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# Is it You? Recognition, Representation and Response in Relation to the Local Film

Vanessa Toulmin and Martin Loiperdinger

Coliseum Daily, at 3 and 8.

The New Century Animated Pictures

Constant Change of Programme

'IS IT YOU?

If you recognise your Photo on the Screen you are entitled to the sum of £1 on making immediate claim.'

CUT THIS OUT

Half Price Family Voucher ...<sup>1</sup>

**T**he term 'local' in recent studies, in particular those relating to early exhibition practices, has been applied to a variety of subject matters and areas. As Uli Jung argues:

Local views are a blind spot in film historiography. They were not advertised in the trade journals and, although they were probably shot in large quantities, they were available only in very small numbers of prints. The producers of local films were either local theater owners – as was the case in Trier – or professional production companies that were commissioned by local people or organisations (including theater owners). Probably the bulk of these films were printed only once (which at the same time may explain why most of the local films must be considered lost), since they were playing only at one cinema and probably not for a long period of time. At the same time, though, they were a significant aspect of the programming strategies of theater owners.<sup>2</sup>

In the United Kingdom, for example, the recent

discovery of the Mitchell and Kenyon canon of films, and the four-year restoration and research project undertaken by the British Film Institute and the University of Sheffield, has resulted in greater emphasis being placed on the typology of local films and their subsequent development and importance as a genre in the development of cinematographic practices.<sup>3</sup> In addition, within the wider academic film community, the idea of the 'local' has been applied to a broader range of concerns.<sup>4</sup> These range from aspects of local exhibition, the local screening of national or international cinema, the local production teams of international companies, the local versus the national, local views or subject-related documentaries and local drama. Local films can also act as propaganda for the local cinema owner by providing a living portrait of local people (as a mass) for the local audience, or presenting living portraits of peo-

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**Fig. 1.** M&K 652 *Hull Fair* (1902). The visitor to the fair is responding more to the camera than the boxers on the front of the show. [Courtesy British Film Institute.]

ple who, as members of an audience, view themselves on the screen. Added to this is the issue of how the 'local' evolves or metamorphoses into another genre when exhibited outside its locality, or when early fiction types such as those produced by the Bamforth Company of Holmfirth, using local people and views, were shown in the locality.<sup>5</sup> Many of these ideas are raised in this issue of *Film History* arising, in the main, from symposia held in Germany and Sweden on the notion of the local in early cinema.

Stephen Bottomore's recently published essay on local films in the silent era defines a film as 'local' only if there is a considerable overlap between the people appearing in the film and those who watch it or were intended to watch it.<sup>6</sup> In this groundbreaking essay, Bottomore discusses the types of films which can be viewed as local, and provides an important overview of the emergence of this phenomenon on an international basis. Building on Bottomore's discussion, this essay further analyses the popularity of the local and draws a parallel with a precinematographic example of this tradition. In addition we seek to understand why the exhibition of local films was both a successful marketing tool in the first decade of the twentieth century and also continued to appear as part of the programme of the local exhibitor for the next forty years in Europe and in the US. However, the principal concern of this essay is the idea of self-recognition as the central feature of the 'local'. This will be illustrated by means of examples from Germany and the North of England.

## The local as self-recognition

As Tom Gunning remarks in his essay 'Pictures of Crowd Splendor: The Mitchell and Kenyon Factory Gate Films', 'it is this cry of recognition which baptizes this cinema of locality, as the amazement of a direct connection marks the viewing process'.<sup>7</sup> The direct connection or the moment of overlap between audience and the subject matter of the film is only manifested in local films when the subjects that are projected coincide with the spectators in the show. This moment of recognition can often be a personage, a locality or, more importantly, the moment when the spectator's gaze is projected back to them, as *Hull Daily Mail* noted: 'The pictures of local scenes produced much interest among the audience, not a few of whom recognised friends among the crowds shown on the sheet'.<sup>8</sup> This can be also extended to the locality in cases when the travelling exhibitor advertised the urban landscape as a living personage that the audience would recognise (Fig. 1). 'Reference must be made to local scenes for a film to be deemed to be local. They form an attractive feature, and although they pass rapidly before the eyes of the spectator, it is an easy matter for the audience to distinguish acquaintances. The views have been taken at Hull's principal factories and workshops, and at the Monument Bridge, and it is amusing to hear the comments of those who know several of the "pictures"'.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the reflected image or living portraiture was an important tool in advertising for early exhibitors in Europe and America as the following extract from a showman reveals:

