

PART TWO The Tableau

Introduce as many tableaux as possible into your story. For instance, you might have thought out a scene wherein a guilty wife, listening through a keyhole, overhears another woman denounce her to her husband. It would be a much finer picture were your husband and the slanderer to meet in a drawing room with a great flight of stairs leading up to a curtained door — the guilty wife suddenly throws aside the curtains and steps out to say “It’s all true” — the husband and the other woman look aghast as the wife stands motionless in this moment of confession.

— John Emerson and Anita Loos, *How to Write Photoplays*¹

Emerson and Loos’s own film of 1916, *The Social Secretary*, contains the following scene: Mayme, secretary to Mrs. von Puyster and in love with her son Jimmie is embroiled in an attempt to save her employer’s family from scandal. A gossip columnist, the “Buzzard,” warns Mrs. von Puyster that he has seen her daughter, Elsie, going into the apartment of a foreign count. The film establishes an alternation between Mrs. von Puyster and Jimmie, who climb the front stairs to confront the Count in his sitting room, and Mayme, who sneaks up a fire escape to the Count’s back bedroom where Elsie is hiding. In the front room, as the Buzzard looks on, Jimmie argues with the Count and demands to be allowed to search the flat. Meanwhile, Mayme tries to persuade a reluctant Elsie to descend the fire escape. Mayme finally gets Elsie out of the window, but does not have time to escape herself before

Jimmie breaks down the door. As Mayme hides her face with her coat, Jimmie drags her into the front room. Mayme’s entrance, like that of the guilty wife described in *How to Write Photoplays*, significantly alters the dramatic situation and provokes a strong reaction from all of the characters present. This revelation is not organized as a tableau, however, but rather, in the following series of shots:

- 1 Medium long shot. The Count’s sitting room. Mrs. von Puyster looks off rear left towards the bedroom. The Buzzard, to her right, listens in the doorway. Mayme enters, rear left.
- 2 Close-up, same angle. Mayme. Mrs. von Puyster’s hand pulls the coat away revealing Mayme’s face. Mayme raises her head and looks off right, then left.
- 3 Medium shot. The Count front left, and Jimmie midground center. Both express amazement. Jimmie is horrified to see his girlfriend.
- 4 As 1. The Buzzard comes through the door, right, and closes it. Jimmie enters left, crosses and addresses the Buzzard. Jimmie walks off left.
- 5 Medium shot. Mayme and Mrs. von Puyster.
- 6 Medium close-up. The Buzzard. Amazed, he stares off left.
- 7 Medium close-up. Jimmie. He expresses despair.
- 8 As 3. The Count alone. He looks amazed.
- 9 As 5. Mayme looks down. Mrs. von Puyster expresses disapproval.
- 10 Title: “So she has been the Count’s confederate all the time.”

The scene continues in the same vein, with Mayme unable to make any explanation in the presence of the Buzzard. Most of the shots are medium close-

ups or medium long shots that isolate the reactions of one or two characters at a time. The space is thus highly fragmented, with closer views used to emphasize the facial expressions of the actors. There is no point in the scene in which all of the characters are shown together, in a single “picture” that would summarize and typify their various reactions to the revelation of Mayme’s presence, nor do any of the actors ever hold a pose. In *The Social Secretary*, Emerson and Loos ignore the prescription they made a few years later in *How to Write Photoplays*.²

This discrepancy between a prescription in a screenwriting manual and the same authors’ practice in a film is not just an isolated aberration of Emerson and Loos. The various outlines that Giovanni Pastrone wrote for the 1914 film *Cabiria* use the words “quadro” and “scena,” Italian equivalents of “tableau” or “picture,” introduced immediately after the description of a plot incident. For example, when Maciste (in the drafts named “Ercole,” i.e., Hercules), fleeing from the priests of Moloch with the rescued child Cabiria, bursts in on Sophonisbe’s tryst with Massinissa, the final outline runs as follows: “Inside garden — Massinissa’s meeting with Sophonisbe — Hercules and the little girl — Scene — Sophonisbe saves the child.” When, later, the hero Fulvius Axilla (“Plinio,” i.e., Pliny, in the drafts) is told by Sophonisbe that Cabiria is dead, the final outline runs: “‘Dead! . . . Ah! Oh!, etc.’ Pliny’s grief — Picture — .”³

However, in neither case in the finished film is there a tableau. The scenes are not broken up into

closer shots, like those of *The Social Secretary*, but neither is there any freezing of the action; at least two of the four or five characters involved in the scene are always in movement. In the first incident (shot 190 in the continuity referred to above), Maciste breaks in as Massinissa is pleading with Sophonisbe, kneeling at her feet. Massinissa rises and stands so as to shield Sophonisbe, who veils her face (Figure 2.1). Maciste kneels and begs Sophonisbe to protect Cabiria, as Sophonisbe's attendant enters and listens. In the second (shots 462–4), Fulvius kneels at Sophonisbe's feet while Massinissa and Maciste look on. She ignores his plea, so he rises and goes to join Maciste, but returns as Massinissa begins to question Sophonisbe on his behalf. Sophonisbe replies in a dialogue title: "*She is no more.*" In the next shot, with an identical framing, Fulvius is ushered back to Maciste by Massinissa after a brief gesture of despair (Figure 2.2).

These two examples from very different filmmaking traditions suggest that an appeal to the idea of the tableau by filmmakers in the 1910s is not a simple anachronism. Rather, the appearance of the term signals a set of functions performed by the stage picture: to punctuate the action, to stress or prolong a dramatic situation, and to give a scene an abstract or quasi-allegorical significance. Filmmakers still felt that certain dramatic situations called



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for this constellation of functions, to the point that they still used the term "tableau" as shorthand for what occurred at these points, even recommended "tableaux" to others, but might not in fact resort to any direct reproduction on film of the stage tableau. Instead other stylistic means were developed to this end. Tableaux became rarer as such, but their place continued to be felt.

The tableau thus provides an example of a theatrical device that, while not being adopted into film in any straightforward way, still affected how filmmakers conceived their practice. Examples like the ones above, where it is possible to bring



2.2

together films and written texts by filmmakers using the term "tableau" are rare. Nevertheless, the relationship can be approached in another way, by examining stage productions that can be shown to incorporate tableaux, and comparing them with their film adaptations. In this part we attempt to trace the cinematic vicissitudes of the theatrical tableau, primarily by a consideration of a series of adaptations, theatrical and cinematic, of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. However, before doing so, it is important to explicate the term "tableau," in order to distinguish how we shall be using it from other usages.

CHAPTER 3 The Stage Tableau in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In nineteenth-century French theatre, the word “tableau” had a number of meanings, two of which are important for our purposes, both being transferred to early film. Arthur Pougin’s *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre* of 1885 clarifies the contemporary usage. Explaining that the term referred to the board on which coming attractions were announced, Pougin continues:

The term “tableau” is also applied to certain material divisions in works that are complicated in their staging. Any change in the setting during an act produces a new tableau. If, for example, a five-act play contains twenty parts with the action performed in twenty different settings, it is said to be in five acts and twenty tableaux. All *féeries* are like this, as are certain dramas. With very few exceptions, the curtain is only lowered at the end of each act; the other changes in setting take place in full view of the audience.

Lastly, the word “tableau” is applied to the plastic and pictorial effect produced at the end of an act by the grouping of the principals and extras who have taken part in the action. A critic wrote in 1824: “Tableau: the marked wordless scene, general pantomime, *coup de théâtre*, obligatory at the end of each act of a melodrama. Guilbert de Pixérécourt is a master of the art of the tableau—it is the least blameworthy of this writer’s talents.”

Although Pougin does not say so explicitly, when actors reached the poses constituting the composition of a tableau in the second sense, they froze in position for a short but definite period. According to Jan Shepherd, the musical scores of early nineteenth-century English melodramas indicate that tableaux should be held for a number of measures of “Rule Britannia,” variously four or eight.⁴

In English usage, tableau in the first sense, i.e., as a segment of the play demarcated by a change of setting, was usually translated as “scene” (the term rarely being used, unlike the French “*scène*,” for a division of an act marked by the entrance or exit of a speaking character without a change of setting). In the second sense, i.e., as a static grouping of characters or a pose, technical writings such as prompt-books use “picture.” In less technical contexts the original French word was often adopted directly. The term “picture” was also used to designate a setting. For example, this use is found in the stage directions for the beginning of the third act of Henry C. De Mille and David Belasco’s 1890 play *Men and Women*: “There is heard the distant sound of a bell striking twelve o’clock.[...] At the eighth stroke the curtain is raised, being timed so as to reveal the whole stage picture on the twelfth stroke.”⁵

Another well-known type of stage picture is the “*tableau vivant*.” Pougin defines this separately from the other uses of “tableau,” as “the precise reproduction by living but motionless people of celebrated and universally familiar pictures or sculptural groups.” One of the earliest famous tableaux vivants occurred in a stage play: the reproduction of Greuze’s “*L’Accordée de village*” in the Comédie Italienne’s production of *Les Noces d’Arlequin* in Paris in 1761.⁶ The theatre occasionally resorted to such paintings later, e.g., David Wilkie’s “*Distraint for Rent*” in Douglas Jerrold’s 1832 melodrama *The Rent Day*, and (as a parody), the “tableau as of Napoleon on the Bellerophon, after the celebrated picture by Orchardson,” in the 1904 staging of *Peter Pan*.⁷ Such tableaux vivants were usually both preceded and fol-



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lowed by a curtain, unlike the tableaux produced by actors stopping in a pose in the course of the action. They are also isolated special cases. Otherwise, the tableau vivant’s career was largely extra-theatrical. Most commonly it appeared as a party piece for amateurs, as illustrated in the Vitagraph film *Coronets and Hearts* of 1912, where the hero first sees the heroine performing a tableau vivant at a ball in her house (Figure 2.3). It enjoyed a brief vogue as a commercial entertainment in the 1830s and 1840s, although the scantiness of the performers’ attire led to its banning in New York.⁸ It can even be found in the unlikely setting of the *Parteitäge* and trade-union congresses of the German Social-Democratic Party in the 1890s, where delegates were entertained with such tableaux vivants as *Humanity Freed from the Shackles of Militarism by Labor*.⁹ As these examples indicate, the tableau vivant did not always reproduce an existing painting or sculpture, but

could also constitute a picture in a more generalized sense — the portrayal of an emotion (an “attitude”), or the allegorical representation of a virtue or other abstract quality. Such generalized tableaux vivants have more in common with some of the tableaux we will be discussing, but this part of our book will largely ignore the genre of the tableau vivant to concentrate on the dramatically integrated tableaux and their film equivalents.

Early French film catalogs mostly use “tableau” in a sense corresponding more or less to the modern “shot,” and this is usually translated into English as “scene,” the contemporary term for a shot.¹⁰ Thus the 1907 Pathé Catalogue describes *Le Chat botté* (Puss in Boots) as a “Féerie cinématographique en sept tableaux,” and prints have seven scenes each preceded by a title, the last scene containing a magical transformation of the décor (using a dissolve) for the apotheosis indicated in the title (“Fiançailles. Apothéose.”).¹¹ The English Pathé Catalogue of 1905 calls these “scenes.” “Tableau” is used by American film catalogs in the theatrical sense of a static pose, particularly if this is an extra-diegetic allegory, e.g., the “Tableau” of Justice in Edison’s *The Kleptomaniac* of 1905, referred to in Chapter 2, above.¹²

Modern cinema historians use the term “tableau” in a slightly different sense to describe a characteristic type of shot in early films, and a type of construction that relies on that type of shot. This is the centered axial long shot, looking at an interior as if at a box set on stage from the center of the theatre stalls. Many early films consist largely of such shots, linked by intertitles; they lack scene dissection, or even alternation between simultaneous scenes. This has come to be called “tableau construction,” though the term is also, unfortunately, used more loosely to refer to any film with slow cutting.¹³

To avoid confusion, we will use “picture” to refer generally to a stage setting or film image with a strong pictorial effect and a descriptive rather

than narrative function. Unless otherwise stated, “tableau” will be used narrowly to mean Pougin’s “plastic and pictorial effect” achieved through the freezing of the action, on stage or in film.

Having given these definitions of the term “tableau,” we can now proceed to examine how such tableaux were deployed in a production, or rather a long series of productions, a theatrical tradition. Play versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* followed immediately upon the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s popular novel in 1852.¹⁴ By the 1870s touring companies performing nothing but *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* traveled throughout rural areas of the U.S., a practice that continued well into the 1920s. On the basis of the surviving promptbooks, it seems that most of these companies utilized George Aiken’s 1852 adaptation of the novel, which also more or less influenced the film versions discussed here.¹⁵ But by the late 1870’s aspects of *mise-en-scène* that are not specified in Aiken’s original version, such as the bloodhounds that pursue Eliza across the ice, had become canonized as part of the performance tradition.¹⁶ Some tableaux are noted in the published Aiken play, some are noted in pencil in the surviving promptbooks, and still others are described in published versions of the play by other authors. Hence it is possible to reconstruct the most frequently used theatrical tableaux and compare them with the way filmmakers subsequently handled the same scenes.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin was thus the center of a vital and long-running performance tradition and, until a generation ago, the story was universally familiar. More recently, the representation of black characters in the play versions and the original novel came to epitomize white patronization of blacks, and the protests this aroused have driven the story so far from popular consciousness that we have felt it necessary to include a plot summary as an appendix to this book. Our interest in it lies not in its current ideological status, but in the fact that it is possible to document the range of tableaux employed, which

is not the case for many other comparable stage melodramas.¹⁷

In order to encompass the major events of the novel, Aiken’s version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was unusually long, divided into six acts and thirty scenes. It was one of the first melodramas in the U.S. to be performed by itself without an accompanying farce or other playlets. Versions of the play by Edward Fitzball, Mark Lemon and Tom Taylor, and Charles Hermann are shorter; they skip the section of the novel that deals with the St. Clares to concentrate on the events on the Shelby and Legree plantations.¹⁸ Another British version apparently eliminated the events on the Shelby plantation to focus on the stories of Tom and Eva. A handbill for the Theatre Royal, Bristol, in the Pettingell Collection advertises “The Second Part of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” a play beginning with Tom’s trip down the Mississippi by steamboat, and his rescue of Eva.

There are other important variations in plot among the various published versions. Two plays unify the story by collapsing the characters of Haley the slave trader and Legree into one — called Haley in the Fitzball version and Legree in the Lemon and Taylor — so that a single character personifies the evils of slavery. These authors unify the story still further by introducing Eliza and Harry at the Legree plantation, in place of the new character Emmeline who is threatened by Legree’s sexual advances in the novel. In Lemon and Taylor, Eliza is recaptured after her escape across the Ohio, and George Harris, passing for white and accompanied by Topsy disguised as his boy servant, follows Eliza to Legree’s plantation on the Red River. Some versions end happily. In Fitzball, Tom is saved by George Shelby and returned to his family. Tom dies at the end of the Lemon and Taylor play, but the last scene is of George, Eliza, Cassy, and Topsy making their escape, as Cassy kills Legree.

The tableaux in these versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* appear in similar scenes, even when there are marked variations in plot and in the overall

organization of acts and scenes. For example, in many versions including the Aiken, the end of the second act is the scene on a high rocky pass, in which George Harris, with the help of the Quaker Phineas Fletcher, defends his family from the slave catchers who pursue them. A tableau occurs at the end of this scene, after Phineas Fletcher has pushed Tom Loker off the cliff. In the Lemon and Taylor version, a similar tableau occurs but at the end of the last act; in this instance it is Cassy who pushes Legree off a high rocky pass, followed by a tableau. All of the versions of the play that deal with the Shelby plantation include a tableau of Eliza crossing the Ohio River on the ice. In most cases this occurs at the end of the first act, but in Lemon and Taylor it occurs in Act 2, scene 4, the penultimate scene of the act. In this case the crossing of the ice is not necessary for the plot, since Eliza is immediately recaptured by her pursuers and taken down south to the Legree plantation. Thus, what was originally a daring escape becomes a failed escape attempt; but the tableau is retained even when the plot is altered. There are other tableaux that appear in more than one version of the play: Tom surrounded by his family just before he is taken away by Haley (Hermann, Fitzball), the end of the slave market scene in which Tom and Emmeline are bought by Legree (Aiken, Hermann), Tom refusing to whip Emmeline (Aiken, Hermann), Tom's death (Aiken, Hermann), and a final tableau that varies widely given changes in the ending (to be discussed later).

