
The world as object lesson: Cinema audiences, visual culture and the St. Louis world's fair, 1904

Tom Gunning

Evanescent monuments and dazzling world pictures: object lessons in modernity

As the study of early cinema broadens, it reveals itself less as a narrow, specialized field than as a dynamic site of cultural interaction. Cinema's first two decades provide a vantage point from which we can examine not only the earliest period of cinema, but also the current modern age that may be drawing to a close (and the possibly 'post-modern' future that awaits us) by allowing us to explore the experience of modernity when it was taking shape. The history of the beginning of cinema previously provided an origin and infancy for the development of the newest art form. Seeing early cinema as a site of complex cultural intersections makes the marking of this origin more problematic and the metaphor of biologic immaturity nearly untenable. As we move away from a naive teleology we must not only abandon conceiving of early cinema as the ur-form of later practices, but also avoid valorizing it as the climax and culmination of a series of inventions and cultural practices understood simply as stages in the invention of 'the movies'. New approaches to early cinema must place it carefully within the visual and

technological culture which marks the turn of the century and must resist situating cinema as the apex of that culture. Cinema emerges, not as a pinnacle, but as an occasionally marginal player upon a contested terrain.

Emmanuelle Toulet in her masterful study of the role cinema played in the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition has summed up film's status at the Exposition as 'both glorious and marginal'¹.

Its glory came from an unprecedented public recognition and a number of highly visual uses of cinema, such as the massive (70' x 53') screen of the Lumière Giant Cinématographe. But among the triumphs of technology and the elaborate attractions of the Fair, film remained a sideshow rather than the main event. As Toulet puts it, 'It was not felt in this

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context to be a revolutionary attraction, but formed part of a tradition of technical reproduction and of spectacles of illusion of which it seemed to be the industrial forerunner rather than the perfected replacement².

Initial research into The Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904 reveals that four years later and on another continent the role of cinema was, if anything, more marginal. Cinema had no official recognition or high profile presence at the St. Louis Fair. Its main role was that of a backstage technology for other attractions which offered mechanical illusions more vivid and sensational than the rather feeble experience offered by motion pictures alone. And yet a close examination of this fair (particularly in relation to the fair it sought to rival, The Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893) highlights the context in which cinema appeared, the celebration of modernity and technology through an emerging visual culture, both official and popular. The new forms of mechanical illusions so popular at the St. Louis Exposition also ultimately influenced the way that cinema was popularly launched – after the Fair – as an attraction in its own right.

The World's Fair provides one of the richest instances of the visual and technological culture that emerged in industrialized countries from the middle of the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Cinema moves within this culture less as its culmination than as a parasite, drawing upon both its forms and its themes but initially remaining relatively neglected, seeming like a pale shadow of richer, more vivid, forms. But as such it has a great deal to tell us about the visual practices which cinema sought to emulate and from which it emerged.

The World Fair of the nineteenth and twentieth century revealed its modernity through a seemingly paradoxical combination of grandeur and transience. The form of all the Universal Expositions was monumental and often explicitly recalled the image of an imperial city, as neo-classical architectural motifs expressed its universal ambitions in terms of world domination. Yet, at the same time, from the Crystal Palace (the ur-form of the modern exposition) of 1851 on, these grand structures were also transient, made to be constructed quickly and designed to be impermanent³. As Neil Harris has said of the White City of the Columbian Exposition:

Fairgoers had a sense of evanescence even during the height of the exposition. The dream metaphors so easily applied to the White City suggested not only its magical and illusionistic qualities, but also an awareness that it would all soon vanish, that its pomp and beauty were the things of just a day. Everyone knew that the fairgrounds would not be maintained, that Jackson Park would be returned to the South Park system with the exposition palaces taken down after the closing date⁴.

The creation of a disposable imperial city, expressing the power of man's dominance over the earth, but designed to be ultimately discarded, is more than an amusing oxymoron, however. The Universal Exhibition was intended as the showplace for a commodity culture based on a worldwide network of production, distribution and consumption which derived its impetus from novelty, a market driven by the desire for the new. This spectacle of an ever renewing and changing universal market place sketched both the form and content of the World Exposition. As Walter Benjamin observed:

The world exhibitions glorified the exchange values of commodities. They created a framework in which their use value receded into the background. They opened up a phantasmagoria in which people entered in order to be distracted⁵.

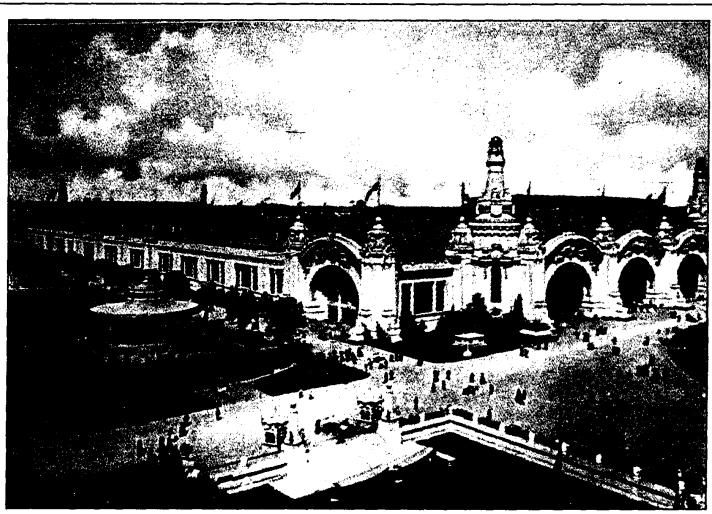
In this respect the very evanescence of the fair reflected the nature of the commodity it showcased, especially their transient novelty and the rapidity of their worldwide circulation. The World's Fair Exhibitions in which the ability to purchase goods was replaced by their purely optical consumption, imaged the commodity as spectacle⁶. As such it served as one of the great training grounds and laboratories for a new commodity-based visual culture. It raised the act of spectating to a civic duty and a technological art. These spectacles, designed to be both entertaining and educational, served several semiotic functions: they provided an image of the world wide power of capitalism; they transformed a market place into a symbolic landscape that not only celebrated but exemplified modernity; and they formed a spectacle in which commodity provided the entertainment, and the commodity form

of entertainment itself was raised to a new technical perfection. As Alan Trachtenberg has described the effect of the Columbian Exposition:

Visitors to the Fair found themselves as *spectators*, witnesses to an unanswerable performance which they had no hand in producing or maintaining. The fair was delivered to them, made available to them. And delivered, moreover, not as an actual place, a real city, but as a frank illusion, a picture of what a city, a real city, might look like. White City represented itself as a representation, an admitted sham⁷.

The World Exposition, then, served as a site where not only the products of modernity were displayed but the protocols of modern spectating were rehearsed within the context of a new consumer culture. In this site Capitalism, Industrialism and Imperialism stagemanaged a complex interaction among technology, commodity, spectacle and, ultimately, new forms of popular culture, all of which shaped the emergence of cinema.

The World Exposition was designed, then, not simply as a site of display but as a carefully laid out text, whose mode of organization served an educational and ideological function. This effort in planning and arrangement marked the cultural pretension of the Expositions which



Figs. 1a, 1b, 1c. The St. Louis World's Fair as an imperial city of new technology: 1a The Palace of Transportation, 1b The Palace of Electricity, and 1c The Palace of Machinery. From *Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (St. Louis: Official Photographic Co., 1904). [Courtesy of Special Collections, Deering Library, Northwestern University.]

sought not simply to gather the marvels of the world but to sort them into a schema which would demonstrate man's technological progress and the world wide dimensions of modern production. Such organization was already evident at the Crystal Palace where Prince Albert proposed dividing the displays into four categories: Raw Materials; Machinery and Mechanical Inventions; Manufactures; Sculpture and Plastic Arts Generally⁸. Most of the World Expositions followed a similar plan, by which visitors could trace the logic of civilization from the potential of raw natural material (including the display of colonial peoples, or the beauties of nature), through the mechanical means of technological transformation, to the exhibition of final products, accompanied by a display of the Fine Arts as the final form of cultural sublimation.

Planners of World Expositions explicitly designed the events as educational texts. The Exposition was most often compared to an encyclopaedia which not only gathered but also classified and organized the diverse knowledge of a culture. The Director of Exhibitions for the St. Louis Fair, Frederick J. V. Skiff described his Fair as:

an encyclopaedia of society ... a classified, compact, indexed compendium available for ready reference – of the achievements and ideas of society in all phases of its activity, extending to the most material as well as the most refined⁹.

But this was a peculiarly modern text, one embodied less in verbal signifiers than in visual ones, exemplifying a new conception of education which made use of things themselves rather than conventional signs. By the turn of the century the World Exposition served as the demonstration of the latest theory in education, the 'object lesson', an approach pioneered in schools and museums which depended less on language to convey knowledge than on pictures and, when possible, scrutinized actual objects for the lessons they contained¹⁰. George Brown Goode of the Smithsonian Institute, who arranged exhibits for a large number of World Expositions (beginning with the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition), was a strong advocate of the object lesson which he traced back to the Crystal Palace. Goode proclaimed the dictum, 'to see is to

know', and his theory of education valorized visual methods of conveying information:

The eye is used more and more, the ear less and less, and in the use of the eye, descriptive writing is set aside for pictures, and pictures in their turn are replaced by actual objects. In the schoolroom, the diagram, the blackboard and the object lesson unknown thirty years ago are universally employed¹¹.

For Goode, an Exposition should be 'an illustrated Encyclopaedia of Civilization'¹². The term 'object lesson' became the buzz word which justified the World Exposition as an educational experience. (The guide prepared by the Boston and Maine Railroad to lure visitors on their tour of the St. Louis Fair urged them not to miss 'This marvellous object lesson of Twentieth Century Progress'¹³). The object lesson's scientific pretensions could also cloak its ideological role. For instance, Director General Buchanan of the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition of 1901 (the largest American International Fair between the Chicago Exposition and the St. Louis Fair and the first after the United States fulfilled its imperial ambitions by obtaining colonial possessions) used the concept to explain its Philippine exhibition. 'This is the first and best opportunity we have had', he declared, 'to justify, by means of the most available object lesson we can produce, the acquisition of new territory'¹⁴. In this case the 'objects' included not only raw material and artifacts from the Philippines, but also native peoples.

