

[연구논문]

Amusement Parks in the Cinema: Repositioning Film in the Culture Industry

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1. Introduction

The integration of amusement parks and cinema has a long history. Hale's Tours are the oldest examples; they attracted visitors by combining the elements of cinema (panoramic view) with those of the amusement park rides (rocking motion). Also, in the United States amusement park movie theaters were a common phenomenon during the early twentieth century (Rabinovitz 35). Critics like Tom Gunning, Lucy Fisher, and Leo Charney have suggested that amusement parks share the interest in mobility, visibility, or even modernity with early cinema. As Gunning writes in his influential essay "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," early cinema and the great amusement parks of the 1920s have their roots in the same ground: the emergence of modernity and the desire to shock the viewers with visibility (58).

With this said, that amusement parks fascinated several film directors in the age of early cinema is not a coincidence. We can find *amusement parks in the cinema* as frequently as we find *cinema at the amusement park*. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the period when amusement parks were in their heyday, Coney Island was viewed as “one of its most complete, most studied and best known manifestations” (Clavé 14). It was shot in several early films such as *Shooting the Rapids at Luna Park* (1903), *Rattan Slide and General View of Luna Park* (1903), and *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (1903) (Musser 124). Films like *Shooting the Rapids at Luna Park* and *Rattan Slide and General View of Luna Park* could maximize the effect of shock by shooting the amusement park—the place that exists for shock and amusement. As Gunning and Fisher have suggested, amusement parks embody the shock, novelty, and amusement of modern experience. However, amusement park scenes produce different meanings when combining to the new element of cinema—narrative. While the early films produced by Edison or Porter seek to show the amusement parks to the spectators, films like *Sunrise* (1927) or *The Crowd* (1928) do more than just showing them to us.

Building upon the works of Gunning, Fisher, and Charney, this article attempts to examine how amusement park scenes reflect the transition in film’s conception of modernity. First of all, this article reads *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, two Hollywood films released in the 1920s, in relationship to the history of the amusement park industry and of cinema. Although Fisher claims that the amusement park scenes are used to reflect and critique the modern life in her analysis

of *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, she does not combine her analysis with attention to historical changes in cinema language and in the amusement park industry. Importantly, the amusement parks come to a decline as people come to view modernity as “a habitual second nature” (Gunning “Re-Newing” 39). My proposition is that the amusement park scenes of the early twentieth-century films highlight the change in the ways in which people react to modernity. By comparing and contrasting the two films, I will argue that the amusement park scenes reflect the historical moment in which people began to be used to modernity.

To be more specific, I intend to investigate how the transition from the cinema of attractions to the cinema of narrative is represented in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* to better understand the changing views of modernity. Tom Gunning argues that “the cinema of attractions does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films” (“The Cinema of Attraction” 57). In another essay, “Modernity and Cinema: A Culture of Shocks and Flows,” he argues that “a sense of fragmentation” that remains in the chase film illustrates the integration of two different cinematic languages (311). Similarly, Charles Musser contends that the transition from actuality to fictional stories is found in the history of the travel genre. With Musser, the transitional films integrate the classical narrative to the “viewer-as-passenger strategy” (130) which was generally used in documentary films. As railway panoramas disturb narrative in transitional films (Musser 129), in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* the amusement park scenes represent the remaining elements

of the cinema of attractions within the narratives.

Fundamentally, this article seeks to highlight the ways in which the amusement park mirrors and critiques the opposing views of modernity in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*. I will examine how amusement park scenes function as attractions in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* and then discuss how the transition in the style of cinema parallels that of the amusement park industry. In the initial part of the article, I will argue that both amusement parks and films were used in representing modern experience. Then I will argue that the elements of the cinema of attraction and the increased narrativization in the cinema and the amusement park industry both appear in the amusement park scenes. The final part of the article will focus on the conflicting views of film's position in the culture industry through comparing and contrasting the ways in which the amusement park embodies modernity in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*.

