New York City in Early Films: An Iconographical and Iconological Analysis

Submitted by Edward John Falvey to the University of Exeter

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Words cannot adequately express the love and gratitude that I have for my family. I thank my mum, Jane, for being a pillar of strength throughout; her support, friendship, and love has sustained me at the hardest of times. I thank my dad, Martin, whose sound judgement, resolute guidance, and loving support has been crucial since the very beginning. I thank my brother, Henry, for his intelligence on the subject of film, for keeping me grounded in my responses to it, and for making me laugh when I needed it most. I thank my sister, Georgina, for her wit, wisdom, and abiding courage; throughout the most difficult of times she has remained a creative, bright, and sassy beacon of inspiration (who would call me remiss if I did not thank the animals as well). I would like take the opportunity to thank my grandfather, John, for his aid and encouragement throughout this process which I am deeply grateful for.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers, Helen and Jane, who did not get to see it completed, but who I know would be deeply proud to see that it is finally done.

Abstract

Accounts of early film have more often than not tended to observe the period less in regards to the films produced and more in a way that privileges formal developments, modes of exhibition, and audiences as the primary subjects of their investigations. This thesis aims to restore a critical interest in the films themselves as complex vessles of protean cultural meaning by placing them, and the city they capture, at the epicentre of a network of images and ideas concerning modern life. This thesis employs the early films of New York as a means of evaluating the multifaceted and multifarious ways in which modernity was impacting upon the city during the period of film's cultural ascension. By surveying a large corpus of films with an oft-neglected method, this thesis finds that many of the films capture aspects of the radically transforming city in their iconography in ways which foreground modernity's considerable impact upon the city and, contingently, modern life. This thesis applies an extensive iconographical-iconological method to the early films of New York to assess the ways in which the emerging medium enshrined the architectural, technological, and social transformations that the city fostered in light of modernity. This thesis consists of three large chapters that focus firstly on modernity's impression on New York during the period mostly associated with actuality filmmaking, secondly on the city's diverse social transformations that were articulated in early fiction filmmaking, and finally on the ways in which Coney Island on film embodies many of the principle ideas discussed throughout the preceding chapters. The research carried out over the course of this thesis demonstrates the ways in which the city was positioned as a primary subject of early New York film and anticipates the ways in which the city would come to figure as a primary structuring principle for filmmaking throughout the century.

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations are signposted in the text where necessary. The most frequent abbreviations are used in reference to the major production companies:

AM – American Mutoscope Company

AMB – American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, otherwise known as The Biograph Company

Ed/Edison – The Edison Manufacturing Company

Vita – The American Vitagraph Company

New York on Early Film: An Iconography in Motion

At the heart of this thesis lies a central question: in the years before the formal and industrial developments that have come to characterise popular American film, how did the medium capture New York City, one of its most popular early subjects. When facing the legacy of more than a century of radical technological, architectural, and social change, it is easy to get caught up in the prominent image of New York as it is represented today when, in fact, New York has been documented in fascinating ways since film's earliest years. This thesis wishes to mount the argument that early New York film captured the city during a period of accelerated growth, and that its image on early film provides an archive of representations of some of those prominent changes.

Most existing scholarship on early New York film tends to focus upon institutional and social histories of the medium. While such accounts of film's relation to the city and its inhabitants remain vital, this thesis will offer an alternative critical perspective, formulating an early filmic history for New York around the films themselves, an approach to early New York film that has thus far not been substantially conducted. Over the course of this thesis I will, therefore, focus primarily on properties of the films: I will (1) identify the iconography that was established by the early films of New York (1896-c.1912); I will (2) reflect upon what this iconography tells us about the role New York played as a subject of early film; lastly, I will (3) move from iconographical evaluation towards an iconological reading of the films that considers what the collective iconography of New York was reflecting, unveiling, implying, or inventing about the city at that time.

During my research, I spent six months at the Library of Congress where I was given access to the Paper Print Collection, the largest and most important collection of early American film available in the world. Raymond Fielding confirms this in his introduction to the catalogue, writing that "altogether, some 3,000 titles are listed [in the Paper Print Collection], representing more than two million linear feet of film— incunabula of the cinema" (1967, xiii). Over the course of this introduction, I will further introduce the strengths of the Paper Print Collection as an iterative representation of early New York film. Nevertheless, it is worth stating immediately that, when checked against catalogues of recorded films, the New York films included in the Paper Print Collection represent a clear and illustrative filmic iconography of the city during this period of formative film production. While this thesis will also consider films not included in the Paper Print Collection, it will take the opportunity to formally catalogue the films of the collection according to the depictions of the city that they render.

The films considered throughout this thesis represent a significant archive for New York and early film, one that is reflective of the city's various transformations that were happening during a period of accelerated growth. Read together, patterns emerge that indicate shared iconographic features which foreground the films' importance as an archive of early engagements with developing urban space. I will consider the representations of the city provided by the archive, collating the most prominent and recurring symbols, images, themes, and subjects, the basis of the city's filmic iconography. It is the position of this thesis to argue that early New York film played a vital role in the construction and proliferation of an enduring city-based iconology that documented the ongoing upheaval of modern life that was occurring throughout the city and nation at that time.

A City of Textures: Reading the Archive

It is the intention of this thesis to offer an alternative way of looking at New York on early film. New York's status as the industrial, cultural, and commercial capital of the United States marks it out as what Saskia Sassen has called a "global city" due to its substantial world influence (1991: 3). For Sassen, global cities functioned as centres of culture and commerce, as amalgams of modern life. As we know, however, the rise of global centres coincided with the advent of new means of documenting urban space. The popularity of photography and film ushered in a new way of capturing the city, of looking at it, of experiencing it. It was, as E.H. Gombrich has written, "a historical epoch in which the image [had taken] over from the written word" (1982: 137), an observation that points to the power that the image holds over urban representation.

By the early twentieth century New York's landmarks were well-established within the city's burgeoning iconography. Landmarks such as the Flatiron Building, Central Park, the Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge, and Coney Island recur throughout early filmic representations of the city. Places such as these illustrate one of the more straightforward ways that icons operate as primary sites signifying the city. Early New York film produced a network of distinct, yet similarly-orientated representations of the city, a system of impressions occurring in the midst of radical industrial, economic, and social change. Together, these impressions present a network of illustrations that, to borrow Michel de Certeau's term, amounts to something of a *texturology* of New York at that time (1984: 91). When viewed together as an archive, the early films of New York exhibit a system of textual (and textured)

representations that offer a compelling commentary on the city at the time of their recording.

Michel de Certeau introduces the term "texturology" in his much-cited chapter 'Walking in the City'. Having ascended the World Trade Centre, de Certeau seeks to immobilise the city in a bid to comprehend it:

Seeing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide – extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space (1984: 91).

The texturology describes a view of the city that is, paradoxically, both total and partial. It expresses the infinite ways in which the city might be put to use. It accounts for the fact that any impression of the city can only ever hope to be fragmentary, and yet, taken together, the corpus of sights and sensations converge into something that is, in its own way, comprehensible for de Certeau. It is a totalising view of the city that is multifaceted and multifarious, and yet from above the "agitation is momentarily arrested by vision". From above, for a moment, the city is immobilised and made legible.

By evaluating the city as a texturology, de Certeau acknowledges the unfeasibility of making sense of all its myriad elements. He places himself at the

summit of the then-tallest building(s) in New York. De Certeau's station atop the World Trade Center places him simultaneously inside and outside of the city. The height of the building places him outside of the intensity of the street and offers a perspective from which he might organise the city into its various parts. That practice is, in effect, not dissimilar to the way in which this thesis will approach the early films of New York. As a series of spectacular, interconnected views of the city, the films provide a means of observing it at the moment of vital industrial, economic, social, and cultural change. In observing the archive as a totalising view – a process that is symbolically in line with de Certeau's ascent of the tower – the films come together to form a texturology of representations which, I will argue, unveils latent iconological meaning that is inscribed in the city's primary imagery.[1]

So how does the texturology of New York appear on early film? While a complex answer to that question will be established over the course of this thesis, it is possible to surmise that the city is foregrounded often and prominently as a focal subject of the corpus. Of course, New York has a long history of representation that significantly pre-dates film. Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar's compilation of New York writings, *Empire City: New York through the Centuries* – which functions as a texturology of sorts – works as a roadmap for modes of representation of New York in literature. It is, as the editors write, "an attempt to chronicle part of the story of one city in the hope that it might serve as an example for the rest of America" (2002: 13). In their introduction, the editors stipulate that New York remains an exemplar for the United States' cultural and social potential. They assert its "special role" in the nation, stating that "[i]f we are to look to a city that most realistically maintains and yet

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[1] Note that a full definition of the terms iconography and iconology will follow later in this introduction, detailing how the terms will be employed throughout the thesis.

questions fundamental American traits and provides an arena where those can be honestly confronted and questioned, it is New York" (13).

Jackson and Dunbar's compendium of New York writing serves as a literary paradigm for the ways in which an archive of representations collects to form a texturological impression of the city as a whole. Looking over the writings of New York most pertinent to this thesis, one can find patterns of representation emerging. Within Jackson and Dunbar's *canon* are narratives of social stratification that chronicle prosperity in the works of Edith Wharton, Ward McAllister, and Andrew Carnegie, and tales of poverty in the works of Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and Helen Campbell. Fiction and non-fiction are included beside poetry and other texts that document central New York sites such as Madison Square and Central Park. Examples include accounts of the development of tenement housing projects, plans for the city, commentaries on the nature and impact of immigration, beside many other materials that contribute to an image of New York through the ages.[2]

While far from exhaustive, Jackson and Dunbar's overview is an intermedial demonstration of what might be identified as dominant themes for the representation of New York at that time. They are themes that emerge in the city films produced in the medium's earliest years. What is revealed is a series of representations that are illustrative of some of the more prominent elements of urban change. In I.N.P. Stokes' large volume entitled *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (published between 1915 and 1928), he demonstrates how such impressions of the city

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[2] The texts cited include: Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920); Ward McAllister's *Society as I have Found It* (1890); Andrew Carnegie's *The Gospel of Wealth* (1903); Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890); Stephen Crane's 'Minetta Lane' (1896); Helen Campbell's *Darkness and Daylight* (1892); Walt Whitman 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' and 'Mannahatta' (1856; 1860); Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868); Frederick Law Olmsted's 'Selected Writings on Central Park' (1858; 1870); Lawrence Veiller's account of 'The Tenement-House Exhibition of 1899' (1901); Jean Schopfer's 'The Plan of a City' (1902); and, Finley Peter Dunne's *Observations by Mr. Dooley* (1902).

participate in the production of the city's iconography. Stokes was a prominent architect and trustee of the New York Public Library and his exhaustive six volume chronicle of New York's iconography provides an extensive collection of materials including maps, plans, city documents, illustrations, and newspaper entries. Stokes declares his intention to "collect, condense, and arrange systematically […] the facts and incidents which are of greatest consequence and interest in the history of New York City, with special reference to its topographical features" (Vol. 1: I:x). This ambition culminates in a work of considerable range that identifies the key icons of the city chronologically as they appear. Everything is accounted for, from large icons such as Brooklyn Bridge (Vol. 5: 1981) and the Statue of Liberty (Vol. 5: 1991) to considerably smaller events in the city – even the first uses of Edison's Vitascope are detailed (Vol. 5: 2024-5), an important entry for the establishment of film technologies as iconographically twinned with New York. In sum, Stokes' encompassing research and accompanying commentary on the city's iconography offers a vast survey of the ways in which the city's iconography was being observed and discussed in the early decades of the twentieth century. So, in what ways does film correlate with existing iconographic patterns of representation and the emerging theoretical consensus on the city's iconography? In short, these patterns of representation are inherited, actualised, and built upon across a range of early filmic representations of New York.

The Paper Print Collection represents a central source of films for this work. During the six months I spent at the Library of Congress, the Paper Print Collection, the largest surviving collection of early film, became the primary archival resource for this thesis. In the hundreds of New York films contained in the collection, a clear texturological impression of the city emerges. It is an impression that owes much to the literary iconography that preceded, it while also unveiling early film's utility in the

development and expansion of the city's image. It is not an overstatement to claim that the survival of the Paper Print Collection is a small miracle. While the practice of sending paper copies of the films to the Library of Congress was originally conceived as a means to battle a lack of representation for film in copyright law, the practice inadvertently, and serendipitously, endowed the Library with somewhere in the region of 3,000 films that had been preserved since the medium's infancy. Kemp Niver, one of the chief historians overseeing the restoration project, stated as early as 1985 that the collection "represents one of the primary sources for the study of the beginning of movement in photography in America", claiming that the chance to view films of the period has gone some way towards establishing that "too much that had been written about the use of a moving picture camera […] was inaccurate" (1985: x-xii). Erik Barnouw, another contributor, writes that it would not be until later that motion pictures would "come to be accepted as a major element in our social history and in the history of human communication" (1985: xv). His description of the collection serves to account for the variety of spectacles it holds, not to mention a clear indication as to the content of many of the New York films:

> [T]he historic value of the films goes far beyond film industry documentation. The early film entrepreneurs shot hundreds of events – parades, battleship launchings, political rallies, village fairs, railroad disasters, floods. They recorded countless people at work – fighting a fire, building a skyscraper, digging a tunnel, driving a subway, piloting a ferry, building an "el." They showed people at play – at beach, park, stadium, fairground, café. The nonfamous, infamous, and famous are here – innumerable figures of the turn of the century were recorded on film" (xvi).

Direct access to the collection has been invaluable for my research, informing it with the provision of a large number of films – and, therefore, a rich diversity of depictions of New York – that are representative of the patterns of production at that time.

Logically, an important question follows: just how representative is the Paper Print Collection of early New York film? To answer this question it was essential that I survey the period to determine to what extent the films of the Paper Print Collection can be taken as illustrative of wider patterns of urban representation for New York on early film. Included as an appendix[3] is the product of that survey: a comprehensive list of the known New York films from the period that this thesis covers.[4] This resource is intended to benefit both myself and future researchers as evidence of the sort of films that were being produced in New York, and *about* New York, during the medium's infancy. It goes without saying that the list of films, while comprehensive, is not exhaustive; instead, it should be taken as a quantitative and qualitative illustration of New York's film output in the first decade and a half of its history.

For the purpose of this thesis, some of the films are of comparatively little interest, since they are not what might be described as "city films" (that is, films that are specifically of and/or about the city). Certain films may be discounted as novelty films, films experimenting with trick photography, displaying incidental events, or capturing performances of sports or dance. While such films contribute to understandings of early film practice, they are largely unconcerned with the city. The remainder of the list shows films (both actuality and fiction) that convey, either explicitly or implicitly, images and ideas about the place in which they were made. It is those

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[3] See pages 276-311.
[4] Largely, I have produced this resource from the record of known films that is available in the AFI catalogues. While these records are not exhaustive, the AFI is a dependable and comprehensive source and the resulting list is enough to formulate a clear view of what was being produced at that time.

films that form the basis of the texturology. This appendix provides both an illustration of the sheer number of films that were being produced in New York at the time, and an index for cataloging early New York film according to the most dominant modes of representation.

Type of Icon[5]	No. of Films
Trains	36
Bridges	12
The Street	94
The Skyline	36
The Slum	45
Tramps and Homelessness	41
Prosperity and Wealth	39
Immigration	54
Coney Island	66

So, what is included among the remaining films? The archive of the city is a diverse, textual, and textured, compendium of views of New York. If de Certeau's texturology suitably conveys one way of looking at the archive, then what can be made of the views it exhibits? A quick grouping of the films according to their primary images presents an illustrative, if simplified, view of what the archive holds. Even grouped together in this way, it is worth underscoring the fact that these films present a diverse range of impressions of New York's geographic and social spatial characteristics. Over the course of this work, I will endeavour to make sense of the differently textured

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[5] These figures are intended only to demonstrate patterns of representations. I do not wish to imply that the films in each grouping share no content with other categories, only that the categories represent my identification of the primary subject of each film.

impressions of the city that are contained here, impressions that imply various ways of looking at New York during film's infancy. Of course, despite de Certeau's best efforts to see the city from above, the film corpus, just like the city, can never be seen or understood in its totality. As de Certeau writes, "the networks of these moving, intersecting writings [what he refers to as the "urban text"] compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces" (93). The best possible understanding of New York's filmic texturology can only hope to make sense of the city in part, but the fragments provided by the corpus nevertheless tell a "manifold story" of the city's growth and the ways in which early filmmakers were rising to capture it.

Cities in Motion: Theorising Film and the City

Since the early days of film theory, film has been discussed as a radical new way of experiencing the world by virtue of being able to see it in motion. In 1924, Béla Balázs wrote that "[e]very evening many millions of people sit and experience human destinies, characters, feelings and moods of every kind, and without the need for words". The possibilities provided by the film camera to see and, in a sensory capacity, experience the world is central to Balázs' claims regarding its "momentous […] impact on human culture" (9-10). Elsewhere, Francesco Casetti has written on film as an eye for the century, stating that

> if film conquered and recast our manner of seeing, it was not only because it
> embodied the gaze of the human eye, but because it embodied the gaze of the
> twentieth century. The camera captured what lay before it in forms that revealed
> the attitudes and orientations with which people were compelled to look at the

world around them. On the screen, more than a reality objectively recorded, we saw reality in the spirit of the time (2008: 8).

This is a powerful claim when considering the role that the film camera has played in the iconographic development of New York. If, as Casetti argues, the film camera and the world are entangled ideologically – both in form and in creative orientation – then the city spectacles and fictions rendered operate as vessels for deeper cultural meaning. The camera is a key signifier of the technologically, industrially, and culturally progressive world from which it emerged (in fact, one might go further and designate it an icon in its own right). Moreover, it functioned as an optical mediator between places and the world beyond and was, therefore, vital in the production and dissemination of urban imagery to the city itself and the world beyond. To New York, the film camera offered a series of windows through which one could view the city during a period of accelerated development. This thesis will organise the texturology in an attempt to formulate an understanding of the way in which early film mounted a deeply expressive iconography for New York.

The texturology of early New York film offers a store of impressions through which one can access views of the city during a pivotal period of its development. Naturally, there is only so much of the city that is seen on early film, but what *is* seen plays an essential role in the development of the city's filmic iconography at that time. In accordance with a texturological understanding of these films, it is neither essential not possible for them to illustrate an objective reality of New York. In fact, the fragmentation of a place is key to its iconographic foundation, in which snapshot impressions render an image of the whole, much like a postcard. Of course, physical icons such as bridges and buildings do have actual, geographic locations within the city, but as representative signifiers of a place they also operate independently of it.

This is to say that iconic images can operate apart from a more unified, concrete understanding of a place; as isolated, elemental signs endowed with signifying potential. This is notionally similar in many ways to Siegfried Kracauer's concept of "camera reality", which presents a spatial facsimile of a place that departs from its physical reality (1960: 78). Vivian Sobchack, writing on the phenomenology of film experience, expands on the ideas expressed here, claiming that "the moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience […] an act of seeing that makes itself seen" (1992: 3). The idea that film provides a sensory facsimile of experience is key to the textured impression that many of these films provide.

Casetti writes, above, of film as an eye for the century.[6] Film and the city are two grand and intertwined phenomena of the American twentieth century. Film's impact upon the way in which cities in general, and New York in particular, have been seen across the century pre-empts an argument to be made that twentieth century urban iconography is fundamentally indebted to the medium. New York's iconography – comprised, most explicitly, of its skyline and bridges and crowds and so forth – is so prominent, in fact, that it transcends its primary representational function as a series of images of New York to facilitate a wider iconography for modern, urban (albeit Western) life in general. Since film's emergence, it has enjoyed a complex, sustained relationship with urban spaces, a matter illustrated by the New York texturology. For Mark Shiel, and other scholars committed to the study of the cinematic city, film is a prominent urban enterprise, a claim that is supported by frequent thematic, formal,

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[6] It is possible to see this as an inverse (or, perhaps, interrelated) position to Alexandre Astruc's important essay on *la caméra-stylo*/camera-pen ('The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo'). While his pen-camera metaphor has been widely appropriated for discussions relating to the auteur, it remains useful for understanding the ways in which images are *inscribed* with meaning, especially given that the etymological origins of iconography find it to be a term to designate *image-writing*.

and industrial links between the medium and the urban spaces of its production (2001: 1-2). While the habit of depicting the urban environment and city life is not unique to film, and has precedents in various other (and earlier) media, film's formal properties (and popularity within urban centres) marks it as an essential conveyor of city imagery and the varying experiences of modern life that early twentieth century American cities had to offer.

Shiel belongs to a school of thinkers who believe that film carries a prodigious hold over the representation of urban landscapes.[7] Shiel's largely synoptic view on the relationship between film and the city is broad yet persuasive; by situating the city as a key point of intersection between the medium and the world, he affords urban spaces a powerful place within the syntax of film.[8] This relationship is clearly illustrated in the city symphonies of the 1920s and 1930s. Francois Penz and Andong Lu have outlined the significance of city symphonies to the construction of an urban imagination, stating that

> with the city as their subject, city symphonies not only represent the city […]
> they also invent the city, enable its imagination and creation, and bring out the
> hidden, silent and invisible features of the city to public consciousness. The city
> symphony genre is a key piece of the urban cinematics puzzle (2010: 10).

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[7] Important works on the cinematic city include Shiel and Fitzmaurice's aforementioned *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (2001) beside David Clarke's *The Cinematic City* (1997), Stephen Barber's *Projected Cities* (2002), Madsen and Plunz's *The Urban Lifeworld* (2002), Barbara Mennel's *Cities and Cinema* (2008), Koeck and Roberts' *The City and the Moving Image* (2010), Francois Penz and Andong Lu's *Urban Cinematics: Understanding Urban Phenomena Through the Moving Image* (2011), and James Clapp's *The American City in the Cinema* (2013). These staple books and edited collections offer recent articulations for the ways in which the city has been approached in relation to film.

[8] M. Christine Boyer's book *The City of Collective Memory* (1994) has gone further to suggest the ways in which film has actually shaped the city. On top of this, and although his work does not dwell on film in the way that Boyer's does, David Pinder's *Visions of the City* (Routledge, 2005) provides a detailed account of utopian urbanism and discusses the ways in which the city has been imagined across the twentieth century.

For Penz and Lu, the city symphony clearly operated as a principal means of urban representation (and invention) for filmmakers of the 1920s and 30s (a period that includes New York's own *Manhatta* [1920]*,* directed by Paul Strand). This thesis is chiefly concerned with a period of film production that predates city symphonies and any direct theoretical conceptions of the cinematic city, however it is clear that representation of the city in early film "invents the city" similarly to the way that Penz and Lu propose. Furthermore, the conceptual framework implied by ideas of "urban cinematics" effectively draws attention to matters of urban life that sit at the heart of these films' systems of representation. Early actuality films, such as those that will be discussed in the first part of this thesis, regularly captured and conveyed fragments of urban life in isolated city scenes. Some of the earlier narrative films succeeded them by producing filmic fictions of modern city life. This thesis raises the claim that since film's earliest years, filmmakers showed a repeating interest in the depiction of the urban environment and urban life, an interest that sparked a lasting interaction between the medium and the city that developed in a variety of different ways.

First and foremost, this thesis situates its study within a specific place, New York. Perhaps chief among place-specific studies into early film and its environment is Giuliana Bruno's field-defining work *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* (1993). Her study mounts an interdisciplinary, archaeological evaluation of the films of Elvira Notari, a previously neglected early Italian filmmaker. Bruno's work provides evidence of what might be gleaned from a focused exploration into film's relationship with the spaces of its production, demonstrating how places can operate at the conceptual heart of a film. Bruno's claim that "a bridge between the metropolitan experience and the cinema was being built both historically and epistemologically" (1993: 55) provides a model approach for studies, such as this one, that wish to take into account films

depicting specific locations. More recent studies conducted by the likes of Paul Newland and Maurizio Cinquegrani whose respective works, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End* (2008) and *Of Empire and the City* (2014), have, similarly to Bruno, observed intermedially the interesting ways in which particular spaces convey shifting ideas about history and identity.

This thesis sits at an interdisciplinary intersection between early film studies and New York studies. Rather than offer another institutional account of early New York, which has been effectively been offered by prior scholarship,[9] this thesis departs methodologically with an aim to rewrite New York's early filmic history from the point of view of the films themselves, an approach to early New York film that has thus far not been completed (though this was an implication of Niver's comments over thirty years ago). This thesis will observe the ways in which the texturology produced by the early films of New York unveiled various ways of looking at the city at that time. Correspondingly, this thesis will organise representations of the city according to the primary images produced by the films with an aim to argue that these films played a vital role in the construction and dissemination of a budding filmic imaginary of New York. While any study into early New York film will naturally correspond with much of the exhaustive, synoptic work done on the careers and cinema of early New York filmmakers such as Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith, this thesis will look past individual filmmakers and studios to observe the function of the city beyond the boundaries of authorship.[10]

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[9] Richard Koszarski's *Hollywood on the Hudson* (2010) provides a detailed institutional account of the New York film industry but engages in relatively little textual analysis that might lead to an understanding of the city's iconography.

[10] Since their publication, two of the most important examples of this literature remain Tom Gunning's *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (1991) and Charles Musser's *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (1991) which offer extensive explorations into the formal development of these two key early American filmmakers.

There have been works that consider, more completely, representations of the city on film and other media. Included among these works is architect James Sanders' *Celluloid Skyline* (2001), a far-reaching and lavishly illustrated overview of New York's filmic utility as it has been employed across the twentieth century. In a bid to cover more than a century of film, Sanders' exploration into the earlier modes of representation is understandably thinner than it could be, nevertheless he is careful to impress upon his readers the value of the early films.

> It is difficult to overstate the impact of these primitive films. They haunt us with the knowledge that what they show is not a stage but an actual place; that the people in them are not actors, but real New Yorkers; that they offer no invented storyline, but ordinary, everyday life. They are, in the end, not *about* the city: they *are* the city – one or two minutes of it, transposed precisely, second by second, from then to now (26).

There is an undercutting simplicity to Sanders' view of the films' authenticity here. While Sanders rightly acknowledges the significance of early films to a presentation of modern life, the suggestion that there is no invention stands at odds with the relatively structured system of representations offered by the archive. The position of this thesis is that observable patterns of representation emerge within the eclectic corpus of texts that constitute the archive. The diversity of the texturology does not undo the fact that there remains focal points of interest. Not only do these points of interest *invent* a particular image of the city, they unveil a way of looking at "ordinary, everyday life" that is determined by the means of looking. More recently, Christoph Lindner has traced the invention of a New York imaginary across literature and other media, including film. He identifies that "the spectacle of everyday street life features as a recurring motif in the early, experimental actualities of New York's emergent film industry" (2015:

123). If Sanders' view could afford to be a little more sensitive to patterns of production, then Lindner's could be supported by more examples of films from the early period, which is the cost incurred by the breadth of his project.

This thesis will trace representations of the city of across the corpus of early film. It will consider how these diverse texts produced an impression of New York that foregrounded its architectural, technological, and social development. In their focalisation of the city, these films reveal a latent impulse by early filmmakers enchanted and enthralled by the spectacles of the city to capture images of it. The texturology emerges as an emblematic simulacrum of the modern urban experience that is registered through the most prominent, recurring images of the city. Annemone Ligensa's view that film is ostensibly "a part of modernisation, i.e. it is shaped by it, represents it and perhaps even promoted it" (2009: 1) positions it as both a consequence of modernity and as a prominent facilitator of a twentieth century urban imaginary. Ligensa's claim could be firmer; it is the position of this thesis that early film was so intertwined with the encroachment of modernity that it unequivocally promotes it through the repetition of its image on film. In doing so, early film established urban modernity – the radical social, technological, and aesthetic changes to the city ("modernisation" for Ligensa) – as the iconographic foundation of the cinematic city. The corpus of films accentuate the fact that early actuality film frequently foregrounded the city as one of its primary subjects and, in doing so, reproduced images of the rapid technological, architectural, and social expansion associated with it.

Ligensa's alignment of film and "modernisation" (here embodied in the city) reveals the substantial investment that each had in the other, a matter that will be explored over the course of this thesis. Even if the texturology presents only fragments of the whole, the fragments nevertheless convey new ways of observing the city that

were being determined by the possibilities of the new technologies available. Tom Gunning has called this style of engagement the "cinema of attractions", a mode of filmmaking characterised by film's capacity "to show something" (1990: 57). Here, Gunning places emphasis on film's exhibitive quality, the *showing*, at the expense of properly considering the *somethings shown*. It is my position that the *somethings shown* of early film are vital to tracing film's relationship with urban spaces. The *somethings shown* of early New York film are a diverse archive of representations of the city, from copious views of the developing space, to illuminating narratives of social change. For early filmmakers, New York clearly had a role as a primary subject, and provided a textured platform to illustrate the new and evolving characteristics of city life.

Figure 1: Crowds of people pass through the city's shopping district in *Fifth Avenue, New York* (Edison, 1897).

Fifth Avenue, New York (Edison, 1897) presents a typical street scene. The film is interesting from a purely formal perspective – it is composed of two shots and makes use of a panning motion – and yet, for the purpose of this thesis, the scenes depicted are of most interest. The bustling street scene illustrates the hyperstimulation of the

modern city and, in doing so, depicts a simulacrum of modernity, a fragment of its influence, which is embodied in the image of the crowd.

Illustrations such as this make a persuasive claim for the importance of considering a film's content beside its form, for scrutinising the *somethings* shown. The filmmaker has not merely stumbled upon Fifth Avenue; he has chosen his subject and location for a reason (likely commercial). At the same time, as the filmmaker captures swarms of wealthy, fashion-clad bodies adorning the famous retail centre, he is participating in the formation and dissemination of a particular image of New York. Even if by 1903 fiction film had overtaken actuality film as the dominant product,[11] one can nevertheless find, in a range of actuality films, traces of an implied, imagined audience that was interested in the daily activities of New York.[12] A film such as this, beside many other examples that will be explored in part one of this thesis, demonstrates the fact that cityscapes clearly had currency for early audiences. Such films explicitly and/or implicitly spectacularised city life and, in doing so, contributed towards an emerging way of visualising the city during a period of accelerated growth.

Moreover, a reading of *Fifth Avenue, New York* introduces the iconographical-iconological mode of analysis that will be carried throughout this work. The film portrays two distinct forms of iconography that structure this thesis. First, in the street the film offers a topographical, physical iconography that renders the city on concrete terms. Second, the film conveys a social iconography that corresponds with the way in which the city is inhabited and/or used. In this film, as in many others that will be

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[11] The nature and effect of this transition is a matter attended to by Charles Musser in his article 'Moving towards Fictional Narratives: Story Films Become the Dominant Product, 1903-4'. For a synoptic perspective on Manhattan audiences, see Ben Singer's article entitled 'Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors'. Both articles are included together in Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer's invaluable collection *The Silent Cinema Reader* (Routledge, 2004).

[12] For a variation on this point see Richard Butsch's article 'The Imagined Audience in the Nickelodeon Era' in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*. In it Butsch argues that assumptions made about early audiences manifested in decisions regarding style and narrative.

explored over the course of this work, the city stages modern life in a way that dramatises its novel and iterative characteristics. The iconographic purchase of the films will then form the basis of the iconological readings that this thesis seeks to offer. In *Fifth Avenue, New York*, for example, the social construction of the city manifests in the demonstration of how particular spaces are occupied and used. Fifth Avenue is a socially coded space and, therefore, conveys certain information about those people occupying it and the spaces of the city that its filmmakers deemed worthy of documentation. The representational value of prominent and recurring images, such as the image of the crowded street, predicates a mode of iconological analysis that evaluates the various observations on modern life that the films provide.

Fifth Avenue, New York demonstrates how the iconography of early New York films drew attention to the city's physical properties while imparting ideas about its usage. The early films of New York are evidence that a city's iconography can express images of, and ideas about, the city's past, present, and future. By understanding the city according to its primary imagery, one can come closer to understanding how the concrete elements of a place establish meaning through their representation. Furthermore, an understanding of the early filmic iconography of New York not only illustrates the fact that early practitioners ultilsed the medium to capture the city's ongoing development, but that the fruits of their labour produced an archive of representations that have much to say about New York specifically and about modern Western life more generally. The inference here is that these films fuction individually and collectively as sites of both specific and general cultural meaning. Iconographical analysis makes sense of what is seen, but it is iconological analysis that takes one beyond how those images mean in a unitary way. This method of reading the films unites them together as reflections on a singular thing, the city, foregrounding their

deeper symbolic value as expressions of the ideology that envelopes that place. I argue that these films come together as an archive of representations of New York that unveil aspects of the city that are contained in its primary imagery, imagery that will be deciphered over the course of this thesis using the iconographical and iconological analysis that I will outline below.

From Iconographical to Iconological Analysis

> To Europe, she was America. To America, she was the gateway of the earth. But to tell the story of New York would be to write a history of the world; saints and martyrs, dreamers and scoundrels, the traditions of a thousand races and a thousand religions went to her making and throbbed and jostled in her streets.
>
> (Wells 1908: 36)

At this juncture, it is important to define what, for the purposes of this thesis, can and cannot be deemed to be an icon, not to mention the artistic function of iconography, its theoretical history, and the conditions for its usage in relation to film and the city. As captured in H.G. Wells' quotation above, by the early years of the twentieth century New York had mutated into a dominant urban icon for the Western world; writing in 1908, just over a decade after film exploded into the public consciousness, Wells positions New York as an emblem for the Western world, a unifying, crystallised image of modern life. This reception of the image of New York is useful for forming the basis of an epistemology for iconography and iconology. Wells implies that through its image, the 'story' of New York City – if any historical narrative of a great city could ever be so simplified – can be ultised as a template for the history

of the Western world. For the purpose of this thesis, it is beside the point to attempt to decipher the reasons why New York has come to be known as the definitive city of the United States, a task which has, to all intents and purposes, been finely accomplished in historical accounts by the likes of Mark Carnes and John Garraty, Howard Zinn, and Eric Foner,[13] and, specifically for New York, Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace.[14] Although this thesis will not present an exhaustive genealogy of New York's iconography, the notion that New York can be received as a metonymic symbol, or icon, for the Western world can easily be read into the body of early city films.

The etymological roots for 'iconography' are located in the Greek words for image/εἰκών and writing/γράφειν. Together, these form a compound that roughly translates as "image-writing". This understanding first and foremost locates the study of iconography as primarily a study of language which is, in this case, a specifically visual one. Dictionary definitions of iconography demarcate it as "the use or study of images or symbols in visual arts […] the visual images, symbols, or modes of representation collectively associated with a person or movement [and] a collection of illustrations or portraits" (OED). Perhaps the most vital definition of iconography for this thesis comes from Erwin Panofsky who states that "[it] is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form" (1955: 26). Both definitions, one general and one theoretical, serve to provide a workable template for determining what iconography is and what icons can be in relation to this thesis; taken together, they amount to a term used to

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[13] Notable general histories of the United States include Mark Carnes and John Garraty's *The American Nation: A History of the United States* (Longman, 2000), Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States: 1492-2001* (HarperCollins, 2003), and Eric Foner's *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (Norton, 2014).
[14] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace's recent Pulitzer Prize winning opus *Gotham: A History of New York to 1898* (Oxford, 1999) quite wonderfully charts the industrial, social, and cultural histories of New York from its origins until the end of the nineteenth century.

determine collective meaning that, in turn, will inform (or render) the iconological meaning that those icons cooperatively produce.

All investigations into a work's iconography can be fundamentally drawn from its formal elements. It is a term that accounts for the manifest content of a work. Such enquiries might lead one to contemplate the following questions:

- What might we identify as the subject(s) of a work?

- Can these subjects be recognised as icons?

- How do those icons operate both inside and outside of the limits of an individual work of art?

- What might these icons tell us about the world?

These questions culminate with a move towards identifying how representations of the city work across a series of similarly-oriented texts. Received individually, a work of art's icons are formally bound to the limits of their representative capacity within a singular piece of work. Read, however, as traceable threads of a larger network of icons, those individual works figure as reflections on something greater than themselves which is a texturological view of the wider city. From there the work may be positioned in relation to other, similarly oriented works that are comparable in their iconographic content and contribute towards an iconological understanding of their subject(s).

Before Panofsky, Aby Warburg headed a movement that approached art in relation to wider social, cultural, and artistic contexts. Warburg's approach sought to assimilate into a work's analysis those elements external to it that might yet determine a more complete understanding of it. A student of Warburg's, Erwin Panofsky is arguably the twentieth century's most important figure for the development of iconographical and iconological approaches to art. In fact, the establishment of the

iconographical-iconological method has been considered by critics, alongside formalism, to have been one of the most important and influential methodologies for art analysis to have emerged in twentieth century.[15] After Heinrich Wölfflin, who had proposed a post-Kantian hypothesis that our senses establish an order that organises the chaos presented by visual phenomena,[16] Panofsky's iconographical-iconological method arose out of his inability to separate, as Wölfflin had, content from form.

Contrary to this earlier thinking, Panofsky claimed that form and content were intrinsically linked, arguing for an interconnectedness on the basis that if the form changes, then content naturally changes also, an idea that is a vital contribution to the notion that film fundamentally altered New York's established iconography.[17] This supports the notion that a work of art, and responses to it, must incorporate extratextual elements of analysis that include social and cultural conditions, ideological readings pertaining to them, not to mention preexisting iconographies associated with a given subject (here: New York) that collectively delineate a history of representations for that particular subject. This approach posits the notion that a work of art can and does exhibit something about the time, place, and people that produced it. If one sets out to seek a *truth* in art – if such a task is possible and such *truth* ever truly recordable – then to all intents and purposes it resides here, at this deepest level of analysis, at the level of iconological evaluation.

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[15] This claim is put forward by art historians Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk in *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester University Press, 2006).

[16] This is one of the driving notions behind Wölfflin's highly influential work *Principles of Art History* (Dover, 1940), in which the author makes the distinction between linear and painterly art. To this end, linear art essentially figures for Wölfflin as a tactile representation of a subject (content), while painterly art is imbued with formal embellishments; he goes on to argue that "a picturesque silhouette can never coincide with the form of the subject" (25), thus marking out the two elements as separable for the purpose of art analysis. Panofsky does away with this separation and argues for an interconnectedness between form and content.

[17] Panofsky writes that "both the *factual* and the *expressional meaning* may be classified together: they constitute the class of *primary* or *natural* meanings" (1939: 4). Here Panofsky is, in fact, referring to formal greetings but his use of the term "expressional meaning" is transferable as he considers the deeper, cultural meanings that orbit arbitrary acts.

Panofsky's iconographical-iconological model has three tiers.[18] Firstly, Panofsky identifies that which he calls the "primary or natural subject matter" (1955: 3). This pre-iconographical phase (1) considers only the formal elements of a work, evaluating "[the] world of pure forms"; that is, the primary matter – lines, colours, textures – that exhibit the factual and expressive qualities. Once the formal elements, or "artistic motifs", have been determined, the analyst must then consider the secondary subject matter. The second stage (2) involves a basic degree of iconographical evaluation. It is at this point that one must determine what one is looking at, what the *thing* truly is. For instance, Panofsky speculates that one might see two figures in combat and determine that they are in fact vice and virtue (1955: 3). One might speculate that this level of iconographic evaluation is likely the most common for sophisticated spectators of a work of art. In the final stage (3) of Panofsky's model, he calls for a deeper interrogation of a work as a means of unearthing those latent meanings that are indicative of an iconological manifesto that links together several or more texts. These iconological meanings may be inferred rather than clearly stated, in the sense that they might circumvent the text itself and only reveal themselves in the context of the bigger iconographic picture. Panofsky argues that these meanings are "apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion--unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work" (3). In keeping with this, iconological content figures as the meeting point between icons and ideology, meaning that it expresses something about the time, place, and people who produced the work.

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[18] Another, more recent model produced by Roelof van Straten in his book *An Introduction to Iconography* (Gordon and Breach, 1994) expands on Panofsky's design to include four categories. Rather than radically reconfigure Panofsky, van Straten instead separates the second stage into two parts that include iconographical description and iconographical interpretation.

To convey how this particular analytical method might work in relation to early film, I will demonstrate Panofsky's iconographical-iconological method on *Fifth Avenue, New York*:

- Stage one of Panofsky's method requires a pre-iconographic description of a work's primary formal content. In line with this, one might be drawn towards the basic, formal elements of a composition: the number of subjects in a work; the intermingling of darkness and light to illuminate the subject(s) of the frame; the depth of field to determine the subjects' proximity to one another, and to the camera; speed and motion that might determine the rhythm of the space.

- The second stage involves the iconographic evaluation of a work. Here, one will consider its components in relation to one another to decipher the nature of its subject. To this end, one might identify the icons of a street, a crowd, a building, and describe the the scene with which they are faced. For the purpose of *Fifth Avenue, New York*, this could include the recognition of Fifth Avenue as an iconic New York site that is subject to many of the events of the modern city: crowds, traffic, speed, etc.

- The final stage includes the matter of iconological evaluation which involves the identification of how a system, or structure, of icons works collaboratively to generate meanings that might not have been explicit in the creation of the composition. This mode of analysis brings to light the ways in which iconographies intersect to produce meaning across a range of disparate texts. This level of analysis allows the viewer to survey meaning intertextually as a means of understanding how iconographies are produced and what they might tell us about the

cultures that produce them. For *Fifth, Avenue, New York*, this could find the dominant icon of the busy New York street scene, with the attendant crowd, to be a recurring, symptomatic expression of urban modernity. Therefore, one iconological interpretation of this film, and of films with similar content, is that it cooperates in the production of an iconology of urban modernity.

It is in this final stage that the value of an iconographical-iconological approach to early film comes into view. While standard formal analysis will take us as far as iconographical evaluation, it is in the iconological reading of the films that one can really consider how they might operate in relation to one another. Formal analysis is useful as a starting point, however, in order to truly assess the greater analytical value of early film's iconographic content – the point at which the iconology emerges – it is vital to see the city films of New York as expressions of something greater: an ongoing project to visually capture the city's coming to terms with its own rapid development. Iconography works to show something, and thus it serves the city synoptically in terms of images produced. Moreover, the iconographic content of a film captures a sense of that space by illustrating the preeminent images that are associated with it. It is there, beneath the iconographic surface, however, that the filmic iconology of New York comes into view.

One might ask: what, at the deepest levels of meaning, does a work's imagery tell us about the place and time it depicts? Iconography shows; iconology unveils. This thesis will consider the city's pre-existing iconography, often from photography and other forms of popular media, and will consider the ways in which film inherited some iconographic tropes while simultaneously creating a new, distinctive iconography of its own. Film functioned as a witness to the development of the city in its formative years

and early film survives as a document of the existing and emerging iconography of New York contemporaneous to its development. Elliptical in nature, such films communicate a world beyond the limits of their frame; when considered collectively, as an incidental archive of urban representations, the films depict New York during a period of rapid development, conveying various spectacles of modern life. The films observe a city that, in accordance with Wells' grand view of it, figures as something of a simulacrum of the Western world: a city operating according to new rhythms iterative of new urban experiences.

An iconographical-iconological approach to the early films of New York draws upon the representational value of the city itself, allowing one to determine what such representations might have to say about the changing nature and disposition of the city. Using an iconographical-iconological approach, this thesis will trace the iconographic threads of a series of early filmic representations of New York to evaluate how the city's emergent iconology reflected the infrastructural and ideological condition of the city at that time. This method will provide a corrective to work that has been wholly focused on social, cultural and industrial contexts, and instead will mine the rich symbolic content of the films themselves. This approach will allow me to observe how early images of New York might be interrelated with a greater iconological structure (or set of structures) for the city that reflect and comment upon the site in which they were produced.

Establishing Film as a Conveyor of Iconology

Conceptually, iconology predates Panofsky by some time. Gian Pietro Bellori is frequently cited as one of the founders of iconographic analysis.[19] In *Vite de'Pittori, Scultori et Architetti Moderni/Lives of the Artists* – a prototypical biographical account of seventeenth century artists – Bellori cultivated a style of iconographic analysis that sought to unveil the classical idealism that belied any given work (Wittkower 1973: 256). Since Bellori, pursuits in iconological studies have often centered on iconography pertaining to religious imagery, often found and discussed in relation to antiquity and Christian art[20]. Since Panofsky, iconographic studies have made important and dramatic advancements towards the study of iconology, a development that has proved the strength of iconographic analysis to uncover wider cultural meaning across the spectrum of artistic enterprises, and not just Christian art.

That is not to say that the work done on Christian cities is unworthy of comment, as much of it is founded upon the iconographic evaluation of place. For instance, Robert A. Russell has argued that "the history of Christian representations of cities is almost as long as the history of Christian art" (1994: 146). In his article, Russell puts to task the role of the city in respect to Christian iconography by exploring the iconographic function of the Christian faith's most dominant urban icon: Jerusalem. Russell claims that Jerusalem, as a site of physical geography, produces and is subject to an iconographical currency that imbues it with a divine quality in the context

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[19] Roelof van Straten, an advocate and practitioner of Panosfsky's iconographical-iconological method, writes that Bellori was one of the first art critics to "pay special attention to the content of artworks" (1994:19).

[20] More famous examples include G.E. Lessing's seminal work *Wie die Alten den Tod gibildet/How the Ancients Modeled Death* (1769) and F.A.R. Chateaubriand's *Le Génie du Christianisme/The Genius of Christianity* (1802); both works represent historical explorations into, respectively, classical and Christian iconography in art.

of the Christian faith. The iconography of Christian sacredness that has been associated with Jerusalem has since been disseminated into the world, often through architecture as is the case with churches and cathedrals. These holy sites of, and monuments to, Christianity form the basis of a geographic Christian iconology that has its roots in Jerusalem. The image of the sacred city, and the ways in which it is recalled elsewhere, underscores Christianity's footprint throughout the world, a footprint that may or may not reveal a wider iconology demarcating empire and the legacy of Christian dominion.

Giulio Carlo Argan notes that "Panofsky's great merit consists in having understood that, in spite of its confused appearance, the world of images is an ordered world and that it is possible to do the history of art as the history of images" (1975: 297). If, as Panofsky, Argan, and others argue, images are in fact ordered in and by their exposition of meaning, then an understanding of the order can allow one to access the ideological core at its heart (and the heart of similar texts). This depth of understanding can point one towards that particular work's function in a larger cultural context which, in the case of city texts (whether that city is Jerusalem or, indeed, New York) reveals a work's capacity to express ideological meaning pertinent to that particular place, not to mention illustrating the way that places can have meaning for the world beyond it.

In line with Russell's claims regarding religious places, if one were to imagine Calvary (or: Golgotha) as both a physical site and as the site of Christ's crucifixion, one will soon conjure an image of the primary Christian icon: the crucifix. These three icons – the site, the event, and the item (the crucifix) – become, in the wider ideological context of the Christian faith, synonymous with one another, expressing Christ's sacrifice upon the cross as part of a wider Christian iconology. Calvary, sat beyond

the walls of Jerusalem, converges with the event and the image of the crucifix itself – a Christian icon that operates in the broadest capacity, as it is worn on clothes or jewelry or hung on the walls of churches and homes – to become the geographic element of the iconographic triptych that is replete with Christian meaning. All icons synergistically point to the crucifixion and towards a far-reaching iconology for the Christian faith that is rendered through its dominant images.

This is a simple example of a city's iconological function, yet it points towards an inclination to explore place in a more complex manner: to regard places as sites of deeper cultural meaning. Russell concludes that "there are many cases where earthly cities were associated, visually or metaphorically, with Jerusalem and Paradise" (1994: 157), a notion that ascribes to cities themselves, both real and imagined, an iconographic purchase within a wider ideological context. New York provides a very different and, in my view, more complicated and varied set of icons than does Calvary. It is a city ever in motion, constantly fluctuating, metamorphosing, and evolving at a tremendous rate. An understanding of the iconography and iconology of New York on early film, a medium that enshrined movement for its first viewer, will allow me to observe the ways in which film has contributed to the development of the city's iconography. In tandem, this approach will draw attention to the ideological inflections that are contained in those representations of the city to determine what they unveil about it. Moreover, this approach can move towards discerning the ways in which filmic representations of New York might have contributed to the normalization of urban iconography for film more generally.

Recognising the potential for wider application of the term, Panofsky paved the way for iconological evaluations of film. In an important essay entitled 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', Panofsky considers film's merits as an emerging art

form and, while the scholarship he provides on film should not be treated lightly, we should also acknowledge that, for Panofsky, film studies was still in its infancy. This emerges in the tenor of his essay, which treats film with a degree of scholarly suspicion – he is initially hesitant to embolden film to the lofty, sacred pedestal upon which it can be regarded as "art" proper – despite the fact that he was one of the first noted academics to lecture on it. [21] Nevertheless, Panofsky details the essential role that film plays in the production and mediation of cultural values:

> Hollywood believes it must produce "what the public wants" while the public would take whatever Hollywood produces. If Hollywood were to decide for itself what it wants, it would get away with it–-even if it should decide to "depart from evil and do good." For […] in modern life the movies are what most other forms of art have ceased to be, not an adornment but a necessity. (2003: 82)

As general as his claims might appear, the claim that "the public take[s] whatever Hollywood produces" reinforces the idea that film imagery, or iconographies, have a profound impact on the cultural imagination.

Given that the iconographical-iconological approach has its roots in the analysis of Christian art, it seems appropriate that Panofsky employs a religious metaphor to describe film and its architects: "it might be said that a film […] is the nearest modern equivalent of a medieval cathedral; the role of the producer corresponding, more or less, to that of the bishop or archbishop; that of the director to that of the architect in chief; that of the scenario writers to that of the scholastic advisors establishing the iconographical program" (81). While the particulars of each role were still being developed throughout film's early years, the image of a film as a construction is

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[21] In her edited collection *The Visual Turn* (Rutgers, 2003), Angela Dalle Vacche acknowledges that Panofsky is "the only notable exception to the recent state of indifference between art historians and the cinema" (14).

powerful, especially when considering the development of its "iconographical program"; it implies that nothing about the iconography is accidental, that every aspect informs the representation of its subject.

Thomas Levin's subsequent essay 'Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory' is important for the case it makes for a more widespread application of Panofsky's ideas to film. Levin, writing decades after Panofsky's seminal essay, discusses its unwarranted academic neglect, its methodological significance, and its role in what he calls the "art-historical debates about the aesthetic politics of the iconographic project" (2003: 88). If anything, "neglect" understates the degree to which iconographical and iconological analysis is absent from scholarly work on early New York film. It is a matter that sits at the heart of this thesis, which aims to understand the early films of New York as collectively productive in the development and dissemination of an urban iconology for the city: this perspective, I argue, offers a powerful new understanding of the ways in which filmic representations of a city widely comment on it, while also collaborating in the development of a cultural imagining of it. Panofsky concludes that "all [...] the objects and persons [...] must be organized into a work of art" (83), thus identifying film as an iconological object in itself. If film figures as an organised structure that is produced by a collection of artists reflecting a medley of lived experiences, then, much like the medieval cathedral to which he compares the medium, one must be able to discover lingering trace elements of the various human experiences that are embodied within it. Moreover, the more explicit images that may be extracted from the films present fundamental visual cues for a particular place. These cues function as the basis of a place's iconography while containing more than just their primary content; this latent content is that which reflects

deeper meaning – what a skyscraper might tell us about the city, for example – and provides the basis of a place's iconology.

Levin points towards an "astonishing silence" on Panofsky's part "on questions of ideology, alienation, profit, monopoly, structures, corporate capital, etc." (102), themes that might emerge from an iconological reading of the early films of New York, and which will not be neglected over the course of this thesis. Writing from the relatively new field of media archaeology, Erkki Huhtamo writes that "identifying topoi, analyzing their trajectories and transformations, and explaining the cultural logics that conditions their "wanderings" across time and space is one possible goal for media archaeology [… which] purports to unearth traces of lost media-cultural phenomena and agendas to illuminate ideological mechanisms behind them" (2011: 28). Huhtamo's description of what might be achieved by a media archeological approach is in fact comparable to the aims of this thesis; however, despite our similar methodological ambitions, we diverge on the nature of the content that we seek. Huhtamo's desire to identify "lost" phenomena actually contradicts the essence of how an iconography operates; an iconography absolutely depends on presence and repetition to the extent that it is always seen (and, therefore, could not be deemed "lost"). Rather than uncover something that has been "lost", as per Huhtamo's interests, this thesis aims to reconcile the icons that we know and see – fortunately, icons are rarely subtle – in the early films of New York. Where Huhtamo is oriented towards excavation, synonymous with discovery, this thesis is more explicitly oriented towards organisation and, instead, aims to position the films in relation to one another to posit the argument that an iconography and, by association, iconology exists throughout the surviving archive of early New York film, an iconology that is expressive of the greater ideological machinery at work.

What Is an Icon?: Establishing Physical and Social Iconographies

Throughout this thesis I will primarily be identifying two distinct forms of iconography while discussing the early films of New York: a *physical iconography* and a *social iconography*. Discussions on iconography frequently invoke the image as the vessel through which explicit iconographic, and latent iconological, meaning is rendered. In essence, the physical iconography as it will be discussed throughout this thesis refers to the city's infrastructural composition, its architectural design – skyscrapers, bridges, streets, open spaces – which render the city physically as a uniquely identifiable geographic site. Social iconography on the other hand is a term I will use to refer to icons relating to the city's social character: essentially, this aspect relates to those filmic icons that convey the lived experience of New York, rendering its social characters through an iconography which often includes representations of poverty and wealth, immigration, social mobility, and other themes that provide the basis of sociological readings of film. Methodologically speaking, the physical/social distinction is primary for this thesis; it will provide me with a broad analytical framework that will allow me to identify and survey the most iterated, and iterable, iconographic features of New York and consider what those dominant and recurring representations of the city reflect, unveil, imply, and invent for it.

What is an icon? It is true that anything can serve an iconography but it is also true that not everything is necessarily an icon[22]. Mostly, icons operate as primary subjects within a specific context or composition. Beyond that, the wider iconographic

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[22] Notionally, this is in line with, and builds upon, Susan Hayward's broad definition that the study of iconography is "a means whereby visual motifs […] can be categorized and analysed." She goes further to state that "iconography can study the smallest unit of meaning of a film, the image, as well as the largest: the generic qualities of the whole film" (2000: 191). Over the course of this thesis, I will indulge in both practices, considering both individual images and commenting upon the wider iconographic value of entire films.

value of a subject depends upon its role both within a single composition and within similar works. Not only is this the basis of determining a subject's iconographic value, it is also the basis for establishing its function within a grander representational schema for the city that extends beyond a single work. Further, it is this that distinguishes the iconographic-iconological approach from customary formal analysis, the ability to move beyond the value of a single film text to consider how that composition functions in relation to a varied archive of representations. Certain subjects – those subjects that most readily bring to mind the word "icon" – might have both independent and collective iconographic value; this can be true for icons such as bridges or buildings which may have an iconographic value in their own right as a dominant image of the city as well as an iconographic function relating to their more general value as icons/images of urban development. To this end, the Brooklyn Bridge, one of the most readily identifiable icons of New York, functions as an icon in its own right while also contributing towards the broader iconological value of bridges more generally, a value that relates to their structure, usage, and their role within representations of the city at that time. Naturally, some films spill iconographically in a variety of directions and one may be left wondering how to contain the readings. The answer to that lies in the texturology. The process of identifying dominant and recurring images of the city from archives containing New York film mostly from 1896 to 1912 will function as a means of restricting and ordering understanding of the films' iconographical/iconological potential. For instance, buildings and bridges might appear to be quite distinct icons, yet both point towards film's engagement with the city's infrastructural development. In the links that may be drawn between icons lies a method for containing what might otherwise be an unbound capacity for meaning. This will be achieved by surveying a vast quantity of representations of New York in a bid

to determine what the most regularly represented features say about the city they depict.

To illustrate the ways in which physical and social iconography operates through an example, one might imagine an individual standing alone on a city street. This immediately carries certain symbolic allusions – chiefly, perhaps, an illustration of urban loneliness – however, if that same individual were placed within a crowd then he or she assumes a different representational function within a new symbolic order. Here the individual reflects upon the conditions of the urban experience through the physical icon of the crowd. Different aspects of that individual's appearance might serve other aspects of the figure's iconographic value in more abstract or latent ways – for example, the quality and condition of their attire might demarcate aspects of a social iconography delineating either wealth or a lack of it. If one considers the well-dressed crowds of *Fifth Avenue, New York* then one might conclude that the film offers readings pertaining to these two elements operating in tandem.

There are other determining conditions that will affect an iconographic reading of this hypothetical individual within a New York film. Naturally, geographic location plays a vital role; for example, Fifth Avenue provides an iconographic value in *Fifth Avenue, New York* quite different to the value that a slum might provide in a different film. Literal spatial positioning of a subject can contribute towards the iconographic reading of that film. For instance, a new construction project within the aesthetic of the old city – as is the case in a film such as *Excavation for a New York Foundation* (Biograph, 1903) – makes primary use of the icon of a construction site. It is this central image that demonstrates the film's iconological merits by conveying film's engagement with urban renewal in the early years of the twentieth century. Alternatively, one might consider the relationship between a tramp and millionaire – such as in the film *The*

Clubman and the Tramp (Biograph, 1908) – and consider the individual iconographic values of the characters, whose socioeconomic juxtaposition points towards an emergent filmic iconology illustrating social inequality and disorder. As will be observed over the course of this thesis, the filmic iconography of New York produces iconological meaning through a range of images both large (for example, a skyscraper) and small (such as clothing) to produce an enduring archive of the city on early film that reflects a lived experience and the ideology that shaped it.

Conducting a Survey of New York Film

In this thesis I will observe the dominant impressions of the city that were being made by early New York film. This survey will be presented in three parts. The first chapter will look at what I have defined as a physical iconography of New York: that is, the concrete city itself as it is represented prominently on actuality films of the period. This first chapter will posit an argument that early actuality film provided a visualisation of New York's confrontation with modernity, embodied in emerging techno-social phenomena that are clearly mapped on early film. I will argue that the films display the effects of urban modernity on the city and on city life. To achieve this, I will isolate dominant icons that encapsulate the physical city on early film – these icons include crowds, bridges, trains both elevated and underground, and the early skyline. This chapter will argue that during this epochal moment of transition for New York, actuality filmmaking collectively produced a collage, or texturology, of the city's radical transformation. Over the course of the first chapter, I will argue that the archive of New York actuality film offers a document of the city's entanglement with accelerated modernity that is visualised through the production and re-production of

an urban imaginary. Within the wider tableaux, dominant urban icons emerge that represent this period of transition while collectively providing an iconological platform for the visualisation of urban modernity.

Chapter two will turn towards what I have discussed as the city's social iconography. While chapter one will use the modernity debate to frame its discussion of New York's actuality film, chapter two will explore the ways in which early narrative films developed an iconology underpinned with ideas about New York's social infrastructure. The icons to be discussed here include the slum, tramps and other icons of homelessness, icons of immigration, social stratification, and wealth disparity. In this chapter, I will consider how the social iconography depicted by progressive reformers such as Jacob Riis foreshadowed the emergence of an ongoing relationship between visual culture and New York, expressive of a prominent iconographic presentation of the city that emerged out of the era of progressive politics. Rather than attempt to rewrite New York's social history, this thesis will instead seek to catalogue the ways in which the city's diverse, if socially stratified, characteristics were etched upon film during the era of progressivism. The findings of that chapter correspond with what historian Alan Dawley has claimed to be "the most enduring contribution of the progressive generation to American reform[,] the invention of a *social* conscience" (2003: 43). The spirit and rhetoric of progressivism is formatively responsible for exposing urban hardships, resituating the city's failures as institutional and infrastructural, and not placing them on the shoulders of the individual. It is the position of chapter two that this newfound social conscience is revealed in many of the early fiction films of the period. These films often utilise the social conditions of the city as agentive force within their narratives, which reflect on institutional failures to provide for the city's inhabitants.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I will build a case study around Coney Island, which provides the location and subject of more than 60 films in the Paper Print Collection. The preponderance of Coney Island films positions it as an essential site in New York's budding filmic iconography. Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century, Coney Island had already been established as the pleasure capital of New York, a place that Michael Immerso has called "ready-made for the masses […] where the democratic spirit was granted free rein" (2002: 4). Both Immerso and Lauren Rabinovitz have approached Coney Island as both a shock to, and symptom of, twentieth century American urban modernity, as "a brash celebration of the human body in motion" (Immerso 118). The pleasures of Coney Island appealed to New Yorkers and, clearly, to early New York filmmakers. As such, this final chapter will find both Coney Island and film to be emblematic of the series of changes occurring within New York at the time. Correspondingly, given Coney Island's geographical and cultural peculiarities, I will treat it as a heterotopic, (sub)urban space in my reading of it and its filmic treatment.[23]   Coney Island represents a self-contained site on the border of New York and, as a case study, will provide a fruitful platform for observing how physical and social icons play out in time and space to produce a compelling iconology of modern life.

