

# Introduction: A New Approach to European Cinema History

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*Cinema Beyond the City* is the first book to look at the dynamics and diversity of film culture in small-town and rural Europe. Since the early days of Lumière's cinematograph, film exhibitors have brought moving pictures to towns, villages and farming communities in the countryside. Across Europe, these consumers constitute a considerable percentage of cinema's potential audience, today as well as in the past. Yet we know remarkably little about their experience of the film medium. In the historiography as well as in the public mind, the cinema is equated with urban modernity and typically conceived as a quintessential metropolitan medium: an entertainment product of the big city and for the big city.

The emphasis on 'cinema and the city' in film scholarship is understandable. The medium has its roots in the metropolitan mass culture of the late nineteenth century, and many later innovations in film production, distribution and exhibition came from major urban centres like Paris, London, Berlin, New York and Los Angeles. At the same time, this monolithic focus has not only obscured the history of moviegoing in the hinterlands, but also moulded our understanding of cinema's relation to modern life.<sup>1</sup> A 'crude city-rural dichotomy' structures much of the industry and academic discourse on non-urban film culture, whereby the country is usually represented as 'backward and disconnected from the current trends', Karina Aveyard observes.<sup>2</sup> Explicitly or implicitly the metropolitan experience of the cinema is often (not always) taken as the norm. Hence, as Robert C. Allen points out, 'it has been difficult to see regional or demographic differences as anything other than aberrations or the result of a lag in the pace of modernization'.<sup>3</sup>

A few years after its invention, the cinema itself had already set the tone. In *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901), a short movie directed by the British filmmaker Robert William Paul, the main character is portrayed as the archetypal rube who does not understand the modern world. Even the most uneducated urban spectators of Paul's film were invited to laugh at his behaviour which implies a misconception of what the cinema is about. The catalogue describes the countryman as 'a yokel in the audience' who becomes overexcited by what he sees on the screen. He climbs upon the stage to try to dance with the ballerina in the film, runs off into the wings when he sees an express train and, in the final scene, in which he makes love to a dairy maid, 'becomes so enraged that he tears down the screen, disclosing the projector and the operator, whom he severely handles'.<sup>4</sup> *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* and Edison's remake *Uncle Josh at the Picture Show* (1902) are usually interpreted as humorous exaggerations of how early audiences reacted to the novelty of the movies. Yet these short comedies also suggest an essential difference between the urban and the rural



experience of the cinema, a notion that was reiterated time and again by contemporary observers and later scholars.<sup>5</sup>

Let me take the example of Christian Metz, one of the most prominent film theorists of his generation. In *Le signifiant imaginaire* (*The Imaginary Signifier*), Metz differentiates between two modes of affective participation with the cinema, each of which is defined by a particular filmic-viewer relationship and type of audience behaviour.<sup>6</sup> These are not just structural archetypes, as he assigns them to specific places and spaces, and by doing so turns them into stereotypes of urban and rural cinemagoers. On the one hand, Metz positions 'the spectator who, as our society prescribes, is immobile and silent' and who belongs to the 'big city and its anonymous and silent cinemas'.<sup>7</sup> On the other, he defines a filmic state and mode of behaviour that he associates with 'the audience of children, the rural audience, the community audience where everybody knows everybody else, [and] the audience with little schooling', and which he geographically situates in the countryside:

those film shows (some still exist, for example in villages or small towns of countries like France or Italy) where one can see the spectators, often young children, sometimes adults, rise from their seats, gesticulate, shout encouragement to the hero of the story, and insult the 'bad guy'.<sup>8</sup>

Like *The Countryman and the Cinematograph*, Metz not only considers the rural spectator 'exuberant' and 'unselfconscious', but also looks down upon these country people: they are uneducated and behave like children in the cinema, 'confusing film and reality'.<sup>9</sup> As Frank Kessler points out, in Metz's theory of spectatorship the metropolitan audience sets the standard and represents the normative viewer. More precisely, it is the audience of the Parisian cinemas that Metz frequented himself, the movie theatres of the Grands Boulevards where he saw the latest Hollywood pictures, the art houses of the Quartier Latin and, last but not least, the Cinémathèque Française.<sup>10</sup>

*The Imaginary Signifier* exemplifies how the fixation with a certain type of metropolitan audience leads to biased conceptualisations of the cinematic experience. We find a similar tendency to broad generalisations and reductive conclusions in the field of film historiography. For the past twenty years, Robert Allen has criticised the 'Gothamcentrism' and 'Manhattan myopia' in historical narratives of moviegoing and social life in the United States and called for a 'decentering of historical audience studies'.<sup>11</sup> As he points out, 'we cannot map big-city exhibition patterns upon the quite different situations to be found in smaller cities and towns'.<sup>12</sup> And, one might add, neither can we map American patterns upon the quite different situations found in Europe. A recent and particularly relevant issue in this respect is the debate around 'cinema's second birth', a term introduced by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion to describe the institutionalisation of the film medium during the 1910s, that is the constitution of the cinema as a set of clearly demarcated production, exhibition and viewing practices that defines its autonomy and identity vis-à-vis other media.<sup>13</sup> According to Paul Moore, their thesis 'consolidates several historiographical claims', but is it also valid for Europe?<sup>14</sup> In the United States and Canada, mainstream film culture was strongly regulated and homogenised by the Hollywood studio system – both in the major urban centres and small-town contexts.<sup>15</sup> However, when we observe cinema's development from a European angle and through empirical studies of



film circulation in its hinterlands, we discover a much greater and enduring diversity of exhibition practices, distribution strategies and cinematic experiences.<sup>16</sup>

This volume, then, takes up the challenge to draw the contours of an alternative, more inclusive and nuanced historical account of cinema's development as a social, cultural and economic institution. Individually and together, the chapters explore the distinctive qualities of film culture in the European countryside, but also provide insight into what binds metropolitan, small-town and rural audiences. Moreover, despite different backgrounds, research questions and approaches, the contributors share a common interest in understanding the place that the cinema occupied in the lives of its audiences. In doing so, they identify with the aims of the New Cinema History. Over the past decade, this term has come to signify a radical 'shift away from the content of films to consider their circulation and consumption, and to examine the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange', as Richard Maltby explains.<sup>17</sup> New Cinema History is also characterised by a wide range of methodological approaches, from micro-histories of local moviegoing to quantitative analyses of national patterns in cinema distribution and exhibition. As editors, we understand this emerging field more specifically in terms of a 'social turn' in film historiography. Thus *Cinema Beyond the City* puts the social experience of the audience at the centre in order to understand cinema's relationship to the changing conditions of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people in the countryside.<sup>18</sup> Allen argues that one way to make it easier to address cinema's relation to society at large is to remove the metropolis from the centre of study.<sup>19</sup> We agree that 'the country' gives film scholars a different agenda and a different set of priorities about what to study and how to study it. However, we kept 'the city' within the present volume. In our view, the flows back and forth between city and countryside, the common ground between centres and peripheries, as well as the regional dynamics within national borders, are essential to understanding the meaning of filmgoing as a sociocultural experience. Similarly, the cinema cannot be isolated from the surrounding entertainment and social landscape or the structural changes in everyday life that occurred as a result of increased urbanisation, rural industrialisation, secularisation and the development of mass consumer capitalism.<sup>20</sup>

