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# STILLNESS AND MOTION ON THE COFFEE TABLE

## Photochemical Motion Pictures in Gilded Age Periodicals

Amy Elizabeth Borden

*My research suggests that in addition to local practices, American film historians should continue to be attentive to mass experiences determined not only by location but, in this case, by 19<sup>th</sup> century periodical reading habits. I focus on the first four years of US public photochemical motion picture exhibition to consider the similarities I found in the use of still photographs to explain and introduce the machines and development processes used to introduce photochemical motion pictures to middle-class reading publics, effectively inviting readers to mentally animate the images themselves, imitating a screening apparatus. I argue that the use of photographs in US magazines, the result of changes in printing practices in the period following the Civil War, shows that in addition to documented exhibitor practices, published magazine accounts also readied potential audience members for the new experience they would encounter by emphasizing the synthesis of individual photographs to create motion pictures. This relationship demonstrates that American periodicals played a crucial role in the way photochemical motion pictures and still photographs were depicted in mass culture to visualize the hidden relationship between photograms once they are placed in motion.*

**KEYWORDS:** silent film, cinema of attractions, American 19<sup>th</sup> C. periodicals, photography, 19<sup>th</sup> C. visual culture

One of the challenges I see for historians of early cinema and late-nineteenth century popular culture is answering the question of how multiple publics considered or reacted to photochemical motion pictures during their late-nineteenth debut years. Much of the scholarship about U.S. gilded and progressive-age motion pictures and early cinema uses newspapers, local archives and historical societies, and the industry's growing trade press to document how members of different communities accessed motion pictures. For instance, the online research collection *Going to the Show* uses fire insurance maps and local newspaper advertisements layered with film historian Robert Allen's commentary and current satellite map recreations of North Carolina's 1896-1930 leisure past, to highlight the location of motion picture venues within civic, residential, and racial divisions.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, J.A. Lindstrom has documented how

inner-loop Chicago nickelodeons thrived in urban areas characterized by diversified residential and commercial land use.<sup>2</sup> Alongside Gregory Waller's scholarship about movie-going between 1906 and 1916 in Lexington, Kentucky, *Going to the Show* and Lindstrom's work are invaluable micro-histories that map motion picture exhibition as a part of community life for the diverse members of a particular region or urban environment.<sup>3</sup> In an effort to recreate an experience of movie exhibition, their use of maps and location create a spatial understanding of filmgoing to visualize how patrons potentially circulated in such spaces as well as what their expectations may have been for motion picture exhibition within the economic and spatial dynamics of a theater's neighborhood.

Examining local exhibition practices is invaluable to learn how motion pictures entered public life in the United States; however, in this essay I suggest that it remains important to ask and document how motion came to photochemical still images and how that was conveyed through a theorized and depicted mass reading experience shared across local film-going experiences. Moviegoing is affected by its local spaces and sites, but seeing photochemical images in mechanized, sequential motion was a common experience across all sites that featured projected and kinoscopic motion pictures. To consider the intricacies of filmgoing via the multiple experiences it engenders acknowledges that one of the hallmarks of modernity is the interdependency of local and mass culture. Rather than focus on the circulation of film patrons near and within exhibition sites I look to mass-market, middle-class periodicals published during the American Gilded Age (1865-1901) as a source from which to learn how the phenomena of *photochemical motion pictures* were publicly theorized for and introduced to middle-class readers during the years of their public debut. In doing so, we can understand how the figures and metaphors used to describe cultural products bridge technological shifts and embed values and expectations.

The aforementioned studies of film audiences and viewing patterns document how middle and educated-class viewership occurred in substantial numbers at the trailing end of the 1906-1908 nickelodeon boom or, in earlier isolated incidents, such as the massive national and cross-class popularity of George Méliès 1902 film *A Trip to the Moon*, which toured the US for years in established and touring motion picture exhibition sites. Both Allen and Russell Merritt have shown how middle-class amusement patrons were catered to during the early-twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> This often occurred in small-time vaudeville houses that featured ‘ornate theatres, uniformed attendants, and long programs,’ creating an ‘important link between the store-front shows of 1906 and the picture palaces of the late-teens.’<sup>5</sup> However, as I show in this article, the multifaceted experience of motion pictures as both technology and amusement was also part of middle-class life during the novelty and pre-nickelodeon eras via the magazines that literary historian Richard Ohmann argues were essential to the class identity of the United States’ ‘nascent professional-managerial middle class beginning in the 1890s.’<sup>6</sup> Because the publication of mass-circulation periodicals boomed in the United States in the decades following the Civil War—from 700 in 1865 to 3300 in 1885; an increase of nearly 400%—they provide a unique site in which to see how motion pictures were written about in a forum that reached a broad middle class united by reading habits rather than location.<sup>7</sup> By 1905, twenty general monthlies, including those I work with, had a total US circulation over 5.5 million.<sup>8</sup> Magazines addressed multiple publics across regional, urban, and rural differences to market products and bring news, opinions, and images to the men and women of, predominately, middle-class households throughout the United States. They were how, ‘just over a hundred years ago...cultural producers first organized millions of people around the country into audiences and group of consumers.’<sup>9</sup> In their growth, they reflected the industrial expansion of the nation and the advent of a robust middle class, one that would soon flock to the movies beginning in the late-1910s.