The value of this thesis lies in its deployment of an alternative mode of reading early film across a large archive of representations. Film provided a means of disseminating images of the city's development which, more than a century later, provide an imprint of the ways in which its developments were being experienced and

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[23] The matter of heterotopic spaces comes, first and foremost, from Michel Foucault who argues for various types of *other* spaces. Regarding his third principal he imagines a garden's heterotopic credentials in its ability to microcosmically recreate several different environments with fauna from around the world (2008: 25-7). As a stage for modern life, Coney Island operates similarly, by providing a platform for all the city's elements to intersect.

recorded by those who lived through them. Jean Baudrillard has claimed that "the American city seems to have stepped right out of the movies" (1988: 56). Meanwhile, Stephen Barber has written that "[t]he first incendiary spark of the film image – extending across almost every country in the world, around the end of the nineteenth century – propelled forward a history of the body that remains inescapably locked into the history of the city" (2002: 13). Baudrillard and Barber's thoughts echo a belief that film and the city became intricately intertwined phenomena over the course of the century. This thesis sustains that belief, arguing that the iconology imparted by early New York films illustrated and augmented, visually, the city's radically changing topography. Moreover, beside the mounting architectural innovations captured, the filmic iconology displayed various existing and emerging social configurations that spoke of the city's diverse character. The three chapters of thesis will offer an account of the ways in which the city's iconography operated and was developed throughout film's early years. This will amount to an extensive survey of early New York film and the ways in which it depicted the city. Ultimately, this thesis will consider how an iconography might be mined for deep, cultural meaning that will provide avenues for employing the city as a structuring principle for the study of early film.

Chapter One

From an Iconographical to an Iconological Reading of the Physical City on

Early Film

Measuring Modernity: Reading Everyday Life on Early Film

This thesis mounts the argument that in its earliest years, film provided a stark visualisation of New York's various modern components. By cataloguing dominant and recurring icons iterative of the city's then-ongoing transformations, this chapter will principally claim that actuality film collectively produced a texturology of modernity that exhibited arresting spectacles of New York life. Modernity has been a largely contested term in scholarship. Nevertheless, Anthony Giddens provides a useful starting point, writing that "modernity refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (2015 :1). While Giddens' definition might account for European conceptions of modernity, it struggles to convey the specificities and discontinuities of modernity as it has impacted the United States. Indeed, Peter Wagner has noted that "there was a considerable lag that separated the modernity of the USA from the 'modernizing' situations that prevailed almost everywhere else" (2012: 107). For that reason, Stuart Hall's phenomenological definition of modernity is more valuable here:

> Essential to the idea of modernity is the belief that everything is destined to be speeded up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, reshaped. It is the shift – materially and culturally – into this new conception of social life which is the real transition to modernity (1996: 17)

By unstitching modernity from a timeline that does not map onto disparate national contexts, Hall instead locates modernity in its tangible effects upon social life. His identification of dissolution and displacement as key elements of modernity echo Karl Marx and, later, Marshall Berman who writes that modernity "pours us all into a

maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal" (1982: 15). Nevertheless, his terms are useful and can be directly mapped onto the various depictions of the New York provided by the filmic texturology. Indeed, dissolution, displacement, and transformation are key to reading the films which display the various textures and images of modern life across a range of impressions from street to skyscraper.

For New York, modernity accounts for the concrete transformations that occurred in the wake of the industrial revolution and has been used to encompass a range of intellectual developments elements that include rationalism, metaphysics, and the rise of secular thought. For the purpose of this thesis, I will employ the term as Hall does, in relation to the material change that are embodied in the social, technological, and aesthetic transformations throughout the city, changes that exhibit the saturation of mature capitalism. A prominent proponent of the modernity debate, Georg Simmel, wrote on the psychological impact modernity was having upon the individual. He identified this impact as the result of the hyperstimulation of modern life, writing that

> The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli (1903: 103).

Simmel's early efforts to make sense of the changing urban experience neatly foreshadow Hall's identification of dissolution and displacement as key effects of modernity upon social life. James Donald has specified concrete causes for the increases in stimulation, citing

> new methods of industrial production; new cityscapes and the anonymity of the crowds encountered in them; new techniques of government and social regulation; new means of transport, especially the unprecedented and

disorientating speed of the railway and automobile; and instant, long-distance

communication through telegraph and telephone (1999: 65).

Here, the theme of newness and change that typifies Hall's definition converges with

material developments in the city, developments that are largely represented in the

texturology of actuality films.

There is a sense, in all of these definitions, that ideas surrounding modernity

are enveloped by notions of the future. Following this, Jürgen Habermas claims that

"the modern world is distinguished from the old by the fact that it opens itself to the

future, the epochal new beginning is rendered constant with each moment that gives

birth to the new" (1987: 6).[24] The transitory present is a well-used motif for

philosophers of modern life. If modernity is preoccupied with rising to meet the future,

then the American city is a clear embodiment of that ethos. For example, Michel de

Certeau writes of New York that

> Unlike Rome, New York has never learned the art of growing old by playing on
>
> all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing
>
> away previous accomplishments and challenging the future (1984: 91).

Represented by the archive of films is evidence of a variety of diverse way in which

New York was re-inventing itself at the time of film's initial development. Indeed, New

York was and is a powerful central image of American modernity, not least for its iconic

metropolitan landscape which will feature prominently throughout this chapter. David

Ward and Oliver Zunz have argued as much, stating that

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[24] In the same lecture Habermas, drawing on Hegelian thinking, claims that "the discovery of the 'new world', the Renaissance, and the Reformation [represent] three monumental events around the year 1500 [that] constituted the epochal threshold between modern times and the middle ages" (1987: 5). While the historical triptych — antiquity, the middle ages, the modern world — is broadly useful to delineate different modes of human existence, it is somewhat reductive in relation to the rapid growth of American cities which occurred much later than Habermas' threshold posits.

[in] New York, the modern skyline attained its earliest and most extraordinary expression. The New York skyline, and with it the character of the city, was transformed by the construction of dozens of skyscrapers in lower Manhattan. Indeed, for much of the world, its dense skylines are the most graphic statement of modernity (1992: 4).

For Habermas, modernity is open-ended, pregnant with the future's promise. For Ward and Zunz, modernity is locked in time, characterised by aesthetic, social, intellectual, and architectural departures from previous forms of urban life.[25] Ward and Zunz's sense of modernity as a concretised period in New York's history lends itself to discussing the texturology as a collage of modern life, as material evidence of modernity itself.

In the early films of New York, modernity manifests in concretised images of urban change. Charles Coleman Stoddard's (1876-1961) poem 'When Broadway was a Country Road' offers an insight into the ways in which this changes were being registered at the time. Stoddard imagines Broadway before the onset of congestion – "No rushing cars, nor tramping feet / Disturbed the peaceful summer days" (1-2) – thus, stripping the city of the traffic that has since come to define its streets and sidewalks. By drawing attention to the concrete effects of modernity, Stoddard's poem configures it as a distinct, visible thing that has encroached upon previous modes of life. The poem captures this effect by omitting key signifiers of Broadway such as the skyline. In the place that Stoddard describes, "No buildings met the skyward gaze" (13); the image of a low-rise skyline is as close to current ideas of Broadway as Times Square is to a regular intersection. The notable absence of the rising architecture,

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[25] Giddens would certainly agree with this for he states that "modern urbanism is ordered according to quite different principles from those which set off the pre-modern city from the countryside in prior periods" (2015: 6). Giddens' position is that urbanism functioned as a somewhat radical departure from earlier modes of life.

crowded street, and technological display in fact draws attention to how modern life can be mapped onto material images. Stoddard's poem closes by reflecting that the Broadway of old had "Little indeed to meet the praise / Of modern times" (25-6). Not only do these lines stand as a reflection on the vast and diverse changes that had occurred in the city over the course of decades that preceded Stoddard's poem, they also point to a paradigmatic shift in urban aesthetics that locates New York itself – as it is seen, as it is experienced – at the centre of the grand web of American modernity. For Stoddard, the change in the "picture" was fundamental; the changing image of the city sits at the heart of his poem as an opposition that exists between traditional and modern modes of life.[26] This chapter will trace modernity's image through the texturology provided by early New York film. In doing so, it will observe the ways in which film captured the visual imprints of modernity by centralising the city itself as a primary subject of early actuality filmmaking in New York.

Ben Singer has usefully engaged with modernity in such a way that lends itself to an iconographic survey of early film. Singer characterises modernity to include the rise of urbanisation to coincide with rapid population growth and migration, the inception of new technologies, the rise of mass communication, merchandising, amusements, and consumerism, and the greater use of public spaces (2001: 21). While this is not an exhaustive list of the concrete symptoms of modernity – nor is it even Singer's complete list – it does provide terms with which one can consider modernity's impact as it is rendered on early film. Later, Singer summarises film's special relationship with modern life, stating that "intertwined with modernity technologically, sociologically, and phenomenologically, cinema seemed to epitomize

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[26] These oppositions manifest in the symptoms identified by Ben Singer earlier in this section which include rapid population growth, migration, new technology, mass communication, merchandising, amusements, consumerism, and the greater use of public spaces, beside others (2001: 21).

and encapsulate modern experience more vividly than any other form of cultural expression" (2009: 37).[27] What the texturology provides is a diverse collage of impressions of modernity, located at various nodal points of urban interest. This idea builds upon Kevin Lynch's description of nodes as "strategic foci into which the observer can enter" (1960: 72). Lynch's explanation of nodes as "small points in the city's image" (72) can straightforwardly be applied to the films, which function as small points of entry into the larger image of New York. This chapter will observe film's special role in presenting and diffusing a vast impression of New York modernity through prominent urban icons.

Marsha Bryant has written that "film and film culture provided signs of modernity, as well as strategies for confronting it" (2014: 71). Film and the city maintain a special relationship that is made apparent throughout the early films of New York. That film's origin coincided with dramatic transformations of the cityscape – represented here in the development of bridges, subways, and skyscrapers, etc. – speaks to its pivotal role in reshaping ways and means of observing modern life.

This research shows that the texturology of early New York film captures dominant icons of modernity that function as key signs of the city's transformation. In aid of this, sites of urban development transform into *sights* of modernity. Bryant discusses film as a means of "confronting" modernity (71). One might argue that the early films of New York provide a visualisation of this confrontation in effect. The films confront modernity by isolating dominant icons that are iterative of the city in a period of rapid development, thus foregrounding moments of urban metamorphosis across a

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[27] This comes from a later essay of Singer's in which he posits the need to "complicate and expand our understanding" of the ways in which film and modernity's special relationship has been discursively theorised until this point (2009: 49). His chief grievance is with a discord that has seemingly been struck between historical and contemporary theorisations of this relationship. For the most part, however, this chapter is looking at symptoms of modernity and not theorisations of it; therefore, evidence of it will be found in the early films of New York, evidence which largely corresponds with Singer's original thesis.

texturological collage of disparate but iconologically invested impressions of modernity.

New York Modernity on Film

The act of filming the city during an era of such pronounced development for New York stands as testament to the fact that urban modernity was something to be witnessed. The act of rendering the city on film during this period of transition conflates individual, lived experiences of the modern city to provide a visualisation of their sum – a notion illustrated clearly in the recurring icon of the crowd on the street. Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin, Jacob Latham locates the city as a primary agent in the construction of self-identity, arguing that "place teaches us the rhythms by which we take possession of ourselves, then it structures and stores our memories, our dreams, and thus ourselves" (2006: 63). For Benjamin, and Latham following him, the drawing together of place and the self is fundamental to both individual and collective identity; I will argue further, however, that this is a fundamental premise upon which iconographies – in effect, a series of images animated by experience – are built.

Over the course of this chapter I will argue that New York actuality film provides a document of modernity's impact that is rendered visible through the production and dissemination of an urban imaginary that visualises this distinct period of development. Walter Benjamin writes of "the regimen cities keep over the imagination" (2005: 614), a thought that positions urban sites as paramount to the production of memory and, therefore, of identity. For Benjamin, the "regimen" that cities hold over the individual accords them a power to transform the way in which places figure in both personal and collective imaginations. By positioning the urban as the locus around which

memory forms, Benjamin reduces the distinction between space and the self, and thus the city becomes a central component in the construction of both personal and collective (or urban) histories. Paris may be the primary subject of Benjamin's thoughts, yet his view can reasonably be transferred to New York. Cites in general figure as points of convergence between the individual and the universal, the intimate and the epic. In that sense, the lived experience of modernity is a communal one, a shared practice located in, and registered through, the city.

The most identifiable city icons are, usually, large sites of cultural reverence given life by the way in which they are configured in the collective urban imagination – the Statue of Liberty, for example, serves as a primary icon of New York. Yet the iconographic value of a thing is not always so immediately transparent. Christine Boyer has written that, in regards to the development of attitudes towards the city and visual presentations of it, "a shift [in the arrangement of knowledge has] mixed the image as a spectacular or theatrical form with the image as a descriptive and rational depiction of reality" (1994: 204). Despite writing on cartographic representations of cities, Boyer's thoughts on spectacular and descriptive representations of the city are useful to the study of actuality film. Boyer's theorisation of the ways in which objective, topographical views of the city are reconfigured in the urban imagination, due to spectacular modes of presentation, suggests how film's novelty was capable of restructurings ways of looking at the city at that time. The marrying together of spectacle with a changing urban 'reality' not only aptly describes the character of actuality filmmaking,[28] but might also explicate, in broad terms, modernity's influence upon the contemporary, urban experience.

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[28] In line with this one might argue, accordingly, that it was the act of filming itself that spectacularised reality by offering a new way of looking at urban space.

Modernity's role in the development of the city is fundamentally an experiential one that may be measured by the effects it was having upon lived experiences. In the process of observing the effect of modernity upon the city – evident through tangible shifts in the technology, social infrastructure, and the physical landscape – one comes to observe, macrocosmically, the effect that it was having upon individual lives. Therefore, not only will a formal study of New York's iconography bring about a new understanding of how the city was *seen* during this period of rapid development, it will also demonstrate how modern phenomena were reconfiguring city life.

New York Rail Networks on Early Film

104th Street Curve, New York, Elevated Railway (Edison, 1899), an early Edison film, stands as a fine example of early film's capacity to capture then-contemporary urban phenomena. Frank Gray notes the "intriguiging relationship" that phantom ride films fashioned for their viewers, due to the "new visual experience" that they encapsulated in their form (2004: 55). He continues to note that such films "worked to create the illusion of a mysterious, dream-like agency" that predicated their name. *104th Street Curve* is an early New York phantom ride film composed of two shots. The first involves the filmmaker placing the camera on a platform to observe passing trains. For the second shot, however, the camera is mounted on the front of one of the elevated trains from which it captures the various scenes as it follows its route along the titular curve. In the second shot a substantial section of the budding New York skyline is visible from the film's rather unique vantage point.

By virtue of its role as a film capturing an elevated train, *104th Street Curve* is emblematic of film's engagement with modernity in practice, however it is just one

example of a phantom train journey. Such films are transparent in their desire to demonstrate the technological and architectural spectacles of the city. Other New York phantom train films include: *New York Elevated Trains* (American Mutoscope Co., 1897), *South Gate of the Highlands* (American Mutoscope Co., 1898), *Across Brooklyn Bridge* (American Mutoscope Co., 1899), *Elevated Railroad and Drawbridge* (American Mutoscope Co., 1899), *A Trip over Manhattan Elevated Railroad* (American Mutoscope Co., 1899), *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge, Nos. 1 & 2* (Edison, 1899), *Panorama of 9th Avenue Elevated Railroad* (Lubin, 1902), *Third Avenue Elevated Train New York* (Lubin, 1903), *6th Ave. New York Elevated Railroad* (Lubin, 1903), *Panorama from Elevated Train, New York* (Lubin, 1903), *In the Rapid-Transit Tunnel* (American Mutoscope & Biograph Co., 1903), *Elevated Railroad, New York* (Edison, 1903), *City Hall to Harlem in 15 Seconds, via the Subway Route* (Edison, 1904), and *Across the Subway Viaduct, New York* (Biograph, 1905).[29]

Figure 2: Four shots taken from *104th Street Curve, New York, Elevated Railway* (Edison, 1899). Above left, a steam car passes on distant line; above right, tenement blocks in the background; below left, a second train incoming; below right, the train pulls into the station.

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[29] While all 'phantom rides', these films incorporate other filmic icons of New York – the subway, or Brooklyn Bridge, for example – and will be discussed, where relevant, in due course.

Gunning has written on the early filmic phenomenon of phantom rides, stating that "the view from the front of the train created a more thrilling perspective [...] summon[ing] up the possibility of shock and intense sensual involvement" (2009: 169). Gunning's reading of the attraction of phantom ride films coincides with the notion that early actualities such as these were (inadvertently or otherwise) rendering the physical and sensory effects of urban modernity wherein the shock and awe of the modern, urban experience was induced through the striking icon of an elevated train.

One of the primary attractions of *104th Street Curve* is the spectacle of motion that is rendered in the 'el' (elevated) train. The spectacle is rooted in the twin forces of technology and motion which are, in fact, characteristic of film, a medium formally and ideologically invested in both themes. Despite this fact that film itself spectacularly realises motion through the nature of its very form, the film's display of motion is magnified and brought to the fore as a consequence of the cameraman's decision to mount the camera on the front of the train. The shot evokes the experience of modernity as a techno-social one, qualifying it through the effect that it is having upon the city, and its reconfigured urban landscape, and its effect on the ways in which urban space might be used. In its origin, the train is a key signifier of the industrial era, but here it is symptomatic of a specifically urban mode of modernity that is made visible by its imposition on the city via subways and elevated tracks such as those displayed. Iconographically the 'el' is an arresting image that was prominent in New York at that time; iconologically speaking, however, the 'el' embodies urban modernity's triumph over time and space in its abilty to demonstrate the increased speed and connectivity of the modern city. As an icon of modern life, the 'el' unveils the potential offered by modernity, and its capacity to provide technological innovation that is illustrated here in the train's ability to unite the city in a way that was previously unfathomable.

A relic of the mid-nineteenth century age of industry, the steam locomotive indicated a new mastery over rural space, epitomised by its ability to link together the nation's industrial hubs. The elevated tracks on display here, however, are a specifically urban image. Comprised of superimposed platforms above the city, the 'el' figures as a dramatic illustration of train technology's contingent power over city space – the mode of transport responsible for the arteries of connection that industrialised the nation was, here, configured as an urban phenomenon (and icon) also. As Mark Storey has written, "the arrival at […] modern consciousness comes with the structural realignment of social and cultural life around a fundamentally urban-oriented society, one that includes physically different types of space within a newly configured system" (2016: 17). Locomotives were chief signifiers of modern industry, yet the matter of bringing trains into the city through the establishment of underground, overground, and elevated railway networks was demonstrative of what Story calls an "urban-oriented society", and not to mention a key contributor to the iconographic foundation of the city as it moved into the twentieth century.

104th Street Curve and other phantom ride films embody the uncanny visual reciprocity that exists between film and the radically changing urban landscape that it captured. Here film, a new technology that embodied motion in both form and theme, was participating in the process of observing a radical new shift in the way in which the city could be used. Both film and the inner-city rail seen here were symptomatic of a techno-social revolution that was occurring at that time and that was drastically changing the way in which the city was utilised by its inhabitants and seen by both the city and the rest of the world.

104th Street Curve stands as a luminous spectacle of urban modernity rendered on film. By capturing the reformation of urban space – the "newly configured

system" as Storey calls it (17) – that was made possible by 'el' trains, the film illustrates urban modernity's radical potential to transform the lived experience of New York. While the 'el' trains were unquestionably important for reshaping the ways in which the city was used, the film goes further to illustrate the new perspective provided by the elevated rail. Richard Dennis writes that "riding the elevated […] allowed one to experience the city's differentiated social geography" (2008: 341). *104th Street Curve* embodies new technology, but it also presents a new way of looking; through the simple act of foregrounding the viewpoint provided by the 'el', the film demonstrates modernity's technological potential in the city while pointing towards a shift the way in which the city could be seen.

Another film, *Elevated Railroad, New York*, features a similar scene in which the camera is mounted, once again, at the front of a train in another example of a film that is keen to illustrate contemporary urban spectacles – not to mention, one that, once again, latently points to an emergent iconology of technology, motion, and connection surround film and the city. The film strongly resembles *104th Street Curve* and, as the train rounds the final corner allowing the tenement buildings to come into view, renders the transforming landscape from a thrilling perspective that was provided by such new forms of inner-city transportation. And yet the 'el' – a beacon for the modern city – signals both the potential and pitfalls of such innovation. Concomitant with the film's display of a new and thrilling technological spectacle, as the train rumbles over the street one need not stretch to envision the long shadow that is inevitably cast beneath its elevated tracks, as well as the noise pollution that would accompany it.

Richard Dennis articulates a tension in the symbolic value of the image of the 'el' train, stating firstly that "the el lent itself to images of progress; especially once it

was not only elevated but electric. When the sun shone, the grid of the city streets was replicated on the pavements beneath the el. It provided evidence of the city of circulation, the "networked city" (346). But, for later scholars such as Dennis, the 'el' did not stand wholly as an unambiguous image of progress. Rather, it had the capacity to simultaneously democratise and destroy space, opening the city up to some (that is, its socially mobile commuters) while closing it off to others (the immobile poor). For Dennis, the 'el' would finally come to "[hem] in the poor in the darkness and thunder" beneath it (347).[30]

The fate of the 'el' aside, *104th Street Curve* and *Elevated Railroad, New York* capture the origins of the 'el' which stands initially for Dennis, and in films produced at this time, as an "image of progress" (346). Both films accentuate the city's radical new potential, highlighting the newly networked city while flaunting the urban landscape's geometric splendor. By placing the spectator at the front of a moving 'el', the filmmakers – here and in other phantom ride films – offered a new perspective of the city that was made possible by the 'el' and film operating in tandem. The 'el' is certainly a primary icon of early twentieth century New York, but more than that it was a recurring image of early New York film, an image pregnant with the possibilities provided by a new urban experience that was being radically reconfigured by emerging technologies and a city that was transforming beside them.

Leo Charney, drawing on Sartre, has argued that in the city "the modern self can never be present", and that motion "tied the experience of film to the experience of daily life in modernity" in as far as "the experience of cinema mirrored the wider epistemological experience of modernity" (1995: 292-3). These films effectively

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[30] It is worth stating that this was the fate of the 'el' and not its origins. By the end of the 1920s – a period overshadowed by the one of the most intense periods of depression in the nation's history – the legacy of the 'el' was synonymous with the urban crisis that it contained beneath in the dark corners of its iron underpass.

capture a temporal verisimilitude between film and the experience of modern life. By creating a spectacle of technology and/in motion, the films draw the eye towards the ways in which modernity has impacted the city by creating an entirely new spectrum of urban potential, (and, not least, new potential for the ways in which the city might be seen). From the icon of the 'el' emerges a crystalline image of urban modernity made legible from an iconological evaluation of it and its relation to film. This chapter will continue to observe film's depictions of modern life through the production of various other icons, arguing that the medium participated in the creation of an iconographic infrastructure that was built upon New York modernity, both as it was embodied in the landmarks of the city and as it was represented and disseminated on film.

Figure 3: Four shots from *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge* (Edison, 1899) capture a train journey across the iconic bridge and into Manhattan.

As evidenced in *104th Street* Curve and other 'phantom ride' films, one of the primary illustrations of urban modernity's imposition on New York was in the development of the city's transportation infrastructure. The film embodies the ways in which emerging transportation technologies were gradually encroaching upon the city and provides evidence of the ways in which those technologies, symptomatic of the saturation of urban modernity in the city, transformed the ways in which New York was utilised and seen by its inhabitants.

The city's various modes of inner-city transportation – rendered on early film in images of bridges, rail networks, the street, and so forth – function as dominant icons of the time and are illustrative of the city's inhabitants' heightened access to the city and its surrounding boroughs. The city's status as a networked city owes much to three primary events which include: the conjoining of the city's boroughs with its various bridges; the shift from horse-drawn transportation to motorised vehicles; and, the integration of the New York subway system. None of these three essential transitions were immediate — all have histories stretching back into the nineteenth century and legacies extending forward into the twentieth — but their contribution to the city was transformative for urban life when early film was introduced. Each event is complete with its own iconographic capital in representations of the city, however they collectively produce an iconography for urban transportation that signals an infinitely more connected city and, by extension, nation.

Despite early demonstrations of elevated and underground trains in the city dating back to the 1860s-70s, respectively, it was not until the final years of the nineteenth century (1898) and the early years of the twentieth century (1904) that the elevated and subway systems were electrified and fully operational (Roess and Sansone, 2013: 4). It is uncanny, perhaps, that the rapid integration of rail network –

another expression of modernity – coincided so perfectly with the widespread emergence of film that was there to capture it.

Edison's 1899 film *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge* (figure 3, above) provides a means of considering two vital icons of early twentieth century urban transportation – Brooklyn Bridge and the inner-city railway – operating in tandem. Similarly to *104th Street Curve*, the film is shot from a moving train which is, in this instance, crossing the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan. The film opens in a tunnel before exiting around a corner beyond which the iconic structure of the Brooklyn Bridge comes into view. Vehicles and pedestrians pass on either side before the train enters the caged body of the bridge where it passes beneath the skeletal frame of metal girders. Finally, the train enters into Manhattan, recognisable by the faint silhouette of the developing skyline. Both the bridge and the train are in many senses illustrative of the modern city's control over the temporal and spatial networking of modern life; in a film such as *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge*, primary icons of the city intimate an iconology founded upon aspects of modernity – in this case, urban connectivity – that were inherent to the city's evolving character and to representations of it on early film.

As discussed in relation to *104th Street* Curve, films of this kind were not uncommon. The gradual mechanisation of the city that coincided with (and was emblematised by) the integration of under and over ground trains drastically reconfigured both urban and suburban life. Once an icon of the development of the United States' nationally networked industrial infrastructure, within the city, however, the train functions differently by projecting, through its iconographic status as an image of the city, an iteration of urban modernity's impact upon the lived experience of New

York. Inner-city trains, both over and underground, are essential images of the sensationalised experience of modern life.

The function and appeal of films that sought to capture and, in doing so, sensationalise modern life have not gone unnoted. Ben Singer has written on critical assumptions that have "perceive[d] a correlation between the hyperstimulus of the metropolis and popular amusement's increasing emphasis on powerful sensations and thrills" (2001: 90). Films such as those discussed here – films that enshrine the objects of modernity – go some distance towards proving this modernity thesis; by situating the city as a primary subject of early film, these filmmakers are inadvertently placing modernity at the conceptual epicentre of the medium. By rendering the sensational aspects of modern life, early films of this kind created a collage of spectacles that portrayed the ways in which urban modernity was radically transforming city life.

While *New Brooklyn to New York* illustrates the modern spectacle of over ground trains in the city, there is a coinciding set of films that demonstrate the imposition of the New York subway. The New York subway is the site and subject of films including *New York's New Subway* (AMB, 1902), *Rock Drill at Work in Subway* (AMB, 1903), *Excavation for Subway* (AMB, 1903), *Opening Ceremonies, New York Subway, Oct. 27th, 1904* (Edison, 1904), *Opening Ceremony of New York Subway* (Unknown, 1904), *City Hall to Harlem in 15 Seconds via the Subway Route* (Edison, 1904), *Interior, N.Y. Subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.* (AMB, 1905), *Across the Subway Viaduct* (AMB, 1905), *Reuben in the Subway* (AMB, 1905), and *2AM in the Subway* (AMB, 1905). Films such as these occupy a spatially specific subset of New York's train-based iconography. While this subset further demonstrates an emergent iconology formed around the icon of the inner-city train, the film also illustrate the

potential that underground space offered to drastically reconfigure the everyday life, a matter evidenced in films such as *City Hall to Harlem in 15 Seconds via the Subway Route* and *Interior, N.Y. Subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.*
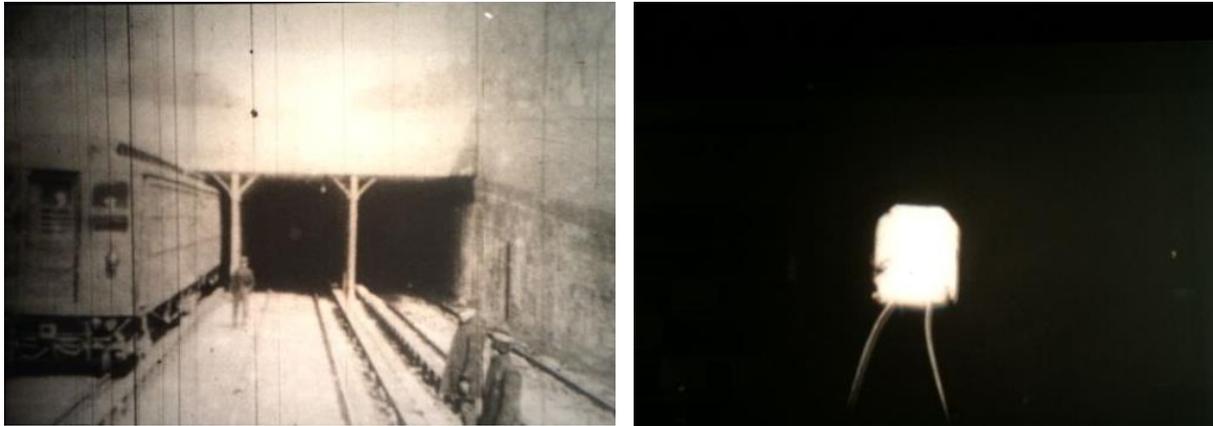
Figure 4: Two shots from *Across the Subway Viaduct* (Biograph, 1905), a 'phantom ride' that renders the experience of travelling in New York's subway system.

Across the Subway Viaduct, New York is yet another 'phantom ride' film, however, the film is striking for the fact that it ends with the train entering the subway system (figure 4, above). Ben Singer has written extensively on the ways in which a contemporary cultural suspicion of modernity's imposition on city life was dramatised in popularly consumed cartoons at the time.[31] Accordingly, just as the crowded street and looming skyscraper proved nerve-wracking for some (as evidenced in Singer's research), the prospect of going underground and entering what was for many new urban territory may well have alarmed those less comfortable with the prospect of a subterranean descent beneath the city's surface. With stories in the *New York Times* bearing titles such as "MAN KILLED IN SUBWAY STRUCK BY SOUTHBOUND EXPRESS", "SUBWAY TRAINS' CRASH SETS GASOLINE ABLAZE", and "KILLED BY SUBWAY CAVE-IN", it is fair to speculate that such urban developments conjured

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[31] The cartoons that Singer collects document a fear surrounding the sensory onslaught of modernity that include, but are not limited, to trains (2001: 59-99).

up a host of attendant fears – collision, fire, and collapse – that were associated with subway system in its infancy (*NYT:* November 4 1904; December 2 1904; March 31 1905).

Emblematic of such concerns, Singer writes that illustrations such as those he was concerned with "dealt specifically with the harsh transformation of experience from a premodern state of balance and poise to a modern crisis of discomposure and shock" (2001: 67-9). With the aforementioned newspaper articles being illustrative of, and responding to, those same fears, it is not inconceivable to imagine that a film such as *Across the Subway Viaduct* has a social utility. On the one hand the film depicts the thrill and excitement of one of the great modern inventions in action and the effect it was having on the city, yet it also makes visible the newly-offered experience of the subway in a bid to normalise it as a commonplace aspect of modern life. A similar effect is achieved in *Interior, N.Y. Subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.* The film opens with a train ahead pulling into the station at 14th Street. The scene captured provides an interior shot of a subway station occupied by passengers who are awaiting incoming trains. The viewer follows this train throughout the film, observing it as it passes through various tunnel and underground structures until it finally arrives at the 42nd Street station (more familiarly known as Times Square).

Both films, *Across the Subway Viaduct* and *Interior, N.Y. Subway*, produce a sensorium for the subway that captures the new urban experience provided by it while simultaneously spectacularising the technology that makes it possible. If a case is to be made for film being more than just a witness to but a *part of* modernity, then it may be done here with films such as these that illustrate a symbiosis that was occurring between trains – icons of the modern city – and film itself.

Stephen Kern has written on this symbiosis and on the legacy of increased mobility in the city. He writes that both

> new technology […] and the cinema had set the world rushing. But beneath there ran countercurrents. As quickly as people responded to the new technology, the pace of their former lives seemed like slow motion. The tension between speeding reality and a slower past generated sentimental elegies about the good old days before the rush. It was an age of speed but, like the cinema, not always uniformly accelerated. The pace was unpredictable, and the world, like the early audiences, was alternately overwhelmed and inspired, horrified and enchanted (2003: 130).

Here Kern contemplates that the cost for the access and efficiency that was provided by the subways was a concentration of foot traffic at access points, and increased congestion on the streets. This tension between motion and stasis would quickly punctuate the sensory experience of the city as well as its aesthetic in the icon of the crowd – the following subject of this chapter – while contributing to the formation of new spectacles that would be the basis of an early iconography for New York on film.

What is captured in the icon of inner-city trains, however, is an image of the urban future which is qualified by the city's technological potential to make more practical and efficient the experience of modern life. Emerging from films such as *Across the Subway Viaduct* and *Interior, N.Y. Subway*, one can recognise a reciprocity that existed between inner-city trains and film. These two expressions of urban modernity facilitated an emergent New York iconology that was based on speed and urban connectivity, two of modernity's chief enablers, and illustrated the ways in which the experience of modern life has shifted towards one that is constantly at the mercy of time and space.

Bridges on Early New York Film

Of all New York's bridges arguably none are more iconic than Brooklyn Bridge. Not only is it one of the world's oldest suspension bridges, it was, at the time of its completion, one of the longest. Perhaps even more so than the skyscraper – which would not reach its point of maturation until the twentieth century – Brooklyn Bridge presents an essential image of the city, not to mention New York's mastery over urban space. More than just a necessary link between Manhattan and Brooklyn across the East River, and more than the triumph over time and space it undoubtedly embodies, the Brooklyn Bridge is one of the city's archetypal icons for the modern period whose very name is synonymous with the broad matter of iconography and its relation to cities.

Completed in 1883, three years before the opening of the Statue of Liberty and some half century before the Empire State Building's robust verticality and iconic structure made its indelible mark, the Brooklyn Bridge figured as a beacon for the future that New York had promised itself. Alan Trachtenberg has stated as much, claiming that "[t]he bridge promised a future of new and even more fantastic forms […] it was also a link with the past[;] in its majesty, it seemed to justify the entire technological assault on nature begun in the early days of the republic" (1963: 732). Beside its "fantastic form", the bridge's iconographic value owes much to its prominent position towards the south eastern tip of Manhattan Island. There, not only does it entwine with the image of Manhattan's burgeoning skyline, the bridge unites, both literally and symbolically, the urban centre of Manhattan with the expanding suburbs of Brooklyn and the rest of Long Island. From the harbour it arrests the view; not only did Brooklyn Bridge provide an essential function to make Manhattan accessible for a

wider urban network, it also became a preeminent icon for the city, a vital spectacle of urban modernity that operated as an illustration of surmounting architectural possibility and, more widely, as an emblem of the city's urban future.

In his extensive history of the Brooklyn Bridge, historian David McCullough calls it "the great highway to New York, just as had been intended from the start" and, keen to underscore the bridge's role in opening out the city, he continues to state that "while Brooklyn in the mind of the average New Yorker might remain an indeterminable, even dubious, destination, for everyone living in Brooklyn, New York was a known quantity" (1972: 513). The unification of the city is an essential aspect of New York's forward momentum into the following century which makes Brooklyn's Bridge's image on film stand, iconologically, as an image of the city's strident, interconnected future. McCullough calls the bridge a "vaulting avenue over the river, defying space and gravity like some weightless natural phenomenon [… that] was also fixed, deep-rooted" (514). The loaded lyricism of his description speaks, in part, to the ideological weight of all that the bridge encompasses. Built by immigrants, and thus reflective of the city's blossoming cosmopolitanism, Brooklyn Bridge was, and continues to be, a monolithic sign of innovation and industry. It is a passage over the water indicative of exchange between the past and present which provides iconological currency as a supreme image that proclaims, boldly, the myth of the American future.

Such was its significance to the New York landscape the Brooklyn Bridge was a central icon to actuality filmmaking in the city. Brooklyn Bridge has featured in actuality filmmaking as both the subject and site of film. These films included but are not limited to: *At the Top of Brooklyn Bridge* (AMB, 1897), *East River, New York* (Lubin, 1897), *Across Brooklyn Bridge* (AMB, 1899), *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge Nos. 1 &2* (Edison, 1899), *Panoramic View of Brooklyn Bridge* (Edison, 1899),

View of Brooklyn Bridge from a Ferryboat (AM, 1899), *Panorama of Brooklyn Bridge, River Front, and Tall Buildings from the East River* (Edison, 1901), *Seeing New York by Yacht* (AMB, 1903), *Battleship 'Illinois' Passing Under Brooklyn Bridge* (AMB 1903), *Panorama Waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge from East River* (Edison, 1903), *An East River Novelty* (Edison, 1903), and *A Sweep Across New York* (AMB, 1903). The frequency at which the Brooklyn Bridge recurs as either an image or site of early New York film positions its iconic status in relation to New York's emergent iconography on film.

In both *Seeing New York by Yacht* and *Panorama Waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge from the East River* the respective filmmakers shoot the bridge from the water, rendering it prominently in such a way as to confirm its status as a central icon of the city. *Seeing New York by Yacht* offers poor visibility – no doubt due to the precarious vantage point offered by an unsteady boat at a distance – but nevertheless offers shots of both the Brooklyn and Williamsburg Bridges, capturing an early iteration of what is now a familiar view for New York sightseers partaking in a tour of the harbour from the water.

The second of the two films, *Panorama Waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge from the East River*, was shot by Edwin S. Porter for Edison and was later included as a part of a lantern show along with other actualities and accompanying slides (Musser, 1991: 523). The film is in considerably better condition than *Seeing New York by Yacht* and includes an extended panning shot that takes in the Manhattan skyline and the Lower East Side, including its docks, before following the length of the bridge across the East River where it captures the still relatively flat Brooklyn skyline. It requires no great leap of the imagination to read the subtle arc of the pan as an accentuation of the structure and function of the bridge, which guides the spectator along its iconic

form which bestraddles the two boroughs. Ideologically speaking, it is a powerful image of the city's orientation towards an urban future; it is an isolated image of the newly networked city that, on film, goes some way towards establishing both modernity's impact on the city and film's role in witnessing it.

Figure 5: Two views of Brooklyn Bridge: left, *Seeing New York by Yacht* (Biograph, 1903); right, *Panorama Waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge from the East River* (Edison, 1903).

Of the films listed above, one of the most striking images provided by the Brooklyn Bridge is included in Biograph's *Panorama from the Tower of Brooklyn Bridge*. The film renders a coming together of the changing landscape and film that is reflective of the city's embrace of urban modernity. The act of filming from the tower illustrates modernity's increasing dominion over urban space, not to mention film's special ability to capture that effect as it feasts from its tower upon the spectacle of the city's progress. Shot from the western tower of the bridge, the film captures Manhattan from its Southern tip. From there the film pans along its horizontal axis, taking in the Lower East Side (where one can just make out the faint silhouette of Fulton Fish Market) before panning over the opposing tower and moving onwards to capture north east of the still-modest Manhattan skyline. It is a most perfect example of the city being foregrounded as a spectacle in its own right. The film captures both the enormity of New York's architectural and technological progress in the breadth of the city's architectural endeavours – emblematised in the Brooklyn Bridge, a chief

image/symptom of the urban modernity project – and the prowess of film beside it, a primary agent in the pursuit of rendering it. In films such as these the Brooklyn Bridge functions as a central icon of New York, but also as a formative icon of technology, architecture, and increased connectivity on film. If one were to form an iconological reading of the Brooklyn Bridge films they might argue that its image conveys an embodiment of modernity, one that renders a startling vision of urban expansion and the extant possibilities provided by that.

Figure 6: Biograph's Panorama from the *Tower of Brooklyn Bridge* (1903) capturing both the Lower East Side and the western tower of Brooklyn Bridge.

The decades that followed the Brooklyn Bridge were the most productive for bridge construction in the city's history. The iconographic capital of bridges grew exponentially as bridges such as the Washington Bridge opened in 1888, followed by the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903.[32] By the time that other iconic bridges including the Manhattan and Queensboro Bridges (both 1909), Hell Gate Bridge (1916), and, later,

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[32] The Washington Bridge was captured in *Washington Bridge and Speedway* (AMB, 1901) where it was shot from Manhattan's famous drive. The Williamsburg Bridge depicted in *Seeing New York by Yacht* (AMB, 1903), *Opening of the East River Bridge, New York* (Edison, 1904), and *Opening of the Williamsburg Bridge* (Biograph, 1904).

the George Washington Bridge (1931) and Triborough Bridge (1936) were completed the taste for actuality filmmaking had been lost. Nevertheless, this period of rapid bridge construction stands to represent a time in which the city's interconnectivity was a chief concern, not to mention a period in which the formative development of the city's iconography for the twentieth was in session.

It is clear that bridges were indispensable in providing efficient access into Manhattan, just as they were indispensable to the city's developing iconography. Joan M. Dim has written on the former, stating that "as each bridge opened and as the outer boroughs and the state of New Jersey were linked, residential and industrial development boomed, and the social, cultural, political, and economic growth of the metropolis blossomed" (2012: 1). As a city composed of islands, it was always essential that New York be efficiently networked, and the various bridges erected at the turn of the century were not only responsible for the acceleration of urban modernity within the city but also for the streamlining of the city's industrial capacity. As such, this part of New York's unique iconography is dependent upon the fact that it is a city of islands in which the necessary bridges provided the city with a globally recognisable iconographic infrastructure that signifies, in its image, the saturation of a new techno-industrial empire.

Through the first-hand act of witnessing such constructions and their establishment as immediate icons of the city – which film had a hand in developing – film came to document the ways in which modernity was impacting upon both the landscape and lived experience of New York. The preponderance of such images persuasively intimates that the emerging filmic iconology of New York was primed to reflect the exciting innovations that the changing city had to offer in light of modernity's ongoing enterprise. From film's earliest years to the present, the Brooklyn Bridge has

enjoyed a privileged role in the city's iconography. Indeed, the iconological promise of its image on film has endured to become an image that is iterative of an urban past, bound in the urban present, while nevertheless still capable of intimating, by its domineering structure and iconographic presence, an ideological connection (or bridge) into the city's seemingly boundless urban future.

The Crowd and the Street on Early New York Film

> I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the crowd, and gaze with them.
>
> (Walt Whitman, 'A Broadway Pageant', 20)

In 'A Broadway Pageant' (1900), Walt Whitman writes of "million-footed Manhattan" (9) in reference to the intense swarms of people in attendance of the titular parade. Laure Katsaros writes on the poem's capacity to articulate a sensory experience of the crowd, stating that, in the poem, city "sounds circulate, echo, and answer one another [… with] answers being voiced in return [that] circulate between the crowd, the emissaries, and the poet" (2012: 44). Here Katosaros observes Whitman's ability to render both the sensory environment and its manifold spectacles, and to amalgamate the city's rhythmic qualities into his poem which comes to emulate the intensification of the modern urban experience by virtue of the exhausting list of spectacles that are provided by the parade. When speaking of the matter of urban rhythms one is immediately drawn to Henri Lefebvre who argues that a rhythm "embodies its own law, its own regularity, which it derives from space – from its own space – and from a relationship between space and time" (1991: 206). He relates this

in terms of the rhythm of an organ and, in line with Lefebvre's thinking, one might come to understand the city as such, an organ that it is replete with various rhythms that are drawn from a city's public and private spaces and the characteristics of their usage.

The icon of the train figures as iterative of early New York film's engagement with the impact that urban modernity was having upon both the cityscape and the lived experience of New York. That said, despite the iconographic capacity of those films, there is a palpable absence of human subjects. In such films the camera renders the effect of modernity by imposing first-person optical agency which functions in lieu of a seeing human agent while concomitantly orienting its viewer towards the transforming experience of New York life. Chris Jenks, in an essay on the primacy of ocularcentrism in contemporary Western culture, writes that "the idea of vision being socially constructed or culturally located both liberates and subsequently elevates the practicing see-er" (1995: 10). By centralising the act of seeing as integral to the sensory experience of the Western world, Jenks positions the spectator as both a qualifying visual agent and as a chief site of meaning in respect to the ever-changing urban experience.

Film's shifting engagement with the act of seeing unveils itself in various ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, the city is primarily an aesthetic object and changes within its architectural infrastructure can be qualified at a purely visual level. Secondly, film functions as a primary agent of observation; for the purpose of actuality film, the camera functions in lieu of a spectator, granting an experiential quality to the scenes of everyday life that it captures at the level of the street. Finally, the significance of the act of seeing in film and the city's engagement with modernity situates the human agent as a primary facilitator of that relationship. By its nature the crowd has little choice but to observe and obey the new flows and rhythms of urban life by following

the geometric circuitry of the city's streets and public spaces. Naturally the crowd is a social phenomenon, but it is also an exemplary physical icon that emblematises the effects of urban modernity that are made visible through its image.

Here I will consider the crowd as a consummate icon of the street, not to mention an icon of urban modernity. As a physical icon of the city the crowd, a natural effect of increased population, is fundamentally entwined with other, more architecturally or technologically prominent shifts in the urban landscape. While the crowd is no doubt a well-established icon of all cities in modernity, it is, perhaps, most prominently entwined with popular imaginings of New York. While I do not wish to suggest that the image of the crowd was an outright scourge for individualism, for the purpose of this discussion it will function as a single entity, an isolatable icon of the modern city that registers in tandem with a drastically changing urban landscape. This was considered by Gustav le Bon's as early as the 1880s who claimed that in a crowd "a collective mind is formed" (1922: 26). This much may be true, but it is also the case that in the crowd a collective icon is formed also, a matter that is readily illustrated in early New York films concerning its presentation.

Figure 7: A shot taken from *Herald Square* (Edison, 1896) which captures the bustling street scene.

One of the very first street scenes, *Herald Square* (Edison, 1896), is an illustration of both the crowded street and an emergent filmmaking impulse to capture it. The film captures a street scene at Herald Square which is located at the busy intersection of Broadway, Sixth Avenue, and 34th Street.[33] While catalogue descriptions of the film at the Library of Congress state that it includes shots of the Herald Building and elevated line, the existing version of the film is clearly a fragment which only runs for around ten seconds and shoots the street with its back to the square.

Despite its incompleteness, the film nevertheless captures a wider sense of the space of the square, including public transport, the flows of foot traffic, and the bustling vibrancy of the scene. Writing on the appeal of films of this kind, Charles Musser notes that "for New Yorkers, at least, [such films provided] 'local views' of locations they encountered in the course of their everyday lives" (1991: 66). While a film such as *Herald Square* would have drawn attention from local crowds purely for the fact that it depicts sites of familiarity in motion on the big screen, its lasting significance as an early film of New York arises from its investment in, and production of, a broader iconography of modern life for New York. Aided by its formal elements – it is composed of a single, stationary shot – the remaining fragment of *Herald Square* presents a synoptic overview of the busy intersection in which the frame struggles to contain the activity as various walkers, bystanders, and street vehicles come in and out of view. By placing the camera on the corner of the intersection, the frequency of walkers and vehicles is emphasised by the close proximity of the camera to the street. The effect achieved by positioning the camera among the foot traffic is illustrative of the sensory

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[33] Appropriately enough, this site is now home to Macy's flagship department store since it opened in 1902.

overhaul that accompanies the street; here, the film renders the sights and frenetic activity of the street by affronting the viewer with the various stimuli that it provides. Finally, a batch of walkers crush before the frame as a tram bearing 'BROADWAY' in large lettering careens across the scene. While less chaotic than other street scenes that will feature here, *Herald Square* is an early articulation of the sensory rush of a New York intersection; the bursts of bodies passing in and out of the frame, beside the various other street sensations captured by the film, render the hyper-stimulated effect of a typical New York intersection at rush hour.

The conjoined icon of the crowd and the street – a veritable signal of the effect of urban modernity upon the city rendered on film – appears in various early films of New York including: *Broadway and Park Row, Front of U.S. Post Office, N.Y.* (AM, 1896), *Broadway, New York, at Madison Square* (AM, 1897), *Mulberry Bend* (AM, 1897), *Sidewalks of New York* (Various, 1897-1900), *An Easter Parade* (AM, 1899), *Fifth Avenue to Central Park* (AM, 1899), *A Ray of Sunshine after the Rain* (AM, 1899), *Accidents Will Happen* (AMB, 1900), *The Dandy Fifth* (AMB, 1899), *The Dewey Arch* (AMB, 1899), *Astor Hotel* (Kleine, 1900), *Bargain Day* (AMB, 1900), *Broadway at the Post Office* (Edison, 1900), *14th Street and Broadway* (Edison, 1900), Broadway *and 14th St.* (AMB, 1901), *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (Edison, 1901), *Broadway and Union Sq, New York* (AMB, 1902), *Scene on Lower Broadway* (AMB, 1902), *Street Scene* (AMB, 1902), *At the Foot of the Flat Iron* (AMB, 1903), *Delivering Newspapers* (AMB, 1903), *Emigrants Landing at Ellis Island* (Edison, 1903), *New York City "ghetto" Fish Market* (Edison, 1903), *Ice Skating in Central Park, N.Y.* (Edison, 1904), *Move On* (Edison, 1903), *New York Police Parade* (Edison, 1903), *A Catastrophe in Hester Street* (AMB, 1904), *A Railroad Quick Lunch* (AMB, 1904), *Bargain Day on 14th Street, New York* (AMB, 1905), *Employees Leaving Office*

(AMB, 1905), *Congested Street Society* (AMB, 1907), and *Crowded Street-Congested Street* (AMB, 1908).

Biograph's 1903 film *At the Foot of the Flatiron* inverts the perspective provided by *Herald Square* to instead gaze inwards towards the sidewalk and away from the street. The effect of turning the lens inwards into a closed space such as the sidewalk focuses the perspective and foregrounds the crowd as the central subject of the spectacle. Despite the scene taking place at the foot of the Flatiron Building (formally the Fuller Building) – the city's then-tallest building and a primary icon in its own right that will be discussed in due course – the filmmaker choose not to observe its architectural grandiosity (as a film such as *Panorama of Flatiron Building* (Biograph, 1903) does) and to instead focus on the scene provided by the sidewalk as pedestrians battle gale force winds, including one lady who is pinned to the storefront by aggressive wind speeds. Due to the building's shape – that is, the flatiron-like wedge after which it came to be named – and location at the southern foot of Madison Square Park, at the intersection between Fifth Avenue and Broadway, the building generated famously windy conditions around its base, the basis of the spectacle provided by the film.[34]

In fact, so drastic were the winds produced at the base of the Flatiron that one local store owner actually attempted to sue the owners of the building, blaming them personally for damages done to his shop window by the strong gusts. Reporting on the story, the *NYT* wrote that the "Flatiron Building, by reason of its extremely peculiar and unusual shape and form of construction, is a public and a private nuisance" for the fact that it funnels the wind contributing to its velocity (*NYT*, Jan 23 1903). The film

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[34] It is worth noting that early film's most famous gust of wind film was captured nearby in Edison's *What Happened on 23rd Street, New York City* (1901). The film features a well-dressed lady stepping onto a hot air vent which ruffles her dress. Both *At the Foot of the Flatiron* and *What Happed on 23rd Street* illustrate actuality filmmaking's interest in making spectacles of freak occurrences on the street.

points to the rhythms of the street by depicting a crowd that is unable to reciprocate those rhythms in accordance with street etiquette. As pedestrians are blown left and right, chaos ensues on the sidewalk. The wind figures as a disruptive influence on the efficiency of the sidewalk by forcing the walkers to betray the spatial rhythms that are conducive to the street's functionality as a densely populated urban space. The momentary arrhythmia, as Lefebvre might call it, in which spatial etiquette is compromised, illustrates the fine line that the city must tread so as to not descend into chaos.

Novel urban occurrences that functioned as items of intrigue for typical passers-by were also, courtesy of that same interest, leapt upon as subjects of early film by contemporary actuality filmmakers. As demonstrated by films such as *At the Foot of the Flatiron* and *What Happened on 23rd Street, New York*, the point of convergence between the ordinary and the extraordinary was a focal source of attraction. Such motion picture attractions depended upon the spectacular display of urban incidences that were both ordinary (a crowd on the sidewalk, for instance) and extraordinary (a street parade or an urban disaster such as a fire, for example). Examples of the former, the icon of the crowd on the street, are listed above, while examples of the latter – that is, extraordinary spectacles capable of summoning a crowd – include in the case of parade films: *7th and 71st Regiment, New York* films (Edison, 1897-9), *Glimpses of the Grant Parade* (AM, 1897), *Gov. John A. Tanner, of Virginia, and Staff* (AM, 1897), *The Old Guard of New York* (AM, 1897), *Admiral Dewey* films (Various, 1898-9), *Chief Dewey at Head of N.Y. Police Parade* (AM, 1898), *New York Police on Parade* (AM, 1898), *Peace Jubilee Naval Parade, New York City* (AM, 1898), *Veteran Zouaves* (AM, 1898), *Close View of Brooklyn Naval Parade* (Edison, 1898), *The "Texas" Naval Parade* (Edison, 1898), *Dewey Arch – Troops Passing Under Arch* (Edison, 1899),

Dewey Parade, 10th Pennsylvania Volunteers (Edison, 1899), *The Glen Island Accompanying Parade* (Edison, 1899), *West Point Cadets* (Edison, 1899), *The Dewey Arch* (AMB, 1899), *Dewey Naval Parade* (AMB, 1899), *An Easter Parade* (AMB, 1899), *Fourth Connecticut Volunteers, Dewey Parade* (AMB, 1899), *General McCrosky Butt and Staff* (AMB, 1899), *Governor Roosevelt and Staff* (AMB, 1899), *Astor Battery on Parade* (Edison, 1899), *Panorama at Grant's Tomb, Dewey Naval Procession* (Edison, 1899), *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Parade* films (AMB, 1900-3), *May Day Parade* (AMB, 1900), *Parade on the Speedway* (Edison, 1901), *48th Highlanders Regiment* (AMB, 1902), *Old Volunteer Fire Dept.* (AMB, 1902), *Automobile Parade* (Selig, 1903), *New York Caledonian Club's Parade* (Edison, 1903), *New York Police Parade* (Edison, 1903), *Parade of Eagles, New York* (AMB, 1903), *Parade of "Exempt" Firemen* (AMB, 1903), *Parade of Mystic Shriners, Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *Annual Parade, New York Fire Department* (Edison, 1904), *Funeral of Hiram Cronk* (AMB, 1905), *New York Police Parade* (AMB, 1905), *The 9th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia* (AMB, 1906), *Volunteer Fire Department Parade* (AMB, 1906), and *Military Parade* (Vitagraph, 1909).

Parades such as those listed here represent the ways in which novel urban events simultaneously intrigued both the city's inhabitants and early New York filmmakers who captured the two icons in unison. In such films the effect of modernity on New York is rendered through the street's capacity to stage spectacles of modern life such as these. Of course, as Ben Singer's study into the cultural fears that grew from and circulated modernity can attest (2001: 59-99), early twentieth-century cities were often a source of mounting anxiety for many of its occupants. Accordingly, early filmed city spectacles sometimes had a stake in this cultural unease and were

representative of escalating anxieties (that were characteristically urban) being formed around the image of the modern city.

An illustrative example can be found in those films contributing towards what might be best described as an iconography of urban disaster. Often these films included fires and accidents, the likes of which formed spectacles that could provide sensorial thrills as motion picture attractions while simultaneously drawing attention to the very real possibility that modern life was in fact a double-edged sword that cut both ways. Examples of such films include *The Fireboat New Yorker* (AMB, 1899), *Firemen Fighting the Tarrant Fire* (AMB, 1900), *Tarrant Fire* (AMB, 1900), *Fire at Durland's Academy, New York* (AMB, 1902), *A Remarkable Fire* (AMB, 1902), *A Midwinter Blaze* (AMB, 1903), *Fireboat New Yorker Answering an Alarm* (Edison, 1903), *Fireboat New Yorker in Action* (Edison, 1903), *The Great Fire Ruins, Coney Island* (Edison, 1903), *The Still Alarm* (Edison, 1903), *Fire Adams Express Office* (AMB, 1904), *A Fire in a Burlesque Theatre* (AMB, 1904), *The Slocum Disaster* (AMB, 1904), *Fire and Flames at Luna Park, Coney Island* (Edison, 1904), *Spectacular Scenes During a New York City Fire* (Edison, 1905), *Fire in New York's Bowery* (Lubin, 1905), and *Man Being Run Over by Automobile* (AMB, 1907).

Films such as these were loaded with the weight of modernity's full effect. Such films intimated that the city was thrilling, an exciting if somewhat dangerous spectacle to behold, a fact that manifests in the survey of films discussed here which all seek to render the city in one way or another. However, as disaster films such as these indicate, the thrilling potential of modern life came at a cost. They imply, in the images of disasters, an ever-looming threat of urban catastrophe that was the price paid for the comforts of modern life. Such films locate and illustrate some of the primary sources of anxiety that surrounded the rapid developments characterising the city. As

it is rendered in the films such as these which reconfigure and rearticulate some of the city's primary icons, modern life is revealed to be both a source of boundless potential while being concomitantly capable of cannibalising the city at any moment.

Whether in relation to disaster films or less dramatic representations of the street, it is true, then, that the icon of the New York street functioned as an expedient means of tracing film's special role in documenting the city's changing nature. Writing on nineteenth century panoramic literature and everyday genres, Margaret Cohen writes that "moving pictures erase the mark of the individual on viewpoint" (1995: 249). In line with the literature to which Cohen is referring, viewpoints are most often particular, not general. While far from being truly objective, street actualities explode the range of viewpoints to present a medley of perspectives, thus lending themselves to more general, and less particular, representations of modern life and the experience of it. Such films foreground the city in a manner that enshrines both the general *and* the particular; they isolate scenes of everyday life as widely attended spectacles on their own terms while moderating the sensorial threat of the street itself by presenting it from a distance.

Film tempers the experiential onslaught of the street by concentrating and enclosing the view which, in effect, limits the city's innumerable sights to a single item of interest. In essence, then, what actuality film provided was something in the way of a fragment of objective urban reality[35] – that is, film provided a verisimilitude of modern life that configured the gaze centripetally by cordoning off the chaos of the street scene's totality. Brian Winston has long made the case for the theoretical impossibility of separating technology from the role it plays in relation to wider cultural ideas, stating

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[35] For more on this one might consult alternative works by Brian Winston who are argues extensively on "realist" claims regarding documentary and actuality film (2008: 133-41).

that "cinema [does] not merely express in texts the ideology of the culture that produces them [...] rather, the technologies are embedded in the social sphere and are themselves an ideological expression of the culture" (2009: 39). Not only does Winston's claim coincide with the notion that film itself is more than just a reflection of modernity, he suggests a reading of technology's ideological role that would incite the notion that film *is* in fact modernity. Moreover, Winston's view is consistent with the idea that film conditioned a particular way of looking at the city and that that way of looking was fundamentally ideological. The film camera contained the space of the city to individual sites and/or events in a manner that regulated the spectator's gaze. The effect is an arrest of the gaze that instils an optical inertia of sorts which allows the viewer to unshackle themselves of what Simmel has called the hyper-stimulation of the modern city in order to make sense of space that they were participating in and witness to.