'Lor', Bil', that's me!' – An enterprising cinematographist, who was giving a series of lantern entertainments in a town up North exposed a film at the gates of a large factory as the men were coming out for their dinner hour. This was in due course projected on the screen, when great amusement was caused to the audience by an enthusiastic member, who on recognizing himself in the picture, shouted out to a companion, 'Lor', Bil', that's me with the square basket!' We are informed that this small incident was the means of bringing a huge audience on the following evening of men engaged at the said works, and after this particular film had been projected, they insisted on an encore, which was of course honoured.<sup>10</sup>

The issue of recognition, either of oneself or the locality played an important part in the development of the local in early cinema history and throughout the later silent period.<sup>11</sup> As Gunning writes:

People might not only recognize their co-workers and friends on the screen, but, like the man with the square basket, themselves. Many of the people in these films look directly at the camera as if in anticipation of recognition to come. This frank glance or even stare at the camera give these films a large degree of their power.<sup>12</sup>

However, the moment when the reflected gaze occurs within the visual medium is not unique to the cinematograph. This phenomenon can be traced to earlier forms in the history of photography and in other forms of visual entertainment and was also one of the motives behind the Lumière brothers' development of the *cinématographe* in France.

### Earlier ideas of 'self-recognition': the looking-glass curtain and *portrait vivant*

Instantaneous reflection was first employed as a theatrical gimmick by theatre owners in France, in the early 1800s, when they placed a large crystal curtain over the stage for the audience to admire before the stage performance. Jane Moody, in *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840*, cites the 'Looking-Glass Curtain' which became part of the architecture of the Royal Coburg Theatre in 1821 as part of the pleasures of seeing and being seen within the huge auditorium: 'The mirror brilliantly dissolved the boundary between the consumer and the object of consumption, allowing the spectators to become the subject of their own spectacle'.<sup>13</sup> The curtain consisted of sixty-three plates of glass in a gold frame that framed the audience within a fixed boundary. Before a performance, the glass would be lowered so that it hung between the stage and the audience thereby reflecting the spectators, allowing them to behold themselves on the stage. Although dismissed by contemporary reviewers 'as vulgar ostentation', contemporary accounts note that the audience testified their delight at 'seeing themselves in the immense mirror and on the stage'.<sup>14</sup> The 'Looking-Glass Curtain' allowed the audience to become not only the subject of the spectacle but also created a scenario whereby they could control the spectacle through the image reflected in the mirror.

Although appearing to predate many of the ideas discussed in this essay with its use as 'self-recognition' as a crowd puller, the 'Looking-Glass Curtain' was compromised by technical difficulties and aspects of its construction. The weight of the curtain made it unmanageable and poor ventilation coated it with a misty opaque film thereby defeating the object of presenting a reflected gaze. However, during its brief presentation at the Royal Coburg Theatre in 1821, the 'Looking-Glass Curtain' caused a sensation and proved more popular to some audiences than the plays that were produced. A further similarity between the response of the audience at the Royal Coburg Theatre and the concept of local films is the relationship of the theatre to its locality. The success of the Royal Coburg Theatre, like that of other minor theatres which opened in London in the early 1800s, was tied directly to its local audience which comprised shopkeepers, East-End barrow boys, sailors, inn keepers and other such personages from the local populace to such a degree that a critic stated 'that the smoke and fume from the frying of sausages, stewed eel and trotter permeated the theatre'.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, productions of pantomimes with local settings and narratives of local events and murders in the area, which would have been known to residents, created an ongoing dialogue between audience and performance.

### **Portrait vivant**

When French journals of photography envisaged the possible commercial exploitation of chronophotography, they employed the term *portrait vivant* (living portrait) to denote the 1½ second animation of a chronophotographic series which amateur photographers might take of their family members. Georges Demeny's Chronophotographe was advertised as a camera for taking *portraits vivants* of beloved ones which were to be animated through his Phonoscope.<sup>16</sup> Selling an apparatus to amateur photographers for taking and projecting *portraits vivants* was also the idea behind the Cinématographe Lumière which had been designed as an *appareil de salon*:

The Cinématographe is a light machine with an ease of operation which makes it particularly suitable for filming in exterior locations. Let us not forget that Louis Lumière headed an enterprise whose fortune was founded on amateur photographers. When he conceived



