Gert Jan Harkema

The new within the old, the old within hin the new: *transmediality and the introduction of the kinematograph in the case of Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse (1898)*

This paper outlines the transmedial associations that projected moving images introduced at the end of the nineteenth century, by locating an unidentified, lost film within the mediated popular imagination of nineteenth-century audiences in the Netherlands. From 1897 to 1906 the German-Belgian showman Henri Grünkorn travelled extensively to Dutch fairgrounds and theatres with his kinematograph, a German-produced projector that he actually advertised as Lumière's Cinématographe. His main attraction in the summer of 1898 seemed to be a collection of scenes called *Aladin met zijn wonderlamp* ("Aladdin with his magic lamp"). The Aladdin scenes were part of his show,[1] which also included three scenes on the "history of magic", some spectacular actualities from the Spanish-American war, and a scene based on *Don Quixote* and the opera *Faust* in three scenes (fig.1). Grünkorn's show brought a typical mix of scenes, or *bewegende lichtbeelden* ("moving light-images"), that represented the range of relations that moving images had with other media, such as theatre, literature, opera and photography. In particular, the Aladdin reels are interesting, because they consisted of two acts or parts (*afdeeling*) in four scenes (*tafreelen* [*sic*]). This echoed the tradition of popular theatre and pantomime shows. Moreover, the small number of newspapers that reflected upon Grünkorn's show mentioned the Aladdins as the audience's favourites. What is striking, is that historically these scenes appear a few years too early. The first Aladdin film according to the received historiographies is an 1899 production by G.A. Smith, but that film was only 79 feet/ 24 meters long, which does not correspond in length as this is only one scene. Most likely, Grünkorn had bought a copy from Pathé Frères as he promoted the film as "this moment's sensation piece in Paris". Yet, Aladdin films do not appear in the Pathé catalogues until 1900, while the earliest version, described as *scène de féerie en 45 tableaux*, does not match the announced structure. Hence, we seem to be dealing here with an unidentified film. However, a 1901 catalogue by Georges Mendel, an early trader of Pathé Frères films in Paris, mentions a series of films named *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* that matches the two parts and four scenes structure. Unfortunately the film is considered lost, but the Mendel catalogue states that *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* consisted of four reels with a length of 20 meters each.[2] Projected, this length translates to around four one-minute presentations. During projection, there must have been breaks between the reels, which allowed the showman to explain the scenes.

While the film reels are presumably lost, descriptions and advertisements can tell us a lot about how these scenes related to practices in nineteenth-century popular culture. These scenes of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp are interesting for a number of reasons. Even though one could say that they forecast the narrative form of cinema after 1906, and are thus possibly very 'cinematic', the scenes also related the kinematograph to various traditions of nineteenth-century entertainment, in particular, theatre plays, pantomime ballet, variety shows, and illustrated books about Aladdin. Hence, the kinematograph scenes drew upon the popular imagination concerning Aladdin. As this overarching imagination was situated in medium-specific manifestations, we could also call this a transmedial story of Aladdin.

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1   The English spelling 'Aladdin' is used when the name is not employed as part of an original title.

2   I thank André Gaudreault for scanning the pages from the Georges Mendel catalogue and sending them to me, as well as Frank Kessler for suggesting that Grünkorn's version was the Pathé version.

Electrische Cinematograaf
Systeem Lumière.
Wetenschappelijke en Origineele uit-
vinding gebreveteerd S. G. D. G.
Groote vertooningen der
BEWEGENDE LICHTBEELDEN.
Gezien den bijval dien wij bekomen
hebben in Frankrijk, Belgïe en Neder-
land hebben wij het genoegen het
geöerde publiek iets nieuws en inte-
ressants te laten zien.
ALS HOOFDNUMMERS:
Aladin met zijn Wonderlamp.
Geschiedenis uit de Duizend en een
Nacht, hetwelk op het oogenblik het
sensatie-nummer te Parijs is; in 2
afdeelingen en 4 tafreelen.
Het tooverpaleis. Toovergo-
schiedenis in 3 tafreelen.
De Oorlog tusschen Spanje
en Amerika. Actualiteit, Sensatie-
nummer.
Don Quichotte en zijn page
Sancho Pancho; Spaansche dolende
ridder geschiedenis. (Comisch).
De gevleckte Faust. In 3 ta-
freelen. Afgeleid uit de opera Faust.
Moordaanslag onder de re-
geering van Frans I. (Historisch).
Ontploffing der Merrimac.
(Actualiteit.)
De laatste Patronen. De slag
bij Bazeilles; episode uit den Fransch-
Duitschen Oorlog (Historisch.)
Verder verschillende komieke en
hoogst interessante nummers zoowel
voor kinderen als volwassenen.
Wij wijzen speciaal op het
systeem Lumière, dat zonder
trilling plaats heeft en voor
de toeschouwers de volmaakt-
ste zekerheid oplevert, door
aanwending van Electriciteit.
Entrée 1ste Rang ƒ 0.25, 2e Rang
ƒ 0.15, 3de Rang (staanplaatsen) ƒ 0.10.
Aanbevelend, **H. GRÜNKORN.**
Elke middag Kinder- en Familie-
voorstelling met extra daarvoor ge-
kozen Pro

