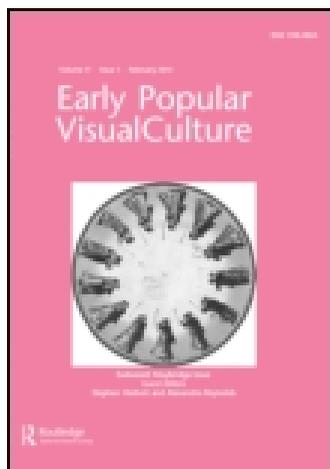


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### The grand opening of the movie theatre in the second birth of cinema

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## The grand opening of the movie theatre in the second birth of cinema

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This article brings Gaudreault and Marion's framework for the 'second birth' of cinema into the realm of film exhibition. From the perspective of an ordinary person in the mass public, the experience of cinema is reborn daily through feature films shown at the movie theatre. Asking 'What is a cinema?' rather than 'What is cinema?', I propose that cinema's second birth comes with the grand opening of the first moving picture theatres. For its first decade, the *cinématographe* was a supplement to other entertainments and social institutions. Evidence of rebirth, however, comes with the first advertised *cinemas* in the nickelodeon boom. I draw upon a wide survey of newspaper publicity from Ontario, Canada, including metropolitan Toronto along with smaller cities, towns, and villages. The date of the 'second birth' of the movie theatre varies widely across Ontario from 1906 to 1909 depending upon the size of its locality and the frequency its local newspaper was printed.

**Keywords:** Gaudreault and Marion; film exhibition; movie theatres; Ontario; Canada

Cinema's 'second birth' found a home of its own in the movie theatre and its routine novelty programme of ever-changing feature films. This simple statement is only a starting point in bringing film exhibition and reception into Gaudreault and Marion's provocations about the 'second birth' of cinema. They propose the medium was 'born twice': first as the *appearance* of a technology, and the second time as the *constitution* of an institution, with an intervening emergence of an apparatus to establish medium-specific procedures (2005, 5). The two births are not merely causal or simply empirically linked: their relation exists in the domain of ideals. The stability and subsequent dominance of the later, second constitution of 'cinema' conversely retains a degree of distinction for the earlier, first appearance of the 'cinema of attraction', which Gaudreault and Marion (2010) have renamed *kine-attractography*. In the realm of film production and aesthetic direction, the second birth of cinema involves a reflexive move away from using the camera/projector to capture/restore a representation of well-established entertainments (Gaudreault 2011). The first birth of the *cinématographe* was necessarily an extension of earlier photographic and screen practices, whereas its second birth provided *cinema* with a semblance of institutional autonomy (Gaudreault and Marion 2002).

'Second birth' consolidates several historiographic claims, especially in light of Gaudreault's and Marion's careers as 'new' film historians of *The Kinematic Turn* (2012). First and foremost, the two births are competing paradigms, analytically and

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historically, rather than merely successive phases or periods. Secondly, a thorough understanding of the two paradigms requires consideration of film's intermedial relations (see Shail 2010); what is portrayed must be seen in 'cultural series' with other media. Analytically, this provides a pedagogical reminder to maintain the distinct esteem provided early cinema as attraction (Gunning 1986; Gunning and Gaudreault 2006; Gaudreault 2009). Altogether, the 'second birth' is distinct from Charles Musser's (1994) 'emergence' and Charlie Keil's (2001, 2004) 'transitional era' of American cinema, despite similar concerns and conclusions. Conceptually, Gaudreault and Marion deliberately avoid connotations of linear transformation from one stage to another, yet provide a framework that still permits regional or national studies of cinema's institutionalization to be simultaneously held apart and in relation to the dominance of American paradigms.

The idea that the second birth of cinema is marked by the emergence of the movie theatre is only peripheral to Gaudreault and Marion's thesis, but nonetheless present in *The Kinematic Turn* (2012) and Gaudreault's published responses to his book, *Film and Attraction* (2011). To be clear, my scope in this brief essay is merely to mark out how the emergence of the movie theatre signifies a 'second birth' for film exhibition, in which 'the movies' find a place of their own in an autonomous social space distinct from other entertainments. The claim is entirely apart from, and far more modest than, the more dialectic question equally begged by Gaudreault and Marion's study: What is the relation between production and exhibition in cinema's second birth? With regard to that distinct question, suffice it to say cinema needed its own local practices and networks of circulation to be a media institution. As early as 1891, Edison's publicity for his future kinetoscope had addressed a mass cinematic public as a possibility (Moore 2012b). The first birth of the *cinématographe* continued to emphasize the potential of still only periodic and temporary cinematic publics, supplementary to other gatherings. The movie theatre sustains its mass public and realizes its mass audience by gathering dispersed, disconnected audiences under a common everyday routine. The actually available, everyday routine of movie-going marks the second birth of cinema as the constitution of a mass audience from what had previously been only a potential mass public.

