

“Baits to Entrap the Pleasure-Seeker and the Worldling”: Charity Bazaars Introduce Moving Pictures to Ireland

Denis Condon

From the first exhibition yesterday the animatograph drew large crowds of patrons. This is certainly, of the many things worth seeing at Cyclopa, one of the most entertaining. It is more so than the kinetoscope, for it shows the figures life size, and so imparts additional realism to the pictures. The Trilby scene is an excellent one, and so is the boxing match.¹

So reported the *Irish Daily Independent* in May 1896 as part of its coverage of the third day of a large charity bazaar called Cyclopa then underway in Dublin, Ireland. Early cinema scholars will be familiar with practically all the elements of this brief review – the early moving-picture devices, the films, the type of venue – but contextual details illuminate the way in which the new entertainment form was adopted in Ireland. Originally known as the theatrograph, the animatograph was the stage name given by the manager of the Alhambra Theatre, Leicester Square, to the moving picture projector developed by British pioneer Robert Paul, when it debuted there in March 1896 for what would be an extended engagement.² For the *Daily Independent* writer, the animatograph represented an improvement over the peepshow kinetoscope on the basis of the increased verisimilitude of its life-sized projected images, but enhancements to the kinetoscope also garnered favourable comments because of *their* increased realism in reviews of Cyclopa. As well as this, because the writer was familiar with kinetoscopic moving pictures – and assumed his or her readers were also – they could be used as the basis of a comparison in an existing public discourse on moving pictures.³ One of the films, too, can be identified with some certainty: the Trilby scene is one of the four films shot by Edison personnel in June 1895 that were available to exhibitors in Britain and Ireland through the London office of Maguire and Baucus.⁴ These devices and films are elements of an already international trade at the very start of projected moving pictures’ novelty year, a period often seen as lasting – in those countries where the projector made its first impact – at least through 1896, and to the end of the 1896–1897 theatrical season.

Accepting this chronology, charity bazaars become an important focus for early cinema research at precisely that moment. To the extent that charity bazaars have been discussed in the current literature, their image has been dominated by the disaster of the Paris Bazar de la Charité, which was held almost exactly a year after Cyclopa. On

CYCLOPIA.

THE ANIMATOGRAPH.

LIFE-LIKE MOVING PHOTOGRAPHS,
Now being exhibited to crowded audiences in London. Most interesting and beautiful exhibition.

FIRST TIME IN IRELAND.
Come and see the Animatograph in the West Hall.

Exhibited by **A. ROSENBERG and Co., of**
Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Programme to be performed at 2 30, 4 0, 7 0, 8 30, and 9 30.

- 1 Zoro, the Tumbling Clown.
- 2 Interior of a Whiskey Saloon.
- 3 Death of Svengali (Tribby).
- 4 The House on Fire.
- 5 The Boxers.
- 6 Scene from Comic Opera.
- 7 Justice in the Far West.
- 8 The Village Smithy.
- 9 The Dentist's Chair.

**A GRAND FANCY DRESS
CYCLE PARADE**
WILL BE HELD IN THE GROUNDS,
On TO-DAY (THURSDAY) AND
SATURDAY,
At 4 30 p.m.

PRIZE COMPETITION — Judging will be done
by the votes of the Public present at the Parade.

Fig. 1. This advertisement for the animatograph at Cyclopia appeared in the Irish Daily Independent (21 May 1896): 4.