I surveyed a selection of late-nineteenth century American magazines that published essays or news articles between 1892—the year prior to the debut of Thomas Edison’s kinetoscope at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in May and 1905—the year film historians identify as the beginning of the U.S. nickelodeon boom. During the first five years of public photochemical motion picture exhibition in the United States, 1893-1898, years including the 1895-1897 novelty era characterized by Charles Musser, I found that a literate American public was introduced to the entertaining new experience and technology of photochemical motion pictures by drawing on readers’ knowledge of earlier photochemical processes and their products, including the new-found ability of mass market publications to publish photochemical images.<sup>10</sup> In the analysis that follows, I consider essays or news articles, published between 1894 and 1897—the year Kinetoscope debuts and including the novelty era, from four different periodicals: *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, *North American Review*, *Illustrated American*, and *Scientific American*.<sup>11</sup> By focusing on these three years, I highlight a period when periodicals are unique in their ability to publish photographic images prior to the 1897 introduction of halftone printing in daily newspaper.<sup>12</sup> As such, alongside the Kinetoscope, Mutoscope, and early-projected photochemical motion pictures, periodicals are one of the few mass cultural products that brought photographs to multiple reading publics. In their reliance on photographic and illustrated images of motion picture production processes—filming, post-production development, and exhibition space/projection—magazines functioned as a site in which readers were able to encounter images that not only illustrated the steps that occur to produce a finished film but that also reproduced photograms—film stills printed to display the edges of the image, recognizing the image’s medium—referred to during the era as “photographic impressions.”<sup>13</sup>

Film historians have increasingly argued that extra-filmic cultural materials may help us navigate the place of motion pictures in fin-de-siècle life.<sup>14</sup> The results of this call are seen in the careful, local historiography that accounts for much of contemporary scholarship about early cinema and nineteenth-century leisure entertainment. Thomas Elsaesser and André Gaudreault have each argued for a method of film history in which historians employ media archeology to understand how projected photochemical motion pictures were considered alongside then-concurrent cultural norms and series.<sup>15</sup> Gaudreault recasts his historicized cinema of attractions with the concept of kine-attractography in an example of “intermedial meshing” that names “the cultural practice animated pictures—kine-attractography” without evoking cinema as both institution and institutional category.<sup>16</sup> He argues that we should see the images projected during the era of kine-attractography (1890s-1910) as part of cultural series that included, rather than cinema, such image-based entertainments as shadow plays, magic lantern images, theatrical productions such as fairy plays, and photography.<sup>17</sup> Challenging Jean Mitry’s historicism, he argues: “it is not cinema’s ‘true nature’ that appeared in 1915; what changed in places where cinema was present, was that the dominant culture of the day made it. There is a difference between these two things, and it is an important difference.”<sup>18</sup> Gaudreault describes how this method acknowledges a “subsystem of a cultural paradigm” that has unique modes; in which “forms...and their overlapping creates a context in which kine-attractography attempted to carve out a space, often within these same cultural series.”<sup>19</sup> To historicize Gilded Age activities from a cinematic perspective ignores the fact that cinema had yet to culturally establish itself as its own series. Marta Braun illustrates the stakes of this difference, effectively utilizing Gaudreault’s concept to re-assert how Muybridge’s use of painted images and sequences constructed from multiple photographed events of similar movements were not, in fact, projected photographic images documenting a continuous action, but painted recreations often drawn from multiple

events. “The first image he published of a horse in motion was actually a photograph of a painting that has in turn been made from one of his negatives. The meshing of painting and photography passed almost unnoticed.”<sup>20</sup> Braun’s work reminds us that the markers of accuracy which may be part of cinematic, photographic series are different within kine-attractography, which did not rely on an unadulterated photographic continuity nor on photographic realism. It also highlights the importance of the examples I discuss here as among the first published, sequential, *photographic* images.