In all of the versions, most of the tableaux occur at scene ends. In one of the promptbooks for the Aiken version, the prompter has noted that a relatively long scene in the typescript, Act 6, scene 5, should be broken down into three shorter scenes.¹⁹ The first of these short scenes ends with Legree striking Tom, who falls unconscious and is carried off stage. The second scene, beginning with the entrance of Shelby, Marks, and Cute, ends with the death of Legree. The third scene, between young Shelby and Tom, ends with the latter's death. The prompter

notes the addition of a tableau on Legree's line "Well, his mouth is shut up at last—that's one comfort" at the point at which Legree strikes Tom down. A new tableau is thus introduced to mark the end of the first, short scene; the device helps to make the transition between Tom's exit and the entrance of Shelby, Marks, and Cute.

As the theatre historian Russell Jackson has noted, the tableau was also sometimes known as a "strong curtain" and frequently prompted applause, sometimes giving rise to a second picture.²⁰ One version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Charles Morton, actually spells out the tableau to be used for the second curtain. Act 3 ends with Eva's death scene as follows:

ST. CLARE. (*sinking on his knees*) Farewell beloved child!
(*Solemn music, slow curtain.*) (*Second curtain, same positions.*)

TOPSY. (*sobs*) Oh, missie Eva—darlin missie Eva.
(*sobs*) (*If slaves are used, they sing hymn for second curtain*)

The use of tableaux as a cue for applause helps to explain their occurrence at the end of acts or big climactic scenes in all of the versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This placement was the commonest one for theatrical tableaux, to the point that some commentators assume it was the only one. There were others, however. Tableaux could be used within scenes, to punctuate a surprising revelation or reversal, as in the example from *How to Write Photoplays*, or even to mark the entrance of a leading character or actor, as with Henry Irving's first entrance as Mathias in Leopold Lewis's *The Bells*.²¹

This is borne out by the theatrical versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although they are not as clearly marked in the playscripts, there are some instances in which we believe scenes began with strong pictorial effects, if not static tableaux, crowd scenes "discovered" when the curtains were pulled back to reveal a vista of a busy open-air space. The written descriptions call for movement on the part of extras while nonetheless constituting a stage picture.

Lemon and Taylor describe the beginning of the third act as follows: "*Legree's Plantation on the Red River. House stretches obliquely up the stage. Machine for weighing cotton stands in front. Slave quarters and fields in distance, with the swamp beyond. As the curtain rises, the slaves are discovered, some grouped with their cotton baskets and resting, others slowly bringing their loads in from the plantation.*" The fairhand copy of Hermann also has Act 3, scene 3, occur on Legree's plantation, the set including his mansion, the cotton weighing house in the distance, and slaves picking cotton. Sometimes the big set provided the backdrop for a large-scale musical number, a dance or choral piece, after which the action resumed. The handbill for "The Second Part of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" referred to above advertises Act 3, scene 3 as containing "Legree's Cotton Plantation—Trio (New American Melody), 'The old Folks at Home'—The Process of Picking, Weighing and Housing the Cotton." In Aiken's published version, Act 6 opens quite simply, without any intimation of a picture: "*Dark landscape. An old, roofless shed. Tom is discovered in shed, lying on some old cotton bagging.*" However, in one of the promptbooks a notation has been made, indicating a more elaborate opening of the scene: "*Plantation. Dance breakdown. When all off W[ait]. Slow flats. Music. Lights. Lights full on scene 1 = Act VI. Cotton plantation. Niggers discovered end of dance. W[ait].*" It seems that in this production the act began with a view of the plantation, and that slaves danced a breakdown. The flats then moved in as the scene shifted to Tom and Cassy in the shed. Once the scene was over, the flats moved out again, to reveal the slaves on the plantation, their dance now finished. John C. Morrow also cites an unidentified promptbook from the Harvard Theatre Collection that suggests a similar scene, although placed at the opening of Act 5, scene 3, the first scene on the Legree plantation in the Aiken version: "*Plantation of Legree—Negroes picking cotton at back—full stage—Characteristic cotton field—Negroes sing, dance and introduce specialties.*"

At end of which Legree enters on horseback and scatters Negroes R & L."²²

Other spectacular settings for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* included the slave market set, which, like the plantation set, was often used as a back drop for musical numbers, and a vista of a steamboat on the Mississippi, conveyed by means of a panorama in one early production.²³ Harry Birdoff describes the use of a panorama showing a steamboat on the Mississippi in the Jarrett and Palmer production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1878. By the time of the Peck and Fursman production in 1888, this kind of spectacle had become more elaborate, involving a re-enactment of a historical regatta between the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Natchez* on the Mississippi.²⁴

The true tableaux in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, did not depend upon the sheer spectacle of the plantation, auction or riverboat scenes, i.e., they did not have an essentially descriptive function. Rather, they served to sum up a specific narrative point in pictorial form. As Martin Meisel has argued, the tableau represents a moment of suspended action, a moment chosen so that the grouping of figures epitomized the forces arrayed in conflict.²⁵ It arrests the flow of the narrative so as to produce a heightened sense of its significance.

A writer in *The Stage* (19 August 1881) described one strategy of tableau construction: "To intensify a particular climax forming a picture in which each character takes a different attitude, though at the same time one exemplifying the dominant idea, or a portion of it, is a task to fulfil which successfully taxes the imagination, ingenuity and general perception of effect of the person responsible for it."²⁶ A good tableau, then, brings a set of meaningful units — the conventional postures or attitudes assumed by the actors — into relation with one another.

The description of the tableaux in the Hermann version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* provides a clear example of tableau construction through grouping together figures in incongruous "attitudes" or emo-

tional postures. The tableau at the end of act 1 is described as follows:

Eliza rushes on to a high bank, exclaims "Heaven protect me!" then leaps from the bank to a raft of ice; and springing from one block to another, reaches, with her child, the opposite shore; here a stranger helps her up. (A girl, attired to represent Eliza in the distance, and a CHILD to personate the man who receives her, will add much to the effect of the scene.) HALEY and SLAVES rush on; in vain he urges them to follow.

TABLEAU of Vengeance and Disappointment on the one bank — Gratitude to Providence on the other.

In the fairhand copy, a prompter has made a similar notation for the scene on a high rocky pass, following the death of Loker: "Tableau of Horror L.H. Gratitude R.H."

Though without a description that specifies the various attitudes or postures to be assumed by the actors, many other tableaux in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* focus on a moment of conflict by grouping together characters in postures that represent seemingly irreconcilable emotional or moral states. For example, in both the Fitzball and Hermann versions the tableau of Uncle Tom taking leave of his family includes Haley. Fitzball describes the end of the scene as follows:

CHLOE. (*holding Tom*) No — oh murder! Oh fire! Childrens, childrens! Come and kiss your daddy — (*Shelby goes out C.*) Them going to take'm away. (*Children run down R.*) What'll we do! What'll we do!

TOM. (*kissing them*) Bless'm all — bless'm all!

HAL. (*flourishing whip*) Come nigger, I can't spare no time for nonsense. (*Music. Tom tries to break away.*)

TOM. Chloe, now Chloe!

(*Picture closed in.*)

[In pencil] (— Song — W[ait])

This tableau depends upon a contrast between two attitudes: Haley flourishing his whip, and Chloe and the children hanging onto Tom. Indeed, in the Hermann version the tableau is prompted by Haley's entrance.²⁷ It is not simply Tom's farewell to his family that is emphasized, then, but the conflict between the slave trader and the loyal wife.

Another example of a tableau constructed through contrast is Tom's refusal to whip Emmeline (Act 5, scene 3, in Aiken; Act 3, scene 3, in the fairhand copy of Hermann).²⁸ Legree orders his overseers, Sambo and Quimbo, to take Tom away and whip him for his refusal to follow orders. But in the Aiken version, while the dialogue calls for Sambo and Quimbo to take Tom off stage, the tableau shows Legree himself about to administer the punishment:

Music. Sambo and Quimbo seize Tom and drag him up stage. Legree seizes Emmeline, and throws her round. She falls on her knees, with her hands lifted in supplication. Legree raises his whip, as if to strike Tom. Picture closed in.

The tableau has Legree rather than his overseers lift the whip, constituting a composite image at the expense of a linear presentation of the narrative events. This is motivated by its furnishing the most effective visual summary of the conflicts that have been played out in the scene. The composite character of the image is also what gives the tableau its punctuating force.

Another, perhaps more familiar, strategy for heightening the narrative significance of the picture was to utilize iconography that evoked relatively abstract or generalized meanings. The final apotheosis scene of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* offers the best example of this tendency, which is operative to some degree in many other instances.

As the play has been given many different endings over the years, it is necessary to summarize some of the more important variants. The version of the ending printed in Aiken has become the stereotype of the apotheosis scene:

Gorgeous clouds, tinted with sunlight. Eva, robed in white, is discovered on the back of a milk-white dove, with expanded wings, as if just soaring upward. Her hands are extended in benediction over St. Clare and Uncle Tom who are kneeling and gazing up to her. Expressive music. Slow curtain.

I. Blaine Quarnstrom has suggested that the

staging of this tableau could be quite extravagant, especially in large-city productions, “some of them flying winged angels during the Allegory as well as both Little Eva and Uncle Tom.”²⁹ But touring Uncle Tom troupes could not carry the equipment that permitted this kind of spectacle. The Harmount troupe, which toured the rural Midwest from 1903, evolved an alternative. Following Uncle Tom's death, the backdrop was lifted to show a painted drop of the “Rock of Ages” — a young woman clings to a cross, her only support in a stormy sea. The Rock of Ages drop gave way to a view of clouds, created by layering scrim and solid cloud drops. The cloud drops were lifted one by one, finally revealing Eva seen through a circle of clouds painted on the final drop.³⁰ Thus, both the ending described in the printed Aiken text and the one actually employed by the Harmount troupe introduce elements of Christian allegory.

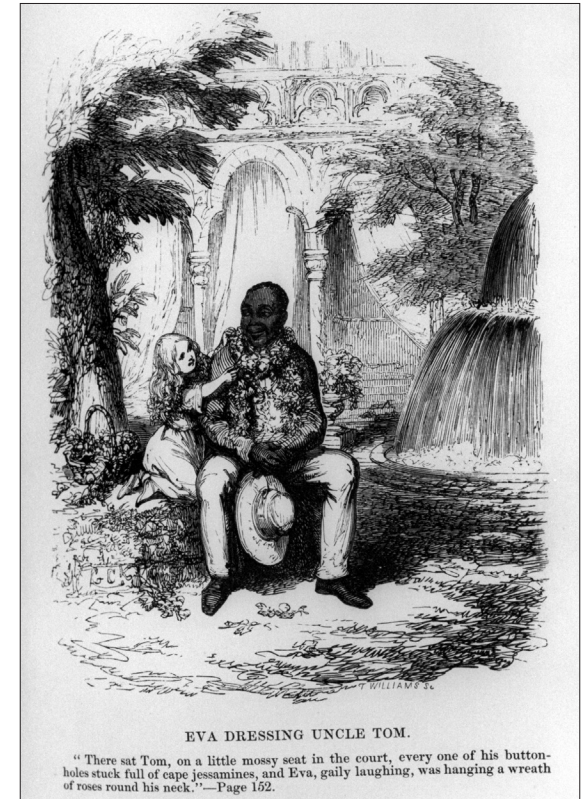
Other versions of the play ended with a historical tableau in celebration of the nation. Although invoking an ideology very different from that of the apotheosis, these tableaux functioned similarly to introduce an abstract interpretive framework at one remove from the immediate interests of the plot. In 1852–3, English productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* frequently ended on a patriotic note. In the Fitzball version, Uncle Tom is rescued by Mr. Shelby and returns to Aunt Chloe in Kentucky. Mr. Shelby then frees his slaves, and George Harris pronounces the final speech: “And, oh, if it be possible there can be any human heart which advocates the cause of slavery! let it turn hither, and contemplate the real felicity of a good Christian! who has just set captivity free, and broken the chains of bondage!” The disposition of the characters at the final curtain is noted in the script: Topsy, Chloe, Tom, George, Eliza, Shelby, Mrs. Shelby, Senator Bird, Mrs. Bird. Three children stood down-stage of this group. Up-stage a banner unfurled that read: “No Slavery!” *Hail Columbia* was played in the orchestra.

Whether or no the Hermann version of *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin was produced in America, the ending of the published version could have been used on either side of the Atlantic in 1852: George Harris and little George Shelby appear on Legree's plantation in search of Uncle Tom and form a tableau beside the slave on his deathbed. However, the fairhand copy of Hermann adds a second picture, designed to appeal to the patriotism of British audiences. Following the death of Uncle Tom, there is a scene change. George and Eliza arrive in Canada at what is described as a “British fort.” The script calls for flags, soldiers and the orchestra to play “Rule Britannia.”

Historical tableau endings for American audiences were introduced somewhat later in the century, presumably once the play's anti-slavery, and by implication pro-Union, stance had become less controversial. In 1897, for example, Barbour and Harkins added a tableau of Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation.³¹

Whether they employ Christian or national iconography, the allegorical tenor of these final tableaux is unmistakable. It is more difficult to discern this kind of abstraction in the case of other stage tableaux, which did not usually depend to such an extent on extra-diegetic references. Nonetheless, the performance tradition does seem to have favored ones that entailed an abstract point or moral. In the Aiken version, the scene of Tom and Eva in the garden (Act 2, scene 2) begins: “*Tom discovered, seated on a bank, with Eva on his knee — his buttonholes are filled with flowers, and Eva is hanging a wreath around his neck.*” The entrance of St. Clare and Ophelia prompts Tom's line: “Look yer; I'm the ox, mentioned in the good book, dressed up for sacrifice,” dialogue that appears in both the novel and the Aiken play. Not only was the opening of this scene selected for a theatrical tableau, it was also illustrated in many editions of the novel, although in the Cruikshank illustration shown here the reference to the sacrificial ox is not reproduced under the picture, presumably because this edition appeared too early in 1852 for the line



2.4

to have achieved canonical status (Figure 2.4).³² But the visual prominence traditionally accorded to this scene derives from Tom's quotation of the Bible. Both the theatrical realizations and the book illustrations opportunistically seized upon this moment in which the dialogue lends the picture of Tom wreathed in flowers a symbolic status.

The predilection for symbolic or quasi-allegorical tableaux apparent in the garden scene may well have influenced the creation of other tableaux within the performance tradition. Recall Hermann's instructions for the scene of Eliza crossing the Ohio that called for a “*Tableau of Vengeance and Disappointment on the one bank — Gratitude to Providence on the other.*” This stage direction invokes the kind of

description of gesture frequently found in works such as the *Conférence de M. Le Brun sur l'expression générale et particulière* or Henry Siddons's *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture*, an English adaptation of J. J. Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimic*.³³ Forming the theoretical basis for important nineteenth-century acting manuals, these works illustrated the physical representation of abstract emotional states such as anger, astonishment, vengeance, etc. Thus, Hermann's direction for a "*Tableau of Vengeance and Disappointment*" may well have been as much a way of signaling to the actors the postures they were to assume as an indication of how audiences were to interpret the scene. But even if we cannot assume that the audience immediately read the end of Act 1 as a picture of Gratitude to Providence and Vengeance, there is at least an indication that actors and playwrights conceived of tableaux in such terms. The tendency already discussed to construct tableaux out of opposed elements would have underscored a conception of the actor's pose in symbolic terms. For example, the tableau of Eliza praying on one bank and Haley cursing on the other presupposes some sort of moral contrast between them. Later stagings of the same tableau set up a different contrast, between mother and baby on the one hand, and the pack of hounds nipping at her heels on the other. But the point is that in either case the tableau arrests the narrative flow at a moment that produces a highly charged and schematic opposition between two terms. Hence the sense of "stepping back" from the story to emphasize abstract or general qualities. The tableaux in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* can be summed up in the abstract captions employed by nineteenth-century illustrators as well as playwrights: "Gratitude and Vengeance" or "Maternal Fortitude."