4 May 1897, at least one hundred and twenty attendees of the Bazar de la Charité died in a disastrous fire caused by the carelessness of the operators of a cinématographe Joly when relighting the lamp illuminating the pictures.⁵ Indeed, H. Mark Gosser has argued that the Bazar de la Charité fire is the third most significant event of cinema's early years, after the commercial debuts of the kinetoscope and Lumière cinématographe.⁶ Unlike these debuts, however, the fire constitutes more an end than a beginning, a tragedy rather than a triumph, a moment of disastrously negative publicity for projected moving pictures. A brief account of the Bazar de la Charité fire will help to point up the similarities and differences with the Irish bazaars that will be the focus here. Founded in 1885, the Bazar de la Charité was an annual event at which the French elite congregated in great numbers to make a contribution to the relief of poverty. They came together in 1897 in a wooden building erected for the occasion whose hasty construction was disguised by stalls decorated with such readily flammable material as papier-mâché and fabrics designed to make the venue look like Old Paris. A long awning hid the roof, and under it, attractively costumed women – many belonging to the social elite – manned the stalls selling donated goods and raffle tickets and inviting attendees to participate in games of chance. One of the featured entertainments was a recent technical curiosity, a moving picture projector, which was located in a side room. The building – which had only one main entrance – was particularly full on the bazaar's opening day. As the *Irish Times* commented the day after the fire: "It is [...] not unlikely that over 1,000 persons representing wealth, distinction, nobility, and diplomacy, were thronged within the building to contribute all that grace, beauty, and money could do

to succour the needy and distressed".⁷ As this quote indicates, it was not just the scale of the tragedy but also and particularly the class origin and gender of most of the victims that made the fire such shocking news. This was a horrific event that disproportionately affected the *beau monde*, the leaders of fashion, the duchesses, countesses, baronesses and other elite women whose doings were reported in the society pages of the newspapers.

Notwithstanding the importance of these events for the early development of the French industry, they have nonetheless tended to occlude investigation of the role of charity bazaars elsewhere during this period, and it is here that a closer look at the previous year's Cyclopaia proves useful. Although certain features of the Irish bazaars made them particularly important to the reception of moving pictures in Ireland, charity bazaars internationally should, I think, be considered among the multiplicity of venues where moving pictures found a more or less short-term home in the decade or so before they found their own dedicated exhibition spaces. Like those other venues – which in Ireland consisted principally of theatres of all kinds, trade shows, *conversaz-*

EVENING TELEGRAPH. SATURDAY, MAY 16, 1896.

INSIDE "CLYCLOPIA" — A RARE TREAT.

Opens on Tuesday—A Glance at the Buildings—The Stalls—The Water Chute—The Haunted Swing—
The Confetti Fete.

(Special to the "Evening Telegraph.")

The Central Court of Cyclopaia.

"Cyclopaia" will burst upon the public in all ; Inside the turnstiles you are immediately I grotto, which has exhausted the talent of the

Fig. 2. This illustration of Cyclopaia appeared in the Evening Telegraph (16 May 1896): 8.

ioni (meetings to discuss literary or scientific topics), waxwork exhibitions, and circuses – bazaars added contextual meanings and implied modes of behaviour that shaped how people received the entertainment novelty of 1896. The institutional meanings associated with bazaars would be of continuing importance in defining the cultural place of moving pictures in Ireland into the 1900s, rivalled only by the variety theatre in terms of number of attendees. Among the institutional connotations attached to bazaars were notions of consumerism and popular entertainment harnessed to social utility; the displaying of women’s organisational abilities in the public sphere; and social consensus built on the acceptance of class divisions. Charity bazaars provided a context in which the carnivalesque world-turned-upside-down was domesticated to a display of *noblesse oblige* in which the leisured elite appeared to work for the common good. The charity bazaar was thus a site where the discussion of class and early cinema can identify the role not only of working- and middle-class audiences but also of the elite – particularly elite women – as both audience and impresarios.

