Aesthetic Experiences of Presence

Case Studies in Film Exhibition, 1896-1898

Gert Jan Harkema

This study investigates viewing experiences that came with the introduction of cinema. Merging (film) history with aesthetic theory, this dissertation is an historically informed theoretical reconstruction of 1896–1898 viewing experiences. To contemporary audiences, projected moving pictures presented an unevenness hovering between amazement and contemplation. This study argues that the cinematograph, the vitascope, and other animated-picture attractions were popular at this early stage because they immediately appealed to the senses. These sensations are subsequently discussed as effects of presence. Exploring different viewing situations in the contexts of fairground culture in the Netherlands and popular vaudeville in Chicago, the current study proposes the aesthetic experience of presence as a framework to understand these various late 19th-century viewing experiences.
Aesthetic Experiences of Presence
Case Studies in Film Exhibition, 1896-1898
Gert Jan Harkema

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cinema Studies at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Friday 29 March 2019 at 10.00 in föreläsningssalen, Filmhuset, Borgvägen 5, Stockholm.

Abstract
This study investigates viewing experiences that came with the introduction of cinema. Merging (film) history with aesthetic theory, this dissertation entails historically informed theoretical reconstructions of viewing experiences between 1896 and 1898. During this novelty period, projected moving pictures evoked a wide array of reactions: on the one hand, early cinema was an extraordinary and astonishing attraction while, on the other hand, it was deeply rooted in daily life and everyday perception. To contemporary audiences, early moving pictures presented an unevenness hovering between amazement and contemplation. This study argues that the cinematograph, the vitascope, and other animated-picture attractions were popular at this early stage because they immediately appealed to the senses. These sensations are subsequently discussed as effects of presence. Early moving-picture exhibitions, moreover, can be seen as performances involving spectators in a play with presence vis-à-vis absence. While moving-picture attractions had an immediate impact on the viewer’s body as situated in the “here and now” of the auditorium, the pictures presented places and objects that were irrevocably inaccessible and absent. Exploring different viewing situations in two different contexts, the current study therefore proposes the aesthetic experience of presence as a framework to understand these various late 19th-century viewing experiences.

The three chapters of this dissertation are organized separately around the concepts of intermediality, movement, and space. Chapter 1 proposes that, in the context of fairgrounds in the Netherlands, early cinema’s “intermedial enmeshing” is a probable cause for the aesthetic experience of presence. This chapter employs the concept of intermediality to outline how the kinematograph attraction caused both a semantically rich as well as a sensuously multivalent experience. It then presents a detailed study of the activities and attractions of the showman Henri Grünkorn before he exhibited “Electric Cinematograph.” Chapter 1 also investigates the various layers of discourse involved in Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse (1897), a series of scenes exhibited by Grünkorn that was popular with local audiences at the time.

Chapter 2 focuses on the experience of movement. Through a close study of the introduction of moving images in the context of Chicago in 1896 and 1897, it proposes that moving pictures presented a radically familiar form of motion. It was familiar in the sense that it brought together a number of constellations of motion and energy fundamental to modernity. Situating moving images in the rhythms of the city allows us to conceptualize the spectator as physically engaged with the motion of the kinematograph. Chapter 3 studies the paradox of proximity and distance and discusses moving-picture attractions as they were introduced in vaudeville and popular theater in Chicago. It describes the different constellations between screen and live performance from a spatial perspective while focusing on the representation of bodies. In many ways, the paradox of nearness and distance allowed for a spatially oriented play with presences. The study concludes with a discussion on the potential and challenges of including presence effects in film-historical research on viewing experiences in early cinema and beyond.

Keywords: Film history, media history, early cinema, film experience, 19th century, aesthetics, presence, intermediality, phenomenology, the Netherlands, Chicago, modernity, fairground, vaudeville, Aladdin, Henri Grünkorn.

Stockholm 2019
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-165624


Department of Media Studies
Stockholm University, 115 93 Stockholm
AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES OF PRESENCE
Gert Jan Harkema
Aesthetic Experiences of Presence
Case Studies in Film Exhibition, 1896-1898

Gert Jan Harkema
Contents

Introduction  Early cinema and aesthetic experiences of presence, 1896-
1898 ................................................................. 7
   Presence and time .......................................................... 14
   Presence in film and media studies ..................................... 17
   Aesthetic experience, a history .......................................... 19
   Presence, a theory .......................................................... 23
   Methodology ..................................................................... 27
   A brief outline of the chapters ........................................... 32

Chapter one  The intermedial enmeshing of early cinema as aesthetic
experience: Henri Grünkorn and his “Electric Cinematograph” .......... 35
   Henri Grünkorn and intermedial spectatorship ...................... 39
      De Amerikaansche Rutschbaan ......................................... 44
      De Wereld in het Klein ....................................................... 49
      Expeditie Lombok ............................................................. 53
      Intermedial spectatorship ................................................... 55
   Intermediality and the kinematograph show .......................... 59
   Terminology and concepts .................................................. 62
   From intermediality to transmediality .................................. 67
      Aladin met zijn Wonder Lamp ............................................. 69
      Transmedial imagination (1): Aladdin in the nineteenth century . 71
      Transmedial imagination (2): Aladdin’s imaginations .............. 78
   Transmedial imagination and aesthetic experience .................. 85
   Conclusion ......................................................................... 88

Chapter two  “Not a movement lost”: Motion, metropolis, and aesthetic
experiences of presence ...................................................... 91
   Revisiting the streets of modernity ......................................... 94
   Movement from the streets into the theater .......................... 97
      The theaters ..................................................................... 104
      From the street to the screen .............................................. 118
      Fragments of familiarity ..................................................... 122
   Familiarity and presence .................................................... 127
   Discourses on movement .................................................... 128
      Mechanical-dynamic paradigm .......................................... 130
      Post-mechanical paradigm ................................................. 134
   Between paradigms, beyond realism ..................................... 137
Distance, touch, and presence ................................................................. 138
Conclusion .............................................................................................. 141

Chapter three  “The very act itself, even to the smack”: Screen and stage bodies, or, moving pictures as spatial intervention ............ 145
Chicago and spaces of modernity ............................................................... 147
The space of theaters: vaudeville and the stage ....................................... 152
Moving pictures between stage and screen ............................................... 159
Spatial constellations ............................................................................. 163
  From distance to proximity ................................................................... 163
  Bringing the near nearer ...................................................................... 168
  Distancing the near ............................................................................ 170
Hybrid performances and the play for presences ...................................... 173
  Early performances ............................................................................ 173
  “The Good Mr Best” ........................................................................ 174
  “Chattanooga” ................................................................................... 176
A play for presence(s), by way of conclusion .......................................... 178

Concluding remarks  (Re)constructing presence in absentia ................. 181
  Methodological Challenges .................................................................. 183
  Presence beyond early cinema ............................................................. 186

Endnotes .................................................................................................. 189
Appendix A .............................................................................................. 255

Bibliography ........................................................................................... 257
  Archives (on site) ............................................................................... 257
    The Netherlands ............................................................................... 257
  France ................................................................................................ 257
  U.S. .................................................................................................... 257
  U.K. .................................................................................................... 257
  Digital collections and databases .......................................................... 258
  Newspapers and Magazines ................................................................. 258
    The Netherlands: ............................................................................ 258
    France .............................................................................................. 259
    U.S. ................................................................................................ 259
  Books, Book Length Manuscripts, and Scholarly Articles ....................... 259

Index ........................................................................................................ 273
List of Figures

Fig. 1: Leydse Courant, July 23, 1889. Delpher .............................................................46

Fig. 2: Postcard rutschbaan at Tolhuis, Amsterdam, late 1880s. Private collection/Stadsarchief Amsterdam .................................................................47

Fig. 3: Haarlem's Dagblad, August 2, 1898. Delpher ..................................................64

Fig. 4: Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 15, 1898. Delpher ..................................65

Fig. 5: Scene description from Georges Mendel catalogue, 1901, collection L. Mannoni / M. Gianati .................................................................70

Fig. 6: Set design for a 1835 pantomime ballet based on Voitus van Hamme’s Tooverlamp, Universiteit van Amsterdam, collectie Theater Instituut Nederland .................................................................74

Fig. 7: Poster advertisement of vaudeville performance Aladin of de Wonderlamp, Fin de Siècle (Amsterdam, Grand Théâtre, 1895), Universiteit van Amsterdam, collectie Theater Instituut Nederland .................................................................75

Fig. 8: Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse (Paris, Théâtre de la Galerie Vivienne, 1891), Gallica/BnF .................................................................77

Fig. 9: Set design by Pierre-Luc Cicéri for the second act of Aladin ou La lampe merveilleuse : opéra-féerie en cinq actes (Paris, Théâtre de l’Opéra-Le Peletier, 1822), Gallica/BnF .................................................................78

Fig. 10: Drawing of scene with the fairy from Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse : féerie en 1 prologue, 3 actes et 20 tableaux (Paris, Théâtre impérial du Châtelet, 1863), Gallica/BnF .................................................................81

Fig. 11 and 12: Lucien Métivet, Aladin - Ombres chinoises en quinze tableaux (Paris: Flammarion, 1904), Bill Douglas Cinema Museum/University of Exeter, Bill Douglas and Peter Jewell Collection .................................................................83

Fig. 13: Map of Chicago distributed by the Chicago Tribune for the 1893 Columbian Exhibition. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library’s Map Collection .................................................................98

Fig. 14: Portrait of Colonel John D. Hopkins, Chicago Weekly Amusement Guide, August 31, 1898, Chicago History Museum .................................................................106
Fig. 15: Exterior of the Schiller Theatre around the time of its opening in 1892, Chicago History Museum Image Collection. ........................................... 112

Fig. 16: Schiller Theatre, ca. 1900. Public domain. ......................................................... 113

Fig. 17: Interior, Schiller Theatre, 1895, public domain. ..................................................... 113

Fig. 18: Cover, Schiller Theatre program, August 5, 1893, when the theater was considered a high-end opera house. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum. 114

Fig. 19: Interior, Schiller (Garrick) Theatre at the time of its deconstruction in 1960, Chicago History Museum Image Collection. ........................................... 115

Fig. 20: Still from Défilé de policiemen. Courtesy of Catalogue Lumère online. ..120

Fig. 21: “How Photography Represents Images in Action,” illustration in “Move as if Alive,” Chicago Tribune, April 4, 1897. ......................................................... 132

Fig. 22: Seating plan, Hopkins' South Side Theatre, Diagrams of Chicago Theatres, Chicago: Chicago and North Western Railway, 1902. Chicago History Museum. ........................................................................................................ 154
Acknowledgments

This dissertation is a historical document in its own right. It is the product of five years of PhD studies at Stockholm University and many more years studying film and media at other institutions. In these years, I have incurred many intellectual debts. First, my warmest gratitude to the astonishing pair of supervisors that who accompanied me on this journey. Thank you, Jan Olsson, for the engaging discussions and, above all, for diligently encouraging me to get the most out of this project. Also, a huge thank you to John Fullerton, who is, beyond doubt, the kindest, warmest, and most involved supervisor one could ever wish for. Thank you for all your suggestions and for all the energy that you put into this dissertation. I especially liked our dinners in Stockholm and Pordenone, which were also due to the delightful company of Elaine, brief moments of delight at which I almost forgot this research project. Our next one is on me, at the Kurhaus in The Hague. Jan and John, thank you for your endless patience. I am much indebted, subsequently, to Frank Kessler, who has been extraordinary generous as an ongoing resource for advice and who did a great job as discussant during my final seminar.

Many thanks to my wonderful cinema studies colleagues at Stockholm University’s Department of Media Studies. Annika Wickman has been a fantastic roommate and a true friend who helped me navigate Swedish culture. A special thanks to Malin Wahlberg for continuously engaging with my work and for her valuable feedback. Among colleagues who read earlier versions of this manuscript, I want to thank for their precious advice Trond Londemo, Daniel Wiegang, Kim Fahlstedt, Nadi Tofighian, and Doron Gali. I am also grateful for the numerous ideas and comments by Kristoffer Noheden, Patrick Vonderau, Guido Kirsten, Bo Florin, Joel Frykholm, Maaret Koskinen, and Tytti Soila. Thank you to the ever-supportive PhD crowd at the department: Ashley Smith, Jonathan Rozenkrantz, Oliva Eriksson, Tove Thorslund, Chris Baumann, Elizabeth Castaldo Lundén, Natalie Snoyman, Linn Löroth, and Mats Carlsson; you created an engaging intellectual environment, both at Filmhuset as well as at Stockholm’s ölbarer. The department’s soul is due to the daily presence of Mattias Johannesson, Bart van der Gaag, Henrik Schröder, Peter Errell, and Clara Fagerlind.

The deep history of this dissertation includes chapters in Groningen and Pretoria. Therefore, I am more than thankful to Annie van den Oever for...
being an inspiring mentor for many years. *Baie dankie* Amanda du Preez for (re)introducing me to phenomenology and philosophy in the kindest possible way. I am deeply indebted to my teachers and peers in Groningen: Miklos Kiss, Susan Aasman, Steven Willemsen, Ari Purnama, and Annelies van Noortwijk. A special thanks to the big-hearted smart people at the Visual Arts department at the University of Pretoria. Anjo-Mari Gouws, Jenni Louwrens, Rory du Plessis, and others: *julle is befok*. My gratitude also goes out to Karel Dibbets, who was so kind to meet me in Amsterdam at various occasions, where we ended up talking for hours. Losing you is a big loss to the (Dutch) film-historical culture.

This project would not have succeeded without the generosity and help of archivists and institutions at both sides of the Atlantic. I would like to thank the dedicated, friendly, and ever-helpful people at the Chicago History Museum’s Research Center and at the Newberry Library. Hennie van Oers is probably the best-informed historian on fairground culture in the Netherlands. He has supplied me with valuable resources. Subsequently, I thank several institutions in the Netherlands: the Royal Library in The Hague, where I spent much of my time writing and editing this dissertation, and the EYE Study Center. Thank you, also, Phil Wickham at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum at the University of Exeter, and Vanessa Toulmin and Matthew Neill at the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield. I am grateful for receiving research grants from the Holger och Thyra Lauritzens stiftelse and the John Söderbergs stipendiestiftelse at the Faculty of Humanities at Stockholm University.

Sections of Chapter 1 were published in article form in *Tijdschrift Mediageschiedenis* and *Kultura Popularna/Popular Culture*. A significant part of Chapter 2 appeared in *Synoptique: An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies*. A special thanks to the editors and reviewers of these volumes.

There would be no dissertation without the ongoing support of my family and friends. A whole book will not suffice to express my love and gratitude to you all. I felt the endless confidence of my parents, siblings, and closest ones when most needed, even though I repeatedly failed to explain what it was that I was doing. My daughter’s beautiful smile put this whole silly project all into perspective; you give me presence. Thank you also Koen Potgieter, Rik Smit, and Tom Tieman for the late-night conversations, intellectual and at times banal and undeniably indecent. To my dearest comrades in Staphorst and beyond, with whom I fondly share deep and intimate histories of friendship: I missed you guys. Forgive me for my absence, but hey, I wrote a little book. Here it is, and it’s finished, for now.

The Hague/Stockholm, February 2019
Introduction

Early cinema and aesthetic experiences of presence, 1896-1898

The popular introduction of projected moving images between 1896 and 1898 constituted an event characterized by paradoxes and inconsistencies. To non-specialist audiences, film was, for example, radically new while, at the same time, it felt deeply familiar. It was an astonishing attraction that was equally mundane. It was a “lifelike” representation of reality abstracted and framed in greyscale and in silence. Film was a visual attraction situated around distances: distances from the audience to the screen and from the auditorium to the scene of recording. Meanwhile, cinema in its novelty period was an attraction of closeness and proximity: its impact on spectators was, above all, physical and visceral. Writing for The New Review in England in 1896, O. Winter (a yet unidentified pseudonym) famously tried to capture the strange and ambiguous nature of the new medium:

Here, then, is life…; but it is life which you may only contemplate through a mechanical medium, life which eludes you in your daily pilgrimage. It is wondrous, even terrific; the smallest whiff of smoke goes upward in the picture; and the house falls to the ground without an echo. *It is all true, and it is all false.*

This study takes the paradoxical responses to the introduction of moving pictures as its starting point. Merging (film) history with aesthetic theory, this dissertation is best characterized as an historically informed theoretical reconstruction of 1896-1898 viewing experiences. It argues that the cinématographe, the vitascope, and other animated picture attractions were popular at this early stage because they immediately appealed to the senses. We can best describe these immediate sensations as experiences of presence. This study subsequently discusses several core concepts in the early cinema experience, intermediality, movement, and space, in terms of the aesthetics of presence.

During its earliest years cinema evoked a wide array of reactions. This study focuses on viewing responses of audiences as part of the popular dis-
course on early cinema in its novelty period. While only some of these responses were published in newspapers and magazines, and only parts of this material survives in archives, the diverse popular discourse on the introduction of film reminds us of the complexity of very early cinema’s viewing experiences. Exploring different viewing situations in different contexts, the current study, therefore, proposes the aesthetic experience of presence as a framework to understand these various late nineteenth-century viewing experiences.

Aesthetic experience, as understood in terms of presence, maintains that aesthetic perception differs from ordinary perception by foregrounding the presentation, appearing, or ‘being there’ of the world. Over the past ten years, the notion of presence has been developed throughout the humanities as a critical concept to readdress aesthetics from the perspective of feelings, sensations, and materiality instead of cultural meaning and interpretation. As Ranjan Ghosh and Ethan Kleinberg observe in the preface to their 2013 anthology Presence: Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century, “[O]ver the past five years, ‘presence’ has developed into one of the most important trends (and theoretical lenses) in the philosophy of history and the humanities.”4 The literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht can be seen as the most vocal advocate in this shift to presence, while philosophers on aesthetics, such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Martin Seel, have also made important contributions to this paradigm.5 Recently, presence has also been a key term in theater and performance studies with Erika Fischer-Lichte as its main proponent.6 While arguing from various perspectives, these authors maintain that an important element of aesthetic experience involves a direct appeal to the senses. It maintains that a large part of aesthetic attraction is based on a sensation of contact, that is, of having the attraction close to the spectator and being part of it. Thereby this conceptualization of presence is located at the intersection between deconstructivism and phenomenology or, as Derrida portrayed Nancy’s philosophical project, it can be seen as a “sort of absolute, irredentist, and post-deconstructive realism.”7 Experience cannot be completely devoid of meaning as perception always involves intention and expectations. Aesthetic experience, however, should be seen as a significant unevenness in the presence-meaning balance. The effect is a sensation of ‘being there’ that turns the embodied nature of human being into an event.

This study undertakes a similar shift to presence with respect to our understanding of the early cinema experience. The dissertation, in turn, examines the interdisciplinary paradigm on presence as a productive conceptual framework for the study of aesthetic experience from a media-historical perspective. While building on detailed historical analysis of individual viewing situations (the Dutch fairground, Chicagoan vaudeville theaters), this study employs the paradigm on presence to construct a theoretically informed understanding of viewing experiences that accompanied the exhibition of film
in its earliest venues. The study maintains that the newly introduced moving pictures enacted a play of presence and absence thereby shifting attention to the materiality of the attraction and its sensations. As a result, the experience of presence is a sensation that is based on perception itself. Cinema in its novelty period turned the banal, everyday perception of embodied human being into an event. Early cinema attractions thus enabled what Martin Seel calls “presentation events,” that is, events of perception enabling a presentation of presence.8

Cinema in its novelty period enabled sensational experiences that situated on performances of pure presentation. Moving picture attractions thereby performed a presentation of the world. These experiences not only involved a complex web of intellectual associations but also addressed the spectator in a sensuous, almost banal way; a spectacle “pure and simple” that involved a basic presentation speaking directly to the senses. A review of a show featuring the Lumière cinématographe in Edinburgh in June, 1896, for example, describes a viewing experience that is beyond language:

The working of the cinematograph was fully described last week but the most glowing description hardly prepares one for the perfection attained. . . . The cinematograph needs no commendation at the hands of the manager, the first picture reveals itself to the house in a manner that speaks for itself, and the applause of the delighted spectators is such as is seldom given to anything of the nature of an exhibition pure and simple.9

The notion of aesthetic experience as presence, meanwhile, challenges the dichotomy of familiarity and newness that marks so much of our current understanding of the introduction of film. The early cinema attraction, in this perspective, was marked by a novelty effect, or, what André Gaudreault calls early cinema’s “properly irreducible alien quality.”10 At both sides of the Atlantic audiences were struck, for example, by the formation of space and depth before their eyes, as was the case with the reception of Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers (Lumière, 1896). Some reviewers described, in hyperbolic language, how viewers seated in the front rows covered their heads being afraid that the approaching cavalry would fall off the screen and dash into the audience.11

The formation of movement, like space, also contributed to the novelty effects and the “alien quality” of early cinema. Seemingly unimportant details, like the dust produced by a running horse or the “sparkling drops [of water] after a great splash,” could arouse strong reactions among spectators.12 “Photographs of objects in motion are reproduced on screen so perfectly that the spectator sees the motion as perfectly as if he were in the presence of the original,” as the Brooklyn Life contemplated on the vitascope and the cinématographe.13 Onscreen bodies (dancing, performing, or merely appearing) gained a special, ambivalent presence: “It was hard to imagine,” as
a Cincinnati newspaper contemplated after mistakenly identifying Ida Fuller in a vitascope serpentine-dance scene, “that the fair Ida was not present herself and entertaining the audience.”

Reviewing the Biograph films featuring William McKinley and the parade in his hometown Canton, Ohio, celebrating his presidential candidacy, a journalist observed that it was almost as if the paraders walked onto the edge of the stage in the theater. Particularly in the U.S., typical press notices on the newly-introduced moving pictures, therefore, heralded machines like the vitascope as “a marvelous invention (...) simple in contrivance, and yet wondrous in its detail and mechanism.”

As the Cincinnati reviewer concludes: “That it pleased was evidenced by the prolonged applause and murmurs of delight that could be heard throughout the house.”

Film, however, equally drew on a deep sense familiarity, both in form and content, as viewers recognized so much of what happened on screen and in the auditorium. On a sensory level, the newly introduced moving pictures were both new and familiar. The concept of presence, as an explanatory model of these viewing experiences, helps to understand how these two poles of newness and familiarity were experienced together, at one and the same time. Meanwhile, the concept of presence allows us to discuss early viewing situations as both mundane and extraordinary events. While these experiences can occur in new or extraordinary situations, aesthetic experiences of presence equally draw upon the mundane or everydayness of regular perception.

Thereby the theoretical framework regarding presence can help us re-evaluate and understand the paradoxical experience of moving pictures.

The introduction of cinema has been studied extensively. Over the past twenty-five years, the dominant approach has been to study early cinema in its own right, that is, as something inherently different from what cinema would become after its institutionalization in the 1910s. However, there exists some discrepancy over what the earliest audiences were experiencing. On the one hand, the kinematograph (the collective name for various projecting moving-image machines including the Lumière cinématographe and Edison’s vitascope, among other devices) presented something new and attractive to its historical audiences. Moving pictures, as an emblem of modernity, presented audiences with “new intensities” that were shocking, alienating, uncanny, astonishing, and distractive.

As Walter Benjamin notably concluded, “Film corresponds to profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus.” Showmen and producers of early moving pictures explored and exploited these thrilling qualities of the new medium in what Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault termed as the “cinema of attractions,” or the “system of monstrative attractions.” Gunning subsequently in his early work describes the 1890s spectator as “a consumer hungry for thrills” involved in an “aesthetic of astonishment.” Confronted with “a new sort of stimulus,” the projected moving image had a visually shocking and traumatic effect on its
spectator. The viewer was amazed, thrilled, shocked, and left in terror and disbelief.

Historical evidence, nevertheless, indicates that the kinematograph was only one among many attractions. An editorial in the New York Tribune, for example, commented on the public enthusiasm surrounding the vitascope that “Truly, there is nothing new under the sun.” Indeed, moving pictures were novel and, as it turned out over the following decades, quite revolutionary. Very often, however, the attraction was part of a (intermedial) discourse of other astonishing inventions. In this respect, the newly-introduced projected moving pictures were seen as an accumulation of existing attractions. An English newspaper, for example stated that the Lumière brothers had “sufficiently tamed the kinetoscope to compel it to exhibit its wonders on the sheet of a magic lantern.” Or, at another instance, the moving picture machine was described as “nothing more or less than an enlarged kinetoscope.” According to press notices, the films projected were an “artistic treat” while the cinematograph show in its entirety marked a “delightful production.” As François Albera summarizes:

No one thought the kinematograh had suddenly appeared from nowhere; on the contrary, people constantly attempted to establish its connections with the moving images, reproductive and projection devices, toys and apparatuses that existed before it. This didn’t prevent them from realizing its novelty, because it was more than an improvement on its predecessors. It delivered more than Edison or the Lumières, for example, had expected of it.

Projected moving pictures were introduced as part of familiar stage and theater practices. These institutional frameworks significantly constrained the viewer’s response. Moving pictures were thus as much a continuation of the familiar cultural practice of attractions. In this way, Charles Musser describes a spectatorship of “attentive contemplation.” Drawing more on familiarity than newness, the kinematograph “mobilized the sophisticated viewing habits of spectators who already possessed a fluency in the realm of visual, literary and theater culture.” If we look into the reception of animated pictures, for example, through reading historical newspapers, there seems to be little evidence that this machine was instantly perceived as revolutionary or groundbreaking. In several contexts, the introduction cinema was met with a degree of skepticism. Reviewing the first exhibition of the cinematograph in Edinburgh, for example, a journalist wrote that some films that were projected “gave one an idea of what the invention may become as a public entertainment—something to wonder at, but not to become enthusiastic over.” On a similar note, reception in the context of the Netherlands was marked by widespread believe that the kinematograph was a temporary fairground attraction that would not be able to attract audiences on the long run. This initial skepticism was in line with doubts expressed by some of the moving
picture inventors themselves, such as was the case with Thomas Edison and the Lumière brothers.31 Early cinema’s embeddedness in other cultural practices and the skepticism voiced in newspapers may suggest that contemporary audiences were not blown away by the moving pictures. The kinematograph, in this sense, fitted a cultural paradigm that was familiar to spectators. Therefore, Charlie Keil, like several other scholars, delivers a critique on the aesthetic of astonishment, stating that viewers were not bombarded with new stimuli and that the spectator was not confused.32 Gunning, in turn, responded to this criticism by emphasizing that next to the shocks and thrills, very early cinema was at times also presenting a comforting flow.33 This study contributes to the dialogue on the impact of early cinema on its historical audiences. It argues that familiarity, institutional continuity and contemplation should not necessarily be placed in opposition to novelty, astonishment, stimulus, and distraction. Furthermore, downplaying the effect of moving images on its earliest spectators does not answer the significance of the new medium in the writings on modernity (by, for example, Benjamin and Kracauer), and the influence that this moment had on the early twentieth-century’s avant-garde.34 Therefore, our conception of the 1896-1898 spectator’s viewing experience is open to revision. In terms of the aesthetic experience of presence familiarity and astonishment are not mutually exclusive because, as Nancy states, the “ordinary is always exceptional.”35 This study maintains that even though moving pictures were integrally part of existing cultural practices and familiar modes of presentation, strong, and sensuous embodied sensations were still possible.

The kinematograph exhibitions can be seen as performances which involved spectators in a play with presence and absence, and in that play the attraction was experienced in its materiality, that is, as an event immediately addressing the senses: the screen was haptically experienced as canvas, the vitascope or cinematograph was experienced as a machine, and the presence of fellow audience members was visible, audible, and sensible. Thereby, the spectator did not forget his/her own embodied perception as present in the auditorium.

Early moving pictures presented an unevenness hovering between amazement and contemplation. This is, for example, expressed in one of the earliest reviews of the Lumière cinématographe in the Netherlands:

Surely, today people are not easily surprised anymore; one observes – and one moves on; the unusual has become commonplace, especially in the big city. But still, one reflects, for a brief moment, when witnessing what the cinematograph brings about, and one shall consider, in amazement, the progress of science.36
The press notice describes how the cinematograph attraction was integrated in a typically flaneur mindset. In urban settings, attractions and stimuli were part of daily life. Everyday environments, as was discussed by Baudelaire and contemporary aestheticians, harbored an aesthetic potential. Meanwhile, however, daily perception was marked by a habituation to sensations as one is “not easily surprised anymore.” The newly-introduced moving pictures, on the one hand, belong to this perceptual framework of endless attractions available in urban contexts while, at the same time, the cinematograph nevertheless manages to cause a peak in perception. So, the cinematograph distinguishes itself as an attraction by causing a singular moment of reflection, consideration, and amazement. The progress of science is thereby casually admired in passing, but the distinct quality of the experience is found in the delay of perception, in the brief moment of sensation and reflection. Hence, even though the cinematograph, according to this review, was fiercely integrated in a daily and almost mundane mode of perception in which sensations have become commonplace, moving pictures still enabled unique experiences.

Early cinema experiences, then, were simultaneously ordinary and exceptional. This study explores the relation between everyday perception and exceptional sensations caused by moving-picture attractions. It argues that if we look at early cinema in terms of sensuous experiences emphasizing both the ‘here-and-now’ of the sensing subject in the auditorium and the ‘there-and-then’ of on-screen representation, we recognize how these viewing experiences were at one and the same time exceptionally ordinary and ordinarily exceptional. By interpreting early film experiences as aesthetic experiences of presence, this study seeks to deliver a nuanced understanding of early cinema.

Aesthetic theory on the experience of presence delivers a way to conceptualize historical viewing experiences in such a nuanced manner. A focus on presence maintains that aesthetic experience for the larger part is not about concepts or knowledge as it is about feelings and sensations. Aesthetic experience, as Nancy, Seel, and Gumbrecht variously argue, involves the foregrounding of a sensuous, bodily, and direct experience of the world in its appearance. By discussing three concepts that were pivotal to the introduction of film (intermediality, movement, and space) this dissertation argues that the earliest moving picture performances presented late nineteenth-century audiences with such a bare presentation of the world. This presentation of the world was not only achieved by actualities, street scenes or local films, but, in a more broader perspective, by way of intermediality, moving between different cultural practices and presenting its viewers with movement and time itself.

The current project involves a sort of ‘whirl’ of history and theory. The three chapters are organized separately around the concepts of intermediality, movement, and space. The importance of these concepts has been ad-
dressed by previous studies in early cinema. These concepts are used to discuss the impact of the moving pictures as a “play for presence.” These concepts, thereby, are employed in this dissertation to bring forward the valuable theoretical insights that the paradigm on presence might hold for the study of early cinema and media history. Meanwhile, the discussions of intermediality, movement, and space are situated around locally specific case studies. In the following pages I will present a brief overview of the concept of presence in film studies before turning to an in-depth, historical description of presence as an aesthetic experience. After discussing methodology this introduction will conclude with a brief outline of the chapters.

Presence and time

The concept of presence has a long and extensive history. Over the past two centuries, presence has been conceptualized in various different ways, first in philosophy and subsequently in film and media studies. In philosophy, the concept of presence was most widely discussed under the rubric of what would become known as the “metaphysics of presence.” Since Plato and Aristotle the question has been raised whether the subject has immediate access to the world or whether presence is always mediated by appearances. Aristotle, for example, already famously emphasized the inescapability of representation. In *Being and Time* Heidegger criticized this metaphysics of presence. The mistake that traditional philosophy makes is that truth is understood to stand outside time and change. Whereas representation can change, the Idea is truth, and this is eternal. Heidegger critiques this traditional correspondence notion of truth by stating that truth happens, it becomes. By focusing on Being or *Dasein*, Heidegger accounted for a more fundamental sense of things by concentrating on the appearance of world in the flux of everyday, and the fundamental position of the human subject in that world. He aimed to outline the conditions of the appearance. In an important way, Heidegger’s concepts of Being and presence constitute the background of the current presence paradigm, as I will address in more detail below.

Related to the discussion concerning the metaphysics of presence is the notion of the instant. Around the turn of the century there was a widespread fascination with immediate perception and the experience of the instant. The technology of cinema had a significant impact on the discourse of presence at this time. The newly introduced projected moving pictures evoked an imagination of presence with inventors, intellectuals, and artists. Cinema, in this sense, merged the fantasies of both direct, automatic experience and the capturing of the instant. Subsequently, presence has been mainly discussed in film studies from a temporal perspective. This dissertation, however, does not include a chapter on time mainly because the paradigm on presence that
informs the theoretical framework for this study is first and foremost discussed in terms of space; presence, in this respect, is the foregrounding of the spatial relationship of things and bodies in the world. Yet, since experience and being involves time, issues of time are addressed, albeit fragment-ed, throughout the chapters. Aesthetic experience, in some perspectives, gets described as a rupture in our daily perception of time. Therefore a brief, concentrated discussion on the relation on the temporality of presence and aesthetic experience is presented here.

The relation between the cinema and the instant, or, in a broader perspective, cinema and the present tense has been explored from a film theoretical as well as from a film historical perspective. In her book *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Mary Ann Doane, for example, describes a fascination for the pure and indivisible present moment. Emerging with late nineteenth-century’s modernity came a widespread allure to experience the pure present tense. Experiments with photography and moving pictures tapped into the popular “lure of instantaneity.” Doane relates presence to Peirce’s notion of deictic index (“the signifiers ‘here,’ ‘now,’ ‘this,’ ‘that’”), a notion that we will revisit in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The deictic index, as she describes, “hovers on the cusp of presence and pastness, it always seems to be haunted by an aspiration to presence, as exemplified by the asymptotic movement toward the instant of instantaneous photography.” Cinema, as byproduct of experiments with instantaneous photography, thereby encapsulated modernity’s ultimate dream to capture time and movement in its fullness. Doane concludes:

Film represents an indelible past that produces a highly cathected experience of presence. The inflated rhetoric of movement, life, and death that accompanied the emergence of cinema confirms the cinematic debt to a dream of revivification and ‘presencing.’

Cinema envisioned a direct, mechanical (i.e. non-human) preservation of the past while it could capture and restore the fleeting and inaccessible “nowness” the present. In his broad ranging study on the cinema-modernity relation *Empty Moments*, Leo Charney also describes presence from a temporal perspective. As an urge to experience the fleeting moment it was a key concept that philosophers of modernity like Benjamin recognized in the cinema. Drawing on Heidegger’s observation that the “evacuation of the present had far reaching consequences for the experience of time in modernity,” Charney argues that theorists of the avant-garde exploited the shock of the singular moment. This “intensified form of present tense” is also, as Tom Gunning remarks, the temporality of the cinema of attractions. As a mode of presentation, the cinema of attractions toyed with the moment of display and the moment of disappearance. The delight of the spectator, “a jolt of pure presence” stems from “the unpredictability of the instant, a succession
of excitements and frustrations whose order cannot be predicted by narrative logic and whose pleasures are never sure of being prolonged.”\textsuperscript{45} In Gunning’s perspective, presence is primarily felt as the interaction “between the astonished spectator and the cinematic smack of the instant.”\textsuperscript{46}

While early cinema might have caused a shock of instantaneity for the spectator, as Gunning, Charney, and Doane argue, it was also part of a comprehensive project of rethinking of time. The kinematograph, in that sense, represented the “thickening” of the present. Alongside the telegraph and the telephone, cinema contributed to a broader rethinking of the experience of time and space. As this was a significant change of paradigm, one might question whether people at the time were actually shocked or astonished by it. As Stephen Kern sums up:

> The ability to experience many distant events at the same time, made possible by the wireless and dramatized by the sinking of the Titanic, was part of a major change in the experience of the present. Thinking on the subject was divided over two basic issues: whether the present is a sequence of single local events or a simultaneity of multiple distant events, and whether the present is an infinitesimal slice of time between past and future or of more extended duration.\textsuperscript{47}

This rethinking of the experience of time, and particularly the key position of the present, was fundamental to the development of phenomenology and its study of perception. Here the historical context of the introduction of film and our interpretive framework on experience again overlap because the paradigm of presence (as defined by Gumbrecht, Nancy, and Seel) builds to a large extent on the tradition of phenomenology. In terms of phenomenology, the present instant itself is inaccessible while the present is, nevertheless, the locus of our experience. Hence we can speak of a “specious present.”\textsuperscript{48} Husserl therefore wrote about the “living,” “primal,” or “flowing” present.\textsuperscript{49} In this “thick” living present there is an anticipation of the immediate future (so called “protentions”), as well as “retentions” from the immediate past and primal impressions emerging in the current moment. Even though primal impressions emerge from the “nowness,” of the moment, the present moment can only be experienced in intentional anticipation (the horizon) to the next instant, and the “sinking in” of the past.\textsuperscript{50} Henri Bergson, Husserl’s contemporary, argued in similar vein against the quantification of time while proclaiming “the impossibility of real instants.”\textsuperscript{51} Yet whereas Husserl maintains the distinguishable categories of retention, protention, and impression, Bergson argues that these entities of the past, present, and future only exist in abstract theory; each moment “represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought.”\textsuperscript{52} Existence is experienced temporally as an ever-changing flow of duration. Time, like movement, Bergson claims, presents an irreduc-
ible continuity. Whereas in Husserl’s notion of the thick present time is still successive, Bergson’s concept of duration is about simultaneity. The past coexists with the present, or better, the past presupposes the present. As Bergson concludes:

Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; and in truth every perception is already memory. Practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.

Both Husserl and Bergson argued (like Merleau-Ponty at a later date) that the notion of “a real presence,” that is being one with the singular present instant, is an illusion. An immediate and unique experience of that present moment is impossible. The late nineteenth century saw a couple of experiments to “measure” the present. In 1890 William James already measured a specious present “varying in length from a few seconds to probably not more than a minute.” And even today scientists are fascinated by the absolute length of the present. Singling out the experiential present as an individual moment remains impossible.

What is possible, however, is that in aesthetic perception the passing of time is felt as an existential principle of our being in the world. This can be done through a presentation evoking a sensation of “nowness,” as the painter Barnett Newman sought, or, in reverse, by screening duration. The aesthetic experience of presence, in this respect, entails a sensation of time in which duration is made tangible. In this constellation, the viewer experiences time directly, that is, not as content represented or thematized but as sensible in mediated form. As addressed above, the aesthetic of presence fundamentally entails a sensation of being in touch with the material world. Although time has no material substance, it still touches subjects as a fundamental category of our being in the world. Like space, time is thus defined functionally but aesthetic experience presents us time directly while bringing it back to our sensuous experience.

Presence in film and media studies

In film and media studies, the term presence is probably most often used to refer to the experiential proxemics of the viewer in relation to what is represented on screen. Concepts like artificial presence, telepresence, and virtual presence describe ways in which (moving) images are understood to erase distance. Lambert Wiesing, for example, in his broad definition of media, outlines how the image’s capacity to show and evoke something across time and space is a central characteristic of pictures. Likewise, Jeffrey Sconce historicizes the notion of artificial presence in his book Haunted Media:
Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television. Whereas many studies on artificial and virtual presence focus on the successful experiences, Sconce demonstrates that the crossing of time and space does not appear natural to a new media’s initial audiences. In any case, the concepts of virtual and artificial presence are constituted in opposition to a ‘real’ and worldly presence. Through media we can communicate over distance or, in its most successful instances, the spectator even accepts the illusion of ‘being there’ physically. Yet artificial and virtual presence, as these concepts maintain, are always derivatives of real presence.

Vivian Sobchack, on the contrary, works with a specific concept of presence through which she addresses the actual, sensual and material impact of moving images on the spectator. In Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture, she devotes a chapter to “cinematic, photographic, and electronic ‘presence’.” Sobchack describes a presence that is not artificial but real. It deals with closeness rather than distance. Drawing on Heidegger’s proposition that “The essence of technology is never technological,” Sobchack argues that cinema constitutes the spectator in two ways. On the level of discourse and meaning-making, technologies such as moving images define how we think about the world and how we make sense of it. At the same time, cinema (like photographic and electronic media respectively) also constitutes how we sensuously perceive the world. Thereby, it enables “a new and discrete perceptual mode of existential and embodied presence.” This recalls Jonathan Crary’s pivotal work on perception in the nineteenth century. Moreover, presence for Sobchack involves our embodied engagement with the world. Contrary to the discourse on artificial presence, this notion of presence is very real. The impact of media in terms of presence is not just that it creates an illusion of ‘being there’. Cinema, more than a medium of representation, materially touches and constitutes the spectator. Thereby, Sobchack’s discussion of presence is, through her interest in Heidegger, closely affiliated to the aesthetic experience of presence developed by Nancy and Gumbrecht. Interestingly, Sobchack’s chapter was originally published as part of an 1994 interdisciplinary anthology edited by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. More recently, Sobchack proposed presence as a framework for film history and, more specifically, media archeology.

Probably the most recent contribution to the extensive history of presence in film studies has been discussed in by Jamie Baron in her book The Archive Effect. Writing about the process of viewing archival footage, Baron develops the thesis that at specific instances the past can unexpectedly overwhelm the viewer in the present. In that way, the past is active in the present. Baron shares with Sobchack an interest in the Dutch philosopher of history, Eelco Runia, who argues that the past is not dead or a “foreign country,” but that it is actually active in the present.

Whereas various concepts of presence have been developed in the field of film studies, the notion of presence as an aesthetic experience, particularly
from a historiographical perspective, has largely remained underdeveloped. The current dissertation aims to make up for that. While Jean-Luc Nancy’s image and film theory receives a growing amount of attention in the field of film philosophy, his ideas on presence are only referred to sporadically. Similarly, so far, Gumbrecht’s work on presence has been equally overlooked by film scholars and film historians, while it has been influential in a range of disciplines such as history, archaeology, and theater and performance studies. Martin Seel, on the contrary, repeatedly addresses film. His book *Die Künste des Kinos* marks his most extensive engagement with the cinema. Yet, due to his focus on classical and institutionalized cinema he focuses solely on immersion and illusion while his brief analysis of the Lumière films displays a very simplified understanding of film history. As a result, I would argue that Seel mistakenly excludes his own theory on appearance and the experience of presence from the film medium. Instead, he focuses primarily on the ethics of cinema and its artistic capabilities.

Thus, while presence has been a recurring topic in film studies as well as film history, the notion of presence as an aesthetic experience has not yet been addressed. Presence as an aesthetic experience sheds light on how the feeling of ‘being there’, the feeling of being in touch with something, can cause a sensation in itself. Thereby, it is closely related to the project of phenomenology. After all, Merleau-Ponty outlined art as a “duplicity” of perception itself as it expresses “the way we live our bodily lives.” In her pivotal study *Address of the Eye*, Sobchack reformulates this as film’s unique capacity to show “the expression of experience by experience,” making perception “seen,” communicating “Here, where the world is sensible; here, where I am.” The aesthetics of presence, in turn, takes this claim, as it were, one step further. It is not only about the presentation of perception but, rather, a presentation of being, or a “presentation of presentation.” This dissertation holds that these concepts can be helpful for our understanding of early cinema experience. Yet, in order to be effective in a discussion on early film, the complex terminology on presence and aesthetic experience requires exploration and explanation. Accordingly, the following sections present a sort of detour through the history of aesthetic experience as a philosophical concept.

**Aesthetic experience, a history**

Aesthetic experience is a notoriously complex concept that remains hard to define. According to Richard Shusterman, the first part (‘aesthetic’) has been approached from so many different perspectives over the past three centuries that the concept’s blurriness frustrates theorists. Meanwhile, the latter part (‘experience’) might prove even more problematic as, to quote Hans-Georg Gadamer, the concept of experience is “one of the most obscure we have.”
Nevertheless, from an equal number of perspectives, aesthetic experience is a helpful way to conceptualize moments that break away from the flow of everyday life, “a distinctively singular experience in contrast to the stream of ordinary experience.” As a toolbox, the notion of aesthetic experience is a way of focusing a broad variety of “heightened, meaningful, and valuable phenomenological experiences.” Importantly, aesthetic experience, in this respect, is not a quality to demarcate art. The concept is more helpful if we understand it in a manner that transgresses the boundaries of art. In this way, aesthetic experience, as a particularly modern concept, is important for our understanding of how people make sense of the world.

As Terry Eagleton observes, “Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body.” From the perspective of continental philosophy, the concept of aesthetic experience might even be considered a linguistic tautology. German philosophy of the eighteenth century, the realm in which the concept of aesthetics in its modern meaning was first developed, equates aesthetics with sensual perception and thus with experience at large. Although responding to earlier theories on the arts and perception (most explicitly to Leibniz), the concept of aesthetics originates from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s Aesthetica, a Latin term based on the Greek aiesthesis, which means perception from the senses, or “science of sensible cognition.” In this manner, the concept relates to today’s usage of the word anesthesia in medical terms as the “loss of sensation.” As Martin Jay explains, Baumgarten’s installment of this novel concept was to differentiate it from noesis (“pure conceptual thought separated from the senses”) and poiesis (“the active making of objects, artistic or otherwise,” similar to what Bordwell refers to as the “poetics of cinema”). Subsequently, aesthetics developed in German philosophy into a new discourse that tried to conceptualize sensible and embodied experience. While for Baumgarten aesthetics involved both the senses and cognition simultaneously, Immanuel Kant, in his third treatise, The Critique of Judgement, separated the two domains. In Kant’s view aesthetic judgments function on a different plane than other kinds of judgment (faculties of cognition); based on sensation as feeling rather than perception, they are a category in their own right. Whereas previously bodily experiences were seen as inferior to mental representations because they were though to deceive, in aesthetics the senses became an important ingredient for the subject’s experience in the world. Arguably still inferior to the mind, sensuous perception turned into something worth studying.

This discourse on aesthetics was developed in close relation to the valuation of artistic objects. Whereas beauty in artistic objects in a pre-modern way was created by divinity (or an institution aligned to that divinity), modern aesthetics in the eighteenth century found a way to centralize the subjective experience and the subject’s judgment as the prime concern for art. The object, in order to be considered as art, had to be experienced as such, and thus had to arouse a sensual pleasure. Moreover, Kant would state that
art could arouse a “non-hierarchical free play” of the subject’s (cognitive) faculties. Art thus becomes a kind of ideal playground where the rules and functional processes of normal everyday experience are suspended.

In Kant’s theory, aesthetics give way to the fundamental laws of perception (as part of the *a priori* underlying laws of nature and humanity). Aesthetic experience, according to Kant, is signified by a “disinterested pleasure.” While pleasure is normally aroused by functionality and the fulfillment of a ‘need’, aesthetic experience breaks with purposes and effectiveness. Its pleasure stems from a different order. Aesthetic experience deregulates the mental faculties and thereby deregulates cognition. In that moment the subject is more or less thrown back to the fundamental elements of perception as s/he experiences the basic faculties. Hence Paul Guyer denotes this as a “play with truth.” Writing on the sublime, Kant describes a “negative pleasure,” which does not mean that the feeling that it arouses is negative or not enjoyable. Moreover, it is negative because it is a free play of our faculties of imagination and understanding that refuses to end up in forms or concepts. So, there is an initial displeasure—or even a “violence”—because there occurs a sensible experience that cannot be categorized. Yet, at a second instance (although these occur together and not chronologically), there occurs a pleasure of a higher order:

Our entire cognitive faculty is, therefore, presented with an unbounded, but, also, inaccessible field—the field of the supersensible—in which we seek in vain for a territory, and on which, therefore, we can have no realm for theoretical cognition, be it for concepts of understanding or of reason.

Kant describes this as a kind of freedom because it escapes the constraints of normal, effective perception which requires form and concept as a foundation for our navigation in the world. In his recent theory of aesthetics, Martin Seel revisits Kant’s position by stating that “[I]n the play of aesthetic perception, we are free to experience the determinacy of ourselves in the world.” Hence, after Kant, this notion of aesthetics has been regarded as a disruption of our everyday perception of the world. This disruption occurs most distinctively in the sublime, which is—next to agreeable and the beautiful—Kant’s main category of aesthetic experience. Most significantly, the content of this negative yet higher order of pleasure is that the subject or beholder becomes aware of the processes of perception, and hence faces his own position in the world as a sensation of experience itself.

Baumgarten’s and Kant’s writings on aesthetics are notably complex, and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully engage with these writings. However, some of the notions coined by these eighteenth-century German philosophers function as the basic material for contemporary ideas on aesthetic experience. Possibly the most vital revision that was achieved almost three centuries ago was the shift in focus from the object to the subject. This
“subject-centered mode of aesthetic experience” is still the starting point for many current-day theories on both aesthetics and spectatorship. Martin Seel, for example, situates his theory not around ontological qualities of objects, but on the effect that they arouse in the spectator, that is “artworks [broadly defined as an object capable of arousing aesthetic experience] develop their transgressive energy from their presence as sense-catching forms.” Aesthetic experience, in this sense, is relational: it is to be found in the encounter between the subject (spectator) and the object. Erika Fischer-Lichte, in turn, describes aesthetic experience as an event or encounter of interaction in which there are only subjects in a shared space (the creator-subject and the recipient-subject) and no objects. Similarly, Jean-Luc Nancy’s aesthetic theory focuses on the physical closeness (touching) between the object and the beholder. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, on an equal note, describes aesthetic experience broadly in terms of “moments of intensity” that strike the spectator due to “its purely physical perception.” A theorizing from the viewpoint of physical perception, then, will also be central to this study of the viewing experiences of cinema.

Another related and recurring theme in the debate on aesthetic experience is the dichotomy between meaning/cognition versus sensation/feeling. This dichotomy is at the heart of the concept of the aesthetic experience of presence as Gumbrecht, Nancy, and Seel equally maintain that there is some kind of direct experience (akin to immediacy) possible, or, at least, that there occurs a disruption when the viewer is confronted with the possibility of direct experience. It is art’s unique quality to hint at these direct encounters with the world. Kant’s original division, revisited by Nancy and Seel, is that of darstellung and vorstellung. The concept of darstellung signifies the mere appearing of an object before the subject, that is, the appearance of the world before we employ our schematizing powers over the material. Related to the Latin exhibitio, it is translated as presentation or givenness. Vorstellung, on the contrary, is usually translated as representation. It deals with the subject’s processing of the object by its correspondence to forms and concepts. This is where understanding is reached.