By compacting the city into single sites or events, film effectively reconciles the frenzied present and makes it palatable for the observer. Modernity, as it is rendered in the early films of New York, is first and foremost a temporal experience epitomised by a self-defeating present. Modern life is temporally determined and so defined by what might be called a Simmelian psychological intensity[36] that the present can never truly be grasped, certainly not in its entirety.

Naturally, the city continues to swirl around the peripheries of the frame, flowing in and out of the scene, yet film's spatial and temporal mastery over the city renders the experience of modern life without subjecting the viewer to it completely. Writing on the crime narratives of detective fiction Tom Gunning claims that:

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[36] This notion is taken from Simmel's claim, central to this sections conception of New York modernity, that "the psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" (1997: 175).

The visual presentation of the modern city remains paradoxical. On the one hand it exists as a festival of visuality, a spectacle of display, a delight to the all-eyes gawker. But as darkness descends, it unfolds its mysteries and visual understanding becomes elusive. The surface becomes a shield, an envelope which conceals a deeper and more sinister system beneath it (1997: 54).

Most actualities did not point towards Gunning's "descending darkness" so much, yet they did nevertheless condition a particular mode of spectatorship that was both resolutely urban and yet specifically filmic. This coincides with Gunning's conception of film as a "spectacle of display" that organised the city into a repertoire of representative icons of everyday life. The act of stepping from the street to view modern life through the displacing agency of the film camera both spectacularised modern life (in uniquely filmic terms, no less) and deferred it. Filmed representations of the street transformed the city into disparate yet associated islands of urban activity, a series of attractions that functioned as a mirror to modern life, making sense of the experiential power of the city by separating it out into its component parts.

This effect can be felt across the street actualities of New York. There are two examples of street actualities, *The Dewey Arch* (AMB, 1899) and *Lower Broadway* (AMB, 1903), that are illustrative of a similar effect to that rendered in *Herald Square.* The three films spectacularise the street and the crowd as primary, filmic icons of everyday life that are illustrative of the medium's investment in New York modernity. The former film captures Dewey Arch and surrounding colonnade, a temporary structure erected at Madison Square in celebration of Admiral George Dewey's victory in the Spanish-American war at the Battle of Manila Bay in May 1898. The film shows

the street scene from the bustling corner of Fifth Avenue where it captures the decorative arch as foot and street traffic passes through it.

Figure 8: The street scene in *Lower Broadway* (Biograph, 1903)

The stationary arch occupying the top half of the frame visually contravenes the active crowd that throbs beneath it. It is a vibrant spectacle of motion punctuated by stasis and anti-stasis which compounds the effect of the scene on the viewer. The arch, as a primary subject of the film, freezes the view while the street distils a frenetic insight into the experience of the scene captured. The twin-icons of the street and the crowd are illustrative of the modern urban experience. The city is at once an object of aesthetic adoration (as seen in the arch) and a locus for hyperactivity (witnessed in the crowd). While architectural monuments (even a temporary one such as the Dewey Arch) provide a built iconography of New York, the street and attendant crowds are icons reflective of a newly-modified urban experience. The street flows with the rhythms of modern life; to be among the crowd is a psychological experience in both its rhythmic organisation (according to Le Bon) and in the overwhelming effects of its

innumerable stimuli (according to Georg Simmel), two effects that are illustrated in this film.

Lower Broadway (Figure 8, above) provides a grander vision of the street scenes offered by *Herald Square* and *The Dewey Arch* that is, once again, contingent with the notion that the street and the crowd constituted essential filmic icons of New York on actuality film. Broadway is the subject of a number of the street films mentioned above (and some, including *Broadway and Union Square*, simultaneously display other icons such as streetcars and other modes of motorised transportation). *Lower Broadway*, however, presents an image of the street that is iterative of its various component parts. The film was shot from an elevated vantage point at the intersection between Broadway and Wall Street and beside the Trinity Church (out of view). To the left of the frame various streetcars, electric and horse drawn (including one with a discernible destination, "Courtland and Fulton Street Ferry", printed on one side) travel north along Broadway. On the right-hand side of the frame the scene is inundated with a crowd of walkers that spread across the length and width of the sidewalk.

While no doubt invested in its subject (the icon of the densely occupied street) the film is concurrently a spectacle of frenetic motion that makes use of the crowd as a primary agent by which the experience of modern life and its symptoms – which, here, include urban hyperactivity – may be portrayed. One can find in such films evidence of a medium that is devoted to taking part in the exhibition of modern life. In these films a refracted, fragmentary experience of the street is instilled in the spectator; in other words, these films deliver a visually representative but sensorially moderated vision of the street. Actual experiences of crowds may figure as chaotic and hostile, but that is a matter made obsolete by the displacing perspective brought about in the

act of filming. Here, the sensory onslaught of the street – that centripetal locus of hyper-stimulated urban activity – is deferred by the film's ability to distance the viewer from the kinetic melee of the street itself.

In films such as *Lower Broadway* the crowd is not a passive thing; rather, it moves with the rhythms of everyday life. The practices of everyday life – commuting in the case of *Lower Broadway* – are amplified by the scale of the city macroscopically so as to produce the icon of the crowd on the street. Due to its investment in the exhibition of modern life, film captures and magnifies such everyday spectacles. But film crowds are multifarious. *Delivering Newspapers* (AMB, 1903) captures Union Square as a large crowd of newspaper boys awaits the arrival of their morning rounds. A horse and cart pulls up bearing "The World" on its side. The crowd congregates at the rear end of the cart where a scuffle ensues. Two boys start to fight in the foreground and the crowd re-forms with half moving towards the newspaper cart as the other half gravitate towards the fight. Here, the icon of the crowd works differently. The crowd of delivery boys points to the operational networks serving the city by drawing attention to the fact that as simple a leisure pursuit as reading the morning newspaper relies on a network of labour from across the city.

Another example of the crowd as an illustrative icon of modern life features in *Emigrants Landing at Ellis Island* (Edison, 1903). The film displays a ferry-full of immigrants disembarking at Ellis Island. The film was produced during what Thomas Pitkin has referred to as the "flood years" (identified as 1901-14), a time during which the number of immigrants passing through the gates of Ellis Island rose from 400,000 to over 1,000,000 each year (1975: 67). Observed beside the icon of the crowd on the street, the crowds at Ellis Island illustrate differing yet interconnected elements of the city's entanglement with modernity actualised in the image of the crowd.

Iconographically, the crowds at Ellis Island lend themselves to discussions relating to the city's social construction on film, and yet they also render an image of the city experiencing rapid rises in its population.

Figure 9: The opening of *New York City "ghetto" Fish Market* has a depth of field that captures the crowd (left) before drawing attention to a of the individuals in it.

New York City "Ghetto" Fish Market (Edison, 1903) and *Bargain Day, 14th Street, New York* (AMB, 1905) provide two crystalline examples of early New York film's capacity to hold a mirror to modern life. The first displays a scene of early morning trading at an inner-city fish market, likely near Hester Street, east of the Bowery. The film accentuates the street's malleability as a site of urban activity and captures the scene from an elevated vantage point. From there, the shot pans along a horizontal axis to provide a shift in perspective. The film opens on the bustling crowd capturing it as it moves between the stalls before slowly and almost imperceptibly refining the gaze with a zoom until the shot comes to rest on a few people in the crowd. The film moves from presenting the crowd macroscopically to focus on a few of the individuals who are participating in its spectacle.

By breaking up the crowd in such a way, *New York City "Ghetto" Fish Market* draws attention to the individuals that occupy it. *Bargain Day, 14th Street, New York*, on the other hand, illustrates its opposite by rendering a Simmelian sensory assault in the image of the crowd. In fact, this film is less a crowd scene and a more an illustration

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of a fully-fledged mob smothering the sidewalk with such magnitude that the street itself is scarcely detectable beneath the pulsing hordes of shoppers bearing down on Rothschild Co.'s 5 and 10 cent store on 14th Street. Seen together these two films accentuate film's capacity to capture the effects of modernity on then-contemporary New York life. Compared to *Bargain Day*, *Fish Market*'s display of a popular commercial space is positively subdued, yet together the two films produce enduring images of modernity in effect, comparable for the events they depict yet discordant in terms of their respective intensities. *Bargain Day*'s barrage of bodies illustrates the sensory shock of modern life (rendered in the icon of the crowd on the street) while *Fish Market* confronts the crowd icon by way of its attempt to isolate a few of the individuals' participation in the spectacle (in a gesture that motions towards microscopic, not macroscopic, readings of the crowd image). The latter film intimates that the crowd must be understood as an amalgamation of individuals whose lived experiences constitute the consummate experience of modern life as it is rendered on film. These impressions, when taken together, demonstrate the medium's preoccupation with modernity to such extent that film must be seen as a discursive instrument that facilitates the dissemination of modernity's image in popular culture.

If such films can be argued to capture and convey modern life through a series of key urban icons, one can see how the street functions as an expressive image of the radical transformations that were occurring within New York at that time. Such representations might lead one to speculate how film, in its infancy, displayed modernity and its influence upon urban life as a primary attraction for the medium. There is an assumed plurality to these films that, when viewed together, allows them to collaborate to produce a montage of modern life. In the early street actualities of New York, the congested street figures as one of the city's prominent icons that

fosters, in its image, an impression of film's continued interest in the shifts and expansions that were occurring there.

The Early Skyline on Early Film

The common misconception that the United States is lacking in "authentic" history and culture is foremost a myth fashioned around a resolutely European approach to modernity. That version of modernity valorises architectural and intellectual antiquity as the foundation of progress for the modern era. The history of the United States is characteristically different, however, to common conceptions of a European past and, unlike a lot of European history, many of its monuments remain intact. Hubert Damisch has written that America's monuments are, architecturally speaking, "not to the past but to the future, monuments of modernity, and of a modernity little indebted to the past" (2001: 81). To look at New York during the first decades of the twentieth century was to witness the potential of the urban future; the city's primary monuments, skyscrapers, were not tributes to a European past but promises of an American future. The history of New York, and especially the history of its architectural aesthetics, has never been about looking back – at least not in the way that European modernity accentuates and enshrines its past – but looking forward, or, perhaps more pertinently, looking up.

It is not an easy task to formulate a contemporary discussion on the New York skyline during the time of actuality filmmaking as little of it still remains. Beginning with the construction of the World Building in 1890 – the first "skyscraper" to overtake the then-tallest point in the city, the spire of Trinity Church – a precedent was set to reconfigure the landscape vertically. For Burrows and Wallace, the World Building

engendered an emergent spirit of architectural competition: "The World Building was more than a mere office building", they write, "it was a corporate self-proclamaion" (1999: 1052). Of course, it would not be until the early 1930s that the Chrysler and the Empire State Buildings – the two principal icons of New York's primary era for skyscraper development – would cap the city's skyline. That is not to say, however, that the city's architectural and ideological embrace of its skyward potential was not established sooner than that. In fact, in buildings such as the American Surety Building, the Broad Exchange Building, the Flatiron Building, Park Row, the Singer Building, the Met Life Building, and the Woolworth Building, not to mention the increased size of tenement buildings, one might find the origins of a skyline in ascension.
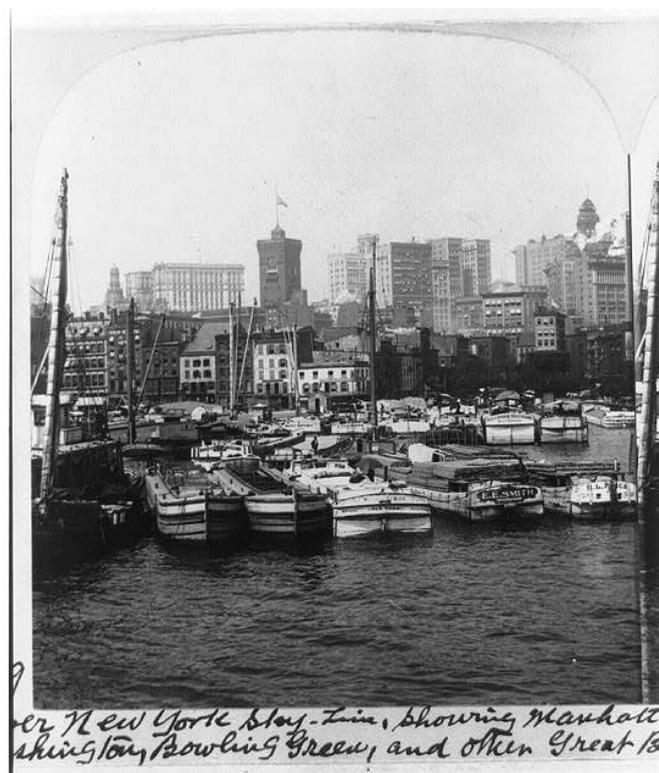
Figure 10: 'Lower New York skyline, showing Manhattan Life, Standard Oil, Produce Exchange, Washington, Bowling Green, and other great buildings' by William Herman Rau, c.1904. Held at the Library of Congress.

Sitting at the meeting point between architecture and ideology, the city's skyline is itself a document of urban innovation in practice. Designed in light of modernity –

and, thus, purpose-built for practicality in a way that European cities were often not – and not ravaged by a litany of conflicts, New York's skyline is an enduring testament to the modern city's radical potential for spatial invention and renewal. What emerges from the early New York films that foreground the city's expanding verticality is not so much a collection of impressions of those early buildings listed above, but rather evidence of a mounting interest in the rising city and a coming to terms with the skyline's role as an essential icon of the city.

Camera Work and Intermedial Projections of the Early Skyline

The skyline before "The Skyline" was a chaotic, immeasurable thing, as were representations of it in visual media. Iterative projections of what might come, New York's early skyscrapers gestured towards later, more iconic, structures, while remaining reflective of the New York's frantic embrace of the technological and architectural possibilities presented to, and by, the modern city.

Roberta Moudry has called the skyscraper "the signal architectural and spatial event of the modern American city" (2005: 3). Moudry's decision to refer to the skyscraper as the "signal" architectural event reinforces its status as a prominent icon of the city. Le Corbusier commented on the legacy of the American skyscraper in respect to modern urban life, claiming that "the original and primitive conception of the sky-scraper comes to us from America […] where the sky-scraper completely holds up Manhattan" (1971: 182-3). Le Corbusier is pointing both to the functional and aesthetic sublimity of the skyscraper and to its role as an icon of urban modernity. For Le Corbusier who claims that skyscrapers "hold up Manhattan", the skyscraper casts a long shadow over a possible myth that exists at the meeting point between

American architecture and conceptions of American modernity. When looking at modern images of the Manhattan skyline, one may find in it the legacy of its early twentieth century ascension. Even as captured on early film the structures on display collect together to form singular image of the future that anticipates the city's iconic vertical cityscape.

Jacob Riis' slum iconography will feature in the following part of this thesis as the representational precedent for those films that sought to reflect and comment upon the city's social infrastructure, and here I will consider the cityscapes presented in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* as a concurrent visual iteration of the city's transforming skyline. *Camera Work*, an eminent New York-based photography journal published between 1903 and 1917, offered a romantic view of modernity to contrast Riis' social realism. Stieglitz and his contemporaries provided an inverse perspective that sought to look upwards and outwards as opposed to Riis whose gaze was orientated towards the city's gutters.

As the founder of *Camera Work*, Alfred Stieglitz was one of the most prominent endorsers for the artistic value of photography and produced, in photographs such as 'The Terminal' (1893), 'The Hand of Man' (1902), and 'The Steerage' (1907), enduring impressions of the various transformations that were occurring within New York around the turn of the twentieth century.[37] Jonathon Green has written that, "profoundly sensitive to its place and time, *Camera Work* represents the crystallization, in written and visual form, of the most vital intellectual, emotional, and artistic currents of its day" (1973: 23). One could go further, in fact, to argue that the photographs of

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[37] In 'The Terminal' Stieglitz displays a horse and carriage, an icon of former city life that now came to signify the end of traditional modes of urban life and the dawning of a new, more frenetic mode of existence. 'The Hand of Man' illustrates the prowess of American industry and the role that the train had in restructuring the nation's industrial infrastructure. The final photograph, 'The Steerage', depicts social transformations with the arrival of a large, new immigrant population. All three photographs are now considered masterpieces of American photography, and the latter two featured in issues of *Camera Work*: 'The Hand of Man' in its inaugural publication and 'The Steerage' in the October 1911 issue.

New York that featured in *Camera Work* went some way towards establishing a visual

impression of the developing New York skyline that is expressive of an intermedial

interest in its development. It is one that is mirrored in those early films of New York

that enshrined the skyline as their principal subject, an exercise that sculpted a primary

basis for the way in which the city would figure in the filmic imagination going forward.

Figure 11: Edward J. Steichen's 'The Flatiron – Evening' (1904) and Alfred Stieglitz's 'The City of Ambition' (1910)

This can be seen in a photograph such as Edward J. Steichen's 'The Flatiron –

Evening' (1904). In the photograph the iconic shape of the Flatiron building cuts a faint

but prominent silhouette against the sky on the brink of dusk. While the building is

prominent, details of it are indiscernible; the building is monolithic, recognisable for the

fact of the Flatiron's uniqueness but rendered ghostly by the lack of light and clarity

that light provides. Furthermore, the lack of light imbues the photograph with a

bleached palette that strips it of most of its natural colours; the photograph provides

an impressionistic image of the Flatiron, rendering it both familiar and, at the same

time, distant. The fact that the building is blocked – from the left by obscuring branches and from the top by the limits of the frame – contributes towards a sense of deferment between spectator and the spectacle which is swamped by an opaque otherworldliness. The effect of the picture is arresting; an enchanting, romantic view on the city's shifting, skyward topography. It was in photographs such as this that *Camera Work* collectively produced a decidedly romantic image of New York that captures the shifting topography while rendering in it an urban aesthetic that is at once modern and beautiful.

Steichen's photograph provided a striking (and, in this case, enchanted) depiction of the city's newfound verticality; later, Stieglitz's own photographs – including 'The City of Ambition', another image in *Camera Work*, included here beside Steichen's photograph – would contribute to this same tone of representation of the ascending New York skyline. Stieglitz's skyward gaze produced an iconography that is founded upon the promise of the city's future, captured prominently in photographs such as 'The City of Ambition' and 'Old and New New York' (both 1910), printed directly in the middle of *Camera Work*'s fourteen year run. Both photographs display the skyline-in-progress and illustrate a coming together of the old low-rises and the emerging high-rises that were poised to dwarf them. Such photographs are expressive of an escalating artistic interest – which, when considered beside the films forthcoming, is best described as an intermedial interest – in the effect that urban modernity was having upon the city's architectural, and thus, ideological orientation towards the future.

From the Ground Up: The Beginning of a Filmic Skyline

In line with the city's developing iconography, photographs such as those discussed above display the city in a particular way, forming impressions that enshrine the architectural prowess of New York – this characteristic is very much actualised in Stieglitz's 'Old and New New York' which captures a building in the process of its construction. One of the more dramatic representations of the city's changing topography on film is *Star Theatre* (Biograph, 1902), a time-lapse display of the famous theatre's demolition. The film opens on a static shot of the famous Broadway playhouse – previously known as Wallack's Theatre – as pedestrians go about their day entering and leaving the frame from both directions. Then, using time-lapse photography, the film captures the dismantlement of the building over a period of thirty or so days. The spectacle is arresting – not least for the efficiency with which the building is pulled down – and yet it is a bittersweet one. On the one hand a famous landmark is being razed to the ground, and yet the image is inflected by the multitude of possibilities that the space could offer to the modern city. Such is the condition of the New York skyline at that time that no building was sacred, all were expendable in service of the city's wider project of growth and development. The image projected by this and similar films is oriented towards the city's future, and while the film closes on the empty site where the Star Theatre once stood, it is a hopeful image of what might come next.

In a sense, Stieglitz's 'Old and New New York' accounts for the absence that is left by a demolition such as that seen in *Star Theatre*. In Stieglitz's photograph the street is overshadowed by the skeletal frame of the building set to occupy the space and stake its claim in the city's developing skyline. Such views on the city correlate

with the notion that early actuality filmmaking was preoccupied with capturing physical expressions of urban modernity and the effects that it was having upon New York. When seen together such films foreground a particular, recurring view of a city caught in the throes of urban modernity. While *Star Theatre*'s temporal flourish is inflected by the filmmaker's particular perspective on the city's shifting aesthetics and topography – the time-lapse functions as commentary on the rapid changes – it also captures, quite readily, a wider intermedial engagement with the development and reconfiguration of urban space.
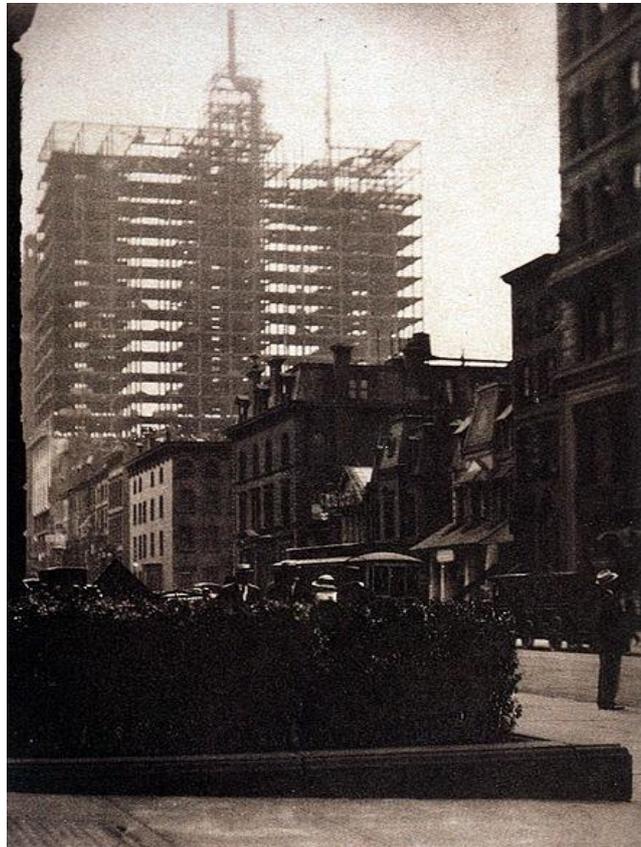
Figure 12: Alfred Stiglitz's 'Old and New New York' (1910)

While perhaps not as frequent as some of the other examples explored in this chapter, when seen together construction films – or, in this specific case, destruction films – such as *Star Theatre* are reflective of a wider filmic engagement with the trajectory of New York through modernity. Other construction films include *The*

Workers (AM, 1897), *Ruins of the Windsor Hotel* (AM, 1899), *A Perilous Proceeding* (AMB, 1901), *Blasting Rocks in Harlem* (Edison, 1901), *Beginning of a Skyscraper* (AMB, 1902), *Excavation for a New York Foundation* (AMB, 1903), and *Brannigan Sets Off the Blast* (AMB, 1906). These films, especially when viewed beside other construction films such as those displaying excavations for subways discussed earlier, are iterative of a common interest in early practitioners that has been considered throughout this chapter, an interest to capture and convey the rapid changes in the city's architecture, and, perhaps more latently, ideological shifts that were occurring in the city at that time.

Figure 13: Two shots from *Star Theatre* (Biograph, 1902) and, right, *Excavation for a New York Foundation* (Biograph, 1903).

This is clearly demonstrated by two of the films listed above, Biograph's *Beginning of a Skyscraper* (1902) and *Excavation for a New York Foundation* (1903). Both films display construction sites for new skyscrapers and very little is captured other than men at work on the foundations. As is the goal of iconological analysis, if one considers these simple films as sites of wider cultural meaning – especially in conjunction with an archive of representations of modernity on film, as has been discussed here – it allows them to illuminate more about the city than their limited content might initially signify. The former film, *Beginning of a Skyscraper*, is little more than a static shot of a construction site. The scene depicted is an excavation site for a

new building; in it, the ground is smattered with piles of rubble and debris and a small number of workmen occupy the frame. The second film, *Excavation for a New York Foundation*, is a little more comprehensive. The film opens on a team of men at work before the camera pans and the spectator's gaze is shifted to a cart of debris that is then hoisted up and set down upon a raised platform by a crane.

By virtue of its spatial properties as a long but narrow island, New York, and in particular Manhattan, had no choice but to look to the skies when faced with an ever-increasing population, limited commercial office space, strict zoning laws, and a burgeoning city-wide industrial output. There is little poetry to be found in the images provided by these two films – certainly not in the sense that one might attribute an urban poetics to Stieglitz's photographs – but that should not deny them their capacity to represent a dual vision of the city's landscape and ideological orientation. As these films observe the foundations for new towers they simultaneously spectacularise the city's architectural and industrial machinations while serving as elliptical images loaded with the weighty, ideological promise of the future city yet to come. As the cart is lifted skyward in *Excavation for a New York Foundation* the film draws the eye skyward also, invoking, through the camera's very motion, the verticality of the city's future skyline and the iconology that that encompasses.

Projecting an Urban Future: The Skyline on Early Film

Spiro Kostof has remarked that early twentieth century American skylines are "the first urban silhouette of modern times not to be determined by steeples and domes" (1991: 324), asserting a difference between European and American iterations of urban modernity that was architectural and ideological. That said, the New

York skyline did not appear overnight and, during its development, drew criticism from some with the likes of Montgomery Schuyler finding it to be a haphazard, chaotic thing. Writing in the *Architectural Review* in the spring of 1899, Schuyler claims that "New York has no skyline at all. It is all interruptions […] scattered or huddled towers which have nothing to do with each other" (qtd in Kostof 324). Henry Russell Hitchcock later pointed out that Schuyler was first and foremost an architectural critic and not a historian, a matter reflected in the fact that Schuyler's criticisms are mostly concentrated on an aesthetic unity that the New York skyline had, at that point, failed to provide (1970: 118). In his study Hitchcock aimed to posit a historical survey on American skyscrapers and designates the phase most pertinent to this thesis – which, for Hitchcock, roughly spans 1890 through to 1911 – an era which oversaw the rise of isolated towers and mounted towers (119). Stieglitz's photograph 'The City of Ambition' captures both of these elements while enshrining the city's supposed chaos. The towers displayed may well be at odds with one another — at least aesthetically speaking, the source of Schuyler's complaint — but collectively they form an image of a skyline that is as beautiful as it is irregular.

This seeming paradox is the basis for New York's early skyline iconography; while it is random, accidental, asymmetric, it is also a clear image of the impact that urban modernity was having upon New York and Western cities more generally. Vincent Scully writes that

> the New York architects never followed a single solution. The skyscrapers […] were all different beings. The group began to take on a fantastic quality; its members stood about and conversed. Others joined them, lifting châteaux, temples, and mausolea into the sky, their tripods smoking among the clouds; a

city of giants was rising. It was a world of fantasy at many levels, of the old world and its spires, or of the new multilevel city (1969: 146-8).

The culmination of this phase, delineated by Hitchcock, would crescendo with the completion of the Woolworth Building in 1913, but in the interim Scully's "world of fantasy" was already beginning to take shape and leave an indelible mark on representations of the rising city in visual media. So intertwined and reciprocal is the photographic and filmic imprint of the New York skyline in visual media that Stieglitz's 'The City of Ambition' in fact closely imitates actuality films of the New York skyline that emerged around it. More recently Martha Chahroudi has written that

for Alfred Stieglitz, skyscrapers were symbols of both the physical magnificence of the city and what he disparaged as the immoderate human ambition responsible for their creation [...] while others focused their cameras downward into the shadowy chasms of New York's streets, he invariably focused upward toward the sky as a reminder of the transcendence of art over mundane life and human shortcomings (1995: 234).

Stieglitz's enchanted depictions framed the city in an altogether different light to the likes of Jacob Riis — no doubt among the "others" to which Chahroudi alludes — and bathes New York with the phosphorescent glow of a city at dawn, both literally and figuratively.

Before the New York Skyline – that ubiquitous, capital S entity, circa 1930s-onwards, inscribed upon the urban imagination of the world – fully took shape, the early skyline still made an enduring impact upon visual representations of New York. For as long as photographic media has been able to convey New York, its skyline, regardless of its state, was a, if not *the*, dominant icon within the city's wider iconographic system of representation, a matter evident in *New York City Harbor*

(Edison, 1907), a film that clearly shares visual characteristics with Stieglitz's 'The City of Ambition', photographed a few short years later. The film opens with shots of the New York docks, accompanied by crisp, clear images of various boats at port; the film then pans to the right where it captures the skyline.[38] Then, the film cuts to a medley of aerial shots of the harbor and the skyline. Here, the skyline is expressive of an ideology that is founded upon industry and commerce for which the omnipresent skyline stands as an unimpeachable, iconic sign of the city's global prowess. It is a simple film that enshrines the city's aesthetic qualities as spectacles in their own right. Unlike the street scenes, discussed earlier, which enshrine the machinations of everyday life by capturing the city's inhabitants as they go about their day, *New York City Harbor* reflects both the picturesque quality of New York and the city's expansion, an aspect indebted to the accelerated embrace of urban modernity that has been discussed throughout this chapter.

Figure 14: two shots of the skyline from New York harbor: left, *New York City Harbor* (Edison, 1907); right, *New York City Scenes* (George Kleine, c. 1900).

The early New York skyline appears frequently throughout the period of early film, such as in *Tarrant Fire* (AMB, 1900)*, A Remarkable Fire* (AMB, 1902), and *Run*

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[38] It is worth noting that 'The City of Ambition' similarly juxtaposes the water and the skyline. It was common, in fact, for the city to be shot from the water. The water not only providing a good vantage point but also accentuated Manhattan's relatively unique status as an island-city, a factor that has played into the city's iconography as discussed in relation to role its bridges played.

of the N.Y. Fire Dept. (AMB, 1903), as well as in the elevated train film discussed earlier, which all display striking shots of the skyline. As the primary subject and spectacle, however, the early New York skyline was foregrounded in films that included *In Front of "Journal" Building* (AM, 1898), *The Skyscrapers of New York* (AM, 1898), *New York City Scenes* (Kleine, 1900), *Panorama of Brooklyn Bridge, River Front, and Tall Buildings from the East River* (Edison, 1901), *New York Skyline From East River and Battery* (Edison, 1901), *New York Skyline from North River* (Edison, 1901), *The Eighth Wonder* (AMB, 1902), *Panorama of Flatiron Building* (AMB, 1902), *Panorama of Lower New York* (AMB, 1902), *St. Patrick's Cathedral and Fifth Ave. On Easter Sunday Morning* (Edison, 1902), *Broadway from the Top of St. Paul Building* (AMB, 1903), *A Sweep Across New York* (AMB, 1903), *25 Stories Up!* (AMB, 1903), *A Windy Day at the Flatiron Building* (AMB, 1903), *Skyscrapers of New York City, from the North River* (Edison, 1903), *Panorama from the Roof of the Times Building, New York* (AMB, 1905), *Singer Building Foundation Co.* (AMB, 1906), *The Skyscrapers* (AMB, 1906), *New York City Harbor* (Edison, 1907), *A Trip Up Broadway* (Lubin, 1907), and *Views of New York* (Urban-Eclipse, 1908).

Similarly to *New York City Harbor*, Kleine company's *New York City Scenes* (1900) functions as a document of the rapidly expanding city, providing shots of the shifting topography beside typical street scenes not unlike those discussed earlier in this chapter. The film opens at street level with a handsome shot of the street displaying automobiles and pedestrians crossing the road. After observing the scene for a minute or so, the films cuts to shots of various buildings and, then, monuments in Central Park (there is a prominent shot of Grant's tomb included here). The film then cuts to shots of skyline taken from the water; clear views of various towers are followed by a prominent shot of the Statue of Liberty and, finally, Ellis Island. Both films reduce

the city to a series of representative images of it; *New York City Harbor* and *New York City Scenes* create a consummate image of the city that compounds an iconography that is reflective of both the city's architectural grandiosity and, more tacitly, the ideological import that such images contain.

Unlike a film such as *Panorama of Flatiron Building* (Biograph, 1903), to be discussed below, part of the attraction of these films is the fact that they do not isolate individual towers. Instead, the towers merge into a singular icon, the skyline, that forms a fundamental basis of New York's vertiginous iconography. The distance from which the skyline is shot in *New York City Harbor* imbues the city with an otherworldliness that is not unlike the *Camera Work* photographs discussed earlier. The very fact that city itself is the primary subject of such films invokes a sense of spectatorial wonder at the city's exhibition of urban modernity, an ideological shift that is offered up visually by the image of high-rise towers, images that function as invitations to gaze upon the city's spectacle.
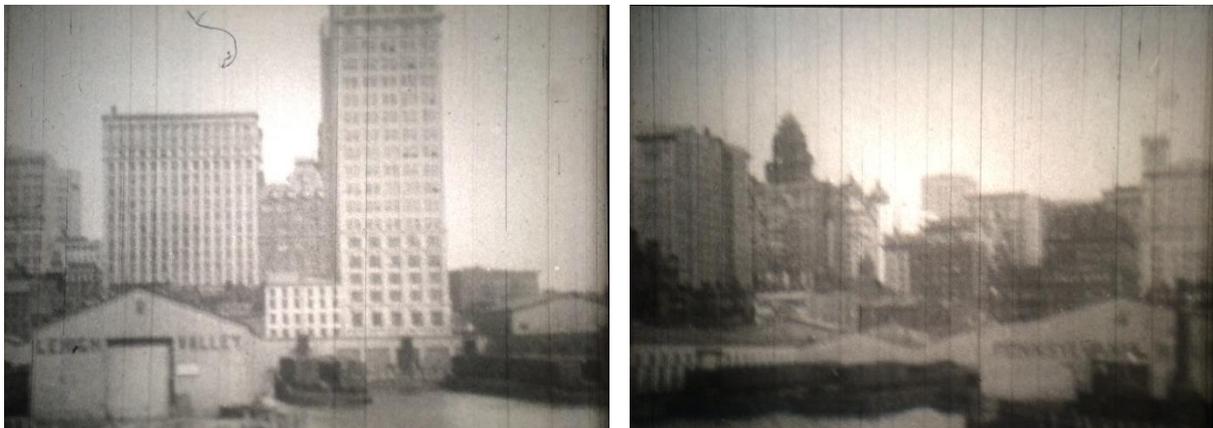
Figure 15: two shots from *Skyscrapers of New York from the North River* (Edison, 1903)

For films such as these that foreground the skyline, the skyline comes to function as a supreme element of New York's iconography, not to mention a iteration of urban modernity itself for which the films operate as indexes for its architectural and ideological intervention into the realm of urban history. In adjacent films such as

Edison's *Skyscrapers of New York from the North River* (1903) – beside the aforementioned photographs – these films come together to situate the skyline as an essential icon within the wider iconographic structure of both New York and urban modernity on film.

Such films do not, for the most part, seek to isolate individual buildings in a bid to demarcate them as individual city landmarks; instead, the films survey the skyline as a single, unified entity that is iterative of the city itself. As Edison's film pans across the skyline from the vantage point of the North River,[39] the film comes to embrace both the breadth and diversity of the budding New York skyline which, from this distance, stands as the city's primary visual icon. In films such as these, the skyscrapers represent the primary matter through which New York is formed and organised visually.

One of the more striking views of the skyline comes from Biograph's *Panorama from Times Building, New York* (1905). The film is shot from the top of the then-recently completed Times Building – the 25-story building was erected in 1904 and was occupied by the New York Times as of the following year. The film opens with a vertical pan that moves from the street to the skyline (Figure 16, below). Then, a horizontal pan shifts the camera's gaze northward over Bryant Park and towards the Public Library, and, then, past the Hippodrome Theatre situated at 43rd and 6th. The film continues past St Mary the Virgin's Church at W 46th and and maintains this trajectory until it comes to rest on Times Square gazing north towards the intersection at 46th Street where Broadway and 7th Avenue separate.

The film offers a comprehensive view of skyline from its viewing position at the summit of the Times Building. With the exception of a few instances throughout the

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[39] The North River is now more commonly referred to as the Hudson River.

film, the streets are not visible below; as *Panorama from Times Building* displays more and more of the city, it appears to unveil a city composed almost entirely of vertical blocks. Like those mentioned before, this film predicates a New York iconography that is dependent upon its expansive and ever-increasing verticality.
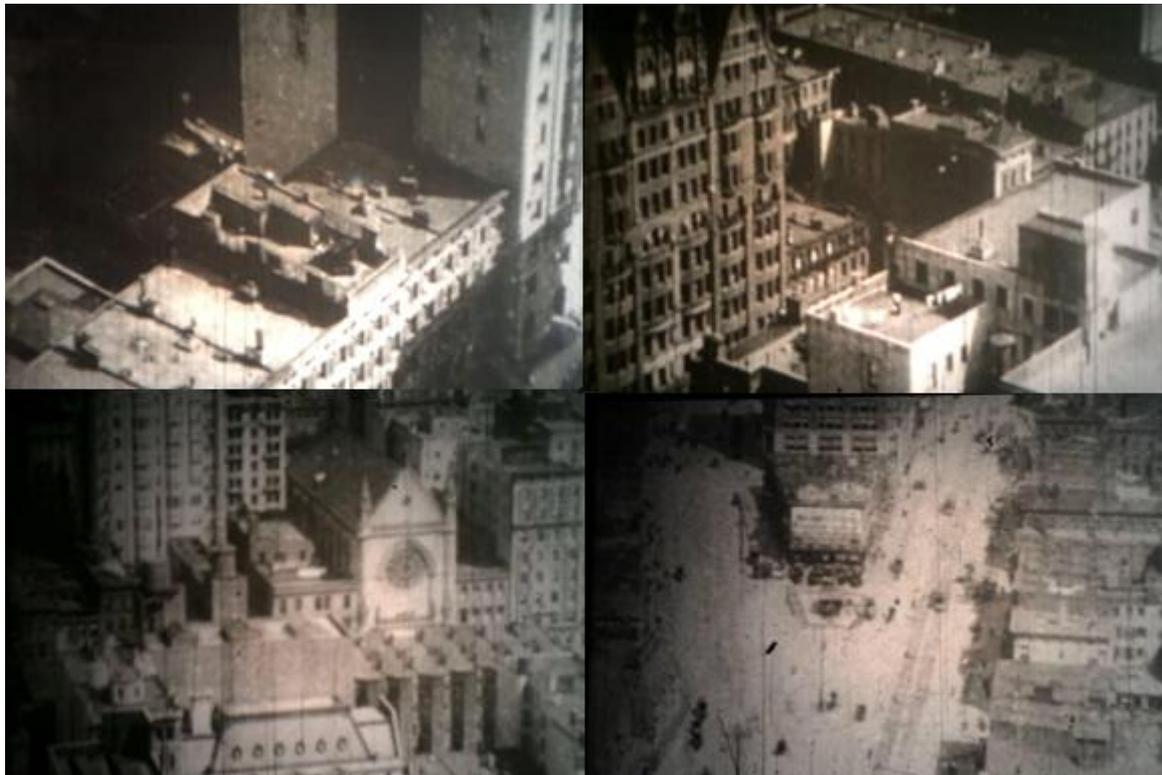
Figure 16: Four views provided by *Panorama from Times Building, New York* (Biograph, 1905)

An Enchanting Skyline: The Flatiron Building

In time, particular buildings would regularly come to develop their own iconographic value apart from, while very much remaining a part of, the complete skyline. That is not to say that even during the time of the early skyline individual buildings were not distinguished from the singular image demonstrated in the above films. While depicted in other films – including *The Eighth Wonder* (AMB, 1902), *At the Foot of the Flatiron Building* (AMB, 1902), and *A Windy Day at the Flatiron Building* (AMB, 1903) – *Panorama of Flatiron Building* (AMB, 1902) is a primary example of this (although the title alone of the *The Eighth Wonder* is demonstrative of the role that

the building was assuming in popular imaginings of the city). While aforementioned films enshrined the skyline as a singular aesthetic object, they do little to privilege individual building within the wider iconographic structure of the skyline. Arguably the Flatiron building was the first to break that panoptic mode of representation. Although the Flatiron Building was not the first example of a triangular structure[40], it is – like Brooklyn Bridge and Statue of Liberty that preceded it, and the Empire State Building that followed it – a city icon in the plainest sense of the term.
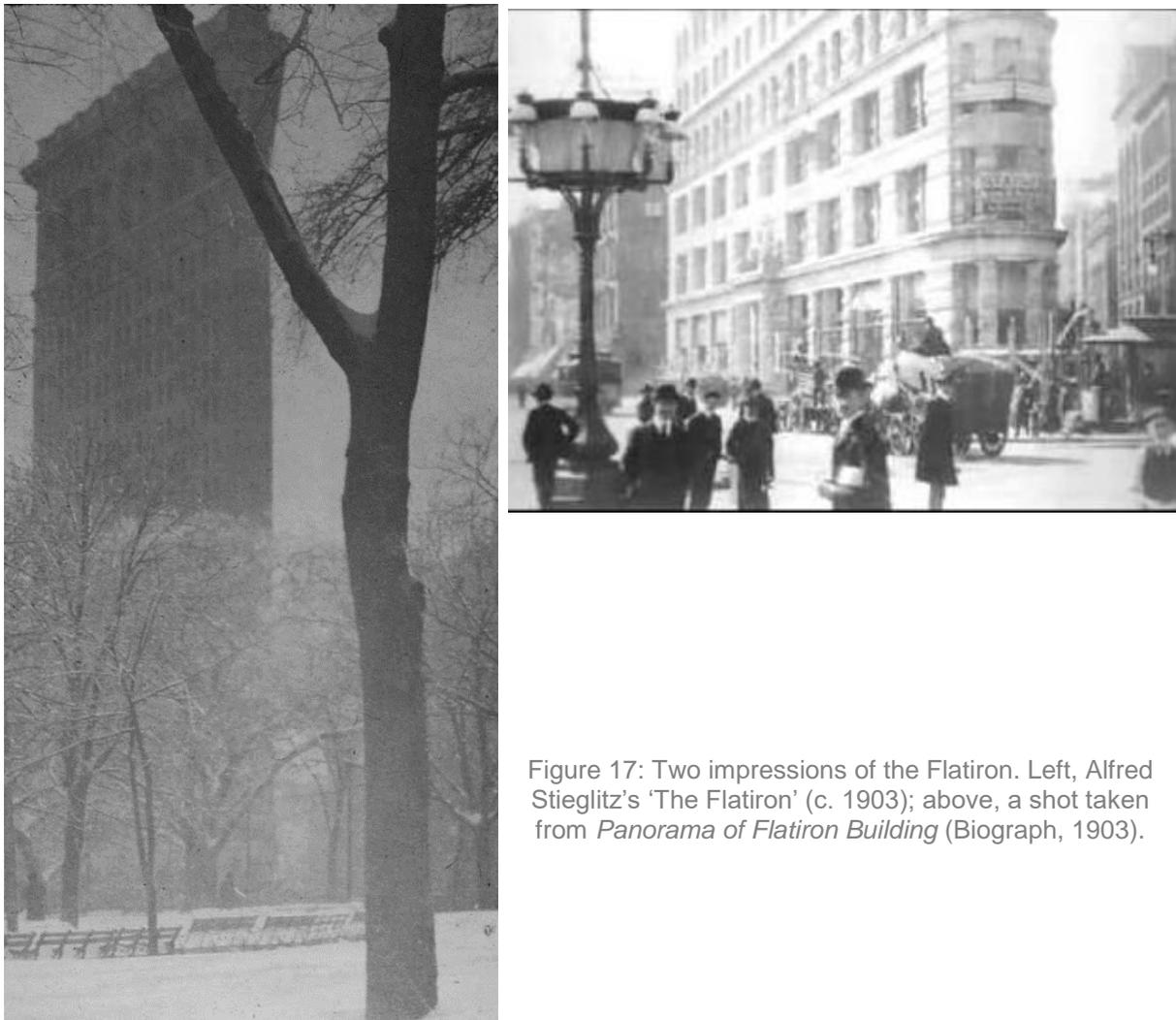
Figure 17: Two impressions of the Flatiron. Left, Alfred Stieglitz's 'The Flatiron' (c. 1903); above, a shot taken from *Panorama of Flatiron Building* (Biograph, 1903).

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[40] Even in Manhattan the Flatiron Building was preceded by the Herring Safe & Lock Co. Building, a triangular building at the intersection of 9th Avenue and Hudson Street in what is commonly known as the Meatpacking District.

As seen through Steichen's striking photograph of the Flatiron Building – and in Stieglitz's photograph, included above – the Flatiron is an early skyscraper that bears such singular, architectural intrigue that it drew attention to the aesthetic value of the skyline on its terms to reflect the enchanting potential of the forming urban landscape. Never one to shy from a grandiose description, recurring commentator on the New York skyline Rem Koolhaus refers at one point to city's upward inclinations as making use of the "inevitable […] frontier in the sky" (1994: 87). Beside that claim, Koolhaus has recognised the Flatiron's inimitable iconographic merit, citing its role as "the [then] most famous building in the world" while exclaiming that "only its photogenic razor-blade elevation reveals it as the mutation it is: the earth reproducing itself" (88). This sentiment finds Koolhaus privileging the role that the skyscraper more generally plays in Manhattan's mastery of urban space while commenting on the unique iconographic currency that is provided by the Flatiron Building.

Panorama of Flatiron Building reveals the way in which skyscrapers might be exhibited as icons in their own right. While the building points towards an oncoming era of star skyscrapers such an argument is teleological; what the film does provide, however, is an interesting insight into the ways in which individual buildings might be isolated and established within the city's wider iconography. *Panorama of Flatiron Building* opens at the intersection at Madison Square Park, located at 23rd Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The film consists of a single sustained panoramic shot taken that begins at street level before slowly ascending the building's 21 floors. A few passersby are momentarily distracted by the camera but the film does appear to display everyday life while allowing the Flatiron to remain the film's primary subject, dominating the spectacle. The view is, in turn, obstructed by horses pulling carts, street trams chugging by, yet, all the while, the building continues to loom

overhead. This film figures as an almost perfect performance of modernity's legacy and potential upon the New York stage. The prominent icon of the Flatiron Building – within the wider structure of the New York skyline – points to a filmic iconology of modernity built around its developing skyline that populated the early films of New York. While Stieglitz's photograph reveals the perpetual tension between nature and urbanity, *Panorama of Flatiron Building* is a spectacle of urban modernity that reveals the city and film's reciprocal investment in one another's future. As the film turns its gaze skyward it imitates the craning of one's neck necessary in order to take in the height of the building. In this action, the film embodies the experience of witnessing the changing – and, in this regard, rising – city and instills, through the camera's motion, a filmic invitation to gaze upon the visual magnificence of the modern city. It is, as this chapter has argued, a gaze that is most often organised around, and through, the city's icons.

Fictionalising Modernity in *The Skyscrapers of New York*

Naturally, New York modernity, such is its encompassing reach, is in one form or another present and detectable in the vast majority of films produced during this formative period of urban mythmaking. As true as that may be, for the purpose of this section I have focussed predominantly on actuality films. I see fit, then, before concluding, to consider an example of fiction filmmaking that deals directly with the themes and modes of urban representation that have been discussed throughout this chapter.

The Skyscrapers of New York (AMB, 1906) stands apart from the aforementioned films for the fact that it does have a narrative to speak of, nevertheless

the film is iterative of an iconology of modernity that has characterised New York in the films discussed previously. Moreover, in fact, AMB's 1906 melodrama makes use of the city's iconography in the service of its plot, an element that stands to create a dialogue between city and the modes of representation that reflect it. The film is something of an oddity; essentially, it is a hybrid film that is part fiction and part actuality. The film includes several sequences that are actuality footage of either the city's skyline – these include general shots of the New York skyline (Union Square can be seen at one point during the film) – or actuality footage of the construction site which serves as primary location for the film. These actuality sequences which include footage of a line of bricklayers, a man heating metal in a forge, the assembly and maneuvering of steel girders, and a group of men suspended on a crane line, are fascinating for the fact that they illustrate the transition from actuality to narrative filmmaking while simultaneously foregrounding the city's embrace of urban modernity. To this end, *The Skyscrapers of New York* expands upon New York's developing iconography as it has been discussed throughout this section by situating it as a primary aspect of the film's plot which points to an ever-present exchange between the rapid developments of the city itself and the film industry that was blossoming simultaneously.

The plot concerns a construction foreman who fires one of his crew for starting a fight. The altercation and subsequent dismissal incites the disgruntled ex-employee to steal from the construction site, a crime for which the foreman is blamed. By the end of the film the foreman is exonerated and the thief found out. Before that climax, however, the two primary characters have a thrilling fist-fight on the unprotected ledge of the building while framed against the backdrop of the skyline. Barbara Mennel has written that "the city street was a particularly privileged setting for action in early

cinema", stating that "many films integrated shots of city streets as a recurring motif without advancing the narrative" (2008: 7). Mennel's thoughts on the role of urban settings in relation to narrative points to the importance of the city to the structuring and composition of filmic space, but in the case of *The Skyscrapers of New York*, however, the urban location does more than merely intimate the film's geography. In this film, the setting not only compounds the city's prominent iconography, through the prominent image of the skyscraper in the development the film underscores a latent ideological orientation towards the city's future, one that is inscribed into the city's emerging architecture and the films that capture it.
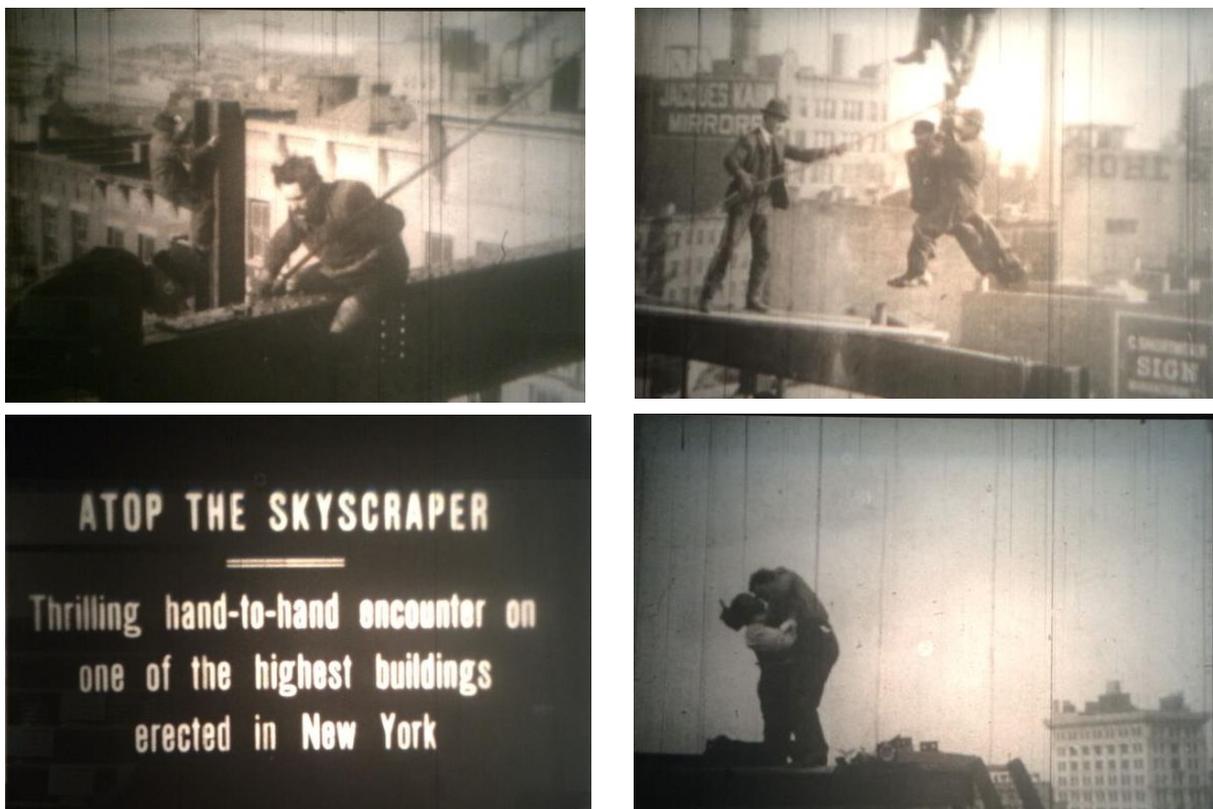
Figure 18: Four shots from *The Skyscrapers of New York.* Above left and right are examples of actuality footage in the film: the first shows men at work on steel girders while the second shows men being hoisted up on a crane. The following shots concern the climactic fight; the intertitle accentuates the daring nature of the spectacle while the adjacent shot captures the fight with the skyline looming in the background.

Admittedly, as a work of fiction, the ideological position of the *The Skyscrapers of New York* is more complex than that of the actualities that preceded it. On the one hand the film's primary images of the rapidly expanding city are demonstrative of the

same iconological orientation towards displaying New York modernity that unites the films across this chapter. The film stages its action above and around the rising city. But there are more iconological issues at work here. The film offers a commentary on the excitement and anxieties that orbited modern life, an inflection that is crystalised in the dog-eat-dog environment of the construction site. The articulation of this theme occurs on the site of one of the city's primary filmic icons, the skyscraper, where the film's narrative confers ideas about the city and those who occupy it.

The film emblematises up a reciprocity that exists between the city, its modern formation, and popular modes of representation. W.J.T. Mitchell has written that

Images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence or character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures "made in the image" of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image (1986: 9).

Mitchell's position is compelling for the fact that it locates images – and, by association, iconography which figures as a thematically aligned corpus of images – at the epicentre of ideology. Mitchell goes further, in fact, to place images at the very heart of humankind's evolutionary trajectory. As one of the primary structuring principals of ideology, the city's iconography – produced via dominant and recurring images in filmic portraits of the city – functions as a reflection of the various systems of ideas that form the basis of a geographic and ideological reality. The city's iconography, as an accretion of dominant and recurring images, underscores an ideological superstructure that culminates in the city's iconology.

In line with Mitchell, *The Skyscrapers of New York* can be read as evidence of humankind's ascendence. The centripetal image of the skyscraper, a fundamental

monument of New York, functions as an icon expressive of the city's shifting aesthetic and ideological dynamics, both through its verticality and through its prominence. Among the cornucopia of New York icons the skyscraper assumes an almost divine quality. As per Mitchell's notion, the created is given life by its creator to become a platform for new stories of man's evolution; the narrative of urban modernity, and ideology pertaining to that, are wrapped up in its image in much the same way that the Christian faith is embodied in the image of a cathedral. In aid of this comparison, skyscrapers function as surrogate cathedrals for the modern world, monuments that signify both the extant possibilities offered up by the modern city, monuments to the fundamental shift in the experience of modern life. Just as cathedrals enshrined an ancient, religious history, skyscrapers enshrined a modern, secular future.

The fact that the film is framed around the actual construction of a New York skyscraper situates its narrative within the wider history of the city's construction which is, in essence, the narrative of urban modernity rendered, iconologically, on film. In the act of foregrounding this spectacle of the modern city, the film presents an image of it that troubles the distinction between fact and fiction. The skyscraper and its construction function not only as essential icons of the modern city, but as the film's primary setting, thus elevating the skyscraper from its role as an icon to function, instead, as a stage. Where earlier actuality films spectacularised the city's development, emboldening the trajectory of its architectural and technological progress as essential images of the city on film, *The Skyscrapers of New York* affords the city a theatrical quality, designating it as a performative space upon which the urban narrative (humankind's modern narrative) might be staged. Moreover, the film presents the city as fundamentally complicit in the performance of its own iconographic and ideological identity. The iconological subtext of *The Skyscrapers of New York* is

simple but powerful; it is the narrative of urban modernity enshrined in the image of a skyscraper, modernity's great cathedral.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to position the texturology of New York actuality film within the context of the city's rapid development at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In doing so, the early films considered here function as visual documents of the fundamental changes that were occurring within the city. In the process of rendering the city, these films produced an iconography of New York and New York modernity that counts among its chief icons transportation technologies including underground and overground railways, bridges, the street and the crowd, and the skyline. These films come together to form a visual composition of New York in the process of becoming the city made possible by the changes occurring throughout this period. Seen together these films represent an iconological archive that confronts modernity, maps it, and situates it within the context of the city's radical transformations.

I have argued that early actuality film produced a visual archive that documents New York's entanglement with urban modernity by isolating key images, dominant and recurring visual characteristics, or, simply put, icons, that function simultaneously as fundamental signs of urban modernity and as physical evidence of the city's architectural ingenuity. The skyscraper operates as one of the most translucent signs, or icons, of this period of transition. The fact that the skyscraper, a vital sign of urban sophistication, is utterly entwined with the image of New York owes much to its proliferation as a visual characteristic of the modern city, and of New York in particular,

in various visual media and, not least, film. Christoph Lindner has claimed that "film quickly rose to the challenge of shooting the vertical city, and skyscraper films – particularly those produced for mass consumption in peep-show machines like Edison's Kinetoscope – became an early cinematic genre and a mainstay of American commercial filmmaking" (2015: 79). Lindner's thoughts direct that film, from the moment of its cultural intervention and throughout its early years, played a vital role in the iconographic establishment of New York and modern (or, at least, American) cities in general; both in film and more widely in the popular urban imagination that those recurring, dominant images give life to. What emerges from these films is an iconography that conveys the city caught up in the throes of urban modernity. It is an enduring iconography – and one that repeats broadly and often throughout subsequent visual representations of New York over the course of the century – that has played a role in rendering the city's urban character in film and in broader popular imaginings of New York.

Terry Eagleton has written that "art does more than just passively reflect that experience [of what it feels like to live in particular conditions]"; rather, he suggests, art is, in fact, "held within ideology" (2002: 9). If film is naturally ideological then, as an image-based medium, it is simultaneously iconological. The icons of New York rendered on early film are iterative of an iconology of urban modernity that is writ large across filmic representations of the city to the extent that they structure and organise its iconography. The early films of New York discussed here collaborate to produce an iconological archive of New York modernity that centralises the city as its primary subject through primary images of its technological and architectural move towards an urban future that functioned as a primary narrative for its early filmic output.

Chapter Two

From an Iconographical to an Iconological Reading of the Social City on Early

Film

Introduction: Film Ideology and the Imagined Audience

Raymond Williams wrote that "language is not a medium; it is a constitutive element of material social practice" (2009: 165). Williams' identification of language as an instrument of social practice preempts the suggestion that *all* languages, be they written, spoken, visual, or otherwise, emerge as systems of meaning that convey pertinent ideas about the world that they describe. This notion precedes a texturological survey of film that observes not only the mass of representations, but their individual characteristics. By observing the films so, patterns of representation emerge that reveal latent correspondance between disparate impressions of urban life. That correspondance lies in the fact that the city remains focal. Regardless of the style or political orientation of any particular film, the simple fact that filmmakers showed a tendency to invoke the city again and again underscores its pronounced role in the developing language of early film. So much so, in fact, that the archive lavishly illustrates the special relationship that was developing between film and the city, displaying a diverse collage of images and textures that go some way towards capturing the various experiences that the modern city had to offer.

The relationship between art and ideology has been explored at length by Marxist philosophers and art critics. Indeed, Mikhail Bakhtin and P.N. Medvedev have written on their relationship, stating that:

All the products of ideological creation – works of art, scientific works, religious symbols and rites, etc. – are material things, part of the practical reality that surrounds man. It is true that these things are of a special nature, having significance, meaning, inner value. But these meanings and values are

embodied in material things and actions. They cannot be realized outside of

some developed material (1978: 125).

