Bangkok and three up-country cinemas in the provincial centres, Lampang, Khorat and Pace. Ultimately, in latter 1932, the operations of the Siam Cinema Company together with those of the Queen’s Theatre were taken over by the United Cinema Company [Bonsat phaphayan saha saha si-nema], a new conglomerate of Thai and European investors in which King Prajadhipok had a controlling interest. See Boonrok, 1992, pp.64-5; National Archives R.7 ratchalekho (Royal Secretariat), 18/23, 18/30, 18/48. Throughout the 1930s this new venture was able to maintain a similar type of monopoly position to that exercised by the Siam Cinema Company and opened a number of new cinemas including the Sala Chalerm Krung, Bangkok’s first modern, air-conditioned theatre. Following Prajadhipok’s abdication in 1935 the company was taken over by the state under whose control it remained Thailand’s premier cinema enterprise until the post-World War II period when American film interests moved into the country and established their own distribution network and theatres. Dome, 1982 [a], p. 24.


38. B.T., 27 November 1903.
39. B.T., 20 March 1911, 8 January 1912.
42. I have been unable to locate any vernacular sources which refer to the film using its Thai name.
43. B.T., 29 February 1912.
44. B.T., 20, 25 March 1912.
46. B.T., 4 September 1922.

The Figure Seen from the Rear, Vitagraph, and the Development of Shot/Reverse Shot

Robert Spadoni

Most mainstream films and television dramas today contain instances of the editing pattern known as shot/reverse shot. In this pattern, at least two shots alternate views of two persons who are having a conversation or otherwise in some interaction, usually a face-to-face one. Sometimes the shoulder of the rear-facing figure in the shot is visible; other times the framing implies that this shoulder is somewhere just behind the camera lens. As Kristin Thompson points out, this device is among the most common figures in the spatial system of the classical Hollywood cinema, and it is, as David Bordwell has explained, an enormously flexible and versatile technique.

Some of the first appearances of shot/reverse shot are in films made by the Vitagraph Company of America in the 1910s. These appearances are related to other practices that, while not exclusive to Vitagraph filmmaking, are highly characteristic of it. I will trace the development of shot/reverse shot back to certain issues of depth staging and to how Vitagraph in particular responded to these issues. Of special importance will be Vitagraph’s practice of placing rear-facing figures in the foregrounds of shots. This essay will not be an attempt to give a general history of the development of shot/reverse shot, but to describe how Vitagraph practice became a particularly significant site for its innovation and adoption.

As Ben Brewster and others have noted, the French films d’Art had influential deep sets. First appearing in 1907, these films resembled story films earlier in the decade in their tableau stagings and distant camera. Particularly influential among them was L’Assassinat du duc de Guise (The Assassination of the Duc de Guise, 1908). Stagings in this film took advantage of built sets whose depths the makers wanted viewers to notice and appreciate. To this end (and others), they applied at least three techniques.

In a rich essay on deep staging in early French films, Brewster describes an emphasis technique that has been used in films since before the turn of the century. This technique consists simply of placing extras in the scenicographic depth while keeping the principal actors in the foreground. A second technique can be traced back more closely to L’Assassinat du duc de Guise and produces more dramatic results. This technique is to lower the camera from the previously typical eye level to around waist

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level. The effectiveness of this technique, Brewster explains, derives in part from the fact that, from the lower height, figures and objects that are closer to the camera appear larger than they do when viewed from eye level. The result is an increased difference between the sizes of figures and objects in the foreground and ones in the background, a change that increases the viewer’s sense of the depth of the space depicted.

Insight on the third and perhaps the most potent emphasis technique comes by way of Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölflin. In his influential study of transformations in style from Renaissance to Baroque paintings he describes a shift from planimetric compositions to ‘recessional’ ones, or compositions that emphasize depth, and he notes that ‘recession speaks most intensely when it can reveal itself as movement’. This is the case in films also, only less abstractly so since figures in films can actually move. With respect to our other two techniques, figures moving through depth tend to bring the depth to life more dynamically than ones merely placed in depth (as in technique one); and they draw direct impetus from technique two, since from the lower vantage point, figures moving into and out of the depth will now shrink and enlarge more quickly. Figure 1 shows these techniques at work in L’Assassinat. This enlargement also shows what can happen when, in films, recession reveals itself as movement: actors can turn their backs to the camera.

Another instance of figures moving to emphasize depth occurs years later and emphasizes a much greater depth. In the Italian Mo l’amor mio non muore! (But my love does not die, 1913), in one of the film’s extended-duration shots, Elsa Holbein (film diva Lyda Borelli) and her father slowly make their way into the recesses of a richly appointed set (Fig. 2). This is another case of the figure seen from the rear, another in which the appearance is a byproduct of movement in the service of calling attention to depth. When Italian diva cinema did present the backs of figures, it was often with exquisite care. At Vitagraph at around the same time, presentations of the backs of figures were both much more casual and common. This casualness and commonness are decisive factors, two reasons why the rear-facing figure that was to function as an intermediate stage in the development of shot/reverse shot made its most sustained and frequent appearances in Vitagraph films. Why not also in other American films? Why not in European films? It is not difficult to imagine filmmakers spread across several filmmaking practices, many diverse and dispersed artists and technicians all tackling many of the same storytelling problems, hitting on this highly versatile editing pattern roughly simultaneously. And yet, after describing applications of the pattern in Vitagraph films, including in a 1913 film in which 25 of its 75 shots are in shot/reverse-shot pairs, Barry Salt notes that ‘in European films made in 1912 and 1913 one finds a few extremely rare instances of reverse-

angle cutting, but only under the same severely limited conditions as in Griffith’s films. Basically that means in scenes involving a theatre and audience. So why not a case of shot/reverse shot breaking out in a dozen spots at once across the filmmaking world? This question jumps us too far ahead. Let us instead ask about the Vitagraph rear-facing figure, the intermediate stage.

Consider briefly Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper, in which Wölflin finds a ‘wall-like compactness which forces the plane upon us’ (Fig. 3). He describes many formal aspects of the transformation from this flat Renaissance technique to the greater depth in Baroque paintings. A comparison of the early film Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (Edison, 1902) to later films suggests that a roughly similar transformation took place in the cinema. For our comparison of these two transformations, I propose just one term: ‘wall-like compactness’.

In Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show, in which a country rube mistakes various films for the real things, we see Josh from behind whenever he rises from his box in the theatre. However, when Josh is seated he is, to borrow a term from theatrical
stage blocking, 'cheated out'. It is as though to look at the depicted film screen from over his shoulder was compositionally a bad idea in 1902 (or perhaps one that occurred to few filmmakers). Even when Josh is out of his seat, he and the screen remain virtually in the same plane (Fig. 4). This film typifies the 'visual flatness' which Noël Burch believes characterises many pre-1906 films. In its staging we see something at least distantly comparable to Wölfflin's Renaissance 'will to the plane'.

Now, as the dramatic playing areas on interior film sets become deeper, how was this visual flatness overcome? In his consideration of Tiepolo's Last Supper, a Baroque work, Wölfflin points out one way that in painting the plane was broken down. In this type of painting, Wölfflin writes, 'the spectator is compelled to co-relate in recession' (Fig. 5). Note that Tiepolo's arrangement of figures includes a figure seen from the rear. Elsewhere Wölfflin writes generally about developments from planimetrics to recession: 'If we attempt to compare the characteristic transformations, the simplest case would be the transposition of the alignment in two-figure scenes into a diagonal recession'. His example, Tintoretto's Adam and Eve, presents another figure seen from the rear (Fig. 6).

Is the example suggested by these paintings followed in film? The answer is 'yes and no', for the diagonal recessional figure alignments that Wölfflin describes are by no means natural byproducts of depth staging in the cinema. In films following the practice of the French Films d'Art, they are permitted or blocked by other conventions that are simultaneously shaping particular filmmaking practices. Simply deepening the playing area does not automatically produce rear-facing figures. For example, Brewer describes Italian diva cinema and its Danish precursor:

Divina cinema then, though it stages in depth, centres itself upon an acting style that tends to orient its star toward the front. For this reason, films such as Ma t'amor mia non mure! allow only limited opportunities for diagonal recession alignments of the sort that Wölfflin describes.

Furthermore, even when diva cinema did present a figure seen from the rear, it was often one that aimed to be the magnetic centre of attraction. In Theatre To Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film, Ben Brewer and Lea Jacobs describe in detail one such appearance, a use of the back that is quite characteristic of Borrelli's interpretation of film diva conventions. Borrelli makes an exit into the far back of the film's luxuriously deep three-room set. Her exit, they point out, takes much longer than the exits of two other actors who have also gone out that way; compared with these other two, her exit 'makes full use of the extreme depth of the set'. In this lingering retreat Borrelli slowly and carefully displays her back to the camera, and the movement is punctuated by moments in which she turns or half-turns to face front and assume a pose or make a highly deliberate gesture. The authors also describe Borrelli investing the same delicate intensity into poses and gestures – which, they stress, never quite freeze into stillness – with her back to the camera, including, for example, the moment when 'at the penultimate stair, she turns back to camera, arches her back, leans her head back, and pauses briefly.'
Likewise, the path-making work of D.W. Griffith beginning at Biograph in the late 1900s made only limited and, as in diva performance, most notably quite dramatic uses of rear-facing figures. Many of these films demonstrate the commitment to keeping facial expressions in view which Roberta Pearson relates to Griffith’s movement toward restraint in film acting.22 This movement, which helped direct Griffith to his bold innovations in closer views, also encouraged a pronounced frontality in his stagings.23 This frontality is evident in his 1909 film The Cricket on the Hearth.

In this film, two men converse in front of the King George Inn. (One has his back to the camera, but he is not in the foreground and, like his pipe-smoking friend and the hats they wear, is hardly more than a picturesque detail.) Into the foreground from the left walks Edward (Owen Moore), a major character. Moore has some acting to do before going inside, namely, to mime having come to his final destination. Moore integrates his performance of this recognition with patting a dog. The patting action splits Moore’s attention between the sign hanging behind him and the dog standing in front of him. The dog, as Tom Gunning points out, represents a touch of realistic detail in the scene,27 but it also helps justify the actor keeping his shoulders forward while swirling his head back towards the sign and then looking fully around again, twice, before turning and going inside (Figs. 7–8). The desire to keep frontal also seems to inform some staging business in a later scene, when Dot (Linda Arvidson) leads the disguised Edward to the weeping May (Violet Meseraux) by tug-hugging him around to May’s seated figure, a choice that helps justly Arvidson backing in a semicircle—even after she has let go of Moore—and thus avoiding having to turn her back on the camera (Fig. 9).

More generally, throughout this film one can notice actors who are always or most of the time facing forward and arranged in loosely lateral fashion across the frame. Salt suggests how this 1909 film is also characteristic of later Griffith films: ‘amongst American film-makers, D.W. Griffith was notable for the way he persisted with a frontal organization of his stagings right through into the “twenties, even when everyone else had followed the Vitagraph example’.28 The Cricket on the Hearth also illustrates Brewster’s characterization of Griffith’s Biograph stagings as “eminently shallow”.29 I suggest that this commitment to frontality and these shallow stagings help account for the scarcity of reverse-angle cuts that Salt finds running even into Griffith’s 1920s films.30 A turn to Vitagraph will help explain why this is so. However, first a brief consideration of some rear-facing figures that Griffith does deploy will further suggest why shot/reverse shot did not appear in his Biograph films with any regularity.

Griffith does place some rear-facing figures to striking effect, as Gunning has shown. One example is in The Awakening (1909), when Mary Pickford’s character expresses grief at the departure of her husband. Of this moment Gunning writes that, ‘instead of turning then to the camera and miming out her grief as [Florence] Lawrence frequently did, Pickford remains with her back to the camera, clings her arms, and bows her head in despair’.31 Here viewer attention is calculated to be primarily aimed at this back, not past it. Gunning sums up the technique that produced the most memorable rear-facing figures in Griffith’s Biograph films, and attributes a meaning to them related to the larger development of what he calls Griffith’s ‘narrator system’:

The Biograph actors’ technique was to play key emotional scenes with their back to the camera, very different from the Vitagraph practice of actors having their backs to the camera at undramatic moments. For example, Wilfred Lucas sits with his back to the camera as he beholds the charred ruins of his plantation on his return from the Civil War in Swords and Hearts (1911). The practice indirectly acknowledges the pressure exerted by the voyeur camera.32

At such moments, characters with nowhere to hide use their backs to shield themselves against the camera’s ‘single probing eye’.33 To perform such a function, these backs must have appreciable bulk and opacity. As Gunning writes, ‘these private moments solicit audience involvement, in part by blocking it’, and this is the opposite of the function ‘the Vitagraph back’ could perform. The Vitagraph figure solicits involvement by acting as a guidepost, a visible but not obtrusive deflector against which the viewer’s attention glances on its way into the scenographic space beyond, and from which it often picks up some narratively pertinent colouroperation.34

Gunning’s example from Swords and Hearts illustrates that looking at versus looking past are far from being “either/or” propositions, but rather a matter of gradation.35 Still, we can note, as Gunning does, some characteristics of the two sorts of rear-facing figure that mark them as distinct practices.