While the possibilities for schematization and abstraction were crucial in determining the selection of scenes and incidents for a tableau, it is important to note that, with the exception of the ending, most remained narratively integrated. By far the most common narrative motivation for

tableaux was surprise or astonishment. This convention extends well beyond the performance tradition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Evoking a story related in Shakespeare's *King John* in which a blacksmith is immobilized by the news of Prince Arthur's death, Siddons recommends that "the man struck with sudden astonishment ought to remain fixed like a statue to his posture for the time."³⁴ In his 1775 performance as Hamlet, David Garrick held his pose of terror and astonishment at the sight of his father's ghost "for so long that some spectators wondered if he needed prompting."³⁵ So common was this way of motivating the close of an act that Rossini parodies it at the end of the first act of *The Barber of Seville*. The revelation of the Count's true identity to the officer of the guard produces a "*quadro di stupore*" in which all the characters on stage (except Almaviva and Figaro) are immobilized:

Fredda ed immobile
Come una statua,
Fiato non restagli
Da respirar.³⁶

The convention extended to colloquial usage. One of the Oxford English Dictionary's citations for "tableau" is of such a usage: "She overheard a gentleman ask another, pointing to two of the witnesses, 'Which of those old cats is Mrs. C.?' Mrs. C. leaned over and said, 'That particular tabby, sir, is behind you.' Tableau!"³⁷

Based upon the evidence of the promptbooks, a tableau of this type appears in the scene in a tavern, Act 1, scene 4, in the Aiken version (although as we shall see there is evidence of more than one way of motivating this particular tableau). Eliza and Harry are resting in a back room of the tavern, exhausted by their escape and frustrated to find that the ferry across the river is not operating due to ice. Haley arrives at the tavern and meets Marks and Loker. Phineas Fletcher, Eliza's ally, enters the scene at this point and joins the men in conversation. Several promptbooks have the notation "*story*."³⁸ Phineas

here tells Loker and Marks a story that is not in the Aiken text. The point of this story is partly to distract their attention as Eliza tiptoes across the rear to escape through the window, but in two promptbooks Phineas describes the escape of an imaginary or absent slave in such a way as to tell Eliza how she can escape.³⁹ The slave catchers make a deal, which Eliza overhears, dividing up the profits to be made from the sale of the runaways. According to the printed version of the Aiken, Loker "strikes his hand violently on the table" when the deal between the men is completed (all of the promptbooks indicate that the striking of the table was amplified by a "crack" from the wings). Eliza, who is already outside the window, screams in response to the sound: "*They all start to their feet. Eliza disappears. Music, chord.*" Although a tableau is not explicitly called for here, it seems likely that the men freeze at the point at which Eliza screams since arresting the action of the slave catchers at this point would give her time to make a getaway. Certainly, the use of sound — the "crack" from the wings, Eliza's scream — provides the conventional motivation of the tableau as a moment of surprise.

Surprise was not the only means of motivating the suspension of the action for the tableau, however. It was also possible to produce a situation in which the characters effectively immobilized each other, usually through the threat of violence, as is indicated by the example of Sheridan's *The Critic* already cited. This kind of tableau occurs in the Edison version of the scene in the tavern, in which Phineas pulls a gun on the slave traders to prevent them from following Eliza out the window. It seems unlikely that this scene end would have been entirely without theatrical precedent, and indeed a photograph of this moment from the Brady stage production shows a similar disposition of these characters in a very similar tavern set (Figure 2.5). Another motivated tableau of this type occurs in Act 2, scene 3, of the Aiken version, in which Phineas Fletcher tricks Haley, Marks and Loker into a cellar

and prevents them from pursuing George Harris by holding a chair over their heads:

(The trap is forced open. Haley and Marks appear. Phineas seizes a chair and stands over trap — picture.)

PHINEAS. Down with you or I'll smash you into apple-fritters! *(Tableau — closed in).*

A similar use of the tableau is found at the end of Act 1 in the Hazlewood version. Hazlewood introduces a new comic character, Jemima, who holds a gun on the slave catchers, keeping them immobilized, so that Eliza may cross the Ohio.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this examination of the theatrical adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* about the use of pictures and tableaux in these plays. First, there was a strong performance tradition for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which, despite variations in the text and staging used, singled out a series of moments in the story as canonical — as necessary elements without which a production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would not be a proper production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; and the customary representation of most of these canonical moments involved one or more pictures or tableaux. Second, pictures and tableaux most frequently occur at the end of a scene, but are also found at the beginning and in the middle of scenes. Third, pictures and tableaux varied in their motivation, some constituting a composite summary of a complex plot situation, some an allegorical commentary on the action, some a moment of verisimilitudinous stasis. Although these moments clearly draw on the body of nineteenth-century practices involving the realization of abstract ideas analyzed by Martin Meisel and others, it is important to stress also their contribution to the texture of the drama, the way they interrupt the continuity of the action and rhythmically articulate the performance of the play. It is these functional aspects of the tableau that become especially important when we turn to the fate of the tableau in the different medium of the cinema.



CHAPTER 4 The Fate of the Tableau in the Cinema

Uncle Tom's Cabin was first adapted into film in 1903, and there were at least six other adaptations during the silent period. We have been able to examine three of these in detail: the adaptations by Edison in 1903; by Vitagraph in 1910; and by World in 1914.⁴⁰ Before proceeding to an analysis of the tableaux, or lack of them, in these adaptations, something should be said about the tableau in early cinema generally.

Although modern viewers and film historians often assume a direct continuity in acting practice from nineteenth-century theatre to early film, in fact the actors in the latter rarely hold a pose for a prolonged period. Unlike theatrical performances, films did not stop for scene or act changes, nor were they designed to solicit applause. Hence there was no need for the “strong curtain,” one of the primary functions of tableaux in the theatre. Nonetheless, the other functions of the tableau adduced above—

summary of a situation, allegorical commentary, punctuation of important narrative moments—did form part of film dramaturgy, especially in the period of the early feature, hence the presence of tableaux or their cinematic equivalents.

Tableau-like shots are most frequent in films with strong ties to the theatre or the graphic arts. They are pronounced in religious films such as the Pathé films of Christ's Passion, inheritors of a strong iconographic tradition. Indeed, as already remarked, there is a tableau of the “Last Supper” in the 1925 film *Ben-Hur*. In *L'Assassinat du duc de Guise* (The Assassination of the Duc de Guise), which utilized actors from the Comédie Française, the *mise-en-scène* is predicated upon the assumption of poses by the acting ensemble.⁴¹ Film adaptations of stage plays with an on-going performance tradition, like *East Lynne* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, also observed the canonical tableaux in some form, as we shall see.⁴²

In these instances the freezing of the actors is usually narratively motivated. It is as if the filmmakers needed a reason to bring the flow of the action to a halt. In the earlier of the National Film and Television Archive's two versions of the Pathé *La Vie et la Passion de Jésus-Christ* (The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ), when the soldiers come to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, a tableau is produced when Judas counts his money in the foreground while in the background the soldiers physically hold back the disciples (Figure 2.6).⁴³ In the same scene in the later version, a pose is motivated when Jesus intervenes to prevent Peter from killing one of the guards (Figure 2.7). In *L'Assassinat du duc de Guise*, the king has the conspirators swear to commit the murder; their pose with swords lifted is thus explained as a vow (Figure 2.8). The final tableau of this film, in the last scene, “Le Corps de Garde,” is motivated as a moment of surprise



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and horror, when the Duke's mistress pulls off the King's mask, confirming that he is indeed behind the murder.⁴⁴

Examples of motivated tableau of this sort can be found in American films as well. Eileen Bowser notes a review of *Gold Is Not All* in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* that complains that at the moment when the rich and poor woman meet "the two gaze at each other over-long."⁴⁵ Bowser points out that the pause criticized in *Gold Is Not All* served "to emphasize the moment, the contrast that the two [women] represented."⁴⁶ It is a kind of tableau, though brief and motivated by the poor woman's picking up and returning the handkerchief the rich woman has dropped. Similarly, in *The Country Doctor*, the doctor (Frank Powell) is called on an emergency visit to a farmhouse. He prepares to perform a surgical procedure to save a young girl in danger of dying from diphtheria. The nurse-maid from his household arrives at the farmhouse and begs him to come home; his own daughter, also suffering from the disease, is in dire need of the procedure. There is a momentary pause, as Powell stands immobilized between the nurse-maid and the mother of the dying girl, the tableau motivated by his being torn between his professional duty and his familial obligation.

Strongly motivated tableaux continue to occur in feature films. Despite the fact that *Cabiria* eschews tableaux where the script seems to call for them, there is one tableau in the film. Fulvius Axilla announces to Cabiria's parents that, although he did find their lost daughter, he was later forced to abandon her in mortal peril; all three characters bow their heads and remain quiet in grief (Figure 2.9). The features we have seen by Albert Capellani — *Les Misérables*, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (Ninety-Three), *Notre Dame de Paris* — frequently make use of tableaux. Thus, in *Notre Dame de Paris*, when Frollo discovers Esmeralda sleeping in Quasimodo's cell and threatens her virtue, Quasimodo enters, frees Esmeralda from Frollo's clutches and starts to strangle him.



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Esmeralda seizes Quasimodo's arm from behind and orders him to stop, resulting in a first tableau, with Esmeralda on the left, Quasimodo leaning over Frollo and Frollo cowering right (Figure 2.10). Quasimodo then crosses to front left, and Esmeralda pulls herself to her full height, stares at Frollo and points to the door midground left (Figure 2.11). Again all freeze, then relax as Frollo slinks to the door and exits left. Feuillade uses tableaux much more sparingly than does Capellani, but certain crucial situations are so represented in *Judex*. One example is the scene that follows the Comte



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de Trémeuse's suicide, in which the Comtesse's two sons vow to seek vengeance on the man that brought about their father's death (Figure 2.12). Another is the moment when the Comtesse is reconciled to Jacqueline, the daughter of her enemy, by seeing her with her small son and his friend the Licorice Kid, heads bowed in prayer (Figure 2.13); the film thus produces a tableau of goodness and innocence to explain and help motivate the Comtesse's acceptance of Jacqueline. In a scene in *Alias Jimmy Valentine* Tourneur uses tableaux as the protagonists remember their previous life of



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crime; cutaways show incidents from the past, as they freeze in slightly varied attitudes four times (Figures 2.14 to 2.17).

But as we have noted, even in the very earliest films tableaux are not simply carried over wholesale from the theatre. One common variation on a definite freeze on the part of all of the actors within the shot is to incorporate limited forms of figure movement within the picture. The scourging of Christ in the earlier NFTVA Pathé Passion offers an example of repetitive movement. Midground center there is a whipping post against a backdrop representing an obliquely receding vault. As Christ is taken down from the whipping post, a crowd of torturers and high priests' spies scorn and threaten him, forming a group reminiscent of paintings of the same subject (Figure 2.18). Rather than holding a stationary pose, they all cyclically repeat brief gestures preserving the overall picture without stasis.

Another strategy is to have one actor or group of actors move while the others maintain a pose. The scene of the crucifixion in the later NFTVA Pathé Passion evokes a composition also familiar from painting, showing Christ in the center with the thieves left and right, all three crosses rising above a crowd of soldiers, disciples and other onlookers (Figure 2.19). Most of the crowd remain still, but



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the leader of the high priests' spies (the figure in the striped cloak in the foreground of Figure 2.19) makes agitated gestures, apparently in remorse. Inversely, in the final scene of *Au pays noir* (In the Black Country), when the miner hero discovers that his eldest son is among the dead after a mining accident, he, his wife and their other children form a static group representing domestic grief; meanwhile, the gendarmes and other miners in the foreground continue the mine rescue work (Figure 2.20).

In some films a strong pictorial effect is cre-

ated without a definite freeze by the use of big sets organized in perspective in which the movement of human figures is minimized by the scale and apparent depth of the shot. We have suggested that a similar emphasis on setting, as opposed to the actor's pose, existed in the scene-opening pictures in the stage productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the theatre, such stage pictures were often combined with processions, an established part of the spectacle in theatrical pantomime and burlesque.⁴⁷ In film, long shots of processions or massive



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assemblies could provide the outlines of a picture while accommodating the movement of individual actors. Such pictures are most evident in big-budget spectacles that employed large sets and large numbers of extras. For example, at the end of part 2 of *Cabiria*, Croessa the nursemaid is captured by Carthaginians angered at the rescue of her charge. Outside the temple of Moloch, Croessa, held by the priests, appears on a raised platform (Figure 2.21). The crowd is arranged in the left foreground, below the platform, and on the right, all along the stairs

that lead to the temple entrance in the background. While Croessa moves in response to the threatening gestures of the Carthaginians, the general effect is of a static picture, until the end of the shot with its procession towards the interior of the temple, where Croessa is to be sacrificed.⁴⁸

The introduction of repetitive or limited forms of figure movement within the shot was not the only way to render the picture more dynamic; a variety of cinematic devices could also have this effect. Unlike the scene in which Croessa is menaced by

the Carthaginians, many of the big sets in *Cabiria* are displayed with oblique tracking shots. While the set is the dominant feature of shot 112, in the interior of Moloch's temple, or shots 254 and 256, the banquet hall of Sophonisbe's father, dramatic changes in perspective and shot scale emphasize the mobility of viewpoint (Figures 2.22 and 2.23).

Before classical Hollywood editing conventions were fully in place, the possibility of a change in framing still affected the use of tableaux in cinema. In the earlier NFTVA Pathé *Passion*, for example,



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the scene in which Veronica displays the napkin with Christ's features after she has wiped his face takes the form of a picture with limited movement (Veronica turns from side to side holding up the napkin for the crowd to see). But, in the later version, there is a cut from a long shot of Veronica displaying the napkin amidst the crowd to a medium shot of Veronica alone against a neutral background (Figures 2.24 and 2.25). The change of framing performs many of the same functions as the quasi-tableau in the earlier version: it provides dramatic emphasis, directs the spectator's attention, and slows down the pace of the action. This cut-in to a closer view in the later

version also bears resemblance to another device of early film, the emblematic close up.

From almost as early as films began to have more than one shot, it was customary to begin, or more frequently end a film with a shot epitomizing the subject, like the frontispiece of a book. These shots, called "emblematic shots" by Noël Burch, echo stage tableaux in many ways.⁴⁹ They can be allegorical, like the "Tableau" of corrupted justice at the end of *The Kleptomaniac*, or sensational, like the famous close shot of the bandit Barnes shooting at the audience that could be placed at the beginning or the end of *The Great Train Robbery*, or summarizing, like the matching opening and closing closer shots in *Bold Bank Robbery*, showing the villains in a drawing room in expensive suits and in jail in convict garb, respectively. Later, especially in Pathé films, the closing emblematic shot is a cut-in on the final scene, showing, for example, the main character's reactions — Max weeping at the end of *Les Débuts d'un patineur* (First Attempt at Skating), or Alphonse chewing the eponymous prop at the end of the Biograph film *The Curtain Pole* — or summing up the final resolution — the reunited families at the ends of *Rescued by Rover* and *A Drunkard's Reformation*. These last examples involve still poses, and so constitute true tableaux. Most of the others do not, but the cut-in is nevertheless functionally the equivalent of a tableau.

Finally, cutting not only provided the possibility of moving in for a closer view, it also obviated one of the theatrical motives for tableaux. Although scene transitions in early film were not necessarily direct cuts — dissolves, cuts to intertitles, and (later) fades out and in were also used — these transitions were always brief.⁵⁰ It was thus possible to terminate a scene-end tableau relatively quickly, that is, without the "wait" routinely noted (usually as a "W" in a circle) in many promptbooks for stage melodramas, and without pausing while the curtain was drawn, a process often noted "picture closed in."

