

THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND LITERARY HISTORY  
OF BOOK, NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE  
PUBLISHING

# Publishing History

LXVI



CHADWYCK-HEALEY

2009

# Publishing History

THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND LITERARY HISTORY  
OF BOOK, NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE PUBLISHING

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# A TOGA TALE OF INGOMAR THE BARBARIAN: FROM PRINT AND DRAWING-ROOMS TO WILLIAM HAGGAR, FAIRGROUNDS AND HOLLYWOOD

by SIMON R. FROST

By the end of the nineteenth century, an entity known as the 'toga drama' could be found both in print and on a variety of stages – travelling theatres, fairgrounds, private drawing-rooms, and bioscopes – throughout Europe and the United States. The term 'toga play' was coined around 1895,<sup>1</sup> and it became a generic label to denote (sometimes in terms of derision) hugely popular melodramas that dramatized conflicts between the State's power and the individual's moral imperative in settings of a (not altogether well-defined) Roman Empire, into which elements of early-Christian virtue were heroically placed. The various fictional elements could be adapted to serve a range of narrative purposes, which David Mayer, in his introduction to *Playing Out the Empire* (1994), has tried to encompass. The 'State' in a toga drama could be secular and imperial, or ecclesiastical, and either supremely despotic or decadently tottering, as needs be; the virtuous hero or heroine might be seen as representing the 'Christian elements of opposition' against the ranks of socialists, imperialists, radicals, and others opposed to them.<sup>2</sup>

The necessary prerequisite, of course, was that most of the dramatic characters must wear the toga. Being a versatile format, this device was used across a range of genres and media – in novels and play scripts that could be read and performed at home, as well as in the theatre, and eventually could be written for the screen. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) is an early example of a published toga novel, while a late-nineteenth-century example is Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur* (1880). Both appeared in various adaptations for the stage, including Louisa Medina's American reworking of *Pompeii* in 1835, and in London the disastrous Queen's Theatre production of 1877: a 'decided failure ... [of] enormous expense'.<sup>3</sup> *Claudian* was conceived and produced for the stage by W. G. Wills and Henry Herman, and performed from 1883 at the Princess's Theatre in London.<sup>4</sup> The actor-manager Wilson Barrett, who had a hand in this successful production, is credited with producing the toga play *The Sign of the Cross* – performed no later than 1894 in the United States; its first British performance was on 26 August 1895 at the Grand Theatre, Leeds – which he subsequently turned into a novel of the same name.<sup>5</sup> The famous novel by the Polish Nobel Prize-winning author Henryk Sienkiewicz – *Quo Vadis* – was first serialized in Poland

in 1895-96 and translated into many languages shortly afterwards, being first published in English for J. M. Dent & Co. in 1898.<sup>6</sup> These dramatic versions were widely read and performed, and by the early twentieth century the toga drama was emerging on film, highlighted in the silent era by D. W. Griffith's *Judith of Bethulia* (1914) and *Intolerance* (1916), and Fred Niblo's *Ben-Hur* (1925); and later in the Technicolor era by such stalwarts as Robert Taylor and Peter Ustinov in *Quo Vadis* (1951) and Charlton Heston in the remake of *Ben-Hur* (1959).

### 'AUTHENTIC' TRANSMISSION

Toga drama was not limited to the English language. An Austrian drama entitled *Der Sohn der Wildnis* was produced in Vienna from 1842. This would come to be translated, adapted, abridged and re-written as *Ingomar the Barbarian* (fig. 1). Now all but forgotten, at one time *Ingomar's* currency was so immense that the play is referred to in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as Stephen Dedalus, squandering his winnings, every night leads 'a party of three or four to the theatre to see *Ingomar*...'<sup>7</sup> The various incarnations of *Ingomar* on page, stage and screen show the drama negotiating a path through the different media, and provides a perfect study for the expressive changes to narrative required by such adaptations.<sup>8</sup> But the argument to be followed here is not concerned with formalistic literary problems, or with intriguing questions of whether any ideal generic text of *Ingomar* can be said to 'exist' outside of its instantiations. Instead, I propose here to follow the history of its productions and, more specifically, a study of what impact on audiences the producers of the play were aiming for when they included toga drama among the performances they would offer to the market. By attempting such an approach, this research turns from being a history of forms into becoming one of socialized events. This will be done, firstly, by describing *Ingomar's* intended nineteenth-century markets, including both its theatrical and book versions; secondly, by investigating fairground entrepreneurs and the bioscope; and thirdly, by looking at toga plays in Hollywood.

As first performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1842, *Ingomar* began life as the drama *Der Sohn der Wildnis*, by the pseudonymous Friedrich Halm (Baron Eligius Franz Joseph von Münch-Bellinghausen). The play is set in Massalia in southern Gaul (later the French Marseille), with the Germanic Ingomar and the Massalian toga-clad Parthenia as its leading characters. For its Viennese audience, *Der Sohn* almost certainly offered

Figure 1. Sketches of Ingomar at the Lyceum, in *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 Sept. 1883. © The British Library Board. (Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library.)



a eulogy of Germanic integrity in contradistinction to contemporary French ‘civilization’ – in its 1843 print edition there is an epigraph by Rousseau on the evils of civilization. In England, a drama then appeared, entitled *Ingomar the Barbarian*, by the actress turned playwright Maria Lovell, which was first performed at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1851;<sup>9</sup> its script was published in 1855 in London by George Daniel Davidson, ‘translated and adapted for the English Stage by Maria Lovell ... with remarks by “D—G” [George Daniel]’<sup>10</sup>. In the same year, *Ingomar* was published in New York by Samuel French, as part of French’s Standard Drama, where the introduction stated that in the United States the play was ‘Performed 1st December 1855 simultaneously at the Bowery and the Broadway Theatres’.<sup>11</sup> If one is to judge by the play’s numerous later editions,<sup>12</sup> by theatregoers such as the fictional Stephen Dedalus, and by its further treatment in the theatrical and motion-picture productions to be discussed later, *Ingomar* continued to be popular with audiences well into the early twentieth century.