To capture these concerns and others that cross-cut the chapters, we have organised the volume thematically rather than geographically. The first part regroups three micro-studies of local film presentation and reception which together deepen our understanding of the various ways in which 'the local' shapes film culture. The essays in the second part revolve around regional patterns and urban-rural comparisons in specific national contexts. In the third, the focus is on the rich diversity of alternative practices and places that characterise the rural experience of cinemagoing. The volume rounds off with a part that investigates regional film exhibition in the age of the multiplex, and looks in more detail at the continuities and discontinuities in the history of small-town and rural film consumption. Within each part, the contributions are engaged with different time frames and these are organised in more or less chronological order. In the overview that follows, the discussion of the individual chapters attempts to point out their relevance beyond that of the specific subject of investigation and to highlight the interconnections between the different case studies. Its goal is to give the readers a preliminary comparative framework to understand the larger social and historical processes at work in European film culture.



## LOCAL DYNAMICS

The first section explores the 'particularity of place', a term which John Caughie introduces in his opening essay about small-town cinema in Scotland. It is by focusing on the early decades of permanent film exhibition in Bo'ness, a harbour town on the Scottish mainland, and Lerwick, the capital of the Shetland Islands, that Caughie immediately confronts us with the diversity and uneven development of small-town film culture. In both port towns, permanent cinema became a feature of everyday life in the early 1910s, but cinema's status in each community was fundamentally different. In Bo'ness, new movie theatres were welcomed and endorsed by the church, the town council and the press as a rational and respectable entertainment with civic significance. Variety entertainment was a crucial factor localising the experience of cinemagoing and it remained on the bill of most cinemas well into the 1920s. In fact, the live acts on the bill were often given more attention in the publicity and reviews than the movies. Caughie argues that variety's persistence in Bo'ness, despite the ongoing process of standardisation of film distribution and exhibition nationally, hints at the importance attached by its patrons to a participatory form of entertainment. By contrast, the North Star cinema in remote Lerwick, the most northern cinema in the UK, was never integrated into the existing public sphere of civil society. Tellingly, it was the company's accountant, an outsider from Aberdeen, who officially opened the new theatre, whereas the first purpose-built cinema in Bo'ness was welcomed with a speech by the local Provost (the Scottish equivalent of a mayor). Right from the start, the programmes of the North Star looked more like those of a metropolitan cinema than a small-town venue, consisting almost exclusively of films. Along with other evidence collected by Caughie, the absence of live entertainment, especially from local dramatic clubs, suggests that the Shetlands' one and only permanent movie theatre constituted a separate social space, more or less dissociated from other aspects of civic life on the island, except for a few instances in the summer when it catered to the largely transient fishermen population.

Caughie's contribution is the first in this volume that draws our attention to the ways in which the unique combinations of geography, demographics, religious and civic attitudes and existing traditions of entertainment shaped cinema's reception and function as a public sphere on the local level. At the same time, he raises the question of how the fragmented nature of small-town cinema culture can be woven into a larger historical narrative. Caughie aligns with Derek Sayer's idea of a montage of *petites narratives*, which seems an appropriate solution for writing a cinema history of a nation that could not rely on an indigenous film production for identity formation around the film medium.<sup>21</sup> Still, from the perspective of comparative history and the bigger story that needs to be told, the question is how can we move beyond a patchwork of local stories?

The second chapter by social historian Dörthe Gruttmann, who deals with film exhibition and reception in rural Germany, offers in a sense the beginning of an answer. Unlike Scotland, Germany had a major indigenous film industry and its products strongly defined the notion of its cinema culture. However, here too we find a diversity of practices, even within the homogeneously Catholic region of the 'black' Münsterland, which is the object of Gruttmann's study. In her precise analysis of film culture in Telgte and Billerbeck, she discusses the integration of the cinema into the



deeply religious and closely knit Catholic milieu of rural Westphalia. The establishment of permanent movie theatres was successfully blocked in both market towns until 1945. Although their way was paved by travelling showmen, the film exhibitors who operated permanent movie theatres in the post-war era still had to overcome deep-seated suspicion and fierce resistance by the clergy, the municipal council and Catholic associations. Dignitaries and authorities closely collaborated to contain 'foreign' cultural and social influences, frequently developing grass-roots actions to 'improve' local film culture. Resistance was strongest against the pioneers who came from the outside and who literally and figuratively embodied the alleged dangers of metropolitan modernity. Significant is the example of a Protestant couple of film exhibitors from Berlin who managed with great difficulty to establish a cinema in the hall of a Billerbeck hotel after the war, but ultimately failed in the face of competition from a town resident, a beer brewer with strong ties to the community and enough money to build a new cinema. Thanks to her micro-analytical approach, Gruttmann provides not only detailed insight into the social, cultural and economic tensions at work on the local level, but also convincingly argues that despite the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, small-town film culture in Westphalia was shaped by an interplay between top-down directives and bottom-up initiatives, by local and supra-local influences.

In the last chapter in this part, Tim Snelson takes up the question of the particularity of place from the perspective of two British seaside resorts, focusing on how economic and social imperatives shaped post-war cinemagoing in Great Yarmouth and its much smaller neighbour Gorleston-on-Sea. The particularities of film exhibition in seaside towns seem almost self-evident with their seasonal influx of holidaymakers, but Snelson observes remarkable differences in how movie theatres dealt with highly fluctuating market conditions and negotiated the often conflicting demands of locals and tourists, many of whom came from the big cities and had rather a different idea of what constituted a good 'night out' than small-town audiences. In Yarmouth, exhibitors not only targeted different audiences in the on- and off-season, but also differentiated between weekday and weekend programmes to ensure a steady income from the widest possible patronage, even if it meant programming more raucous fare. Family-friendly films and stage shows offered working-class tourists and their children 'something special', whereas X-rated horror and other exploitation films were put on the bill to attract local youths, initially on weeknights and in winter when the tourist trade was slow, but in the 1970s on a more regular basis. In Gorleston, a small Edwardian seaside town with two 1,000-seat cinemas for a population of slightly under 5,000, Snelson found that film exhibitors were more status-conscious and showed a stronger commitment to maintaining middle-class respectability in accordance with the make-up of the local population and the resort's older and more affluent tourist clientele. Hence, unlike their colleagues in Yarmouth, they kept the same middlebrow fare throughout the year and maintained a 'film-only' policy, leaving more participatory and boisterous forms of entertainment to other venues. However, faced with declining attendance, both cinemas were hard pressed to survive and by 1964 one had already been transformed into a bingo hall, a fate common to many movie theatres across the UK and a typical British phenomenon. The other theatre closed five years later, turning Gorleston into one of the many British small towns without a cinema – a pattern of decline that can be witnessed across Europe from the early 1960s onwards.