2. Amusement park: the recreation of the city

Sunrise and *The Crowd* shed light on the interconnection of city street, film, and amusement park. Noting that people rode the trolley just to feel the "trolley breeze" before the emergence of the amusement parks, David Nye states that the electric light turned the urban landscape into a spectacle, and the trolley offered people "a new kind of tourism" (85). Nye also notes that the amusement parks were first built at the ends of the trolley line (11). This highlights the ambivalent views of the amusement parks. First, it implies that

the amusement parks were created from the desire to escape everyday lives; since they were located at the end of the line, people could feel that they momentarily leave the city behind and travel to somewhere else instead of endlessly coming and going between their home and workplace. This is connected to Nye's argument that amusement parks "serve[d] as a feast of fools for an urban industrial society where the patron momentarily escaped into a magical world" (12). That the amusement parks "operated chiefly at nights, on weekends, and during holidays" (Nye 11) also suggests that people visited the amusement parks to escape the daily routine.

At the same time, the location of the amusement parks highlights the connection between its inner space and the outside world. That streetcar companies developed many of the rides (Nye 128) indicates that amusement park rides were literally an extension of the trolley or streetcar. Thus, it is not surprising that the amusement parks offer their visitors the same kind of experience of urban space. In *Sunrise*, the scene in which the couple enters the city on a trolley overlaps the scene in which people enter the amusement park through a tunnel. In the first shot of the amusement park, there is an entrance below the circles of electric lights, and the camera enters a tunnel that connects the inside to the outside of the amusement park. Similarly, in *The Crowd*, John and Mary go up to the second floor of the double-deck bus on their way to the amusement park in order to watch the urban landscape. This scene overlaps the scene where they pass through *Tunnel of Love* in a canoe; as in the double-deck bus scene, the camera is located in front of them, shooting both the couple and the passing images. The overlapping of these scenes

highlights the similarity between the act of riding a bus or trolley and that of riding the amusement park rides.

The acting of watching the urban landscape is recreated not only in the amusement parks but also in the cinema. Significantly, early cinema allows people to repeat what they experienced in their daily lives at the movie theaters. As Weihsmann writes in “The City in Twilight: Charting the Genre of the ‘City Film’ 1900-1930,” the early city films functioned “as true-to-life documents” that recorded the city life (8). Although Weihsmann focuses on the German Expressionism in this article, he notes that it was a general trend of the early cinema to try to grasp the actuality of life through recording the urban landscape:

Early examples of film were received, like photography, as true-to-life documents and therefore as scientific proof. They showed without much attempt at rhetoric or aesthetics that the incorruptible camera-eye was a reliable tool that made the magical appear in the seemingly bland and banal of everyday places and situations. Their work thus emphasized primarily the (re)presentation and perception of space rather than special effects, fake or pseudo-realistic, surrealistic and magical elements as in Méliés’s marvelous trick theater. (8)

Quoting Gunning, Weihsmann adds that the early cinema offered the audience the opportunity to enjoy the urban landscape as spectacle: “The transfer to film allowed the city street to become another sort of spectacle, one mediated by an apparatus ... the street is filled with endless attractions” (Gunning “The Cinema of Attraction” 8-9). From this quote, we can see how the attractions of the urban world served

as the subject matter for the early cinema.

In *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, the representation of modern experience is stressed through a new kind of perception. When watching these two films, the viewer is supposed to get used to a new perception of landscape through the eyes of the central characters onto whom the panoramic scenery rushes while they are riding on modern vehicles. As Kirby notes, both railway travelers and moviegoers had to undergo “the internalization of panoramic perception as second nature” in the early age of the railway and film industries (59). In *Sunrise*, the panoramic scenery passes by the couple’s trolley while they are heading for the city, making the audience feel that they themselves are entering it. That is, the boundary between the trolley passengers and the film audience is blurred through this scene. This scene also suggests that the act of looking around the city street resembles that of seeing a film. As a film “pull[s] the viewer in and give[s] the viewer a place” (Charney 33), the city space literally pulls the couple in. It is important to note that the couple do not look at the urban landscape while riding on the trolley. In a sense, they do not become a part of the surrounding scene until they look around themselves. As Charney writes, modern life is characterized by “the experience of the urban street, traversed by vision, motion, and perception” (52), and one must “keep up best [one] can” (33) while the images drift by incessantly. After coming out of the doorway, the couple raise their eyes and look at the city street for the first time. When they walk into the landscape, the moving images pass by them as in a film. This scene signifies not only the fact that they are physically “entering” the city street but also the fact that

they are being immersed into the scenery through “watching” it. This kind of metaphoric image indicates that the act of walking along the city street is no different from watching a film and that visual sensation is the essence of modern experience.