The object lesson with its direct and visual evidence, seemed to short circuit the act of signification and to bring the things themselves before the spectating public. However, the discourse surrounding the expositions continued to describe the experience as a mediated one, organized as knowledge and demonstration, and experienced as a picture. Director Skiff of the St. Louis Fair described its effect as a 'living picture' (a term which, of course, was also applied to the nascent cinema, although with a somewhat different meaning). The grounds of the Expositions in the United States from Chicago through Buffalo to St. Louis were laid out not only as demonstrations of the relations between nature and technology, but with a strong concern for the unifying effects of the picturesque, with the axial boulevards providing predetermined view points and

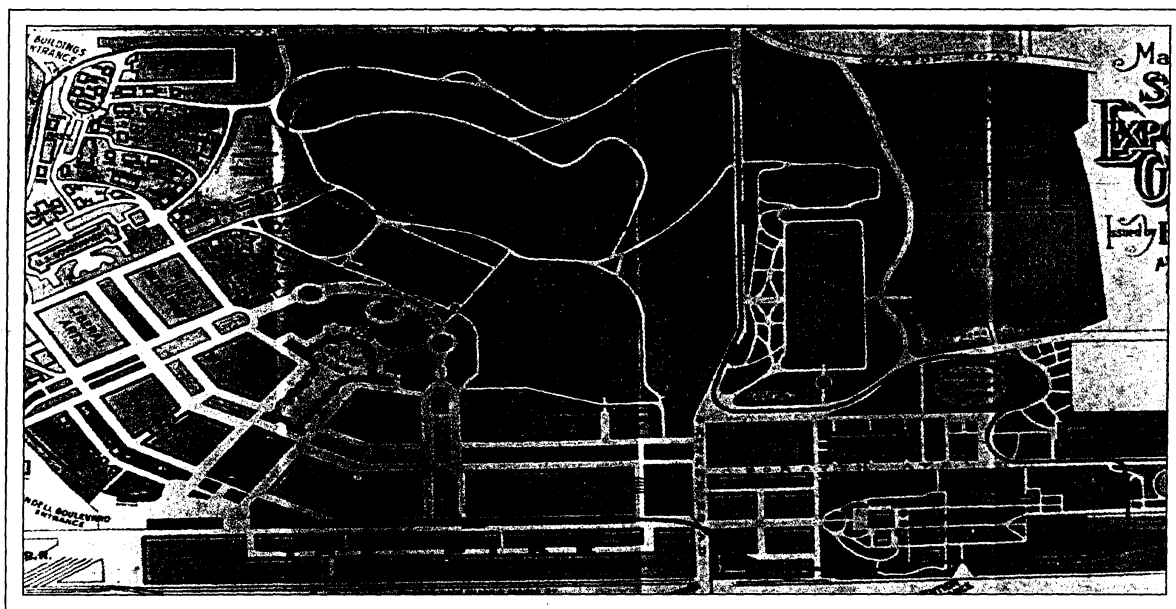


Fig. 2. A map of the St. Louis Fair provided by the Boston and Maine Railroad (1904).
[Courtesy of Special Collections, Deering Library, Northwestern University.]

compositional centres, visual effects underscored by reflecting pools and nocturnal electrical illumination. The Boston and Maine Railroad guide to the St. Louis Fair described it as a 'matchless picture'. The official proclamation of the St. Louis Exposition indicated that visual effects and liveliness could serve educational and ideological purposes when it announced, 'Life, colour, motion and demonstration [will be] the chief feature of all departments'¹⁵.

Of course, the total effect of a World Exposition rested on its attempt to produce a *world picture*, an *imago mundi* organized around the demands of commerce and the methods of technology. As the Exposition celebrated the triumphs of technology in the 'annihilation of space and time'¹⁶, the image it offered of the world contained within its bounded grounds sought to provide a miniature compendium of all the world had to offer, brought together at great expense and effort. One official history of the St. Louis Fair described it as the 'latest attempt to bring what is practically the whole world into an enclosure of 1240 acres'¹⁷. The Fair itself was a world in which space and time had been, if not annihilated, significantly reduced. The World's Fair was a microcosm whose miniaturization not only affirmed the new unity of the globe but also made possible its consumption as a single, though diverse,

spectacle. A trip around the fairgrounds was seen as the substitute for a trip around the world, a compressed and timesaving educational experience. As the Boston and Maine Railroad guide to the St. Louis Fair put it:

Taking it all altogether, the domestic and foreign exhibits combined represent the concrete expression of modern civilization and impress upon the eye and the mind of the beholder that which would require years of time and thousands of dollars to learn by personal travel¹⁸.

But if the compression and variety of the World Exposition was designed to educate and enrich the spectator, the modernity of this experience is also revealed by its excessive nature. While a profound and extensive understanding of the modern world and man's progress provided the purpose for a visit to the Fair, the initial effect (at least) often produced neither knowledge nor insight, but dazzlement and sensory overload. This response of complete astonishment in the face of the spectacle is vividly expressed by a postcard preserved from the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in which words give way to sheer play of phonemes:

Dear Mother, Oh. Oh. o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o !!!!!!!¹⁹

Observers more articulate (if no more expressive) describe similar experiences. Owen Wisner, the author of the novel *The Virginian*, described his entry into the Columbian Exposition: 'before I had walked for two minutes, a bewilderment at the gloriousness of everything seized me ... until my mind was dazzled to a standstill'²⁰. And a journalist for *Harpers Weekly* covering the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition held in Omaha in 1898 reported, 'I have seen men and women stand stupefied at the entrance of the Grand Court, blinded as they would have been by a flash of lighting'²¹. Occasionally this dazzlement was literal, caused by the bright white scheme of most American World Expositions from the White City on, a key aspect of the visual experience devised by Fair planners. But more often the dazzlement was the product not of a single visual stimulus but of their accumulation. The special Exposition Number of the magazine *The World's Work* covering the St. Louis Fair warned would-be visitors about the Fair's 'endless variety of things to see – these at first produce an impression of bewilderment'²². In fact, Dr. Charles Hughes a professor of neurology at Barnes Medical College in St. Louis urged his colleagues to prevent any patients diagnosed with nervous disorders from visiting the St. Louis Fair for fear its very massiveness might occasion a total collapse²³.

The most poignant account of the overwhelming effect of a World's fair comes from author Hamlin Garland's memoirs of bringing his aged parents from their midwest homestead to visit Chicago's White City. Garland described his mother's reaction as they watched the nightly spectacle of the electrical illumination of the fairgrounds:

Stunned by the majesty of the vision, my mother sat in her chair, visioning it all yet comprehending little of its meanings ... At last utterly overcome she leaned her head against my arm, closed her eyes and said, 'Take me home. I can't stand any more of it'. ... In truth they were surfeited with the alien, sick of the picturesque. Their ears suffered from the clamour of strange sounds as their eyes ached with the clash of unaccustomed color'²⁴.

The visual effect of the World Exposition, then, teeters between the rational and classifying knowledge of the object lesson and an experience of

bewilderment before the intensity of technology and cultural and sensual variety. Rather than visual mastery and understanding, the spectacle could produce an excessive experience which risked leaving no impression at all other than that of the limits of perception and no lesson other than Dorothy Gale's plaintive, 'There's no place like home'.

Dazzlement played an essential role in the visual attraction of the fair, even if its place was rarely explicitly theorized. Most descriptions limit this dazzlement to an initial experience on first beholding the Fair, a suitably awed entry which would then give way to the more rational object lessons of the exhibition. However, the somewhat uneasy relation between dazzlement and knowledge marks the complex experience of this exemplar of modern visuality, as it also marked the contemporary cinema of attractions²⁵. A journalist covering the St. Louis Fair described the exposition's educational method in terms of the modern experience of 'shock', proclaiming: 'The fair is a succession of mental shocks, cumulative and educational'²⁶. It is no wonder that doctors might advise their neurasthenic patients to avoid this rather jolting educational experience.

Why would shock and dazzlement play a central role in a supposedly educational experience? While the answers for this are undoubtedly multiple (e.g. the political uses of awesome spectacle in a society demanding new disciplines for its work force and building support for military involvement in the struggle for colonial possessions), it is possible to consider the World Exposition as the monumental form of a visual processing of modern life through the medium of spectacular attractions. While the experience of dazzlement came largely from the effect of the fairgrounds itself – their immensity, variety and intense visuality, it also served as the proper framework in which to experience the wonders of new technology which promised bewildering transformations in daily life.

Modern technology played an increasingly central role in World Expositions as they moved towards the twentieth century. Machinery, Electricity and Transportation exhibitions seem to elbow their way into the ideological and spatial centre of the symbolic geography of the fairgrounds. Electricity especially commanded an increasingly central position, gaining its own building at the Columbian Exposition, represented by the massive Electrical

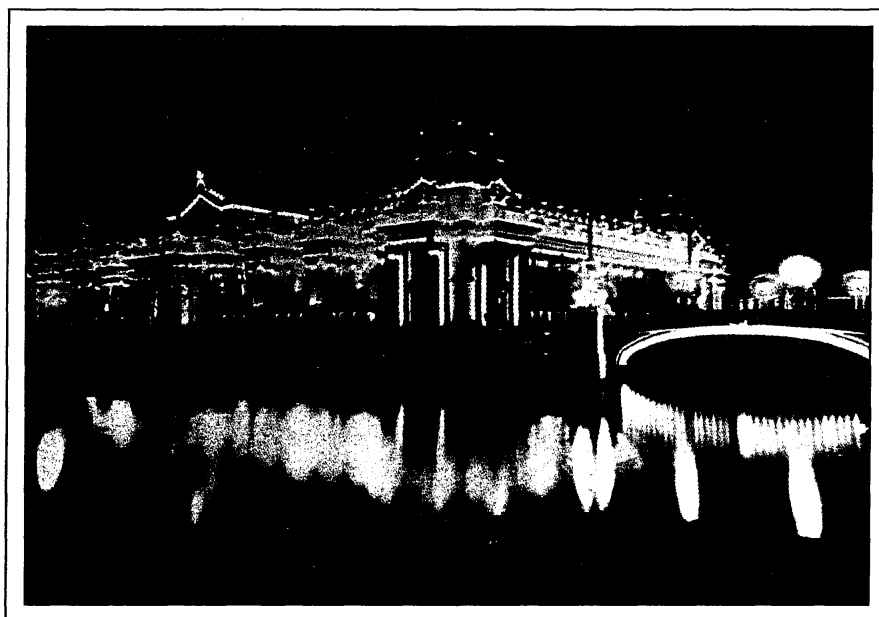


Fig. 3. The Palace of Electricity at night. From *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated* (St. Louis: Official Photographic Co., 1904).