**Fig. 2.** M&K 602 *Parkgate Iron and Steelworks Co., Rotherham* (1901). The steelworker is responding in an aggressive manner to being filmed! [Courtesy British Film Institute.]

of the Cinématographe, his first intention was to make it available to informed amateurs. As a simple photographic apparatus, the Cinématographe would record family scenes with the additional element of motion.<sup>17</sup>

Louis Lumière took around 100 views in 1895 and 1896. Many of them, as for example his famous *Le Déjeuner de Bébé*, seem to be included to demonstrate to amateur photographers how they could achieve *portraits vivants* of their families with the new Lumière apparatus.<sup>18</sup> This initial idea was not realised due to the success of the Cinématographe Lumière with paying audiences, the new-born camera and projector becoming a device for making money through the exhibition of film in public spaces.

The work of film pioneers such as Georges Demeny and Louis Lumière demonstrates a close relationship between amateur photography and early cinema. The sale of film cameras and unexposed film to amateur photographers was a key principle in the early days of cinematography, though this was only successfully exploited on a commercial basis from the 1920s. In the period between 1895 and the 1920s, the concept of *portraits vivants* played an important role in film exhibition and performance where, instead of taking and viewing *portraits vivants* in the private sphere, local people were provided with *portraits vivants* of their own by travelling cinemas and local cinema owners. Audiences were invited to recognise themselves on the screen when local views of factory gates (Fig. 2), church exits, processions, parades etc. were an-

nounced through the local press or through posters and leaflets. It seems that audiences of every social strata were enthusiastic for viewing living portraits of themselves on the screen, from the first days of cinematography until at least the First World War, and perhaps even into the 1920s and 1930s in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

In the United States, this tradition continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s in rural America with the work of H. Lee Waters. Waters made movies in 117 towns in North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina and Virginia in the mid-1930s to early 1940s, a collection that is currently being researched and restored by Duke University. Interestingly, Karen Glynn, visual materials archivist in the Special Collections Library at Duke University, stated:

He [Waters] always filmed a lot of children so that the kids and the rest of their families would buy tickets to see the children on the big screen. Sometimes, business owners paid him to film their products and their stores and edit the footage into the film. He was ahead of his time.<sup>20</sup>

Ironically, Waters was not ahead of his time at all for he was continuing a tradition of exhibition at the heart of early cinema production and, perhaps unintentionally, part of the Lumière intention in developing the Cinématographe.

### Vues Lumière shown as local views

If we follow Bottomore's definition of the 'local' and H. Lee Waters and Mitchell and Kenyon's business model, then a cinematographic view may be defined as a local view when screened at the place of shooting. However, the majority of Vues Lumière, which were taken in European countries and then listed in the Catalogue Lumière, were already distributed in 1896 across several countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain. But what happened to such views when they were shown in the town where they were shot? Did they become local views, as it were, for local people when they were screened in a local context? There are some indications that this was more or less the case. Uli Jung is right to draw a distinction between a screening of the Vue Lumière *Sortie de la cathédrale* (Fig. 3) which was shot in Cologne and shown elsewhere, and a view of people leaving a church in Trier which was produced by the Marzen travelling cinema and was shown only to local audiences in Trier.<sup>21</sup> But *Sortie de la cathédrale*,





**Fig. 3.** *Sortie de la cathédrale (Cologne).* [Courtesy Association Frères Lumière (Michelle Aubert).]

the Lumière film, was also shown in Cologne. There are, however, no reports in Cologne newspapers that provide an account of the response of the local audience, but the local press announced the filming and screening of views from Cologne 'which will arise very special interest here in Cologne as they represent scenes of Cologne itself'.<sup>22</sup> In spring 1896, Charles Moisson shot *Sortie de la cathédrale* (Fig. 3) and *L'Arrivée de l'express* (Nos. 225 and 226 in the Catalogue Lumière) in Cologne. He also shot *Feierabend einer Kölner Fabrik*, a factory gate view of Stollwerck's chocolate factory, which is lost and not listed in the Catalogue Lumière, and which, seemingly, was shown only in Germany – at least in Cologne, Breslau (present-day Wrocław), Bremen, Bremerhaven and Karlsruhe. Stollwerck Bros. was the leading chocolate manufacturer in Germany and exploited the Cinématographe Lumière in Germany in 1896 using up to ten machines and attracting paying audiences of at least 1,400,000 in 1896.<sup>23</sup>

