

# Narrative Machines, or, from ‘Bottom to Top’

## *Early Discourses on the Novel and Film*

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There is a certain tendency in the contemporary historiography of early film studies to construe modernity as a model for the textual analysis of specific, isolated moments in film history. Furthermore, film history – and other media histories – is usually studied and written within the academic boundaries of different departments. We are given the history of media according to media and communications, film studies, art history, literature and so on. Very seldom are we offered a perspective founded on an interdisciplinary or comparative approach.

Therefore, I will both criticise some trends in early film historiography and argue in favour of the importance – and necessity – of employing a historico-dialectical and comparative analysis. I support my argument and discussion by comparing the paradigmatic interpretations of “modernity vs. early film” and the Finnish discourses on early film in the 1920s and the early novel in the 1850s.

### **Film Historiography**

In film studies, it is often forgotten that film was not the first ‘narrative machine’. Conversely, literary academics often forget that the book was in itself quite the “technological invention”. Even the novel was once considered to be an instrument, a vehicle, a material embodiment or means of conveyance,<sup>1</sup> i.e., a technological form. This is also the “early” modern sense of technology, as “a description of the practical arts”, which Raymond Williams dates roughly to the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

It is common in humanities today to consider film the technology and machine of modernity as well as the medium that gave life to the visual expe-

rience of modernity. The subject of film and cultural modernity is an established field of its own within the broader film studies context.<sup>3</sup> However, such historiography could also be criticised as a sort of “historical blind spot”, founded on an excessively expressive interpretation of history.

The original arguments used in early 20th century discourse are reproduced in studies by later scholars as expressing a homogeneous tendency – broadly defineable as modernity – thus placing the discourse aside from most historical and comparative relations with, for example, previous 19th century discourse. Such deterministic views on technology – and on film vs. society – often fail to consider that the object under study and the agent that constitutes the object are both part of the same process, which includes several different media and often incongruous views. Hence, the method I criticise has been similar to textual analysis, in its tendency to read a particular situation primarily in accordance with a pre-existing set of concepts and interpretative strategies. It did not treat the situation as something born out of change, i.e. in potential opposition to pre-existing paradigms and/or constituting a part of conflicting and different forces.<sup>4</sup>

The conditions for a historical study are thus not necessarily only to put an object into its accurate context, but also to consider it as part of a formation over a period of time, an incoherent assembly of conflicting ideas and interests in constant tension and change. Consequently we should pay attention to, as Sven-Eric Liedman reminds us, “the controversial or, dialectical character” of a specific situation.<sup>5</sup> According to this view, historical context is not something that simply exists, but is rather constituted within a complex constellation in constant process, and is effected by a dual process of inclusion and exclusion together. An analysis adherent of such an ideal has thus to avoid both mechanic cau-

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sality (local relations of cause and effect) and expressive causality (treating a phenomenon as having an essence, an inner unity, that causes something specific) by historicizing its own concepts and presuppositions.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the context for early discussion on film need not be found necessarily in the contemporary discourse of the time, but in earlier discourse as well. A relation and a comparative perspective generate a “context” and a critical view.

Certainly, historico-dialectical studies may not be critical as such, but are at least anti-dogmatic. They are critical, since they relativise the object of study by stressing that conditions have been different and open to change; this in turn implies that conditions might also become different in the future and that individual studies are part of such a historical process. There seems often to be a lack of awareness regarding historical process, the history of concepts and of words, and forms for understanding and appropriation, in the different historical interpretations offered in film studies, which concentrate on the visual.<sup>7</sup> It seems, on the contrary, as if there already existed a specific tradition of thought with regard to film history in relation to technical and material issues. Different studies are then turned into case-studies that can only confirm an a-priori interpretation. That tradition is, for example, detectable in Siegfried Kracauer’s *Theory of Film* when the author quotes Erwin Panofsky in 1947: “It is the movies, and only the movies, that do justice to that materialistic interpretation /’from bottom to top’/ of the universe which, whether we like it or not, pervades contemporary civilisation”.<sup>8</sup> When I first read Kracauer’s use of Panofsky’s quotation I wanted simply to check if the critics at the time also considered film to require a materialistic interpretation. I chose to browse some Finnish journals from the 1920’s because that period seems to me as good a starting point as any to trace the origins of today’s media culture. Kracauer himself uses the quote – in 1960 – to argue in favour of the material aesthetics of film. Panofsky instead- in 1947 – attempts a historical argument to explain why film expresses a cultural change.