The cinematic tableau was thus rendered more dynamic than its theatrical equivalent. In part this resulted from the introduction of limited forms of figure movement within the shot. It was also achieved by the introduction of cinematic devices; the use of camera movement, the emblematic close-up, and rapid scene changes. The extent to which the cinema altered the traditional form of the theatrical tableaux is evident in the earliest version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The Edison film version of 1903, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Slavery Days*, remains the closest to the theatrical performance tradition.⁵¹ The filmmakers' strategy for abbreviating the lengthy Aiken play within the short-film format seems to have been to string together the scenes and incidents consecrated within the performance tradition. Intertitles like "Tom and Eva in the Garden" and "Tableau: the Death of Uncle Tom" almost function as captions, identifying scenes in terms of the conventional tableau, even though the incident occasioning that tableau may occur long after the scene's opening. The film also retains a specialty act, the dance at the opening of the auction scene, which is mentioned in two of the Aiken promptbooks, and familiar bits of stage business, such as Topsy plaguing Aunt Ophelia. The scene of the race between the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee*, filmed with model steamboats, may have derived from the sensation scene described by Birdoff, first staged in 1888.⁵²

The film consisted of 14 single-shot scenes, two with superimpositions, each preceded by a title, as listed below.⁵³

- Scene 1. *Eliza Pleads with Tom to Run Away.*
- Scene 2. *Phineas Outwits the Slave Traders.*
- Scene 3. *The Escape of Eliza.*
- Scene 4. *Reunion of Eliza and George Harris.*
- Scene 5. *Race Between the Rob't E. Lee and Natchez.*
- Scene 6. *Rescue of Eva.*
- Scene 7. *The Welcome Home to St Clare, Eva, Ophelia, and Uncle Tom.*
- Scene 8. *Eva and Tom in the Garden.*

Scene 9. *Death of Eva.*

Scene 10. *St Clare Defends Uncle Tom.*

Scene 11. *Auction Sale of St Clare's Slaves.*

Scene 12. *Tom Refuses to Flog Emaline.*

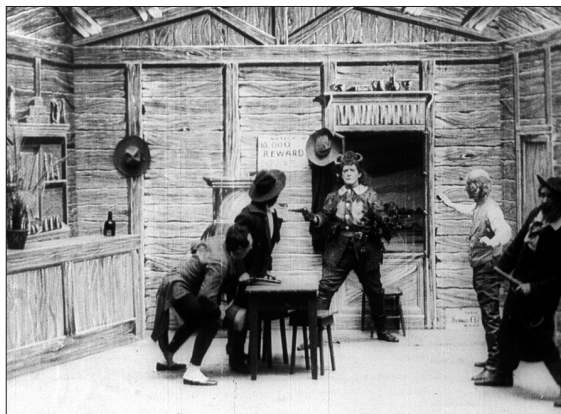
Scene 13. *Marks Avenges the Death of St Clare and Uncle Tom.*

Scene 14. *Tableau: Death of Uncle Tom.*

Despite the evident theatrical influences, there are no prolonged freezes. Scene 2 concludes with a definite but brief freeze, the tableau already discussed that is motivated by Phineas drawing his guns (Figure 2.26). Most of the other canonical tableaux from the stage tradition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could be illustrated with frame stills from this version, but none of these “tableaux” involves a static pose held for more than a fraction of a second.

The title of Scene 8 evokes one of the canonical tableaux: Tom and Eva in the garden. However, after a lengthy cake-walk by the slaves, the scene merely has Tom accompany Eva out of the house and sit under a tree with her in his lap as he reads her the Bible and gestures to heaven (Figure 2.27); St. Clare enters with Aunt Ophelia, expresses anxiety about Eva's health, and Tom carries Eva back into the house. There is no sign of the wreath, and no true stasis, though, of course, Tom and Eva are relatively static while she is in his lap.

In some cases, stasis is broken up by repetitive movement. Thus, Scene 3, Eliza crossing the Ohio, shows the river represented by a moving backcloth with painted lumps of ice. Eliza moves perpendicularly to the lens axis on a conveyor belt or truck obscured by some painted rocks in the foreground. Dogs and slavers run across the forestage from right to left. Tom Loker tries to pull the lawyer Marks out of the river into which he has fallen (Figure 2.28). The movement is repetitive—Marks is pulled out by his umbrella, but only emerges part way and then falls back in. Similarly, Scene 4, corresponding to the scene on a rocky pass in Aiken, ends with a static composition, but one incorporating repetitive movement. To the right of a cabin (according



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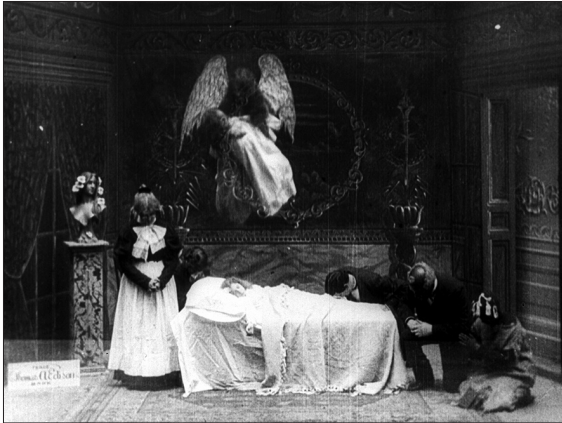


2.29

to the Edison catalog the home of the Quaker girl Ruth, Phineas's intended) are two painted flats representing a rocky cliff face. At the end of the scene, Phineas, George and Eliza stand between the two flats, “up on the rocks,” looking down on Marks and the fallen Loker. Marks has turned away from them and faces the camera, his knees knock together as he tries to shield himself from the fugitives' bullets with his open umbrella, and the third slave hunter shakes his fist at the fugitives (Figure 2.29).

In other cases, what was a tableau in the theatrical performance tradition is marked by a spectacular cinematic device that does not entail

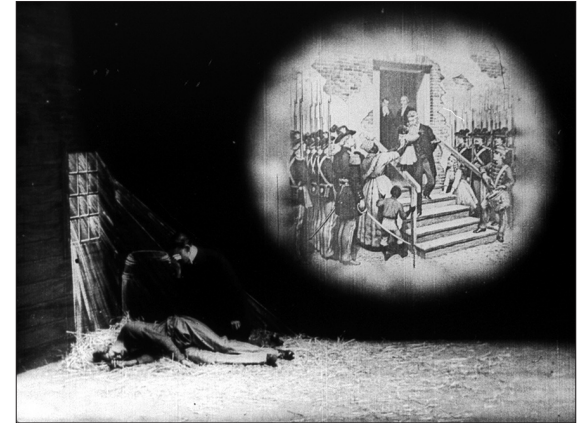
immobilizing all the actors within the scene. Scene 9, the death of Eva, uses superimpositions to show an angel taking Eva to heaven. The actors round the bed are static, but the superimposed figures are in continuous motion (Figure 2.30). Scene 14, the death of Uncle Tom, shows George Shelby kneeling by Tom's bedside. Tom gestures in response to a painted angel that appears in the upper right-hand corner of the frame (Figure 2.31). As Tom dies, the angel disappears giving way to the apotheosis, a series of superimposed drawn images described by the Edison catalog as “visions”: “John Brown being led to execution (Figure 2.32), a battle scene from



2.30



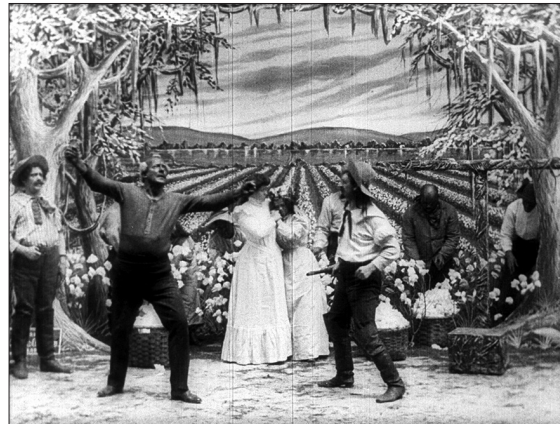
2.31



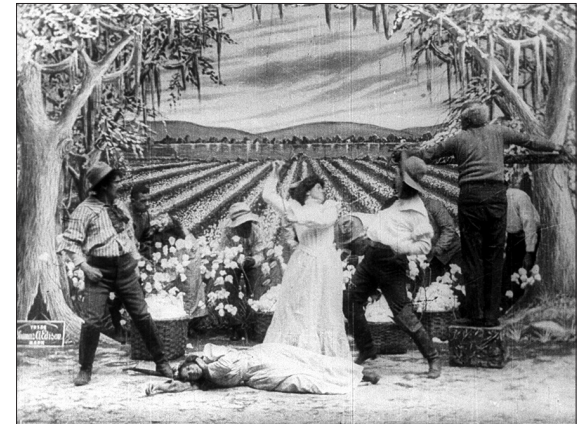
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the Civil War, and a cross with a vision of emancipation, showing Abraham Lincoln with the negro slave kneeling at his feet with broken manacles."⁵⁴ These visions are certainly reminiscent of the allegorical tableaux used in the theatre. But the circularly vignettted images, clearly drawings rather than photographs, are substituted for one another within the same general scene in what looks like a lantern-slide show rather than the realization of pictures with immobile human figures.

Perhaps the most frequent alternative to a long-held pose is what we can call a "truncated tableau."

Scene 10, the auction scene, ends with the actors in the postures described in the published version of the Aiken text: Tom and Emmeline kneeling, and Legree standing between them with raised whip (Figure 2.33); but this is only held for a few frames. Scene 12 takes place on a cotton-field set. Tom refuses to whip Emmeline and is tied to a tree, right. Legree orders his overseer to whip Tom, but the overseer is stopped by Cassy, who pulls the whip from his hand. Emmeline pleads with Legree and Legree moves to attack her, but he is stopped by Cassy threatening him with the whip. Both the re-

fusal (Figure 2.34) and Cassy's second intervention (Figure 2.35) result in groupings and poses like the stage tableaux, but there is no wait: in the first case, the pose is immediately broken and the scene resumes; in the second, there is an immediate cut to the intertitle introducing the next scene. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is Porter's first film to use cuts to and from intertitles as scene transitions, rather than dissolves. The markedly truncated tableaux at these scene ends might thus indicate experimental uncertainty rather than a regularized practice. Whichever is the case, it suggests that the filmmakers already

felt that scene ends had to be handled differently in the cinema.

The Edison version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, made in 1903, was sold only as a single subject, and was, as far as we know, intended to be projected as a whole. At any rate, the only divisions in it are the fourteen scenes, each with its introductory title. The Vitagraph version of 1910 and the World of 1914, were multiple-reel films. By 1910, most moving-picture houses in the U.S. were showing half-hour or hour-long programs of short films based on the 1,000-foot reel unit, which took a little over a quarter of an hour to project. Most films were a full reel, and exchanges and theatres rented film from producers in reels, but a certain number of the reels contained two shorter subjects adding up to 1,000 feet, known as “split-reel” subjects. The films were interspersed with music, songs and sometimes live acts, and the program was repeated continuously, in metropolitan houses from the early afternoon until the theatre closed late at night. Longer stories were occasionally screened serially, the different reels being issued at intervals, with the narrative in each reel partly self-contained, so as to be intelligible to the viewer who missed one or more of the parts. The Vitagraph *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was such a film. It was in three parts, which were issued on the Tuesday, Friday and Saturday of the week ending Saturday, 30 July 1910. This meant that it was possible for exhibitors to wait until the Saturday and show all three reels together, and despite the competition among theatres to show only the newest films, some theatres seem to have done this. However, each of the three reels has a fairly autonomous narrative, with a partial resolution at the end, especially for all characters other than Uncle Tom himself, who is the only one to appear more than briefly in all three parts. The alternation between the stories of George and Eliza on the one hand and Tom and the St. Clares on the other found both in the book and in the Aiken play is rigorously avoided; George is eliminated and Eliza's adventures after crossing



2.36

the Ohio are omitted, as is any reference to the fates of Topsy and Aunt Ophelia after St. Clare's death. In many ways, the Vitagraph version is the furthest from the Aiken or any other play text of all the film versions we have seen.

Even if the reels were screened one after the other, few theatres in 1910 would have been equipped to show the film without pauses to load each new reel, and even in those with the two projectors necessary for continuous projection across a reel end, it is probable that the projectionist would have left a short break, or used a device such as a dissolve or announcement slide used elsewhere in the program to mark a division between “numbers.”⁵⁵ This produced a situation at the reel end very like that at a curtain in a stage play. And the reel ends in the Vitagraph version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seem to have been typical moments for act-end tableaux.⁵⁶ Reel one ends as Tom bids farewell to the slaves on the Shelby plantation and is carried off by Haley. There is indeed a brief tableau, as two slaves kneel front center, and Tom, standing above them in irons in Haley's wagon, blesses them, but the scene ends with the wagon exiting, and Mrs. Shelby collapsing in tears in her husband's arms — i.e., the scene has a brief anticlimactic epilogue rather than closing with the tableau (Figures 2.36 and 2.37). Plot



2.37

summaries indicate that the last scene of reel two was that of Eva's death.⁵⁷ Neither print that we have seen has any kind of ascent to heaven or vision of angels, but in neither case are we confident that the scene is complete. The National Film and Television Archive print ends before Eva's death. Murray Glass's print has more of the same final scene, including Eva's death, and a tableau with St. Clare burying his face in Tom's shoulder and Tom gazing heavenward. Scratches on the print suggest that this is near a reel end, but it is not clear that there may not once have been sufficient extra footage to include some kind of supernatural manifestation. The end of the third reel is the scene of Tom's death, with the winged figure of Eva appearing over his dying body. Certain narrative elements remain unresolved — the escape of Cassy and Emmeline is not assured, and Legree is still alive — but the contemporary descriptions referred to above tell us that this would have been the last scene, though the tableau might have been extended to include the carrying of Tom's soul to heaven.

Within each reel, however, there is no significant subdivision. There are 38 intertitles for 63 picture shots in the NFTVA print. The intertitles are descriptive titles, specifying time and space for the next sequence, and filling in non-visualized narrative



2.38

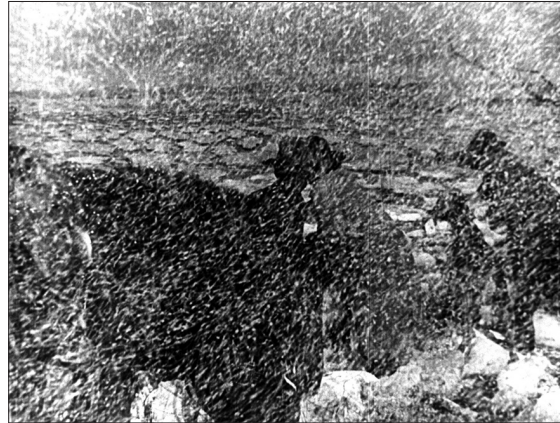
information. Thus, the film consists of a series of short scenes, neither the integral “sequence shots” of the Edison version, nor the complex sequences of feature filmmaking. Within each reel, there are no significant pauses in the action such as would be accompanied by a curtain or open-stage scene change in a theatrical presentation.

Correspondingly, few of the canonical tableaux appear in the form typical of the stage versions, or even truncated, as in the Edison version. The elimination of George Harris, Loker and Marks takes with it the scene in the rocky pass and the arrival in Canada. Eliza does escape across the frozen Ohio River, and she is pursued by bloodhounds, following the stage tradition rather than the novel, but the incident is presented as follows:

27 The Ohio River. A painted backdrop represents the river filled with ice floes. A strip of real water across the middle ground contains moving papier-mâché floes. Eliza runs in front left, carrying Harry, sees the river blocking her way, kneels and prays. Artificial snow is blown onto the scene. She jumps onto one of the floes and exits left, jumping from floe to floe (Figure 2.38).

28 Title: *The pursuers baffled by the Ohio River.*

29 As 27. A white man with dog standing right. Haley rides in front left and dismounts. Snow falls. His horse exits right as two slaves lead their horses on



2.39

left. All scan the horizon rear left, searching for Eliza (Figure 2.39).

30 Title: *Eliza saved by Phineas, the Quaker.*

31 Similar backdrop to 27, but a different foreground bank, with bushes. Eliza, carrying Harry, enters midground left jumping from floe to floe. As she staggers, about to fall into the water, a man in Quaker garb runs on front left, seizes her hand, and helps her off front left (Figure 2.40).⁵⁸

Thus, all the elements of the tableau of “*Vengeance and Disappointment on the one bank and Gratitude to Providence on the other*” are present, but not in a single picture; rather they are dispersed across a series of shots and titles.