Gunning locates a key to the functional capacity of the Vitagraph figure to send attention past itself in referring to the undramatic moments in which this figure often appeared. In Vitagraph films in the first half of the 1910s, appearances of rear-facing figures were more profuse and, for the most part, less carefully worked out—less significant—than in other films, such as Griffith’s Biograph productions, and Italian diva cinema, and—as Salt has indicated—European cinema on the whole at this time.36 Both this profusion and this lack of significance left the Vitagraph figure comparatively more available to appropriation by functions that would not become concrete until later.

Referring to developments and directions in staging techniques as they were practiced in the late 1900s and early 1910s, Brewster writes:

These same impulses, deriving largely from La Mort du duc de Guise, led to slightly different
results outside France, in the USA and Denmark. In the USA, Vitagraph adopted the low camera position, but combined it with a much closer forward camera position in the main action of the shots ("American foreground" or "plan américain") and the possibility of the principals in the foreground turning their backs to the camera. 36

Whatever impulses concerning staging and camera placement that Vitagraph might have derived from L'Assassinat accorded well with developments that Jon Gartenberg finds well underway in the company by 1907. Already by then, he finds the studio angling set walls, placing furniture, and ranging action in planes at various distances from the camera, all so as to significantly enhance the viewer's sense of depth. 37 The Film d'Art impulses combined with these developments at Vitagraph and, as Brewster notes, the possibility of principals in the foreground turning their backs to the camera. 38 All in all Vitagraph stagings of the period stand in marked contrast to the more persistently frontal blocking styles broadly characteristic of European and Griffith's films at that time. Figures 10 and 11 from Vanity Fair (1911), Fig. 12 from The Re-Incarnation of Karma (1912) and Fig. 13 from Red and White Roses (1913) show both the closer camera of the American foreground and Vitagraph's distinctive approach to figural placement and orientation. 38

Two developments figure significantly in the development of shot/reverse shot. These are the closer camera of the American foreground (combined with the lower Film d'Art camera), and a blocking style in which down-stage actors, including principal ones, turn around at undramatic moments. These adjustments affected a shift, a local surge, in the potentials and tendencies that, speaking in the broadest sense, composed 'film style' in the first half of the 1910s. These potentials and tendencies offered filmmakers a number of options in combining some of these stylistic elements and putting them to use, and also presented viewers with options in construing their effects. Let us first consider how the rear-facing figure contributed to this shift.

Vitagraph's efforts to make staged actions look more natural gave rise to an almost certainly unanticipated opportunity. 39 One approach to thinking about it is suggested by Colin Bailey in his discussion of Moonrise over the Sea (1822), a work in which the nineteenth-century German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich depicts three rear-facing figures looking at some ships:

The people gazing wistfully at the vessels outlined ether- rally against the moonlit sky convey through their bodily attitudes their common involvement in the natural spectacle before them. As in so many of Friedrich's pictures, the figures have their backs toward us, and because we participate in the same visual experience we identify closely with them. 40

Many another artist could help make this basic point. Vermeer for example, of whose Painter With Model Wollflin writes that "the model is placed far back in the room, but lives only in relation to the man for whom she poses" 41 (Fig. 14). So, let Friedricb or Vermeer suggest a potential that opens up when the film spectator sees a figure – preferably one in the near foreground and accommodatingly to one side – from behind. The potential is for the spectator to regard her view on a scene as a view shared with one or more of these figures. This is a potential enhanced by the American foreground and ignited by Vitagraph stagings.

By making this claim about spectators and characters sharing viewpoints, I am not suggesting that such a figural orientation necessarily functions as an identificatory mechanism in the way that, say, a perceptual point-of-view shot often does. Rather, this figural orientation associates the viewpoint of the spectator with that of a character. This association works similarly to the way that a gazing rear-facing figure can function to keep spectators spatially oriented as they follow along in a shot/re-

verse-shot exchange. 42 We have seen how a rear-facing figure can act as such a visual marker. Now let us consider how the closer camera of the American foreground enhances this figure's potential anchoring effect.

The American foreground was created when the camera was moved from around twelve feet away from the action in to around nine feet. 43 Eileen Bowser has referred to the former as 'stage distance'. 44 From twelve feet away the scene does appear more stage-like, since the further back from the lens the action is staged, the less pronounced is the camera's narrowly 'funnel-like' field of vision which sees only part of the action. 45 From such distances staging approximates the spectator's view in the theatre, where action must be legible from all (or most) seats. In contrast, at nine feet the line demarcating the front boundary of the action,
i.e., the foreground, narrows to just four-and-one-half feet across. A rear-facing figure standing or sitting in this foreground position looks upon a scene that is, compared to the twelve-foot camera position, more 'optically inscribed' as belonging to himself and to the viewer.

Moreover, the closer camera compounds the effect of the lower Film d'Art camera in that it too enlarges foreground figures more than it does background ones. A figure so enlarged can begin to effectively block out and single out other elements in the composition. This larger figure's gaz ing registrars with viewers as more salient than would a smaller one's, and so this figure's suitability to proffer itself as a 'guidepost' to a view on a scene is correspondingly increased. This suitability would be decreased, however, if the figure drew too much attention to itself—that is, if it absorbed more attention than it deflected. The Vitagraph figure avoids this problem through having its back to us.

As Bordwell writes in a general discussion of the film director's knack for making images intelligible: 'The director learns that, all other things being equal, the viewer will tend to watch the actor's face, especially the eyes and mouth. The director also learns that an immobile, silent, watching figure can call our attention to another character.' The Vitagraph figure, by generally sticking close to a three-quarters rear orientation, hides its potentially distracting eyes and mouth while still communicating the direction of its watching. (See, for example, Figs. 10 and 11.) So enlarged, oriented and placed, the figure becomes well suited to direct attention on purely compositional and also narrative levels. This is what the figure does in Vitagraph films, as I will show.

