Everybody's Going: City Newspapers and the Early Mass Market for Movies

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The emergence of the mass market as a concept ordering distinctions in urban space is investigated through newspaper reporting and promotion of early movie-going in Toronto, 1907–1916. The analysis builds upon a revision of Chicago Sociology's text on *The City*, shifting the method and theoretical weight to rest more on Park's *Natural History of the Newspaper* than Burgess' *Growth of the City*. The metropolitan newspaper is both document and agent of urbanization, and is used here to describe how modernity was grounded in mass culture. The newspaper provides a sensible version of urban living for city dwellers, a map or menu of the city's rhythms and spaces. Specific to the movies, there is a shift from journalism to promotion, from trying to understand the audience to letting advertising for ever-changing film titles stand in for the urban practice. In particular, the brief fad of serial films with accompanying stories in newspapers perhaps marks when a mass audience was first assumed. Serial films provided an umbrella text to explicitly show how the variety of spaces, times, prices, and classes of audiences encompassed a common practice, a mass practice.

In May 1909, the *Toronto Star* surveyed the "fad" of moving pictures across the entire city. In considering whether the picture show was becoming part of everyday urban life, the writer surveyed the opinions of politicians and film-business people, detailed the bureaucratic hoops to jump through to open a show, considered issues of fire safety, profitability, compared Toronto to Montreal, and listed the streets on which picture shows already existed throughout the city. A city official was quoted, "Let them multiply like rabbits and they'll soon sign their own death-warrant. They are almost overdoing it already, and if we get a few more of them the moving picture fad will soon fall flat" (*Star*, 1909). With 20 picture shows opened in just 3 years since the first in 1906, it was still unimaginable to him that the number of movie theatres in the city would multiply fivefold again to nearly 100 by 1914. Rather than a fad, movie-going would become fully integrated into everyday urban life. With pessimism and prescience, the journalist himself interjects, "How can they be stopped? . . . They can't." Nothing in the article, however, yet addresses the newspaper-reading public as the audience, as the *subject* of the fad.

   The journalist described the emergence of a mass market for movie-going as it was happening, before the idea of a mass audience was well-defined. The future possibilities are outlined in local, municipal terms of whether to regulate the market for this fad or take a laissez-faire approach. None of the official voices are yet conceiving a future when

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movies become a form of mass communications, let alone pervasive enough to anchor a modern, mass culture. The journalist himself happens to be the one who guesses correctly that the movies cannot be stopped. Although merely a rhetorical flourish, I draw attention to this because I will examine the newspaper, and implicitly its creators, as a central agent in the reshaping of urban life through the mass market. My method uses newspapers to document the institutionalization of a mass practice, in this case looking in detail at Toronto in the decade after the first permanent nickel show opened. As records of everyday urban life through their reporting and advertising, newspapers are easily taken as historic documents, but they were also important participants in the processes of urbanization, modernization, and commercialization, often through editorial and business negotiations irrecoverably behind the scenes. The method thus requires a sociological understanding of how the metropolitan press was integral to making modernization and urbanization sensible to its readers, albeit with a bias that positioned the mass market for advertised products as central to that process.

Drawing upon Gunther Barth's (1980) *City People*, which lays the foundation of American "modern city culture" atop the metropolitan press before turning to consumption and leisure, I read the newspaper as a key way the mass public of modern cities could mediate the complexity of urban life, a type of map or menu offering a way to interpret and make the modern metropolis legible or palatable. Outlining this premise through key essays in urban sociology whose ideas were formulated during and just after the emergence of mass movie-going, I proceed to document the changing place of film-going in Toronto newspapers from curiosity to mass practice. Advance promotion and newspaper advertising remade *going to the movies* into an act that could be anticipated and planned, removing the tinge of infantile, instant gratification that came with the sidewalk ballyhoo of early nickelodeons (then called theatoriums in Toronto).

I conclude with a profile in detail of the formal and standardized coordination between the film industry and newspapers that came with fiction serial stories published to accompany melodramatic serial films (see Fig. 1). I propose that this brief phenomenon, lasting only a few years from 1914 to 1917, made the common practice of far-flung audiences instantly recognizable as part of a massive, organized hierarchy of temporal "runs" and spatial "zones." This film industry discourse and practice briefly became, with the film serials, how movies were promoted for consumption. Through the film serial, with up to 26 parts of its story spanning 6 months in the weekly newspaper, the entirety of Ontario (in my case) could quite literally be watching the same film at the same time, although audiences downtown in Toronto saw each episode first and paid the highest ticket prices accordingly. Going to the movies, and understanding how to do so, was now fully integrated into city life.

URBANIZATION, MASS MARKETS, AND MODERNITY

As the movies became part of everyday life, Toronto was undergoing the same explosive growth as other cities across North America. Its population more than doubled to 400,000 between 1901 and 1911 as it became an industrial and commercial metropolis for densely populated Southern Ontario. It began to overtake Montreal as the cultural and financial metropolis for the entire Dominion of Canada, still only a few decades past formal independence from Britain in 1867. The urbanization of Toronto did not come from any single type of industry or manufacturing. Grain shipping, steel making, and the new automobile

FIG. 1. *Chicago Record-Herald*, adapted from ads printed on February 4 and 23, 1914.

Note: Variations of this promotion for a daily Universal Pictures story also ran in Detroit and Buffalo newspapers. Daily movie stories started at the same time as serials early in 1914, but generally lasted only a few months, about as long as a single serial/break story.

industries were headquartered elsewhere in Ontario, in cities closer in character to "company towns." Although there were sizable stockyards in Toronto, most of its growth came from a wide range of relatively small factories for finished consumer products, especially furniture, clothing, and foods, plus a great deal of retailing and clerical work downtown (Careless, 1989; Gad and Holdsworth, 1984).

