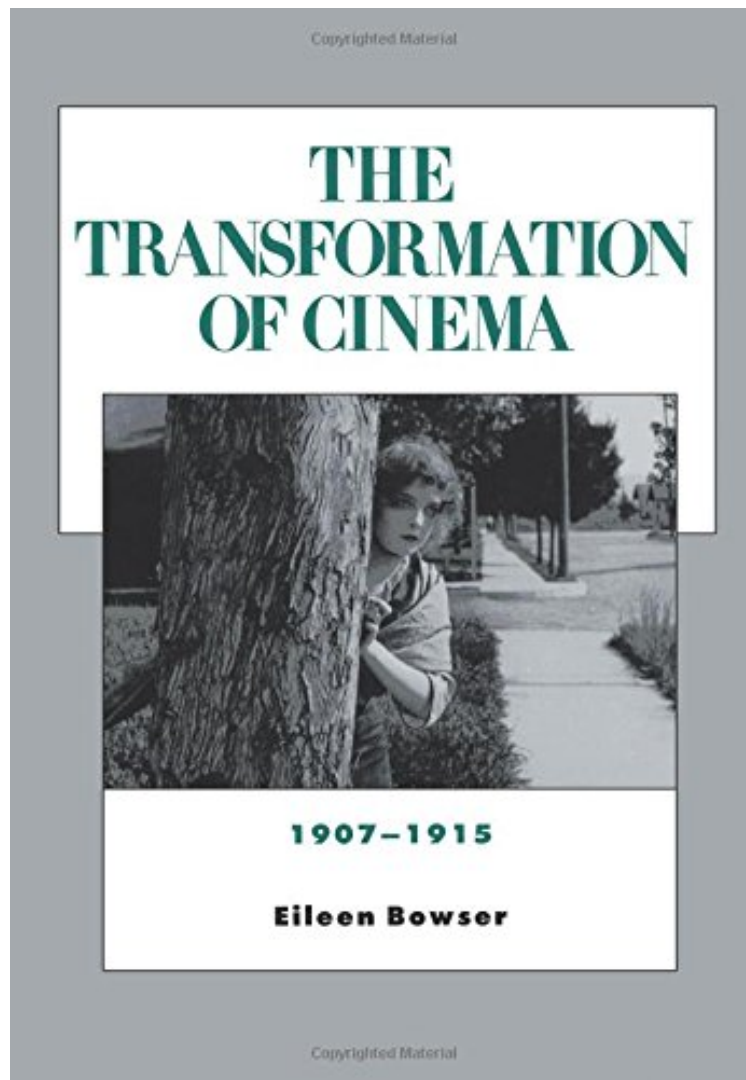


(Free read ebook) The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915 (History of the American Cinema)

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Eileen Bowser

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Eileen Bowser : The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915 (History of the American Cinema) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915 (History of the American Cinema):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An excellent study of the development of early cinema By Barbara Underwood As a silent film enthusiast I thoroughly enjoyed reading "The Transformation of Cinema" and got a lot out of it. Although the author takes quite a scholarly approach (with extensive notes and bibliography), I found the book to