Furthermore, although early film scholars may associate charity bazaars with France, it seems that they were particularly strong in Britain and Ireland, where in England alone more than a thousand bazaars were advertised in newspapers every year during the nineteenth century.⁸ Most of these were relatively modest affairs, but the largest drew tens of thousands of attendees and raised tens of thousands of pounds for the charities concerned. These monster bazaars, as they were often called, were very lucrative sources of funding for charities, in large part because they placed a higher emphasis on spectacular entertainments than in the cases of the Bazar de la Charité or smaller bazaars, at which the selling of goods at stalls was the main activity. The mix of commerce, entertainment, and religion – because charities were always linked to one religious group or another – was not uncontroversial and was condemned by such churchmen as the Gloucestershire vicar J. Priestley Foster, whose 1888 book-length sermon *Fancy Fair Religion, or, the World Converting Itself* noted that “when a history was written of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, it would not be complete unless it took notice of such institutions as Bazaars”, but considered them not to be a creditable feature of the age because they were an obstacle to true Christian almsgiving.⁹ Consumerism as such was not the focus of Foster’s ire; far more pernicious was the fact that people attended a bazaar for the

amusements offered, or because of the Patronage bestowed, or in order to join in the general fun, and be entertained by the concerts and theatricals, farces, nigger entertainments, or opportunities for gambling which the various programmes issued, hold out as baits to entrap the pleasure-seeker and the worldling.¹⁰

That bazaars required such a broadside from Reverend Foster indicates the established place they held in Victorian society in the late nineteenth century. And in true Victorian fashion, the bazaar would become highly codified, with such manuals as John Muir’s 1896 *Bazaars and Fancy Fairs: Their Organisation and Management* instructing the new bazaar organiser on how to arrange all aspects of the event, from lighting the grounds at night, to booking sideshows, to seeking the endorsement of a titled patron.¹¹

By 1896, Dublin had become a centre of expertise in bazaar organising. Looking back from 1909, the Irish women’s journal *The Lady of the House* claimed that “Dublin is famous for its monster bazaars; in no city in the three kingdoms [England, Scotland and Ireland] are such gigantic fancy fairs held”.¹² The benchmark for these very large events was a series of monster bazaars that had been held in the city between 1892 and 1896 at the exhibition grounds of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) in a prestigious area south of the city called Ball’s Bridge.¹³ The RDS grounds consisted of a large exhibition

hall and extensive show grounds on which the most prestigious event of the city's social calendar, the Dublin Horse Show, took place during a week in August. It was the Horse Show that the organisers sought to rival and outdo, and in this, they succeeded.¹⁴ In a city of less than 400,000 according to the 1891 census, the attendances at these bazaars were in excess – sometimes well in excess – of eighty thousand, attracted by the things that Reverend Foster had complained about: entertainments and fashionable patronage.

"The larger the list of influential patrons and patronesses that can be secured", Muir advises neophyte bazaar organisers, "the more imposing does the bazaar become".¹⁵ In an Ireland polarised along religious, political, and class lines that separated the majority population's Catholicism and nationalism from the largely Protestant peerage and gentry loyal to the British crown, the patronage of as prominent a titled person as possible served usefully contradictory ideological functions. On the one hand, a large social event organised and led by the elite classes, supported by those of the Catholic middle class with social aspirations, demonstrated the normality and loyalty of Ireland in relation to the British Empire. On the other hand, these elite classes displayed their utility and dedication to Ireland as a country with a distinct identity and social needs that had to be addressed. The chief patrons of Cyclopia were the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Earl Cadogan, who performed the opening ceremony, and his wife, Countess Cadogan. Alongside them, advertisements named seventy-seven titled women, listed in order of social rank, as patronesses of the bazaar, led by such royals as the Princess of Wales, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, and the Duchess of York. Under the rhetoric of social service, class hierarchy was maintained because these women lent their names to the event, sponsoring stalls at which women of lesser rank sold "pretty trifles of all lands from China to Peru, as well as the more substantial necessities of life".¹⁶ Of particular ideological importance was the fact that the Irish Industrial Stall, which sold Irish-made handcrafts, was under the patronage of Countess Cadogan, but was actually run by Lady Charlotte Stopford, Lady Bellingham, and Mrs Gore Cuthbert.¹⁷ The unmarried daughters of such women did much of the selling, providing one of the attractions of the bazaar for male attendees, including the reporter who declared himself willing to be robbed in the cause of charity, if it meant that he would "be 'held up' by a blushing maiden armed with no more fatal weapon than a pair of witching eyes and an attractive book of ballot tickets".¹⁸