As in most American cities, the population growth was largely due to mass immigration. With 38 percent of the city foreign-born in the 1911 census, Toronto's proportion of immigrants was a close second to New York among the continent's 20 largest cities. However, in stark contrast to American immigration, this was overwhelmingly "British" in ethnicity (a racialized category that included Irish Catholics). Nonetheless, the city had a significant, highly visible, and largely ghettoized Jewish population, consistently making up between 5 and 10 percent of the population (Harris, 1996, p. 23–32). The most overt difference between Ontario and U.S. cities was an unambiguous prohibition against work and commerce on Sundays under the Lord's Day Act. Looking South at saloons, theatres, fairgrounds, and newspapers flourishing on the Sabbath, religious reformers sometimes called this commercialization a "United States Sunday" (e.g., *British Whig*, 1907). The Jewish ghetto was allowed few exceptions to these rules, and the entire city, at least on Sunday, was expected to follow the strictest Methodist guidelines. Such a large minority, even in a culturally British city, showed Toronto's urbanization shared much with American cities, especially when it came to moral reform issues and the "social purity" movement (Valverde, 1991). Reformers often conflated immorality, poverty, and this ethnic ghetto as they made demands for modernized civic measures, not least in leisure and novelty pastimes like picture shows, which I will discuss later.

Urban governance in Canada was legally constructed to be distinct from the United States (Isin, 1992), emphasizing administration over political power, especially in policing (Rogers, 1984). When municipal offices undertook reformist improvements, the best examples of American progressivism were incorporated, but adapted especially to avoid corruption and graft thought endemic to American municipal politics and policing. Keeping in mind how Toronto's growth was based especially on producing finished consumer goods, it is no surprise that commercial institutions, too, freely borrowed products and content from the United States (Johnston, 2001; Monod, 1996). There was a shaky confidence, continually questioned, that consumption in Canada was *de facto* Canadian. Confronted with the creeping commercialization of daily life, there were frequent calls for regulation, especially of the novel, everyday availability of what had been special carnival features: moving pictures, but also items like ice cream and roasted peanuts, billiards and bowling, posters and handbills. Debates about how to regulate all of these took place in Toronto in the first decade of the new century, most concisely compiled and indexed in the Letterbooks of the Chief Constable.

Some framed such practices as the tip of an iceberg of an emerging mass culture, built upon mass marketing. Reformers, parents, and ministers worried about commercialization, especially due to the new freedom and independence granted by a single nickel in the hand of a child (Nasaw, 1985). Reformers proposed nonprofit alternatives with educational mandates. For movies, an early case happened at Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago (Lindstrom, 1999), and a later proposal came from the suffragette Town Improvement Society of a suburb near Toronto (*Weston Council Minutes*, 1912–1913). With the notable exception of alcohol's prohibition, police and politicians in cities across North America were far more likely to manage the perceived problems through regulation rather than reforming the profit-seeking character of the market. In a sense, this even worked to legitimate mass marketed items by controlling and monitoring their effects on city streets. In a sense, I have outlined here how the mass market developed as an analytic concept, gathering initially disparate products and practices by criticizing their commercial character, especially as a threat to traditional institutions of family and church. In Toronto,

its emergence was hardly even identifiable before it was relatively well instituted. When commercialization was raised as a problem, the solution was usually municipal licensing regulations, setting age, time, and spatial limits. For movies, there was censorship, adult accompaniment laws, and safety codes, but profit-seeking showmanship remained intact.

Looking at such details, my interest here is more restricted than, but not contradicting, Ewen and Ewen's (1982) well-known claim that mass advertising helped shape "American consciousness." Certainly, techniques of branding and business structures of mass distribution and marketing are evident in the late 19th century (Strasser, 1989). However, Lizbeth Cohen (1990), for one, thoroughly considers the problem of an American mass subjectivity in relation to the failures and successes of the labor movement. She argues that a widespread solidarity is undeniable only in the 1930s, after mass immigration had stopped, mass cultural practices had become pervasive, and an international economic catastrophe had happened. My method does not consider the subjectivity of actual, historical movie-goers, let alone the intentions and motivations of editors and business people. Instead, I argue that the institution of a mass practice is implied in discourses, such as newspaper promotion, that work to organize urban practices as common practices, whether or not engaged consciously as such by individuals.

Few municipal authorities or reformers at the time isolated the relationship between the mass market and the mass populations of cities that now often explains the shift of modernization at the end of the 19th century. As I already noted, Barth (1980) outlines succinctly an explanation of urban modernity that builds an analysis of mass consumption and leisure first upon how the metropolitan press bridged the "divided space" of cities segregated by class, ethnicity, race, and male privilege. He proposes that the cacophony of polyglot cities in North America resulted in an emphasis on the problem of integrating differences. "Awareness of others produced an urban identity that stamped members of heterogeneous groups generally as city people. ... That culture constituted a response to major problems of metropolitan existence as perceived by large groups of people: the lack of identity and the need for communication; women's urge to partake in big-city life and men's search for leisure as part of urban existence; and everyone's hope to be recognized as individual in a crowd "(p. 23). Even being careful about Barth's assumption of awareness and perception, the concrete effect of the metropolitan press was to provide "a language for communicating with each other" (p. 25). This point is echoed especially in studies of late 19th century print and visual culture (Fritzsche, 1996; Henkin, 1998; Lehuu, 2000). The language provided to mass readerships was, of course, largely commercial in character, in a sense presenting the entire city as an elaboration of the marketplace.