## REGIONAL PATTERNS

While the micro-historical enquiries in the first part may raise issues about generalisation and representativeness, the comparative approach of analysing two towns still invites scholars to move beyond the 'village level' and make connections between particular circumstances and developments which may otherwise have seemed marginal or unique. More importantly, these case studies open the way for a more comprehensive level of analysis, especially when combined with large-scale national and more quantitative studies.<sup>22</sup>

The opening essay of this second section exemplifies how interdisciplinary collaboration and the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches allow for a better understanding of the place of hinterland audiences within national frameworks of distribution, exhibition and reception. Combining methods and insights from history and social geography, Åsa Jernudd and Mats Lundmark look at regional patterns in Swedish film exhibition and address the question to what extent the experience of rural cinema audiences differed from the metropolitan experience of moviegoing. By mapping the precise locations of 35mm film outlets, their seating capacity and ownership structure, the authors create a context for understanding film exhibition in the county of Jämtland, an agricultural region in the north of Sweden. Their research focuses on the 1940s, when the country witnessed a sharp, nationwide rise in cinema attendance and equally sharp growth in the number of film exhibition outlets, a development that has been largely ignored by Swedish film scholars, who have concentrated instead on the concomitant boom in film production. The flourishing of the domestic film industry partly explains the growing popularity of cinemagoing, and Jernudd and Lundmark provide with their study of Jämtland indirect evidence for the preference of Swedish audiences for Swedish films.<sup>23</sup> However, they take an altogether different angle to the subject of the thriving film culture in the early decades of the Swedish welfare state by exploring the geographic, economic and sociopolitical conditions for its emergence.

Characteristic of the Swedish market in 1940s was a strong urban-rural contrast in terms of ownership. Whereas a handful of vertically integrated corporate companies monopolised film exhibition in the big cities and large towns, civil society organisations occupied a key position in rural regions due to their ownership of multipurpose halls, leaving small, independent cinema businesses squeezed between the interests of these two players, the first with economic power, the second with political clout. Thanks to a combined process of centralisation and institutionalisation, civil society cinemas – mostly run by either the workers' movement or the temperance movement – boomed in the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the People's Houses concentrating in the industrialised countryside and the temperance houses in agricultural regions. In Jämtland, the majority of the cinemas were located in farming communities and had been operated by independent commercial exhibitors in multipurpose venues since the early twentieth century. With the exception of a few People's Houses, these halls were owned by the local divisions of the temperance movement, which had a stronghold in the region. However, in the 1940s, many civic societies took over the control of their venue, deciding to run their own cinema venture with the support of national umbrella organisations that provided the films. Although these in-house cinemas officially operated on a not-for-profit basis, they represented a vital source of income for the



societies as the returns were often used to maintain the building or sponsor less lucrative cultural and social activities. By the early 1950s, the non-commercial sector was good for almost 30 per cent of the Jämtland market.

Along with the research of several other authors in this volume, Jernudd and Lundmark's study reveals the centrality of multipurpose halls in the history of rural cinema, an importance that raises new questions about film exhibition at the intersection of ideological, social and commercial constraints. The examples from Sweden, France, Germany and the Netherlands suggest a significant and continued interrelationship between moviegoing and other realms of public life well into the 1950s. In the period of early cinema, a similar permeability of film consumption and civic society also characterised the urban experience of the cinema, especially on the neighbourhood level, but in cities and larger towns it seems that the boundaries were redressed with the medium's institutionalisation during 'cinema's second birth'.

Like Jernudd and Lundmark, Thissen's contribution uses a combination of meta-level and micro-level analysis to shed light on the geographical differences in cinema provision and film culture in the Netherlands, not only between big cities, small towns and villages, but also depending on factors like religion, secularisation and industrialisation. Drawing on the existing historiography, notably Karel Dibbets's quantitative study of the Dutch market, Thissen provides an analysis of the rural-urban dynamics in the exhibition sector against the backdrop of the sociocultural and political compartmentalisation of Dutch society into a Protestant, Catholic, socialist and liberal pillar. Her study then zooms in on the Protestant countryside, in particular on eastern Groningen, an agro-industrial zone where the cinema attendance approached metropolitan levels despite the region's remote and rural character. By focusing on the demographic make-up of the local population and the broader sociopolitical context, Thissen is able to show how class, religion and municipal policies shaped the business opportunities for film exhibitors. What also emerges from her work is the strong connotation of cinema with metropolitan modernity, which she traces in the public discourse and publicity materials, and in the very names given to movie theatres, such as 'Metropole' and 'Modern'. Most striking is the popularity of the name 'City' (always in English) in the Netherlands, which literally conflates 'going to the cinema' and 'going to the city'. This name-giving draws our attention to the question of how the geography of national film culture was experienced by small-town and rural audiences, a question that is addressed in the next two chapters, which make extensive use of oral history.

Social historian Corinne Marache examines the relationship between film culture and rural life in the Gironde, a department in the south-west of France. With the help of the historical society of Coutras, she interviewed former exhibitors and audience members to understand cinema's place in rural society from the 1920s until the early 1960s. In the first part of the chapter, she brings alive the forgotten history of the ambulant projectionists who toured the French countryside well into the post-war era. In 1947, an estimated 12,000 locations in France were served by travelling exhibitors using 16mm film.<sup>24</sup> Rain or shine, they toured long distances by bicycle or motorbike transporting their portable equipment in a little cart. They went from village to village on a fixed weekly circuit approved by the CNC (*Centre national du cinéma*) and in the early evening would set up their show in a village hall or café, helped by local residents to whom they offered a cheap and much welcomed pastime. Each week, these showmen



brought a new programme, mostly consisting of old films – a few shorts and a feature, which they rented in Bordeaux where all the major distributors had an office. On Monday, they personally picked up the copies, returned the ones that they had used the previous week and began their next round. When reading the stories of these travelling showmen, the emblematic figure of the village postman in *Jour de fête* (1949) comes to mind. Of course, Jacques Tati's film was made in precisely those transformative years when the French countryside was rapidly modernising, bringing along new pleasures and challenges which the film maker captured with humour and compassion.