[Courtesy of Special Collections, Deering Library, Northwestern University.]

Tower at the Buffalo Exposition (meant to 'suggest the triumph of man's achievement' according to the Fair's planners)²⁸, and occupying the true centre at the St. Louis Exposition. The *World's Work* read the symbolic layout of the St. Louis Fair in a manner that underlined the role of electricity: 'The larger meaning of the whole scheme is this: First Power and Electricity and Machinery. The machines that run and light the Fair mark a new era in the use of electricity. ... For the first time electricity is the dominant power. It may well turn out that the new age of Electricity will date from the Fair. The public will, for the first time, be made aware of the extent to which such a new era has already come'²⁸.

As had been true of World Fairs from The Chicago Exposition on, the illumination of the fairgrounds by electric light – the spectacle that produced Mrs. Garland's desire to return home – served as the principal demonstration of the power of the new energy. With its transfiguration of night, this scientific demonstration in the form of a spectacle overcame the order of nature. A history of the St. Louis Fair describes the deep audience absorption in the technological spectacle of the first official lighting of the fairgrounds:

In whispering silence the great throng watched the first faint glow of the lights in the various buildings, and as the splendour grew, animated expressions produced a humming noise which gave way to deafening cheers as the full

effect of the glorious spectacle was realized ... The myriads of electric lights, glimmering and twinkling from every nook and corner of the big World's Fair building, transformed the grounds into an enchanted city filled with fairy palaces of light and gold²⁹.

The new scientific era of electricity was presented as a strange and otherworldly spectacle, a fairyland attraction more than an object lesson. Or rather its effectiveness as a lesson was founded upon its uncanny power. The *World's Work* described the dazzling sensual effect of entering the electrical exhibit:

As you enter the Palace of Electricity you hear uncanny whirrings and snappings; you see electrical lights of hues and intensities that you never saw before; strange machines begin to glide or whirr or glow or click. The meaning of all these things is that electricity is put to more varied uses ... than ever before³⁰.

But if this description moves effortlessly from dazzlement to meaning, the cumulative effect of the display of the new uses of electricity could still deliver a shock as these magical technologies caused a revolution in the experience of space, time and human presence. The St. Louis Fair in particular abounded in technological inventions which could send messages instantaneously across distance. Among these were the 'telautograph' which 'through

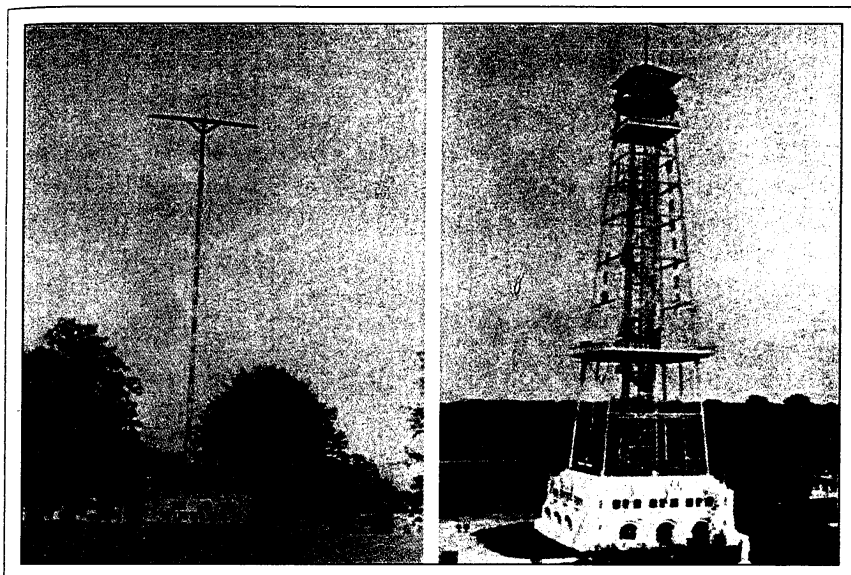


Fig. 4. The De Forest Wireless Telegraph Tower.
[From *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated*.]

the medium of but two wires connecting distant points, is used to transmit with exactness a message written at a sending point to a receiving station. The person writing the message writes with a stylus much like an ordinary pencil, and at the distant receiving station a second stylus accurately reproduces each stroke of the point in the hand of the sender³¹. The telegraphone, an early form of answering machine using wire recording, was capable of receiving messages 'during one's absence'³². These inventions not only maximized the ability of previous technologies to overcome distance, but could transport the traditional sign of one's presence, the signature, or could receive messages during one's absence. Technology was increasingly problematizing the nature of bodily presence and experience.

The Machinery and Transportation Exhibits at the St. Louis Fair also pictured a world in which distance was collapsing. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition presented the first large automobile display at an American Fair³³, and announced a grand competition in aeronautic achievement, although due to stiff regulations no aircraft was able to qualify for a prize³⁴. But the dominant technological marvel at St. Louis was certainly the De Forest Wireless Telegraph Tower. One history of the Fair claimed that as the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition was remembered for the introduction of the telephone and the Chicago Exposition had popularized the incandescent light bulb, the St. Louis Fair would be recalled for the De Forest Tower³⁵. The De

Forest Tower stood hundreds of feet high, a major structure of the Fair. It could transmit radio messages a distance of 1500 miles, with receiving stations in Kansas City and Springfield, Illinois.

The encroaching domain of popular amusements: exoticism, technology and virtual voyages

I paid a visit to the Fair, the wondrous sights to see;
I really felt bewildered, I confess
Such marvellous inventions of ingenuity
'Twas strange to see the different styles of dress.
On the Midway, the Midway, the Midway
Plaisance
Where the naughty girls from Algiers do the
Kouta Kouta dance,
Married men when with their wives give a
longing glance,
At the naughty doings on the Midway Plaisance.

— song by W.C. Robey, 1893 (my thanks to Richard Crangle)

The World Exposition, then, offered object lessons in technology through the medium of visual spectacle which presented the astounding transformations of modern life within a form designed to dazzle as well as instruct. But it is possible that the enduring legacy that the World Exposition left modern visual culture

lies precisely in its dazzling effects which may convey as much about the transformations of modern experience as the lessons they were supposed to communicate. Visual spectacle pervades the World Exposition but finds its purest demonstration in what was known as the Concessions Section, the commercial amusement areas of the Fair which progressively invaded American Expositions, looming as their dark shadow or evil twin. It is in this area that the Exposition's links to early cinema are the strongest.

The attitude of the American Expositions towards commercial amusements moved from exclusion through grudging inclusion and containment to a somewhat cautious embrace, charting a change in official culture's relation to popular entertainment as well as a technical transformation of popular culture itself. At the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 commercial amusements had been excluded. However, outside the perimeter of the fairgrounds an unregulated commercial 'Centennial City' had grown up down Elm Street, thronged with visual entertainments such as dioramas, displays of 'Wild Men of Borneo' and freak shows, as well as food stands. These flimsily constructed attractions drew crowds and caused concerns about fire, safety, crime, and propriety³⁶. The Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 decided to include a commercial entertainment section primarily in order to exert control over it. The Midway, originally designed as an area for the overflow of crowds waiting to get into the Fair, became a thoroughfare of commercial attractions leading away from the orderly space of the Exposition proper.

The Exposition's ambivalent attitude toward this form of popular, commercial entertainment can be seen through its marginal placement within the Fair's symbolic geography, a rectangular section leading perpendicularly away from the grounds proper. The Exposition's president, Harlow Higginbotham, justified the inclusion of commercial entertainments on the Midway Plaisance through their spatial positioning:

... located as it was, separate from the Exposition proper, so that those who were not disposed to visit the sights to be seen there did not have them forced upon them, the Plaisance was a feature from the absence of which the Exposition would have suffered greatly³⁷.

Like the eccentric placement of this area, Higginbotham's elaborate use of litotes expresses the literal and cultural distance the Exposition maintained from the commercial amusements. The orderly facades of the main exhibition buildings, the neo-classical palaces, the Grand Basin and the Court of Honor, which formed, as Neil Harris puts it 'the visible centre, the ordered heart, the source of control'³⁸ of the Fair occupied a carefully designed central area from which the Fair radiated outward. The Midway dangled like an appendage pointing toward the dispersal of unordered urban space along the risky pathways of pleasure. The actual attractions offered there often played on the disorientation that visual distortion offered, rather than the centered and orderly space of the main Exposition which guaranteed cultural solidity and enriched personal identity. In contrast the amusement areas of the Exposition's displayed a carnivalesque confusion of identity, as in this description of 'The Temple of Mirth', an attraction from the 'Pike', the St. Louis Exposition's amusement area: 'Mirrors that distort the human body confront the visitor, turn which way he will; looking one direction you seem to weigh 300 pounds, another less than 100; or a tall man is made short and a short man tall'³⁹.

But like the bodies of water included in nearly all American Expositions which mirrored an etherealized reflection of Fairground buildings, the Midway actually served a vital role in the Chicago Exposition's symbolic geography, providing a bit of shadow for the dazzling White City, a ballast for its idealism. Fair designer Daniel Burnham saw the trajectory from the central Court of Honor to the Midway as a journey from order to chaos⁴⁰. The Rand McNally Guide to the Columbian Exposition organized the fair according to three distinct architectural styles: the dignified neoclassicism of the buildings around the Grand Basin, the less formal architecture of the outlying buildings and state and foreign pavillions and finally the Midway Plaisance where 'no distinct order is followed, it being instead a most unusual collection of almost every type of architecture known to man - oriental villages, Chinese bazaars, tropical settlements, ice railways, the ponderous Ferris Wheel and reproductions of ancient cities. All these are combined to form the lighter and more fantastic side of the Fair'⁴¹.