The crowded heterogeneity of American cities, and Toronto similarly because of mass immigration, provided the conditions to reap large profits from cheap, mass-produced goods, adapting conspicuous consumption to the unprecedented, if limited, incomes of the employed masses and especially the middle classes. Eric Hobsbawm (1994, pp. 49, 105–106, 236–242) points to the movies as the exemplary case of such nickel-at-a-time mass markets. He adds the conjecture that such practices made material and practicable at least some form of the ideals promised in the language of democracies and the publics of nation-states. The urban masses responded so receptively to products such as metropolitan newspapers, department stores, sporting matches held in stadiums, and entertainments held in palatial theatres because they were integrating spaces, ostensibly open to everyone who could afford the relatively cheap cost. Of course, the way a newspaper is an inclusive public place is different in kind from stores and stadiums, not being a space at all. But the

integrative and interpretive role of offering up the city itself for consumption, making the city sensible and legible, organizes crowds in similar ways, part of what has been called "the imaginative structure of the city" (Blum, 2003).

NEWSPAPER PAGES AS A MAP OF URBAN LIFE

In order to recover the importance of the metropolitan press in reflecting and shaping the city at the time moving pictures and the mass market emerged, it is worth a review, albeit rudimentary, of key essays from the sociology of the University of Chicago: Robert E. Park's (1923) "The Natural History of the Newspaper," Ernest W. Burgess' (1925) "The Growth of the City," and Louis Wirth's (1938) "Urbanism as a Way of Life." Chicago sociology, which these essays in a sense paraphrase, remains a vital and thorough record of American urban modernity, which had just taken shape in the early 20th century (Bulmer, 1984; Deegan, 1988; Lindner, 1996). I use these essays as theories of the historically situated American city, context for the period when movie-going had just become an inescapable part of everyday urban life. In doing so, I also aim to secure an interpretive theory for the method of using newspapers to trace the emergence of the mass market.

The emphasis on social integration as an explanation of the importance of the newspaper will ring a few bells for urban sociologists, some of them alarm bells. This is, after all, the textbook synopsis of the orientation of the Chicago School of Sociology and nearly a century of criticism against it. Indeed, the historical affinities and shared concerns of Chicago Sociology, progressive reform, professionalized policing, and popular journalism is well documented.[1] It is important to historicize the moralistic context in which Chicago sociologists studied urban heterogeneity as a social problem. Nonetheless, I follow Martin Bulmer (1997) in seeing such connections as providing "a focus upon phenomena which helped to give American sociology a distinctive character" (p. 245), that is, an emphasis on class and ethnicity, but especially race and gender.

Park's essay on "The Natural History of the Newspaper" was included in the Chicago School of sociology's principal text, *The City*, in 1925. Park, at one point a journalist before turning to sociology, wrote an important outline of the social relations encouraged by the newspaper: an integrator and educator of immigrants in the American city; an agent of sophistry, or sophistication at least, in the modern world; an orientation to the newsworthiness of the local; an opposition to political partisanship; either a way to recognize yourself or a flight from reality. A newspaper makes a city habitable, makes it feel local and coherent, makes vast metropolitan regions seem like sensible entities with knowable orders of place and histories. But what is only implicit in the essay is why it belongs in a textbook on how to study the city as a social object, a book where every other essay is more clearly relevant to urbanism, referencing in their titles neighborhoods, communities, mobility, or city life itself. Being included, it should be assumed that the natural history of the newspaper is equally vital to *The City*, both the book and the place, as Ernest W. Burgess's (1925) more widely cited essay on "The Growth of the City," which offered the oft-cited classification of concentric zones as a way of seeing the city.

Burgess's model has been revised, tested, and criticized continually since its publication (compare, say, Quinn, 1940; Zukin, 1991). Initially called into question as an empirical hypothesis, theoretical models such as Burgess' have since become criticized as rhetorical and active agents in the reshaping of space and social relations (Harris and Lewis, 1998).

With the zonal hypothesis more overt, abstract, diagrammed, Park's equally theoretical elaboration of the role of the collective action of reading journalism and advertising has been left untested, unconsidered as a theory of urban space. It does not take too much effort to see the newspaper's sections as another way of zoning the city, of mapping its movements and possibilities, and seeing the whole thing at once (Goist, 1971, p. 57). Some of the same criticisms of Burgess are transferable to Park, or at least my synthesis of his essay. He was actually careful to be somewhat skeptical of the efficacy of the newspaper, for example noting its failed promise to reproduce the sociability of village gossip on a metropolitan scale. A newspaper might be composed to offer the possibility of seeing the whole city at once, but to whom and at what cost? Of course there are options left off this menu by its editors and advertisers, others exaggerated by puffery. Because I will use newspapers as sociological documents, let me be clear: If the press is an alternative way to map everyday urban life, it is as partial and inscribed with ideology as any statistical table or map. Shifting the focus from Burgess to Park might allow for descriptive, historical sociology, but it does not avoid methodological problems.

Park does not provide a key to his half-toned map of the city, but Wirth's relatively straightforward definition of urbanism gives a standard to stake out a claim that reading the newspaper was a part of urbanism. Still discussing urbanism in the abstract, Louis Wirth's (1938) "Urbanism as a Way of Life" was overtly influenced by Georg Simmel's (1950) essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (Levine, Carter, and Gorman, 1976). Wirth starts by distinguishing a quantitative study of urbanism from his own; size or density alone does not describe the urban way of life. It is only with the combination of places that are geographically larger, more populated, and culturally heterogeneous that the urban character is accentuated. The heterogeneity is key, and not only in terms of ethnicity, class, culture, but more importantly with the pace, variations, and rhythms of daily life found in the city. Going back to Simmel, it is the relentless change and variety in the city, over-stimulating the senses, that allows explanations for the reserve and blasé anonymity of urbanism. These are the ways of "immunizing" the self against the endless personal claims and expectations of others (p. 12). Rationality itself, in the stylized form of sophistication, is the way that city dwellers make intelligible a potentially anonymous and transitory form of urban life, an imaginative and uniquely sociological definition of urban life that was briefly espoused by Weber as well as Simmel (Kemple, forthcoming).