Fig. 1: Advertise-
ment for the ‚Electric
Cinématographe' by
Henri Grünkorn. *Rot-*
terdamsch Nieuwsblad,
August 15, 1898.

Since the narrative and form of that story changed over time, this is not the same transmedial storytelling process as is discussed by Henry Jenkins, who emphasises how "integral elements of a fiction get dispersed *systematically* (…) creating a *unified* and *coordinated* entertainment experience" (Jenkins, 2011). Rather, transmediality in the case of Aladdin can be seen as a kind of shared imagination which viewers held in common. Even though the stories changed significantly across platforms and were not explicitly connected, they all echoed not just orientalism, but also the nineteenth-century audience's enthusiasm for artificial light, transformation, and mechanics. Transmediality in this respect is the "appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media" (Rajewsky, 2005: 46). Yet, while a theatre play, a book, or a series of films addresses the same transmedial phenomenon, they are always located within the specifics of the individual medium, as proposed by Irina Rajewsky. Meanwhile, in contrast to adaptation, a direct link to an original is "irrelevant or impossible" (Rajewsky, 2002: 13). Therefore, as I argue in this paper, the scenes involving Aladdin and his wonderful lamp that Henri Grünkorn included in his show can be seen as a kind of double mechanism with regard to transmediality: on the one hand, it brought the new invention of projected moving images to the familiar tradition of theatre and pantomime, a process wherein the new medium of the kinematograph became part of an older paradigm of attractions popularised in the course of modernity. At the same time, telling a familiar story through a new medium invited early cinema audiences to recognise the singularities and specific capabilities of the moving image machine.

In the first section of this paper I will briefly outline how the transmedial story of Aladdin was popularised in the Netherlands. The second part deals with the transmedial imagination that Aladdin represented while situating the scenes from *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* in this context. In the last part of this paper I will propose that this transmedial connection had a twofold effect: on the one hand, it brought the new medium of the kinematograph closer to familiar cultural practices while, on the other

hand, it created the opportunity for the new medium to arouse a medium-
-specific experience.

Aladdin and nineteenth-century entertainment

During the nineteenth century the tale of Aladdin and his magic lamp became
increasingly popular with audiences. Although the story was introduced in
the eighteenth century, it gained more attention in other media formats after
1800. A German translation of Adam Oehlenschläger's version circulated
after 1808, and it is likely that earlier French versions also travelled to the
Dutch library, although I have not found any instances before 1853. In the
course of the 1800s the story of Aladdin was translated to a range of media
platforms. By then, orientalism as the European-centralist, hierarchical,
worldview determined the conceptualization of the world (Said, 1978). The
nineteenth century saw an increase of orientalist entertainments. With
the rise of urban theatre culture, the Orient became a successful source for
theatre plays as well as panoramas and other amusements. But, as Edward
Ziter describes, these bright and colorful productions that represented an
Orient that "is not the Orient as object of imperial objectivity, but an Orient
that confronts the spectator with a character so different as to 'defy des-
cription.' Mastery folds before an absorbing confusion" (Ziter, 2003: 29).
Within this popular orientalist entertainment the story of Aladdin gained
significance in European countries such as England, France and Denmark,
as well as in the United States. The situation in the Netherlands was similar
(De Hond, 2004). A brief study of historical newspapers shows an increasing
appetite for the story expressed through multiple forms of entertainment
and media. The earliest version of Aladdin on stage that I have found in the
Netherlands was produced in 1825. This was a pantomime ballet performance
written by a Dutch playwright, A.P. Voitus van Hamme, with music by R.C.
van Goens. It premiered in Amsterdam at the *stadsschouwburg* (city theatre).
Around the same time, between 1829 and 1831, a nine-part illustrated Dutch
translation of *A Thousand and One Nights* was published as well. The pantomime
ballet returned to the Amsterdam city theatre several times. During the first
re-appearance it played for almost two years, between 1837 and 1839, while the
show was also briefly performed in The Hague. A reworked version of this
production appeared on the same stage in 1847, and again in 1868. By then
the pantomime was re-edited from three into two acts. In 1875, this version
was again changed as it was shown at a different location in Amsterdam, at
Paleis voor Volksvleit. Meanwhile, in The Hague's Theatre Royal Française,
a *féerie* show ("a grand opera ballet in five acts and a grand spectacle") played
in the autumn of 1834.