In His Official Appointment (1914), five state department clerks play a joke on the Colonel (Charles Kent), who anxiously awaits word of a possible state appointment. One clerk sits on a desk with his back to the camera and writes on an envelope. Another, seated behind the desk and facing forward, drafts a fake appointment (Fig. 15). The clerk sitting on the desk partially masks important action, the drafting of the fake. He carves out a rounded region of frame that contains within itself no important or distracting details. He frequently looks at the one seated behind the desk, and at his writing, and the direction of his attention appropriately directs the viewer's. In this way this figure's looking works in conjunction with the looking of the other four clerks, in that all five pairs of eyes frequently converge on the 'hot spot' of the scene's central action, the desktop. Both the masking and the directional cueing effects of this rear-facing figure would have been weaker from a vantage point further back, from which point the clerks would have been smaller and nearer in size to each other. From there, the graphical interplay of all five figures would have been swallowed up in considerably more 'dead' space overhead, and the saliency of the rear-facing figure's looking would have been weaker. Compare the masking effect and the saliency of the directed look in Fig. 15 to Fig. 1 from L'Assassinat, which presents a roughly similar arrangement viewed from farther away.

Likewise, in The Vengeance of Durand, or The Two Portraits (1913), Marion (Julia S. Gordon) sits for her portrait. The back of the painter (Earle Williams) is near enough in the foreground to block our view of it. Then he moves aside and we see the portrait from over his shoulder as he wipes some finishing touches on it. He and Marion admire the painting together, leaving a gap through which film viewers—somewhat like beholders of Vermeer's painting—can see it as well (Fig. 16). A camera positioned further back would have taken in more empty space above the figures and the painting, and the sense of looking between beholders, through an opening, would have been weaker. Compare Fig. 16 to the view between the shoulders pictured in Fig. 17, from Ma l'amor.

Another source of the power of this figure to pull viewers into stories is the obliviousness to viewers that it seems to flaunt. For example, in the opening scene of Vanity Fair, Amelia (actor uncredited) introduces her brother Joseph (John Bunny) to Becky (Helen Gardner). The two women turn their backs to the camera while Amelia (cut off at the knees) makes the introductions and Becky (closer, cut off at mid-thigh) bows (Fig. 10). A moment later we see Becky's excitement at meeting Joseph from a viewpoint that both filters the light over Amelia's shoulder and allows us to catch Joseph eavesdropping on the private moment (Fig. 11). This viewpoint privileges and steers viewers but it also takes in actors who seem to be indifferent to the camera. Of such stagings, a Vitagraph director might proudly point out that they look natural. He might indicate that they fall on the favourable side of distinctions such as ones The Film Index was reiterating at that time—for example, where it stated that 'in the spoken drama and its various branches the mediocre player is always playing "at" the audience instead of playing "for" it. When the same class of player gets into a picture the play is "at" the camera.'

A student of art history might find these stagings recalling another distinction, one Michael Fried makes in his study of eighteenth-century French paintings. In his study, Fried finds certain works reflecting 'the desire to escape the theatricalizing consequences of the beholder's presence.' He finds these works 'anti-theatrical, which is to say that they treated the beholder as if he were not there.' Fried characterizes the absorptive qualities of these paintings in considerably more involved and complex ways than the one that I am suggesting characterizes our Vitagraph figure. Still, a sense of his distinction between theatricality and absorption maps loosely (and anachronistically) onto one that I want to make: on the one hand we have Leonardo's Christ and Apostles, and Uncle Josh, and some figural arrangements broadly characteristic of European and Griffith's cinema in the 1910s. These are 'theatrical' insofar as they exhibit a frontality which could only be for the benefit of viewers. On the other hand the Vitagraph stagings align loosely (and provisionally) with what Fried refers to as 'the pursuit of absorption', underlying which is:
the demand that the artist bring about a paradoxical relationship between painting and beholder – specifically, that he find a way to neutralize or negate the beholder’s presence, to establish the fiction that no one is standing before the canvas. (The paradox is that only if this is done can the beholder be stopped and held precisely there.)

Fried helps us to understand how, through these stagings, Vitagraph was rehearsing aspects of the highly ‘absorptive’ shot/reverse shot pattern – for some film theorists have found that holding the spectator precisely there is epitomized by shot/reverse shot’s pinning (or ‘saturating’) the spectator into the spatial system of the classical narrative film. However, to consider this operation with respect to Vitagraph stagings, we must depart from painting-based models and consider how these components of shot/reverse shot work together with aspects of film editing.

The beholder’s apparent absence that Fried argues is a prerequisite for the absorptive effect in certain paintings can produce troubling effects when, in a film, this absence is insisted upon by a character who turns his back on the viewer for too long. I have suggested that the perception of sharing one’s view with a character is a potential effect of the Vitagraph figure. However, some film theorists have maintained that so orienting the spectator’s viewpoint with respect to such a figure – one who is, while inscribed filmically, pictured barely or not at all – can actually prevent absorption unless a counterweight is added to it. They describe an operation that hinges on filling in an absence which, if left unchecked, would block spectatorial pleasure. In the canonical example, this threat is neutralized when the absence is filled in with the presence of the figure pictured in a reverse shot. Skirting every concern with ideological effects that informs such a position and, again, not claiming that shot/reverse shot causes viewers to alternate their identification back and forth from one character to another, I will borrow this theoretical position in its roughest outlines to make two points: first, Shot A in a shot/reverse-shot exchange can create a tension that is relieved with the cut to a reverse angle, Shot B; and second, a shot and its reverse shot ‘ticking and locking against one another’, as Bordwell puts it, is one of the classical cinema’s most powerful tools for moving viewers closely along with the pace and action of a film narrative.

Flashing out the first point just a bit, we can note shot/reverse shot alternating two views, each of which is cued to the viewpoint of a character whose face, directors know, the spectator is going to want to see again. We can also see Vitagraph stagings creating an absence very similar to the one created by Shot A in a shot/reverse-shot exchange. These stagings permit the spectator to discover, as Daniel Dayan wrote with respect to Shot A in a shot/reverse-shot exchange, ‘that he is only authorized to see what happens to be in the axis of the glance of another spectator, who is ghostly or absent’. We can also see Vitagraph stagings angling to fill this absence in.