The Midway Plaisance served not only as the

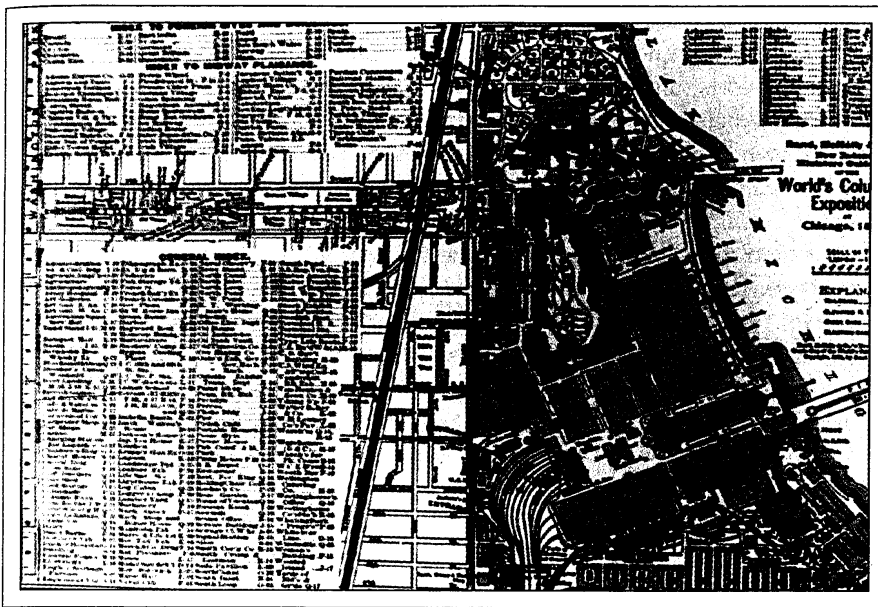


Fig. 5. The Rand McNally Guide to the Columbian Exposition.
[From *Grand Illusion: The World Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993).]

fantastic aspect of the fair, but as a literal counter-image to the civilization emblazoned in the monumental architecture of the official buildings. The strong presence of exotic oriental (Bedouins, Egyptians, Tunisians, Sudanese, Turks, Chinese, Japanese and Javanese) and 'primitive' cultures (American Indians, Dahomeans and South Sea Islanders) related the Midway to the non-white majority of the world, positioned on the outskirts of civilization. The *Chicago Tribune* described a trip along the Midway as an 'opportunity to descend the spiral of evolution', viewing these peoples from the racist perspective that historian Robert Rydell demonstrates was embodied by the Fair's popularization of Darwinian principles⁴². Similarly a character in a contemporary novel describing a trip to the Exposition fitted the Midway back into the object lesson classifications of the larger schema by claiming, 'Midway is just a representation of matter and the great White City is an emblem of Mind'⁴³.

But if the layout of the symbolic space of the Columbian exposition encouraged a contrast between the White City and the Midway, one could also find a number of similarities between the two areas. The Midway with its exotic international attractions could claim as justifiably as the White City to be a microcosm, an *imago mundi*. And while the Midway (and the other concession sections found in later American Expositions) certainly encouraged mocking racist attitudes in many visitors, it was also

possible to invert the implied value structure of the fairground and prefer the colour and cultural diversity of the Midway to the solemn and sterile ideal City Beautiful proposed by the White City. The young Jewish entrepreneur placed in charge of the Midway, Sol Bloom, indicated in his memoirs that this was his own experience, claiming that 'the spiritual intensity of the performance presented by a troupe of Bedouin acrobats exceeded the emotional power of a pre-Renaissance tapestry'⁴⁴. The Midway carried other object lessons for Bloom than the official one:

I came to realize that a tall skinny chap from Arabia with a talent for swallowing swords expressed a culture which to me was on a higher plane than the one demonstrated by a group of earnest Swiss peasants who passed their day making cheese and milk chocolate ... And I could not pretend to deny that God's handiwork seemed more clearly shown in the music of even a second rate band than in all the products of the world's mills and factories here on display⁴⁵.

On the other hand, the relation between the Midway and the White City might best be characterized as neither contrast nor identity, but as demystification, as the Midway with its overt commercialism and open courting of visual fascination tended to desubliminate the pretensions of the

official Exposition and bare its devices. On the Midway, The White City's capitalism and imperialism cloaked in universal idealism became a commercial carnivalesque Tower of Babel, where the powers of visual dazzle provided their own justification.

As if acknowledging the secret identity between the methods of official exhibits and the concession area, eleven years later at the St. Louis Fair the amusement centre, known as the Pike, had switched positions. As the *St. Louis World* noted, for

the first time 'a street of concessions becomes the earliest impression of the visitors'⁴⁶. The official attitude toward the amusements area still expressed reservations about its popularity. An official history of the Fair expressed this tentative acceptance of the Pike as an undeniable, if not entirely felicitous, reality: 'Indeed it must be admitted with however much regret that the side shows probably draw as many people as the main exhibit'⁴⁷.

Although the Pike still holds something of a liminal place within the Fair, its position parallel to the entrance seems to proclaim it as an alternative centre to the Exposition, another way to conceive its image of the world. The St. Louis Fair seemed determined to stress the Pike's similarities to the fair rather than its opposition.

And, indeed, the terms used to describe the Pike clearly reflect those used to describe World Expositions generally. The press agent for the Pike described it in terms that recall Goode's description of the Fair as object lesson: 'The Pike is a living colour page of the world, and pictures speak louder than words'⁴⁸. The *St. Louis World* declared in a headline 'To See The Pike Is to See the Entire World'⁴⁹, a sentiment seconded by the Boston and Maine Railroad Guide which claimed, 'a journey up and down the 'the Pike' practically amounts to a tour of the world'⁵⁰. Similarly *Jackson's Famous Photographs of the St. Louis Exposition and 'the Pike'* saw the Pike as the most international area of the Fair, describing it as 'the most cosmopolitan thoroughfare in the world. Denizens from all quarters of the globe come and go, attracting the visitor's attention by their quaint customs, peculiar speech and strange garb'⁵¹.

Once again this world picture consisted primarily of exotic native peoples on display, including attractions inhabited by natives of Persia, Ceylon, Burma, Hindustan, Japan, Palestine, Turkey; Spanish gypsies, Hairy Ainus from Japan, Patagonian Indians,

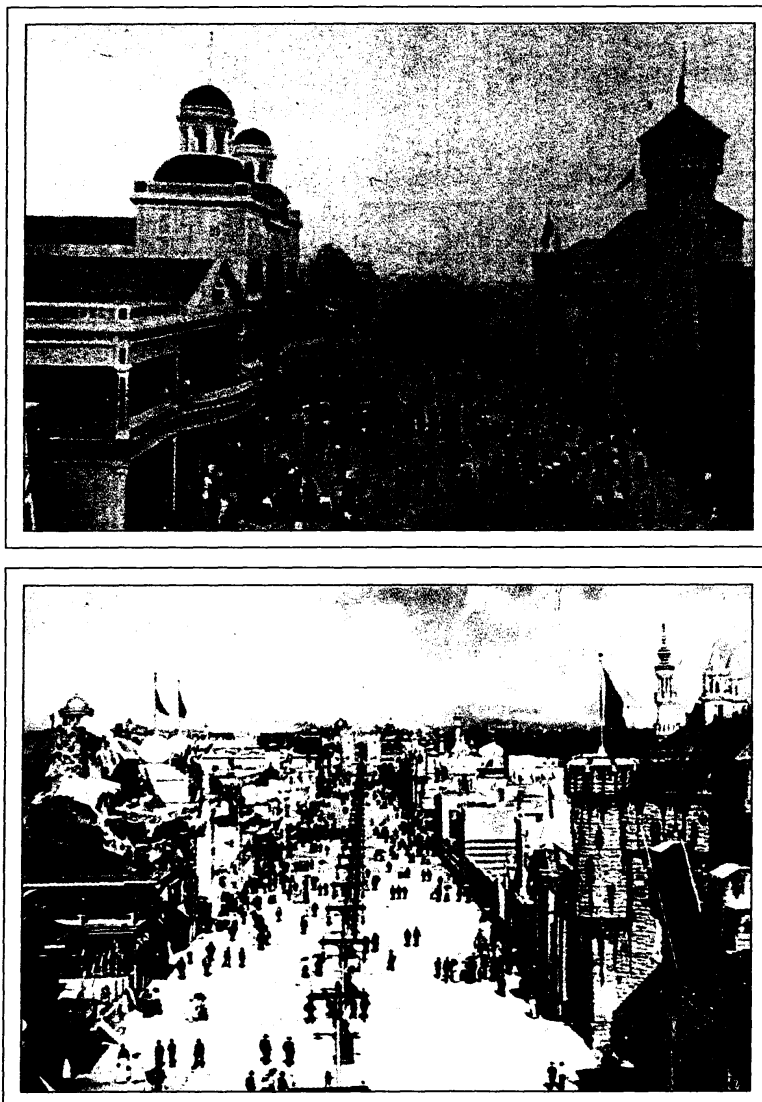


Fig. 6. Two views of 'the Pike'.
Fig. 6a (upper). Looking down the Pike, from *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated*. Fig. 6b (lower). The Pike, looking east, from *Louisiana Purchase Exposition*.

African pygmies, Kwakiutl and Zuni Native Americans (as well as visits by such great war chiefs as Geronimo, Chief Joseph and Quantah Parker). This assembly of non-western peoples was climaxed by the largest 'anthropological' exhibit, displaying the inhabitants of the United States recent colonial possession, the Philippines, including a variety of cultural groups: Visayans, Moros, Bagobos, Negritos and Igorots.

As the Pike's image of the world was not only more colourful and exotic than the non-commercial exhibits, it was also less unified and thrived on the unexpected juxtapositions that the bringing together of diverse attractions allowed. A guide to the Fair published by the Pennsylvania Railroad emphasized the contrasts along the Pike: 'The spectacular sights range from The Creation to The Hereafter. The Cliff-dwellers are neighbours to the Southsea Islanders and Old St. Louis to Cairo'⁵². A feature in the Boston and Maine guide entitled 'Odd Things on the Pike' listed in intentionally random order attractions to be found along the amusement thoroughfare, clearly delighting in their incongruity. These included:

A flood of fifty thousand gallons of water every minute ...
 Man who carves images on a single grain of rice ...
 Relics from Golden temple in Rangoon ...
 Zuni Indians dance the mask, flute and snake dance
 Eleven sections of arcaded bazaars of Stamboul ...
 Devil dancers – the strange medicine men of Burmah ...
 Gypsy lane of Barcelona with genuine Romany, ...
 Geishas dance sing and serve tea in native kiosk.
 World recreated in shell 150 feet in diameter; 115 feet high ...
 Transparent mirrors; you dissolve into a masterpiece ...
 Café Chantants the elixir of Parisian fever ...
 Burmese village with houses of straw and strange people.
 The Maine will be blown up in Havana harbour ...
 Church of Holy Sepulchre, size of original in

Jerusalem ...