All but one of Dublin's monster bazaars were to aid the city's hospitals – a cause that could command widespread support – and all had an overarching theme on which the exhibition grounds were decorated and the "lady stallholders" were expected to be dressed – often in fanciful orientalist or peasant costumes. Cyclopia, the last of the monster bazaar of the 1890s, was organised to raise the estimated ten thousand pounds needed to fund the amalgamation of two Dublin hospitals, the National Eye and Ear Infirmary and St Mark's Ophthalmic Hospital. The name Cyclopia was a pun on this objective of producing "one eye" hospital for the city.¹⁹ Therefore, this bazaar had a particular focus on visual and to a lesser extent auditory attractions, the visual attractions being epitomised by Sir Henry Grattan Bellew's Cyclopean Eye, a large mechanical eye whose pupil moved and lid blinked. Grattan Bellew might have expected that his locally invented attraction would be among the most prominent attractions, but by a historical coincidence that could not have been foreseen when the bazaar was original planned in the summer of 1895, two even-more striking visual novelties became available for public display in the early months of 1896: moving pictures and X-rays.

The press had made Irish people aware of both of these startling discoveries, with X-rays particularly capturing the public imagination, at least as far as can be gauged

from newspaper articles.²⁰ Public interest in X-rays had been raised and fuelled by reports of spectacular experiments by international and then Irish scientists, several of the latter of whom held public lectures and demonstrations. Moving pictures, by contrast, had received only modest press coverage in the early months of 1896, and there had been only one film show in Dublin, when the Star Theatre of Varieties had featured the Lumière cinématographe on the top of its bill in the week of 20 to 25 April. However, audiences had been disappointed by the indistinctness of the screened image, the result of the projectionist – who was not a genuine Lumière operator – using films printed on frosted kinoscope stock. The manager of the Star, Dan Lowrey, noted in the theatre’s engagement book that there had been “[n]ot enough light on the pictures”.²¹ As a result, these shows did not catch the public interest to the same extent as the X-rays had, receiving reviews that were more interested in the potential of moving pictures than in their current realisation.

Nevertheless, these first shows did contribute to what would be the successful launch of projected moving pictures just a month later. The Saturday matinee at the Star had in fact been a benefit in aid of Cyclopa, held under the patronage of the Countess of Mayo and attended by many of the bazaar organisers. The cause of charity brought members of the social elite to Dublin’s best-known music hall, where they got their first view – however distorted – of a moving-picture show. At Cyclopa, projected film in Dublin would be sufficiently technically accomplished to achieve popular approval in a context in which it could be directly compared to other technological marvels. Although many bazaar-goers did return home with a souvenir X-ray of their own hands, interest in moving pictures would eclipse that in X-rays at Cyclopa and transform the public perception of cinematography.

In contrast to the poor reception of moving pictures at the Star, several accounts of Cyclopa emphasised the particular attractiveness of the animatograph shows, which garnered increasing attention as the bazaar progressed. This is especially revealing because here observers had the choice of patronising all the well-established and state-of-the-art novelties that the bazaar organisers had booked. As a report in the *Dublin Evening Mail* put it:

[A]n effort has been made to bring together under the one roof everything to delight the eye, to please the ear, to soothe the appetite, to tickle the fancy, to excite curiosity and then allay it, and generally speaking, to put people into that glorious condition of being well satisfied with themselves, in which they are usually more disposed to part with money. Every reasonable penchant has been carefully considered, all tastes have been thought of, and an effort has been made to gratify them.²²