Charney claims that amusement parks in the metropolis provided people with “release and relief from the urban world of work,” adding that “ironically, these parks reaffirmed the conditions of modernity as much as they relieved them” (76). Although I agree that they came to perform dual roles in modern society, the reaffirmation of the modern experience does not seem just “ironical.” Rather, it seems that the amusement parks of the early twentieth century are designed to represent everyday lives of the urban world from the beginning. Noting the similarity between the urban landscape and the landscape of the amusement park, Clavé states that the early amusement park “heralded visitors through its excess and velocity of parts-in-motion” (30):

Park architecture was extravagant, large-scale, a diverse mix of fantastic, historic, and exotic styles painted in bold colors and dramatically illuminated with incandescent electric lighting. Frederick Thompson, planner of Coney Island’s Luna Park, emphasized this to his fellow businessmen: “The very architecture must be in keeping with the spirit of carnival. It must be active, mobile, free, graceful, and attractive. It must be arranged so that visitors will say ‘What is this?’ and ‘Why is that?’” (30)

That the mixture of different colors, shapes, and cultural context was intentionally put into the design of Coney Island indicates that amusement parks seek to represent the very overstimulation and

distraction of urban space. We can see how the representation of the urban landscape is illustrated in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*. In both of the films, different kinds of rides, dancing halls, and restaurants are located densely without any coherence or spatial structure, preventing both the audience and the amusement park-goers from fixing their eyes to one spot. In *Sunrise*, since a tunnel connects the inside and outside of the amusement park, the amusement park-goers come to face with the diverse images of an elephant, dancers, a roller coaster, a circle swing, and a merry-go-round as soon as they pass the tunnel.



Figure 1.

As shown above, different kinds of images are contained in a single shot, and each image is moving in its own way, distracting the viewer's attention. Since the camera looks up at the spectacle from a visitor's level, the audience comes to experience the overwhelming

quality of the spectacle just as the visitors, feeling that they themselves have become a part of the flow of visitors who are climbing the narrow path in the middle of the scene. Similarly, even though *The Crowd* attempts to capture the whole view of Coney Island by shooting it from a high position, visual sensation is emphasized in it as in *Sunrise*. The interior space of Coney Island lacks coherence as it does in the amusement park shown in *Sunrise*. At first, the camera cuts to diverse places such as *Luna Park* and *Tunnel of Love* and then shows fragmentary images of the scenery by cutting to several attractions that the characters ride on. By doing this, both of the films suggest that the amusement parks create their amazement with the aid of overstimulation and distraction.

That the camera shoots the rides like the circle swing, revolving mandrel, and fun slide with staccato images implies that the amusement park visitors' attention is as distracted and momentary as that of city viewers whom Charney characterizes as "discontinuous" (52). As in a number of city films, the fragmentary images of the urban world are shown in *The Crowd* when Johnny first arrives at the city. Also, in *Sunrise*, the city street is so full of rapidly passing images that the whole scenery has no cohesion in it. By shooting the city street and the amusement park in a similar way, *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* shed light on the way in which the amusement park recreates modern experience.

3. The transition from shock to narrative

In “Hollywood as Modernism’s Other: The Case of *Sunrise*,” James Morrison claims that *Sunrise* combines two different languages of cinema: a Hollywood melodrama narrative and German Expressionism. While Morrison focuses on the ways in which the avant-gardism counters the flow of the narrative, the avant-gardism is not the only element that turns this film into a hybrid. Both in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, the amusement park scenes illustrate the integration of the desire to display and the desire to tell a story.

Arguing that early cinema had a purpose other than storytelling, Gunning suggests that the cinema of attraction does not disappear from the history of cinema. According to him, the elements of the cinema of attraction remain as “the desire to display” (“Now You See It” 73) within the narrative, disturbing the flow of discourse in some classical films (“Now You See It” 74). While here he does not mention amusement parks, the persisting elements of the cinema of attraction can be found in the amusement park scenes of *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*. Although both of the films adopt the Hollywood-style narrative, they use the convention of the cinema of attractions when shooting the amusement parks. It is true that those scenes function as a part of the narrative in each film. In *Sunrise*, the visit to the amusement park functions as one of “the phases of reconciliation,” leading the couple into the “rhythms of the city itself” (Morrison 35, 36). In *The Crowd*, it “provides the setting for [John and Mary’s] brief courtship” (Hansen 109), relating to a series of events that occur later in the film. Nevertheless, it is also true that the

amusement park scenes represent “early cinema’s fascination with novelty and its foregrounding of the act of display” (“Now You See It” 73) that Gunning attempts to find in classical films.