The effects of masked regions of the frame and directed glances can often be described with respect to little or no plot summarizing. However, the Vitagraph figure and the American foreground function within the context of more than one shot, and they require a consideration of narrative context to be fully appraised. For example, the Re- Incorporation of Karma presents the story of Qunitreea (Rosemary Theby), the unrequited lover of Karma (Courtney Foote), High Priest in a nondescript ancient locale. In the opening scene, she waits outside a doorway as a procession of white-robed worshipers file through it. Her figure is fully in frame. When Karma emerges, last in the procession, Qunitreea runs ahead of him, coming close enough to be cut off just below the hip. From this spot she greets Karma with a deferential swirl of the arms. Her back is to the camera and her body so angled as to present some of her profile some of the time (Fig. 18). Meanwhile Karma, unimpressed, continues forward. Rosemary Theby has to rush to hit her mark – on or close to the nine-foot line – before Courtney Foote exits frame left. Thanks to her fast feet, we catch Karma over Qunitreea’s shoulder at just the moment when both figures reach the largest sizes they will attain in the shot.

Following a title, the next shot is from a position further out in the courtyard space that we have just watched Karma and Qunitreea enter into. Karma continues forward and slows at the edge of a pool. There he turns his back three-quarters to the camera while Qunitreea takes up a three-quarters frontal position across a diagonal traversing the pool (Fig. 19). While now neither character is close to the nine-foot line, the two have just rearranged themselves in space across a (nonreverse-angle) cut.

This rearrangement and cut together accomplish the rough functional equivalent to a shot/reverse shot exchange. Karma and Qunitreea’s maneuvers do not approach the often elegant alternatives to editing that Brecht and Jacobs find European depth stagings elaborating throughout the 1910s. Rather, the staging and editing combination shows one company edging down a path on which the American cinema as a whole was moving in this decade, as Brewster explains in a comparison of deeper staging and faster cutting:

In a sense they can be seen as alternatives – once a simple shallow staging of action in long tableaux began to be felt (by audiences and/or film-makers) as tedious, variety could be introduced either by increasing the rate at which tableaux are replaced, or by creating more complicated settings and more complicated staging of the action in those settings. And, broadly speaking, the American cinema took the first road, and has consistently faster (and accelerating) cutting rates than those characteristic of Europe during the 1910s, whereas the tendency to emphasize depth is European.

I would place Karma and Qunitreea on this ‘first road’ and, more particularly on the route taken by Vitagraph (though I am aware that one could choose to highlight more going on in this exchange than a prefiguration of shot/reverse shot).
In Red and White Roses, a pair interrelate in recession even more elaborately. Morgan Andrews (William Humphrey), 'the reform party's choice for nomination as governor' (title), visits the parlour of tempress Lida de Jianne (Julia S. Gordon), the opposition candidate's sister. From on her right shoulder, which is in the left half of the frame, we watch the two join hands (Fig. 20). Then Lida draws forward and crosses diagonally into the foreground, and we watch them join hands again, this time from her left shoulder, now frame right (Fig. 21). This exchange, even more than the one in Re-INCarnation, unhurriedly accomplishes the rough functional equivalent to shot/reverse shot. Both alternations loosely fit the description in Thompson and Bordwell's glossary entry for the term in Film History: An Introduction:

> Two or more shots edited together that alternate characters, typically in a conversation situation. In continuity editing, characters in one framing usually look left, in the other framing, right. Over-the-shoulder framings are common in shot/reverse-shot editing.

The two exchanges in Re-INCarnation and Red and White Roses seem to suggest that narrative cinema, before it adopted shot/reverse shot as one of its major figures, already possessed an interest in reversing the foreground/background relations of two interrelating characters. This type of switching back and forth is distinct from another type, parallel editing, which is what film scholars usually mean when they refer to alternation. However, character alternations within undivided and comparatively small spaces (such as parlours or court-yards) are arguably as much at the centre of the classical cinema's character-focused narrative system as any other form of alternation. Burch makes the straightforward claim that shot/reverse shot 'developed as an essentially narrative procedure', and perhaps one could add that the technique serves the essentially narrative interest in alternation. In these Vitagraph sequences, such an interest is served by the American foreground camera as well as by staging manoeuvres.

Along with these developments at Vitagraph that were agreeable to the innovation of shot/reverse shot (the American foreground camera, the Vitagraph figure) it seems likely that set constructions and prop placements also played a role in shifting filmmakers and viewers from a pattern of mise-en-scène to a pattern of editing. Red and White Roses contains some interesting reverse-angle cuts that suggest this.

Morgan and Lida are in rooms separated by a small court. The title, 'The next evening. Across the court,' delineates a temporal break and also marks a jump through space to be made by a reverse-angle cut.

**Shot 1:** Lida stands with lace curtains behind her and smells a flower. The window behind is glimpsed through a space between the drawn curtains. She gazes off frontally, then turns to face the window, slowly begins to part the curtains, and peers through. (Fig. 22)

*Title: 'Lovers'*

**Shot 2:** Across the court, Morgan and his fiancée are in the foreground. He begins to escort her toward the left rear of the room.

**Shot 3:** Lida, having spied them together, leaves a hand on the still-only-slightly-parted curtains and turns to gaze off frontally some more. She smells the flower again.

**Shot 4:** Morgan, now alone, crosses from the rough middleground to the window in the rear of the room. He begins to part the lace curtains hanging in front of the window.

**Shot 5:** (Joined to the preceding shot with what works like a match-on-action cut, even though the action in progress at the start of this shot is Morgan raising his window, not parting curtains.)

A reverse view from across the court, through Lida's window. The curtains in front of her window are now sufficiently parted for us to see Morgan clearly from below the waist to above the head. Lida turns from facing us to slide up her window and look at him (Fig. 23).

**Shot 6:** Reverse-angle cut to Morgan's back, which blocks our view of Lida (Fig. 24). He turns away from the window and faces front.

After this wordless exchange, action resumes briefly in a parallel fashion back and forth across the court.