Maria Lovell’s *Ingomar* concerns the beautiful Parthenia, ‘often wooed but never won’.<sup>13</sup> Her rejection of a local merchant, Polydor – ‘a mongrel money grub’ whose interest in Parthenia appears to be as a business transaction rather than true love – inspires Polydor’s resentment against both herself and her father. Parthenia’s father, a poor merchant, is then captured by a bandit gang of barbaric Alemanni (*Die Deutschen* in the Viennese production). She tries to raise the ransom and fails, turns to Polydor and offers to marry him if he will provide the money, but he refuses. In despair, she travels to the barbarians’ camp to exchange places with her father and become a hostage slave. The gang-leader Ingomar falls in love with her, becoming an ‘irresolute and feverish dreamer’. Since this change of character ‘suits not his ferocious band’, the other gang members try to sell Parthenia to slave-traders from Carthage. But Ingomar saves her, and pays off his crew as compensation for their loss. Ingomar escorts Parthenia safely home to Massalia, where, still hopelessly in love, he agrees to her father’s request to throw away his sword, shave his beard and go to work in the town’s fields. Meanwhile, Parthenia’s father has become so deeply indebted to Polydor that the latter demands both father and daughter as his slaves. Ingomar offers to take their place, but, suddenly, the alarum sounds: the Alemanni enter, and finding Ingomar apparently enslaved, they threaten to lay waste to Massalia. Ingomar explains that he is a willing slave, and the town’s chief official Timarch, impressed with Ingomar’s honest and dignified bearing, annuls the father’s debts and banishes Polydor. All unite, and the empire is refreshed with Ingomar’s newly ‘civilized’ barbarian genes.

Both of the published editions of Lovell’s 1855 play script – Davidson’s London edition and the New York French’s Standard Drama – make use of an introduction credited to George Daniel. In his summary, not too faithful to the actual plot,<sup>14</sup> Daniel removed the emphasis on proud barbarian integrity in contrast to so-called civilization. Instead, he explained that the play ‘exhibits filial duty in its most beautiful form, and treats the mysterious passion of love (exquisite delusion; captivating error!) with delicacy and feeling’. Daniel brings to the fore not the problems of a decadent empire but Parthenia’s sense of family loyalty, and not muscular romance between the pair but deluded, erroneous young love. It is conceivable that Daniel was writing about a production he had seen that we know little of, which may have emphasized the daughter’s duty and the folly of youth.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps he was being ‘creative’, or the publishers merely expedient. Perhaps Daniel and Davidson were simply taking what they needed from a textual resource and tailoring a summary to broaden the appeal for their target audience.

As well as a love song published in 1881 by Walter Maynard, entitled *Love Described*, which used some of the text from Lovell’s *Ingomar* for its opening lines, a play script appeared called ‘Ingomar: or the Noble Savage’ by Robert Reece (described on its title-page as ‘an awful warning in one act’) as part of a collection of *Drawing Room Plays and Parlour Pantomimes* (1870).<sup>16</sup> Highlighted in this comic burlesque version is Parthenia’s taming of Ingomar-the-Obtuse and her spirited resistance to male constraints: ‘Ah you’ll see. No living man will ever conquer me!’ When Ingomar is arrested at the end, Parthenia invokes an archaic law to save him: an ancient law, she says, that ‘pardons e’en the man to crimes addicted | if anyone will marry the convicted | Wisely determined with humour grim | [that] marriage is punishment enough for him!’ On the penultimate line, emerging from dimwittedness into awareness of a cunning marriage trap, Ingomar cries:

I know it – I have it – I am certain  
these women are the very ...  
*Parthenia* [hastily]: Drop the curtain!

Discussing the reasons that may have led Reece to write his play is outside the scope of this article, but it might be of note to reveal that the compiler of the *Drawing Room* collection was no less a figure than Clement William Scott, drama critic of the *Daily Telegraph* from 1871 until 1899, and by 1900 the leading London theatre critic – a man engaged in prescribing good taste in drama. Scott had a pronounced dislike for what he termed

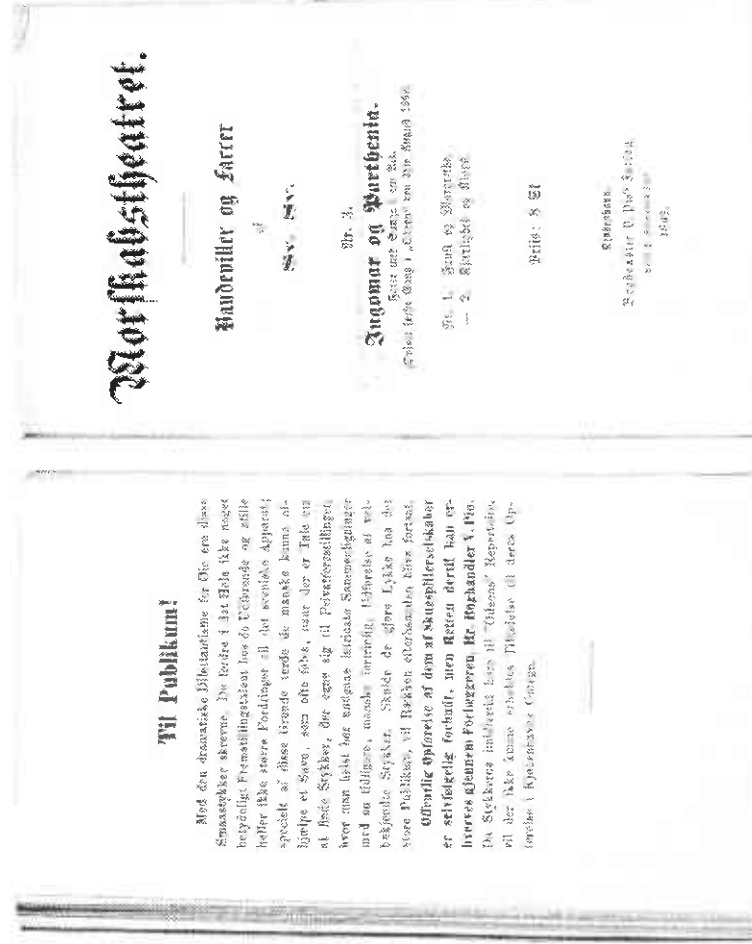
'new drama', by which he meant anything influenced by Henrik Ibsen.<sup>17</sup> From his inclusion of Reece's work in the compilation, we may infer that the theatrical works Scott urged his audiences to appreciate, with his knowledge of the market, included *Ingomar*.

Elsewhere in Europe, in the same manner as Reece and Scott, other publishers were mining what they could from the success of *Ingomar*. In Denmark, Halm's *Ingomar* became part of the repertoire of the Danish Royal Theatre.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, a collection of nineteen vaudevilles and farces was also published in cheaply produced paper covers by Pio's, in the series *Morskabstheatret* [Theatre of Amusement], retailing at only eight skilling – Number 3 was *Ingomar og Parthenia*.<sup>19</sup> Set in a contemporary furniture shop, the *mise-en-scène* is distorted to an extreme, where only the main protagonists' names remain unchanged. The announcement on the verso facing the title-page specifies its intended market (fig. 2). These plays are for dilettante theatregoers *only* – for their private use. In bold typeface there is a statement forbidding any public performance by theatrical companies, but offering instead performing rights from the publisher. Due to repertory-theatre competition inside the capital, such rights would only be granted for places outside Copenhagen.