Whole streets transplanted from Asakusa in tight Japan.

Flight over the ocean by airship ...

Discovery of the North Pole in twenty minutes...⁵³

While the tone of this list certainly situates the visitor as a privileged western voyeur of the world of 'strange' events and customs which are often displayed in a condescending and exploitative manner, nonetheless it is in the polyglot chaos of the Pike that a more diverse *imago mundi* was available.

The range of attractions along the Pike was enormous, and its sense of variety and contrast did not come exclusively from the display of exotic culture. In fact the Pike served as a compendium of popular culture as much as the Exposition proper served as an encyclopaedia of official culture. The Boston and Maine guide to the St. Louis Fair compared the variety of attractions offered along the Pike to a vaudeville show⁵⁴. Most of the exotic peoples were, in fact, performers, offering dances, acrobatic feats or demonstrations of craftsmanship for the curious crowds, and were joined by performers from Europe and the United States as well. But beyond its actual vaudeville component, the Pike offered a range of visual entertainments consisting of attractions which entrepreneurs felt could separate gawkers from their coins. This range of attractions directly corresponds to the subjects of early cinema.

Running down the list of Pike attractions, a historian of early cinema becomes overcome with *déjà vu*. The attractions directly parallel the genres of early film, both staged films and actualities. Clearly the exotic locales reproduced on the Pike court the same curiosity about foreign lands that early travel films do. These exhibits consisted not only of native performers and crafts, but also of recreations of their environment. The Pike included recreations of Philippine villages, the streets of Cairo, the Taj Mahal, Constantinople, an Irish village, the streets of Seville, The Holy City of Jerusalem, St. Louis in 1804, and an astonishingly realistic mock up of the Tyrolean Alps. Railway journeys, so important to the early travel genre, also abounded on the Pike, from the three mile long Scenic Railway, to a forty-five minute trip over the Trans-Siberian Railway. Historic and recent events that served as

the subjects of films were re-enacted as well, with the Galveston Flood recurring on the hour; major battles of the Boer War restaged in an arena with several of the original participants; the Battle of Santiago and the explosion of the Battleship Maine were enacted with a 22-foot model battleship in a huge tank at the Naval Exhibit; and a series of battles were presented in cycloramas in Battle Abbey (including Philippoteaux's famous circular panorama of Gettysburg).

A dramatic re-enactment of the dangers in the life of American firemen was staged in George C. Hale's spectacle 'A Midnight Fire in Greater New York'. Visual tricks were offered in the Temple of Mirth, with a labyrinth of distorting mirrors and transformation effects. The Tyrolean Alps even offered a recreation of Oberamergau Passion Play 'seen and approved by 1000s of ministers'⁵⁵. Of course, this extraordinary parallel in themes between early films and the Pike attractions does not indicate imitation on the part of the Fairway amusements, but the contrary. These were the range of visual amusements that early cinema sought to emulate and reproduce.

One of the contrasts between the Pike and the Chicago Midway about a decade before lies in the enormous increase in mechanical attractions which vied with the exotic exhibitions as the main attractions of the amusement section. The director of the St. Louis Fair stressed that the Pike amusements embodied the sort of technological progress that the main exhibits celebrated, claiming that 'advances in the theory of presenting such attractions made the scientific mechanical and spectacular features far superior to those of preceeding expositions'⁵⁶. Entertaining scientific attractions offered a common ground between the amusement sections and the Exposition proper. The placement of a scientific demonstration in one area or the other seems often arbitrary (at the Columbian Exposition, for instance, the Edison kinetoscope was slated to appear in the Electricity Building while Muybridge's zoopraxoscope demonstrating the laws of animal locomotion was placed on the Midway). Many of the Pike's attractions demonstrated scientific technology, such as the pavilion of baby incubators in which spectators could observe premature infants in their transparent warmers, 'a unique testimony of the power of modern science'⁵⁷.

Technology in these mechanical attractions

played a complex role similar to that of new technological devices appearing during these same decades in the magical theatre of illusions of Maskelyne or Méliès or in the fascination offered by the first projections of cinema⁵⁸. On the one hand they sought a vivid sensual intensity and verisimilitude that moved the attractions toward an illusion of reality. On the other hand, this effect of verisimilitude also displayed a triumph of technology. Such masterful illusions demonstrated an openly acknowledged stagecraft rather than seamlessly creating a naturalistic illusion aimed at an effect of realism. Thus mechanical attractions delivered to their spectators not simply a simulacrum of real events, but marvels of technology. The criteria of realism served more as a measure of the effectivity of the technology rather than simply as the final aim of the representation.

The elaborate technical effects of two attractions, The Galveston Flood and Hale's Midnight Fire, show how verisimilitude and a *tour de force* of 'scientific, mechanical and spectacular features' both supplied spectators with astonishment and satisfaction:

The Galveston Flood was, a living picture of remarkable effects obtained by the use of plastic art combined with mechanics and electricity. The immediate foreground was real and the still life was full size. Real grass, real trees, fences and houses appeared around the spectator. As the picture receded, objects gradually flattened out, yet with their angles so constructed that each retained its true perspective. They became flatter and flatter until they merged into silhouettes. In the view of Galveston the foreground was real water carried back into the picture, so that practically all the water lapping the beach and stretching away into the middle distance was real. A new invention kept the water in continual motion. The illusion was carried out all the way to the horizon so that the eye could follow a wave as it flowed from under the feet of the spectator far away into the picture, until its individuality was lost in the wide ocean distance⁵⁹.

Firefighting was something new under the guise of entertainment. A corps of wonderfully trained firemen who were almost circus performers in

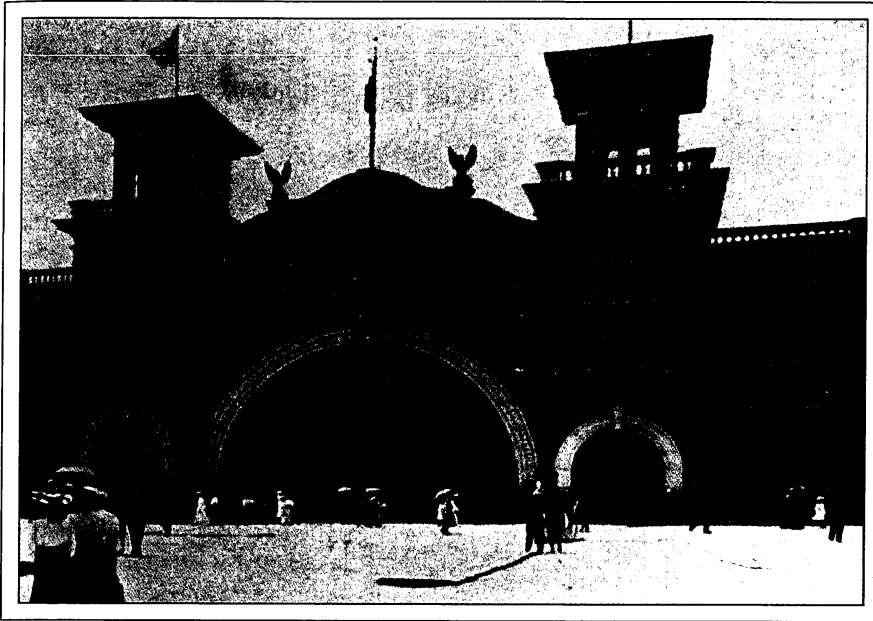


Fig. 7. The Galveston Flood, from *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated*.

agility and acrobatic skill kept the thrills working for nearly an hour. Seated in a vast auditorium the audience watched the alarm turned in to a modern fire station five hundred feet from the grandstand. The firemen were seen to leave their beds, slide down the brass poles, hitch the horses and respond by dashing through a moving panorama of the New York streets. Just in front of the audience a six storey block was ablaze. People appeared at the windows screaming for help. As the firemen rescued the unfortunates by aerial hooks, the whole scene was enveloped in a fiery glare. No fire was used but the effect was produced by electricity, steam, stained glass, celluloid, silk and other mechanical appliances. The effect was startling especially as the building collapsed after the victims were removed⁶⁰.

The 'special effects' of these mechanical illusions did more than reproduce reality. Like the spectacular electrical effects witnessed as visitors entered the Palace of Electricity, they demonstrated in a stunning manner the possibilities of the new technology. It is no wonder that projected motion pictures on a flat screen might seem a rather tepid attraction next to these extravaganzas, a poor man's illusion. At the same time such illusions undoubtedly used

projections and possibly some form of motion pictures as part of their backstage technology.

Perhaps the most seamless blending of technology and entertainment on the Pike came with its rich offering of technological 'virtual' voyages⁶¹. Some of these imaginary modes of world travel likely employed cinematic devices, but even those which were pre-cinematic in technology had a determinant influence on the way cinema became popularized as an attraction after the Fair. These virtual voyages also literalize the basic trope of the World Exposition itself, the world tour compressed in space and time and rendered effortless for the tourist, in which the role of tourist and spectator are truly collapsed.