More information is available on local screenings of Vues Lumière which were taken in Stuttgart. In summer 1896, an unknown Lumière operator shot views in Stuttgart of which nine are listed in the Catalogue Lumière: two views from the centre of

Stuttgart (237. *Schlossplatz* and 238. *Fontaine sur le Schlossplatz*), four views from the historical parade of a German Singers' Festival (239. *Cortège sur le Schlossplatz*, 241. *Cortège de cavaliers*, 240. *Cortège des anciens Germains*, 783. *Stuttgart: Cortège du prince Weimar*), and three military views of Stuttgart presenting dragoons undertaking exercises (242. *Stuttgart: 26e Dragons. Sauts d'obstacles*. 243. *Stuttgart: 26e Dragons. Pied à terre*. 244. *Stuttgart: 26e Dragons. Défilé*). The Cinématographe screenings in Stuttgart were shown at the Ausstellung für Elektrotechnik und Kunstgewerbe, the most important industrial fair of 1896 in Germany's south-west regions. Sixteen Stuttgart views were advertised in the local press as a programme called *Stuttgarter Bilder* (Stuttgart Views) which ran as a programme of local views in various compositions (usually one programme contained between eight and ten Vues Lumière) for three weeks from 20 August to 8 September 1896. The local newspaper *Schwäbische Kronik* reported packed audiences which were keen to watch local views as a special attraction. It seems that it was enough to announce Stuttgart views of the Cinématographe Lumière and middle-class locals who could afford the 50 Pfennig entrance flocked in

**Fig. 4.** *Fontaine sur le Schlossplatz* (Stuttgart). [Courtesy Association Frères Lumière (Michelle Aubert).]



order to see them. *Schlossplatz* and *Fontaine sur le Schlossplatz* were reported as, 'Some views of Stuttgart street life with well-known figures will be interesting and full of humour'.<sup>24</sup>

The shooting of these two Vues Lumière was carefully staged. *Fontaine sur le Schlossplatz* (Fig. 4) shows children, women and men entering and leaving the frame, with the men lifting their hats and often shaking hands as they greet each other. This scene is somehow overstaged and still amuses today's audiences. It seems that these men were probably 'well-known figures'; they might have been among the organisers of the 1896 industrial fair. The Stuttgart 26th Dragoons were invited to a separate screening on 21 August 1896 in order to see military views from Spain and France, and, of course, to see their own exercises on screen: 'The soldiers were greatly amused and examined their achievements with an expert look, often detecting a tardy comrade'.<sup>25</sup>

### Local views in Germany

Recent research has demonstrated that local films played a prominent role in the context of local cinema

competition in the United Kingdom before the First World War, a pattern that is also seen in Germany.<sup>26</sup> When cinema owners offered short film programmes of comedies, dramas and non-fiction films they had several strategies for trying to establish the superiority of their programmes to those of their competitors. Local films were exclusive, and a unique attraction in a programme that could attract large audiences interested in recognising themselves on the screen. It seems that cinema owners were able to compete successfully by adding local accents to their shortfilm programmes, as Peter Marzen did by using local films shot in Trier and lecturing in the local dialect.<sup>27</sup> Between 1907 and 1912, film production companies in Germany such as Welt-Kinematograph, Express-Films, Eclipse and even Pathé offered the opportunity of filming local views or, at least, provided a laboratory service for processing local views. It seems that companies who offered newsreels were interested in obtaining footage of local events. Express-Films in Freiburg, which regularly offered actualities under the title *Der Tag im Film* (The Day in Film), offered filming and laboratory service for local views, but claimed the right to in-



**Fig. 5.** *Arheilgen* (ca. 1910).  
[Courtesy Bundesarchiv-Film archiv, Berlin.]

clude them in *Der Tag im Film*.<sup>28</sup> Apart from the outstanding example of the enterprise of the Marzen family in Trier,<sup>29</sup> there are only very few local films known to be extant in German film archives. Paul Hofmann's Kinemathek im Ruhrgebiet (Duisburg) holds *Fuhrleute & Kutscher-Verein 'Einigkeit' Bottrop – 1. Stiftungsfest & Fahnenweihe* (Wagoners & Coachmen Association 'Unity' Bottrop – 1st founding celebration and consecration of flags) which shows a parade in the industrial town of Bottrop. This local view, which was commissioned by a cinema owner, does not only cover the wagoners' and coachmen's parade, but also a parallel narration which shows street boys disobeying the orders of a man in charge of discipline. Audiences pay more attention to the street boys revolting against authority than to the people in the parade who were the genuine subject of the film.