The "materiality" of ideology that Bakhtin and Medvedev speak of is especially useful

for a texturological and iconological reading of early film. The films render a series of

views of New York that depend upon its material features – as seen in the street and/or

skyline films discussed in the previous chapter.

It is clear that early film presented a new means of producing and re-producing

local ideology to its audience. As New Yorkers in their droves packed into the many

store front nickelodeons that rose and fell in film's early years, they engaged directly

with the images of everyday life that characterised modern life, and with film's novel

means of displaying it. Barry Grant has written on the role of the audience, stating that

In mass-mediated society, we huddle around movie screens instead of

campfires for our mythic tales. Comparable to myths, genre movies may be

understood as secular stories that seek to address and sometimes seemingly

resolve our problems and dilemmas, some specifically historical and others

more deeply rooted in our collective psyches (2011: 29).

Here, Grant observes film's function as a vehicle for ideology, the role it plays in

imparting ideology, or "myths", locally and globally. It is the position of this thesis that

these films had a critical stake in the production of the city's filmic iconology which

conveyed "mythic" conceptualisations of modern life.[41] That these films simultaneously

inscribe concrete urban sites with critical reflections on various urban phenomena

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[41] Graeme Turner has warned of the dangers that such projections might pose, ideologically, if we are to understand the world according to its representations in media. He writes that "the American domination of the mass media has, to some extent, normalized American images of society" (1993: 135). His fear is contingent with a belief that film's role in the production, reproduction, and dissemination of ideology is so great that dominant images of places are catching and, if widely appropriated, could threaten to engulf images of those places lacking in representation.

speaks to the value of the archive to understanding film's relationship to urban development.

The early fiction films of New York provide a series of fascinating insights not only into the socioeconomic formation of the city at the time, but into the ways in which the city was being seen from within. Many of the surviving films[42] – not to mention descriptions of missing films – reveal a corresponding imperative to reflect and comment upon the city's social climate. The early films of New York contain textured impressions of modernity that depict various social formations and urban experiences. Louis Giannetti writes that

> Ideology is usually defined as a body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture. The term is generally associated with politics and party platforms, but it can also mean a given set of values that are implicit in any human enterprise—including filmmaking (2001: 412).

Despite his rather general description, for Giannetti film is an ideological enterprise, meaning that archival analysis can provide general insight into film's ideological persuasion. That the city and city life featured so prominently in early film is material evidence that the medium was being regularly employed to convey images of modern life back to its largely city-based audience.

Much has been written on early film audiences even if there is limited certainty on the subject. The nickelodeon "craze", as it is described in the *Tribune* article included below (Figure 19), occasioned a rapid expansion for the industry's commercial potential. In the years before the craze – which began around 1905[43] –

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[42] As aforementioned, for the purposes of this research I compiled a representative list of the known films of New York that is included as an appendix (pages 276-311).

[43] Roberta Pearson writes that "permanent exhibition sites were established in the United States as early as 1905, and by 1907 there were an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 nickelodeons; by 1909, 8,000, and

film was limited to sporadic showings that were often confined to heterotopic spaces

of urban and suburban otherness. Both in practice and character, early film exhibition

was somewhat vaudevillian; a mishmash of travelling exhibitions and amusement park

shows, when the nickelodeons did finally emerge prominently they were often located

in the bawdier parts of the city where they did not initially provide an avenue of filmic

entertainment for the middle class.[44]

NICKEL CRAZE GROWS.

Five-Cent Moving Picture Theatres Prove Exceedingly Popular.

Nickel madness is a term applied to the amazing popularity attained during the last year or so by the five-cent moving picture theatre. Tried as an experiment, this new form of entertainment is making a fortune for its projectors. Crusades have been organized against them, and they have been denounced as vicious and demoralizing, yet they have flourished wonderfully and are continually increasing.

New York is no exception to the rule. They are to be found with pretentious fronts in Broadway. In the Bowery and through the East Side they are almost omnipresent. Dozens of them are exceedingly popular in Brooklyn. They are springing up in the shady places of Queens, and down on Staten Island they are to be found in the most unexpected bosky dells, or rising in little rakish shacks on the mosquito flats. They have even invaded nearby Jersey cities. In the last year two hundred licenses have been granted by the city authorities for these amusement resorts in the Borough of Manhattan alone, and it is said that 200,000 people a day contribute to their support through the city.

"The popularity of these cheap amusement places, even with the foreign born population," says Barton W. Currie in a recent number of "Harper's Weekly," "is not to be wondered at. The newly arrived immigrant is appealed to directly without any circumlocution. The child whose intelligence is just awakening and the doddering old man seem to be on an equal footing of enjoyment in the stuffy little boxlike theatres."

Figure 19: A 1907 article that details the expanding Nickelodeon industry (*New-York Tribune.*, September 22, 1907)

So who exactly was watching early film? It is not a question easily answered.

Traditional film historians such as Lewis Jacobs, Terry Ramsaye, and Benjamin

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by 1910, 10,000. By the start of 1909, cinema attendance was estimated at 45 million per week" (1996: 36).

[44] For more on this see Douglas Gomery' *Shared Pleasures* (1992: 16-7) in which he describes in finer detail the nature of early film exhibition practices.

Hampton[45] have argued that the nickelodeons were predominantly a working class pastime, while others have since argued for a more nuanced approach. Russell Merritt, Robert C. Allen, and Lary May have worked to revise the narrative, attempting to reframe it to account for a bourgeois element that had previously been overlooked (1976; 1979; 1980).[46] May claims that "[early] theatre managers did everything possible to raise movies above their disreputable origins […] as films went from shorts to photoplays, nickelodeons changed from store fronts to more sumptuous buildings" (148). Certainly, the emergence of movie palaces in the aftermath of the nickelodeon craze – those "more sumptuous buildings" to which May is referring – played a role in extracting film from its status as a working class pastime to accommodate it for a wider and wealthier audience.

Recent research, however, has claimed that the histories might not have been as far off as May and others suspected. In his illuminating article 'Manhattan Nickelodeons', Ben Singer attempts to reevaluate the "data" that has led film historians such as May to produce the paradigmatic narrative for early film. Singer argues that the original narrative of early audiences may not have been altogether wrong, stating that

> Census data on the composition of Manhattan neighborhoods call into question
> the revisionist argument about the importance of middle-class audiences in the
> nickelodeon era and early teens. While traditional survey histories were indeed
> "grossly inadequate" due to their superficiality, their emphasis on the immigrant

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[45] Collectively these historians represent a traditional approach to early film audiences, one that is based heavily upon inferences and assumptions. Their works – *The Rise of the American Film* (1939), *A Million One Nights* (1964), and *History of the American Film Industry* (1970), respectively – are demonstrative of early critical positions that have now been built upon.

[46] These writers are illustrative of an attempt in the 1970s and 80s to move away from earlier models of audience evaluation to consider a more nuanced approach.

and working-class foundation of early exhibition may not have been as far off

the mark as revisionist historians maintain (2004: 130).

While Singer's thoughts appear to invert a mostly agreed upon critical position, it does not undo the narrative completely. Instead, Singer challenges the value of the data used by others, acknowledging that many of the early approaches were based on assumptions and guesswork. Lee Grieveson agrees, stating that a vast number of small and sometimes contradictory factors complicate the process of identifying accurately the character of film's first audiences. Nevertheless, Grieveson claims that "a crucial part of cinema's significance depends on the meaning and pleasure that audiences took from their movie-going" (2005: 48).

Grieveson's suggestion that cinema always held a personal significance for its audiences leads neatly to the type of audience I am most interested in here: the *imagined* audience. This chapter will primarily explore the films themselves as vehicles for local ideology that is laced into a collage of impressions. By focalising images of the city's social composition, the films preempt conceptualisations of an imagined audience who are invested in such matters. Grieveson's position is useful when contemplating the notion of an imagined audience.

Popular conceptions of early imagined audiences have tended to place them at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson have argued that the Vitagraph quality films (popular from around 1908 onwards) marked a clear move towards satisfying a clearly imagined audience. They write that "although the producers themselves foregrounded the "high culture" intertextual associations of the qualities, they were well aware of the need to retain their old audiences and thus publicized the quality films as polysemic enough to appeal to a broad spectrum of viewers" (1993: 64).

Uricchio and Pearson's claim suggests that the industry were making conscious efforts by 1908 to elevate the content of their productions to target a more refined audience. Significantly, Richard Butsch has claimed that this was happening earlier. In an important article titled 'The imagined Audience in the Nickelodeon Era', Butsch takes evidence from Variety magazine and Motion Picture Weekly to suggest that early industry pioneers had a clear idea of their audience and knew exactly what type of films they should be producing for them. What emerges from Butsch's research is a clear indication that the working class were considered a primary audience of early film:

> Through 1909 it seems that the industry and the public consistently conceived of movies as an inexpensive amusement for the working classes. Not only did the press identify movies with the working class, but it also characterized that audience as susceptible to bad influences and needing guardians, education, and civilizing (2012: 114).

Besides identifying that there were clear, pre-Hays code concerns about film's lack of regulation and its effect on the moral constitution of its patrons, Butsch's research illustrates that the industry was familiar with its primary audience even as it sought to widen it. While earlier histories relied heavily on assumptions as well as ethnic and class generalities in their attempt to determine the audience of early film, they clearly forgot to spend much time with the films themselves as essential evidence of who might have been watching. It is the position of this chapter that the films themselves are indicative of, and indeed contain, their audience and reveal, in great numbers, the way in which the city and its people were being imagined at that time.

Despite the fact that the concept of an imagined audience may, by virtue of its title, feel too close to fiction to be fully useful, it does base its inferences on a large

texturological corpus of impressions. The generous archive of films that sit at the centre of this research provides evidence that social concerns of the city were staple features of early fiction filmmaking.[47] It is the position of this chapter that these films were clearly made with an audience in mind and, therefore, as films of the city they must be understood as films *for* the city also. I argue that these films convey various timely narratives of the city, and that they project iconological detail through concrete signifiers, or icons, of modern social life.

Jacob Riis' Sensational Slum: An Icon of Urban Immobility

> When once I asked the agent of a notorious Fourth Ward alley how many people might be living in [the tenement] I was told: One hundred and forty families, one hundred Irish, thirty-eight Italian, and two that spoke the German tongue. Barring the agent herself, there was not a native-born individual in the court. The answer was characteristic of the cosmopolitan character of lower New York, very nearly so of the whole of it […] One may find for the asking an Italian, a German, a French, African, Spanish, Bohemian, Russian, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Chinese colony […] The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctively American community. There is none; certainly not among the tenements.[48]

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[47] At least this approach acknowledges the role that the imagination plays in ascertaining early film's audience, unlike preceding conceptualisations, which had no qualms with presenting guesswork as empirical evidence of a "real" audience.

[48] This extract comes from Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (2010: 20). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations taken from Riis in this section are from that text.

Perhaps the most prolific, widely digested, and potentially problematic presentations of the city at the time was Jacob Riis' vision of the Manhattan ghettos in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). In his own time Riis was recognised for both his startling photography and the aggressive muckraking journalism that accompanied it.[49] Riis' presentation of New York figures as a dramatic, dynamic, and influential mode of representation for the city during the time of film's ascendance. In his work one might find a complex iconography of the city's social structure that details matters of class, poverty, and criminality. *How the Other Half Lives* was among Riis' first works and is, arguably, his most enduring. Released in 1890, Riis' collection of essays is an expression of many of his own experiences of the city that unflinchingly unveiled the underside of New York. Riis' work dissected the city, and exposed it to itself, through its shocking portrayal of tenement life in both his writing and in the potent accompanying photography.

As New York City entered the twentieth century, Riis, as much a social ethnographer as a journalist, sought to shed light on the city's often overlooked socioeconomic state: signifiers of oppression, injustice, squalor, and social immobility were deeply embedded into the iconography of his photography. Riis' work was well circulated and discussed at the time of its release[50] and its mode of representing the city was iterative of a string of emergent voices belonging to urban reformers and civil representatives who were working for change at the end of the nineteenth century.[51]

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[49] For a history of muckraking – that is, the attempt to bring about social reform through unflinching portraits of the city – see John Harrison's *Muckraking: Past, Present, and Future* (1978).

[50] This is noted by Alexander Alland who comments on Riis' success, claiming that from his first book Riis' work "went into several editions and was quoted from the pulpit. Magazine critics praised it, some with reservations" (1993: 30).

[51] *McClure's* and *Collier's* magazines are examples of two widely-read publications that were politically oriented towards the direction of muckraking.

For John Harrison, Riis' work represents a persuasive call-to-arms to those with the power to act on his observations. He writes that

> Riis had both the determination and the constitution for revealing the sorry contents, human and material, of [the New York] ghettos. By showing what their surroundings were doing to the young, Riis stirred hundreds of sympathetic readers who joined his attack with energy, with influence—and with funds (1978: 3-4).

Of course, Riis' representation of the city was an evocative one, but it was equally a provocative one shrouded in melodrama and with a clear political agenda. Alexander Alland chronicles Riis' troubled yet intimate relationship with the city, noting that he supposedly pawned his revolver for enough money for a place to sleep (1993: 19). Riis himself claims that one morning, having checked into a police lodging room the night before, he awoke to find his locket stolen and his adopted dog beaten to death: later, he wrote that "that one night cured him of dreaming" (qtd in Jackson and Dunbar, 2002: 338).

The corruption of Riis' dream, as it is evidenced by the photographs and anecdotal writings and lantern exhibitions, is arresting, and invests the reader in the way that first-hand accounts can, but should, as Bonnie Yochelson argues, be considered in line with the work's purpose. He was, as Yochelson claims in reference to his lantern lectures, "a polemicist, not a photographer, and although photographs were integral to his polemic […] he did not value photographs apart from his message" (2016: 94).[52] Irrelevant of Riis' achievements as a photographer, and beside his status as a polemicist, Riis' photography represents a milestone in urban representation and

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[52] Ludwig Vogl-Bienek, in his article "A Lantern Lecture: Slum Life and Living Conditions of the Poor in Fictional and Documentary Lantern Slide Sets" (2016: 35-63), provides another usual perspective, beside Yochelson, on the value offered by lantern lectures for courting the social questions of the time.

influenced an enduring, intermedial iconography for the city that sought to comment upon living conditions that he came to know. It is an iconography that is invested in the image of modern life while concomitantly lamenting the injustices that accompanied it.

Figure 20: 'Bandit's Roost', one of the most striking photographs in Riis' collection, presents the striking, diverse character of the slum.

Peter Hales has written that "one may view Riis as a revolutionary on many levels: as a photographer, reformer, aesthetician, urban observer, and sociologist [wherein his] camera served to topple structures of thought and behavior which had been stagnant for years" (2005: 192). Riis presents a city at odds with itself; in this, it is equally important to regard both the visible poor and the absent (but present) middle class who were Riis' primary audience. "Riis' lantern slides and his books were not meant to entertain", writes Hales, "they were meant to demand of his middle-class

Victorian audience a complete and active commitment to the cause of social justice and economic reform" (193). The images of poverty contained therein might have expressed the city's social constitution by displaying (and, potentially, exploiting) those occupying the poorer parts of the city, yet the addressees were nearly always those with the power to enact the change that Riis wanted.[53]

The social state of the city was, according to Rem Koolhaas, brought about, in part, by Manhattan's island status which had no choice but to make use of its finite space. This characteristic, combined with the ordinary appeal of living near the centre, amounted to tremendously cramped living conditions for the city's inhabitants, particularly in less affluent parts of the city. "The city becomes a mosaic of episodes," Koolhaas argues, "each with its own particular life span that contest each other through the medium of the Grid" (1994: 20). Koolhaas articulates a conceptual emphasis on the grid as the core component of New York's topography. Moreover, as is demonstrated by Riis' photography, the grid is a primary determining factor for the social formation of the city that boxes its inhabitants into a "mosaic" of spaces that each reflect a unique lived experience of New York.

Riis' New York, as illustrated by the passage that opens this section, is a "mosaic" of slum sites that figure as epicentres for the lower classes which accumulated large numbers of incongruent, newly-arrived metropolitans who had no choice but to pile in on top of one another. The packed tenements were the natural byproduct of an urban environment that was powerless to accommodate the ever-fluctuating number of bodies that continued to arrive from disparate overseas origins.

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[53] While I will argue that Riis' iconography was, in many ways, transposed onto many of the socially-oriented early films of New York, it is worth noting that the us-and-them relationship formed between subject and spectator here does not operate in the same way.

Riis' catch-all regard for his subjects has been a matter of scrutiny for some, including Robert Hughes who has commented on the nature of Riis' approach:

> Viewing these folk as specimens, who must be exposed to view for the ultimate good of their own class, Riis could be – by more recent standards of journalistic etiquette – grossly intrusive. He felt no need for agreement between subject and photographer. His forays were like police raids […] the results are like images of befuddled animals in their dens (1997: 323).

Throughout his writing Riis displays an often arrogant faith in the virtue of his own work and maintains an unsettling tendency to depend on stereotypes.

Certainly there are aspects of Riis' observations that are problematic and based on contentious if historically popular clichés regarding ethnic determination; however, in spite of this flaw, symptomatic of his time, Riis does uncover the city as a place of diverse social elements that combine to form a cosmopolitan sense of space. For the most part, Riis does not privilege one group over the others and pragmatically deploys an egalitarian rhetoric that treats his subjects fairly, noting a "cosmopolitan character of lower New York" (2010: 20) that is emblematic of the city's ethnically plural nature. In an introduction to Riis' text, David Leviatin writes that "Riis came down hard on difference not because he was a racist or a 'product of his times' but because, from his perspective as a European who was eager to make himself into an American, he saw in difference the threatening seeds of chaos and dissolution" (2011: 37). For Leviatin, while Riis' work reveals tensions of its time, it was not an intentionally prejudiced piece of writing. Rather, Riis spoke to, and for, an assimilated, cosmopolitan city that was ethnically inclusive and demonstrative of modern life; for him, the city was not exclusive, but socially comprehensive, and comprised of diverse

people coexisting beneath a mutating nomenclature that demarcates the emergent, culturally plural "American".

An illustrative example of Riis' socially aware outlook is 'Bandit's Roost', included above.[54] The deep focus of 'Bandit's Roost' points to this social plurality of the city and reveals, layer upon layer, the multitude of urban "types" that accumulate to form the city's iconographic backbone. Riis' New York was a great many things – filthy, impoverished, over-populated, and violent – but above all it was highly sensationalised through Riis' depiction of it. As witnessed in photographs such as 'Bandit's Roost', Riis was not incapable of fostering a rough beauty even among the muck and squalor, as bright light shines from the damp cobblestones to illuminate his elegantly arranged ensemble of subjects. The two figures to the right of the photograph appear to be guarding the slum; the first offers the impression of a gatekeeper, the man to his right, a henchman. The gangster is a veritable icon of both the slum and early film and these two figures, in attire and seeming menace, align with general conceptions of that urban type. Beyond their threshold is a medley of other street folk, all of whom are looking forebodingly towards the camera.

There is a sense in Riis' work, and in the early films of New York to be discussed, that the poorer parts of the city represent sites of immobility. As seen in photographs such as 'Bandit's Roost', there is little indication of movement; the inhabitants are statue-like, immovable, fixed in their place in the slum. It is hard to make out who the ringleader is, or whether all the subjects are in fact affiliated, or even if they are the "bandits" promised by the title. The shadowy-faced man on the left-hand porch, for instance, is dressed in such a way that might suggest homelessness, while

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[54] For those familiar, a cursory glance at the densely populated street scene of 'Bandit's Roost' might bring to mind a film such as D.W. Griffith's The Musketeers of Pig Alley which makes use of similar slum iconography.

women and younger men that look on from the windows appear to be local inhabitants; the man occupying the background, for instance, seems almost separate from the foreground proceedings. Regardless of the "truth" of Riis' picture, 'Bandit's Roost' stands as an impression of the slum that fashions, in accordance with similar images, a particular but popular iconographic imprint of the city's social character. The extent to which Riis' work can figure as an objective presentation of space is ultimately beside the point; more important, not to mention more accessible, is Riis' role in the production of an iconography that illustrates the social concerns of the time and foreshadows representations of the city in film.

Figure 21: 'Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement -- five cents a spot' by Jacob Riis.

In another photograph, 'Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement -- five cents a spot', included below, Riis captures a scene within a Bayard street tenement. The photograph displays several men packed tight in the claustrophobic Chinatown lodging house. To the left of the shot a seated man, cloaked in shadows, appears

affronted by the photographer's intrusion; the two men in the foreground, pitched up against the wall, on the other hand, appear to still be sleeping. The room is dirty and dimly lit, considerably overpopulated, and littered with boxes and bric-a-brac. This scene, according to Riis, is a reasonable depiction of the many lodging houses on and around Mulberry Street at that time (2010: 51). Moreover, like 'Bandit's Roost', this photograph reveals elements of the city's burgeoning social iconography.

An interior perspective, the photograph reveals something about the physical and social make-up of the city. The cramped living conditions illustrate overpopulation and the need for ulterior usages of space. It is clear that the subjects of such scenes would have had no choice but to occupy these characteristically small, dark, and unpleasant spaces. The image of immobility perseveres here, revealing something of the city beyond this scene: the social structure of New York is unveiled in the exposure of the forgotten people who reside in such unpleasant spaces. The fate of these subjects explicates an impression of the city's social infrastructure and outlines elements of a social iconography which foregrounds marginal inhabitants as symptomatic of social injustice. Such scenes, when read together and in light of the films that followed, contribute towards a wider iconology of social injustice that operates intermedially beyond the limits of the frame. It is an iconology illustrative of the social state of the city as it is represented in visual media, and one that has a currency in later films that were concerned with similar themes.

Writing a short time after Riis' initial popularity, Louise Ware claims that he "lifted the reader beyond the world of Mulberry Street to the realm of things of the spirit" (1938: 357). Ware's commentary speaks to both the inherent Christian moralism that is apparent in his writing, but also to Riis' hard-to-place relationship with social realism. His work gives life to a particular image of the slum that sometimes feels staged in

order to reinforce the politics of his endeavour; it is an image that reads part-fictitiously as opposed to offering a seemingly authentic, journalistic document of urban life. While Riis' work might fail in such regards, it nevertheless fashions a clear socio-geographic reality that, while sensational, is contingent with an aspiration to comment upon New York's social constitution.

Even if Riis' New York is somewhat half-formed and subject to, as Yochelson claims, less "a change of heart but to a shift in rhetorical strategy", one cannot overlook the legacy of his work (2016: 92). Despite being driven by a desire to stage a particular version of the city in line with a politically motivated set of agendas that governed his system of representation, Riis' images have endured. What emerges from Riis' photography is an iconography of social injustice that curated a series of particular characteristics for New York in visual media. These characteristics include icons of poverty such as the filthy slum, the overpopulated tenement, the tramp, the criminal, the street urchin, and so forth. When formulating an iconographical/iconological reading of early New York film, and placing Riis in relation to that, it is important also to consider him purely in the context of artistic representations of New York. Riis' photography constitutes a popular and iconic depiction of New York whose legacy is inscribed on New York film.

Slum Spectacles: Locating Riis' Iconography on Early Film

In his famous treatise on the social conditions of New York, *Lights and Shadows*, James McCabe writes that:

Respectable people avoid the Bowery as far as possible at night. Every species of crime and vice is abroad at this time watching for its victims. Those who do not wish to fall into trouble should keep out the way (2015: 193).

Originally published in 1883, McCabe's description of what would become a central subject of Riis photography and writings, the Bowery, functions as a warning of what awaited those who dared enter the slum. Certainly, if he and Riis are to be believed, there are grounds to suspect that those living there do so out of necessity, not choice; nevertheless, it is a damning portrait and, in McCabe's account, a condemnation of the inner-city poor.

Naturally, faith is important in order for such representations to endure; the intermedial images of poverty produced by the likes of Riis and McCabe might have had the power to shock, but it was equally important that they had the power to persuade. Writing on the power of visual rhetoric, John Louis Lucaites and Robert Hariman have sought to explain the function of iconic photographs in regard to the American public consciousness. They argue that

[some] photographs reflect social knowledge and dominant ideologies, shape and mediate understandings of specific events and periods, […] influence political behavior and identity, and provide intellectual (figurative) resources for subsequent communicative action (2001: 37-8).

There is no question that the jolt provided by Riis' photographs made a lasting impact upon the ways in which the city was seen across media, and epitomised the ways in which social issues were being framed at the intersection of political rhetoric and the arts. Moreover, the prevalence of this mode of representation – of Riis' iconography – placed Riis' work at the center of contemporary commentary on the city, commentaries that vocalised social matters across visual media.

The basic component of Riis' iconography is, of course, the slum itself, not least the area surrounding the Bowery, and the early social films of New York recall his infectious patterns of representation in myriad ways. Narratives pertaining to urban poverty, criminality, and social injustice invoke, both through their plots and their central imagery, a version of the city in keeping with the one that Riis sought to present. Characteristics extend beyond the slum as a cumulative iconographic space to include the tenement, especially overpopulated and poorly kept tenements, the street criminal, the tramp, and so forth. Many of these icons are identifiable by the manner of representation – for instance, a street criminal or tramp is discernible often by their dress. By foregrounding such narratives, the early films of New York collectively produced an accidental archive of films that sought to confront the social question, films that jointly yield an iconology of New York cosmopolitanism and social injustice.

Examples of films that specifically foreground the slum as a primary spectacle include *A Bowery Café* (AM, 1897), *Knock-Out Drops* (AM, 1897), *Tipping the Cart in Mulberry Bend* (AM, 1897), *Mulberry Bend* (AM, 1897), *The Bowery Waiter and the Old Time Ball* (AM, 1898), *Some Dudes Can Fight* (AM, 1898), *A Convict's Punishment* (AMB, 1900), *The Downward Path (in Five Parts)* (AMB, 1900), *A Raid on "Dago" Counterfeiters* (AMB, 1900), *In a Chinese Restaurant* (AMB, 1900), *A Raid on a Chinese Opium Joint* (AMB, 1900), *A Tough Dance* (AMB, 1902), *A Bowery Five Cent Shave* (Edison, 1902), *Move On* (Edison, 1903), *Bowery Street Dancers* (Lubin, 1903), *The Heathen Chinese and the Sunday School Teachers* (AMB, 1904), *Rounding Up the Yeggmen* (AMB, 1904), *The Athletic Girl and the Burglar* (AMB, 1905), *The Ex-Convict* (AMB, 1904), *The Waif: Or, Out in the Street* (AMB, 1904), *The Girl, the Burglars, and the Rat* (AMB, 1905), *Lifting the Lid* (AMB, 1905), *Robbed of Her All* (AMB, 1905), *Raffles, the Dog* (Edison, 1905), *The Kleptomaniac* (Edison,

1905), *The Black Hand* (AMB, 1906), *On the Stage; Or, Melodrama from the Bowery* (Vitagraph, 1907), *An Awful Moment* (AMB, 1908), *Falsely Accused!* (AMB, 1908), *A Burglar's Mistake* (AMB, 1909), *Concealing a Burglar* (AMB, 1908), *Deceived Slumming Party* (AMB, 1908), *Old Isaacs, the Pawnbroker* (AMB, 1908), *A Baby's Shoe* (AMB, 1909), *A Drunkard's Reformation* (AMB, 1909), *In Little Italy* (AMB, 1909), *Golden Louis* (AMB, 1909), *The Honor of Thieves* (AMB, 1909), *The Girls of the Ghetto* (Thanhouser, 1910), *A Child of the Ghetto* (Bio, 1910), and *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (AMB, 1912). Far from being exhaustive, this list of films is illustrative of the way in which filmic portrayals of New York's social condition were configured in ways that recalled the representations cultivated by muckrakers such as Riis.

Figure 22 : A Bowery street scene in *Lifting the Lid* (AMB, 1905)

Riis' New York is simultaneously dynamic but restrictive, expressing diverse social elements while seemingly condemning those occupying its slums to squalor. Moreover, Riis' New York appears to participate in the creation of its own emerging identity. His depictions almost work to mythologise the slum by presenting it as a

defining social icon, replete with narratives of poverty, injustice, and criminality, but an icon that nevertheless renders the city as a complicit force in the production of its own image, and one that is wrought with anxiety surrounding that image.

Lifting the Lid (AMB, 1905) is a fiction film that portrays a version of the city that is classed in such a way that is reminiscent of Riis' photography. The film opens on a crowd of rube types[55] – stock characters of US vaudeville and early film that are demonstrative of different modes of living – as they board a sightseeing bus for a tour of the city. The bus pulls into the background of the shot leaving two figures in the foreground: a street sweeper in the centre of the road and a well-dressed man walking along the adjacent pavement (Figure 22, above). If we consider that a social iconography depends, in part, upon the finer details, then their attire, which classes them apart from one another, is striking. Moreover, their positioning points to the social structure of the city in which the street/sidewalk polemic leads the spectator to make inferences about their social standing. As the tour bus disappears into the background, the street sweeper is left centered in the frame. Beyond the symbolic currency provided by a character literally sweeping the streets, the focalisation of the character presents him as a temporary icon of his station – rather, an illustration of the type of worker occupying the area. As the well-dressed man passes by, he does so in the periphery; the focus is fixed upon the street sweeper who, inadvertently or otherwise, draws attention to the myriad urban experiences offered by the city at that time.

The scene cuts and we follow the rubes as they tour through a series of city spots: a dance hall in which a fight breaks out over a girl; a bawdy vaudeville show in which one of the party mounts the stage before being removed; finally, an opium den.

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[55] See Thomas Elsaesser for more on the nature of the rube archetype and its development in the early period (2006: 205-23).

The film actively foregrounds a particular version of the city; yes, it is intended for dramatic effect, but the mode of representation nevertheless elicits a particular response to social matters of the time. Rather than tour the more obviously iconic spots – the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, etc. – the film utilises locations that are more in keeping with Riis' presentation of the city. The Bowery dance hall, vaudeville show, and opium den are illustrative of the same pattern of representation that characterises Riis' work. Together, these sites manifest as elements of a budding iconography that foregrounds the social question across media.

When considered beside an earlier film such as *Knock-Out Drops* (AM, 1897), a film in which an unsuspecting man is lured into a Bowery lodging house where he is drugged and robbed by a woman and her companion, it is clear that these films owe much to a history of representation that privileges the slum as a significant site of the city. Lifting the Lid plays with the iconographic value of the slum by inverting ideas about what qualifies as city sights. In this, the film illustrates an iconography that is, latently or otherwise, intertwined with Riis', one that similarly purports an agenda to foreground social questions.

The film ends where it began with the rubes disembarking the bus at the end of their tour. In *Lifting the Lid* the city is condensed to a sequence of illustrative scenes of urban life that brings the Bowery to life. By foregrounding the slum as both a subject and spectacle, the film revels in the debauchery offered by alternative urban experiences. Following Riis and others, such parts of the city had been made visible and, thus, by drawing attention to such sites as opium dens, the film goes further to indict those who have failed to act on the city's behalf, drawing attention to institutional incompetence that has been unable to solve the city's crises. Moreover, the tour dramatises the city's knowledge of its own socioeconomic state. Lucaites and Hariman

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have written that iconic photographs "contribute to the representation and constitution of specific conceptions of civic identity" (2001: 38); *Lifting the Lid*, and similar films that that draw attention to the city's slums, demonstrate a contemporary civic identity that was founded upon a coming to terms with the social issues that the city faced.

A similar film, *Deceived Slumming Party* (AMB, 1908), likewise shows another busload of rubes taking an alternative tour of the city, in particular Chinatown and the Bowery. If anything, this staging of alternative space is even more pronounced than in *Lifting the Lid*; before the "rubecart" arrives at its Chinatown destination, locals are paid to deliver what might be construed as a satisfactory slum spectacle. This film actively plays with the iconography of the slum, sensationalising it to breaking point. Upon being paid, the patrons assume their expected roles within a now-consciously constructed slum scene. Happy to perform as violent men and lunatic women – for a wage, no less – the occupants of the slum exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit that is both uplifting and amusing. A young woman feigns suicide in a Chinese opium den; another appears to be ground into sausage meat in a Chinese restaurant; later, a fight breaks out over small change in a Bowery saloon.

The plot culminates in an excessive slum spectacle that consciously draws on its iconography to the extent that, by the end of the tour, the rubes vow never to return. Once the rubes, a primary diegetic audience, have left, the "performers" celebrate and split their earnings. The film reveals a clear sense of the dominant iconography of such parts of the city, but uses it intelligently, ironically even, as it stretches it to the point of absurdity. In this, the slum assumes the role of a stage upon which the spectacle of slum life can be performed; while these are the roles that have been assigned by popular representations of Chinatown and the Bowery, the fact that it is fundamentally a performance is fascinating. Finally, the film comes to mock the ludicrousness of

common expectations regarding the slum and its inhabitants, almost working to flout the representation provided by the likes of Riis. Steve Ross has written on film's capacity to provide political discourse, stating that "motion pictures took people out of their neighborhoods and brought the wonders – and problems – of the age to life in a way that no other medium could rival. In doing so, movies turned local and regional issues into subjects of national concern" (1998: 6). In line with Ross' thinking, beyond providing an entertainment for the masses, film at that time was able to communicate and debate considerable social issues. Film was capable of broadcasting a political manifesto on the socioeconomic condition of the city at large, a vision of New York that makes use of, and plays with, the enduring images of the New York slums cultivated by Riis and others.

Lifting the Lid and *Deceived Slumming Party* actively foreground the slum and representations of it but other films reveal a similar engagement with Riis' city, even if it is in more subtle ways. Both films make use of the city's social icons to invoke key social anxieties of the time. Key to Riis' photography, however, is the broader notion of classed space – that is, space that reflects and comments upon the vast spectrum of urban experiences. Malpas has written on the complexity of place and the ways in which we can respond to its plurality. He states that

> the complexity of place does not entail a dispersion of elements, but rather
> enables their 'gathering together' – their interconnection and unification –
> in such a way that their multiplicity and differentiation can be preserved
> and brought to light. The differentiated and complex unity of place reflects
> the complex unity of the world itself; it also reflects the complex unity, given
> focus through a creature's active involvement with respect to particular
> objects and events, that makes for the possibility of memory, of belief, of

thought and of experience – only within place is the unity necessary for subjectivity established (1999: 174).

Malpas' thoughts on the complexity of place are particularly useful to a discussion on malleable, classed spaces displayed on early New York film. By understanding New York as a complex place comprised of myriad elements, it emerges as the sum of its various parts.[56] By observing the early fiction films of New York, it is clear that Riis' ghettos are as important to New York's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century iconography as the Empire State Building would be to its mid-century iconography to follow.

Tied up in those polemical images of New York's visual formation are all the aspirations and failures of the "American Dream", the budding ideological backbone of the nation at large.[57] Jim Cullen has argued that upward mobility is "one of the most familiar American Dreams", existing since the days of Lincoln's presidency (1861-5) and his battle to end slavery; it is "a dream," Cullen argues, "typically understood in terms of economic and/or social advancement" (2003: 8). In one capacity, the "American Dream" embodies a hopeful vision of social mobility that originates in the ghetto and ends (at least metaphorically) atop the New York skyline – indeed, a significant part of the lure of skyscrapers must surely be the very literal premise of ascent. As a primary fixture of the ever-strengthening American spirit, the "American Dream" mythologised the possibility that prosperity and personal betterment existed for all and, in doing so, augmented a social infrastructure that was bottom-heavy and

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[56] This stands apart from the catch-all "melting pot" premise – which comes from Israel Zangwill's 1908 play, The Melting Pot – as a means for describing, and reducing, the ethnic plurality of the city.
[57] Granted, these films precede the popularization of the term by James Truslow Adams in 1931, however the cultural conception of an "American Dream" existed notionally as a permanent fixture of American ideology that would become an essential feature in the foundation of American identity (1931: 214-5).

vertically integrated. The attraction of upward mobility would have resonated greatly with early film's "imagined" working-class audience.

Of course, naturally, the "American Dream" was something of an ideological trap, a matter well illustrated in a film such as *The Ex-Convict* (AMB, 1904). The film follows the eponymous ex-convict recently after being released from prison for an undisclosed crime. Determined to support his wife and child, but saddled with a criminal record and no references, the ex-convict struggles to find legitimate employment. One day, the ex-convict prevents a young girl from stepping out in front of an oncoming car. Saving the girl does not immediately change his fortune, however. As he becomes increasingly desperate, the man has no choice but to turn back to crime. One night, he breaks into a wealthy home but is caught by the homeowner, an attorney who apprehends him and calls the police. Just as it seems that the ex-convict will be returned to prison, the attorney's daughter appears and identifies the man as her saviour. Her father is left with no choice but to forgive the ex-convict and the film ends with the attorney offering the redeemed man work. The film makes use of various locations throughout the city which collectively aid an actuality aesthetic that provides a sense of authenticity to the various sites depicted throughout the film.

Charles Musser has written on the film's social commentary and its engagement with such themes as city in crisis and the sanctity of the American family:

> *The Ex-Convict* places family and society in conflict, but family values are given primacy. The love and intimacy within the ex-convict's and the wealthy attorney's families are contrasted to the impersonality, selfishness, and class antagonism of the social system. The ex-convict is forced to break the law in an attempt to save his daughter's life because society, controlled by the rich, fails to protect its more vulnerable members (1991: 295).

The city in crisis is central to the plot and politics of Biograph's film – and similar films including *The Black Hand* (AMB, 1906), *An Awful Moment* (AMB, 1908), and *The Honor of Thieves* (AMB, 1909) – which work to capture and comment on the social inertia plaguing the city at the time, and against an ideology that is propped up on the dishonest promise of class mobility. Instead, these films demonstrates a debilitating immobility for any person burdened with poor social standings and/or a criminal record, illustrated clearly by the trials and tribulations of *The Ex-Convict*'s protagonist.

Figure 23: Unemployed men wait to see if work is available in *The Ex-Convict* (AMB, 1904).

The prominence of representations of poor areas on early film was, in part, an artistic response to the current trends of popular muckraking journalism and the emergence of progressive politics more generally.[58] Indeed, Musser has argued that *The Ex-Convict* "articulated a central concern of the Progressive movement" (295).

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[58] For a comprehensive examination of the development of the progressive voice in America, see Maureen Flanagan's *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivism (1890s-1920s)* (Oxford, 2007).

While the velocity of this moment in the country's history should not be understated, it can, in the case of films such as *The Ex-Convict*, be seen as a core component in the production of a social iconography on early New York film.

What can be seen here is an emergent progressive voice in early film. Maldwyn Jones has written that the rise of progressivism was a response to the nation's burgeoning successes elsewhere, predominantly in technology and industry. He states that "[t]hough Americans were proud of their technological achievements, many of the more thoughtful were disturbed by the rise of the trusts, the growing concentration of wealth, the spread of political corruption, the widening of social divisions, the bitterness of industrial strife, the scale and character of immigration, and the resulting loss of cultural homogeneity" (1983: 368-9). As this chapter will demonstrate, many of the early films of New York demonstrate an iconological investment in what Jones identifies as progressive concerns, thus establishing a shared desire, latent or not, among filmmakers to articulate growing concerns regarding the social condition of the city at that time.

There is a clear agenda in a film such as *The Ex-Convict*, pictured above, to critique the urban conditions that allow for such misery. Figure 23 depicts a line of unemployed men waiting outside of a factory in hope of work. The long shot places the men at the centre of the frame; from this distance the only discernible character is the foreman in white, the rest of the men merge to form a singular, striking image of unemployment. One by one, the men enter the factory – an icon in itself of both industrial America and the working class – with the exception of the ex-convict who is denied work. This sequence points a progressive message that underscores the film: regardless of the man's crimes, the fact that he is unable to reenter society and provide for his dependents, reveals a flaw in the justice system and a failing in the ideological

approach to criminality. The iconographic value of criminality in popular visual media of the time has history in Riis' photography – 'Bandit's Roost' serves a fine example – and in films such as *The Ex-Convict*. Here, there is a clear sense of an emergent iconology of social injustice that is dependent on urban immobility, and that works in opposition to fundamental ideals that permeate national ideology – ideals that would go on to be the founding principles of the "American Dream".
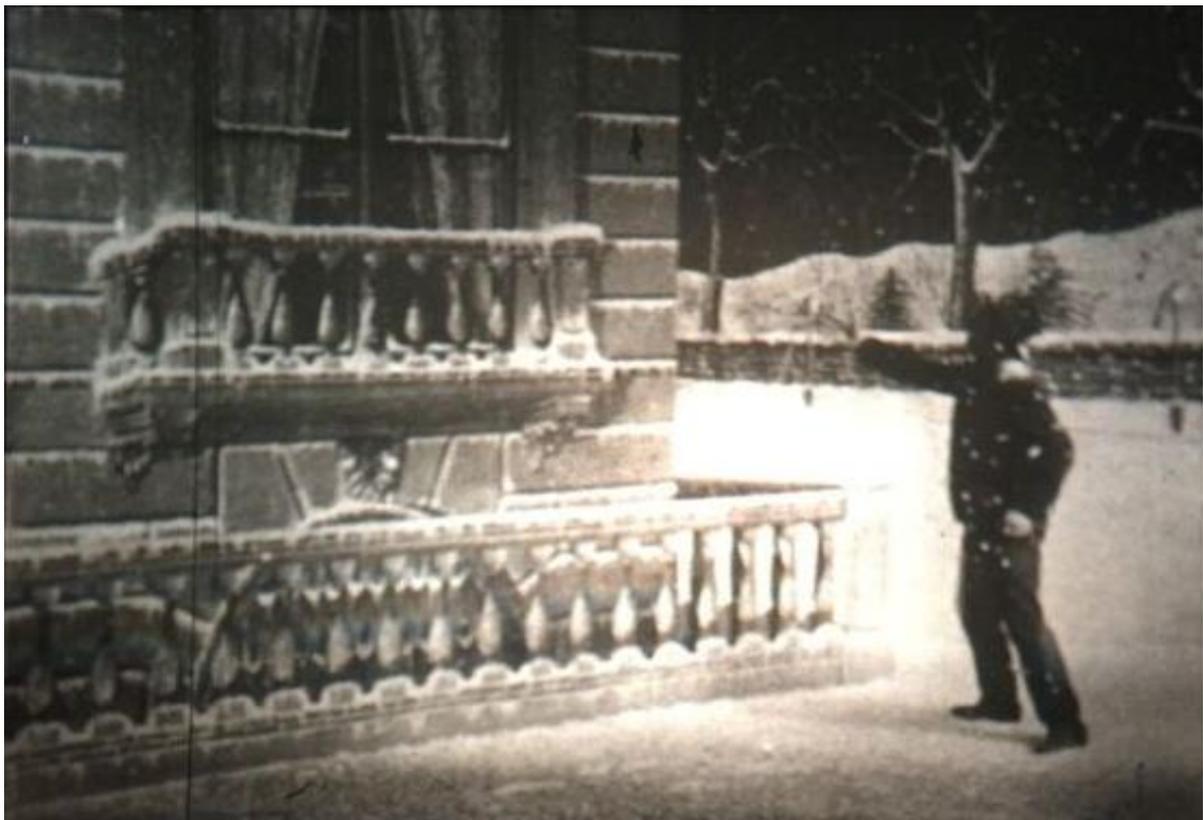
Figure 24 : The titular ex-convict standing before the attorney's wealthy home (AMB, 1904)

Before breaking into the attorney's home, the ex-convict wanders around in the snow contemplating his options. The freezing weather comes to emblematise the severity of his plight, and is illustrative of an elemental force that is acting against him, a comment in itself, perhaps, on the uncompromising socioeconomic landscape. He stops before the wealthy town house and gestures towards it as though it were a character in its own right, an icon in itself of the vast differences offered by the American urban experience (Figure 24, above). The ex-convict's emphatic gesturing

towards the wealthy home figures as a plea for help, and in this action he comes to embody an image of social injustice through his iconographic function in this setting.

The window into the wealthy home looms over him and acts as both barrier, gateway – he breaks in through it – and icon for a world of literal and figurative riches that continue to elude him. In order to access the world that is denied him the ex-convict has no choice but to take it by force, to once again defy the legal system that has already exiled him both socially and economically. In spite of a national ideology that promised upward mobility, the ex-convict breaks down the class barrier in the only way available to him; he forces his way into the house which stands as a visible beacon for the social injustice he has been left to endure. In the end, the ex-convict's fate is not salvaged by social reform, but by sheer chance and good, old-fashioned dumb luck. The film ends with the ex-convict being forgiven by the wealthy attorney, granted a job and, through it, a means to provide for his family. That victory, however, is a hollow one; the good fortune of this ex-convict is far from representative of the fates of the many like him. Those will remain at the mercy of a city that is quite clearly unequipped to serve them.

Malpas explains that the complexity of place is compounded in a "gathering together" (1999: 174) of many diverse elements, a notion crystallised by *The Ex-Convict*. Differentiation, according to Malpas, lies at the heart of the complex unity of place. Both the ex-convict, and the attorney who grants him clemency, lie at opposing ends of the social spectrum, but, seen together, they illustrate the range of experiences that the city has to offer. (In fact, the various rungs of the social ladder are not "offered" as part of some free-for-all paradigm of opportunity that rewards desire, acumen, and perseverance; rather, as a film such as *The Ex-Convict* illustrates, one's social standing is determined by external forces beyond the control

of the individual in question.) The polemical social experience of New York is embodied here in the ex-convict and the wealthy attorney. Once these two icons are placed in proximity to one another, the absurdity, arbitrariness, and unforgiving nature of the social infrastructure is brought into view, as is the callous immobility that is reserved for those located at the bottom. It is here that diverging social experiences are made visible through the characters' access to the various rungs of the social ladder, upon some of which lies social security while on others its absence is evident in abundance. Together, the two characters illustrate an iconology of social injustice that is demonstrated by a collection of films, mentioned above and forthcoming; it is an iconology that draws on preceding images of social injustice and draws attention to vast difference in the modes of living that the city provides.

While Riis' images of the city presented social immobility to those members of the higher classes willing to listen, films of this kind – written and produced with an imagined audience in mind – stage those images. In them, such films cultivate an iconology of social injustice through fiction films that play out the class drama central to Riis' representations. Many of the themes pertinent to *The Ex-Convict* recur throughout early narrative films, not least in *A Baby's Shoe* (AMB, 1909), a slightly later film.

The film tells the tale of two siblings who are separated at birth who then, after a chance encounter, end up engaged to one another before their identities are finally revealed. The separation of the two children results in each of them being granted rather contrasting upbringings. If the progressive politics are easily felt in *The Ex-Convict*, then here they are utterly transparent. The film opens in media res as an ailing and poverty-stricken woman – played by early star Florence Lawrence – bemoans the fate of the two children she cannot provide for. Seeing no other course

of action, the woman places her youngest child, a daughter, on the steps of a wealthy banker's home. Upon returning home, the woman finds the titular shoe which leaves her distraught at the thought of what she has done. There, she falls into a paroxysmal fit of delirium before collapsing lifeless into her chair, all the while clutching onto her abandoned daughter's shoe. A neighbour overhears the commotion and sets off to find a priest. The priest assumes responsibility for the remaining child, a son, and chooses to keep the daughter's remaining shoe, appearing to understand its significance. Meanwhile, the banker and his wife have decided to adopt the daughter left upon their doorstep. Fifteen years later, both children have grown. In Central Park one day, the grown daughter is caught up in a carriage attached to a runaway horse and the grown son intervenes to save her, a simple act of fate that allows their paths to cross again. Unaware of their relation, the two start courting and, soon after, fall in love. The grown son abandons his plans to join the priesthood, and the couple are granted the blessings of their adopted carers. As the wedding approaches the banker and his wife recount the story of how the daughter was brought into their care, and in doing so produce the lone shoe that binds the children together. The priest immediately recognises it as the shoe to match the one he kept some fifteen earlier. Upon realising that they are indeed brother and sister, the young couple call off the wedding and the boy reprises his plans to join the priesthood, while the young lady decides to join a convent.

A Baby's Shoe is a melodrama with roots in the same form of social criticism that makes *The Ex-Convict* such a cutting indictment of the city's social infrastructure, a message reinforced by Florence Lawrence's impassioned performance as the helpless mother. Beside the heavy-handed themes of Christian moralism that underscore the film, *A Baby's Shoe* foregrounds social injustice in effect as one of its

primary concerns. In fact, the baby's shoe figures as a symbol for the ruthlessness of the city's social landscape, as an image of social injustice in general, demonstrative of the ways in which social injustices threaten to dismantle the American family unit and, thus, core American values.

Figure 25: A distraught mother is left with no choice but to abandon her child to a wealthy couple in *A Baby's Shoe* (AMB, 1909)

While central to the film's plot, the matter of the brother-sister engagement is less important to my reading than the circumstances that led to their romantic faux pas. The wealthy couple's adoption of the daughter is less an act of charity than a response to their desire for a child – they have the privilege to choose whether or not they want to keep the child, a choice that is, sadly, denied to the mother who can only imagine a future for her daughter that is apart from her. The long shot of the ex-convict gesturing towards the wealthy family's home, discussed above, bears similarity to the shot above from *A Baby's Shoe* (Fig. 25). In films such as this and *The Ex-Convict*,

wealthy houses operate as icons that reinforce social differences, both through their lavish architecture and by their separation from the slum – not only are they are located in affluent areas, they are set back from the street while looming over it. Above the street, and guarded behind sturdy fences, the wealthy home figures as an icon of ideal life that is denied to many by a punishing social infrastructure.

The icon of the slum, and icons pertaining to slum-life, manifest in early film through a collective iconology of social injustice that counts, in its repertoire, images of urban immobility that trap the lower classes in their social (and spatial) place within less affluent parts of the city.[59] Spectacles of ideal life transmit images of socioeconomic stability which are idealised by the poverty-stricken in films such as *The Ex-Convict*, *A Baby's Shoe*, and others. In such films, wealthy homes operated as icons of the upper classes that embody the (decidedly American) dream of prosperity while projecting an image of security that was unattainable for so many.

Riis' New York is characterised by an ongoing coming to terms the social state of the city at that time. The intertextuality that exists between Riis' photographs and representations of the lower classes on early film is striking for a number of reasons, not least for the fact that they collaborate to produce an artistic manifesto on social injustice that demonstrates, intermedially, the way in which visual culture operates ideologically. Of course, when reading such representations, it is hard not to recognise a recurring inclination among these visual artists to depict the city at its most desperate, and one should certainly be wary of blindly accepting Riis' perspective, or

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[59] Later films such as *The Lure of New York* (1913), *The King of the Bowery* (1914), *The Life of Big Tim Sullivan: Or, From Newsboy to Senator* (1914), *The Million* (1914), *The Outcast* (1915), *Susan's Gentleman* (1917), and *The Battler* (1919) are illustrative of the fact that the slum, and especially the Bowery, remained a key icon within New York film.

subsequent perspectives, as conclusive.[60] What emerges is an iconography that foregrounds the slum and portrays the oppressed. Riis' illustrations of New York might imply that parts of the city are uninhabitable, but that does not mean that they were in fact uninhabited. The power of his project lies in the fact that he exposes poverty and places its imagery among more romantic representations of the city; he displays the marginalised and makes them visible, thus bringing their often unfortunate urban experiences to wider attention. As is evident in the films discussed in this and subsequent sections, Riis' gritty aesthetic endured across media and is echoed in the early narrative films of New York that reveal an ongoing engagement with pertinent social issues.

Tramps and Homelessness on Early Film

In its many forms the tramp figures as a cumulative icon of poverty and social injustice that recurs throughout early film. The tramp signifies a great many things; not only do tramps represent archetypal stock characters of early film, they also provide bountiful iconographic capital that embodies impoverished sites such as the slum while disseminating social issues more broadly. Thanks in no small part to Chaplin's famous creation,[61] the tramp has endured as an emblem of the silent era, but its intermedial iconographic value predates that by some years. If Jacob Riis' iconography is one that is punctuated by social injustice, then the tramp figures as an

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[60] Take, for instance, the photography of Alfred Stieglitz that featured in the previous part of this thesis that portrayed the city in an altogether different light, favouring an earthy beauty to contrast Riis' more sensationally raw photographs.

[61] Of course, more than enough has been written on Chaplin and his defining creation. In *My Autobiography* (originally published in 1964) Chaplin himself mythologises the birth of the character: in a serendipitous moment of good fortune, as he searched for a costume, everything fell into place and "by the time [he] walked on to the stage he was fully born" (2003: 148). Simon Louvish has rightly noted, however, that "the American tramp was a familiar figure before Chaplin came on the scene" (2009: 46).

icon that embodies the weight of that ideology. As a prototypical icon of film's direct engagement with the social question, the tramp emblematises the fact that, even in its earliest years, film was deeply invested in confronting social issues and disseminating images of the city that critiqued its institutional failures to provide for its less fortunate citizens.

The tramp is distinguishable from the hobo who, by contrast, is epitomised by his mobility; a "romanticized" figure, according to Simon Louvish (2009: 46), the hobo is essentially a wanderer without roots who is often caught train-hopping from city to city where they embody the permeable spirit of the open road. The tramp, on the other hand, is identifiable by the opposite: a more tragic figure, and resolutely urban, the spatially immobile tramp is a natural by-product of the city and its current condition, and is, due to their preponderance in representations of the city, a recurring means of demonstrating the effects of a social infrastructure in crisis. Jay Boyer has written that "to our early movie audiences, the tramp surely suggests some ill-defined notion of a permanent under-class in [the United States] – of *other*, of *them*, of being aside from the promise that this country held out" [emphasis in original] (1990: 88). Correspondingly, John Seelye has identified the paradox of the filmic tramp by suggesting a tension between "our distaste for the real tramp and our love for the comic version" (1963: 535). The thoughts of both writers collaborate to suggest that the image of the tramp, as a vehicle of direct social signification, was exploited as a means of vocalising pertinent social concerns within the city, and nation, at that time.

The tramp's capacity to generate meaning is a principle that lends itself to Linda Fuller's intercinematological method of exploring homelessness in film. Intercinematology, as Fuller proposes, seeks to penetrate "the many aspects and layers of film that can provide clues to our better understanding [of] its manifest and

latent content", finding links between "social phenomena and social reality" (1999: 160). The analysis of latent content discussed here is methodologically in line with the sort of close analysis that makes sense of a work's iconological content. Fuller's approach asks one to consider what she calls the "latent" elements of a piece of work which allows her to assess the ways in which filmmakers have approached the topic over time:

> In terms of the theory of intercinematology, one can see that a close reading of motion pictures dealing with the topic of the homeless reveals clear-cut demonstrations for dealing, or not dealing with a difficult subject. In the early days of cinema it was easy to establish that person as villainous or comic tramp, whose life was so different as to make him "other" […] As our society becomes ever more stratified in terms of both its economic and information gaps, we unfortunately seem to be grasping at excuses for not dealing with the very people and problems that need our attention (1999: 170).

What is clear in Fuller's thoughts, and indeed from filmic presentations of tramps more generally, is that tramps signify a series of institutional failures in modern cities. The tramp endures as a symptomatic, and iconic, expression of capitalism's egalitarian failings within the city; both intimately a part of the city and at the same time not belonging to it, the tramp is essentially a rogue urban dweller that is synonymous with social injustice within New York.

As a symptom of the city's social state and early film's tendency to confront social issues regarding the institutional failures of capitalism – thanks, in no small part to the rise of late-nineteenth-century muckraking journalism – the tramp is intricately entwined with the city and the iconographies pertaining to it. An illustrative survey of New York tramp films reveals an iconocentricism surrounding the figure in films

including *The Tramp and the Bathers* (AM, 1897), *A Tramp's Dinner* (AM, 1897), *Tramp in a Millionaire's Bed* (AM, 1897), *The Tramp Caught in a Tartar* (AM, 1898), *The Tramp and the Giant Firecracker* (AM, 1898), *The Tramp and the Muscular Cook* (AM, 1898), *The Tramp Trapped* (AM, 1898), *The Burglar and the Bundle* (AMB, 1899), *Spirits in the Kitchen* (AMB, 1899), *The Astor Tramp* (Edison, 1899), *The Evidence Was Against Him* (AMB, 1900), *How They Fired the Bum* (AMB, 1900), *One on the Bum* (AMB, 1900), *The Tramp and the Burglar* (AMB, 1900), *The Tramp gets Whitewashed* (AMB, 1900), *Tramp in the Haunted House* (AMB, 1900), *A Tramp in the Well* (AMB, 1900), *Tramps in the Old Maid's Orchard* (AMB, 1900), *The Ugly Tempered Tramp* (AMB, 1900), *The Tramp and the Crap Game* (Edison, 1900), *Meandering Mike* (AMB, 1901), *On the Benches in the Park* (AMB, 1901), *The Tramp's Strategy that Failed* (Edison, 1901), *The Twentieth Century Tramp; or, Happy Hooligan and his Airship* (Edison, 1901), *Foxy Grandpa Shows the Boys a Trick or Two with the Tramp* (AMB, 1902), *On a Milk Diet* (AMB, 1902), *The Sleeper* (AMB, 1902), *Poor Hooligan, So Hungry Too!* (AMB, 1903), *"Who Pays for the Drinks?"* (AMB, 1903), *Halloween Night at the Seminary* (Edison, 1904), *Pranks of Buster Brown and his Dog Tige* (Edison, 1904), *"Weary Willie" Kidnaps a Child* (Edison, 1904), *"Weary Willie" Kisses the Bride* (Edison, 1904), *Raffles, the Dog* (Edison, 1905), *A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed* (AMB, 1906), *Tramp's Angel* (AMB, 1907), *What the Bum did to the Dude* (AMB, 1907), *The Clubman and the Tramp* (AMB, 1908), *Then the Tramp He Woke Up* (AMB, 1908), *Golden Louis* (AMB, 1909), and *How the Tramp Got the Lunch* (Edison, 1909). From relatively simple beginnings that include *The Tramp and the Bathers* (AM, 1897), a film in which a tramp is caught stealing unattended clothes, to the more complex narratives of films such as *The Clubman and*

the Tramp (AMB, 1908), the tramp endured as a popular, if malleable, archetype for the early filmic landscape of New York.

The Twentieth Century Tramp; or, Happy Hooligan and his Airship (Edison, 1901) is an early example of film that embodies the tension between real and screen tramps described by Seelye. A stylistically impressive trick film, *The Twentieth Century Tramp* makes use of a split screen to portray a tramp riding a pedal-powered airship over a panorama of the New York skyline. In fact, the film makes use of the city's physical iconography; towards the end of the film there is a clear shot of the Brooklyn Bridge in the skyline panorama that occupies the bottom half of the screen. The film actively engages with the city's bridge and skyline iconography and its tramp, as with many tramps that followed, represents a meeting point between the axes of humour and social insight, the two fundamental bases of satire. As the tramp rides above the city on a futuristic, winged machine, he comes to emblematise a city at odds with itself where images of urban progress, illustrated in the impressive skyline, contend with the more prominent theme of social injustice. The film suggests that for as long as social matters remain unattended, progress, such as that embodied in the flying vehicle, is a fantastic dream. As the tramp soars above New York, made identifiable by icons including the Brooklyn Bridge, he affirms his continued place in the city's future; the city, often synonymous with progress, is at once marked by the looming spectre of social injustice.

The Bad Boys' Joke on the Nurse (Edison, 1901) features two young boys playing a prank on a nurse who is sleeping with a child in her lap. A homeless man is sleeping nearby. One of the boys takes a log and swaps it with the sleeping child before placing the child in the homeless man's arms. The nurse wakes to find the child missing and confronts the tramp who is none-the-wiser as to how he ended up with

the child. She beats him before he is escorted away by a nearby policeman. While this film concomitantly highlights the matter of juvenile delinquency, it is also a paints damning picture of the way in which the homeless were regarded at the time.