The effortless spectator voyage had played a major role in the rise of visual entertainments earlier in the century (especially the Diorama and panorama which frequently portrayed distant tourist sites). It motivated not only the World Exposition as a whole, but also the recreation of foreign lands which thronged the Midway and the Pike. But the technological virtual spectator voyage forms a particular sub-genre of great consequence for early cinema. The origin of the spectator voyage comes as well from transformations within tourist travel itself. Wolfgang Schivelbusch describes the growing comfort of train travel in which the upholstered seat insulated the traveller from the discomforts of the journey, as the railroad itself had delivered them from the physi-

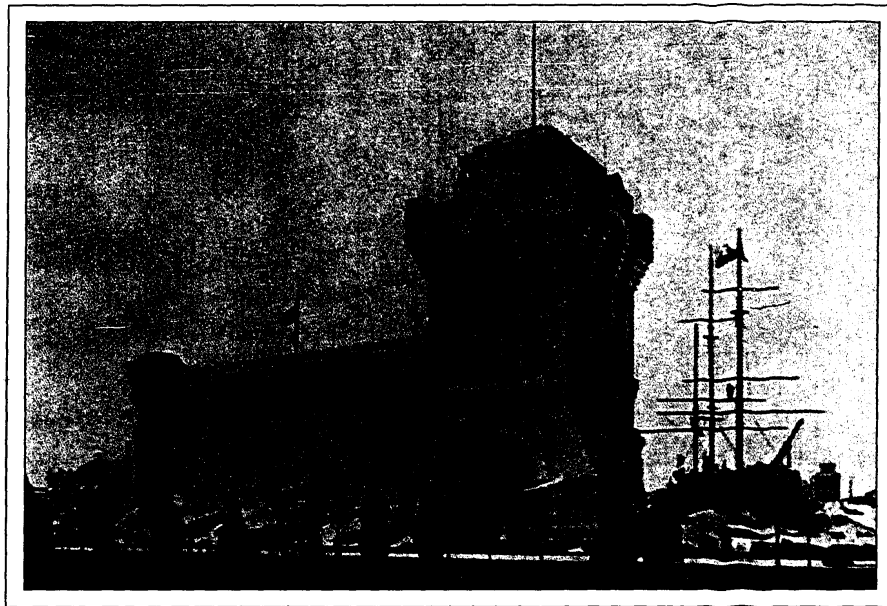


Fig. 8. New York to the North Pole from *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated*.

cal effort of travel⁶². Schivelbusch locates a new visual perception arising with train travel, 'panoramic perception' in which 'the traveller sees the objects, landscapes, etc. *through* the apparatus that moves him through the world'. The ideal of a 'frictionless'⁶³ voyage around the world had been pushed to the point of parody in 1873 by Jules Verne in his *Around the World in Eighty Days* whose impassive hero Phileas Fogg was described as 'not travelling, but only describing a circumference ... he was a solid body traversing an orbit around the terrestrial globe, according to the laws of rational mechanics'⁶⁴.

The virtual technological voyages offered along the Pike reproduced the Exposition's dominant trope of the collapse of space, time and distance. One attraction was called 'New York to the North Pole in Twenty Minutes' and publicity emphasized that the trip over the entire route of the Trans-Siberian railway took only forty-five minutes. But just as important as diminished space and time was the seduction of effortless travel, consumed primarily through the eyes. The movement through space required no effort on the part of the spectator who sat impassively transported, like Phileas Fogg, by the power of technology. The descriptions of these attractions stress repeatedly that the passive visitor is 'carried' or 'taken'. Even the announcements of the Edisona (a concession area holding hundreds of coin-operated vending machines and amusements)

hawked its travel attractions as effortless (though not gratuitous) visual voyages. Describing what most likely are peepshow devices of the kinetoscope or mutoscope sort, the Edisona's publicity invited visitors to:

... enter the world of travel, imagine yourself at the top of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, looking through the Golden Gate upon the broad expanse of water where the light of day reflects its departing rays of brilliant splendour upon the placid Pacific, until you are reminded that another coin will take you to the snow clad peaks of the Alps, the boulevards of fascinating Paris, or among the palm trees of the tropics⁶⁵.

The voyage attractions stressed magical transformations of landscape with their relatively short travel time as well as providing simulacra of new technological modes of travel (including ones not yet invented, introducing an utopian aspect to their travel illusions). 'New York to the North Pole' took place on an elaborate and detailed mock up of an Atlantic steamer (two hundred by fifty feet) which moved from panoramas of the teeming metropolis to arctic landscapes, with 'great fields of snow and ice and huge icebergs 100s of feet high'⁶⁶, accompanied by 'an electrical effect giving a startling illustration of the Northern Aurora'⁶⁷. 'Over and Under the Sea' provided 'a mechanical and electrical illusion which supported the sensation of a trip in a sub-

marine⁶⁸ to Paris with 'an aerial return via London, New York and Washington'⁶⁹ during which the 'visitor first entered an airship and seemingly sailed away' and later landed on the Eiffel Tower. 'This illusion was reported to 'have a strong suggestion of reality'⁷⁰, and may have involved some use of motion pictures (although other devices may be just as likely).

Although the St. Louis Fair might be considered the climax of these entertainments (which had remained in a rudimentary stage of development at the Chicago Exposition), they had been developing steadily in the eleven years between fairs. The Paris Exposition had probably served as their first great triumph. There 21 of the 33 major attractions involved some illusion of a voyage, including the Mareorama sea voyage so well described by Toulet, a Trans-Siberian panorama (which was most probably the same one exhibited on the Pike) and Grimoire-Sansom's ill-fated Cineorama which planned to use motion pictures to convey the illusion of a balloon voyage⁷¹. A number of such attractions also appeared at the smaller intermediary fairs such as the Scenic Railway at the 1898 Omaha Trans-Mississippi Exposition, or the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901, which included a voyage to the realms of Satan in 'Darkness and Dawn Underworld' and an attraction (which also seems to have been displayed at the Paris Exposition) which offered a Trip to the Moon. The extra-terrestrial nature of this last attraction prompted one journalist to comment, 'There you see, not satisfied with exhausting the earth [showmen] have already begun on the universe. Behold the world is a sucked orange'⁷².

In addition, between the two fairs the United States had experienced a rapid proliferation of new amusement parks located on the outskirts of large urban areas, such as Coney Island or Riverside Park near Chicago. As John F. Kasson has shown, the development of these parks was directly indebted to the popularity of the Midway at the Chicago Exposition⁷³. The new amusement parks were in many respects patterned on the Midway, both in their layout and in the attractions they offered, which had been either imported directly from Chicago or were modelled on its most popular offerings. Mechanical illusions such as The Trip to the Moon, the Galveston Flood, or Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea proliferated at these amusement centres, particularly

at Luna Park which opened in 1903, just before the St. Louis Exposition and at Dreamland which opened a year later. As Kasson demonstrates, these amusement parks both drew upon the World Expositions and inverted their values, as had the Midway. While amusement park architecture adopted the technological possibilities of visual spectacle premiered at the Chicago Exposition – such as the elaborate use of electric light⁷⁴ – it used them to its own ends. As Kasson puts it, contrasting Luna Park and the Chicago Exposition:

In its neoclassical formalism, the Exposition represented an architecture of responsibility; here, however, was an architecture of pleasure. The Columbian Exposition preached discipline; Luna Park invited release. Constructed out of the same impermanent plaster materials as the White City, Luna's buildings achieved monumentality without oppressiveness, grandeur without solemnity⁷⁵.

The rise of these amusement parks and their overtly technological attractions may have affected the change in attitude (and position within the fairground) of the concessions area at the St. Louis Fair.

As the journalist at the Pan-American Exposition quoted earlier noted, the technological virtual journey illusion, untrammelled by the confines of realistic representation or actual geography, could easily slide into fantastic voyages. A number of travel attractions on the Pike left the real world behind entirely and launched spectators into the realms of metaphysics. 'The Hereafter' offered a voyage in which, 'the visitor was taken through the underground domain of Satan and thence through Daphne's Grove to the Gates of Paradise'⁷⁶. 'Creation', one of the most popular attractions on the Pike, was even more ambitious in its metaphysical itinerary, taking visitors back through millenia. This attraction combined a boat ride in which time travel was experienced as another virtual voyage. This upstream trip against the flow of time deposited its passengers at the moment of creation itself, followed by a display of demiurgic power made palpable through a visual spectacle combining all the devices of visual transformation available in the contemporary technology of manipulated light and stage craft.



Fig. 9. Creation, from *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated*.

The visitor glided backwards through twenty centuries in a grotesque craft along a water canal encircling the dome for a distance of one thousand feet. A moving panorama of the centuries in plastic and real life was passed en route to the master mechanical denouement. At the first century the passengers left the boats and entered a temple of that period. The walls of the temple melted away and a feeling of vast void surrounded the Piker. It was chaos. The spectator was in the midst of the dome and completely enveloped in a cloud wrack. A loud voice uttered the words: 'The Lord made the heaven and earth in six days'. Intense darkness surrounded the waiting audience. The voice continued the story of creation. 'Let there be light' was obeyed as the soft glow of dawn pervaded the hollow dome. It increased until the glare of the day revealed the void of clouds about the spectators. The light faded into the evening of the sixth day. 'Let there be a firmament', proclaimed the voice. It appeared, separating from the waters. 'Let the dry land appear'. The limitless ocean rolled back revealing the land. Trees, flowers and shrubs gradually resolved themselves into the Garden of Eden. 'And the Lord made two great lights'. The sun and moon came forth making a day and night effect. 'Let the waters bring forth living creatures'. Fantastic shapes moved through the

waters while the birds were seen and heard overhead. Reptiles and beasts of long ago crept and walked through the forest. 'Let us make man after our image', said the voice. A spectral form of Adam seen approaching from the invisible reached the foreground in full light. Adam and Eve discovered one another and the story of the creation was complete⁷⁷.

The mode of representation here is syncretistic, seemingly using a wide series of means, ranging from projected images to full three-dimensional actors. Motion pictures may have played some role in these illusions, but only as one component in a carefully managed spectacle. 'Creation' outlasted the St. Louis Fair and became the central attraction of the last of the great Coney Island amusement parks, Dreamland, where its massive nude female flanked the entranceway to the park⁷⁸.

Coda: the world's exposition and the film spectator

The place of motion pictures at the St. Louis Exposition seems to have been resolutely secondary. Animated pictures were no longer sufficiently novel to be accorded attention as an important scientific innovation (if they ever truly had that status). Beyond their likely role as backstage devices for the more spectacular illusions, films were also used in the educational exhibits outside the Pike as illustrative material. The

reproduction of the Holy City of Jerusalem, for instance, included within Solomon's Temple 'dissolving views, moving picture and lectures illustrated the various customs of the Israelites'⁷⁹. The American Biograph and Mutoscope company produced several series of such illustrative films which were shown in at least two venues, public and private, at the St. Louis Fair.