Imagination, in Kant’s model, functions as the mediator between presentation and representation. Thus imagination is always involved in aesthetic experience. Eventually it is through representations that we make sense of the world. It allows the subject to navigate the overwhelming number of sensations that occur in everyday life. However, as explained above, the aesthetic experience is the moment when this process is reversed. Sensuous experience (the presentation) cannot reach form and concept, and thereby the subject’s control over the material world is suspended. After Kant, the presentation-representation dichotomy spreads beyond aesthetics. It appeared most notably in Hegel as aufheben, and in Heidegger’s critique on metaphysics (the Dasein). However, where Hegel foresaw a total freedom in aesthetics, Heidegger’s theory tried to think of the limits of understanding
and perception. In Heidegger’s phenomenology, *Dasein*, that is, the subject’s most material and elementary being in the world, is always already goal-oriented. Thus the complete freedom of presentation (or *darstellung*) is, at the same time, limited by the subject’s position. Gumbrecht’s and Nancy’s theories on presence should be read in close relation to the Kant-Hegel-Heidegger tradition. As Gumbrecht outlines, the aesthetic experience of presence brings the subject’s material position in the world to the surface. The subject experiences his or her position in the world as an embodied mind and being. Aesthetic experience, in Heidegger’s terminology, thereby involves an unconcealment of Being.\(^97\) This causes the sensation of aesthetic experience. Early cinema, it is argued in this study, did something similar: as moving pictures were an attraction based on the mere presentation of the world, it enabled an experience of experience, that is, it enabled an experience of the subject’s elementary and material being-in-the-world.

**Presence, a theory**

As described above, aesthetic experience contains a wide variety of ideas and concepts. The German philosophers of the eighteenth century were early to observe that the aesthetic experience of the beautiful differs from the experience of the sublime or the grotesque. This is a difference both in terms of effect (or affect) and as well as in objects. While the beautiful recalls emotions of agreement and pleasure, the sublime triggers awe, envy, terror, and astonishment.\(^98\) The grotesque, in turn, which, as an aesthetic category, involves more of a cognitive “subversion of categorial expectations,” evokes fear and disgust.\(^99\) Due to this wide variety of feelings and emotions, we have to specify what kind of aesthetic experience we will focus upon. Above all, we should keep in mind that these notions are theoretical constructs or models through which we can conceptualize objects or (past) events and the experiences that they triggered.

Presence does not always give way to aesthetic experience. Our presence in the world is, on almost all occasions, including mediated communication, an unnoticeable fact of life.\(^100\) At moments of aesthetic experience, on the other hand, the material presence of the world takes center stage. Presence, in this way, signifies a potential threat to our effective navigation in the world by challenging meaning and understanding. So, following the Kantian model, our experience of the world is characterized by a raw perception (presentation) that is made meaningful by applying concepts and forms (representation). In this model, presence goes hand-in-hand with meaning. Aesthetic experiences, on the contrary, are described by Nancy as moments that allude to the “outside” of representation as they evoke “the infinite withdrawal of meaning.”\(^101\)
Thereby the notion of presence is used as the counterpart to signification and understanding. This is where the “post-deconstructive realism” steps in: presence is a way to conceptualize the “outside of language” and, in a Heideggerian way, the “end of philosophy” and the essence of absolute knowledge. Nancy, like Gumbrecht and Seel, argues that presence basically entails a sensation of touch: that is, a sensation of an object in its most direct appearance. As Nancy states: “That this thing exists, and that it is some thing, is the content of absolute knowledge that precedes thought in though itself... It is the impossible and real, the impossibly real experience of some thing.” In terms of phenomenology, meanwhile, experience can never be completely devoid of meaning as the world always appears to us functionally. This functionality based on our intentionality can nevertheless be obstructed, and this is what the aesthetics of presence does. It hints at the possibility that there is an outside of meaning.

On a similar note, Gumbrecht explains the aesthetic experience of presence as the “oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects.” Whereas in our normal perception of the world meaning and presence functionally appear together, aesthetic experiences are situations in which the balance is broken. At these instances either presence or meaning gains dominance. While the two poles still appear together to some extent, aesthetic objects, however, can appeal to either the meaning-dimension or the presence-dimension of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience thus has a semantic dimension and a sensuous dimension but it is the unevenness between these two poles that makes it an intense moment. Meanwhile, as I will illustrate in the first chapter of this thesis that discusses the semantic richness of early cinema’s intermedial experience, semantic complexity can also bring forth the sensuous dimension of the experience. Gumbrecht’s main argument is that, in a very broad perspective, the humanities typically learned to recognize and discuss aesthetic experience as semantically rich moments that we can dissect through interpretation. The paradigm on the aesthetics of presence, in turn, seeks to make up for neglecting the (seemingly) immediate sensuous counterpart of experience.

Gumbrecht equates aesthetic experience with “lived experience” and “moments of intensity.” Thereby, he seeks to remove aesthetic experience from interpretation. For Gumbrecht, as well as for Nancy and Seel, interpretation is secondary to sensation. Aesthetic experience is a situation caught between this lived, immediate, purely physical experience (Wahrnehmung) and perception as the effect of interpretation (Erfahrung). As a result, the aesthetic experience of presence, as Gumbrecht defines, gives way to “experiencing the things of the world in their pre-conceptual thingness will reactivate a feeling for the bodily and spatial dimension of our existence.” “Pre-conceptual thingness,” here, should not be understood as a kind of pre-discursive freedom in which every direction is possible. Rather, in a
Heideggerian sense, being-in-the-world is already object-oriented and thereby marked by its (cultural) position.\textsuperscript{109} Gumbrecht’s concept of aesthetic experience as “oscillation between meaning and presence effects” is helpful for our understanding of the historical viewing experience with moving pictures as it explains how seemingly meaningless or unimportant objects, such as the kinematograph, still arouse physical sensations. In passing, Gumbrecht also historicizes meaning and presence. Whereas modernity prescribes rationality and meaning, experiences of presence appear as a sort of undercurrent or countermovement to that ideology of rationality.\textsuperscript{110} His depiction corresponds to Walter Benjamin’s critique of modernity and early cinema’s potential to overcome modernity’s process of alienation.\textsuperscript{111} In Gumbrecht’s view, modernity is depicted as a “meaning culture” preoccupied with distancing the subject from its surroundings. This gives way to a longing for a sudden touch of the world that we, as people living in the meaning culture of modernity, experience; to live experience instead of understanding it.\textsuperscript{112} Seel, on a similar note, mentions how we “yearn for a sense of presence for our lives” as “we want to experience the presences in which we exist as sensual presences.”\textsuperscript{113} Rephrasing Gumbrecht’s and Seel’s observations, Fischer-Lichte notes that whereas traditionally Western audiences are accustomed to the mind-body dualism, the aesthetics of presence allows for an explicit experience of man as embodied mind.\textsuperscript{114}

For Jean-Luc Nancy presence is also fundamental to aesthetic experience. Art (aesthetics) is an operational term that Nancy employs to describe how certain objects “stage” or “expose” the “genesis of meaning as coming-into-presence.”\textsuperscript{115} Not unlike Merleau-Ponty’s observation that art expresses the way we live our bodily life, for Nancy art stages an “encounter with the world.”\textsuperscript{116} As a process, aesthetics demonstrate to the subject that his/her presence is not stable but always fleeting. It shows that what we consider as meaningful, originates from our ephemeral sensuous contact with the world. Thus the spectacle of the object is also a self-spectacle of our relation with the world.

Compared to Nancy and Gumbrecht, Martin Seel is less associated with the discourse on presence as aesthetic experience. Yet his work is of equal interest to our current discussion. In The Aesthetics of Appearing, Seel maintains that what makes an object “aesthetic” is the way in which it brings forward the “appearing” of the object itself. Thus, like Nancy and Gumbrecht, Seel argues that art is not so much about content or representation as it is about presentation. These objects constitute events that are self-referential: they do not semiotically refer to a meaning outside the object or performance but foreground its own appearance as performance.\textsuperscript{117} Artworks, including early moving picture exhibitions, foreground the appearing of itself and, subsequently, also the appearing of the world. Although Gumbrecht, Nancy, and Seel never collaborate and only reference each other incidentally, collect-
tively their writings present a concept of aesthetic experience that is concerned with the sensuous perception of objects.

Essentially, the paradigm on presence urges us to think of experience not just in terms of meaning-making or sense-making but also in terms of sensation. It thus centers on sensuous perception. Pleasures from these primordial sensations can be highly irrational. A discourse of sensationalism as “intense sensuous experience” while “catering to ‘base instincts’” shortly followed the introduction of cinema.\(^{118}\) Meanwhile Tom Gunning has argued that the cinema of attractions (as a mode of film practice) catered to these sensations. Studies on sensationalism and early cinema, however innovative and useful, tend to equate sensationalism with a disruptive assault of the senses to an astonishing effect while neglecting the continuities and subtleties of sense perception. Thereby sensationalism has primarily been discussed in terms of newness. The concept of presence, in this study, functions to further investigate early cinema’s relation to sensationalism albeit from a more existentialist phenomenological perspective. Thereby presence becomes a productive framework for our understanding of historical viewing experiences. Even though we tend to speak of viewing experiences, early cinema spectatorship involved all the senses.

Presence is a way of conceptualizing these viewing situations as semantically rich, multisensuous experiences. Therefore the individual chapters of this dissertation present historically informed discussions of the concepts of intermediality, movement and rhythm, and space. Thereby this study also contributes to our understanding of the history of the senses and emotions. Under this rubric a group of historians tries to account for the touch, smell, taste, sound, and the rhythm of the past.\(^ {119}\) A sensuous perspective on history is important because it shows how, on an everyday level, the senses only change gradually, even in, for example, the rapidly changing environment of late nineteenth-century’s urban modernity. Moreover, it is through sensuous experience that subjects are most directly connected to the environment surrounding them.\(^ {120}\)

Presence, in this manner, becomes a framework in which we can conceptualize both the astonishing and the mundane responses to early projected moving pictures. Whereas astonishment is usually associated with newness and novelty, presence originates from the inherently familiar. Fischer-Lichte, for example, remarks that “Presence does not make something extraordinary appear. Instead, it marks the emergence of something very ordinary and develops it into an event.”\(^ {121}\) Presence thereby hovers between the novelty effect and an existential recognition of what is familiar at heart. There is an overconcentration on newness and novelty in media history, as recently argued by Benjamin Peters, and Andreas Fickers and Annie van den Oever.\(^ {122}\) As a practice, historiography focuses on change rather than on monotony. Yet, as the experience of presence holds, monotony and mundaneness is also important to aesthetic experience. This has been addressed sporadically in
early cinema research. According to André Gaudreault, the earliest practices with the kinematograph involved a “zero degree of filming.” Producers of early films recorded what was already there in front of the camera, repeating familiar practices. The act of filming, representing, and projecting the pre-filmed world (a street, or a play on stage) was enough to arouse spectators. This corresponds to what Gumbrecht describes as “short moments of concentration on the ‘things in the world’.” On a similar note, Martin Seel writes how this kind of aesthetic experience evokes “a heightened sense of the real.” The subject involved in the aesthetic experience of presence is aroused merely by the fact that things are there, “an attentiveness to what is appearing.” Very broadly, I think that presence is an insightful way to describe a viewing situation preoccupied with the act of experiencing the world represented while it was hovering between the familiar and the extraordinary.

Subsequently, as addressed above, the aesthetic experience of presence is a productive explanation of how in familiar or mundane contexts, small, special moments can occur. Even though cinema would become a major form of entertainment in the twentieth century, we should not forget that during its early years moving pictures were one among many attractions. As will be outlined throughout the chapters of this dissertation, cinema was not always extraordinary within the context of the fairground or vaudeville. Yet, it clearly can be argued that within these highly competitive contexts of amusement, moving pictures made a lasting impact on audiences. This impact was not always clear from the beginning. In the Netherlands, for example, popular responses to the kinematograph were very modest. Meanwhile, in Chicago in 1896, moving pictures were mainly introduced as an off-season summer attraction. On both sides of the Atlantic, however, the new medium somehow made an impression that was not always astonishing or revolutionary, but still special and noteworthy. The framework of presence can help to theoretically reconstruct these experiences from a perspective that emphasizes the sensual, haptic, and tactile. In this manner, a perspective from the aesthetic experience of presence can include both the viewing positions of astonishment and contemplation. A growing number of studies approach film spectatorship as a multi-sensuous affair. In the past few years an increasing interest has emerged in embodied spectatorship in the field of early cinema studies. Reframing the impact of moving images as an aesthetic experience gives way to a more comprehensive account of very early cinema.

Methodology
Experience is by definition beyond words. Language is only one modality of experience and the complexity of sensuous experience often exceeds expres-
Histories of emotions and senses always struggle to represent the complexity of emotional life because the historian seeks what Constance Classen describes as “the unspoken messages of our bodies and exploring our most intimate relationships.” Yet, as Classen also remarks, “A lack of words, however, does not mean a lack of feelings or of social significance.” Meanwhile, what we are left with is a selection of material objects and historical discourse. This historical discourse is not just the evidence of experience but also the prerequisite of how these discourses shaped experience.

This study, therefore, combines historical research with aesthetic theory. The dissertation, meanwhile, marks an effort to operationalize the paradigm on presence in historical analyses. It maintains that an aesthetic interpretation from the perspective of presence is necessary to bring forward parts of the viewing experience that are not evident in the historical discourse. This study, thereby, subscribes to Hayden White’s argument that historical facts do not speak for themselves and that historical representation, as figurative description, always entails implicit or explicit theorization:

For whether history is considered simply as the past, the documentary record of this past, or the body of reliable information about the past established by professional historians, there is no such thing as a distinctively historical method by which to study this history. Indeed, the history of historical studies displays ample evidence of the necessity of importing conceptual models, analytical methods, and representational strategies from other disciplines for the analysis of structures and processes considered to be generally historical in nature. In principle, therefore, there is nothing inherently a- or antihistorical in importing models, methods, and strategies borrowed.

Thereby this dissertation entails a series of historically informed theoretical reconstructions of viewing experiences. The historical viewing experiences reconstructed throughout the chapters present a distinct version of the past, one that is the product of the specific theoretical framework applied. Experiences, here, are defined as plural; as each chapter describes different viewing situations, this study avoids favoring one mode of spectatorship over another. As mentioned earlier, viewing experiences are explored thematically by way of a discussion of intermediality, movement, and space. Following Lisa Gitelman’s tenet that “specificity is key” for media history, the “primary mode” of this dissertation is the case study. The chapters are organized as case studies describing locally specific moving image performances and popular discourses. It is not that these locally specific discourses together form a whole, or that they are positioned in opposition of each other. Rather, the different contexts account for specific viewing experiences which, in turn, can be interpreted as evoking aesthetic experiences of presence. As addressed above, the introduction of cinema involved a wide variety of viewing situations. Meanwhile a large number of professional (‘scientific’) and popular discourses were involved in the conception of film. Cinema’s
earliest reception, thereby, was marked by paradoxes and inconsistencies. By analyzing and discussing several viewing situations in their own right, this study seeks to do justice to the multivalent viewing experience.

Throughout the chapters two local contexts explored in detail. This study is thematically organized as each chapter discusses a key concept to the early cinema experience (intermediality, movement, space). The different contexts serve as historical ground to anchor theoretical discussion. Chapter 1 locates discussion in the Netherlands, where the kinematograph exhibitions of the German-born fairground showman Henri Grünkorn are explored. While tracing the intermedial influences for some of his films, the chapter also touches upon the Paris entertainment scene of the late nineteenth century. This case study is selected because Henri Grünkorn was, in some respects, a very ordinary fairground showman who turned to moving pictures. He was not the first with a kinematograph on the fairground, and his performances were, for a long time, not considered innovative. This might explain why his exhibition practices have mainly been overlooked by historians. Still, his typical but popular programs of scenes illustrate the many intermedial dimensions of early moving pictures. Meanwhile, as will be argued, the intermedial status of the moving pictures at the time has a transhistorical relevance for (post) cinema experiences today.

The second and third chapters are situated in the urban-metropolitan context of Chicago. Around the turn of the century downtown Chicago was considered by contemporary critics the most modern city in the world. Even though it has been argued by some that US urban environments are overrepresented in film history, I would hold that there is still some transhistorical relevance to this particularly modern context. Chicago was a space characterized by movement and flux while there was a surplus of entertainment possibilities with which moving pictures had to compete. Thereby it is not unlike the present (post) cinema situation.

To a certain extent, the selection of contexts for the chapters is also accidental. Odo Marquard reminds us that “We human beings are always more our accidents than our choice,” and that “Part of man’s dignity is his ability to bear the accidental.” Archival research is about bracketing the accidental by checking all available historical resources. Yet for the historian the accidental is, I believe, also a blessing. Finding an unknown object or some ‘odd’ newspaper coverage and tracing its origins leads to a new perspective. The first chapter, in this respect, began as an overview of the introduction of film in the Netherlands, but once I stumbled upon an unidentified scene named Aladdin in one of Grünkorn’s shows, the text developed in a completely different direction. Similarly, research for Chapter 2 started with a wide angle search for writings about the kinematograph and movement, but one Chicago Tribune article made me dive into the specificities of the local discourse on early film in Chicago.
That there are two chapters based in Chicago is due to practical concerns: there was simply not enough time to explore a third context from scratch. Accessibility and the historian’s own subjective position is also a case in point here. English, Dutch and, to a lesser extent, French, are languages with which the author is familiar. As experience is by definition beyond words, historically reconstructing emotions and experiences from written material demands the historian to be extra sensitive to language. Aesthetic experience, in particular, refuses expression. Historians, however, are in many ways surrendered to written sources and, if we are lucky, images or other material. Therefore, we should look for traces of past experiences in the “the most trivial details” that give way to mannerisms of the time. As a history of emotions or mentalities, this dissertation concentrates not so much on big theories and classical texts but on “unspoken or unconscious assumptions, on perception, on the workings of ‘every day thought’.”

In this respect, historical newspapers provide a pivotal entry to everyday life and thought. Paul Moore explains that around the turn of the century newspapers functioned as “a menu of urban possibility, not so much a map charting every possibility as a synopsis of key diversions.” These abstracts of possibilities introduced the reader to many different attractions and distractions available in the city. Newspapers, which were predominantly local publications, also expressed, to a certain extent, the ‘mood’ on the streets by expressing the general atmosphere of the town. While cities grew in size and stimuli, newspaper coverage moved between the local familiarity of one’s own neighborhood to the novelty of the extended metropolis. In his history of American newspapers, Michael Schudson outlines the importance of newspapers from the 1880s to the early 1900s as “use-papers.” As life in the city evolved rapidly, and readers were often new to big city life, newspapers functioned as “a compendium of tips for urban survival.” Even more concrete than a menu of possibilities, newspapers presented readers with guidelines and concepts on behavior in the unfamiliar surroundings of the city.

Of course, as Schudson and others have also suggested, different newspapers had different functions. They were aimed to serve their own local and particular readership. Thus newspapers in the 1890s did not strive for the objectivity that current-day journalistic ethos demands. Rather, most newspapers were notoriously liberal with the truth. In a way, the press served the subjective sensationalism that many readers experienced on a daily basis (or at least they wanted to read about this on a daily basis). While troubling historical claims of evidence, the 1890s newspapers’ emphasis on experience is still productive in outlining what impressions audiences were subject to. Throughout this thesis, I will read these newspapers with an extra sensitivity for cracks and gaps in the audience’s understanding of the earliest moving picture machines.

Like most other media historians working today, I have combined digital research with on-site archival work. The digital availability of newspapers...
has enabled me to search a broader variety of newspapers. Media historian Huub Wijfjes, however, warns against “digital laziness” as he states: “The big challenges therefore not only lie in the analysis of digital sources, but in developing a professional attitude as a historian in the digital world.” Indeed, keyword search allows one to scan large portions of material at an instant with a risk of neglecting the specific context and connotation of each newspaper entry. Therefore, keyword searches for this research project have been done by one newspaper title at a time, maintaining local and temporal specificity. Browsing through scanned pages and chronological reading also helps to contextualize newspaper coverage. In my view, this is elementary to understanding the tone of writing (e.g. serious or ironic) and reconstructing ideological views and intended audiences. While reading newspapers on microfilm is much less time efficient, it is my experience that manually browsing through individual issues still results in a better understanding of the ‘mood’ of a local context. Research on-site in Chicago also showed the limited digital availability of newspapers; as of now, only two out of the fourteen local newspapers in circulation in Chicago at the time have been made available online.

Next to historical newspapers, this research also draws on other historical materials from popular discourse, such as photographs, popular magazines, trade journals, manuscripts, drawings of set designs, and, of course, film material. These materials have been consulted at various archives in The Hague, Amsterdam, Paris, and Chicago.

This dissertation does not present the reader with a chronologically organized historical narrative on the reception of the earliest projected motion pictures. While the chapters are thematically structured, their organization is somewhat eclectic as theory and historical descriptions move back and forth. Accordingly, this study subscribes to recent developments in the philosophy on history which, under the label of presence and experience, have critiqued empirical realism and historical narrative. As authors such as Ethan Kleinberg and Eelco Runia maintain, the historian should acknowledge that historical explanation is never complete. We could be more careful claiming history for “how it really was.” Meanwhile, the archive, as Dominic LaCapra argues should not become a “literal substitute for the ‘reality’ of the past” as we should acknowledge its absences and silences. This dissertation, in turn, follows Kleinberg’s call for a historiography that acknowledges the “chaotic, heterogeneous and polysemic conditions of the past, and this chaotic relation to the present.” As a result, the chapters do not focus on one explanation but meticulously describe historical situations before theorizing possible meanings. Ideally this approach consciously addresses the limitations and uncertainties of historical research.

A number of film historical studies from the past twenty years already subscribe to similar ideas on historiography. Giuliana Bruno’s well-known
book *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, for example, presents a fragmented, discontinuous, and spatially oriented history of Elvira Notari’s work. Bruno described her project as a palimpsest instead of a historical narrative. Bruno’s *Atlas of Emotion* walks a similar path, stressing the materiality of film experience by looking at the architecture of moving picture palaces. Thereby, Bruno’s work functions in this dissertation not just as inspiration and a blueprint to merge meticulous description with theory on spectatorship.

Conceptualizing viewing experiences from the 1890s using a theoretical framework from today can be seen as an anachronism. Yet, I believe that there are several successful studies of early cinema that refer to contemporary theory while making sense of the past. Moreover, linking cinema’s past with the present might be a fruitful way to show in a transhistorical manner what Runia provocatively phrases as “the living on of the past in the here and now.” The themes discussed in the following three chapters, intermediality, movement, and space, are recognizable in today’s media environment. Although a transhistorical argument is not at the heart of this dissertation, I hold that it is relevant to study cinema’s past from a contemporary perspective. Thereby, I would like to subscribe to Jane Gaines’ call for a renewed version of history because, as she concludes, “our ability to produce paradigms powerful enough to conceptualize the technological present and future depends on the concept of history we employ.”

A brief outline of the chapters

The first chapter proposes that the kinematograph’s “intermedial enmeshing” is a probable cause for the aesthetic experience of presence. Intermediality has been a productive concept to outline the complex genealogy of cinema. This chapter employs the concept of intermediality to outline how the kinematograph attraction caused both a semantically rich as well as a sensuously multivalent experience. As mentioned above, discussion follows Henri Grünkorn, a German-born showman who was traveling fairgrounds in the Netherlands and Belgium from the mid-1880s to 1907. The chapter describes Grünkorn’s attractions before he bought his “Electric Cinematograph” in 1897, such as a rollercoaster and a mechanical diorama. By exploring notions such as mobility and virtuality, it is argued that Grünkorn’s early attractions provide important information on the intermedial status of moving pictures. Subsequently, the chapter analyzes the scenes included in Grünkorn’s kinematograph shows by outlining its intermedial and transmedial connections. Intermediality, here, is discussed as influences and exchanges between the moving pictures and another medium or particular cultural practice, while transmediality is employed as a concept to outline cinema’s many relations with phenomena and cultural imagination transcending individual media. The middle part of the chapter details the many layers of
popular discourse involved in *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* (1897). These transmedial connections demonstrate that moving pictures were on the one hand banal, everyday and familiar, while, at the same time, they addressed complex layers of aesthetic imagination. The chapter concludes that the kinematograph was a multivalent object that allowed a potentially endless number of interpretations.

Chapter 2 focuses on the experience of movement. Through a close study of the introduction of moving images in the context of Chicago in 1896 and 1897, I propose that moving pictures presented a form of motion that was radically familiar. It was familiar in the sense that it brought together a number of constellations of motion and energy fundamental to modernity. Situating moving images in the rhythms of the city allows us to conceptualize the spectator as physically engaged with the motion of the kinematograph. Subsequently, on the level of discourse, I argue that in the 1890s there were two different paradigms on movement in place. These explanations contradicted each other at certain instances, for example, in descriptions of the kinematograph. As a disruption in understanding, this might indicate the presence of an aesthetic experience. By pointing at this disruption in the familiarity and the physical closeness of the attraction, this chapter concludes by interpreting the viewing experience of movement as an aesthetic experience of presence.

Chapter 3 studies the paradox of proximity and distance. As in Chapter 2, this chapter is concerned with downtown Chicago in 1896-1898 where the introduction of film in a popular vaudeville context forms the focus of this discussion. The chapter describes the different constellations between screen and live performance from a spatial perspective while focusing on the representation of bodies. On the one hand, film could bring the viewer closer to details and nearer to the bodily performance on screen. Thereby film established a kind of presence as a haptic fixation on the objects and bodies on screen. Yet, at the same time, the screen body was distanced, abstracted, and marked by an absence. In many ways this spatial paradox was key to the reception of the newly introduced moving pictures. Throughout the chapter I discuss the spatial renegotiation of moving pictures by constructing three overlapping categories. These categories coincide with the dynamic conception of space associated with modernity: bringing the distant near, bringing the near nearer, and distancing the near. As a result, I argue that viewing experiences were marked by a “presence in absence.” The dissertation concludes with a discussion on the potential and methodological challenges of including presence effects in film-historical research on early cinema and beyond.
Chapter one
The intermedial enmeshing of early cinema as aesthetic experience: Henri Grünkorn and his “Electric Cinematograph”

Spectatorship at the time of the introduction of the kinematograph was profoundly intermedial. Not only did the invention of projected moving image devices have a long and complicated technological history, the environment in which they were presented to audiences was crowded with a broad variety of cultural practices.1 The kinematograph entered pre-existing systems of entertainment such as the fairground and the variety theater show in Europe and vaudeville in the United States, only to transform these industries throughout the course of the next decades. Even though the production and exhibition of both moving picture machines and films was a “distinct tech- ne” requiring a specific set of skills, they were introduced to audiences in familiar contexts that each had their own histories, their own traditions, and their own modes of spectatorship.2 These contexts, I will argue in this chapter, shaped very early experiences with the kinematograph. Cinema’s earliest exhibitors, such as the travelling fairground showman Henri Grünkorn in the Netherlands (this chapter’s central character), often had an extensive history working within certain traditions of entertainment. Similarly, the scenes projected during the kinematograph shows conformed to a broad variety of pre-existing cultural practices. Early cinema, thereby, took part in an “interplay within show business” dominated by what Tom Gunning classifies as “attraction-based forms of amusement.”3 This chapter presents a case study of early cinema’s inherently intermedial status from an experiential perspective. André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion describe this initial condition of cinema as a “fusion phase” marked by an “intermedial meshing”:

The medium (...) initiates itself into the syntagmatic chain of culturally established genres and media representations; lacking a real paradigmatic depth of its own, it is content to bind with other elements of the chain of socially practiced media and genres.4
The projected moving pictures, thus, always appeared in relation to other media. These manifold relations had a profound impact, both semantically and sensuously, on early viewing experiences. The interplay of attractions was, as will be argued below, multisensuous and not merely visual.

The semantic reach of the word intermediality, however, has throughout the years been stretched to its extremes. As an umbrella term it can mean almost anything in any context. Therefore, as the literary scholar Irina Rajewsky urges, the concept of intermediality can only be productive if we specify its distinct definition and purpose. Subsequently, following Rajewsky, intermediality is defined in this chapter from a diachronic perspective. Intermediality, in this sense, refers to the many relations between the kinematograph and other media and practices from a historical perspective. It is about the shifting, unstable borders between media (I am referring here to attractions as media). I am particularly interested in what earlier fairground attractions can tell us about the reception of the kinematograph and how pre-cinematic experiences carried over to the early moving picture experience. In the second half of this chapter the discussion shifts to the concept of transmediality, and transmedial imagination. Transmediality, here, is defined as a subcategory of intermediality. While intermediality sketches exchanges and influences between different media, transmediality is used to discuss how phenomena appear across media, and how a non medium-specific imagination about a story or a character (Aladdin) is presented in a medium-specific manner in early cinema.

The concepts of intermediality and transmediality are not associated very often with presence. The intermedial approach has been criticized lately for presupposing mediation, and for implicitly presuming distinguishable media and media borders. It could be argued that a semantic conception of intermediality, as originating from the concept of intertextuality, favors seeing the world merely as “readable” while constituting the spectator as an observer in stasis interpreting complex media objects in front of her. Yet, from the perspective of presence, concepts like intermediality and transmediality are nevertheless relevant if we use them in a historical perspective to account for the materiality of media as related to meaning-making and the address of the senses. Although cinema at this early stage could hardly be defined as a proper medium because it lacked the protocols and institutionalization that were necessary to become “a socially realized structure of communication,” the newly-introduced moving pictures nevertheless took part in an interplay between various established forms of mediation. Meanwhile, early cinema did present from the outset several socially realized structures of experience as there was something specifically cinematic in film exhibition from the very beginnings. Jürgen Müller concludes that “primarily in terms of thorough historical studies” the intermedial “axis” of research “will lead us to some level of intellectual complexity which conceives the relation between ‘sense’ and ‘materiality’, between ‘meaning’ and ‘media’, as a relation of
tension or of oscillation.” Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, on a similar note, firmly states that answers related to the historical constellations of the “materialities of communication” in intermedial research can only derive from “detailed empirical (and certainly often enough quite cumbersome) research.” This chapter, therefore, employs the concepts of intermediality and transmediality to highlight the complexity between meaning effects and presence effects in early viewing experiences. Moreover, the concepts are critically applied to outline the semantic and sensuous denseness of moving pictures in the fairground context.

Over the past two decades intermediality has been a recurring framework to interpret and explain cinema’s multifaceted, complex early years. The intermedial approach disclosed the manifold origins of cinema, thereby challenging singular histories or genealogies of the moving image. One might even argue that very early cinema was uniquely intermedial, an ontological status that cinema despite its similarities to the present situation, might never obtain again. Gaudreault summarizes that the “particularly polyphonic form of expression” was the “primary quality” of the earliest moving picture shows. Even though a medium is never ‘pure’ as there is always an element of ‘inter’ or ‘multi’ involved in every form of mediality, this chapter explores the initial stage of the projection of moving pictures as a historically specific moment where we can recognize a peak of entanglement between the kinematograph and various other media practices and imagery. In his introduction to a special issue of Early Popular Visual Culture, Andrew Shail states that because of the “absence of the claim (…) to the status of a medium . . . The period 1895-c. 1908 invites a description of cinema as intermedially embedded.” Meanwhile, as Musser brings in against Gaudreault and the intermedial approach, from its initial stages film constituted a particular practice; it was never completely embedded in the cultural practices of stage performance or the fairground. The moving picture attraction demanded a specific set of technical and performative skills from the exhibitor. I hold that this was the main reason why only certain showmen took up the kinematograph in the 1890s. Very early on, animated pictures gained a singular status because the attraction was in several ways different from neighboring fairground amusements. This specificity of the kinematograph attraction is important to recognize in the early viewing experience. The moving picture experience hovered between various familiar attractions while bringing its own unique sensorial qualities. Thereby intermediality remains a key concept to understand spectatorship in the earliest cinema. Although not referring to intermediality explicitly, Anne Friedberg’s studies on the many different origins of cinema spectatorship, published in her books Window Shopping and The Virtual Window, where she repeatedly describes the terms ‘mobility’ and ‘virtually,’ illustrate this perspective.

This study draws on the rich conceptual framework developed by early cinema scholars, particularly Gaudreault’s notion of cultural series (subsyst-
tems of signification which are part of a larger cultural paradigm), and Friedberg’s dual concepts of mobility and virtuality. The chapter also extends the current discussion by moving beyond the semantic bias of this approach. In the context of the Dutch fairground, it is argued, the kinemato-graph was indeed experienced as a semantically rich object addressing a wide array of familiar imagery (what I will term ‘intermedial enmeshing’), yet, as an attraction, this complexity also involved the senses and the materiality of viewing experience. The viewing situation of early projected moving pictures, in short, was embedded in an intermedial history of different viewing positions.

Historical viewing experiences of the late 1890s have no ontological properties in the present—experiences are irrevocable and have ceased to ‘exist’ (if experience can ever exist)—outlining the new medium’s intermedial complexity allows us to trace elements of that viewing experience as an empirically-informed theoretical reconstruction. Through a close analysis of Henri Grünkorn’s endeavors with the kinematoscope (which he marketed mainly as the “Electric Cinematograph”) on and around Dutch and Belgian fairgrounds in 1897-1899, I will describe a mode of spectatorship that was profoundly intermedial. Moreover, Grünkorn’s kinematoscope shows, as well as his history before the moving picture attraction, function in this chapter as a case study illustrating various ways for conceptualizing cinema’s entanglement with other forms of entertainment, other media, discourses on modernity and modes of representation. Thus intermedial relations entailed practices and genres that cinema adapted from neighboring attractions while it also appeared on the level of transmediality as non medium-specific imagery and narratives that were worked into cinematic representations (for example, _Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse_ and _Don Quixote_). Hence I will draw upon notions of transmediality and transmedial imagination as subcategories of intermediality. While spectatorship was characterized by this intermedial enmeshing, the medium-specific qualities of projected moving images could also be experienced.

This chapter argues, above all, that the kinematoscope’s intermedial entanglement can be primarily conceptualized as giving way to the aesthetic experience of presence. As Gumbrecht describes, aesthetic experience can be seen as a disruption of the status quo of everyday life, an intimate feeling of the de-automatization of perception caused by an “oscillation between presence and meaning effects.” While presence, the sensuous, materiality of the world, is always part of perception, an aesthetic object reawakens and revives presence. Thereby, presence as the foundation of perception regains attention. Aesthetic objects, in this sense, appear to the spectator as a phenomenon or situation, causing a disruption to everyday perception by standing out as both a banal and a complex event. I propose that the kinematoscope was such a banal yet complex object, thereby giving way to an aesthetic experience that centered on materiality and sensuous perception. In
cinema studies, and in early film historiography, the concept of intermediality has been employed in a wide variety of ways, some of which I will address in more detail below. Still, the concept has not been used much in conceptualizing the (earliest) viewing experiences.20

As outlined above, this chapter is an historically-informed theoretical reconstruction of viewing experiences. The current case study of Grünkorn’s kinematograph show in its specific historical contexts thus focuses on particular intermedial and transmedial connections. At the same time, these particular viewing situations and contexts are joined with more general and abstract notions of spectatorship and aesthetic experience. Yet, these two ends, the empirical and the theoretical, can inform each other. Throughout this chapter I will discuss the intermediality involved in Grünkorn’s kinematograph show from three different perspectives. The first part of the chapter introduces Henri Grünkorn as a fairground showman operating in the late nineteenth-century culture of spectacle. This section describes how the fairground attractions that Grünkorn operated before he turned to moving pictures informed the spectatorship of the kinematograph. Thus this section deals with the intermedial entanglement of spectatorship throughout various historical constellations.

The second part of the chapter discusses transmediality as a subcategory of intermediality. This section contextualizes Grünkorn’s main act in 1898, a set of four one-minute scenes about Aladdin. Tracing various representations of Aladdin throughout the nineteenth century in the Netherlands and France, I argue that the filmic féerie that Grünkorn exhibited engaged with several transmedial imaginations about artificial light, transformation and metamorphosis, and the world as visual object. These cultural imaginations anchored viewing experiences. Moreover, they related to aesthetic imagination concerning appearance, perception, and presence.

Henri Grünkorn and intermedial spectatorship

To contemporary Dutch audiences, the introduction of film in 1896 and 1897 was an extraordinary experience that was nevertheless not that revolutionary or special. Even though projected photographic moving images were a unique invention that was popular from the beginning, we should contextualize its novelty experience as part of an extensive late nineteenth-century culture of spectacle and attractions. Compared to the reception of moving pictures in the U.S. (which I discuss in chapters two and three) the reaction of audiences in the Netherlands was rather cool; seen as yet another variation to popular quasi-scientific fairground attractions, the invention lacked in its early stage a functional purpose.21 In the press only limited attention was given to moving pictures. I believe that this was due to the context of the fairground landscape in which the kinematograph was introduced to most
audiences. Toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, Dutch fairgrounds were subject to widespread, locally-organized “anti-fairground offensives.”\textsuperscript{22} Even though fairgrounds were advertised in local newspapers, coverage of these events and their attractions seldom resulted in extensive coverage. A challenge to any film historian, this near absence of newspaper coverage indicates how much the kinematograph was conceived as part of the existing cultural paradigm or cultural platform of the fairground and ‘cheap’ late nineteenth-century spectacle.

Despite of, or actually because of, its lack of cultural esteem, the fairground was a special, temporary space organized around non-ordinary experiences. Around the turn of the century the fairground, or kermis in Dutch, was a heavily regulated ‘free zone’. The word \textit{kermis} stems from \textit{kerkmis} or \textit{kerkemis}, literally meaning ‘church mass’.\textsuperscript{23} The mediaeval fairground thereby has its origins in church festivities.\textsuperscript{24} These were public celebrations of newly-opened churches or patrons. Yet, already in the middle ages these religious celebrations merged with seasonal or annual commercial fairs. These \textit{jaarmarkten} (‘yearly markets’) or \textit{vrijmarkten} (‘free markets’) constituted distinct moments when regional traders would come to town. Traders were seeking crowds with potential buyers, and thus church and commerce went along quite well. The \textit{kermis} thus developed into a commercial, festive event, distinct from, but not unrelated to, the annual carnival. Liturgic performances (sometimes in \textit{tableaux vivant}) gave way to non-religious forms of amusement. Thereby theater was a recurring element on the fairground from a very early stage. The arrival of salespersons, theater companies, and other ‘strangers’ into town was thus a key part of the fairground.\textsuperscript{25} The fairground thus marked a moment when the unfamiliar was welcomed into town and exhibited, usually at the most central point in the village, town or city.

In the nineteenth century, fairgrounds became more regulated. The peak of the amusement calendar, the fairground was seen by the bourgeois and elites as a place filled with obscenities evoking immoral behavior. In smaller towns, local governments tried to gain more control over the festivities. Meanwhile, in the cities organization was assigned to special bourgeois societies, so-called \textit{verenigingen voor volksvermaken} (‘societies for popular entertainment’, many of which are still active today) who had as their objective to civilize and cultivate the people.\textsuperscript{26} The fairground was still a place of free rein but by the end of the nineteenth century this freedom was highly regulated. Local authorities or organizing committees were actively seeking or banning attractions.\textsuperscript{27} Attractions based on curiosity, for example, had been popular in the fairground for centuries and in the nineteenth century these kind of exhibitions were seen as favorable by regulators. Ideally, an attraction would combine sensation with information, as the historian G.H. Jansen remarks. There was a form of selection based on moral criteria combined with sensational impact. Usually showpeople would return to the same town on an annual basis. Allotment was done a few weeks in advance.
through anonymous bidding on paper. Advance newspaper coverage stated which shows and attractions were to be expected. Food still played a big part at the fair as newspapers mentioned in advance which food stalls would be present. Drinking, meanwhile, seems to have been prohibited on most fairgrounds, but there were many events in local pubs, theaters, and music halls around town organizing special events during the week. The fairground lasted for a week or ten days while it constituted a time of festivities and celebrations for most people in town and neighboring villages.

Despite regulation, the fairground remained a joyful place that was sensuously overwhelming. It was loud, colorful, crowded, and smelly. Different odors of people, exotic foods and sweets, and smoke were part of the experience. The urge to regulate the fairground thereby can be seen as way to control the threat of sensationalism as the primordial appeal of the lower senses.28 Crowds slowly moved through the temporary geographical structures of excitement at the fairground, a place that during most other days of the year was an open square. Thereby it constituted a liminal space.29 The fairground was disassociated from everyday life and everyday rule while it was not completely removed from authority. It was a temporary, ritual place. Certain showmen and other ‘strangers’ would show up every year. The fairground usually began and ended with celebrations. This ritualistic familiarity contrasted with the sensational unfamiliarity of most attractions.

It was within this fairground landscape that Henri Grünkorn over the years exhibited his attractions: a rollercoaster, a mechanical diorama, a tableaux vivant, and, from 1896 onward, the kinematograph. Hence it was in this highly dynamic context that moving pictures were introduced to most Dutch audiences.

Several different terms were used to describe moving images between 1896 and 1898 of which beweegende lichtbeelden (‘moving-light images’) was the most recurrent. In these years a great variety of showmen with different backgrounds took up the kinematograph. It should be noted that, different from the US and Chicago contexts discussed in the following chapters, moving pictures were in almost all instances the sole attraction. At its earliest stages in 1896 and 1897, moving picture exhibitions were not integrated into a larger show, as was the case with vaudeville. Traveling fairground showmen bought kinematographs and exhibited motion pictures in their ground booths or portable theaters. These settings would develop into traveling cinemas. Around the same time, moving pictures were also shown in variety theaters and music halls but introduction in this entertainment circuit happened gradually.30 On the fairground, audiences bought tickets to go and see the kinematograph, and not a complete evening program with live entertainment. Thereby, the attraction was part of a cultural practice since it was situated in or around the fairground.

Henri Grünkorn was one of the traveling showmen who took up the kinematograph. Although he appears on several occasions in Guido Convents’
study of the early years of cinema in Belgium, *Van kinetoscoop tot ciné-café*, Grünkorn has not been studied closely, particularly his activities in the Netherlands remain uncovered. In the spring of 1897, when Grünkorn first started to give shows with what he would call his ‘Electrische Kinetograaf’ or ‘Electrische Cinematograaf’ (‘Electric Kinematograph’ or ‘Electric Cinematograph’), other moving picture machines were already in circulation. In March 1896 Camille Cerf and Francis Doublier held the first commercial moving picture screenings with the Lumière Cinématographe at a storefront at Kalverstraat 220 in the heart of Amsterdam’s commercial district. The Cinématographe subsequently moved to The Hague’s seaside and entertainment district of Scheveningen, where it was quite successful for a few months. Exploitation of projected moving pictures at the fairground started with Christiaan Sliker’s attraction, ‘Edison’s Ideal’, a kinematograph that he first exhibited in the provincial town of Leeuwarden in July 1896. Meanwhile the Werner brothers, the Skladanowsky brothers and Robert Paul were also giving shows with various moving picture devices in the Netherlands. Thus Grünkorn was not the first to exhibit moving pictures, nor was his show considered to be particularly innovative or remarkable. As a result, film historians have shown only limited interest in Grünkorn’s kinematographic practices.

While Grünkorn appears as a minor character in several studies of the introduction of film in the Netherlands, his work on the fairground before he began to exploit moving pictures, and the influence this development might have had on his kinematograph show, has been paid little attention. Only a few facts from his private life are known. Born as Heinrich Ludwig Grünkorn in Germany (possibly Braunschweig) in 1856, he married a Dutch woman (Jeanne Ruys) in 1890 in The Hague. They settled in Amsterdam where, I believe, Henri previously owned and exploited some permanent attractions. In 1900 Grünkorn and his wife relocated to the city of Ghent in Belgium. It is not really clear how he ended up in the fairground community. Usually this was a trade that passed from one generation to another, but with Grünkorn this does not seem to be the case. Yet Grünkorn proved to be rather successful as a fairground showman; he was active for more than twenty years, from 1888 to 1910, in three different countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany) although it seems that after his relocation to Ghent he becomes less of a prominent figure on Dutch fairgrounds. Throughout his extensive career Grünkorn exploited at least six different attractions or shows. These attractions included among others a rollercoaster, a mechanical diorama, and a *tableaux vivant* performance.

These previous attractions are important because they indicate how the kinematograph was embedded in the late nineteenth-century culture of spectacle where various modes of spectatorship were developed over time. The kinematograph came with a particular mode of spectatorship, a particular role and position for the spectator to experience moving pictures. Kinemato-
graphic spectatorship was both idiosyncratic and archetypical: there were many variations of kinematographic spectatorship while several core practices remained fixed. Thereby it was both diverse and homogeneous. Grünkorn’s moving picture attraction proves to be a valuable example of this. There was a uniqueness to Grünkorn’s show and his position in the 1890s fairground scene. This form of spectatorship was, in terms of intermediality, anchored in established cultural patterns and practices.

Anne Friedberg historicizes the moving picture viewing position as she situates it on the crossroads of mobile and virtual spectatorship. She describes this as a paradox. On the one hand, the late nineteenth-century spectator was moved and mobilized through actual mobile spectatorship or mobile virtuality while, at the same time, the position of the spectator became more static and immobile; what Friedberg describes as “virtual mobility.” It should be noted here that virtuality is not in opposition to reality, but rather functions as complementary: “Virtual images have a materiality and a reality, but of a different kind, a second-order materiality, liminally immaterial.” It should be noted that this concept of virtuality as having a materiality of its own marks an important shift in Friedberg’s theory. In her 1993 book Window Shopping the virtual is mainly described in terms of the illusionary quality of media to take viewers to another place (akin to virtual reality and virtual presence). Cinema’s present tense, for example, is described as a virtual effect overriding the material pastness of the photographic trace. In doing so, virtuality is associated with immersive realities. In The Virtual Window, Friedberg addresses the importance separating the concept of virtuality from immersion and the space of illusion. Here, the concept of virtual is described as having a materiality of its own coexisting with reality. Pictures and paintings, in this manner, have always enabled forms of framed virtuality. Cinema, however, added an experience of mobility to that framed virtuality. Friedberg describes virtuality as not immaterial because, as she emphasizes, virtual mobility was not a representation on screen, but “a relation between the bodily space inhabited by the spectator and the virtual space presented on the space of the screen.” It is this relation between the spectator’s body and various spaces that distinguishes different forms of spectatorship before and after the introduction of moving pictures on the fairground.

These various modes of spectatorship were intermedially related to each other. Mobility and virtuality were essential elements for kinematographic spectatorship while these notions had a long and various history throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, mobility and virtuality were an attractive force behind numerous spectacular experiences developed in different media. These concepts, thereby, illustrate how moving picture experiences were related to other sensational attractions. In doing so, Friedberg’s dichotomy of mobility and virtuality functions as a framework to discuss these attractions, including the kinematograph, in terms of presence and representation. In short, these experiences were anchored in actual, material sensations of
nearness while also referring to the second-order materiality of the representation on stage and on screen. As I will outline, Grünkorn’s attractions alluded to ‘other places’ while, at each instance, the sensation still centered on the ‘here and now’ of the body. In that manner, the intermedial standpoint presented in this chapter is related to the kinematograph’s bipolar play between distance and nearness as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. The forces of mobility and virtuality were reworked or renegotiated through previous attractions into the moving picture experience, in which context Grünkorn’s attractions in the years before his kinematograph show can be interpreted. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of his fairground activities from this perspective will shed new light on the kinematograph experience.