It is evidence, in fact, of the malleability of the tramp figure in early New York film. The actual culprits are, of course, the two boys who get away with their prank without consequence as the tramp becomes the scapegoat for their antics. Compared to a film such as *The Clubman and the Tramp*, to be discussed below, which presents a comic tramp who is mischievous as opposed to villainous (in that film, he has hardly done much harm by the film's end), in *The Bad Boys' Joke on the Nurse*, the tramp is wholly villainous in the eyes of the nurse – after all, it is only dramatic irony that vindicates the tramp – and the comedy emerges from the young boys' successful attempt to frame him. The villainy that is ascribed to the tramp may be undeserved but it does, nevertheless, point to an assumption that lies at the heart of tramp films such as these. There is an expectation of character that underscores them, based on a cultural predisposition to assume that tramps by nature are dishonest and, ultimately, villainous.

This supposed villainy arises in both *Weary Willie Kidnaps a Child* (Edison, 1904) and *A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed* (AMB, 1906). The former film opens on Willie, the titular tramp, asleep on a park bench. There he is joined by a nurse with a child. A nearby policeman approaches the nurse and begins to flirt. Quite bizarrely, the nurse goes off with the policeman, leaving Willie alone with the child. Willie wakes to find the child unattended and decides to take it with him. He dresses the child in rags and, before long, passers-by take pity on Willie and the child and give them

money. Within minutes, the policeman and nurse catch up with Willie who is arrested just as a passing woman offers the child money.

Figure 26: The sleeping tramp in *Weary Willie Kidnaps a Child* (Edison, 1904)]

In contrast to the earlier film mentioned in which the tramp is framed for a crime he did not commit, Willie's actions at least appear more sinister. Willie's kidnapping of the child instils a considerably darker message regarding the city's social question. As a symptom of New York's rapid urbanisation, the tramp is an icon of urban displacement. Sprawling across the bench, Willie comes to embody the mounting visibility of the city's failure to provide for the less fortunate who emblematise the hard truth that the city's prosperity cannot be enjoyed by all. While perhaps mollified by the film's comedic elements – as is the case with most tramp films which fall into the comedy genre – the kidnapping nevertheless articulates an anxiety not only for the safety of children in the vast city, but to attendant fears that the following generation will suffer for the former's failings. The metamorphosis of the middle class child into a

proxy for poverty – a transformation which makes use of the iconographic currency of rough clothing to signify the poor – expresses a fear that the city will not be able to sustain itself indefinitely. The transformation of the child makes visible the speed at which one might succumb to social collapse; after all, as the child indicates, all you need to do to be a tramp is to dress like one. To this end, the tramp himself morphs iconologically from a sly villain into a totem for the possibility of impending urban ruin.

The policeman functions here as a symbol of both institutional power and civic responsibility. The fact that he pays no attention to the tramp reflects a lack of care to attend to the needs of the city's underclass. If we assume that the tramp intends to do no harm to the child, then his criminal act ceases to be malicious; instead, it comes to demonstrate a last-ditch attempt to survive by any means available. The success of his ruse – that is, the use of the child to encourage sympathy and charitable donations – reveals a public fear of the conditions of the city's future. In the end, the tramp profits by exploiting the public fear that marginalises and vilifies him. The tramp makes use of the child's youthfulness to appeal to the charitable impulses of those passing by, but in doing so makes tangible the fact that homelessness will not be confined to a single generation. The public quickly respond to Willie's provocation and, through fear, guilt, or both, donate their change to him.

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed (AMB, 1906) opens on a courtyard. The starving tramp and his dog occupy the space to the right of the frame while a makeshift bed lies in the background to their left. Here, the arrangement of the mise-en-scène foregrounds the fact that the tramp is sleeping rough. The film then follows the exploits of the tramp's loyal pet who, thankful that he shared his little food with him in the film's opening scene, takes to the street to find food to repay him for his kindness. Following a close-call at a sausage-making factory where he is nearly turned into the meat he

so desperately desires, the dog manages to escape with a length of sausage which he shares with his master at the film's end.

Figure 27: The tramp and his dog in *A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed* (AMB, 1906)

While the tramp of *A Friend in Need* is, in fact, a supporting character to his own dog - which, in itself, might offer a comment on the general regard for such city dwellers - he is nevertheless humanised by the charity that he extends towards his dog. In the process of sharing his food he embodies the civic responsibility that is owed to those creatures unable to provide for themselves; his charity operates as a simple appeal to humanity, humility, and altruism, necessary creeds for a city of its size. Unlike the tramp, the dog acts on intuition; its impulse to steal food is framed, narratively, as a repayment when it is in fact a primal instinct to survive. The small issue of cannibalisation aside – the dog appears to have stolen sausages made from other, less athletic dogs (likely a part of the film's humour) – the dog exonerates the

tramp's responsibility for consuming stolen goods, and the film ends with the two dining together.

Figure 28 : The tramp and his dog dine together at the end of *A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed* (AMB, 1906)

While missions in areas such as the Bowery were trying to feed the city's homeless (Seppo, 1995: 148), *A Friend in Need* points to a basic civic duty to provide for one another. The film closes on a medium close-up of the tramp dining with his dog. The shot breaks the fourth wall in a technique which interestingly mirrors the famous opening/closing shot from *The Great Train Robbery* (Edison, 1903).[62] The tramp looks directly into the camera as he eats – a ploy that was not uncommon at that time – and maintains eye contact with the audience; certainly, it is less striking than firing a weapon into the camera (as in Porter's film) yet, it achieves a similar, no

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[62] That is, the famous shot in which the bandit faces the camera and fires his weapon, although it has been noted that the shot was moved in various versions of the film (Musser, 2004: 95).

less haunting effect and demands that the audience address the social questions brought to mind by the film.

While most film tramps are indeed inflected with at the very least an air of villainy, it should be noted that there were many comic iterations in the developmental trajectory that led to Chaplin. In Griffith's *The Clubman and the Tramp* (AMB, 1908) one will find a simple and yet deceptively incisive commentary on the city's social composition, chiefly, that is, in regard to the fantastical promise of class mobility. Griffith's comedy of errors opens outside of the Sniffins' considerable family home[63] – the home itself an icon of wealth and prosperity – where a tramp attempts to persuade the housemaid to offer him food. After she refuses the tramp cunningly enters the house where he helps himself to the various home comforts to be found around the Sniffens' kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom. After trying on one of Mr Sniffins' suits, the tramp considers that, if he were to shave, he could reasonably pass for the wealthy clubman himself.[64] With his newly acquired identity, the tramp goes about town borrowing money and dancing with showgirls. Soon after Sniffins' hearing of her husband's shenanigans, Sniffins' wife calls the police who, naturally, arrest the real Mr. Sniffins by accident. Despite his reasonable protestations, Mr Sniffins is taken to police station. After being granted bail the clubman and the tramp encounter one another at Sniffins' house where the misunderstanding comes to light. There, the tramp is arrested and taken off to jail.

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[63] Catalogue descriptions explain that exterior shots were filmed around West 12th Street, Manhattan.
[64] *Halloween Night at the Seminary* (Edison, 1904) features a similar plot wherein a tramp is mistaken for a guest at a Halloween part and *A Gentleman Burglar* (AMB, 1902) features a burglar disguised as in a gentleman's attire. There is a lot to be said, in fact, for the similarity between these plots and the famous tramp and drunken millionaire sequences in Chaplin's masterpiece *City Lights* (UA, 1931).

Figure 29 : The tramp acquires a new, "respectable" identity in *The Clubman and the Tramp* (AMB, 1908).

In an early 1908 review, one (anonymous) critic goes to lengths to describe the noble character of the clubman before asserting that

> there comes a day of reckoning, though through no fault of Sniffins. To the basement door come [sic] a fat, lazy tramp in quest of the usual handout. He is met by Bridget's cold refusal and so resorts to subterfuge. He tells Bridgt [sic] that the cop would like a word with her at the corner, whither she foes [sic] in answer to this bogus message. This gives his Trampship an opportunity to slip into the kitchen and poultice his digestive machinery with the inviting viands there on the table, moistened with a bottle of wine (qtd in Higgins, 1999: 164).

So unsympathetic is this particular critic towards the tramp and all he represents that one would not hesitate to speculate where their social allegiances lay. On this writer's terms, the tramp's "quest of the usual handout" constructs his character as parasitic, a burden upon the wealthy classes whose lavish but insular world is being disrupted

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when it should, in this writer's mind, be protected from the underclass that seeks to topple it.

Of course, the general feeling towards class disparity was not as unanimously hostile as the above reviewer's words suggest. Despite an unfortunate tendency to regard poverty as a failure of character, Andrew Carnegie wrote in *The Gospel of Wealth* (originally published in 1889) that

> it is held to be the duty of the man of wealth […] to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is so called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgement, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community (qtd in Jackson and Dunbar, 2002: 452).

The philanthropic spirit of Carnegie's rallying cry recalls Riis and stands as yet another example of an assertive voice outspoken against the bias of the city's social infrastructure. Carnegie's call to arms can be read as an acknowledgment of the deep disparity that existed between the wealthy few and the many poor. Like Riis, Carnegie embodies an emergent spirit of progressivism that seeks to contest the city's institutional failings.

At the heart of *The Clubman and the Tramp* lies the implication that the basis of the "American Dream" is capitalism thriving on opportunity. For an imagined audience that would count among its viewership a number of working class patrons, the image of the impoverished tramp inhabiting the wealthy clubman's world might well have functioned as a form of wish fulfilment for the poverty-stricken masses who were denied spatial, social, or economic access to such luxury. *The Clubman and the Tramp* articulates the ways in which film presented the city and its ongoing coming to terms with the social conditions that blighted it. In short, the film is a fantasy of

fulfilment for a dejected proportion of the city that dreams of personal, economic betterment while also serving as a condemnation for having it too easy.

The Clubman and the Tramp reveals film's ongoing entanglement with early twentieth century urban modernity, reflecting the effects that it was having upon the city's social dynamics through an iconography that centralises class division. The tramp, identifiable most often through their scruffy attire and spatial displacement, is a central icon to the presentation of class division on film. Against the icon of the middle class home, the tramp presents a visual paradox that highlights the film's central thesis. By donning the clubman's suit and stepping out into the world as man of leisure, the tramp becomes a projection of the illusion of the "American Dream". The tramp may be lacking in opportunities but he also gets by on sheer dumb luck (that is, until it runs out). To this end, the film essentially suggests that the social structure is predetermined and while it may wobble, it will eventually right itself once again.

Johan Nilsson identifies that an understanding of satire in relation to a film's primary aesthetics is essential in revealing the subtext that lies at the heart of a given work, stating that "the viewer is required by satire to realize connections to specific targets outside the film" (2013: 109). The message of *The Clubman and the Tramp* is, admittedly, ambiguous, but by drawing attention to the tramp's central deceit, the film ends up reinforcing the class divisions that it seeks to unveil. The film touches upon pertinent social concerns, but by calling attention to the system that it seeks to mock, the film stabilises it. The tramp's thievery is finally framed as a villainous act which, by failing to dwell upon the social conditions that made the tramp's exploits necessary in the first place, only works to reinforce the animosity felt towards such people.

The tramp finally figures as an embodiment of a false promise of shared opportunity; a quintessential icon of city life, the tramp signals all that is wrong with the

myth of American modernity. The tramp underscores an iconology of social injustice that manifests through its image in the films discussed here. It is an iconology that functions to criticise the notion of opportunity and upward mobility that were characteristic of the nation's underlying ideological infrastructure. The tramp, then, is both an archetypal character of early film and an enduring icon that signifies the socioeconomic inconsistencies that lay at the heart of the inner-city.

The tramp remains an enduring sign of urban dislocation. As an occupier of heterotopic urban spaces – the park, the alleyway, the gutter, the ghetto – the tramp, a seeming by-product of the modern city, is neither of the city he signifies, nor is he apart from it. The early tramp films of New York locate the tramp as a central icon of the city's burgeoning social crises; he is a malleable figure who articulates fears surrounding the proliferation and perpetuation of the urban underclass while providing an amusing stock character for early filmic escapades. The tramp is the embodiment of displacement, a wanderer caught between spaces, condemned by the powers of capitalistic hegemony to exile, an unwelcome by-product of his city's success. The narrative function of tramps may be so yet, iconologically, the preponderance of them on early film implies something more: the tramp, signalled by both their dishevelled attire and spatial presence in the margins, points to the fact that capitalism is a battle that not everyone can survive.

How the *Other* Other Half Lives: The Social Elite on Early Film

> [It] is one thing to live comfortably with the abstract conception of poverty, another to be brought in contact with its human embodiments. Lily had never conceived of these victims of fate other than in the mass. That the mass was

composed of individual lives, innumerable separate centres of sensation, with her own eager reachings for pleasure, her own fierce revulsions from pain–that some of these bundles of feeling were clothed in shapes not so unlike her own, with eyes meant to look on with gladness, and young lips shaped for love–this discovery gave Lily one of those sudden shocks of pity that sometimes decentralize a life.

(Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, 159)

As this chapter has illustrated so far, images of poverty were commonplace on early film, however, there were other iconographies representing the city's social constitution at that time. In fact, as has been identified in many of the films that have featured above, the wealthy classes were often depicted relationally to the poorer classes. When seen together, the rich and poor form a visual dialectic of the city's social constitution on screen that expresses the concerns of the city through simple juxtaposition.

The House of Mirth, Edith Wharton's perceptive and rather biting novel of manners, was published in serial format in *Scribner's Magazine* between January and November 1905, the same journal that was responsible for publishing various essays of Jacob Riis, including a shorter version of *How the Other Half Lives* in 1888 that preceded the complete text two years later. Just as Riis' texts played a central role in the formation of slum iconography, Wharton's novel produced another widely circulated iconographic template for New York's high society in the early 1890s, the same period as that which is rendered in Riis' text. *The House of Mirth* stands as one of the more prominent depictions of New York's social elite, offering a critique of the upper class to rival Riis' polemic documentation of their socioeconomic opposite.

Wharton's 1905 novel tells the story of Lily Bart, a New York socialite who dreams of marrying well and embarking upon the interminable carousel of luxurious living, formal engagements, and conspicuous consumption that figures as life for New York's high society. Things do not work out as planned for Lily who, after a series of misunderstandings, comes to witness the erosion of her social standing. By the novel's end, Lily experiences poverty firsthand before overdosing on a lethal dose of sleeping draught. In the above passage, Lily is descending towards poverty, and in doing so reveals the degree to which New York high society was unable to conceive of the issues that were impacting the rest of the city. Their world may be opulent and expensive, but it is also, for the most part secure from the reality of the outside world.

After falling on hard times, Lily has no choice but to confront the poor "victims of fate" in a way "other than in the mass" (159). Lily's inability to conceive of poverty as anything other than an abstraction is, itself, a comment on the class divisions that existed in the city at that time. So protected is her social position, and so great is her ignorance of the troubles of the world, that she is dangerously unprepared for her encounter with poverty.[65] Wharton's novel constructs a damning depiction of New York high society, depicting it as an ivory tower fated to collapse. Furthermore, as an indictment of privilege and entitlement, the novels suggests the life of mirth enjoyed by the New York socialites is composed of a series of superficial social gestures that scarcely conceals the absurdity of their lifestyle.

Much as Riis' text drew upon his experiences in the Lower East Side, the details of Wharton's novel were drawn from her own experiences growing up as a New York socialite. While outwardly oppositional, the effect of the two texts is startlingly similar.

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[65] In line with this, it is worth acknowledging that the title of Wharton's novel comes from a passage in Ecclesiastes which reads: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (*The Authorized King James Bible*, Ecc. 7.4).

Lily's broad ignorance regarding the reality of the city's social constitution, and the effects of povety on the individual, is iterative of the same pattern of ignorance that resulted in *How the Other Half Lives* being such a sensation. Riis' text functioned as an epiphany for the wealthy classes whose social aloofness predicated the feelings of shock and responsibility that greeted it. In its time, Riis' text was described in the *New York Tribune* as an "epoch-making book" (14 Dec. 1901) while Wharton's novel was likewise a sensational success with the *New York Times* referring to it as "a novel of remarkable power" (15 Oct. 1905). While inverse in their approach, read together Riis and Wharton's works can been seen to document the same imperative to make class divisions in the city visible.

Wharton's novel challenges the security of the social elite's opulent, if delicate, universe. The brittleness of their world is evident in some of the films aforementioned in this chapter – consider, for instance, the role of the wealthy home in *The Ex-Convict* and *The Clubman and the Tramp* which stand in for a more extravagant way of life that has been denied to the protagonists of those films. Both films feature a home invasion and, while the wealthy characters do not ultimately suffer in the way that the poorer characters do, the presence of a tramp and the ex-convict in the homes of New York's high society implies the fragility of their world. Whether or not they believe it, the wealthy do not exist in a social vacuum; rather, they coexist in proximity with the poverty that they often choose to ignore. Both Riis and Wharton's texts, beside the two films mentioned above, succeed in making concrete the abstraction that is New York's class system. Collectively, such texts produce an impression of New York's social formation, the basis of an iconology that is built on difference, division, and distance.

The wealthy appear throughout early films of New York such as *A Crusty Old Bachelor* (AM, 1899), *The Divorce (in three parts)* (AMB, 1903), *European Rest Cure* (Edison, 1904), *How the French Nobleman Got a Wife Through the NY Herald Post Column* (Edison, 1904), *The Hypnotist's Revenge* (AMB, 1907), *Mr Hurry-Up of New York* (AMB, 1907), *Betrayed by a Handprint* (AMB, 1909), *The Christmas Burglars* (AMB, 1908), *Falsely Accused!* (AMB, 1908), *Father Gets in the Game* (AMB, 1908), *For A Wife's Honor* (AMB, 1908), *Jones and his New Neighbours* (AMB, 1908), *Money Mad* (AMB, 1908), *Mr Jones at the Ball* (AMB, 1908), *Romance of a Jewess* (AMB, 1908), *His Wife's Mother* (AMB, 1909), *The Better Way* (Bio, 1909), *The Broken Locket* (Bio, 1909), *The Cardinal's Conspiracy* (Bio, 1909), *Choosing a Husband* (Bio, 1909), *The Curtain Pole* (AMB, 1909), *The Honor of Thieves* (AMB, 1909), *The Jilt* (AMB, 1909), *Jones and his New Neighbors* (AMB, .1909). *Mr Jones Has a Card Party* (AMB, 1909), *Mrs Jones Entertains* (Bio, 1909), *The Politician's Love Story* (AMB, 1909), *A Rude Hostess* (AMB, 1909), *The Son's Return* (AMB, 1909), *Sweet Revenge* (Bio, 1909), *Two Women and a Man* (Bio, 1909), *The Voice of the Violin* (AMB, 1909), *A Wreath in Time* (AMB, 1909), *An Arcadian Maid* (AMB, 1910), *As the Bells Rang Out!* (AMB, 1910), *A Child's Impulse* (Bio, 1910), *The Message of the Violin* (Bio, 1910), *Taming a Husband* (Bio, 1910), and *The Passer-By* (Edison, 1912).

The fact that films of this kind appeared in greater numbers towards the latter end of the decade implies an emergent pattern of production coinciding with the industry's ongoing attempt to reconfigure its products for a more "respectable" audience. Writing on the Vitagraph Quality films, Pearson and Urrichio state that by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century there is an indication that the industry was "attempt[ing] to shed its association with cheap amusements" by producing films that were "polysemic enough to appeal to a broad spectrum of viewers"

(1993: 63-4). A survey of such films demonstrates Pearson and Urrichio's argument; clearly, there is a discernible shift from an *imagined* audience towards what might be called an *ideal* audience, at least from an industrial perspective. This shift culminated with both the industry's subsequent explosion within the sphere of the middle class and the slew of middle-class melodramas and comedies of manners that followed in the 1910s and beyond.

Returning to Wharton, it is arguable that one of the more enduring aspects of her oeuvre is her capacity to cut to the heart of the New York social elite and, held beneath her lens, the absurdity of their social practices come to light. As this section will demonstrate, some of the latter films achieved that same effect; but what of the iconographic effect of preceding representations of the city's wealthier inhabitants? *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife through the NY Herald Personal Column* (Edison, 1904) (hereafter *French Nobleman*) is a playful farce that follows a wealthy man's attempts to find a wife. The film opens with a title card reading: "Young French Nobleman, recently arrived, desires to meet wealthy American girl, object, matrimony." As with Lily in *The House of Mirth*, the French nobleman's primary concern is to marry well and preserve his social status. As both *The House of Mirth* and *French Nobleman* make clear, one of the surest ways to maintain the social order is through the careful selection of a marriage partner, an example, as Carole Case has argued, of the social elite's "power and ability to resist intrusion" (1994: 47). The film opens in an extravagent drawing room – even more lavish than the wealthy homes in films such as *The Clubman and the Tramp* – where he looks over a small-ad seeking potential suitors. He waits outside Grant's Tomb, as per the ad's instruction, where he is met by far more women than he could have hoped for. Initially he greets each in turn, bowing comically low to the ground but, before long, he becomes overwhelmed by

their growing numbers and flees. The eager women pursue him along beaches, through woodland, and over farmland, before cornering him beside a river. With nowhere to turn, the nobleman wades into the water as the remaining women call to him from the bank; one woman follows him into the water where she is rewarded with his affection.

Figure 30: The French Nobleman flees from would be suitors in *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife through the NY Herald Personal Column* (Edison, 1904)

The upper class, as it is embodied in the French nobleman, is presented as an antiquated group that struggles to acclimatise to the modern age. The stylised theatricality of his gestures and the belittling presentation of his courting practices suggests that the film is commenting on the absurdity of the upper class as a series of codified, nonsensical social gestures. Sven Beckert considers the "tremendous power upper class New Yorkers amassed during the second half of the nineteenth century", stating that "bourgeois New Yorkers dominated the drama of production, culture,

ideas, and politics" (2001: 3). This might have been the case in a broader context, but in terms of filmic representation a film like *French Nobleman* makes the case that popular media was keen to make light of that tremendous power by trivialising their customs. In this the film provides various avenues of comic relief; to those represented by the nobleman, the film is a light and reflexive piece of self-mockery, and to everyone else it sends up those who control much of the city's social, economic, and cultural capital.

French Nobleman may be different in tone to Wharton's novel, however both achieve similar ends by mocking the absurd customs and social practices of the city's elite. Similarly, *The Hypnotist's Revenge* (AMB, 1907) goes to extreme lengths to mock the chaotic enterprise of social etiquette among the city's elite. The film follows a young hypnotist who, having been confronted by a skeptical man over the legitimacy of his act, enacts his revenge by making the man perform like a monkey, dance irresponsibly at a party, adopt the role of a waiter, and oust the groom at a wedding. While fantastical, the film comments on the fragility of the social order; notably, the man's outrageous behaviour finally finds him placed in a mental asylum. It is a film that deals extensively with the performative nature of class that threatens to break down at any moment as the hypnotised man drinks recklessly, swings from a chandelier, and kisses women without invitation. This theme is consistent with Henri Lefebvre's notion of "dressage" which speaks to the rhythmic unification of people through behavioural conditioning. Lefebvre writes that

> Society is composed of crowds, of groups, of bodies, of classes, and constitute peoples. They understand the rhythms of which living beings, social bodies, local groups are made up (2004: 42).

What Lefebvre is describing are the ritual acts that preserve the status quo of the social order. As the hypnotised man ousts the bridegroom at his own wedding, the film demonstrates the way in which flouting social codes of conduct can cause chaos on a considerable scale. Of course, western weddings are ritual acts governed by a particular set of conventions and, by flouting the paradigms of etiquette that govern the wedding ceremony, the hypnotised man calls into question the rules of governance that determine such rituals in the first place. The film makes the point that one's social standing is determined by the act of doing what you are supposed to in the place in which you are supposed to do it. The hypnotised man's behaviour draws attention to the fragility of a social order that depends on such gestures and mocks the ritualistic behaviour and customs that distinguish and determine class in the first place.

Another early comedy of manners, *His Wife's Mother* (AMB, 1909), makes light of the "trials" facing the wealthy. The plot is essentially an extended mother-in-law joke that finds a husband frustrated by that fact that his visiting in-law is removing his various pleasures one by one, including smoking and drinking. The husband hatches a plan to lavish his wife's mother with gifts and attention to the point that his wife becomes jealous and insists that her mother leave. Like the opening of *French Nobleman, His Wife's Mother* makes use of the mise-en-scène – that is, the wealthy home, splendid attire, and other luxurires – to contextualise the joke. These iconographic elements point to the class status of the film's subjects, but beyond their primary connotative powers, such narratives as this imply an emergent iconology of excess that surrounded depictions of the wealthy on early New York film. Despite the objections of his temperate, religious mother-in-law, the husband is a hedonist: he smokes, drinks when he chooses, entertains guests, owns a large home which is attended by staff, and does not appear to work. His lifestyle, characterised by the

luxuries he enjoys, renders him an embodiment of a way of life that is only possible for the wealthy.

The films observed so far have mocked the social elite in relatively charming ways, however some films accomplished this while offering commentary that probed a little deeper. Two 1909 Biograph films, *A Politician's Love Story* and *The Jilt*, offer slightly different views of the city's social elite. *A Politician's Love Story* follows a local politician named Boss Tim Crogan who is riled by a newspaper cartoonist who makes humiliating and accusatory sketches of him. He visits the newspaper's office with a weapon brandished and vengeance on his mind only to find that the person responsible is a rather beautiful woman. Crogan pursues the cartoonist who rejects him on multiple occasions. Later, she is accosted in a local park where Crogan, passing by, runs to her aid to save her from the unwanted advances, an act of bravery that wins her affections.

The film is a simple romance in which a hardened politician is softened by his affection for a woman, yet it is also an interesting treatise on the intersectional themes of class and power and how those fucntioned in relation to broader social issues. Crogan himself is an embodiment of political corruption. Clearly used to asserting power through fear and intimidation, one might wonder that if it were not for the fact that Peters turns out to be a woman – not to mention an attractive woman – then what sort of retribution might Crogan have sought. His macho, aggressive display of power is the basis of a recurring gag in the film: Crogan returns smitten with the intention of wooing Peters and, on each occasion, the other employees flinch as though he was once again brandishing the gun that he threatened them with during their initial encounter.

The film does not disclose whether or not Crogan was in fact guilty of the corruption dramatised by Peters' cartoons, yet given his rage and the general progressive attitudes towards contemporary politicians, the film is clearly making use of that telling ambiguity. The suggestion that such men may be humanised by a good, attractive woman is not the most enduring message, however, Peters, with her anti-establishment cartoons, represents an emergent voice for social issues and embodies a mounting dissatisfaction with political misconduct in general. In threatening the newspaper and wooing Peters, his chief rivial, Crogan effectively silences the opposition. The implication that he is a changed man by the film's end is not enough to suggest that this is a broader victory against the plight of political corruption. Rather, the film finally underscores the considerable power that the political elite have over various institutions, including the media. As an icon of the city's social infrastructure, the crooked politician unveils a series of wider social issues facing the city at that time, wrapped up in a romantic drama.

The Jilt is a melodrama that offers a contrasting depiction of the social elite. The film follows the romantic exploits of two college friends, John and Frank. John is engaged to marry Dorothy, a social climber with a history for flitting between prospective male suitors. On the day of their wedding, Dorothy jilts John via a letter, after which he descends into a state of despair leading to alcoholism and financial ruin. Upon hearing that Frank, his college friend, is now engaged to Dorothy, John leaves with a note to tell Frank about her true character. Prepared to show it to Frank, John is disarmed by his friend's happiness and decides to leave without causing a scene. John accidentally drops the note at the wedding which Frank happens upon. Frank's love turns sour and he decides to enact revenge upon Dorothy for the misery she

inflicted on his old friend. He writes an identical note which he has John deliver to her on their wedding day.

Ben Singer has stated that "[m]elodrama overcomes repression, giving full expression to the magnified passions, the intensities of love and hate residing deep (or not so deep) within us all" (2001: 51). Singer's description postulates that, fundamentally, melodrama relates to real life stories of love and hate replete with heightened emotional states. As with *The House of Mirth* – a novel which boasts a slew of melodramatic conventions – *The Jilt* once again draws attention to the absurd romantic customs of the city's wealthier classes, a common theme in films of this kind. Held up beside films that utilise slum iconography to reflect and comment upon a decidedly different way of life, these films plainly illustrate that the concerns of the wealthy were considerably more trivial than those issues that were facing the lower classes.

The House of Mirth presents the self-destructive nature of social and economic power, a theme that returns in a film such as *The Jilt*. The film makes use of the dating customs of these particular people to reveal the shallowness of their world. The succession of various jilts culminates with Dorothy being punished by Frank for abusing her "power" through indecision. The end of the film reveals the shallowness of this particular type of social power in the first place by implying that Dorothy's power is entirely contained to her social sphere and dependent upon her role within it. Her fickle and indecisive behaviour results in the joke finally being had on her: the sad fact that, at that time, a woman could only maintain her social status through good marriage meant that she finally depended on the men she humiliated and abandoned – so it went with Lily in *The House of Mirth*. In this, the film draws attention to the fragility of the social hierarchy in which power is gendered, temporary, and relative.

While such films demonstrate a discernible iconography of their own – made visible in the homes, clothes, and luxuries that the characters enjoy – they also are illustrative of Susan Hayward's suggestion that "iconography has connotative powers beyond the visual imagery" (2000: 215). There is a clear interest to depict the social elite as extravagant, excessive, aloof, and absurd. Seen beside poverty films of the same period, these films correspond with a wider iconology of social injustice. By trivialising the lives of the social elite – or, by suggesting that they live in a world of their own – these films underscore the crises facing everyone else. Read together, these films produce an iconography of prosperity that is founded upon class distinction (and picks up on issues of gender) which manifests as a visual dialectic that is based upon coded and determined differences in the lived experience of New York.

As explored here, that difference is at times accompanied by humour, as in *French Nobleman* and *His Wife's Mother*, or melodrama, as in *A Politician's Love Story* and *The Jilt*. What emerges collectively from these films is an iconography that illustrates the divisions and discrepancies in class, wealth, and power that manifest through the material conditions of different lived experiences of the city that are rendered in early fiction films. Therefore, the iconology of poverty and wealth both revolve around power. Paul de Man writes that "what we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality" (1986: 11). His thoughts attend the tricky structuralist predicament of making sense of the way in which images of the city might project, imply, and invent ideas regarding its reality. The social iconography of such films as those discussed here culminates in an iconology that is demonstrative of power and social injustice, yet also intimates cosmopolitanism in covert and intriguing ways.

Under the Shadow of Liberty: The Immigrant Narrative on Early New York Film

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch

(Emma Lazarus, from 'The New Colossus', 3-4)[66]

Peter Hales has argued that "Riis' revelations about the conditions among the immigrant slum dwellers of New York underscored the significance of another event occurring the same year – the opening of Ellis Island in New York harbor as the new immigration station for the city and much of the nation" (2005: 221). The impact of immigrant communities to Riis' conceptualisation of the city cannot be understated: "one may find for the asking an Italian, a German, a French, African, Spanish, Bohemian, Russian, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Chinese colony", recalls Riis in regards to a Bowery tenement (2011: 20). The cosmopolitanism that the city is now famed for was developing quickly during the period that Riis was reporting; in fact, Carol Groneman has claimed that between the years 1880 and 1919 more than 23 million immigrants entered the United States and, of that figure, at least 17 million entered through New York City (qtd in Jackson 2011: 638).[67] Concomitant with the social reconfiguration and expansion that accompanied such developments, the years 1886 and 1892 respectively marked the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty and the opening of Ellis Island, two key moments for the establishment of New York icons that were fundamentally entwined with immigration.

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[66] Emma Lazarus did not live to see her poem, 'The New Colossus', carved into the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1903 where it remains.

[67] If one sought further perspectives on this key period for New York immigration, they might choose to consult the likes of Thomas Kessner's *The Golden Door* (OUP, 1977) and David M. Reimers' *Still the Golden Door* (Columbia, 1992).

Figure 31 : The Statue featuring prominently in 'Welcome to the Land of Freedom', an image taken from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (July 2, 1887).

First, Liberty Enlightening the World, which would come to be known as the Statue of Liberty, was erected in 1886 on Liberty Island in New York Harbour. A gift from France – and designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi – Libertas looms above the harbour emblematic of the freedom and liberty promised to new settlers arriving in the nation. Since its erection, the Statue of Liberty has featured prominently as an icon of the city carrying considerable iconographic capital that signifies the nation beyond the city. Edward Berenson, for example, has noted the Statue of Liberty "coincided almost exactly with the advent of the advertising agent" who "grabbed hold of the great green goddess from the beginning and never let go" (2012: 140). Berenson surveys the Statue's status as an icon whose ubiquitous image has fueled popular imaginings and the imagination of the nation. Liberty's image has found its way onto stamps and postcards, into photographs and films, into literature and paintings, and so forth. More than just an image in itself, the Statue of Liberty is

an ideological projection of the United States as a whole, an image not of what the nation is, perhaps, but an idealistic forecast of what it imagines itself to be. Therefore, the Statue of Liberty is more than just an image of the United States; it is a projection of a global future. Embedded within the image of the Statue of Liberty, at the nexus of image and identity, is a mythic unification of alternative conceptualisations of Americanness into one complete whole.

Six years later, on January 1st 1892, Ellis Island opened its doors just north of Liberty Island. Barbara Blumberg has claimed that before its closure in 1924, Ellis Island operated as the primary gateway to the United States with more than 12 million immigrants entering the country through it (qtd in Jackson 2011: 410). The preponderance of immigrant narratives within early New York film is reflective of the ways in which that narrative has been adopted ideologically into the mythic characterisation of the nation. One anonymous Greek immigrant writing in Saloniki, a Chicago newspaper, stated that "I have seen in the port of New York the Statue of Liberty, which was born in Greece many thousands of years ago" (qtd in Øverland, 2000: 145). Between the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island lay the discursive and iconological apparatus for the nation's cosmopolitan future, the geographic (and, concurrently, iconographic) gateway to the city and nation that inferred the possibility that the immigrant narrative could be an American narrative also. As seen in illustrations such as the one included above (Fig. 31), the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island beside it, operated as an iconological beacon that was capable of projecting myths of a configured national identity alongside hopes for the nation's global future.

The Statue of Liberty's role within the city's blossoming iconography was fatefully entwined with its ideological function as an epigraph for developing conceptualisations of Americanness. Not only does it predicate an emergent American

cosmopolitanism, it signals an inclusive, itinerant version of the American myth that accounts for the multitudinous possibilities that it could present to its diverse inhabitants. In its presence at the city and nation's border, the Statue of Liberty embodies an idea of what it is to be American, transplanting a blossoming national ideology into a single, mythic vision, and icon, of nationhood. Bertrand Dard has written that

> Liberty's enduring quality derives from the evocative nature of her pose. Her gesture of striding forward and holding high the torch of liberty has taken on a symbolic significance all its own. In this magnificent gesture the Statue of Liberty rises above the pettiness and parochialism of everyday life, above the limits of the human condition itself. The Statue of Liberty is, indeed, the supreme symbol for all those who refuse to accept the inevitability of fate and who cherish freedom (1994: 78).

Dard's thoughts offer insight into the ways in which the Statue of Liberty functions as a vehicle for disseminating ideology that is transmitted both to and through the immigrants arriving at the nation's gate. Dard attends the ideological purchase of the Statue as a global signifier that transcends its role as an icon of the city to transmit myths about national identity to the world. In a film such as *The Italian* (New York Motion Picture Co.,1915), to be discussed in this section, Liberty overlooking the harbour functions as spectacle of nationhood that does not preclude the immigrants it greets at the city and nation's threshold. The Statue of Liberty functions as an iconological vessel for New York that projects, in its image, the immigrant narrative, an urban experience that begins in there in the harbour and ends, often, in Riis' notorious, recurring slums, as this section will observe.

Photographing Immigration

In actualities that featured the Statue of Liberty as a preeminent icon for the city – including the likes of *Liberty Statue* (Lubin, 1897), *Statue of Liberty* (Edison, 1898), *Liberty Enlightening the World* (AM, 1899), *New York Street and Harbor Scenes* (George Kleine, 1914), and *Islands Around New York City* (George Kleine, 1915)[68] – its image functions as an image both of New York and about New York that incorporates all of the ideological subtext that the statue embodies. Naturally, the Statue of Liberty is well regarded as an icon of the city, and as an icon of New York film, but it is important for this work that it is responded to, alongside Ellis Island, as an icon intertwined with the city's immigrant narrative. Due to their architectural allure, geographic placement, and ideological significance, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, as icons of immigration, projected myths about an urban future that was multifaceted and allows for a cosmopolitan ethnic character.

New York City Street and *Harbor Scenes* (1914) and *Islands Around New York City* (1915) feature both prominently. Both films comprise a montage of images of New York that fashion an urban narrative around and through the key icons of the city – much the same way, in fact, as the later city symphony films would. The fact that both films situate the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island as key icons of the city is significant if only for the fact that this underscores an emergent iconology of cosmopolitanism that would characterise many of the New York's early films. Aside from illustrating the

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[68] The two Kleine films mentioned here are interesting for the fact that they were produced at a time when actualities had fallen out of fashion. These films are illustrative of an outdated mode of urban representation while pre-emptive of city symphonies such as *Manhatta* (1921) that would follow in the 1920s.

city's developing architectural iconography, their inclusion foregrounds the immigrant experience as an essential aspect of the city's evolving character.

Figure 32: The Statue of Liberty in as it is seen in *The Italian* (Paramount, 1915)

Lewis Hine is perhaps one of the most recognised early photographers of Ellis Island. Similarly to Riis, Hine was concerned with observing ongoing transformations in urban life and cataloguing the effect of these changes.[69] Like Riis, Hine's most enduring work sought to unveil the horrors that developed in the wake of the national industrial explosion yet demonstrated a humanity and duty of care to his subjects that is considerably more apparent than in Riis' work.

Hine's photography is oriented towards human experience, and employs the body as an agent through which one can formulate an understanding of the rapid transformations that occurred in light of modernity. Bodies do not decorate scenes in

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[69] In his most famous photographs Hine documented child labour in factories across the United States for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC).

the way that they do for Riis; for Hine, the city and the subject are reconciled as one in a series of images of modern life that are underpinned by the budding urban ideology that interpolates them. At the centre of Hine's striking photographs of Ellis Island sit the immigrants who came to expand the narrative of the modern American city. Kate Willmann has written that "Hine evidently took from Ellis Island an understanding of America as an immigrant nation as well as a deep and lifelong opposition to nativism" (2008: 226). As with Riis, Hine had faith in photography's power to encourage social reform and sought to render the overlooked aspects of the modern urban experience by capturing the beginning of the arriving immigrants' American narrative. His pictures worked to humanise that narrative by focusing attention on individual subjects as opposed to the crowds who populated early Ellis Island films such as in *Arrival of Immigrants, Ellis Island* (AMB, 1906) where individuals are lost among the throbbing crowds.

Figure 33 : Two of Lewis Hine's Ellis Island photographs, 'Peace, an Ellis Island Madonna' (1904) and 'Italian Immigrants at Ellis Island' (1905)

In the two photographs included above, one can see evidence of what Willmann calls "a dialectic between the one and the many" (227). Hine displays a sensitivity to his subjects that sidesteps the impossibility of representing a universal experience to instead place value on individual experiences. In doing so he strives to characterise the otherwise faceless masses tasked with passing through Ellis Island's gates. Hine's treatment of his subjects is appealingly humane, and yet he is not once guilty of romanticising the experience he captures; instead, he demonstrates in miniatures the unquantifiable anxieties that might accompany relocation in the hope of the better life promised in, and by, the United States.

'An Ellis Island Madonna' makes use of the subject's saint-like silhouette to add weight to the photograph's thematic subtext. The interchange of expressions between the mother and daughter, the photographs' two primary subjects, is demonstrative of the polemical narrative they embody. The daughter's youthful innocence and trusting expression harks to the nation's budding cosmopolitan future. While she looks up towards her mother expectantly, her mother's downturned expression illustrates the burden of responsibility that she bears, both for herself and for her daughter. Between the two subjects – and before an assortment of other characters blocked behind the fence – hang the many narratives of those traveling to the United States: it is a narrative of innocence and experience, of a mother's grief and a daughter's hope.

What emerges here is carried forward into the early narrative films of New York: an iconological subtext of cosmopolitanism and social injustice that hangs on the immigrant narrative. Michael Sundell suggests that Hine recognised the city's mounting cosmopolitanism as an essential element in the development of the nation more broadly, writing that:

The essential truth that Hine himself perceived and wished to reveal throughout his career was the authentically heroic American character of the new urban working class. The drama of their experience appeared to him the traditional narrative adventure being reenacted in unfamiliar ways. In the exotic and often frightening tide of immigrants flooding the cities, he saw the aspirations and daring that had created the nation, and in the strength and agility of the men and women working in the factories and mills, he saw the power that had caused the nation to succeed and grow (1986: 172).

The narrative that occupies the meeting point between the mother's grief and the daughter's hope is a narrative that characterises much of Hine's photography, but also the immigrant experience of New York as it is captured on early film. In Hine, Sundell finds the seeds of a belief that the nation's fate lies in the hands of its rapidly expanding immigrant population.

The narrative embodied in the mother's grief and the daughter's hope underscores a far-reaching urban narrative that is characterised by cosmopolitanism and social injustice, the iconological backbone of many of the early narrative films of New York. The immigrant narrative of New York sat at the epicentre of a system of signs/icons that included the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and the immigrant him/herself. The development of a diverse and inclusive iconography predicates ideological undercurrents that were being projected through the nation's social, industrial, and cultural centres. The representational capital of their narratives and experiences runs deeper, however, as we will see over the course of this section which will consider the ways in which the immigrant narrative was inscribed into the early fiction films of New York.

The Immigrant Experience on Early New York Film

Richard Butsch's notion of an "imagined audience", a theoretical principal that has been discussed throughout this thesis, draws attention to an early industrial awareness that was shared between producers and the press and that directly shaped the content of the pictures being produced (2012: 114). This line of historical enquiry is strengthened by the evidence provided by this chapter that finds that early films were often iconographically determined by, and ideologically encoded with, the various social contexts that surrounded their creation. This fact, paired with common historical assertions regarding the working class and immigrant credentials of early audiences, as discussed earlier in this thesis, converge to produce a compelling account of the rationale behind early film content. This identification of a primary demographic allows these films to function as both films of the city and films for the city. The immigrant as an icon of early New York film is considerably more complex, more pliable, than other social icons such as the tramp. It is almost impossible to discuss the icon of the immigrant without grounding that discussion in the narrative traditions of early New York film.

In *Emigrants Landing at Ellis Island* (Edison, 1903), the film opens on a liner slowly approaching Ellis Island. The film then cuts to the pier as immigrants in their droves disembark from the ship laden with what remains of their possessions. A later, more sophisticated actuality*, Arrival of Emigrants, Ellis Island* (AMB, 1906), captures similar scenes. Before the backdrop of the main building, a line of immigrants, overburdened by all the personal effects that they can carry, file to the right and out of the frame. Unlike Hine's photography, the film does not isolate a single subject; instead, the mass of bodies functions as the primary spectacle of the film which

struggles to contain them within the frame. As it tracks to the right, the sheer number of bodies on display becomes more and more pronounced; finally, the film cuts to a second shot that reveals a similar line stemming from a newly arrived ship (Figure 34, pictured below). The impersonality evident here is characteristic of actuality filmmaking of the time and yet, just as Hine's photography imbued the immigrant narrative with specificity, subjectivity and agency, early narrative films offered a platform for colourful and varied depictions of the New York immigrant experience.
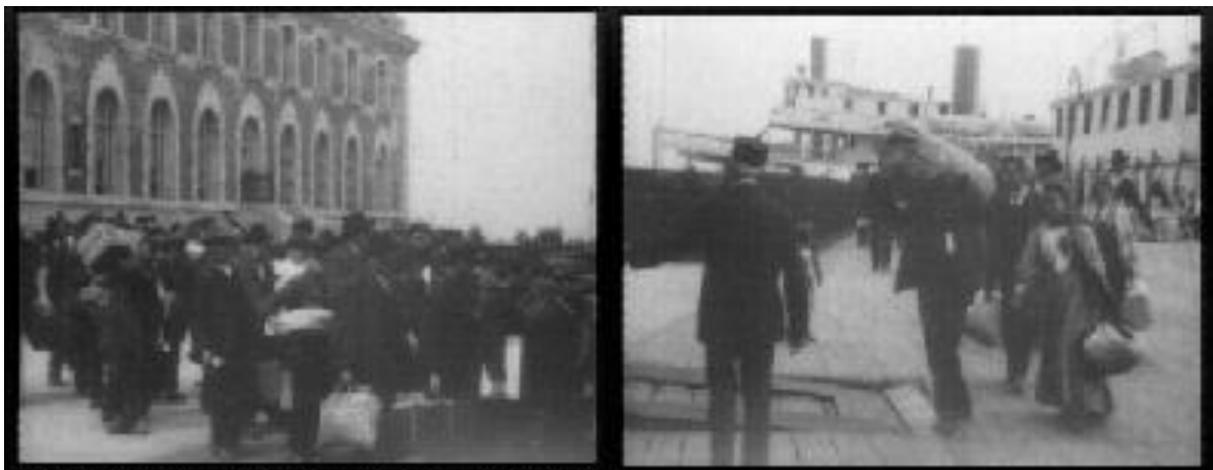
Figure 34: two shots taken from *Arrival of Emigrants, Ellis Island* (Biograph, 1906)

The New York immigrant narrative appears in a series of diverse films from across the period that include *Li Hung Chang* films (AM, 1896-1901), *A Bowery Café* (AM, 1897), *The Baldheaded Dutchman* (AM, 1898), *Dance in a Turkish Harem* (AM, 1899), *A Lark at the French Ball* (AM, 1899), *Allabad, the Arabian Wizard* (AMB, 1900), *In a Chinese Restaurant* (AMB, 1900), *A Raid on a Chinese Opium Joint* (AMB, 1900), *A Raid on "Dago" Counterfeiters* (AMB, 1900), *Alphonse and Gaston* (AMB, 1902-3), *Bowery Street Dancers* (Lubin, 1903), *Arab Act, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), *A Gypsy's Duel* (AMB, 1903), *Levi & Cohen* (AMB, 1903), *A Bucket of Ale Cream* (AMB, 1904), *A Joke at the French Ball* (AMB, 1904), *Just Before the Raid* (AMB, 1904), *Parade of Mystic Shriners, Luna Park, Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *"Personal"* (AMB, 1904),

Buster and Tige Put a Balloon Vendor Out of Business (Edison, 1904), *Cohen's Advertising Scheme* (Edison, 1904), *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife Through the NY Herald Post Column* (Edison, 1904), *Japanese Acrobats* (Edison, 1904), *Old Maid and Fortune Teller* (Edison, 1904), *Latina, Contortionist* (AMB, 1905), *Latina, Dislocation Act* (AMB, 1905), *Reuben in the Opium Joint* (AMB, 1905), *The Kleptomaniac* (Edison, 1905), *Mystic Shriners' Day, Dreamland, Coney Island* (Edison, 1905), *Stolen By Gypsies* (Edison, 1905), *The Black Hand* (AMB, 1906), *Chink Chippie* (AMB, 1907), *Egyptian Princess* (AMB, 1907), *Lena and the Beaux* (AMB, 1907), *An Awful Moment* (AMB, 1908), *Her First Adventure* (AMB, 1908), *The Music Master* (AMB, 1908), *Romance of a Jewess* (AMB, 1908), *The Yellow Peril* (AMB, 1908), *At the Altar* (AMB, 1909), *The Brahama Diamond* (AMB, 1909), *The Broken Locket* (AMB, 1909), *The Lure of the Gown* (AMB, 1909), *The Prussian Spy* (AMB, 1909), *The Roué's Heart* (AMB, 1909), *Schneider's Anti-Noise Crusade* (AMB, 1909), *The Slave* (AMB, 1909), *The Voice of the Violin* (AMB, 1909), *The Englishman and the Girl* (Bio, 1909), *In Little Italy* (Bio, 1909), *The Mexican Sweethearts* (Bio, 1909), *That Chink at Golden Gulch* (Bio, 1910), *A Summer Idyll* (Bio, 1910), *When Old New York Was Young* (Vitagraph, 1910), and *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (AMB, 1912).

Of course, as a survey of some of the films that chiefly concern immigrants and immigrant narratives will indicate, they are varied in their representation. Moreover, there is clear intersectionality to the ways in which narratives of poverty, criminality, and immigration merge and overlap in the early films of New York, much as they do in Riis' iconography. Included in this illustrative list of films are actualities such as *Allabad, the Arabian Wizard* (AMB, 1900) and *Japanese Acrobats* (Edison, 1904). Immigrant actualities such as these display their performances as spectacles of the

city as well as spectacles for the city. While such performances would have invited curiosity for a variety of reasons, not least for their foreignness, they are nevertheless afforded the same value as other scenes captured by the wandering cameras of actuality-era New York. Indeed, such films situate the performances among the attractions of the city and, thus, situate the immigrant (and especially the immigrant performer) among its occupants.

Figure 35: Left, Fiammetta enters the judge's apartment through the balcony window; right, her trap that she has devised to murder the judge's wife (*An Awful Moment*, AMB 1908)

Biograph's *An Awful Moment* (AMB, 1908) demonstrates the complexity of the icon of the immigrant. Certainly, it offers a multifaceted illustration of the ways in which immigrant narratives intersect with other prominent themes that have been discussed over the course of this chapter, not least social injustice and criminality which are also two of Riis' more prominent themes in *How the Other Half Lives* and attendant works.[70] *An Awful Moment* follows a young woman as she wreaks vengeance on the judge responsible for sentencing her husband, the leader of the gypsy gang to which she belongs, to life imprisonment. After following the judge home on Christmas Eve,

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[70] If one takes a film such as *What They do to Respectable Men in the Tenderloin* (AMB, 1900) – a film that seeks to comment on the vastly different walks of life but does not make claims for the nationality of its subjects – and applies the same social categorisation that characterises much of Riis' work, then one could see how geographic and social elements could determine a character's ethnicity and character.

Fiammetta breaks into the house where she takes the judge's wife hostage. After binding and gagging the judge's wife, Fiammetta rigs a shotgun to the door so that as the judge enters the room, he will trigger the weapon and kill his wife. The plan is finally foiled after the judge's daughter discovers her mother and undoes the death trap in time.

An Awful Moment is demonstrative of a series of problematic ways that immigrants were being imagined during the years of early New York film. Representative of a fear that seems to spring from the well of characterisations provided by Riis in *How the Other Half Lives*, films such as *An Awful Moment* enable certain prejudicial expectations about immigrants that are illustrative of mounting anxieties surrounding the effects of urbanisation. These factors attend a film whose primary theme orbits the stylised dramatisation of divergences in social power. The judge stands as an embodiment of the city and by extension the nation: a college education, wealth, power, and civic responsibility, have been afforded to the judge by virtue of his privilege and have correspondingly granted him a privileged role within the city's institutional structure. Fiammetta, on the other hand, can only exhibit comparative power in a show of force; her power is not social, rather it is the product of a vengeful response to the institution that condemned her husband to prison.

A shot in *An Awful Moment* resembles a similar scene in *The Ex-Convict*, discussed earlier in this chapter. After Fiammetta has followed the judge home to his 14th Street apartment she climbs up the front of the building to enter through the balcony window (Figure 35, above). As discussed earlier, *The Ex-Convict* features a similar scene in which the titular ex-con stands before the home he intends to burgle. In both films, the icon of the wealthy home foreshadows the poverty that denies them such affluence. In their similarity these two films demonstrate how immigrant films and

social injustice films could overlap. Such is the brutal nature of Fiammetta's *lex talionis* mode of retribution that the film comes to represent the immigrant as an unquantifiable threat to the city; in Fiammetta's image, the immigrant is rendered as a source of poverty, unrest, and violence. Although the precocious child functions as an optimistic sign for the future and imbues her innocence upon the scene in place of Fiammetta's violence, the threat of Fiammetta and, thus, the immigrant as a sign of urban conflict lingers uncomfortably throughout the film's supposed resolution.
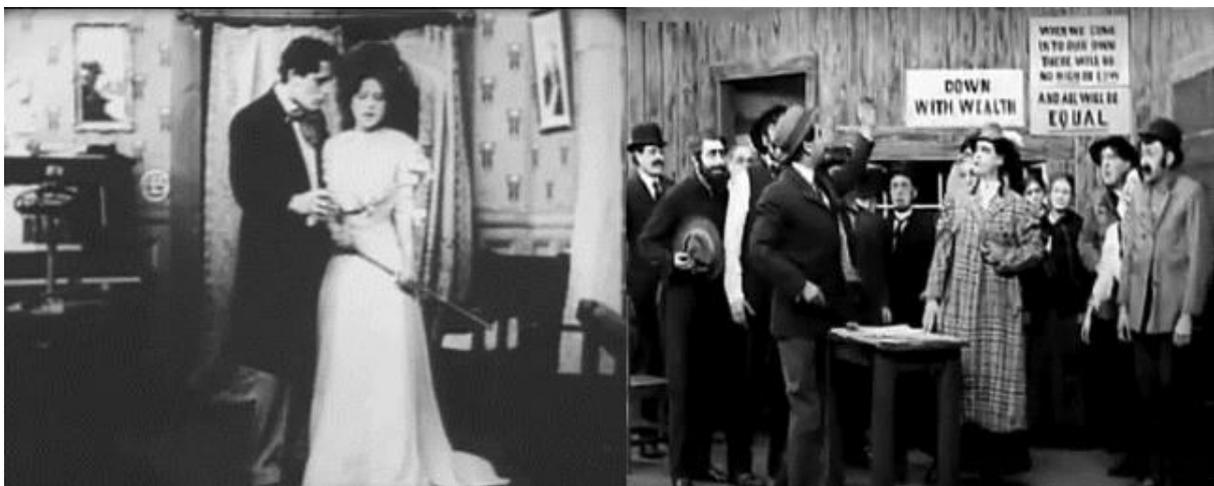
Figure 36: Two scenes from *The Voice of the Violin* (AMB, 1909): left, Von Schmitt and Helen; right, the political rally.

Not all films concerning immigrants utilised their iconographic purchase to articulate fears regarding a potential threat that they posed to the city. A film such as Biograph's *The Voice of the Violin* (AMB, 1909), for example, is firstly a more typical melodrama that just so happens to feature an immigrant subject. At the centre of its narrative *The Voice of the Violin* is a simple romance between a penniless German violin instructor and a wealthy industrialist's daughter. However, through the icon of the immigrant – which we have determined can project various meanings – the film provides both a commentary on a social infrastructure that bears down on the little man beside an overwrought warning regarding the dangers that political radicalisation might pose to the "safety" of the city. These things considered, *The Voice of the Violin*

is first and foremost a dramatisation of the immigrant experience of New York besides being an account of the injustices they faced and an advisory tale to highlight the importance of rejecting alternative (that is: foreign) ideologies as a part of the process of assimilation.

The protagonist, Herr Von Schmitt, is a young violin instructor from Germany who falls in love with Helen, an industrialist's daughter whom he teaches. The penniless violinist declares his love to the young heiress and is promptly rejected, his social standing is insufficient to garner her attention. After the spurning, Von Schmitt takes up with a group of anarchists bent on hurting the monopolists they hold responsible for the injustices they have suffered. Von Schmitt stands guard outside of the wealthy home they have targeted as his accomplice places a bomb in the cellar – it is a sequence that once again makes use of the icon of the wealthy home as a stand-in for social difference. There, he is struck by the sound of a violin coming from an upstairs window. It dawns on him that the house is home to Helen and he tries to prevent the act of terrorism that he is complicit in. He appeals to his companion, but the fuse has already been lit. After a struggle, Von Schmitt is overpowered and bound. He crawls to the bomb and bites through the fuse, thus foiling the plan. His involvement in the preceding events appears to go unnoticed and he is hailed a hero before, naturally, winning the affections of Helen.

The Voice of Violin makes another interesting companion piece to *The Ex-Convict*. Just as with *An Awful Moment*, all three films explore themes of social mobility, injustice, and privilege, and all conclude with similarly vague moral denouements. Von Schmitt and the ex-convict are both redeemed criminals; in both cases, in fact, it is only luck and circumstance that provide relief for the films' protagonists. Due to *The Voice of the Violin*'s status as an immigrant narrative, and its

use of the icon of the immigrant in Von Schmitt, what begins as a traditional romance quickly transforms into a social and economic battle for the occupation of urban space. Von Schmitt is not welcome in Helen's wealthy sphere: socially, economically, and ethnically, he is other, and therefore his romantic inclination towards Helen is untenable. Narratives such as this that make use of the iconographic purchase of the immigrant as an agent of urban change, reflecting battling ideologies that are characteristic of mounting tensions between nation/self and immigration/other.

The iconographical/iconological value of the immigrant, as a site of signification from which ideological meaning is projected, really comes into effect in a film such as *The Voice of the Violin*, as it has done in other films discussed in this section. Von Schmitt fails to immediately recognise Helen's house because he has never previously been welcome there, even in his capacity as a violin instructor. Helen only enters Von Schmitt's world when she has something to gain from him, and he is certainly not welcome in her socially exclusive sphere. The distinction between the two drastically different domestic spaces is predicated on the difference between the modest and luxurious homes that the characters occupy. When seen beside some of the other films discussed throughout this section, the luxurious home belonging to Helen and her family again demonstrates the ways in which wealthy homes functioned as icons of ideal life in early films of this kind.

Striking is the fact that Von Schmitt's apartment not only operates as the site of their violin lessons, but also as the site of his radicalisation. This is one example of the ways in which the immigrant functions as a pliable icon with the capacity to comment, iconologically, on the various anxieties that characterised the period. While there are strong and problematic assertions being made here as to the character of the poorer classes, the seeming threat that immigration poses against the ideological security of

the city is compounded in Von Schmitt and his prompt transformation into a highly politicised anarchist.

Stanley Coben has theorised the fear of "[a] hostility toward certain minority groups, especially radicals and recent immigrants, fanatical patriotism, and a belief that internal enemies seriously threaten national security" (1964: 53). Despite the fact that the United States has a very short history of actual attacks from foreign forces on its own soil,[71] The Voice of the Violin imagines the threat of competing ideologies on quite literal terms in the bombing of buildings throughout the city. It is important to recognise that these threats extend from the immigrant as a primary icon of otherness and, thus, the threat of violence is one that extends from the immigrant as a product of rapid urban expansion. D.W. Griffith, the director of *The Voice of the Violin*, would indeed come to be known for his deeply problematic ethnic profiling. Yet, even in this film, which preceded *The Birth of the Nation* by some six years, by marking out the slum as a space which within which violent radicalisation could take hold, Griffith demonstrated a medley of emerging prejudices surrounding the immigrant that were projected through their presence as early filmic icons of the city.

In Von Schmitt, Griffith illustrates a polemical representation of German culture. Von Schmitt is a classically trained musician and thus his trade signifies the great German musicians such as Beethoven, Bach, Wagner, Brahms, and Handel. Yet on the other hand, Von Schmitt is also easily seduced by socialist philosophy. The "DOWN WITH WEALTH" poster in the background of the mise-en-scène (Fig. 36), with its "No High! No Low!" proclamation, invokes, in clear terms, the socialist politics that the nation was already growing uneasy with. In the film the "threat" of immigration is far from subtle and, while the film is able to comment upon many of the struggles

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[71] A "threat" that has recently, and corrosively, reared its head in conservative political rhetoric.

that early-twentieth-century immigrants faced, especially in regard to social injustice, it is first and foremost a narrative fashioned around ideological difference.