## The Materiality and Modernity of Film and Literature

Everyone who has been teaching film knows how easy it can be since films can always be easily presented/represented, just like a concrete machine or any other object. You may easily freeze a picture – from the string of frozen pictures that film is – and point out different technical devices. You cannot

freeze the sound, however, a significant reason why sound often appears as the ‘immaterial’ element in film analysis. Or, according to Fredric Jameson, who envies film studies because he sometimes feels that it is “easier to be a materialist when you had a “really” material object to work with”.<sup>9</sup> This is especially evident when dealing with silent – or “early” film – but in a more general sense film embodies a permanent struggle with material elements – equipment, matter and objects – whereas reading and analysing a novel appears points more to a time-based, personal, interior and less material experience in which the process of material and concrete materialization falls mostly with the reader/audience.

Thus, the analysable physicality and material concreteness of film makes it suitable for arguments about its material qualities, or its technological character. But could this not be another sort of historical blind spot? And perhaps especially so if the material is seen as expressing something unique to film, and not as being part of a new historical situation which changes different media, and causes different and contradictory attempts to deal with these modifications. If the history of modernity is constructed around film and that which is contemporary to film, one medium is cut loose from the context and seen as constituting the history of modernity through the process of neglecting the media and its germane processes, which precede it. Obviously, audience of the early 20th century were not making their experiences as cultural individuals only at the cinema, and neither were they suddenly thrown out of time into an entirely new period. Hence, most modernity studies are projected from a position in which film is thought to have – so to speak – outmoded literature and as if it existed as a distinct practice. This is something which actually reflects the present boundaries among academic disciplines. Or, perhaps, film is observed from a ‘viewing’ position, in which the meaning of literature has changed – from signifying the practice of reading and writing to ‘pure’ literature (‘belles lettres’) – and where even film is shifting in its meaning – from film as cinema, or ‘film as film’, into film as “medium”; in short: from mechanic machine with a specific aesthetic into digital ‘media’ and its new aesthetic. In other words, the categories and the concepts we use to define film are also subject to the historical processes of change.

For that reason we should perhaps attempt to pose questions such as: What happens if we are even more historical and venture back even further, to a cultural stage when film didn’t exist? What was

then experienced as material? As technology? That is, as “a description of the practical arts”. In order to make that step possible, however, we should first look back at the 1920s and at the discourse on film. This will allow to grasp appropriate terminology and concepts, and to see how they can be used.

## The Discourse on Early Film

What is significant in the discourse on early film in Finland is that it is produced in two different spheres: the trade-press and cultural forums like traditional journals. It is mainly in the latter that it is possible to find critical interpretations of film as a phenomenon.

The typical reaction is that film is seen as a machine. One influential writer, who was quite sympathetic to film, wrote in 1925 that “Machine is machine”, i.e. that film had a nature as machine, ‘the aeroplane of the arts’.<sup>10</sup> Another writer, Hagar Olsson, wrote that film ‘destroyed the inner coherence of all phenomena and threw it into a forced muddle of meaninglessness and illusiveness’.<sup>11</sup> It is worth paying attention to that it was so-called modernists who made these different arguments, intellectuals who were considered both controversial and progressive. However, it is a mistake to interpret the situation as if it were a question that was only and exactly about film and nothing else. (Even such a progressive intellectual as Venny Soldan-Brofeldt claimed in a critical reply to Olsson’s negative remarks that film already in 1921 had consumed all old and new literature).<sup>12</sup> Because, if we do explain such confrontations with film as yet another story about the very narrative machine of modernity, what about such a narrative machine as the novel?

## The Novel in 1850s Finland

The novel as a genre was imported into Finland in the 1840s and 50s and was mainly used as a vehicle for the education of the middle class. The elite stated quite frankly in the press that the novel should be viewed as a vehicle, “a means of conveyance”, for educating the public and creating a middle class. Accordingly, the leading cultural elite did not consider the novel as pure literature, ‘belles lettres’, but as a form for educating the people – and therefore as an instrument for building a nation by creating a reading public, i.e. a middle class. The reason for such a strategy was that ‘Bildung’ and nationality were seen as the fundament and condition for producing literature and a reading public. The con-

stellation is similar to how film was considered in the 20s. The difference is that the middle class now felt threatened by the new media, the film. The technology of the novel was a question about creating a middle-class; consequently the discourses about the novel and the film were not dependent on the “material” or “modern” as such. The material and the modern were part of the vocabularies used for making meaning of a new situation and of trying to intervene in it.