De Amerikaansche Rutschbaan

In 1888 Henri Grünkorn appears for the first time on the Dutch fairground. His debut must have been quite spectacular. That year he began traveling to fairgrounds with his ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ (‘American Rollercoaster’). At times, he would also label this attraction as ‘Vliegende bergtram’ (‘Flying mountain tram’) or ‘Montagne russe’. The latter became a generic term for rollercoasters in French, while ‘montaña rusa’ became the standard in Spanish. The word *rutsch* could also refer to a ‘slide’ or ‘chute’ but Grünkorn’s attraction was particularly an early rollercoaster. Originating from German, the word *rutsch* in combination with the adjective ‘American’ quite likely connoted (nearby) exoticism and international allure.\(^{40}\) Suggesting international origins was a frequent strategy implemented by fairground showman. At a later stage, Grünkorn’s kinematograph show would bring “Paris’ biggest theatrical hit” Aladdin to local Dutch fairgrounds. Meanwhile the ‘Amerikaansche Rutschbaan’ was the first rollercoaster on a fairground in the Netherlands. In several advertisements Grünkorn included a drawing of his attraction, possibly to emphasize its spectacular nature (Fig. 1). Between 1888 and 1891 the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ was set up at fairgrounds in Haarlem, Heusden, Leeuwarden, Purmerend, Zwolle, Rotterdam and Leiden, and possibly some other cities. Acquiring the rutschbaan must have required quite a financial outlay, which suggests that Grünkorn had funds that were above average for a traveling showman. Construction of the rutschbaan was labor-intensive: in several cities Grünkorn published calls for “two solid workmen” in the days preceding the fair.\(^{41}\) Once at the fairground, the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ did not go unnoticed. While operating at the fairground in Heusden, the regional newspaper *Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en ’s Hertogenbossche Courant* wrote an extensive review which included a detailed description of the attraction:
A small car or truck runs along a steeply constructed track that, because of its own weight and the load of its passengers, runs down with such power that, when it approaches the last part of the track, the speed will cause the car to fly over a [hill]top, after which it will run down again, in the opposite direction gaining speed to fly against another ascent, after which it runs down the same track again.\textsuperscript{42}

The article goes on to describe that the amusement ride measures five meters in height and eighty meters in length, even though Grünkorn himself advertised that the ride was a hundred meters. It must have been a spectacular and major attraction for local fairgrounds at the time. Moreover, in terms of size, the \textit{rutschbaan} can be considered the biggest attraction on Dutch fairgrounds in history.\textsuperscript{43} The ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ was also electrically lit, which was another novelty in 1888-1889. The newspaper article states that there were two other rollercoasters in use at the time. One was located in Scheveningen, the entertainment seaside district near The Hague, while the other operated in Amsterdam at a provisional amusement park or pleasure garden (“plaats van vertier”) called Tolhuys, located immediately north of ’t IJ (close to where the Dutch film institute EYE is situated today) (see Fig. 2). Henri Grünkorn was also the owner of the \textit{rutschbaan} in Amsterdam which he offered for sale in 1888.\textsuperscript{44} Although this date coincides with Grünkorn’s move to the fairground, the rollercoaster was not the same fairground ride as the one in Amsterdam which was in use until 1900 when it was again offered for sale due to lack of space. Like the fairground equivalent, these semi-permanent structures gained little attention in the media. Yet the newspaper \textit{Algemeen Handelsblad} wrote about the rollercoaster in Scheveningen, stating that it must be at the very least dangerous. The paper stated, ironically, that it must have been built by some newly qualified doctors in desperate need of new patients.\textsuperscript{45} In 1890, when Grünkorn travelled the country with his attraction, he speculated that the rollercoaster would be unsafe by mentioning in his advertisement that this was “a solid construction” in which “anyone could take a seat without any danger.” A specific safety rail prohibited the car from derailing.\textsuperscript{46} “The object has a more solid construction than many American railroads,” concluded a local newspaper.\textsuperscript{47}
Fig. 1: Leydse Courant, July 23, 1889. Delpher.
Although no accidents were reported with the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ the risk of danger was nonetheless part of the experience, just as it would be with more advanced rollercoasters. Speed and height played an important role in the experience of controlled danger. Grünkorn subsequently advertised his attraction with the slogan: “With the highest speed over mountain and valley.” It could be argued that this slogan loosely connoted the virtuality of the ‘other’ place as there are no mountains and valleys in the Netherlands. The rutschbaan was extraordinary on the late 1880s and early 1890s fairground because it physically mobilized the spectator. This was not the case with most other attractions at the fairground. At the fair in Leeuwarden, for example, the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ was exhibited alongside a theater tent, a camera obscura, an attraction with optical illusions, a demonstration with steam-driven bicycles, a horse show, and a vague attraction that showed the “wonders of modern progress.” Most fairground attractions were organized in a manner similar to an auditorium in a theater setting. The spectator was an observer who witnessed the spectacle from a safe distance, even though the spectacle was at times sensually moving. Grünkorn’s rollercoaster was one of the few exceptions to that experience in that it mobilized the spectator. The carousel, another popular attraction innovated around this time, also mobilized the spectator, and at least at one location the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’ was located next to a carousel. The spectator now
physically participated in the attraction. The core of this attraction was located in the physical sensation or \textit{thrill} of movement and speed.

Influenced by technological progress, mobility and speed gained a new dimension in the latter part of the nineteenth century. More than a means of transport, mobility signified mechanical spectacle. Well-known examples of this included the locomotive and the train, but we might also include bicycles, elevators, and escalators. These forms of technological progress were exhibited publicly and applauded. Meanwhile, the threat of danger remained an important ingredient in appreciating these inventions. Technology was considered a blessing, but a potentially lethal one that could kill in an instant, while the spectacle of mobility came a potentially deadly force of power that could extend beyond human control.\textsuperscript{51} The ‘Amerikaanse rutschbaan,’ in this case, relied on the force of gravity.

An important part of the spectacle of mobility entailed a mechanical transportation of the human body across a distance, usually at a faster speed than people were used to. Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s classic study concerning the introduction of railway transportation describes the impact of this form of mobility in terms of visual experience as well as its implications for our understanding of time and space.\textsuperscript{52} On a more general note, Anne Friedberg describes this experience as “mobile spectatorship,” that is, the attraction of a spectator who physically moves. The spectator’s mobile gaze subsequently presupposes a “spatially mobilized visuality” by rendering the world as a visually organized, aesthetic object that could propel the spectator.\textsuperscript{53} Mobile spectatorship, I propose, had a lasting impact on film spectatorship, even though, as I will outline in more detail below, with moving pictures the attraction of physical mobility was restricted and substituted by virtual mobility. Still, movement and mobility played a crucial role in the experience of early film, as I will detail in Chapter 2. Very early film producers such as Edison and Lumière took up on the attraction of mobility, most strikingly in the popular genre of \textit{phantom rides} where the camera was mounted on a moving train, streetcar, boat, or moving sidewalk.\textsuperscript{54}

The form of mobile spectatorship plus the sensation of movement that Grünkorn’s ‘Amerikaanse rutschbaan’ promoted in spectators is, accordingly, relevant to the experience of early cinema. The rollercoaster illustrates the physical attraction of mechanical mobility. The attraction of the rollercoaster demanded hardly any imagination as the sensation was immediately felt in the body. It typifies an eagerness to experience movement, to be physically moved by technological means. These elements would reappear a few years later with Grünkorn’s kinematograph show, as I will discuss in more detail below. We may therefore propose that spectatorship of the earliest moving pictures with the ‘Electric cinematograph’ was intermedially influenced by the \textit{rutschbaan}. While the moving picture spectator remained immobile, in that the spectator was not physically mobilized as with the ride,
the kinematograph show nonetheless involved the attraction of movement and mobility.

De Wereld in het Klein

Although Henri Grünkorn was still active with his rollercoaster at the fairground in Leeuwarden in the summer of 1891, he also introduced a new attraction in the fall of 1890. ‘De wereld in het klein’ (‘The world in miniature’) seems to have been what was known at the time as a *mechanisch theater* (mechanical theater) or a *panorama mécanique* (mechanical panorama) although Grünkorn did not use these terms to advertise his attraction. Instead, he systematically advertised ‘De wereld in het klein’ as a *mechanisch kunstwerk* (‘mechanical artwork’). In today’s terminology we would call it a mechanical diorama or a mechanical puppet theater. It involved not so much a theater performance but more a mechanically animated Alpine landscape with moving figures, miniature trains, and other moving elements. Like the rollercoaster, this mechanical diorama entailed elements of spectatorship that would return in a different form with the kinematograph. According to Grünkorn, ‘De wereld in het klein’ was “the biggest mechanical artwork of modern times.” Through all kinds of automata and moving elements the attraction represented daily life in a small mountain village in the Alps. The diorama was exhibited on a stage. In January 1891, the local newspaper *Arnhemsche Courant* wrote an extensive description:

The view of the city in the mountain, where everything is moving and alive, can be called surprising. The naturalness of the walking, the working of the crafts, the train and the railroad with waving passengers, the procession entering the small chapel accompanied with the sounds of bells and organ music, are all very worth seeing.

In his advertisements Grünkorn claims to have been part of a popular regional exhibition in Germany in 1890, the Nordwestdeutsche Gewerbe- und Industrieausstellung in Bremen. This was a regionally organized version of the popular world’s fairs. However, neither Henri Grünkorn nor his attraction (or an account of it) appears in the official exhibition catalog. Before or after Bremen, Grünkorn also claimed to have exhibited ‘De wereld in het klein’ in the Panoptikum in Hamburg. Since 1879 the Panoptikum was a widely-known and prominent exposition with wax statues and live shows. Once again, I was unable to associate Grünkorn’s diorama with the Hamburg entertainment scene. What is certain, however, is that ‘De wereld in het klein’ was exhibited in Groningen and Arnhem in December 1890, and in the following years, from 1890 to 1894, Grünkorn took his diorama to the fairgrounds of Haarlem, Rotterdam, Waalwijk, Leeuwarden, and Utrecht.
The attraction must have been relatively successful since the German showman toured with ‘De wereld in het klein’ for more than four years.  Most reviews indicate that the audiences appreciated the mechanical movements of the automata as well as the detail shown in the representation. In his advertisements Grünkorn also emphasized that all miniature automata depicted by craftsmen were moving simultaneously and that “everything was alive and moving.” He did not fail to stress that no glass separated the viewer from the diorama. The show did not observe a strict schedule but, rather, a continuous performance, as was common for fairground showmen. In contrast to the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan,’ the attraction was organized as in a small theater. Audiences were seated in front of the diorama where, after the show, they had a chance to walk up to the front and inspect the miniature automata in more detail. Tickets for the front rows were more expensive than those at the back: 25 cents for the former and 15 cents for the latter. Grünkorn would maintain this pricing policy until his kinematograph show in 1897-1898.

The showman also explicitly emphasized that ‘De wereld in het klein’ was not a panorama or a stereoscope. This remark reveals how closely media practices were intertwined, as well as how short-term their popularity was. Like the diorama, the panorama and the stereoscope were attractions organized around the visual representation of distant places. Both media forms were particularly popular in the 1870s and 1880s, but the audience’s enthusiasm for the panorama turned out to be short-lived. Although the panorama and the stereoscope were attractions beyond their peak, the diorama was not a new medium as it had a long and extensive history reaching back over centuries. The more extensive variant of mechanical theater also had a long history. Throughout the nineteenth century several mechanical theaters were exhibited and it seems that Grünkorn’s diorama was drawing on that tradition. Mechanical theaters, though, were not exhibited on fairgrounds but in theaters and music halls where they could be on display for a couple of weeks in a row. Therefore, ‘De wereld in het klein’ was, I believe, from a larger cultural perspective not groundbreaking or exceptionally innovative. Grünkorn’s mechanical diorama did not so much draw on novelty; rather, ‘De wereld in het klein’ seemed to draw upon its uniqueness as there was no comparable attraction in fairgrounds in the early 1890s.

‘De wereld in het klein’ was in many respects less spectacular than the rollercoaster. Grünkorn’s rollercoaster was truly something new and thrilling as it engaged the individual’s body in an attraction that epitomized speed and danger. His mechanical diorama, which fell under the category of ‘kijkwerk’ (attractions based on the ‘act of looking’), brought important practical advantages. Exploitation of the diorama at local fairgrounds was cheaper, as the rental fee was calculated according to the number of square meters the attraction occupied. Also, as fairgrounds became more regulated ‘De wereld in het klein’ was a safe bet: It could be argued that the diorama involved less
of the bodily senses (the ‘lower’ senses) and more of the intellect. At the time, the diorama was probably also easier to categorize than the rollercoaster. This was an advantage as organizations were claiming more control over the content of the fairground. Meanwhile, at the fairground, these visual attractions were less dependent on the weather. Yet what was probably even more important for Grünkorn was that the exploitation of the diorama was not limited to the fairground with its limited season. As explained above, around the turn of the century (and continuing well into the twentieth century) fairgrounds began to disappear due to local restrictions and the success of reform movements, or what social historian G. H. Jansen defines as a widespread offensive against fairgrounds. The diorama made Grünkorn less dependent on political and legislative changes. He was now exhibiting his attraction in store fronts and at clubs. Between November 1890 and April 1891, ‘De wereld in het klein’ was shown, for example, at the music hall Concertwes in Groningen, in a storefront in Arnhem, and in a storefront in the Kalverstraat in Amsterdam (only meters away from the storefront where the Lumière brothers introduced the Cinématographe to Dutch audiences five years later). This circuit of social clubs, theaters and storefronts would also be of importance when Grünkorn traveled with his kinematograph show.

In terms of spectatorships, ‘De wereld in het klein’ entailed significant elements that would return with the advent of moving pictures a couple of years later. The spectacle of mechanical movement, for example, was a recurring concern for both the mechanical diorama and the kinematograph. The notion that objects could move on their own accord was a source of fascination for contemporary audiences. These objects were not necessarily gigantic, like locomotives or steam engines, yet, automata or mechanical dolls drew on the same attraction. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, automata and mechanical toys flourished in private settings as much as in public spaces. The mechanical diorama drew upon a common popularity. Similar to automata, the reception of Grünkorn’s diorama was characterized by a paradox: while the attraction foregrounded a certain naturalness maintaining that the representation was indistinguishable from reality (“Supremely natural . . . As if reality” as one review put it), the plasticity and artificiality of the object was also emphasized at the same time.

Thus the sensation of the diorama was not just about the representation (the Alpine village); it also concerned the presentation, that is, the physical, mechanical attraction in front of the spectators. So, the virtual other place, the thereness of the representation, competed for attention with the hereness of the presentation. It was mentioned, for example, that Grünkorn took five and a half years to construct the piece of art. The practice of taking a closer look after the show also entailed this “operational aesthetic” in which audiences were eager to witness the mechanics behind the trick. Grünkorn did not fail to stress that there was no glass separating the viewers from the art-
work, as already mentioned above. This remark also entails the double nature of the ‘here’ of the construct and the ‘there’ of the representation because the absence of a glass window can either hint at the ideal of immersion (as in losing oneself in the represented world and the feeling of ‘being there’ that was often associated with the panorama) but it can also mean that it enable the spectator to get as close as possible to the diorama with all its complicated automata and mechanical tricks. Either way, the comment signifies a desire to overcome the distance between the spectator and the attraction. Moreover, this paradox situated around the plasticity of the artwork and the immersive quality of the representation, as I will describe in more detail below, was also pivotal to forms of spectatorship that the kinematograph inaugurated.

Next to the mechanical element, ‘De wereld in het klein’ also addressed a widespread fascination for observation and miniatures. Instead of closeness, the miniature setting actually underscored the distanced position of the viewer. The newspaper *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* nicknamed the attraction “a micro cosmos.” The attraction presented an observable and clearly structured (and thus comprehensible) enclosed world to the spectator demonstrating that the affinity between observation and the miniature was pivotal. In his history of the rise of the museum in the nineteenth century, Didier Maleuvre explains that the fascination for miniatures at the time expressed “a consciousness that seeks to cram the world into a compact object grasable at a glance.” In similar fashion, Steven Millhauser writes: “The miniature, then, is an attempt to reproduce the universe in a grasable form. It represents a desire to possess the world more completely, to banish the unknown and the unseen.” Hence the miniature allows the spectator to view the world from a distance as it presents the world as a visual object at a remove. According to Millhauser, the miniature is thereby related to the view from a mountaintop or an observation platform. It creates a proper position for the spectator while it distances the world. Thereby, the popular fascination for the miniature runs parallel to the popular world’s fairs. Not only was the ‘complete world’ compressed into a few square kilometers, a main attraction at these expositions was their spectacular observation towers. This unique position that placed the spectator at an appropriate distance from reality while, at the same time, engaging the viewer in the attraction, was, once again, an important element that would recur in Grünkorn’s kinematograph.

But distancing the spectator came at a cost. Whereas Grünkorn’s rollercoaster attraction exploited mobility, the mechanical diorama confined the spectator’s mobility to the auditorium and the chair. Meanwhile, the mobility of the viewer was exchanged for a mobility of the representation. After all, ‘De wereld in het klein’ represented a foreign village in the Alps at a time when tourism to the Alps was becoming increasingly popular. In Anne Friedberg’s terminology, the diorama exchanged physical mobility for virtu-
This novel form of mobility could be as spectacular as actual mobility. In the late nineteenth century, the panorama and the diorama virtually placed the spectator at exotic locations. Yet, rather than offering a completely immersive viewing experience, the spectator was equally confronted with virtuality as a “second-order materiality” acknowledging the plasticity of the construction. Meanwhile, the virtual mobility of ‘De wereld in het klein’ also involved an experience of closeness aimed at both the presentation of the mechanical diorama as well as at its representation.

Expeditie Lombok

Henri Grünkorn traveled with his mechanical diorama until 1895. Subsequently, in the winter of 1894-1895, he temporarily exploited an exhibition/demonstration called ‘De Tooverkamer’ (‘The Magic Chamber’) in the Nederlandsch Panopticum, a wax museum located on the Amstelstraat in Amsterdam. ‘De Tooverkamer’ was also exhibited at fairgrounds in Meppel and Assen, two provincial towns in the north of the Netherlands. In both cases, Grünkorn’s attraction was situated next to the ‘Panopticum’ by Robert Geissler. Geissler was, like Grünkorn, a German-born showman who was predominantly active on Dutch and Belgian fairgrounds. And like the Amsterdam museum, Geissler’s ‘Panopticum’ was an exhibition of historical wax figures. In the spring of 1895, Geissler’s exhibition included a series of figures in the recent war in the Dutch East Indies, the so-called Lombok Expeditions. The winter of 1894-1895 saw a real Lombok-Expedition craze. In the spring of 1894, the ruler or radja of the Balinese kingdom of Lombok, who maintained a special status in the Dutch colonies, refused to relinquish authority over his land. This resulted in a military conflict in which, surprisingly, the Dutch colonizers faced an unexpected defeat in August 1894. This First Lombok Expedition, nicknamed the “Disaster at Lombok,” cost the lives of 98 Dutch soldiers who were honored in newspapers and illustrated magazines as heroes. A couple of months later, in December, the Second Lombok Expedition took place. This time the Dutch forces won. The short battle resulted in a massacre. The radja’s palace was plundered and all valuables (“The Lombok Treasure”) were confiscated by the Dutch colonizer. In nationalist fashion of the time, newspapers and illustrated magazines wrote detailed descriptions that glorified the military expedition and its heroes and treasure.

Possibly inspired by Geissler’s wax figures, Henri Grünkorn came with his own Lombok fairground attraction. With his tableaux vivants show, ‘Expeditie Lombok,’ the showman picked up on the Lombok craze. Like the mechanical diorama, this show had a theater set-up in the sense that the audience was seated in front of a stage. But instead of mechanical miniatures, this attraction had living actors. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the number of theaters increased significantly, not just in the form
of permanent theaters in city centers, but also as mobile theaters on the fair-ground. An “extraordinary beautiful symphonic organ” played music to accompany the performance. The show entailed “seven scenes performed by live people” (“zeven taferelen uitgevoerd door levende personen”). The word *taferelen* (the plural of *tafereel*) is noteworthy as the show had various yet particular meanings attached to it. According to the Calisch 1878 dictionary, it was best translated into English as “panel, picture, description.” A similar dictionary describes the word as “a painting; presentation; visual presentation; description; a wooden painting at the rear part of a ship.” And, in yet another way, as the current Van Dale dictionary explains, “tafereel” could also mean something that happened, a “situation, accident, or occurrence.” In that sense of the word, *tafereel* also refers to the concept of the animated view; it was a representation of a lively event. The human figures, or actors as living statues in this case, gave way to a certain ‘liveness’: the performance happened in the here and now of the portable theater.

The ‘Expeditie Lombok’ show told a popularized version of the event in the Dutch East Indies in seven scenes, representing seven dramatic moments, commencing with the “betrayal in the night” to “storming” the palace to a scene titled “the bravery of the Dutchmen” and “capturing the radja.” Due to the abundant media coverage of the events in the previous winter audiences must have been familiar with all the events. When Grünkorn began with his *tableaux vivant* performances illustrated publications had already been available to the public, visualizing events in a dramatic way. Yet, I did not find a direct connection between these illustrated representations and Grünkorn’s scenes. The ‘Expeditie Lombok’ show was an attempt to address the audience’s previous knowledge of the event and to stir nationalistic sentiments.

Like the rollercoaster and the mechanical diorama, the *tableaux vivant* was a constitutive part of the emergence of early cinema spectatorship. Similar to the diorama, the *tableaux vivant*, or *levende beelden* as they were known in the Netherlands, had an extensive history. Originating in ancient Greece, *tableaux vivant* had an important liturgical function in the Middle Ages and early modernity, while the art form flourished in the renaissance. The early years of the nineteenth century also saw a rise in the popularity of the *tableaux vivant*. In general, these earlier performances represented mythological or religious figures and folklore tales or portrayed artworks and paintings with which audiences were familiar. The spectacle of actuality and reality was a particularly modern addition relating to living statues. During the late nineteenth century, current events were represented in popular wax museums and, as Grünkorn’s attraction indicates, in *tableaux vivant*. What ‘Expeditie Lombok,’ then, added to Grünkorn’s already extensive involvement with modern media was the attraction of actuality and the spectacularization of reality. The spectator was seated in front of a stage, as in the dio-
rama. Yet, ‘Expeditie Lombok’ gave way to a different engagement for the spectator who now participated in a nationalistic media event. The representation was based on a semi-current event; although the military conflict was over, the media event continued to be present for half a year. Thus the show addressed a certain temporal relevance as the performance illustrated the news event.

In terms of virtuality and mobility, the *tableaux vivant* had a different function than the diorama. I could not find any reviews that maintained that the spectator was completely immersed in the spectacle, as if s/he was in Lombok. With ‘De wereld in het klein’, Grünkorn emphasized the nearness of the attraction suggesting there was no glass window separating the viewer from the spectacle. With ‘Expeditie Lombok’ the showman underscored in press coverage that these were real, flesh-and-blood actors. Thus, in a certain way, Grünkorn accentuated, once again, his attraction in terms of presence: it was a live performance taking place before the spectator. Meanwhile, following Friedberg’s dichotomy, we concluded that the mechanical diorama exploited mobility and movement as a characteristic of the representation instead of the spectator, the *tableaux vivant* show contrasted movement with stasis. The represented scenes were, above all, stirring and eventful moments presented, paradoxically, motionless, as if the energy had been captured and paused. Studies by Daniel Wiegand, Vito Adriaensens, and Steven Jacobs have shown how, in terms of intermediality, this dichotomy between movement and stillness was an important element of attraction staged in the earliest films. During the first years of cinema “living statues” was a recurring theme but, more importantly, the kinematograph capitalized on the stillness-movement dichotomy that was pivotal to *tableaux vivants* and made it into a core element of its attraction.

**Intermedial spectatorship**

It is impossible to measure the precise impact of Grünkorn’s previous attractions on spectatorship with the kinematograph. After all, it could well be that even though Grünkorn often visited the same town fairs several years in a row, the 1897 and 1898 audiences that went to see moving pictures constituted a different audience to that of the rollercoaster, the mechanical diorama, and the *tableaux vivant* show. Yet Grünkorn’s attractions preceding the introduction of moving pictures illustrate the context in which the kinematograph was introduced. This historical context was important for the position of the spectator as well. It indicates that the duality of mobility and virtuality was constantly re-negotiated through different forms of spectacle encountered on various media platforms. Meanwhile, these different attractions also conveyed a play with distance and nearness, that is, the sensations of these attractions emerged as a tension between the immediate bodily involvement of the here and now, and the imaginary engagement or immersion of the
representation. In 1896, when Grünkorn obtained his electric kinematograph, this moving picture machine was introduced as the latest installment of these negotiations between mobility and virtuality, and between the ‘here and now’ of the presentation and the ‘there and then’ of the represented moving pictures.

The negotiation of mobility and virtuality was as much about embodiment as it was about leaving the body behind. Lauren Rabinovitz, for example, writing about theme parks and attraction rides, relates the rollercoaster to the moving picture viewing position. As both the rollercoaster and the kinematograph were rooted in the experience of modernity, Rabinovitz emphasizes that both attractions involved “a sensorial reorientation” that exploited thrills and sensations. The thrill ride “provided a tenuous relationship between the perception of danger and the assurance of safety,” as addressed above, thereby reversing the relation of the controlling body and the subordinate machine.

The visitor was now subject to the rhythm of the machine, and the body was developed into a site for sensations. The relation of the visitor’s body involved in the rhythm of the machine is similar to the impact that the kinematograph had on its audience, as I will argue in Chapter 2. In both instances, the spectator was subject to mechanical forms of movement establishing a rhythm in which the body participated.

Although we concluded that ‘De wereld in het klein’ as a mechanical diorama exchanged physical mobility for virtual mobility, this shift to virtuality also involved a novel constellation of the body and the senses. Even though the artwork represented another place, and the spectator was, to some extent, immersed in this represented world, the materiality and the here and now of the attraction was vital to the viewing experience. More than the rollercoaster, the diorama presented a visual attraction, one which involved a degree of hapticity. Haptic visuality differs from mere optical or psychological visuality as it implies a visual perception that is enriched by other senses, such as touch and kinesthetics. “The eyes function like organs of touch,” as Laura Marks explains. Hapticity establishes a contact zone between the viewer and the object as it spatially bonds the spectator with her environment. The proper distance to the object and the ability to walk up to the automata at the end of the show, as well as the above-discussed absence of a glass window, implied a direct or immediate contact between the spectator and the object. These elements can be interpreted as signifying an experience of haptic visuality. Even though visitors were not allowed to physically touch the attraction, visual touching was, as it were, involved as a ‘visual reaching-out’ or ‘visual grasping’. The miniature status of the representation reinforced the urge to touch and grasp. Following Alois Riegl’s nineteenth-century art criticism, Antonia Lant develops the notion of the haptic as involving representational flatness or planarity as well as a complex mode of depth. Not only is this bipolarity, according to Lant, typical of modern representation, she also describes the novel spatiality of early cinema as “utterly haptic” due to its
“clearly delimited height and width with no visual suggestion of an inside, of any depth.” Meanwhile, I would hold, the diorama already involved this kind of hapticality, thereby constituting an important forerunner for early cinema’s viewing experiences.

Both Grünkorn’s diorama and his moving picture show shared this haptical mode of representation. With both attractions the material surface of the construction was as important to the spectator as the content of the representation. Haptic perception, as Laura Marks states, “tends to rest on the surface of its object rather than to plunge into depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is a labile, plastic sort of look, more inclined to move than to focus.” Hapticality thus signified a perception that hovered between the physicality of the presentation in presence of the spectator (the surface of the screen and the presentation of the diorama) and the virtual elsewhere of the representation. We could thus distinguish haptic visuality as an intermediary element recurring with both ‘De wereld in het klein’ and the kinematograph show. Meanwhile, this haptic visuality potentially caused a sensation of embodied mobility as it physically reaffirmed the spectator’s position in the spectatorial space (Grünkorn’s portable theater or mobile bioscope). Giuliana Bruno, in Atlas of Emotion, explains that the haptic “is also related to kinesthesis, the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space.” This spatial aspect is a “reciprocal condition” of the haptic: “It covers the entire body, including the eye itself, and the feet, which establish our contact with the ground.” Thus instead of leaving the actual for the virtual, leaving the body in the auditorium while virtually transported to another place, these attractions still centered on the sensation at the site of the body. Subsequently, the act of looking was thereby both embodied and active instead of disembodied and passive: after all, both the diorama and the moving pictures were categorized as kijkwerk, that is, attraction based on the ‘activity (or even labor) of looking’.

From a broader perspective, the play with mobility and virtuality that occurred in the rollercoaster, the mechanical diorama, the tableaux vivant, and the kinematograph show was related to the sensorial reorientation of modernity. The intermedial enmeshing between these different forms of spectacle was played out in terms of sensations and sensorial events. Even though a significant number of late nineteenth-century attractions and toys concentrated on optics and vision, these appeared in a broader intermedial context involving what Ben Singer calls the “aesthetic reconceptualization of the senses.” The intermedial character of these experiences, recurring throughout and between different media, was pivotal. The intermedial experience in which sensations stem not from one source but from a heterogeneity of origins can be seen, according to Chiel Kattenbelt, as “a modern way to experience life.” That Grünkorn’s attractions were part of the fairground was pivotal in this respect. The fairground was, as mentioned above, a temporal space where sensations could be experienced that were otherwise excluded
from everyday life. The fairground constituted a festive place, a place for pleasure-seeking. While these sensuous experiences with the rollercoaster, the mechanical diorama, *tableaux vivant*, and the kinematograph are often associated in historical overviews with urban modernity and its sensations, through the fairground they became temporarily available to rural audiences and small-town folk throughout the country.

Grünkorn’s history on the fairground illustrates how several quintessential late nineteenth-century themes reappeared throughout different attractions. Mechanical movement vis-à-vis stasis, observation and the panoramic view, as well as an eagerness for media events, were all themes that ran through Grünkorn’s operations. Illustrating the multi-layeredness and complex origins of moving pictures, these themes would reappear with the kinematograph, as I will argue in more detail below. These subjects were as much experienced in terms of presentation as in terms of representation. A simplified narrative would hold that, from the rollercoaster to the kinematograph, Grünkorn’s attractions gradually shifted from bodily sensations to virtual or imaginary experience. But as I outlined, the virtual mobility that the later attractions presented were nevertheless situated around embodied sensations. These embodied sensations were not limited to haptic visuality. Moreover, the appeal of mechanical movement or the pleasure of participating in a nationalistic media news event was as much a bodily, sensuous affair as it was about intellectual enjoyment and meaning-making. Also the *tableaux vivant*, for example, constituted a performance situated around liveness and eventfulness. In short, all of Grünkorn’s attractions involved a fair degree of eventfulness and ‘being there’ *in presence* of the spectator. Albeit in different constellations and variations, with all these attractions the immediate materiality of the fairground ride or performance mattered.

The intermedial context of spectatorship, involving a negotiation of mobility and virtuality, and of materiality and representation, is important for our understanding of the earliest kinematograph shows. The sensuous play of mobility and virtuality that stretched through these pre-cinematic attractions can be conceptualized as a play for presence. After all, what mattered with these different attractions was a constant double focus between the other place of the representation on screen or on stage, and the here of the embodied spectator as part of the spectacle. As Martin Seel explains, this kind of aesthetic play is performance-oriented: “We want to be moved for the sake of being moved. This being moved can be bodily or emotional, or both. The point of playing is bodily or mental agitation. In the situation of playing we want to become present to ourselves in a special way.” At the core of such an aesthetics of presence would be, as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht maintains, “that dimension that constitutes itself around bodies, [which] must be the primordial dimension in which the relationship between humans and the things of the world are being negotiated.” And this is particularly the case with Grünkorn’s attractions: relations between bodies and environments
were being rearranged. The fairground was a special, temporarily organized and physically demarcated space where such a play could occur and where aesthetic negotiation was allowed. Thus the fairground as the collective of many different attractions provided an important situational framework for aesthetic experience.

Intermediality and the kinematograph show

In the fall of 1896 Grünkorn bought his kinematograph in Berlin. In his extensive study of the introduction of film in Belgium, Guido Convents maintains that Grünkorn’s moving picture machine, which is now considered lost, was a ‘bioskop’ model manufactured by Oskar Messter.\(^{103}\) If his device was German, I propose that Grünkorn’s device was not a product of Messter but was manufactured by Hermann Foersterling, a Berlin-based producer of optical devices who was largely forgotten until quite recently.\(^{104}\) Instead of developing his own system, Foersterling successfully copied French moving picture machines, particularly designs by Victor Continsouza. Together with Henri René Bünzli, this Paris-based watchmaker patented in France (but not in Germany) a reversible camera-projector inspired by the Cinématographe Lumière and added a Maltese cross.\(^{105}\) According to his rival Oskar Messter, Foersterling freely copied other designs while generally labeling these machines cinematographs.\(^{106}\) In France, these efficient projectors were distributed by Pathé Frères, but internationally the system was immediately copied by rival manufacturers. The German trade journal for fairground showmen Der Komet, for example, published an extensive description on the Lumière Cinématographe concluding that this device was for sale in Berlin while the actual Lumière machines were not sold to exhibitors at all.\(^{107}\) Christiaan Slieker, another Dutch traveling bioscope showman, bought a similar machine from Foersterling only a few months earlier.

More than Slieker, Grünkorn emphasized the French system underlying his kinematograph. He explicitly advertised his “Electric Cinematograph” as a “system Lumière,” even though the French pioneers hardly had anything to do with his particular model. Indicating the presence of an (early) Maltese cross, according to the showman, this was the single device that had the least flicker of all systems available: “We would especially emphasize the Lumière, which operates without vibration.”\(^{108}\) This was indeed possible with Foersterling’s pirated kinematograph machines. Meanwhile, as I will outline in more detail below, most films that Grünkorn exhibited were Pathé and Lumière productions that he bought in Paris. Therefore, another option would be that his machine was really manufactured in France and that Grünkorn did not buy it in Germany at all. In that case, it is most likely that he bought this device together with his collections of films at Georges Mendel’s store in Paris. Mendel was a salesman for film and photography
equipment and films while also distributing films for several French producers including Pathé Frères and the Lumières. He mainly sold to French fairground showmen and advertised in their trade journal. He was also an inventor and in 1897 he introduced his ‘Cinématograph-Parisien’, which was copyrighted in December 1896. Manufactured by himself, Mendel sold his Cinématographe Parisien in package deals combined with a set amount of film. In this case, like with the German-pirated machine, Grünkorn would have a Lumière-like device with a relatively stable picture. Grünkorn’s German-oriented practices would point to a Berlin-produced machine but his selection of films could indicate that he really owned a French projector.

A possible reason for Grünkorn aligning his moving picture show with the already famous Lumière Cinématographe could have been cultural prestige. Although the Lumière brothers premiered their device in a storefront in the same street where Henri Grünkorn would later perform with his kinematograph, the Cinématographe would developed a status superior to any fairground attraction. Next to Grünkorn’s “Electric cinematograph” various moving picture machines were exhibited on fairgrounds throughout the country. These local variations were seen by the press as a form of short-term entertainment, based on a yet imperfect device that would soon find a serious purpose. The Cinématographe, in contrast, had only a limited release in the Netherlands and was explained as a more serious invention. Whereas there were many different moving picture machines available on fairgrounds and theaters nationwide, there was only one Cinématographe device which was only exhibited at two locations before it moved to Belgium.

After its introduction in March 1896 in Amsterdam, the Lumière Cinématographe moved to The Hague’s seaside amusement district, Scheveningen. There it was quite successful as upper- and middle-class entertainment at the Kurhaus Theater for a couple of months. As a newspaper report observed, there were many honorable guests present during the first screening, amongst others the Queen’s Commissioner, the head of police, and the popular (panorama) painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag. An official premiere screening with selected honorable guests did not occur with any of the other moving picture machines. In comparison with the other projected moving image devices that followed, such as the American Biograph, Edison’s Vitascope and R.W. Paul’s Theatrograph, the Lumière machine was the only machine that gained national attention in the media. Thus by including the name “electric kinematograph,” “system Lumière, scientific and original invention certified S. G. D. G”, Grünkorn’s kinematograph attraction made the Lumière’s fancy machine available to lower-class audiences throughout the country. Not only was it now available at places outside the nation’s capital and governmental capital (The Hague), Grünkorn’s show was also significantly cheaper, as a show at the Kurhaus cost twice as much as Grünkorn’s version at the fairground.
Grünkorn’s initial moving picture performances demonstrate direct intermedial connections with his previous fairground attractions. In the scenes that make up his kinematograph performance in the spring and summer of 1897, we can recognize some of the themes outlined above, indicating a mode of intermediality on the level of representation or content. The show was billed as a “combination of views from all countries, arrivals of trains and trams, sea views, serpentine dances, acrobats, blacksmiths, painters, fishermen, etc., etc.”\[115\] His broad and varied film program was, moreover, similar to most other traveling cinema showmen, both nationally and internationally. Among the scenes that were part of his first performances were the Lumière actualities Neger-bad aan den Congo (Baignade de nègres, Lumière, 1896) and Aankomst van een boot in een dok te Antwerpen (Arrivée en bateau, Lumière 1897). In this respect, in the manner of virtual mobility, these scenes brought the distant near, not unlike the mechanical diorama and the tableaux vivant. Meanwhile, Arrivée en bateau and the train films that were included in the program (which I have been unable to identify at this stage), indicate attentiveness to the experience of mechanical movement.

Contrary to the aesthetic approach to intermediality described above, where we focused on the sensuous aspects of experience, Joe Kember highlights the institutional intermediality that was part of the performances in the earliest cinema. Practices across different media or attractions were shared because they were performed within the same institution. As Kember observes: “Spectators were certainly subjected to powerful institutional continuities that played a dominant role in managing the experiences they took from the show.”\[116\] This is a productive form of intermediality, according to Kember, because institutional continuities helped audiences tame the novelty of the moving picture attraction. It steered expectations and gave spectators a form of control. Grünkorn’s case illustrates some of the institutional continuities that Kember identifies. Again, the context of the fairground was pivotal in this respect. The fairground—as far as we can classify this broad range of cultural practices as a single institution—established certain norms and managed expectations: attractions, for example, had a rather short time-span with a maximum of about twenty minutes, and every trivial quasi-scientific novelty was presented at the fairground as ground-breaking and revolutionary.\[117\] At the fairground everything could be made into a spectacle.\[118\] Grünkorn’s different attractions, including the kinematograph, indicate both diversity and continuity. In terms of institutional practices, the moving picture attraction was a logical continuation of the mechanical diorama and the tableaux vivant. The theater set-up did prove to be successful in the seven years and he already owned much of the infrastructure needed, such a tent, organ, stage, and chairs. Also, Grünkorn knew how to work with electricity and, possibly, even owned a generator, at least in his years with the ‘Amerikaansche rutschbaan’.
It remains difficult to tell whether Grünkorn’s moving picture show was within the audience’s realm of expectations or if and where it transgressed their prospects. It seems at least clear that different audiences had different anticipations. There is a letter of complaint printed in *Haarlem’s Dagblad* of August 4, 1898 that is of specific interest in this regard. Written and signed anonymously, the letter tells of the writer who, together with three ladies and two girls, went to see Henri Grünkorn’s show on one of the first days after it came to town. The show was held in a fairground tent. Even though the performance was “truly fine,” the final scene was “highly inappropriate.” It is not specified what the writer’s moral objections were to the film. Due to the crowd, the man and his company were unable to leave the room. In the newspaper article he discouraged others from visiting the show, and even questions whether the police should not close Grünkorn’s attraction. According to the author, the presence of some wealthy families on the front row also indicated “that they also did not know what to prepare for.” Even though this letter seems more concerned with one individual film, which may have been a scene listed on Grünkorn’s bill as *Een onrustige nacht* (presumably Pathé Frères’ *Nuit Terrible*, 1897) or *Een blinde bedelaar met een politie-agent* (*Aveugle malgré lui*, Pathé, 1897), the writer proposes to ban the complete show. It seems as if he expected something more distinguished, and that he unexpectedly found himself in the realm of low culture. It should be noted that the complaint was about one scene only and thus did not entail the kinematograph as a medium or performance. Still, the letter expresses that as the performances were constituted from many individual scenes (approximately 16 scenes in this particular performance) there was an exchange of unexpected and unwanted encounters.

Terminology and concepts

Kember’s emphasis on what he calls “institutional continuity” fails to recognize the mixing of subordinate cultural practices and the intermedial enmeshing that were constituted in the kinematograph attraction. Indeed, the kinematograph was probably uniquely intermedial in the sense that it could take up a very broad variety of themes while relating to many cultural practices. Moving pictures had a wider variety than Kember’s institutional continuity thesis suggest. André Gaudreault’s theoretical distinction between cultural paradigms and cultural series might be more insightful to shed some light on this wide variety of intermedial relations. A cultural paradigm, in Gaudreault’s view, is a “polysystem” which included “various forms of signification.” Cultural series, in turn, are these various subsystems of signification included in such a paradigm. Gaudreault’s main example here is late nineteenth-century stage entertainment which, in turn, included a broad variety of different performances, such as music shows, pantomime, *féerie* performances, lectures, and eventually kinematograph performances. These
different kinds of performance were distinct cultural practices for contemporary practitioners. Yet, as historians, according to Gaudreault, we actively construct categories that were inaccessible to the showmen at the time. Thus a cultural series, in contrast to a cultural practice, might include thematic, stylistic, or formal continuities that we construct as historians. Hence the intermedial parallels that run through Grünkorn’s work, like the themes of mechanical movement and the fascination with actuality, could be grouped as cultural series even though as practices they were remote. To these cultural series the fairground would constitute a common cultural paradigm.

As Gaudreault outlines, the unique quality of these earliest cinematographic shows was the various cultural practices or series that they involved. This “particularly polyphonic form of expression” was early cinema’s “primary quality.” The many forms that were involved gave the new medium a fluid or multivalent dimension while it made the moving picture attraction a difficult object to describe and interpret. There is, for example, some discrepancy in the words and concepts used to describe the new moving image attraction. In lack of a fixed terminology, Grünkorn employed the term beweegende lichtbeelden (‘moving light images’). Other showmen used different words: Christiaan Slieker advertised his attraction as levende beelden (‘living images’), the same words that Grünkorn employed for his tableaux vivant, while Henri van der Marck described his moving pictures as levende fotografien à la kinematograaf (‘living photographies à la kinematograph’). Recurring words, in this respect, were movement, living and photographic. Another exemplary example of this is found in a 1896 description of the Werner Cinematograph in Rotterdam as “through photography and by way of electricity reproducing movement.” The scarce reviews of the kinematograph shows that were printed in newspapers were usually depicted in the standard format of variety theater shows: the first sentences concerned the location and the attraction, before summing up the segments. A wide variety of words were employed for the segments in Grünkorn’s attraction. Haarlem’s Dagblad used the word nummer (‘act’), a concept translated from the variety theater. A newspaper in Nijmegen described the scenes with the concepts tableaux and tafereel (‘picture’). The former signifies a tradition of tableaux vivant, or just a striking scene, as the word tableaux was used for religious paintings as well. The latter, tafereel, was a term commonly used for paintings representing a vivid scene featuring people.

The terminology that Henri Grünkorn used to describe scenes or films is also interesting in this respect. Whereas his 1897 notices do not announce any titles or descriptions, in 1898 Grünkorn began to include lists of scenes in advertisements. His advertisements in Haarlem’s Dagblad (Fig. 3) and in Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad the following week (Fig. 4) do not announce a complete list of scenes, but distinguished between three categories of
scenes.\textsuperscript{128} *Aladin met zijn wonder lamp* (‘Aladdin with his magic lamp’)
features as the *hoofdnummers* (‘main acts’, in plural). Grünkorn possibly borrowed these concepts of main and minor acts from the variety theater. At that stage, this terminology was not used by other exhibitors. Titles that consisted of multiple tableaux were mentioned first on the bill. So, even though *Aladin* had a single title, it was described in the plural as “main acts.” Possibly this mode of illustrating a theme or story with multiple scenes deserved the public’s special attention. This practice of combining multiple tableaux into one moving picture presentation was rather novel at the time. The 1897 catalogue of Georges Mendel, who most likely served as Grünkorn’s supplier of films, for example, only lists individual titles.

Second on the list, as added in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* advertisement, are the multi-reel series of *De gevloekte Faust* [sic.] (‘Faust’s Damnation’) and *Don Quichote*. The content of this secondary category of films differs between the two shows, but in both cases it includes a few actualities that are specified as, for example, *De oorlog tussen Spanje en Amerika* (scenes from the Spanish-American War) and *Jubileum-feest der Koningin der Engeland* (in three *afdeelingen* or scenes), a trick film *Het Tooverpaleis*, and a historical actuality *Moorddaanslag onder de regeering van Frans I* (*Assassinat du duc de Guise*, Lumière, 1897). Last on the list were unspecified scenes described as “multiple comical and highly interesting acts, for children and adults.”\textsuperscript{129} So, there was a hierarchy that seemed to favor multi-scene or multi-reel themes over individual short films.

---

\textbf{Fig. 3: Haarlem's Dagblad, August 2, 1898. Delpher.}
The terminology that Grünkorn used to advertise his films differed from other kinematograph showmen active at the time. Grünkorn deliberately used a vocabulary from the theater emphasizing thematic or even narrative unity. Most strikingly, *Aladin met zijn wonder lamp* (‘Aladdin with his magic lamp’) consisted of two acts or parts (afdeeling) in four scenes (tafereelen). Similarly, *Het Tooverpaleis* (‘The magic palace’), *Het Jubileum-Feest der Koning van Engeland*, and *De gevoelde Faust* each comprised three scenes or reels. Yet whereas in Haarlem, Grünkorn described these entities as *afdeelingen*, in Rotterdam thirteen days later he used the term *tafereelen*. Even though Grünkorn seemed to mix the words he used, the concepts originated from the way popular theater was structured in enter-
tainment such as pantomime performances and opera-ballets. In doing so, Grünkorn presented his kinematograph attraction on the fairground not only as an esteemed theater but he also managed to associate his attraction to the Paris (féerie) theaters where most of his films were recorded. As will be discussed in more detail below, the Aladdin films were advertised as the current sensation in Paris. This confirms the “canned theater” element of early cinema, or, what Benoit Turquety calls the “straight from the stage” model. Writing about magic- and trick films, Turquety describes that although these scenes were adapted to the film medium, “they nevertheless came straight from the stage, and were perceived by spectators as ‘versions’ of the older, familiar magical numbers that some of them had seen performed on the city stages.” The latter part of Turquety’s arguments is questionable in relation to Dutch audiences. It is unlikely that viewers from Haarlem, Rotterdam, or smaller provincial towns managed to recognize the theater performances on which the films were based. But, without immediate recognition, theatrical origin was important as it connoted cultural prestige and exoticism, and, as will be discussed below, cultural imagination.

In newspaper coverage of Grünkorn’s 1898 show, another categorization of scenes appears: An article in Haarlem’s Dagblad covering the performance described the actuality scenes of the arrival of the trains and the coronation scenes with the Dutch word nummers (‘acts’) while the other films, such as Aladin and Don Quichote, were designated as levende lichtbeelden (‘living light images’). Judging from today’s perspective, it might be argued that this distinction drew upon the fact that what the article called ‘acts’ were scenes taken from reality akin to actualities, while scenes that the newspaper called ‘living light images’ were staged productions. While this categorization of scenes only appears on one occasion it nevertheless might shed some insight into the exhibition and reception of these moving images. Mario Slugan, for instance, argues that we should interpret this distinction not as merely a fiction/non-fiction dichotomy, but as different degrees of (non-)imaginative engagement. Nonetheless, such instances demonstrate that Grünkorn’s scenes were multivalent and intermedial, and that somehow there was a need, at the time, to classify them.

In absence of documentation on the reception and experience of the earliest moving pictures, this derangement of terminology sheds some light on the intermedial status of his cinematograph. Language in flux was intermedial in the sense that a variety of words, stemming from different cultural practices, was used to signify the same medium, a process that illustrates Gaudreault’s theory on the polyphonic status of the kinematograph attraction: during its initial years the moving picture show “truly was at one and the same time magic lantern show, fairy play, magic act, and music hall or vaudeville act.” As much as there was institutional continuity, there was at the very least an equal fusion or intermedial enmeshing between different cultural practices. This makes early cinematographic spectatorship, in the
case of Grünkorn at least, both an embodied and an intellectual affair. Presumably, spectators in their viewing of film were constantly involved in an experience of flux; both semantically and sensuously, the kinematograph presented a multilayered and rich attraction that escaped a steady meaning.

From intermediality to transmediality

The semantic richness of the kinematograph show can be conceptualized in several ways. First, as outlined above, there is the axis of intermediality, wherein the newly introduced projected moving pictures mimicked and blended existing cultural practices and genres. This genealogical model of what Gaudreault labels the “integrated birth” is a connection between two or more distinguishable media. Yet, this form of genealogical intermediality is not the only connection that can be outlined. In her overview of different conceptualizations of intermediality, Irina Rajewsky distinguishes between inter-, intra-, and trans-mediality. Whereas intermediality is a valuable perspective to outline the exchanges and influences between different media, transmediality is an approach that traces how phenomena appear across media. Broadly described, these “traveling” phenomena can entail a variety of formal elements such as themes, motifs, discourses, structures or narratives, and aesthetics. Rajewsky’s concept of transmediality, originating from the fields of literary studies, philology, and the German history of motivgeschichte, thereby differs significantly from Henry Jenkins’ widespread notion of transmedia storytelling in which a story is systematically dispersed across different media in order to create a larger whole. Transmediality, in Rajewsky’s characterization, is thus a specific case under the umbrella of the broader notion of intermediality, a particular modality of an intermedial relation. This concept of transmediality thereby presents a specific perspective on media interaction as it highlights how one mediated expression relates to popular discourse and cultural imagination. Transmediality hence relates to a deeper history of mediation and representation.

As Rajewsky sets out, in most transmedial constellations the origins of the phenomena cannot be retraced any more while “adaptation from a contact-making source medium [Ursprungsmediums] is irrelevant or impossible.” Instead, the motif becomes, for a certain period, more or less commonplace. In this period, the motif will “pop up” more or less simultaneously in various media or (cultural) contexts. In order to remain identifiable and graspable to audiences, the transmedial element has to be fairly embedded in a collective cultural memory. According to Rajewsky, these transmedial phenomena are distinguished by a “double logic”: on the one hand, these motifs travel between media thereby transgressing media boundaries, while at the same time, “the actual manifestations of these phenomena are always perforce [sic] medium-specific, that is, they are without exception...
tied to, and contingent upon, their respective medial dispositions.” This double logic is important for the viewer’s experience because “from the receiver’s point of view they materialize in similar ways across media, while their actual realizations nevertheless remain specific to the respective media.” This thin balance between similarity and specificity or difference has great potential for novel media adaptations of familiar narratives and aesthetics. Charles Musser, for example, notes how cinema’s earliest narrative productions particularly relied on audiences’ familiarity with the stories portrayed. Due to technical limitation with regard to the length of reels narratives were fragmented. Acquaintance with the plot, together with information supplied by the showman, helped viewers perceive these fragments as stories. Yet, as I will outline below, narrative is only one transmedial element among others.