All this aside, *The Voice of the Violin* remains a fascinating case study for the fact that it is firstly a love story and finally a story about assimilation. As the object of Von Schmitt's affection, Helen functions as both an icon of male desire and of American opportunity. It is finally Helen, an embodiment of American "virtue", which deters Von Schmitt from his radical plot. Von Schmitt is subsequently rewarded with an idealised version of American life once he has renounced the un-American, socialist ideology that encouraged him towards a more violent future. His prize is both Helen, an embodiment of American life and the subject of his desire, and upward social mobility, the ambition of all Americans competing under capitalism. Iconologically, then, Von Schmitt illustrates the strength, or persistence, of American ideology – after all, he is first and foremost seduced by a woman – via Helen, an iconological embodiment of American opportunity, and the film concludes with his assimilation to the American way of life, a veritable triumph for Americanness against competing ideologies.

The Voice of the Violin might be both assumptive and reductive in its illustration of a cosmopolitan, ethnically diverse city, and its message is certainly vague, nevertheless the film does encouragingly close on an image of hope and assimilation. While the film demonstrates the luxuries of international influence through the arts – as characterised by Von Schmitt and his importation of music – it also implies that the intellectual and political influence of an immigrant community could bring about more challenging consequences. Teshome Gabriel, in a very different context, has written of the social responsibility of film, stating that it "should not simply be images printed on celluloid, but what those images refer to - the memories, the lived experiences, the

dreams, the unseen realm of myths and spirits that hovers beyond and between the images" (1999: 79). Of course, film has for the most part always been thoroughly incapable of condensing the memories, experiences, and dreams of a city into a single unified image of it, so what remains in films such as *The Voice of the Violin* are a series of representations that go some way towards characterising it at a particular time. Even if German culture is ruthlessly compressed into a series of unfinished signifiers, by a gathering together of cultural binaries – the "best' and "worst" of what, in this filmmaker's view, the nation has to offer – the film nevertheless accepts the immigrant's role as a central component of the city's future. The iconological value of Von Schmitt, then, as an immigrant of New York, is expressive of the narrative of grief and hope that was discussed at the opening of this section. While guilty of exploiting anxieties emerging from the diversification of the city, films such as *The Voice of the Violin* nevertheless situate the immigrant prominently within the developing filmic tapestry of New York life.

In a later Griffith film, *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (AMB, 1912), one can find evidence of the legacy of immigrant narratives such as that utilised in *The Voice of the Violin*.[72] Snapper Kid, the central immigrant character of *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, is a Lower East Side Italian gangster who is at the centre of a conflict with the law and a young, impoverished street musician. There is a common, and demonstrably problematic, assumption that immigrants are always responsible for, or on the edges of, crime. The implications are broader than that, however; it as though, by virtue of their common socioeconomic status, the immigrant and the slum – and all associated assumptions pertaining to the slum – become visually, ideologically, and, thus,

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[72] For a recent study on representations of the nation throughout film history, including detailed considerations of competing depictions of race, see Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin's book *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (2011).

iconologically enmeshed in the early films that portray them. Just as in *The Voice of the Violin*, the casual and causal lines drawn between immigrants and criminal behaviour in *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* characterises a growing unrest in the popular imagination regarding the effects that urban transformations and expansions were having upon the city and the role that the growing immigrant population was playing in compromising its security.

The Musketeers of Pig Alley capitalises on such popular fears and exploits them in order to reinforce the perennial strength of the American ideology it preaches. The film employs an iconography that is tangibly similar to Riis' slum iconography, a matter that has been commented on by Russell Merritt who writes that it is an "instance of Griffith quoting a photograph instead of a painting" (2002: 161). Not only does the film work to encourage the bigoted myth that immigration will embolden and bring about more criminality, it also posits the notion that it is infectious; by the end of the film, the Little Lady (played by Lillian Gish), a local woman, provides Snapper Kid with an alibi, and thus embroils herself and her husband in his criminal behaviour. Beside *The Voice of the Violin*, these films collectively capture and confer popular preconceptions about the city's expansion by ultilising the immigrant as an icon capable of projecting anxieties that lie at the heart of a radically changing urban environment.

The Immigrant Narrative as a Staple Feature of New York Film

The public fear of immigration, especially regarding the effects that it was having on crime rates, is a theme of the aforementioned films just as it is a theme of *The Italian*, a 1915 feature film directed by Reginald Barker. *The Italian* follows Beppo, an Italian gondolier in love with Annette, a local girl. Annette's father is fond of Beppo,

but worries that he is ill-equipped to care for his daughter. Consequently, Annette's father gives Beppo a year to prove that he can provide for Annette. A competing suitor sees this as an opportunity to get rid of Beppo and proceeds to sell him the wonders that are in store for immigrants to the United States. Beppo sails for America where he opens a moderately successful shoe shining stand in New York. He is persuaded to help Bill Corrigan, a local political candidate, win the Italian vote, and in exchange is loaned the money to have Annette join him in the city. The couple marry and have a child but, after an intense heatwave, the child is taken ill. The doctors advise Beppo that unless he can provide his son with pasteurised milk, his child will die. On the way to purchase the milk, Beppo is leapt upon by local hoodlums and mugged; he puts up a fight but is treated as the instigator by police and is arrested and taken to a local jailhouse. Beppo appeals to Corrigan for help but after he fails to provide assistance, his son dies. Upon release, Beppo hears that Corrigan's young daughter has also been taken sick; enraged, Beppo sneaks into Corrigan's home with the plan to kill his ailing child in an act of revenge. As he stands over the child's crib and looks down upon her, he has a change of heart and leaves her unharmed. The film ends with Beppo placing flowers on his son's grave.

The plot of *The Italian* is bookended by a prologue and epilogue in which a wealthy Italian man reads from a novel that is also titled *The Italian*. It just so happens that this character is also played by George Beban and, despite the fact that his identity is never made abundantly clear, there is a mist of ambiguity engulfing his presence that lends itself to the suggestion that the characters are one and the same. That said, even if they are not in fact the same character, the wealthy character presents an idealistic vision of the future for the city's immigrant population, an image of hope that may yet manifest for those choosing to make the United States their new

home. This framing device is striking for a number of reasons. Not only does it structure the primary narrative as a work of fiction, an act that distances the more tragic elements of Beppo's story from the "real" world, it also predicts a future in which immigrants will be afforded the luxuries and opportunities denied to them by the present. This device might well undermine the poignancy of Beppo's tragedy, yet it simultaneously works to legitimise his story and immigrant narratives in general as recognised components of the narrative of New York life.

Figure 37: Left, a shot from the epilogue of *The Italian* (1915); right, Beppo and Annette before they leave provincial Italy.

The film frequently plays to Beban's strengths as a physical comedian and much of the first act, set in provincial Italy, plays out as a slapstick comedy of manners that does not pass up any opportunity to let the talented actor embrace the physical potential of the role, such as when Beppo dramatically falls into the water while working as a gondolier. The film sets up a rural/urban binary that is demonstrative of the two radically contrasting modes of life that are embodied in the difference between provincial Italy and urban New York.[73] Situated away from the sensorial abundance of the city, Beppo's homeland constitutes a rural idyll (Fig. 37) complete with wide,

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[73] The discrepancies between the urban and the rural are displayed plentifully throughout the film, and not solely to mock provincial life – of course, it is worth remembering that the rube in the city, a character which Beppo is effectively a version of, was a staple character of vaudeville that made its way onto early film.

natural landscapes that provide a stark visual contrast to the dark and dirty streets of the New York that he will come to know. The Italian countryside (above right) embodies the simple beauty of nature that in some ways preempts Beppo's wholesome, if naïve character, while suggesting that opportunities away from the city are few and far between, illustrated in the picturesque, if decidedly sparse, landscapes.

The quaintness of the countryside preempts the obsolescence of ways of life that pertain to it: Annette's father, a sweet-natured if simple rube-type, embodies the traditional way of life that is inferred by such rural locales, and yet he is poor and hungry, a characterisation that clearly takes aim at the current limitations and dubious future of this mode of existence away from the city. Here is as clear an example as one will find of the iconological dissonance that hangs between images of the future-founding American city and defunct European country. After Beppo has decided to pin his hopes on the United States, a title card appears reading: "Youth, enflamed by the fire of love and ambition rushes off to meet the future". For the purposes of the film, its narrative, and the ideology it projects, "the future" is fundamentally an American one, an embodiment of a pronounced urban consciousness that promotes of modern life at the expense of traditional modes of living. At this point of the film, it is made clear that for Beppo and the countless other immigrants he comes to represent through his iconographic profile, the United States and the future are synonymous, utterly inseparable, one and the same. In the final shot of Italy, as Beppo and Annette overlook the vast pastoral setting that they are set to leave behind, they come face-to-

face with the enormity of their decision; here, the striking beauty of their rural past is matched by the colossal promise of their urban, American future.

Figure 38 : Beppo's journey to New York in *The Italian* (1915)

Beppo's journey to the United States makes use of many of the key icons associated with immigration that have been discussed throughout this section. The crowded ships, and teeming docks recall actualities such *as Emigrants Landing at Ellis Island* and *Arrival of Emigrants, Ellis Island* which make use of those same dominant images. Clutching a crucifix gifted to him by Annette, a token reminder of Annette herself and of the distant country from which he has travelled, Beppo is initially unable to share in the other passengers' unbridled joy at their arrival in New York harbour. It is then that the Statue of Liberty comes into view. In this instance, the Statue, Beppo's first image of the United States, projects meaning that works in tandem with Beppo's iconographic status as an immigrant. "That is the Statue of Liberty", a boatman tells Beppo who is struck by the grandeur of its spectacle. Within the context of the film, the Statue's silhouette functions as both an icon of the city and of the nation, not to mention an icon iterative of the immigrant narrative with which it is associated. The iconographic capital of the Statue of Liberty, the mighty "Colossus" of Lazarus' poem, precedes the iconological investment *The Italian* which presents the immigrant narrative as a primary component of the city's grander narrative.

Immediately after landing, Beppo is beaten by an old woman for asking a question: here, the accented hopefulness of his arrival is immediately tarnished by a strain of ethnically incited hostility that will come to characterise most of his experiences of the city as an immigrant. This encounter foreshadows a similar episode of prejudice that lands Beppo in jail later in the film, an incident that works as a catalyst for the film's tragic denouement. Such is the iconographic status of immigration in light of Riis and the films that preceded *The Italian* that what begins as an immigrant narrative reverts into another slum narrative in the vein of those examined above. Beppo and Annette's status as immigrants is absorbed by the slum iconography that once characterised Riis' famous work. Much like Riis' work, *The Italian* draws bold lines between sites of social injustice and the prevalent immigrant narrative, only this time the slum imagery discussed earlier functions adjacently to Beppo and Annette's standing as immigrants, a characteristic that determines their experience of the city throughout.
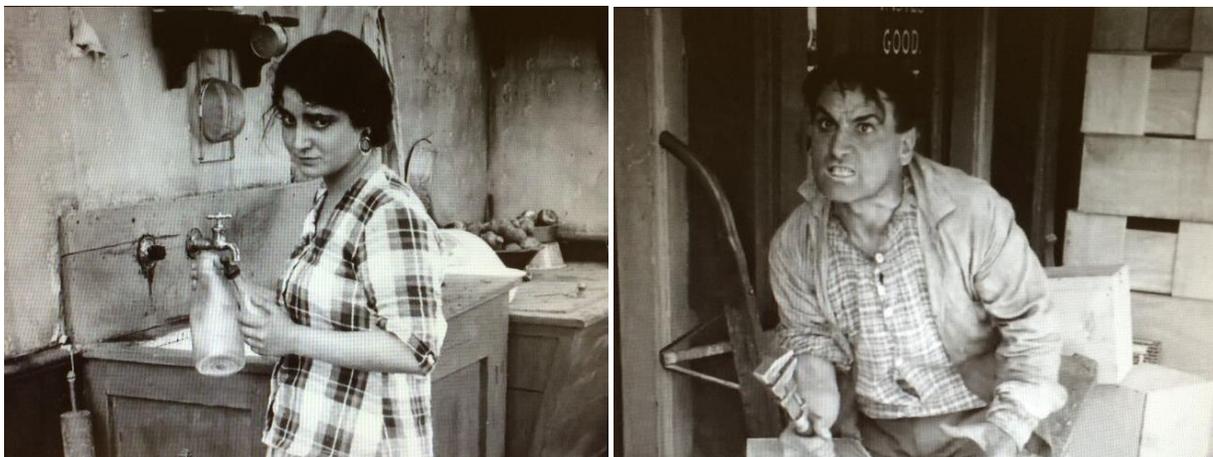
Figure 39: left, Annette's kitchen; right, an enraged Beppo.

Here, as in the other films discussed throughout this section, it is evident that the immigrant narrative of early New York film, and iconographic imagery pertaining to it, is fundamentally entwined with the same slum iconography that typify other, associated social problem films of the period. Annette's kitchen (Figure 39, above) is

not dissimilar to the tumble-down domestic spaces that characterise much of Riis'
photography, and the threat of a local gang recalls the shady figures occupying
'Bandit's Roost' in one of the photographs discussed above, as well as *The
Musketeers of Pig Alley*. It is worth noting that although *The Italian* was set in New
York, much of it was filmed in San Francisco yet, as Peter Bondanella writes, "there
are, however, the pedlers, the open hydrants in the heat wave, and the urban bustle
we have come to associate with New York at the turn of the century" (2004: 25). As a
work of fiction, it is not particularly important to the analysis of the film that it was not
shot on location; in fact, if anything, the artificiality of this version of New York works
as evidence of the significance of some of the city's key signifiers: characteristics that
are rendered here instill in the viewer as much visual fidelity as any other imagining of
the city. The fact that the sets were purpose-built to resemble popular imaginings of
New York, and yet they still resemble Riis' imagery, reinforcing its iconological
influence upon both the city's image and upon wider understandings of it.

   As seen in the photography of Riis and in the films discussed over the course
of this section, criminal behaviour is presented prominently across associated media
as a characteristic of the immigrant experience and therefore of the immigrants
themselves. Despite the fact that Beppo is by all accounts a victim of terrible
circumstances, *The Italian*, like other films such as *An Awful Moment* and *The Voice
of the Violin*, makes clear assertions about the seemingly dubious character of
immigrants by designating them criminals or at least sympathetic to criminal
behaviour. As Beppo is arrested in spite of his innocence it is clear that the film wishes
to comment upon the natural prejudice that was held against immigrants, a prejudice
that tragically leads to the death of Beppo's son. In the end, it is not only their
desperate economic status that ensures their tragedy, it is a bias against immigrants

that brands non-Americans criminals by default, a prejudice born out of difference, out of national ideologies at odds with one another, and one that manifests as an enmity that guarantees their ruin. Bondanella writes that "Beppo's portrayal in *The Italian* […] contains many of the elements that characterized the superstition, prejudice, ignorance, and lack of empathy on the part of Americans of the period who viewed the great Italian influx into the United States with a jaundiced eye" (2004: 26-7). After Beppo's mugging, there is a collective expectation on the part of the city's authorities that Beppo must be the guilty party and, thus, his appeals go unheard and his statement is torn up. When Corrigan's daughter is ill, however, the street is cordoned off to not disturb the sickly child: here, the film dramatises vast space that separates the New York experience. At this point, the film works quickly to dismantle the hopefulness that underscored the film's opening acts; by the film's end, Beppo's experience articulates the harsher realities that the city presented for immigrants – he is brought to the brink of murderous revenge by a socioeconomic structure that weighs him down. Even after he has relinquished his plan to murder Corrigan's daughter, the damage has already been done: his child is dead, and the defeating cycle of social injustice that has preyed on him, that is embodied in his iconographic profile as an immigrant, is perpetuated ad infinitum.

As Beppo kneels distraught beside his child's grave the primary narrative gives way to an epilogue to match the film's prologue. While Beppo's story is one that is finally overwhelmed by grief, in this framing device in which the narrative is conformed as a work of fiction that bears the same title, the film dares to offer its audience a hopeful conclusion. Represented as a work of fiction, *The Italian*'s final achievement is that it integrates its tale into the grander tapestry of representations of New York life and, thus, Beppo's tale of grief finally figures as a trial by fire for American prosperity

that is founded upon a promise of hope. The wealthy immigrant reading the tale is played once again by George Beban who signifies, through his shifting iconographic stature as an immigrant of changing means, an iconological promise that the fate of immigrants is not yet sealed with sadness and squalor.

The Early Social Films of New York: An Iconology of Everyday Life

The first chapter of this thesis sought to catalogue the dominant and recurring imagery associated with the seeming brightness that emblematised New York's future, to consider its iconographic repertoire, a repertoire that founded ideas about the city as it quickly grew to assume its standing as the industrial, commercial, and cultural capital of the nation. What emerged from this broad texturology was an approximation of film's relation to the city as a means of documenting its use, its embodiment of and effect on modern life, and its representation. By departing from formal and industrial approaches, that section observed the ways in which early film contributed towards the iconographic foundation of New York, the United States' primary – or, at least, first – truly "cinematic city". By shifting focus from the purely iconographic to iconological analysis, that section was able to consider film's foundational role in the way in which New York were seen and utilised throughout the medium's infancy.

This second chapter has catalogued the social elements of the city's iconographic structure, one that is most significantly felt in regards to the visual formation of the city's cosmopolitan character. Rather than purely presenting the physical space of the city, as the actualities did in the preceding chapter, these films produced and contributed towards a socially oriented iconography that captured a clear sense of the social and ideological shifts occurring in the city during film's early

years. At the time of film's rise to industrial and cultural prominence, the social arrangement of New York was rapidly transforming and, as the city consolidated its status as the commercial, industrial, and cultural hub of the United States, divisions of wealth became more pronounced. The influx of arriving immigrants not only drastically diversified the city's social constitution, they provided a large component of film's primary imagined audience, which had discursive ramifications on the films that displayed concerns relating to class, poverty, and ethnicity. The nature and effect of these social transformations have been discussed during the course of this chapter, as has their representation on film. What emerges from close readings of some of the remaining films that deal directly with New York's social elements is an iconography that engages with the social fallout of the city's push towards an American century. For New York, it was a moment of liminality embodied in a period of rapid development, in which the city's filmic image conveyed social concerns imparted by the iconographic purchase of its early films.

The socially-oriented iconography of early New York film was not without precedent in other media. In fact, much of the city's iconography borrowed heavily from well-established and well-circulated modes of urban representation, not least the photography and writings of Jacob Riis and his contemporaries. The ghost of Riis' imagery inhabits many of the city's social problem films. That his iconography's influence is etched so clearly onto various forms of urban representation, including film, is testament to its endurance; that it is so entwined with the progressive politics of the era – characterised by the muckraker collective to which Riis belonged – speaks to film's function as facilitator to the expounding of social issues of the time.

Over the course of this chapter, I have examined the ways in which various social issues manifested in and were circulated through the early films of New York.

Despite demonstrable diversity among the films, there is clear evidence of an attempt to articulate contemporaneous aspects of the modern urban experience, not least in regards to matters of social injustice and cosmopolitanism, themes that appear throughout the archive of films. Despite diverse and sometimes contradicting images of New York, seen together the films constitute a network of representations that render particular aspects of the urban experience relevant to the city during the time of their production. Films oriented towards the presentation of New York's social environment participated in the circulation of future-founding ideology established upon a new sense of urbaneness that was pluralistic in nature and diverse in character. Writing on the notion of future-founding poetry, Sascha Pöhlmann writes that the

> present and future thus coexist in mutual dependence, each containing traces
> of the other. Conceived this way, the combination of future and present opens
> up a space that exists between the extremes of complete uncertainty and
> complete determinism; the future is neither wholly disconnected from nor wholly
> determined by present, and this state makes potential itself possible (2015: 6).

If one takes Pöhlmann's premise and applies it to the films discussed here a degree of reflexivity manifests within the catalogue. As actualities sought to frame the city's major developments, they inadvertantly imprinted an image of the future city, or at least an image of the direction in which major cities were moving in light of modernity. The social issue films, then, presented corresponding images that captured the effects that such developments were having on the lived experience of the modern city and thus developed a social iconography in accordance with this.

So how does one come to speak of an iconology of the films discussed here? If the actualities discussed in the preceding chapter collectively produced an

iconological archive of modernity around the city as a central subject, then these films appear to particpate in the formation of an iconology that captures everyday life while demonstrating the diverse characteristics of the city's budding cosmopolitanism alongside the prevalence of social injustice. Kwame Anthony Appiah writes that "cosmopolitanism is an adventure and an ideal" (2006: xviii), a sentiment that adequately expresses the ways in which many of the films discussed in this thesis have, latently or otherwise, been oriented towards an idealistic vision of urban life, towards, as Pöhlmann might put it, a simultaneously uncertain and determined future that is resolutely American. In the production of a social iconography that depends on keys icons such as the slum, the criminal, the tramp, and the immigrant beside images of wealth and properity, the social films of New York are complicit in the production of an iconology of social difference that appears to simultaneously hope and fear for the city's social future. Moreover, it is an iconology of everyday life that collectively captures its diverse nature, one that is born out of the impact of urban modernity and carries in it the narrative of hope and grief that broadly characterises the social condition of New York on early film.

Chapter Three

From an Iconographical to an Iconological Reading of Coney Island on Early

Film

Introducing Coney Island

Figure 40: A full-page spread devoted to Luna Park advertising, among other things, its "500,000 ELECTRIC LIGHTS" (The Sun. Jul. 12 1903)

In an early scene in *Annie Hall* (Dir. Woody Allen, 1977), Alvy, a young Coney Islander, demonstrates anxiety about the expanding universe. His mother gets angry that this is his reason for failing to complete his homework: "what has the universe got to do with it? You're here in Brooklyn! Brooklyn is not *expanding*!" It is interesting that for Alvy's mother, New York operates outside of natural law. The city acts as a stabilising force in many of Allen's films, and here it is discussed as an island separate from the world and not subject to the rapid expansion that will one day destroy it. The notion that Brooklyn is not expanding is ironic for the fact that Brooklyn was one of the

foremost sites of expansion for New York following the convergence of the five boroughs in 1896. The idea of New York as an island arises in many of Woody Allen's films, not least *Annie Hall*, and is symptomatic of a worldview that imagines New York at its centre. For Alvy, Coney Island exists both inside and outside his cherished city, invoking the alterity of his childhood but signifying his future in its adjacency to Manhattan. As this chapter will explore, a complex image of modernity emerges out of the Coney Island texturology. It is an impression of modernity that is at odds with many of the images presented by the Manhattan films. Nevertheless, modernity inhabits Coney Island, demonstrating new patterns of social life in the films produced there, at the tip of Brooklyn's eastern peninsula, at the end of the F line, poised before the beguiling expanse of the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure 41: Joan Vinckeboons' 1639 map of Manhattan and its surroundings (note, that Coney Island is the globular growth attached to the West coast of the land mass rising from the South).

There is something to be said of the fact that Coney Island was named Narrioch by its early Native population. Narrioch, or "land without shadow", was so named for its geographic position at the westerly tip of Long Island, adjacent to Brighton Beach (John T. McManus, 1935). There is something romantic in the fact that centuries before Coney Island became an epicentre for early New York film, it was famed and named for its relationship to light, that primary element of the medium. Coney Island was named Conyne Eylandt by early Dutch settlers and is depicted above in Joan Vinckeboons' 1639 map of Manhattan and its surrounding area (Fig. 41).[74] The map represents the distribution of early Dutch settlements around Manhattan, yet its depiction of Coney Island is curious: presented as a small, globular growth on the southern coast of Brooklyn, it appears to be breaking away from the mainland.

Coney Island's relationship to the city is interesting given its remote geographic placement and distinct cultural particularities. While a part of New York, it remains spatially distinct from Manhattan and the film relating to it, therefore one might question how Coney Island's films figure in the context of the wider New York texturology. To what extent, then, does Coney Island's iconography develop and/or problematise its relationship to New York? Just as Coney Island should, ultimately, be treated as a part of the city, so too should its films be considered a part of New York's texturology, despite their seeming differences. But to what extent are they different? Just as the street, bridges, and skyscrapers have proved fundamental to New York's budding iconography, the amusement parks and thrill rides are essential to Coney Island's iconography. Nevertheless, in their own way, both Manhattan and Coney Island illustrate the city's status as a central site of American modernity, as a monument to

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[74] If this map appears hard to follow, it might be due to the fact that New York is most frequently mapped vertically, not horizontally as it is portrayed here. This disorientation can be fixed by rotating the map 90 degrees anticlockwise.

the rapid developments of modern life. In the films of Coney Island, modernity is embodied in spectacles of speed, motion, and excess. As rollercoasters cruised along intricate wooden structures, and bright neon lights flashed above the heads of throbbing crowds, Coney Island demonstrated modern life's artifice, enchantment, and ideological orientation. It was a spectacle of modernity quite different from Manhattan, and one that reflected and reciprocated film's principal novelties: speed, motion, and excess. The films of Coney Island compounded modernity, confronted it, demonstrating modern life's evolutions through its unique properties and characteristics.

Coney Island reached its height of popularity with the opening of its three major theme parks: Steeplechase Park in 1897, Luna Park in 1903, and Dreamland in 1904. During its rise, however, Coney Island became the subject of concerns born out of its supposed impact on its visitors' moral constitutions. Coney Island was a source of both repulsion and wonder; a chaotic cultural symbol that embodied various modern social components. Adjacent to Manhattan's concrete images of modernity, Coney Island's history and iconography offer an alternative imprint of American modernity: among its theme parks and thrill rides, travelling acts and freak shows, saloons and dancehalls, Coney Island embodied the emergence of a culture of leisure and pastime.

Coney Island's uncertain reputation grew out of such offerings. In one article titled 'A Paradise Lost', an anonymous writer states that "the innocent City youth shuddered at the place as a marine Sodom and Gomorrah" (*New York Times,* 29th Sept. 1873). Elsewhere in the article, the author writes:

It is true that from time to time dark whispers came to cloud the brightness of

these pictures [of Coney Island] – dismal rumours of mosquitos so fierce and

large that they frequently devoured small children, and did not hesitate when

driven by hunger to attack grown men; or gloomy tales of a still more ferocious beast of prey, known in dialect as the 'fevranagy,'[75] which seized upon the unwary visitor and shook him to death (*NYT,* 29th Sept. 1873).

Moreover, in 1893, just a few years before the opening of Steeplechase, the first of the major amusements parks, Raymond De L'Epee called Coney Island "M'Kane's Sodom by the Sea" (*NYT,* 15th Oct. 1893), referencing Brooklyn politician John McKane's supposed grip on Coney Island throughout its development. Such representations characterise Coney Island as a site of danger and moral bankruptcy. The fear-mongering threat of child-devouring mosquitos and other beasts of prey instilled Coney Island with horrific imagery to match its supposedly morally dubious nature.

In many ways, such representations inform Coney Island's complex relationship with the city. It is a relationship that might be best understood heterotopically, as per Foucault (2008: 13-29). Foucault writes that

> There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable (17).

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[75] A direct definition of "fevranagy" appears to have been lost, but based on the context of its use – not to mention the fact that it appears beside descriptions of mosquitoes – one might deduce that it describes a larger insect or a 'fever agony' taking into account the local dialect. Regardless of the exact definition, it clearly refers to some formidable affliction that the writer wishes to associate with Coney Island.

Representation through contestation and inversion are the reasons that Coney Island might be read as a heterotopic embodiment of modernity's various intersecting components. Central to Foucault's formulation of the heterotopia is its inside/outside status; Coney Island is both "local" and yet distinct from the city proper. At the edge of New York, Coney Island deployed a medley of modern spectacles revolving and unfolding, inverting yet exposing modernity's myriad elements. As a primary icon of New York film, Coney Island had a privileged capacity to "represent, contest, and invert" various elements of modern life that are captured through its unique representation.

The symbolic purchase of Coney Island has not gone unchecked. Indeed, John F. Kasson has written that

> At the turn of the century this [new American] culture was still in the process of formation and not fully incorporated into the life of society as a whole. Its purest expression at this time lay in the realm of commercial amusements, which were creating symbols of the new cultural order, helping to knit a heterogeneous audience into a cohesive whole. Nowhere were these symbols and their relationship to the new mass audience more clearly revealed than at turn-of-the-century Coney Island (1978: 3-4).

Kasson's identification of Coney Island's symbolism of "the new cultural order" positions it within the same system of representation in which the Manhattan films convey modern life, albeit with substantially different imagery. Elsewhere, Lauren Rabinovitz has written on amusement parks as a consequence of modernity, imagining it as a series of shocks and jolts to previous modes of life (2012: 13), resulting in what Kasson calls "the new cultural order". By situating Coney Island at the symbolic (if not actual) centre of the same cultural rupture that characterised

changes within Manhattan, the films of Coney Island demonstrate the texturology's variance, expanding modern life's image in a series of different, if nevertheless interrelated, ways. In the above passage, Kasson envisions Coney Island as an iterative site of modernity that, with its own unique system of images, demonstrated an alternate view on the transformations that have figured in the films throughout this thesis.

The preponderance of Coney Island films illustrates a recurring interest in it as a cultural artefact of considerable appeal, a matter marked by the frequency and prominence of its depiction. Over the course of this chapter, I will explore the ways in which Coney Island functioned as a complex site of modernity that captured in its image the various elements of modern life. The early films of Coney Island include *The Aerial Slide at Coney Island* (AM, 1897), *Beach Scene, Coney Island* (AM, 1897), *Fun on the Steeple-Chase* (AM, 1897), *Riding the Merry-Go-Round* (AM, 1897), *Suburban Handicap* (Edison, 1897), *Coney Island Bikers* (AM, 1898), *Elephants in a Circus Parade* (AMB, 1899), *Jeffries-Sharkey Contest* (AMB, 1899), *Shoot the Chute Series* (Edison, 1899), *Around the Flip-Flap Railroad* (AMB, 1900), *King and Queen Diving Horses* (AMB, 1899), *Flip-Flap Railroad* (Edison, 1901), *Arab Act, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), *The Bamboo Slide* (AMB, 1903), *A Cake-Walk on the Beach at Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), *The Camel at Luna Park* (AMB, 1903)*, "Holy Moses" The Camel* (AMB, 1903), *A Little Tease* (AMB, 1903), *The Sand Baby* (AMB, 1903), *Shooting the Chutes, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), *Slide for Life, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), *Steeplechase, Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), *The Vaidis Sisters, Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), *The Waders* (AMB, 1903), "What are the Waves Saying Sister?" (AMB, 1903), *Electrocution of an Elephant* (Edison, 1903), *The Great Fire Ruins, Coney Island* (Edison, 1903), *Looping the Loop at Coney Island* (Edison, 1903), *Orphans in the Surf*

(Edison, 1903), *Rattan Slide and General View of Luna Park* (Edison, 1903), *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (Edison, 1903), *Shooting the Rapids at Luna Park* (Edison, 1903), *Loop the Loop* (Lubin, 1903), *Alone* (AMB, 1904), *The Beach at Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *The Coney Island Beach Patrol* (AMB, 1904), *A Couple of Lightweights at Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *Fighting the Flames* (AMB, 1904), *Fighting the Flames, Dreamland* (AMB, 1904), *The First Baby* (AMB, 1904), *Orphan Children on the Beach at Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *Parade of Mystic Shriners, Luna Park, Coney Island* (AMB, 1904), *The Racing Chutes at Dreamland* (AMB, 1904), *The Seashore Baby* (AMB, 1904), *The Swimming Class* (AMB, 1904), *Two Bottle Babies* (AMB, 1904), *The Widow and the Only Man* (AMB, 1904), *Boxing Horses, Luna Park, Coney Island* (Edison, 1904), *Elephants Shooting the Chutes at Luna Park, Coney Island* (Edison, 1904), *Fire and Flames at Luna Park, Coney Island* (Edison, 1904), *Leap From Railway, Coney Island* (AMB, 1905), *On the Beach at Brighton* (AMB, 1905), *The Boarding School Girls* (Edison, 1905), *Coney Island at Night* (Edison, 1905), *Girls and "Barrel of Love"* (Edison, 1905), *Girls Riding Camels* (Edison, 1905), *Hippodrome Races, Dreamland, Coney Island* (Edison, 1905), *June's Birthday Party* (Edison, 1905), *Mystic Shriners' Day, Dreamland, Coney Island* (Edison, 1905), *Meet Me Down at Luna, Lena* (Lubin, 1905), *May's Mechanical Trace Track* (AMB, 1906), *Monday Morning in a Coney Island Police Court* (AMB, 1908), *Cohen's Dream of Coney Island* (Vitagraph, 1909), *Levi and Family at Coney Island* (Atlas, 1910), *Gone to Coney Island* (AMB, 1910), and *Aeroplane Flights, Coney Island* (Pathe, 1910). What emerges from this large corpus of films is evidence of a clear interest that early filmmakers were taking in Coney Island as a site and spectacle of modern life. This final chapter will consider Coney Island's status as a complex and varied site of

modernity that offered a window into the new and evolving characteristics of modern life.

Coney Island: An Iconology of Motion

Many of the films listed above foreground the large repertoire of mechanical amusements that Coney Island had to offer. Films such as *The Bamboo Slide* (AMB, 1903), *Steeplechase, Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), and the various Shooting the Chutes films including *Shooting the Chutes, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), are illustrative of a shared desire among filmmakers to display the thrills offered by Coney Island.

Such attractions form the basis of Coney Island's iconographic purchase on early film. The spatial properties conveyed by such representations is in equal parts imaginative and enchanting, as demonstrated by films such as *Coney Island at Night* (Edison, 1905) and *The Boarding School Girls* (Edison, 1905). Other films such as *Arab Act, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903) and *Mystic Shriners' Day, Dreamland, Coney Island* (Edison, 1905) correspond with the preceding section of the thesis by presenting Coney Island as a site central to New York's emerging cosmopolitanism. The former film captures a street performance and the latter a procession: together, these two films can be seen to illustrate Coney Island's diverse nature, one that preempts its status as a central icon of early-twentieth-century American film.

Across the spectrum of representations, these films exhibit the machinations of modern life at the margins of the city. Due to the its status as a site of modernity, Coney Island represented a clear form of social, cultural, and geographic expansion, a new mode of urban attraction that was, as Kathy Peiss claims, founded upon both a socially progressive and a socially democratic use of public space:

Steeplechase incorporated into its notion of mass entertainment cultural patterns derived from working-class amusements, street life, and popular entertainment […] the park encouraged familiarity between strangers, permitted a free-and-easy sexuality, and structured heterosocial interaction (1987: 136).

The films discussed here depict a small spectrum of representations of Coney Island's kinetic display. Whether it is in the ribbons of neon lights, in a wild and engaging street performance, on some vomit-inducing thrill ride, or on the pleasant sands of its beaches, there, between the multitudes of patrons, is the dizzying spectacle of modern life laid bare. If New York was a dazzling stage showcasing the culmination of early twentieth century American life, then Coney Island was the off-Broadway show within which all of modern life's curious eccentricities could be actualised, exhibited, and reconciled. Coney Island on film presented a textured impression of modernity in effect; it was modernity embodied and unbound; finally, captured, Coney Island was modernity on film.

The principle of motion is central to articulations of modernity on film. Indeed, Francesco Casetti writes that "a gaze measured by speed can never be content to follow a single event: it must be able to operate simultaneously upon a multiplicity of backdrops" (2008: 119). If nothing else, the early Coney Island films present that multiplicity in abundance, revealing a compilation of arresting spectacles that excite the crowds of Coney Island before intriguing early film spectators thereafter. What these films demonstrate in abundance is a concerted effort to capture and make use of Coney Island as a primary contemporary spectacle.

Tom Gunning's cinema of attractions offers an intriguing, if differently inclined model for approaching Coney Island as a subject on early film. Gunning's identification that "the cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting curiosity, and

supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle" (1990: 58) is useful to my account because it privileges the temporariness of the spectacles offered, both in actuality and on film. In this section I will consider how the early films of Coney Island curated an iconography of motion that exemplifies a wider iconology of modernity featuring in many of the films discussed throughout this thesis. Gunning's thoughts are not only intriguing for the fact that he locates film exhibition amid various other *attractions* of the early period (with one attraction, of course, being the amusement park itself), it is vital for the fact that he identifies the spectatorial arrest associated with film in general as being born out of the same tradition that made other attractions such as amusement parks arresting. As useful as Gunning's position is, it could also be said, however, that it at times undermines the content of the films, locating their significance as symptomatic of the medium's primary function as an amusement (or attraction) rather than as a conveyor of new lived experiences. This thesis is less interested in formal properties of early film as an attraction and, instead finds value in the images preserved which illustrate the city's rapidly developing imaginary. Thus, the early films of Coney Island both assist and resist Gunning's notion: on the one hand, they are demonstrative of the spectacle-oriented filmmaking that Gunning addresses; on the other hand, they illustrate, in their content, fascinating features of the changing urban (and suburban) world.

Giuliana Bruno has written that New York is subject to a touristic gaze that one might more commonly associate with a tourist attraction such as Coney Island. She writes that

New York [is a] tourist attraction, and a tourist's nightmare. [Its] very history is intertwined with tourism, colonization and voyage, and their relative apparatuses of representation. In many ways, [its] filmic image partakes in a

form of tourism: cinema's depiction is both an extension and an effect of the tourist's gaze. Repeatedly traversed and re-created by the camera, […] New York [has] produced a real tourism of images. Shot over and over again, [this city has become] an image, imagery, a picture postcard (1997: 47).

Bruno's thoughts on the filmic impression of New York can be extrapolated to discuss how Coney Island – an actual tourist site and geographic addendum to New York – functions in relation to the main city. A touristic gaze accounts for the variance provided by the texturology which is fragmented and structured around sites of preeminent interest.

Coney Island brings to life some of the more peculiar elements of modernity. Both in built form and actual experience, Coney Island was a dynamic space that presented the various elements of modernity through the spectacle of the amusement park, a monument to modern life that was founded upon an entrepreneurial concentration of human desire. Coney Island emerges from the shadow of New York, then, as a space within which modernity could be actualised, confronted, and finally reconciled within a new, experiential urban order. Kasson writes that

Coney Island abstracted features from the larger society and presented them in intensified, fantastic forms. Instruments of production and efficiency were transformed into objects of amusement, and life around them lifted from dull routine to exhilarating pageantry (1978: 73).

In line with Kasson's thoughts, it is clear that Coney Island functioned as more than a series of mere side-show attractions; rather, it embodied a new urban modality that was symptomatic of transformations occurring in the greater city across the bay.

Motion functions not only as a principal component of film that the Coney Island films capture prominently, but also as a component of machinery more generally that

draws to mind the consequences of industrial modernity. Bruce Isaacs writes that "technology presents as a fetishistic object in so much of spectacle cinema [because] the sublime image draws its power from the display of new technologies, new technological uses, and its new creative possibilities for imagining the world" (2013: 147). Isaacs recognises technology's function as both a dominant aspect of film and a dominant image of it. Amid the attractions of Coney Island that are foregrounded in the films pertaining to it is the dizzying display of motion which is reflected in film's capacity to convey movement. A 1903 article from *The Indianapolis Journal* reads thus:

> To enumerate the mechanical contrivances at Coney Island that jostle and toss and tumble and jerk and pull and haul you would be almost an impossibility. Never before in the history of the resort have there been so many different kinds of mechanical monstrosities put together for the purpose of giving people queer sensations (Jones, 1903).

The experiential thrill of Coney Island articulated here was captured in film's capacity to show such "mechanical monstrosities" in operation; thus, films such as the *Shoot the Chutes Series* (Edison, 1899) provided a filmic imprint of the extant possibilities of modern life while demonstrating an early engagement with what Isaacs identifies as film's "fetishistic" relationship with technology and its image.

Edison's *Shoot the Chutes Series*, beside a similar, later film, *Shooting the Chutes, Luna Park, Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), demonstrates the ways in which images of new technology create an iconology of motion that articulates in principle both the technological and sociological results of modernity. Recalling the phantom train films that featured in an earlier part of this thesis, Edison's film boasts three separate shots taken from three vantage points, including one in which the camera is

mounted onto one of the boats as it makes its descent. In the March 1900 edition of the *Edison Films* catalogue, the film is called a "most wonderful picture" (1900: 29) and is praised for providing different perspectives on the same scene. The catalogue is useful here for capturing the contemporaneous reception of the film. The filmmaker makes use of these formal elements – namely the versatility of perspectives made possible by editing – to showcase a complete cycle of the ride that captures both the image and the experience of it. Consider the advertisement for the ride below (Fig. 42), you will find an exaggerated depiction of the attraction that emphasises the drop out of proportion so as to accentuate the thrill offered by it.
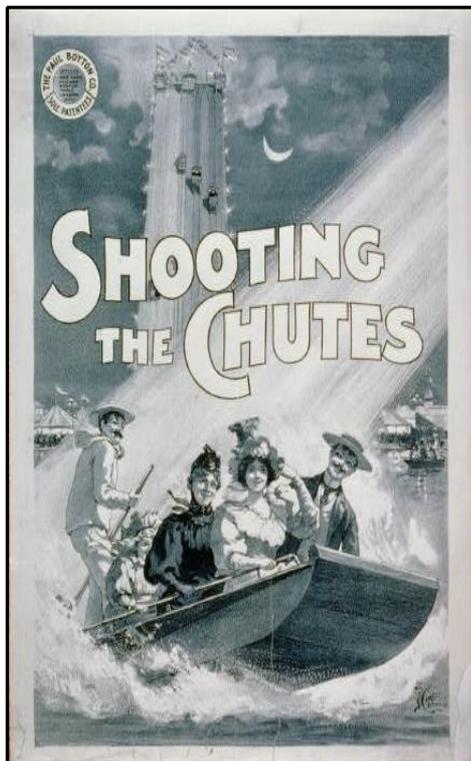
Figure 42: An 1896 poster advertising the 'Shoot the Chutes' ride. Held in the Library of Congress.

The poster plays into Coney Island's primary iconography, the one founded upon images of pleasure, while pointing to a wider iconology of motion and modernity that such representations foreshadow. The portrait of the ride emphasises the magnitude of the drop, drawing power from the spectacle of technology and pleasure

that the ride embodies. Attractions such as Shooting the Chutes actualised and illustrated modernity's potential to transform the world and the individual's experience of it. Through creative technological displays such as the ride, and in dramatic light displays such as that captured in *Coney Island at Night*, Coney Island's iconographic character as a site of pleasure, an impression rendered in the images of its various attractions and amusements, foreshadowed its ability to iterate the new sociocultural superstructure that the amusement park embodied.
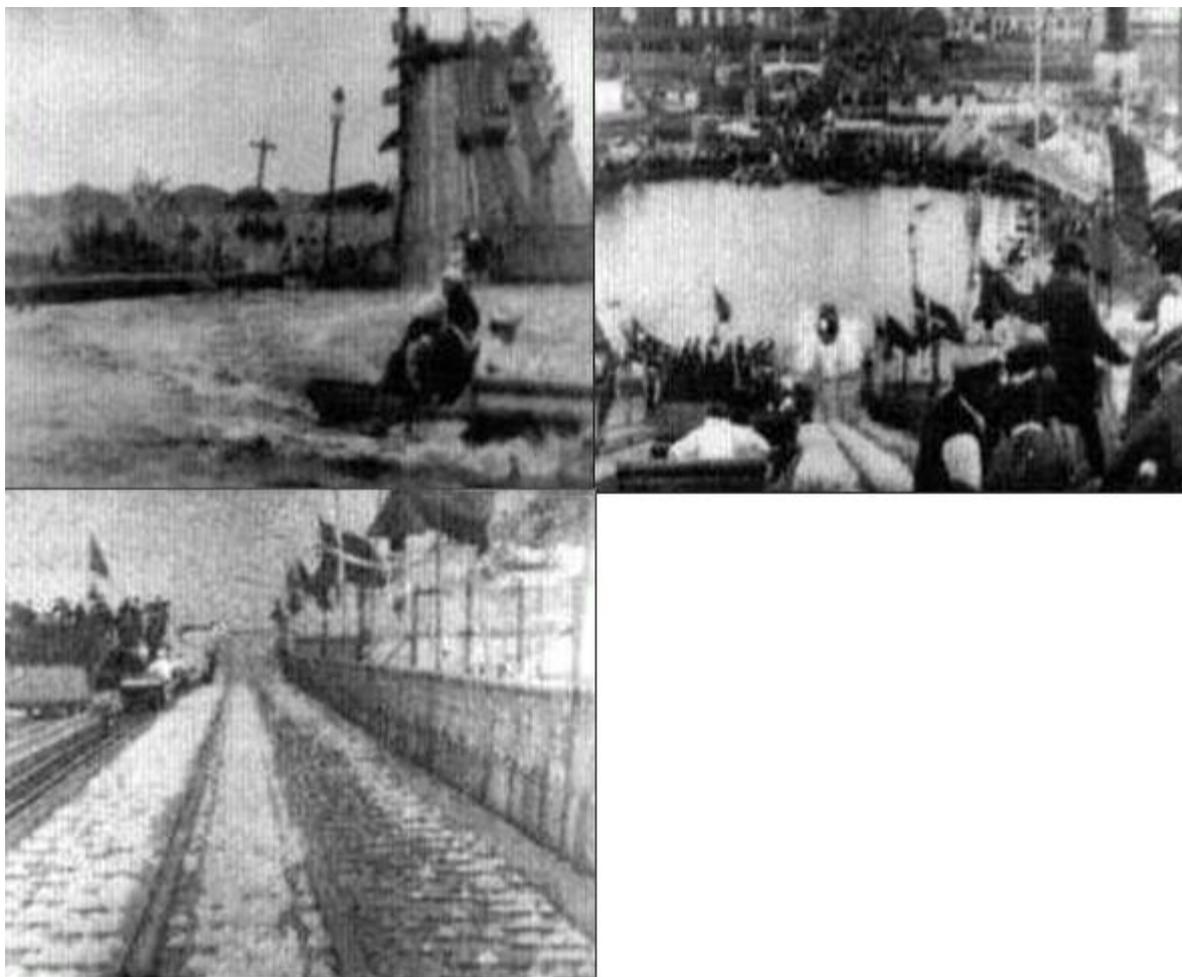
Figure 43: Three shots from *Shoot the Chutes Series* (Edison, 1899). The first shot is taken from the pond at the bottom of the chutes. Crowds are visible to the left of the attraction. The second shot finds the camera mounted at the top of the chute. The lake is visible at the bottom, as are more crowds occupying our previous vantage point. In the final shot the camera is placed onto one of the boats. We assume the gaze of one of the riders as we cruise towards the lake below.

Charles Musser notes that "the spatial world portrayed [in *Shooting the Chutes*] is complex, while the temporality remains imprecise or underdeveloped" (1991: 149).

The complexity of Coney Island's spatial world is often hard to grasp in single shot films that fail to provide the depth of field offered by alternative angles, but here, due to the fact that the overall impression of the space amounts to the sum of three distinct perspectives, the camera is able to infiltrate the visual field to provide a more comprehensive impression of the spatial world. After an establishing shot of the ride and its surroundings creates a sensation of the physical space being represented, the scene changes as the camera is mounted upon the ride itself, a decision that draws attention to the medium's function as an attraction in its own right, and to its active participation in the spectacle conveyed. The scene is witnessed from the bridge by a large crowd who reinforce the attraction's function as a primary spectacle of Coney Island. M. Christine Boyer considers "how many times have the city, its architecture, and the theatre been intertwined, for the theatre is often a foil for the representation of public life, and public space frequently is arranged as if for a theatrical performance[?]" (1994: 74). Boyer's thoughts highlight the theatricality of public space, a matter which foregrounds Coney Island's capacity to stage emerging social phenomena. As the crowds look on to the ride, they confirm the theatricality of what they are witnessing and, in doing so, become a part of its spectacle on film.

As a primary attraction of Coney Island, the chutes amount to a spectacle of motion both in terms of its primary imagery and in regards to the iconological substance of that imagery. It is first and foremost a moving mechanism and therefore the ride's literal embodiment of movement contributes directly to the nature of the spectacle. Over and above that primary impression, however, the Chutes exemplify the ways in which Coney Island functioned as a space of sociocultural innovation, conveying, through technology and emergent social modalities, new patterns of commercial consumption. At the summit of this staple attraction and recurring icon of

Coney Island film, the promise of modern life is laid out before its giddy patrons, manifested in a mechanical attraction founded upon modern life's extant possibilities. When their turn arrives; they take their seat. Suddenly, the ride starts its cycle as they are plunged experientially into the thrill of American modernity. In the image of its drop, they become a component of modernity's dazzling spectacle as they descend, jolted to life by the shock and awe of it all. It is a simple image of modernity wrapped up in an amusement park attraction that illustrates the nature and characteristics of modern life.

There are a significant number of Coney Island films capturing the spectacular attractions it offered. Films such as *Steeplechase, Coney Island* (AMB, 1897/1904), *The Diving Horse* (Edison, 1899), *King and Queen Diving Horses* (AMB, 1902), *Double Ring Act, Luna Park* (AMB, 1903), *The Bamboo Slide* (AMB, 1904), *Fighting the Flames, Dreamland* (AMB, 1904), *The Racing Chutes at Dreamland* (AMB, 1904), *Boxing Horses, Luna Park* (Edison, 1904), *Elephants Shooting the Chutes at Luna Park 1 and 2* (Edison, 1904), *Fighting the Flames at Luna Park* (Edison, 1904), and *Hippodrome Race, Dreamland* (Edison, 1905) are all examples of films that present the attractions themselves as subjects central to the emerging iconography of Coney Island.

Some of the spectacles contained in the above films go to dramatic lengths to inspire excitement in their spectators. Take, for instance, the image of two horses falling fifty feet from a tower into a pool in *King and Queen Diving Horses*, or the dangerous titular act of *Fighting the Flames, Dreamland* and *Fighting the Flames at Luna Park* that pits performers against actual fires (it is worth noting that Coney Island suffered several devastating fires in its early years). Rather than suggest that such films worked to amplify aspects of Coney Island's darker reputation discessed earlier,

Lauren Rabinovitz has argued that disaster films (such as *Fighting the Flames, Dreamland* and *Fighting the Flames at Luna Park*) were "doubly cinematic – extravagant multimedia spectacles themselves cinematic in their assaults on the viewer" (2012: 59). Rabinovitz's suggestion that such scenes were "doubly cinematic" when filmed accentuates both the theatricality of the environment captured and film's active role in the process of framing it. As in films concerning the street and crowd, discussed earlier, here the crowd figures as a recurring image in the iconographical constitution of Coney Island. So much so that the camera acts as another member of the crowd in attendance – or, at the very least, a surrogate gaze – that emphasises the theatricality of the actual event that is repeated, or "doubled", by its depiction.

Historians such as Aron and Peiss as well as David Nasaw have found that understanding the function and role of amusement parks offers insight into American social history by chronicling the ways in which entertainment and pleasure-seeking emerged to completely alter the existing modes of life leading to an invigoration of the ways in which the American public approached work and play. Nasaw writes that

> The amusement parks succeeded in attracting millions of visitors because they provided the city's residents with enclosed playgrounds, isolated and insulated from the demands of everyday life. In their promiscuous juxtaposition of sedate and seditious entertainments, the amusement parks were the self-conscious heirs to the world's fairs. Almost every park included among its offerings ribald attractions disguised as wholesome entertainments (1993: 85).

The conclusions he draws here are particularly useful to an understanding of how Coney Island embodied what one might call social motion, an iconological phenomenon that unites physical motion with social mobility. As a site that exists, both literally and figuratively, inside and outside of the city proper, Coney Island functions

as an escape from the city, while remaining entirely characteristic of it. Emblazoned in its image are new structures of urban life operating from what is effectively an extraurban space. The image of the Coney Island crowd, then, can be responded to as the product of that social motion in effect; moreover, the image of the crowd is the evidence of the films' iconological capacity to articulate ongoing and permanent sociocultural changes. The succession of images of the social body at play (if not entirely at rest) that is contained within such films is demonstrative of the ways in which the iconological substance of early film had a privileged capacity to dramatically embody various aspects of new and emerging urban structures. Coney Island, then, might be found to be a symptomatic expression of a new urban modality, as a spatial embodiment of modern desire that reflected a complex coming to terms with modern life's potential.

If social motion is the iconological capital of these films then it is interesting to consider hows they make use of the icon of the American family at rest. Woody Register, discussing Luna Park, writes that

> [Luna Park's] construction as a marketplace of play and effortless abundance plotted the coordinates of a new cultural outlook that placed the park and its inventor at the center of twentieth-century consumer capitalism in the United States. […] [Luna Park] represented new ways of imagining pleasure and fulfilment for middle-class men in such a world, dismissing older apprehensions about the personal and social dangers of immaturity, material luxury, and self-indulgence (2001: 86).

Here, Register finds Luna Park to be symptomatic of cultural movement within the United States that is intrinsically linked to the emergence of new patterns of leisure and consumption.

Such impressions lay the groundwork for an iconology of motion that pertains to Coney Island's filmic imprint as a facilitator of such transformations. One of the functions of these films was to provide a substantial insight into the developments to, and filmic impression of, the American family at rest. Films such as *Beach Scene, Coney Island* (AM, 1897), *A Cake-Walk on the Beach at Coney Island* (AMB, 1903), *The First Baby* (AMB, 1904), *On the Beach at Brighton* (AMB, 1905), and *Levi and Family at Coney Island* (Atlas, 1910) reflect the ways in which the beach space functioned as a class neutral social space for leisure at the time of Coney Island's cultural ascension. *The First Baby* is composed of a single static shot of a baby sat between its parents. This film is simple and yet interesting. First, the dominant image of the family unit offers an atypical image for Coney Island when it is compared to some of the films discussed above. Despite its popularity as a family retreat, as has been discussed at length, Coney Island is most frequently represented by its litany of amusements rather than through the image of the American family unit. As Cindy Aron reports, contemporary newspapers "lavishly praised" the efforts of reformers to organise family outings to Coney Island, noting the positive effects that such trips were having on the childrens' temperament (1999: 186). Such trips are demonstrative of social motion in effect. As families escape from the city to partake in Coney Island's lavish staging of modern life's various contrivances – including the various mechanical rides discussed above – they are participating in the dizzying thrill of modern life at its literal and figurative edge.

It is an alluring image that is embodied in the icon of the American family at rest. In one film, *The Sand Fort* (AMB, 1903), a group of children play in the sand as a large ship looms on the horizon. One would assume that the ship in the background is coincidental, yet seen together the image forms a dazzling spectacle of both modern

life's consistency and its orientation towards the future. Locked into the scene is the ideologically-loaded image of the American family, including children, a veritable signal of an impending future. Meanwhile, beyond their image lies a prominent icon of the future itself, of technology and industry intertwined. The incidental image of a ship, bound from or for the wider world, provides evidence of the various ways in these films captured modernity, in direct and indirect observations of changing sociological and technological elements of modern life.

Coney Island: An Iconology of Excess

> The gold ring on the carousels was made of brass. Even as kids in Coney Island we didn't believe it was the real thing. By the time we'd grown old enough to ride the outside horses and lunge out sideways to grasp the metal rings that swung towards us for the final few rotations, the carousel was no longer enchanting and we had no deep desire for the free ride that the last, lucky gold one awarded. By then we had nickels enough to go around again if we wanted to, but we tended to spend them on attractions that were higher and faster, more spectacular – roller coasters – and, for fun, the electric bump cars (Joseph Heller, 1998: 1).

The above quotation is taken from the opening of Joseph Heller's memoir *Now and Then* that details his childhood growing up in and around Coney Island in the 1920s. The artifice of the "gold ring […] made of brass" is emblematic of the ways in which Coney Island, if understood as a site of modernity, might also be understood as a site of excess. As discussed in the previous section, many Coney Island films revolved around spectacles of pleasure-seeking; thus, the images of technology and

leisure that were born out of such representations of Coney Island informed its function as a veritable icon of modernity. It is not unsurprising, then, that images of excess appeared symptomatic of modernity's filmic imprint and thus coincided often with the iconographic dimensions of Coney Island as a central site for leisure. For Heller, Coney Island was a place of pronounced artifice – even as a child, Heller knew that the rings were brass, not gold, and, thus, in his introduction to the place he characterises Coney Island as a site of both enchantment and excess, insinuating its artificiality.

Figure 43: The execution of Topsy in *Electrocuting an Elephant* (Edison, 1903)

Electrocuting an Elephant (Edison, 1903) offers an antithesis to Heller's observation. The film has been scrutinised by Mary Ann Doane as an exemplar of early cinematic executions that revel in electricity's "technological control over life and death" which is, in turn, iterative of film's "same promise in the field of representation" (2002: 28). The film is a harrowing spectacle in which Topsy, an abused Coney Island

elephant responsible for killing three trainers, is executed via an AC current.[76] This film finds Topsy before a sign that reads "THE HEART OF CONEY ISLAND"; accidental as this may be, in the context of the film it does demonstrate the fact that there was something grotesque about Coney Island's merciless pursuit of its patrons' leisure dollars.

Heller's description of Coney Island's artificiality contradicts the very real image of death that is Topsy's execution. As is made evident in attractions that seek to be competitive in their demonstrations of the spectacular, excess is a consumable product that is central to Coney Island just as it is central to filmic artifice. Edison's sadistic display is a grotesque embodiment of excess that implies, in its violent imagery, that there was a concomitant darkness that accompanied Coney Island's success as a site of heightened phenomenological interest. In the instance of Topsy's execution, the fact that the spectacle is an excessive one, both in reality and as it is represented on film, forms an essential part of its "appeal". The exhibition of electricity's tremendous power demonstrated both its promise to transform modern life while simultaneously underscoring its capacity to cause death or serious injury.

On the one hand, Coney Island represents modernity in effect through various components, while on the other it seems to foreshadow a cultural breaking point. Excess is found to be implicit to critical understandings of modernity, and certainly in Georg Simmel's theorisation of "the metropolitan type" (1997: 326). Here, the notion of excess characterises Simmel's formulation of the urban individual as a character of innumerable variations, as the locus through which the city's endless "fluctuations and discontinuities" (326) – the basis of the urban experience for Simmel – are realised.

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[76] The sinister nature of *Electrocuting the Elephant* has been noted by Kelly Oliver who writes "the elephant film brought together Edison's most significant inventions, electric lighting, film, and electrocution as a means of administering the death penalty" (2013: 174).

A precedent for the philosophical relationship between the city and notions of excess can be observed in the works of philosopher Georges Bataille. In his 1930 essay "The Labyrinth", Bataille considers the ways in which the individual is never isolable or unitary, but is in fact a participant within a wider community – "the existence of the particle can in no way be isolated from [the] composition" (1985: 174) – and then goes further to suggest that nothing in the universe is unitary, but rather exists in a balance, a particle of the "composition", the greater whole. Bataille's interest in the relation between neighbouring elements – the particles of the composition – recurs in his theorisation of adjacent urban spaces and their influence on one another. He writes that:

> The city that little by little empties itself of life, in favor of a more brilliant and attractive city, is the expressive image of the play of existence engaged in composition. Because of the composing attraction, *composition empties elements of the greatest part of their being, and this benefits the center* – in other words, it benefits composite being. There is the added fact, in a given domain, *if the attraction of a certain center is stronger than that of a neighbouring center, the second center then goes into decline* (emphasis original, 1985: 175-6).

For Bataille, "the play of existence" figures as capitalist competition, a struggle between neighbouring sites for one's prominence over the other. What Bataille describes in the identification of the favour felt for "more brilliant and attractive [cities]" is the cultural capital that excess brings as a commercial commodity. He describes a process of competition, of rejuvenation and reform, in which communities work to outdo one another in what could be described in commercial terms as a contest of attractions.

If society is the basis of Bataille's "composition" then its penchant for leisure may be construed as the consequence of a collective id that is founded upon desire which, emboldened by the commercial spirit of the modern city, remains the principle drive to which Coney Island's attractions are responding. Rather than necessarily compete with the centre (that is: the city), Coney Island demonstrates a cultural decentering that provides an alternative space in which cultural fantasies might be articulated and enjoyed en masse. Therefore, Coney Island functions as an extraurban site specifically devoted to leisure in which the city's collective id can be satisfied without impacting the centre; thus, through its marginality, Coney Island's peripheral status as a fringe site of particular cultural significance allows the city to facilitate widespread fantasy fulfilment without compromising the stability of the urban matrix, the primary centre, the city. This notion prefigures the foundations upon which Coney Island was built: it was an alternative space of capitalist enterprise primed to satisfy the modern urban individual's excessive requirement for pleasure fulfilment. Seeking to provide the fastest, the tallest, the biggest, the sweetest, and/or the most grotesque attractions, Coney Island was an extraurban embodiment of excess, an arena of play whose sole limitation was the extent to which its patrons could stomach the various abundances on display.