   In 1870 a version was introduced at the Grand Theatre in Amsterdam.
This show was in the new (micro) genre of *tooverkluchtspel* ("magic farce
comedy"), which could either indicate a relation to the *féerie* genre or imply
that there was a magic lantern involved in the show as well. This was a va-
riety show in three acts (or 'parts') and ten scenes, including songs, parades,
dances and fights. As there was not yet a tradition of entertainment reviews
in the Dutch newspapers, newspaper coverage is limited to advertisements
and programs.

A third stage version of Aladdin and his magic lamp was also more of a comedy. This was a play presented in Rotterdam that was shown in a fairground theatre in 1890. Regarding this show, a reviewer remarked the set design was so good that it might arouse a dream-like feeling for the viewer. Five years later, in 1895, there appeared another variety of the Aladdin story on stage. Again, at the Grand Theatre in Amsterdam, an English-American vaudeville company came with the show "Aladin [*sic*] of the Wonderlamp, Fin de Siècle". Also, in 1891, the Pulchri Gallery in The Hague exhibited a series of paintings that recounted the fairytale. Meanwhile, the story had also spread through print media. Between 1877 and the early 1890s at least three illustrated books were published. One of them was specifically a children's book, while the other two were based on printed lithographs.

It is in this long tradition that Henri Grünkorn's exhibition of the kinematograph should be contextualised. Charles Musser has shown that a specific characteristic of cinema's earliest narrative productions was their reliance on the audience's familiarity with the stories that were portrayed (Musser, 1991). This allowed film producers to make the early narrative films more fragmented, as the length of reels was limited. The case of Aladdin is interesting in this respect. It tells the story in a rather fragmented fashion by showing just four key moments, presumably with breaks between each reel. According to the catalogue, each reel corresponds to a separate scene while still relating to the familiar fairy tale. If we approach this as a multi-scene narrative, there are gaps or ellipses in between the reels that were possibly completed by the lecturer. However, we have to bear in mind that narration might not have been the dominant mode during these early screenings as monstration was also part of the attraction. [3]

As a result, in terms of narrative, the *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* version that Grünkorn projected differed significantly from the representations on stage and in books. However, deviations from the 'original' story were far from an exception. Stemming from an oral tradition, any notion of an 'original' Aladdin narrative is already problematic even though Antoine Galland's translation was often approached as the standard. As far as I have been able to determine, there seemed to be substantial differences between the Aladdin stories, to the extent that we can hardly speak of a process of adaptation. While the popular pantomime version by Voitus van Hamme remained close to the 'original' by telling a story of a lower-class Aladdin who falls in love with a princess, the moving picture scenes display a story without any princess at all. While in the pantomime Aladdin lives with his mother and sister, the 1898 film version is situated around the death of his father and a jealous uncle. Although the films are lost, the Pathé catalogue describes four scenes in which Aladdin mourns his father's death. His jealous uncle locks him away in a basement where Aladdin sees a lamp, and a fairy appears. The fairy changes Aladdin to a prince and the basement changes into a palace. In the third scene he receives his father's possessions which his uncle stole. The fourth and last installment provides a moral dilemma, as Aladdin saves his uncle from the devil.