The American slang 'movies' was common enough by 1909 to start appearing in journalism, at first always surrounded by quotation marks to signify it as youthful jargon – the 'movies' was where kids went *and* what they saw. The conflation of the place where moving pictures were seen with the pictures themselves is a telling indication that a new institution was emerging. Social and cultural aspects of this institutionalization were already associated with the word. Perhaps its first appearance in American newsprint came within an August 1909 story calling for New York City's censorship and Philadelphia's regulations to be extended nationwide (Woodruff 1909). The term 'movie theatre' reflects how my argument will be supported with research for North America. Specifically, I track the proliferation of the 'grand opening' of movie theatres across an entire region: Ontario in Canada, with Toronto its metropolis and capital. The essay is a complement, then, to an earlier survey that typified how Ontario picture shows first appeared in newspaper advertising, news articles, and 'town topics' notes in cities, towns, and villages (Moore 2011). Language and terminology hint at the importance of regional and national variation, but Gaudreault and Marion's framework allows the American situation to be isolated as a dominant ideal. Richard Abel's (1999, 2006) careful

studies of the Americanization of the movies in America itself thus stand as a foundation for my review of Ontario as a film market with both a foreign and domestic relation to the United States (Acland 2003; Moore 2008). The movie theatre is an easily problematized starting-point, to be sure. A wealth of recent scholarship on non-theatrical exhibition has shown that the privileged ‘four wall’ commercial theatre is only idealized as the norm rather than empirically prevalent beyond certain moments and markets. The same is true of institutional cinema and its feature films – empirically outnumbered by alternatives and dominant as a paradigm rather than predominant as a form. Pointing out the discrepancy between empirical and ideological dominance merely reinforces how the question of the ‘second birth’ seeks to understand how a particular ‘cultural series’ was realized in form *and* as norm.

In shifting Gaudreault and Marion’s framework to film exhibition, I am in a sense turning away from the question ‘What is cinema?’ and instead asking ‘What is *a* cinema?’<sup>1</sup> To some extent, this can only be defined in hindsight through the norms that iteratively came to define its cultural specificity and social importance. This is an admittedly circular definition of ‘a cinema’, but one that Gaudreault and Marion repeat for ‘cinema’: ‘Isn’t it because the medium was consecrated that we came, after the fact, to look back and grasp the path that had led to such a constitution?’ (2005, 5). With similar concerns, Deb Verhoeven (2012) asks ‘What is a cinema?’ in light of the proliferation of projection and exhibition sites allowed by digital and consumer-grade technologies that coincide with the ‘death’ and ‘closure’ of the movie theatre as a supposedly stable measure of the social experience of cinema in communities. For her, the empirical question of a cinema’s closure is a constitutive and critical tool for rethinking assumptions about what a cinema is (and what cinema is, too).

Although the particular details differ for her task of cataloguing the end of cinemas in Australia, the same analytical process is at play in my specific case of cinema openings in Canada. I am reviewing the ‘birth’ and ‘opening’ of movie theatres, but encounter the same ontological concerns, and similarly present the exercise as a critical tool. The opening of a movie theatre provides a local community a place to engage in the social institution of cinema’s ‘second birth’, but it is simultaneously the enclosure of the ‘first birth’ of kinematic exhibition. For its first decade, before the nickelodeon, moving picture attractions circulated as a supplement to an unpredictable range of possibilities, locations and occasions, each attached to pre-existing social institutions and collective rituals. With the grand opening of the movie theatre, a mass medium’s institutional singularity replaced an intermedial multiplicity. By the end of 1896 in Toronto alone, true of almost every large city in North America, a cinématographe had already appeared at an industrial exhibition, a vitascope as a featured act at a variety theatre, a kinematograph as a supporting act in itinerant vaudeville, and the cinématographe had been used both in a special event at a civic association hall and relocated for several months at a rented storefront location (Musser 1994; Moore 2012a). Who then would have guessed that this last, most tentative and humble site would, in hindsight, be required to stand as the marker of *cinema* and its distinction from *cinématographe*?