*Arheilgen. Aufgenommen anlässlich der Eröffnung des Biophon-Theaters* (*Arheilgen. Taken on the Occasion of the Opening of the Biophon-Theater*), a local view of Arheilgen (Fig. 5), a community close to Darmstadt in the Main valley, starts with the arrival of a tramway from Darmstadt and also shows

a factory gate exit at Arheilgen. Both views recall Lumière's famous cinematographic icons and expose a lot of local people to the local audience. The closing view shows the owners of the cinema standing in the entrance welcoming clients who flock into the cinema. It seems that this local film was presented to local people not only to draw attention to the opening of the cinema, but also to shape this new venue of entertainment as a spot which offers views of local interest.

### Local exhibition in the north of England

The landscape of the North of England in early Edwardian Britain was heavily industrialised, highly urban and modern. The Victorian cityscapes had been transformed by largely mechanised modes of public transport demonstrated by the rise of electrified tram systems in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield. The streets of these large industrial cities were captured both in still photography and in cinematography with Manchester being a city that is particularly rich in its record of pictorial representation.<sup>30</sup> By the early 1900s, the cinematograph



**Fig. 6.** M&K 589  
*A Trip to Sunny  
 Vale Gardens at  
 Hipperholm*  
 (1901).  
 Spectators  
 waving to the  
 camera.  
 [Courtesy British  
 Film Institute.]



had proved to be a popular attraction, and daily shows of two hour programmes competed against the fifteen minute shows at the local wakes fair (Fig. 6) or in the music hall.<sup>31</sup> Within the Mitchell and Kenyon Collection, over 830 local actuality films have survived; more information on these individual locations can be found in the forthcoming filmography.

In order to demonstrate the importance of audience recognition as a marketing ploy within local exhibition, contemporary accounts of the film shows will be discussed in different locations between 1901 and 1904, showing a uniformity in reaction across the filmic programme as the audience recognises familiar faces and landscapes. Newspaper reports of film shows in the first decade of the twentieth century are a rich vein of evidence still waiting to be mined. The gait, dress, appearance and even vanity of the audience being filmed are consistent features of the reports that appeared in daily reviews. The appearance of notable personages was greeted with 'amusement and gratification' as this review from Lytham St Anne reveals:

The cinematograph reproduction of Lytham Club Day procession, is a splendid success, and Mr Kingston is to be congratulated on his enterprise. The photographs come out with remarkable clearness, and a number of persons can be easily recognised on the screen, much to the amusement and gratification of the audience.<sup>32</sup>

The film show at the Palace of Varieties in Lancaster on 26 April 1902 was also greeted with 'much amusement when well known faces and characters were recognised'.<sup>33</sup> A later review commented on the vanity of the personages concerned when they realised they were being filmed, and noted their

wish to create a good impression for the camera and their audience. However, the reviewer also stressed the importance of the filming of the civic event, of equal importance to the future local spectator:

The Edison-Vernon animated pictures still prove a great attraction, local views being added each week. The 'very latest' is a set describing the opening of Blea Tarn, beginning with the arrival of the members of the Corporation and the guests at the entrance gate. Much amusement is caused by the 'gait' of some well known personages who have evidently been anxious to make an impression on the camera. The opening ceremony is also cleverly depicted, including the presentation of the key and the entrance into the valve of the tower of the Mayor ... There was a crowded house on Monday, and a matinee on Thursday for the Mayor and members of the Corporation. Fresh local pictures will be on view next week.<sup>34</sup>

This theme of recognition and response continued throughout the run of the exhibition with later reviews commenting on how the show was still a great attraction with 'the local pictures in particular calling forth the admiration of the audience'.<sup>35</sup>

Reviews from Tweedale's show in Halifax in January 1902 elicited the same response: 'local street scenes, of which there are many ... create roars of laughter as fellow townsmen are recognised hurrying to and from business'.<sup>36</sup> A later reviewer was moved to write that the local films 'reflect in a remarkable degree the traits of Halifax people'.<sup>37</sup> This pattern is also evident in Edison's show in Chesterfield where the reviewer commented that 'much amusement has been caused, as many well known Chesterfield people have been recognised on the canvas'.<sup>38</sup> A review from an unknown show at Southport in September 1902 continued the theme:

#### 'CINEMATOGRAPH AT THE CIRCUS

Of especial local interest are the procession of school children and tradesmen on Coronation Day. In each it is quite easy to recognise many well known faces; and members of the younger generation present may frequently be heard to raise up their voices with joy at discovering some friend or acquaintance.<sup>39</sup>

Although there has been no survey of the number of exhibitors working in the North of England

in the early 1900s, a cross-section from *The Showman* of July 1901 reveals over forty different showmen incorporating cinematographic views in their performances. This corresponds to the research undertaken on the Mitchell and Kenyon Collection which reveals that in 1901, over 80 per cent of the films surviving from that year were commissioned by stand alone film showmen in the North of England.<sup>40</sup> News reports from 1901 also demonstrate the popularity of the audience responses to both the critic and the showmen who utilised them in their advertising:

The Thomas Edison Animated Photo Company are prolonging their visit at the Victoria Hall another week. New films which have been added, include the football match, played last Saturday between Salford and Halifax ... Crowded houses nightly are eloquent testimony to the public appreciation of this class of entertainment, the laughter being loud, long and continuous in the recognising of friends and relatives in the local scenes.<sup>41</sup>

A similar range of reviews appeared in 1902 with usage and phraseology common to both the advertisements and the reviews. This suggests that the material cited could have originated in press releases supplied by the showmen themselves and incorporated into reviews. This is very marked when one analyses a series of reviews from a particular theatrical run relating to one exhibitor in a range of newspapers. In order to understand the marketing strategy employed by the showmen and their use of local concerns, a small selection of reviews from the visits of the Thomas Edison Animated Photo Company in Bradford during 1901 will be presented.

An advertisement in the *Bradford Daily Argus* reveals the enterprising nature of the Thomas Edison Animated Photo Company's show in Bradford, as Thomas filmed the afternoon crowd entering the cinematograph show and then exhibited it as part of the evening's entertainment (Fig. 7):<sup>42</sup>

The crowded state of the St George's Hall last night shows that Bradford people know how to appreciate 'a good thing'. The entertainment furnished by the Thomas-Edison Animated Photo Company is unsurpassed for its magnitude and area of excellence. Tonight a further luxury is promised, namely, a film showing the crowd entering St George's Hall to witness a performance by the Edison Company, which



will doubtless attract the interest of quite a host of people.<sup>43</sup>

The return visit of the Thomas Edison show to Bradford in August 1901 demonstrates a different marketing strategy, with the use of the camera as an instantaneous snapshot. The reviewer for *The Showman*, the trade journal of the travelling fraternity, commented on Thomas Edison's show in Bradford:

Interesting as are the pictures of prize winners and others among the animals on the show-ground, local interest seems to centre, if possible, more in the pictures of well-known local gentlemen who have been snap-shotted unawares in various attitudes and disguises, and is undoubtedly a great draw.<sup>44</sup>

In September 1901, the company returned to utilising the earlier practice, namely that of audience recognition. Interestingly, the description of the show in the following review unknowingly conjures up the illusion of the 'Looking-Glass Curtain' with the audience part of the staged performance:

A great many new films have been added, conspicuous among these being a number of local views which are always an attraction. Quite a common expression now in Bradford – 'Do you know that you are on the curtain at St. Georges Hall?' And sure enough, does many a prominent Bradford Citizen find his counterfeit presentment.<sup>45</sup>

The skilful use of the print media as a means of advertising and publicising the local shows, and the selection of material advertised is an important aspect in the popularity of local films during this

**Fig. 7.** M&K 637 *The Crowd Entering St George's Hall Bradford* (1901). The showmen standing in front of the advertisement for Edison's show are Waller Jeffs, Loder Lyons and A.D. Thomas. The film was shown the same day in the evening show. [Courtesy British Film Institute.]

period, a factor which was not altogether lost on the newspaper critics themselves:

The North American Animated Photo Company continue their occupation of the Hull Circus this week. The public taste for animated pictures is as strong as ever, but it is the skilful treatment of local event that does much towards filling the building every night.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

Nowhere in early film history is the enigmatic presence of the audience so acutely felt as in local films. The Mitchell and Kenyon collection epitomises this, but other, less complete series demonstrate this just as well. The participatory fervour so evident in the films themselves is echoed in the comments of the reviewers. The language used by the newspapers is highly reminiscent of the advertisements themselves, and there are instances where the reader is left wondering whether the author has indeed visited the show or simply read the advertisement and press release. Important in this context is the local audience's recognition of itself. The audiences attending the projection of local films were clearly aware that they were both the subject and object of the show, either through their participation at the moment of filming or by the advertising employed by the showmen after the filming.