Based on the descriptions, *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse*, similar to many other productions, hardly related to the coherent story told through different media. Hence, transmediality in the case of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp was dispersed and fragmented. As Rajewsky explains, "adaptation from

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3   See Gaudreault, 2009.

a contact-making original medium [*Ursprungsmediums*] is irrelevant or impossible" (Rajewsky, 2002: 13). The transmedial story of Aladdin seemed to act like an umbrella, containing many different versions around a few central themes. Yet, as the story changed depending on which media platform the narrative was encountered, all productions and versions were aligned to some concept of Aladdin.

Transmedial imagination

The productions in the course of the nineteenth century all seem to relate to a more abstract version of the Aladdin story. More than a story or narrative, the different versions of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp communicated an imaginary world. Already in 1890 *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* wrote that the Aladdin story with its magic and its "air of mystery" was the ideal counterpart to the rational attitude of the nineteenth century (*Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 August 1890). The most obvious imagination involved is that of 'the Orient'. However, as Edward Said outlines, the Orient is above all a construct by Europeans to define their own civilization in relation to the Other (Said, 1978: 9–10). Consequently, according to Ziter, the rise of popular orientalist entertainment during these years can only be understood in the context of a "loss of classical order" and modernity's effort to come to terms with the new situation, or a newly installed *episteme* (Ziter, 2003: 10). Thus the imagination is not so much the real space of the Orient as an imagination of modernity itself. This relation between the West and 'the Orient' also became evident at world exhibitions where non-European cultures became spectacles next to western technologies and inventions (Mitchell, 1989). Therefore, the story of Aladdin entailed not just an imagination of an oriental world far away. It also reflected a response that dealt with the rapidly changing environment typical of late nineteenth-century modernity. Broadly speaking, one may suppose that the themes involved the popular imagination. Yet, as I would like to emphasise, their embeddedness in specific medium practices implies a process that may be characterised as involving a form of 'transmedial imagination.' Such a process is often referred to implicitly. Yet, I think there are certain themes that indirectly recur throughout the multiple Aladdin installations, while they were also manifest in the film version that Grünkorn exhibited, though each time in a medium-specific manner. Thus the transmedial popular imagination included the attraction of artificial light, the notion of a sudden transformation (of space and surroundings), and the visual motif of the complete world within the viewer's reach. This is not to say that these themes are encountered only in representations of the Aladdin tale. On the contrary, it is quite possible that early cinema at large was involved with these issues. However, the tradition of Aladdin makes it possible to trace a continuous interest in these themes throughout nineteenth-century entertainment.

For example, although the 1895 vaudeville show "Aladin of the Wonderlamp, Fin de Siècle" received hardly any attention in the newspapers, there were two articles separated by two days that both referred to technical failures with artificial lighting. But when these problems were solved, "Aladdin's light shone bright" (*Nieuws van den Dag*, 26 July 1895). On its own, this sounds rather trivial, but when we consider the Aladdin shows of previous decades, we recognise that the issue of artificial light seemed a key attraction in the story of Aladdin. A seemingly meaningless brief anecdotal joke in an 1874 newspaper also mentions a farmer and his wife going to see the

Aladdin comedy, but leaving before the show starts because they mistake the gas lamp for the actual performance. The script for the pantomime ballet version also mentions the importance of the lighting. Ending an intense love scene in which Aladdin declares his love to the princess, at the moment of departure, "the light burns spontaneously, spreading a beautiful and bright light" (*De Telegraaf*, 24 July 1895).

Another seemingly insignificant mention of Aladdin was in the marketing of lamps. During the nineteenth century, Aladdin became a cultural trope that was easily recognised by newspaper readers. Hence, several gas-light producers in 1893 marketed their lamps as "wonderful lamps", linking their product to the larger imagination around the oriental story. The *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* scenes that Grünkorn showed to the public in 1898 also drew on the theme of artificial light. As Laurent Mannoni and Tom Gunning remind us, the appeal of early cinema was very much an attraction associated with light, corresponding to a fascination with artificial lighting in the nineteenth century (Mannoni 2000).[4] Artificial light intensified the kinematograph's association with electricity. Similarly, Grünkorn advertised his device as an "Electrical Cinematograph" from Lumière since this was the only device that gave a bright and stable image. Movement through light signified dynamic and mechanical energy as well as the dematerialization of the image (Gunning, 2012). Even though the attraction of light is located in the projection of films, we can also recognise a fascination with artificial light within the scenes, in the diegetic world. Just as the pantomime show had a special moment around the wonderful lamp, the Pathé catalogue draws our attention to the importance of a wonderful lamp that *shines*.