Two points need to be made here: firstly, Pio's *Ingomar og Parthenia* makes no reference to Halm, nor to *Ingomar* as intellectual property. Indeed, nineteenth-century Danish publishers rarely paid for foreign rights, making much greater efforts to block rival translations through an internal trade agreement – the so-called *kollisionsbekendtgørelser* (a formulation announcing in the trade journals that a particular publisher intended to translate a certain foreign title). Breaches of a publisher's rights in Denmark and Norway were tightly policed at this time within the trade, but, for imported works, '[i]llegality, as said before, was almost total'.<sup>20</sup> Pio's publishing house, like other such businesses operating safely behind a minority-language barrier and not yet exposed to the ramifications of the Berne Convention of 1886, was protectionist over sales but libertarian over texts.

Secondly, creative adaptations such as Reece's or that published for Pio could hardly have connected with audiences if there had been no tradition of serious toga drama beforehand and, in particular, if the story of *Ingomar* had not been widely known. But for purposes of analysis, the question remains as to what *conceptually* these publications might be adaptations of. Possible literary and/or textual-studies responses might offer a text-based answer, and argue that *Ingomar* is a lingual structure – a 'text' shared between the various published editions, adaptations

Figure 2. Verso and recto from *Ingomar og Parthenia*, published by V. Pio, 1869. (Reproduction taken by the author with the kind permission of State and University Library of Denmark.)



and performances, and supported by discourse about it. However, an alternative version might be to begin socially, from the point of view of audiences' experiences of associations between imperialist and nationalist cultures: that this association might be symbolized by the term 'toga' and the name 'Ingomar'.

## ECONOMICS OF PRODUCTION

The tale of the translation of *Ingomar* onto celluloid begins with one man: William Haggar, born into humble circumstances in Dedham (Essex) in 1851, who ended his days in 1925 as a cinema pioneer and respected public figure in South Wales. As a young man, Haggar was the proprietor of his own 'portable theatre', one of the many itinerant theatrical troupes travelling the length of Britain in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and carrying their premises on a wagon. Like many other mummer and portable theatres, Haggar's was a small family concern, involving some half a dozen players. Horse-drawn around the towns of southern England, the wagons would be converted into a stage, actors found lodgings, permissions sought from local officials, and the meagre resources of props, costumes, performing texts and artistic skills put to work in attracting the largest audiences and highest revenues possible. Closer to a medieval mystery play performed on the back of a cart, these portables differed widely from the London touring companies, the 'stock companies' attached to particular theatres or groups of theatres, and from other travelling entertainers who performed their repertoire at permanent venues.

Dramatic effectiveness was the key to the portables' successful enterprise. All involved had multiple tasks, from advertising to manning the box-office, repairing the wagons and acting as security on the doors. The players' skills and their personal characteristics determined which roles they performed. One of them, Dick Walton, could hold two cutlasses and fight six opponents at a time on stage. Because of his natural aptitude, Haggar himself was typecast as a low comedian; his wife Violet was 'stunningly pretty'. They performed a mixture of tragedy, melodrama and comedy, their programmes consisting of selected scenes from popular plays. Excerpts from *Hamlet* might be followed by scenes from Molière's *Amphitryon*, here renamed *The Miser of Newport*. Haggar would always send his audiences home with a comedy. Apart from the obligatory selections from Shakespeare, the plays they performed (sometimes re-titled to avoid copyright infringements) included *Sweeney*

*Todd*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *East Lynne* and *The Sign of the Cross*; and among this repertoire was *Ingomar the Barbarian*.

Haggar's experiments with film presentation were inspired by economic hardship. By the 1880s and 1890s, during the time of the great agricultural depression, the financial difficulties faced by Haggar's troupe became considerable.<sup>21</sup> A storm tore the roof off their wagon in Poole (Dorset). Touring through places in Dorset and Hampshire, they survived by snaring rabbits and by fishing, and occasionally selling picture-frames, rather than by acting. Haggar resorted to using marionettes, because 'they will get no pay, and they are always sober'. But no stringency could resolve their main problem, which was a lack of money in the country areas. In 1890, on the River Wye at Chepstow, William's daughter was drowned. Rather than return to England, they decided to try their luck in Wales. Between 1871 and 1901, the size of the United Kingdom's population rose by one-third – in South Wales, because of internal migration, by even more. In 1851 the population of the Rhondda Valley was less than 1,000; but by 1901 it had surged to an astounding 113,000 (and to around 169,000 by 1924).<sup>22</sup> In the decade up to the 1881 Census, Britain produced 45% of the world's coal, and was its largest coal exporter, much of it from the South Wales coalfield. Haggar's success in touring between Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire and Abergavenny in Monmouthshire was substantial. New family marriages were made and children born, the wagons were rebuilt, and in 1893 William was able to establish a second portable theatre. Between the two companies, Haggar now had sufficient resources to begin experimenting with film-making. But, before that, an important organizational change had occurred.

The portable theatre's troupe had previously shared the revenues according to a 'commonwealth' principle: the profits were divided into shares, allotted pro rata to each participant as well as on the equipment. On the amounts of the shares being announced – for example, 'shares 3d', 'shares 6d', etc. – the actors would often then make for the nearest public house. The commonwealth system encouraged communal decision-making, and actors would only return if it suited them. But in the Welsh valleys, Haggar's theatre became the victim of its own success. Individual shares were sometimes as high as 7s 6d, which resulted in actors becoming too drunk to perform – and a single absence could ruin a show. Haggar therefore imposed a new system of what he called 'salaries', with himself as employer and now the autocratic entrepreneur: 'They recommenced on salaries, say 30s. and 25s. each ... they never went back to share terms, and there was only one recognised boss: W. Haggar, senior, whereas in



the “commonwealth” days, everyone shared, so everyone bossed, hence they were always arguing.’<sup>23</sup>

Haggar’s phenomenal success with film was the product of two factors: the first was the acquisition of technology and technique; the second was in its business implementation. The first required that he should progress from portrait photography – a hobby he had taken an interest in earlier – to shooting motion-film footage. The second involved introducing this footage into existing commercial venues, and by doing so create new demands and new environments for popular entertainment.

## TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUE

Technological constraints would shape the development of Haggar’s Bioscope. His first ‘cinematograph and triunial lantern’ (seen in a magazine advertisement), which cost £80, would have been well beyond his means but for his recent fortunes in South Wales. This exceptionally high initial financial outlay committed Haggar’s to making a spectacular success of its implementation. They had no instructions other than the booklet that Haggar had brought back from Exeter, together with the lantern, and its accompanying gas cylinders, regulators, gauges, slides and films that had been advertised. It took almost two weeks of trial and error to produce the correct lighting required for film projection – the most dangerous part of this was William’s and son James’s experimentation with the high-pressure hydrogen and oxygen cylinders that were required in the production of limelight (a highly volatile mixture and liable to explode). In 1898 Haggar’s first films were shown from a lantern on two trolleys, as part of a new purpose-built portable theatre called ‘The Windsor Castle Biograph’, at night when their tent was sufficiently dark.

The success that Haggar’s ‘Biograph’ secured over the next half-decade meant that they could purchase improved projectors and build more impressive show fronts. Despite a fire that destroyed the original ‘Windsor Castle’, by the summer season of 1899 they could afford to replace the old triunial lantern with a Maguire & Baucus Bioscope supplied by Charles Urban, an American selling products in Britain for the Edison Company of America. Urban later set up independently, first as the Warwick Trading Company and then as the Charles Urban Trading Company, selling cinema equipment but eventually also commissioning films from entrepreneurs such as William Haggar. The bioscope from Urban was then replaced by the even better Chrono projector sold by the London offices of the French Gaumont Company – praised for the

‘beautiful clear and steady pictures’ it projected as William wrote in a letter to his London suppliers on 8 October 1904.<sup>24</sup>

As Haggar’s business was mobile, the acquisition of a traction engine in 1904 was another significant improvement. The size and weight of the equipment they needed to move around meant that horse-drawn wagons had become impractical, whilst rail transport was described by Walter Haggar as ‘a turmoil’.<sup>25</sup> The traction engine, which could also pull additional trailers, reduced transport costs to the price of a half-ton of coal (not that expensive in South Wales), and it allowed them to widen their field of operations (albeit slowly) to sites not accessible by rail. The traction engine, or rather its attached dynamo, also produced electricity. When Haggar’s first upgraded to electricity, in 1901, they had had to use a ‘portable’ steam generator – portable in name only, being cumbersome and prone to sink in boggy ground. The traction engine, sitting on wide plate-wheels, supplied electricity not just for the projector (that had formerly been hand-cranked) but for the whole show – the tent, lighting and barrel organ. In overall terms, these new technologies allowed Haggar not only to improve the projection quality for his films, more importantly it also enabled him to present an impressive spectacle that would eventually create an entirely new business.

## COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

Haggar’s bioscope business was one in which the exhibiting and making of films, though central, was only a part. Rather than measure his role in the development of the aesthetic of film (which was considerable), I shall instead consider how he made use of social events through which his audiences could experience increasingly more complex motion pictures. What were those events?

The Fairs Act of 1871 had legislated against what it termed ‘injurious’ and ‘immoral’ fairs in England and Wales – this resulted in a boom for those fairs that survived and the travelling amusements that went with them. By 1900 fairs were offering swings, roundabouts, helter-skelters and boxing booths. The pinnacle for fairground frontages occurred between the 1890s and 1914, when many were resplendent in gold-leaf, carvings and paintings. The increasing use of traction engines and electricity meant that the rides became bigger and more spectacular. Fairground music would be supplied by the massive mechanical organs manufactured by the Gavioli and Marengi companies in Paris. It was in this context that Haggar first exhibited moving pictures: not as a theatrical impresario but as a showman among the South Wales fairgrounds.

Among the sideshows exhibiting performing animals and other entertainers, a favourite was the 'ghost show', such as the 'Phantomspectre and Ghostdrama', that created a convincing illusion by means of a sheet of glass angled at 45° to the audience through which backlit actors (hidden from the audience) cast their ghostly images onto the sheet. By the 1890s, 'ghosts' were the most spectacular fairground shows of them all. Randall Williams (known in the trade as the 'King of the Showmen') had a ghost show that combined ghosts and goblins together with conjurers, illusionists and dancing-girls – he was also the first British showman to buy a traction engine, for £712, in 1895.<sup>26</sup> But public interest in ghost shows was beginning to wane and another novelty was required. In October 1896 Williams announced the showing of 'animated pictures', thereby becoming the first man in England to introduce moving images to the fairground public. (A friend of Haggar's, Harry Scard, who ran Wadbrook's Travelling Cinema from around 1898, had also previously been in the ghost show business.)

Like the ghost shows, the early bioscope films displayed – not acted narratives – but action: trains arriving, or Loïe Fuller dancing.<sup>27</sup> These films appeared in the regular music-halls too, but they quickly dwindled away. In the *travelling* bioscopes, however, with their canvas tents, golden frontages, electrically-powered organs and dancing-girls, the film exhibitions thrived (figs. 3 and 4). Up to 150 in number at their peak, the travelling bioscopes had their heyday between 1906 and 1912.<sup>28</sup> Haggar's upgraded his Royal Electric Bioscope of 1901 with the additions of a Marengi organ and a new show front (figs. 5 and 6). Bought for £1,000 cash in 1906, this frontage had two entrances, 840 incandescent lamps copying the colours of the painted images onto the frontage, and a forty-four-foot organ, giving the place a cathedral-like appearance. One year later, Haggar passed this bioscope on to his son, and then bought an even bigger frontage with a 110-key Gavioli organ, which he marketed as Haggar's Electric Coliseum (fig. 7).

Haggar's bioscope business was one of spectacle. The films that were shown were almost of secondary importance. Invariably prefaced by dancing-girls, the first film would have Haggar playing sound effects on a kettledrum. Bioscope shows employed a lecturer, who would shout out live commentaries, such as: 'Who's this?', 'Sir Jasper!', 'She does not see him!' When cinemas with indoor seating became possible, the lecturer was superseded by text cards and the film itself, especially those of D. W. Griffith, became *the* tempting goods on offer.