Giuliana Bruno has written that when "thrown into the rhythm of the metropolis, a field of forces in motion, the body is affected. As a result of the flow of impressions, the optical montage, and the fluctuating nature of the metropolitan space, the unity of the body disintegrates" (1993: 56). This conceptualisation of the body as a site of multifarious rhythmic interferences (which culminates in its disintegration) prefigures it as a locus of corporeal excess. In line with the notion of embodied excess, Linda

Williams has written on cinematic excess in relation to filmed articulations of sex, violence, and/or melodrama, stating that:

> Visually, each of these ecstatic excesses [sex, violence, emotion] could be said to share a quality of uncontrollable convulsion or spasm – of the body "beside itself" in the grips of sexual pleasure, fear and terror, and overwhelming sadness. Aurally, excess is marked by recourse not to the coded articulations of language but to inarticulate cries – of pleasure in porn, screams of fear in horror, sobs of anguish in melodrama (2003: 144).

It is worth making note that I am not so much interested in Williams' definitions of excess as an on-screen abundance of violence, sex, or emotion, despite all being useful elsewhere, including in *Electrocuting an Elephant* in which a violent spectacle takes place. Rather, I am mostly compelled by William's articulation of excess as the instigator of affect, of a pronounced bodily reaction in the character and viewer alike, the catalyst for a subject being left "beside itself" on and off-screen.[77]

Cinematic excess, in accordance with Williams' definition, decentres the body, compromises it, throws it out of balance. So it goes with Coney Island. If, as I have argued, Coney Island is a simulacrum of the city's collective id, then it is indeed fitting to explore it as a space to which a body out of balance belongs. To this end, I will argue that filmic representations of Coney Island in early slapstick comedies such as *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (Edison, 1903), *Boarding School Girls at Coney Island* (Edison, 1905), *Jack Fat and Slim Jim at Coney Island* (Vitagraph, 1910), and *Coney Island* (Paramount, 1917) utilise images of excess as a primary element of their

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[77] This brings to mind Vivian Sobchack's persuasive reading of Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993), in which she measures her response to the film through her body: "I want to ground my discussion in the flesh. In *my* flesh, in fact–and its meaningful responsiveness to and comprehension of an actual film" (2010: 61). She argues that films are *felt* by the viewer, and thus the viewer is forced to respond to its particulars with their own sensing body.

iconography. Further, I will argue that the iconological imprint of that iconography goes some distance towards articulating the ways in which Coney Island functioned simultaneously as a complex site of modernity and as an alternative space in which the pursuit of pleasure could be exploited.

Often it is the case that the human body is utilised as both a site and signifier of excess in the slapstick genre. The act of looking that is central to Laura Mulvey's thesis on the gender bias in film spectatorship is predicated on a fascination with the human body.[78] Mulvey writes that "curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world" (2009: 715). Despite her interests being differently oriented, Mulvey's recognition of the body's filmic primacy proves vital to understanding how excess functions in films of this kind. Her focalisation of the body as a primary site of spectatorial fascination is of particular use to understanding excess' iconological function for the very fact that slapstick is characterised by excessive bodily performances. The early slapstick comedies of Coney Island, such as those named above, made use of an iconography of excess that was articulated through prominent images of bodies out of balance, and which provided a means of conveying the sociocultural transformations that Coney Island exhibited.

Coney Island slapstick comedy coalesces at the meeting point between geographic space and the human body, illuminating a fantastic carnival of modern life that was primed to exhibit the new modes of freedom and expression that

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[78] Of course this fascination manifests often as a desiring gaze. One of the primary problems of film for Laura Mulvey is the fact that as a medium it gives life to fantasies of wish fulfilment that are fundamentally masculine in nature. She writes that "the cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect" (2009: 715).

accompanied it. The thrills on offer, embodied in laughter, screams of pleasure, and occasionally vomit, are archetypal signifiers of bodily abundance that are demonstrative of the role that excess plays in arenas such as Coney Island, a space that foregrounds the body's relation to its extremities. Mikhail Bakhtin, an exponent of theorisations of the carnivalesque, writes that "exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style" (1984: 303). Coney Island slapstick comedy made use of grotesque imagery that was, as I will later argue in regards to *Coney Island* (Paramount, 1917), at least partially indebted to some of the freak shows that marked its history. Carnivalesque imagery is indicative of the ways in which both Coney Island and slapstick comedy both operated in accordance with the dominant principle of excess which constituted a key part of its filmic iconology. Writing on Bahktin's conception of the carnivalesque, Andrew Robinson discusses the ways in which such spaces present alternative sociocultural infrastructures:

> Carnival is also taken to provide a positive alternative vision. It is not simply a deconstruction of dominant culture, but an alternative way of living based on a pattern of play. It prefigured a humanity constructed otherwise, as a utopia of abundance and freedom. It eliminated barriers among people created by hierarchies, replacing it with a vision of mutual cooperation and equality. Individuals are also subsumed into a kind of lived collective body which is constantly renewed (2011).

Coney Island's carnivalesque properties are ubiquitously laced into both its composition and the lived experience of it, as is made evident in the preponderance of representations of its space and attractions that are provided by the early films of the period discussed thus far. In the establishment of a new sociocultural order that is,

in line with Foucault, fundamentally heterotopic, carnivalesque spaces such as Coney Island offered both, as Robinson puts it, "abundance and freedom" to its patrons, levelling existing hierarchies while providing an alternative platform upon which to explore new social formations in anticipation of the city's urban future.

Lauren Rabinovitz has written on the ways in which the human body functions as a primary site of meaning for the slapstick genre, stating that

> slapstick comedies intertwined bodies (both onscreen and off) with those effects of cinema that produce celebration in the physicality of one's own body. Such visceral sensation often found its best illustration in those slapstick movies featuring amusement parks – that spectacle most closely associated with the body intermingling with the mechanically modern (2012: 138).

Rabinovitz finds a striking reciprocity between the slapstick body and mechanical attractions, observing its unique capacity to reflect Coney Island's image of modernity. In which case it is fitting to propose, in line with Rabinovitz's reasoning, that Coney Island slapstick was not so much concerned with articulating a common experience than it was in hyperbolising the experience of Coney Island out of all proportion. In the context of Coney Island, the slapstick body functioned as apparatus upon which anxieties about modern life could be hung, and by which new social experiences could be measured. As heavily coded signifiers of abundance, slapstick bodies acting out of balance demonstrated more than just excess in performance, they went further to offer evidence of the developing ways in which Coney Island itself, and those represented in it, could function discursively.

In line with Williams' discussion of some of the manifestations of cinematic excess, I will regard the shared experience of slapstick comedy as a fundamentally embodied one; born in the performer (the site and source of the gag) and felt in the

spectator (who reacts, most often, with laughter), the slapstick body, in both origin and affect, doubles the effect of Coney Island. Alan Dale writes that "slapstick doesn't feel profound but rather feels true to our experience very much as we live it[,] it's a popular phenomenon that predates modern pop culture but that in movies shares pop culture's immediate access to the audience" (2000: 27). Dale's thoughts, like Rabinovitz's, centralise the human body as a primary agent of meaning, thus insinuating a corporeal transaction in which the performer and spectator are conjoined in a contract of excess and embodiment. In this final section, I will observe in a selection of early Coney Island slapstick comedies the ways in which excess formed a central aspect of Coney Island's iconological impression, conferring, through the slapstick genre's excessive form, ideas about the place itself and its relation to modern life.

Embodying Excess: Coney Island Slapstick Comedy

Among the earlier Coney Island slapstick comedies were *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (Edison, 1903) and *Boarding School Girls at Coney Island* (Edison, 1905) (*Rube and Mandy* and *Boarding School Girls* hereafter). While both films predated the saturation of the slapstick genre, they nevertheless displayed narrative tropes, characterisations, and an overall aesthetic that would inform the slapstick comedy that followed.[79] As Henry Jenkins writes of slapstick's formal resistance to emergent narrative conventions, stating that:

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[79] While the term 'slapstick' – named so for the sticks that circus clowns would hit one another with – can be found to be used as of the early part of the twentieth century in publications such as the *NY Tribune* (Dec. 27 1908), it is worth noting that it was not completely assimilated into the language of comedy until as late as the 1910s (*OED*). Both *Rube and Mandy* and *Boarding School Girls* demonstrate tropes of what would later come to define slapstick comedy, and yet neither can be fully reconciled within the genre due to its only partial existence at the time of their creation. It is, however, interesting to view these films as illustrative of what followed as more fully discernible slapstick comedies went into production.

A comedy that sought to integrate some central aspects of the vaudeville aesthetic into dominant studio practice would have been a strange-looking film indeed. It would be a text shaped by competing if not directly contradictory aesthetic impulses. Such a film would assert the centrality of narrative only to puncture that narrative with a series of self-contained performance sequences" (1992: 98).

The plots of both films are developed around excursions to Coney Island. Unlike *Boarding School Girls*, which opens in New York, the action of *Rube and Mandy* all takes place within Luna Park and predominantly around the Steeplechase, one of its primary amusements. With the exception of a mobile shot that follows their horse and cart as it enters the park, and a protracted panoramic shot demonstrating the space of Luna Park (Shooting the Chutes is visible beside a collection of neighbouring attractions), the film is composed of a series of slapstick vignettes that allow the performers to govern the spectacle.

The characters of Rube and Mandy (and the Boarding School Girls to a lesser degree) are identifiable as stock vaudeville characters whose excessive bodily displays announce, in multifarious and multifaceted ways, the excesses offered by the unique experience of Coney Island. In the context of amusement park modernity, the characters reveal Coney Island's implicit nature in moments of imbalance, impropriety, and inhibition, demonstrating the ways in which form and content can converge to provide an additional layer of meaning particular to the space in which it was performed. Much has been written on slapstick's capacity to mediate a coming-to-terms with the world, a positon that emboldens the significance of a film's mise-en-scène as fundamental to the construction of meaning. For instance, writing on Buster Keaton, Lisa Trahair claims that:

Undoubtedly the contraptions and apparatuses in Keaton's films are the basis for his gags. Even if the operation of such machines does not always correspond with the Keaton character's intention (at times he unleashes an unstoppable destructive capacity), they are his primary means of adapting to the world in which he lives" (2007: 71).

Trahair makes the point that the contraptions found in Keaton's comedy are not merely incidental, that such devices are essential not only to the gags, but to the plot also. It is clear that the same is true for early slapstick performances: as in *Rube and Mandy* and *Boarding School Girls* the performers engage with the mise-en-scène in ways that are central to the gags and narrative. In an early scene in *Rube and Mandy*, the two protagonists take a cow ride together. Rube and Mandy are each mounted upon a separate cow where they attempt to embrace one another. This proves to be a poorly judged exercise that compromises their individual balance and leaves them thrashing and fighting to remain upright, the basis of the gag. Like the clothing that came under discussion in regards to social iconography, Rube and Mandy's rube attire marks their fish-out-of-water credentials and figures as an image of urban expansion that was explored in the previous chapter. Here, the gag is born out of a failing of the body, out of the performers' inability to remain upright as they fight against the weight of gravity. Moreover, the gag depends upon the tantalising promise of the body's defamation (or destruction), courtesy of a fall. The harder they try to stay on their cow, the more they struggle and as their struggle increases, the slapstick nature of their performance intensifies accordingly. The spectator anticipates the fall, perhaps they even hope for it as punishment for Rube and Mandy's ridiculousness. That fall is denied, here, yet the spectators' patience is rewarded later as the two fall from a camel.

Figure 44 : Left, Rube and Mandy on the rope bridge; right, Rube and Mandy on the slide.

Henri Bergson writes that in order "to understand laughter, we must put it back into its natural environment, which is society, and above all else we must determine the utility of its function which is a social one" (1911: 7-8). Bergson's thoughts are fundamental to understanding the relationship between slapstick comedy and the prominent iconography of Coney Island. If one understands laughter in relation to its environment, then its social utility, as Bergson puts it, lies in the recognition of a common experience. *Rube and Mandy* hyperbolises the excessive experience of Coney Island into a kinetic sequence of amusements, yet in doing so the film underscores the fact that Coney Island is already of the slapstick mould, a carnivalesque site of cultural myth-making in which excess operates as the preeminent signifier of modern life. Of course, that does not make slapstick redundant in such arenas; rather, it prompts recognition of the nature of the place, and thus the iconological merit of such films comes into play. If, as I argue, excess was intrinsic to the filmic iconography of Coney Island, then I also argue that the iconological effect of such impressions marks the ways in which amusement park modernity presented a coming-to-terms with modernity itself as it was impacting the adjacent city.

In line with this, spectacles of excess confer an embodied display of one's ability or inability to reconcile the pressures of modernity that manifest in Coney Island's

composition. The film is a succession of scenes in which the two hapless out-of-towners struggle and (mostly) fail to overcome the attractions on display. The cow ride is one instance, but the same is true for two sequences including a rope bridge and a slide. A sequence in which Rube and Mandy attempt to traverse a rope bridge, followed by a sequence in which Rube and Mandy (and a cohort of fellow riders) collide at the bottom of a slide, operate similarly to the aforementioned cow riding sequence. All sequences culminate with excessive displays in which their bodies are unable to maintain their balance with those spectacles farcically revealing the nature of Coney Island. In some cases, existing iconography is made use of to embolden the gag: the image of Mandy in a dress attempting to cross the rope bridge, for instance, juxtaposes her inappropriately formal attire with the silliness of such an amusement. Despite that, however, Mandy traverses the bridge with ease while Rube's uncontrolled determination leaves him swinging back and forth at constant risk of a fall.

The second sequence takes place at the foot of a slide. Soon after Rube and Mandy's descent, more and more riders follow them, contributing to large-scale collision at the base of the slide. The mass of bodies serves the primary effect of the gag which is to have a group of riders crashing into one another. The secondary meaning, however, generates out of the fact that Coney Island is a highly-populated place in which the principal of excess flourishes. To read the iconological substance of such images, then, is to engage with the ways in which such films depend on place as a facilitator of meaning. These are not just films set *in* Coney Island, they are films *of* Coney Island and transfer, through their representation, ideas about the place itself. As witnessed in the crowds that populate the Coney Island actualities discussed earlier, the mass of pleasure-seekers informs an iconography of abundance that is tangible in this sequence. Therefore, the film provides a series of amusing gags that

satirises Coney Island's excessiveness, here embodied in the vaudevillian performances.

Symptomatic, perhaps, of the themes of excess which are pertinent to the form and space of Coney Island, the slapstick humour evident here depends upon (as it does in much of slapstick comedy) the body's destruction and/or defamation. In keeping with the notion that excess and embodiment synthesise at the moment of the body's failure to contain itself, here the body forms a centrifugal site of commentary for discussing the external forces that govern it. Tom Gunning has written on slapstick comedy's use of machines as objects of failure, stating that "a machine misused or turned against itself becomes a gag" (2010: 140). Within the landscape of early Coney Island comedy, the mechanical "failures" are sometimes literal and sometimes not, born out of either the performer's inability to master the machines (the various attractions) on display, or out of their inability to reconcile themselves with the overwhelming effects of modernity. Readings of the latter are the consequence of finding iconological meaning in the relationship between the space of Coney Island and the slapstick form; here, performers discharge themselves against that which they can neither understand nor master, a process that manifests as a series of spectacular failings of the body in a world with which it is newly out of kilter.

The final scene of *Rube and Mandy* works to reinforce the effect that I am relying on here as evidence for the film's iconological structure. After the couple have acquired hotdogs they move to the right of the frame so that the crowd remains a prominent part of the mise-en-scéne behind the primary action. Through a series of hyperbolic gestures, Rube and Mandy insinuate that they are about to vomit, a cumulative image of excess that acts as the cherry on the top of the figurative cake of abundance. Throughout the film, the performers make use of their bodies as vehicles

for comedic emphasis; by assuming the role of an illustrative Coney Island couple going about a day of typical activities, they draw attention to the nature of Coney Island as a space that exploits its patrons' impulse to satisfy their baser pleasures. The final shot, a medium close-up, bust shot of Rube and Mandy stuffing their faces with hotdogs and smearing sauce on one another, stands finally as a sublime image of the ways in which an embodiment of excess can function iconologically as a striking comment on the space in which they are performing.

Boarding School Girls opens on a terraced New York City house; a group of finely dressed young ladies enter a vehicle bound for Coney Island. In the over-crowded vehicle the ladies attempt to erect their parasols which proves to be difficult in a gag that characterises much of the forthcoming action. The amusing image of a dozen parasols erect atop a small vehicle is illustrative of the theme of the excess that runs throughout such films. After dismounting the vehicle at Dreamland, the group of women begin their activities; an early sequence finds three of them digging a hole on the beach for one of their friends to fall into. As is the case in *Rube and Mandy*, the gag here revolves around the spectacle of a dramatic fall and, characteristic of comedic traditions (as we will find with Fatty Arbuckle in a following example), it is the outcast friend who is left to suffer the humiliation of that fall. Juxtaposed against the opening scene, what transpires in such behaviour is the seeming dismissal of social pretence; through the defamation of their friend, the boarding school girls relinquish the social order that governs their conduct in stricter social spheres. In short, courtesy of the democratic nature of Coney Island's space, which works to level existing social hierarchies, the girls are given license to have fun within the new spatial order where playfulness, and, more subversively, inhibition coexist in spite of the presiding social expectations that would otherwise govern their conduct.

In a later scene, the girls ride the rocking barrel, a circular contraption that travels along a runway spinning its riders. As the girls descend along the barrel's track, a matron runs after them waving her umbrella. The ride's mechanical properties inform its utility as an icon illustrative of Coney Island's impressive technological display, a matter well demonstrated in some of the aforementioned actualities. The image of the frantic matron, meanwhile, positions the sequence in tandem with slapstick performances that depend upon eccentric bodily displays; the matron's hysterical, if ultimately futile, attempt to prevent the girls from enjoying the freedom from inhibition Coney Island has afforded them leads to her eventual defamation courtesy of a fall. The rolling barrel attraction is yet another facilitator of pleasure-seeking that is excessive in nature; upon it, the girls abandon modesty and decorum in favour of a good time, while the frantic matron is left unable to control her students in the face of the power and excitement of amusement park modernity.

Vitagraph's 1910 slapstick comedy *Jack Fat and Slim Jim at Coney Island* is now, sadly, an incomplete film, yet what remains represents a continuation of the themes and iconological effects that are characteristic of the aforementioned films. *Jack Fat* is a more sophisticated version of those films mentioned above, and follows two physically opposite men, accompanied by two women who they meet at Coney Island, making fools of themselves on various attractions. Lauren Rabinovitz has written on it, noting that the film makes interesting use of the slapstick body as a source of meaning. The film, she claims, "establishes an important difference between bodies meshing fluidly with machinery [... and] the quite mechanical movements of those who resist the rides" (2012: 144). Once again, *Jack Fat* demonstrates the slapstick body as a primary site and source of meaning that transmits, through its efficiency or lack

thereof, notions about the nature of Coney Island itself as a centre for sociocultural expansion.

More complete is Fatty Arbuckle's 1917 slapstick comedy *Coney Island*, a short film co-starring emerging and recognised stars such as Buster Keaton and Al St. John. The film opens with "Fatty" and his wife on the beach, where he buries himself in the sand as a means to escape her. After fooling his wife, Fatty heads to the amusement park where he partakes in some of the attractions before spotting and pursuing "Pretty Girl" who is there on a date with Buster Keaton's character, "Rival". The film makes use of an iconography of excess in interesting and complex ways, addressing issues of otherness and libertarianism that are symptomatic Coney Island's ideological nature while simultaneously providing a functional space for slapstick performances.

Rabinovitz has called the film "a sublime example of physical motion as interlocking parts of a cosmic machine," stating that "like the experience of the park itself, the pleasures of Coney Island are cinematically rendered both as an accommodation to new technologies that alleviates the alienating effects of modern industrial labor, as well as an allowance for sexual expression in a society whose institutions are otherwise repressive" (2012: 145). Rabinovitz's regard for the film's utility as a display of uninhibited physicality (a "sublime example of physical motion") is important. In both name and appearance, Fatty becomes an embodiment of Coney Island excess: his large physicality is utilised and accented by the film's mise-en-scéne. After a series of impressive night shots of Coney Island to establish the space (which Buster Keaton's Rival tries to watch via a lamppost), the first sequence involving Fatty takes place on the beach away from the amusement parks. In an establishing shot of Fatty he is framed so that his large stomach is central to the shot while an early gag finds Fatty attempting to lie on the sand only to roll away due to his

spherical proportions. Time and again, Fatty's body is employed as the site of defamation and its physically excessive properties are the source of many of the film's gags. The prominence of Fatty's physicality frames his body as a grotesque spectacle; not only does such a reading reinforce my iconological position on such films, it points to a history of representations of grotesque bodies that coincide with Coney Island's carnivalesque nature.

In his exploration of American freak shows, Michael Chemers he attempts to strip the term "freak" of the cultural stigma that inhabits it. Chemers argues for the importance of "remind[ing] the reader that the history [of freak shows] is one of a marginalized community of performers: targeted, isolated, disenfranchised, tortured, abused, and murdered" (2008: 9). An understanding of freakish bodies and their cultural capital allows one to explain how a slapstick body such as Arbuckle's might be expressive of wider cultural issues concerning the body and its relation to its environment. Chemers writes that:

> The strategy of stigma management generally employed by the freak show is plain: the tactical exaggeration and exacerbation of perceived deviance for the purpose of parting gawkers from their money. [Freak shows are] undeniably capitalist, typically mercenary, often indecent and usually exploitative (24).

Chemers definition is usefully broad, thus enabling one to position Fatty's appeal within the wider context of the freak show tradition. Implicit to the image of Fatty's attempt to bury himself in the sand is the amusing impossibility of containing so great an object, his body. This objectification of Fatty's body affords it a formative role in the construction of primary meaning: he is fat, therefore we laugh. Such logic is consistent with Chemers' notion that freaks shows are "mercenary, often indecent and usually exploitative" employments of bodies defined by otherness for commercial gain.

Nevertheless, contingent with such a reading is an adjacent acknowledgment of the capital that such bodies offer films of this kind. As a site of actual embodied excess, a large body such as Arbuckle's foregrounds the way in which the slapstick genre utilises otherness for comic effect. Read in relation to the environment in which it is found, Arbuckle's performance, like those that have been discussed in the preceding examples, may be read as a consequence of Coney Island's status as a space of abundance. In alternative spaces (and certainly in unspecified ones), such performances might be most prominently read in accordance with their primary function which is to provide comedic value. In respect to Coney Island slapstick performances, however, such displays are given space to mean in more profuse ways, as extensions of, and commentaries on, the place in which they are found.

Figure 45: Fatty in drag in Coney Island (1917)

In one scene, Keaton's character, a small and scrawny man, physically Arbuckle's opposite, hides himself inside a waste bin to conceal his passage onto one of the rides. A scene such as this once again employs the performer's body (in this case, a small and wiry one) as an object functioning in service of the gag. Later in the film, Fatty laughs at a tall and skinny man he stumbles across; yet another example of a body that is framed as a gag for its "extreme" properties. This motif both reinforces the ways in which slapstick performances might be read as a continuation of freak show traditions, but also goes some way towards illustrating how it frames Coney Island as an inclusive space in which otherness might exist (despite its evident objectification). Chemers goes as far as to suggest that Coney Island continues to "style itself as a freak show" (127), and in such films as *Coney Island* one can find evidence of ways in which the employment of the slapstick body points to a tradition in which unusual bodies were spectacularised for commercial gain.

In a later sequence Fatty dons a large lady's bathing outfit (Fig. 46, above) and goes on to perform the remainder of the film in drag. Jokes are made about his inability to fit into regular swimwear – "Can't fit you – hire a tent", an intertitle reads – yet here the film makes use of his body in ways that are rather complex for its time. While inferences might be made that Arbuckle is employing drag to contribute to the film's cumulative, excessive display, in doing so he stages and makes visible otherness in a mode that, as Rabinovitz puts it, foregrounds "sexual expression in a society whose institutions are otherwise repressive" (145). So while the use of drag might serve a primary purpose of facilitating gender-swapping gags, it nevertheless has produced an image of a liberated body that is surprisingly progressive. Defamed at every opportunity as an object of grotesque amusement, Fatty, taking clear pleasure in his new appearance, actually works to reclaim the space of Coney Island for "freaks" such

as himself. By today's standards such a message might be received as an overwhelmingly positive one, but in service of the notion that Coney Island had the capacity to level existing social hierarchies it is a profound one. The body is inscribed not just with the iconography of excess that characterises both Coney Island and slapstick performances more generally; here, the body, inscribed by Coney Island as a cultural event, subverts social paradigms in a way that reconfigures its discursive capacity to provide cultural commentary and challenge existing notions surrounding gender and identity.

Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, who has at length discussed a genealogy of freakery, argues that:

> The freak show made more than freaks: it fashioned as well the self-governed, iterable subject of democracy – the American cultural self. Parading at once as entertainment and education, the institutionalized social process of enfreakment united and validated the disparate throng positioned as viewers. A freak show's cultural work is to make the physical particularity of the freak into a hypervisible text against which the viewer's indistinguishable body fades into a seemingly neutral, tractable and invulnerable instrument (1996: 10).

Garland-Thompson argues for a point of recognition between the subject and the spectator, centralising the body of the "freak" as a locus for uncovering ideas about identity through the "hypervisible text" of the body itself. In this sense, Arbuckle's bodily displays become more than a mere illustration of Coney Island's excessive nature, they become a signifier of otherness that, in covert (and sometimes contradictory) ways, defends those repressed by undemocratic systems of representation by making them visible in an arena that typifies the promise and pitfalls of modern life.

It is clear that the body serves Coney Island comedy in various ways, providing both primary meaning as the site and source of gags alongside secondary meaning that invokes it as a vehicle for dispelling ideas about the place itself. Henri Bergson, in his aforementioned essay, claims that in the comic "we can obtain a first glimpse […] of the laughable side of human nature and of the ordinary function of laughter" (1910: 18). Bergson points to an act of recognition that is fundamental to understanding "the ordinary function of laughter", to a moment of clarity in which the spectator profoundly comes to terms with the "truth" of it all (relative as that may be). In the slapstick comedies of Coney Island, it is revealed to be a revolving, unfolding, and sometimes vomit-inducing, spectacle of abundance that encompass particular elements of modern life. To that end, the slapstick body has a variety of functions culminating with a utility to lay bare the absurd, excessive qualities of the space in which it finds itself that, in the moment of recognition, exposes the spectator to the nature of their own desire.

Conclusion

In his 1913 portrait, 'Battle of Lights, Mardi Gras, Coney Island', artist Joseph Stella channels the complex sensory restlessness of Coney Island in a single work. The piece represents something of a carnivalesque culmination of many of the themes discussed throughout this chapter, and works by bringing together the iconographic impression of motion and excess into a single hypnotic, chaotic, and tentatively apocalyptic work of art. 'Battle of Lights' expressively renders the spectacle of amusement park modernity through the use of vibrant colour and intricate techniques and, in doing so, posits the persuasive notion that Coney Island figures as a carnival

of arresting, glittering spectacles that revolve and unfold chaotically before its onlookers. The excess that Stella's painting embodies is also present in the films that were produced at the same time, not least in the slapstick comedies that have been discussed here. It is certainly an impression that has endured.

Figure 46: Joseph Stella's 'Battle of Lights, Mardi Gras, Coney Island', 1913.

Both the city itself and Coney Island are expressive of the various consequences of modernity, but while the city demonstrates its structural and social development through familiar signs (the street, the skyline, etc.), Coney Island's impression of it is arguably more complex. By trading in images of architectural development for images of social metamorphosis, Coney Island presents a mythic site of uninhibited desire for all that contains modernity's impression. Of course, the early films of Coney Island did manage to enshrine technological innovation (witnessed

mostly in the mechanical attractions) beside images of social cosmopolitanism, capitalist enterprise, and the enchanting effect that modernity was having on the American family through the development of leisure time. In the early actualities of Coney Island, it figures as a space of social expansion that actualised modern life's potential to satisfy not only the primary needs of the city (envisioned in the development of housing, transport, and so forth), but to satisfy also the spirit of pastime that the nation was encouraging. In the early slapstick comedies of Coney Island, its excesses were put on trial by a format born out of similar principles. On the surface, such films might only appear to be making use of a popular locale, however they should not be unstitched from the context in which they were produced. What they demonstrate, then, are the ways in which Coney Island literalises the fact that excess operated as a central characteristic of modernity.

Across this chapter I have held Coney Island to be a great many things. From basic understandings of it as a popular beach resort and pleasure retreat, to critical interrogations of it as a complex image of modernity founded upon the commercial articulation and exploitation of human desire. While critical revisions of Coney Island as a highly expressive cultural artefact have long positioned it as "the uncontested epicentre of America's emerging popular culture" (Immerso 2002: 3), it is my position that a formal understanding of its early filmic imprint and history can compound this hypothesis in new and engaging ways. The notion that Coney Island is multifaceted in nature anticipates the ways in which it has been employed fluidly as a source of meaning in films across the century: from *Coney Island* (Dir. Ralph Ince, 1928), *The Crowd* (Dir. King Vidor, 1928)*,* and the Harold Lloyd comedy *Speedy* (Dir. Ted Wilde, 1928) which all make use of its space to stage ideas about the sociocultural shifts that accompanied modern life, to early noirs such as *Meet Boston Blackie* (Dir. Robert

Florey, 1941) and *When Strangers Marry* (Dir. William Castle, 1944) that employed its iconography to express darker narratives.

If Coney Island indeed functioned as a platform for staging modern life's more eccentric elements, then its insular, geographic position at the city's margin feels appropriate. The preponderance of films alone is illustrative of its status as a cultural curiosity. Produced away from the city, where filmmakers were demonstrating a particular interest in its various structural and social transformations, the considerable number of Coney Island films underscore its capacity to similarly convey the enthralling and sometimes absurd promise of twentieth century urban life through the expressive spectacle of amusement park modernity which, in my reading of it, lays bare an excessive commodification of human desire. If modern life, embodied by the city's growth, figured as an imposing proposition, then Coney Island presented an alternatively structured experience that existed beyond the perimeter of the city's considerable shadow; a space within which modern life is theatrically dramatised, given life to, and reconciled.

Over the course of this final chapter, I have observed the ways in which early Coney Island film configured an iconography of modernity that depended on images of motion and excess. Both elements are not only pertinent to film given its formal properties, they speak to the iconological purchase that such films have in their collective representation of Coney Island. Read together, the films of Coney Island assume an iconological capacity to reflect and comment upon the various manifestations of modern life that are particular to Coney Island and prominently framed in the films that served it. I have held the position across this thesis that iconology is the juncture at which image and ideology meet, the moment in which a text transcends formative meaning to provide a broader statement on the

machinations of the specific place in which it was produced. Taken independently, the early films of Coney Island display novel scenes centred on the beach and the amusement parks' various, curious attractions. Taken together, however, the iconological substance of the texturology becomes clear: the Coney Island films offer alternative images of American modernity that is consistent with, yet separate from, embodiments of modernity that may be gleaned from the films of the city proper.

Coney Island's illustration of modernity is arguably more complex than Manhattan's which demonstrates it through images that are consistent with popular understandings of it. In images of Manhattan's skyline, of its newly built bridges, of its harbour, of its newly integrated under and overground rail networks, in its bustling streets lined with commercial outlets, the symptoms of modernity, of urban expansion and renewal, form the backbone of the city's formative filmic iconography. It is my position that the early films of New York, in complex and diverse ways, augmented a way of looking at the city that enshrined various elements of it that captured modern life in their own way. Coney's Island image of modernity, while being consistent with this notion, functions somewhat differently. This is partly due to the matter of its architecture being that much different to the main city. It is also due to the fact that, as I have argued, Coney Island operated somewhat heterotopically in relation to the city itself, functioning tangentially in a way that is contingent with its status as a primary, if alternative, site of sociocultural expansion. If Coney Island's iconography, comprised of the beach, amusement parks, and attractions, retains an iconological utility as an expression of modernity, then it is one that is inflected by the principal of excess that characterises modern life. It is the case, then, that if one returns to those primary images of the city, one will find that excess functions as a fundamental property of modern life's fluid identity. Excess is embodied in the city itself: in the tallest buildings,

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the longest bridges, the fastest means of travel, the wealthiest homes, and so forth. Coney Island reveals the modern impulse for excess in the simple fact that its primary utility is to satisfy desire and desire, as Coney Island reveals, is a carnival.

Conclusion

How does one begin to summarise a place? What value is afforded to its architecture, its people, or the general feeling that it conjures (if such a thing is able to be qualified and expressed in the first place)? What role is played by its history, by its economic or cultural status, or by its prescience for envisioning the future? Beyond such fundamental questions, it is important to recognise that the discussion of cities is impacted by dominant discourses surrounding urbanity that embolden the importance of some cities (and the hegemonies they represent) at the expense of properly acknowledging others. Of course, New York is one such city. Arguably more so than other cities, New York's image has been significantly determined by film's utility to represent the world. Moreover, due to its status as an epicentre of American film, especially in the medium's infancy, New York has had a profound, determining influence on the nation's urban cinematic imaginary, not to mention a formative impact on interdisciplinary discussions of cities more generally, and especially those prominently depicted on film.

Murray Pomerance has argued in his edited collection, *City that Never Sleeps: New York and the Filmic Imagination*, that New York's image has operated across film as a highly complex, highly fluid, and highly contested thing, stating that competing imaginings of it "constitute a set of nodes in the long progression of filmic treatments of a great, and very specific, urban world" (2007: 9). Each essay in the collection, from David Sterritt's essay on the films of Spike Lee and their capacity to articulate a particular New York experience (137-151) to Paula J. Massood's work on New York ethnicity in the films of Martin Scorsese (77-91), makes a case for a particular version of New York. What emerges is clear evidence that there is no fixed idea of what

constitutes New York, and that the ever-expanding texturology of New York film compounds the idea that it is indeed a great many things. In its earliest years, filmmakers were getting to grips with the city and, in doing so, catalysed a century of representation in which the city was configured and reconfigured in a variety of ways. This is evident across the varied texturology that has been discussed over the course of this thesis, just as it is apparent in Pomerance's diverse collection.

This thesis has achieved three things. Firstly, it has determined the nature and characteristics of New York's early filmic iconography. Secondly, it has remarked upon the various ways in which that iconography could lead to explanations of New York's role as a primary subject of early film. Finally, it has provided a series of iconological readings of the films that considers how they might reflect, unveil, and imagine the city at that time. As such, this thesis has provided an extensive texturological survey led by a large archive of films that demonstrates how the city's developing iconography informed its early filmic representation. While clear, concrete icons such as the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge are there in the texturology, a complex understanding of New York's early filmic output requires more than buying into a series of referent, mythic notions about what the city is.

Here lies the significance of the texturology as a means of qualifying the city through disparate representations that illustrate the overlaps between what is imagined and what is depicted. Discussing the texturology in all but name, M. Christine Boyer writes that "the landscape of the contemporary city seems to be composed of conflicting fragments, slices or framed views first cut out and extracted from the city fabric, then set up and juxtaposed against each other" (1996: 421). While Boyer's formulation of city's "fragments" nicely account for the corpus' variety, her identification that the fragments are "conflicting" is not entirely appropriate here. The early city,

insofar as it figures across the texturology, does not so much present a chain of opposing fragments, but rather a textual and textured illustration of how the city was functioning as a subject of early film. The fragments may be different, but it would be inappropriate to necessarily call them conflicting. Rather, the fragments converge into a texturological illustration of the various ways in which a corpus of texts commonly engaged with the city were exhibiting the evolving environment in which they were produced.

The closest scholarship has come thus far to providing a survey of early New York film's impact on the developing urban imaginary is in the work of Christopher Lindner. Over the course of his ambitious work, Lindner provides a complex demonstration of how New York's image developed intermedially. While I will not dispute Lindner's point that early film captured "the speed, scale, and scope of change wrought to the city by the accelerated rise of the skyscraper" (2015: 80), the work is limited by its narrow focus. Moreover, it seems hasty that he should make such grand claims about the nature and function of early New York film, given that his work contains only a few scant references to the actuality films that have been the subject of this thesis. This thesis takes Lindner's suggestion considerably further. It is my position that it is not sufficient to think about the films on their own terms, as unitary conveyers of meaning; rather, it is possible and, I argue, necessary to observe the films as a texturological index of the city's internal developments. What this thesis offers is a considerable expansion of Linder's claim by (1) providing the evidence needed to make such an assessment in the first place, and (2) by contributing a detailed record of the ways in which early New York film reflected, unveiled, implied, and invented ideas about the city at that time.

In the films considered across the three chapters of this thesis, it is clear that early filmic representations of New York provided a complex and comprehensive, if varied, illustration of the ways in which people were viewing the city through film. By mapping a distinct phase in both film and New York's history, this thesis has observed how the city's developing iconography informed its representation on film. My readings of the iconological function of the city on early film have often found material evidence of modernity that was fundamental to the way in which the city was being framed in film at that time. Modernity, then, in its many startling forms from slum to skyscraper to Coney Island, functions as a unifying element of New York's early filmic impression.

In many ways, this thesis works to prove the original modernity thesis that is consistent with the works of Stephen Kern, Ben Singer and others in relation to American film. Kern has noted how "the cinema reproduced the mechanization, jerkiness, and rush of modern times" (1983: 117). Singer, on the other hand, has argued that evidence of modernity can be found in direct, tangible effects such as "industrialization, urbanization, migration, transportation, economic rationalization, bureaucratization, military mechanization, mass communication, mass amusement, and mass consumerism" (2001: 19). These characteristics of modernity, identified by Singer, are discernible in material ways in the texturology. Across the course of the three chapters of this thesis, these embodiments of modernity are found to be identifiable and extricable from the mass of representations in a way that displays modernity's impact on the city's apparatus and upon modern life more generally.

This thesis also refutes Richard Dennis' claim that "a closer examination [of early film] suggests that in the first thirty-five years of its existence, the silent film era from 1895 to the late 1920s, cinema produced little in the way of original interpretations of city life" (2008: 102-3). Exactly what Dennis means by "original interpretations"

aside, his claim is immediately discredited by the fact that film itself *was* an original way of looking at the city at that time. Furthermore, this thesis provides evidence of the ways in which both actuality and fiction city films did in fact instigate novel ways of viewing the city, while simultaneously generating a series of itinerant ideas about its rapid development. As Francesco Casetti writes, "film is a medium for the exhibition and exchange of proposals […] a sphere in which the impulses of its time can be reworked and made iconic […] a space in which these contradictory impulses can come to the negotiating table" (2005: 11). Beyond repudiating Dennis' position, Casetti's acknowledgement of film's complex mediation of its environment through the working and reworking of key images and ideas corresponds with the conclusions that may be gleaned from this work. This thesis has found that the filmic iconography of New York comprised, directly and indirectly, of various architectural, technological, and social changes that were occurring in modernity. By surveying the films in accordance with my method, this thesis has identified the origins of an emergent relationship that was being established between film and New York.

In fact, due to the prominence of films of the city at that time, one can find in film evidence of a new, dominant agent of urban representation. Certainly, popular structuring principles of film scholarship such as the "cinematic city", a notion that frames film's figuration as a central component of global urban imaginaries, were born out of recognised patterns of representation that made prominent use of urban imagery. This thesis has found that the early films of New York were, indeed, *of* New York, not just in location, but in nature. They conveyed interest in, and ideas about, the city and about modern life. As filmmakers embraced the medium's capacity to deliver images of the evolving urban environment, they contributed to a texturology of varied impressions illustrating the city's critical developments.

While there have been many different approaches to the overlapping fields of early film, film and the city, and New York film more specifically, this thesis intersects the three while determining what a iconographical-iconological approach to a large corpus of films might yield. The iconographical-iconological approach has allowed me to substantially determine how the iconographic threads of early filmic representations of New York unveil an iconology that reflects the infrastructural and ideological characteristics of the city at that time. This method moves away from the social, cultural, and industrial contexts that characterise much of the scholarship on these topics in order to evaluate film's propensity to directly and passively project meaning in accordance with the system of representations in which they participate. The iconological structure (or set of structures) that this thesis unveils goes some way towards demonstrating how the film functioned as a primary framework for the city's reception, conveying interest in, and ideas about, its rapidly changing constitution. Beyond the inferences that could be gleaned from basic, formalist readings of these films, an iconographical-iconological approach allows the films to be considered in light of one another, as part of a wide texturology that moves beyond a text-by-text approach towards understanding how an archive of impressions can demonstrate how a single subject – the city – can condition ideas about the structures and nature of modern life.

Chapter one positioned New York actuality filmmaking within the context of the city's rapid development at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In doing so, the chapter found that early film and the city developed in tandem, demonstrating an ongoing relationship that has extended into the twentieth century. It was the position of this chapter that early films operated as key visual documents detailing the substantial changes that were occurring within the city at that time. In the

process of rendering the city, such films augmented an iconography of New York modernity that privileged the representational function of novel urban phenomena such as developing transportation technologies, bridges, the street, the crowd, and the skyline. These films provide an iconological repository of New York modernity that situates its various icons, influences, and effects within the broader circumstances of the city's radical evolution.

Chapter two explored the multifarious ways in which various social concerns were actualised in the early films of New York. Across a corpus of socially conscious fiction films that are different in nature if comparable in effect, there emerged a clear initiative to illuminate various aspects of the metamorphosing urban experience. Some such films demonstrate the iconographic legacy of Jacob Riis' slum panoramas. It was the position of that chapter that many of the early slum films of New York retained aspects of Riis' imagery to express matters of social injustice and an ideological move towards cosmopolitanism. The films discussed over the course of chapter two present a complex network of representations that conveyed various elements of the urban experience. I found that such films were often oriented towards a pronounced depiction of New York's varied social environment. By observing the key social icons of early New York film, I found that the corpus of representations an iconological store of existing and emerging social structures. These structures are articulated across a range of films that convey, in a variety of ways, the new urban modalities that were fostered by the modern city.

In chapter three, I considered the iconographic characteristics of Coney Island as a popular site of early film. As a geographically fluid space that was both inside and outside of the city, Coney Island's filmic image represents it as a complex expression of modernity's many influences. Chapter three finds Coney Island to be a heterotopic

depiction of the modern, urban experience. Giuliana Bruno writes that when "thrown into the rhythm of the metropolis, a field of forces in motion, the body is affected. As a result of the flow of impressions, the optical montage, and the fluctuating nature of the metropolitan space, the unity of the body disintegrates" (1993: 56). It was the position of chapter three to move towards understanding Coney Island's early filmic imprint as both a confirmation of the modernity thesis and as iterative of the various ways in which the body, in line with Bruno's conceptualisation of it, acted as an agent of desire that embodied and confronted modernity in new and arresting ways.

In line with Annemone Ligensa's suggestion that film is ostensibly "a part of modernisation, i.e. it is shaped by it, represents it and perhaps even promoted it" (2009: 1), this thesis has argued that early film was so enmeshed in the spaces of its formative operation that modernity's various and varied images were fundamental to its developing iconography. Inversely, film's deployment of urban imagery was equally integral to the development of a twentieth century urban imaginary that focalised the city, and matters relating to the city, as central subjects of the medium. Urban modernity, then – that is, the major social, technological, and aesthetic adaptations of the city and of modern life (what Ligensa calls "modernisation" above) – was a central aspect of the iconological fabric of New York.

Moreover, deployment of imagery relating to the ongoing reconfiguration of urban life was abundantly evident in early city films and paved the way for the establishment of the "cinematic city" as a primary structuring principle for the medium moving into the twentieth century. The idea that such films would naturally result in the city symphonies of the 1920s is simplistic and teleological, yet it is certainly fair to insinuate that the "cinematic city" as a broader concept has antecedents in the early filmic city. Francois Penz and Andong Lu have argued that the "cinema may use cities

in creative ways to reorganize the city spaces into narrative geographies where urban fragments are collaged into spatial episodes" (2001: 14). The early films of New York make visible the city's embodiments of modernity in a textured archive of "spatial episodes". The films render the city's physical transformations and shifting social formations across a texturology that goes some way towards producing an intertextual film narrative of New York modernity.

As a primary structuring principle of film, the "cinematic city" is inconspicuously inscribed upon the ways in which cities have been observed intermedially since film's beginnings. The New York that is projected in the films observed across this thesis is unrecognisable beside auteurist visions of the city in films by notable New York directors such as Martin Scorsese, Sidney Lumet, and Woody Allen. And yet, the films remain films *of* the city that utilise the urban environment in way that demonstrates interest in the machinations of modern life. The notion that the city *transmits* meaning is central to understanding how an iconographical-iconological method has generated new understandings of New York's function as a primary subject of early film. Casetti's conceptualisation of film as the eye of the century – that is, his claim that "film conquered and recast our manner of seeing" and "embodied the gaze of the twentieth century" (2008: 8) – is rooted in the idea that film conditioned a new way of looking at the world. As this thesis has speculated and observed, film and the city were highly enmeshed phenomena of the American twentieth century. From its earliest years, film fostered a relationship with the urban environment that is palpably inscribed upon New York's early films. This thesis has traced representations of the city across the texturology of early New York film and, in doing so, has outlined the various ways in which the iconology of modernity it embodies has informed its representation. It is clear that the metrocentric way of looking at the world that was established by early

film foreshadows the city's role as a primary site and source of meaning for the medium moving forward.

This research opens up avenues of enquiry for iconographical-iconological approaches to other primary American "cinematic cities" such as Chicago, Philadelphia, or Los Angeles. There, one could make use of this research to explore further how early filmic representations of different American cities articulated ideas about the nation's shifting identity. Alternatively, one might turn to cities such as London, Paris, Berlin, or Dublin to determine how a range of Western cities were represented in film's earliest years. Alternatively, one might adopt a global position, observing the films of lesser-seen cities in order to determine how filmic urban imaginaries overlap or contend with one another on a global scale, and how they might impart converging or diverging ideas about urban space, national identity, and cultural memory.

This thesis has identified that New York offered a dynamic and varied font of filmic imagery in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century. It has claimed that the city provided a vibrant space for confronting a range of key questions about the nature and characteristics of modern life, questions that have not necessarily been hat have not necessarily been fully handled by existing scholarship. My comprehensive methodology has made use of a large corpus of early films to find evidence of various ways in which the medium framed the city and city life. I have found that film served as a primary, catalytic agent for coming-to-terms with modern life in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century, initiating an enduring legacy of urban representation that would continue to characterise the medium moving forward.

Appendix: A Representative Survey of New York Films (1896-c.1910)	Year	Company
The Abuductors	1905	AMB
Above the Limit	1900	AMB
Above the Speedway	1900	AMB
An Acadian Elopement	1907	AMB
Accidents Will Happen	1900	AMB
Across Brooklyn Bridge	1899	AMB
Across the New Viaduct of New York	1905	AMB
Actor's Fun Field Day	1910	VIT
The Adjustable Chair	1905	AMB
Admiral Dewey Films (14)	1898-9	Various
Admiral Sampson On Board the Flagship	1898	Ed
The Aerial Slide at Coney Island	1897	AMB
Aeroplane Flights, Coney Island	1910	Pathe
An Affair of Honor	1897	AMB
"Africander" Winning the Suburban Handicap	1903	Ed
After Dark in Central Park	1900	AMB
After Many Years	1908	AMB
After The Ball	1899	AMB
Al Treloar in Muscle Exercises	1905	AMB
An Alarm of Fire in a Soubrette's Boarding House	1898	AM
Albany Day Boats	1897	AM
"All Hot"	1902	AMB
All On Account of the Milk	1910	Bio
Allabad, the Arabian Wizard	1900	AMB
Alligator Bait	1900	AB
Almost a king	1903	AMB
Alone	1904	AMB
Alphonse and Gaston (various)	1902-3	AMB
Always Room for One More	1905	AMB
The Amateur Trapese Performers	1898	AM
Anawanda Club	1901	AMB
And Pat Took Him At His Word	1904	AMB
The Angel Child	1908	Ed
Animated Painting	1904	Ed
Annabelle in Flag Dance	1896	AMB
Annual Parade, New York Fire Department	1904	Ed
Answering the Alarm	1900	Ed
Apple Blossoms	1899	AMB
Appointment By Telephone	1902	Ed
An April Fool Joke	1901	AMB
Arab Act, Luna Park	1903	AMB
An Arcadian Maid	1910	Bio

The Arizona Doctor	1900	AMB
Armor vs. Amour	1899	AMB
Around New York in 15 Minutes	1905	P&S
Around the Big Curves	1899	AM
Around the Big Swing	1898	AM
Around the Flip-Flap Railroad	1900	AMB
Around the Mulberry Bush	1902	AMB
Arrest of a Shoplifter	1900	AMB
Arrival of Immigrants, Ellis Island	1906	AMB
The Art of "Making Up"	1900	AMB
The artist's Studio	1903	AMB
As Seen on the Curtain	1904	AMB
As the Bells Rang Out	1910	AMB
Astor Battery on Parade	1899	Ed
The Astor Tramp	1899	Ed
At the Altar	1910	AMB
At the Foot of the Flatiron	1903	AMB
At the Fountain	1902	AMB
At the Top of Brooklyn Bridge	1897	AMB
The Athletic Girl and the Burglar	1905	AMB
An Attempt to Escape	1899	AMB
Aunt Jane's Experience With Tabasco Sauce	1900	AMB
Auto Boat Race on the Hudson River	1904	AMB
The Automatic Prize Fight	1899	AMB
Automobile Parade	1903	Selig
Automobile Race for the Vanderbilt Cup	1904	AMB
An Awful Moment	1908	AMB
Babe and Puppies	1904	Ed
Babies Playing on a Hot Day	1899	AMB
The Baby	1903	AMB
The Baby and the Puppies	1904	AMB
Baby Class at Lunch	1903	Ed
Baby Feeding a Kitten	1899	AMB
A Baby Merry-Go-Round	1897	AMB
A Baby's Shoe	1909	AMB
Bachelor Gets a Baby and Other things He Don't Want	1907	AMB
The Bad Boy and Poor Old Grandpa	1897	AM
The Bad Boy and the Grocery Man	1905	AMB
Bad Boy's Joke on the Nurse	1904	Ed
A Bad (K)night	1899	AMB
The Badger Game	1905	AMB
Bag Punching By Sadie Leonard	1897	AM
"Balancing in the Basket"	1898	AM
The Baldheaded Dutchman	1898	AM
Ballet of the Ghosts	1899	AMB
Ballet Rehearsal	1903	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
A Ballroom Tragedy	1905	AMB
The Bamboo Slide	1903	AMB
The Bandit's Waterloo	1908	AMB
The Banker's Daughter	1910	Bio
The Barber's Dee-Light	1905	AMB
The Barber's Pretty Patient	1905	AMB
The Barber's Queer Customer	1900	AMB
A Bare Skin Joke	1899	AMB
Bargain Day	1900	AMB
Bargain Day on 14th Street, New York	1905	AMB
Bargains	1907	AMB
The Barnstormers	1905	AMB
The Bather's Lunch	1899	AMB
The Bathing Girls' Hurdle Race	1898	AMB
Bathing in Samoa	1903	AMB
Bathroom Frivolities	1898	AMB
The Battery	1897	AMB
Battery K Seige Guns	1899	Ed
Battles Flags of the 9th U.S. Infantry	1903	AMB
Battleship 'Illinois'	1902	AMB
Battleship 'Illinois' Passing Under Brooklyn Bridge	1903	AMB
Battleship Indiana	1898	Lubin
NY Battleship Films (x19)	1897-8	Various
Bayonet Exercises	1903	AMB
The Beach at Coney Island	1904	AMB
Beach Scene, Coney Island	1897	AMB
Beaver Show Case	1903	AMB
Beginning of a Skyscraper	1902	AMB
Behind the Screen	1904	AMB
The Bench in the Park	1904	AMB
Betrayed By a Handprint	1908	AMB
Betsy Ross Dance	1903	AMB
The Better Way	1909	Bio
Between the Acts	1898	AM
Beyond the Danger Line	1903	AMB
Bicycle Girl	1897	AM
"Ein Bier"	1900	AMB
A Big Blaze	1902	AMB
The Bigamist's Trial	1905	AMB
The Black Hand	1906	AMB
The Black Storm	1900	AMB
Blackmail	1905	AMB
The Blacksmith's Wife	1909	NYMPC
Blessed is the Peacemaker	1903	AMB
A Blessing From Above	1904	AMB
Blind Man's Buff	1904	AMB

The Blizzard	1899	AMB
The Blue and the Grey	1908	Ed
A Bluff From a Tenderfoot	1899	AMB
The Boarding School Girls	1905	Ed
Boarding School Girls' Pajama Parade	1900	AMB
A Boarding School Prank	1903	AMB
Bobby's Kodak	1908	AMB
The Bold Soger Boy	1904	AMB
The Boomerang	1900	AMB
The Borrowing Girl	1904	AMB
A Bowery Café	1897	AM
A Bowery Five Cent Shave	1902	Ed
The Bowery Kiss	1902	AMB
Bowery Street Dancers	1903	Lubin
The Bowery Waiter and the Old Time Ball	1898	AM
Bowery Waltz	1897	Ed
Bowling Green	1900	Ed
Boxing Dogs	1899	AMB
Boxing Horses, Luna Park, Coney Island	1904	Ed
The Boy in the Barrel	1903	AMB
The Boy Under the Table	1904	AMB
Boys Entering Free Bath	1901	AMB
Boys Free Public Baths	1901	AMB
The Boys & Foxy Grandpa (x5)	1902	AMB
"Boys Will Be Boys"	1897	AMB
The Brahama Diamond	1909	AMB
Brannigan Sets Off The Blast	1906	AMB
A Break For Freedom	1905	AMB
Bribing the Police	1900	AMB
Bridal Couple Dodging Cameras	1908	Ed
The Bride's Trousseau	1899	AMB
Bringing a Friend Home For Dinner	1899	AMB
Bringing Up a Girl the Way She Should Go (1&2)	1905	AMB
Broadway and 14th St.	1901	AMB
Broadway and Park Row, Front of U.S. Post Office, N.Y.	1896	AM
Broadway and Union Sq, New York	1902	AMB
Broadway at the Post Office	1900	Ed
Broadway from the Top of St. Paul Building (25 Stories Up)	190-	AMB
Broadway Massage Parlor	1905	AMB
Broadway, New York, at Madison Square	1897	AM
The Broken Locket	1909	BIO
The Broker's Athletic Typewriter	1905	AMB
Brother Willie's Revenge	1907	AMB
Bryan	1906	AMB
Bubbles	1904	AMB
A Bucket of Ale Cream	1904	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Buffalo Bill's Wild West Parades (Circus Parades) (x12)	1900-3	AMB
Bunco on the Seashore	1899	AMB
The Burglar	1903	AMB
The Burglar and the Bundle	1899	AMB
A Burglar Cupid	1909	Ed
The Burglar-Proof Bed	1900	AMB
A Burglar's Mistake	1909	AMB
A Burglar's Slide For Life	1905	Ed
Burlesque Cake Walk	1897	AM
A Burlesque Queen	1910	AMB
Burning of the Academy of Music, Brooklyn	1903	AMB
Buster and Tige Put a Balloon Vendor Out of Business (and others)	1903-4	Ed
The Bustle in the Narrow Door	1904	AMB
A Busy Day for the Corset Model	1904	AMB
Busy Lizzie Loses Her Clothes	1907	AMB
Butterfly Dance	1896	AM
Buying a Title	1909	Ed
Buying Manhattan	1909	Ed
A Cake-Walk on the Beach at Coney Island	1903	AMB
A Calamitous Elopement: How it Proved a Windfall for Burglar Bill	1908	AMB
The Call to Arms	1910	BIO
The Camel at Luna Park	1903	AMB
The Camera Fiend (1 & 2)	1903	AMB
Can-Can in the Klondike	1899	AM
Captain Boynton Feeding His Pets	1900	AMB
Capture of the Yegg Bank Burglars	1904	ED
The Cardinal's Conspiracy	1909	Bio
A Career of Crime (1-5)	1900	AMB
Carmen	1907	AMB
Casey and his Neighbor's Goat	1903	Ed
Casey's Frightful Dream	1904	Ed
Casey's Nightmare	1903	Ed
A Catastrophe in Hester Street	1904	AMB
A Catch of Hard Shell Crabs	1903	AMB
Cat's Cradle	1903	AMB
Caught	1900	AMB
Caught by Wireless	1908	AMB
Caught Napping	1897	AM
Century Wheelman, N.Y. City	1902	AMB
The/A Champion Beer Drinker	1900	AMB
A Change of Heart	1909	Bio
Charlie Wanted the Earth	1899	AMB
Chasing the Cherry Pickers	1900	AMB
Chauncey Explains	1905	AMB

The Chicken Thief	1904	AMB
Chief Devery and Staff	1899	AMB
Chief Devery At Head of N.Y. Police Parade	1898	AM
A Child of the Ghetto	1910	Bio
Childhood's Happy Days	1899	AMB
Children Coasting	1903	AMB
The Children in the Surf	1904	AMB
Children's Tea Party	1902	Ed
A Child's Faith	1910	Bio
A Child's Impulse	1910	Bio
A Child's Remorse	1912	Bio
A Child's Stratagem	1910	Bio
The Chimney Sweep and the Miller	1900	AMB
The Chinese Rubbernecks	1900	AMB
Chink-Chippie	1907	AMB
Choosing a Husband	1909	Bio
Chorus Girls (x 7)	1898-1908	Various
Christening and Launching Kaiser Wilhelm's Yacht	1902	Ed
The Christmas Burglars	1908	AMB
Christmas Eve	1897	AM
Christmas Morning	1899	AM
The Christmas Tree Party	1897	AM
Chuck Connors Vs. Chin Ong	1899	AMB
Church Temperance League	1898	AM
City Hall to Harlem in 15 Seconds via the Subway Route	1904	Ed
Clarence the Cop	1904	AMB
Classmates	1908	AMB
The Cloister's Touch	1909	Bio
A Close Shave	1901	AMB
Close View of the Brooklyn Naval Parade	1898	Ed
The Clown and the See-Saw Faries	1900	AMB
The Clubman and the Tramp	1908	AMB
A Coal Strike	1906	AMB
Cohen's Advertising Scheme	1904	Ed
A Cold Water Cure	1900	AMB
A College Girl's Affair of Honor	1906	AMB
Col. Theodore Roosevelt and Officers of his Staff	1898	AM
Colored Maid Getting Rid of a Suitor	1908	AMB
Comedy Cake Walk	1897	AM
A Comedy in Black and White	1908	Ed
The Committee on Art	1904	AMB
Concealing a Burglar	1908	AMB
Coney Island at Night	1905	Ed
The Coney Island Beach Patrol	1904	AMB
The Coney Island Bikers	1898	AM