The transmedial perspective is important for our understanding the experiences of the kinematograph because it allows us to dissect another dimension of the multi-layered, complex object that the earliest moving picture performances were constituted. The kinematograph’s fundamental intermedial status was thereby not limited to the practices and paradigms of entertainment; it also involved narratives and forms of signification that were particularly habitualized and a part of everyday life. Tracing transmediality thereby sheds light on how early films addressed what we could call the late nineteenth-century historical imagination. Broadly defined, imagination concerns the realm of experience that is not directly perceived in the object itself. In the act of imagination, the viewer “adds” substance to perception. The viewing experience is thereby informed by historically specific constellations of feelings and ideas which make up “the affective infrastructure of everyday life.” The subject’s individual activity of imagination is related to cultural or social imaginations and fantasies. Thus even though experience takes place on the level of the individual, through imagination it is socially and transmedially constituted. Drawing on Rajewsky’s theory, Jens Eder has developed the concept of “transmedial imaginations,” which involves, as he explains, “all levels of aesthetic experience: perception, construction of the represented world, exploration of indirect meanings and communicative reflections.” Additionally, Eder identifies three aspects involved in transmedial imagination: (1) information and previously obtained knowledge that allows the viewer to fill in narrative gaps and surpass open endings and questions; (2) the mode through which the experience of a film is influenced sensuously and emotionally by previous media experiences; and (3) the stimulation of “additional fantasies following reception” which entails that the more the viewer knows, the more s/he is activated and ‘participates’ in the experience. The following sections of this chapter analyze how Grünkorn’s kinematograph show encompassed several late nineteenth-century transmedial imaginations.
Aladin met zijn Wonder Lamp

Grünkorn’s main act in 1898 was, as mentioned above, Aladin met zijn wonder lamp (‘Aladdin with his magic lamp’). The limited newspaper coverage that the show attracted ranked the Aladdin scenes among the audience’s favorites. According to the advertisement, the set of films consisted of four scenes (probably referring to four reels) together constituting a story in two parts. Just like the other films that constituted Grünkorn’s show, this series of scenes relating to Aladdin was not produced by Grünkorn but bought in Paris. However, historically these scenes appear a few years ‘too early’. According to the received filmographies the first film version of Aladdin was produced by George Albert Smith in Brighton, England. Smith’s film was only one scene that measured 79 feet / 24 meters in length, which does not correspond to Grünkorn’s version. Also, as Grünkorn promoted the Aladdin films as “this moment’s sensation piece in Paris,” it is, of course, more likely that the films were indeed a French production. According to the filmographies, Pathé Frères was the first company to distribute an Aladdin film. Yet their first version did not appear until 1900. This version was described in their catalogue as a “scène de fée en 45 tableaux,” which, again, does not match the length and structure of the film that Grünkorn was exhibiting.

There is, however, a 1901 catalogue from Georges Mendel who was a trader of Pathé Frères films in Paris at the time. It is very possible that Grünkorn bought most of his films from Mendel in Paris because the Lumière films that he screened at his earliest presentations all appear in Mendel’s 1897 catalogue. His catalogue mentions a series of scenes with the same title as the 1900 production, Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse, but has a significantly different structure as it matches the two parts and four scenes arrangement that Grünkorn advertised. It should be noted that Mendel’s distribution activity was not limited to Pathé films. Nevertheless, it seems that this particular Aladdin series has, until today, not been included in any of the filmographies of the early French film producers such as Lumière, Gaumont and Pathé Frères. It is also possible that Georges Mendel produced these films himself but little is known of Mendel’s activities. And, unfortunately, none of the film archives consulted holds an Aladdin version that matches the description, which suggests that the film is lost.

Despite the limited information available, Grünkorn’s advertisement together with the scene descriptions from the Mendel catalogue give us a fair idea of what Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse represented (Fig. 5). As a ‘main act’ it consisted of four twenty-meter reels constituting four separate scenes or tableaux. In 1897, seventeen meters was still the standard length of reels produced for the Lumière cinématographe and similar devices. When projected at an average speed a single scene would last about forty seconds. Most likely each scene was followed by a short break in which Grünkorn, as lecturer, would complete the narrative and introduce the next scene while
loading a new reel on the projector. The 1901 catalogue contains some brief scene descriptions. In the first scene Aladdin mourns his father’s death while his jealous uncle locks him away in a basement. In the second scene Aladdin finds a lamp and a fairy appears. The fairy changes Aladdin into a prince and the basement changes into a palace. In the third scene Aladdin, with the help of the fairy, retrieves his father’s possessions that had been stolen by his uncle. The fourth and last instalment provides a moral dilemma, as Aladdin saves his uncle from the devil.

While collectively constituting Aladdin met zijn wonder lamp or Aladdin ou la lampe merveilleuse, the four scenes reduce the Aladdin story to four one-minute instants that represent a fragment from the popular folk tale. Whereas it was common practice in early cinema to draw upon the audience’s previous knowledge of the story, this form of abridgement was more typical of the genre of féerie films. As Frank Kessler observes while comparing different Ali Baba féerie films from 1902 and 1907, “the ordinary relation between story and plot seems to be reversed: the spectator cannot really construct the story on the basis of the events pictured. On the contrary, he has to be familiar with the story (or have it narrated by the lecturer while he is watching the film) in order to understand the narrative context in which these tableaux function.” The story, as Kessler suggests, precedes the film and its plot. Prior to its screening, the story already exists in the viewers’ imagination. Narrative serves as a “pretext” to “trickality” and visuality. The scenes, in turn, present a spectacular illustration of that familiar narrative. The Aladdin reels and the Ali Baba film shared this same function.
Thereby the Aladdin tableaux tied into a preexisting transmedial imagination.

In terms of cultural series *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* was very much aligned with the genre of the *féerie*, a genre of theatrical presentation that was particularly popular in France throughout the nineteenth century. As a “magic play” the *féerie* was related to the tradition of the *Märchenstücke* in Germany and pantomime in England.¹⁵² In the Netherlands the French term *féerie* was adopted, mainly because of the French influence in The Hague and Amsterdam although the genre was not nearly as widespread as in its native country. Kessler supplies a clear definition of the genre which, through the work of Georges Méliès and others, would have a lasting influence on cinema: “*Féeries* are plays which rely chiefly on special effects as well as on a spectacular display of settings, costumes, or props, and less on dramatic conflict or narrational logic. Furthermore, they share a predilection for fantastic or magical plots which provide ample motivation for the use of elaborate trick techniques.”¹⁵³ Thereby the genre of magic plays relied extensively on rapid mechanical transformations of scenes and decors as well as other technical tricks. “Trickality” was an attraction in its own right.

The Aladdin series of scenes was a filmic *féerie*. Although it appears to be not a direct adaptation of a theater performance, the film version was nevertheless firmly constituted in the genre. As mentioned earlier, the film’s narrative was only loosely organized while tricks, spectacle, and visual delight was dominant. In line with theatrical cultural practice, the film version of Aladdin presented the attraction of rapid changes in setting (or *décor*) plus the instant metamorphosis of main characters. In the second scene, for example, 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 montage such as stop motion, splicing and juxtaposition, moving images could uniquely accelerate transformations and metamorphosis in comparison with the theater or magic lantern shows.¹⁵⁴ Because *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* is lost we are unable to conclude which editing techniques were used, yet we do know that sceneric transformation was pivotal to the scenes.

**Transmedial imagination (1): Aladdin in the nineteenth century**

In order to serve as a “pretext” for the film attraction, the story of Aladdin had to be familiar to contemporary audiences. In 1886 the popular Dutch orientalist Michael Jan de Goeje observed that “A Thousand and One Nights” was so popular that merely mentioning its title would lead to a series
of vivid images with audiences. This familiarity with the narrative as well as acquaintance with the imagination surrounding Aladdin was important for the viewing experience. There are two contexts intertwined in this respect: the context of production (Paris, France) and the cultural context of reception, the Netherlands where Grünkorn exhibited the films. Together these contexts shed light on how transmedial imaginations were involved in *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse*. That is, to paraphrase Jens Eder, how the filmic *féerie* allowed audiences to fill in the gaps while it invited additional fantasies and preferred certain *modes* of aesthetic perception. Imagination, in its basic formulation, is the positioning of an object that is “not there,” it is not directly available to the senses. Present in absence, it is imagined individually or collectively by the viewer. While *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* presented specific images of Aladdin on screen, it also alluded to an image of Aladdin that preexisted the moving pictures. This imagination with regard to Aladdin was constructed transmedially, over time across different media.

Both French and Dutch audiences were, presumably, very familiar with the Aladdin tale. The story was very popular as it occurred in many different instances across a variety of media throughout the nineteenth century. Just like the tales of Ali Baba, the story of Aladdin was introduced to European readers through Antoine Galland’s *Les milles et unes nuites, contes arabes traduits en français* which was published in twelve volumes between 1704 and 1717. Galland, who died in 1815, two years before the publication of the final volume of his work, probably encountered these stories when living in Istanbul where he spend almost fifteen years in total. His interest in Arab and Persian culture was part of a widespread reevaluation of Islam among European intellectuals in the seventeenth century. As part of the “Arabic-reading enlightenment,” Galland was obsessed by Islamic libraries. He became an almost frantic collector of manuscripts and books, and back in Paris he established his own library. Galland had been collecting manuscripts on classical stories for decades before he published his first translations. Galland’s volumes were distributed in the Netherlands. Between 1746 and 1761 the collection was also printed in The Hague (in French). A complete translation of Galland’s volumes in Dutch would only appear in 1874, while an abbreviated illustrated version of *Duizend en één nacht* were available between 1829 and 1831. In 1805 the Danish playwright Adam Oehlenschläger wrote a play titled “Aladdin, eller Den forunderlige Lampe” of which a German translation was published in Amsterdam in 1808. On stage, the earliest representation of Aladdin seems to have been a pantomime written by John O’Keeffe in 1788.

It was after 1800 that the Aladdin tale gained popularity on stage as well as in other media. By then, popular forms of orientalism had developed into a European-centralist, hierarchical worldview. The nineteenth century saw an increase in orientalist entertainments throughout western Europe. With the rise of an urban theater culture, the Orient became a rich source for thea-
ter plays as well as panoramas and other amusements. But, as theater historian Edward Ziter describes, these bright and colorful productions 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 description.’ Mastery folds before an absorbing confusion.”

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 yet different. In his broad study *Verlangen naar het Oosten*, historian Jan de Hond describes that while there was an increase in orientalist art and performances in the nineteenth century most practitioners concerned with orientalist thematics remained rather marginal.

Still, a brief study of historical Dutch newspapers shows an increasing appetite for the story of Aladdin expressed through multiple forms of entertainment and media. The earliest version of Aladdin on stage in the Netherlands was produced in 1825. This was a pantomime ballet written by a Dutch choreographer, Andries Voitus van Hamme based on a 1797 libretto by Rijklof Cornelis van Goens. It was premiered in Amsterdam at the stadsschouwburg (city theater) where, for more than forty years, Voites van Hamme was the director of ballet and choreographer. The pantomime ballet was repeated seventeen times in a row. It returned to the Amsterdam city theater several times, for example in 1835. Over the years Voitus van Hamme’s Aladdin ballet would become “one of the most popular performances of the nineteenth century.”

During the first re-appearance the pantomime ballet 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, 1868, and in 1875. By then the pantomime ballet 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 Volksleit.
In 1870 a version of Aladdin was introduced on stage at the Grand Theater in Amsterdam. This show was in the relatively new (micro) genre of *too-verkluchtspel* ("magic farce comedy"), which could either indicate a relation to the féerie genre or imply that the magic lantern was also involved in the show. This was a variety show in three acts (or ‘parts’) and ten scenes, including songs, parades, dances and fights. A third stage performance of Aladdin and his magic lamp appeared in Rotterdam at a fairground theater in 1890. Although it was designated only as a comedy, a local newspaper review suggests something more like a féerie: “Colorful decorations and costumes, successful ‘changements à vue’ [changes of setting], cheerful, familiar music, well-synchronized ballets . . . All makes Alady [sic] to a performance of which the spectator wonders: ‘Am I awake or dreaming?’” Five years later, in 1895, there appeared another variation of the Aladdin tale on stage. Again, at the Grand Theatre in Amsterdam, on this occasion an English-American vaudeville company presented the show “Aladin of the Wonderlamp, Fin de Siècle” (Fig. 7).
Meanwhile, the tale of Aladdin was also adapted in the illustrated publications. As mentioned above, the earliest Dutch translation of Galland’s *Les milles et une nuits* was an abbreviated and illustrated edition. Between 1877 and the early 1890s at least three picture books were published recounting the Aladdin tale. One of them was specifically a children’s book, while the other two were based on printed lithographs. Also in 1890, the well-known author Frederik van Eeden would write his version of Aladdin, a version that was illustrated by Marius Bauer, one of the most respected orientalist painters at the time.¹⁷¹ In 1891, the gallery Pulchri in The Hague exhibited a series of paintings that recounted the fairytale. The story also appears, as the only orientalist tale, in a collection of ‘magic tales’ for children from 1893.¹⁷² Illustrated youth literature on Aladdin and other characters from “A Thousand and One Nights” was so popular that, as historian Jan de Hond

---


states, around 1900 there were hardly any children who were not familiar with the tale.173

The Aladin story was also recounted in magic lantern performances, but it remains unclear to what extent the tale recurred in this medium. The magic lantern, or *tooverlantaarn* in nineteenth-century Dutch, was possibly the closest akin to the cinematographic projected moving image. It is notoriously hard to trace what slides were shown where and when, but in a 1873 guidebook Aladdin appears as a reference when the author discusses improved techniques of lithographic drawing and printing on glass.174 As a topic Aladdin appears among other popular tales, which suggests that it was a recurring and familiar topic with magic lantern shows. Yet the 1896 catalogue by the Amsterdam-based leading lantern and slide manufacturer Merkelbach & Co does not list any Aladdin or Thousand-and-one-Nights (series of) slides. French catalogues at the time also sporadically mention the orientalist tale.175 Lucerna, the international magic lantern slides database, by contrast, lists twelve different sets of slides with Aladdin in the title, all of which are dated between 1872 and 1905.176 Even though all of the twelve sets were produced by UK-based manufacturers, it is very possible that some of these representations reached the Netherlands because international trade was common practice. The above list of Aladdin representations, including incomplete magic lantern performances, is not exhaustive. There must have been more adaptations presented to Dutch audiences the publications and promotions of which might not have reached the archives. It nevertheless suggests that Aladdin was in any event a familiar subject while it appeared in a seemingly endless variety of forms.

Grünkorn’s set of Aladdin scenes was a filmic *féerie* even though only a very limited number of *féerie* performances of the orientalist tale were staged in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. The genre *did* exist in the low countries, but its popularity was limited to Amsterdam and The Hague, where culture, due to its status as governmental capital, was still fully bilingual. There were multiple French theaters located in the city. At the Theatre Royal Française a *féerie* show of Aladdin was performed (“a grand opera ballet in five acts and a grand spectacle”) in the fall of 1834.177 Yet these exclusive theaters were firmly segregated from the provincial fairground culture where Grünkorn would have given his kinematograph performances.178

Meanwhile in Paris, versions of Aladdin were frequently performed both as *féerie* plays but also as pantomime ballets and operas. Paris had an extensive tradition of *féerie* performances that told a story based on some kind of Aladdin. Chronologically closest to the film version seems to have been *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse*, an opérette-féérie performed at Théâtre de la Galerie Vivienne in 1891 (Fig. 8). The show consisted of three acts including a prologue and eight tableaux. In a stenographic review, *Le Figaro* wrote “the decors and costumes seem to be magnificent,” thereby reaffirm-
ing the importance of scenery and visual splendor for the genre. On five other occasions the Aladdin story premiered as a *féerie* show in Paris, two separate plays in 1822, one in 1863 (to reappear on stage in 1881), one in 1872, and one in 1882. All of these shows presented their audiences with exuberant, colorful settings and costumes. During the magic plays decors would rapidly change between acts. At one of the 1822 performances, a five-act *opéra-féerie*, Louis Daguerre was employed as set designer, sharing credits with Pierre-Luc Cicéri. The script actually describes a spectacular transformation of the décor, where a magnificent palace arises from under the stage floor (Fig. 9).
Transmedial imagination (2): Aladdin’s imaginations

The question remains how the long list of Aladdin performances in the Netherlands and France informed viewing experiences with Henri Grünkorn’s kinematograph show. An important part of that answer, I would suggest, is to be found in the transmedial imagination involved in Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse. The many nineteenth-century Aladdin representations differed significantly from each other. At times, the character of Aladdin, the object of the magic lamp, and the fairy involved seem to have been the only recurring elements as the other parts of the story would vary. Some versions revolved around the romance between Aladdin and a princess, while others, such as the film scenes from Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse, contained completely different characters and situations. Between representations the setting could also change from the Middle East to the Far East to Africa, as long as it was an exotic “other place” that could be re-signified from the western perspective. Transmediality, therefore, in the case of Aladdin did not appear as a coherent story told across different media. On the contrary, the Aladdin story emerged as the traveling phenomenon that Rajewsky de-
scribes. It changes and alters on every occasion while the ‘original source’ loses relevance.\textsuperscript{181} Still the phenomenon of Aladdin had an important narrative function to the viewers’ experience: no matter how loosely formulated it becomes a pretext, a kind of backstory that helps the viewer make sense of the limited information available in the actual representation.

By being more than a clear narrative, as Eder observes, transmedial imagination opens up to fantasies and indirect meanings. Thereby transmedial imagination also phenomenologically informs the sensuous experience of the newly-introduced moving picture scenes of Aladdin.\textsuperscript{182} We can outline at least three transmedial imaginations that appeared throughout the nineteenth-century presentations of Aladdin as they also made their way into the 1897 \textit{Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse}. These transmedial imaginations closely related to the experience of modernity, as a way of coming to terms with radical changes in demography, advanced capitalism, and sensory experience, i.e. “changes that transformed the texture of everyday life.”\textsuperscript{183} As I will outline in the following paragraphs, these transmedial imaginations centered on (1) the attraction of artificial light, (2) the notion of a sudden transformation of situation and spaces or character metamorphosis, and (3) the presentation of the (distant) world as an object to be viewed. On each occasion these transmedial imaginations were taken up in a medium-specific manner. The translation of these themes to the kinematograph might have doubled its attraction, as each of these discourses also emphasized the specificity of the cinematic medium.

The orientalism in Aladdin—as the genre that accommodated these themes and discourses—was already a way to engage with modernity. In 1890 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{184} As Edward Said outlines, the Orient is above all a construct by Europeans to define their own civilization in relation to the Other.\textsuperscript{185} Although Aladdin in all its varieties (mis)represented distant cultures, its imagination was not so much concerned with the cultural space of the Orient as it was with envisioning its own western society and the changes with which it was confronted. One of the fundamental changes that took place during the nineteenth century, to various degrees and at different stages, was the widespread introduction of artificial light. This had an enormous impact on the organization of time and space in modern society.\textsuperscript{186} In particular, artificial lighting had a significant impact on urban nightlife and theater practices. It was not uncommon for theaters to shut down because of problems with (electrical) lighting just as the light source itself was one of the key attractions of the kinematograph machine (which is why Grünkorn emphasized his \textit{electric} cinematograph). The 1895 vaudeville show “Aladin of the Wonderlamp, Fin de Siècle” that would have its Dutch premiere in Amsterdam, for example, was mainly remembered in the newspaper review because of technical failures with artificial lighting: “The most remarkable
thing about Aladdin’s magic lamp was that yesterday at the Grand Theater the lamp went out.” 187 Yet, as the newspaper concluded, when these problems eventually was solved, “Aladdin’s light shined bright.” 188 To contemporary audiences artificial light was still an attraction in its own right. An anecdotal joke from a 1874 newspaper mentions a farmer and his wife going to see the Aladdin comedy in the city, yet they leave before the show starts because they mistake the gas lamp for the actual performance. 189

Hence it is not surprising that one of the recurring transmedial imaginations throughout Aladdin representations was artificial lighting. Obviously, the magic lamp that Aladdin obtains in most stories is, of course, the most artificial of all lights: it supplies him (by way of the fairy) with supernatural powers that can change spaces, surroundings, and more. Yet the transmedial fascination with artificial light occurs both in the texts and illustrations as well as in the discourse surrounding the Aladdin performances. The script for the pantomime ballet *De Tooverlamp* (performed in 1829, 1831, 1847, 1868, and 1875), for instance, mentions the importance of the lighting. Ending an intense love scene in which Aladdin declares his love to the princess, at the moment of removal, “the light burns spontaneously, spreading a beautiful and bright light.” 190 Similarly, the scripts for the French *fée*rie performances also emphasized the attraction of light. The 1822 version, for example, describes “Ismenor qui paraît sur un char orné des attributs de la lumière.” (“Ismenor appears on a chariot decorated with light.”) Daguerre and Cicéri’s set design for the show was equally bright and shiny. On a similar note, drawings of ballet scenes from a *fée*rie performance at Théâtre du Chatelet in 1863 indicate contrasts between light and darkness. Most dancers are featured holding torches (Fig. 10). The playbill for that show also features a stark contrast between the dark setting and the bright light of the magic lamp. The opposition between illuminated and dim scenes also features on the poster for the 1891 *fée*rie play (Fig. 8). Stark shadows indicate well-lit scenes appearing in contrast to the darkened cave setting.
This recurring motif of artificial light was at each instance medium specific or even genre specific. It came with the cultural practice of theater or, more specifically the féerie. Such a distinguished play between light and darkness was technically not yet possible for cinematographic recordings. Still, as mentioned above, the kinematograph itself thrived on the attraction of artificial (electric) light while the magic lamp still maintained a key position in the film version of Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse. The catalogue description of the scenes emphasizes draws our attention to the importance of a wonderful lamp that shines brightly. As a well-established transmedial imagination, the motif of artificial lighting steered moving-picture spectators toward a sensuous experience of the kinematograph performance as an attraction of light and darkness. Grünkorn’s fairground audiences might not have been familiar with the complete history of Aladdin as a theater or féerie play, yet the connection between Aladdin and artificial light recurred throughout nineteenth-century culture. As a transmedial imagination this potentially sensitized spectators for a particular experience of the film version as a novel attraction centered on artificial light.
A second transmedial imagination distinct across the different Aladdin stories is the motif of sudden transformation and metamorphosis. Most obviously, the transformation in the Aladdin story is the sudden change in social position. In all the versions of the folk tale that I have been able to retrieve there is a transformation that involves class, status and financial circumstances. In terms of narrative, the purpose of social transformation was irregular. In some instances, Aladdin uses his new position to achieve his love interest in the princess, while on other occasions he uses his newly acquired position to restore his family’s honor, or in some versions, wealth itself is the objective. The audience’s appreciation of the transformation motif might have related to the increased dynamism of urban modernity where different classes encountered each other more easily. Popular entertainment, and the theater in particular, created spaces where previously segregated classes could potentially meet. The different Aladdin stories, both in print or in the theater, represented and idealized the possibility of transcending social hierarchies. The orientalist character of these performances functioned as an intermediary between the fictional, magical space where these mobilities were viable and the reality of the streets.

At the same time, the imagination about transformation also centered on visual and spatial metamorphosis: rapid changes of scenes and costumes, and the sudden appearance of the genie from the lamp. As Edward Ziter observes, Orientalist Theater, both popular and elitist, contributed to “a new spatial logic” through which the arrangement of scenes and views gained significance. This was evident in the Aladdin plays. A review of the 1890 féerie-like comedy performed 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.”

Meanwhile in France, as discussed above, féerie performances were celebrated for transformations of setting and the metamorphosis of characters, which often involved ingenious technical devices and tricks. Yet the transmedial imagination of transformation was also manifest in other visual media, such as illustrated books. A French illustrated book by Lucien Métivet, for example, based on a shadowplay exploits a spatial transformation through visual similarities and continuities (Fig. 11 and 12). At the same time, the notion of an Aladdin-like transformation 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.” In the 1890s, Aladdin came to signify wishes too good to be true or a sudden transformation of someone who becomes rich overnight, while the concept of Aladdin repeatedly suggested an emotional state of surprise.
The *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse* scenes that Grünkorn exhibited as part of his electric kinematograph show foregrounded transformation and metamorphosis. As the Mendel catalogue reveals, the film scenes are particularly attractive due to the rapid transformations of sets. Over the course of four one-minute scenes, the basement is transformed into a palace only to return into a basement in the next scene. The scene description equally mentions

---

*Fig. 11 and 12: Lucien Métivet, Aladin - Ombres chinoises en quinze tableaux (Paris: Flammarion, 1904), Bill Douglas Cinema Museum/University of Exeter, Bill Douglas and Peter Jewell Collection*
how the fairy suddenly appears out of nowhere. As explained above spatial transformation was probably achieved through stop-motion. The sudden appearance of the fairy could have utilized superimposition. The kinematograph representation of Aladdin accelerated and intensified the familiar transmedial attraction of transformation and metamorphosis. Thus the transmedial imagination regarding transformation was an important marker for the viewing experiences of moving pictures. This imagination queued the viewers’ attention to the medium-specific qualities of the kinematograph and the cut.

A third transmedial imagination was related to the visual demonstration of placing the world within the viewer’s reach, akin to “the age of the world picture” which, as Heidegger pronounced, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture.” This suggests a desire to have the distant optically present at the subject’s demand. Again, this corresponds to what Timothy Mitchell calls “rendering up the world as a thing to be viewed,” a concept discussed in the first part of the chapter. This idea of having the world visually at hand was another recurring motif in Aladdin representations and their surrounding discourses. Following the spatial transformation motif, most Aladdin versions involved some kind of spatial replacement or displacement. At times Aladdin’s palace was, through aerial transportation, replaced from one continent to another, or Aladdin would feature on a magic carpet. Orientalism constituted a European-centered imagination to explore, view, and grasp the rest of the world. Aladdin’s popularity in the nineteenth century was a product of that world-view. Moreover, the folk tale became associated with that construct. 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. The Crystal Palace in London was similarly explained to Dutch readers as a realization of Aladdin’s world of magic because it collected views from all over the world in one individual place.

Aladdin presented a story of vision and visuality that denoted new encounters and novel impressions pivotal to modernity. The recurring motif of visuality functioned as a ‘hook’ or initiator to extra fantasies evident in the metaphoric use of the story. Meanwhile, this transmedial imagination also touched upon issues of mediation and medium-specificity. With theater and féerie plays it was about creating medium-specific ways to bring the exotic onto the stage. Correspondingly, through print media an ancient, original folk tale from a distant culture became available to European audiences, or at least that is how it was marketed. The moving-picture scenes of Aladdin that Grünkorn presented to local audiences suggested another dimension to the notion of visuality. The kinematograph attraction—as “the machine of the visible,” centered around the notion of rendering the distant world as a visual object before the viewer’s eyes. Yet, whereas this is usually attributed to the
Lumières’ actualities and travelogues, a filmic féerie such as Aladdin ou la lampe merveilleuse equally appealed to that ideal. Grünkorn indeed advertised his obtained Aladdin scenes as the current hype in Paris. Although this claim was untrue—Aladdin on film or on stage was not a hype in Paris in 1897-1898, it nevertheless established a kind of present-tense bond between the local Dutch fairground and the modern, exotic entertainment scene in Paris. Next to that, the exotic, orientalist representation of Aladdin also foregrounded the kinematograph’s unique quality to bring the distant near. The transmedial imagination, in short, preconstituted an experience that in a medium-specific manner foregrounded vision and visuality itself.

Transmedial imagination and aesthetic experience
The description on transmedial imaginations surrounding Aladdin representations is not exhaustive while they are historical constructs from the present. During Henri Grünkorn’s 1898 show Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse was the main act of his kinematograph performance. Yet, while this series of scenes was the headliner they were part of a more extensive moving-picture show. In this respect the filmic féerie differed fundamentally from stage plays of the Aladdin story. On stage and in print Aladdin stories were presented as more or less “autonomous spectacles” whereas in the kinematograph show the scenes constituted four one-minute spectacles integrated into the spectacle of the moving picture attraction. Each of the other scenes brought along their own transmedial imaginations. Next to the Aladdin scenes, Grünkorn exhibited films like “Het Tooverpaleis” (which I identify as Georges Méliès’ Le Manoir du diable, 1897), “De Gevloekte Faust” (presumably Méliès’ Le Cabinet de Méphistophélès, 1897) and a series of three scenes on Don Quichotte (which so far I have not been able to identify) next to a bunch of actualities and events. Outlining the discourses and imaginations that were involved with each individual scene is beyond the scope of this chapter. Yet, what the analysis of Aladdin indicates is that Grünkorn’s moving picture show was able to produce a rich and multifaceted experience.

The transmedial, cultural imaginations on Aladdin are important for our understanding of the viewing experiences that Grünkorn’s kinematograph show could potentially evoke. The motifs and conventions that predated the moving pictures indicate how novelty and familiarity were intertwined. Nineteenth-century audiences shared an image of Aladdin that was constructed across different media. As a form of cultural imagination, the film alluded to shared ideas and conventions that were present in their absence, as they were not shown on screen. Thereby the transmedial angle relates to intermedial spectatorship as outlined in the first part of this chapter. Both perspectives illustrate that the newly introduced kinematograph attraction
was not just about novelty. These transmedial imaginations on Aladdin formed a grid of familiarity from which *Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse*, as a kind of new-media adaptation (in absence of an original) could deviate.

Naturally, the spectators, collectively and individually, had their own histories. Spectators were acquainted with many other contemporary attractions and screen technologies. These histories affected the viewing experience. More than frameworks for understanding, these previous experiences functioned as frameworks for aesthetic perception because they enabled a sensitivity to the sensuous appearing of a representation through a new technology. Yuri Tsivian observes that early cinema spectators were in fact “medium-sensitive” spectators who were on the lookout for discontinuities between media. These audiences took pleasure in *feeling* the differences between novel and familiar attractions. In one of its earliest reviews the cinématographe, for example, was described in comparison to the kinetoscope and the sciopticon. Or, as another reviewer wrote, moving pictures should be compared to a magic lantern show. The Aladdin film scenes mobilized such a medium-sensitive experience by presenting a very well-known story or pretext, including all the ideas surrounding that story, while performing it in a new form, through a new medium.

Aesthetic imagination, in turn, can be seen as the intimate counterpart to the transmedial, cultural imagination regarding the depiction of Aladdin. The two forms of imagination, cultural and aesthetic, are interrelated. However, whereas cultural imagination is about collectively shared conventions and ideas, aesthetic imagination is individual and private. Basically, in terms of phenomenology, aesthetic imagination involves the appearing of objects or images that are not object of perception. It is about the imagining of objects and images that are not physically there. Aesthetic imagination thus involves the senses indirectly; it concerns sensations and feelings that are imagined. Imagination, however, becomes only properly aesthetic when these sensations reflect upon perception and the (existential) appearance of the world, as this form of experience “responds and corresponds to the World of existence.” Aesthetic imagination is thus a kind of sensuous reflection on perception. Aesthetic imagination is thus a sensuous equivalent to transmedial, cultural imagination. These categories of imagination always appear together, not unlike meaning effects and presence effects.

The sections above detailed three cultural imaginations regarding various representations of Aladdin but, as I hold, these three transmedial imaginations (light, transformation, and visuality) related to sensuous, aesthetic imagination as well. Hence we can theoretically reconstruct some presence effects that the Aladdin films enabled. The three cultural imaginations associated with Aladdin dealt, to some extent, with appearance and the senses. Moreover, these imaginations were materialized in medium-specific depictions that experientially highlighted the uniqueness of the moving pictures. The cultural, transmedial imagination on artificial light, in this manner, ena-
bled a heightened sensuous experience of the kinematograph as an attraction of light. In its cinematic representation the light as elementary to human perception was made sensuously present. Instead of supplying a stable meaning, the recurrence of the magic lamp in various forms throughout different narratives gave way to a sensation of mediation, a sensation of the materiality of representation. The cinematic version, in turn, could evoke a specific sensation of artificial light; one that was concentrated on four times one-minute lasting beams of light.

Meanwhile, the motif of transformation and metamorphosis in previous Aladdin representations enabled a sensuous experiences that concentrated on the mere appearance of representation in moving pictures. Spectators were familiar with the pretext; they could anticipate the transformations in Aladdin performances. With the kinematograph attraction these key moments of metamorphosis were translated into medium-specific sensations. The sheer sensation of “now it’s there, now it’s not” established appearance as an event or a “moment of intensity.” Following Gumbrecht’s presence-based definition, the event is not related to surprise but more to discontinuity and playfulness. These playful moments of metamorphosis performed by way of moving pictures, then, could be felt as moments of sensuous appearance. In these moments, the spectator could be involved in a heightened sense of presence. The sensuous and playful eventfulness of filmic metamorphosis in the Aladdin films, then, foregrounded not just the materiality of cinematic representation as the trick itself was put center stage, but it also enabled a sensation of perception itself. In Vivian Sobchack’s terms, the kinematograph attraction thereby presented “an expression of experience by experience.” In a similar manner, the motif of visuality in Aladdin performances allowed for a heightened sense of visual perception with the Aladdin film version. It thereby expressed visuality and vision (i.e. the gaze) itself provoking a sensuous sensation of visuality.

The imaginations discussed here only represent a fraction of the possible associations and feelings that Grünkorn’s kinematograph performance evoked. As audiences were diverse in gender, class, age, and identity, and Grünkorn’s show was performed at different locations in the Netherlands and Belgium, transmedial imaginations were, of course, manifold. So any historical analysis simplifies historical reality. Nevertheless, I hold that aesthetic imagination was in many ways pivotal to cinema’s earliest viewing experiences. The Aladdin case study should be read as an illustration of that argument. Aesthetic imagination is, by definition, non-empirical as it is inaccessible and unspeakable. Yet relating and associating the aesthetic imagination with cultural imagination, which indeed leaves historical traces, deepens our understanding of the available aesthetic experience.
Conclusion

Although this case study is limited to 1898, Henri Grünkorn remained a prominent figure in the fairground scene until 1905. In 1899 he produced his own films. These films seem to be modeled after familiar Lumière and Edison scenes as titles included *Aankomst eener trein te Leiden* (‘Arrival of a train in Leiden’), *Het uitgaan van der katoenfabriek* (‘Exiting the cotton factory’), and *Het uitrukken van de Utrechtsche brandweer* (‘Calling out of the Utrecht fire brigade’). Yet the added attraction with these scenes was that some of them were locally produced; Grünkorn filmed, for example, at least five local variations on exiting churches after high mass. Until 1902 he traveled Belgian and Dutch fairgrounds with his kinematograph before he sold his attraction to Willem Frederik Krüger, a Dutch-born Belgian fairground showman. As Guido Convents identifies, Grünkorn’s ‘Electric Kinematograph’ was by then known as the ‘Cinématographe Grünkorn’ before Krüger renamed it ‘The Impérial Bio of Cinématographe Krüger’. In 1904 The Impérial Bio was destroyed by a fire, marking the end of Grünkorn’s attraction. Krüger, however, would rebuild The Imperial Bio and by 1907 he owned two travelling cinemas while he opened the first permanent picture place in Antwerp.

When Grünkorn sold his attraction the salon measured twenty-six by ten meters, yet it remains unsure if this was the same set-up and equipment as five years earlier at the beginning of his kinematograph attraction. Convents’ valuable study also notes something strange that occurred after Grünkorn’s sale. Although Grünkorn officially was not involved in moving pictures after 1902, a person named André Grünkorn, who was registered at the same address in Ghent as Henri, managed the ‘Cinéma Fortuin Américain’. This mobile theater was owned by Willem Fortuin who bought exploitation rights to several fairgrounds from Henri Grünkorn. This combination Fortuin-Grünkorn remains operative until 1907 when Grünkorn finally left moving pictures. Another remarkable incident in Grünkorn’s history after 1900 is that by 1905 he seems to have obtained another rollercoaster. By then he seems to focus mainly on Belgium. Until the World War I he remained active exploiting several attractions at the same time.

Henri Grünkorn’s initial fairground career and his earliest practices with the moving pictures were at the center of this chapter. In many ways, his operations were not special or remarkable; in terms of early cinema he is usually not considered a “first” nor is he seen as an innovator. Grünkorn was one among many fairground showmen of “the first generation” who tried their luck with the kinematograph. He was reasonably successful, but like many other early showmen Grünkorn left the moving picture business when permanent cinemas were introduced and traveling cinemas became professionalized. Still, as this case study implies, taking a close look at the earliest moving picture shows while contextualizing them as part of the late nine-
teenth-culture of spectacle gives insight into the new medium’s earliest viewing experiences.

This chapter proposed an empirically informed, theoretical reconstruction of viewing experiences with Grünkorn’s ‘Electric Cinematograph’ in 1897 and 1898. As stated at the outset of this chapter, while experiences are irrevocably lost, there are traces from which we can construct theoretical viewing positions. Throughout this analysis I have applied different concepts of intermediality. These concepts functioned as ways to organize the historical material in order to say something valid about viewing experiences. In this manner, the first part of the chapter proposed a form of intermedial spectatorship. The survey of Grünkorn’s attractions before the kinematograph from the perspective of sensations showed that the kinematograph involved a negotiation of mobility and virtuality. Moreover, this negation between mobility and virtuality was complex in the sense that it also entailed a double focus on both the material presentation of the attractions and the visual or imaginary representation on stage or on screen. As discussed in terms of haptic visuality, the perception of the diorama, the tableaux vivant, and the kinematograph was as much about the surface and materiality of respective mediums and technologies as it was about the depth of the representation and the illusion of realism. Thereby, as I have outlined, this negotiation between mobility and virtuality was very much an embodied affair. Virtuality should thus be seen as having, what Anne Friedberg calls, a “second order materiality.” Despite an increasing virtual mobility, bodily presence was nevertheless vital for these fairground experiences as aesthetic experiences. This is what the kinematograph show importantly shared with Grünkorn’s other attractions.

Secondly, the study also tried to designate Gaudreault’s concept of polyphonic expression as early cinema’s primary quality. As the study of Grünkorn indicates, there were various cultural practices involved from which we can identify many cultural series. Following Gaudreault we can conclude that the semantic richness of the early moving picture show pre-constituted multifaceted, pluri-form viewing experiences. Thus early cinema’s embeddedness in various familiar cultural practices generated both continuity and discontinuity: while the show was in many ways a continuation of the established practices of fairground and theater among others, the viewer was at the same time presented with a complex new medium, both semantically and sensuously or experientially. The kinematograph was, thereby, a multivalent object that allowed a potentially endless number of interpretations. The concepts of transmediality and imagination were employed to reconstitute some of these possible interpretations and experiences. The transmedial imaginations around Aladdin illustrate how deep and multi-layered these experiences could be.

The perspective of intermediality demonstrates that in terms of viewing experiences the newly introduced moving picture attraction constituted ase-
thetic events that were both banal and complex. On the one hand, Grünkorn’s attraction was simple and straightforward fairground entertainment lacking a serious purpose, as the Dutch press remarked. A pure recording that was easily explained which so many people were thought to understand from an early stage.\textsuperscript{212} Meanwhile the sensations that the new attraction stirred were also banal: it foregrounded seeing, sensing, moving, exhibiting, and appearing. In many ways these early viewing experiences were not intellectual but sensuous affairs. And yet the kinematograph show was also a complex event as it mobilized, or even invited, a wide variety of interpretations and meanings. This tension between meaning or interpretation versus sensation and tangibility is characteristic of aesthetic experience. This current study of Henri Grünkorn thus illustrates the “oscillation of presence and meaning effects” that can be found at the heart of aesthetic experience.\textsuperscript{213}
Chapter two

“Not a movement lost”: Motion, metropolis, and aesthetic experiences of presence

“Movement is reality itself.”
Henri Bergson in Creative Mind (1907)

On July 5, 1896, the day the vitascope was introduced to the Chicago public, the newspaper Inter-Ocean described the moving picture device as “the latest in line of the scientific reproductions of life, being a combination of instantaneous photography, the kinetoscope, the stereopticon, and several other combinations in themselves, the whole providing a means for reproducing on a screen an exact scene from life.” This claim of realism is anything but unique. We can safely state that the realism trope appeared as the most dominant way to understand the projected moving pictures. In terms of audience experience the realism claim entailed familiarity as the pictures were apparently recognized as an “exact copy” of real life, movement as a vital element of this claim. On the impact of the pictures, the review continues: “The more the familiar the pictures are presented the more incredible and bewildering becomes this triumphal achievement of the wizard [Edison].” This remark indicates an interesting situation in which apparent naturalness and familiarity caused a remarkable, or possibly astonishing, experience. The question remains, how could something that was black and white, silent, lasting under a minute, and subject to significant flicker, still be appreciated by audiences as something inherently real and extraordinary? And how should we conceptualize this potentially paradoxical viewing experience?

This chapter proposes that a presentation of movement was central to the experience of realism and its sensation of familiarity. The core claim is that the movement presented with the kinematograph was radically familiar. The moving pictures embodied the plural forms of movement that bombarded spectators as part of life in the metropolis. Inside the theater they presented a continuation of the forms of movement and energy that were part of the outside world. Meanwhile, the motion of the moving picture attraction was not
limited to on-screen representation. I suggest that by being a technology of movement in the broadest possible sense, the kinematograph’s moving-picture attraction was involved in a wider presentation of motion, energy, and rhythm. Through this technological articulation of motion as an essential element of life, moving picture attractions sensuously engaged the spectator. Movement, thereby, was a matter of presentation as it was materially sensible in the here and now. The spectator, thereby, was involved at the level of presence. While the vitascope or cinématographe attraction was partly drawing on curiosity and the intellectual understanding of motion, a significant part of cinema’s earliest viewing sensation was situated on the mere feeling of movement. Movement directly committed the spectator to the spectacle; motion and rhythm resonated in the viewer’s body while, in terms of embodied experience, the viewer’s subjectivity animated the moving picture attraction. Hence, via a detour through discourse, this chapter discusses the aesthetic experience of cinematic movement in terms of an oscillation of presence and meaning effects.

The previous chapter discussed the aesthetic experience of presence in terms of intermediality, outlining the sensuously multivalent and semiotically rich experiences that the kinematograph enabled. This chapter, in turn, aims to develop our discussion on presence in another direction. Shifting attention to the concept of movement enables us to discuss the materialist and sensorial dimensions of early cinema experiences from a different perspective. Movement and intermediality are of course related, but the objective of this chapter is not to completely integrate the two conceptual frameworks. Instead, this dissertation employs different conceptual frameworks throughout the chapters in order to describe the earliest viewing experiences from various angles. While Chapter 1 focused on the introduction of film in the fairground context of the Netherlands, this chapter, as well as Chapter 3, relocates our discussion overseas to the context of Chicago and the vaudeville settings in which film was introduced to audiences in the U.S. This transatlantic setting can be seen as a second local case study. Obviously, there is no explicit historical connection between Chicago and Henri Grünkorn, or between the city and Dutch fairground practices. Historic Chicago was, as will be evident below, a particularly modern and metropolitan context and thereby presents us with a different viewing situation. The vaudeville-metropolitan setting allows us to reconstruct other elements of cinema’s earliest viewing experiences.

The first part of the chapter describes the familiarity of cinematic movement by outlining the physical context in which moving pictures were introduced in downtown Chicago between 1895 and 1897, discussing the relation between the streets, the theaters, and the films. In doing so, I would like to situate the kinematograph within the rhythm of the metropolitan street. Rhythm, as “the dynamic coupling of movements within and outside the individual body” transgresses the traditional separation of the individual
from its environment, as well as it challenges the partition between mind and the body. Therefore rhythm is pivotal to understanding early moving picture experiences. In the discussion of the context of the kinematograph, I will move from the streets to the films and scenes, to spectators and audiences in order to create a continuum in which movement should not be seen as an element that can be located separately in either the street, the film, or the spectator. Rather, movement should be considered as rhythm stretching between these elements which stitched the attraction together. Even though the kinematograph was in many ways an attraction of visuality (as Jonathan Crary and others have argued), examining movement establishes a broader perspective, one that is more inclusive of the other sensuous experiences and sense as bodily impulse.

The second part of the chapter presents a more epistemological discussion of movement. Examining how movement was understood and conceptualized, I will present the argument that moving pictures brought together two different paradigms on movement and energy operative in the 1890s; the mechanical-dynamic paradigm and the post-mechanical energetic (electrical) notion. As part of popular discourse in Chicago at the time, these different ideas on movement and energy can be seen as discursive elements that significantly influenced early experiences with the kinematograph. As these ideas were different and, at times, contradictory, they might have caused a potentially disruptive viewing experience.

Bringing together the analysis of movement from the street to the screen, and the evaluation of the different conceptual frameworks, the last section of the chapter proposes that the experience that the kinematograph aroused during its initial years in Chicago can be seen as an aesthetic experience deeply rooted in everyday life. Even though the content of the moving images fluctuated from local street corners to exotic places, the movement presented by the kinematograph aroused a profoundly familiar feeling. In contrast to astonishment—the category of aesthetic experience coined by Tom Gunning in his groundbreaking work on very early cinema’s viewing experiences entailing a spectacle at a safe distance—I propose a more participatory experience of spatial and sensual proximity, one that involved the spectator rather than distancing him/her. The concept of aesthetic experience that I propose instead of astonishment is that of presence. While located within everyday perception, the aesthetic of presence “involves shedding the everyday significations and conceptual framings . . . [Thereby it] locates the subject in the presentness of a singular sensuous event.”5 Drawing on the writings of Nancy, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, and Martin Seel, I will propose presence as a category of aesthetic experience that moves between the everyday and the singular. The kinematograph made the ordinary extraordinary. It did so by turning ordinary perception against itself. The attraction of early cinema was not extraordinary because it presented amazing pictures leaving the spectator in awe and wonder. Rather, moving pictures presented an in-
This chapter seeks to provide an account of experiences of movement with the kinematograph, and definitely not the experience of movement (just as the previous chapter supplied an account of intermediality). Any claim of the latter would make misguided claims to a universal history. This chapter endeavors to be specific in presenting a local metropolitan situation while theoretically interpreting the historical situation. Thus this representation of the past is the result of a theoretical angle. Although the last section of the chapter seeks to present alternative viewing situations outside the metropolitan context, the larger part of this chapter will not entail an effort of comparing and contrasting.6

Revisiting the streets of modernity

This chapter is, as mentioned above, situated in the principally modern and urban historical context of Chicago in the 1890s. In this period Chicago was, above all, a highly dynamic place that was under constant reconstruction. The city was characterized by modern forms of movement in various ways. In the 1890s, Chicago’s downtown area, what would become known as “The Loop,” constituted the most modern and busiest place in the U.S. and thereby in the western world.7 The Columbian Exposition of 1893, meanwhile, made Chicago audiences particularly sensitive to advanced technological modernity. Thereby, as a historical context, Chicago forms a promising location in which to analyze early moving picture experiences.

Modernity, as a concept describing radical social transformation fueled by rapid technological progress, remains a tricky concept. Critics warn that the definition of modernity as a moment of change is hard to determine. Society is, after all, never static and always evolving. History has seen other moments of acceleration and technological progress, also outside the western world, which could mean that modernity has happened before and still happens today.8 While modernity remains due to “its flexible temporal boundaries,” what Singer calls “an inherently broad and ambiguous term,” this chapter retains a historically specific definition.9 I follow Stephen Kern, who defines, in his classic study *The Culture of Time and Space*, modernity as “a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture [which] created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space.” These changes emerged, in a western perspective at different times at different places, “from around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I.”10 Although the city of Chicago has been subject to constant attention well beyond this limited timeframe, I hold that the historically distinctive modes of thinking
that Kern defines as modernity had a significant impact on the popular conception of the city as a space of movement and motion.

Understanding the introduction of film from the framework of urban modernity, however, has been a dominant approach for many years and, in that respect, it has been criticized severely. As Gregory Waller convincingly argues in *Main Street Amusements*, the metropolitan context might have been too decisive in the study of (early) film history. Following Waller’s 1995 publication many other studies appeared focusing on lesser-researched contexts, resulting in new information on different non-theatrical viewing situations. These studies have been helpful in constructing a more varied view on the introduction of moving pictures, one less defined by theories on modernity and metropolitan life. While the importance of studying “cinema beyond the city” is evident, urban contexts, such as downtown Chicago, still provide interesting and stimulating historical situations that should not be neglected. Within these contexts of urban modernity, the early moving picture attraction was part of an extensive and intensive amusement culture in which different performances and different media, and thereby different forms of presence, were competing for the viewer’s attention. While I do not argue that there is a direct parallel with today’s competitive media environment, I do believe that the similarities between the past and the present make the context of late nineteenth-century’s modernity a relevant object of study.

Also in terms of experience, the past two decades have seen a critical reconsideration of the cinema-modernity matrix. The idea that during the late nineteenth century, due to urbanization and technological innovation, people were unprepared for the stimuli that attacked the senses (which Ben Singer calls the “history of perception”-argument) has been criticized from various positions. Joe Kember, for instance, takes a nuanced position on the early twentieth-century writings that depicted an accelerating urban metropolis where the senses were under constant assault. Kember points out that many of these writings were strategically overstating the impact of modernity in order to exploit the newness of their attractions. Nevertheless, I hold that these critiques on the perception of modernity do not answer what historical audiences might have felt as they only further problematize the entanglement between newness and familiarity. Singer, meanwhile, states that these “hyperdynamic” journalistic descriptions were part of a discourse that was characterized by sensationalist language. Yet, while these somewhat sensationalist writings and illustrations on early film may have overstated the assault on the senses, they nevertheless related to the technology of cinema as “a sensory-reflexive horizon for the experience of modernization and modernity.” Thus, these discourses on urban modernity and its sensorial impact, in relation to cinema, are nevertheless vital for understanding cinema’s earliest viewing experiences. A more refined interaction with the writings on modernity combined with historical analysis and theory, therefore, can shed new light on the experience of the earliest spectators.
The early years of film in Chicago have been studied before. These studies mainly consider the post-1900 nickelodeon years while they have the social construction of audiences as their principal focus. Lauren Rabinovitz’s *For the Love of Pleasure* discusses Chicago’s turn-of-the-century context in relation to early cinema. However, the years of cinema’s introduction, between 1896 and 1900, is only briefly mentioned by Rabinovitz: these pivotal years are sketched in only three pages. Even though the current study will not provide a complete history of early moving pictures in Chicago, it seeks to give a spatial analysis of where and how moving pictures were introduced in the downtown area. Rather than presenting a social history, this study focuses on the viewing experiences of audiences.

