

Not the End: reflections on the changing ontology of film

Ian Christie

We're living in a time when 'the end' is fast disappearing. Not so long ago, when films were seen primarily in cinemas or on broadcast television, the end of a film really was 'the end'. You could of course pay to watch it again, but that would bring you once again to the moment of ending. Now, I need hardly remind you, most films can be paused, wound back and repeated. 'The end' merely signifies a boundary marker in the continuous presence of a given work. In one sense, films have become like books; and in another, they've become like Moebius strips. They've lost their unique formal and emotional qualities of launching us into a bounded temporal experience.

So how does this change our relationship with 'the film experience': its former finitude, its internal manipulation of chronology; the emotional release or frustration we felt at 'the end'? And how might *that* relate to other chronologies we have long taken for granted - such as the chronology of, let us say, the psychoanalytic session?