In 1984, Charlotte Herzog presented what remains a remarkably thorough presentation of the variety of intermedial exhibition contexts of early cinema.<sup>2</sup> When the nickelodeon arrived, Herzog reminds us, it was at first designed to ‘adapt the architecture of locales where these earlier inventions were shown’ (1984, 12). The open and recessed vestibule, the box office, poster and electric light displays, and

neo-classical design and decorative motifs kept the novelty of the picture theatre in cultural series with the earlier locations hosting cinema: expositions, fairgrounds and amusement parks, variety theatre, dime museums and storefront amusement parlours. Tracing architectural motifs allowed Herzog to keep the nickelodeon in continuity with sites of early cinema, but the nickelodeon nonetheless 'adapted and reconciled' (1984, 28) the multiplicity of possible locations that ultimately distinguish early cinematographic audiences from later cinematic publics. In 1900, a full-page Sunday illustrated newspaper feature recapped how 'Moving Pictures are all the rage' and began with the proof that 'no entertainment of any size is complete without them' (*Philadelphia Inquirer* 1900). By 1912, a similar feature article on 'Movies: The Little Sister of "Legit" & "Vodvil"' began 'from your seat' in a movie theatre and positioned the industry as 'belonging to the twentieth century, without the thrall of the nineteenth and its antiquated methods. They have developed entirely along new and original lines' (*New Orleans Times-Picayune* 1912).

For a decade, early picture shows circulated throughout Ontario and North America in multiple arenas and within other institutions for commercial and civic entertainments. Summer parks and seasonal fairs, religious and civic events, educational and medical institutions all occasionally incorporated moving pictures into their offerings; the Salvation Army was an early adopter of moving pictures for its activities across the continent. Itinerant stock theatre companies and variety shows incorporated moving pictures as specialties, just as big-city vaudeville added films as the 'chaser' on their playbills. Small-time entrepreneurs toured to almost every locality with pictures of the latest boxing prize fights, passion plays of the life of Christ, and 'wargraphs' of battleground actualities; a Scottish Concert Kinematograph and a patriotic Living Canada Bioscope were particularly Canadian variations. Higher-profile commercial moving picture shows were common on the itinerant circuit of smaller cities without vaudeville theatres, often providing Sunday concerts in jurisdictions that barred theatre (but not moving pictures) on the Sabbath.<sup>3</sup> By 1903, these companies almost always featured a standardized programme interspersing moving pictures with illustrated songs, providing a precedent for the routine content of the nickelodeons. Such travelling picture shows regularly appeared throughout Ontario, except in Toronto where Keith's Vaudeville consistently included a kinetograph on its bill at Shea's Theatre after 1899.

And then, on a continental scale came the nickelodeon boom of 1906 and 1907, with its origins mythologized in Pittsburgh (Aronson 2008). Moving pictures, of course, continued to be shown in other non-theatrical contexts and within other entertainment institutions; but the 'movies' were born at the five-cent picture show. Four 'theatoriums' opened in Toronto in 1906 to bring to Ontario the first permanent home for what, in hindsight, was becoming cinema. My book, *Now Playing* (Moore 2008), recounts for Toronto how the standardization of the novelty into a civic and social institution took several more years. As late as 1909, a city official could dismiss calls for better licensing and regulation because, 'they are almost overdoing it already... the moving picture fad will soon fall flat'. The journalist relaying this opinion could not help but reject this underestimation of the new people's pastime, 'But it's not a fad!' (*Toronto Star* 1909). Dotting the cityscape, picture shows were now part of domestic neighbourhood life. Across Ontario, picture shows were now open in almost every town with more than 2000 population. The emergence of the movie theatre had occurred, and the constitution of the

cultural practice of 'going to the movies' was underway. Steps toward that institutionalization can be listed for Toronto and Ontario, as an example of a standardized story happening more or less simultaneously across North America: municipal police censorship become a public concern in 1907; regional film exchanges open in 1907; fire safety regulations require picture machine licences in 1908 and machine operator licences in 1909; those projectionists unionize in 1909; showmen reinvest profits for larger, purpose-built picture theatres from 1909; an Ontario Censor Board begins a centralized process approving every film distributed in 1911, just as the first downtown picture palaces begin to routinely feature a particular film in their weekly newspaper advertising.