Tom’s goodbye to Chloe and the children is a single shot, but the elements of the tableau are, again, presented in succession rather than simultaneously. The scene (33) opens with Tom saying goodbye to the children. One of them is in his lap, Chloe holds another in the cabin doorway to his right. Haley enters left, and calls roughly to Tom. Chloe and the children exit into the cabin, then Haley puts irons on Tom’s wrists. Young George Shelby enters right, looks at the fetters in horror, swears to save Tom as soon as he is able, and exits right. Tom turns and says farewell to his cabin, then follows Haley off left.

Other tableaux are more conventionally pre-



2.40

sented. At the end of the slave market scene (69), Tom and Emmeline kneel front center, with Legree standing over them threatening them with his whip (Figure 2.41). In the cotton field (76), after Sambo has caught Tom helping Lucy, Cassy steps between Sambo and Tom to prevent Tom from being beaten, leading to a true motivated tableau (Figure 2.42), but the scene then continues, as Sambo exits and Tom succors Lucy. In the weighing shed (78) there are two tableaux: when Tom kneels and returns the whip to Legree, refusing to beat Lucy (Figure 2.43); and at the end, after Sambo and Quimbo have dragged Tom away, when Cassy steps between Legree and Lucy to save her from a beating (Figure 2.44).

Thus the only frozen pictures in the film are motivated tableaux, and even they rarely constitute the end of a scene, with a direct cut to a title or the next scene. Rather, the action continues to empty the frame, or close with an anticlimactic picture, what might be called a weak tableau, as at the end of the first reel. If the truncated tableaux in the Edison version are a response to a sense that cinema required a different kind of scene-ending from that of the stage, the surviving reel ending in the Vitagraph version can be seen as a more developed response to the same requirement. Where incidents that



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provided the stage tradition with opportunities for tableaux fall within a reel, the Vitagraph version either disperses the elements of the tableau in time and across shots, or extends the action after the tableau. The World version carries the same tendencies much further.

We have studied four different prints of the version produced by World in 1914, one in the National Film Archive in London (hereafter NFTVA), two in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (LoC1 and LoC2), and a copy distributed as a videocassette by Grapevine Video (GV).⁵⁹ No print is com-

plete, and the ordering and length of shots vary. However, we have also been able to consult the script deposited together with frames of the scenes of the film at the Copyright Office, in conformity with the 1912 Copyright Act. The celluloid frames themselves have decomposed, but a comparison of the script with the surviving prints suggests that it is a sequential description of those frames, and constitutes a virtually complete shot breakdown of the film. We are thus reasonably confident that we have been able to reconstruct the film as it was when copyrighted in the summer of 1914, and virtually

every scene in the reconstruction survives in one or more of the surviving prints. The shot numbering of the examples in the following analysis follows the scene numbering of the copyright script, dividing the scenes as (a), (b), and so on, when there is more than one shot to a scene.⁶⁰

The film was released in five reels, and would have been sold on a states-rights basis, i.e., by a regional distributor booking a small number of prints into theatres, not all of them primarily moving-picture theatres, in the territory to which he was granted exclusive rights. By 1914, even such theatres would have been equipped with multiple projectors, at least in larger towns, so the film could have been screened continuously, as a modern feature film is, but many theatres continued to allow a short break at the ends of reels, and most films continued to be made, like the Vitagraph version, with partly self-contained reels. This seems to be the case with the World *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The script indicates the reel ends, and LoC1 is still divided at the same places: after Eliza's flight from the Shelby plantation; after the Harrises reach safety in Canada; after Eva's death; and as Emmeline escapes Legree's attentions and comes to talk to Tom on the doorstep of his cabin. Only this last break is not a major punctuation point in the narrative.

If most of the reels are thus analogous to acts, the reel endings are where one might expect to find tableaux of the "strong curtain" type exemplified in the staging tradition. However, as with the Vitagraph version, this does not seem to have been the only way to end a reel for the World filmmakers. Indeed, only one of the reels of the World version ends in a tableau.

This is the end of reel two, Scene 104, as the fugitives arrive in Canada. Phineas Fletcher, the Harrises, and Jim Vance (a runaway who accompanies George on his flight in this version) are shown backs to camera in a long shot on a hill overlooking a village with a church steeple. A rectangular soft-



2.45

edged iris closes in. All but George fall on their knees and thank God, while George stands in the center, arms raised to heaven, and the pose and the contraction of the iris are momentarily held (Figure 2.45). None of the surviving prints has more than a few frames after this. It is possible that it was once held for much longer, but it looks more likely that there was a truncated tableau of the type found in the Edison version.

The end of the whole film intercuts the death of Tom in the presence of the adult George Shelby

Jr., with the ambush and shooting of Legree by the slave who Tom refused to whip (in this version a young man); there is also one shot (Scene 211) to show that Cassy and Emmeline escaped safely. There is a shot of Tom's vision of Eva, essentially similar to those in the Edison and Vitagraph versions. Tom is alone in his hut, lying on a mattress, Little Eva's spirit is superimposed, Tom reaches out to her joyfully, her image fades, and Tom falls back as if dead. However, according to the script, this scene, 191, occurs before the final alternation, well before Young Shelby arrives by the bedside in time for the dying Tom to recognize him. After the deaths of Tom and Legree, there is a single shot (Scene 213) of Young Shelby kneeling beside a grave marked "In Memory of Uncle Tom," and a final close-up (Scene 214) of the last two pages of the novel (echoing the opening of the whole film), with a final moral summation: *Into the land of eternal love which knows no race or class.* This ending is surprisingly understated, and it is interesting that none of the surviving prints places the vision scene as early as the script. Two have it as a shot out of any narrative concatenation, immediately preceding the shot of Tom's grave, adding weight (and a traditional character)

to the end. GV substitutes for the brief motto a title quoting the Emancipation Proclamation, superimposed over a still picture of Lincoln, again an appeal to tradition, reminiscent of the Edison version.

The end of reel one also uses an alternation: between Eliza and George Harris as each leaves their respective plantation at night, ending as George joins Jim Vance and the latter says goodbye to his mother. Reel two begins with Subtitle 17 — *Haley learns of the escape of Eliza and her boy*— and after a short sequence showing a furious Haley berating the Shelbys (Scene 44, Subtitle 18, and Scene 45), the alternation continues with shots of both George and Vance, and Eliza and Harry. The final embrace of Vance and his mother at the end of reel one (Scene 43), and the jump to the next morning at the beginning of reel two constitute a clear reel-end punctuation.

The end of reel four (Scene 171) presents no such breathing space. A few scenes earlier, there is what seems a more appropriate breaking point: after Cassy's interruption of Legree's beating of Uncle Tom (Scene 163). Subtitle 54 announces Cassy's demotion to field slave and Emmeline's promotion to Legree's housekeeper, which sets in train the final



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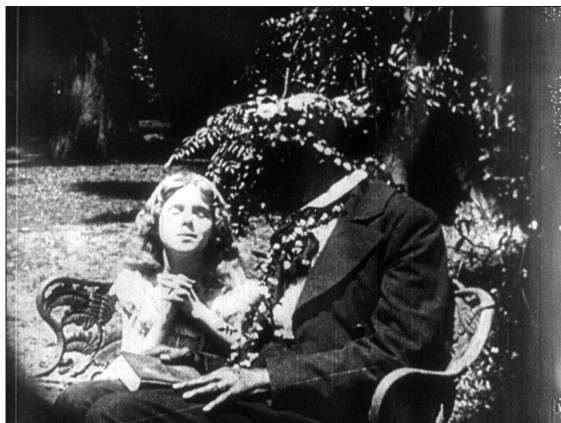
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episode of the two women's escape, itself leading directly to the death of Tom. It seems possible that this was planned to be the end of the reel, but the distribution of footage between reels four and five was too uneven, so the break in the final cut was at an arbitrary point. If the reel end were at the more motivated point, it would resemble that of the end of the first reel of the Vitagraph version. After he refuses to whip the young slave, Tom is dragged off by the overseers to the slave huts. Emmeline sees this in a cutaway, runs to the house, and appeals to Cassy. When Cassy reaches the huts (Scene 162), Legree is about to whip Tom. She seizes his arm from behind, they argue, then Legree turns back to Tom to whip him. Cassy places herself between them and Legree stops, giving a clear tableau pose (Figure 2.46, compare with the scene in the cotton field in the Edison version, Figure 2.35, and the Vitagraph version, Figure 2.42). But then Legree backs down, orders the overseers away, and follows them off. Cassy turns to Tom, lying on the threshold of the hut. As she kneels to tend him, there is a cut-in to medium long shot (Scene 163, Figures 2.47 and 2.48). This cut-in would provide the punctuation appropriate to a reel end, but the narrative incident would be an anti-climactic epilogue.

The punctuating cut-in, and also a vignette, are



2.50

found where one of the canonical tableau points occurs within a reel: the scene of Eva and Tom in the garden. After Subtitle 35 — *Two Years Later. Uncle Tom tells Eva of the New Jerusalem* — Scene 121(a) is a long shot of the garlanded Tom sitting on a garden bench with Eva sitting in his lap holding an open Bible. A circular vignette closes round the couple, and then there is a cut-in on the same axis to Scene 121(b), a similarly vignettied medium shot of them (Figures 2.49 and 2.50). Tom's gesture to heaven is repeated in the cut-in.

A much more elaborately edited, and therefore linearized, treatment of a canonical tableau is found at the death of Eva.

Subtitle 38. *Spring brings sadness into St. Claire's home.*

Scene 126. Slightly oblique long shot from the foot of Eva's bed, showing her supported by pillows rear center and the door to the room rear right, with Marie and Augustine St. Clare sitting left and right of the bed and Ophelia standing at the bedhead right. Eva speaks earnestly to her father (Figure 2.51).

Subtitle 39. *"Papa before I die, promise to free Uncle Tom."*

Scene 127. As 126. St. Clare promises. Eva lies back on the pillow. The others are despondent (Figure 2.52).

Scene 128. Medium long shot of the other side of the door of 126. Tom on his knees left praying (Figure 2.53).

Scene 129(a). Medium shot of a louvre-shuttered win-

dow in an ivied wall right. Topsy looks off right into the window (Figure 2.54). She turns to face front and prays.

Scene 129(b). As 126. Ophelia goes to the door right and opens it (Figure 2.55).

Scene 130. As 128, but slightly tilted up. The door opens and Ophelia appears (Figure 2.56). Tom rises, they converse, Ophelia weeps. She exits back into the room, followed by Tom.

Subtitle 40. *"In Heaven above, where all is love, we'll meet to part no more."*

Scene 131. As 126. Marie and Ophelia as in 126, St. Clare standing right, Tom kneeling front right. Eva falls back on the pillow. All kneel and weep except St. Clare, who leans against the bedpost and buries his face in his hands. While no one is looking at her, Eva sits up again, her face expressing joy. A group of small girls in white robes are superimposed on the bedhead (Figure 2.57). They gaze at Eva and beckon to her. She falls back on the pillow and they fade out. Everyone looks at Eva again. St. Clare kneels and speaks to Eva. The superimposed girls reappear. Eva's spirit detaches itself from her inert body, turns and walks to the rear to join the girls (Figure 2.58). As they lead her away, she turns and looks back. All the spirits fade out. St. Clare leans forward over Eva, and starts to cover her face with the sheet.

Scene 132. As 129. Topsy weeps, then exits right (Figure 2.59).

Scene 133. Long shot of the outside of the house. Assembled slaves kneeling with their backs to camera, waving their arms in mourning (Figure 2.60).

Subtitle 41. *Topsey's offering.*

Scene 134. Slight variant of 128. Topsy stands left holding a bunch of daisies. The door opens to reveal Tom. Topsy averts her eyes and thrusts the daisies at him. He takes them, she turns to go, but he calls her back, and leads her off into the bedroom (Figure 2.61).

Scene 135. Slight variant of 126. Eva dead in the bed. No one else is present except for Tom and Topsy coming from the door to the bed. Tom starts to put the flowers on Eva's breast, then hands them to Topsy, urging her to do it. Topsy kneels beside the bed right, reverently lays the flowers on Eva, then collapses weeping, her head in the bedclothes (Figure 2.62). Tom prays. A fade-out begins.⁶¹

Thus rather than gathering all the principals round



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2.53



2.54



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Eva's bed and representing her ascent to heaven and their grief in one or two comprehensive tableaux, as in the stage versions and the Edison, the scene starts with the immediate family alone, and only gradually widens the circle. Tom is included before the death, but Topsy only enters Eva's presence some time later.

The ascent to heaven here, too, is strongly marked as Eva's vision, rather than as an allegory. The passage from the novel that inspired the stage representations of Eva's death does describe a vision:

The child lay panting on her pillows, as one exhausted, — the large clear eyes rolled up and fixed. Ah,

what said those eyes, that spoke so much of heaven! Earth was past, and earthly pain; but so solemn, so mysterious, was the triumphant brightness of that face, that it checked even the sobs of sorrow. They pressed around her, in breathless stillness.

"Eva," said St. Clare, gently.

She did not hear.

"O, Eva, tell us what you see! What is it?" said her father.

A bright, a glorious smile passed over her face, and she said, brokenly, — "O! love, — joy, — peace!" gave one sigh and passed from death unto life!⁶²

This emphasis on Eva's vision is much attenuated in the stage versions, however, which drew on the

traditional representation of the apotheosis of the martyr in painting and drama, itself deriving from representations of the ascensions of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Such representations might appear as the vision of a saint, or even of the picture's patron, but more commonly they simply gave spectators a privileged view of an objective reality — perhaps a reality concealed from profane eyes, or only visualizable via allegory, but not simply a subjective vision. The stage versions of the death of Eva seem to share this objectivity, and the same is true of the Edison version. The Edison Catalog runs as follows: "Eva points toward the sky telling her father that



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she is going there, and falls back dead. Uncle Tom and Topsy, who were standing at the foot of the cot, kneel in prayer while the angel appears, takes the spirit of Eva and ascends." It is the action described at the beginning of the first sentence in this description rather than that in the second that is illustrated in the Catalog by a still captioned "Eva's Vision."⁶³

Nineteenth-century staging tradition did have methods of representing visions, and the devices deployed were often indistinguishable from those used in objective apotheosis scenes. Thus Mathias's vision at the end of Act 1 of *The Bells* was

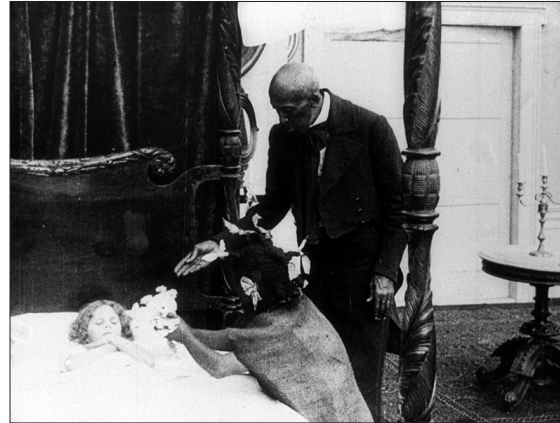
achieved by a "sink and rise," dropping part of the set representing the street wall of the inn into a stage sloat, raising part of it into the flies, and revealing, behind a scrim giving the appearance of a cloud, Mathias (acted by a double) pursuing the Polish Jew's sled; while his dream of being tried for the murder in Act 3 was represented by raising a black cloth from behind the transparent gauze depicting the rear wall of his bedroom to reveal the ghostly courtroom beyond.⁶⁴ What constitutes these as visions is an appropriate narrative context and their visibility to one character alone (in addition to the audience, of course). Such devices were rapidly adapted into early cinema, which, before 1910, regularly superimposed or matted in a second scene over the main scene to represent a vision.⁶⁵ Here too, narrative context distinguished a vision from an objective supernatural being. If the ascent of Eva to Heaven in the Edison version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a vision, because Eva has had her vision, but the spectator has not been able to share it, and she is dead before the angels appear to take her to Heaven, the appearance of the spirit of Eva to the dying Tom in the same film is at least compatible with the representation of a vision. In the World version, the status of a vision is extended to the

other stage apotheosis. Eva's vision before death is vouchsafed the spectator, so when the angels reappear after her death to lead her spirit away, this seems to be a continuation of the vision by a now disembodied Eva (Figures 2.57 and 2.58). The supernatural paraphernalia of the stage versions have been subjectivized.