A second recurring theme across the different Aladdin stories is the notion of a sudden transformation. Most obviously, the transformation in the Aladdin story is the sudden change in social position. Even though the stories differ a lot, in all the versions that I have found there is a transformation that involves class, status, and financial circumstances. The pantomime of Voitus van Hamme that was re-edited on a number of occasions tells of a love story between a poor Aladdin and the princess. Similarly, the transformation in the 1898 Pathé Frères version portrays an inversion of the hierarchy of the family when, Aladdin, once on his throne, needs to save his uncle.

At the same time, the motif of transformation also centered on visual and spatial metamorphoses: rapid changes of scenes and costumes, and the sudden appearance of the genie from the lamp. Similar to the theme of light, the potential of the medium was vital to the modes of transformation. In his book *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, Edward Ziter describes how changing theatre practices coincided with the involvement of orientalism in "a new spatial logic" in which the surrounding space became more important than the individual exotic object (Ziter, 2003: 5–6). As a result, the arrangement of scenes and views gained significance. A review in *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* of an 1890 comedy that played in Rotterdam specifically celebrated the constant changes and the successful *changements à vue*. The costumes and decors changed rapidly, while "ghosts and fairies appeared at every turn" (*Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 12 August, 1890). A review of the vaudeville version from 1895 also notes the vast diversity of scenes. It was common practice to end a show with an apotheosis in which all the characters and various scenes

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4   On the attraction of artificial light in the nineteenth century see Schivelbusch, 1988; Nye, 1992.

would be celebrated. The notion of an Aladdin-like transformation surpassed the Aladdin performances as it developed into a metaphor. For example, rapid illusions by a magician in the city of Leeuwarden were explained as if the showman was "Aladdin in the possession of his wonderful lamp" (*Leeuwarder Courant*, 6 February 1896).

As a result, rapid visual transformations were also part of the film version. Quite possibly, *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* originated from the tradition of the *féerie*, a French genre of stage entertainment that centered on visual spectacle and magic tricks, and made the rapid mechanical transformation of décor an attraction in its own right (Kessler, 2012; Singer Kovacs, 1976).The Aladdin reels are an early example of this. Even though the *féerie* might not have been as common in the Netherlands as in its native country, the genre was still quite popular. In the second scene, it is light that catches Aladdin's attention. He touches the lamp and a "mechanical" change appears. Then, "suddenly, through the change of a wall, the basement [where Aladdin is locked up by his uncle] changes into a palace." At the end, there is another sudden spatial transformation. After Aladdin decides to help his uncle dispel the devil, the wall that changed the basement into a palace reverses again, and the palace goes up in smoke. Through editing, the moving images had the unique possibility of making transformations of scenes even faster and more impressive than in theatre or magic lantern shows. At the same time, the kinematograph was marketed as a device that mechanically transformed still images into movement. However, I have not found a comparison between media in contemporary reviews.

In the course of the 1890s, Aladdin had become something that many people could relate to. Themes of the magic lamp and the story's hero were used as metaphors to depict all kinds of events, from emotions to politics. The wonderlamp often signified wishes too good to be true or just a sudden transformation, while the concept of Aladdin repeatedly suggested an emotional state of surprise.

A third imagination was one related to the visual demonstration of the complete world within the viewer's reach. This suggests a desire to have the distant optically present at the subject's demand. This corresponds to what Timothy Mitchell, writing on world exhibitions in the nineteenth century, calls "rendering up the world as a thing to be viewed" (Mitchell, 1989: 220). In November 1875, for example, *Nieuws van den Dag* published a syndicated piece on an exhibition in Philadelphia that included a panorama so big that it would have been the fulfillment of Aladdin's wishes. As explained above, orientalism already encouraged a European-centered imagination to explore and 'view' the distant world, and the Aladdin story responded to that. The construction of The Crystal Palace in London, for example, was also explained to Dutch readers of *Groninger Courant* as a realization of Aladdin's world of magic because it would show views from all over the world.