The 'movie theatre' as a paradigm involves more than permanent sites for routinely engaging in cinema. A 'movie theatre' requires a series of supporting labours and conditions to become recognized as a specific type of cultural space; in this sense, it is an actor-network of social and material relations (Latour 2005; Bijker and Law 1992). First of all, a market of entrepreneurial showmanship puts the specific exhibitor in cooperative and competitive association with others. There also needs to be a distribution network of regional film rental exchanges; the specialized, skilled labour of projectionists, musicians and performers; the civic and state oversight of licensing and censorship; and the publicity of newspaper advertising and other forms of promotion. Only with all these in place can a film be featured as a coming attraction worthy of anticipation and planning for going to the show. None of the elements of movie-going are empirically particular to the second birth of the movie theatre; all are present at various places and moments from nearly the start of the first birth of the *cinématographe*. Specific films were featured as the attraction of moving picture shows as early as 1897 for Victorian Jubilee celebrations and the Corbett-Fitzsimmons prize fight; the latter led to the first widespread efforts and attempts to install film censorship. In addition to such newsworthy actualities, by 1902 fiction films were occasionally singled out in advertisements as the special feature of variety programmes, both by itinerant showmen in small towns and vaudeville theatres in big cities, and also by the occasional storefront 'electric theatre'.

As already noted for Toronto, moving pictures were exhibited in storefront locations on their own from the earliest appearances of the *cinématographe*. Some of these spaces went beyond merely temporary venues. Showmen on the Pacific coast, in particular, continually experimented with picture shows in their own venues (Musser 1994, 299–303); a small chain of 'Searchlight' picture theatres operated from 1900 to 1902 in Seattle and other cities in Washington and British Columbia; a string of Edison or Electric theatres in the west often opened as picture shows before consolidating into a circuit for family vaudeville. Peepshow and slot machine arcades, such as those run in Kansas City by Bruce Yale and San Francisco by A. W. Furst, included projected moving pictures for five cents in back rooms or upstairs as early as 1898, later remembered as the origins of local movie-going (see for example *Kansas City Star* 1904, 1916). Even the film exchange had its precedents, despite its proliferation coming hand in hand with the nickelodeon. As early as 1901, Alfred Harstn was renting films out of his Coney Island film supply; by 1903, he had moved offices to Manhattan, while Eugene Cline in Chicago was also offering a weekly film rental service, followed soon by Miles Bros. in San Francisco and others (Abel 1999, 22). 'Film exchanges', 'film services' and 'rental bureaus' slowly proliferated throughout 1904, serving the smaller-scale boom in

itinerant picture shows that preceded the nickelodeon years. An indication that many exhibitors were already renting films before the nickelodeon boom arrived is a 1905 ad for American Vitagraph's full service to vaudeville theatres and amusement parks – 'We don't rent films! We don't have to!' (*New York Clipper* 1905).

All these precedents are exceptions. Each aspect of the emergence of the movie theatre appeared earlier, separately, and only in geographically isolated locations; whereas once the movie theatre was established, its operations were standardized and widespread across the entire continent. A movie theatre soon opened in practically every big-city neighbourhood and every small city, town, and even village across the whole of North America. Of course, they did not all open at once; it is important to consider all those theatres opening as a process of a paradigm developing, rather than a single event. The mass market for cinema is not simply an empirical fact – there is no quantified threshold or proportion of the population that signifies a mass practice. The movie theatre was established on a sustained, regional scale from metropolitan sites to towns and villages: the second birth of cinema is also the establishment of a mass audience. Local difference and standardization are both required to sustain a mass market across an inter-regional network through the simultaneous perception of particularity and connectivity. The methodological consequence is the need to look beyond one location, to look at newspapers (in my case) from all available locations in order to see each movie theatre in relation to others on a regional scale. Movie theatres and their newspaper advertisements are representative of the relation between local and mass culture, as precisely offering transcendence of locatedness even as they encourage located consumption.