When the novel was introduced in Finland it was literally considered a vehicle. In 1854 one critic wrote that in today’s society ‘poetry has been silenced by the noise of the machines’ and that the adequate form for writing in this new material and unspiritual world is the novel.<sup>13</sup> Another critic, H. K. Kellgren writing in 1848, claimed that the novel is ‘a product of its time’ and that ‘it expresses the needs of the moment’.<sup>14</sup>

What is worth paying attention to is that the same kind of characterisations which were used of the novel, later on have been used as ways and forms for understanding contemporary technologies such as film and digital media. In other words, every technology has its own crucial time, a moment that is very much characterised by how the new technology is understood and used. (For example, the classical discussion of modernity in Germany on ‘Gleichzeitigkeit’ – the presentness, contemporaneity and simultaneity of the city is equivalent with the situation in Finland regarding the novel during the 19th century).<sup>15</sup> Such discourses are then merely a proof for that the act of giving meaning to something is never only a question of meeting or confronting an object. Instead it is also a question of constituting, reading and interpreting the object in question in order to enable an own intervention in a concrete (historical and social) situation.

The novel in the different historical discourses I have studied, is not only seen as connected to the concrete and present time, i.e. as truly being not transhistorical, but material and specific. It is also considered a machine in itself and being a product of the machine. As, for example, Kellgren who claims in 1848 that the ‘novel is conjured by the machine, copied into hundreds of thousands copies which can be read by millions of people’.<sup>16</sup> In this way the novel – in the 1840s, in Finland – were seen as materialising its origin in the printing press, or printing machine. And furthermore, constituting technologically an unlimited public sphere, as the media culture its viewed today. Another reason for why the novel was seen as a machine, was that its stylistic

form was considered an international language in itself.<sup>17</sup> The genre of the novel was seen as transparent, not being bound by external norms. It was simply considered as a window to the outside world. The critics argued, for example, that the language used made it easier for the novel to have a quality of being transnational and even international, because it was written in pure prose which was easy to translate.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the case of the novel in 1850s Finland was as a cultural situation very similar to the one Walter Benjamin was writing in. The difference is that he was writing in the 1930s and in a situation where film was the new machine and the new technology, hence that object which could serve the argument Benjamin was constructing in his famous essay on the “The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction”.<sup>19</sup> Benjamin’s article, in turn, has become one of the biggest fetishes in film studies (a rediscovery that became institutionalised during the 1970s) and it has in many ways determined scholarly thinking about technology and culture. I would suggest that Benjamin’s “Artwork”-essay has influenced media history and film studies far too much.

Henrik Björck is one who has drawn attention to overinterpretations of the meaning of new technology in his book on the history of the idea of technology (*Teknisk idéhistoria*). He stresses the fact that the impact of a new technology is usually exaggerated.<sup>20</sup> Such a reaction and intervention is therefore turned into a historical symptom in itself. Why is a new technology exaggerated? Why is it interpreted as a break? And even as such a radical break that later scholars forget what has been preceding the cultural form they are studying.

## The Reconstruction of The History of Modernity

The art-historian Lena Johannesson is one of those who have criticised Benjamin for a hasty and exaggerated interpretation in her book *Den massproducerade bilden* (“the mass-produced picture”). She claims as well that Benjamin’s thesis creates a historical blind spot.<sup>21</sup> Johannesson’s book, which is about the mass-produced picture and about visual culture during the first half of the 19th century, criticises Benjamin’s historiography. According to Johannesson Benjamin identified the technique of reproduction with the late chemical photogravure and therefore neglected its 70 yearlong prehistory of industrial reproduction, i.e. lithography, xylography and the various methods of printing. In fact – as John Frow has pointed out – such benjaminian con-

cepts as the cliché, stereotype and “Schablone” all refer to the printing press and not to the invention of photography (which is the base and fundament in Benjamin’s history of the radically new with the film media and photography).<sup>22</sup>

Another scholar who is practising a far too textual analysis of film modernity is Miriam Hansen. She writes in an article that the intellectuals at the time (early 20th century), “considered the cinema and mass culture to function as an intersubjective horizon in which a wide variety of groups – a heterogeneous mass public – could negotiate and reflect upon the contradictions they were experiencing”. What is worth remembering is that the interpretation of the situation was not radically different from how the novel was considered in the 1840s in Finland.<sup>23</sup> The real difference, I would say, is that literature already had a different meaning in the 1920s and belonged to another kind of public sphere, (the same that I think is happening with film today when we are moving into the digital era). Consequently, the question is not what a certain practice or institution “contains” or “is”, but how it is placed in a social and cultural relation and how it therefore functions as part of an institutional practice. That the function of literature in the mid and late 19th century was much the same as that of film in the early 20th century is made clear by Anton Kaes:

As literature freed itself in the mid-18th century from its subservience to church and court, it became dependent on the free market, thereby setting the stage for its transformation into a mass-culture product. The economic incentive to expand the base of literature’s reception led to the expansion of the literary public sphere; as a result, art gradually lost its representative function. Disseminated by the mass media, literature became generally accessible; it no longer constituted the privileged domain of a special class of educated and well-to-do citizens. In order to increase its marketability, literature had learned to capitalise on the means of mass-media dissemination: already toward the end of the 19th century, it made use of the almanacs, calendars and paperback editions...<sup>24</sup>

In this way, literature – through the market and different technologies of production, distribution and consumption – played in own time a very similar part to the one film had in the early 20th century. And literature’s representative function in the 1920s as well as its institutional immaterial aesthetic was in fact something that had been consti-

tuted during the latter half of the 19th century because of the threat of the materiality of the novel;<sup>25</sup> a form that was considered as being imposed on literature and as an artefact born out of the different printing machines. Such an opinion grew even stronger when the literary field was confronted by the first versions of popular novels. When for example the Finnish writer A.G. Ingelius published the first Finnish gothic novel, *Det gråa slottet* (“The Grey Castle”, 1851), the critics were upset because it did not follow the ideals of realism.<sup>26</sup> The fantastic tale implied that literature could be constituted by artefacts that aimed at sensations and created a new reading public that was not concerned about inherent, literary values.<sup>27</sup>

### **Media Historiography as Cultural History**

Consequently, this change in what literature and film signifies at certain moments is not only a question of what literature and film ‘is’; it is also a question about history – what they are made to be and will become. As Raymond Williams has pointed out the “mechanical” is derived from “machine” during modernity, although – in English – mechanical was used to describe the main range of non-agricultural productive work.<sup>28</sup> Therefore “mechanical” acquired a derogatory class sense. But it was not until the 19th century that the mechanical was clearly opposed to the spiritual and idealistic. After that it could function as a concept for structuring and framing cultural and literary activities.

In short, what we are confronting in the different discourses on early film and the early novel, are various ways of discovering the history of literature and the history of film and enact in these “histories”. Therefore those histories are also turned into symptoms of something else. And that ‘else’ is never about the object in itself, the novel or the silent film during the 20s, or “film” and “literature” and so on. Instead it is a cultural question about social relations: cultural struggle, competing social positions and interests when a new cultural form is confronted and given meaning. Such a struggle is a complex and contradictory constellation and perhaps precisely because of that the new technology and the new material are so exaggerated since so much is at stake.

When scholars have treated the city as a physical image for the cinema to make the argument that “modern culture was “cinematic” before the fact” they have constituted a sociologically faithful production field around such components as the city,

the cinema/film and modernity.<sup>29</sup> What they often have forgotten is Pierre Bourdieu’s imperative that the making of such a production field is also a question of reconstruction, a reconstruction that never can be motivated by the objects alone.<sup>30</sup> It is also a question of how these objects were constituted in language, how they were seen and used. Then perhaps the use of such words as “the machine”, “technology”, but also “film” and “literature” had been put in a historical perspective.<sup>31</sup> Now, the city is treated exactly as Benjamin did. Not for historical reasoning but as an “image” that embodies film and modernity.<sup>32</sup> Machine in such historical discourses is not a thing, a cultural artefact. Machine is a form. It is a linguistic form for imaging the new – the material that suddenly appears – and for acting in the new situation. The historian who traces and reads the discourses has consequently both to track the socially linguistic categories and to place them in a relation that has its own past and present. If modernity is treated only as a form, it is translated into an object that is open for free interpretation and textual play in the present. This is something that I think is evident in many of today’s film studies on modernity and the visual.<sup>33</sup> In those studies modernity has become a way of imaging film history according to a logic where the city, the visual and modernity becomes an emblem for early film.

This historical blind spot therefore becomes historical in itself; i.e. history is not so much a causal relationship as necessity and change in the sense that it creates a limiting situation. The effect of the new narrative machine – the film – was so overwhelming that its prehistory in, for example, the materiality of the novel was forgotten (or, as Johanneson points out, that Benjamin “forgets” the whole technological history of the image). All these explanations should rather not be seen as motivated because of some technological, mechanical causality, but because cultural forms like literature, as a concept, as a condition of production and condition of use had been appropriated by other cultures and social interests and therefore changed meaning.