Above all, Aladdin seemed to be a story of vision and visuality that denoted new encounters and novel impressions that originated in different places in the urban, modern world. The popularity of illustrated books for adults and children filled with lithographs indicates a visual interest in the story. The importance of decor with stage versions of the Aladdin story confirms the importance of visual illusion. At times, set designers were explicitly mentioned in reviews. Even though the earliest film version of *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* was diegetically limited to one location (the basement) that transformed into a second place (the palace), it is likely that the palace, in contrast to the

basement, must have been visually impressive. More generally, in its early years, the medium of the moving image was very much associated with an extended view of the world. Henri Grünkorn's show included views from the Spanish-American war and the historical re-enactment of an assassination. In another case, scenes involving Aladdin were shown together with scenes from the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina. Hence, presenting the familiar story of Aladdin – a narrative already associated with vision and a specific view of the world – through a new medium known for the 'views' it offered, might have redoubled its impact. The close alliance between the exotic story of Aladdin and the kinematograph was re-enforced by the two other moving picture versions that were released by the same company between 1898 and 1906. Also, the fact that the 1898 scenes of *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* were still a central part of Pathé Frères' 1901 catalogue confirms an enduring interest between the two.

Above all, the three tropes of transmedial imagination that appeared in the popular representation of Aladdin in the course of the nineteenth century can be seen to relate to modernity in particular. Artificial light, the attraction of sudden transformations, and visual attraction were central issues for nineteenth-century audiences since rapidly changing cities were a spectacle in their own right (Singer, 2001).The spectacle of modernity reappeared in entertainment practices.

Transmediality as mechanism between the old and the new

The Aladdin and his wonderful lamp scenes were a way to situate the new invention of projected moving images within the realm of nineteenth-century entertainment. According to André Gaudreault (2011), the new medium of moving images found its identity in dialogue with the 'old' media. This meant positioning the kinematograph in relation to existing entertainment practices. The Aladdin scenes signify this intermediality with other cultural practices; they show that cinema not only emerged from screen practices such as the magic lantern shows or peep-shows, but also from the tradition of popular theatre and the *féerie*. What distinguished Henri Grünkorn from other travelling kinematograph showmen in the Netherlands from around the time, were the terms and concepts that he borrowed from popular theatre to advertise his scenes. Other exhibitioners worked with 'views', 'tableaux' or 'images', which indicates their embeddedness in screen practices, but as far as I have been able to trace, Grünkorn is the first (and for a long time the only) exhibitor who advertised the new medium using terminology from the theatre, stressing the organization of one story divided into two parts and four scenes. This structure might have originated from his contacts in France, as well as the Georges Mendel catalogue that uses the word "décor" for the four scenes. Using concepts and structure from popular theatre brought the kinematograph closer to the practices of stage entertainment, which involved not only narrative, but also spectacular visual illusions. In the Netherlands, the kinematograph was mainly seen as an imperfect, temporary fairground attraction that could possibly have a future scientific purpose. In this respect, the intermedial connections that the Aladdin reels entailed in 1898 can be seen as a strategic move to emphasise the medium's spectacular narrative

capabilities. It is difficult to say, however, whether this had any influence on the audience's reception of the moving images, as there is little documentation as to how they were received.

In contrast to intermediality, transmediality entails elements (such as a motif, an aesthetic, or a theme) which exceed individual media. Hence, in terms of transmediality, the appearance of Aladdin in the new medium of the kinematograph functioned to move the new medium towards the popular imagination of the modern spectator. The relation between modernity and the machine that 'animated the pictures' was quite evident: while the popular theatre was already spectacular and visual, the kinematograph added the attraction of a machine. The invention echoed the progress of modernity as a form of entertainment based on a quasi-scientific device that showed spectacular views. Grünkorn and the other early exhibitors exploited this association. Grünkorn advertised his show as "system Lumière, the scientific and original invention" (fig. 2). Although the Aladdin scenes were more entertainment than science, they, together with other early cinema productions, aligned the new medium with the popular imagination associated with modernity. Indeed, by relating themes such as transformation, artificial light, and vision through this entertainment medium, issues central to modernity were addressed.