In the first shot of the amusement park, *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* both attempt to shock the spectators with “a sudden burst of presence” (Gunning “Now You See It” 76) as the early films do. In both of the films, the image of the amusement park attracts the audience’s attention by contrasting with the surrounding darkness. In *Sunrise*, the outline of the amusement park appears from the darkness as if the electric bulbs are being turned on while the camera is shooting it. The first thing that appears from the darkness is a revolving circle that beckons the amusement park-goers into the tunnel below it.

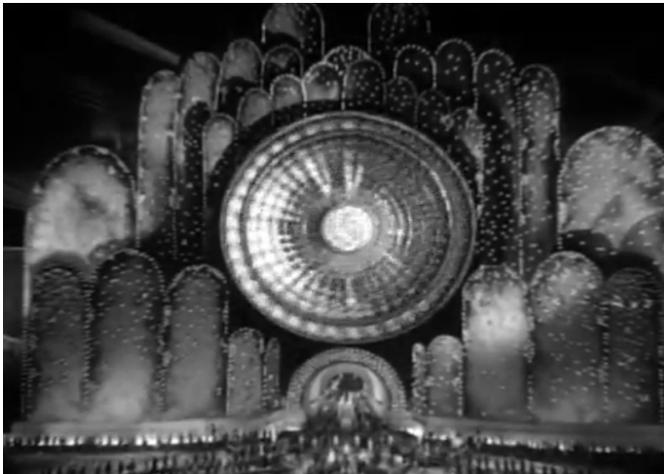


Figure 2.



Figure 3.

Similarly, in *The Crowd* Coney Island attracts the audience's eyes with its electric lighting. These scenes suggest that the amusement parks function as spectacle within the two films as they do in daily lives. In other words, both of the films seek to shock the audience with sheer visibility when they start to shoot the amusement parks. We can see that the amusement parks are displayed to the audience "with the immediacy of a 'Here it is! Look at it!'" (Gunning "Now You See It" 76), which characterizes the cinema of attractions. Further, the circle that is revolving above the entrance of the amusement park highlights that both the amusement park and the early film offer people "an isolated moment" (Charney 43). As Charney argues, people seek to grasp the moment by detaching themselves from ordinary life. Amusement parks promise them the extraordinary experience by isolating itself from the outside world

with the means of the brilliant electric lighting and the tunnel-shaped entrance.

Interestingly enough, the two films suggest that not only the amusement park but also the amusement park-goers fashion themselves as the object of gaze. As Gunning notes, the relationship between the spectator and the object of gaze differs in the cinema of attraction and in the cinema of narrative: “The attraction directly addresses the spectator, acknowledging the viewer’s presence and seeking to quickly satisfy a curiosity. This encounter can even take on an aggressive aspect, as the attraction confronts the audiences and even tries to shock them” (“Now You See It” 75). In the amusement park scenes of *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, the visitors display themselves to other visitors/spectators quite willingly as if they agree to become a part of the spectacle. In *Sunrise*, both the amusement park visitors and the film audience can watch the husband and wife dancing in public. In this scene, they “take their places as tranquil objects of a public gaze rather than anxious subjects of an individual look” (Morrison 38). This indicates that the couple change into a kind of attraction at the amusement park.

It is *Tunnel of Love* of Coney Island that illustrates the act of display most strikingly. When John and Mary’s canoe returns to its starting point, the visitors are waiting for their turns in front of the banner that says “Do they neck? WATCH!” What attracts the spectators’ attention is the temporality of the spectacle. According to Gunning, attractions are created from “the alternation of presence/absence” (“Now You See It” 76):

The temporality of the attraction itself, then, is limited to the pure present tense of its appearance, but the announcing gesture creates a temporal frame¹⁾ of expectation and even suspense. It differs from a diegetic suspense, of course, in being concerned less with *how* an event will develop than with *when* an event will occur The exhibitor's role as a showman presenting an attraction embodies the essential gesture of the cinema of attractions and could be dramatically intensified through temporal manipulation. ("Now You See It" 77)

Interestingly enough, we can see that the same principle of attraction is used for *Tunnel of Love*. Since the spectators who are waiting at the end of the tunnel already know what they will witness when the cover of the tunnel is lifted, *when* the kissing couples will be displayed is much more important than what they really see. Also, there is an exhibitor beside the banner, pointing at the spot where the spectators can see the kissing couples in a good light. This highlights that *Tunnel of Love* shocks the amusement park-goers in the same way as the cinema of attraction.