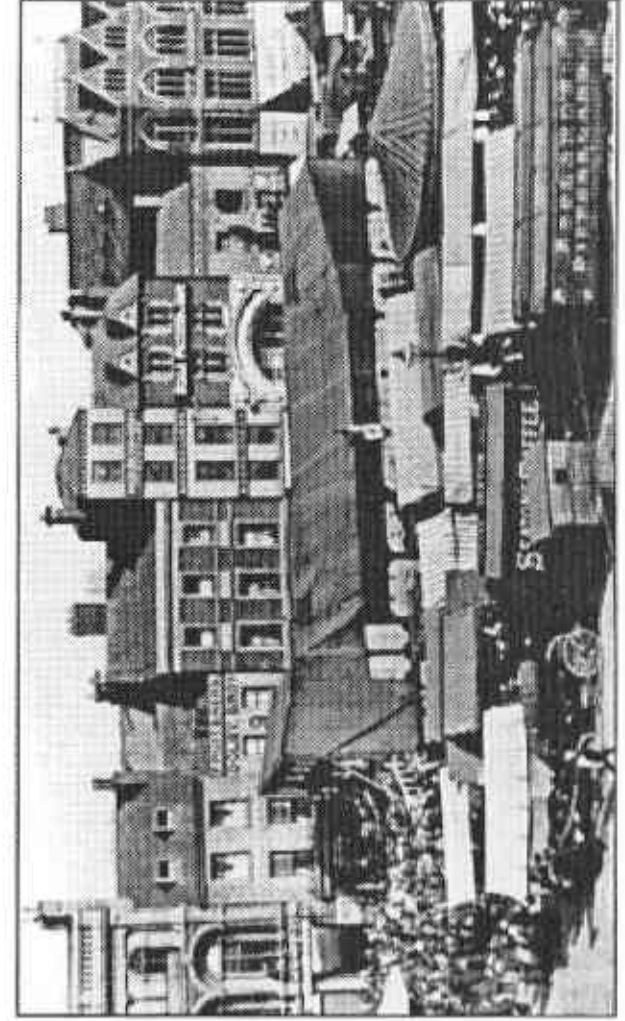


Figure 3. A typical bioscope show. Aspland's Pictureland at Boston Fair in 1912. (From the private collection of Peter Yorke. Reproduced by kind permission of Mr Yorke and Accent Press.)

Figure 4. Chipperfield's Electric Theatre on the road in 1911. (Reproduced by kind permission of Peter Yorke and Accent Press.)

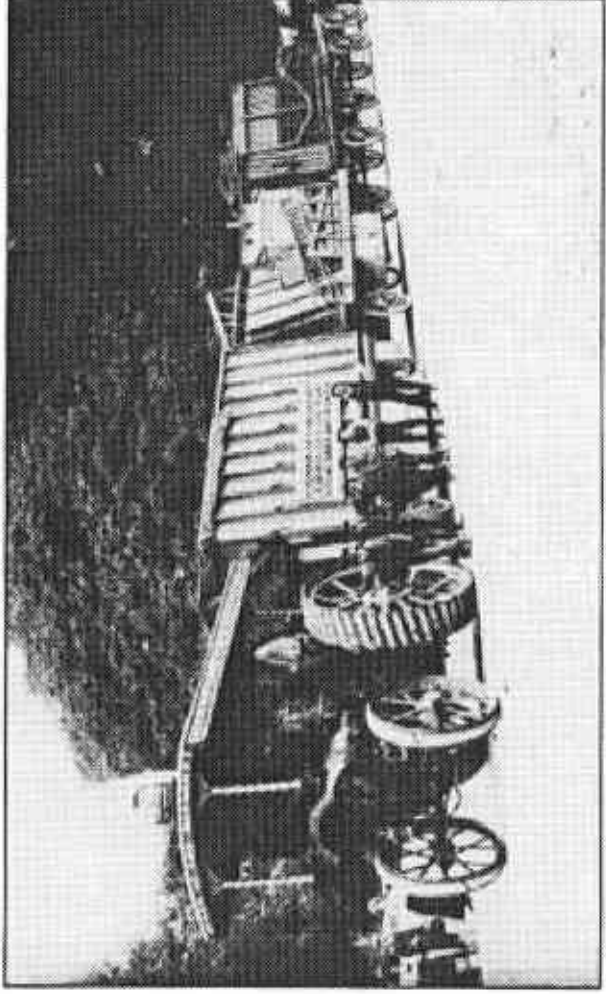


Figure 5. Hagggar's Royal Electric Bioscope (1902). (Reproduced by kind permission of Peter Yorke and Accent Press.)

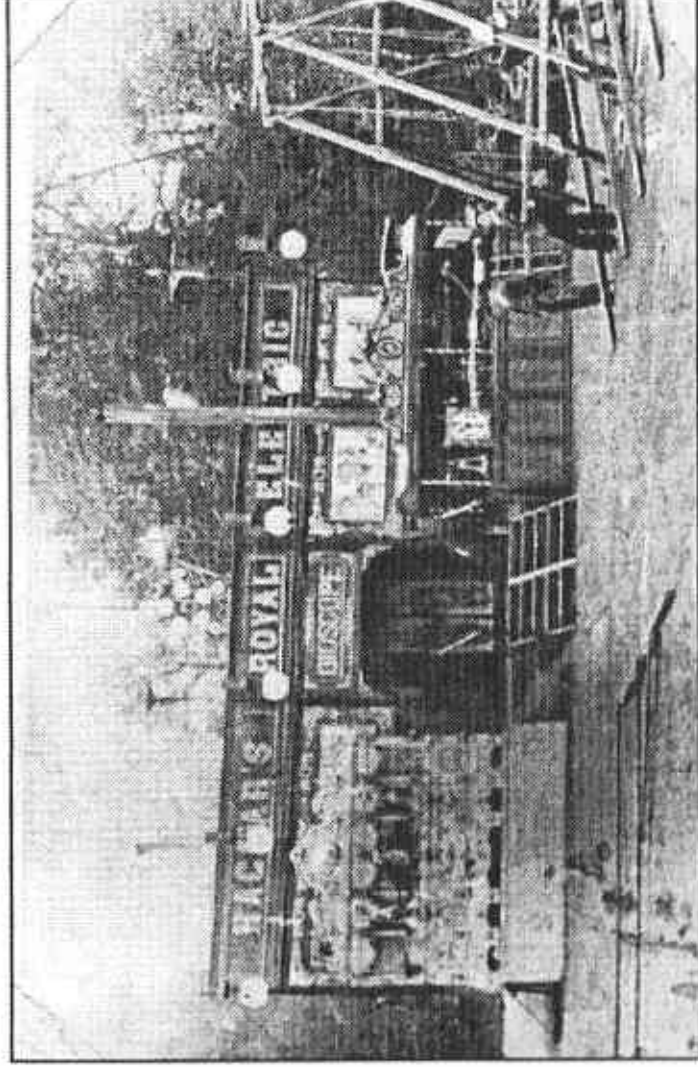


Figure 6. Haggar's Royal Bioscope (1908), with new Marenghi organ and show front. (Reproduced by kind permission of Peter Yorke and Accent Press.)