In the south-west of France, the first permanent cinemas appeared in Bordeaux around 1910, but their regional diffusion was slow. Ambulant showmen continued to serve the smaller cities and larger towns. This began to gradually change after World War I when the first permanent movie theatres opened in smaller towns. The construction boom was part of a much wider modernisation effort. From the 1920s on, many French small towns underwent an architectural makeover as municipalities invested in new schools, post offices, streets, squares and sporting facilities. By the end of the 1930s, most *petites villes* in the Gironde had a permanent movie theatre and many of them stood out for their resolutely modernist architecture. In the reminiscences of small-town moviegoers that Marache collected, both the cinema buildings and the entertainment experience were strongly associated with urban modernity. However, respondents also pointed out that going to the movies was intertwined with more traditional forms of sociability, with dating and dancing, local *fêtes* and *foires*. More generally, social life in the rural countryside was still governed in many respects by the cyclical rhythm of farming. In the summer, there was less time for leisure because of the farm work and related agricultural, agro-industrial and household activities. This was not only the case in France, but also elsewhere in rural Europe. Moreover, with the growing prosperity and mobility in the post-war era, many preferred a trip to the sea rather than to the cinema. Tim Snelson notes that in the 1960s the majority of tourists in Great Yarmouth and nearby beaches came from the big cities, but a considerable number also came from the rural hinterland of the Norfolk coast.

For much of the twentieth century, the choice in films and exhibition spaces was typically quite limited for those in the countryside. The elderly French who shared their movie memories with Marache were well aware that the pictures that they watched in their youth at the local cinema were seldom recent releases. Yet they did not resent that their peers in Paris and Bordeaux were much more up-to-date and, at least in retrospect, the delay in time and lack of choice were presented as an inevitable consequence of living in the countryside. However, other contributions to this collection suggest that rural audiences in France were worse off than elsewhere in Europe. In 1948, audiences in Coutras, a market town situated 65 kilometres east of Bordeaux with which it was linked by a direct railway connection, saw only three films out of eighty-six that were less than a year old. More importantly, 85 per cent were more than two years old, including the vast majority of the French films, which dominated the bill. By contrast, in Östersund, 550 kilometres north of Stockholm, 82 per cent of the Swedish films and 40 per cent of the Hollywood films were shown less than three months after their national release in the capital. Even in the remote villages of Jämtland, the film produce was still fresher than in Coutras. This did not necessarily imply that audiences in the rural Gironde were not part of the national film culture. For one,



French film culture was not so much about seeing the latest films, but about loving the cinema. Especially in the post-war era, the discourse of cinephilia took the form of an almost nationalist cultural discourse, asserting an intimate and unique historical relationship between the French and cinematography. More generally, the time lag between a film's national release and its local screening also had positive side-effects. As Matthew Jones notes in his chapter on rural film culture in Britain, months of waiting and pre-talk could enhance the experience of cinemagoing, especially for an (inter) national box-office hit. Marache's respondents recalled that there were long queues for hit movies when they finally arrived in their town and people were advised to buy tickets well in advance. Small-town movie screenings of big pictures were often local events, even if they took place long after a film's first run in metropolitan cinemas. Growing up in the Dutch countryside, I remember the excitement when ten weeks after the national release in Amsterdam, some girls in my high-school class had managed to secure tickets for the local premiere of *Grease* (1978) – the ultimate happening for those of us who were hopelessly devoted to John Travolta.

Viewers' memories are often unreliable, especially where films are concerned. Objectivity is elusive, Matthew Jones remarks in his reflection on the methodological problems that arise when researchers use oral history for understanding the practices and preferences of cinema audiences. He works with questionnaires and interviews that were collected in the context of the AHRC-funded research project *Cultural Memory and British Cinemagoing in the 1960s* led by Melvyn Stokes. Jones is concerned with discovering the trends that emerge from these qualitative data and considers the result of his analysis as one version of the 1960s – a version that has been constructed and narrated by people who experienced the cinema in the countryside during the decade that witnessed its demise as a mass entertainment medium. By taking the hybrid and open approach to oral history that Jones advocates, researchers can identify broad trends without losing the unique character of each individual cinema experience.

One of the remarkable findings of his research is that despite the fact that many movie theatres in the UK were closing down in the 1960s, even more so in the countryside than in the big cities, the memories of rural cinemagoers seem not to have been affected by this dramatic transformation. Because of the growth in car ownership, people could travel longer distances in a shorter time. Before the 1950s, it was not unusual for people to walk an hour to see a film or to spend even longer time on a bus journey. After local competitors had closed their doors, many of the surviving small-town film exhibitors could remain in business because people's radius of action drastically increased with car ownership. Yet there is more to this new perspective on cinema's relationship to mass auto-mobility. As Jones convincingly argues, cars became 'spaces in which cinema memories were formed and resurfaced'. Moreover, what happened in the car on the way to and from the movie theatre may well have been more memorable than the cinema experience itself.

Jones's goal is to generate insight into the social and cultural characteristics of British film culture in the countryside in relation to the nation as a whole. He therefore explores how national patterns in film consumption were reflected in the memories of his rural and small-town respondents. In the case of Hollywood cinema, it seems that their taste did not differ significantly from city dwellers. However, when focusing on two highly popular urban film genres in 1960s British cinema – the



hedonistic 'swinging London' films and the gritty 'kitchen-sink dramas' situated in the industrial north – the respondents' geographic context does seem to have influenced their understanding and appreciation of particular films. To most rural and small-town viewers, the fashionable youth scene of swinging London represented an unfamiliar world, which seemed very different from their own way of life. Many were curious about the capital and some admitted that they wanted 'to live in London' when they were young. With the gritty stories that were set in urban, working-class milieux in northern England, most respondents identified in terms of similarity rather than dissimilarity. The social problems that were tackled in kitchen-sink dramas were often familiar and indeed sometimes 'too much like real life', as one respondent put it. Remarks like this reveal that it was not only an urban-rural bias that shaped the reception of genres, but also the class background and aspirations of individual audience members. It is at the conjunction of multiple demographic factors that we have to understand the experiences and meanings of the cinema as a social and cultural phenomenon, both in and outside the city. Hence, the methodological challenge remains to avoid reducing the enormous diversity of cinema audiences and experiences by subsuming them into abstract container categories like 'urban', 'metropolitan', 'small-town' and 'rural' without further analytical differentiation and nuance, but also without getting stuck in too many details. Jones's proposition to think in terms of 'trends' is very helpful in this respect, especially in combination with his practice of systematically integrating individual quotes from respondents in his analysis to remind us of the unique experience of the individual viewer within the broader collective framework.