I also point to Braun’s work to show how series photography in mass circulation was series images, often illustrated to be published in mass periodicals prior to 1897 or themselves painted to accentuate the image’s features. Braun’s reminder that enmeshed painting and photography passed unnoticed points to how unique the sequential photographs published in American periodicals were even as they share cultural space with other image-based entertainments. Magazines exposed middle-class readers to photochemical motion pictures in ways that highlighted the synthesis of photograms—sometimes displayed as sequential, still, film-strip-like images—in an experience that would be augmented in the presentation of the new amusement in exhibition spaces, as silent film historian Tom Gunning has shown, in which the ‘incredulity’ recorded in accounts of early film screenings was crafted by exhibitors and showmen to evoke shock from the ‘unbelievable visual transformation’ of still images into motion pictures.<sup>21</sup> Considering the industrial and mechanical growth during the Gilded Age in the United States, it is not surprising that photochemical motion pictures were produced with articles and representations that broke down the detailed mechanical processes used to create the new product. Magazines often reproduced photograms from the Edison Film Company and American Mutoscope and Biograph films to illustrate their written descriptions of the mechanical and industrial processes involved in the production of motion pictures, which, in these cases,

were made for the kinetoscope and the Mutoscope. Photograms were reproduced as both an individual image taken from a motion picture; as a full-page photograph of multiple, vertical film ribbons that look like a photographic contact sheet; or, rarely, as a series of horizontal sequential images. (See the figures later in this essay.) Magazines were able to both describe and represent the photographic synthesis motion pictures depend on and to place that synthesis within the context of diverse means of representation, including engravings, color illustrations, and half-tone printed photographs aimed at representing moving images. More so than any other medium, the transformation from animated images to animated photography was captured in the magazines that made their way to middle-class coffee tables, including in Thomas and Alva Edison's New Jersey home.<sup>22</sup> Periodicals were a site where the tension between motion and stillness which defines motion pictures was materialized. Even as film historians have increasingly argued that extra-filmic cultural materials may help to navigate the place of motion pictures in fin-de-siècle European and gilded- and progressive-era American life, encounters with motion pictures within the dominant mass medium of these eras has been largely overlooked. Yet, it is within magazines that readers and potential middle-class motion picture viewers most often encountered illustrated and photographed images in their everyday lives.

The materials included in Alan Kattelle's study of the American home movie industry demonstrate how coverage of serial photography was also featured in science-focused magazines such as *Scientific American*, which suggested its viewers "paste" its published "drawings made from Muybridge's photographs...on a cardboard strip and place the strip in a zoetrope to see the full effect of the galloping horse."<sup>23</sup> Published in 1888, these images were not photographs, but illustrations that would have been similar to the magic lantern illustrations familiar to many middle class families. Photographic lantern slides were introduced in 1850 and magic lanterns were part of many middle-class homes in Europe and England by 1896.<sup>24</sup> Series photography



and magic lantern slides, concurrent cultural series that used sequential horizontal movement and glass plates, contained delays in sequences and often relied on painting over a photographic image in public performance. These were not flaws in the presentation, but a feature: series photography revealed the motions hidden by continuous movement. Although we may commonly see the flickering images that characterized early-film projection as a step in the development of perfected mechanical projection, accounts written at the time remind us how these published descriptions were not predicated on the expectation of a seamless visual synthesis. Instead, we should be mindful that the combination and recognition of single, photographic items joining together in a unique viewing experience was written about extensively, preparing middle-class viewers for their actual, flickering, viewing experience. The importance of the individual, photographic image is well established in the critical and theoretical discourses of film theory. These periodicals reveal how photochemical motion pictures were considered within the cultural series of still photography and print media and used the forms from those cultural series to familiarize readers to the new practices associated with projected photochemical motion pictures. Rather than simply suggesting that motion pictures are the next step in an evolution from projected still images, these articles describe in great detail how each photochemical motion picture is and is recognized as a series of still images. They incorporate the materiality of the medium, one of the hallmarks of kine-attractography, Gaudreault's reconception of the cinema of attractions. Periodicals help us to see not whether photography and photochemical motion pictures were seen as similar cultural; rather, periodicals allow us to see how photochemical motion pictures and photography were linked to underscore a visible process of synthesis, previewing practices that will be used in the public performance of projected motion pictures. [FIGURE 1 here]

One such instance was published in the 24 March 1894 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, which began regularly featuring halftone images by the late 1880s.<sup>25</sup> Photographed by W.K.L. Dickson, the entire Edison Company kinetoscope film of Fred Ott's sneeze was published to illustrate the physical experience of a human sneeze. Assisted by his sister Antonia, Dickson will publish pamphlets in later 1894 and 1895 publicizing his work perfecting pictures in motion on behalf of the Edison company. The article's author writes at length about the experience of sneezing, using Dickson's 'eighty-one prints' to aid his explanation. Even when attending to the range of facial expressions and their pantomime of the sounds of a sneeze, the writer emphasizes the 'series of photographs' which reveal the minute physiological changes in the experience.<sup>26</sup> As you can see from the image, numbers and letters mark its vertical and horizontal edges. Readers could then locate individual images within Dickson's contact sheet-like photograph as if on a map grid. The author describes the physiology of the sneeze by using these coordinates to locate and describe individual images in the series to identify the actions taking place in each individual 'picture.' The grid coordinates highlight the individual status of each image as a still photograph. The printed image has coordinates that translate the motion described to a kinetic mental puzzle to be brought to life. A reader must then follow the images down one column before adjusting her view to continue the viewing down the next and so on. This is partially why the grid markers are needed to orient the reader: a natural English-language left-to-right ordering of movement as we see in a Muybridge series, for instance, is thwarted by the format of Dickson's large contact sheet-like photograph which underscores the individual photographs within the series as well as the ability and, indeed, necessity of the reader/viewer to make the pictures move.