The World version thus presents some filmic "equivalents" of the tableau, such as the iris out on the Harrises' arrival in Canada, or the use of cuts into medium shot on Cassy holding Tom after his beating, and Tom and Eva in the garden. Although these devices might be considered "cinematic" in and of themselves, and indeed the cut-in clearly derives from the emblematic close-ups found in earlier films, they also preserve the pictorial integrity of the canonical tableau and in this sense harken back to the stage versions. In the case of Little Eva's death, however, the tableau is transformed beyond recognition. Not only is Eva's vision subjectivized, but the film emphasizes the separation among characters traditionally gathered, motionless, around the bedside. The use of editing is somewhat different from that in *The Social Secretary* example, in which the film cuts into medium shots or close-ups to present the reactions of characters all within a single room.



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In the World *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the characters are represented as in different spaces: Topsy at the window and Tom at the door outside the bedroom. The dissection of the scenic space is thus given in the construction of the sets themselves. Given this construction of the sets, the filmmakers seem to have gone out of their way to structure the scene differently from the canonical stage picture, and to present a temporal succession of grieving characters rather than a static moment of general grief. In other instances the film similarly transforms the canonical tableaux not simply as

a function of continuity editing, but also through changes in camera angle and shot scale that heighten the sense of spatial fragmentation. Paradoxically, even the use of spectacular staging in depth, which is quite pronounced in this film, can contribute to the effect of this transformation.

Like the Vitagraph version of the same scene, the moment in which Tom bids his family farewell is characterized by a dispersal of significant elements, although in this case the film also employs a rather spectacular use of staging in depth. In Scene 77 this is achieved by having Tom exit off screen while his

children come on. Tom kisses Chloe while Haley taps on his shoulder. As Tom exits front right (Figure 2.63), his children run in from under an arch rear left, which emphasizes the movement from background to foreground (Figure 2.64). Haley also exits off right. The children gather around Chloe, all gaze off right and wave sadly. The decomposition of the tableau continues, with Tom's departure from young George Shelby distributed over three shots interrupted by titles (Scene 78, Subtitle 27, Scene 79(a) and (b)). Scenes 78 and 79(a) are long shots showing Haley's carriage, facing front. Haley

and Tom approach the carriage and are followed by George, who runs over a bridge front right (Figure 2.65). The last shot of the segment (Scene 79(b)) is a slight high-angle medium shot of George, who looks after Tom off right, weeping (Figure 2.66). This cut-in seems to function quite differently from the closer view of Tom and Eva in the garden. The latter held all of the tableau elements together, the use of the iris and the closer framing emphasizing the image's significance. In contrast, the shot of George weeping is but one element in a series that has been presented in linear succession.

In the sequence of Eliza crossing the Ohio, the decomposition of the unified space of the tableau is quite marked. Recall that the Vitagraph version already breaks up this action, presented in one shot in the Edison version, into three. At the end of the first shot, Eliza jumps onto an ice floe; a title follows, then the film cuts to the slavers and dogs remaining on the river bank; after another title, we see Eliza arrive safely at the other shore, aided by Phineas. In the World version Subtitle 21 announces Eliza's arrival and her determination to cross the river. The sequence ends with Subtitle 22, introducing Phineas as her rescuer, and a shot of Phineas leading her to his house. In between there are eight shots alternating between Eliza requesting help from the ferryman, and eventually running across the river, and Haley and other slavers mounted on horseback, with bloodhounds, on the riverbank.

Not only is the action broken up over more shots than in the Vitagraph, but also the World is shot on location, which introduces another order of spectacle (for the World version of the crossing of the Ohio see Figures 2.67 to 2.76, which appear here in the order of the sequence of shots in the film, and compare with the same scene in the Vitagraph, Figures 2.38 to 2.40, and the Edison, Figure 2.28). Like the Edison, the Vitagraph crossing of the Ohio employs a set: a painted backdrop in the background with a strip



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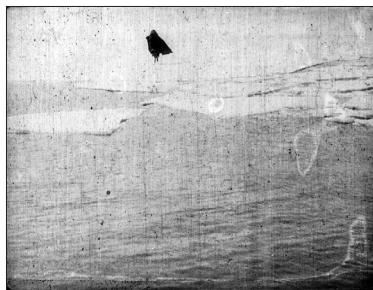
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of real water across the middle ground containing moving papier-mâché ice floes. As we have noted, the foreground of the set is dressed differently for the last shot of the segment, to indicate the opposite shore of the river.

Location shooting permits the filmmakers of the World version to create a much more varied sense of landscape. Thus, the shots of Eliza at the ferry landing are framed very differently from those showing the traders at the same location. Scene 51(a) (Figures 2.67 and 2.68), in which Eliza negotiates with the ferryman, is a slightly high-angle long shot, with a largely frozen river across the rear, and a boat moored to the bank. Scene 51(b) (Figure 2.69) is a high-angle very long shot, which shows Eliza on the edge of the ice rear right, as she leaves the shore and begins jumping from floe to floe. Scene 52 (Figure 2.70) shows the arrival of the slave hunters and bloodhounds at the river's edge. The framing is markedly different from that of Scenes 51(a) and (b) (Figures 2.68 and 2.69) of Eliza at the ferryboat landing; we see a row of buildings in the rear right, and the corner of a pile of lumber juts into the right foreground. In Scene 54 (Figure 2.72), a return to the slave hunters, the framing has been altered again; the camera has moved closer to the men in the midground, so that the lumber is no longer visible and the buildings in the background are cut off. This composition emphasizes the outlines of the dogs, horses and mounted riders, all looking off left, after Eliza.

There are pronounced variations in shot scale as well as background and composition in this sequence. Two of the shots of Eliza on the ice, Scenes 53 and 57, are high-angle long shots in which her figure fills about one-half of the frame (Figures 2.71 and 2.75) but there are also two extreme long shots, Scenes 51(b) and 55, in which her figure appears much smaller, dwarfed by the landscape (Figures 2.69 and 2.73). There may even have been a link between variation in figure size and the cut "across"

the river, so that the actress is very far from the camera in Scene 55 (Figure 2.73) as Eliza recedes from the view of the slave hunters, and then is shown closer to the camera in Scene 57 (Figure 2.75), as she approaches Phineas on the opposite shore, the action announced in Subtitle 22 that follows it.

In one sense, in its use of landscape and evocation of the river's width, the World version recalls the spectacular effects that were engineered for the crossing of the Ohio in at least the big-budget theatrical renditions of the tableau. The stage directions in the Aiken version note that the full depth of the stage should be used to represent the Ohio, a distance that could run up to 60 feet in a major metropolitan theatre, and could be made to look much larger through masking and the painting of drops in perspective.⁶⁶ The Hermann recommends the creation of false perspective in this scene; the stage directions in the published play suggest that a small girl be substituted for the actress playing Eliza, and a child for Phineas, to increase the sense of depth and make the opposite shore of the Ohio appear farther away. In contrast, the sense of depth is relatively limited in the Edison version, as Eliza moves right to left in a line running between the moving backdrop and the forestage. Even in the Vitagraph, which stages the scene with movement from foreground to background, the space between the forestage and the backdrop remains confined. But while the crossing of the Ohio in the World version is the first of the film versions to approach or rival the spectacular stagings of the theatrical tradition, it does not simply reconstitute the elements of a theatrical spectacle in this scene; it exploits the ease with which the cinema alters viewpoint, introducing subtle variations of background from shot to shot as well as a 180-degree cut to the "other side" of the Ohio. This kind of mobility of viewpoint is suggested in the Vitagraph version as well, through the device of changing the foreground of the Ohio river set, and indeed this film

does contain true 180-degree cuts in at least one scene.⁶⁷ However, these 180-degree cuts are of a kind that can be called "centripetal," the camera remaining outside the space of the action, all of which appears in all of the shots, viewed from opposite sides. In the World film's editing of Eliza crossing the Ohio, the "centrifugal" type of 180-degree cutting more common in later, classical filmmaking is deployed: the camera stands in the middle of the field of action, and looks outward at different fragments of it in turn — the pursuers on one bank of the Ohio, viewed from near the shoreline, and Phineas running down the bank towards the camera and the opposite shoreline to help Eliza and Harry to his house. Thus, in the World version, the move to location shooting in combination with the larger number of shots allows the filmmakers to traverse the spectacular deep space and to exercise the potential for pictorial variety to a much greater degree than was achieved by the Vitagraph filmmakers.⁶⁸ Other, traditionally spectacular, tableaux are treated in the same way in the film, exploded into a succession of striking, and strikingly varied, shot set-ups.

The scene on a rocky pass may be divided into two segments. The first is comprised of an alternation between two groups: George, Phineas, Jim Vance, Eliza and Harry on a rock platform high on a mountain, and the posse led by Marks and Loker in the gully below. George and Phineas exchange shots with the members of the posse, the lawyer Marks gets scared and flees on his donkey, and Loker begins to climb the cliff face. This segment is comprised of 10 shots (Scenes 95 to 101(c) shown in Figures 2.74 to 2.86). The second segment cuts around the group on the rock platform with two interposed shots of Loker alone. Loker makes his ascent. George realizes the group is out of ammunition just as Loker reaches a hollow directly beneath them on the platform. George strikes Loker with a revolver butt and the slave hunter rolls down the



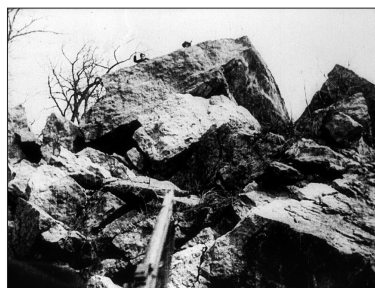
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cliff to the bottom of the gully. A cutaway shows Marks escaping on his donkey. This segment is comprised of 7 shots (Scenes 102 to 103(f) shown in Figures 2.87 to 2.93).⁶⁹

The first segment includes cuts from extreme high angle to extreme low angle, and a great variety of camera positions. Although there is one long shot, straight on, of the posse (Scene 99, Figure 2.82), most of the shots of the posse are high-angle long shots taken from the rocks above

(Scene 95, Figure 2.77; Scene 97, Figure 2.79). A more extreme variant of this set up is almost vertical (Scene 101(a), Figure 2.84), and a somewhat closer shot from the same vertical angle (Scene 101(c), Figure 2.86) shows Loker starting to climb. The group on the top of the rocks is shown from a number of positions: initially, shot from behind in a slight high angle, looking out on the snowy landscape beyond (Scene 96, Figure 2.78); then in a very low angle, the point of view of a rifleman

looking over the barrel of a gun and firing at George and Phineas's heads visible just over the lip of the rock (Scene 98(a), Figure 2.80); then in a very high-angle long shot, looking down on the rocky platform from an even higher position on the rock face (Scene 98(b), Figure 2.81); and later, at the same angle as the point-of-view shot, a somewhat closer view showing George and Phineas returning fire (Scene 101(b), Figure 2.85). The spectacular mobility of viewpoint is exemplified in the changes in camera angle between five shots, Scenes 98(a) to 101(a), the first the very-low angle shot looking up at the fugitives from the point of view of the rifleman (Figure 2.80), the second a very high-angle shot of the fugitives on the platform (Figure 2.81), the third a horizontal shot taken from a position on the gully floor (Figure 2.82), the fourth a return to the rifleman's very low-angle point of view (Figure 2.83), and the fifth an almost vertical very long shot down on the posse in the gully (Figure 2.84). There is a similar variety of shot set-ups in the second segment. Without going into the same degree of detail, it can be said that this variety derives from the flexibility with which the film cuts around the group of fugitives on the platform. The scene on a rocky pass thus depends on visual and dramatic contrasts established over the sequence of shots rather than a unified and compelling picture that might approximate a tableau.

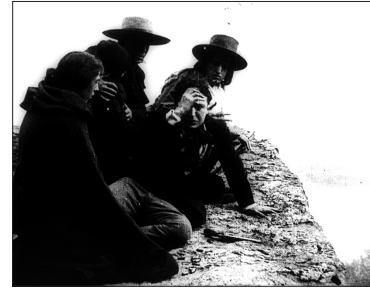
In the nineteenth century, the use of the tableau as a form of punctuation was pronounced, extending even beyond the theatre to verbal forms such as the novel, in which striking moments were often described as static pictures, to ordinary conversation.⁷⁰ Yet, as the example of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* indicates, the cinema frequently modified the theatrical tableau in favor of a more continuous rhythm of narrative development. This is evident relatively early, as in the truncated tableaux of the Edison version, in which the actors quickly resume their movements or, in the scene-

end tableaux, when the film immediately cuts to the next shot. Similarly, one of the strategies of the Vitagraph version is to introduce epilogues after strong tableaux that militate against the sense of a pause. At the end of the first reel, for example, the image of Tom posed over the slaves in a blessing is followed by the movement of the carriage as Tom exits frame right and the scene closes on the Shelbys. The tendency to “smooth over” the breaks in the action upon which the theatrical tableau was predicated became even more marked with the development of rules for scene dissection. Such editing conventions favored the linear representation of significant elements through cutting in or around a space rather than the creation of composite or summarizing “pictures.” Moreover, the distribution of narrative action across a series of shots gave filmmakers the opportunity to establish momentary pauses for description or emphasis without necessitating a definitive interruption. A concatenation of brief descriptive shots, a protracted alternation between characters, a cut away to a close-up, could underscore a meaning or a gesture without bringing the story to a complete halt. Thus, as continuity editing became part of the cinema’s narrative armature, the tableau was dissolved into the sequence.

But, as Tom Gunning has suggested, editing carries within it the seeds of new forms of discontinuity — a capacity to interrupt the continuity of an action for the purposes of creating suspense or making a gesture stand out from the flux of the actor’s movements. In an analysis of Biograph’s *After Many Years* (1908), Gunning discusses a cut from the shipwrecked Enoch Arden about to kiss a locket given him by his wife, to her in England thinking of her lost husband. He argues this cut is akin to the sense of discontinuity attendant upon a theatrical tableau; it arrests the movement of Enoch’s kiss and in so doing produces a heightened sense of its significance.⁷¹ Gunning suggests that Griffith’s



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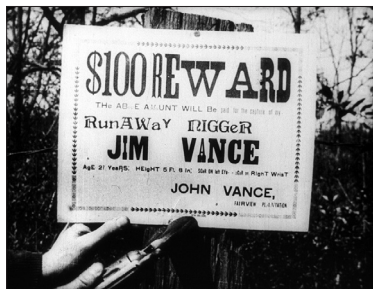
innovative editing in *After Many Years* was inspired by the disjunctive style of stage melodrama — the quick scene changes, the freezing of the action, the creation of strong effects of shock or suspense — a style Gunning describes, with reference to Benjamin’s essay on Brecht already cited, as an “aesthetics of astonishment.”

While the cross-cutting between distinct spaces in the early Biographs is clearly disjunctive, especially when the cut is used to interrupt a gesture,

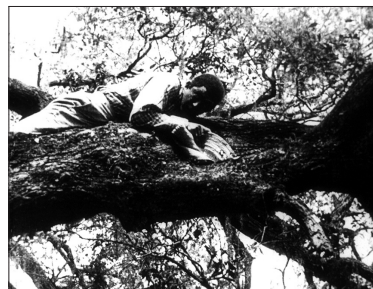
one might argue that this is not the case for later continuity editing in which matches on action are precisely one way of smoothing over shot transitions.⁷² That is, it is the more eccentric aspects of Griffith’s editing style that might be said to bear an affiliation with melodrama, while the editing patterns in a film like the *World Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which more closely approximate classical norms, linearize melodrama’s disjunctive style, including its deployment of the tableau. But this is too simple.