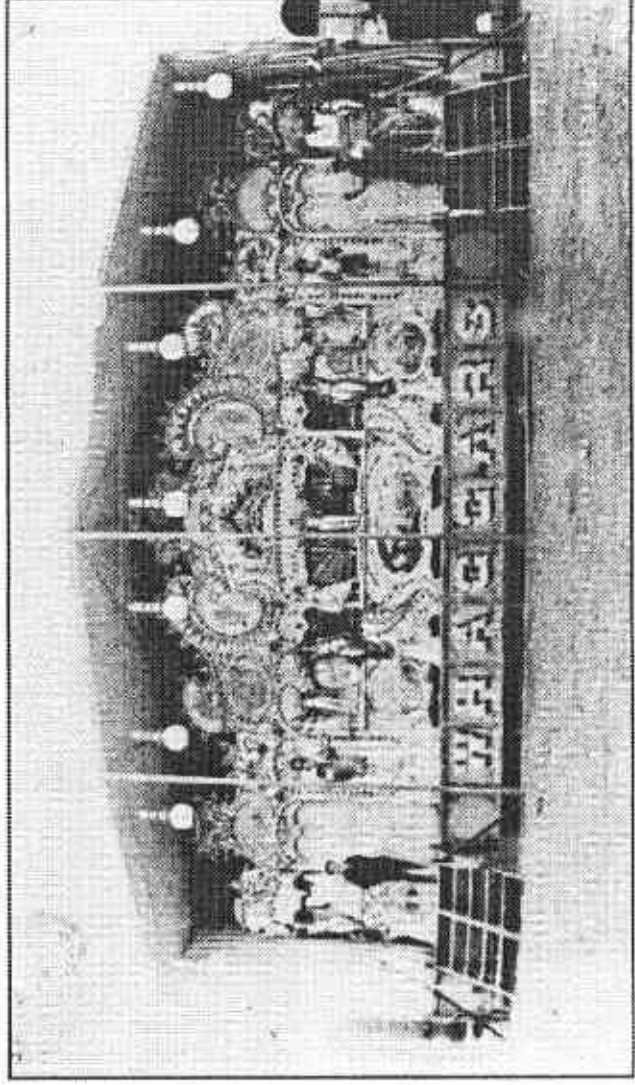
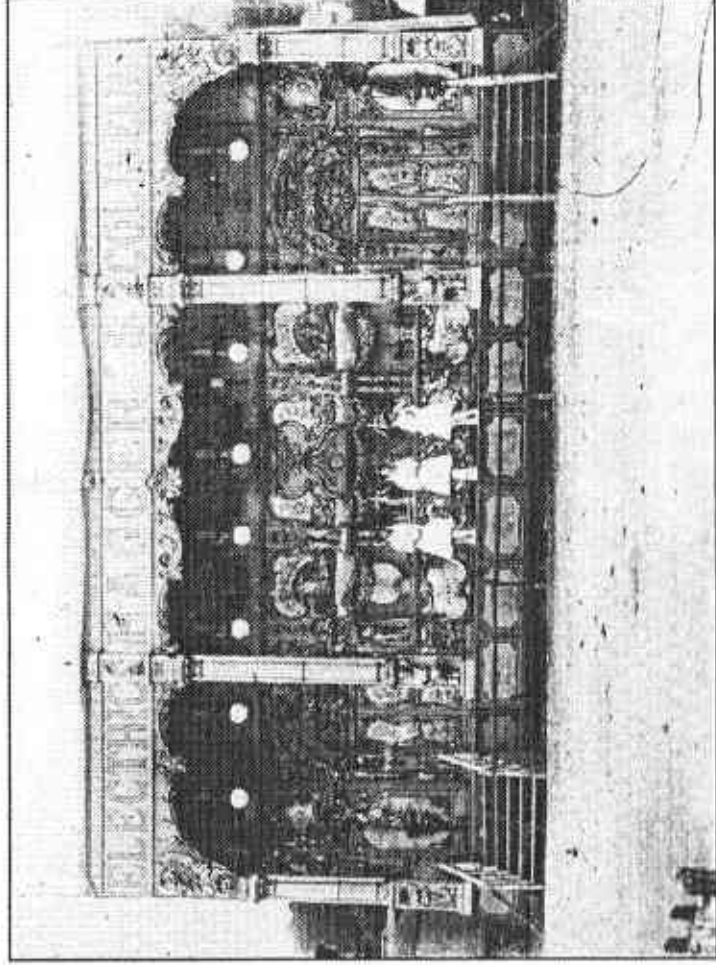


Figure 7. The even grander Haggar's Electric Coliseum, with Gavioli organ showfront, established one year after Haggar's Royal Bioscope. (Reproduced by kind permission of Peter Yorke and Accent Press.)



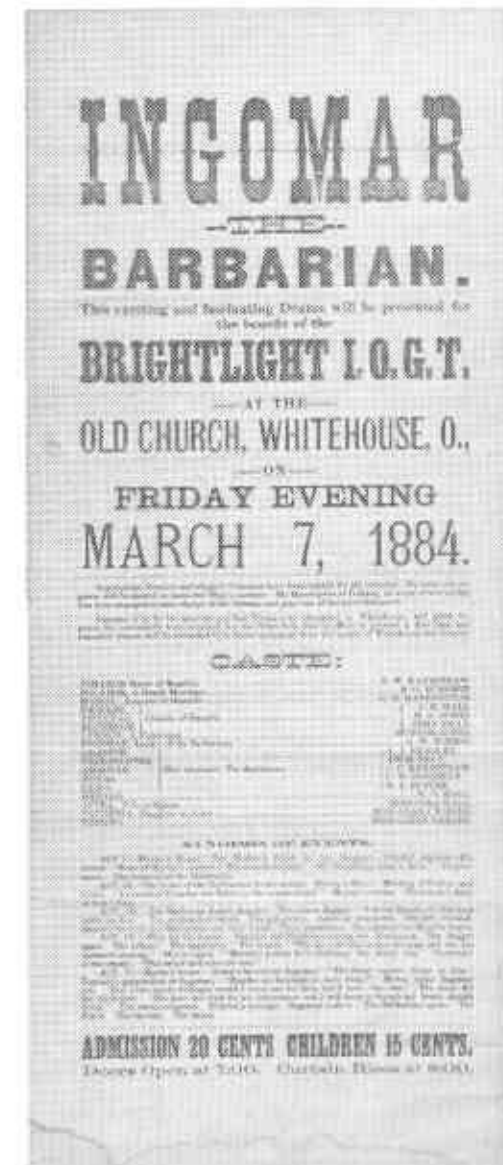
The supply of Haggar's first motion-picture exhibits was soon exhausted – some fourteen films, of less than two minutes duration each, that he had obtained along with his very first triunial lantern. So he bought some film stock and began to make his own movies. 'The Factory Gates at Home Time', football matches, and 'topicals' – where audiences might recognize themselves on the screen – were popular, along with dramatizations of news events and, occasionally, what purported to be 'newsreels' (the Boer War of 1899-1902 was reported from the Rhondda, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 from the snow-clad hills above Rhymney Valley).<sup>29</sup>

Haggar also filmed his own repertory players, and thereby by chance devised the form of cinematic narrative. Alongside comic slapstick, he made serious dramas like *East Lynne* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1907), *The Gladiator's Bride* (1908), *The Sign of the Cross* (1904) and, of course, *Ingomar the Barbarian* (1902).<sup>30</sup> As all these stories were well known, audiences' interest and expectation lay in seeing how spectacularly Haggar would produce them.