When does cinema become routine, ordinary, everyday, and locally permanent? Well, this, of course, depends upon the locality and the locale and the local circumstances. The first Ontario picture show to advertise, and advertise its opening in November 1906, was the Allen Brothers' Theatorium in Brantford (population: 20,500).<sup>4</sup> This particular movie theatre is notable because its showmen went on to later create the first vertically integrated North American, national chain of movie palaces affiliated with Paramount Pictures (Moore and Dombowsky 2009). The Brantford Theatorium is less important for that coincidence than for being the first announcement of a grand opening of a picture show, and thus a sign of the opening of a novel routine in everyday life. Moving pictures and illustrated songs were now *publicized* as available on a daily basis in a place of their own. For the first time in Ontario, an audience, made up of newspaper-readers and others, could plan to see moving pictures anytime, on demand, close to home. Nickel shows had opened earlier in Toronto, but without such an announcement or advertising. As I review in detail elsewhere (Moore 2011), five-cent shows in larger cities tended at first to be reported only when something newsworthy drew attention, such as a celluloid fire at the Trocadero in April 1906 in Toronto (population: 338,800).

Picture shows in smaller villages were more typically first noticed through single sentences buried within 'town topics' gossip columns. One such sentence in May 1909 in Acton (population: 1950) announced 'Wonderland, the new moving picture show in the building next Johnstone's hardware store will be opened to the public with the latest and most refined pictures to-morrow evening'. From every available newspaper in Ontario I have collected such notes, news and advertisements about movie theatres in 88 locations. Charting the opening date of the first movie theatre in town against the population, and including a 'curve of best fit', shows the dispersion of movie theatres from cities to towns to villages (Figure 1).

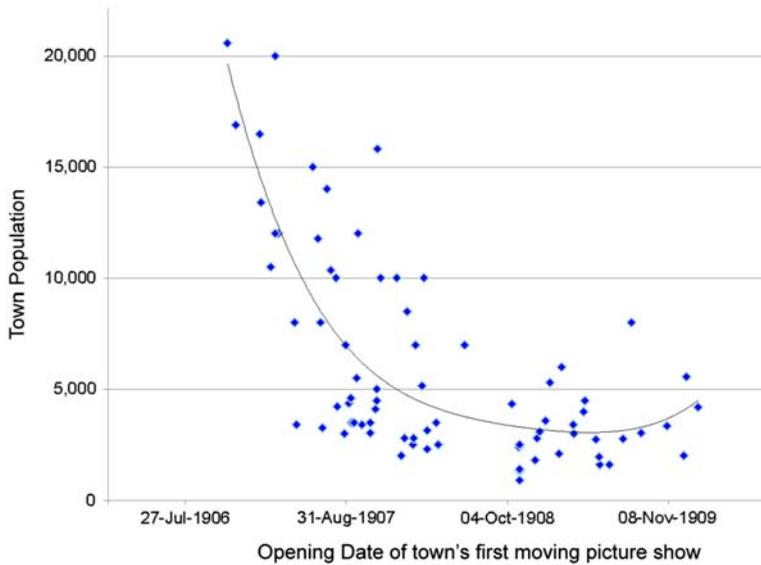


Figure 1. Plot of population versus first show's opening for smaller cities and towns in Ontario. The 'curve of best fit' has  $R^2 = 0.36$  (the line explains 36% of the scatter in the plot, a statistically significant result).

The largest metropolitan cities – Toronto and a few others, all with populations of 50,000 or more – are omitted, to prevent their disproportionately large populations dominating. A few results are notable on the chart. First of all, the dispersal from cities to villages is not an entirely formulaic pattern: there is scatter in the plot, reflecting showmen working as entrepreneurial individuals each making independent decisions to open a show in a particular location. On the other hand, there is a general trend – an emerging market, if you will; it begins in 1906 in cities, and reaches saturation around 1910, when almost every Ontario town that is ever going to have a movie theatre finally has one. A few small towns had a show open a little earlier than expected, and a few mid-sized cities took a little longer than expected; but movie theatres first opened in cities, and later in towns and then villages. Statistically speaking, this is a significant relation that was not produced randomly: a curvilinear 'line of best fit' explains 36% of the variation, a relatively strong explanatory value for a social phenomenon. In short, it took about four years for the Ontario mass market in picture shows to emerge, and the end of this period coincides with Gaudreault and Marion's second birth of cinema.

