 23). Department stores and indoor markets attracted punters with the novelty of the

cinematograph, and ice-skating rinks used it to entertain those waiting for their turn. After full-time commercial cinemas were built from 1908 onwards, travelling exhibition retreated to institutional and promotional contexts, while some local authorities invested in projectors for schools and conducted research on educational uses of screen media (Bohlmann 2016, 129–135). Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, nurtured by cinephile film societies and rural development programmes, non-theatrical exhibition thrived in diverse varieties from the didactic to the elitist, infiltrating civic spaces as well as private residences, hotels and stations, anywhere where at least some of the conditions of cinema could be conjured up.

This book approaches these lines of continuity with a genealogical intention, but not necessarily a linear one. Rather than attempting to trace every step in a continuous passage from an old form of media practice to a recent one, I aim to acknowledge that other histories have been possible and have often been forgotten about by the time a new version of the same idea comes around. These are discontinuous lineages that would not serve to establish a pedigree, which is par for the course in this hybrid history.

Even the notion of a 'permanent' or 'full-time' cinema is unstable. Dedicated cinema spaces, by virtue of being commercial enterprises in a capitalist economy, are exposed to considerable risk. One way to deal with this challenge has been the diversification of activities and income streams. Cinemas in Scotland have been sites for concerts, pageants, tombolas, and public information lectures. They have hosted political rallies and local council meetings, fundraising and enlisting for two world wars, and are also routinely hired for private functions. The screen itself is not a preserve of 'cinema': it has displayed Roll of Honour photographs and football results, while digital projection is now bringing livecast performances, video games and special television transmissions into cinema spaces. The permutations are so many that the arbitrariness of the ten features outlined in Table 1 may seem unjustifiable. The variability and uniqueness of each encounter between audience and film is at risk of being underplayed. And yet, as Acland argues, 'it would be an equally grave mistake to assert that there is no connection or consistency between each of those viewing conditions. Indeed, a chief operation of the film apparatus has been to assure and promote this consistency' (Acland 2003, 47). Like the proverbial Greek ship, cinema may have had all its parts replaced over time, but there is a connection – in name, function, and social use.

1.3.   Conclusion

To speak of cinema is still to mean something. There are no essential, non-negotiable conditions, but there are clusters of elements that are activated by proximity; some overlap between these is necessary. There is a materiality to this clustering, but it is the product of historical agency, including both social arrangements and discourses that cannot be taken for granted. Cinema may be a concept in permanent crisis, but that does not stop it from working. Indeed, as Elsaesser insists, 'our media technologies tend to be culturally most productive, when *their disruptive and failure-prone dimensions* are taken into consideration in addition to their performativity' (Elsaesser 2011, 40). As Balsom puts it, citing Bellour, '"the historical and formal singularity of cinema" [as a hegemonic dispositif] has shattered into its aggregate parts, which are now free to enter into new constellations with elements once foreign to it' (Balsom 2013, 16). It is this fragmentary and composite existence that the following chapters document.

The examples above, and the many others included in later chapters, are understandable as cinema in an impure and partial sense, rather than as an independent category. The mode of experience they offer emerges at fleeting intersections between objects, spaces, bodies, ways of doing things and of talking about them. None of these aspects is sufficient on its own, but not all are necessary at the same time. They have tended to cluster together around the dedicated cinema theatre, but this contingent association has been proven to be unstable. The cinema is no longer (if it ever was) defined by a building. The next chapter examines where and how cinema appeared in Scotland during a period of fieldwork, and uses this as an empirical test for the theoretical categories outlined above.

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