Wirth mentions newspapers along with other mass media as a "leveling influence" in the city (p. 18), one of many institutions that serve the needs of the average person by serving the largest mass of people. But there is a chance here to apply his definition of urbanism (a rational way of immunizing the self against the claims of others) by focusing on the way the newspaper is *created and distributed* to mass readerships, rather than simply read and interpreted by particular readers. Consider how the edited stories, surrounded by advertising, organize and offer a planned life, styled from the fullest range of available, constantly seductive, calls for attention in the city. In an exemplary way, it is through the newspaper that the city becomes navigable for the middle class and at the same time seen to constantly make accessible new places, new things, new people, but in a managed way. The managers, I propose, are those whose interests pursue mass markets, through readers, spectators, and consumers.

Yet, those persons who make up the mass were not merely duped by marketing. This is, finally, a point that Park makes clear when he writes, "reading, which was a luxury in the country, has become a necessity in the city. In the urban environment literacy is almost

as much of a necessity as speech itself." He turns to the immigrant in America as the proof of newspaper reading's urban centrality, providing "a window looking out into the larger world outside the narrow circle of the immigrant community in which he has been compelled to live" (Park, 1923, p. 274). As an example, then, the immigrant experience made clear that this is the function of newspapers for *anyone*. The urbanism indicated by the compulsion to read a paper, exemplified by people supposedly trapped in their locale, becomes a necessity especially for those urbanites who feel a need to know *how* they are living in narrow circles. Recalling Wirth and Simmel, the newspaper provides a means to know what is just outside the everyday for people who need to rationalize their place, to define themselves in order to put order to the place where they live. In the North American city, especially as presented in newspapers, the order is supposed voluntary, self-selected, chosen from among an offered range.

Note that this use of the newspaper as a menu of components fitting together to make up an urbane life, and an urban self, is far from the open debate inspired by the political press that makes up the democratic public sphere (Habermas, 1989). A cosmopolitan turn away from the political press to the popular press has been traced to attempts to avoid a tax on publishing opinion (Schwarz, 1998), a point not missed by Park writing in the 1920s (Park, 1923, 1927, p. 285–289). He mentions, too, that the emergence of the mass press, the penny paper, accompanied by its new features of editorial independence and impartiality, became transfixed as part of the virtues of metropolitanism, not through the impartiality of liberal judgment, but through the impartiality of the urban blasé. It is not difficult to recognize that the public sphere of inclusive rational debate over ideas and ideals is not, or not only, what is laid out for consumption in the popular press. Instead, the new ideal becomes a metropolitan lack of avowed ideals, an attention to the trivial, the superficial, the human-interest of reportage of all the innovations introduced to city life, commercial, bureaucratic, and technological. Walter Benjamin (1968) famously proposed such an emphasis on "room for play" as a form of critique, as his own method (Hansen, 2004). The newspaper as a menu of urban possibility, not so much a map charting every possibility as a synopsis of key diversions, is also akin to Michel de Certeau's (1984) operational concept of urban practice in everyday life. The "city" produces a space of its own, substitutes a range of options outside of traditions, and promotes a more universal, anonymous subject "walking in the city," clearly a companion to the more historicized figure of the flâneur (Frisby, 2001; Walkowitz, 1992). These qualities are even more cogently applied to the way a metropolitan newspaper interprets the city and offers it to a general readership.

To summarize this characterization of the newspaper as a key instrument of urbanism, the main point is to link the composition of the paper to excitement with the idea of urban living in the abstract. The urbanism described is not meant to be a synthetic overview that combines coexisting habits and concerns, but a more or less deliberate overall orientation to the possibility of the city for its inhabitants. The entire newspaper, all of its sections and features, encourages and facilitates a way of living in the city that specifically aims to understand the whole unwieldy and unmanageable sprawl, not as a burdensome task but as a skill and a challenge. Again, I add the proviso that this is an imagined experience that translates the mass market into practice. Simmel and Wirth evoke urbanism and the mental life of the metropolis as a series of coping mechanisms, as if the city stands in the way of an enjoyable, pleasant daily life. Here, instead, my point was to strengthen this model by adding that mental life in the metropolis can be taken up as a practice

of knowing the city as an insider. Perhaps the clearest explanation of how reading the newspaper encourages a particular way of organizing city living is how the entertainment section orders the practice of *going out* (Erenberg, 1981; Nasaw, 1993).