In June 1894, W.K.L. and Antonia Dickson publish a precursor to their 1895 pamphlet *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope and Kinetophone*, 'an essay in which they describe photograms as 'photographic impressions.'<sup>27</sup> Their nine-page 'Edison's Invention of the

Kineto-Phonograph,' introduces his kineto-phonograph to readers of *The Century* by documenting its mechanical process and describing the viewing situations it may engender. In each version, an emphasis on still photography and single images is present alongside explanations of the new machines and descriptions of the images they produce. For instance, in the 1895 pamphlet, Dickson's own trick photographs are liberally displayed, and the cover of the pamphlet features individually framed drawn images from popular kinetoscope views and Black Maria films. As a synecdoche of the complete film, each cover image highlights the inclusion of individual images on the bands of film used in the new machines, including *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (1895), *Annie Oakley* (1894), *Boxing Cats (Professor Welton's)* (1894).

As in the pamphlet, the essay includes the Dicksons's description of the mechanics of the kineto-phonograph and a history of its invention. Included alongside this description they describe how bands of kinetoscope film are composed of individual 'impressions' and include two full-page photographs of kinetoscope films printed as contact-like sheets, similar to Ott's sneeze published three months prior in *Harper's Weekly*. The essay also includes a photograph of a 'kinetoscopic band of two sections of *The Fencers*, showing minute gradations in pose printed vertically down the left-margin of one of its pages.'<sup>28</sup> In both the pamphlet and the article the Dicksons's introduce the kineto-phonograph via a step-by-step description of the process by which it takes and displays pictures in motion. Their long description of how the phono-kinetograph takes pictures using a single camera, differentiating it from the 'battery of cameras' Muybridge used, emphasizes a photographic process that captures photograms on a length of film. In the essay, negative photograms are referred to repeatedly and in multiple contexts as 'pictures' and 'impressions.' One such selection is as follows, which I include at length to highlight the various ways they call attention to the individual, negative photograms

that will be synthesized to create motion pictures, including numbering how many impressions are needed to create an ‘evening’s entertainment.’

a shutter opens rapidly and admits a beam of light, causing an image or phase in the movement of the subject. The film is then jerked forward...and held at rest while the shutter has again made it round, admitting another circle of light, and so on until forty-six impressions are taken a second, or, 2760 a minute. This speed yields 165,600 pictures in an hour, an amount amply sufficient for an evening’s entertainment, when unreel'd before the eye.<sup>29</sup>

The synthesis of photographic impressions is described for readers in the essay and displayed for them as they run their eyes down the article’s accompanying photographs of sequential photograms. Because the Dicksons’ write about projecting images created for kinetoscope viewing, the inclusion of the photograms both animates the mechanical process described to the reader and illustrates a translation between similar viewing technologies, uniting each around realistic, photographic reproduction. [FIGURE 2 near here]

In addition to *The Fencers*, the article includes two full-page Edison kinetoscope views printed as contact-like sheets, similar to the reproduction of Fred Ott’s sneeze in *Harper’s Weekly*. Printed as the entire fifth page of the essay as five vertical bands, the first film sheet is a segment attributed to *Hear Me Norma*, which was likely shown in kinetoscope parlors under the name *The Organ Grinder*.<sup>30</sup> Readers of the essay would have experienced an intriguing break in the text following the page where they would have seen the double-strip from *The Fencers* and read the detailed description of the projected viewing experience. At the end of that page a reader would read the phrase, ‘the inconceivable quickness of the photographic,’ turn the page and be faced with the photograms from *Hear Me Norma* (aka *The Organ Grinder*) before they were able to finish the sentence a page later with the phrase: ‘succession, and the exquisite synchronism of

the phonographic attachment, have removed the last trace of automatic action, and the illusion is complete.’<sup>31</sup> Whether this break was intentionally placed to introduce the photographic images into the reader’s page-turning pause, in asking the reader to unify the essay’s machine description and the viewing experience, functionally, it animates the reader/viewer as the animator of the on-page images. This is a quasi-motion picture viewing experience unique to periodicals.