First, Biograph films were shown daily in the United States Government Exhibits. The Department of the Navy supplemented their displays with film showings. The Department of the Interior showed a series of films of American Indians and of views of Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks⁸⁰. These films showed both Native American rituals (such as Kachina dances by Pueblo Indians from Walpi and Oraibi, Arizona, and Crow Indian dances on a Government reservation), Navaho women weaving baskets, and Native Americans engaging in a variety of sports (wrestling, basket ball, racing, tug of war). Scenes on reservations and at Government Indian Schools contrasted with the ritual dance films by showing 'well educated and civilized Indians'⁸¹ undertaking such tasks as performing a firedrill, taking classes in carpentry, and raking hay. These films of Native Americans conformed to the central ethnographic view of the Exposition, displaying the exotic while simultaneously celebrating the civilizing influence of White domination. The Interior Department's tourist views offered vicarious tours of the recently established National Parks in Yellowstone and Yosemite, including views of famous sights (e.g. Bridal Veil Falls and Artist's Point at Yosemite; Fountain Geyser, Old Faithful and the Mammoth Paint Pots at Yellowstone), and included films in colour (most likely tinted or stencil coloured)⁸². The United States Post Office Exhibition also used motion pictures to display contemporary mail handling techniques. The device used here seems to have been a mutoscope machine outfitted for several viewers:

... a half dozen or more biographs were placed in the Post-office Division, and fitted with several stereoscopic eye-pieces so that four or five persons might use one instrument at the same time. These were kept constantly running and being free to visitors were enthusiastically patronized. The motion pictures showed operations in every department of the postal

service, collecting, delivering, assorting, distributing and depositing⁸³.

Besides the Government sponsored films, Biograph motion pictures also displayed the achievements of private enterprise in some of the earliest film 'industrials'. The extraordinary series of Biograph films shot by Billy Bitzer in Westinghouse factories in Pennsylvania in April and May of 1904 were shown as part of the Westinghouse Exhibit in the Hall of Machinery⁸⁴. The auditorium in which these films were shown had a seating capacity of 350 and the three daily film shows were 'nearly always given to standing room only audiences'. The exterior of the theatre was described as resembling 'a fairy land, contrasting strangely with the cold commonplaces of the surrounding machinery exhibits'⁸⁵. An official history of the Fair described even these industrial films as virtual voyages:

The novelty of sitting in a comfortable seat and literally taking a stroll through the different Westinghouse plants and seeing them in full operation was one that will be remembered with pleasure as long as memory lasts with those who saw the highest development of the photographer's art⁸⁶.

There are undoubtedly other examples of films shown within exhibits. From sources not directly publicizing the Fair there is evidence that foreign motion picture showmen presented films either at the Fair or somewhere in St. Louis at the same time. Oskar Messter apparently showed examples of his talking films at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition⁸⁷, although I have not discovered in what context. The early travelling exhibitor from Quebec, the vicomte Henry d'Hauterives, indicated in his publicity for showings in Quebec in November, 1904, that he had 'arrived directly from St. Louis where he had spent twenty weeks at the Exposition'⁸⁸. I have not found him listed as a concessionaire, however. The famous Hale's Tours, the novel form of film exhibition which had an enormous impact on future film exhibition, is often claimed to have premiered at the St. Louis Fair, but my research does not indicate that it actually appeared at the Exposition.

Hale's Tours is worth discussing in some detail, since it clearly shows the strong relation early film shows maintained with the tradition of virtual

voyages so well displayed on the Pike. This novel attraction reveals early film's vital relation to the visual culture pioneered at the World's Fairs. To an important degree, Hale's Tours represents an attempt to bring these virtual voyages to a broader section of the population, making them geographically more accessible and economically more affordable. This attraction housed its audience in a screening room designed to resemble a railway car. Motion pictures shot from the front of trains and trolleys were projected at the front of this railway mock-up. Combined with a lecturer conductor and the noise of click-clacking wheels, the exhibition produced the sensation of train travel⁸⁹.

The relation of the Hale's Tours to the St. Louis Exposition is a vexed issue, much like the presence or absence of Edison's kinetoscope at the Columbian Exposition. No guide book or account of the Pike that I have read mentions a Hale's Tours attraction and it is not listed in the official list of 40 concessionaires⁹⁰. Although he concedes this lack of evidence, Raymond Fielding in his carefully researched pioneering article on Hale's Tours maintains that the attraction did premiere at the 1904 Fair, basing himself on Terry Ramsaye and on the childhood memories of two witnesses⁹¹. Part of the confusion may be due to the fact that the description Fielding gives of Hale's original patent (which involved a mobile train car open at the side running on a track through an underground tunnel on which projected images were shown) could well correspond to other Pike attractions, such as the Scenic Railway. Or memories recalled from childhood might confuse the elaborate moving panoramas of the Trans-Siberian Railway (which involved five different moving canvases at different distances from the observation car and running at different rates of speed)⁹² with projected motion pictures. Barring further evidence, I doubt that Hale's Tours premiered at the St. Louis Fair, at least under that name or in its later form.

However, the relation between Hale's Tours and the St. Louis Fair remains significant. The entrepreneur from whom it takes its name was the ex-fire-chief of Kansas City, George C. Hale whose exhibition of firefighting did provide one of the chief attractions on the Pike. Although the patent application for the attraction was filed in March 1904⁹³ (shortly before the opening of the St. Louis Fair), it

seems likely that his experience on the Pike where so many attractions offered virtual voyages must have convinced Hale of the viability of his motion picture attraction. The first Hale's Tours (other than the putative opening at the Fair) opened at the Electric Park amusement centre in Hale's native Kansas City in May of 1905⁹⁴. For the next three years Hale's Tours spread through the United States, opening a new venue for motion pictures. Besides providing an opportunity for many investors who later became prominent in the nickelodeon era, Hale's Tours liberated motion pictures from the vaudeville theatre, providing the first large-scale network of exhibition outlets which offered motion pictures as their main attraction. Hale's Tours served as the shock troops for the imminent nickelodeon invasion which transformed motion pictures from a mechanical invention whose novelty was fading (and an amusement whose status had become increasingly marginal) to the harbinger of a technical and social revolution in international show business and the creation of a mass audience.

Motion pictures conveying the experience of travel through a camera mounted on some means of transportation are as old as Promio's cinematographic gondola trip down the Venetian Grand Canal in 1896, and exhibition situations which imitated means of transportation certainly predate Hale's Tours. Yet the significance of this new form of cinematic entertainment as a successful commercial enterprise cannot be denied. Located initially in amusement parks, they undoubtedly provided a low-budget version of the elaborate virtual voyages offered at World Expositions and large scale amusement parks. Less overwhelming than these attractions and of a stature probably beneath the notice of such prestigious events as World Fairs, their nickel or dime admission was also less than the 50 cents charged for 'Creation'. Their initial popularity undoubtedly derived not only from the fact that they offered a substitute for expensive world tours, but also for the more elaborate mixed media technological illusions familiar from World Expositions and their publicity.

But the Hale's Tours also borrowed from these forms a newly-defined spectator accustomed to virtual illusions of travel. What Charles Musser calls the 'viewer-as-passenger' convention⁹⁵ drew its inspiration from a newly formulated modern visual culture

that had been exemplified by, and to a large degree created for, the World Expositions. This essay has attempted to outline the key aspects of this new visual culture: a new faith in the power of visual knowledge; a conception of the world itself as a consumable picture, imaged through the collapse of space and time; and an aggressive visual address aimed at dazzling the viewer with a new control over the gaze. The World Exposition embodied and proselytized this new visual culture, serving as a new form of visual presentation whose dialectic teetered between object lesson and sensual dazzlement, whose 'first goal' was (as Catholic journalist Maurice Talmeyr observed of the Paris Exposition) 'to attract, to hold'⁹⁶. The complex methods for attracting and holding attention formed the basis of a visual culture from which the cinema issued. After its initial run as a vaudeville novelty, it was in the form of Hale's Tours, that film emerged independently to wedge a first fragile beachhead in the competitive world of popular entertainments. Leaving this beachhead behind, the cinema then moved into the urban landscape, launching an invasion destined to radically transform modern culture.

The difference in price between a fairground attraction like 'Creation' and the Hale's Tours or the nickelodeon must also indicate a change in the economic status of the projected audience for each amusement. Clearly the movement of motion pictures out of the vaudeville houses and the extension of virtual voyages to a larger public reflects a broadening of the class address of the visual culture nurtured by the World Expositions⁹⁷. While the localities in which Expositions were given offered special days in which working class patrons could attend at reduced admissions, they met with mixed success⁹⁸. The admission prices for the World Expositions, their cultural pretensions and locations signalled them as middle or upper class events. As Alan Trachtenberg indicates about the Columbian Exposition, they were largely celebrations of:

... the victory of élites in business, politics and culture over dissident but divided voices of labour, farmers, immigrants, blacks and women. Elite culture installed itself as the official doctrine of the Court, claiming dominion over the 'low' confined to the outskirts of the Midway⁹⁹.

However, as we have seen, the exile of low culture had become problematic by 1904 and the carefully defined differences between low and high culture were in peril of confusion in the polyglot carnival of the Pike. The inner consanguinity of official exhibits and the Pike (which flowed beneath their still maintained spatial segregation) sprang from their common exemplification of a visual culture, offering an object lesson instructing viewers about new technology and the shrinking distances of exotic lands, paradoxically brought closer by the impulses of imperialism. As nineteenth century socialists had recognized a powerful lesson of internationalism running parallel with the Crystal Palace's celebration of capitalism¹⁰⁰, so the new visual popular culture found along the Pike offered both visions of racist imperialism and of a new multicultural world.