## ALTERNATIVE EXHIBITION PRACTICES

Part III concentrates on one of the long-term trends that can be discerned in the history of European film culture: the wide range of alternative exhibition formats and contexts in which audiences encountered the movies when they lived in villages and hamlets, or in small towns where there was no permanent cinema. In many respects, film exhibition in rural Europe escaped the processes of institutionalisation and standardisation that took place in the mainstream urban markets across the Western world, and especially in the United States and Canada. By the end of the 1910s, the permanent movie theatre had become the dominant *dispositif* in which films were exhibited and watched in North American cities and towns. Elaborating on Gaudreault and Marion, Paul Moore argues that, from the point of view of film exhibition, it is above all the emergence of the movie theatre as 'an autonomous social space distinct from other entertainments' that characterises cinema's second birth.<sup>25</sup> However, as Yvonne Zimmermann observes, 'the institutionalization of the cinema as the signature site of film consumption in urbanised regions' did not prevent the medium's continued alliance with other cultural, social and economic practices. Indeed, in most parts of rural Europe, the movies never found 'a place of their own' and film exhibitors continued to operate in other venues, mostly in multipurpose halls. The four chapters in this part all examine aspects of alternative exhibition and together they provide insight into the multiple ways in which the film medium was embedded in existing and new sociocultural spheres inside and outside of the commercial film sector.



In the opening chapter on corporate film screenings in Switzerland, Yvonne Zimmermann returns to questions raised by Richard Maltby about cinema's function as an agent of consumerism. However, she shifts the perspective from theatrical to non-theatrical exhibition and from Hollywood and American economic expansionism to the use of the cinema as a promoter of consumer culture by the Swiss food industry.<sup>26</sup> Her analysis focuses in particular on the road shows of the Maggi Food Corporation. Initially consisting of slide-illustrated lectures, its programmes later also included short silent films with a live commentary. In addition to free admission, audiences were lured with a soup degustation during the break. From the early 1900s until the 1960s, the company toured the country with these programmes and tastings during the winter season, using schools, gyms and local halls and targeting children and women as their main audience. Entertainment, education and marketing went hand in hand. The Maggi movies, especially the company's *Heimat*-films about Swiss mountain regions, carefully aligned the promotion of modernisation with traditional family and patriotic values in order to convince potential consumers to buy its foodstuffs and help rural audiences in particular to adjust to a rapidly industrialising world. Key to understanding the nationwide popularity of Maggi's shows, Zimmermann argues, was the fact that they maintained the mode of address and participatory reception of early cinema. In addition, in many rural parts of the country there was little choice of film entertainment. With some rare exceptions, commercial travelling shows disappeared in Switzerland with the introduction of permanent cinemas. In their absence, the corporate film shows by Maggi and other large corporations (e.g. Suchard and Nestlé) played a central role in the familiarisation of rural populations with cinemagoing as a sociocultural practice, Zimmermann concludes. At the same time, these road shows were set up as a marketing and advertising instrument for product industries. People did not have to pay to see the films, but ultimately the screenings were profit-driven. In fact, one could argue that the convergence of film as cultural artefact and social experience on the one hand, and vehicle of consumer capitalism, on the other, was rarely as strong as in the context of corporate film shows.

Thunnis van Oort explores further manifestations of non-theatrical exhibition, concentrating like Zimmermann on for-profit enterprises. His chapter deals with ambulant exhibition in the Netherlands after the 'classical period' of tent shows. In the standard historiographical narrative, commercial travelling cinema was a short-lived exhibition format, a phenomenon strongly associated with the medium's early development that allegedly died out with the breakthrough of permanent movie theatres in the 1910s. However, like earlier contributions in this volume, Van Oort's study of ambulant film exhibition in the Netherlands demonstrates that the traditional account of cinema's development does not do any justice to the dynamics of rural film exhibition. Tent shows, a seasonal fairground business in cities as well as the hinterlands, disappeared during the interwar period. Ambulant film exhibition in multipurpose halls, on the other hand, thrived from the 1930s until the late 1950s in the Dutch countryside. Hotel-restaurant-café complexes with large multifunctional auditoria became the dominant film outlet in localities where the economy would not support a permanent movie theatre. In Catholic provinces, travelling shows were also frequently given in communal halls that were part of the public sphere of the church. We see a similar phenomenon in France, where parish cinemas operated on a commercial



basis, but remained within the strict control of the clergy. Whether operating in the neutral sphere of the market or under the influence of the religious/ideological institutions, permanent exhibitors considered their ambulant counterparts a threat to their own business. As Van Oort points out, the repeated efforts by the Netherlands Cinema Alliance (NBB) to regulate and restrict the travelling trade strongly suggest that ambulant shows were a non-negligible economic force on the market. During the 1940s and the early 1950s, this market segment continued to grow, as did the number of venues served by travelling exhibitors. These were the heydays of rural cinemagoing in the Netherlands. A total of sixteen ambulant operators were active in this period and several of them became major players outside the big cities and provincial capitals. The latter were typically organised as regional family-owned chains and combined the operation of permanent movie theatres in the larger market towns with so-called 'weekend-cinemas' in smaller towns and villages. In addition, most chains served a circuit of villages that were visited only once or twice a month. In other words, these chains served a wide range of localities with different formats and business models. Spreading risk and maintaining a considerable degree of flexibility to upgrade or downsize operations in the travelling sector were key to their success and temporary survival, when rural cinema attendance began to drop sharply in the early 1960s, following the national trend that had set in a few years before. By the end of the decade, the ambulant business was no longer profitable and most weekend-cinemas were closed down. Only a handful of marginal entrepreneurs survived and they worked outside the commercial market.

In a nutshell, this is the revised history of travelling film exhibitors in the Netherlands. Some aspects of this story can be generalised for other European countries, notably the persistence of ambulant cinema in multipurpose halls well into the post-war era and the many partnerships with owners of hotels and café-restaurants. However, the scale and scope of the travelling business in the Netherlands seems exceptional and related to the particularities of the Dutch market, which for most of the twentieth century had a much lower attendance rate per capita than neighbouring countries. Ambulant exhibitors filled a gap which did not exist elsewhere in Europe, where permanent cinema had gained a much stronger foothold in small towns during the interwar years.