Film archivist and historian Paul Spehr describes how the images included in the Dicksons’ pamphlet, expanded from this essay, were ‘intended as a souvenir...of the films that patrons could see—or had seen—on the kinetoscope. Illustrations from the films could be used to remember the experience or to show to others.’<sup>32</sup> Reading the full-page images left-to-right would yield an experience of non-progressive images that contradicts the Dicksons’s promise: ‘Projected against a screen, or viewed through a magnifying-glass [sic], the pictures are eminently lifelike [sic]’<sup>33</sup> Printing the images as part of a top-to-bottom sequence creates the appearance of continuous motion across the photographs. As opposed to solely engaging individual images in and of themselves, by publishing a double-strip, as with *The Fencers*, or a full-page photograph of five vertical bands without corresponding coordinates, the reader must actively engage the synthesis of photograms.

As in other articles that include images of sequential photograms, the term photographic impressions in the Dicksons’ essay underscores the role of the reproduced sequential and individual photographs interacting with a moving image machine to produce an evening’s entertainment. After a reader of *The Century* was introduced to the operations of the new Edison invention and invited by the placement of *The Fencers* to animate those images alongside the written instructions explaining how Edison’s machines animate photographs, they are provided with a full page of photograms that they may experience for themselves by moving their eyes

across the images. The magazine images provided a souvenir of sorts of reading about the process and participating in the animation of these kinetoscopic views as part of their reading experience rather than one commemorating a visit to a kinetoscope parlor and seeing these images in motion courtesy of the kinetoscope. In this example, then, magazine readers act as the machines they have just read about to create motion.

In these examples, the synthesis of individual images—named photographs—is emphasized, producing, in the words of W.K.L. and Antonia Dickson, ‘eminently lifelike’ representations.<sup>34</sup> Each of the following examples also emphasize the process by which individual impressions, negatives, or photographs become motion pictures despite the fact that individual photograms are elided in the viewing experience once the projection apparatus animates the film. An account of Edison’s Kinetoscope and Vitascope published in *North American Review* emphasizes also the ‘individual impressions’ taken on each length of motion picture film as does the 17 April 1897 issue of *Scientific American*, which includes detailed illustrations of the industrial practices used to produce projected motion pictures alongside reprinted photograms from American Mutoscope Company films.<sup>35</sup>

In its September 1896 issue, the literary periodical *North American Review* published ‘Stage Scenery and the Vitascope,’ a five-page article about the invention of Edison’s vitascope projector and its potential theatrical uses. Although the author, Lathrop, focuses on whether projected motion pictures may replace stage scenery in the theater, ‘heightening theatrical verisimilitude,’ the first half of the article addresses the mechanical process by which individual images are imprinted as ‘negatives’ also named ‘impressions’ on the ribbons of film projected by the Vitascope.

The lens has a shutter, which opens just long enough to admit one impression of the moving object; then closes, while the ribbon passes on for the space of perhaps a quarter of an inch

and opens again to receive another impression. Every one of the impressions thus received becomes a perfect and sharply outlined photographic negative, stamped on the ribbon in a small fraction of a second... In one minute about 3,000 of these negatives are made. In the kinetoscope this ribbon afterward, for the purpose of bringing together in the spectator's eye the blended images of all the negatives, [creates] for him the total impression of a moving form...

Lathrop continues by describing the film ribbon's path in the Vitascope, concluding, 'the light from this carbon burner blazes fiercely through the translucent ribbon, and projects the images on the negatives there, blended, to a distant screen, with great clearness, for the benefit of the audience.'<sup>36</sup> The use of 'blended' to name what happens to the photogram once it's placed within the Vitascope and projected to an audience suggests that the motion which operates as the major attraction of motion pictures was also registered as an active synthesis of still images to create the 'total impression of a moving form.'<sup>37</sup> Lathrop's description of the individual impressions printed on the film ribbon coupled with their projection as blended, single images recall the description of 'photographic impressions' and the 'inconceivable quickness of the photographic succession' found in the Dicksons' essay in *Century*.<sup>38</sup>

After seeing the connection between exhibition and production spaces depicted on the cover of the 17 April 1897 issue of *Scientific American*, a reader turning to cover essay, 'The Art of Moving Photographs,' found a narrative description of the processes illustrated on the cover that emphasizes the individual images found on the exposed gelatine-celluloid film. A description of the precise path undeveloped film takes through the Mutograph camera continues for some time: '160 feet of film has streamed past the lens, received its one thousand impressions and been wound with its precious record upon its receiving spool.'<sup>39</sup> This reference to 'individual impressions' echoes Lathrop's description of individual 'impressions' found in *North*

*American Review*, an *Illustrated American* reference to ‘40 to 100 photographs’ on a single filmstrip, and the Dickson’s descriptions of ‘photographic impressions’ and ‘photographic succession.’<sup>40</sup> In this final example, a series of photograms is published alongside a composite illustration of a viewing and development space that also accompanies the article’s descriptions of the individual images placed in motion in the projection apparatus. Through the depiction of the Mutoscope in this composite illustration, the reader is provided the chance to imaginatively step into the projection and development space to mimic the projection apparatus depicted on the cover and alluded to in the article. The potential for movement suggested in the photograms is made into movement once the reader places himself into the position of the presented machines. As in the *Century* article, the reader is invited into the mechanized processes on which motion pictures depend. Readers are offered a way to engage this process in a way that repeatedly emphasizes the presence of still images due to the depictions of photograms and the conflated industrial and exhibition spaces presented.