This chapter seeks to give an account of the (aesthetic) experiences of movement in which cinema’s initial audiences took part. Experience is a very complex combination of understanding and feelings, and of cognition and affects. Discursive elements determine how reality appeared to historical subjects. In this way, the initial reception of the kinematograph was mediated by sets of beliefs and ideas surrounding the new medium. At the same time, there is the materiality of experience involving embodied or sensuous elements that have an unmistakable effect on the spectator. Watching moving pictures, as discussed by Vivian Sobchack among others, is a process involving both our (involuntary) embodied sensuous experiences as well as mechanisms of meaning making. On a similar note, Jean-Luc Nancy, outlining his notion of experience as that which escapes meaning and language, has argued that aesthetic experience is always relational, both temporal and spatial. A spatial relation creates an overdetermination with surrounding experiences, surrounding bodies, attractions, and activities to which the body is subjected, while, in terms of temporality, preceding ideas and feelings also affect the subject. Therefore, if we want to say anything about the historical spectator’s aesthetic experience when watching the newly-introduced moving pictures, we have to situate their perception in its physical context.

In *Atlas of Emotion*, Giuliana Bruno describes how the film experience is irrevocably connected to the theater space and other surroundings. Bruno conceives film as haptic matter while the film experience can be seen as constituting a tactile spatial bond between the viewer and her surrounding space. This chapter follows Bruno’s theoretical shift “from the optic to the haptic—and from sight to site—(…) [moving] away from the perspective of the gaze and into the diverse architectural motions.” As “a history of movement, affect, and tact,” this spatial conception of motion is fundamentally related to the emotion of film experience. Inspired by Bruno’s analysis, as well her study *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, the following sections attempt to distribute a detailed snapshot of the streets and theaters in which moving pictures were introduced in Chicago in 1896 and 1897. My objective is to point out forms of movement and rhythms that the spectator was involved in before and after watching moving pictures. Rhythm is a productive
way to describe the different movements of the city streets as it entails the contact point and merger between the individual’s body and its surroundings. In *Rhythmanalysis* Henri Lefebvre defines rhythm as the “interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy.” Thus, in what follows, I will describe in detail the location of downtown Chicago in times of rapidly changing modernity, entailing many new forms of transportation, energies, and forms of motion.

**Movement from the streets into the theater**

Chicago was, as mentioned above, a city that became synonymous with modernity. From the 1880s onward, the city attracted a great variety of people, ranging from intellectuals including writers and architects to financial speculators, and from poor immigrants to wealthy industrialists. It was a city in the making aiming for the future. As Theodore Dreiser observes in his memoirs: “Chicago was like no other city in the world, … a city which had no tradition but which was making them . . . it was something wonderful . . . to see a world metropolis spring up under your eyes.” The city expanded rapidly. Between 1880 and 1890 its population doubled in size from 500 thousand to over a million inhabitants. Surpassing Philadelphia, Chicago became the second city in terms of population in the U.S., after New York. In the 1890s alone, the population grew by 600,000 people to almost 1.7 million in 1900.

Downtown was the focal point of Chicago as a growing metropole. The city expanded rapidly in many directions. The downtown area, close to where the first non-native settlements were built at the mouth of the Chicago River close to Lake Michigan around 1780, became an increasingly crowded juncture in the city’s extensive geography. Here, crowds gathered on the streets, at the intersections, and on the sidewalks. By 1890 Chicago had become the gateway to the west. It was the largest transportation hub in the country. There were four railway stations or “depots” in downtown Chicago; two more stations were located just across the water. At each station different railway lines serviced different destinations. The result was a huge traffic of crowds and suitcases, and other goods moving through the downtown streets. Next to the long-distance railroads, central Chicago was characterized by streetcars, elevated trains, and other forms of mobility. Streetcar lines reached far into the northern and southern suburbs. In the early 1900s these streetcars were reconditioned with electric power. Elevated railroads were built from 1892 onward and the “Elevated Loop” was completed in 1897. Already in 1896 the city center was referred to as “The Loop.” The Loop became an informal boundary designating the downtown area. Measuring about ten blocks in length and six blocks wide, downtown Chicago was in northern and western directions confined by the Chicago River, while the
eastern part of downtown borders Lake Michigan (Fig. 13). Downtown Chicago was, thereby, in every respect marked by moving crowds, mobility, and modern transportation.

Fig. 12: Map of Chicago distributed by The Tribune for the 1893 Columbian Exhibition. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library’s Map Collection.
Meanwhile, crowds kept flooding downtown on a daily basis, despite the chaos and disorder of the streets. The city was dirty, muddy, noisy, smelly, and covered under a layer of smoke or smog, as will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3. The skyscrapers were stoking all day and in certain weather conditions, the smoke would fall on the streets. This made the streets dimly lit, even during daytime. Chicago downtown encompassed in a few square miles commercial activity, theaters and amusement establishments, art institutes, libraries, small factories, the Board of Trade, and social and political clubs. No other metropolitan city, it was agreed among locals, had such a concentrated downtown district. Even New York, as a visitor observed, “does not for a moment compare with Chicago in the roar and bustle and bewilderment of its street life.”

Historian Donald Miller concludes:

By 1893 (…) Chicago had the busiest and most modern downtown in the country, with a dozen and more of the highest buildings ever constructed. Chicago would never become as big or as consequential as New York, its greatest rival, but it had made goods boast as the city that could accomplish almost anything.

A 1893 map of the downtown area distributed by the Chicago Tribune as a souvenir for the Columbian Exposition, lists eighteen “theaters etc.” that could be found inside or just south of the Loop. Illustrating the crowdedness and liveliness of the downtown streets, the map also lists an incredible number of seventy-one hotels in the area. By 1896, however, when the vitascope and the cinématographe were introduced, the city was just recovering from an economic setback occurring alongside the Columbian Exposition. Despite the economic depression of 1894 and 1895, the Loop was still filled with a large number of theaters, dime museums, hotels, and other forms of entertainment. There were around twenty-five theaters operative in Chicago around the summer of 1896, but this number fluctuated significantly as new venues opened throughout the year while others closed. During summer season, there were also traveling vaudeville shows active and some outdoor entertainment organized at public places such as Manhattan Beach and North Side Park.

Meanwhile, the entertainment scene was extremely competitive. Theaters were not only competing with each other but also with other forms of (evening) entertainment. Department stores were popular among crowds, not just as places to buy goods but also as landmarks for the urban spectacle of consumption. The tall, early skyscrapers, in what would be called the Chicago School of architecture, signified modernity. With their interiors lit by electric lighting, the storefronts were seen as visual spectacles in their own right. At night, Field Marshall & Co—the biggest and most popular department store in Chicago, and by 1893 the largest in the world—“lit up the
entire store—inside and out—with electric lamps and bulbs, giving it a festive-like atmosphere.” The downtown streets had electric streetlights as one of the first American cities, which, supposedly, made the streets as safe at night as during the day. For popular department stores and theaters lighting became an attraction. When the skyscrapers were illuminated in the evening, the Loop’s streets became “gloomy canyons.” As early as 1896, the Field Marshall & Co even used the cinematograph to attract audiences.

The two most central buildings in the downtown area were the post office and the city hall. Right in the middle, between these two central buildings, on Clark Street, we find the place where the first projected moving images were introduced to Chicago audiences in July 1895. The Lathams’ eidoloscope premiered at Kohl and Middleton’s Clark Street Dime Museum, a cheap museum theater that also hosted Houdini and other magic acts and oddities. Although the introduction of the eidoloscope occurred a year before Edison’s vitascope reached the city, the eidoloscope had an unsuccessful run at the Clark Street Dime Museum and beyond. The scheduled “private view” for the press and their family members on July 15 was “hampered by imperfect adjustment.” On view was, among else, “a lively but shadowy version of a famous fistic contest on a large screen.” Reviewers were still mildly enthusiastic about this “marvel” of a machine and the eidoloscope attraction was relocated to the Schiller Theatre, which was, as will be discussed below, a high-end theater. There, the presentation was, again, marked by technical failure, and after one week moving pictures disappeared silently from the playbill. Hardly any reviewers mentioned the device. After a couple of weeks the eidoloscope reappeared at the Olympic. Located a hundred meters north at the corner of Clark and Washington, the Olympic was considered more middle-brow and programmed only vaudeville. Yet again, within a week, the moving picture device was relocated, back to the Kohl & Middleton’s Clark Street Dime Museum (Kohl and Middleton also leased the Olympic) where it stayed for at least three weeks, until mid-September 1895. Thus, in general, the eidoloscope marked a rather unsuccessful introduction of projected moving pictures in Chicago as the medium moved around different venues.

A more durable and successful (re)introduction of projected moving pictures came in July 1896 when John D. Hopkins, the manager of the Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, acquired two Edison vitascopes. To reach the Hopkins’ South Side Theatre from the dime museum, we turn right at Washington Street, two blocks west, to State Street. At the corner of Washington and State, we face the front of Mandel Bros. department store, which in the late 1890s employed more than 3,000 people. Together with Field Marshall & Co, one block north at State Street (the same building nowadays houses Macy’s), these cross-sections constituted the most crowded places in town. Due to its commercial crowds this part (where North met South State Street at Madison) was nicknamed the ‘Ladies’ Half Mile.” We make a turn right,
in a southern direction, on State Street, which was the busiest and broadest avenue running across the Loop from north to south. During rush hours, at noon and after 4 p.m., State Street could be crammed with people, and the sidewalk could be so busy that there was hardly any place to walk. If we follow South State Street for around 600 meters, right at the point where we geographically leave the Loop, at the corner of State and Congress, we find Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, located across another large, modern department store, Sears, Roebuck & Co (the Second Leith Building designed by William Le Baron Jenney, nowadays used by the Robert Morris University). After some appearances of the device in the local press during the spring, it was at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre that Edison’s vitascope was introduced to the Chicago public on July 5th, 1896.40

We can imagine contemporary audiences walking a similar route along the department stores and theaters of State Street before reaching Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. Or, since it was summer when the vitascope was introduced, they might have come from an eastern direction, from Congress Street where, only two blocks away, the Lake Front Park was located, in which case they would have passed the Auditorium building in which high-class opera was usually programmed and the city’s elite regularly congregated. The Hopkins theater, in turn, was not considered high-class. By then, the theater had the status of what was known as an “outside,” “second class,” or “provincial” theater. This meant that the place was geographically located outside the central amusement district as it belonged to the “south theaters.”41 According to a guide for “pleasure seekers” visiting the city on the occasion of the Columbian Exposition, such theaters were known for their “sensational type of plays, specimens of the wild and woolly border drama being usually presented for the edification of their mercurial patrons.”42 At times, South State Street was known as “Whiskey Row” and, later, “Burlesque Row.”43 John D. Hopkins, who usually went under the name “Colonel Hopkins,” however, managed to surpass that status with his theater. The geographical location of his theater, surrounded by second-class theaters, did not prohibit him from running a highly successful theater that was able to attract diverse audiences. As for many other places in downtown Chicago, crowds at South State Street were miscellaneous.

Even though walking through the downtown streets was considered an event in its own right, the Hopkins’ theater was also surrounded by other forms of transportation. Just outside the building the crowded State Street cable-car line was running. The cable car would take passengers further north into downtown, before it continued in a northern direction across the bridge over the Chicago River uptown. In reverse direction, the cable car ran to the south side of the city. State Street was a broad avenue that provided space for three cable-car tracks as well as two broad lanes for other traffic. In less than two years, from 1890 to 1892, practically all streetcars were modified and transformed to run on electric power.44 This shift to electricity faced
heavy resistance among the public as the high-voltage lines were perceived as inappropriately dangerous in the streets. The Chicago Tribune even published a piece titled “Death in the Air.” Across the corner, at the back of Hopkins’ theater building was the terminal of the South Side Elevated Railway. The South Side line was the first form of rapid transit in Chicago. Departing from Congress Street, the railway, running through the city’s South Side, connected the downtown area to the Columbian Exhibition site at Jackson Park. In 1896 the elevated railway might still have exuded the air of novelty. The line was opened in June 1892, well before the 1893 exhibition. Nevertheless, the south-side railway still employed steam locomotives in contrast to the West Side Elevated Railroad, which opened in 1895 and ran on electricity. Hence the theaters, including Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, were surrounded by various forms of mobility, and it is quite likely that a significant portion of its audiences reached downtown through one of these forms of transportation. Chicago had rapidly become a city of mobility as suburbs grew. Its transportation system was more comprehensive than New York’s.

Due to these novel forms of transportation, the downtown area witnessed a daily rhythm of large crowds coming and going. Not unlike the 1920s city symphony films, crowds in 1890s Chicago city center increased during the day and into the night as the function of the city center changed. As urban historian Sam Bass Warner writes: “The downtown district became the city for Chicagoans. It was a place of work for tens of thousands, a market for hundreds of thousands, a theater for thousands more.” Then, at night, crowds slowly dispersed into the suburbs, while the next day the everyday ritual of people coming and going repeated itself.

It must have been quite an experience to walk through the streets of Chicago, “one of the world’s most explosively alive cities.” Walking these boulevards the spectator was involved in various forms of movement and rhythms while participating in the energy of the modern metropolis. Baudelaire’s famous concept of the flâneur describes walking the modern streets as an attractive activity in its own right. But Nancy Forgoine reminds us that walking the late nineteenth-century streets was a physical, sensuous exercise. While some accounts of the flâneur emphasize the role of the gaze, thereby distancing the subject from the world, Forgoine states that this concept of streetwalking was an activity of “integrating inner and outer worlds.” It was an embodied exercise that engaged all senses, considering smells, smokes, noises, and sights, and even the gravel of the pavement. Thus, these audiences walking the street participated in the attraction of the metropolis while these streets formed the subject in reverse.

The merging of inner and outer worlds was pivotal to modernity as a “particular mode of experiencing the city,” as theorists of modernity Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin repeatedly observed. Citing art historian Meyer Schapiro (and echoing Poe’s “Man of the
Crowd”), Forgoine states: “This feeling that the self has been wholly dissolved by the world or the world has been absorbed into oneself, so that the boundary between self and world has been erased or blurred in sensation, is an experience often described in nineteenth-century literature.” On a similar note, Pasi Väliaho, in his discussion of the late nineteenth-century scientific discourse on the body, describes how the subject’s inside-outside boundary was challenged. Perception was thought of as a “dynamics of action” in which the line between interior and exterior became blurred while a rhythm entailed body, mind, and surroundings. The physiological movement of the late nineteenth century was an important case in point in this respect. These novel ideas on bodies, energies and movements inspired much modernist art. What modernity entailed, in this respect, was not just a shock of radical newness, but an intensification and superimposition of (everyday) rhythms and motion in which the individual body (involuntarily) participated.

Simmel, in his 1896 essay “Sociological Aesthetics,” observes that the mode of perception in modernity “makes us more and more sensitive to the shocks and turmoils which we confront in the immediate proximity and contact with people and things.” Subsequently, in his 1907 essay “Sociology of the Senses,” Simmel describes how people sense and act collectively in society. Not unlike individual cells in a human body, modern society can be seen as a “pulsating life which links human beings together (…) [structures of a lower order], as it were, remain in a fluid, transitory condition, but are no less agents connecting individuals to social existence.” These are “primary, immediate relationships, which then determine all higher structures,” and it is through the “person’s sensory presence” (i.e. smell, voice, tone, look, and touch) that a “communalizing social effect also occurs.”

Walking Chicago’s crowded city streets, thereby, became a sensory, communal experience. The subject became part of a pulsating life and, in turn, contributed to an urban energy. Thus, individuals were constitutive in the modern crowd. Cultural historian Christoph Asendorf outlines that around 1900 power was, above all, perceived as immaterial and flowing. Power was universal and transferable, and in this perspective human beings were considered transformers of these universal energies. Vibration was seen as an expression of this immaterial omnipresent energy, and humans thus partook in the pulsating vibe of their surroundings. These energies and vibrations were, according to some contemporary critics, contagious and dangerous as they belonged to the lower senses. Individuals, thereby, were in constant negotiation with their environment, adapting surrounding energies and vibrations before returning these in a different form.

While these novel conceptions of movement, rhythm, and energy became a prime part of the paradigm of modernity around 1900, the sensation of pulsating urban life was felt in the streets. As an embodied activity in which the self and the outside world merged, walking the Chicago down-
town streets can be considered as a perfect prelude to the moving pictures. Meanwhile, these forms of movement, rhythms, and energies were constitutive of the cinema experience. The attraction of the streets of modernity prepared audiences for a particular kind of experience, one that was not necessarily visual and voyeuristic (with a spectator distanced from the spectacle) but, rather, a participatory position equally characterized by closeness, proximity, and bodily involvement.

The theaters
Theaters played a major role in the Chicago streetscape. Their exuberant exteriors were what made the metropolitan streets modern. The facades of the theaters extended onto the sidewalks. In this way, even without entering the place (or “palaces” as these places were often nicknamed), people still walked through the attraction, which was in many cases electrically lit at night.

As the crowd itself became an attraction associated with modernity, the theater became one of the places these crowds gathered. The theaters in downtown Chicago were numerous, as mentioned, and there was a great variety of amusement performed on stage. Basically all venues programmed variety theater.\textsuperscript{60} Even at the most prestigious opera houses the playbill contained multiple acts. In 1896, when moving pictures were successfully reintroduced by way of the vitacope and the cinematograph, the Chicago theater scene witnessed a shift toward vaudeville programming. Vaudeville was embraced by the urban middle class as even high-end theaters, such as the Schiller Theatre where the Lumière cinématographe premiered, now introduced the vaudeville format to their program. Cinema’s role within the vaudeville format will be discussed in Chapter 3. The dominance of vaudeville was, actually, one of the recurring complaints in the press. Reviewing the 1896 theater year, the \textit{Tribune} concluded that there was a “lack of improvement in theatrical matters” and that the past twelve months could be remembered for its “dullness,” which was due to the presidential elections and a general shortage of money in the city. In this realm, the review continues, “the vaudeville theaters have profited in the meantime by attracting the public to a cheaper form of entertainment.”\textsuperscript{61} As I will explain below, however, the main theaters in which projected moving pictures were introduced to Chicago audiences each had a particular character and status. Furthermore, these theaters, Hopkins’ South Side Theatre and the Schiller, entailed their own forms of movement. In both cases, these forms of motion and rhythms were related to the streets.

Hopkins’ South Side Theatre
John D. Hopkins became the manager of the People’s Theatre in February 1895 while renaming it the Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. Hopkins licensed
the theater from a chain of theater owners, the Tri-State Amusement Company, who had bought the People’s Theatre one year earlier, in 1894. Previously, Hopkins had been the manager of the Casino from 1888 onward. The Casino was an “outside” theater as it was located north of the river at North Clark Street. Colonel Hopkins, as he was often addressed, also owned theaters in St. Louis while he would continue to open theaters in other cities in the Midwest. He also operated another theater in Chicago, Hopkins’ West Side Theatre, which was located not in the Loop but at the western part of the city. The West Side Theatre did not program vaudeville but more high-end drama.

The State Street branch nevertheless remained Hopkins’ primary venue in Chicago. In opposition to the downtown, “high-priced” theaters, this category of theaters offered a different kind of entertainment at affordable prices. As mentioned above, Hopkins’ South Side Theatre was located in a notorious part of town, at South State Street, just south of the Loop. Therefore the People’s Theatre had a questionable reputation when Hopkins took over management. He refurbished the theater before opening while he opted for a different reputation by advertising in local newspapers alongside the established theaters. The interior was “redecorated and otherwise made comfortable for patrons.” It is not really known, however, what this refurbishment entailed, but it was mentioned that at his St. Louis theater Hopkins was early to install electric lighting. This might also have been the case in his Chicago theaters. Programming vaudeville acts that did not seem to be offensive, Hopkins managed to undo the theater’s shabby reputation, yet the venue remained among the cheaper theaters located downtown. Hopkins’ South Side Theatre was included in the weekly reviews of local amusement, and in 1898 a portrait of Hopkins was even featured in the Chicago Weekly Amusement Guide (Fig. 14). The theater, in short, was respected as a very popular, quality vaudeville house.
J.D. Hopkins’ theater business was thought to be particularly successful because of low entrance fees, offering accessible and inexpensive vaudeville entertainment, and for introducing “the continuous show.” The claim that Hopkins introduced the format of continuous performance in Chicago remains questionable: Even though Hopkins was indeed early to introduce continuous vaudeville performances at the Casino theater as early as 1888, there were already dime museums in town advertising continuous shows. Hopkins’ South Side Theatre opened at a competitive time. In rapid succession, ventures opened, closed down, gained new owners, only to be reopened a few months later. But the Hopkins theater managed to attract large audiences pretty much immediately after opening by programming “standard drama and high-class vaudeville.” Hopkins’ theater, thereby, seemed to have been relatively successful in attracting audiences throughout the year. Like all its branches, the South Side theater had low entrance fees that remained the same throughout the season.

Tickets were ten, fifteen (later twenty) and thirty cents. These prices were advertised at every occasion. In comparison, an evening at one of Chicago’s opera houses, such as the Grand Opera House or the Columbia, would cost between 25 cents to $1,50. The Auditorium, which mainly programmed musical concerts, was even more expensive. Hopkins’ downtown location and the theater’s extensive coverage in local newspapers, however, indicates that the venue was successfully situated between the lower-class entertainment
that the dime museums offered and the high-class music and drama of the expensive downtown theaters.

It was within this “cheaper form of entertainment” that the Edison vitascope was introduced in Chicago. The arrival of the vitascope, in contrast to the reception of the eidoloscope, was consistently met with positive responses. It constituted a big event for the Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. Throughout the weeks, the vitascope gained greater popularity. According to the *Evening Post* the vitascope attracted more people in its fifth week than after its introduction, which was remarkable for a short-lived attraction in the vaudeville format.66 On its third Sunday, when the vitascope was screening *The Corbett-Courtney Fight* (Edison, 1894) and more, the theater, according to the *Journal*, set the official record for the “largest business (...) ever known at any 10, 20, and 30 establishment in the United States.”67 This is a remarkable claim because the summer season was generally seen as a low season or “dull season” for theater amusement.68 Yet, in turn, introducing the vitascope during the summer season might have been a strategic choice for Hopkins; most competitors were actually closed during these months while Hopkins advertised his place as the “coolest theater in America.”69 The theater seemed to have a “refrigerating apparatus” which made the auditorium significantly cooler than outdoors.70

When the vitascope was on the bill for two weeks, the *Tribune* remarked that the moving image machine, pompously described here as a “scientific achievement in the art of accurate reproduction of living scenes,” has “attracted the attention and patronage of many people who never before attended the continuous and popular price form of entertainment.”71 Thereby the review indicates (though we can question its accuracy) that by way of the vitascope, Hopkins’ theater managed to attract upper-class audiences who would normally avoid vaudeville. The *Times-Herald* observed that “Many scientific people have signified their intention of visiting the exhibition this week.”72 This was important for the experience of the spectators. More than New York and Boston, Chicago was a society in which classes frequently encountered each other and, at times, mixed.73 Theater owners went to great lengths to have a mixed audience because, as historian David Nasaw recounts: “A mixed audience was by definition a respectable one, a male-only one, indecent.”74 We can presume that the Hopkins’ audience entailed a wide variety of people, which was similar to diversity of the crowds in the street. According to the *Dixon Evening Telegraph*, the Hopkins theater “might truthfully be described as the ideal family resort in the entertainment field of Chicago.”75 Although comments like these were partly marketing, it could have been the case that children and women were indeed part of the audience. Having families in the crowd not only meant that the theater was decent, it also signified that the place was cheap enough for working-class audiences to attend as well.76
At the same time, reports about public (and free) screenings of the vitascope with the elections in November 1896 indicate that there were still crowds excluded from moving pictures in the theaters. On the night of the presidential elections held on November 3, in which William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan, the Tribune organized a festive public screening of its bulletins covering the election results. While bulletins were screened with the stereopticon, a range of musical acts was programmed to entertain audiences. At two of these locations, at the Coliseum and at an outdoor screening event at corner of Madison and Dearborn Streets, the vitascope was included in the program. Presumably in an effort to reach out to new audiences, Hopkins generously offered to exhibit his two vitascopes free of charge on this festive occasion. This non-theatrical use of the vitascope not only changed the nature of the vitascope exhibition, but it also made the attraction available to a larger public.

Some audiences attending the screenings at the Coliseum, reportedly measuring 25,000 in attendance, were, according to the Tribune’s coverage of the event, not even used to the lights being turned off: “‘Os!’ and ‘Ahs!’ (…) greeted the turning on of the lights after each short period of darkness.” This indicates that at least some part of the audience at the Coliseum belonged to a lower class that was mostly excluded from the Chicago entertainment scene.

Hopkins’ South Side used two vitascopes securing a “rapid succession” of images. As Hopkins’ show mirrored the New York and Boston exhibitions with the vitascope in many ways, I presume that the dual projectors also imitated how it was used in other cities. At the same time, however, reviewers also mention intervals in the moving picture exhibitions. The Times-Herald, for example, describes the first show with a significant amount of detail:

The exhibition was described in advance from the stage, and a moment later the house was in total darkness. Still another minute, and a whirring sound from far aloft was followed by the flashing of a bright picture on a canvas that occupied nearly the entire stage opening . . . There was another delay of possibly two minutes, and then came the familiar scene of the interior of a blacksmith-shop in full operation…

The contrast between moments of darkness followed by the “whirring sound” of the machine and the “flashing of a bright picture” was, of course, part of the attraction. Spectators anticipated what would come next. The rapid succession of scenes corresponded to the novel way of programming for which John D. Hopkins was acknowledged in both St. Louis and Chicago. Performances were constantly repeating so there was a “continuous show” running daily from 1 until 11 pm. Instead of having a fixed schedule with a starting time, people visiting Hopkins’ South Side Theatre could purchase a ticket, drop in at any time, sit through the show, and wait for the
program to start over. Instead of an overture that signified the end of the show, special performances closed the reel of variety performances. “No overture, no waits, no stops,” as the advertisement stated. The delay in total darkness that the reviewer above describes, thereby, seems to have been only a relative obstruction to the pace and rhythm of the vaudeville show. Instead of presenting a complete pause, the delay functioned as a moment of anticipation.

At Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, moreover, the vitascope was part of an ongoing program of vaudeville entertainment in which people could freely walk in and out of the auditorium. In terms of movement and rhythm the format of continuous performance thereby presented a forceful parallel between the metropolitan streets and the theater. Because the storefront of the theater extended well beyond the sidewalk, people who passed by on the street could temporarily exchange their flaneuring for an easily accessible vaudeville show that included the vitascope. Because of the ongoing performances, people were constantly moving around, although most of them would sit through the prime attraction that the moving pictures were. Commenting on the format of continuous entertainment at the opening week of Hopkins’ in February 1895, the Inter-Ocean wrote that from early afternoon until late evening “audiences kept coming and going.” Thus the crowds were in a constant flux. Audiences inside the auditorium were as diverse as they were on the streets outside. And while the boulevard was filled with noises from streetcars, elevated trains, and large crowds of people, the theater was filled with the buzz of the moving picture machine and a constantly moving crowd. The ongoing movements in the audience might have been a distraction to the concentrated spectator. However, at the same time, this situation also confronted the spectator with the other individuals in the auditorium. As Simmel explains, hearing, smelling, and touching others creates a social construction of the space. It creates intimacy and repulsion. Thereby, the spectator was closely invested in the collective rhythms around her/him. The presence of fellow spectators, in this way, was fundamental to the early cinema viewing experience.

The movements inside the Hopkins theater were closely related to the rhythms of the streets. This relation was limited to the on-screen representation of streets and crowd. Rather, there was a fundamental connection in terms of presentation or presence as the crowded rhythms of modernity were sensuously felt both on the street and in the theater. While Hopkins’ format of the continuous show became an attraction in its own right in Chicago, this type of programming also resembled the forms of rhythm and repetition of the metropolitan streets. In the late nineteenth century (mechanical) repetition became a recurring concept in various writings on modernity, ranging from Nietzsche’s cyclical notion of history to Benjamin’s reflections on rhythmic labor and the body in capitalism. In this way, the continuous show might signify a kind of mechanization of vaudeville entertainment. It is strik-
ing that in this programming the moving picture machine was for the first time successfully introduced to Chicago audiences, especially since most early films were shown in a loop. As I will discuss in more detail below, in a single showing films ran for only thirty to forty seconds, and were thus repeated several times in a row before moving to the next. At the same time, we recognize a number of rhythms intertwining in this organization. As Ben Highmore remarks in his *rhythmanalysis* of London streets in the late nineteenth century, it was not necessarily the disruptive acceleration and speeding up of everyday life that marked the experience of modernity, but the different, polyrhythmic temporal experiences present in urban life.87 Caroline Levine similarly writes that in modernity, “the superimposition of rhythms becomes much more complex than it once was.”88 Whereas acceleration is usually associated with attraction (or distraction) and sensation, repetition entails the risk of sameness and even boredom. And these elements were equally part of modernity.89 The continuous show that the vitascope was part of can thus be seen as another layer of repetition that was added to the already rich rhythmic experience of the city. Thus, I think we can speak here of a “spectatorship open to motion,” that is, a spectatorship in which the spectator was temporarily part of a different rhythm and subject to a different form of motion.

The Schiller Theatre

Let us leave Hopkins’ South Side and relocate to another theater, the Schiller, where the Lumière cinématographe was introduced to Chicago audiences. In September 1896, the vitascope had been a popular attraction at Hopkins’ for eight consecutive weeks but now, as a reporter observed, “the rivalry has reached Chicago” with the arrival of another moving picture machine. The reporter continues: “Every now and then some entertaining vaudeville manager gets hold of a striking and successful novelty, and then there is a rush of his rivals to obtain something as near like it as possible.”90 To get there, we will leave Hopkins’ and walk up State Street in a northerly direction.

At the intersection of State Street and Jackson Boulevard we recognize, after a short distance, on our right, the Great Northern Hotel. This 500-room luxurious hotel, designed by Daniel Burnham, who was the director of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, was located at Dearborn Street. The popular hotel had a theater on the rooftop and in August 1896, while the vitascope attracted huge audiences but before the cinématographe had reached Chicago, the phantoscope was exhibited here (although spelled with an a as “phantoscope”).91 The phantoscope exhibitions, however, were a “mortifying failure,” as one newspaper hyperbolically observed.92 The exhibition seemed to struggle with technical problems as “The apparatus did not work well, and
the time apportioned to it was chiefly devoted to cheap kaleidoscopic pictures. This moving picture show was considered a mere imitation of the vitascope exhibition, which was the real novelty available just two blocks down the street. Within a week the phantoscope had disappeared from the bill. As the Journal stated: “The tiresome phantascope has been tossed off the roof, to the relief of everybody . . . Bringing the phantascope to the roof was primarily an attempt to make a noise with other people’s thunder.” The phantoscope failure, however, demonstrates that even though moving pictures were so popular that a rivalry between machines was expected, exhibiting motion pictures was seen as a distinct techne. Although moving picture exhibitions, as discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, was intermedially embedded in existing theater practices, not everyone could pick up these machines and start exhibiting. Rather, it required a specific set of skills to set up a good picture show.

The cinématographe was, compared to the phantoscope, more of a competitor to the vitascope success. Thus we continue our walk down State Street in a northerly direction toward the Schiller Theatre. Between Randolph and Adams Streets, this section of State was the busiest part of downtown, and “one of the greatest concentrated shopping districts in the world,” where crowds gathered around the department stores that were at the time the most modern in the world. At the corner of Randolph and State, ending the “Ladies’ Half Mile,” we find the Masonic Temple skyscraper, the tallest building in town, some 92 meters high. At the rooftop theater of the Masonic the cinématographe would be programmed in July the following year, 1897, followed by the American Biograph in September. But, as we are ghost walking the Chicago streets in the summer of 1896, we need to turn left on Randolph Street and continue for around two hundred meters to find the Schiller, where the Lumière cinématographe was programmed.
Fig. 14: Exterior of the Schiller Theatre around the time of its opening in 1892, Chicago History Museum Image Collection.
Fig. 15: Schiller Theatre, ca. 1900. Public domain.

Fig. 16: Interior, Schiller Theatre, 1895, public domain.
Fig. 17: Cover, Schiller Theatre program, August 5, 1893, when the theater was considered a high-end opera house. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum.
In contrast to the Hopkins theater, the Schiller was considered a first-class theater. This was evident through its exterior, interior, location, and programming (Fig. 15 - Fig. 19). Other high-end theater palaces like The Grand Opera House, the Central Music Hall, and the Masonic Temple were within one block distance, at Chicago’s city hall. Thus the Schiller was located at the heart of downtown, right at the center of Chicago’s entertainment scene. Compared to the Hopkins theater building, the history of the Schiller Theatre is relatively well documented. Louis Sullivan and the German-born Dankmar Adler designed the building. Both men would become important figures in the Chicago School in architecture. They were commissioned to build a luxurious opera house for the German Opera Company. Named after the playwright and poet Friedrich Schiller, the theater was opened in 1892 as a place to promote German-language culture and events. By 1896 the Schiller had stopped programming German opera although German-oriented advertisements in program leaflets indicate a strong connection with the local German population.

In contrast to the Hopkins theater, the Schiller was really a monumental building on both the outside and the inside. Seventeen stories tall, it signified modern Chicago’s ambition to measure itself alongside the great metropolitan cities of the world. The Schiller’s facade was decorated by the faces of important German poets, composers, and philosophers. Throughout most of its history, though, the building would be known as the Garrick Theater. It
became a television studio in the 1950s before turning into a cinema. After the building was demolished in the 1960s, this facade was incorporated in the front of the Second City building, a rather well-known comedy club in town, while other stone faces from the facade are now part of some public works on North Dearborn. The entrance of the theater stretched out over the sidewalk, covering most of it, thereby creating a kind of heteronomous zone between the inside and the outside of the theater.

The Schiller’s interior was equally impressive as it was luxurious and spacious. The theater seated 1,286 people after its opening night. Yet, despite some popularity following its opening year, by 1896 the Schiller theater had a hard time filling its large auditorium. During the fall season of that year there was a change in management as Robert Blei took over. Under the new management the Schiller switched to vaudeville programming, although Blei did not install a system of continuous performance. Ticket prices were lowered to 20, 30, and 50 cents. Many theaters had trouble filling the seats and therefore lowered the prices while turning to the vaudeville format. The Schiller was, according to the Times-Herald, “the last to take this vaudeville faith cure treatment.”

The Lumière cinématographe was the first main attraction programmed after the theater’s shift to vaudeville in September 1896. The theater, however, remained one of the more prestigious venues in town. The Evening Journal assured readers that “He [Blei] has provided a high-class entertainment at unusually low prices and has at the same time preserved the tone of the Schiller. There is no evidence of the cheap and nasty taint which has infested vaudeville to so shocking degree of late.”

Thereby the theater would become, as Blei presented it to the press, the city’s “elite vaudeville theater.” Consequently, the cinématographe was introduced in a more high-end theater than was the case with the vitascope. This was in line with the introduction of the cinématographe in other cities, both in the U.S. and in Europe, where the Lumière machine was seen as a particularly European, and hence possibly more sophisticated, match to the vitascope and other devices. This was also due to the limited availability of the Lumière cinématographe in the U.S. By mid-August there were only three cinématographes operating in U.S. theaters. The rights to the French machine were controlled by Benjamin F. Keith; by August, he only exhibited the cinématographe in his own theaters in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The cinématographe’s appearance in Chicago’s Schiller theater, therefore, was indeed special.

The moving picture attraction was a huge success at the Schiller Theatre. Like the vitascope at Hopkins, the cinématographe’s success was growing over the months that the moving pictures were exhibited. An annual overview mentioned the cinématographe as the most successful attraction of the year in the otherwise predominantly unsuccessful year for the Schiller. There were even complaints that the cinématographe was programmed too late in the evening-filling vaudeville show: audiences travelling by train who
had to leave early sometimes missed the attraction which they had come to see. The moving pictures were on the bill from the beginning of September 1896 until January 1897.

However, similar to Hopkins’ theater, the Schiller’s was closely tied to the movements of modernity and the rhythms of the streets. On Randolph Street the theater had a strong presence. With its towering building on top, the Schiller was hard to miss as a symbol of modernity. Moreover, the theater’s attractive storefront with its electric lighting almost completely covered the sidewalk. At night there was a constant flow of crowds passing through the lobby. The cinématographe was introduced very much in the context of modernity. As the first main attraction under the new “elite vaudeville” format, the moving picture machine merged popularity with cultural prestige, thereby mixing, up to a certain extent, high and low culture. The Schiller’s interior with its impressive arches, large stage, and exuberant lighting, can be seen as an extension of the attraction of modernity from the streets into the theater. And the cinématographe, as the Schiller’s main attraction in the fall of 1896, fitted well within that entity of the modern attraction of streets, energies, lights, and theaters. Thus, the moving images that the cinématographe projected on screen cannot be seen apart from its context of the constantly moving and pulsating streets of downtown Chicago.

The context of different forms of movement continuing inside and outside the auditorium were important for the earliest cinema experiences. The vitascope and the cinématographe, as will be discussed in more detail below, were, above all, attractions of modern movement. These forms of movement, as the above description of the streets and theaters outlines, was not limited to on-screen representation. It was not just the images that were moving, but the complete attraction of the motion picture attraction as part of a larger constellation of the rhythms felt in the streets, the theaters, and in audiences. These sensations of movement, moreover, were immediately offered to the senses. Spectators participated in these rhythms. Arguably, by situating moving picture attractions in the wider context of the modern forms of movement, we recognize that the vitascope and the cinématographe, as well as the other devices that were available, enabled experiences that centered on the presence of movement rather than a mere representation of it. Cinema’s earliest viewing experiences, therefore, were as much marked by the immediate surroundings of spectators than by the content of the images. This was evoked by a sensation that was there, immediately available to the senses. The attraction of movement that moving pictures offered, moreover, was inherently familiar. The rhythms and forms of motion offered by the cinématographe and the vitascope might, as will be discussed in the next section, have been presented as an intensification of modernity’s pulse, but it was nevertheless fundamentally connected to everyday experience.
From the street to the screen

The sections above described how the theaters associated with the early moving pictures in Chicago were embedded in the movements and rhythms of the city’s modern streets. The argument proposed entailed that there was an ongoing pulse stretching from the streets into the theaters and vice versa. These pulses or rhythms contributed to the sensuous experience of the theater environment. Subsequently, our next step is to analyze how motion and rhythm appeared in the films on screen.

The relation between the metropolitan street and movement on screen has been a key concern for film theory since the outset. In their film theoretical writings from the 1920s onwards René Clair, Abel Gance, and Germaine Dulac all describe film as an essentially rhythmic medium. The popular genre of city symphony films is indicative of this view. Moreover, the association between the streets of modernity and the screen is probably most evident in the work of Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein. Yet, instead of repeating these wide-ranging statements on modernity, for the next section I would like to look critically at the specific films that were shown in the Chicago theaters. I will continue to develop my argument that the forms of movement presented with the kinematograph corresponded to the rhythms of the streets. This will entail some detailed descriptions of films and genres. Moreover, as we will see, the scenes did not necessarily exploit the discontinuities and novelty of modernity but, rather, presented the viewer with a close-hearted familiarity.

Street scenes

The popular genre of street scenes appears to be the most direct representation of the metropolitan cityscape. Thereby the street scene genre can be seen as the most direct correspondence between the movement and energies of the streets and the rhythm of the moving pictures. The initial exhibition of the vitascope at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre included one street scene. This was *Herald Square, NY.*, a film by William Heise for Raff & Gammon owned by the Edison Company. It was described in the press as “a view of the life and bustle of Herald Square, New York City, on a busy day.”108 The scene was popular: two weeks after its premiere it was still on the bill. The Herald Square scene was mentioned in almost all press coverage of the initial vitascope exhibition in Chicago, and at every instance the bustle of the streets was mentioned as successfully representing “the activity and bustle of a weekday.”109 *Fire Rescue Scene*, a reenactment scene shot by Dickson and Heise in 1894 for the kinetoscope, was described in similar sensationalist language as “the bustle and excitement of a city fire, with the flames, the firemen, and the excited spectators.”110 While the scene about firemen cannot be considered a street scene proper, it seems that the excitement for met-
Street scenes were popular and formed a stable part of the moving picture programs in the novelty period. The first screenings with the cinématographe also included “moving street pictures.” The Tribune observers mention this genre first in a list of popular recurring topics. Initially, the vitascope was introduced projecting films that were actually part of Edison’s kinetoscope collection. These scenes mainly entailed photographed versions of popular vaudeville acts recorded in the closed environment of the Black Maria studio. The Edison company, however, soon recognized the need for outdoor scenes albeit under the pressure of the cinématographe’s success with these topics. Thus, from May 1896 onward they constructed a portable camera that allowed them to record street scenes and natural wonders. Unfortu-
ately, the Chicago context offers limited historical sources to recon-
struct complete programs from the summer of 1896, as individual films were men-
tioned only in passing. Yet we know from the Edison catalogue, as well as from coverage from other American cities, that outdoor recordings were frequently programmed and that these films were enthusiastically received by audiences. What was mentioned in the newspaper was a scene from Li Hung Chang’s visit to New York (The Arrival of Li Hung Chang). In one way this film could be considered a street scene as it featured the Chinese diplo-
mát’s appearance outside the Waldorf Hotel in New York.

The first popular recordings of Chicago were made by Alexandre Promio, a Lumière cameraman who, in September 1896, took pictures in New York, Boston, and Chicago. His arrival in Chicago coincided with the debut of the cinématographe at the Schiller. Similar to the moving picture attraction, Promio’s arrival in town was anticipated a couple of weeks in advance as newspapers already announced that the Lumière cameraman had arrived on the east coast, and that he would soon make his way to Chicago. Once in town, Promio seems to have been quite an attraction in his own right. Promio took the negatives with him back to France and these films were not projected in the U.S. until late November. The films that Promio shot in Chicago were Défilé de policemen (Lumière catalogue no. 336), featuring a parade of local policemen, Michigan Avenue (Lumière catalogue no. 337), a somewhat traditional street scene, and Grande roue (Lumière catalogue no. 338), a scene featuring the Ferris wheel constructed for the Columbian Ex-
position. The enthusiasm for Promio’s arrival in town was connected to one of the prime attractions of early cinema: the opportunity to recognize oneself or others on the screen. The films, however, were, at least to my knowledge, not screened in Chicago. This might have been due to exhibition rights in the U.S., which the Lumières tried to retrieve from the vaudeville chain owner Keith. Unfortunately, from the Michigan Avenue scene and the Ferris wheel film only the negatives have survived. From Défilé de police-
mén a copy is still available (Fig. 20). The scene is a continuous shot featur-
ing a large group of policemen walking into the static frame from the left upper corner. Due to the camera placement, an effect of depth appears. The Lumières were renowned for this staging in depth where subjects closely approached the camera.

![Still from Défilé de policemen. Courtesy of Catalogue Lumière online.](image)

The Edison company also recorded a few street scenes in Chicago. *Corner Madison and State Streets, Chicago* was shot by William Heise on a busy Sunday in June 1897 (either 13 June or 20 June). Around the same time, Heise also shot three scenes at the Chicago Stockyards: *Cattle Driven to Slaughter* (Edison, 1897), *Sheep Run, Chicago Stockyards* (Edison, 1897), and *Armour’s Electric Trolley* (Edison, 1897). The recording of the Madison and State Street corner, however, remain most relevant to our discussion. According to the Edison catalogue, the scene presented:

An animated picture of the busiest corner in Chicago. Crowded with pedestrians and the movement of street traffic. A cable car makes the turn into State Street in the midst of the crowd. Shows hundreds of shoppers crossing Madison Street, with a correct view of State Street looking north toward the Masonic Temple. This picture gives a good idea of the care displayed in handling the street traffic of a busy corner in a big city.\(^{120}\)

In this film we recognize a straightforward representation of the context of the moving pictures, indicating a direct relation between the streets and the vitascope. Luckily, the film has survived as it was part of the paper print collection at the Library of Congress.\(^{121}\) Indeed, in *Corner Madison and State Streets* we see lots of traffic and an extensive crowd. Taken from a
slightly elevated position, the film allows us to oversee the crowd. The scene starts abruptly as the streetcar in full motion has passed halfway already and is moving from left to right, pretty much filling the complete frame. Slightly off-frame, the streetcar makes a turn into State Street before taking off into the center of the frame and the depth of the screen. Immediately after its passing, the crowd starts moving again, filling the cross-section in which the streetcar disappears. Men and women look into the camera in passing, while the head of a horse fills the foreground. Movement appears in many directions, from left to right (and reverse, following Madison St), as well as in deep space moving slightly diagonally through the shot (following State St). Multiple planes of interest appear: the streetcar, the horse, and two men passing with banners. The multiple directions of movement on different planes create a strong feeling of depth in the picture. The scene had Edison’s standard length of fifty feet, so it ran for about thirty seconds.

Filmed a year prior to the Chicago scene, Herald Square, NY is remarkably similar when we look at the forms of movement. Again, the film starts with a cable car that is halfway across the frame. On this occasion it is crossing the frame from right to left. After this first streetcar has left the frame, another streetcar appears in the distance approaching the camera, while a horse-drawn streetcar moves in the opposite direction. Suddenly yet another cable car enters and completely fills the frame, moving from left to right. After passing the camera, crowds quickly fill the streets again. The movement of the cable cars and the activity of the pedestrians that was especially noted in the press. The position of the camera is less elevated than with Corner Madison and State, but there are some striking similarities when we look at the directions of movement. There is a strong sense of depth because the cars move diagonally through the frame, while people walking in the street also pass the camera in a diagonal direction, after swiftly looking at the camera. The suddenness and intensity of movement resembles that seen in Corner Madison and State. In the latter there is the sudden appearance of the horse in front of the frame, while in Herald Square the streetcar suddenly appears right when the spectator focuses on the approaching car at center frame.

There is a promise of contingency in the picture, a change of catching sudden events, even though audiences might have hoped to see more accidents. On May 17, the Boston Post sensationalized that “Mr. Edison’s traveling photograph wagon, the kinetograph, is now busy in the New York highways and byways taking snapshots for his vitascope, which will accurately portray both the motion and color of Gotham incidents.” The view of Herald Square would specifically present “The movements of the elevated trains, the bustle of the crowds and the hurrying and scurrying of its hack drivers, peddlers [sic], etc., are all depicted true to life.” The abbreviation “etc.,” often appeared in reviews that sought to describe what happened on screen, and even though it might seem rather trivial, the “etc.,” refers to a
kind of openness and a potentially endless number of objects included in the picture and the well-nigh impossibility of providing an exhaustive verbal description.

After watching the street scene at a trial show at Keith’s in Boston, the Boston Post affirmed the relation between the representation and the exterior streets referring to the screen as a window that opened onto the world: “There was a picture of Herald Square, New York, with moving cable cars, ‘L’ trains, vehicles and pedestrians, and one could scarcely believe but that he was actually looking out of an open window on the busy scene itself.”

In Cincinnati, Herald Square, NY was among the most popular views: “Herald Square, New York, with its moving street cars, wagons, people walking along the streets and on the crossings was first shown, and it was so lifelike that the audience nearly went wild with applause.”

The Los Angeles Herald also emphasized the lifeliness of representation by pointing to the many different forms of movement simultaneously present in the picture, writing “Herald Square, New York, with its mighty traffic, its elevated trains rushing by, its cable cars, its horse-drawn drays, and the surging throng of men and women — every movement natural as in actuality.”

On a similar note, a review printed in the Los Angeles Times seems to describe the diagonal movements of the framed objects stating the representation of “streetcars and vans moving up and down.”

The people walking by and the streetcars moving made, as another newspaper observed, the moving picture “as natural as life itself.” As these press notices agree, the multiplicity of movement, appearing by way of pedestrians, streetcars, and horses, created a vital connection to the external world. With these street scenes, the abundance of energies and movements provided these pictures with realism and lifeliness.

Fragments of familiarity

In his effort to categorize and distinguish between very early kinematograph films, André Gaudreault identifies three paradigms of very early filmmaking, notably the paradigm of (1) capturing and restoring, (2) monstration, and (3) narration. In this model, street scenes like Corner Madison and State and Herald Square, NY can be interpreted as typically capturing (recording) and representing what was before the camera. This mode of “zero-degree filming” entailed that the camera operator “tended to preserve the autonomy of the object being depicted by showing it in its absolute temporal integrity and by attempting to reveal its properly attractional quality.”

It seems that the abundance of movement in the street, entailing multiple directions and intensities, evoked this “properly attractional quality.”

At the same time, there was also an element of monstration, of showing involved in these scenes. The fact that both scenes look so similar indicates a particular style, or a kind of sensitivity to particular kinds of movement in-
volved in the recording. This was a sensitivity shared by camera operators of both the vitascope as well as the cinématographe. After all, the street scenes that Alexandre Primio recorded for the Lumière in Chicago also strongly feature diagonal movement as the policemen cross the frame, highlighting the depth of the moving picture. Edison’s camera operator, William Heise, in the New York scene as well as in the Chicago recording, positioned his camera in such a way that it captured movement both horizontally and laterally (the movement from left to right), as well as diagonally, creating a feeling of depth. In terms of intermediality, this play between surface and depth reminds us of the stereoscope.

Whereas the stereoscope might have prepared audiences for illuminated photographic views in depth, the sudden appearance of an animal and a train from the sides of the frame was something unprecedented. Obviously, there are fundamental elements of contingency included in the recordings. In a way, the street scenes presented the viewer with forms of movement that were unpredictable and sudden, thereby simulating what theorists have labeled as the “sensory overload and distraction” of modernity. At any moment, mundane reality could turn into something spectacular. Unpredictability or contingency, meanwhile, was both lure and risk. In urban modernity every moment becomes fortuitous as the event (in a Lyotardian sense defined as an “unpredictable happening”) hides around every corner. These elements of contingency—that something could enter or move into the image all of a sudden, “the pregnant instant”—was critical for the attraction of reality that the moving pictures presented.