The World Expositions discovered more than technology and world wide markets; they also formulated new visual modes for understanding this new world. The growing accommodation of popular culture evident in the changing place accorded to the amusement concessions in World Expositions certainly charts a re-negotiation of American culture. Did the cultural élite who backed the Expositions simply discover a way to manage the fascination of the fairground attractions, or did a different view of pleasure and visual excitement begin to overwhelm the monuments of official culture? Undoubtedly elements of both transformations took place. Whether this new visual culture simply dazzled viewers with the blindingly white surfaces of evanescent monuments to élite culture or began to provide a new basis for international and cross class experience remains perhaps the most vital enigma the Expositions bequeathed to the new phenomenon of the movies. Need we point out that it is still unresolved and its history remains to be fully researched and written?*

Notes

This essay was originally delivered in a somewhat different form at the third Domitor Conference, 'Cinema Turns One Hundred' 13–18 June 1994 held at New York University and the Museum of Modern Art. I would like to thank the organizers of the conference and its participants for valuable discussions, with special thanks due to Andre Gau-

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1. Emmanuelle Toulet, 'Cinema at the Universal Exposition, Paris, 1900' *Persistence of Vision* No. 9, 1991, 10-36.
 2. *Ibid.*, 33.
 3. On the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 17-72. And for a different view, see Marshall Berman in *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1988), 235-248. Berman also stresses the transience of the Crystal Palace, 237.
 4. Neil Harris, 'Memory and the White City' in Harris, de Wit, Gilbert and Rydell, *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993), 3.
 5. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1985), 165.
 6. The commodity as spectacle forms a central theme of Richards' treatment of the Crystal Palace and its effect on Victorian commodity culture. See note 3.
 7. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 231.
 8. Richards, 32.
 9. David R. Francis, *The Universal Exposition of 1904* (St. Louis: St. Louis Purchase Exposition Co., 1913), 371.
 10. Simon J. Bronner, 'Object Lessons: The Work of Ethnological Museums and Collections', in Bronner, ed. *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1989), 217. Rosalind H. Williams also discusses the object lesson in a French context, in *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 58-59.
 11. Quoted in Bronner, 222.
 12. Quoted in Wim de Wit, 'Building an Illusion: The Design of the World Columbian Exposition' in Harris, de Wit, Gilbert and Rydell, *Grand Illusions*.
 13. St. Louis Exposition, 30 April to 1 December 1904 via Boston and Maine Railroad (Boston: Boston and Maine Railroad, 1904) 2.
 14. Quoted in Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 139.
 15. Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Statement Showing Receipts and Disbursements for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903) 42.
 16. H.B. Wendell, *In a Nutshell: 1000 Facts about the World's Fair* (St. Louis, Publication Office 1903), 6.
 17. J.W. Buel, ed. *Louisiana and the Fair: An Exposition of the World, its People and their Achievements* (St. Louis: World's Progress Publishing Co., 1904) Vol IV, 1401-1402.
 18. Boston and Maine Railroad, 5.
 19. Quoted in Rydell, 13.
 20. Quoted in Trachtenberg, 213.
 21. Quoted in Rydell, 107.
 22. *The World's Work* Vol VIII No. 4 Aug. 1904 Special Double Exposition Number, 5053.
 23. Rydell, 157.
 24. Hamlin Garland, *Son of the Middle Border*, (New York: Macmillan Co, 1923) 460.
 25. See my article 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and Avant-Garde' in Thomas Elsaesser, ed. *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56-62.
 26. Quoted in Rydell, p. 159. On the concept of shock in modern culture see also Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 135-160, and Walter Benjamin, *Baudelaire*, 113-120. I have discussed shock in relation to the cinema of attractions in 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In]credulous Spectator' *Art & Text* no. 34, Spring, 1989, 31-45.
 27. Quoted in Rydell, 1, 134.
 28. *World's Work*, 5057.
 29. Buel, Vol IV, 1392.
 30. *World's Work*, 5088.
 31. Buel, Vol X, p. 3349.
 32. *World's Work*, 5092.

33. Mark Bennett, ed., *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (St. Louis: Universal Exposition Pub. Co., 1905), 576.
34. Buel, Vol IX, 3179.
35. Bennett, 623.
36. On Philadelphia's 'Centennial City', see de Wit, 95 and Rydell, 34.
37. Quoted in James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 94.
38. Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 121.
39. *Jackson's Famous Photographs of the St. Louis Exposition and 'the Pike'*. (Chicago: Metropolitan Syndicate Press, 1904) (no page numbers).
40. Quoted in Gilbert, 88.
41. Quoted in Tractenberg, 213.
42. Quoted in Rydell, 65.
43. This passage from the novel *Sweet Clover* written by Clara Louisa Burnham, is quoted in Rydell, 67.
44. Quoted in Rydell, 62.
45. Quoted in Gilbert, 87.
46. Quoted in Rydell, 179.
47. Buel, Vol IV, 1388.
48. Thomas R. MacMechen quoted in Rydell, 178.
49. Quoted in Rydell, 179.
50. Boston and Maine Railroad, 31.
51. *Jackson's Famous Photographs* (no page numbers).
52. Pennsylvania Railroad to the World's Fair, St. Louis Mo. Descriptive notes, list of hotels, rates of fare, schedule of trains, and general information (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, printers, 1904), 24.
53. Boston and Maine Railroad, 31.
54. *Ibid.*, 6.
55. *Jackson's Famous Photographs* (no page numbers).
56. Francis, 594.
57. *Ibid.*, 597.
58. See, 'My "Primitive" Cinema - a Frame-up? or The Trick's on US' *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 2 Winter, 1989, 3-12., as well as 'Aesthetic of Astonishment'.
59. Francis, 600.
60. *Ibid.*, 600.
61. Anne Friedberg's discussion of the 'mobilized and virtual gaze' in her book *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) introduces an important context for the virtual voyage of the fairground and the emergence of cinema. See, especially, 15-38.
62. Schivelbusch, 123-124.
63. The concept of the urge towards a 'frictionless' environment in contemporary life has been developed by Rick Wojick in an unpublished seminar paper at Northwestern University.
64. Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988) trans. William Makepeace Towle, 52.
65. Bennett, 726.
66. *Jackson's Famous Photographs* (no page numbers).
67. Francis, 600.
68. *Ibid.*, 595.
69. *Jackson's Famous Photographs* (no page numbers).
70. Bennett, 721.
71. The best description of these attractions is provided by Toulet, 17-23. See also Williams, 73 A description with illustrations and diagrams of the panoramas from the 1900 Paris Exposition is given in Leonard de Vries, *Victorian Inventions* (London: John Murray, 1991), 124-25, reprinted from the Dutch magazine *De Natuur*.
72. Quoted in Rydell, p. 151. Although not mentioned by Toulet, Williams places the 'Trip to the Moon' attraction at the Paris Exposition, 75.
73. John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 17-28; 61-72. Kasson's slim volume has been a major inspiration for this essay. A detailed and insightful discussion of Riverside Park in relation to early cinema is given in Lauren Rabinovitz, 'Temptations of Pleasure: Nickelodeons, Amusement Parks, and the Sights of Female Sexuality' in *Camera Obscura* 23 May 1990, 71-90. I would also like to thank Prof. Rabinovitz for sharing with me her work and thoughts on the Chicago Columbian Exposition.
74. *Ibid.*, 65.
75. *Ibid.*, 63.
76. Bennett, 717.
77. Francis, 567.

78. Kasson, 82–85.
79. Francis, 601.
80. Francis, 560–561 lists film showings for the Navy and Interior Department. The Interior Department screenings are given in detail. In 1905 the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company offered some of the films shown at the Interior Departments Exhibition to showmen. See, Kemp Niver, *Biograph Bulletins* 1896–1908 (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1971) 145, which reproduces 'Biograph Bulletin no. 40, 21 January 1905 *American Indians and Yellowstone Park Views*'. Comparing the titles offered here with those listed in Francis, it would seem Biograph offered the public only a partial selection. I would like to thank Paul Spehr of the Library of Congress for calling my attention to both the Dept. of the Interior films and the Vestinghouse films at St. Louis.
81. Niver, 147.
82. Francis, 561.
83. Buel, Vol. IX, 3292.
84. Musser, 359–60.
85. Buel, Vol. IX, 3395.
86. *Ibid.*
87. Martin Loiperdinger informed me of Messter's presence at the St. Louis Fair.
88. Germaine Lacasse (avec la collaboration de Serge Duigou), *L'Histoiregraphie (Les debuts du spectacle cinématographique au Québec) Les Dossier de la Cinémaèque*, no. 15 (Montreal: Cinémaèque Québécoise, 1985), 38. I thank André Gaudreault and M. Lacasse for this reference.
89. Accounts of Hale's Tours can be found in Raymond Fielding, 'Hale's Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture' in John Fell, ed., *Film Before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 116–130 and in Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema* (New York: Scribners, 1990), 429–430.
90. See List of Concessionaires, Francis, 584.
91. Fielding, 121.
92. See De Vries, 124–25.
93. Fielding, 120.
94. Musser, 429. Lauren Rabinovitz offers an interesting discussion of the role of Hale's Tours at the Riverside amusement park, 79–82.
95. *Ibid.*, 429.
96. Quoted in Williams, 64. William Leach in *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993) provides a brilliant account of this new commercial culture of visual attraction.
97. Gregory Waller has sent me an ad appearing in the *Lexington [Kentucky] Leader* on 25 July 1906 which proclaims, in part:

We are to have a World's Fair. This is unexpected and Startling news, but we hope it will be none the less welcome ... Prof. Forrest D. High, of St. Louis, the world-famous lecturer and entertainer, will give an exhibition of 'World's Fair scenes, showing the world at a glance, moving pictures, with startling effects ... combining in a brilliant display the latest inventions in the use of the Stereopticon ...

ABSOLUTELY FREE OF COST TO YOU

Prof. High comes here as the representative of The Brown Shoe Co. of St. Louis ... in order to afford the people an evening of unmixed pleasure and entertainment.

REMEMBER BUSTER BROWN AND HIS DOG 'TIGE' will be shown in comic motion pictures.

A large canvas will be stretched across the front of McElhone & Maloney's store.

This announcement shows the way the motion pictures served to disseminate the visual culture and fascination of the Expositions to a wider public both economically and geographically. The offering of World's Fair films as part of an evening of 'unmixed pleasure and entertainment' programmed with the comic Edison series of *Buster Brown* films is typical of the initial reception of motion pictures. I thank Prof. Waller for this valuable reference.
98. Rydell chronicles the mixed results (and often dubious motives) of these attempts to make the Fairs accessible to working class patrons, from the Centennial Exhibition (32–33) to the Portland Lewis and Clark Centennial in 1907 (188–191). The Crystal Palace had also offered 'Shilling Days' of reduced admission prices to encourage working class attendance with uncertain results (Richards, 37).
99. Tractenberg, 231.
100. A more ambivalent view of the Crystal Palace than Richards condemnation of it as the seedbed of consumer capitalism is given by Marshall Berman in *All that Is Solid Melts into Air* He details Chernyshevsky's utopian reaction to the Crystal Palace on 243–245. Benjamin briefly discusses the influence of World Expositions on the International Workers movements of the nineteenth century, beginning with a delegation of French Workers to the Crystal Palace (Baudelaire, 166).