Let me provide a slightly different way of looking at the same data, by grouping cities (populations of 10,000–20,000), towns (populations of 4500–9000), and villages (populations of 4000 or lower), charting the average date that first moving picture shows opened within each category<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2). Again, metropolitan cities are omitted, although this time because there are so few of them to consider the variation of their mean opening dates. This alternative way of presenting the dispersal of the movie theatre across the region indicates, first of all, how the first picture shows in cities open earlier than in towns and villages: around August 1907, on average, for cities; but not until July 1908 for towns, and September 1908 for villages. The confidence intervals around the average dates show the error in the statistic – there is a chance of 1 in 20 that the actual average lies outside the

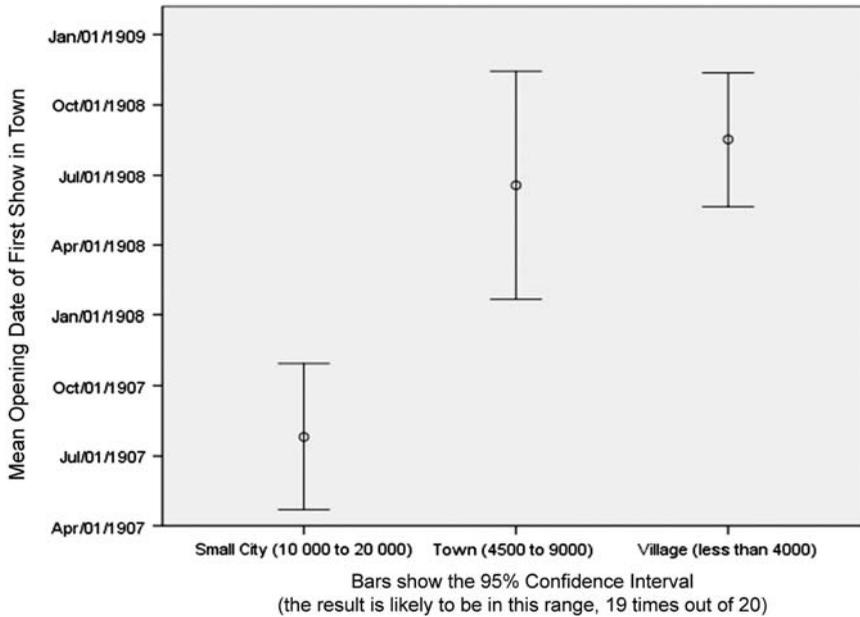


Figure 2. Chart of grouped mean opening date for first shows in small cities, towns, and villages. The ‘confidence intervals’ around the means depict the range needed for the result to be true 19 times out of 20.

interval. This additional statistical measure tells a more nuanced story than the average opening dates alone. We can be confident that the mean for cities is earlier than for towns and villages. However, the intervals for towns and villages overlap; we cannot say, statistically, that pictures shows open in towns earlier than in villages.

In short, cities get their first movie theatres significantly sooner than towns or villages, but there is really no difference between when the first movie theatres opened in towns and in villages. Unlike the general trend within the scatter of the earlier chart, this second way of charting the dispersal demonstrates that the emergence of the movie theatre is not reducible to population; there is a qualitative difference between cities and town or villages. One qualitative difference is daily versus weekly newspapers. At the time the movie theatre was emerging in Ontario, a city needed a population of around 10,000 to sustain a daily newspaper – these places are more likely to have theatrums open sooner. Places with smaller populations and only weekly newspapers have their first picture shows opening later, more or less irrespective of population. More than population alone, the way a mass public is mediated through newsreading is a factor in the second birth of cinema. Some earlier amusements, such as dime museums and vaudeville theatres (as opposed to town halls), and annual exhibitions (as opposed to fairs), had only ever been located in metropolitan cities. Other entertainments, like summer amusement parks, circuses, and commercial ‘opera houses’ hosting touring theatricals, dispersed somewhat further to small cities, too. Before the movie theatre and the second birth of cinema, there were very few commercial amusements that also routinely included small towns and villages within the same network as larger and metropolitan cities – syndicated news, sheet music, and subscription magazines are better held as precedents for mass amusement than any performative or screen entertainment.