JOURNALISM SURVEYS THE NOT-YET MASS AUDIENCE

Newspaper journalism on early film-going in Toronto did not begin covering film-going in the way theorized above, presenting it as an exciting option in daily life. From 1907 to 1911, when film-going was mentioned at all, it was approached with a critical distance, explained for its sociological importance, at least partly because the early audience seems assumed to be mutually exclusive from the public of newspaper readers, disproportionately juvenile, ethnic, working-class, or all combined (Olsson, 2004). While not quite in the same muckraking fashion as in Chicago, journalists in Toronto at first also treated the early audience as outside the respectable everyday readership of literate, hard working, middle and upper class daily readers.[2] The first audience to grab the attention of a Toronto journalist was composed largely of the Jewish population of the Ward, just Northwest of downtown. This is somewhat curious since there was only ever one theatre in the Ward. Nearly all of the first Toronto picture shows were operated by an older, Toronto-born Irish-Catholic showman, and located along the main shopping streets downtown. Audiences at these earliest theatoriums were rarely the subject of investigative journalism in local newspapers; a singular exception ran under the headline, "Five Cent Theatre Harmless Here" (*Mail and Empire*, 1907b). In contrast, when a small picture show opened on University Avenue in the Ward, it immediately caught the interest of a newspaper writer (*News*, 1907b). A combination of circumstance, exoticism, singularity, and marginal location makes the Ward's theatre the best-documented space of early film-going in Toronto.

On April 25, 1907, just as the issue of theatre and film censorship was making headlines in Toronto (*Mail and Empire*, 1907a; *News*, 1907a; *Star*, 1907), a reporter for the *News* (1907b) attended the opening of the People's Theatre as an opportunity to look inside a moving-picture show. The context of a marginalized, ethnic audience for the earliest reports of picture shows makes *almost* explicit that film-going was seen as part of the problem of gathering together the modern North American city's diversity of people. Journalism was the public, popularized face of a sort of sociological project of understanding the relation of film to urban, modern life. The report was not meant as a generalization of the city's theatoriums, but talk of regulating moving pictures might have made looking at the Jewish theatre a topical story.

The *News* reporter found much of interest at the People's Theatre, and the overall tone of the article was pleasantly surprised, writing "the audience combines freedom with pleasure to a remarkable degree." The curiosity and strangeness of the place was still overt, however, as the article began by proposing "some day, perhaps, some oriental historian may undertake to chronicle the story of the interesting Jewish building." The article peeking inside the People's Theatre is clearly orientalist, openly so, and the implied mainstream, mass readership of the newspaper is thus assumed to be not just middle-class, literate, and English-speaking, but ethnically Anglo-Saxon and Christian. On the other hand, keeping Park and Wirth in mind, the reader nonetheless may be assumed an urbanite, curious about the Jewish ghetto and its theatre, and about the novelty practice of movie-going. Perhaps the picture show is a site of flaneurie or urban tourism for some, as well as a place

threatening the social purity of the city for others.[3] Indeed, another newspaper article in Toronto wrote, "as a piece of unique study, not so much in its entertainment as its people, the meeting place of the amusement seekers of The Ward is worth a couple of Bohemian hours" (*News*, 1909). An even later article harkened back to this time in 1907, "A few years ago when the picture show was a novelty, many people of excellent standing in the community used to make a night of it at these places for a lark or 'just to see what they were like'" (*Star Weekly*, 1911).

The first 1907 article reported in detail how the cost was 25 cents downstairs and just 15 upstairs, no seats reserved, and the man in the box office automatically sold the more costly downstairs ticket to the reporter, "a Yellow pasteboard printed in Yiddish, which proved an effective passport." Paying to sit "down" turned out to be a relief as the gallery upstairs "was filled—even thronged" with men, women, and children. "Down was the location of the aristocracy who came late, of course, and were clothed for social ceremonial. The young swain with his lady love here held sway." Good music, supplied by a piano and violin, continued all evening as "five or six little business lads" went around selling candies, fruit, and ice-cold drinks, "stopping neither for pictures or singer." The article ends with the note that "there was little applause. The whole production was accepted most stoically and there was practically no demonstration," despite the moving pictures being "for the most part amorous and humorous." The detailed description of those aspects supposed particularly Jewish is striking, since the presence of children at a night show, hawking food inside the theatre, and a stoic lack of applause would later come to be part of movies in general. The People's Theatre took hold in Toronto's small Jewish community, ethnically and linguistically divided, because it relied on moving pictures and American touring theatre troupes (Speisman, 1979). Yet, it seems that the theatre on University Avenue never really recovered from concerns raised in September 1908, when a rail of the balcony broke and a dozen people in the gallery, mostly children, fell and were injured. The incident brought the attention of all six daily newspapers in the city, giving them another opportunity to report in detail how the people of the Ward lived and passed their leisure time.

Shortly after the incident, the city's first regular entertainment news column appeared in the *News* each Saturday, including many notes on the film business. This still-exceptional local theatre journalism about audiences in Toronto is as thoughtful, observant, and analytic as later well-known critical writers, such as Siegfried Kracauer (1995), on similar themes.[4] In an essay bemusing the character of the audience for a matinee, the columnist wrote, "No one came to learn: it was the fruitless craving for amusement, something that would kill time pleasanter than minding a baby or darning stockings, or shopping, or idling. Had the distraction so much desired been possible from reading a book, the theatre would have been empty. . . . Careless, good-natured, indiscriminate, indolent, and bored. . . . The folks with the least to do are always the busiest" (*News*, 1908). As with the ethnographic gaze inside the Jewish theatre, the move from re-printing puff piece promotion to local investigative entertainment journalism had made the audience itself an object of interest.

In tandem with the emergence of regular entertainment news and journalism was routine newspaper advertising for films, something that began in Toronto only in 1911 with the opening of the Strand. It is no coincidence that this theatre was part of a Buffalo-based chain that eventually opened the Broadway Strand just off Times Square in 1914. Compared to prior theatoriums in Toronto, the Strand's large seating capacity, relatively high prices, downtown location, and especially the weekly ads naming what films were

coming, in a sense made it the city's first picture palace. The ads for the Strand worked to shift the spatial organization of film-going toward a hierarchy favoring large picture palaces downtown (Moore, 2004). In 1906 and 1907, early theatoriums had existed almost anonymously downtown, certainly no competition against the large playhouses. And it seemed from 1908 to 1911 that film-going would be a popular practice associated with residential neighborhoods, practically domestic, the entertainment equivalent of corner stores. Until the Strand opened in 1911, downtown was just one picture-going neighborhood among many. It is certainly true that the concurrent shift toward longer "feature" films with well-known stars, directors, and name-branded studios also played a part, but the new policy at the Strand of promoting *whatever* was playing weekly was instituted right from its opening. The ads hardly changed as the featured films grew to two and three or more reels in length.