Due to its indexical nature, that is, the physical-mechanical inscription of light on the celluloid, it was believed that cinema could capture and retrieve any instant. While cinematic duration was predominantly filled with uneventful time, the promise of an “unpredictable happening” was, in this respect, always looming. Meanwhile, the cinematic representation of the instant, eventful or not, could not be more than an abstracted recording of that event because on film, after all, the event was subjected to a strict temporal and spatial logic. Watching the earliest moving pictures was thus, in this perspective, marked by a constant anticipation to encounter a surprising event.

Nevertheless, I would argue that these street scenes were not just about unpredictability. Rather, films like *Herald Square, NY* and *Corner Madison and State* presented the viewer with something very predictable and familiar. Because of the strong recurring rhythms and increasing organization of public spaces, individuals often coped pretty well with the streets of modernity. This was also the case in downtown Chicago where, despite the constant reconstructions going on and the increasing amount of traffic, people seemed to deal pretty well with their noisy, smelly, and murky environment. Visitors who experienced the Loop as “hell” were surprised to see that Chicagoans
could live there on a daily basis. To these Chicago audiences who were habituated to the many forms of movement and modernity’s plurality of rhythms, the street scenes presented on screen may not have sensuously overwhelmed the spectator. Precisely due to the many elements of movement presented on screen, the street scenes may have come across as inherently familiar and part of everyday, and perhaps even mundane.

In his critical evaluation of the modernity-cinema relation, Joe Kember states that to most turn-of-the-century audiences the city was “a familiar and comfortable space rather than a site of sensory overload.” To some, due to its repetitive structures, modernity was even considered boring and dull. The moving picture attractions, as Kember then concludes, did not just mimic the distraction of modernity but, rather, created “a comforting sense of intimacy” as audiences could recognize well-known performances and familiar situations, such as street scenes. Thus the familiarity and predictability of scenes became an important element in the attraction of film. This, I believe, was also eminently the case with the street scenes. Watching the vitascope films may have offered a strong sensory experience, whether this was due to the unpredictability of the scenes or not remains unsure. It was, however, as much about repetition as it was about difference. Herald Square, NY, after all, played at Hopkins theater for three weeks in a row. Audiences repeatedly came back to the theater where, despite the weekly changing views on display, they may have been presented scenes that they had encountered before. As the press coverage evidences, repeating favorite scenes was a recurring element of the vitascope and cinéma exhibition.

A compelling question remains, however, how these familiar, mundane, and everyday situations could still arouse a strong impression on Chicago audiences. Hence it is striking that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the concept arises of aesthetic experiences within everyday life. The theorists of modernity—such as Baudelaire, Kracauer, and Benjamin (and Simmel, albeit to a lesser extent)—all speculated on the aesthetic qualities of everyday reality. This was an important disjunction from previous theories on aesthetics, which held that only special objects could create aesthetic feelings. Thus, art objects as aesthetic entities were removed from everyday experience—they were exactly everything that was not found in the streets. Aesthetic objects were everything but ordinary. Baudelaire and other theorists of modernity outlined a different idea of where an aesthetic experience could take place, and where the aesthetic experience took the spectator. The movement of Aestheticism associated with nineteenth-century Britain and fin-de-siècle Paris already acknowledged the beauty in everyday life. Again, Baudelaire with his notion of the artist as the flâneur who participates in the aestheticization of life by walking the metropolitan street is relevant here. The constant flux of bodies allows “man to take a bath of multitude; enjoying a crowd is an art.” The urban environment was, to Baude-
laire, an “open space” where men could find a new and modern “aesthetics of existence.”

The sociologist and aesthetician Jean-Marie Guyau, operating more or less in the same circles as Baudelaire in 1880s Paris, presented an aesthetic theory maintaining that *aesthesis* surrounded people in everyday life. The beholder has to be aware of this ethical and almost existential aesthetic dimension of reality. Other writers at the time also addressed the notion of an everyday aesthetics. Like Baudelaire, Guyau referred to the rhythmic pace of walking. Walking could give way to aesthetic experience when the subject became aware of the pace of his surroundings, his breathing, and so forth. This awareness would arouse a sensation of being alive. Writing in his 1900 volume *The Origins of Art: a Psychological and Sociological Inquiry*, Yrjö Hirn comes to a similar conclusion arguing that aesthetics originate from the practices of everyday life. These everyday routines then, are, the “concrete origins of art.” In Hirn’s “emotionalistic interpretation” of art creation and experience, rhythm was one of the most forceful elements of aesthetic experience. Meanwhile, Max Weber argued for the re-enchantment of everyday life, while the British artist William Morris declared that “the true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.”

Although these writings by Baudelaire and others were not part of the popular discourse in Chicago in the 1890s, these perspectives nevertheless indicate that there were efforts made to theoretically reconcile aesthetic experience with the everyday, mundane acts and rhythms. Theories on aesthetic experience in everyday situations maintain that strong effects are not only aroused by new impressions and sensations; aesthetic experiences can be equally aroused by overly familiar objects that could otherwise pass as boring or uninteresting. Thus, there is an aesthetic potential within the familiar and the mundane. None of these authors mentioned the kinematograph, but I maintain that their collective effort is nevertheless relevant for cinema in its novelty period. After all, the moving picture attraction presented not just extraordinary pictures but also mundane reality and everyday rhythms. Film historical writings might focus too much on early cinema as “a medium of strong impressions” bringing a “contra-contemplative spectorial distraction.” Yet, as demonstrated, street scenes like *Herald Square, NY* and *Corner Madison and State* were inherently familiar to audiences. What these scenes represented might not have been exceptional eventfulness but rather something in the registers of the mundane or intimate. Thereby, cinematic perception was interwoven with the pulse of the street, and to audiences this pulse was not that extraordinary.

This form of intimate familiarity was, of course, not restricted to street scenes. It remains quite hard to tell what films the 1896-1897 Chicago audiences appreciated most. The *Inter-Ocean*, however, wrote that “[T]he more familiar the pictures are presented the more incredible and bewildering be-
comes this triumphal achievement of the Wizard [Edison].”151 In terms of marketing, this makes perfect sense as most of the views included in the program during the first weeks of the vitascope at Hopkins’ theater were kinetoscope films. These were recordings of familiar vaudeville acts performed in front of the camera at the Black Maria. During the first week of exhibition at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, these scenes included, for example, *Band Drill* (Edison, 1894) and *Finale of First Act, Hoyt’s ‘Milk White Flag’* (Edison, 1894), as well as *The Kiss*, which was a fragment from John McNally’s “The Widow Jones.” *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (Edison, 1894) was also originally a vaudeville performance. In terms of intermediality, as outlined in the Chapter 1, the activity of seeing something old in a new medium indeed might have aroused audiences in a particular way. This caused a semantic richness and sensuous complexity that could trigger experiences of presence. Meanwhile, as will be argued in Chapter 3, these vaudeville recordings that were popular at the vitascope’s earliest exhibitions highlighted the spatial intervention that the newly introduced moving pictures presented. With these scenes the vitascope exhibition in a vaudeville context involved a play with distance and nearness akin to a play of presence. Like the street scenes, these recorded performances addressed the spectator’s familiarity with its stage version.152 And, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, Chicago audiences could very well be familiar with recorded performances. Newspaper reviews repeatedly state that scenes screened with the vitascope compare with “the original,” or that these scenes even add an element of detail to that of its stage version.153

Of course, there are more differences than similarities between the street scenes and the kinetoscope films that featured vaudeville performances. These genres presented different forms of movement while each film had its own rhythm. Thereby individual scenes might have addressed other levels of familiarity. This is not to say that the familiarity of fragments and everyday life was the only attraction of the kinematograph. On the contrary, the Lumière cinématographe was especially noted for showing exotic scenes from around the world next to street scenes, actualities, and charges by the cavalry. The *Inter-Ocean* observed: “The public never seem to tire of its wonderful pictures. It is not surprising, as they are taken in every land and represent, with a realism which no word picture could, scenes and habits which the vast majority of this country have no opportunity of witnessing.”154

Nevertheless, what I have argued is that moving pictures relied heavily on an association with the familiar. This was a sensuous and intimate familiarity based on forms of movement that everyday reality and the screened representation shared. In this manner, the close-hearted familiarity of the scenes should be seen as an effect of presence. The content of the earliest vitascope and cinématographe films related to the physical surroundings of its spectator. The films discussed above indicate an interest in the mundane and the intimate, rather than the novel and the distracted.
Familiarity and presence

To its Chicago audiences, the kinematograph did not necessarily present something new as much as it presented the radically familiar. The movement and rhythm of moving pictures participated in the contextual rhythms of the streets, creating a kind of sensuous familiarity. In that way, the kinematograph contributed to the superimposition of rhythms in modernity while mirroring it at the same time. Moreover, the effect of the kinematograph on its audiences might not have been that of a thrilling and surprising “sudden rupture,” visually shocking, or traumatic, which are the feelings appearing in Gunning’s early work on the cinema of attractions.\textsuperscript{155} Audiences might not have been caught by astonishment as the moving picture attraction fitted too well with its environment. (It must be noted here that Gunning in his later work emphasized that this mode of sensationalism and shocks should be seen as only one of the modes of presentation that sought effect, and that the more comforting modes of flow and rational order were equally present.)\textsuperscript{156} Charles Musser, on the contrary, argues that cinema during its novelty period was heavily dependent on the viewer’s understanding of cultural forms. Thus, he concludes, early spectatorship was contemplative; audiences were intellectually involved in games of understanding.\textsuperscript{157} Musser’s model of the “cinema of contemplation,” however, does not acknowledge physically arousing aesthetic experiences as it reduces spectatorship to a process of meaning-making. We might, therefore, want to find a middle way between astonishment, familiarity, and contemplation.

As discussed above, deeply rooted in everyday rhythms and movements the newly-introduced moving pictures caused aesthetic experiences because of their familiarity. I argue that instead of astonishment or contemplation, we can conceptualize these viewing experiences in terms of presence. The basic premises of aesthetic experience in terms of presence is Heidegger’s notion that the ordinary is, after unconcealment, exceptional.\textsuperscript{158} In his aesthetic theory on presence, Jean-Luc Nancy rephrases Heidegger’s aphorism into “the ordinary is \textit{always} exceptional,” or, on another occasion, “the existence of the world is always unexpected.”\textsuperscript{159} Presence, in this manner, is a feeling of closeness and intimacy. Moreover, presence, as Fischer-Lichte states, “does not make something extraordinary appear. Instead it marks the emergence of something very ordinary and makes it into an event.”\textsuperscript{160} This marks an aesthetic interval of presence in which, fundamentally, the appearance of the world itself is presented to us. Gumbrecht recounts that “To all of us those moments are familiar when an object that has long been familiar, all of a sudden and without any obvious reason, looks or feels strange.”\textsuperscript{161} Aesthetic experience, in this respect, feels as a kind of disruption to what is already there, what we already know by heart.\textsuperscript{162} While Gumbrecht’s account echoes Freud’s experience of the uncanny as well as Shklovsky’s aesthetic technique of estrangement or defamiliarization (\textit{ostranenie}), the effect of pres-
ence is different because it brings forward the materiality of existence, the “being-there,” of the subject. Martin Seel, therefore, remarks that “The real, which is otherwise perceived in this or that form and is ascribed this or that meaning in this or that form, appears here without these forms and without the meaning usually associated with them.” Thus, we could speak of a radical familiarity, as the spectator’s comprehension of what is shown strikes back at him/her.

The kinematograph touched upon the familiar by participating in the forms of movement and rhythms of the streets. Subsequently, it turned the individual fragment from reality into a spectacle. By signifying movement and energy, the moving picture machines actually took part in a popular discourse on very fundamental issues. Claims of realism heralding the moving pictures as “lifelike and distinct” or “perfect to life” can be explained in this manner. As these reviewers observed the vitascope or cinématographe presented “the bustle of activity and real life before the observer,” we can conceptualize these comments as concerning the realistic sensuous experience of movement to 1890s spectators. Rea Beth Gordon, therefore, emphasizes that with early cinema spectatorship “The feeling of reality is in fact the physical stimulus and the response of internal bodily movement.”

Cinema’s earliest viewing experiences, I would argue, were characterized by this physical feeling of moving realism to the extent that it presented an experience of movement and energy itself. Moving pictures thereby presented audiences with fundamentals to perception by demonstrating how experience is rooted in (embodied) motion. In phenomenological terms, the kinematograph attraction thereby presented a perception of perception itself. In an existentialist dimension, these fundamentals, then, were the presence effects of the earliest moving pictures. This made the moving picture attraction at once ordinary or mundane and still spectacular. Meanwhile, as I will discuss in the following sections, ideas on movement and energy were diverse, and the kinematograph managed to simultaneously address the versatile, sometimes even contradictory nature of these ideas.

**Discourses on movement**

Whereas the first part of Chapter 2, so far, dealt with the sensuous experience of movement and rhythm from the street to the screen, the middle part of the chapter focused on the processes of meaning-making on movement and the kinematograph. The discourse on movement in which the moving pictures were introduced can be seen as contributing to the meaning effects of the earliest cinema experiences. As explained above, movement within moving pictures functioned as an extensive context of motion in modernity. These surrounding rhythms shaped the experience of the spectator. Yet, at the same time, audiences were also subject to discursive practices through
which cultural meanings are produced and understood. Contemporary ideas on what movement was and how it appeared were projected upon the new moving picture machine. In return, the kinematograph helped to spread certain notions. These processes of sense making that appeared in (local) popular discourse in the late 1890s equally influenced the spectator’s experience. So, if we want to know, as I explained at the outset of this chapter, what impact cinematographic movement had on its audiences, we have to outline the dominant concepts in place at the time.

Moving pictures, quite naturally, became a hallmark of novel notions relating to energy and movement. In a recent article, Tom Gunning argues that at the time of its introduction, cinema presented “an energized and animated image, not only portraying this new world [of modernity and electricity], but demonstrating its motive force.”166 In this way, the attraction of the moving pictures reached beyond mere representation and narrative while touching upon fundamental elements of life. The kinematograph became a playground for novel ideas and imagination about movement and energy. As Väliaho writes in *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900*, “the moving image discloses and brings forth the world in a manner specific to itself. Thus, the emergence of the moving image amounts to a particular kind of beginning and modulation, consisting of a variety of elements ranging from scientific and philosophical articulations to filmic expressions and technical configurations that become layered into a constellation of many voices and faces.”167 As Väliaho explains, the epistemology surrounding the moving pictures consisted of a range of ideas and imaginations from (popular) science and philosophy that were projected on this new medium.

However, as I will propose in the following sections, the late nineteenth century also saw a major alteration in the conception of motion and energy. In between, the understanding of movement was anything but stable. Under the influence of natural science, different ideas on energy and movement entered popular discourse. Coverage of moving picture attractions in the popular press in Chicago in 1896-1897 shows that the kinematograph was associated with different ideas of movement, which we can distill into two larger paradigms: a mechanical-dynamic paradigm of motion and a post-mechanical or energetic (electromagnetic) paradigm of movement.

Chicagoans, living in a city that defined itself through technological modernity, might have been particularly receptive to novel and emerging ideas on movement. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 was the place where many novel attractions of applied science were celebrated, and an overwhelming majority of the local population had attended the fair. After the exposition, Chicago became one of the first major cities to adopt electricity on a large scale by installing electric lighting in the downtown area as well as by having elevated railways and streetcars powered by electricity. Soon after the exposition, the city would even be nicknamed the “electric city.”168
So, within this context of technological modernity, and particularly the visibility of new forms of energy throughout the city, Chicago audiences might have been sensitive to different novel discourses on motion and energy. I will argue, in this section, that these different and at times contradictory conceptions of motion potentially destabilized the viewer’s perception of the moving pictures. Appearing as a disruption in understanding, the kinematograph’s presentation of motion gave way to an aesthetic experience (of presence).

Mechanical-dynamic paradigm

The first paradigm, entailing the dominant way to understand movement from the 1850s onward, was the idea of motion as the manifestation of energy and, more particularly, the manifestation of energy and motion as a continuous flow. In his book *Energy, Force and Matter*, Peter Harman suggests that during the second half of the nineteenth century movement was considered the underlying principle of all objects in the world. In his formulation of the paradigm of movement, “light, heat, electricity and magnetism (…) are now treated as forms of motion, as different manifestations of the same fundamental energy.” Anson Rabinbach observes, on a similar note:

The discovery of energy as the quintessential element of all experience, both organic and inorganic, made society and nature virtually indistinguishable. Society was assimilated to an image of nature powered by protean energy, perpetually renewed, indestructible, and infinitely malleable. The pioneers of energy conservation viewed the transformation of mechanical energy into heat, and subsequently, the transformation of all natural forces as manifestations of a single *kraft*.

Motion becomes the elementary ingredient already available in a fundamentally mechanical and dynamic universe. The two laws of thermodynamics that were identified halfway through the nineteenth century created a worldview consistent with endlessly convertible and transformable flows of energy. The conceptual bundling of energy and movement suggested a worldview that was mechanical, universal and quantifiable. Meanwhile, this popular and widespread worldview suggested that energy could be conserved in individual objects.

The mechanical-dynamic paradigm variously appears in the writings on the vitascope, the cinématographe, and the magniscope. In early coverage the machines maintained a kind of conundrum. The cinématographe, for instance, is described by the *Inter-Ocean* as “a huge magic lantern, provided with a clockwork for the moving of the continuous roll of photograph negatives.” Similarly, the vitascope is portrayed in the *Tribune* as a “clockwork for moving the photographs before the lens” and, on an earlier occasion, “a
remarkable manipulation of scientific forces.”173 When the local newspapers start describing the devices in more detail, they do so in an effort to unwrap the kinematograph’s entanglement with reality. The Lumière device, for example, was defined as a “marvelous little machine” that is “easily described,” even though the writer wrongfully assigns the stability of the projected image to the distance between the photographs.174

In several newspaper articles, movement is depicted as a process, as a vital element of the kinematograph appearing at various stages. Motion was not reserved for the screen, but was also located in the projecting apparatus and captured on the film strip, and was understood to be part of the process of recording. This was the mechanical “art of lightning photography and animate reproduction.”175 Indeed, motion on screen is only the end result of a series of mechanisms and procedures. Motion was described as appearing at multiple levels and stages. In April 1897 the Chicago Tribune published an extensive peace titled “Move as if alive” in which motion is depicted not just on the screen, but also on multiple levels between reality, the camera, and the projected representation (Appendix A). The article follows the production of moving pictures in some detail, addresses motion as a process and as an element that defines the various stages of recording, developing, and projecting a film. The writer states that while everybody knows how the pictures look when projected, “what they really are, how made, and how exhibited, is so much a source of ignorance.”176 This topos akin to an operational aesthetics explaining the mechanics behind the “trick” appeared frequently in newspaper coverage. Tracking the different stages of recording, development, and projection, the article describes movement as a flow. It starts in profilmic reality, goes through different stages of machinery and humans, and ends up on the white canvas on stage in the popular theater. These various stages are also depicted in the large illustration (Fig. 21). Under the header “How Photography Represents Images in-Action” we see (clockwise) four drawings: a crowd gathered around the camera, a film printing machine, a portrait of Amet with his camera, and the magniscope projector. Across these pictures a film strip depicting people on bicycles can be seen (a “piece of the ribbon exact size,” Amet’s magniscope used by 1897 Edison’s 35 mm format).177
The description of the journalist’s day with Amet starts with a crowd that has gathered in the street. In the midst of all the people, the filmmaker is “busily” recording the scene with his ostensibly self-invented camera. The activity of recording is accurately situated within the street crowds. After this description of the crowd, the writer states that Amet actually starts recording, by turning the crank, as a careful operation between man and machine. When the recording is finished, Amet relocates and moves through the city to other scenes of interest. These are the familiar train and the platform where Amet, again, “was industrially turning the crank of his instrument.” The city of Chicago with its crowded streets, busy train station, and “numerous other events” are conceived as the raw ingredients that the camera feeds on. Movement is already there before the recording starts, as a fundamental element of Chicago’s modern streets. The filmmaker, Amet, is also constantly described in motion, as he is on the road from one scene to another. And when he is stationary, he operates the machine through the crank. It is quite telling that the camera’s subjects on the platform were standing still, stuck “in the rigidity of their poses,” while nearly being hit by that other nineteenth-century engine of change, the locomotive. The article states that
“[T]hey forgot that the moving picture machine wants motion instead of repose in its peculiar line of reproduction.”

After the sections on recording, the mechanisms inside the camera as well as the procedures and energies involved in the development of the film are described. Inside the camera “the mechanism feeds the film strip.” Quite effortlessly, the article moves to a section which reports on the development process. There is a form of continuity in this description as each stage is characterized by a form of mechanical movement. The development of the strip, for example, is done with “a wonderfully accurate little mechanical contrivance operated by a water motor” that powerfully punches through the strip. The verb “feed” appears a second time as the “machine must feed the pictures for exhibition purposes,” and also a third time, concluding that the feed mechanism is vital for a smooth picture. Printing a positive picture from the negatives involves the aid of a “special device” through which the films are unrolled and pressed together, using the right aperture “in the instant of time which elapses while the films are passing the opening the printing is done.” Thus, in this description, the film rolls are constantly involved in some kind of process, indicating a variety of movements.

Movement defines humans, objects, mechanisms, and technology. What we can read in the Tribune’s “Move as if Alive” article is a heightened awareness of movement as a flow. Movement is an energy that the camera, the developing mechanisms, and the projecting device (the magniscope) transform and redirect. So, moving pictures, as an extensive mechanical procedure, quantifies energies (movements, gestures, approaching trains) by means of images. In an earlier piece on the cinématographe, the Tribune wrote: “To show a person in the act of making a bow requires about fifty photographs. The lifting of the hat requires a dozen, and so on.” Hence the motion of both kinematographs (the cinématographe and the magniscope) functions as a method to store, measure, and calculate energies into numbers of pictures.

The “Move as if Alive” article also explains that certain moments of “rapid motion,” such as the arrival of a train or the movement of waves on the shore, are especially challenging to capture on film. The text seems to suggest that these moments of high energy are more difficult to record than other instances, or at least that these moments need a larger number of pictures. Recording a moving train, according to the press notice, requires special skills from Edward Amet, the “moving-picture artist” (i.e. camera operator). The text thereby seems to refer to under-cranking or over-cranking the camera. Thus, the article presupposes a bond between movement in profilmic reality, the turn of the crank and the apparatus, and the process of recording moving pictures. These moments of high energy correspond to Gunning’s concept of the “image of energy” in which nineteenth-century technologies could make energies visible. Yet, while Gunning relates the image of energy to ghostliness and otherworldliness, the discourse on moving pic-
tures in Chicago voices a more rational and scientific concern. The flow of movement that the Tribune article presents is fundamentally quotidian and recognizable to its metropolitan readers. The energies that the moving pictures quantify and make visible originate from familiar crowded streets, trains, and railway stations. For the Chicago audiences that attended kinematograph shows, the energies that the kinematograph made visible were inherently familiar. In this way, the idea of a mechanical-dynamic flow of movements that moving pictures participated in might have established continuity or even an existential bond between external reality, the auditorium, and the film projection.

Post-mechanical paradigm

The mechanical-dynamic paradigm was not the only way to understand movement. In the course of the 1890s, different theories on movement and energy appeared that refuted mechanical notions concerning the continuity and preservation of motion. These ideas could be brought together in a new paradigm that provided a way to understand the world in terms of discontinuities and intensities. This post-mechanical way of conceiving motion thus provided another way to comprehend moving images, one that was active alongside a mechanical-dynamic description. Instead of movement as a flow, motion is depicted in these instances as a burst of motion and as an energy thrown on the screen. Again, the Chicago Tribune article “Move as if Alive” describes how at each instant “light is suddenly thrown through it [the picture] on screen . . . And the projected image is made to appear to move.”

On an earlier occasion, when describing the vitascope, the newspaper wrote that “in an instant it is given life, motion, and coloring.” These sudden bursts of light and movement destabilize the natural flow of motion.

As much as there was movement during the early moving picture shows, there was also stasis. During projection, the flow of movement could easily be disrupted. Individual films ran for about forty seconds, depending on the rate of projection. At other instances, a scene was projected in a loop, allowing viewers to watch the action repeating itself for a few minutes. The moving images mainly ended abruptly and unexpectedly: there were breaks between the scenes in which the presenter took center stage. In this way, even constituting a rhythm, motion appeared intensified (or concentrated) and fragmented. Most early projectors allowed reverse projection as well. Yuri Tsivian defines reverse projection as the “optical refutation” of the continuity of energy (that is, the optical refutation of the mechanical worldview) although it should be noted that even these playful “special effects” of reverse projection emphasized time’s irreversibility. In Sweden, for example, a journalist reviewing the cinématographe’s reverse projection of locally recorded open-air bathing scenes at the 1897 Stockholm Exhibition wrote:
The audience choked with laughter, and that is not so strange, for this scene – which is contrary to all reason and laws of gravity – looks tremendously funny. The whole secret consists in a repetition of the just projected bath-scene in reverse order, starting with the end and ending with the beginning. Such strange “optical illusions” may appear close to magic, but are in fact the most natural thing in the world.\textsuperscript{186}

The Swedish review, thereby, explains the cinémagraphe’s optical refutation of the natural laws of motion and energy as still in line with the order of the world at a deeper and more fundamental level. Hence moving pictures could simultaneously address different ideas and experiences of motion. In general, the interplay of stasis and motion, of pause and release, nevertheless, allowed the kinematographe attraction to be conceived as a representation of energetic or electric movement.

Electromagnetics, as Christoph Asendorf writes in his book \textit{Batteries of Life}, contributed to a post-mechanical paradigm in which objects and energies flow immaterially, invisibly, and behave more unexpectedly than in the received idea of the dynamic, mechanical world.\textsuperscript{187} Whereas in the mechanical-dynamical conception of the world, energy appeared visible and audible (like the steam and noise of a locomotive), in the post-mechanical paradigm movement, as the emblem of energy could appear abruptly at any instant. Above all, electricity became a “life force,” it breathed life into inanimate objects. In this manner, the introduction of electricity coincided with a revival of the philosophy of vitalism which, according to some scientists and scholars, now held that “electricity was the source of life itself.”\textsuperscript{188} When properly applied, according to vitalists scholars, electricity could strengthen the human body. As 1890s Chicago audiences were eager to read, these new forms of energy were both powerful and life threatening.\textsuperscript{189} Movement as energy also signaled the possibility of disruption. Electricity thus symbolized both the continual motion fundamental to modernity as well as the shocks and assaults on the body associated with it.

It is interesting to note that the descriptions of moving picture machines appeared at the junction between the two different paradigms. The popular discourse of 1896-1897 Chicago demonstrates a mixture of connotations and understandings that came with this new machine. Electricity, for example, was frequently associated with the movement of the kinematographe, even though most devices were hand-operated and not all shows used an electrical light source. Initially, the vitascope was introduced to the \textit{Tribune} readers as “a combination of electrical forces reproducing scenes from life.”\textsuperscript{190} Another article from later that month notes that details were thrown on the screen “by a remarkable manipulation of scientific forces.”\textsuperscript{191} Or, as another newspaper stated: “The vitascope is a scientific arrangement of electrical forces combined in a sort of stereopticon effect.”\textsuperscript{192} The \textit{Inter-Ocean} described that before the machine’s premiere, the “electrician for the Cinematographe has
been in town all week, fixing the wires and the switchboard.” And even in a Tribune article which denounces the cinématographe as a device “easily described,” the author mistakenly observes that there are a number of electric wires attached to the projecting apparatus. There is some discontinuity in how the confusion regarding electricity and the moving pictures was resolved. On August 30, 1896, the Tribune wrote that “Contrary to the general belief, which doubtless arose out of the association of Edison’s name with the American invention, the light is the sole connection of electricity with the apparatus.” But, as explained above, on October 5, the Tribune repeats the electrical association with the cinématographe by describing “a small, square box of glass and wood hitched to a number of electric wires.” Hence, it seems that, to a certain extent, associations between the novel scientific idea of electric energy were still part of the popular discourse surrounding the introduction of the kinematograph during the first year of its introduction in Chicago.

In a broader perspective, the paradigm shift between the mechanical and post-mechanical notions of movement was also the subject of Henri Bergson’s work. Although his writings on the topic postdate the introduction of cinema by a couple of years, Bergson’s critique on the mechanical worldview addresses the distinction between the two paradigms. His critique on the mechanical worldview does not so much entail electricity or other energy sources but, rather, deals with biology and scientific realism. Nevertheless, what Bergson argues is that the true nature and essence of things escapes us while we are bound to this mechanical-dynamic worldview. In his introduction to a reissue of Creative Evolution, Michael Vaughan explains: “For Bergson the natural bent of the human intellect is to parcel out the reality that flows into segments that may be weighed and measured.” And cinema, as addressed by multiple film scholars, functions in Bergson’s writings as a metaphor for our rigid mechanistic perception of the world as it cuts reality into approximately sixteen separate instances per second. Yet, as Gunning summarizes, “According to Bergson, the mechanical is antithetical to life, to the sense of vitality on which his understanding of movement rests.” The concept he establishes, in opposition to mechanism, is Élan vital, which can be described as that which “designates the vitality of matter itself, its organization, its growth, its indeterminacy, unpredictability and creativity, and this is inaccessible to mechanism in principle, not merely in fact…It signifies a force different in kind to matter conceived mechanistically or deterministically, and this ‘force’ is nothing more than that very same matter conceived intuitively.” Thus Bergson epitomizes the paradigm shift that occurred around the turn of the century. He tries to bridge the realms of perception and science that present us with a mechanistic view on reality, while at the same time he argues in favor of the recognition of certain powers—a force unpredictable and inaccessible.
Between paradigms, beyond realism

For Chicago audiences the two concepts of movement and energy persisted. The presence of two different ideas of motion in coverage in popular press indicates the temporal absence of a solid conceptual framework regarding the newly introduced moving pictures. Contradictory explanations could further obscure the spectator’s already limited understanding of the vitascope, the cinématographe, the magniscope, and other moving picture devices. This absence of a solid framework of understanding is nevertheless valuable in theorizing the spectator’s experience. Broadly speaking, aesthetic experience appears where understanding fails, making perception “a distinctively singular experience in contrast to the stream of ordinary experience.”

This is related, in several ways, to the semantic richness of the early kinematograph shows as described in Chapter 1. Thereby moving pictures, as an aesthetic object, gained complexity while it refused simple explanation. This, then, marks the arrival of meaning effects (as opposed to immediate or presence effects) of aesthetic experience: the aesthetic object refuses to be put into a category, thereby disrupting the flow of comprehension. And this seems to have also been the case with the introduction of moving pictures in the particular context of 1890s Chicago.

In the absence of a solid framework of understanding, audiences found themselves confronted with movement as a fundamental characteristic of the world and of their presence. Claims on the life-likeness of the moving pictures can be interpreted accordingly. The *Inter-Ocean*, for example, introduced the vitascope as reproducing “an exact scene from life.” Meanwhile, the cinématographe could represent “a realism which no word picture could,” referring to an impression of realism that reached beyond language.

These claims of life-likeness did not entail a perfect moving picture, nor did audiences seem to mistake the representation for reality. Images were in black and white (or hand colored), silent, and often contained significant flicker. Frequently, technical failures disrupted the show, instances that were reported in the papers as well. Therefore, it is more likely that the comment about ‘life-like’ movement entailed an engagement with a broader notion of movement in modernity.

What was ‘life-like’ was not necessarily a duplication of movement in appearance, but movement as energy, as a flow, as effect, and as a possible disruptive force, akin to Gunning’s “energized and animated image.” It was the experience of movement and energy that was so fundamental to everyday perception, which was turned into an attraction. Looking at the reception of Lumière films in the context of Sweden, Pasi Väliaho, like Gunning, concludes that “the so-called lifelikeness and emotional force at issue here is not so much about what films show but more about the movement and twitching of the cinematographic image itself.” Subsequently, Gunning concludes that the late nineteenth-century’s images of energy
aroused an uncanny experience in spectators due to the visibility of energies that normally remained unseen. Yet for the kinematograph, this uncanny experience remains hard to locate in Chicago’s popular press. The aesthetic experience that historical audiences participated in seemed not so much directed toward a ghostly otherworldliness, but, rather, was aimed at familiarity and the very earthly and worldly context of modernity. This experience, therefore, seems to be related to the aesthetic experience based on presence. The “realistic reproductions (…) wonderfully lifelike and distinct” entailed the presentation of movement as a vital force in this particular modern worldview as much as it concerned photographic realism. The function of moving pictures as images of movement and energy also indicates how the moving pictures were ingrained in the rhythms and energies of modernity’s streets.

Distance, touch, and presence

The aesthetic experience of movement that the earliest cinema exhibitions involved entailed a combination of presence and meaning effects. On the one hand, these shows enabled a sensuous, immediate rhythmic experience involving the spectator’s body in relation to its surroundings, as described in the first half of this chapter. At the same time, moving pictures elicited a whole range of ideas and conception on movement and energy as fundamental forces in the world. Moving picture machines such as the vitascope and the cinématographe came to signify these complex, modern and scientific notions. These two ends enforced each other like the “oscillation between presence and meaning effects” that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht describes. Thereby, these earliest cinematic experiences were intimate experiences of familiarity that touched upon the subject.

Phenomenologically speaking, we can affirm that, as mentioned above, moving pictures enabled a perception of perception itself. This, however, is not a process of detachment and reflexivity. Rather, as a form of intimacy this experience of movement marked a bodily and sensuous involvement. The spectator (more than the ‘viewer’) was in contact with his/her immediate surroundings as well as with the on-screen representation. In ‘normal’ perception this contact with the world would have remained functional and imperceptible, and thus, above all, ordinary. These earliest cinematic experiences, I argue, foregrounded the subject’s contact with the world. It was, to cite Seel, the “relation of human beings to their life surroundings” that surfaced with this new technological attraction. This is also why moving pictures were significant in terms of rhythm and pulse: It created a communal experience in which spectators participated with their surrounding subjects and in that sense the kinematograph attraction showed by way of perception itself how being fundamentally relates to others. As an aesthetic
object moving pictures presented a mode of perception that was fundamentally recognizable by showing, as Nancy expresses, that “existence can only be grasped in the paradoxical simultaneity of togetherness (anonymous, confused, and indeed massive) and disseminated singularity (these or those ‘people(s),’ or ‘a guy,’ ‘a girl,’ or ‘a kid’).”

This explanation in terms of presence differs from a conceptualization of cinematic experience in terms of astonishment because the latter presupposes a safe distance and a visual entanglement with the spectacle. The kinematograph, then, made the rhythms and movements of modernity not just visible but also sensible and tangible. And, more than that, through its haptic qualities, it made rhythm and motion sensible.

In *Aesthetics of Appearing*, Martin Seel formulates what aesthetic experience in terms of presence means for perception. Most importantly, “always concerned with sensing its objects,” aesthetic perception brings back “to our consciousness and to our bodies the thingness of the world.”

Like Nancy and Gumbrecht, Seel emphasizes the role of the complete body, stressing that reality is made sensuously available before the subject. In the event of “an intensive sensuous self-sensing” our embodied situation becomes noticeable. Yet this re-sensibility is a rather unstable feeling. Even though this situation is by definition beyond words, I believe that we can find, in a certain way, a trace of this in the coverage of the film *Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers* (Lumière, 1896). During the first weeks of the cinématographe’s run at the Schiller, this was supposedly the most popular film among audiences. The *Evening Post* wrote that “These military pictures (…) are the chief favorites.”

The scene was on the bill for at least five weeks in a row. It appears that there were sound effects accompanying the projection. Supposedly, there were effects of shouting, hurrahs, and a bugle but this remains somewhat unclear for the Chicago exhibitions. On October 5, 1896, the *Chicago Tribune* published an extensive description of the film, which is both unusual in length and in content:

Every movement of the picture is perfect to the life. A charge of the cavalry is shown. At first the only thing to be seen is a tiny cloud of dust way off on the plain. Gradually it takes the shape of men and horses in a confused mass. Soon the forms of the five officers riding in front can be distinguished and you are conscious that the troop is rushing toward you.

The sound of the bugle is heard in the distance, quickly followed by the beat of hoofs and the rattle of sabres and the clashing of bridle chains. The troop is in plain sight now. The eyes of the men and the breath from the nostrils of the horses can be plainly seen.

The officers wave their swords and one of them turns in his saddle to shout a command. The forms grow larger and larger until suddenly the officers are almost upon you, life size, their horses dancing, curving, and showing every movement of the energy and excitement.
The bugle sounds a halt. The officers pull their horses upon their haunches and take their position at the left of the column, the troopers pull up and crowd and jostle each other back and forth until the line is formed, their horses throwing up their heads and tossing the foam from their bridles. The bugle sounds again, the troopers salute, wheel sharply to the left, and are out of sight.

So vivid is the impression of life and action that women in the boxes nearest the stage shrink and half rise from their seat instinctively to seek safety as the troop dashes toward them.213

The following week, The Inter-Ocean came to a similar conclusion:

Every view creates wonder and amazement in the beholder especially a charge by the French cavalry regiment, whose galloping horses come rushing down to the footlights with so much of life and motion as to cause those of nervous disposition in the front seats to involuntarily change their positions. . .

One can almost hear the hurrahs of the cavalry as they charge toward you or the measured tramp of the infantry as they swing smartly by.214

As a kind of haptic quality, the sounds are mentioned in relation to what is visible: movement presented in depth and a seemingly unlimited amount of details. Although we do not know for certain how accurate this report is, there appears to have been some confusion of the senses. Another sensuous overload appears by way of the movement in depth when the cavalry moves toward the camera and the audience. Repeating a familiar trope in very early cinema, both newspapers state that sensitive people—or, as the Chicago Tribune directly states, women—”involuntary” or “instinctively” suffer bodily effects. On another occasion, a reviewer observes that “the youngsters fairly shrieked with delight as the horses and riders came rushing onward at breakneck speed.”215 Again, one could argue that this was caused by the cinématographe’s reality effect, but, as Martin Loiperdinger states in his study of the L’Arrivée d’un train en gare de la Ciotat (Lumière, 1895), the depth of focus came across rather strangely for contemporary audiences, leading him to the conclusion that “spectators did not want to see reality on the screen, but rather images of reality, which were different from reality.”216

Writing about the unreal realism of the moving pictures, Gunning observes that, “Innovations in realist representation did not necessarily anchor viewers in a stable and reassuring situation. Rather, this obsession with animation, with super-lifelike imagery, carries a profound ambivalence and even a sense of disorientation.”217 And this seems to have been the case with Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers at the Schiller. It is as if the scene indeed did cause ambivalence, but it did so precisely as a disorientation of the senses, resulting in a confusion of the faculties. In Seel’s terminology, the aesthetic experience caused by the film creates a kind of overload for one of the sens-
es (vision) resulting in a synesthetic energy effecting one of the other senses (hearing).

Of course, press notices on Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers do not discuss the deep-rooted feelings identified here with the aesthetic experience of presence. These feelings would not make it into the discourse. But the reception of the cavalry scene does indicate an appetite to show in order to cause a frontal sensuous impact. In part, the scene thereby corresponds to the cinema of attractions as it addresses and “holds” the spectator, “emphasizing the act of display.” This mode of address involves a form of deictic index signaling “there it is.” The reception of the scene, however, exceeds the scopic pleasure related to the act of display. What these accounts describe is a more haptic visuality drawing on sensuous pleasure. The film attraction, as presented in this case, is an embodied affair involving not just vision but the complete sensorium. This strong effect of realism is thereby induced by a sensation of motion. What we recognize, accordingly, is a more sensuously oriented mode of “thereness.” More than visually showing the on-screen cavalry actions, Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers involved the spectacle of appearing and of presence. It was about the mere appearing or, in Nancy’s terminology, the “coming-into-presence,” of motion, and thereby reality, itself. The moving picture attraction thus addressed the spectator’s desire to perceive perception.

Conclusion

Movement was a key element for the moving picture attraction. This is evident in the reception of the Edison vitascope and the Lumière cinématographe in 1890s Chicago, but, of course, the attraction of movement was not limited to this historical setting. Popular discourse on the newly-introduced moving pictures was strikingly similar in many other US cities. To some extent, these similarities in the reception of the vitascope and the cinématographe might have originated from press releases as the licensing and distribution of these machines was well orchestrated. Meanwhile, these newspaper reviews were also specific to Chicago. Venues like Hopkins’ South Side Theatre and the Schiller each had their own distinctiveness and social status, while projection habits also varied. And, as will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3, each theater also had its specific spatial organization. Local exhibitors like John D. Hopkins and Robert Blei (the manager at the Schiller Theatre) were responding to attractions programmed at other venues. Moving picture attractions, thereby, appeared to audiences as part of a larger constellation of local amusements demonstrating that a site-specific contextualization of the early cinema attraction remains essential in order to reconstruct theoretically the various possible viewing experiences.
This chapter offered a locally-oriented analysis of early cinema experiences from the perspective of movement. I have argued that the movement of the moving picture attraction was deeply familiar to audiences. It was pivotal for the impression of realism that surrounded the introduction of cinema. However, as I have argued throughout this chapter, realistic motion in the moving picture attraction should be contextualized in the broader perspective of metropolitan rhythm. Cinema, during its novelty period, felt realistic to audiences because it related to their sensuous experience of the pulse of movement in modernity. Thereby the street and the theater were constitutive of the earliest cinema experience. Street scenes presented the most direct representation of the city’s dynamic pulse on screen. Or, as the *Times-Herald* observed, “There is nothing as real as the ‘Cinematographe.’ It reproduces nature and natural movements with the exactness that sometimes startles the spectator.”

In film historical writing these are often approached as presenting a distracting bombardment of the senses. I proposed, in turn, that these scenes offered a more intimate familiarity. The attractive quality of these scenes was not their thrilling unexpectedness but their intimate familiarity that corresponded to the pulse of the outside world. Also, in terms of meaning-making and understanding, the notion of movement was a key issue for the earliest cinema experiences. Multiple ideas on motion and energy were attached to the kinematograph and its projected moving pictures. These competing notions obstructed a stable understanding of early cinema. In this manner the kinematograph could appear as an aesthetic object, that is, an object that refused easy explanation thereby enabling aesthetic experience. While the early moving picture attraction enabled aesthetic experiences that were marked by a rhythmic, bodily, and sensuous involvement as well as a semantic complexity, I argued that these moments are best understood as experiences of presence.

This dissertation argues that the earliest cinema experiences should be interpreted not just in terms of meaning but also in terms of presence. Presence, as mentioned in the Introduction, basically means the sensuous pleasure of having something within reach, of being in contact with an object. It is about feeling or sensing an object in its nearness. Cinema in its novelty period, therefore, should not be seen as just a technology of representation but also as an attraction of presentation, as it was the materiality of the moving picture attraction that contributed to viewing experiences. Movement was pivotal, in this respect, because movement, in terms of vibrations and rhythm, resonates with the spectator’s body. It thus brought the moving picture in proximity to the subject to the extent that the spectator actually participated in the movement attraction. And, as explained above, this is what caused cinema’s reality effect.

The importance of motion was also addressed in Chapter 1. There it was argued that the kinematograph offered in terms of intermediality a sensuous-
ly rich and semantically multivalent experience. And, as explained, movement was also an important element of the richness of the moving picture attraction. In Chapter 1, movement was mainly explained in terms of embodied mobility and as a form of virtual mobility. This chapter, however, has presented a more inclusive take on movement. While Chapter 3 presents an analysis of moving picture attractions in terms of space the notion of movement will also reappear. The following chapter discusses the opposition between on stage performance and film projection as a play with distance and presence. In this interplay the representation of movement was, again, pivotal to the effect of realism as motion endowed screen bodies with liveness. Liveness, in the end, is what movement added not just to projected moving pictures but also, as was discussed above, to viewing experiences as a relation between viewing subjects, the attraction, and its contexts. What the movement of the motion picture attraction did was to bring representation in contact with the spectator. As a form of presence this contact was the real experiential realism of cinema in its novelty period.
Chapter three

“The very act itself, even to the smack”: Screen and stage bodies, or, moving pictures as spatial intervention

“When the machine is started by the operator, the bare canvas before the audience instantly becomes a stage.”

— Raff & Gammon in the prospectus to Edison’s vitascope

At the time of its introduction, moving picture attractions presented new spatial relations between stage and spectator, between actor and audience, and between the auditorium and the outside world. Chapter 1 discussed, within the context of the Netherlands and, specifically, the fairground, how the kinematograph was introduced within a complex web of intermedial relations and how these situations shaped viewers’ experiences. In the U.S., and in Chicago in particular, these intermedial dimensions were differently pivoted. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the moving images were introduced within the context of stage entertainment. Moving picture machines, such as the vitascope and the cinématographe, were, in most cases, presented to audiences as vaudeville acts. Even if the theater would not align itself to vaudeville, moving pictures were always part of a variety show. In contrast to the situation on European fairgrounds, where kinematographs constituted a free-standing attraction, Chicago audiences paid for a full program of which moving pictures were but one element. As a result, moving pictures always appeared alongside, or in relation with, live performances. Thus, the screen attraction was always preceded by, or followed by, flesh-and-blood performers. At times this relation between live actors and screen amusement was very direct, for example, with hybrid performances that included moving pictures in the performance of light opera. However, more often, the affiliation between screen and live performances was more subtle, for example,
when *The Kiss* was conceived in relation to the actual performance. As a reviewer in the *Chicago Journal* wrote, “It is not as a picture, but as the scene itself reproduced in all the activity and genuine motion, color, and effect of real life. It is not, say the management, a stereoptical view of John C. Rice and May Irwin enjoying the famous ‘Widow Jones’ kiss,’ but the very act itself, even to the smack.”

This chapter describes the different constellations between screen and live performances from a spatial perspective. Film, in this sense, presented audiences with a paradox of distance and nearness: on the one hand, film could bring the viewer closer to details and nearer to the bodily performance on screen, thereby establishing a kind of presence as a fixation on the screen objects as screen bodies. Yet, at the same time, the screen body was distanced, abstracted, and marked by an absence. The bodily co-presence of actors and audience was, constitutive to live performance, thereby temporarily substituted for a presence in absence. As I will argue in this chapter, in many ways this spatial paradox was key to the reception of the newly introduced moving pictures. It marked a spatial renegotiation in which performance was not just “here” but also “there.” Although the event of the projected moving pictures appeared before the spectator’s eyes, these images originated from a spatial and temporal “elsewhere.” The insertion of an elsewhere in the here and now of the auditorium constituted a pivotal part of the kinematograph attraction; it enabled a spatial relation between the spectatorial space and a specifically defined other location, such as Canton, Ohio, or Niagara Falls, or a specifically defined event in the (near) past. As a result, viewing experiences were marked by a presence in absence.

This chapter discusses the spatial paradox of early cinema in terms of a phenomenological, embodied experience. Following the pioneering work of Vivian Sobchack, I wish to outline how the newly-introduced moving pictures, as a spatially organized technology, were both “objectively constituted” and “subjectively incorporated, enabling a new and discrete perceptual mode of existential and embodied presence.” Like the previous two chapters, this entails an empirically-informed theoretical reconstruction of viewing experiences. By way of historical and local specificity, I will argue that spectators could have been involved in the aesthetic experience of presence, thereby freely moving between specificity and (aesthetic) theory. Throughout the chapter, I will focus on different constellations between the spectator, the space of the auditorium, the stage (and its actors), and the screen. The social organization of audiences and theaters is beyond the scope of this research, even though I acknowledge its importance for the experience of viewing.

This chapter seeks to continue and expand the in-depth portrayal of the introduction of film in the local, downtown Chicago amusement scene. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a considerable number of studies have portrayed the city’s early film culture. As these studies equally recognize, turn-of-the-
century Chicago constitutes a fascinating case study in terms of urbanization, spatial organization, and its heterosocial public sphere. Yet none of these studies has linked modernity’s novel spatial constellations to aesthetic experience. It can be argued that no other city was as involved in modernity, both in terms of discourse as well as in terms of everyday sensuous experience, as Chicago. Thereby 1890s Chicago forms a relevant object of study, not just in terms of movement and rhythm but also as a particularly modern space. In many ways the introduction of projected moving pictures in Chicago was emblematic for most other major American cities. In all of these cities, vaudeville was the prime context for the introduction of the Edison vitascope, the Lumière cinématographe, and other moving picture machines. Chicago’s amusement scene was a vivid and ever-changing environment where projected moving pictures were introduced in close companionship to live performance. One could even make the case that this constellation of live and screen performance is of specific relevance in today’s saturated multimedia landscape.

Essentially, the paradox of space appeared as a plurality of novel or modern constellations of space collectively causing an aesthetic experience of presence. Throughout this chapter I will discuss the spatial renegotiation of the kinematograph by way of describing three categories. These categories coincide with the dynamic conception of space associated with modernity: bringing the distant near, bringing the near nearer, and distancing the near. These conceptions of space in relation to modernity have been studied extensively, but, I would maintain, the framework of modernity is nonetheless important for cinema as a new medium, particularly in relation to the changing media situation. Because these experiences were so much situated around the novel constellation of space in modernity, the first part of the chapter describes the discourses on space and place, and the new theories of spatiality that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Subsequently, the second part of the chapter describes how the moving pictures, in relation to audiences, were situated in Chicago theaters followed by a discussion on the notion of the screen and the stage. The consecutive sections of the chapter discuss how the different constellations of space emerged in and around moving picture shows.