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The mobility of viewpoint characteristic of the World *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could itself be used to punctuate the continuity of the action in order to generate shock effects or create moments of heightened allegorical or dramatic significance. For example, while the action takes place in continuity in the scene on a rocky pass, the film cuts between extreme high and low angles in a way that emphasizes the fragmentation of the space and the compositional contrast between shots. The use of the point-of-view shot from the bottom of the gully exacerbates the purely formal shock of these cuts, by providing for a dramatically sensational moment when the rifleman is shot by the fugitives, his hands momentarily thrown up into the frame before he falls dead. Another relevant example is the opening sequence, in which a number of whites post a notice of reward for the capture of Jim Vance while he is hiding in the tree above them. The sequence of shots is as follows:

Scene 1(b). Long shot of a road running from rear right to front right with a fence parallel to it and a large tree midground left. Whites mounted on horseback ride from rear to midground along the road and stop at the tree. One man dismounts holding a poster (Figure 2.94).

Scene 1(c). Insert of the wanted poster being nailed to a fence post with the butt of a gun. The poster promises a reward for the capture of Jim Vance, "runaway nigger" (Figure 2.95).

Subtitle 1: *Jim Vance*.

Scene 2(a). Low-angle shot of Vance, framed from knees to head as he lies stretched horizontally along the branch of the tree (Figure 2.96).

Scene 2(b). Vance's point of view looking down on the heads of the whites, i.e., an almost vertical high-angle shot. The man on the ground remounts and they all begin to turn their horses (Figure 2.97).

Scene 2(c). As 1(b). The riders turn and ride away from the camera (Figure 2.98).

Scene 2(d). As 2(a). Vance cautiously works his way backwards along the branch, moving left (Figure 2.99).

The film thus abruptly thrusts us into the midst of a perilous situation without any exposition. It leaves Vance just as abruptly, as the next shot is Subtitle 2, introducing Tom and George Shelby. While there is no freeze in this sequence, it does perform functions analogous to the tableau. The incident epitomizes slave life in the South, bringing the elements of the narrative conflict together in a way that is not subject to much narrative preparation or development. Further, the elements of conflict are heightened through their graphic treatment. They do not assume the form of a single unified picture, of course, but the contrasting angles and the use of optical point of view help to evoke the state of threat and panic. The cut from Scene 2(a) to 2(b) (Figure 2.96 to 2.97), from low to high angle, is in part motivated by character point of view, and in this resembles the scene on a rocky pass. Like that example, too, we are given the point of view of a character who is not well known to us, though his naming in the poster and a subtitle suggest he will be more than a mere extra; it is not, however, a question of creating empathy, but of cutting to a vantage point that will immediately maximize the sense of danger and suspense. The jump from Scene 1(c) (Figure 2.95) to the subtitle and then Scene 2(a) (Figure 2.96) function the same way, suddenly revealing Vance's presence to the spectator and his proximity to the slave-hunters below.

Thus, the World version uses editing and other compositional devices specific to film to approximate the powerful summarizing and heightening effect of a tableau. Moreover, it does so for an incident that does not appear in the book or in any of the stage versions and has no previous history of such pictorial representation. Another sequence akin to the opening with Vance depicts Tom, Emmeline, and Simon Legree's trip by steamboat up the Red River to Legree's plantation. While the steamboat motif has theatrical precedents in the sensation scenes involving views of boats on the

Mississippi, we have found no stage pictures or tableaux concerning the disembarkation of Legree and his slaves. Like the Vance episode, then, the depiction of this incident clearly does not rely on theatrical representational strategies while at the same time it achieves some of the effects of the stage tradition: the drawing out of a situation by emphasizing the potential conflicts and moral contrasts between the characters. The sequence of shots is as follows:

Subtitle 47. *Up the River to Legree's plantation.*

Scene 144. A quay with a gangplank leading up to the steamer off front right. Legree is seated at the end of the plank, watching as Tom leads a line of slaves on left and off up the plank (Figure 2.100). The last of this line is Emmeline. Legree rises and embraces her, then points for her to go off up the plank.

Scene 145. Very long shot of the Mississippi. A real stern-wheeler paddle-steamer sailing right to left. Pan left (Figure 2.101).

Scene 146. The bow of the steamer moving right to left, with its name, "OMAHA," painted on it. Tom and several slaves seated in the bow with Legree (Figure 2.102).

Subtitle 48. *Cassy, the slave, Legree's housekeeper.*

Scene 147. A hilly green with houses surrounded by picket fences to the rear, and a levee across the front. Slaves are sitting on the bank, waiting. Cassy stands in medium long shot looking off front center. Cassy prays (Figure 2.103).

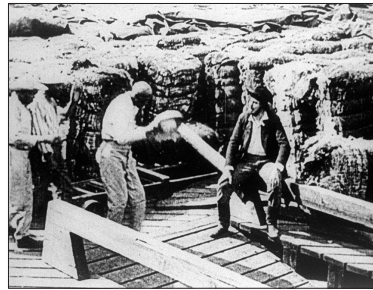
Subtitle 49. *"God help the poor wretches he is bringing to this hell on earth."*

Scene 148. As 147. The slaves point off front center (Figure 2.104).

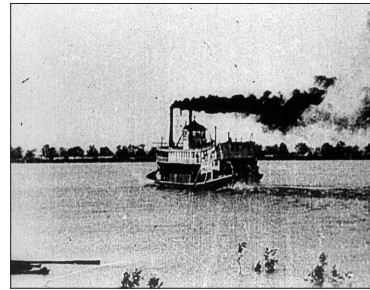
Scene 149(a). A different view of the bow of the *Omaha*, with Tom, Emmeline, and slaves sitting down. Legree, upright, waves his hat off front left (Figure 2.105).

Scene 149(b). 180 degrees from the angle of 147. Cassy stands in medium long shot front left, back to camera, with the slaves seated front center. The *Omaha* is approaching on the river rear right. Cassy shades her eyes to look at the steamer (Figure 2.106).

Scene 150. In the foreground the group on the steamer, with the levee in the far rear. Emmeline and Legree are standing front left and right in medium long



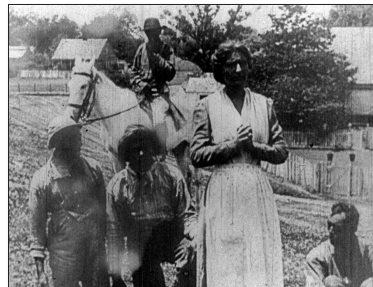
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shot. The slaves and Cassy are visible on the levee rear center (Figure 2.107). Legree grabs Emmeline. Scene 151. Variant of 149(b). The steamer is rear left nearing the levee while Cassy waits front right (Figure 2.108). A gangplank is lowered on a crane to front left. The slaves carry grain sacks from the steamer across the gangplank and off front left (Figure 2.109). Legree stands with Emmeline in the bow rear left, until the last of the slaves has disembarked, when they follow, Legree staggering drunkenly. At the top of the plank he greets Cassy. Emmeline exits front left, then re-enters at Legree's command. Legree introduces her to Cassy (Figure 2.110). Pan left. Emmeline, Cassy, and Legree exit left. (The shot is 117 feet 11 frames long in NFTVA.)

Unlike the scene on the rocky pass or the crossing of the Ohio, the time of this sequence is not continuous. The journey up river is initiated in Scene 144 (Figure 2.100). Scenes 145 and 146 (Figures 2.101 and 2.102) have a largely descriptive (and spectacular) function, at most they summarize the

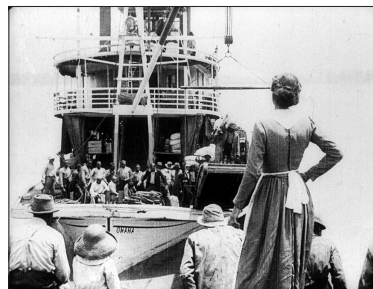
time of the boat's passage. The film then introduces Cassy and cuts to the time of the disembarkation, Cassy and the other slaves react to the boat's appearance (Scene 148, Figure 2.104) and Legree waves to them in response (Scene 149(a), Figure 2.105). Another series of shots then emphasize the stately grandeur of the steamboat's movement toward the shore. Scene 149(b) (Figure 2.106) cuts around to the back of Cassy and the other slaves, so that the boat is shown rear right moving toward the figures in the foreground. Scene 150 (Figure 2.107) is a new angle on the characters on the boat—the previous Scenes 146 and 149(a) (Figures 2.102 and 2.105) have shown the characters gathered in the bow—but now we see a side view in which the shore is visible in the background. In Scene 151 (Figures 2.108 to 2.110), whose composition is similar to 149(b) (Figure 2.106), we see the boat come in, the gangplank lowered, and the slaves come off in single file. What is impressive here is not simply



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the use of a real paddle steamer, but the flexibility of the changes of camera position. The film cuts 180 degrees around Cassy and the other slaves, so that we can gauge the boat's movement from their position on shore.

Perhaps the most striking thing about this sequence is its redundancy. The only new narrative material it contains is the introduction of Cassy, who appears in all but one of the shots following the title that names her, but does nothing after her prayer for Legree's victims. Three of the shots show Legree pawing Emmeline. Unlike the alternations in the scenes of Eliza crossing the Ohio and the fight in the rocky pass, the 180-degree cutting here is of the centripetal type, increasing the repetition: the camera remains outside the arena of the action, looking in, so all the significant characters are in each shot together. Finally, Scene 151 (Figures 2.108 to 2.110) is very long-held — 118 seconds at 16 frames per second, in a film with an average shot

length of 10 seconds. This shot, which might be expected to climax when Legree introduces Cassy to the woman with whom he intends to supplant her, simply ends with all three exiting together. All the elements of a tableau are present: the wretchedness of the new arrivals, Cassy's mixed feelings at seeing her master and his new favorite, Legree's lust for Emmeline and anticipation of triumph over Cassy, mingled with trepidation at her response, Emmeline's grief, disgust and terror at Legree. A single tableau expressing each of these character's feelings and their moral significance in a grouping of attitudes is easy to imagine. But the presence of all these elements in this shot is no more than an unmarked continuation or repetition of their presentation in the sequence. The shot is not qualitatively different from the ten that precede it; what could conceivably have been the components of a theatrical tableau are effectively dispersed and re-iterated over the entire group of eleven shots.

However, this is not a smooth integration of narrative action with narrational commentary on it, such as we might expect from the classical narrative cinema. The redundancy and the anticlimactic nature of the sequence in general and the final shot in particular retain the suspension characteristic of the stage picture, where the action stops while its significance is presented.

The World *Uncle Tom's Cabin* makes fluent use of what were to become standard devices of classical continuity editing: centrifugal 180-degree cutting, optical point of view, and a tendency evident throughout the film to use a relatively large number of shots, and to dissect the scenic space into highly varied shot set-ups. While such techniques entailed the abandonment of some, if not all, of the conventional tableaux, they also provided new ways of securing what Gunning calls shock effects, interrupting or punctuating the continuity of the action to underscore important dramatic situations. Cutting to characters outside of Eva's room during the deathbed scene, cutting across the Ohio with Eliza, establishing an alternation between the top and the bottom of the rocky pass, the film reproduced the canonical tableaux of the old play with a new panoply of cinematic techniques. The fact that the World version used the same techniques to similar effect in scenes without clear theatrical precedents, such as the posting of the notice for Jim Vance and the trip up the Red River, suggests that it may be possible to speak of an autonomous development of pictorial effect in film, one that goes beyond the straightforward adaptation of certain plays. In what follows then, we will turn from consideration of a specific theatrical device and its filmic equivalents to consideration of how a broad range of pictorial effects associated with methods of acting and staging in the theatre contributed to the development of strategies for handling *mise-en-scène* in the early feature, having an influence beyond and apart from the range of theatrical adaptations.

Notes to Part Two

- 1 New York: James A. McCann, 1920.
- 2 We should point out that the print of *The Social Secretary* that we have seen, from the EmGee Film Library, calls the heroine's employer Mrs. de Puyster, not Mrs. von Puyster, as 1916 reviews and summaries of the film do. This strongly suggests that it derives from the re-issue of 1924, which the *American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States*, vol. F2: *Feature Films 1921–1930*, ed. Kenneth W. Munden (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1971), entry F2.5214, suggests was re-edited. It is therefore possible that 1916 prints did have a tableau shot (though it is hard to imagine how such a shot could have been staged, given the tight space of the set). Even if this is the case, its removal is symptomatic of the problematic character of the tableau in the cinema.
- 3 Giovanni Pastrone, *Cabiria, visione storica del III secolo a.C.*, titles by Gabriele D'Annunzio, introduction by Maria Adriana Prolo, continuity described from an original tinted and toned print by Roberto Radicali and Ruggero Rossi (Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 1977), 200: "Interno giardino — Incontro di Massinissa con Sofonisba — Ercole a piccina — Scena — Sofonisba salva la bimba," and *ibid.*, 202: "'Morta! . . . Ah! oh: ecc.' Dolore di Plinio — Quadro —."
- 4 Personal communication.
- 5 Reprinted in Barrett H. Clark et al., eds., *America's Lost Plays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1940; repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1963), 17:313. Very occasionally, "picture" was also used in the sense of scene as segment, e.g., by Charles E. Blaney: "The public that demanded a quick succession of pictures — that is, scenes — have gone over to the moving picture houses" ("Good and Bad Melodrama," *New York Dramatic Mirror* 19, no. 1533 (9 May 1908): 2; cit. Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 134).
- 6 See Holmström, *Monodrama*, 217–19. This book gives a clear account of the early history of the genre.
- 7 See the end of Act 1 of Douglas Jerrold's *The Rent Day*, playtext in the Pettingell Collection at the Library of the University of Kent at Canterbury, England; Roger Lance-lyn Green, *Fifty Years of "Peter Pan"* (London: Peter Davies, 1954), 53 and the illustrations between pp. 66 and 67.
- 8 See Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 342–9; and Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Carolina Press, 1991), 92–4.
- 9 See Friedrich Knilli and Ursula Münchow, eds., *Frühes deutsches Arbeitertheater 1847–1918* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1970), 23, 286–302, and the illustrations on pp. 497–9.
- 10 But recall the remarks in ch. 1 about the discrepancies between the film "scene" before 1920 and the modern "shot."
- 11 The *American Star Film Catalog* seems to have a slightly different usage (unless Georges Méliès simply wanted his advertising to exaggerate the number of scenes in his films); each significant dramatic incident is called a scene, even when no change of décor or shot is involved, while "tableau" refers to a spectacular décor; thus, *Blue Beard (Barbe Bleue)* is described as "A great fairy drama, with spectacular tableaux, in twelve scenes," and three of these "scenes" ("9. At the Place of Execution. 10. The Rescue of Fatima. 11. Death of Bluebeard.") occur within a single setting and in continuous time. The film catalogs referred to in this book can be conveniently consulted in two microfilm collections: British ones and the 1907 French Pathé Catalogue in *Early Rare British Film-Makers' Catalogues 1896–1913* (London: World Microfilm Publications, 1983, eight reels), and American ones in *Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors 1894–1908*, ed. Charles Musser (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1984–5).
- 12 Edison Catalog Form no. 267, 10 May 1905, no. 6116. See also Howard Lamarr Walls, *Motion Pictures 1894–1912 identified from the Records of the United States Copyright Office* (Washington: Copyright Office, Library of Congress, 1953): "H56410. The Kleptomaniac. Tableau."
- 13 For an example of the term "tableau" for a kind of shot typical of early film, see Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, 164.
- 14 References to *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly* (first published by John P. Jewett, Boston, 1852) in this book will be to the Penguin Classics edition, edited and introduced by Ann Douglas (London, 1986).
- 15 George Aiken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, published in French's Standard Drama, the Acting Edition, no. 217 (New York, n.d.); repr. in Daniel C. Gerould, ed., *American Melodrama* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), 75–133. The Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the Performing Arts Research Center of the New York Public Library has three promptbooks based on this edition. According to John H. McDowell, "Scenery and Staging of *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Selected Scenes*," *Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin* 10 (1963): 19, the OSU theatre collection has ten such promptbooks. William A. Brady's New York production of 1901, for which there is an annotated typescript in the Museum of the City of New York, is also an adaptation of the Aiken version.
- 16 Harry Birdoff, *The World's Greatest Hit: Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1947), 257 (on the proliferation of Uncle Tom troupes); and 295 (on bloodhounds).
- 17 For the modern attack on the novel see James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," first published in *Partisan Review* in June 1949 and reprinted in *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 13–23. For a history of the reception of both the novel and the Aiken play, see Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985). Gregory A. Waller describes conflicts surrounding the staging of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Lexington, Ky., in the 1900s, in *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), esp. 44–6.
- 18 We consulted versions by Edward Fitzball, Mark Lemon and Tom Taylor, Charles Hermann, and Colin Hazlewood in the Pettingell Collection at the Library of the University of Kent. There were two copies of the version by Hermann, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; A Drama of Real Life*, one published by Samuel French (London, n.d.) and one handwritten (hereafter referred to as the fairhand copy). R. S. Holland ("Introduction to Hazlewood") has traced the history of the production of all these versions. Although they were first produced in England, there are prompt scripts of the Lemon and Taylor, and the Hermann in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection, so it is possible that they were also performed in the United States. The Billy Rose Theatre Collection also contains a typescript of a version by Charles Morton prepared for copyright deposit in 1912.
- 19 This promptbook, signed J. S. MacNeill and not dated, is one of three promptbooks utilizing the Aiken text in the Samuel French edition in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection (another is unsigned, while the third is signed J. B. Wright and dated 1866).
- 20 Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre* (London: A. & C. Black, 1989), 160–2.
- 21 See Leopold Lewis, *Henry Irving and "The Bells": Irving's personal script of the play by Leopold Lewis*, ed. and introd. David Mayer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 44 and 80n6. It should be noted, however, that the descriptions of this tableau cited, by Edward Gordon Craig and Eric Jones-Evans, are based on performances dating from the turn of the century, when "Irving in *The Bells*" had become an institution, and there had to be a pause for the applause greeting the star's entrance. Neither the script, nor the review of the first performance in the *Observer*, 26 Nov. 1871 (reprod. in Mayer's edition, 100–3), which carefully describes the curtain calls for Irving, then still a little-known actor,