Haggar's distribution network was international. He had an agreement with Alfred Claude Bromhead of the Gaumont Company, or rather its British wing.<sup>31</sup> A. C. Bromhead would develop Haggar's films and, in return, the latter would receive a free print together with new film stock with which to make more. Bromhead would, meanwhile, retain the negative and make additional prints. Haggar's *The Poachers* was printed in 480 copies, over one hundred of them going to continental Europe. The films were sold by each foot of reel length: Haggar's *Sign of the Cross* was advertised at 6d per foot: its 700 feet (a sensational eleven and a half minutes) selling for £17 10s.<sup>32</sup> Bromhead sold Haggar's *Poachers* for £5 10s, while Edison and Biograph distributed the same film in the United States. 'Dupe' (duplicate) copying was obviously a risk, and Haggar's *Sign of the Cross* is known to have been pirated in America. The only copyright stipulation that Haggar and Bromhead held to was that no prints should be sold to other showmen in South Wales. Like Pio's of Denmark, a liberalist attitude was maintained for supplies going abroad, whilst the home market was protectionist. Bromhead recalled a business ritual they shared in: that whenever Haggar arrived in the port of Milford Haven, he would send Bromhead a basket of fresh fish.

In the United States, *Ingomar the Barbarian* thrived in the local theatres (fig. 8). The playbill shown in this figure is for a production in Ohio. Another report, from Milwaukee (Wisconsin), mentions that Ingomar's costume furs, soaked in insect powder and benzene, sent the

Figure 8. Playbill for *Ingomar the Barbarian*, at Whitehouse, Ohio (1884). (From a private collection. Reproduced by kind permission of John Nicholson.)



leading actress into convulsions.<sup>33</sup> A similar toga export to the United States derived from the 'pyrodrama', which dated back to an erupting Mount Vesuvius spectacle staged in London parks by 1823.<sup>34</sup> James Pain's New York office staged firework reconstructions of Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* at Coney Island, later touring throughout America. In the early 1900s, separated by a seventy-foot lake, audiences could safely watch Pompeii ablaze, together with 300 choreographed actors, some of them occasionally yelling a line. Next door to Pain's fireworks enclosure on Brighton Beach, the Kalem Company filmed their 1907 version of *Ben-Hur*, borrowing many of Pain's sets and costumes. These borrowings, or rather the drawing from a common toga source, simulate what in economic terms are known as 'extractable fringe units' drawn from a 'common pool resource'. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that in 1908 D. W. Griffith should draw on this same common pool to film his version of *Ingomar*. As the movie industry was heavily litigious, his five-minute bioscope was called *The Barbarian Ingomar*, and its plot re-shaped for an American audience.<sup>35</sup> In 1913 Griffith went on to make his first feature-length film – another toga drama called *Judith of Bethulia*. An argument with the American Biograph Company over the film's distribution caused Griffith to set up on his own. By 1916 the torch that Griffith carried for the toga drama resulted in *Intolerance*, the first epic on a truly colossal scale, beginning a tradition that still thrives today.

## CONCLUSION

In the same year that Griffith filmed *Ingomar*, a US Circuit Court ruled, in May 1908, to prohibit motion pictures being made from a story without the author's permission. The case under consideration was *Ben-Hur* by Lew Wallace. At some point, whether because of the arrival of indoor-seated cinemas or of feature-length films, the common pool of resources that entrepreneurs had been sharing suddenly became worth protecting. The original copyright mechanisms in use may be thought of as a 'common property' regime, designed to prevent congestion or overuse of a common pool resource. With the Griffith epic, the high stakes that were involved could justify more stringent legal regulation. In comparison to twenty-first century international copyright law, the earlier use of a common pool resource, at a less capitalized stage of development, now seems to us unsophisticated. But we can still see how the common pool was drawn on, in Pio's decision to publish a farce version of *Ingomar*, or William Haggar asking his family to appear in his films. Looking at the

stills of early bioscope toga films, one cannot help but wonder whether they represent a last spark of entrepreneurial opportunism, improvisation and play.

But when investigating the *lineage* of such bioscope films, arts and literature scholars are trained, perhaps too well, to analyse an evolution of aesthetic forms. They find that the paternal line of the cinema Bioscope does indeed pass in lineal descent through Photography's resolution of the perspective problem inherited from the quattrocento Renaissance. But there is another lineage to consider also: let us call this the matrilineal – it involves people at country fairs, festivities and 'ghost shows'. When looking at the passage of a work as part of its social and historic fabric, therefore, the event at which each presentation was experienced should also be taken into account. *Ingomar's* father may have been the aristocratic author Friedrich Halm, but his natural mother was the bearded lady in the fairground tent. Thus, to gain this sense of her as a *socialized* event, it seems that the model of the work as being the container of a text, sent out by some authorial agency, mediated by that agency to its eventual receptors, is inadequate. An alternative view might be to think of a field as a 'common pool' resource, adapted and altered by entrepreneurs to conjure up an event. But whatever model is used, it will have to employ other methodologies than those currently utilized in the humanities.

## NOTES

- 1 David Mayer (ed.), *Playing Out the Empire: Ben-Hur and other toga plays and films, 1883–1908: A critical anthology* (Oxford 1994), p.2, n.1. Information on toga drama used in this essay is derived chiefly from this work, unless otherwise stated, while the section concerning Haggar's Bioscope draws on Peter Yorke, *William Haggar, Fairground Film Maker: Biography of a pioneer of the cinema* (Bedlinog (Glam.): Accent Press, 2007).
- 2 Mayer, p.10.
- 3 Lew Wallace, *Ben-Hur* [1880] (repr. Oxford: World's Classics, 1998), 'Introduction' by David Mayer, p.x; and Erroll Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century* (London 1925), p.204.
- 4 Mayer, pp.30-4.
- 5 Ibid. 111-12. For the novel, see Wilson Barrett, *The Sign of the Cross. [A novel based on the play of the same name]* (London 1897). (British Library shelfmark 4414.dd.1.)
- 6 Including French, German, Italian, Danish, Icelandic and Russian as well as English: see The European Library (online search of National