With a sharp focus on institutional structures and strategies, Mélisande Leventopoulos examines the ways in which the French Catholic youth movements sought to shape the film taste of rural adolescences during the cinema boom of the late 1940s and 1950s. Like Dörthe Gruttmann (Chapter 2), she breaks away from the usual approach to Catholics and the movies, which concentrates on film censorship, to investigate the Church's direct involvement in film exhibition in the broader context of Catholic cultural politics. Since the late nineteenth century, the French Catholic Church had extensively used mass entertainment media, magic lantern shows and illustrated magazines in particular to fight the 'religious recession' and strengthen Catholicism. In the early 1900s, in response to the growing popularity of the cinematograph, parish priests began to organise screenings to lure children and teenagers away from commercial cinemas – a development that we witnessed in Catholic regions across Europe. After World War I, hundreds of multifunctional parish halls in France were equipped with a 9.5mm Pathé-bébé or 17.5mm Pathé-rural projector to show



free films in the context of youth work and other educational programmes. At the same time, new Catholic halls opened that were used primarily as cinemas and catered to the general public. Run by travelling showmen and serving all ages, these 'family cinemas' charged admission and operated within the realm of commercial film exhibition, but with the restriction that they only showed 'good films', meaning films approved by the central Catholic censorship organisation.

On the eve of World War II, France counted about 1,500 Catholic cinema halls. In this respect, the Church was rather well equipped to respond to the post-war boom in attendance among rural youths, especially in strongholds like Bretagne and the Loire Valley/Centre region where family cinemas proliferated. However, its leadership lacked a vision on film education. A strong anxiety about the corrupting influence of commercial cinema had been the main rationale behind the Catholic involvement in film exhibition during the interwar period. This attitude changed radically after the war, when a new generation of Catholic militants, mostly students, came to the forefront and embraced the cinema as 'the people's university of the future'. Starting within the Parisian branch of the youth movement for Catholic students and its working-class counterpart, a new infrastructure for film education was set up which ranged from a technical support system to the development of film analysis courses and the coordination of a Catholic *ciné-club* circuit. Unlike the more localised and bottom-up initiatives that Gruttmann found in the small-town Catholic milieu of Westphalia, these French initiatives followed rigid top-down principles of organisation with Paris functioning as the absolute centre from where cultural politics were disseminated via regional militants to local activists in small towns and villages.

Leventopoulos details how the Catholic rural youth movement (*Jeunesse agricole chrétienne*) began to educate rural youths about the cinema and guide them in their choice of films by integrating film reviews, plot summaries, background articles and quizzes in their monthly and bi-weekly magazines. The militants of the young rural women's branch ardently embraced the discourse of a popular cinephilia based on the Catholic faith. They not only promoted films that were approved by the central Catholic censorship organisation, but also explicitly advocated for faithful representations of country life in French cinema and for more films with rural themes and peasant heroes with whom country girls and boys could identify. In the mid-1950s, the rural youth organisation moved to the next level of Catholic film action and launched its own network of *ciné-clubs*. The adoption of the *ciné-club* format meant a quite radical break with the past because the clubs operated entirely outside the commercial sector. The obligatory membership to gain admission may have posed an initial barrier, but the main problem was that the films were selected by the central office in Paris and reflected an urban, more intellectual appreciation of cinema. Put simply, the programmes did not match the popular taste of rural audiences. Moreover, the post-screening discussions were often a disaster because the rank-and-file members did not know how to talk about films. Learning from this initial miscalculation, the urban format was adapted to the rural context, but Catholic *ciné-clubs* remained a marginal phenomenon in the countryside and most of them vanished during the 1960s. In retrospect, however, the tradition of a cinephilic engagement with the movies turned out to be quite resilient in rural France. *Art & Essai* cinemas do well in the French countryside, as we will see in more detail in Kristian Feigelson's chapter in the final section of this volume.



Despite the radically different geopolitical context, there are some interesting overlaps between the Catholic *ciné-clubs* of 1950s France and the rural film clubs that were organised in the German youth movement of late 1960s and the 1970s, which Gunter Mahlerwein discusses in the final chapter of Part III. In the post-1968 decade, the youth movement was the most important form of grass-roots activism among rural adolescents in the German Federal Republic. An urban phenomenon at first, it soon spread to the countryside, where the demand for an autonomous youth centre – outside the influence of the municipality, church and existing associations – was frequently met with fierce resistance because it was perceived as an overt protest against the traditional social and cultural order. Influenced by American and British rock music as well as left-wing politics, youth centre activists developed an alternative culture in which the cinema was integrated by way of monthly film nights, which consisted of a screening followed by critical discussion. The film programmes were typically set up by a special film team of cinephiles, who often developed a taste for art cinema by reading specialised literature, attending discussions with young film-makers, and visiting art-house cinemas in nearby cities. In most cases, the film team was responsible for the selection of films, which sometimes led to heated debates because their predilection for art-house films was not necessarily shared by other youngsters. In most youth centres such conflicts were solved by implementing more democratic selection practices and programming a broader range of films, alternating between ‘hard-core’ art cinema and more accessible movies. The need to find a balance between art and entertainment, intellectual and popular sensibilities, was a recurring problem for rural film clubs, regardless of the historical context. In the big city, there usually was and is a large enough audience to support a strictly art-house programme, but in the countryside the aesthetic ambitions of cinephile programmers are usually tempered by economic and social constraints. At the same time, art cinema has a continued presence in the countryside, which seems to have its roots in the various youth movements of the post-war era.

Again we can begin to aggregate research findings and observations. What appears from these contributions about alternative exhibition practices is the need for a more specific historiography of filmgoing in rural settings. Rural film culture is marked by an amazing diversity of sites and situations, which calls for further exploration and categorisation. More importantly, its history is characterised by a qualitative difference in the way the cinema operated as a cultural practice and social experience. For rural audiences, the experience of filmgoing remained diverse and fragmented to such a degree that we might ask ourselves to what extent these viewers participated in the mass entertainment culture that was rooted in the permanent movie theatre as the preferred site of capitalist film consumption with an ideologically defined set of rules in respect to exhibition practices and audience behaviour.

## CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The final essays in this volume each offer a long-term perspective on contemporary trends in small-town and rural film exhibition. By putting the present in contrast with the past, the authors provide further insight into the historical continuities and discontinuities that have been discussed with varying emphasis in the first three sections.