be fairly easy reading throughout, and each chapter, which deals with a separate theme and includes good photos, is just the right length. This book is probably best for the more serious student or enthusiast of early film development, rather than for general reading or information on certain films or people. The author's approach is an overall one, encompassing the mentality and social conditions of the time in the US which influenced the development of cinema, such as, for example, the attitude in the early years that moving pictures were only for the 'great unwashed masses' and was looked down upon by middle and upper classes. As a result, influential people concerned with 'uplift' in society pushed to make films educational, intelligent and appealing to the more intellectual classes of society. Then there was a backlash as the majority of people preferred to be entertained rather than lectured, and further chapters focus on the changes that took place in filmmaking: moving cameras, lighting, editing, fade-outs and so on. Many films are mentioned as examples, but there is no section devoted to any person or film in particular. Instead, the author takes an all-encompassing approach which shows how people responded to moving pictures in the first place, then how producers and filmmakers responded to the public's reactions, tried to influence the public in various ways, and how all these interactions led to the transformation of nickelodeons into cinemas as we know them today. I found this to be a very good, informative and enlightening approach which was handled well, making this book an important foundation in the understanding and appreciation of moving pictures.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
Lucid, Informative and Unusually Comprehensive overview at the Beginning of the Movies
By John Silence is Golden
There have been scores of books written on the early American Cinema but there are very few as comprehensive as this one in the way that it details all the variegated facets of a new industry and art form at its infancy. It shows "warts and all" the American film industry in bare knuckled competition between companies, monopolies, cities, and the sometimes clear, sometimes clouded vision of the pioneer executives, directors, actors and producers groping to find their footing without previous experience in a new industry / medium. Some individual films are described and deconstructed but first and foremost this tome is a historical perspective of the 1907-15 time frame that highlights the how, who's, what's and why's that shaped the earliest years of the American film industry and how the industry moved from a limited "nickelodeon" novelty entertainment sideshow that was not considered legitimate or worthy of respect BUT in less than a decade - by 1915 it had evolved into the most watched, innovative and vibrant entertainment medium in the world. AND while D.W. Griffith and the Biograph Studio get "their pride of place" in their role as being in forefront of innovation the realms of film narrative, editing and direction, the author ensures that they don't completely dominate the narrative - The other pioneer film companies, Lubin, Vitagraph, Kalem, Edison, Essanay, IMP, Universal, Thanhouser, Mutual, Famous Players {aka Paramount}, Selig AND who founded them, their stars, product type and their preferred film genres - they are all given their due. The film patents battle between the {so called} legitimate film producers led by Thomas Edison and upstart producers that refused to pay them royalties for their product and own innovation is particularly illuminating and well told and is a story not often told. This book may not be for everyone, it is a narrative history that encompasses a wide range of areas of an industry in the throes of development and change from how the fledgling medium was financed, how the early film studios were designed / equipped / managed, popular film genres of the era and why the public liked them. The book describes the beginning of the "star system", "The East Coast versus the West Coast", the "tug of war" for the battle of where movies would be made and the producing studio's located and why the "West Coast" {for the most part} won the battle. The individual men and women who learned and evolved their crafts through "trial and error", who became the first generation of directors, writers and producers and how they constructed the new language of film narrative is well detailed. Constant innovation in photography, lighting, editing, direction resulting in overwhelming acceptance by the public of this new field of entertainment is a major theme of the narrative. I liked this book, it was different and informative and {especially} for the dedicated student of the silent film and film history, I give it a rating of between 4 and 4 1/2 stars.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.
Thorough examination of American Film History from 1907-1915
By Bruce Calvert
Ms. Bowser has written a detailed history of this film period, using her extensive research from early film trade magazines and the court records for the Patent War trial proceedings. The Patent litigation can be very confusing, but she does a good job of pointing out the important highlights. Besides the Patent War, the Patents Company also lost the economic war with the independent film producers and distributors. She describes the rise of the nickelodeon theatres, and the backlash against films by some moral "authorities" of the time. She shows many examples of films where the camera crept closer to the actors than just a full shot of their body, and the early attempts to tell a story better by editing different shots together. This period was the very beginning of the "star" system. Many studios resisted releasing the names of their actors, but others (including a few licensed producers) were happy to do so. With the coming of feature films came bigger, more elaborate movie palaces. And although Hollywood started booming in this period, films were being made in New York City, New Jersey, Florida, San Antonio, Chicago, Ireland, Cuba, and many other places. Because this book covers only American films, the reader will miss out on film history being made in Europe and the rest of the world. However, it does explain how Italian spectacles in 1913-1914 influenced certain American filmmakers. And Pathe Freres in France had some influence over distribution patterns in the USA before World War I. The main reason that I didn't give this book 5 stars is that it only describes major films as to their editing techniques or social content. There is no analysis as a whole of

major films like *THE ITALIAN*, *MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY* and others. Also, short comedies like the Mack Sennett Keystones only have a couple of pages, and Charlie Chaplin (who started working in 1914) and Sidney Drew barely have a mention.

Eileen Bowser chronicles the history of the American film business from the days of storefront nickelodeons to the premiere of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. The effect of the surroundingsthe size of the hall; whether the film was shown alone or along with vaudeville entertainment; and the size, quality, and relevance of the musical backgroundare all examined for their impact on the filmgoing experience.

"There is no equivalent to these books. . . . When Eileen Bowser says that the term 'movie star' was first applied to Florence Turner, the Vitagraph actress, in 1910, you can trust her as you never could trust the journalistic chroniclers of the movies who relied on second-hand sources or memory."--Kevin Lewis, "Film CultureAbout the AuthorEileen Bowser is former Curator of Film at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.