Chicago and spaces of modernity

As addressed in Chapter 2, Chicago in the 1890s was a city deeply involved in modernity. The 1893 Columbian Exposition was, of course, both the effect and a future stimulant for the position of Chicago as marker of the “progress of civilization.” Spatially, the Columbian Exposition had a lasting effect on the city’s modern organization: it demarcated a specific site for leisure, recreation, and pleasure after 1893. Meanwhile the extension of the
first elevated railroad to Jackson Park (the “L”) constituted the rapid transit system boosting the development of suburban settlement in the South Side and the development of commuting.

Chicago attracted architects, writers, and artists from all over the world interested in cultural and technological change. The city was aimed at the future: At the Chicago Board of Trade the commodities in futures market with its speculation and cornering signified advanced capitalism while the Union Stock Yards in the South Side heralded the industrialization of meat production.\(^8\) To many critics, these elements of Chicago represented a dark future, but still, in any case, the city was seen as a space of the future.\(^9\) It was a space aimed at tomorrow, while it was widely accepted that, collectively, city planners, politicians, and businessmen were making history. The downtown area was in a constant state of construction and change; spaces, as it were, were in a constant flux. Throughout these years of construction, daily life in downtown continued as crowds rushed by in the streets. The city, thereby, constituted a modern space with downtown, or “the Loop,” as focal point. Chicago’s advanced transportation system enabled downtown to become the center of a rapidly-extending city. To many people living in the suburbs commuting became a daily routine. Meanwhile, a diversity of nationalities and religions was represented in these city streets.\(^10\) Swedish, German, Dutch, and Polish local newspapers were in print in the 1890s. A wide variety of languages was heard in the streets causing it to be “the first and only veritable Babel of the age.”\(^11\) Although most Chicagoans seemed to adjust pretty well to the rapidly changing living situation, the city constituted a dynamic space that was continually changing while inherently connected to an (inter)national pattern of trade, communication, and migration.

Foreigners and other visitors experienced the modernity of the city space sensuously. The Swedish writer Henning Berg who lived in the city for about a decade and situated several novels there wrote: “I saluted this extraordinary city, which both attracts and repels: the city of factories and money, the giant skyscrapers, the hell of misery, the whore of the West and the queen of the prairies by the blue eye of Lake Michigan.”\(^12\) In his travelogue The Land of the Dollar (1897), the English writer George W. Steevens also expressed his mixed emotions visiting Chicago:

Chicago! Chicago, queen and guttersnipe of cities, cynosure and cesspool of the world! Not if I had a hundred tongues, everyone shouting a different language in a different key, could I do justice to her splendid chaos. The most beautiful and the most squalid, girdled with a twofold zone of parks and slums; where the keen air from lake and prairie is ever in the nostrils, and the stench of fousls smoke is never out of the throat; the great port a thousand miles away from the sea; the great mart which gathers up with one hand the corn and the cattle of the West and deals out with the other the merchandise of the East; widely and generously planned with streets of twenty miles, where it is not safe to walk at night; where women ride straddlewise and millionaires
dine at mid-day on the Sabbath; the chosen seat of public spirit and municipal boodle, of cut-throat commerce and munificent patronage of art; the most American of American cities.\textsuperscript{13}

With its skyscrapers, businesses, stores, streetcars and elevated railroads, the Loop was the most densely-packed commercial area in the world. A cloud of fog and smoke hanged over downtown as a result of all the gigantic buildings that were heated. In the winter, streetlight could be on all day. As Chicago historian Dominic Pacyga writes, “To foreign visitors Chicago seemed ‘a true Hell’ with its choking bituminous cloud, ‘the curse of Chicago’.”\textsuperscript{14}

This “hell” was experienced sensuously: a French visitor wrote that “The sky is made of iron, and perpetually growls a rolling thunder … Electric lights are emitting burning sparks; below are wagons of every size and kind, whose approach cannot be heard in the midst of the noise; and the [street]cars, with jangling voice which never ceases, cross and recross.”\textsuperscript{15} Similarly, a Japanese visitor to the city concluded that “If the most noisy place is hell—surely Chicago must be hell.”\textsuperscript{16} Some Chicagoans were also critical of the development of the Loop as they feared that the elevated railroads’ steel constructions would damage buildings while this extra layer above the street level would exclude sunlight. Lincoln Steffens in his 1904 \textit{The Shame of the Cities} depicted the downtown Chicago streets in similar terms:

Yes, Chicago. First in violence, deepest in dirt; loud, lawless, unlovely, ill-smelling, irreverent, new; an overgrown gawk of a village, the ‘though’ among the cities, a spectacle for the nation;—I give Chicago no quarter and Chicago asks for none . . . The city cannot solve the smoke nuisance. With recourses for a magnificent system of public parking, it is too poor to pave and clean the streets.\textsuperscript{17}

Chicagoans, it turn, seemed to cope pretty well with the ever-changing downtown surroundings. On the level of everyday activity, people adjusted to every new situation. Downtown, meanwhile, constituted a place of contingency, a place where all kinds of things could happen. It was a familiar place with many unknown locations and situations. The local newspapers, of course, exploited these urban elements in terms of sensationalism and danger. Yet a more engaging and curious view of the city was equally printed, for example, in the illustrated daily column by George Ade, “Stories of the Streets and of the Town,” which appeared between 1893 and 1900 in \textit{The Chicago Record}. Ade describes seemingly meaningless, unimportant places and everyday situations while turning them into short literary attractions in a manner similar to that effected visually by the cinematograph.

In various ways, downtown Chicago inhabited all the spatial dynamism and paradoxes of modernity. What Stephen Kern describes as “the annihilation of time and space,” so central to modernity as an historical process of change, was felt in the streets. Chicago was marked by transport, by travel-
ers, and by communication. As America’s most important and biggest railway junction a very high number of people travelled through the city. Meanwhile, railway intersections were hardly secure; an average of two people per day were killed by the railroads in the late 1880s. The railroad brought in people and goods from America and the world to downtown Chicago. The railroad thus decreased distances. The vast increase of local transportation also contributed to the annihilation of space. Although Chicago was “a city of spectacular distances,” the rapid streetcars, which drove significantly faster than in other American cities at the time, made Chicago into “the city of speed.” Public transport made it possible for Chicagoans to commute significant distances on a daily basis.

The annihilation of space and time was also felt in the Chicago streets through the key role of capitalism, business, and speculation. The Board of Trade Building was an important local landmark that signified Chicago’s new key role in national trade and the economy. Opened in 1885, the building was the first to be fully equipped with electric lighting. The bell tower, which was 91 meters high, made the Board of Trade Building the tallest building in town until 1895 when the Masonic Temple was constructed. The Board of Trade was the place for a new form of commercial transaction, one that was fast, speculative, and dynamic. Technologies of communication were pivotal to this. With the Board of Trade, Chicago’s local economy was inherently intertwined with (and dependent on) both regional crop yields as well as (trans)national finances.

Both the Board of Trade and the railway were important markers of the expansion of space in modernity. Even though downtown Chicago was a concentrated and demarcated area, the expansion of space was felt by locals in the streets. Like so many other domains in modernity, this expanding space had to be rigorously controlled, resulting in a vivid market of professional and the publication of popular atlases. Yet what the Board of Trade also signified was the idea of simultaneity. Defined by Kern as “the sense of being in, or having access to, two or more places at the same time,” simultaneity emerged at the Board as being active in Chicago, on the trading floor or “the pit”, while also operating on a national level. Simultaneity, moreover, meant a double presence: a person, or an activity or event, was at the same time both “here” and “there”. But also, in more abstract terms, Chicago was always connected to other places. Thereby, “the present,” as Stephen Kern outlines, “was no longer limited to one event in one place . . . [But] could, indeed must, include events around the world.” This worldview of simultaneity and expanding space was, well before film took up the same project, strongly reflected in the rise of newspapers.

Following Anthony Giddens’ definition of modernity as the separation or the dislocation of space from place, we recognize how the local experience in Chicago’s Loop related to that of an abstract (trans)national monetary or imaginary space. In this respect, abstract spaces and distant influences began
to determine the subject’s position in the world. The local situation, the
place, is nevertheless important for everyday experience yet the status of the
place is influenced by abstract and distant forces. Giddens concludes: “Place
becomes increasingly phantasmagoric: that is to say, locales are thoroughly
penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from
them.”21 Most Chicagoans, after all, were unable to travel by train while
even fewer were active at the Board of Trade. They lived their lives locally,
like so many generations before them in different countries and different
cities. Yet the lives of these people, who would constitute cinema’s earliest
audiences, were nevertheless influenced by distant social, economic, and
cultural forces. Downtown Chicago was, in a certain way, a locally-
experienced symbol of the distant world.

It was particularly in this context of “space” versus “place” that popular
theater operated. The theaters and vaudeville houses were places where au-
diences could see the attraction which they had read about in newspapers.
Thereby newspapers functioned as menus for local amusements.22 But prem-
ieres from other U.S. cities were covered in newspapers as well. Next to a
section on local theater amusement, all popular Chicago newspapers had a
recurring illustrated section on theater and drama from a more national per-
spective. The Chicago Journal had “In amusement World,” the Chicago
Evening Post had “Music and the Drama,” while the Chicago Tribune had
“Gossip of Plays and Players.” By way of these newspaper sections, the the-
earter world was described as a remote universe of famous stars, who occasion-
ally would come to Chicago theaters. The newspapers were “mapping” the
modern, extended theater world as it were, wherein audiences anticipated
the arrival of these stage amusements. These attractions were thus imagined
before they were actually experienced. This was also the case for moving
pictures and Edison’s vitascope in particular. Advance newspaper publica-
tions prepared audiences for Edison’s next popular invention.23 Imagination
was important as newspapers described how the vitascope was developed at
Menlo Park, and how the moving picture machine received its successful
premiere in New York. These events happened in the distant “space” while a
few months later the attraction was ready to be experienced locally at Hop-
kins’ South Side Theater. Thus, in Chicago’s modernity of the 1890s, we
recognize both a fascination for what is happening at a distance as well as an
obsession with the local, the proximate.24

The dislocation of space from place and vice versa is related to the spatial
paradox of modernity that Walter Benjamin addressed throughout his work.
In his many formulations of the notion of the aura, Benjamin describes a
paradox of nearness and distance as an experiential phenomenon occurring
with modern technologies. The aura, in this respect, is defined as “the unique
appearance of a distance, no matter how close it may be.”25 In his canonical
essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproduction,”
Benjamin observes “the urge of the present-day masses to ‘get closer’ to

151
things spatially and humanly, and the equally passionate concern for over-
coming each thing’s uniqueness by appropriating it in the form of its repro-
duction.”

Whereas technologies in modernity promise to bring the distant
nearer, their mediation always creates both distance and nearness. This effect
is all extensive in modernity with life determined by a negotiation of space
and place, of distance and proximity. However, as Benjamin states, cinema
uniquely embodies the “discontinuous nearness.” Thereby, as Miriam Han-
sen concludes from Benjamin’s observations, it is cinema’s ideal social func-
tion to train audiences to better cope with the “changed configurations of
distance and nearness, and to do so across fundamentally transformed regis-
ters of duration, movement and speed.”

Against this background of the annihilation of time and space, a separa-
tion of space and place, and the paradox of distance and nearness, the intro-
duction of film in the context of live theater is relevant and interesting. For
Chicago audiences, these novel constellations of space were part of daily
life. People experienced this in the streets as well as through the newspapers
and other media. Because it was so much ingrained in daily life, we should
not overemphasize the disruptive qualities of these changes in the conception
of space. However, as I will explain throughout the rest of this chapter, I
believe that the arrival of moving pictures in relation to live performance
placed these everyday changes in the limelight.

The space of theaters: vaudeville and the stage

Moving pictures were, of course, a screen attraction. The context, however,
in which film was introduced to its Chicago audiences was not designed for
screen attractions. One could actually argue that the kinematograph was, in
terms of vaudeville acts, rather “the odd one out” in a format that was consti-
tuted from oddities. The theater context in which the moving picture attrac-
tion was situated was particularly organized to show live entertainment, with
live actors, singers, magicians, or acrobats, performing on stage. Variety
theater, vaudeville included, was thus a setting of bodily presence: every-
thing of importance was there on stage, present before the spectator’s eyes.
The moving pictures, in turn, brought a different constellation of presence,
one more based on a presence in absence. Thus, the context of the moving
picture attraction, both spatially and culturally, was essential to viewing ex-
periences.

As outlined in Chapter 2, projected moving pictures were introduced to
Chicago audiences for the first time during in the summer of 1895 when
Latham’s eidoloscope came to town. A more successful and lasting entrance
of moving pictures came with the introduction of the Edison vitascope at
Hopkins’ South Side Theatre and the exhibition of the Lumière ciné-
matographe at the Schiller Theatre. At both instances the moving picture
attraction was one part of a more extensive, altering vaudeville program. The cinématographe and the vitascope, however, constituted the most successful and lasting vaudeville acts in 1896. Despite this success, and despite some media attention, moving picture popularity should not be seen as a craze that forced all amusement houses to have a machine. Occasionally, other venues would program the magniscope or phantoscope, but these efforts were never long-lasting. These shows never gained the popularity and status of the different moving picture devices at Hopkins’ and the Schiller.²⁸

These theaters that were associated with the moving pictures each had their own history and status in the local entertainment scene. Even though the Hopkins and Schiller theaters differed a lot from each other, both theaters constituted spaces organized around the performance of live theater and not screen entertainment. Hence both the vitascope and the cinématographe, as well as the American Biograph which was introduced later, were presented to audiences within the cultural context of live stage entertainment. These spaces were not necessarily suited for the screen attraction that the moving picture machine constituted. Moreover, as an attraction, the kinematograph was less flexible than most other acts. Film historian William Paul observes that “In its earliest appearance in a theater, film might seem more of an immutable object that merely had to be fit within an existing space willy nilly, not able to change in any fundamental way as stage practices in live theater could change in response to the architecture.”²⁹ The moving pictures was a bit of an odd act on the bill. Neither the Schiller and nor Hopkins’ South Side Theatre did have a history of programming other pseudo-scientific or technological attractions.

Let us briefly reconsider the spaces of these theaters by looking at their interiors. Especially with Hopkins’ South Side Theatre this is a challenge to the historian; because of its status as a vaudeville house, and because of its rapid turnover of ownership (in 1904 it became The Folley Theatre and later the State-Congress) it is notoriously difficult to find information on the exterior or interior.³⁰ Compared to the big theaters located downtown, the Hopkins theater did not have a very grand entrance. The entrance was, together with the Park Theatre, located between small stores. Thereby the visitor entered through some kind of hallway, after which s/he would enter the auditorium.³¹ The Hopkins was not, however, a small theater. According to the floor plan it seated at least 541 people.³² 198 of these seats were located on the ground floor while the other 343 were situated on the balcony (Fig. 22). There were four private boxes located closest to the stage. Like all other theaters, there was a small orchestra pit in front of the stage. Located next door was the Park Theatre. Although limited in size, the Park Theatre had a very questionable reputation: A “unique playhouse,” according to The Pleasure Seeker’s Guide, the Park was known for its “informality of the performances” while its male visitors could use the upstairs “wine-rooms” for a “tete-a-tete and a bottle of champagne with his chosen charmer.”³³
Fig. 21: Seating plan, Hopkins' South Side Theatre, Diagrams of Chicago Theatres, Chicago: Chicago and North Western Railway, 1902. Chicago History Museum.
In 1896, Hopkins and the Tri-State Amusement Company bought the next-door Park Theatre and absorbed it into the Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. The Park’s auditorium was partly used as a foyer, but within a few years the property was sold and turned back into a separate commercial store. Possibly, Hopkins and the Tri-State Amusement Company just wanted to remove the brothel next door. In October 1896, Hopkins also added a “rustic garden” to his theater. Presumably this was a small open space bordering on the south side of the theater. One could question how “rustic” this garden was, as it bordered directly onto the elevated railroad at the back of Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. Whereas the “theater proper” would show European views, in the adjoining garden American films were shown.

Hopkins’ South Side Theatre thus became an esteemed vaudeville venue associated in the main with the newly-introduced moving pictures. By 1896, Chicago saw a steep rise of vaudeville places. From the 1880s onward, vaudeville had gradually become the most popular form of variety amusement, and by the mid-1890s the urban middle class had fully embraced the theater format resulting in approximately fourteen theaters programming vaudeville during the summer of 1896. By bringing women, and sometimes children, into its audience, vaudeville had become the entertainment form that was tailored to the cities’ heterogeneous middle classes. While vaudeville was by some still associated with “cheap thrills” it had now also taken over first-class theaters. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Schiller Theatre, where the Lumière cinématographe premiered in September 1896, was such a first-class theater that shifted its programming from opera-variety to vaudeville. But also places like Hopkins’ Theatre, as a place that was from the outset associated with vaudeville, managed to attract middle-class audiences. There was a certain prestige to good vaudeville programming. Theater managers were portrayed in local Chicago amusement guides. They had public personas and changes in management were eagerly published in local newspapers. Vaudeville was a genre about efficiency and modular attractions. Successful acts could stay, or were captured by competing theaters, while unsuccessful acts were quickly disposed. Programming was a key element in managing the audience’s attention, and it was the theater manager who was responsible for the theater’s success.

As Robert Allen outlines in his pivotal study *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915*, vaudeville came with a pretty rigid internal structure or “system.” From the Hopkins’ advertisements it remains unclear whether the theater already applied the strict eight-act format, but the general modular structure was in place. Similar to the general structure of vaudeville, which prescribed that the show opened with a visually oriented act accommodating late arrivals, the show at Hopkins’ in early July opened with “European acrobats, who will introduce a number of novelties.” There was a strict hierarchy among the acts in which the main act or star performer was centrally programmed at the second part of the show. As for the Hopkins theater in July
1896, Edison’s vitascope was the main act. Of secondary importance was the playlet, usually an abbreviated light opera or a comic drama. This was usually performed by the theater’s stock company during the first half of the program. At Hopkins’, for example, the stock company played “The Westerner” during the first week of the vitascope, followed by Lost in “New York” during its second week, and “Lights and Shadows” in its third week. As a sort of light opera these plays included musical performances. As the play was also considered something noteworthy, these various performances were generally mentioned in the press, and occasionally stock companies would invite semi-famous guest actors. In press coverage, the rest of the program was seen as the “supplemental bill,” “the vaudeville list” or “regular entertainment.” Hierarchy or order was not specified in this respect, but during its second week at Hopkins’ the other acts accompanying the vitascope included a blackface comedy, “the Donazettas”, European acrobats, “Boyce and Clifford in a comedy sketch”, “and more.”

The vaudeville context was also important for the introduction of the Lumière cinématographe in Chicago at the Schiller Theatre. As mentioned, the Schiller Theatre was a luxurious, high-end theater. In downtown, the Schiller was a landmark skyscraper. Its interior was equally remarkable. The theater was considerably bigger than Hopkins’ with a seating capacity of 1,286. Whereas the venue was established to perform German operas, the theater had been on a low since the 1895 season and from September 1896 onward programmed vaudeville. This shift from highbrow opera to vaudeville, albeit “high-class vaudeville” at the “elite vaudeville theater,” was really a news event that was addressed in the newspapers’ amusement sections; to some reviewers this change was illustrative of the decline of quality theater in Chicago. Earlier that year, other high-end theaters nearby, such as the Chicago Opera House and the Olympic, had already changed their programming to vaudeville, and there was a fear voiced in the local press that the popular vaudeville format would consume all other types of theater. The Schiller did not employ continuous presentation but had “only” two performances on stage per day: a matinee at 2 pm and an evening performance commencing at 8 pm.

The cinématographe, then, was the very first headliner for the Schiller Theatre as it shifted to vaudeville on Monday, September 13. Like the vitascope at Hopkins’, the cinématographe was the main act of the show. Whereas the general structure of vaudeville prescribes eight acts, the Schiller during its first week had at least ten acts on stage. The evening opened with Bessie Bonehill, a “character change artist.” Then came the dancing Hengler Sisters who, according to the advertisements, had arrived directly from London. Third was a whistler or siffleuse family act. The fourth act constituted three aerialists. Then, as the main act before the break, the Lumière cinématographe was shown. Subsequently, possibly after the break, there was a grotesque musical act, a “parodist,” a soprano from Venice, a cornet virtuo-
so, and, lastly, Sherman “the great”. All in all, the show bill constituted a typical variety of comedy, acrobatics, dancing, and music while light-opera or comic drama seems to have been missing.

Crucial for the viewer’s experiences with the newly introduced moving pictures was that the spatial and cultural context of the theater as well as the vaudeville system collectively constituted a familiar referential whole. It constituted a familiar ritual distinct from everyday routine, but still related to dominant ideological and moral conceptions. From a phenomenological standpoint, the spectator, as in ordinary perception, already anticipated what would appear and what would show up. In this respect, the subject’s relation to the world is always functionally defined. The spectator’s surroundings appear as an “always already interpreted world.” Every act, that is, every performing body or moving picture machine, thus appeared in terms of intentionality as an attractive vaudeville act.

Programmed as the main attraction on the bill, the moving picture attraction constituted a noteworthy and relevant entertainment. Audiences went to Hopkins’ South Side Theatre or to the Schiller Theatre with expectations. They might have been familiar with the theater and its interior, or this might have been their first time there. Meanwhile they were seated among other spectators. Individual spectators thereby became part of an audience that took part in a shared activity in which they focused joint attention on a collective intentional object. Collectively, the audience waited in anticipation for the surprising and exciting acts that would perform on stage. The Schiller’s interior was particularly designed to aim attention on the stage. The eight gigantic arches that stretched across the auditorium funneled the audience’s collective attention to the stage (Fig. 17 and Fig. 19, Chapter 2). Thus, audiences and their activity of collectively watching established moving pictures as a vaudeville act. The vitascope thereby gained meaning as part of vaudeville as a referential totality, even though it was in many respects a rather odd element in the program.

Experience and perception of the moving pictures was thus already marked by being included alongside dancing, acting, and singing bodies on stage. Yet, within this interpretive contact with the show, the cinema screen’s singularity might have functioned as a disruption of the operational functional vaudeville framework. Thus, the mere presentation of the screen on stage evoked a heightened sense of presence in experience. As mentioned above, the vaudeville format was formulaic: even though it was all about spectacle and surprises, the form of these surprises was relatively conservative. Basically all acts contained performers on stage. The moving images’ radical break with this practice, presenting a screen (and machine) in presence, and bodies and objects in absence, shifted attention to the materiality of the attraction as collectively experienced.

The collective audience effect was increased through the spatial organization of the theaters. The combination of the traditional horseshoe-shaped
auditorium and the moving picture machine that rattled at the back of the theater caused audiences to share their attention between the stage or screen and the auditorium. The special act of the Edison vitascope and Lumière cinématographe took place partly on stage, partly at the back of the auditorium, and partly in-between as the moving pictures “were thrown on the screen before the eyes of the audience.” Thus the distance between the apparatus and the pictures appearing on screen was an important element of the attraction. As audiences in the horseshoe-shaped balcony slightly faced each other, they became more aware of their fellow spectators and the effects of the attraction. Thereby this spatial organization could, as William Paul describes, “create a greater sense of intimacy in the audience as people were arrayed in a way that made them always aware of other viewers, marking the communal nature of the theatrical experience . . . central to its social function.” Thus the sense of being together in a theater space, while anticipating the act on stage (and in the back of the auditorium), collectively gave way to a shared experience of the vitascope as a vaudeville act.

What is important here is that moving pictures were part of a vaudeville show entailing an eclectic combination of comedy, drama, song, acrobatics, and dance. Some of these acts were narrative and some were more visually oriented, but the vaudeville variety show had a predominantly direct mode of address. All of the acts took place on stage, in the same time-space before the eyes of the observers. Traveling performers were there; their presence in town was published in the press and this was the audience’s unique opportunity to see them on stage. Moreover, all these acts centered very much on bodily performance. The actors were put on stage. The stage, in this respect, made these performing bodies relevant and present. To appear on the vaudeville stage was an act that attracted attention.

In terms of space, the vitascope and cinématographe constituted a significant break from the other vaudeville performances. The attraction appeared on the screen located at the front of the stage. But another part of the attraction happened throughout the auditorium. These elements of the moving picture spectacle—the screen, the machine, and the magical light force—were present in the auditorium. Yet, what was shown on screen referred to objects, streets, people, and performers that were not present in the theater. These objects projected on screen were present in their absence. Christian Metz explains this absence as the “double withdrawal” of cinematic representation compared to theater performance: Not only was the object distanced from the spectator by being on screen instead of on stage, the object or body projected was a “reduplication” in the sense that it constituted a recorded performance originating in a different time and place. The moving picture act thereby combined the direct mode of address of vaudeville with the more distant representational mode usually found in highbrow theater. Thereby, as will be discussed in the following sections, the screen itself, as well as the representation on screen, embodied the paradox of dis-
tance and nearness. On the one hand, it was about the *thereness* and the proximity of the attraction, while, at the same time, the moving pictures gave way to a distanced view.

**Moving pictures between stage and screen**

The screen was a pivotal part of the moving picture attraction. The concept of the screen quickly became synonymous with moving pictures in general. Yet, as Ian Christie reminds us, the screen was actually a rather late addition to moving picture technologies. Of course, there was a history of screen practices including the popular stereopticon and the magic lantern. Moving picture machines, such as the vitascope and the cinématographe, would eventually tie into that centuries-long history. However, the move from the kinetoscope’s peeping device to moving picture projection in a theater setting was, at least for Edison and his company, not a straight line. Hand devices and peeping practices were earlier, but after the introduction of projected moving pictures in theater settings, the screen became the focal point of attention although, ideally, the viewer looks *through* the screen and the canvas itself remains transparent. The screen, once functioning as a transparent window, constituted the position of the spectator at a distance to the world which was, as discussed in Chapter 1, in Timothy Mitchell’s words “rendered up as a thing to be viewed.” Thereby, as Robert Romanyshyn writes about the cinema screen as window:

> It establishes as a condition for perception a formal separation between a subject who sees the world and the world that is seen, and in so doing it sets the stage, as it were, for that retreat or withdrawal of the self from the world which characterizes the dawn of the modern age. Ensconced behind the window the self becomes an observing *subject*, a *spectator*, as against a world which becomes a *spectacle*, an object of vision.

The screen quickly became the focal point of what would become the cinematic *dispositif*. However, within the context of vaudeville theater the screen was anything but standard. The screen was anything but a transparent object. Although acrobats, aerials and even musical acts would use the space on stage creatively, none of these acts actually “closed” the stage by pulling up or rolling down a sheet. At both the Schiller and at the Hopkins theater, it is most likely that the canvas was located at the front of the stage. This reminds us of the original double meaning of the word “screen” as both an object of protection and a site for monstrosity.

In many ways the screen was the most present element of the moving picture attraction. Audiences were generally facing the screen and, although the machine at the back also demanded attention, the location of the canvas at
the very front of the stage gave the screen even more presence. The materiality of the screen was mentioned by reviewers. The Tribune, for example, described “a huge screen occupying the entire stage” as a literal eye-catcher at the first vitascope screening at the Hopkins theater. The Daily News came up with the term “stage screen,” suggesting a combination between the two elements. Thus, presumably, the screen itself was something noteworthy. Likewise, many descriptions drew attention to the fact that images are “thrown on the canvas,” just as the size of the pictures (“life-size” or “large as life”) was a frequent observation. Another journalist reviewing the show at the Schiller Theatre observes both the location of the canvas and the distance to the screen: “The pictures are projected upon the curtain at the front of the stage, some sixty feet away, large as life.” In January 1897, the curtain was even extended as the Advertiser and Amusement News noted: “the show curtain view takes in the full width of the stage, which makes the view even more realistic than ever.” Thereby the space and the screen were thus observable elements, things that audiences might have taken into account during these early screenings.

However, this emphasis on the materiality of the screen seems to work against the illusionary quality of the moving pictures. The paradox of these 1896 comments about the materiality of the screen is that they are usually followed by a celebration of what Anne Friedberg calls the “virtual immateriality” of the screen space. For example, immediately following the description of the “pictures thrown at the canvas before the eyes of the viewer,” the newspaper piece writes that what is actually presented on screen is not a picture but the very scene itself. Thus, a note on the materiality of the attraction was followed by a remark on the life-likeness of the picture. More specifically, these remarks outline how the two-dimensional screen turns into a space, a screen space. This is particularly how the vitascope was advertised by Raff and Gammon, who were responsible for the commercial exploitation of Edison’s moving picture device, promising, “When the machine is started by the operator, the bare canvas before the audience instantly becomes a stage.” Curiously enough, a local amusement publication talks about “pictures shown in the Cinematograph,” as if the moving picture machine constitutes a separate space that viewers look into. It seems that this creation of space and depth before the spectator’s eyes was celebrated as “a sort of stereopticon effect.” Some decades earlier, the stereopticon had been a popular improvement on the magic lantern. Its magnifying power and projection of photographs on glass gave way to a profoundly visceral experience of depth. The constitution of a three-dimensional, lived space on a flat surface was thereby key to Chicago’s early cinema experiences.

As Friedberg describes, the frame of the screen functions as a clear boundary between the materiality of the spectatorial space and the virtuality of the screen. Once activated as a window, the screen presupposes transparency, not necessarily immersion. Viewers look through the screen into a
virtual space. Thereby the moment of movement constituted the space as a lived space. Through movement and depth, the image was “fleshed out” before the spectator.70 What appears on screen, in the virtual space, promises relevance. Thereby, what is represented gains presence. As Lucas Introna and Fernando Ilharco observe: “Screens, in their screen-ness, often appear or confront us as promises to bring into being, to make visible, that which is relevant in that world (...) while simultaneously hiding their physical being behind that same relevance.”71 But the popular discourse around the introduction of the moving pictures indicates how close the materiality of the screen and the immateriality of the screen space were entangled. Even though there was a significant interest in the screen and the machine as artificially establishing the illusion of movement, a reviewer in the Tribune describes how the women in the boxes nearest to the screen “shrink and half rise from their seats instinctively to seek safety as the troop dashes toward them.”72 It seems as if this effect was particularly palpable to viewers seated in the front rows—those lacking sufficient distance—and, as has been observed in previous studies, women, children, and elderly people. It seems that without having the proper distance to the canvas, the boundary between the spectatorial space and the screen space could be transgressed.

There is another occasion, for example, that during screenings held on election night in 1896, “One old fellow who had come early and was seated in the front row of the gallery became so excited over the chances of the two contestants that when his enthusiasm was cut short suddenly by the disappearance of the actors from the suspended scene, his disappointment was audible to all who sat within a radius of a hundred yards.”73 Of course, we should not forget that these observations were written from the perspective of a meta-spectator. On a similar note, the Journal described The Suburban Handicap (Edison, 1896), a recording of the popular horse race in New Jersey exhibited during the second week of the vitascope at Hopkins’, as nearly transgressing the screen space and entering the auditorium: “the unruly ponies dashing down the village street and kicking up clouds of dust and turning just as they appear to leap over the footlights into the orchestra pit.”74 Yet this recurring trope of spatial transgression, akin to the approaching train, might nevertheless indicate how people took in both the immaterial space represented on screen while still acknowledging the materiality of the canvas in front of them.

Secondly, observations on the materiality of the screen functioned to emphasize the size of the pictures. The screen showed the outcome of a process of magnification in which the moving picture machine was involved. In contrast to the kinetoscope and other peeping devices, projected moving picture machines, such as the vitascope, the cinématographe and the magniscope, created a representation that was considered by reviewers as “life-size” or “large as life.” However, it remains questionable whether these claims of “life-size” concerned the materiality of the screen or the experience of the
pictures. The same newspaper clipping observes that the moving pictures were actually projected on “a huge screen occupying the entire stage.”\(^{75}\) As the framing of subjects differentiated between the scenes (including extreme long shots for street scenes and actualities, and medium shots in The Kiss from “The Widow Jones”), the size of the bodies represented on screen was subject to change as well.

Thereby, the screen was both experienced in its materiality as a flat surface as well as a temporary spatial extension of the theater stage. It might be argued that this latter function was privileged. Ideally, the screen became a transparent window causing a virtual three-dimensional screen space enabling the viewer’s absorption or immersion.\(^{76}\) In terms of phenomenology, we could state that the screen in this instance was, in Heideggerian terminology, “ready-to-hand” (zuhanden); through its function it became unnoticeable.\(^{77}\) Transparency was, in this sense, the screen’s distinctive kind of Being. As the viewer, in this ideal position, stared “through” the screen, the less the canvas appeared as a “Thing” and, following Heidegger’s argument, the more primordial the viewer’s relation became with the object of the screen.\(^{78}\) The screen thereby becomes equipment. The screen as transparent entity was defined by its assignment to represent a three-dimensional screen space. Once movement was established and virtual space was created through depth, the screen fulfilled its purpose. However, as Heidegger notes, the “ready-to-hand” has the “character of inconspicuous familiarity.”\(^{79}\) Within the context of its earliest vaudeville exhibitions, however, the moving picture screen presumably lacked the deep sense of familiarity that was necessary for transparency. Early cinema spectators, in turn, both experienced the materiality of the screen (i.e., the screenness of the screen) while watching through it.\(^{80}\) Thereby, the screen’s operation, its assignment, was obscured. Meanwhile the canvas gained a “presence-at-hand” (Vorhandenheit) as its materiality became noticeable and sensible.\(^{81}\) The screen appears as a “Thing” rather than in its function. In this process, Heidegger concludes, the “assignment” of the equipment becomes explicit while “[t]he context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection. With this totality, however the world announces itself.”\(^{82}\) The screen itself was nothing new; people were historically well equipped to deal with screens and projection. Yet a screen with well-lit moving pictures on it in the context of a (semi) darkened vaudeville theater was refreshing. Spectators, thereby, re-noticed the screen as a material object. And this shifting presence of the screen, this reappearance or “unveilment” of the screen in its materiality, constituted a “break” in the referential context of familiar, ritualized stage entertainment.\(^{83}\)

The early moving picture shows, then, constituted a play between different planes of presence. By merely appearing on the screen, represented objects and bodies gained relevance and presence. These objects did not just appear on a flat surface. Rather, they were presented in a virtual lived space
as the screen developed into an enclosed realm. As will be discussed in the following sections, the mere act of projection turned everyday people and objects into noteworthy phenomena while this process was obscured by the materiality of the screen. As argued above, within the context of vaudeville, the screen became a noteworthy object itself. The awareness of this materiality gave way to a heightened presence of the spatial and tangible surroundings. The theater, the screen, the machine, the light-beam, and fellow audience members were explicitly felt. Hence there was an interaction of presence on two distinct planes between the auditorium and the screen space.

Spatial constellations

The interaction or play between different planes of presence differs significantly from what has been described as the cinematic dispositif. Instead of immersion and identification with objects and people in the “there” of the screen space, these very early cinema shows actually exploited the discrepancy between “there” and “here,” a difference that constituted a part of the attraction of the vitascope and cinématographe. As I will outline in the following sections, this spatial dichotomy can be interpreted as giving way to aesthetic experiences of presence. The subsequent parts of this chapter consider three different spatial constellations involving the stage and the screen, indicating the kinematograph’s dynamic relation to space. These are: Bringing the distant near, bringing the near nearer, and distancing the near. Although the categories are presented in this chapter separately, they always, as I seek to outline in the next sections, appeared together, thereby evoking a constant negotiation of distance and proximity. While individual films are mentioned as examples within each category, these scenes always addressed, in a minor way, the other categories of distance.

From distance to proximity

Possibly one of the most striking promises of the newly-introduced moving pictures was to bring the distant near. Critics very early recognized that the kinematograph could show remote places. As William Uricchio’s studies demonstrate, recorded moving images were seen by some as a transitional step toward live broadcasting. Overcoming distance was a recurring trope throughout technological modernity. The kinematograph, in this respect, was related to communication devices such as telegraphy and the telephone. These different devices all afforded some kind of artificial or electronic presence. Particularly in the U.S., where Edison was a key figure associated with the invention of moving images, the trope of immediate visual communication was highly resonant. For moving picture machines such as the vitascope and the cinématographe, the ideal of a virtual presence could entail
two kinds of spatial relocation: either the viewer was virtually transported to the location of the scene, or the location of the scene was relocated to the auditorium. Especially the former has been discussed extensively in terms of immersion. The latter, the relocation of the scene to the auditorium, was closely related to Raff & Gammon’s announcement of the screen turning into a stage, as well as to Friedberg’s concept of virtual screen space.

As argued in the previous section, complete immersion in represented space was an unlikely option for the earliest film spectators. The spectatorial space of the auditorium and materiality of the screen were too evident for this. Besides, even cinema’s “founding myth” of the approaching train that terrified the spectators was not so much about complete realism and immersion as it was about “images from reality, which were different from reality” by way of the moving picture machine’s intervention. The ideal of being transported to a different location was occasionally mentioned in the press, for example, with the Niagara Falls films as a substitute for the real experience, but a more recurring notion was the opinion that the vitascope and the cinématographe could represent distant spaces and scenes. The Inter Ocean, for example, observed: “The public never seem to tire of its wonderful pictures. It is not surprising, as they are taken in every land and represent, with a realism which no word picture could, scenes and habits which the vast majority of this country have no opportunity of witnessing.” Moreover, at times, for example with the Corbett versus Courtney fight pictures, distance to the original location was stressed as a positive quality. The vitascope, in this manner, did “away with all the annoyances attendant upon an actual meeting of pugilistic start,” while it lets audiences witness the much-anticipated fight from a safe distance.

The distinction between American and European “views” was a recurring factor for both the vitascope and the cinématographe. With both devices it seems that European films were more popular. At Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, for example, European scenes were part of the main program whereas American film was projected in the “rustic garden.” Meanwhile there was, as will be discussed below, also a call by audiences to see American or even local scenes. Nevertheless, the popularity of European scenes possibly indicates that distance did indeed matter. Both American and European scenes were “realistic reproductions” of distant locations, such as Paris, New York, or a shore on the beach. Accordingly, sound helped to reinforce the effect of realism. These sounds seem to have been produced on stage behind the curtain or, otherwise, in the orchestra pit.

By bringing distant scenes “realistically” to the Chicago theaters, the newly-introduced moving pictures participated in the larger cultural enterprise of the “annihilation of time and space.” While the spectator was caught in the spatial paradox between the auditorium with the screen and the screen-space of the representation, s/he was also involved in an act of spatial simultaneity. Fundamental to the modern experience of space, Stephen Kern de-
fines simultaneity as “the sense of being in, or having access to, two or more places at the same time.”

More than transporting the viewer to another place (and time) by way of immersion or absorption, early cinema audiences were present at two places simultaneously. The spectator, as addressed above, divided her attention (or intention) between two planes of presence: the attraction of the screen and moving-picture machine, and the absent-presence of the objects in the screen-space. This simultaneity is related to Giddens’ notion of the dislocation of space and place. The local place, Hopkins’ theater or the Schiller in this respect, becomes infiltrated by the remote spaces causing a “phantasmagoric” experience of place.

In the very early years of cinema in Chicago, between 1896 and 1898, there were a few instances in which the “seeing across distance” element of moving pictures became the dominant focal point of the attraction. Bringing the distant near was key to the conception of media events. Media played a big part in the creation of national events by bridging space and place. Moving pictures enabled the local visual experience of remote political events, such as coronations and elections. The series of scenes produced for the Biograph by the American Mutoscope Company (by W.K.L. Dickson) recording the presidential candidate William McKinley at his home in Canton is an important reference in the Chicago context. *McKinley at Home* and *Parade, Canton, Ohio* were shown, after the elections, in November 1896 at the Columbia theater. The films were projected “sandwiched between the second and the third act,” as part of Palmer Cox’s Brownies spectacular variety show. Audiences responded to the moving pictures of the president-elect cheering and singing. In March, the following year, the scenes were also part of the American Biograph show at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre. Again, the McKinley scenes constituted the headliner of the program.

The pro-filmic location of these scenes was, I believe, an important element of their attraction. In both films, McKinley and his supporters were shown in a particular space that clearly was not Chicago. Recorded on the lawn outside his home, and at his hometown Canton, the distance to the Chicago theater added a veneer of authenticity to the representation. The presidential candidate could now be shown in his natural environment. The *Evening Post* noted that the film showed McKinley reading telegrams on his porch, possibly indicating a form of communication between separate places. Charles Musser observes: “McKinley’s virtual self served as a surrogate for his absent self. His absent presence could miraculously appear on stage (on screen) at the front of the theater, acting as a relay between the man in Canton and the spectators in the theater.” Hence the distant figure of McKinley was brought into proximity. Writing well after the elections, a Philadelphia reviewer observed that “President McKinley visits Philadelphia thrice a day, via the biograph, at Keith’s.” Contrary to an immersive experience in which viewers would be virtually relocated to McKinley’s home in Canton, the spatial presentation of these pictures was more complex as the
space of spectatorship and the space of representation appeared simultaneously. Reviewing a press screening of the films a pro-McKinley New York newspaper was particularly struck by the presentation of space on screen. Describing the pictures of the parade, the reviewer writes:

They [the paraders] will advance down the stage, apparently to walk over the footlights; they will march across and back, then turn and march back until they seem to be lost in the distance, and so deep will be the vista that it will look as though the entire back of the stage had been taken out.\(^98\)

Musser cites \textit{The New York Tribune}'s coverage of a screening, stating that “it was as if the audience has been transported to Canton and at the same time McKinley had been transported to Hammerstein’s Olympia.”\(^99\) Thus the location of the Although none of the Chicago sources mentions anything like a virtual transportation to McKinley’s garden, the films indeed left a big impression on audiences.\(^100\)

It could be argued that all actualities performed this function of media events bridging time and space.\(^101\) But the 1896 vitascope and cinématographe exhibitions only showed a very limited number of major news events. However, after the attraction of moving pictures slowly faded away in the latter half of 1897, 1898 saw an increase of moving picture popularity precisely because of a media event. With the Spanish-American War of 1898, “the motion-picture industry discovered a new role and exploited it . . . revealing the new medium’s ideological and propagandistic force in the post-novelty era.”\(^102\) These “Cuban war films” functioned, somewhat similar to \textit{McKinley at Home}, as bringing a distant political event to local Chicago theaters. Again, Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, in particular, exploited the revitalized interest in the moving pictures after its novelty period in the summer season of 1898. In June, July, and August, Hopkins programmed his vaudeville programs after the patriotism surrounding the war.

Since the spring of 1897, the Biograph was on and off the bill at Hopkins’. In June 1898, the Biograph’s war pictures constituted a stable attraction. From the fourth of July week onward, he let the stock company play a different “Cuban drama” or “Naval drama” almost every week. These dramas were popular across town, to the extent that for a brief period of time they constituted their own genre. “Patriotic vaudeville bills” were playing at all major vaudeville houses. Plays like “Old Glory”, “The Flag of Truce”, and “Heroes of ‘98” were performed on stage at Hopkins’.\(^103\) This combination of drama and moving pictures representing the same event is, of course, relevant in terms of intermediality. It echoes the patriotism on stage and on screen at Grünkorn’s fairground shows discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. “Heroes of ’98” in particular might have been a hybrid performance in which moving pictures were included in the play.\(^104\) This was an
original Hopkins’ South Side production that went on tour through the region in the following month.  

Both in “Heroes of ’98” as well as in the other programs combining live action with war films, this intermedial combination created new opportunities to arouse audiences. It seems, for example, that the Biograph war films were seen as authentic “pictures from the war” whereas the drama added “a degree of romantic sentiment and patriotic spirit tending to lend an entertaining and inspiring effectiveness.” The moving pictures, in this respect, functioned as a visual newspaper acting as a witness to the events of the war. Or, on another occasion, the war pictures functioned as a visual postcard when it was announced that one of the scenes featured “our Chicago boys at the front, the Second regiment of the Illinois volunteers engaging in field evolutions and passing in review.” Thus, the moving pictures had a very specific spatial function as these scenes brought the actual location of the war, the front, to the Chicago theaters. The drama, in turn, could make up for the lack of action by delivering catharsis. Audiences were very responsive to this combination of film and drama. First the playlet was performed, immediately followed by the Biograph war scenes. There was an accumulative effect of emotions. The Evening Post wrote: “The war scenes reproduced by the biograph have aroused the most intense enthusiasm.” Once again, Hopkins’ South Side Theatre became a well-known, unique location for these patriotic sensations, leading to “enthusiastic demonstrations” among the collective viewers. Yet, in August, when the war craze was almost over, Hopkins was accused of exploiting the audience’s patriotism. In any case, the moving pictures successfully communicated the distant war to local Chicago theaters.

The combination of drama with war films gave yet another dimension to spatial negotiation between distance and nearness. Both forms mediated different steps between the distant war and the spectator’s surroundings. Compared to the dramatic performances by live actors portraying war scenes on stage in the immediate presence of spectators, the Biograph scenes must have looked more distant. As mentioned, the playlets were seen as emotionally engaging whereas the film scenes were about “realistic reproduction” and “genuine views of scenes of actual warfare.” Still, the moving pictures’ efforts to represent the war “faithfully” was seen as a unique quality of the Biograph. Thus, again, there were different plains of presence involved in representing the same event: The immediate presence of the actors on stage, the collective sensorial celebration of patriotism in the auditorium while audiences were “aroused,” the materiality of the Biograph projector and the screen occupying the stage, and the front represented in the projected moving pictures.
Bringing the near nearer

Bringing distant events, people, and objects into (experiential) proximity was not the only spatial re-negotiation presented by the kinematograph. As in other locations, there was an almost immediate urge with Chicago audiences to see themselves on film and to see their local space represented. Hence there was both a fascination for the distant and for the near, as long as it was being projected by these novel moving picture machines. Coverage of the cinématographe’s first weeks at the Schiller Theatre, for example, celebrates first how the machine almost perfectly represents remote locations that would otherwise remain inaccessible to local audiences, before promising potential readers that the attraction might become even more spectacular when the local films shot by Alexandre Promio, the Lumière’s leading cameraman, will return to town. The writer anticipates that these scenes will be shown in Chicago shortly, a claim that is repeated over the course of months as the local pictures possibly did not make it to Chicago before the cinématographe disappeared from the program.

This indicates that the audience’s fascination with space was multivalent; viewers wanted to see both distant, exotic locations as well as local and familiar places and faces. This also relates to coverage of Edison’s vitascope, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that also proclaimed: “the more the [sic.] familiar the pictures are presented the more incredible and bewildering becomes this triumphal achievement of the wizard.” During the first stint of the vitascope at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre between July and November 1896, there was also a recurring anticipation for local pictures. However, local films never seem to have made it to Chicago theaters during this first novelty period. In fact, Edison did shoot street scenes in the city, but these are dated as July 1897. James White and William Heise recorded for Edison the corner of Madison and State Street and an electric trolley. Subsequently, in 1898, the American Mutoscope Company filmed A Chicago Street (1898), “a view in front of one of the big department stores on State Street during a busy shopping hour,” for their Biograph. Meanwhile, based near Chicago in Waukegan, Edward Amet was the most locally-oriented film pioneer. From the fall of 1896, Amet (financially backed by George Spoor) focused on film production and the exploitation of his Magniscope. Already in the spring of 1897, Amet recorded local scenes in the streets of Chicago, as discussed more extensively in the previous chapter. Yet, unfortunately, there is no coverage of local audiences’ reception of these Chicago street scenes.

The popularity of local pictures indicates that a fair part of the moving picture attraction involved the promise of recognition and familiarity. As outlined above, recognition was also included in some of the Biograph was films. More generally, experiences of recognition were evoked through the representation of everyday, familiar places on screen. In the flow of everyday life, these streets, places and people were “unnoticeable”; after all, in
daily life people approach their surroundings in terms of actions and intentionality. Surroundings are defined by what we can do with them, what they mean to the subject. However, once projected, these normal, mundane spaces were defamiliarized and became extraordinary. The screen made these places relevant. By being on the screen, spaces, people, and objects gained attention. By being reestablished as a screen-space, the locations gained a different presence; they became present-at-hand (vorhanden) and noticeable. Again, we should emphasize that in this constellation of early cinematic space, the viewer was equally confronted with the materiality of the screen, and, thereby, was still involved in a play with different presences.

Next to local films, a direct formal presentation of bringing the near nearer was found in the size of the pictures. As mentioned, the canvas at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre as well as at the Schiller Theatre covered the complete stage. Even though the pictures were celebrated for their “life-size” it seems more likely that, once projected, represented objects must often have appeared larger than life. Next to speed, moving picture machines were heralded frequently for their magnifying power. Projection turned postage-stamp-sized photographs into stage-filling, attention-demanding representations. Moreover, the framing of objects and performances differed significantly between the scenes that were projected. For example, the first week’s screenings with the vitascope at Hopkins’ included Niagara Falls, Gorge (Edison, 1896) and Herald Square, NY (Edison, 1896) in extreme long shot, Annabelle Serpentine Dance (Edison, 1894) and Band Drill (Edison, 1894) in long shot, and The Kiss in medium close-up. Meanwhile, the popular Rough Sea at Dover (R.W. Paul, 1895) was described as “the immense billows come sweeping in and the spray dashes high into the air.” The Lumière’s cinématographe show at Schiller, in turn, exploited depth in the image. As addressed in the previous chapter, Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers (Lumière, 1896), arguably the most popular cinématographe scene at the time, played with depth and scale. The regiment started as small dots on the horizon but, while approaching the camera, ended up in medium shot. The soldiers and horses thus ended up as huge objects on screen. In both instances, with the vitascope as well as with the cinématographe show, there was a constant shifting of scale: Sizes of bodies on screen was a point of measuring the scale and experiencing depth of field. Within the contexts of these local vaudeville shows, shifts of scale were unique to projected moving images. On the vaudeville stage, performative bodies could appear in many sizes, but they were never as magnified or enframed as with the moving pictures. It can be argued that it is precisely the shifting relation of scale that recurs as a constant appeal throughout many (novel) screen devices.