The urge for self-recognition has a long pedigree with photographic images sold and displayed on fairgrounds and in photographic studios where the audience was both the subject of the photographs and a member of the audience who looked on as *flâneurs*.<sup>47</sup> A later advertising technique used by one enterprising showman actually incorporated the two traditions as an advertisement from the Memorial Hall in Leeds in 1903 demonstrates:

For Easter Holidays ...  
Edison's Electric Animated Pictures.  
Right Up to Date.  
First Visit to Leeds – Something Worth Seeing.

Many Locals advertised as well as Opening of Parliament ...

A startling innovation is the Edison Lightening Photography. Hundreds of Lifesize Portraits of Members of the Audience will be given away absolutely free of charge during this engagement.<sup>48</sup>

The tension between observing oneself and looking at others who are potentially observing themselves (as others see you) motivates and energises these early film shows. The concept of self-recognition and the reflected gaze is a key to the successful marketing of the local views. That self-recognition is an essential element of not just early cinema is suggested by the longevity of its commercial exploitation. The Mitchell and Kenyon Collection in the United Kingdom (1900–13), the Peter Marzen films in Germany and Trier (1902–14), the Scottish Film Archive collection relating to Green's Topical Productions (1915–27) and the H. Lee Waters material in North America demonstrate the international scope of the local view. As a genre, in the words of the showmen, what local views did was not just place the viewer 'within the reach of all' but included them all:

The showman, and the man who gets his living on the fair ground, is nothing if not enterprising. He can always be expected to make the most of his opportunities, and the public in this respect are not disappointed ... 'The Best Show for Local Pictures' is the legend that greets the visitor wherever his face is turned along this line of 'living picture' exhibitions ... This is science served up to the public steaming hot, at a price which is, to borrow a phrase of the showman, 'within the reach of all'.<sup>49</sup>

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## Notes

1. *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 28 August 1904, 1.
2. Uli Jung, 'Local Films: A Blind Spot in the Historiography of Early German Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, 3 (2002): 255.
3. This ground-breaking curatorial and collaborative research project was completed in January 2005. A wide range of material has been published on the collection, but for an introduction to the material, see Vanessa Toulmin, 'Local Films for Local People:

- Travelling showmen and the commissioning of local films in Great Britain, 1900–1902', in *Film History* 13, 2 (2001): 118–138, Vanessa Toulmin, Patrick Russell and Tim Neal, 'The Mitchell and Kenyon Collection: Rewriting Film History', *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Moving Image Archivist* (2003): 1–18, and Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell (eds.), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2004).
4. For example, at the recent Domitor conference in July 2004 held at the University of Utrecht, the subject of the local was widely discussed in a symposium chaired by Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer, 'Global Distribution and Local Standards: A Workshop on Research and Teaching'. Subsequent discussion resulted in a wide range of definitions of the term 'local' in film studies, some of which appear in this issue of *Film History*.
  5. See Richard Brown, 'Film and Postcards: Cross media symbiosis in early Bamforth films', paper delivered at the second Visual Delights Conference, University of Sheffield, July 2002.
  6. Stephen Bottomore, 'From the Factory Gate to the "Home Talent" Drama: An International Overview of Local Films in the Silent Era', in Toulmin, Popple and Russell (eds.), *The Lost World of Mitchell & Kenyon*, 33–48, 33.
  7. Tom Gunning, 'Pictures of Crowd Splendour: The Mitchell and Kenyon Factory Gate Film', in Toulmin, Popple and Russell (eds.), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon*, 52.
  8. *Hull Daily Mail*, 23 April 1901, 4.
  9. *Hull Daily Mail*, 30 April 1901, 4.
  10. *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* 12, 140 (January 1901): 2.
  11. For an overview of this, see Bottomore, 'From the Factory Gate to the Local Talent', in Toulmin, Popple and Russell (eds.), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon*.
  12. Gunning, 49–50.
  13. Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing, 1840–1888* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001).
  14. Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London 1770–1840*, 152.
  15. Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience*, 35.
  16. See 'Appareil chronophotographique pour les amateurs', *Photo-Gazette*, 25 September 1894. See also Georges Demeny, *Le Portrait vivant* (Douai, L. Dechristé, n.d., a four-page document held at the Agfa Historama, Cologne) and Laurent Mannoni, *Georges Demeny: Pionnier du cinéma* (Douai, 1997), 128.
  17. Vincent Pinel, *Louis Lumière. Inventeur et cinéaste* (Paris: Nathan, 1994), 37–38, quoted in Tom Gunning, 'A Mischievous and Knowing Gaze: The Lumière Cinématographe and the Culture of Amateur Photography', in Philippe Dujardin, André Gardies, Jacques Gerstenkorn, Jean-Claude Seguin (eds.), *L'aventure du Cinématographe. Actes du congrès mondial Lumière* (Lyon: Aléas éditeur, 1999), 314.
  18. See Deac Rossell, 'Die soziale Konstruktion früher technischer Systeme der Filmprojektion', *KINtop* 8 (1999): 53–81 and Gunning, 'A Mischievous and Knowing Gaze' in Dujardin, Gardies, Gerstenkorn, Seguin (eds.), *L'aventure du Cinématographe*, 253–255.
  19. For a discussion of local films in travelling cinemas in the 1920s, see Mariann Lewinsky, 'Schweizer National-Cinema Leuzinger, Rapperswil (SG), Aktualitätenfilmproduktion und regionale Kinogeschichte der Zentral-und Ostschweiz, 1896–1945', *KINtop* 9 (2000): 64–81.
  20. See news release, Duke University, 13 June 2003, for the full interview available at <http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/> and Tom Whiteside, 'Up for Adoption: The Adaptability of H. Lee Waters' Movies of Local People' published on the website of the Orphan Film Symposia, University of South Carolina Film Preservation Symposium, 23–25 September 1999 <http://www.sc.edu/orphanfilm/orphanage/symposia/orphans1/whiteside.html>
  21. Jung, 253–255.
  22. *Kölner Tageblatt*, 330, 23 May 1896.
  23. See Martin Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade. Stollwercks Geschäfte mit lebenden Bildern* (Frankfurt am Main and Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1999).
  24. *Schwäbische Kronik*, 185, 10 August 1896.
  25. *Schwäbische Kronik*, 196, 22 August 1896. For exhaustive information on Vues Lumière taken at Stuttgart and the local screenings, see Loiperdinger, 163–168, 249–272, 303–304.
  26. See Bottomore, op. cit., and, for an introduction to the local material produced by and for cinema owners in Scotland from the 1910s to the 1950s, Janet McBain, 'Mitchell and Kenyon's Legacy in Scotland – The Inspiration for a Forgotten Film-making Genre', in Toulmin, Popple and Russell (eds.), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon*, 113–125.
  27. See the essay by Brigitte Braun and Uli Jung in this issue.
  28. Jung, 260–262.



29. See the essay by Brigitte Braun and Uli Jung in this issue.
30. Chris Makepeace (ed.), *Manchester and Salford in the 1890s: A Collection of Photographs by Samuel Coulthurst* (Hendon Mill: Hendon Publishing, 1986) and The Samuel L. Coulthurst Photographs-Victorian Salford and Manchester" (Salford: The Friends of the Salford Museums, 2002).
31. See Vanessa Toulmin, 'The Importance of the Programme in Early Film Presentation', *KINtop* 11 (2002): 19–34.
32. *Lytham Times*, 4 July 1902, 4.
33. *Lancaster Guardian*, 26 April 1902, 5.
34. *Lancaster Guardian*, 3 May 1902, 5.
35. *Lancaster Guardian*, 10 May 1902, 5.
36. *The Showman*, 31 January 1902, 311.
37. *Halifax Evening Courier*, 4 February 1902.
38. *Derbyshire Times*, 18 January 1902, 2.
39. *Southport Guardian*, 3 September 1902.
40. Toulmin, Russell and Neal, 'The Mitchell and Kenyon Collection: Rewriting Film History'.
41. *The Showman*, 29 March 1901, 211.
42. This film has survived in the Mitchell and Kenyon Collection as M&K 637: *The Crowd Entering St George's Hall Bradford* (1901).
43. *Bradford Daily Argus*, 6 February 1901.
44. *The Showman*, 9 August 1901, 511.
45. *The Showman*, 4 October 1901, 58.
46. *The Showman*, 30 May 1902.
47. See Audrey Linkman, 'Fair Likeness: portrait photography at the fairground in 19th-century Britain', in Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (eds.), *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 71–84.
48. *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 11 April 1903, 1.
49. *Hull News*, 13 October 1900, 9.