The adoption of regular newspaper advertising happened alongside a new restraint in the quantity and sensationalism of posters, allowing movie theatres a way of aesthetically demonstrating how film-going was becoming upwardly mobile. In the trade press *Moving Picture World* (1910a, 1910b) "poster-itis" was discussed as a disease, a sign of tawdry, cheap amusements that would never attract refined crowds and reap the profits that came from demonstrating attention to civilized, cultured entertainment (see Fig. 2). More than questionable film content, a theatre whose entrance was filled with posters simply betrayed the supposed immaturity of the early years of the nickelodeon when people still had to be taught what to expect, and encouraged and prodded into entering. In contrast, a clear, streamlined passageway from the sidewalk to the auditorium signified that this transition was becoming a normal part of everyday urban life, and that people knew what to do and what to expect when entering a theatre. Proudly enclosing a photo of his theatre entrance, a Toronto showman wrote to the trade press in 1913 that he had "discarded the poster . . . the seats thus vacated have been taken by the steadily growing automobile trade and by a class who never visited the picture show on account of its cheap appearance" (*Moving Picture World*, 1913).

Muting the visual "noise" of posters cluttering the sidewalk in front of a picture show was also implicitly part of keeping entrances and exits from theatres unobstructed, a matter of urgent fire safety. The shift away from the sidewalk also clearly dovetails with the increasing regularity of newspaper advertising. If posters were censored, at least they were tolerated compared to handing out flyers or vocally "barking" invitations to "step-right-in." Such sidewalk antics were treated by local authorities in Toronto as outright nuisances and banned. If the trend in general was thus toward mediated, *visual* means of promotion instead of direct interaction with crowds and strangers, then newspaper advertising was the pinnacle of modern promotion. Newspaper ads further implied that the entire city was invited to attend, that the potential audience was *everybody*. Writing a history of workers' leisure time in Worcester, Massachusetts, Roy Rosenzweig (1983, p. 210) does not note movie-going to be an "interclass entertainment" until during the First World War. In metropolitan cities, the first movie palaces seem to have achieved this a few years earlier. By 1913, in Toronto and most of the larger cities of the Midwest United States, special moving picture feature pages were introduced to Sunday newspapers advertising dozens of local theatres under a collective banner (Abel, 2001). In promoting the movies as mainstream, the editorial content accompanying these early movie listings often argued against unnecessarily strict regulations. In Toronto, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Buffalo alike, the move toward routine movie advertising around 1913 was partly politicized, an

FIG. 2. Photo by William James, City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 320C.

Note: "Poster-itis" at the Auditorium on Queen Street in Toronto (c. 1909) might have been aimed at working women walking by, since this early theatorium was not far from the garment factory district.

assertion of showmen's collective respectability in the moment just before film-going was assumed to be a mainstream, mass practice. It was also just before the responsibility for local promotion shifted out of the hands of theatre managers toward film studios and their regional distributors.

READING EVERYONE INTO THE AUDIENCE: SERIAL-QUEEN HEROINES

While Sunday motion picture pages were demonstrating film-going had taken on a re-spectable place in society, the variety of ads and articles still emphasized *differences* among separate audiences and competing showmen. Soon the serial film, and its fictionalized accompaniment printed in weekend newspapers, overtly encouraged an entire continent to "see" the same movie together, even as it solidified a spatial and temporal hierarchy among increasingly distinct types of theatres. In September 1912, the Strand Theatre and its weekly advertising in the *Star Weekly* began its second year. The section of the paper in which the ads appeared was given a new banner title: the Woman's Section. While no novel component was included, the banner solidified the context. Society and fash-ion columns were grouped with serial fiction stories, alongside suffragette news, articles debating proper feminine conduct, as well as the dramatic pages where the Strand ad appeared.

Coincidently, a special series of films were featured at the Strand, the *What Happened to Mary?* series starring Mary Fuller. The first ad notes that the stories appear in print in

McClure's *Ladies World* magazine, a rural and working-class alternative to the middle-class *Ladies Home Journal*. The novelty here was integrating the films with the serial fiction of women's magazines and weekend newspapers. The key audience members were working-class mothers and young working women who were already the implied readers of serial fiction, and would appreciate the mass literary form of the serial story. Borrowing from melodrama, the serial films appealed openly to women, now made directly part of the audience through intertextual fiction versions of films. The picture versions incorporated exactly those thrilling genres that had long been the fulcrum in the debate about the need for film censorship: modern thrills and dangers, crime and suspense, sordid romantic melodrama. Usually, a strident young woman was protagonist, in a sense tempering the thrills with a touch of suffragette reform (Singer, 2001; Stamp, 2000).