Karina Aveyard traces the history of community cinemas in Britain from the foundation of the first film society in London in 1925 until present-day developments in volunteer-led film exhibition, whereby she explores the interplay between initiatives on the grass-roots level and the broader political discourse on film as culture and educational instrument. Like the French *ciné-clubs*, film societies were initially an urban phenomenon and a rather elitist endeavour with their condemnation of popular movies and almost exclusive focus on avant-garde cinema, documentaries, classics from the silent era and other non-mainstream cinematic forms. After the war, in the context of left-wing cultural politics committed to elevating the taste of the lower classes, the film societies expanded their social and geographical basis. While cinema admissions plummeted, the movement flourished from the 1950s until the late 1970s, notably in small towns in rural Yorkshire, Scotland and the south-west, where commercial film exhibition was almost inexistent. Technological innovation is an important factor in understanding patterns of growth and decline in alternative, volunteer-led film exhibition. The widespread availability of 16mm copies spurred the growth of film societies in the post-war era, whereas the emergence of home video and the launch of movie channel Film4 heralded their decline in the 1980s. Since the late 1990s, there has been a resurgence of community cinemas, most strongly again in rural regions with a low density of movie theatres. This recent growth can partly be explained by the advent of user-friendly and relatively inexpensive exhibition technologies (DVD, Blu-ray and portable projectors). However, as Aveyard convincingly argues, the enthusiasm for community cinema cannot solely be accounted for in terms of opportunities created by new technologies. Volunteer-led film exhibition requires active engagement on the organisational level and a continued commitment to social and cultural ideals, as she points out. Her analysis also makes clear that these ideals have considerably shifted over time in response to changes in the public discourse on the cinema as well as changing notions of rural sustainability. Whereas first-wave community cinemas were strongly engaged with film education and appreciation, today's film clubs typically have a different vocation. A significant number still promotes film appreciation in the tradition of the film societies, but more frequently the screenings are primarily organised and perceived as social events that foster community cohesion. As a result, the programming revolves no longer around art-house genres, but typically consists of mainstream films that have already proved their success at the box office.

In sharp contrast to the United Kingdom, where the contemporary political climate attributes a minor role to the government to assure cultural access in rural regions, Kristian Feigelson's case study of a community cinema in Die, a semi-rural small town in the Rhône-Alpes region of France, shows that pro-cinema policies can make a real difference to people who live in rural regions, where most traditional movie theatres have closed down and which are ignored by the big multiplex companies. Although today the provision of cinemas in municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants is extremely low in France, especially compared to the boom period of the 1950s, paradoxically, these smaller localities represent about half of the total number of cinemas that are classified *Art & Essai*, an official art-house label which stipulates that a considerable part of the programme is devoted to quality cinema. In fact, recent statistics reveal that in many rural and semi-rural *départements*, art houses dominate the market and their market share continues to grow year by year. As Feigelson observes,



this remarkable development challenges common-sense notions of cultural geography, although it must be said that the large majority of these venues also show mainstream movies and would not survive without the *Art & Essai* subvention and financial support of the local municipality. This is also the case with Le Pestel in Die, which has been owned by the town since 1985 but is rented out to a private entrepreneur. With empathy for the challenges of running an art-house cinema in the countryside, Feigelson details the theatre's programming practices, social engagement with the Die community, policy of cultural diversity and participation in the international East-West Festival. Thanks to government support and the idealism, enthusiasm and commitment of its managers and volunteers, Le Pestel maintains the French cinephilic tradition and manages to survive in an increasingly competitive market in which the majors leave little room for independent cinemas.

What transpires in the history of Le Pestel is a strong commitment to post-1968 ideals of community activism, which we also see in Mahlerwein's study and which may have played a role in the recent resurgence of volunteer film exhibition in the UK as well, as it coincided with the retirement of the first cohorts of the baby-boom generation. Aveyard notes that in rural Norfolk the initiative for a film club often comes from higher-educated retirees who recently moved there from London. In respect to the demographic dynamics, it is significant that in the UK as well as in France, community cinemas primarily attract a clientele well above the age of cinema's core audience. In the final chapter, Stuart Hanson raises the question of age and the future of small-town film exhibition. Young people (age group fifteen to twenty-five) have historically constituted the core audience of movie theatres. In the French countryside, youngsters nowadays prefer to travel long distances to multiplex complexes to see the latest Hollywood and French blockbusters. They shun independent mono-screen movie theatres like Le Pestel, which only offer mainstream films weeks after their national release and in general favour the less commercial art-house fare. More data are needed to establish the film preferences and practices of their peers in other parts of Europe, but existing evidence suggests that there is not much reason to believe that art-house style cinephilia has much of a future outside metropolitan Europe, with the exception perhaps of student towns. In any case, the greying clientele for traditional movie theatres represents a ticking bomb under state-subsidised film exhibition in rural France and even more so in other countries where rural regions do not benefit from a structural, ideologically motivated government support system for independent cinemas and quality programming.

The last two chapters examine key trends and major transformations in the spatial distribution of cinemas, combining film-historical data and insights with perspectives from social geography and urban planning. Daniel Biltreyst and Lies Van de Vijver offer a longitudinal analysis of film exhibition in Flanders, one of the most densely-settled regions in Europe. Despite its size, Belgium has been a lucrative market since the early 1900s, with a provision of cinemas and attendance rates that are only surpassed in Europe by the United Kingdom. The proliferation of film venues can be partly explained by the importance of the non-commercial sector. From the 1920s until the 1960s, about a third of the film outlets were run by religious and political organisations which each used the cinema to attract people who belonged to their sphere of influence. Like elsewhere in Europe, cinema attendance in Belgium decreased



dramatically from the late 1950s onwards and as a result of the decline the structure of the market fundamentally changed. Small, family-owned businesses that operated mono-screen cinemas disappeared and film exhibition was increasingly controlled by a small group of big players that operated multiscreen venues. The decline in film venues was particularly sharp in small towns and villages, whereas the number of screens in metropolitan Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, and in the main provincial cities, remained more or less stable. A key moment in Belgian cinema history was the opening of the twenty-five-screen Kinopolis complex in Brussels in 1989, only four years after the first European multiplex opened in Milton Keynes in Britain. The Kinopolis Group became market leader in Belgium and with 110 screens the company holds a near monopoly in the main segments of the national market.

Biltreyt and Van de Vijver apply theories of spatial functional hierarchies to gain insight into the geographical distribution of cinemas across time and to understand how different networks of film exhibition operate in present-day Flanders. In the early twentieth century, the boom in permanent cinemas spread from the three metropolitan centres – Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent – to the main provincial cities and from there to small towns in more rural areas during the interwar period. At the turn of the twentieth century, after several decades in which rural and small-town cinemas represented a considerable segment of the exhibition sector, they conclude that cinemagoing has become once again an essentially urban leisure-time activity that is concentrated in the big cities and metropolitan agglomerations – a development similar to that observed in many European countries. Although in Flanders the dichotomy between city and countryside is increasingly blurred because of urban sprawl, functional hierarchies between urban networks still hold and determine the fields in which the different players operate. The authors found a strong correlation indeed: the activities of the multiplex companies are concentrated in metropolitan areas and major regional centres, whereas independent commercial exhibitors operate in smaller cities and niche markets that are left aside by the majors.