# NOW OPEN EVERY NIGHT

Collingwood's New Attraction

## "WONDERLAND"

Presenting High-class Moving Pictures and Illustrated  
Songs, with Change of Programme  
three times per week.

Under the Management of W. B. McNaught and Jas. M. Norris.

WONDERLAND is one of the numerous attractions of this class  
that is being installed in most of the principal towns and  
cities of Canada.

Change of Pictures Tuesday, Thursdays, Saturdays

Be Up-to-date, Visit Wonderland

Our Pictures are clean and interesting, educating and pleasing.  
Can be patronized by mothers as well as by the boys, rich  
and poor, old and young as our price is well within the  
reach of all.

Everything  
Clean and  
Moral

5c.

WONDERLAND  
Next Cadillac  
Restaurant

Figure 3. The grand opening of moving pictures and illustrated songs, every night at the Wonderland. *Collingwood Bulletin*, 31 August 1907.

Needing to find even a modest profit in a small town or village required inviting 'everyone' – specifically including children. In turn, catering to children in a small town or village required upholding the strictest respectability, lest a showman invite the scrutiny of parents, police, and parish priests. Early advertising for itinerant moving pictures rarely makes an explicitly open invitation or claims of respectability, whereas these are staples of trade for early movie theatres. In Collingwood in 1907, the grand opening of the Wonderland could 'be patronized by mothers as well as by the boys, rich and poor, old and young as our price is well within the reach of all' (Figure 3). At the Bijou Dream's grand opening in Ontario's own London in 1907, 'ladies and children' were invited to attend 'without escort'. The Paris, Ontario, Wonderland offered 'a clear, pleasing, instructive and unique entertainment

for the people... Parents, bring your children. Everybody Come.’ The Gayety in northern Sault Ste Marie in 1908 was not just ‘open to all’: it advertised ‘Opera Chairs for all. Reserved Seats to all. We accept them all. Same price for all. We welcome them all. Comfortable for all’, capped with an acknowledgement of the cold north wind: ‘no charge for the heat’.

Almost all of these advertisements for small town grand openings of movie theatres specifically announce a programme comprised of *illustrated songs* along with moving pictures. Song illustrators can be seen in continuity with the *bonimenter* or film lecturer of early cinema (see Lacasse 2000), insofar as live performance continued to be used to mediate the picture show presented to early movie theatre audiences. Song illustrators had far less leeway to present a locally particular performance than might be presumed if considered in continuity with lecturers; illustrated songs were very nearly as standardized and mass produced as the movies they accompanied. Illustrated songs emerged as a novelty precisely with moving pictures in 1896, and the combination of ‘moving pictures and illustrated songs’ was the predominant programme for itinerant showmen by 1903 – this is the key element common to small-time ‘family’ vaudeville, travelling picture shows, and early nickelodeons. By 1909, there were even occasional claims that acting, photographing and illustrating the songs, ‘properly done, is an art in itself’ (*Chicago Tribune* 1909). An entire industry existed to supplement the sheet music industry by providing standard sets of lantern slides to accompany the latest popular songs.

About 12 ‘transparency’ companies produced song slides in the USA, each producing 80–100 sets of one song weekly. The more popular songs had 250–300 sets of slides made: four for each verse and three for each chorus, a title slide and a slide for the words of the chorus. Small-town advertising for early movie theatres was as likely or to mention the titles of illustrated songs as film titles. Illustrated songs disappeared from the movie theatre programme quickly between 1911 and 1913 (Figure 4), precisely as multiple-reel feature films shown in continuity with dual projectors become the norm (Altman 2004). It became tempting to dismiss the earlier pervasiveness of the illustrated song for its clear functionality in providing programming between the single reels of short films. ‘In the early days of moving picture theatres’, one paper recalled in May 1914, ‘while the reels were being re-rolled some frog-throated youth or squeaky girl would render mushy love ballads to the accompaniment of a piano and a set of lurid stereopticon views. [...] Nowadays the “illustrated song” is never seen or heard’ (*Cleveland Plain Dealer* 1914). Allow me instead to speculate a cultural purpose for the songs-and-pictures programme that preceded the multiple-reel feature film: the song illustrator animated the audience to enact being the second birth’s mass public by singing the choruses of the popular songs together. *Everybody welcome! Everybody join in the chorus!*