Among the biggest attractions of Cyclopa, patrons could stroll around the mock-up Dutch village with its lady stallholders and fancy goods; ride the water chute, switch-back railways, and merry-go-rounds; ascend in a hot-air balloon; and attend the café chantant, the Pembroke Concerts, the Olympia Variety Entertainment, and the ever-popular children’s dances. Many of these were human-based entertainments, but technological ones, what one reporter called “the products of a highly developed state of civilization”, were also enormously popular.²³ Among these, other moving-picture and projected visual novelties vied for attention with the animatograph. A kinoscope synchronised to a phonograph – arguably the novelty that provided the best audio-visual spectacle – showed “a champion high-kicker perform[ing] a vigorous and graceful dance to the accompaniment of an orchestra”.²⁴ After dark, a spectacular outdoor magic lantern show issued from the Lantern Tower in the grounds onto a thirty-foot screen, which raised some objections because “[m]ixed with the slides dealing with subjects

of general interest were many others which partook of the nature of advertisements, and were calculated to make the spectator feel that he was being more or less imposed on".²⁵

Even in this dazzling company, the animatograph stood out, receiving increasing attention in advertising and press accounts of the bazaar. A column-long advertisement that appeared in the daily newspapers on the bazaar's third day not only listed the animatograph first of the amusements as in previous days, but also ended with details of the films and from where they and the projector had been hired. Among the other attractions, only the café chantant, a bazaar staple, was afforded this special treatment. Of the nine named films – *Zaro*, *the Tumbling Clown*, *Interior of a Whiskey Saloon*, *Death of Svengali*, *The House on Fire*, *The Boxers*, *Scene from Comic Opera*, *Justice in the Far West*, *The Village Smithy*, and *The Dentist's Chair* – most are readily recognisable as Edison titles. The Trilby scene mentioned in the epigraph is here named as *Death of Svengali*, and of the others, *Zaro* is the only really puzzling title, but it may be Edison's *Grotesque Tumbling* of January 1895.²⁶ The exhibitor is listed as August Rosenberg from Newcastle in the north of England, who was part of a firm that launched a projector known as "Rosenberg's cinematograph" later in 1896.²⁷ Charles James, proprietor of Dublin's World's Fair Waxworks, had booked the animatograph from Rosenberg and would keep the projector in the city in the week after Cyclopia.

As well as the prominence given to the animatograph in advertisements, the press commentaries on each day of the bazaar also gave it sustained attention. An almost thousand-word article, titled "The Wonder of Cyclopia: The Animatograph", appeared in Dublin's most popular daily paper, the *Freeman's Journal*, and its *Evening Telegraph*, offering technical information on persistence of vision, projection speeds, and the operation of the shutter; notes on Edison and the Lumière brothers; and detailed descriptions of some individual films.²⁸ As the bazaar progressed, the newspapers reported that additional animatograph shows were required to cater to demand. The trajectory of this is clear when the *Irish Daily Independent's* brief final notice of the bazaar revealed that during the Whit Monday holiday, "Cyclopia was still in full swing and had a fair attendance, the animatograph supplied by Mr C. A. James, of the World's Fair, being exceedingly well patronised, while the Children's Dances, and the Café Chantant did good business in the afternoon".²⁹ The animatograph had been the hit of Cyclopia, allowing James legitimately to advertise it as the "wonderful triumph of Scientific Research, [...] which has been patronised by the Nobility and Gentry of Ireland at Cyclopia", when he opened it at his World's Fair Waxworks in the week following the bazaar.³⁰ The change of venue could hardly have been more extreme; James charged two pence (2d.) admission to the waxworks and stage show at the World's Fair, a sixth of the one shilling (1s.) daily admission charged at Cyclopia. Those with just the minimum of disposable income could enjoy the entertainment that had been the spectacular success of the biggest social event of the year. Although over the coming year's film projectors with other proprietary names would more often be exhibited at Irish venues associated with the lower-middle and working classes, they would also remain established features of both large and small charity bazaars. At these, moving pictures would continue to accrue the benefits of being associated with charity events organised by the most respectable members of society.