- European Library databases), <http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/index.html> [accessed Jan. 2010].
- 7 Cited in R. B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989), pp.221-7.
- 8 For a scholarly treatment of co-operations in literary forms between the novel and the stage, see Gillian Beer, "'Coming Wonders": Uses of theatre in the Victorian novel', in Marie Axton and Raymond Williams (eds), *English Drama: Forms and development* (Cambridge 1977), 164–85. For a comparative treatment of narrative in literature and film, see Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film* (Ithaca, NY, 1978).
- 9 Maria Anne Lovell (née Lacy, 1803-77) retired from a successful career as an actress after her marriage and began writing plays. Her other productions include 'The Beginning of the End', performed at the Haymarket Theatre in 1855. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (compact edn in 2 vols; Oxford 1975) [hereafter cited as ODNB], i.1242.
- 10 Lovell, *Ingomar the Barbarian, A play in five acts* (London 1855). (British Library shelfmark 11779.a.40.(2).) George Daniel is probably the professional writer of miscellanies (1789-1864), who wrote a number of farces performed after 1818, and a reference work, *British Theatre* (1823-31). He is credited with editing a series entitled 'Davidson's Actable Drama': see ODNB, i.499.
- 11 Lovell, *Ingomar the Barbarian* (New York: French's Standard Drama, 1855). (British Library shelfmark 11754.b.28.)
- 12 See *Ingomar the Barbarian, ... Translated ... altered and adapted for the English Stage by Maria Lovell* (London: Lacy's Acting Editions, 1867); and *Ingomar the Barbarian, A play in Five Acts by Maria Lovell* (London: French's Acting Editions, 1875). The British Library also holds a number of song sheets whose titles refer to *Ingomar* and to Maria Lovell's play. A revival of the play for London audiences included a production by the American actress Mary Anderson in Sept. 1883.
- 13 From George Daniel's Introduction to *Ingomar* (1855 edn). Subsequent citations from this plot summary are from this edition.
- 14 For example, he claims that Massalia's chief official, Timarch, tempts Ingomar to betray his former gang members – not present in Lovell's text in either of its 1855 editions.
- 15 Lovell's 1851 production at Drury Lane is claimed to have owed much of its success to 'the acting of Miss Charlotte Vandenhoff in the character of Parthenia', ODNB, i.1247.
- 16 Robert Reece, 'Ingomar: or the Noble Savage. A drawing room play in one act', in Clement Scott (ed.), *Drawing Room Plays and Parlour Pantomimes* (London 1870). For Ingomar's love song, see Walter Maynard, *Love Described* (London 1881). (British Library shelfmark H.1579.b.(18).)
- 17 For Scott's antipathy to 'new drama' stated in his own words, see the Preface to his *The Drama of Yesterday and Today*, 2 vols (London 1899).
- 18 Carl Borggaard (trans.), *Ørkenens Søn: romantisk Skuespil i 5 akter* (Copenhagen: Royal Theatre Repertoire (No. 149), 1843).
- 19 *Morskabstheatret: Vaudeviller og farcer af Sv. Sv.* [possibly a pseudonym of Valdemar Korfitsen], Nos. 1-19 (Copenhagen: Pio's forlag, 1869-74).
- 20 Aleks Frøland, *Bøger, Bogsalg, Boghandlere: omkring 1875* [Books, Book Shops and Publishers: circa 1875] (Copenhagen 1969), pp. 34-6 (my translation).
- 21 Under normal conditions, the troupe would frequently go hungry, and the actors often had to carry their props and costumes on their backs between engagements.
- 22 Figures from Yorke: his figures tally well with those provided in Arthur H. John and Glanmor Williams (eds), *Glamorgan County History: Vol. V, Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 to 1970* (Cardiff 1980), p.342.
- 23 William Haggard's son Walter, from an unpublished 31-page typescript, dictated by Walter shortly before his death in 1953; cited in Yorke, p.27.
- 24 Ibid. 63.
- 25 Ibid. 62.
- 26 Ibid. 45. See also the National Fairground Archive online database at the University of Sheffield: <http://www.nfa.dept.shef.ac.uk/index.html> [accessed Jan. 2010].
- 27 Chicago-born Loie Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* had been filmed by the Lumière Brothers, c.1899. An online digital edition of the film is accessible from the Internet Archive at: <http://www.archive.org/details/Vuelumiere765DanseSerpentine> [accessed Jan. 2010]. [It is even available now on YouTube.]
- 28 Yorke, p.46. The 1909 Cinematograph Act was instrumental in the demise of the travelling bioscopes in that, because of their horrific

fire risk, it demanded a fireproof enclosure for the projector and projectionist. The First World War imposed further travelling restrictions, and traction engines were requisitioned for the war effort. Almost none of the travelling bioscopes would reopen after the War.

- 29 Ibid. 59 and 81-2. Yorke includes an anecdote of how, during a screening of the 'newsreel', one of the heavily bearded 'soldiers' was recognized as a lad from the town.
- 30 Haggar's masterpiece was *The Maid*, shown in Dec. 1914. At fifty minutes, it was the longest film ever devised at the time of its planning two years earlier. With Shakespearian incorporations, *The Maid* repeats the missing fourth-wall convention of filmed Victorian melodrama, but more importantly it made significant innovations in filmic forms, with outdoor shots, tracking and panning, and depth-of-field shots. It may also have included some footage from an earlier version that had literally worn out. Haggar's *Life of Charles Peace* (1905) contains arguably the first use of a matching cut.
- 31 The main British film distributors at the time were Charles Urban and A. C. Bromhead. Urban, as mentioned earlier, was an American citizen working for Edison, who set up his own business, trading in equipment and film. Motion pictures were made either on commission or bought from film-makers like Haggar. A. C. Bromhead and his brother Reginald were instrumental in the setting up of a company that became known as Gaumont-British. Gaumont subsequently sold and distributed Haggar's films. After the first flush of enthusiasm, at the turn of the century around ten British film-makers, including William Haggar, together with Bromhead and Urban, made up the entire home film industry.
- 32 Yorke, p.48. Bioscope films ran at around 60-70 feet per minute.
- 33 Cited in 'Some Western Anecdotes', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 15 Dec. 1883, p.12.
- 34 Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London 2006), p.279.
- 35 Given Griffith's apparently xenophobic inclinations too, the resolution centres on the 'barbarian' accepting civilized modes of behaviour. Cf. 'The Barbarian, Ingomar', in Mayer, *Playing Out the Empire*, 300-11; and 'The Barbarian, Ingomar', in Paolo Cherchi Usai (ed.), *The Griffith Project: Vol. 1: Films produced 1907-1908* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), pp.117-21.