In this sequence camera positioning, actor blocking, and parallel editing are 'forced' into a proto-shot/reverse-shot couplet. The view of the action depicted is tightly constrained by windows that require the camera to line up behind Lida, who looks at Morgan through her window, the view through which is considerably narrowed by curtains hanging to either side. Lida's and our view, then, is through a window, across the court, and through another window to Morgan. Her back is to us, she is standing just enough to the side for us to see the object of her gaze, and the only view that could possibly take in both characters is through this diegetic tunnel. This tunnel opens up when first Morgan and then Lida part curtains and slide up windows, and after Lida has moved far enough aside for us to see (Fig. 23). Then, perhaps in an only partially worked-out response to this narrative's interest in alternation, there is a cut to Morgan's back – a reverse angle that does not return a view of Lida because Morgan's body is in the way. This enactment of the profligate to naturalise some reverse-angle cutting was not a singular occurrence at Vitagraph. Citing examples, all from Vitagraph films, Brewster observes:

>a number of instances of 180-cutting round doors or windows (e.g. Yens Yenssen, 29 Oct. '08, Oliver Twist, 10 May '09, and this is then extended, expanding the size of the windows until it is essentially a single space looked at from opposite sides (e.g. A Spanish Romance, 6 Oct. '08, Romance of an Umbrella, 28 Sept. '09).

Along with set constructions and prop placements, lighting developments at Vitagraph also nudged the company to the vanguard of readiness to adopt the pattern. Salt describes changes he started seeing in films in general at this time, lighting arrangements effecting a 'marked figure modeling as well as separation from the background'. In 1912 he locates 'a definite move in all the major film-making countries towards having the majority of the lighting in studio scenes provided by artificial light, rather than by the diffuse daylight through the studio roof and walls'. Under these improved conditions for exercising control, both figure and set lighting were increasingly coordinated to lock visual emphasis onto figures by sculpting them in sharper relief than before, and by setting them against comparatively darker backgrounds. In the process lighting was molding figures to the developing requirements of a character-centred narrative cinema. Salt also finds that, at this time, 'as far as standard studio lighting was concerned, Vitagraph was the most advanced company'. He singles out as exemplary of 'best practice' in 1912 a Vitagraph film in which the lighting 'gives a fairly natural fall-off in light intensity towards the walls of the set, and much improved modelling of the features. It also gives fairly good separation of the figures from the background.' Compare Fig. 10 from Vanity Fair to Fig. 17 from Ma T'amor to see how much more evenly lit the shot in the Italian film is. Lighting, then, was increasingly emphasising the front and rear anchor points of the diagonal reces-
The figure seen from the rear

Vitagraph is that this company provided a middle ground between certain European and American practical and stylistic contexts for representing two characters in face-to-face interaction. While staging in less depth than generally practiced in European cinema (but more than in Griffith’s), Vitagraph staged in some depth; and while cutting less frequently than Griffith (but more frequently than in European cinema generally), Vitagraph used some cutting. It would seem that shot/reverse shot — a pattern that, unlike parallel editing, presumes some depth at least as much as some latitude — found favorable conditions at the crossroads of enough depth and enough cutting. 76

David Bordwell’s essay on shot/reverse shot, “Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision,” does not take into account the sort of historical and company-related pattern of emergence that I have explored. 77 It calls on “sensory triggers” (stimuli that produce automatic responses, such as directed glances and their automatic indication of the object of attention) and “contingent universals” (for example, conversational turn-taking in every known culture) to explain shot/reverse shot’s nearly universal adoption and comprehension, and why filmmakers would try the device in the first place. 78 His argument reaches back before the earliest beginnings of art to stake its account and to locate the sources of the device.

I agree with many of Bordwell’s speculations, for example, that “it would seem likely that this alternating editing grows out of an effort to capture the [conversational] turn-taking phenomenon in cinematic form.” 79 However, in the case I have made, grows out of has a different meaning, one that I hope seems not in conflict with his. He writes that “the shot/reverse-shot device deserves to be called a stylistic invention,” 80 to which we could add that it was not one so self evident that it broke out in a dozen spots at once. Before it became one of the major figures in classical cinema, shot/reverse shot was tested and modified, and made viable through repeated uses. Various contingencies (including, of course, ones external to strictly practical and stylistic concerns) promoted and inhibited shot/reverse shot’s innovation and integration into the contexts of a constituted practice and a general style. All of this preceded and shaped both ‘trying out’ and ‘catching on’. Bordwell builds a powerful explanatory framework for why the pattern was ever devised, why it was ever adopted, and why it continues to make sense to viewers. However, other factors and events, some quite indifferent to shot/reverse shot and to the types of exchange that it is so well engineered to represent, also played a part in this devising, proliferation and comprehension.

In On the History of Film Style, Bordwell speculates that the lowering of the Film d’Art camera ‘probably arose from a desire to bring figures forward while keeping both head and feet in the frame.’ 81 Brewster’s conjecture is that ‘the aim may have been to produce a theatrical effect, a view from the stalls, or perhaps even simply to create an illusion of the principal character’s height; whatever it was, it stuck.’ 82 Similarly, Bordwell gives a formalist rationale for why an actor in a diagonal recessional alignment might be instructed to turn around:

Recessional staging creates compositional difficulties. Bring one actor diagonally forward and you may unbalance the frame, since he or she will probably loom larger than the other players. You will therefore need something to give the distant figures more visual weight. A simple expedient is to have the nearest figure turn from the camera; the lack of frontalité, aided by the act of looking, can steer our attention to the distant plane. 83

The compositional difficulties that Bordwell points to might certainly have motivated the solution he outlines, at Vitagraph and elsewhere. However, a too-narrowly defined problem/solution model of stylistic change might fail to see that this particular problem, and its solution, also motivated solutions to problems posed further down the line and in other places.

I do not suggest that Bordwell proposes such an overly limited model. Nor am I saying that the continuity and universality that he often finds marking back and spreading uniformly wide must contradict or exclude accounts in which solutions to problems are fabricated in a piecemeal fashion along crooked assembly lines by workers altogether different, and multiple, solutions and problems on their minds. That I am not proposing a philosophy of stylistic change that is necessarily, or
cutting (‘Deep Staging in Franck Films, 1900–1914’), in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., Early Cinema: Space – Frame – Narrative (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 50. Noel Burch is another to count this innovation among Vitagraph’s achievements (Life to Those Shadows, trans. and ed. Ben Brewster [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990], 131). Barry Salt suggests that Vitagraph director Ralph Ince was responsible for many early appearances of the device at Vitagraph – including in outdoor fiction filmmaking, a site of this device’s development that I do not explore in this essay (Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis, 2nd ed., rev. London: Stanward, 1992), 93–95, 137, and 238; see this essay’s last footnote for more on Ince and reverse-angle cutting). Instances of non-Vitagraph applications of the shot/reverse shot are many. Perhaps the best known is The Loafer (Es- sanay, 1911); see Salt, Film Style and Technology, 94). In addition, the device’s general adoption was preceded by a scattering of reverse angles appearing in films dating back to before the turn of the century, as Stephen Bottomore has found (‘Shots in the Dark: The Real Origins of Film Editing,’ in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., Early Cinema: Space – Frame – Narrative (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 108–109.