In the final chapter, we return to the United Kingdom, which for a large part of the twentieth century left the rest of Europe far behind in terms of cinema attendance and which represents today the largest and most developed multiplex market within the EU. Whereas Aveyard's contribution emphasises rural film exhibition, which in Britain has become an almost entirely volunteer-led affair, Stuart Hanson deals with the latest trends in commercial film exhibition: the re-emergence of the movie theatre as a key feature of the urban landscape, especially in medium-sized cities and smaller towns. Since the opening of The Point in Milton Keynes, the number of multiplex cinemas continued to grow in the context of increased suburbanisation and planning policies that encouraged the emergence of out-of-town shopping and leisure centres. However, since the mid-2000s, cinema's place in the town centre has been re-established, Hansen argues, both in the public discourse and in actual practice. His contribution underlines the importance of studying policy shifts in urban planning and economic legislation to understand the changing geography of new cinema construction. The growing emphasis on 'urban regeneration', especially under Tony Blair's Labour governments, resulted in new mixed retail and leisure developments in many inner cities across Britain and the opening of new multiplexes by both national players and smaller regional multiplex operators. However, not all regions profit from this new trend in the same way.



Smaller market towns, especially in more rural regions, continue to lose their cinemas as traditional venues close and the multiplex companies are not interested in taking their place. However, in some of these towns, the gap is filled by independent exhibitors who renovate old mono-screen movie theatres and operate them as second-run cinemas on a business model that has been developed to serve community interests. As in the case of Le Pestel in Die, key to the success of this new generation of independent cinema operators is a close relationship with the local community. Regular moviegoers are encouraged to participate in a membership system which offers them special benefits like reduced ticket prices and special members' events. At the same time, these members reinforce the economic sustainability of the venue and its function as a social space.

At the end of this volume, the conclusion that cinema has become once again an urban entertainment is difficult to avoid. At the same time, the research in the final section hints at the persistence of a range of independent, community-centred initiatives that aim at keeping the social and cultural experience of filmgoing alive in rural regions. As Gunter Mahlerwein points out, there is a long tradition in the countryside of cultural self-organisation.

The new film medium had its roots in the big city, but travelling showmen brought the cinema to the country not long after the first presentations to metropolitan audiences. In later decades, the movies became a more permanent feature of social life in towns and villages, although rarely a daily routine. What did the cinema mean to people who lived in Europe's hinterlands? There is no simple answer to this question. There are no simple analytical frames to be adopted, no one-dimensional methods of interpretation that may satisfactorily reveal the meaning of filmgoing in the European countryside – any more than there is a single, essential metropolitan experience of the cinema. However, the metropolitan ideal of cinema did become the paradigm of film historiography. With this volume we have shed a different light on European film culture by looking at its dynamics and diversity from the perspective of the periphery. It is our hope that the contributions in this book will stimulate more innovative and comparative approaches to the history of cinemagoing in Europe and elsewhere, while encouraging other disciplines to discover what might be learned from film historians.

## NOTES

1. For the American historiographical debate on this issue, see the introduction and conclusion of Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley (ed.), *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) as well as Robert C. Allen's contribution in this volume of essays about small-town and rural cinemagoing in the United States. See also Robert C. Allen, 'Race, Region, and Rusticity: Relocating U.S. Film History', in Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes and Robert C. Allen (eds), *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), pp. 25–44.
2. Karina Aveyard, *Lure of the Big Screen: Cinema in Rural Australia and the United Kingdom* (Bristol: Intellect Press, 2014), p. 3.
3. Robert C. Allen, 'Decentering Historical Audience Studies: A Modest Proposal', in Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, p. 22.



4. 'The Countryman and the Cinematograph (1901)', BFI Screen online, [www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/444455/](http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/444455/), accessed 13 June 2015.
5. Cf. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Discipline through Diegesis: The Rube Film between "Attractions" and "Narrative Integration"', in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 211–14.
6. Christian Metz, *Le signifiant imaginaire* (1977). Quotes are from the English translation: *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 103.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
10. Frank Kessler, 'La salle en ville comme dispositif', in Laurent Creton and Kira Kitsopaniidou (eds), *Les salles de cinéma: Enjeux, défis et perspectives* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), pp. 53–4. It is telling in this respect that the working-class patrons of Parisian neighbourhood cinemas (a 'community audience' of people with 'little schooling') are erased from his metropolitan model and integrated in the rural archetype. As we know from historical sources, many of them were recent migrants from the countryside. Metz acknowledges that he offers just 'one ethnography of the filmic state'; other variations are possible – depending on the cultural, social and geographical contexts, but he situates these other modes outside Western countries. *Imaginary Signifier*, pp. 138–9.
11. See in particular Allen, 'Race, Region, and Rusticity', pp. 25–44, and 'Decentering Historical Audience Studies', pp. 20–33. See also Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley and George Potamianos, 'Introduction: Researching and Writing the History of Local Moviegoing', in Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, pp. 3–9.
12. Robert C. Allen, 'Manhattan Myopia; or, Oh! Iowa!', *Cinema Journal* vol. 35 no. 3 (Spring 1996), p. 97.
13. André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, 'A Medium Is Always Born Twice', *Early Popular Visual Culture* vol. 3 no.1 (2005), pp. 3–15. See also Paul S. Moore, 'The Grand Opening of the Movie Theatre in the Second Birth of Cinema', *Early Popular Visual Culture* vol. 11 no. 2 (2013), pp. 113–25.
14. Moore, 'The Grand Opening of the Movie Theatre in the Second Birth of Cinema', p. 113.
15. See, for instance, Gregory A. Waller, *Mainstream Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kathy Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996); Fuller-Seeley, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*.
16. It should be noted that the homogenising tendency of Hollywood is partly magnified by film historiography. For one, North American scholarship on small-town and rural film exhibition (e.g. Waller, Fuller, Potamianos, Klenotic) has focused primarily on the era of silent cinema. For another, little attention has been paid to non-theatrical venues where films continued to be screened after the emergence of permanent movie theatres (e.g. churches, multipurpose halls and community centres). A broader approach in time and scope may well generate a richer and more differentiated understanding of Hollywood's impact on film culture in the American hinterlands.
17. Richard Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories', in Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers (eds), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 3.



18. Cf. Richard Maltby, 'On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below', *Tijdschrift voor mediageschiedenis* vol. 9 no. 2 (2006), pp. 85–7.
19. Allen, 'Decentering Historical Audience Studies', p. 22.
20. Cf. Maltby, 'On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below', pp. 84–91.
21. Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 7.
22. Cf. Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories', pp. 13–14.
23. On the importance of domestic films, see Andrea Sisto and Roberto Zanola, 'Cinema Attendance in Europe', *Applied Economics Letters* vol. 17 no. 5 (2010), p. 516.
24. Claude Forest, *Les dernières séances: Cent ans d'exploitation des salles de cinéma* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1995), p. 80.
25. Moore, 'The Grand Opening of the Movie Theatre in the Second Birth of Cinema', p. 114.
26. Maltby, 'On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below', pp. 87–90.