Confidence	1909	AMB
Confounding the Art Critic	1900	AMB
Congested Street Society	1907	AMB
Connecticut Naval Reserve	1899	AMB
Contrary Wind	1900	AMB
The Convict's Bride	1906	AMB
A Convict's Punishment	1900	AMB
The Cook Visits the Parlor	1903	AMB
A Coon Cake Walk	1897	AM
The Cop Fools the Sargeant	1904	Ed
The Cord of Life	1909	AMB
The "Corsair"	1899	AMB
"Corsair" in Wake of Tugboat	1899	AMB
The Corset Model	1899	AMB
A Country Couple's Visit to an Art Gallery	1898	AM
A Country Dance	1897	AM
The Country Doctor	1909	Bio
The Country Schoolmaster	1906	AMB
Countryman and Mischievous Boys	1898	AM
A Couple of Lightweights at Coney Island	1904	AMB
The Course of True Love	1909	Bio
The Cowboy and the Lady	1903	AMB
Cowboy Justice	1904	AMB
Crayono	1907	AMB
The Creators of Foxy Grandpa	1902	AMB
The Cricket on the Hearth	1909	Bio
The Croton Dam Strike	1900	AMB
Crowded Street	1908	AMB
Cruikshank	1897	AM
Cruiser Brooklyn	1898	Lubin
Cruiser New York	1898	Lubin
The Crush at the Bridge	1907	AMB
A Crushed Hat	1904	AMB
A Crusty Old Bachelor	1899	AMB
Cupid's Pranks	1908	Ed
Curious Mr. Curio	1908	Ed
The Curtain Pole	1909	AMB
A Customer Drops In	1900	AMB
The Dairy Maid's Revenge	1899	AMB
Dalgren Post, G.A.R.	1898	AM
Dance, Frenchonetti Sisters	1897	AM
Dance in a Turkish Harem	1899	AM
Dance of the College Women's Club	1904	AMB
The Dance of the Living Picture	1898	AM
A Dance on the Pike	1904	AMB
Dancing Darkies	1896	AM

The Dancing Girl of Butte	1909	Bio
Dancing Girls Limbering Up	1897	AM
Dancing on the Bowery	1900	Ed
The Dancing Skeleton	1897	AM
The Dandy Fifth	1899	AMB
Danger of Dining in Private Dining Rooms	1903	AMB
The Darling of the Gallery Gods	1905	AMB
The Daughter of the Regiment	1898	AM
The Day After	1909	Bio
The Deadwood Sleeper	1905	AMB
The Deaf-Mutes' Ball	1907	AMB
Dear Little Sister	1907	AMB
Death Curve, New York City	1903	Lubin
Deceived Slumming Party	1908	AMB
The Deception	1909	AMB
Deer in Park	1902	AMB
Delivering Newspapers	1899	AMB
A Delusion	1902	AMB
Demolising and Building up the Star Theatre (Star Theatre)	1901	Bio
The Demon Barber	1899	AMB
Demonstrating the Action of an Automatic Piano	1897	AM
Demonstrating the Operation of the Harrington Railin Bonding…	1900	AMB
Departure of Peary For the North Pole	1905	AMB
Desperate Encounter Between Burglar and Police	1905	Ed
"Deutschland" Leaving New York at Full Speed	1902	Ed
The Devil	1908	AMB
Dewey Arch - Troops Passing Under Arch	1899	Ed
The Dewey Arch	1899	AMB
Dewey Naval Parade	1899	AMB
Dewey Parade, 10th Pennsylvania Volunteers	1899	Ed
Dial Girls' Band, Luna Park	1905	AMB
Dick Crocker Leaving Tammany Hall	1900	Ed
Dinah's Defeat	1904	AMB
The Disappointed Old Maid	1899	AM
"The Diskobolus"	1901	AMB
Diving at Bath Beach	1897	AM
The Diving Horse	1899	Ed
Diving Through Paper Screens	1899	AMB
The Divorce (in three parts)	1903	AMB
Dixon-Chester Leon Contest	1906	AMB
Docking a Liner	1902	AMB
Dr. Dippy's Sanitarium	1906	AMB
The Doctor's Favouite Patient	1903	AMB
The Dog and the Baby	1904	AMB
Dog Factory	1904	Ed
A Dog Fight	1900	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Dolls in Dreamland	1907	AMB
"Don't Get Gay With Your Manicure"	1903	AMB
Double Ring Act, Luna Park	1903	AMB
Down the Bamboo Slide	1903	AMB
Downey Vs. Monaghan	1897	AM
The Downfall of China	1901	AMB
The Downward Path (in five parts)	1900	AMB
The Draped Model	1902	AMB
Dream Kisses	1907	AMB
Dream of a Rarebit Fiend	1906	Ed
Dreams of Fair Women	1907	AMB
A Dressing Room Scene	1897	AM
The Dressmaker's Accident	1903	AMB
Dreyfus Receiving his Sentence	1899	AMB
"Drill, Ye Tarries, Drill"	1900	AMB
The Drive for a Life	1909	AMB
A Drop of Ink	1904	AMB
A Drunkard's Reformation	1909	AMB
The Drunken Acrobat	1896	AM
The Dude and the Burglars	1903	AMB
A Duel to the Death	1898	AM
The Duke's Plan	1909	Bio
An Early Breakfast	1898	AM
East River, New York	1897	Lubin
An East River Novelty	1903	Ed
East Side Drive (1 & 2)	1896	Ed
East Side Urchins Bathing in a Fountain	1903	Ed
An Easter Parade	1899	AM
The Easy Chair	1904	AMB
Eclipse of the Sun	1906	AMB
Edgar Allen Poe	1909	AMB
Effect of a Certain Photograph	1898	AM
Egyptian Princess	1907	AMB
The Eigth Wonder	1902	AMB
Electrocution of an Elephant	1903	Ed
Elephants in a Circus Parade	1899	AMB
Elephants Shooting the Chutes at Luna Park, Coney Island (1&2)	1904	Ed
Elevated Railroad New York	1899	AMB
Elevated Railroad and Drawbridge	1899	AM
The Elopement	1903	AMB
Employees Leaving Office	1905	AMB
The Englishman and the Girl	1909	Bio
Eradicating Aunty	1909	Bio
Escape From Sing Sing	1900	AMB
The Escaped Lunatic	1904	AMB

European Rest Cure	1904	Ed
Everybody Works But Father	1905	Ed
The Evidence Was Against Him	1900	AMB
The Ex-Convict	1904	Ed
Excavation for a New York Foundation	1903	AMB
Excavation for Subway	1903	AMB
An Exciting Finish	1899	AMB
Excursion Boats, Naval Parade	1898	Ed
An Execution By Hanging	1905	AMB
Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison	1901	Ed
Exhibition Drill, New York Firemen, Union Sq.	1904	AMB
Expert Bag Punching	1903	AMB
The Expiation	1909	Bio
The Exposed Séance	1900	AMB
The Extra Turn	1903	Ed
The Face at the Window	1910	Bio
The Face on the Barrom Floor	1908	Ed
Facial Expression By Loney Haskell	1897	AM
The Faded Lilies	1909	Bio
A Fair Exchange	1909	Bio
The Falling Walls at the Tarrant Explosion	1900	Ed
A False Alarm	1908	AMB
Falsely Accused!	1908	AMB
Family Troubles	1900	AMB
A Famous Escape	1908	AMB
Fancy Diving	1899	AMB
Fangere	1906	AMB
Farmer Oatcake Has His Troubles	1899	AM
Farmer Wayback Entertains	1899	AMB
The Fascinating Mrs. Francis	1909	AMB
The Fatal Hour	1908	AMB
Father Gets in the Game	1908	AMB
A Feast Day In Honolulu	1899	AMB
Female Crook and her Easy Victim	1905	AMB
The Female Drummer	1899	AMB
Ferryboat and Tug Passing Governors Island, New York Harbor	1897	AM
The Feud and the Turkey	1908	AMB
Fifth Avenue to Central Park	1899	AM
5th Ohio Volunteers of Cleveland	1899	AMB
A Fight for a Bride	1905	AMB
A Fight in the Dormitory	1904	AMB
Fighting the Flames	1904	AMB
Fighting the Flames, Dreamland	1904	AMB
The Finish of Bridget McKeen	1901	Ed
Blasting Rocks in Harlem	1901	Ed
The Finish of Mr. Fresh	1899	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Finishing Touches	1901	AMB
Fire, Adams Express Office	1904	AMB
Fire and Flames At Luna Park, Coney Island	1904	Ed
Fire at Durland's Caademy, N.Y.	1902	AMB
The Firebug	1905	AMB
Fire Department, N.Y. City, 1st and 2nd Alarm	1896	AM
A Fire in a Burlesque Theatre	1904	AMB
Fire in New York's Bowery	1905	Lubin
The Fireboat New Yorker	1899	AMB
Fireboat New Yorker Answering an Alarm	1903	Ed
Fireboat New Yorker in Action	1903	Ed
Firemen Fighting the Tarrant Fire	1900	Ed
Fireside Reminiscences	1908	Ed
Firing the Cook	1903	AMB
The First Baby	1904	AMB
The Fisherman's Model	1908	AMB
Five Minutes to Train Time	1901	AMB
A Flash of Light	1910	Bio
The Fleet Steaming Up North River	1898	Ed
Flip-Flap Railway	1901	Ed
A Flirtation	1900	AMB
Flirty Fred	1907	AMB
Flour and Feed	1904	AMB
Fly Paper	1908	Ed
Foiled Again	1897	AM
For A Wife's Honor	1908	AMB
For Love of Gold	1908	AMB
For the Upper Crust	1903	AMB
48th Highlanders Regiment	1902	AMB
The Foster Mother	1899	AMB
Fougere	1899	AMB
Found a Man Under the Bed	1900	AMB
Four A.M. at the French Ball	1899	AMB
Four Beautiful Pairs of Legs	1904	AMB
The Four Seasons	1904	AMB
14th Street and Broadway	1900	Ed
Fourth Connecticut Volunteers, Dewey Parade	1899	AMB
Foxy Grandpa Shows the Boys a Trick or Two with the Tramp	1902	AMB
Foxy Grandpa Tells the Boys a Funny Story	1902	AMB
French Acrobatic Dance	1897	AM
The Fresh Lover	1901	AMB
A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed	1906	AMB
A Frontier Flirtation	1903	AMB
Frowsy Lizzie Knocks Them Dizzy	1907	AMB
The Fugitive	1910	Bio
Fulton Market	1901	AMB

Fun in a Girl's Dormitory	1898	AMB
Fun in a Harlem Flat	1898	AM
Fun on the Joy Line	1905	AMB
Fun on the Steeple-Chase	1897	AM
Funeral of Hiram Cronk	1905	AMB
A Funny Story on the Beach	1903	AMB
The Furnished Room - Taking Life Easy	1904	AMB
Fusion, on to Brooklyn	1903	AMB
Fussy Father Fooled	1907	AMB
Gaiety Dance	1897	AM
The 'Gator and the Pickaninny	1900	AMB
Gay Girls of Gotham	1902	AMB
A Gay Old Boy	1899	AMB
The Gay Shoe Clerk	1903	Ed
"Gee, If Me Mudder Could Only See Me Now"	1905	AMB
Geisha Girls	1897	AM
General Booth	1902	AMB
Gen. McCrosky Butt and Staff	1899	AMB
A Gentleman Burglar	1902	AMB
The Gerry Society's Mistake	1903	AMB
Getting Even	1909	Bio
Getting Evidence, Showing the Trials and Tribulations of a P.D.	1906	Ed
Getting Ready for the Seashore	1900	AMB
Getting Rid of the Surplus	1899	AM
Getting Up in the World	1899	AMB
Ghosts in a Chinese Laundry	1900	AMB
The Giddy Dancing Master	1903	AMB
The Girl and the Gossip	1908	AMB
The Girl at the Window	1903	AMB
Girl $998	1907	AMB
The Girl on the Park Bench	1907	AMB
A Girl Who Wanted to Rise in the World	1904	AMB
Girls and "Barrel of Love"	1905	Ed
Girls' Boarding School	1897	AM
The Girls Dormitory	1908	AMB
Girls Jumping the Rope	1904	AMB
The Girls of the Ghetto	1910	Thanhouser
Girls Riding Camels	1905	Ed
Girls Swinging	1897	AM
The Girls, The Burglar, and the Rat	1905	AMB
Gladys Must Be in Bed Before Ten	1898	AM
The Glen Island Accompanying Parade	1898	Ed
Glimpses of the Grant Parade	1897	AM
Gloomy Gus Gets the Best of It	1903	AMB
Gold Dust Twins	1903	AMB
A Gold Necklace	1910	Bio

Golden Louis	1909	AMB
"A Gone Goose"	1900	AMB
Gone to Coney Island	1910	AMB
A Good Story	1897	AM
A Good Time with the Organ Grinder	1900	AMB
The Gossipers	1906	AMB
Gov. John A. Tanner, of Virginia, and Staff	1897	AM
Governor Roosevelt and Staff	1899	AMB
Grand Hotel to Big Indian	1906	AMB
Grandfather as a Spook	1904	AMB
Grandpa's Reading Glass	1902	AMB
The Greaser's Gauntlet	1908	AMB
The Great Fire Ruins, Coney Island	1903	Ed
The Great Jewel Mystery	1905	AMB
The Great Lafayette	1899	AMB
Greater New York	1899	AM
The Growler Gang Catches a Tartar	1900	AMB
A Guardian of the Peace	1899	AMB
A Gun Play in the Klondike	1900	AMB
A Gypsy's Duel	1903	AMB
H. N. Marvin's Family	1900	AMB
A Hair-Raising Episode	1900	AMB
The Hairdresser	1903	AMB
Halloween Night at the Seminary	1904	Ed
Ham and Eggs	1901	AMB
Happy Hooligan Films (x 9)	1903	AMB
A Hard Scrabble	1897	AM
A Hard Wash	1896	AM
The "Havana"	1899	AMB
Haivng her Gown Fitted	1903	AMB
The Haymarket	1903	AMB
Hazing Affair in a Girls' Boarding School	1899	AMB
He Forgot his Umbrella	1901	AMB
He Got into the Wrong Bath	1905	AMB
"He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not"	1903	AMB
He Thoughts That He Had 'Em	1899	AM
Heard Over the Phone	1908	Ed
The Heart of a Rose	1910	Ed
The Heart of New York	1901	AMB
The Heathen Chinese and the Sunday School Teachers	1904	AMB
Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band	1898	AM
The Helping Hand	1908	AMB
Helping Mother	1900	AMB
The Henpecked Husband	1906	AMB
Her First Adventure (Kidnapped with the Aid of a Street Piano)	1908	AMB
Her First Biscuits	1909	Bio

Her First Lesson in Dancing	1898	AM
Her Morning Dip	1899	AM
Her Terrible Ordeal	1909	Bio
Herald Square, New York	1902	Lubin
High Jinks	1907	AMB
High Steppers in Harness	1899	AMB
Hippdrome Races, Dreamland, Coney Island	1905	Ed
His Dad Caught Him Smoking	1900	AMB
His Day of Rest	1908	AMB
His First Smoke	1897	AM
His Last Burglary	1910	Bio
His Lost Love	1909	Bio
His Masterpiece	1899	AMB
His Name Was Mud	1900	AMB
His Ward's Love	1909	AMB
His Wife's Mother	1909	AMB
His Wife's Visitor	1909	Bio
The Hod Carrier's Revenge	1901	AMB
Hold Up in a Country Grocery Store	1904	Ed
"Holy Moses" The Camel	1903	AMB
The Homemade Turkish Bath	1904	AMB
Honesty is the Best Policy	1908	Ed
The Honor of his Family	1909	Bio
The Honor of Thieves	1909	AMB
Hooligan films (x 18)	1903-4	Ed
The Hoop and the Lovers	1904	AMB
The Horse Market	1902	AMB
Horsewhipping an Editor	1900	AMB
Hot Mutton Pies	1901	AMB
The House with Closed Shutters	1910	Bio
How a French Nobleman Got a Wife…	1904	Ed
How Bill the Burglar got a Bath	1899	AMB
How Bridget Made the Fire	1900	AMB
How Buttons Got Even with the Butler	1903	AMB
How Charlie Lost the Heiress	1900	AMB
How Hubby Got A Raise	1910	Bio
How Jones Lost His Roll	1905	Ed
How Little Willie Put a Head on His Pa	1899	AMB
How Mike Got Soap in His Eyes	1903	AMB
How Old Is Ann?	1903	Ed
How Papa Set off the Fireworks	1899	AMB
How the Cook Made her Mark	1904	AMB
How the Lovers Got Rid of Boozy Pa	1907	AMB
How The Magician Got the best of the Installment Man	1900	AMB
How the Old Maid Got a Husband	1900	AMB
How the Tramp got the Lunch	1909	Ed

How the Young Man Got Stuck at Ocean Beach	1900	AMB
How They Fired the Bum	1900	AMB
The Human Hen	1896	AM
Hunter's Dream	1907	AMB
The Hypnotist's Revenge	1907	AMB
"I Had to Leave a Happy Home For You"	1900	AMB
Ice Skating in Central Park, N.Y.	1904	Ed
The Impossible Convicts	1906	AMB
An Impromptu Hairdresser	1900	AMB
In a Boarding School Gymnasium	1904	AMB
In a Chinese Restaurant	1900	AMB
In a Manicure Parlor	1902	AMB
In a Raines Law Hotel	1905	AMB
In Central Park	1900	AMB
In Front of "Journal" Building	1898	AM
In Little Italy	1909	Bio
In My Lady's Boudoir	1903	AMB
In the Dressing Room	1903	AMB
In the Grip of the Blizzard	1899	AM
In the Rapid-Transit Tunnel	1903	AMB
"In The Springtime, Gentle Annie!"	1904	AMB
In the Tombs	1906	AMB
In the Watches of the Night	1909	Bio
Indiana Whitecaps	1900	AMB
Installation Ceremonies, Columbia University	1902	AMB
The Insurance Collector	1903	AMB
Insured Against Loss	1900	AMB
Interior, N.Y. Subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.	1905	AMB
The International Alliance	1899	AMB
An Interrupted Breakfast	1898	AM
An Interrupted Crap Game	1899	AMB
An Interrupted Kiss	1898	AM
An Intrigue in the Harem	1899	AMB
The Invisible Fluid	1908	AMB
Ironed	1907	AMB
Islands Around New York City	1914	G. Klein
It's a Shame to Take the Money	1905	AMB
It's Dangerous to Tickle a Soubrette	1899	AMB
"It's Unlucky to Pass Under a Ladder"	1899	AM
Jack and the Beanstalk	1902	Ed
Jack the Kisser	1907	Ed
Japanese Acrobats	1904	Ed
Japanese Wrestling	1901	AMB
The Jealous Cook and the Policeman	1899	AM
Jealousy and the Man	1909	Bio
Jealousy Behind the Scenes	1908	AMB

Jealousy in the Dressing Room	1900	AMB
Jeffries-Sharkey Contest	1899	AMB
A Jersey Skeeter	1900	AMB
A Jest and What Came of It	1899	AMB
The Jilt	1909	Bio
Joe, the Educated Orangoutang	1898	AM
Johanna's Chase	1899	AM
The Johnnie and the Telephone	1903	AMB
A Joke at the French Ball	1904	AMB
A Joke on Grandma	1901	Ed
A Joke on the Old Maid	1900	AMB
A Joke on Whom?	1901	AMB
The Jolly Bill-Posters	1904	AMB
The Jolly Monks od Malabar	1906	AMB
Jones and His New Neighbors (and others)	1909	AMB
Judging Ladies' Saddle Horses	1899	AMB
Jumping the Rope After Bed Time	1898	AM
Jumping the Stick	1898	AM
June's Birthday Party	1905	Ed
Just Before the Raid	1904	AMB
A Just Cause for Divorce	1899	AMB
Kathleen Mavoureen	1906	Ed
The Katzenjammer Kids in School	1898	AM
The Kentuckian	1908	AMB
The Kentucky Squire	1904	AMB
The Kidnapper (in three parts)	1903	AMB
King and Queen Diving Horses	1899	AMB
The King of the Cannibal Islands	1908	AMB
The King's Pardon	1908	Ed
A kiss in the Dark	1904	AMB
Kiss Me!	1904	AMB
The Kleptomaniac	1905	Ed
The Kleptomaniacs	1900	AMB
Knock-Out Drops	1897	AM
Kronprinz Wilhelm Docking	1902	AMB
Kronprinz Wilhelm with Prince Henry On Board Arriving in NY	1902	Ed
Ladies Day at the Public Baths	1901	AMB
Lady Bountiful Visits the Murphys on Wash Day	1903	AMB
Lady Helen's Escapade	1909	AMB
The Lamp Explodes	1902	AMB
A Lark at the French Ball	1899	AMB
The Last Deal	1909	Bio
Latina, Contortionist	1905	AMB
Latina, Dislocation Act	1905	AMB
Laughing Gas	1907	Ed
Launch of Meteor III	1902	AMB

Launching of the USSS Battleship "Connecticut"	1904	AMB
The Lazy Girl	1898	AM
Leap From Railway, Coney Island	1905	AMB
Learning to do Splits	1898	AM
Leather Stocking	1909	Bio
A Legal Hold-Up	1901	AMB
Lena and the Beaux	1907	AMB
The Lesson	1910	Bio
Levi & Cohen, the Irish Comedians	1903	AMB
Levi and Family at Coney Island	1910	Atlas
Li Hung Chang Films	1896-1901	AM
Liberty Enlightening the World	1899	AM
Liberty Statue	1897	Lubin
Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles	1899	AMB
Life of an American Fireman	1903	Ed
Life of an American Policeman	1905	Ed Paley
Life of the New York Policeman	1905	Steiner
Lifting a Wagon from a New York Foundation	1903	AMB
Lifting the Lid	1905	AMB
The Light That Didn't Fail	1902	AMB
Lillian Russell	1906	AMB
Lina & Vani	1897	AM
Little Algy's Glorious Fourth of July	1901	AMB
Little Angels of Luck	1910	Bio
A Little Bit Off the Top	1904	AMB
The Little Darling	1909	Bio
Little German Band	1904	Ed
The Little Girl Who Did Not Believe in Santa Claus	1907	Ed
A Little Piece of String	1901	AMB
A Little Tease	1903	AMB
Little Willie and the Burglar	1899	AMB
Living Pictures (series)	1900	AMB
The Loaded Cigar	1904	AMB
Locked in the Ice	1901	AMB
The Lone Hughwayman	1906	AMB
The Lonely Villa	1909	Bio
Looking For John Smith	1906	AMB
Loop the Loop	1903	Lubin
Looping the Loop at Coney Island	1903	Ed
The Lost Child	1904	AMB
Lost in the Alps	1907	Ed
Love and Jealousy Behind the Scenes	1904	AMB
Love at 55	1900	AMB
Love Finds a Way	1909	AMB

Love in a Hammock	1899	AMB
Love in Quarantine	1910	Bio
Love in the Dark	1900	AMB
Love in the Kitchen	1899	AM
"Love Me, Love My Dog"	1903	AMB
The Love of Lady Irma	1910	Bio
Love Will Find a Way	1908	Ed
The Lover's Quarrel	1899	AMB
The Lovers' Telegraphic Code	1908	Ed
The Lovers' Yarn	1901	AMB
Love's Labor Lost	1899	AM
Love's Perfidy	1905	AMB
Love's Young Dream	1897	AM
Lower Broadway (Scene on Lower Broadway)	1902	AMB
Lower New York	1902	AMB
Lucky Kitten	1903	AMB
Ludlow's Aerodrome (1 & 2)	1905	AMB
Lunch Time in the Studio	1899	AMB
The Lure of the Gown	1909	AMB
M.B. Curtis	1899	AMB
M'lle Alma	1900	AMB
M'lle Cathrina Bartho (Various)	1899	AMB
Madison Square, New York	1903	AMB
Madison Square, New York City	1902	AMB
The Magic Picture	1900	AMB
Mags Jag	1907	AMB
The Mail-Man in Coon Town	1900	AMB
Major-General Dodge and Staff	1897	AM
Major-General O. Howard	1897	AM
The "Make-Up" Thief	1899	AMB
Making a Welch Rabbit	1903	AMB
The Man and the Woman	1908	AMB
Man Being Run Over By Automobile	1907	AMB
The Man in the Box	1908	AMB
The Man in the Jimjams	1900	AMB
Man Under the Bed	1908	AMB
The Maniac Barber	1899	AMB
The Maniac Chase	1904	Ed
The Maniac Cook	1909	AMB
The Marked Time-Table	1910	Bio
Married for Millions	1906	AMB
Marshall P. Wilder	1897	AM
The Masher's Waterloo	1900	AMB
Masked Policeman	1908	AMB
The Masqueraders	1906	AMB
The "Massachusetts" Naval Parade	1898	Ed

May Day Parade	1900	AMB
Mayor Van Wyck and General Miles	1899	AMB
May's Mechanical Race Track	1906	AMB
Me for Water Wagon	1907	AMB
A Mean Trick on a Sleepy Soubrette	1899	AM
Meandering Mike	1901	AMB
Mechanical Hair-Restorer	1900	AMB
Medical Gymnastics	1901	AMB
The Medicine Bottle	1909	AMB
Meet Me Down at Luna, Lena	1905	Lubin
Mellin's Food Baby	1904	AMB
Merlin, the Magician	1899	AMB
The Merry Widow at a Supper Party	1908	AMB
The Merry Widow Waltz Craze	1908	Ed
The Message	1909	Bio
The Message of the Violin	1910	Bio
The Messenger Boy's Mistake	1903	Ed
The Mexican Sweethearts	1909	Bio
Mice	1902	AMB
A Midnight Adventure	1909	Bio
A Midnight Fantasy	1899	AMB
Midnight Intruder	1904	Ed
Midnight Ride of Paul Revere	1907	Ed
A Midwinter Blaze	1903	AMB
Military Discipline	1898	AMB
Military Parade	1909	Vit
The Miller's Daughter	1905	Ed
The Mills of the Gods	1909	Bio
The Minister's Hat	1903	AMB
The Minister's Wooing	1898	AM
The Mischievous Monkey	1897	AM
Mischievous Willie's Rocking Chair Motor	1902	AMB
A Misdirected Ducking	1904	AMB
The Misdirected Kiss	1904	AMB
The Miser	1897	AM
Mishaps of a Maid	1907	AMB
The Misplaced Signs	1904	AMB
Miss Jessie Cameron, Champion Child Sword Dancer	1903	Ed
Miss Jessie Dogherty, Champion Female Highland Fling Dancer	1903	Ed
Miss Sherlock Holmes	1908	Ed
Mr and Mrs Califf at Dinner	1900	Ed
Mr. Butt-In	1906	AMB
Mr. Easy Mark	1903	AMB
Mr. Gay and Mrs.	1907	AMB
Mr Hurry-Up of New York	1907	AMB
Mr. Jack Entertains in his Office	1904	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Mr. Jack Visits/Caught in the Dressing Room	1904	AMB
Mr Jones at the Ball	1908	AMB
Mr Jones has a Card Party	1909	AMB
Mrs. Jones Entertains	1909	AMB
Mrs. Jones' Lover	1909	Bio
Mrs. Smithers' Boarding School	1907	AMB
Mrs. Trouble	1908	AMB
Mixed Babies	1908	AMB
The Model	1897	AM
The Model That Didn't Pose	1904	AMB
The Model's Ma	1907	AMB
A Modern Sappho	1905	AMB
A Modest Young Man	1909	Ed
Moline Bag Punching Platform	1901	AMB
Monday Morning In a Coney Island Police Court	1908	AMB
Money Mad	1908	AMB
Moneyweight Salesmen	1904	AMB
Monkey Business	1905	AMB
The Monkey's Feast	1896	AM
Mother's Angel Child	1905	AMB
Moulin Rogue Dancers	1898	AM
Mounted Police Charge	1896	Ed
A Mouse in a Girls' Dormitory	1897	AM
Move On	1903	Ed
Muggsy's First Sweetheart	1910	Bio
Mulberry Bend	1897	AM
Murder Scene from "King of the Detectives"	1903	AMB
The Music Master	1908	AMB
Musical Calisthenics	1903	AMB
Mysterious Disappearance of a Policeman	1899	AM
A Mystic Re-Incarnation	1901	AMB
Mystic Shriners' Day, Dreamland, Coney Island	1905	Ed
The Narrow Road	1912	AMB
Naval Constructor Richmond P. Hobson	1898	AM
The Neatsighted School Teacher	1898	AM
Necessary Qualifications of a Typewriter	1900	AMB
The Necklace	1909	Bio
The Necromancer	1903	AMB
Nellie, the Pretty Typewriter	1908	Ed
Nero and the Burning of Rome	1908	Ed
Nervy Nat	1904	AMB
"Never Touched Him!"	1903	AMB
New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge No. 1	1899	Ed
New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge No. 2	1899	Ed
The New Maid	1901	AMB
The New Stenographer	1908	Ed

A New Waiter Opening a Fizz	1897	AM
New York	1906-7	Lubin
New York Caledonian Club's Parade	1903	Ed
New York Dumping Wharf	1903	Ed
New York City "Ghetto" Fish Market	1903	Ed
New York City in a Blizzard	1902	Ed
New York City Police Parade	1903	Ed
New York City Public Bath	1903	Ed
New York Elevated Trains	1897	AM
New York Fire Department	1896	AM
N.Y. Fire Department Returning	1903	AMB
New York Harbor Police Boat Patrol Capturing Pirates	1903	Ed
N.Y. Journal Despatch Yacht "Buccaneer"	1898	Ed
New York Mounted Police	1899	AMB
New York Naval Milita	1899	AMB
New York Naval Reserves	1898	AM
New York Police	1899	AMB
New York Police on Parade	1898	AM
New York Police Parade	1898	AM
New York Police Parade, 1905	1905	AMB
New York Sky-Line From East River and Battery	1901	Ed
New York Sky-Line From the North River	1901	Ed
New York's Subway	1902	AMB
New York's 7th and 71st Regiments	1903	Lubin
A Newsboys' Scrap	1897	AM
Next!	1903	AMB
A Nigger in the Woodpile	1904	AMB
Night Before Christmas	1897	AM
A Night of Terror	1908	AMB
Night of the Party	1906	AMB
The Nine Lives of a Cat	1907	Ed
The 9th Mass Vol. Militia	1906	AMB
Ninth Regiment, N.G.S.N.Y.	1899	AMB
No Liberties Please	1902	AMB
No Wedding Bells for Him	1906	AMB
A Non-Union Paper Hanger	1901	AMB
Nora's 4th of July	1901	AMB
Not The Man She Waited For	1900	AMB
The Note in the Shoe	1909	AMB
A Novel Way of Catching a Burglar	1904	AMB
The Nurse's Joke	1899	AM
Nursing a Viper	1909	Bio
Observation Train Following Parade	1898	Ed
Ocean Greyhounds	1897	AM
Off for China	1899	AM
Off his Beat	1903	AMB

The Office Boy's Revenge	1903	Ed
"Oh, Uncle"	1909	Bio
An Old Bachelor	1904	AMB
Old Fashioned Scottish Reel	1903	Ed
The Old Guard of New York	1897	AM
Old Isaacs, The Pawnbroker	1908	AMB
Old Maid and Fortune Teller	1904	Ed
The Old Maid and the Burglar	1898	AM
The Old Maid's Picture	1898	AM
The Old Maid's Temperance Club	1908	Ed
Old Volunteer Fire Dept.	1902	AMB
A 5c Trolley Ride	1905	Ed
On a Milk Diet	1902	AMB
On the Beach at Brighton	1905	AMB
On the Benches in the Park	1901	AMB
On the Flying Rings	1903	AMB
On the Reef	1910	Bio
On the Speedway	1902	AMB
On the Stage; Or, Melodrama from the Bowery	1907	Vit
On the Window Shade	1904	AMB
One Busy Hour	1909	AMB
104th Street Curve, New York, Elevated Railway	1899	Ed
One on the Bum	1900	AMB
One Touch of Nature	1909	AMB
One Way of Taking a Girl's Picture	1904	AMB
Only a Rat	1897	AM
The Open Gate	1909	Bio
Opening Ceremonies, New York Subway, Oct 27th, 1904	1904	Ed
Opening Ceremony of New York Subway	1904	Ed
Opening of New East River Bridge	1904	Ed
Opening of the Rapid Transit Tunnel	1900	AMB
The Opening of the Williamsburg Bridge	1904	AMB
An Oration	1897	AM
Ore the Banster	1905	AMB
The Organ Grinder's Fourth of July	1900	AMB
Orphan Children on the Beach at Coney Island	1904	AMB
Orphans in the Surf	1903	Ed
Our Dear Friend, Fogarty	1904	AMB
Outbound Vessel Passing Govenor's Island, NY Harbor	1897	AM
The Over-Anxious Waiter	1903	AMB
Over the Fence and Out	1900	AMB
Over the Hills to the Poor House	1908	AMB
Over the Wall	1907	AMB
The Painter's Revenge	1908	Ed
A Pair of Queens	1903	AMB
The Pajama Girl	1903	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Panorama at Grant's Tomb, Dewey Naval Procession	1899	Ed
Panorama from Elevated Train, New York	1903	Lubin
Panorama from the Roof of the Times Building, New York	1905	AMB
Panorama of Blackwell's Island	1903	Ed
Panorama of Brooklyn Bridge, River Front, and Tall Building from the East River	1901	Ed
Panorama of Flatiron Building	1902	AMB
Panorama of Lower New York	1902	AMB
Panorama of 9th Av. Elevated Rail Road	1902	Lubin
Panorama of Riker's Island	1903	Ed
Panorama Waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge from East River	1903	Ed
Panoramic View of Brooklyn Bridge	1899	Ed
Panoramic View of Floral Float "Olympia"	1899	Ed
Panoramic View of Hohenzolern	1902	Ed
Panoramic View of the Dewey Arch, New York City	1900	Ed
Parade of Eagles, New York	1903	AMB
Parade of "Exempt" Firemen	1903	AMB
Parade of Mystic Shriners, Luna Park, Coney Island	1904	AMB
Parade on the Speedway	1901	Ed
Les Parisiennes	1897	AM
Park Avenue Explosion	1902	AMB
Park Police Drill (x2)	1896	Ed
The Passing of a Grouch	1910	Bio
A Patient Sufferer	1901	AMB
The Paymaster	1906	AMB
Peace Jubilee Naval Parade, New York City	1898	AM
Peanuts	1907	AMB
Peeping Tom	1897	AM
Peeping Tom in the Dressing Room	1905	AMB
The "Pennsylvania"	1899	AMB
Pennsylvania Tunnel Excavation	1905	AMB
A Perilous Proceeding	1901	AMB
A Persistent Suitor	1908	Ed
"Personal"	1904	AMB
La Petite Adelaide	1897	AM
The Photographer's Fourth of July	1902	AMB
Photographing a Female Crook	1904	AMB
Phrosine and Meledore	1900	AMB
The Physical Culture Girl (various)	1903	Ed
Physical Examinations	1904	AMB
Pickaninnies Dance	1897	AMB
A Picture from "Puck"	1902	AMB
Pie-Eating Contest	1897	AM
A Pillow Fight	1897	AM
Pilot Boat "New York"	1898	AM
A Pipe Dream	1905	AMB

A Pipe Story of the Fourth	1902	AMB
Pity the Blind	1899	AMB
Plaguing Grandpa	1897	AM
A Plain Song	1910	Bio
A Plate of Ice Cream and Two Spoons	1899	AMB
"Play Ball" - Opening Game, National League, NY City, 1905 - NY vs Boston	1905	Ed
Playmates	1908	Ed
A Poet's Revenge	1902	AMB
Pole Vaulting at Columbia University	1899	AM
The Police of New York City	1910	Ed
Police Raid at a Dog Fight	1906	AMB
Policemen Play No Favourites	1898	AM
A Political Discussion	1900	AMB
The Politician's Love Story	1909	AMB
Pompey's Honey Girl	1905	AMB
Pontoon Bridge Building	1902	AMB
Poor Hooligan, So Hungry Too!	1903	AMB
Poor John	1907	Belcher
Poor Old Fido!	1903	AMB
A Poor Place for Love Making	1905	AMB
The Porous Plaster	1903	AMB
The Poster Girls	1899	AMB
The Poster Girls and the Hypnotist	1899	AMB
"The Pouting Model"	1901	AMB
The Power of Authority	1904	AMB
Pranks of Buster Brown and his Dog Tige	1904	Ed
Pranks of Cupid	1907	AMB
President McKinley's Address	1897	Ed
Pretty Girls and the Rail Fence	1897	AM
The Price of a Kiss	1899	AMB
The Pride of the Household	1899	AMB
Prince Henry films	1902	Various
"The Prince of Darkness"	1900	AMB
The Princess in the Vase	1908	AMB
A Private Supper at Heller's	1902	AMB
Professional Jealousy	1908	AMB
The Professor of the Drama	1903	AMB
The Prussian Spy	1909	AMB
Pull Down the Curtains, Susie	1904	AMB
The Purgation	1910	Bio
Pussy's Bath	1896	AM
Queen of the Harem	1899	AM
Quick Dressing	1897	AM
A Quick Recovery	1901	AMB
Quick Work Behind the Scenes	1904	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
Quick Work for the Soubrettes	1904	AMB
A Race for Millions	1907	Ed
The Racing Chutes at Dreamland	1904	AMB
Raffles, the Dog	1905	Ed
Ragtime Dance	1902	AMB
A Raid on a Chinese Opium Joint	1900	AMB
A Raid on a Cock Fight	1906	AMB
A Raid on a Woman's Poolroom	1900	AMB
A Raid on "Dago" Counterfeiters	1900	AMB
A Railroad Quick Lunch	1904	AMB
The Rainmakers	1898	AM
The Rat Trap Pickpocket Detector	1905	AMB
Rattan Slide and General View of Luna Park	1903	Ed
A Ray of Sunshine after the Rain	1899	AM
Reading the Death Sentence	1905	AMB
Reception of British Fleet	1905	AMB
The Reckoning	1908	AMB
The Recreation of an Heiress	1910	Bio
The Red Girl	1908	AMB
Reginald's First High Hat	1899	AM
The Rehearsal	1903	AMB
A Remarkable Fire	1902	AMB
The Renunciation	1909	Bio
A Reprieve from the Scaffold	1905	AMB
Reproduction of the Jefferies-Corbett Contest	1903	AMB
Republican National Committee of 1900	1900	AMB
Rescue of a White Girl from the Boxers	1900	AMB
The Restless Girl	1897	AM
Resurrection	1909	Bio
Return of Troop C. Brooklyn	1898	Ed
Reuben in the Opium Joint	1905	AMB
Reuben in the Subway	1905	AMB
Reviewing the "Texas" at Grant's Tomb	1898	Ed
Rex's Bath	1902	AMB
The "Richard Peck"	1899	AMB
Riding on the Merry-Go-Round	1897	AM
The Rival Models	1904	AMB
The River Pirates	1905	AMB
A River Tragedy	1905	Ed
The Road to the Heart	1909	AMB
Robbed of her All	1905	AMB
Rock Drill at Work in Subway	1903	AMB
The Rock of Ages	1903	AMB
Romance of a Jewess	1908	AMB
A Romp	1897	AM
Rooms For Gentlemen Only	1905	AMB

The Rose	1903	AMB
Rose O' Salem Town	1910	Bio
Rosedale	1900	Ed
The Roue's Heart	1909	AMB
Rough House in a New York Honky Tonk	1905	AMB
"Round and Round the Mulberry Bush"	1898	AM
Rounding Up the Yeggmen	1904	Ed
The Royal Salute	1902	AMB
The Rubberneck Boarders	1900	AMB
Rube and Mandy at Coney Island	1903	Ed
A Rude Hostess	1909	AMB
Ruins of the Windsor Hotel Fire	1899	AM
Run of the N.Y Fire Dept	1903	AMB
The Sacrifice	1909	AMB
The "Sagamore"	1899	AMB
Sailors Ashore	1904	AMB
Sailors of the Atlantic Fleet	1899	AMB
St. Patrick's Cathedral and Fifth Ave. on Easter Sunday Morning	1902	Ed
A Salutary Lesson	1910	Bio
The Salvation Army Lass	1909	AMB
"Sampson" Champion High Stepper	1899	AMB
The Sand Baby	1903	AMB
The Sand Fort	1903	AMB
Sandow (various)	1896	AM
The Sandwich Man	1899	AMB
Santa Claus Filling Stockings	1897	AM
Saturday at the Free Baths	1901	AMB
Saved!	1904	AMB
Saved By Love	1908	Ed
Scandal in the Custom House	1900	AMB
A Scandalous Proceeding	1899	AMB
Scarecrow Pump	1904	Ed
Scene on Lower Broadway	1902	AMB
Scenes from Luna Park	1907	AMB
Scenes in an Infant Orphan Asylum	1904	Ed
Schneider's Anti-Noise Crusade	1909	AMB
School Girl Athletes/Gymnasts	1904	AMB
The Schoolmaster's Surprise	1898	AM
A Scrap in the Dressing Room	1904	AMB
Scrubbem's Washing Machine	1899	AMB
The Sculptor's Nightmare	1908	AMB
A Sculptor's Welsh Rabbit Dream	1908	Ed
Sea Gulls (in Central Park)	1901	AMB
A Search for Evidence	1903	AMB
The Seashore Baby	1904	AMB
A Seaside Cakewalk	1904	AMB

Title	Year	Studio
"Seeing New York"	1902	AMB
Seeing New York By Yacht	1903	AMB
Seeing Things at Night	1900	AMB
The Seeress	1904	AMB
Selling a Model	1902	Ed
The Serenaders	1899	AMB
The Seven Ages	1905	Ed
7th and 71st Regiment, New York (various)	1897-9	Ed
The Shah's Return from Paris	1900	AMB
Shamrock Starting on Trial Trip	1899	AMB
She Fell Fainting Into His Arms	1903	AMB
She Kicked on the Cooking	1904	AMB
Shelter Tent Drill	1903	AMB
Sherlock Holmes Baffled	1900	AMB
The Shocking Stockings	1904	AMB
"Shoo Fly"	1900	AMB
Shoot the Chute Series	1899	Ed
Shooting the Chutes (various)	1896-1903	Various
Shooting the Chutes, Luna Park	1903	AMB
Shooting the Rapids at Luna Park	1903	Ed
Shredded Wheath Biscuit	1904	AMB
Shut Up!	1902	AMB
Siamese Twins	1898	AM
Side-Walks of New York (x3)	1897-1900	Various
Silveon and Emerie "On the Web"	1903	AMB
The Silver Wedding	1906	AMB
The Simple Life	1906	AMB
Singer Building Foundation Co.	1906	AMB
6th Avenue New York Elevated Railroad	1903	Lubin
69th Regiment, N.G.N.Y.	1903	Ed
Skating in Central Park	1900	AMB
Skating on N.Y. Theatre Roof	1907	AMB
The Skeleton at the Feast	1899	AMB
A Skipping Rope Dance	1897	AM
Skyscrapers of New York City, From the North River	1903	Ed
The Skscrapers	1906	AMB
The Skyscrapers of New York	1898	AM
The Slave	1909	Bio
The Slave Market	1900	AMB
The Sleeper	1902	AMB
"The Sleeping Child"	1901	AMB
The Sleeping Uncle and the Bad Girls	1898	AM
The Sleeping Soubrette	1905	AMB
Sleighing in Central Park, New York	1904	Ed

Sleighing Scene	1898	Ed
A Slide for Life	1899	AM
Slide for Life, Luna Park	1903	AMB
The Slippery Slide	1901	AMB
The Slocum Disaster	1904	AMB
A Smoked Husband	1908	AMB
Smoking Up	1907	AMB
A Snare for Lovers	1904	AMB
Snow Men	1896	AM
The Snowman	1908	AMB
Soap Bubbles	1897	AM
Society Girls Playing "Leap Frog"	1897	AM
The Society Palmist	1905	AMB
The Society Raffles	1905	AMB
Socks or Stockings	1898	AM
Some Dudes Can Fight	1898	AM
Some Troubles of House Cleaning	1898	AM
The Song of the Shirt	1908	AMB
The Son's Return	1909	Bio
The Sorrows of the Unfaithful	1910	Bio
Sorting Refuse at Incinerating Plant, New York City	1903	Ed
Soubrette's Troubles on a Fifth Avenue Stage Coach	1901	Ed
The Soul Kiss	1908	AMB
The Sound Money Parade	1896	AM
Sousa and the Band	1901	AMB
South Gate of the Highlands	1898	AM
Spanking the Naughty Girl	1898	AM
Sparring at the N.Y.A.C.	1905	AMB
Special Muto Reel Mellin's Food Co.	1908	AMB
Spectacular Scenes During a New York City Fire	1905	Ed
A Speedway Parade	1902	AMB
The Spider and the Fly	1899	AMB
"Spike, the Punching-Bag Dog"	1897	AM
Spinster's Waterloo	1898	AM
Spirit of '76	1905	AMB
Spirits in the Kitchen	1899	AMB
Spooks at School	1900	AMB
Springtime in the Park	1901	AMB
Star Theatre	1902	AMB
The Startled Lover	1899	AM
Statue of Liberty	1898	Ed
Stealing a Bride	1899	AM
Steam Yacht "American"	1901	AMB
Steamer "Grandrepublic"	1899	AMB
Steamscow "Cinderella" and Ferryboat "Cincinnati"	1903	Ed
Steeplechase, Coney Island	1903	AMB

Stern's Duplex Railway	1905	AMB
The Still Alarm	1903	Ed
Stolen By Gypsies	1905	Ed
The Stolen Jewels	1908	AMB
"Stop Thief!"	1900	AMB
The Story the Biograph Told	1904	AMB
A Strange Meeting	1909	Bio
A Street Arab	1898	Ed
Street Boys at the Seashore	1898	AM
Street Car Chivalry	1903	Ed
Street Scene	1902	AMB
The Strenuous Life	1904	Ed
A Strike in a Dime Museum	1900	AMB
Stripped-Stripped	1907	AMB
A Study in Openwork	1902	AMB
A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery	1904	AMB
The Subpoena Server	1906	AMB
Subub Surprises The Burglar	1903	Ed
Suburban Handicap, 1897	1897	Ed
The Suburbanite	1904	AMB
The Suburbanite's Ingenious Alarm	1908	Ed
Such a Quiet Girl, Too!	1900	AMB
The Suicide Club	1909	AMB
The Suit of Armor	1904	AMB
The Summer Boarders	1905	AMB
The Summer Girl	1899	AMB
A Summer Idyll	1910	Bio
A Summer Tragedy	1910	Bio
Sunshine Sue	1910	Bio
A Surprise Party	1897	AM
Swearing in Recruits	1904	AMB
A Sweep Across New York	1903	AMB
Sweet and Twenty	1910	Bio
The Sweet Girl Graduate	1899	AMB
Sweet Revenge	1909	Bio
Sweethearts	1902	AMB
Sweets for the Sweet	1903	AMB
A Swift Chappie	1898	AM
The Swimming Class	1904	AMB
Swimming Pool at Coney Island	1901	Ed
A Swimming Race at Coney Island	1904	AMB
Symphony in "A" Flat	1899	AM
Tale the Autumn Leaves Told	1908	Ed
Tales the Searchlight Told	1908	Ed
Taming a Husband	1910	Bio
Taming of the Shrew	1908	AMB

Tarrant Fire	1900	AMB
The Tavern-Keeper's Daughter	1908	AMB
The Teacher's Unexpected Wish	1898	AM
The Teacher's Unexpected Ducking	1903	AMB
Teasing the Cook	1899	AM
The Teddy Bears	1907	Ed
The Tell-Tale Kiss	1900	AMB
Temptation of St. Anthony	1900	AMB
Ten Nights in a Bar-Room	1901	AMB
A Tenderloin Tragedy	1907	AMB
A Tenement House Tragedy	1907	AMB
Tent Pegging	1899	AMB
The Tenth Battalion	1898	AM
10th U.S. Infantry films (x3)	1898	Ed
The Terrible Kids	1906	Ed
A Terrible Night	1900	AMB
Terrible Ted	1907	AMB
The Test	1909	Bio
The "Texas" Naval Parade	1898	Ed
That Awful Stork	1908	AMB
That Chink at Golden Gulch	1910	Bio
Thaw-White Tragedy	1906	AMB
Theatre Hat	1897	AM
Then the Tramp he Woke Up	1908	AMB
They Forgot the Messenger	1908	AMB
They Found the Leak	1902	AMB
They Led Her Husband Astray	1900	AMB
They Meet on the Mat	1906	AMB
They Would Elope	1909	Bio
The Thief and the Pie Woman	1900	AMB
Third Avenue Elevated Railroad	1903	AM
Third Avenue Elevated Train, New York	1903	Lubin
The Third Degree	1898	AM
The Thirteen Club	1905	AMB
13th Infantry films (x7)	1897	AM
This Girl Not Wanted	1907	AMB
Those Awful Hats	1909	AMB
Those Boys!	1909	AMB
Those Wedding Bells Shall Not Ring Out	1900	AMB
Three American Beauties	1906	Ed
Three Cavailers on the Road	1905	AMB
Three Girls in a Hammock	1904	AMB
A Three Masted Schooner	1898	AM
Three Views of the 69th Regiment	1898	AM
Three Weeks	1908	AMB
Through The Breakers	1909	Bio

Through the Key-Hole in the Door	1900	AMB
Throwing the Sixteen Pound Hammer	1903	Ed
Tied to her Apron Strings	1904	AMB
A Time and a Place for Everything	1898	AM
The Tipping Evil	1898	AM
Tipping the Cart in Mulberry Bend	1897	AM
Tis An Ill Wind that Blows No Good	1909	AMB
To Save Her Soul	1909	Bio
Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son	1905	AMB
Tommy's Ringing Good Joke on his Dad	1899	AM
Tommy's Trick on Grandpa	1900	AMB
A Too Ardent Lover	1903	AMB
Too Many in Bed	1908	AMB
Too Much of a Good Thing	1907	AMB
Toodles Recites a Recitation	1903	AMB
The Topers	1905	AMB
Topsy-Turvy Quadrille	1899	AMB
Tortured By Boxers	1900	AMB
A Tough Dance	1902	AMB
A Tough Kid's Waterloo	1900	AMB
A Tragedy Averted	1898	AM
Tragic Love	1909	AMB
Train Vs. Donovan	1898	AM
The Trainer's Daughter; or, A Race for Life	1907	Ed
The Tramp and the Burglar	1900	AMB
The Tramp and the Crap Game	1900	Ed
The Tramp and the Giant Firecracker	1898	AM
The Tramp and the Muscular Cook	1898	AM
The Tramp Caught a Tartar	1898	AM
The Tramp gets Whitewashed	1900	AMB
Tramp in a Millionaire's Bed	1897	AM
Tramp in the Haunted House	1900	AMB
A Tramp in the Well	1900	AMB
The Tramp Trapped	1898	AM
Tramps Angel	1907	AMB
A Tramp's Dinner	1897	AM
Tramps in the Old Maid's Orchard	1900	AMB
The Tramp's Strategy that Failed	1901	Ed
A Trap for Santa Claus	1909	Bio
Trial Marriages	1907	AMB
Trial of Captain Dreyfuss	1899	AMB
Trial Scene	1897	AM
Tribulations of a Country Schoolmarm	1898	AM
The Tribulations of an Amateur Photographer	1900	AMB
A Trick on the Cop	1904	AMB
Trilby and Little Billie	1896	AM

A Trip over the Manhattan Elevated Railroad	1899	AM
A Trip Up Broadway	1907	Lubin
Troop "A": N.G.S.N.Y.	1898	AM
Trouble at the Christening	1900	AMB
The Troubles of a Manager of a Burlesque Show	1904	AMB
The Troublesome Fly	1900	AMB
The Truants	1907	AMB
The Tunnel Workers	1906	AMB
Turning the Tables	1910	Bio
Twelth Regiment, N.G.S.N.Y.	1898	AM
Twentieth Century Flyers	1901	AMB
25 Stories Up!	1903	AMB
Twin Brothers	1909	AMB
2AM in the Subway	1905	AMB
Two Bottle Babies	1904	AMB
Two Chappies in a Box	1903	Ed
Two Girls in a Hammock	1899	AMB
Two Little Waifs	1910	Bio
Two Old Cronies	1900	AMB
The Two Sisters	1903	AMB
Two Women and a Man	1909	Bio
"Two's Company"	1900	AMB
Tying the Red Light on the Tiger's Tail	1903	AMB
The Ugly Tempered Tramp	1900	AMB
The Unappreciated Joke	1903	Ed
Uncle Reuben at the Waldorf	1903	AMB
Uncle Reuben Lands a Kick	1900	AMB
Uncle Rube's Visit to the Man-O-War	1898	AM
Uncle Si's Experience in a Concert Hall	1900	AMB
Uncle Tom's Cabin	1903	Ed
Under Full Sail	1899	AM
Under the Bamboo Tree	1905	AMB
Under the Mistletoe	1903	Ed
Under the Old Apple Tree	1907	AMB
Under the Tree	1904	AMB
Underwear Model	1898	AM
Undone By a Suitcase	1907	AMB
Unexpected Advent of the School Teacher	1898	AM
An Unexpected Knockout	1901	AMB
An Unexpected Santa Claus	1908	Ed
The Unfaithful Odalisque	1900	AMB
The Unfaithful Wife	1903	AMB
Union Square - New York	1896	AM
U.S. Battleship "Oregon"	1898	Ed
U.S. Cruiser Ship "Brooklyn", Naval Parade	1898	Ed
U.S. Cruiser "Olympia" Leading Naval Parade	1899	Ed

U.S. Cruiser "Raleigh"	1899	Ed
The United States Flag	1896	AM
U.S. Marines in Dewey Land Parade	1899	Ed
U.S. Sailors	1897	AM
Unloading a Mackeral Schooner	1901	AMB
Unloading Mail at Pier 13	1907	AMB
Unlucky at Cards, Unlucky at Love	1905	AMB
An Unlucky Lover	1901	AMB
An Unprotected Female	1903	AMB
An Unsuccessful Raid	1898	AM
The Unwelcome Callers	1898	AM
An Up-to-date Female Drummer	1899	AMB
Upset By a Cigarette	1907	AMB
The Usurer	1910	Bio
The Vaidis Sisters, Coney Island	1903	AMB
The Valet's Wife	1908	AMB
The Vaquero's Vow	1908	AMB
Vesta Tilley	1906	AMB
Veteran Zouaves	1898	AM
A Victim of Circumstantial Evidence	1903	AMB
Victorious Squadron Firing Salute	1898	Ed
View of Brooklyn Bridge from a Ferryboat	1899	AM
View on Boulevard, New York City	1896	AM
Views of New York	1908	Urban-Eclipse
The Village Cut-Up	1906	AMB
The Violence Maker of Cremona	1909	Bio
The Violin Player	1899	AMB
"Vizcaya" Under Full Headway	1898	AM
The Voice of the Violin	1909	AMB
Volunteer Fire Department Parade	1906	AMB
The Waders	1903	AMB
The Wages of Sin - A Mother's Grief	1903	AMB
A Wagon Load of Babies	1901	Ed
The Waif; Or, Out in the Street	1904	AMB
Waiting at the Church	1906	Ed
Waiting for Bill	1903	AMB
Waiting for Hubby	1897	AM
"Waiting for Santa Claus"	1901	AMB
A Wake In "Hell's Kitchen"	1900	AMB
Waltzing Walter	1907	AMB
Wanted, A Child	1909	Bio
Wanted: A Dog	1905	AMB
Wanted a Man Badly	1907	AMB
Wanted - A Nurse	1906	AMB
A Warm Baby with a Cold Deck	1899	AMB

A Warm Occasion	1904	AMB
Was Justice Served?	1909	Bio
Wash Day	1902	AMB
Washing the Baby	1897	AM
Washington Bridge and Speedway	1901	AMB
The Washwoman's Daughter	1898	AM
Water Nymphs	1902	AMB
A Watermelon Feast	1896	AM
Waving American Flag	1904	AMB
The Way of Man	1909	Bio
The Way to Sell Corsets	1904	AMB
"Weary Willie" Kidnaps a Child	1904	Ed
"Weary Willie" Kisses the Bride	1904	Ed
Weighing the Baby	1903	AMB
The Welcome Burglar	1909	AMB
Welcome Prince Henry	1902	AMB
A Welsh Rabbit	1903	AMB
West Point Cadets	1899	Ed
The West Point Cadets and Band	1899	AMB
Westinghouse Sign	1904	AMB
What a Mechanical Toy Did to Some Giddy Girls	1904	AMB
"What are the Waves Saying Sister?"	1903	AMB
What Burglar Bill Found in the Safe	1904	AMB
What Drink Did	1909	Bio
What Happened in the Tunnel	1903	Ed
What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City	1901	Ed
What Happened to a Fresh Johnnie	1900	AMB
What Happened to the Burglar	1899	AM
What Happened to the Dancing Master's Pupil	1898	AM
What Happened When a Hot Picture Was Taken	1898	AM
What His Girl's Voice Did	1907	AMB
What Hypnotism Can Do	1899	AMB
What Julia Did to the Ghosts	1899	AMB
What Our Boys Did at Manila	1898	AM
What the Bathing Girls did to the Kodak Fiend	1900	AMB
What the Bum Did to the Dude	1907	AMB
What the Copper Saw	1908	AMB
What the Dude Lost in the Dressing Room	1908	AMB
What the Fisherman Caught	1907	AMB
What the Girls Did to the Bachelor	1907	AMB
What the Jay Saw in the Studio	1900	AMB
What they do to the Respectable Men in the Tenderloin	1900	AMB
What's the Matter With the Bed	1898	AM
What's Your Hurry?	1909	Bio
When Babies' Quarrel	1899	AMB
When Old New York was Young	1910	Vita

When Reuben Comes to Town	1908	Ed
When Stocks Went Up	1901	AMB
"When the Cat's Away, the Mice Will Play"	1902	AMB
When the Clock Strikes Two in the Tenderloin	1898	AM
When Their Love Grew Cold	1899	AMB
"When We Were Twenty-One"	1900	AMB
Where Breakers Roar	1908	AMB
The White Caps	1905	Ed
White Roses	1910	Bio
White Star S.S. Baltic Leaving Pier On First Eastern Voyage	1904	Ed
White Wings on Review	1903	Ed
"Who Pays For the Drinks?"	1903	AMB
Who Said Chicken?	1900	Bio
The Whole Damn Family and the Dam Dog	1905	Ed
Why Clara Was Spanked	1899	AM
Why Curfew Did Not Ring Last Night	1900	AMB
Why Foxy Grandpa Escaped a Ducking	1903	AMB
Why He Resigned From the Lodge	1899	AM
Why Mamie Missed the Masquerade	1899	AMB
Why Mrs McCarthy Went to the Ball	1900	AMB
Why Papa Cannot Sleep	1896	AM
The Widow	1903	AMB
The Widow and the Only Man	1904	AMB
Wifey's Mistake	1904	Ed
Wifey's Strategy	1908	Ed
Wifie Invades the Studio	1900	AMB
Wilful Peggy	1910	Bio
Willie's Camera	1903	AMB
Winding the Maypole	1898	AM
A Windy Corner	1898	AM
A Windy Day at the Flatiron Building	1903	AMB
A Windy Day on the Roof	1904	AMB
Wine Garden Scene	1896	Ed
The Wine Opener	1905	AMB
Wine, Women, and Song	1906	AMB
Winning Back His Love	1910	Bio
The Winning Coat	1909	Bio
With Her Card	1909	Bio
The Wizard and the Spirit of the Tree	1899	AMB
The Woman From Mellon's	1909	Bio
Women Employee's Dining Room	1905	AMB
Women of the Ghetto Bathing	1901	AMB
Wonderful Dancing Girls	1899	AMB
The Workers	1897	AM
The Wrath of a Jealous Wife	1903	AMB
A Wreath in Time	1909	AMB

Wrestling at the N.Y.A.C.	1905	AMB
Wrestling Pony and Man	1896	AM
Wrinkles Removed	1902	AMB
Wrong Bath	1907	AMB
The Wrong Room	1904	AMB
The X-Ray Mirror	1899	AM
Yale Laundry	1907	AMB
A Yankee Man-O-Warman's Fight For Love	1908	Ed
A Yard of Frankfurters	1900	AMB
A Yard of Puppies	1903	AMB
Ye Merry Sleigh Bells	1897	AM
The Yellow Peril	1908	AMB
"You Dirty Boy"	1901	AMB
"You Will Send Me to Bed, Eh?"	1903	AMB

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