However, the mechanisms of transmediality and intermediality were never unidirectional. A new medium is not just absorbed into existing cultural practices; rather, it is within the "intermedial meshing" that the practice of a new medium is developed (Gaudreault, 2011: 68). Also the transmedial connections between the moving picture scenes of Aladdin and the encompassing imagination of that story can be seen as a negotiation between the new and the familiar. As Irina Rajewsky (2005) explains, the transmedial story is necessarily expressed in media-specific installments, as each medium has its own limits and possibilities. Thus, whereas the scenes shown with the kinematograph told a familiar story, thereby demonstrating a recognizable modern imaginary world around Aladdin, audiences also faced the singular qualities of the moving images. As the audiences had read, viewed, or heard the story of Aladdin before, they had a frame of reference which they brought to the kinematograph show. These audiences came to Grünkorn's travelling theatre with certain expectations. They also might have had expectations

about the kinematograph, as by 1898 the device had been around for two years. Still, for most audiences, the combination of the two must have been new and unfamiliar. Even though we cannot revisit the actual film, from the catalogue description we can conclude that tricks and sudden scene transformations were a key attraction. This must have been distinctive for the Aladdin story presented by means of the kinematograph compared to stage productions, as live action could not beat the speed of editing. As the rapid transformation of sets and scenes was already important for the versions encountered in the popular theatre, the acceleration of this process with the kinematograph must have made an impression. Similarly, the themes of light and vision, already illustrative in previous accounts of Aladdin, were intensified with this new medium.

As a result, I would argue that one of the attractions of watching a transmedial story emanated from the singular capabilities of a medium. To see a familiar story told by a new technology might have *sensitised* the viewer for the unique capacities of the kinematograph.[5] Pleasure did not derive from seeing the same story, but the same story by means of projected moving images. Hence, the relation that *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* had with the transmedial imagination of the story is one of a double logic. On the one hand, it familiarised audiences with a new medium by addressing themes that were recognizable from previous entertainment practices. On the other hand, it also distinguished the kinematograph as an individual medium, which helped establish the kinematograph as the particular medium that intensified the attraction of artificial light, transformation, and a visual representation of the distant world within one's reach.

Conclusion

Accordin g to the *Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche Courant*'s coverage of Grünkorn's exhibition in October 1898, the scenes from Aladdin and his wonder lamp were the most popular aspect of his show and "caught [the audience's] special attention, which they deserved." These scenes were even more appreciated by the audience than the nationalistic scenes from royal festivities (an observation that could indicate that the late nineteenth-century audiences who went to the early kinematography shows were not necessarily as much aroused by the radically new, as with the 'new within the old'). The audience might have liked the scenes from *Aladin ou le lampe merveilluese* in particular because of the double logic discussed above: on the one hand, the reels anticipated in a familiar transmedial imagination themes that were already in people's minds, while at the same time these scenes also highlighted the specific attraction of the newly-introduced device for projecting moving images. The intersection between the new and the old remains a fascinating field for study because new knowledge of the nineteenth-century popular imagination could still shed new light on the earliest encounters with the kinematograph.

We tend to interpret the relations that the new medium established with familiar cultural practices as a way of domesticating the novelty of the kinematograph. But as I have argued here, that explanation is only half of the story. The transmedial connections between the kinematograph and the

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5   On film technology's capacity to (re-)*sensitise* habitualised viewing practices see Van den Oever, 2010; Van den Oever 2011.

case of the Pathé Frères' Aladdin scenes show that this process was more complex. Rather than relating to existing cultural practices, these scenes introduced themes from modernity to the new device. This strengthened the kinematograph's position as a medium associated with modernity. Likewise, however one could say that the process of transmediality tamed the viewer's experience by telling a familiar story. I have argued that this strategy also aroused new experiences by demonstrating to the viewer the singular potential of the new kinematograph.

Naturally, this research is not complete, as one could never fully reconstruct the transmedial imagination of modernity. However, what I have tried to do in this short study is situate transmedial and intermedial processes in a specific example in a specific time and place. It shows how a film or a set of reels enter a field of pre-existing cultural practices. The nineteenth-century spectator came to these early cinema exhibitions with certain expectations. While many studies investigate the intermedial relations between the kinematograph and other forms of entertainment, we should not forget that these early practices with the kinematograph were also related to the overarching realm of experience that came with modernity. I have labeled this conjunction a transmedial imagination, a process that could also be explained by the concept of 'cultural paradigm' that André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion coined. I believe that it is within these intersections – between the specifics of the newly-introduced projected moving images and the overarching realm of experience associated with modernity – that the biggest impact of the kinematograph occurred.

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