Consequently, what the new narrative machines – at their own time – do is to materialise, relativise and also question notions of knowledge and therefore questions of the cultural and the aesthetic. If we look at the technology of today it is easy to notice how well “the computers” have pointed out how historical and sociological our notions of knowledge and culture are. How literature, film, television and digital media are different “information processing technologies” given different meanings in different socio-historical situations and

therefore constituting different poetical and political strategies.<sup>34</sup> A critical analysis is therefore a historical and comparative one, because the act of comparing over time always implies a critical view as the object under study is put in a relation, in a perspective beside itself. Hence, the context of early film in the 20th century and its concept of technology and the “machine” can very well be found by studying the novel in the middle of the 19th century. Together the different medias constitute a productive and dialectical force field, which illuminates both the different centuries and the different media, and moreover: different ways of appropriating new machines and the making of meaning of technology.

Consequently, through a cultural history – if “cultural” is considered in a socio-historical sense; signifying a material, active and social practice of making meaning in and out of history – then we are able to take into consideration differences and history as a question of cultural change and clash. Therefore an interdisciplinary analysis and comparison over time is significant, because such a methodology and way of proceeding makes it possible to take into account that every cultural act is positioned both in a relation to something previous and present, and that such relations always causes different reactions in the same historical situation.

## Notes

1. In this sense it could also be argued that even narrative is a “technology”. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young makes that argument in his “Magic Media Mountain – Technology and the Umbildungsroman”, Joseph Tabbi and Michael Wutz, eds., *Reading Matters – Narrative in the Media Ecology*, eds., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 29-52.  
See also Bruno Latour who sees the machine as “means of producing ideas and facts”, Latour, *Science in Action – How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1987).
2. Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, (London: Fontana Press 1976), see under “Technology”.
3. As the title indicates in the anthology edited by Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 1995).
4. David Bordwell has criticised the “culturalist” research on modernity and film in his *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1997). His point of view is empirical (the object is “fine-grained causal processes”) and cognitive/rational (the motivation behind decisions and choices is rational problem-solving) as mine is historico-dialectical (human culture is seen as historical and changing and can therefore not be studied from an external and neutral point of view – what is studied is always a part of how something is studied).  
R.L. Heilbroner has emphasised in his classical article “Do Machines Make History?” (originally in *Technology and History* 8 (1967)) that “Techno-

- logical determinism is thus peculiarly a problem of a certain historical epoch – specifically that of high capitalism and low socialism – in which the forces of technical change have been unleashed, but when the agencies for the control or guidance of technology are still rudimentary”, 65, *Does Technology Drive History? – The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, eds. Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1994)
5. Sven-Eric Liedman: “Institution and Ideas: Mandarins and Non-Mandarins in the German Academic Intelligentsia”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 28:1 (1986), 119-144.
6. On “mechanical” and “expressive” causality see for example the chapter “On Interpretation” in Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1981), 17-102. Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith writes regarding technological determinism and causal models that: “the thingness or tangibility of mechanical devices – their accessibility via sense perception – helps to create a sense of causal efficacy made visible. Taken together, these before-and-after narratives give credence to the idea of “technology” as an independent entity, a virtually autonomous agent of change”, Smith and Marx, “Introduction”, Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, eds., xi.
7. For example Tom Gunning and his argument about a “cinema of attractions” (which he dates to 1895-1906) appear to be founded more on an attempt to intervene in film history and reject earlier models which are based on ideals of linearity and the development of a narrative cinema (there is also in Gunning’s idea a certain longing for a