The same page features an engraved illustration of the ‘Drying and Retouching Room’ with a “Mutoscope shown in the foreground.” In this image, we see rows of women bent over reels of film and working with individual image cards for the Mutoscope. One woman appears to be inspecting the images while two other women and a man use a Mutoscope to view moving pictures in the foreground of the engraving. As in the cover illustration, this engraving bypasses a distinct space for the public viewing experience—both for the solitary Mutoscope viewer and the multiple Biograph viewers in a theatrical venue – for a composite space where both the production and viewing of images occurs. The composite viewing and development space presented in the article and on the cover contributes to the transformation of these small photographs into photograms. Running your eye quickly over the images allows a reader to recreate the movement of the film with one’s own eyes.



Finally, returning to the Dicksons, their narrative of the invention process and description of its use of photographic impressions is directly reflected in the way many writers wrote about photochemical motion pictures. Subsequently, this affects how a wide range of readers were introduced to the new experience and concept of projected photochemical motion pictures. Often relegated to footnotes, their writing, in addition to his inventions, are invaluable to the documentation of kino-attractography. The fact that multiple authors writing for different middle-class periodicals use blended or blurred to describe the process by which motion pictures are animated points to the idea that the synthesis of still images to create what one such writer, Lathrop, describes as a ‘total impression of a moving form’ is one of the attractions these new amusements provided.<sup>41</sup> More so, it demonstrates how the material composition of the medium was named, described, and emphasized for potential viewers. This effectively visualizes the central place of a photographic cultural series within motion pictures during this era and starkly illustrates how the transition between individual photographs and motion pictures was represented for American middle-class periodical readers. In doing so, a photographic realism is valued among the originary narratives of cinema’s self-explanations.

Both three-dimensional and two-dimensional projected images were a familiar experience for late-nineteenth century audiences, so, building from the research above, what was it that motion pictures provided in this era?<sup>42</sup> Amusement, spectacle, and novelty, certainly, but once we consider how motion pictures were written about and illustrated in popular magazines, we begin to see how motion pictures also visualize a process of synthesis. Gunning suggests, ‘one needs to feel the force of the phrase “motion pictures” as an oxymoron.’<sup>43</sup> Through the synthesis offered by the interaction between readers and photograms this oxymoron establishes how the novelty of motion pictures was represented for the middle class in the magazines found on their coffee tables.



## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Going to the Show explains its work as “an experiment in re-locating the experience of cinema, of resituating movies and moviegoing within a few of the hundreds of thousands of places in tens of thousands [of] communities where people went to the show.” Going to the Show: Mapping Moviegoing in North Carolina, <http://gtts.oasis.unc.edu>.

<sup>2</sup> Lindstrom, 217-223.

<sup>3</sup> Waller, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, ‘Motion Picture Exhibition,’ 2-15; Merrit, 83-102.

<sup>5</sup> Allen, ‘Motion Picture Exhibition,’ 13.

<sup>6</sup> Ohmann, ‘Selling,’ 220.

<sup>7</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth*, 2; also see, Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ohmann, ‘Knowing/Creating Wants,’ 230.

<sup>10</sup> Musser, *Beyond*, 57-103. The U.S. film history, the novelty era marks the public debut of projected photochemical motion pictures in 1895 in Paris, followed by the April 1896 show with Edison’s Vitagraph at Koster and Bial’s in New York, including the opening of the first kinetoscope parlor in New York in April 1894. This era is marked by the proliferation of machines designed to project images until the nascent US industry settles into a manufacturing and licensing rivalry between the Edison Manufacturing Company and the American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., a breakaway concern founded with WKL Dickson after he leaves the Edison company in 1895.

<sup>11</sup> Changes in magazine production and distribution increased their potential to reach a mass readership, while lowering subscription and issue prices solidified the availability of magazines to a wide public of middle-class readers. The less expensive popular monthly *Illustrated American* had a circulation of 40,000 and *Scientific American* had a monthly circulation in 1897 of between 50,000 and 75,000. Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 58. *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, previously *Scribner's Monthly*, the most popular and widely influential U.S. periodical of the nineteenth century, had a circulation of more than 100,000. Robbins, 'Scribner's', 369. *North American Review* had both 'an enormous circulation' of 76,000 in for a literary magazine in 1897. Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth*, 2. Finally, rivaling *North American Review* for literary influence, the more widely popular *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* had a circulation of 200,000 at its height in the 1890s. Ibid; Chielens, 289.