The early few serial story-films (with continuity still only in characters rather than cliffhanger plots) had been affiliated with McClure's continentally distributed magazines. At the beginning of 1914, *The Adventures of Kathlyn* brought the story tie-ins to the local level in weekend newspapers throughout the United States and Canada, beginning and syndicated through the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*. The most famous of the serials, *The Perils of Pauline*, was prominently syndicated soon after through the chain of Hearst newspapers. Written story versions of each new film episode could be read ahead of time, and the picture version sought out in theatres eagerly. The promotional strategies were explicitly directed toward the widespread circulation in multiple forms of a single "text." In its mature form, the serial story-film lasted at least 15 episodes, so that it took 4 months or more to follow the drama to the end. If all of the film episodes, all of the fiction installments, and the continentally syndicated promotion in key magazines and newspapers are considered altogether to make up a single film text, then by 1915, nearly all of the film-going audience of North America could have been *aware* that the film they were watching was in some form being seen by almost everyone else, everywhere else. The serial story-film made film-going a truly mass medium by overtly demonstrating the films' widespread availability.

In a sense this simply expanded the promotional logic of local theatre advertising, like that at the Strand in Toronto, into a transnational, intertextual film experience. The promotion of film serials and local movie palaces differed in one key respect, although the difference was mutually beneficial. Elite theatre sites depended on distinguishing themselves from other movie theatres. In the language of the film industry, the most important distinction was having priority to new films, showing them in an early "run" in the "zone" of nearby theatres. The timing that separated first run from second and subsequent runs of each film cast each theatre site into a particular place in a strict hierarchy, with first-run in the downtown zone at the top. This differentiated among theatre types and spaces, despite the same films being sooner or later shown in theatres everywhere. Promotion of film serials both worked against this differentiation and benefited from it by listing where each episode could be seen over the many months of the series. Each episode was thus distributed in the same hierarchy as other feature films, but the entire serial could, in a sense, be promoted as appearing everywhere at once. Serial films thus cast the illusion that everyone was watching part of the same film, whether it was the story version in a newspaper or one of the numerous episodes.

In Toronto, the *Star Weekly* picked up many of these early syndicated stories, beginning in January 1914 with *The Adventures of Kathlyn*. Just as with the earlier serials, the Strand ads promoted its first-run status showing *Kathlyn*. Unlike the earlier serials, however, the Strand's own ad was not the only place to find out where to see the films. The *Star Weekly*
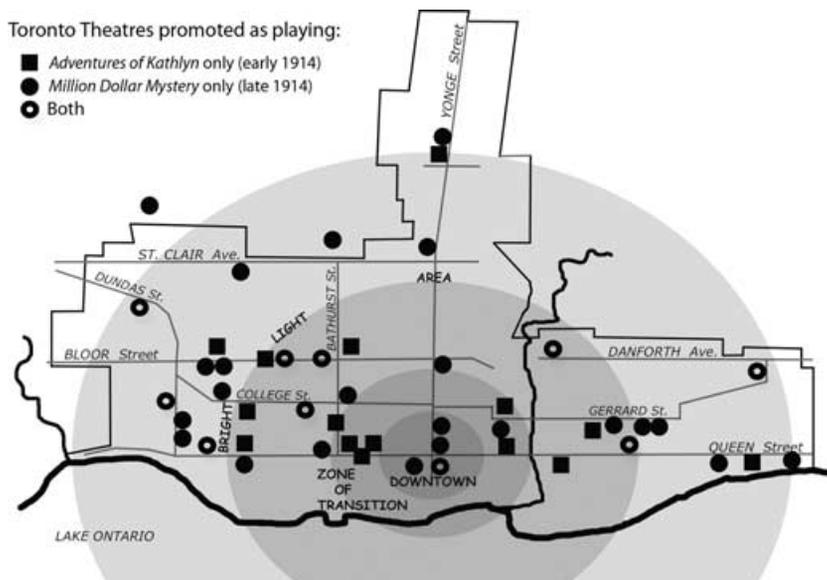
FIG. 3. City limits in 1914 with zones evoking Burgess' "The Growth of the City."

Note: In the 6-month lag between the first and second movie serials in the *Star Weekly*, there is already a suburban shift, and the Strand's first-run status downtown is reinforced by nearby second-run competition.

printed lists of where to see the *Kathlyn* episodes. New locations were added to the bottom of the list each week as peripheral theatres began with the first episode over the 26 weeks of the serial story. A total of 25 theatres in Toronto, more than one-quarter of the total, were cited in the newspaper as playing *Kathlyn*, big and small in all parts of the city. There was even a note that the films were playing in a few smaller cities. The next serial to appear in the *Star Weekly* was *The Million Dollar Mystery*. Over one-third of Toronto's theatres played it. This time there was also mention of fully 38 theatres throughout the rest of Ontario, but all followed far behind the first-run Strand downtown.

Mapping where these first two serials played in Toronto (see Fig. 3), the differences between *Kathlyn* and *Mystery*, just 6 months apart, show that the film industry (and its audience) was quickly learning to navigate the city in a way directly paralleling Burgess' (1925) concentric zone map of "The Growth of the City." *Kathlyn* played more indiscriminately except for the privileged place of the Strand as the only downtown theatre showing it. It played at many theatres in the poorer, central city "zone of transition," and relatively few in the distant residential suburbs, although one large, ornate, suburban movie palace did play it first-run, right after the Strand. The next time around with *Mystery*, there were less theatres in the transitional zone nearby downtown, more theatres in the suburbs, their marquees quite literally supplying the "bright light" of Burgess' map. Also, with *Mystery*, other smaller theatres were included downtown, in the same zone as the Strand but with a run many episodes later.