As Charney claims, the modern subject performs the role of an actor who "live[s] the role freshly as if he or she views each performance as purely momentary" (60). According to Charney, "the actor as a character" and "the actor as a spectator" are not distinguished from each other (60).²⁾ The *Tunnel of Love* scene illustrates how the

1) In *Sunrise*, the transparent walls surrounding the amusement park make the park space look like a transparent 'frame.' On the one hand, the isolating walls emphasize that the amusement park offers an isolated moment to its visitors, but on the other hand, the transparency of the outer walls implies that the inside of the amusement park is still connected to the outside world. Therefore, it can be said that in *Sunrise* the amusement park functions as a metaphoric image that sheds light on the general conception of the amusement park space.

momentary experience is repeated and recreated through endless role-switching. In both *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, the characters play the role of “an object of gaze” (Morrison 109) as well as that of the spectator in the amusement park. When the kissing couples are suddenly displayed to the spectators, the couples don’t look really irritated but seem to enjoy their own role.³⁾ When John and Mary both recognize the end of the tunnel and get excited—John rubs his hands and Mary rolls her eyes, smiling—they know not only the fact

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- 2) Noting that the couple of *Sunrise* enter the barbershop through a transparent door, Morrison claims that the couple become a part of the urban world by learning to play the double role of spectator and object of gaze:

The door’s transparency allows the viewer to see the busy shop in the depth of the composition, but it also allows the proprietor to see the street, so that when the couple tentatively enter the composition, the vigilant proprietor immediately opens the door with exaggerated cordiality to hurry them into the shop. If the connection of visual consciousness to urban experience previously in the film positions the couple as anxious subjects of the look who are themselves unseen, from this sequence on they become objects of a generalized, public gaze. (Morrison 41)

I argue that the amusement park gives them the opportunity to perform these dual roles just like the barbershop. In *Sunrise*, not only the outer wall but the walls dividing the inner space of the amusement park are transparent. This suggests that there is no distinction between viewer and object of gaze in urban space. Both in the city street and in the amusement park, restaurants and shops are surrounded by transparent walls, enabling passengers and customers to look at each other. Through seeing and being seen by others in those places, the couple come to engage with the urban landscape.

- 3) There is a difference between the ways in which the characters of the two films fashion themselves as an object of gaze. In *Sunrise* the couple enjoy the public gaze at the amusement park, while John and Mary—Especially John—are conscious of others’ gaze. For instance, when he and Mary’s kissing is displayed to the viewers in *Tunnel of Love*, he looks a little uncomfortable. I will discuss this difference between the two films later in this article.

that they can soon enjoy a kiss but also the fact that their kissing will be displayed in public. Moreover, that the spectators who watch the couples kissing hastily get into the canoe after them suggests that they agree to play the same role as John and Mary.

As shown in the *Tunnel of Love* scene, amusement park-goers know what they will experience before they get into the ride. Simultaneously, however, they must pretend that they experience it for the first time in their lives to be amused with it. In other words, amusement park-goers must forget their experience repeatedly in order to recreate the moment of shock again and again and to make their own experience always fresh. This is connected to the fact that each ride is shot only once in *The Crowd*. As the amusement parks train their visitors to “live the role freshly” (Charney 60) each time they set their foot in them, amusement park-goers must pretend that they visit the place for the first time even if they have visited it every weekend. Through the repetition of the same stimulation, however, “amusement gives way to familiarity” (Gunning “Re-Newing” 41). As one cannot be astonished by the same ride for ever, both the cinema of attraction and the amusement park come to lose their ability to shock.

Interestingly, *The Crowd* shows that Coney Island integrates different styles of entertainment. Most of its rides still fulfill the purpose of attraction; the rides such as the spinning circle, spinning cup, or revolving mandrel astonish the visitors by the sensation of mechanical movement. By contrast, *Tunnel of Love* combines a narrative with the elements of attractions. Although it follows the convention of the early amusement park rides when displaying the

kissing couples to the viewers, it has a narrative in it. We can see that the two couple's canoe passes by a reproduction of George Washington and his soldiers standing against the backdrop that portrays the Delaware River (Rhodes 122). This structure makes the riders feel that they are traveling into the history of America while riding on the canoe. This kind of train ride that has a narrative frame in it is differentiated from the rides that are designed for offering mechanical movements or visual sensation. The integration of the two different styles suggests that the mechanical movements and visibility are losing their power to shock.

