Visual Modernity: The Movies
Clarke & Doel 2005 in *Journal of Historical Geography*

“Early 20th people go to the movies: made needlessly complicated”
Clarke & Doel

• Moving pictures just a continuation of a technological trend in engineered spectacles for public entertainment
  – Panoramas, cycloramas, dioramas
  – Magic lanterns, the camera obscura

• **Ways of transforming the experience of time and space**

• **Important to the unfolding of the visual experience of modernity**
Precursor Technologies

- Stereoscopes
- Cyclorama
Cyclorama in Toronto

• The city hosted Prof. MacEvoy’s travelling cyclorama of Ireland
  – St Lawrence Hall Aug 1861, Music Hall Mar 1862
  – Fiddlers, singers, impersonators, comedians

• Fall 1887: cyclorama returns
  – Runs in Toronto with a ‘Battle of Sedan’ theme
  – Bring in audience via special trains from Guelph, Kitchener, Stratford
  – Special ‘ladies’ days’ and ‘people’s days’
Cyclorama: Battle of Sedan

• Begins Sep 1887
• Still going Sep 1888 (2898 admissions/day)
Cyclorama

- Becomes the Cyclorama & Toronto Museum
  - summer 1889 “The Spectre of Abbey Manor” a ghost mystery
  - Summer 1893: “Jerusalem on the day of the Crucifixion”
Cyclorama Building

- The Cyclorama & Toronto Museum
- Circular building at Front & York
- Had electric light
- Active 1887-1893
- By 1900, seized by the city for unpaid taxes
  - Rented out as a taxi garage, machinery showroom, parking structure
Eadweard Muybridge
Key Technical developments

• Eastman’s roll film, 1888
  – Allowed movies

• Movie projectors
  – allowed mass audiences
Thomas Edison

- Developed motion pictures in 1890s after viewing Eadweard Muybridge’s animations
- Edison’s Kinetoscope (1890s) was viewed like a peep-show
- 1896 bought a patent for movie projection: Vitascope
Lumiere Bros

• Invented the cinematographe (1895), a combo of
  – Portable movie camera
  – Film processing unit
  – Projector

• Enabled them to entertain audiences with films of commonplace things:
The arrival of a train 1895
Workers leaving the factory, 1895
The gardener takes a shower, 1895
Demolishing a wall
Feeding the kid lunch
Card players
Boat leaving harbour, 1895
Great Train Robbery, 1903

- First major movie drama
- Dramatic smoking gun
EDISON FILM
COPYRIGHTED 1903
THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

No. 201

© USPS 1998
"The Great Train Robbery" 1903

32 USA

© USPS 1998
A Marketing Breakthrough

• Pre 1907
  – Theatres bought their movies
  – Tended to play them continually

• 1907: innovation of renting movie prints
  – Enables chains of theatres to show the same new movies, simultaneously
  – Creates the movie star
Toronto at the Movies

• First Edison kinetoscopes in Steamship offices
  – Busy public places, where people had to wait
• Early theatres were small, crude
• Great growth of popular live theatres in 1890s-1910s
• 1920s: Gradual conversion of ‘live theatres’ into movie theatres
  – Some, like the Uptown Theatre were dual-purpose
Movie Theatres

• Themed as escapist places
  – Like the movies they showed

• Boasted high-tech comforts
  – Climate control
  – Sound systems
  – Orchestras and theatre organists
Movie Content

• Transported audiences on fantasy journeys
  – Over time
  – Over space
Siberia
Bartley Campbell's Soul-Stirring Drama of Love and Intrigue in Darkest Russia

with
ALMA RUBENS
EDMUND LOWE
Lou Tellegen
Lilyan Tashman
Tom Santschi
Helena D'Algy

Scenario by EVE UNSELL
VICTOR SCHERTZINGER
Production

Sunday Sept. 19th
GILDA GRAY

*ALOMA OF THE SOUTH SEAS.*

A MAURICE TOUREUR PRODUCTION

WITH PERCY MARIAH

WARNER BAXTER, JULIANNE JOHNSTON, ... WILLIAM POWELL

A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: U.S.A.

THIS SLIDE LEASED FROM FAMOUS PLAYERS LEONICORE.
ce n'est pas une lune