- suggest that there was a pause or such applause at this point then.
- 22 John C. Morrow, "The Harmount Company: Aspects of an *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Company," *Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin* 10 (1963), 28.
- 23 Hermann describes the setting for the auction scene, placed at the opening of Act 3 in his version: "Splendid hall—figures of Justice, Liberty, and Mercy, in niches—a rostrum for selling Negroes—Negroes grouped about—Auctioneer smoking—Tom, Emmeline, Emmeline's Mother, etc., etc. grouped." The fairhand copy notes a tableau at this point. Aiken's description of the same scene notes simply "An Auction Mart. *Uncle Tom* and *Emmeline* at back. *Adolf*, *Skeggs*, *Marks*, *Mann*, and various spectators discovered." But Morrow, "Harmount Company," 29–30, suggests that the Harmount troupe's opening of the scene was quite elaborate, beginning with a painted backdrop showing river boats at a levee, and a crowd. He also cites one Harvard promptbook in which specialty numbers were introduced in front of this backdrop, after which the dancers carried out the platform and auction block for the scene to follow.
- 24 Birdoff, *World's Greatest Hit*, 233–4 and 320.
- 25 Meisel, *Realizations*, 38–51, the chapter entitled "Speaking Pictures: The Drama." The argument of our book as a whole owes a great deal to this chapter of Meisel's.
- 26 Cit. Jackson, *Victorian Theatre*, 160–2. See also Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 61–2, citing Abel Hugo, Armand Malitourne and J.-J. Ader, *Traité du mélodrame* (Paris: Delaunay, 1817): "At the end of each act, one must take care to bring all the characters together in a group, and to place each of them in the attitude that corresponds to the situation of his soul. For example: pain will place a hand on its forehead; despair will tear out its hair, and joy will kick a leg in the air. This general perspective is designated as Tableau. One can sense how agreeable it is for the spectator to take in at a glance the psychological and moral condition of each character."
- 27 In the typescript version of Hermann the timing of the tableau is uncertain, but the fairhand copy clearly specifies that the tableau follows upon Haley's entrance.
- 28 A similar scene, played with Eliza and Harry rather than Tom and Emmeline, appears in Fitzball, Act 2, scene 3, and may have had a tableau.
- 29 "Early Twentieth Century Staging of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Harmount's Tom Show—Selected Scenes," *Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin* 15 (1968), 40.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 40–1.
- 31 Birdoff, *World's Greatest Hit*, 318.
- 32 The Cruikshank illustration appears in the edition of John Cassell, London, 1852; for other editions that also illustrate this moment see Clarke, London, 1852; John P. Jewett, Cleveland, 1852; Nathaniel Cook, London, 1853; Simpkin, Marshall, London, 1857; Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1882; Cassell, London, 1896; Blackie, London, 1908.
- 33 Originally published in 1698, Le Brun's lecture was translated into English by John Williams as *A Method to Learn to Design the Passions Proposed in a Conference on Their General and Particular Expression* and published by the translator in London in 1734 (see the reprint by the Augustan Reprint Society, Publication number 200–1, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980). For Henry Siddons, see *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action; adapted to the English Drama: From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engel* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807). The influence of these works, and more generally the role of postures and attitudes in the development of pictorial acting styles is discussed in detail in ch. 5 below.
- 34 Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, 78–9.
- 35 Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 87.
- 36 The chorus can be translated: "Frigid and motionless, like a statue, unable to draw a breath."
- 37 First edition, "Tableau," definition 2 c, citing the *Westminster Gazette*, 18 Oct. 1894: 5, col. 2. Walter Benjamin noted that the French word was used in the same way in Berlin: "... a family row. The mother is just about to pick up a pillow to hurl at the daughter, the father is opening a window to call a policeman. At this moment a stranger appears at the door. 'Tableau,' as they used to say around 1900" ("What is Epic Theatre? [First Version]," in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: New Left Books, 1973), 5; and *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 2:522).
- 38 All three promptbooks based upon the Aiken text in the Samuel French edition in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection indicate that Phineas re-enters the scene at the point when Marks says "these yer arrangements are my forte." The unsigned version notes the word *story* at this point, while the Wright version has the dialogue spoken by Phineas, telling a *story* about another runaway. The Brady typescript in the Museum of the City of New York has the story written out in full.
- 39 An anecdote attributed to Hobart Bosworth describes a production in which he appeared in 1887 that involved "the scene where Fletcher holds the attention of Loker and the other slave-driver down stage while he describes to Eliza the way she is to escape through the window 'at back' with her pickaninny." See Ralph Eugene Lund, "Trouping with Uncle Tom," *Century* 115 (1928), 335.
- 40 Other versions that we do not treat here include ones by Lubin, 1903, 1 reel; by Thanouser, 1910, 1 reel; by Imp, 1913, 3 reels; by Kalem, 1913, 2 reels; by Paramount, 1918, 5 reels; and by Universal, 1927, 13 reels. There are also a number of parodies, e.g., *Uncle Tom without the Cabin*, Paramount, 1919, 2 reels; *Uncle Tom's Caboose*, Universal, 1920, 2 reels; elaborations on characters from the book, such as *Topsy and Eva*, Feature Productions for United Artists, 1927, 9 reels; and many films in which characters assist in the staging of an adaptation of the novel, from *An "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Troupe*, Biograph, 1913, 1 reel, to *The King and I*, Fox, 1956, 133 minutes, via *Dimples*, Fox, 1936, 78 minutes. See William L. Slout, "Uncle Tom's Cabin in American Film History," *Journal of Popular Film* 2 (1973): 137–51.
- 41 Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, "... levant les bras au ciel, se tapant sur les cuisses'. Réflexions sur l'universalité du geste dans le cinéma des premiers temps," in Roland Cosandey and François Albèra, eds., *Cinéma sans frontières/Images across Borders, 1895–1918* (Lausanne/Québec: Payot-Lausanne/Nuit blanche éditeur, 1995), 133–45.
- 42 In *D. W. Griffith*, 249, Tom Gunning discusses several tableaux in *A Corner in Wheat*, including one of men on a breadline in which the actors remain static for the duration of the shot, resembling a "freeze frame." We have not seen anything comparable to this last example in any other film of the period, nor can we relate this shot to a previous iconographic tradition.
- 43 The National Film and Television Archive dates one of these films, an Italian-language print entitled *Vita e passione di Cristo*, to 1906, the other, an English-language print entitled *The Life of Jesus Christ*, to 1914. As the individual tableaux of these films were sold separately, and Pathé remade different tableaux at different times, dating individual prints of the Pathé Passion is notoriously difficult. It seems to us more likely that the NFTVA's earlier version is that released in 1902, the later that released in 1907. See Henri Bousquet and Riccardo Redi, *Pathé Frères, Les films de la production Pathé (1896–1914)*, part I: [1896–1906], *Quaderni di Cinema* 8, no. 37 (Jan.–Mar. 1988): 79–81 and Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des années 1896 à 1914*, [part 2] 1907–1908–1909 (Paris: published by the author, 1993), 4.
- 44 This scene is absent from the print circulated in the U.S. by the Museum of Modern Art. For a description and still, see the shot breakdown in Pierre Jenn and Michel Nagard, "L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise," *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma* 334 (Nov. 1984): 72.
- 45 Anon. [probably Frank Woods], "Reviews of Licensed Films [...] *Gold Is Not All*," *New York Dramatic Mirror* 63, no. 1633 (9 Apr. 1910): 17.
- 46 Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema 1907–1915*, vol. 2 of *A History of American Cinema*, ed. Charles Harper (New York: Scribner's, 1990), 88–89.

- 47 Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, 83, writes of Augustus Harris's "obsession" with processions in his Drury Lane pantomimes; see also Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 17–18.
- 48 In surviving prints, this shot is the last in episode two, and would therefore be the natural place for a scene-end tableau. Its slightly anticlimactic character suggests, however, the possibility that a subsequent shot showing her consigned to the flames in the temple has been censored, as certain sequences were in the reissue print held by the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin, from which the prints we viewed derive. See Paolo Cherchi Usai, "Cabiria, an Incomplete Masterpiece: The Quest for the Original 1914 Version," *Film History* 2, no. 2 (June–July 1988): 155–65.
- 49 Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, 193–6.
- 50 Méliès began to use dissolves to link scenes in *Cendrillon* (Cinderella) in 1899, his first multiple-scene film sold as a single unit, and he continued to do so for most scene transitions throughout his career. Porter took up the same device at Edison, in films such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902). In such dissolves, any characters left in scene often freeze in something like a tableau, but the transition rarely lasts longer than a second or two, and the appearance of new visual material simultaneously distracts attention from the tableau function. Trick films provide instances of another sort of pseudo-tableau also related to the possibility of splicing lengths of film together, when actors had to hold a pose while the camera was stopped and restarted after changing some aspect of the scene for a magical transformation. The poses adopted would often be similar to those of stage tableaux (where one of the constraints was the need for poses actors could retain for a significant length of time), and as all the actors rarely arrived at a pose absolutely simultaneously, it was almost impossible to sustain the illusion of continuity of movement through the transition.
- 51 Charles Musser suggests, both in *Before the Nickelodeon, Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 242, and in *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, vol. 1 of *A History of the American Cinema*, ed. Charles Harpole (New York: Scribner's, 1990), 349, that the Edison Company hired a traveling Uncle Tom troupe for the film, but in neither place does he offer any supporting documentation. It would hardly have been necessary to hire a constituted troupe, however, as so many of the small-time actors available for hire would have known the play well. It should be said that many settings, groupings of actors, and tableaux look very like cut-down versions of the stage photographs of the William A. Brady New York production of 1901 (see Stephen Johnson, "Translating the Tom Show: The Legacy of a Popular Tradition in Edwin S. Porter's 1903 Film of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in John Fullerton, ed., *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema* (London: John Libbey & Co., 1998), 131–7). For an approach to the Edison film version employing a very different method and reaching rather different conclusions from ours, see Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 101–23.
- 52 See n. 21, above.
- 53 This description assumes that the film as first issued was ordered as the Paper Print in the Library of Congress is ordered, an order that also corresponds to the descriptions in Edison catalogs. The other print we have seen, in the National Film and Television Archive, London (deriving from a copy in the Museum of Modern Art, New York), has the scenes in an order bearing no relation to the traditional sequence of the action, presumably as a result of a broken print being incorrectly respliced at some time; more important, it consistently inserts its titles into the scene more or less at the point where the action described in the title begins, a re-ordering we presume is an exhibitor's or collector's deliberate re-editing. Here, as in other quotations from film intertitles, we have followed the spelling of names found in the title, but in all descriptions of films and plays we have used that found in the original novel.
- 54 Edison Films, Catalog Supplement no. 175, May 1903, in Musser's microfilm collection. The cross mentioned in the vision of Lincoln freeing the slaves is not visible in the NFTVA print or the Library of Congress Paper Print version, and this vision is followed in both prints by one not described in the catalog, showing two soldiers in the uniforms of the North and the South reconciled by an angel of peace.
- 55 See Ben Brewster, "Traffic in Souls: An Experiment in Feature-Length Narrative Construction," *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 1 (Fall 1991): 40–1, repr. in Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer, eds., *The Silent Cinema Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 229.
- 56 We have seen two prints of this film. The National Film and Television Archive print is a copy of one in the Dansk Filmmuseum, Copenhagen, with Danish titles, but otherwise closely corresponding to the plot summaries of the film in the trade press. The second is a print belonging to Murray Glass, deriving from a reissue by the "Empire Safety Film Co.," according to its opening title. This is apparently a version re-edited for home viewing, in six parts rather than the original three, and with many interpolated titles and some interpolated footage. We have based our descriptions on the National Film and Television Archive print (our shot numbers refer to this print), with occasional references to the Murray Glass print when it contains clearly authentic footage missing from the NFTVA print.
- 57 For plot summaries see "Stories of the Films [...] *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 6 (6 Aug. 1910): 314; and "Reviews of Licensed Films [...] *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *New York Dramatic Mirror* 64, no. 1650 (6 Aug. 1910): 26. The latter has a particularly careful account of the reel ends.
- 58 The first title in this sequence is our translation of the Danish one in the NFTVA print, the second follows one of the Vitagraph titles interpolated in the NFTVA's print of the World version discussed below.
- 59 Since this was written, we have seen a fifth print, a 16mm one in the Cinémathèque française. We were not able to study this in as much detail as the others, but it is clear that it derives from the same reissue as the Grapevine video, with fewer later modifications, and a certain amount of original footage not in any other version, particularly in the sequence of the auction after St. Clare's death.
- 60 We should like to thank Pat Loughney for providing us with a copy of this script.
- 61 The surviving prints differ more or less from the script, all but NFTVA placing Scenes 129, 132 and 133 differently, and all but LoCI breaking up the very long Scene 131 with cutaways and titles.
- 62 Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 427–8.
- 63 Edison Films, Catalog Supplement no. 175.
- 64 Leopold Lewis, Henry Irving and "The Bells", 34, 49, 62, 67, 84n21 and 91nn10–14. For stage visions more generally, see Vardac, *Stage to Screen*, 34–5 and 38–9.
- 65 Book-ending the vision scene with dissolves or fades were less common alternatives.
- 66 See ch. 8, below, and Vardac, *Stage to Screen*, 2–4.
- 67 Shots 12–16, where Eliza overhears the sale of Harry and Uncle Tom, alternating shots of the Shelbys' parlor, with Eliza just visible through the sliding doors rear center, and shots of her behind the doors in the adjoining room, with the characters in the parlor visible through the crack between the doors.
- 68 For a discussion of the effect of location shooting on film style between 1909 and 1915, see Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 162–5.
- 69 In the first of these segments, NFTVA lacks one of the shots in the other three prints, and it is in a slightly different order. It should be said that this is one of the few sequences in the film that leaves room for doubt as to the precise correlation of the script and the shots in the surviving prints.
- 70 For an example from a novel, see Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 286–7: "The group that stood in various attitudes, after this communication [the news of Loker's recruitment of a posse to pursue the Harrises], were

worthy of a painter. Rachel Halliday, who had taken her hands out of a batch of biscuit, to hear the news, stood with them upraised and floury, and with a face of the deepest concern. Simeon looked profoundly thoughtful; Eliza had thrown her arms around her husband, and was looking up at him. George stood with clenched hands and glowing eyes, and looking as any other man might look, whose wife was to be sold at auction, and son sent to a trader, all under the shelter of a Christian nation's laws." For the everyday use, see the examples from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and Walter Benjamin referred to above.

⁷¹ Gunning, *D.W. Griffith*, 114–16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 115.