While the narrativization of the train ride represents a new style of entertainment, it is suggested that masses cannot be amused by the newness as strongly as in the early days of technology. *The Crowd* captures the historical moment when technology is losing its magical nature. Chip Rhodes claims that Bert's cynicism is emphasized in the *Tunnel of Love* scene; when imitating Washington's pose, "Bert does not take history and its representations seriously" (122). At the same time, however, this scene suggests that the age of shock and amazement has already passed through irony. Ironically, Bert's behavior reminds us of the "primitive" (Kirby 65) spectators. Pressing his shoulder down, John says "You don't look historical. You look hysterical." Although Bert looks similar to the early spectators who hysterically reacted to the images projected on the screen, he is far from being hysterical in this scene. By stressing the gap between the early spectators and Bert the cynical spectator, *The Crowd* highlights that people began to get used to the newest invention more quickly than before.

4. Film: assembly-line or playground?

Tunnel of Love, in fact, anticipates increased narrativization in the amusement park industry itself. It is noteworthy that the amusement parks that are shown in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* lose their popularity along with the rise of theme parks. In *The Global Theme Park Industry*, S. Anton Clavé does not distinguish theme parks from their predecessors, amusement parks, arguing that there is no fundamental difference between the two. Stating that cinema has changed “from its beginnings, into a fundamental component of recreational areas” (18), Clavé does not take into account the period when both cinema and the amusement park industry had a different purpose than escapist recreation. Although I agree that amusement parks and cinema theaters have functioned as the sites for entertainment, I argue that a changing conception of modernity is presented through the shift in the amusement park and cinema industries.

Disneyland, the most famous and popular theme park that has changed the amusement park industry tremendously, opened in 1955. Although Universal Studios in Hollywood opened before *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* were released, it was Disneyland that opened the age of the theme park. As Disneyland offers a standard for the parks that were built after it, the early form of amusement parks came to pass its prime. It is differentiated from the amusement parks of the 1920s in many ways. As Clavé writes, Walt Disney never liked Coney Island because of its chaotic and dirty inner space (25). By eliminating the sideshows and thematizing the whole landscape, Disney built an artificial dreamland that has a “concrete narrative intention” (Clavé

24). It is important that the narrativized space of theme parks contrasts with the space of their predecessors that have no thematic coherence.

Although amusement parks and theme parks both allow people to enjoy leisure activity, they form different relationships with the outside world. Representing the disordered urban landscape and astonishing people by mobility and visibility, amusement parks repeat or even celebrate the modern experience. If they call themselves dreamlands, the dreamlike aspect comes from modernity itself. This aspect connects amusement parks to the outside world. By contrast, theme parks provide contemporary masses with sheer escapism by creating a separate world that seems to exist outside the modern world. Clavé notes how the design of theme parks creates the fantasy of an alternative world: “Theme parks usually have architectural programmes in which the buildings and facilities are ordered in relation to one another with the idea of shaping a place as a whole. The aim of this is to create the very sense of the place, not just recreating a thematic script but attempting to create identification between the function carried out and its form and location in space” (206). This indicates that the inner space of theme parks is more thoroughly disconnected from the outside world. Additionally, the design of theme park space helps to increase control over the visitors. To increase the profit of the parks, architects and planners designed the space with the flow of human traffic and psychology in mind.

Compared to the amusement parks that are shown in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, theme parks represent the negative force of modernity

more intensely. In fact, the shift in the conception of modernity is found from the different views of modernity presented in the two films. While the amusement park presents a defamiliarizing quality in *Sunrise*, such quality is already fading away in *The Crowd*. The couple of *Sunrise* do get the sense of newness and amazement both in the street and the amusement park because they are not used to the experience of the new. In contrast, in *The Crowd*, either visiting Coney Island or crossing the city street does not give the urban residents the sense of shock and amazement, because they have become a part of their routine. In this way, *The Crowd* portrays the modern world in which all activities are controlled by the same system and therefore no one can escape from it, while in *Sunrise* there is a space into which modernity has not yet infiltrated. Unlike the couple of *Sunrise*, who return to their space at the end of the film, the two couples of *The Crowd* do not return to their space because they have never left their world while visiting Coney Island. Thus, it can be said that *The Crowd* anticipates the world in which the uniformity of culture makes the illusion of escape that Disney promises irresistible to the masses.