<sup>12</sup> In 1897 the *New York Tribune* and the *Chicago Tribune* both regularly began featuring half-tone representations. See Harris, 'Iconography an Intellectual History,' 314; Kobre, *Development of American Journalism*, 374; Lee, *The Daily Newspaper*, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Dickson and Dickson, 'Edison's Invention,' 210.

<sup>14</sup> See Bottomore 'A Cartoon History,' 16; Fuller-Seeley and Patamianos, 'Researching and Writing,' 2008; Allen, 'Getting to Going,' 266-267.

<sup>15</sup> See Elsaesser, 'The New Film History,' 75-117; Gaudreault, 'Film and Attraction,' 9-31.

<sup>16</sup> Gaudreault 'Film and Attraction,' 68, 69.

<sup>17</sup> Gaudreault 'Film and Attraction,' 64

<sup>18</sup> Gaudreault, 'Film and Attraction,' 19.

<sup>19</sup> He uses cultural series rather than cultural practice because the latter “supposes that the scholar has divided the object of study up and taken on the task of constructing, by him or herself, story events, factual events, and cultural series, whose ties to each other he or she undertakes to explain.” Gaudreault, ‘Film and Attraction,’ 65.

<sup>20</sup> Braun, 9. Also see Braun, 198-207.

<sup>21</sup> Gunning, ‘An Aesthetics of Astonishment,’ 119.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas A. Edison Papers. Van Ness to TAE, Nov.1881 [D8111N; TAEM 57:473].

<sup>23</sup> Kattalle, 26. Even in this study the published images are referred to as photographs, yet the technology to print them as photographs did not yet exist.

<sup>24</sup> Katalle, 52-54. Although home movie equipment was marketed in European and Britain during this era, the first four such machines were marketed in Britain in the 1890s, none of these machines were marketed in the U.S.

<sup>25</sup> Harris, ‘Iconography an Intellectual History,’ 313.

<sup>26</sup> Barnet Phillips, ‘The Record of a Sneeze,’ *Harper’s Weekly* (24 March 1894): 280.

<sup>27</sup> Dickson and Dickson, ‘Edison’s Invention,’ 210.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 207 & 210.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>30</sup> A note on the identification of this film: Charles Musser does not include an entry for *Hear Me Norma* in his filmography of Edison motion pictures. However, he does include an annotation for *The Organ Grinder*, including references to the Dicksons’ article in *Century* and includes a film still that shows the same image found in the photograms published in *Century* and labeled *Hear*

*Me Norma*. He cites the length of the film as 50 feet and writes that W.K.L. Dickson produced it for Edison's laboratory by May 1894. *Edison Motion Pictures*, 98, entry 34.

<sup>31</sup> Dickson and Dickson, 'Edison's Invention,' 210, 212.

<sup>32</sup> Spehr, *The Man Who*, 394.

<sup>33</sup> Dickson and Dickson, 'Edison's Invention,' 210.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lathrop, 'Vitascope,' 377.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>38</sup> Dickson and Dickson, 'Edison's Invention,' 207, 210.

<sup>39</sup> *Scientific American*, 249.

<sup>40</sup> See Lathrop, 378; *Illustrated American* 735; and Dickson and Dickson, 'Edison's Invention,' 210.

<sup>41</sup> Lathrop, 'Vitascope,' 377.

<sup>42</sup> Musser, 'Emergence,' 15-43; Gosser, 'Kircher,' 972-980; Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, 120-126.

<sup>43</sup> Gunning, 'Modernity and Cinema,' 300.