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- modernist or avant-garde aesthetic, i.e. that film emerged from such a tradition, or at least not from a narrative tradition). Gunning, "Cinema of Attractions", *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute 1990). Very soon the "cinema of attractions" was turned into a concept for textual analysis of individual films and specific cultural forms. For a historical critique of Gunning see Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7:2 (1994), 203-232.
8. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, (London: Oxford University Press 1960), 309.
  9. Fredric Jameson, "Allegorizing Hitchcock", *Signatures of the Visible*, (London: Routledge 1992), 99.
  10. Elmer Diktonius, "Spekulationer i det kinematografiska", *Filmrevyn* no. 3 (1925), 47.
  11. Hagar Olsson, "I filmens tecken", *Nya Argus* no. 22 (1920), 175-176.
  12. Venny Soldán-Brofeldt: "I filmens tecken – från en annan synpunkt", *Nya Argus* no. 1 (1921), 10-11.
  13. A. E.: "Romanen i våra dagar", *Litteraturblad* no. 10-12 (1854), 334.
  14. H. K. Kellgren: "Bolag för romanlitteratur på svenska I", *Åbo Underrättelser*, 8 Dec. 1848.
  15. Miriam Hansen: "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity", in Charney and Schwarz, eds., 362-402.
  16. H. K. Kellgren., 8 Dec. 1848.
  17. In fact, the Finnish scholar Ragnar Öller considered the novel an international language in itself as late as 1919, "En finländsk romanskrivare från 1850-talet", *Förhandlingar och uppsatser* 33 (Helsingfors: SLS 1920), 81-187.
  18. The argument is used several times in the whole article that H. K. Kellgren published in three parts, "Bolag för romanlitteratur på svenska I-III", *Åbo Underrättelser*, 8, 12, 15 Dec. 1848.
  19. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books 1969). The essay was actually written originally with film in mind but emerged from his work with the *Das Passagen-Werk* where Benjamin studied Paris, "the capital of the 19th century", in order to investigate the culture of early industrialism. Theodor W Adorno, who used to criticise Benjamin's "Artwork"-essay, was very supportive regarding the "Passagen"-study. Adorno saw the latter as a more proper analysis as it concentrated on the new commodity-form that emerged during the 19th century and not on how a technology by itself changed a cultural situation. *On Das Passagen-Werk* and the correspondence, see Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften: Band V* and *Band VII* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1982 and 1988).
  20. Henrik Björck, *Teknisk idéhistoria*, (Göteborg: Arachne 1995)
  21. Lena Johanneson, *Den massproducerade bilden*, (Stockholm: AWE/Gebers 1978). Johanneson published her book in Swedish, in 1978, and therefore became a victim of the historicity of film studies itself. And especially the discourse on modernity in film studies – that can be roughly dated to the 1980's and 1990's.
  22. John Frow: *Marxism and Literary History*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986), 108.
  23. Hansen in Chaney and Schwarz, eds., 389.
  24. Anton Kaes: "Literary Intellectuals and the Cinema", *New German Critique* 40 (1987), 15.
  25. In this sense the early history of literature is a history of its materiality. See for example Joseph Tabbi's and Michael Wutz's "Introduction", in Tabbi and Wutz, eds., 1-25.
  26. For example S. Elmgren in *Litteraturblad* no. 10, (1851), 298-301.
  27. For a discussion of the reception of the novel and the politics of creating a reading public see my "From A G Ingelius to Börje Brast: Legislating Finland-Swedish Identity", *Polygraph* 10 (1998), 105-113.
  28. See Williams on "Mechanical".
  29. Charney and Schwarz, eds., 1.
  30. Pierre Bourdieu: *Homo Academicus*, see his afterword in the Swedish edition, (Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag 1996), 255-266. Sara Danius forgets also this in her dissertation *The Senses of Modernism – Technology, Perception, and Modernist Aesthetics* (Diss., Department of Literature, Uppsala University 1998), she is trying to make a production field around the new technologies and how they were perceived/sensed by authors like Mann, Joyce and Proust. This phenomenology of technology she understands as materialistic. But what she in fact is doing is to support a technological determinism, which is quite logical because her work is part of the literary tradition of textual analysis. As Madeleine Akrich has pointed out "the method of content analysis, as applied to texts, adopts an individual and psychological approach [which] ignores the wide ranges of uses to which objects may be put [and] becomes close to technological determinism", Madeleine Akrich, "The De-Description of Technical Objects", *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, eds., (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press 1992), 208.
  31. Charles Musser has criticised Tom Gunning for not considering film as a practice and event – its institutional meaning. Musser points out that during 1897-1901 "the exhibitor acted as the principle *cinematic* narrator and his presence was strongly felt in the narratives that he constructed, not only through the selection and arrangement of films and slides but with a lecture and the introduction of music and effects", Musser, 223.
  32. For a critique of Benjamin's historical analysis see Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1971), 74-77.

I think what has happened in film studies is that the image of the city and modernity has become “second nature” in the discipline itself. Hence, history is turned into an image of something and not seen as a matter of change, of competing discourses and interests that produces contradictory and conflicting images and notions.

33. For example, Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1991)
34. Tabbi and Wutz, eds., 15.