Film serials continued for decades with great success, developing into a cliffhanger genre with a visual grammar and clichés all of its own. But the appeal of reading along in the newspaper was short lived, just into 1916, in retrospect serving primarily to boost female

and lower-class readership for establishment newspapers (Wilinsky, 2000). Although the phenomenon was short lived, its importance in constructing the appearance of a universal audience for a mass medium cannot be underestimated. In just 2 years, the 16 serial film-stories that appeared in Toronto newspapers were advertised as showing in 86 picture theatres in the city, all but a few of those open at the time. Perhaps more important, fully 124 picture theatres in the rest of Ontario were noted in Toronto newspapers as playing one of the serial films, perhaps one in three then open. Certainly, the idea was to expand the circulation of the weekend newspapers, but simply noting that the time had come when film could be trusted for that purpose supports the understanding that the serial film craze was instrumental in creating a mass audience—bringing together the whole province of Ontario through one film and one newspaper.

Whether part of a refined, "high-class" audience downtown or at a laid-back "nabe" close to home, the many occasions that could be made of film-going were all promoted as part of the same mass cultural system. At the emergence of this practice, serial films and their intertextual promotions made this explicit. Serials also translated the complex system of film distribution, pricing, and zoning into an instantly legible and understandable format that positioned a newspaper reader or film-goer immediately as part of the system, assessing an expense and prescribing a practice based on her level of interest. After the serial craze, newspaper film pages stopped highlighting local showmen's neighborhood theatre spaces, instead profiling only those first-run films changing weekly at downtown theatres. The top of the run-zone system could stand in for the whole, as the mass market for film-going was now fully institutionalized as a significant part of the ordering of urban life. The promotional journalism that supported the advertising no longer focused on local showmanship or audiences, but on the industry and its high profile stars and studios, now almost all located in California—not yet nicknamed Hollywood. The film industry had matured into a mass media system supported with promotion and journalism about its celebrities and their latest feature films, by 1915 reaching over an hour in length and able to anchor an entire evening's vaudeville show (Koszarski, 1990).

The way newspapers address early moving pictures is part of a larger institutionalization of the novelty, involving the vertical integration of a big business (Staiger, 1983), codification of government restraints in censorship, regulation, and licensing (Grieveson, 2004), and resolution of tensions with those acting on behalf of family life, church, and education (Uricchio and Pearson, 1993). Each of these played a part in resolving how the mass market for film-going would shape the social and spatial relations of the city. While I continue to flesh out a broad social history with attention to government, court, police, church, and film industry records, I argue here that the circulation of reportage and promotion in newspapers is key to understanding how the movies became a communal, mass practice, as opposed to a merely prevalent or routine pastime. Admittedly partial, restricting the analysis to newspapers nonetheless concisely traces the emergence of a mass market and its organization of actually dispersed urban practices into an apparently common culture. The gradual shift from local, exploratory, and explanatory journalism to various forms of promotional advertising reflected a change in who was assumed to be the *subject* of film-going, shifting from a marginal audience (specifically distinct from newspaper readers) to a mass audience addressing everyone. Focused on the mediation of movie-going through newspaper reading, the *mass* of mass culture becomes explicitly distinct from the empirical population of a city or region. "Everybody" becomes instead those both willing and able to be considered part of the mass audience.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] Ernest W. Burgess (1923) explicitly considered the "interdependence" of sociology and social work at the University of Chicago. The history of professionalized social science has been related to the emergence of modern policing (Frisby, 2001; Walkowitz, 1992), municipal governance (Bender, 1975; Joyce, 2003; Valverde, 2003), social work (Frisch, 1982; Hiller, 1982; Ward, 1990), moral reform (Valverde, 1991), and literary realism (Cappetti, 1993), even tangentially with respect to early film (Olsson, 2004; Urrichio and Pearson, 1993).

[2] A spate of *Chicago Tribune* articles about five cent shows in April and May 1907 espoused the moral and safety issues brought to light by reformers (Grieveson, 1999). At exactly the same time and despite raising the same issues, early journalism in Toronto refused to enflame any sense of crisis over picture shows (*Mail and Empire*, 1907a, 1907b; *News*, 1907a; *Star*, 1907). Three key differences in context are that (1) in Chicago, there was a newly elected mayor and politically appointed police chief; (2) in Toronto, film and stage censorship were considered together, the latter unpalatable to journalists and editorialists; (3) police in Toronto reported they were already easily and routinely censoring moving pictures on patrol and in response to complaints, so that no new bureaucratic or legislative intervention was needed.

[3] This combination of undercover investigation and reform survey is an example of a genre common in newspapers throughout North America in these years, investigating picture shows in Los Angeles where Japanese and Mexican audiences gathered, in New York and Chicago where Italians and Jews spent their leisure time (Olsson, 2004; *Tribune*, 1907). There is even a small article in Chicago's Black newspaper, already working against segregated theatres, when its theatre columnist took a look inside the city's Jewish theatres, as in the mainstream press finding a degree of appreciation for the inclusiveness and novelty of the space (*Defender*, 1910; Stewart, 2005).

[4] Benjamin (1968), Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), Kracauer (1995); and reassessments by Hake (1987), Hansen (2004), and Huyssen (1986). While the Frankfurt school of critical theory has become nearly synonymous with theories of mass culture, it is important to remember how mass society was once a key concept in studies more squarely residing inside sociology, from Gabriel de Tarde (1969) to Theodor Geiger (1969) and Edward Shils (1960, 1962). Mass society is even, in a sense, the underlying concept in David Reisman (1960) and C. Wright Mills (1951). It is perhaps no coincidence that Reisman and Reisman (1952) studied movie audiences, too. Movies, in fact, used to be a subject sociologists cut their teeth on, from Herbert Blumer (1933) to Lazarsfeld and Merton (1947, 1948) to Herbert Gans (1957). Still, the only serious sociology of cinema remains that of the philosopher Ian C. Jarvie (1970; 1978; also Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller, 1996).

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