Notes

1. "Cyclopia: Third Day of the Fete", *Irish Daily Independent* (22 May 1896): 6.
2. John Barnes, *The Beginnings of Cinema in England* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1976), 99. The spelling here – all the Irish references refer to the projector without a final "e" – may indicate that the projector used in Dublin was not manufactured by Paul. Advertisements nevertheless

- claimed that this was the “[f]irst appearance of the original Animatograph in Ireland”, specifying that it was currently “being exhibited nightly at the Alhambra Theatre, London”.
3. Several kinetoscope parlours had opened in Dublin since the device’s premiere on 4 April 1895; see Denis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema, 1895–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 25–34.
 4. Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 52.
 5. José Baldizzone, “L’Incendie du Bazar de la Charité”, *Archives* 12 (March 1988); H. Mark Gosser, “The Bazar de la Charité Fire: The Reality, the Aftermath, the Telling”, *Film History* 10.1 (1998): 70–89.
 6. Gosser, “The Bazar de le Charité Fire”, 70.
 7. “Terrible Calamity in Paris: Fire at a Fashionable Bazaar”, *Irish Times* (5 May 1897): 5.
 8. F.K. Prochaska, “Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth-Century England”, *Journal of British Studies* 16.2 (Spring 1977): 66.
 9. J. Priestley Foster, *Fancy Fair Religion, or, the World Converting Itself* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, and Co., 1888), 11.
 10. Foster 1888, 18.
 11. John Muir, *Bazaars and Fancy Fairs: Their Organisation and Management: A Secretary’s Vade Mecum* (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1896).
 12. “This Year’s Great Bazaar at Ball’s Bridge”, *Lady of the House* (May 1909): 5.
 13. For a more detailed account of the monster bazaars in relation to consumerism in Ireland, see Stephanie Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin, 1850–1916* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 141–163.
 14. No full attendance figures were published for Cyclopia, but the daily figures appeared to indicate a falloff in comparison to previous years, a fact also noted by several commentators. Nevertheless, the admissions for the bazaar were considerably more than for the Horse Show, on the lines indicated by the attendance figures for the 1895 events: while fewer than 54,000 people attended the Horse Show that year, eighty thousand attended the Erne bazaar. See “The Great National Horse Show: Opening Day”, *Irish Times* (26 August 1896): 9; and *Lady of the House* (June 1895): 2.
 15. Muir 1896, 11.
 16. “Cyclopia”, *Irish Times* (2 May 1896): 7.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. “Cyclopia Bazaar: Opening Ceremony by the Viceroy”, *Irish Daily Independent* (20 May 1896): 5.
 19. Gearoid Crookes, *Dublin’s Eye and Ear: The Making of a Monument* (Dublin: Town House, 1993), 45–46.
 20. Denis Condon, “‘Spleen of a Cabinet Minister at Work’: Exhibiting X-Rays and the Cinematograph in Ireland, 1896”, in John Hill and Kevin Rockett (eds), *Film History and National Cinema: Studies in Irish Film 2* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 69–78.
 21. Lowrey quoted in Eugene Watters and Matthew Murtagh, *Infinite Variety: Dan Lowrey’s Music Hall, 1879–97* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), 166.
 22. “Cyclopia Fete”, *Dublin Evening Mail* (21 May 1896): 3.
 23. “Cyclopia Fete”, *Daily Express* (21 May 1896): 5.
 24. “Cyclopia: A Big Attendance”, *Irish Daily Independent* (21 May 1896): 6.
 25. “Cyclopia Fete”, *Dublin Evening Mail* (21 May 1896): 3.
 26. Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 174.
 27. Barnes 1976, 135–138.
 28. “The Wonder of Cyclopia: The Animatograph”, *Freeman’s Journal* (20 May 1896): 5.
 29. “Whit-Monday in Dublin”, *Irish Daily Independent* (26 May 1896): 3.
 30. Advertisement for World’s Fair Waxworks, *Evening Telegraph* (26 May 1896): 1.