Following Gaudreault and Marion, it is possible to understand the ‘movie theatre’ as providing an exhibition space for the second birth of cinema as well as for films. None of the factors that contributed to the establishment of movie theatres in North America are determinant, since their suspension in alignment was not strictly a matter of causality – be it economic, social, cultural, or even habitual. There can continue to be a variety of local cultures of movie-going, which can hold various aspects of this network of actors, texts, technologies, regulations and objects in distinct balance depending on the cultural context. There are historical cases of nationalized or protectionist film distribution, of state-managed exhibition, of voluntary

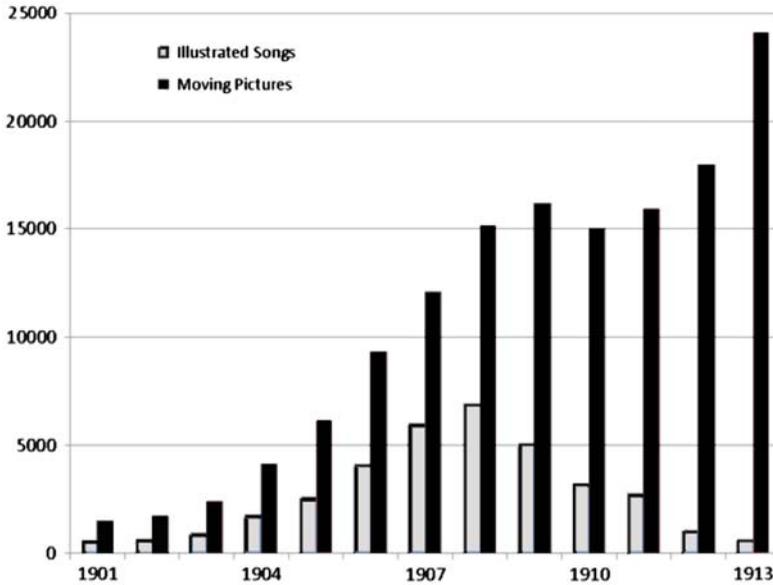


Figure 4. Annual occurrences of the terms ‘illustrated songs’ versus ‘moving pictures’ (or ‘motion pictures’ or ‘movies’) in historic American newspapers (genealogybank.com). Rising in tandem until 1908, illustrated songs wane as the ‘movies’ find a cultural space of their own.

production codes in place of censorship. We have recently turned to automated and digital projection and web-based schedules and ticket sales. On the one hand, Gaudreault and Marion (2012) have considered whether the images we see at ‘the cinema’ are still ‘cinema’ in an age of digital, simulcast opera, ballet, concerts, etc. The same concerns prompt the question of whether these screen auditoriums remain ‘movie theatres’. We may now find the showtime on a webpage, purchase a ticket in advance online, skip the box office; but in going together, we are still recognizably at ‘the movies’.

### Notes

1. While I use Bazin’s (2009) famous question ‘What is cinema?’ to help clarify my own question, it is important to note that Gaudreault and Marion do not directly describe their work as founded upon Bazin’s essays. Their claim of a second birth is specifically not a reiteration of the famous declaration that ‘Cinema has not yet been invented!’ (21).
2. Herzog’s essay was published within a special issue of the *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* on the ‘Archaeology of Cinema’ that included a call from Charles Musser (1984) to anchor cinema in continuity with the long history of screen practices, which continues to resonate with, rather than contradict, Gaudreault and Marion’s premises.
3. Lyman H. Howe is the best-known itinerant exhibitor, thanks to a book-length study (Musser & Nelson 1991); but perhaps most prominent was Archie L. Shepard, whose multiple exhibition units toured the entire eastern and southern USA and provided Sunday concerts throughout New England. From 1903 to 1906, American Vitagraph supplemented its primary endeavor of supplying picture outfits to big-city vaudeville houses with Fall/Winter itinerant circuits to smaller cities and Spring/Summer circuits of Chautauquas and seasonal fairs. At various points, Selig’s Polyscopes, Spoor’s Kinodromes,

American Biographs, and other key early US film producers all had itinerant exhibition outfits.

4. All town populations and taken from McKim's *Canadian Newspaper Directory* 1909.
5. Separating Ontario cities, towns, and villages in terms of population in this fashion was not a legislated distinction. The categories are my own typification based in part upon how the locality's newspapers address their publics.

### Note on contributor

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