4. Salt describes another way this film was influential, specifically on Vitagraph films: The Vitagraph company signalled that they had taken note of L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise by giving two of their films reverse-angle shots. L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise had appeared in New York, namely The Judgement [sic] of Solomon and Oliver Twist, the extra descriptive subsidiary title Vitagraph High Art Film, (Film Style and Technology, 88).


9. As Bordwell writes: ‘Making action thrust diagonally to the foreground is a very old principle in painting, but moving pictures gave it a new force’ (On the History of Film Style [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Uni- versity Press, 1991], 171). Also, of the 1895 Lumière film Arrivée d’un Train à La Ciotat, and its imitations, Burch remarks on ‘the extraordinary effect of depth produced by a framing that makes the train arrive towards the spectator’ (33).


11. Salt, Film Style and Technology, 95.

12. Wolflin, 74.

13. Burch goes so far as to claim that ‘the cinema in some sense recapitulated the history of the pictorial representation of space in the West’ (168).


15. Wolflin, 73.

16. I specify dramatic and interior because, as Brewster points out, exterior-short comic chase films staged action in depth much earlier than dramatic films an interior setting did (‘Deep Staging,’ 46; see also Jon Gartenberg, ‘Vitagraph Before Griffith: Forging Ahead in the Nickelodeon Era,’ Studies in Visual Communication, vol. 10, no. 4 [Fall 1984] 11). Another objection to specify dramatic is that, as Brew- ster notes, scenes of spectacle in films made by Meliès and others were often staged in depth (‘Deep Staging,’ 46).

17. Wolflin, 73.

18. Ibid., 76.


21. Ibid. See 112–115 for their general discussion of this scene, and 112–113 in particular for more instances of it. See also Lea Jacobs, ‘A Tactics of Cine- matography’ (1910).


24. Gunnings finds this scene reflecting Griffith’s growing interest in environmental detail (D.W. Griffith, 176).

25. Ibid.

26. Salt, Film Style and Technology, 88.

27. Brewster, ‘Deep Staging,’ 50. Bordwell describes how this shallowness in staging extended to Griffith’s editing constructions, characterizing Griffith’s del- ight in multiplying and repeating – lateral cuts, prolonging movement by lining up rooms like rail- road cars’ (History of Film Style, 132; see also Brewster and Jacobs, 189). It might also be noted that, in contrast to Biograph’s Manhattan brownstone studio – which afforded limited possibilities for depth staging – Vitagraph opened a spacious new studio in Broad Street, NJ (8). See also Gartenberg on how shooting in the new studio gave Vitagraph ample opportunity to explore depth stag-
Robert Spadoni

The figure seen from the rear

letter writer Herbert Waterbury, who singled out one company for its actors’ avoidance of this fault of “camera dodging.” A fault the authors found as ominous as “camera consciousness.” “The Vitaphone players seem to have come to this idea, as they move their eyes naturally” (23 July 1910, 2 for the preceding article). A little more on “Camera Dodging,” 10 July 1910, 15–16, for the reference to “camera consciousness,” quoted in Bowser, 90. “Camera consciousness” is repeated in “A Little More on Camera Dodging,” 3. However, in a reflection of some Vitaphone actors, the Index noted—without naming names—that there have been pictures in which we have observed the movement of the players to be mainly up and down stages so as to speak, thus presenting a full rear view too frequently (“A Little More on Camera Dodging,” 3). Such a criticism suggests that Vitaphone stagings struck some tastes as going too far in avoiding camera consciousness, and—contrary to Waterbury’s opinion—committed the sin of camera dodging. (My thanks to Stephen Bottomore for bringing these Film Index references to my attention.)

Pearson places the intense acting back with the Gabin describes within the set of ‘versimilar’ codes that Griffith and his troupe were then elaborating. 104. That these intense rear-facing figures were at Vitaphone part of a restained and versimilar acting style, and the casual ones at Vitaphone part of a natural acting style, should remind the reader of Stallybrass and White’s point that ‘versimilitude should not be equated with reality’ (28).


41. Wolflin, 77. Interestingly, Michael Fried quotes a contemporary art critic of an eighteenth-century French painter who seems to miss the connection between the painting that he admires and what he considers to be an obstacle the painter had to surmount in order to achieve it: “The painting represents a young man engaged in copying a drawing… One sees only the young draftsman’s back. In spite of this, the author has captured so well the truth and the nature of the young man’s situation that it is impossible not to feel, on first views of the painting, that this draftsman pays the greatest attention to what he is doing” (Absorption and Theatrality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], viii).

42. Edward Branigan describes a “reverse angle” — from behind the subject, usually over one shoulder. In addition to being less ‘subjective’ than the PV shot, it is a more stable articulation since we view the direct spatial relation of subject and object” (Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film [Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984], 110).

43. See Bowser, 94–95; Bordwell, History of Film Style, 184; and Brewster and Jacobs, 169.

44. Bowser, 94.

45. See Brewster and Jacobs, 173–174. Bordwell relates how narrow this tunnel is: “The standard lens of the 1910s and 1920s, yields about 28 degrees of horizontal coverage – as compared with the 200–degree field available to two-eyed humans” (History of Film Style, 122). For a clear description of the camera’s visual capability, see History of Film Style, 181–184. For a more technical one, and a helpful diagram, see Brewster and Jacobs, 170.

46. Bordwell, History of Film Style, 184.

47. Ibid., 164.

48. Gortenber’s essay on Vitaphone films in the 1900s describes how the studio was making significant headway towards directing viewer attention already in 1907, the year of a film in which he notes: “The composition and movement in interior control the path of observation of the viewer down the center of the image toward the rearrangements, a change in concept from earlier films” (15).

49. Kent also directed the film (Brewster and Jacobs, 12).

50. Frank Woods knew that the actor’s lack of awareness of the viewer is, of course, a game: “Should there be absolute unconsciousness that the camera is there – or rather should there not appear to be this unconsciousness?” (The New York Dramatic Mirror, 10 July 1910, 15–16; quoted in Bowser, 90).