Vidor seems to share a critical awareness of modernity with Theodor W. Adorno, who views “sameness” (94) and “uniformity” (97) as the essence of modern culture. Adorno argues that modern system makes everything the same through mechanical reproduction and that even leisure time is consumed as cultural production (98). By stressing the similarity between workplace and amusement park, Vidor presents a similar view of modern culture. That both John’s desk in the office and the canoe he rides on have numbers on them

suggests that he cannot escape the totalizing system while either working or spending his leisure time. He cannot detach himself from the environment with the means of shock and amazement that Coney Island offers him, but rather, become a part of a single mass audience while his mentality is being standardized. This is connected to Adorno's argument about the effect of the culture industry: "The mentality of the public, which allegedly and actually favors the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system, not an excuse for it" (96).

Although this essay has focused on the relationship between amusement parks and modernity, the amusement park scenes shed light on film's position in modern culture as well. Using the amusement park scenes in different ways, *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* seek to redefine the cinema's role in the ever-changing modern world. Although Vidor's portrait of the amusement park corresponds with Adorno's view of the culture industry, they differ in their views of cinema. For Adorno, the film is one of the cultural products that unify the modern subjects. He argues that the film "seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception" and that its "mechanical duplication" confines moviegoers to the present system by depriving them of the powers of imagination (99-100). It is noteworthy that Adorno's pessimistic view of the film contrasts to Walter Benjamin's relatively positive view of it. Calling modern society a "prison world," Benjamin states that the film performs dual roles: first, it "extends our compression of the necessities which rule our lives," and secondly, it leads us into the "field of action" where "we calmly and adventurously go traveling" (236). While Adorno views the film

as an assembly-line on which individual viewers' mentalities are standardized, Benjamin views it as a playground that allows them to look at the "prison-world" from a different perspective. Even though Vidor's view of modern system is as pessimistic as Adorno's, his view of the film is closer to Benjamin's than to Adorno's. Instead of reproducing "the world of everyday perception," *The Crowd* gives us a new perception of reality through highlighting the factory-like quality of the amusement park. By critiquing modern society through the representation of the society, Vidor differentiates his film from the amusement park that cannot help us to develop a critical mind.

Although *Sunrise* does not anticipate the totalizing system of modern society but celebrates modernity itself (Morrison 33), Murnau's view of film conforms to Benjamin's, too. While *The Crowd* helps us to better comprehend our environment, *Sunrise* functions as a "field of action" that liberates us from the prisonlike world. Interestingly, the amusement park of *Sunrise* resembles Benjamin's vision of the film: it is a "field of action" where the couple are liberated from the world they know while wandering among the images of the modern world. Therefore, it can be said that *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* both seek to redefine the film's position in the culture industry through the amusement park scenes even though they differ in their views of modernity. Unlike the amusement parks that give viewers the sense of defamiliarization only momentarily and then fade into the history of the entertainment industry, some films have the power to resist the uniformity of the culture industry by allowing viewers moments of both liberation and disillusionment.

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Illustration Credits

- Figure 1, page 8, *Sunrise* (F. W. Murnau)
- Figure 2, page 11, *Sunrise*
- Figure 3, page 11, *The Crowd* (King Vidor)

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Abstract

Amusement Parks in the Cinema: Repositioning Film in the Culture Industry

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This article attempts to investigate how not only the history of the amusement park industry and of film but also the different views of modernity are highlighted in the amusement park scenes presented in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, two Hollywood films of the 1920s. By comparing and contrasting the amusement park scenes, this article argues that those scenes reflect the conflicting views of modernity. While *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* both present the amusement park as a place that embodies modernity itself, each film sheds light on the different aspects of modernity: in *The Crowd*, the amusement park scenes emphasize the totalizing and mechanizing effect of modern experience, while in *Sunrise* the amusement park is portrayed as a place that offers its visitors a sense of liberation and empowerment. Further, the different portraits of the amusement park mirror the different perspectives towards film's position in the culture industry: can film be as liberating as the early form of the amusement park, or is it just a part of the standardizing system that forces individuals to merge into a large crowd? Reading the amusement park scenes in *Sunrise* and *The Crowd* together helps us to revive these questions which were at stake at the time of the early cinema.

Key Words

cinema of attractions, early cinema, amusement park, city, shock, narrativization, modernity, culture industry