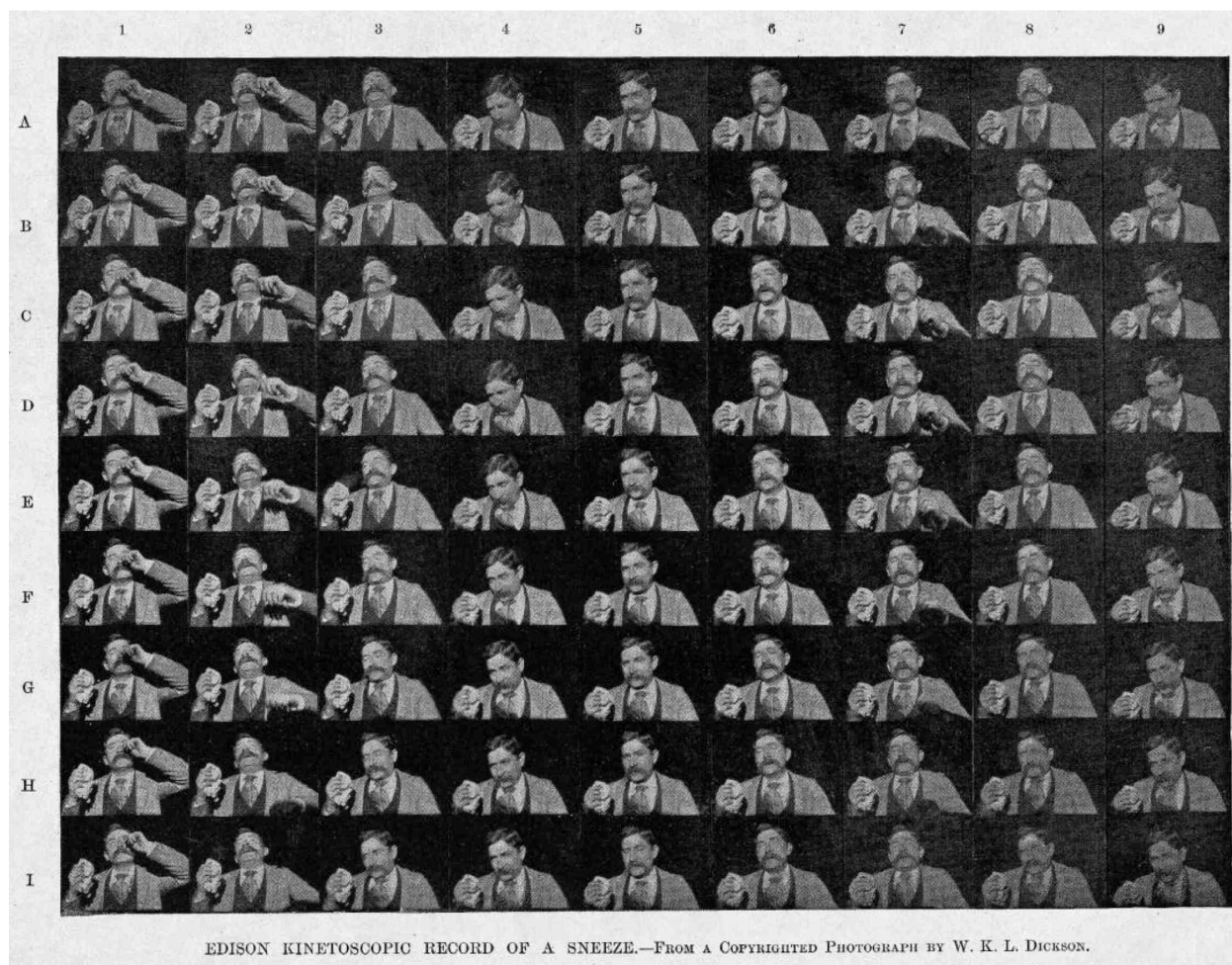
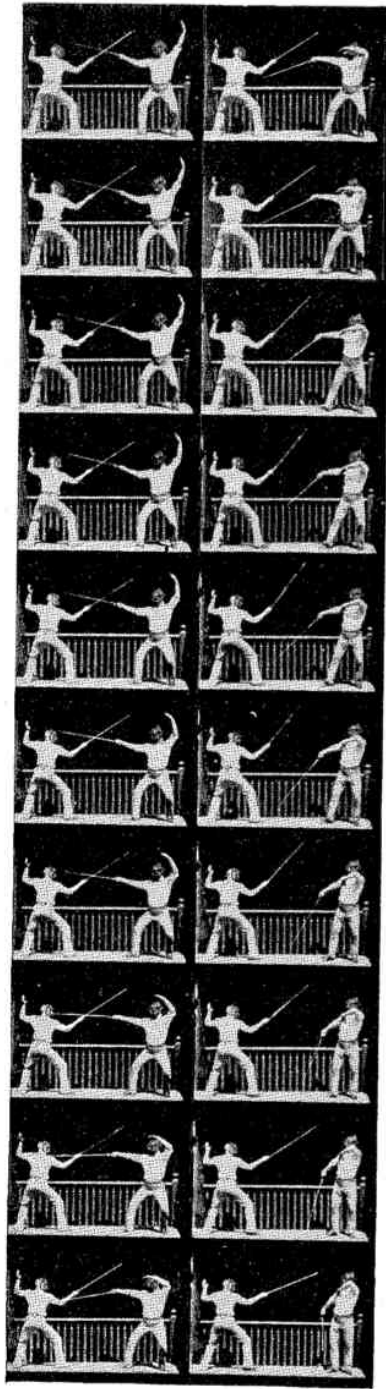


FIGURE 1

W.K.L. Dickson's photograph of the Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze published in the 24 March 1894 issue of *Harper's Weekly*.



THE FENCERS. TWO SECTIONS OF THE KINETOSCOPIC BAND,  
SHOWING MINUTE GRADATIONS IN POSE.

FIGURE 2

1. The Edison Company's Kinetoscope view *The Fencers*, published in 1894, *Century Magazine*.







"HEAR ME, NORMA." KINETOSCOPIC VIEWS, SHOWING FIVE SECTIONS OF THE STRIP.

FIGURE 3

Full-page Kinetoscope views published in 1894, *Century Magazine*.

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