52. Fried, 4, specifically in reference to a painting outside the focus of his study – Géricault’s Raft of the Medusa.

53. Ibid., 5, specifically in reference to paintings and sculptures outside the focus of his study.

54. Ibid., 108.


56. Bordwell, Steiger, and Thompson, 66.

57. Dayan, 188.

58. Bordwell writes that the nine-foot line ‘could cut the actor off at midnight or at the waist’ (History of Film Style, 184). Pearson finds that the line could cut the actor off at the ankles (162 n. 112).

59. See Brewster and Jacobs, 124–127 for a description of how scene acting in Eisenberg Bauer’s films, and films by other European directors – mostly of the later...
The figure seen from the rear

linds the rear walls of sets pointed so to be rendered a uniformly dark grey on film. On this he writes: ‘I can only say that I believe that shots are taking over depth staging to an industry moving quickly towards standardisation in the History of Film Style, 198–199. So Gartenberg, 8–9, on how Vitagraph set early precedents and standards of studio organization and film production. See the same pages for Gartenberg on Vitagraph and the emerging central production system.

67. I do not suggest that the cinema shifted wholesale from alternations to stagings by ones to editing. Bordwell describes a scene in Fellen Angel (1945): “Pickering’s trick-and-a-half minute plan sequence needs no shots/reverse shots, takes turns assuming over-the-shoulder stance with utter naturalness” (History of Film Style, 233). It would be just as easy to argue that the film-makers here are not simply balking a returned view of Lida. The viewer at this moment knows well full well what Morgan is looking at, and also has a good idea of his tortured thoughts. There is no need to put Lida in view beyond Morgan’s shoulder, his still and centered figure, which absorbs all our attention, implies what lies beyond the court.

68. Bordwell, ‘The Vitagraph Fragments in the Library of Congress P.D. Jacobs Collection,’ Pordenone papers, 20. In an essay on Vitagraph’s reverse-angle cuts in exterior-shot films, Salt seems to describe the same phenomenon: ‘occasional films made through the next few years have a reverse scene action through a door or window from opposite sides of the wall containing the opening, nearly all of them made in the development that if one shoots reverse shot, one could call progress. ’I recognize that a venture into those rough cuts and jagged ‘cuts’ that Benjamin describes might turn up much more interesting results than they have.

69. Bordwell incorporates this scene and nine enlarge- ments from it into a discussion of staging strategies in the 1910s in On the History of Film Style, 185–187. He calls this scene a ‘pas de deux de temptation, hesitation, and acquiescence,’ and points out that a slightly higher than typical camera height helps to keep the two moving figures in view (185). See also Brewer and Jacobs, 120–121, on this film.


71. For example: Burch, 151–158; Gunning, D.W. Griffith, 95–96; and Salt, Film Style and Technology, 99–100.

72. Burch, 245.

73. Other interests would function increasingly to con-strain and transform expressions of this narrative interest: ones to narrative production and stand-ardized product, to transfer control of the film from the on-set director to the post-production domain of producers; and to tell stories effi-ciently, which generally would favor collecting comparatively short shots and reverse shots for later assembly over choreographing complicated stag-ings. Bordwell briefly discusses the appeal of over- long staging to an industry moving quickly towards standardization in the History of Film Style, 198–199. So Gartenberg, 8–9, on how Vitagraph set early precedents and standards of studio organization and film production. See the same pages for Gartenberg on Vitagraph and the emerging central production system.

74. Salt, Film Style and Technology, 74. ibid., 76. Gartenberg describes significant gains in Vitagraph’s control over lighting as early as 1906, the year they completed the new Brooklyn studio (8). He also writes that ‘making the ‘new Vitagraph studio made more composition in depth in interiors possible’ (17) and that ‘making dramas in the new studio had challenged Vitagraph to find new ways of representing space and time in a continuous narrative flow’ (18).

75. Salt describes a means other than lighting by which figures were set off against backgrounds. Also around 1912 – and especially at Vitagraph – he

76. For the 1987 Pordenone Vitagraph retrospective, Salt prepared a paper with a section titled ‘Reverse Scenes and Reverse Angles,’ in which he wrote: ‘Story-telling patterns and titles of the camera to keep the actors well placed in the frame when they make small changes in position are also to be found in Vitagraph films with increasing frequency after 1910, and together with the features already mentioned such as the use of dialogue titles, the “Vita-graph angle,” etc., the ground was prepared in 1912 for some of Vitagraph’s work at putting all this together in the final polished form that we unthinking accept as the normal way film are constructed. This someone turned out to be Ralph Ince, and he did it in the films he made between 1912 and 1916’ (Vitagraph Films – A Touch of Class, Pordenone papers, 26) I look to the access to the Ince’s surviving films to explore Salt’s provocative claim. However, taking his word for it, in Film Style and Technology, that ‘the early history of the use of this device seems to begin in the work of Ralph Ince from 1913 to 1915, for he was the first to get an appreciable number of reverse-angle cuts into his films’ (728), I can speculate that Ince was at the center of the mid-1910s galvanization and transformation of favorable conditions that I have described. Salt wrote more about this shot and reverse shot in one of his papers for the retrospective, one devoted exclusively to Ince. In this essay he makes strong claims for Ince as an important and overlooked figure in film history, and includes many comments on the director’s handling of shot/reverse shot and, more generally, reverse-angle cutting (Ralph Ince, Pordenone papers, 1–13; see also Salt, Film Style and Technology, 95 and 137). Salt also describes Ince’s applications of this device in outdoor fiction filmmaking (Film Style and Technology, 93–95), suggesting that more experiments on interior doors that I have described were instrumental in the transitioning of this device into outdoor sets (where, for example, Salt writes that “the United States was increasingly coming to be shoot”). Salt suggests that Ince was an important figure in this transition: ‘Films that [Ince] made at Vitagraph in 1915 such as The Right Girl and The Impatient Sweetheart show him putting the final polish on the technique of using a large number of reverse-angle cuts in interior, as well as exterior, scenes’ (Film Style and Technology, 137). Regarding the timing of shot/reverse shot’s integration into general narrative film style, Thompson refers to the occasional use of the device in 1911 and to its increasing use from 1914 on (‘Narration in the Early Transition to Classical Filmmaking,’ Film History, vol. 9, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 414 and 433, respectively).