This process of magnification and enframing brought objects virtually closer to the viewer. Through magnification details were visible that otherwise would remain indistinct. This explains the enthusiasm for the “faithful-
ness of detail” surrounding the vitascope. Details such as leaves, dashes of water, or clouds of dust after a pony race, were addressed as adding to the realistic quality of the pictures. But also bodily details were important. The *Inter Ocean* remarked that *The Kiss* was “presented in all the startling distinctness of the original, with the exception of a pantomimic process which renders it even more ludicrous than the original.” The vitascope reproduction of the popular “The Widow Jones” scene let audiences examine the bodily performance of the actors in detail, a process that was impossible to comprehend when performed on stage. The *Journal* observed: “In the reproduction of the ludicrous kissing scene between May Irwin and John C. Rice in ‘The Widow Jones,’ one can almost distinguish the words themselves that the actors are speaking, so distinct and realistic is every detail of motion and facial expression.” Although these performing bodies were distanced by being part of the virtual screen space, they nevertheless appeared to the spectator as being in close proximity.

Distancing the near

Whereas the moving picture adaptation *The Kiss* brought audiences virtually closer to the spectacle of the bodily performance (and the erotic event), on screen the actors also appeared more abstract and distanced. Thus the experience of the moving pictures relates to the general experience of modernity as described by Walter Benjamin and others in terms of the “paradoxical entwinement of distance and closeness.” There occurs a fascination for the haptic nearness of things experienced as sensations, while the omnipresence of images proclaim distantiation through vision. Or, as Miriam Hansen summarizes Benjamin’s notion of the aura in relation to film: “For cinema has the power to increase the haptic impact of material objects and events, to bring the viewer closer to them than possible in ordinary perception, but only on the condition of technological mediation, which affords the viewer distance and protection from the actual phenomena.”

On the one hand, the performances reproduced on the vitascope appeared closer than ever. Yet, at the same time, the mediation caused an unbridgeable distance. The remark about the “pantomimic process” is vital in this respect. The reviewer compares the two versions, live and on film, and concludes that the vitascope scene actually adds something: the “pantomimic process” makes the scene “more ludicrous.” Pantomime, in this respect, seems to refer to two elements of the film: the silence of the pictures and the framing in medium close-up. The framing, as argued above, placed viewers closer to the performers, yet this nearing was only virtual as the actors appeared in a different space. This distance to the performance was emphasized by the silence of the pictures. There might have been sound effects, or even music, but this did not originate from the diegetic world. In the absence of speech,
the sole drama relied on the bodily performances of John C. Rice and May Irwin.

Pantomime around the turn of the century, as Tami Williams explains, was understood as the silent art of abstraction. The lack of sound was not hidden but foregrounded in the art form. Cinema’s earliest moving pictures did something similar. On-screen projections of muted talking mouths, for example, emphasized, according to Jonathan Auerbach, the scenes as bodily performances. The attraction of The Kiss thus partly centered on abstraction and silence. Not coincidentally, similar remarks involving the art of pantomime were also voiced in the reception of the scenes Band Drill (Edison, 1894) and Finale of First Act, Hoyt’s ‘Milk White Flag’ (Edison, 1894). As a newspaper observed: “the actors and actresses made their entrances and exits and went through the pantomime of their parts perfectly and naturally.” Another newspaper celebrated the scene simply because “a couple of dozen people appeared.” Hence, walking in and out of the frame, the appearance and disappearance of the bodies on screen was a key attraction in this instance. The two scenes from “A Milk White Flag” were both framed in long shot, thereby including the full-length bodies of the performers. Thus, details and gestures were less evident. What all these Edison scenes had in common was the lack of background. Originally produced for the kinetoscope in 1894, these scenes were all shot against a black background in Edison’s Black Maria studio. Without any scenery, the screen bodies stood out as they became the sole focus of the spectator’s attention. Hence, as with The Kiss, the actors’ bodies, movements and gestures, in absence of sound and scenery while enframed in a dark screen space, became the focal point for the drama.

To most Chicago audiences present at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, The Kiss, Band Drill and Finale of First Act involved a fair degree of recognition and familiarity. Both Charles Hoyt’s “A Milk White Flag” and John McNally’s “The Widow Jones” were extremely popular musical comedies. Chicago’s Grand Opera-House, a quality place for light opera, was a venue generally associated with the popular Hoyt. Between 1894 and 1896, “A Milk White Flag” was performed on three occasions, playing every time for multiple weeks in a row. In 1896, while the scenes were still popular as moving pictures, the stage performance of “A Milk White Flag” was revised and updated as it premiered in Hoyt’s presence at the Grand Opera-House. “The Widow Jones,” in turn, was performed in 1896 on two occasions at the Columbia Theatre. Therefore, audiences were well-equipped to compare the stage and the screen versions. It is unlikely that the short film reproductions could replace the complete drama of these comedies. Rather, the vitascope reproductions aimed at showing the particularity of moving images by presenting very familiar scenes on screen. By way of this familiarity and recognizability, scenes such as The Kiss embodied the processes of abstraction and distancing involved in moving pictures.
In her phenomenological theory on acting, Vivian Sobchack compares the functions of bodies on stage and on screen. With stage acting, the body functions more metaphorically as a substitute for higher ideas. Sobchack categorizes this as the “personified body”; the body functions through big gestures to communicate meaning, knowledge, and higher ideas in a very clear way. The spatial distance between the stage and the spectator requires this type of body. The screen body, on the other hand, involves a fair amount of the “prepersonal body” and the “personal body”. Prepersonal, in this sense, means the material ground of the acting body, involving preconscious behavior like rhythms, jerky movements, tics and so forth. While these are still to a fair degree culturally habituated, these elements communicate “vitality affects” signifying aliveness and the presence of the body. The personal body, in turn, means the screen actor’s capacity to be conscious of these functions and to use them in his/her acting persona. Sobchack proposes that while the screen body appears in the lived screen space, and thereby does not share the same time-space with the viewer, the body on screen becomes more available and more material than a body on stage.

Sobchack’s theory seems counterintuitive; she argues that the screen body is more available and is thereby not spatially removed. Her point demonstrates the experiential complexity of distancing the near. It is not unrelated to Benjamin’s belief that the camera lets the subject appear in a new, and possibly more honest, way, contributing to an “aesthetics of unveiling.” The pantomime comments concerning The Kiss, Band Drill, and Final of First Act illustrate what Sobchack theorizes. Compared to the comedy performances on stage, the acting bodies appearing in the vitascope projection gained a different presence. On screen the performance became more physically oriented when exhibiting bodily movements, details and gestures. Thereby, instead of communicating a higher idea or meaning, on screen the materiality and vitality of the body was foregrounded. Hence the projected bodies were monstrated, to borrow Jean-Luc Nancy’s terminology. Turned into pictures, by way of abstraction, the actors’ bodies lost their presence-at-hand (as Vorhandenheit) but gained an intense presence (as Gegenwärigkeit) in terms of attention. Thereby, the effect of this abstraction and distancing is, quite paradoxically, an intimacy. This intimacy differed, however, from the intimacy present in theater as the latter relied on the co-presence of spectators and actors. Contemporary critics, therefore, described film as mere “canned theater.” Cinema, in this view, marked the removal of the actor’s performance from realm the spectator. The phenomenological intimacy of presence that Nancy describes, on the contrary, aligns to, for example, Jean Epstein’s concept of photogénie as the capturing and uncovering of the “mobile and personal aspects of things, beings, and souls.” Thus the intimacy of the pictured/projected body is, by way of its filmic abstraction, foregrounding a special vitality of a body in the world. This is vitality that appears in relation to the spectator but is not depending on him/her.
Again, these complex processes of distancing the near were not limited to the reproductions of stage performances. Rather, it is essential to all cinematic (re)presentations, or, as Benjamin outlines, all technological mediation. Nevertheless, some early scenes and genres foregrounded these spatial alterations thereby exhibiting cinematic mediation. Local films are a case in point. An implicit promise of these films was that audience members had a chance to recognize friends and relatives, or even better, to see oneself in the moving pictures. Being part of the crowd thus meant that one could be photographed with or without notice. This pleasure of recognizing members in the crowd, or even seeing oneself within the crowd, was actually a pleasure of seeing seeing, of generating a different spatial relation to the other or to the self as a visual object. Thus, again, we find a process of distancing; distancing from the self or distancing from the crowd of which one is a part.

Hybrid performances and the play for presences

The paradoxical yet coinciding spatial relations described above—bringing the distant near, nearing the near, and distancing the near—were thus involved in all moving picture presentations. However, one could argue that in hybrid performances these categories appeared most strikingly. Hybrid performances, after all, actively experimented with novel spatial constellations that moving pictures enabled. During the early years of the kinematoscope, hybrid performances hardly ever took place in the context vaudeville. Due to its modular format, vaudeville acts were rather segregated. Still, a couple of relevant hybrid performances appeared in Chicago theaters in 1896, 1897, and 1898.

Early performances

The eidoloscope, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, established a fairly unsuccessful start for the exhibition of moving pictures in Chicago. By 1896, the Lathams were still trying to turn their business into a success. Their main attraction at the time was their extensive scene Bullfight, which was presumably recorded in Mexico in March 1896. However, despite their attempts, by the fall of 1896 the Lathams’ moving picture business was sold to Raff & Gammon, who were commercially exploiting the vitascope. The eidoloscope projectors were sold. One projector with a copy of Bullfight ended up with a touring company that performed a version of “Carmen” on stage. In November 1896, this marked the first instance of a hybrid performance in the U.S. as the theater company embedded the bullfight scenes in their show. This hybrid version of “Carmen” had a successful six-month
run throughout many American cities, but it did not reach the metropolitan cities of New York, Chicago, and Boston.

The first hybrid stage and screen production in Chicago was performed at Lincoln Theatre in November 1896. This was “The County Fair,” a play originally written in 1888, but revised and presented in a new version. The climax of this play was a race scene featuring real horses on a treadmill. During the race scene, a vitascope was used to project images as scenery or background. Anticipating the play, the Journal wrote: “The race scene will, it is promised, be as realistic and exciting as ever, and the husky scene in the barn will be enlivened with special features.” It was never specified in the local press notice what these special features entailed. Reviews of the show were not published, possibly due to the marginal status of the Lincoln Theatre in Chicago’s theater scene. In any case, the use of the vitascope for scenery was a continuation of the employment of a moving panorama to create the sense of speed. This panorama-treadmill combination, initiated with the 1889 performance of “The County Fair,” became known as “racing machines.” Although the vitascope presented a novelty, it seems that, compared with the painted moving panorama, moving pictures were not as successful in arousing a realistic sensation of speed.

“The Good Mr Best”

A more successful hybrid performance in Chicago was “The Good Mr Best.” This was a farce comedy performed by a “combination company” (the Rich & Harris’ Great Comedy Company) at the Grand Opera-House on October 10, 1897. According to Chicago Tribune the show offered “an abundance of fun, music, pretty girls combined with a breezy plot to make up a pleasant evening.” There were many tricks involved in this play, such as a mechanical staircase. According to a review in the Inter Ocean the play reached such a low level of “deep laughter” that it reached the level of vaudeville, dubbing the performance “The Good Mr Worse.” Not only did “The Good Mr Best” include a hybrid performance of stage and screen, the particular hybrid scene entailed a form of interaction between live actors and the moving picture scene.

Whereas moving pictures were previously a “subject foreign to the play,” with “The Good Mr Best” it was noted that “they not only assist in the development of the plot, but are necessary to it.” The characters actually appeared simultaneously on stage and on screen. In the last act of the play, the main character walks into the room while wondering what his wife might be up to at the moment. As he accidentally switches off the electric light, a moving picture scene starts in which he and the audience see, presumably, ‘live’ coverage of what his wife is up to at that moment. After the scene, another character enters and when he accidentally switches off the light another moving picture scene starts, before the process is repeated for a third
time. Newspaper reviewers particularly remarked that the characters on screen were the same as those on stage. In terms of narrative, the scene is a typical example of the voyeuristic fantasy of seeing at a distance. This fantasy is technically played out in a way that reminds us of the use of split-screen in twentieth-century cinema. “The Good Mr Best” thereby anticipated, through cross-cutting, innovations in early cinema such as superimposition that were used simultaneously to represent two separate locations. Within the hybrid performance of “The Good Mr Best,” moving pictures were used to depict two separate spaces, one on screen and one on stage, that were unified in time. In that manner, the play tied into a wider fascination for space-binding technologies such as the telephone and telegraphy.

The audience’s appreciation of this trick, or at least that part of the reception that appeared in the newspapers, shows a contradictory response. According to some, the trick with the cinématographe was received by audiences with applause. It was the highlight of the evening but critics were fairly negative. The Weekly Amusement Guide summarized: “‘The Good Mr Best’ will continue his evil way of doing good or his good way of doing evil, as you wish to call it, at the Grand for another week. The piece elicited no end of criticism of various kinds, but the audiences who have packed the theater at every performance have been pretty well satisfied.” The Chicago Journal, for example, wrote that the play marked “the limit of triviality.” The newspaper even concluded that with “The Good Mr Best” and previous unsuccessful shows, the Grand Opera-House damaged its perfect reputation. Similarly, a New York review (where it was staged a few months before its Chicago premiere) remarked that the cinématographe scenes marked the height of the vulgarity of the play. Although this commentary fails to specify the nature of the vulgarity (it does not seem that there was anything disturbing going on in the projected scenes), we could guess that it had something to do with the act of secretly gazing upon other individuals. In any case, the contradictory responses to the trick with live and projected actors shows that it made an impact by arousing audiences in various ways. The play was staged for two weeks and some reviewers were happy that the play moved to another town.

The moving-picture trick presented in “The Good Mr Best” entails all three spatial constellations. It draws on the tele-vision fantasy of seeing across distance where space is bridged and the distant becomes accessible. There is also a distancing of the near: Actors present on stage, not only constituted a presence on stage, but the introduction of the screen in the play added another spatial constellation since the material presence of the screen, not a standard feature on the drama stage, especially at the Opera-House, potentially disrupted the diegetic illusion of the stage space. When the actors re-appeared on the screen, their bodies were distanced before the viewer’s eyes. Following Sobchack, we can conclude that they gained a more physical and material presence. Subsequently, the motion-picture trick in the play
also constituted a nearing of the near since the moving pictures focused on the acting that was already performed on stage. In doing so, the materiality of the presentation was foregrounded; the inclusion of the screen and the moving picture machine destabilized the functional relation between the audience and the performance.

“Chattanooga”

The third hybrid stage-and-screen performance in Chicago appeared on stage at the Columbia Theater in June 1898. This hybrid performance slightly preceded the stage-and-screen production featuring the Spanish-American War at Hopkins’ in July discussed above. “Chattanooga,” the performance at the Columbia Theatre, also presented a war story but this time it was about the Civil War. Written by Lincoln J. Carter, a local playwright and innovator, the play depicted the heroic event of a Confederate railroad engineer who tries to regain control over his stolen train. The locomotive, nicknamed “The General,” had been exhibited at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, while the legend would later feature in Buster Keaton’s masterpiece. The play’s climactic chase scene made use of projected moving pictures with live actors in front of the screen. Using an original phantom ride scene, the lead actors were shown as if they were fighting “aboard the locomotive as it appeared to hurtle forward along its track, unmanned, into the depth of the moving-picture setting upstage while the motion of the filmed scenery sped towards the spectators.”

Similar to “The County Fair,” moving pictures were used to evoke the experience of movement in the scenery. Yet “Chattanooga” was exceptional in its creation of depth. As Waltz observes: “it was space that the actors appeared to penetrate—a breakthrough illusion of ‘limitless’ depth in which stage action could occur, as if the outside world were funneled forward onto the stage through the screen at the back of the theatre.”

What was also mentioned in the local press was that the scenery pictures were taken “from actual localities.” Thereby the suggestion was raised by these press notices that, in contrast to theater productions with painted scenery, the scenery of “Chattanooga” brought, to some extent, the Tennessee location to the Chicago stage.

In contrast to “The Good Mr Best,” “Chattanooga” did not feature actors on screen. Functioning as scenery, the moving pictures solely represented a moving landscape recorded from a train. The motion picture scenery, thereby, functioned to bring the distant location to the theater stage. In this manner, the historical aura of the original location was resurrected on the Columbia Theater’s stage. Still, there is no mention of immersion or “being there.” Rather, the historical location was re-established in the stage-space. What is more, Lincoln J. Carter actually wanted to bring the depth of the cinematograph image to the stage. By way of motion and depth, “Chattanooga” tried to evoke the feeling of the lived screen-space in a stage perfor-
mance. It remains questionable how successful Carter’s attempt was. With its extensive production, “Chattanooga” seemed to aim for a full summer season at the Columbia. Yet, against Lincoln’s own wish, complaining that he did not get a fair chance, the Columbia closed for the summer season “after two unprofitable weeks.” Only after its closure, the *Times-Herald* came out with a bad review, writing that Carter possessed “no finesse or technical skill, he was unable to drag these fragments together in a workmanlike manner. The result was a degree of incoherence and inconsequence which has seldom been equaled.” Hence, according to the review, the techniques of representation were not transparent as they canceled out the illusion of the performance. Instead, as mentioned above, both the stage and the screen became noticeable. The scenery screens, on which the moving pictures were presented in the fourth and final act, lost their primary function; from ready-at-hand these techniques of representation became present-at-hand.

The harsh criticism voiced in the *Times-Herald* review can be read as mere conventionalism. The piece concludes that “his play will never appeal to high-class audiences.” But there is also a formal critique in these comments, as the writer mentions an incoherence of time and space that actually works against the claims of historical truthfulness with regard to the scenery. This incoherence, then, seems particularly cinematic. After all, moving picture attractions, especially up until that point in 1898, were marked by fragmentation and spatial inconsistency. A twenty-minute cinematograph show could present images from different continents, entailing fiction and actualities, while projection was done at various speeds. Thus, in terms of spatial configuration, “Chattanooga” might have been too cinematic to be on stage.

Like the broad variety of moving pictures projected during the earliest vitascope and cinematograph shows, the hybrid performances discussed above indicate a continual experimentation with different spatial constellations that the moving pictures afforded. “Chattanooga,” as well as Hopkins’ Cuban war play “Heroes of ’98,” used moving images to recreate the “authentic” distant location on stage. The eidoscope’s bullfight pictures included in “Carmen” can also be seen as an effort to bring an “authentic” Mexican bullfight on stage. “The Good Mr Best,” on the contrary, signifies an experiment in which stage and screen bodies were contrasted, representing modernity’s spatial notion of simultaneity. Thereby all of these hybrid performances involved a renegotiation of space from a modern perspective; either as an extension of space (bringing the distant location on stage) or as a “doubling” of space (simultaneity). All of these plays received mixed to negative responses. This indicates that, generally speaking, spatial experimentation by way of the moving picture machine and the screen was a difficult enterprise. As outlined in the sections on vaudeville and the screen, moving pictures were not immediately “at home” in the theater. The spatial play with presences was accepted in the fragmented, modular vaudeville format, but it proved
nearly impossible to incorporate moving pictures into the stage-theater experience.

A play for presence(s), by way of conclusion

In September 1896, while the vitascope was still the venue’s main attraction and *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (often mistaken for Loie Fuller’s performance) had been a key part to that success, Hopkins programmed Papinta as the first headliner after the moving pictures. Papinta’s performance was remarkably similar to the projected serpentine dance. Immediately she was nicknamed “La Loie’s dearest enemy.”\(^\text{164}\) The *Times-Herald* observed: “A more picturesque and exquisite combination of colors, graceful motion and beautiful effects can scarce be imagined than those offered in the so-called ‘myriad’ dances of Papinta.”\(^\text{165}\) Although none of the newspapers compared Papinta’s serpentine dance explicitly with the vitascope scene, it remains striking that the live performance followed the moving pictures at such a short notice. The vitascope act and the serpentine dance shared some characteristics: Both were drawing upon novel technologies of light and electricity, and, of course, both performances centered on bodily motion. Although there were enough differences between the two versions—one review praises Papinta for her modest personality during the performance, indicating an interaction with the audience that was impossible with the vitascope—the serpentine dances nonetheless demonstrate how moving pictures were drawing upon overly familiar bodily performances. Subsequently, it shows how moving pictures presented a different spatial relation and thereby constituted a different presence. While the moving picture representation could move closer to the actor’s performance the bodily co-presence of spectators and actors was with the early cinema attraction temporarily substituted for an absence in presence.

In this chapter I have outlined the multivalent and complex interplay of live performance and screen bodies in the vaudeville context of Chicago. These different relations between stage and screen performance can be seen as renegotiations of space and place. Thereby, cinema’s earliest viewing experiences were marked by heightened presence effects: It was not the just the on-screen representation that caused aesthetic experiences but rather the overall constellation of moving pictures as spatial intervention in the context of stage performance. The newly-introduced moving pictures, either as a hybrid performance or as a vaudeville act, presented audiences with a paradox of distance and proximity, while the materiality of the screen in front of the stage and the moving picture machine at the back of the auditorium established a particular spatial renegotiation of the theater space. In this situa-
tional framework, the screen attraction gained a heightened sense of presence. This intermedial dimension is similar to the sensuous multivalent experience discussed in Chapter 1, in which the materiality of the attraction surfaced as an effect of early cinema’s various relations to other attractions. The screen, in the Chicago theaters, was at once a transparent window establishing a lived screen space and at the same time materially perceived as a flat, white, canvas surface.

While hybrid performances delivered the most direct manifestation of these experiments, cinématographe and vitascope exhibitions offered a wide range of renegotiations of theater and screen space. The attraction of early cinema, therefore, should be seen as a fascination for a “play with presences.” The attraction of the moving images, as we have seen, presented simultaneously distance and nearness, as well as presence and absence. The different planes of presence were not suppressed, as the cinematic dispositif in the twentieth century would come to institute. Rather, discrepancies between “here” and “there” and between spatially absent but perceptually present were highlighted and appreciated. This was a play in the sense that it was “performance-oriented”; satisfaction, pleasure, or thrill was found in the play with presences itself and not in a particular goal outside that process. Thereby, it was also a play for presence, with the purpose to feel different modes of presence and to experience the materiality of existence; to feel different forms of touch, to feel different forms of nearness. This, then, was one of the aesthetic potentials of the newly-introduced projected moving pictures.

Meaning, as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht outlines, is time-based. Meaning takes time to develop as an aesthetic object takes time to be understood. Presence, on the contrary, is spatial. It concerns the subject’s primordial spatial relation to the world. Furthermore, in terms of phenomenology, space is always conceived functionally, in its relation with the subject, and not as a geometrical entity: “Space is a feature of the ready-to-hand, and not an empty container which can subsequently be filled with objects. It is only when our practical dealings are disturbed that we notice mere space.” The newly introduced moving pictures, we can conclude at this point, presented the spectator with such a distortion vis-à-vis practical space. In the context of the vaudeville theaters such as Hopkins’ South Side and the Schiller, the vitascope and the cinematographe were odd attractions, both materially as well as through their different spatial constellations. The effect was an experience that playfully centered on presence.

My analysis is based on a distinct spatial analysis of downtown Chicago and the vaudeville theaters where the Edison vitascope and the Lumière cinématographe premiered. The play for presences outlined above, therefore, might have surfaced in differed forms at other instances. Like the sensuous experiences of movement and rhythm discussed in Chapter 2, these experiences of spatial presence were also, to some extent, embedded in the medi-
um-specificity of cinema. The two-dimensionality of the screen and the three-dimensionality of the virtual screen space, for example, would come to constitute a recurring trope in classical (postwar) film theory. Meanwhile, the different spatial constellations that moving pictures presented were related to the changing experience of space in modernity. Cinema in its novelty period, thereby, became an epistemological and a sensory counterpart to modern experience. 

Early cinema presented, as discussed in Chapter 2, a sensuous experience of movement and rhythm that was existentially related to everyday perception. It did something similar in terms of space: moving between distance and nearness, and between “here” and “there,” moving pictures presented an experience that circulated around presence and absence. Thereby, it corresponded to what Miriam Hansen defines as cinema’s unique quality “to provide, to a mass audience both at home and abroad, a sensory-reflexive horizon for the experience of modernization and modernity.” 

It did so not just by showing people their world on screen, but, rather, by presenting different constellations of space and different experiences of material and virtual presence. Space was, thereby, presented in its materiality, as constative to human existence in modernity. However, what this approach equally demonstrated was that audiences were not just blown away by the novelty of the moving pictures. Thereby this chapter reaffirms other conclusions drawn in Chapter 2: Chicago audiences were not, I would hold, shocked, astonished, or struck by a sort of hyperstimulus mode of attention. As the aesthetic experience that the moving picture attraction offered can be seen as a play of presences, the effect was both more mundane and more powerful.

Writing well after cinema’s novelty period, Siegfried Kracauer maintained that: “Spatial images are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of any spatial image are deciphered, there the basis of social reality presents itself.” Although Kracauer, at this point, does not explicitly refers to cinema, his observation remains relevant for the newly introduced moving pictures. After all, what film presented in its earliest years was both a confirmation and a confrontation of spatial reality. The film attraction, in this sense, presented what Nancy calls “the spacing of the world,” that is the “absolute condition” of human being. Thereby, in a phenomenological-existential dimension, early cinema “expressed” spatial perception as a “perception-cum-expression,” that is, the “communication of the experience of existence.” Thus the play for presences that hovered between the “here” of the spectator in the auditorium and the “there” of the representation was drawing upon a deep-seated familiarity.
Concluding remarks

(Re)constructing presence in absentia

In *Aesthetic Experiences of Presence* I explored viewing experiences in cinema’s novelty period as aesthetic experiences of presence. The chapters above describe how moving picture exhibitions constituted sensuously engaging attractions. I outlined how viewing experiences in various historical viewing situations can be conceptualized as what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls “oscillations of presence and meaning effects.” The attraction of early cinema, thereby, centered on both immediate sensations in the here and now while it also addressed various dimensions of meaning-making. My argument, as formulated at the opening of this dissertation, entails that film-historical research has until recently focused too much on the semantic dimension of early film experiences while overlooking the sensuous impact of moving picture attractions. Historical research tends to overemphasize moving picture exhibitions as visual attractions by looking at film as a predominantly representational medium. Early cinema, indeed, re-presented distant scenes and, as so-called “canned theater,” brought recorded performances to the screen. However, as this dissertation argues, the early cinema attraction should also be recognized as constitutive to a presentational event—this because moving pictures also constituted a performance of movement and space in the here and now of the auditorium. The spectator was sensuously involved with the spectacle of early cinema. Rather than locating the observer at a distance, moving pictures included the spectator in the performance of these mechanically-produced rhythmically-organized projected photographs. This involvement was, thereby, not just imaginary but also physical. Meanwhile, as this study equally outlines, this involvement was not merely immersive but was, as a perception of perception, also reflective to the subject’s material being in the world.

Cinema in its novelty period formed a popular attraction that was characterized by many paradoxes as it negotiated the ‘here’ of the auditorium and the ‘there’ of the screen space. Audiences had strong reactions to these earliest projected moving pictures although they might never have been fully immersed into the represented world. Meanwhile, in terms of temporality, viewing experiences involved both a sense of “nowness” in which the repre-
sentations were resurrected before the viewer’s eyes in present tense despite the audience’s awareness of the kinematograph as a recording and preservation technology. Moving picture machines like the Edison vitascope and the Lumière cinématographe became successful vaudeville attractions although they offered a rather odd act surrounded by on-stage performances. Early cinema was arousing and sensational while it at an existential level deeply related to everyday mundane experience. The cinema attraction thereby was, to paraphrase O. Winter’s well-known 1896 observation, *all true, and all false.*

Although the list of apparent paradoxes is far from exhaustive, it indicates that the introduction of film enabled a wide variety of multidimensional viewing experiences. The depth of moving picture attractions, in this respect, reached well beyond the depth of the screen. These experiences did not just involve processes of meaning-making, but also addressed the senses in both novel and familiar ways. The onscreen projected films were the focal point of viewing experiences and once the picture was running, viewers engaged with these cinematic representations of approaching trains, kissing actors, quarrelling babies, recorded *féerie* theater, and more. Rather effortlessly, viewers seemed to make sense of these pictures: Overall, audiences comprehended the projected pictures very well. They understood where these recordings came from, whether it be a busy juncture in New York or a French cavalry exercising, while they recognized these pictures as recordings of past events. Early cinema’s perceptual complexity, thereby, originated not so much at the level of meaning-making, but at the level of the immediate address of the senses. These viewing experiences were thus, as was argued throughout this dissertation, aesthetic experiences. Cinema in its novelty period presented an attraction in which the spectator’s relations to his/her sensory environment (in terms of motion, space, location and audience) were pivotal. Therefore, as this study argues, in order to gain a better understanding of cinema’s earliest viewing experiences, a more complete assessment of its presence effects is necessary. This, allows for a reconceptualizing of early cinema experiences as simultaneously mundane and astonishing.

I have explored the paradigm on presence as defined by Gumbrecht, Nancy, Seel, Fischer-Lichte, and others, as a conceptual framework to discuss the sensuous dimensions of early cinema experience. I have done so by relating the presence paradigm to phenomenological film theory as formulated by Sobchack, Marks, Lant, Hanich, and others. The three chapters that constitute this dissertation presented different efforts to make the presence paradigm useful for the study of early cinema spectatorship. Chapter 1 employed the paradigm on presence and aesthetic theory to discuss the newly-introduced moving pictures a semantically rich and sensuously multivalent object. The intermedial approach singled out the many different relations to neighboring cultural practices and cultural imaginations that the newly introduced kinematograph enabled. Chapter 2, in turn, described how the moving
picture attraction was sensuously experienced as a technology of movement. Hence theories on movement and experience illustrated how moving picture offered a rhythmic attraction that resonated with the spectator’s body and with the modern streetscape. Meanwhile, in Chapter 3, notions of space and experience were analyzed to indicate how early cinema enabled a play with distance and nearness, which, in turn, was conceptualized as a play with presences.

Throughout the chapters different theoretical concepts highlight different aspects of early viewing experiences. As stated in the Introduction, this study proposes historically-informed theoretical reconstructions of early cinema’s viewing situations. The three chapters of this study thereby read as an eclectic mix of detailed history and aesthetic theory. Rather than constructing a chronological narrative with a beginning, middle and ending, this dissertation has undertaken an investigation of the cultural terrain that attended the introduction of film. In that manner, the reader has been encouraged to follow a series of “inferential walks”: instead of providing a set of definite answers, the dissertation confronts the reader with gaps that open up to more questions.174 The plurality of approaches and case studies presented tries to acknowledge “the chaotic, heterogeneous and polysemic conditions of the past” because this heterogeneous and paradoxical condition was, after all, also central to cinema’s earliest experiences.175

The first decades of film, meanwhile, have been studied extensively. Early cinema spectatorship, thereby, remains a many-sided topic of discussion. Throughout the dissertation I tried to position my research within this rich and diverse field of early cinema historiography. My theoretically-informed discussion of cinema’s earliest viewing experiences, then, should not be misread as a final answer to the ongoing discussion on early cinema spectatorship. Rather, it presents a modest theoretical addendum to early cinema historiography by, as the dissertation suggests, the productiveness of taking the presence effects of experience more systematically into account.

Methodological Challenges

Throughout the three chapters, the contexts of the Dutch fairground and the Chicago amusement scene were investigated. This study, however, does not pursue a full-fledged historical account of the introduction of film in the Netherlands and Chicago. Rather, the method of detailed contextualization as practiced in this study illustrates how specific viewing situations were embedded in historical, spatial, and experiential contexts. Contextualization, as Martin Jay reminds us, means positioning oneself: a context is never neutral and always serves a purpose.176 Thus, the context itself, despite of what is sometimes maintained in New Historicism and New Cinema History, is not an explanation.177 Subsequently, the contextualized viewing situations
analyzed in this study offered points of departure for theoretically-oriented discussions regarding aesthetic experiences and presence effects.

Jointly, the three chapters argue for a perspective on early film experience that situates motion pictures in close contact with the spectator. Viewing experiences, I maintain, entail a haptic and tactile visuality. Even though film, in terms of innovation and technology, was firmly rooted in nineteenth-century discourses on vision and visuality, on the fairground and in vaudeville projected moving pictures were introduced in a context that was aimed at sensuous, tactile, and tangible attractions. Through rhythm and movement, the spectator was bodily involved in the moving picture presentation which enabled a sensation of presence. This presence as aesthetic experience, as Martin Seel concludes, “enables not just a recollection of the mere presence of things and events, nor just a making present of atmospherically articulated life situations, but an encounter with presences of human life.” Jean-Luc Nancy writes, on a related note, that aesthetic experience foregrounds “a certain formation of the contemporary world, a certain shaping, a certain perception of the self in the world.” Sensations of presence, thereby, comprise an existential dimension. This is the unconcealment of experience that Heidegger already addressed in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” The aesthetic interval enables the subject to experience her own position, and her own presence, in the world. Aesthetic experience, thus, leads the subject to experience the fundamental materiality of life. “Presence,” as Fischer-Lichte concludes, “brings forth humans as that which they always already are: embodied minds.”

This existential dimension of the aesthetic experience of presence is, however though-provoking and inspiring it may be, hard to outline from a historical distance. We can reconstruct the sensuous dimension of experience theoretically, but presence will always be characterized by a lack of evidence. From a historical perspective, then, presence is always marked by an absence: an absence of speech and an absence of discourse. Or, from a different viewpoint, it can be argued that the early twentieth-century’s avant-garde experiments with the sensuous impact of film can be considered a delayed getting-to-terms with the existential dimensions of early cinema.

In this respect, discourse on the presence effects of cinema is characterized by a significant delay. Either way, the challenge to the media historian, however, is to retrieve or readdress these historical feelings of presence. Presence, as Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us, is by definition non-representable. It belongs to the domain of presentation (darstellung in Kant’s and Heidegger’s terminology) and therefore is located perceptually before comprehension and meaning-making. The moment we try to capture this immediate domain of experience in words, the instant we label it, presence is already gone. This is why, as discussed in the Introduction, Husserl and other phenomenologists consider real presence a perceptual impossibility. The temporality of presence thereby runs parallel to that of the past and histori-
ography: the past as material entity is always irretrievable because the moment we try to define the past as such it becomes history. Hence we are always dealing with a presence in absence. While presence, like the past, remains unrepresentable, effects of presence can become noticeable. These effects are noticeable as feelings or perceptions. Feelings and perception, in turn, leave traces in discourse while they are also (partly) constituted by it.

As feelings end up in historical discourse this happens in complex ways. Even when sensory effects are put into words, these sensations very often do not get documented. For the historian working on emotions and feelings, there is always a shortage of written references but, as Constance Classen writes, “A lack of words, however, does not mean a lack of feelings or of social significance.” In historical sources like newspapers, magazines and other documents, feelings and emotions are not addressed as such. Rather, they are presented in terms of social reality. Feelings, thereby, can be retrieved from seemingly objective worldviews. It is the historian’s task to historicize experience. In historical discourse, therefore, experiences of presence are only accessible indirectly. The media historian’s main effort when writing about these effects is “reading what was never written.”

This study has mainly focused on popular discourse about moving pictures as published in newspapers and magazines. The language used to describe the introduction of cinema in Chicago was similar to most other major U.S. cities. One explanation for this can be found in the publicity materials that exhibitors and distributors circulated among the newspapers’ editorial offices. In many cases, these newspapers were eager to publish just about anything, as long as it did not upset its group of implied readers. Preprinted materials were, in this sense, easy content that tied in with commercial interests. This was also the case, albeit to a lesser extent, with Dutch newspapers. Reviews and press notices, therefore, might be less “authentic” than they often present themselves to be. Yet, despite this partial lack of authenticity, there is, I believe, still a degree of bona fides to theater reviews and other newspaper clippings describing the introduction of film. The theater and drama sections in which reviews of the vitascope and the cinématographe appeared varied across different newspapers. These newspaper sections had developed some form of critical attitude to the local amusement scene. Negative appraisals to early shows with the magniscope and the phantoscope illustrate such a critical stance. Although there were commercial interests that we, as historians, are unable to understand in full detail, individual newspapers could have different opinions about the same show or performance. The newspaper clippings discussed in this study are, therefore, up to a certain extent at least, illustrative to the critical reception of the vitascope, the cinématographe, and the other moving picture exhibitions. Moreover, these writings, as commercially informed as they were, are nevertheless the pertinent discourse surrounding the moving pictures. In this manner, they are of key importance to the historian working on emotions and feelings.
To work with the paradigm on presence in a historical-contextualist perspective thus offers difficulties that are less evident in the formalist mode of explanation that many film-philosophical analyses draw on. As mentioned in the Introduction, a limited number of film scholars is already working with a concept of presence that is similar to the paradigm discussed in this dissertation. Most often these studies review Nancy’s thought while applying his aesthetic philosophy to contemporary (French or auteur) cinema. These discussions, however, tend to work with a different mode of explanation, one in which the film is more central than the historical context. To work with the paradigm of presence in a historical perspective, then, creates additional challenges because the historian is bound to specific historical settings and available sources. Even if we, as film or media historians, fully acknowledge the epistemological uncertainty of the past, we are, after all, supposed to construct our arguments around evidence. While explicit documentation of presence effects with the kinematograph is scarce to non-existent, we are left to work with circumstantial evidence, such as indirect references to experience of presence by way of discourses on movement and space, or on intermedial relations and transmedial imaginations. Despite these methodological challenges, there is, nevertheless, a need to account for the presence effects of early cinema. These presence effects constituted, as this study illustrates, significant aspects of cinema experiences in the novelty period.

Presence beyond early cinema

Aesthetic experiences of presence are not limited to the historically-specific viewing positions of early cinema. Experiences in which one feels sensations of presence can be evoked by both new and old media. These experiences can emerge in familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and, to a certain extent at least, can be triggered by both narrative and nonnarrative representation. Given this, the potential of this conceptual framework beyond the limited scope of early cinema is evident. Whereas the current study centers on the novelty period of cinema, similar endeavors can be undertaken to address the presence effects that were part of moving picture experiences before and after the years discussed in this study. Furthermore, one can, of course, also use this theoretical framework to discuss other (non-visual) media. It would be, I think, of particular interest to see a discussion of presence in relation to the process of the “re-newing” of old or familiar media technologies. A methodology to physically reconstruct the sensuous dimension of bygone media objects, can surely be found in the emerging field of experimental media archaeology.

The transhistorical potential of the presence paradigm differs from the historical specificity of the cinema of attractions and its aesthetic of astonishment. Therefore, as a historically specific mode of cinematic presentation
dominant before 1906, the concept of the cinema of attractions remains un-
contested. In what is possibly the most-cited subsection of his canonical text,
Gunning states: “In fact, the cinema of attraction(s) does not disappear with
the dominance of narrative but rather moves underground, both into certain
avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in
some genres (e.g., the musical) than others.” Aesthetic experiences of
presence, in the meantime, did not go underground but remained part of the
cinema’s viewing experiences throughout the twentieth century and beyond.
Whereas scholarship on digital media tends to focus on virtual and artificial
presence, the existential or radical dimension of presence should be also
accounted for. While viewing experiences can be dominated by meaning-
effects, there are, as Gumbrecht reminds us, always implicitly or explicitly
elements of presence and materiality involved in perception. At each instant
presence can take center stage. In today’s media ecology, when viewing
situations are diverse and fragmented, these material dimensions of touch
and presence seem to be more prominent than before. This, I venture, was,
and still is, the aesthetic potential that cinema concealed from its earliest
years until well into the post-cinematic digital era: that this outward window
on the world actually enables a form of self-revelation.
Endnotes

Notes to Introduction

1 The popular introduction of film exhibition followed the introduction of moving pictures to professional audiences such as investors and inventors. The term thereby “popular” refers to what Raymond Williams defines as “well-liked by many people.” This is only one of the four definitions of “popular” that Williams supplies. Meanwhile, as Williams outlines, “popular” is at most instances an identifier used by others. Popular journalism, for example, was distinguished from quality press. Yet Williams also signals a shift in nineteenth-century US discourse in which “popular was being seen from the point of view of the people rather than those seeking power from them.” Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, new edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 [1976]), 180-181.


3 Popular discourse is, in this sense, is distinct from professional, scientific, or academic discourse. Popular discourse concerns everyday practices and “common knowledge.” See, for example, Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, “Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology…” *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, 3 (September 1993): 473-499.


11 *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1896. As early as August, 1896, the *Philadelphia Times* describes (and groups) these military scenes by the Lumières in which the cavalry rushes to the camera as “dashing scenes.” *Philadelphia Times*, August 9, 1896.


13 *Brooklyn Life*, October 17, 1896; a note on the spelling of the devices: I maintain the French spelling ‘cinématographe’ when referring to (shows held with) the Lumière device while employing the English spelling ‘cinematograph’ when referring to unidentified moving-picture machines that were used, for example, with hybrid stage-screen performances. Already in 1897 the word cinematograph appeared as a widespread word for moving-picture attractions in general, both in the U.S. and in the Netherlands.

14 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 22, 1896.

15 *New York Mail and Express*, October 12, 1896.


17 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 17, 1896.


24 Pall Mall Gazette, February 21, 1896.

25 Cincinnati Enquirer, August 9, 1896.

26 Manchester Courier, December 26, 1896.


30 Edinburgh Evening News, April 14, 1896.

31 Louis Lumière allegedly said that “cinema is an invention without a future.” I was unable to trace his statement. However, in correspondence predating the popular introduction of the cinematograph in December 1895, the Lumière brothers express a hesitation to commercially exploit their moving-picture machine as this seems to have been, at the outset at least, one of their minor inventions. This is evident, for example, in a collective letter from the brothers to their father signed October 14,


36 *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, March 14, 1896. The translation is mine. The original reads: “Men verbaast zich in dezen tijd over weinig meer, dat is zeker; men neemt iets waar en – men gaat verder; het ongewone is met name in de groote stad, gewoon geworden. En toch, men denke een ogenblik na het zien van wat door de Cinemograaf wordt tot stand gebracht, en men zal vol bewondering de vorderingen der wetenschap gadeslaag.”


38 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 83.


41 Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 220.

42 Leo Charney, *Empty Moments: Cinema, Modernity, and Drift* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); and Charney, “In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, eds. Leo Charney and

43 Charney, “In a Moment,” 281.


45 Gunning, “‘Now You See It, Now You Don’t,’” 10-11.

46 Ibid., 11.


50 David Couzens Hoy, The Time of Our Lives: A Critical History of Temporality (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 51. As Hoy reminds us, paraphrasing Husserl: “Past, present, and future are different from retention and protention. We experience ourselves as in time and having a past, present, and future because our temporality involves the structure of protention, retention, and primal impression.”


54 Bergson, Matter and Memory, 194.


56 Probably the most recent contribution to the long tradition of measuring the present is a 2014 study by neuroscientists from MIT and UC Berkeley who state that what we perceive as the present is a continuum of the past fifteen seconds. See Jason Fischer and David Whitney, “Serial dependence in visual perception,” Nature Neuroscience 17, 5 (May 2014): 738-748.

See, for example, Cheryl Campanella Bracken and Paul D. Skalski, eds. Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life (New York and London: Routledge, 2010).


Sobchack, Carnal Thoughts, 139.


Eelco Runia, Moved by the Past: Discontinuity and Historical Mutation (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 85 and 108. The concept of the past as foreign country originates from the novelist L. P. Hartley who writes in The Go-Between (1953): “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” For a critical analysis of the topos of the past as distinctively “other” or “foreign,” see
also David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country - Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015 [1985]).


71 Marjorie Greene, “The Aesthetic Dialogue of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty,” *The Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 1 (1970): 59-72, 68. Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes, for example, about duplicity in relation to what he calls “double sensations” in which the perceiving body is made sensible to the subject, for example when one’s own hands touch each other. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of

72 Sobchack, Address of the Eye, 3-4. The reader should note that, at this stage, Sobchack’s description of experience is still very much organized around sight and vision.

73 Alison Ross, The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy, 156.

74 To give a complete historical overview of the development of aesthetic theory is beyond the scope of this dissertation; hence this section delivers an abbreviated version that functions to embed a few of the concerns in the context of contemporary aesthetic theory.


76 Ibid., 222. Shusterman situates his definition very much around analytical philosophy on aesthetic experience, most notably John Dewey, Arthur Danto and Monroe Beardsley. Yet, for sake of clarity, this introduction will focus solely on the continental tradition on aesthetics.


83 Jay, Songs of Experience, 136.

84 Also, aesthetic judgments are ‘disinterested’ in a second way, in the sense that the object does not necessarily have to exist.

85 Guyer, “18th Century German Aesthetics.”


Martin Seel, Aesthetics of Appearing, 4-5. Original emphasis.


Gumbrecht, “Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Worlds,” 305. Other recurring important philosophers in the work of Gumbrecht, Nancy, and Seel are Hegel and Heidegger.

Seel, Aesthetics of Appearing, xi.


Gumbrecht, The Production of Presence, 98-100.


Ross, Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy, 3. See also Martta Heikkilä, At the Limits of Presentation: Coming-into-Presence and its Aesthetic Relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy’s Philosophy (Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2008), 79-80.

Ross, Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy, 3.


Ibid., 177.

Ibid. Emphasis in original.


This is almost a political argument as Gumbrecht throughout his writings argues for aesthetic experiences outside the domain of art. Sports spectatorship, for example, is also a domain for aesthetic fascination. See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In Praise of Athletic Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Meanwhile, Gumbrecht’s notion of presence and its “lure of immediacy” has been criticized as being dangerously a-political while his aesthetic fascination for sports has been judged by some as proto-fascists. See Simon Martin, “In Praise of Fascist Beauty?” *Sport in History* 28, 1 (March 2008): 64-82; Janet Wolff, “After Cultural Theory: The Power of Images, the Lure of Immediacy,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 11, 1 (May 2012): 3-19.

Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 100.

Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 100.


112 Gumbrecht, Production of Presence, 86.


115 Ross, Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy, 10.


117 As Fischer-Lichte writes: “The things signify what they are or as what they appear. To perceive something as something means to perceive it as meaningful. Materiality, signifier, and signified coincide in the case of self-referentiality. Materiality does not act as a signifier to which this or that signified can be attributed. Rather, materiality itself has to be seen as the signified already given in the materiality perceived by the subject. . . What the object is perceived as is what it signifies.” Fischer-Lichte, The Transformative Power of Performance, 141.

118 Annemone Ligensa, “Sensationalism and Early Cinema,” in A Companion to Early Cinema, eds. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 163-182, 166,173. As Ligensa outlines, debates on “modern nervousness” or “neurasthenia” or mentions of the flickering projector hurting the eye can be seen as part of this discourse. See also Singer, Melodrama and Modernity.


125 Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, 57.


127 See, for example, the proceedings of the 2016 Domitor Conference held in Stockholm: Marina Dahlquist, Doron Galili, Jan Olsson and Valentine Robert, eds. *Corporeality in Early Cinema: Viscera, Skin, and Physical Form* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

128 Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, xvi.


Cinema Beyond the City: Small-Town and Rural Film Culture in Europe (London: BFI, 2016).


140 As Ethan Kleinberg explains, ontological realism is “a commitment to history as an endeavor concerned with events assigned to a specific location in space and time that are in principle observable and as such are regarded as fixed and immutable. Here the historian accepts that there is a possibility for epistemological uncertainty about our understanding of a past event, but this is mitigated by the ontological certainty that the event happened in a certain way at a certain time. Central to this position is a commitment to empirical data that serve as a false floor to hold it. In the end, getting the past ‘right’ is a question of historical method.” On a similar note, Alun Munslow argues: “The basic thing to be acknowledged by all historians is that the(ir) history is always an authored substitute for past reality. ‘History’ is perhaps the most obvious example of turning a representation into reality. A ‘history’ is an imitation of a one-time reality.” This ontological realism can found, for example, in Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery’s sourcebook Film History: Theory and Practice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985) in which Allen and Gomery maintain that the film historian’s objective is to explain the mechanisms as complete as possible, thus delivering complete and compelling narratives on historical change. After all, according to Allen and Gomery, “the world of history exists of mechanisms not
events.” The philosophy of history on presence favors the event over mechanism and explanation. The most important thing, according to Gumbrecht, Runia, and Ankersmit, is that something happened. Runia himself, in turn, emphasizes discontinuity, disruption, spatial specificity and fragmentation. Furthermore, as Ankersmit explains, historical representation is already an explanation. See Kleinberg, “Presence in Absentia: Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century,” Presence, 8-25; Frank Ankersmit, Sublime Historical Experience (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Frank Ankersmit, Meaning, Truth, and Reference in Historical Representation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Eelco Runia, Moved by the Past: Discontinuity and Historical Mutation; Alun Munslow, “Thoughts on authoring the past as history,” Rethinking History 20, 4 (2016): 556-585, 584; Ethan Kleinberg, Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 1. The turn to presence more or less began with the special issue of the journal History and Theory 45, 3 (2006) containing articles by Ankersmit, Gumbrecht, and Runia amongst others. For a concise critical overview of the debate, see Torbjörn Gustafsson Chorell, “Desire for the Past?,” Rethinking History 19, 4 (2015): 569-582.


142 Kleinberg, Haunting History, 142.

143 Vivian Sobchack, drawing on Runia’s concept of historical presence, calls for a history of denotation instead of connotation, summarizing that “Presence, then, emerges not at the level of narrative and meaning but in meticulous description, which is, as potentially endless, always metonymically partial and open—and prior to the summary comprehension accomplished first by naming and then by interpretation.” Vivian Sobchack, “Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-presencing the Past,” 326.


145 See, for example, Pasi Väliaho’s study of early cinema where he draws extensively on Deleuzian theory. Väliaho, Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema Circa 1900 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); or Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993) which draws on Lyotard’s postmodern theory; or Tom Gunning’s paper “Impossible Bodies: Metamorphosis of the Body in Trick Films and Early Animation,” delivered at the Domitor 2016 Conference, Stockholm, June 14-17, where Gunning draws on Bernard Stiegler’s theory of prosthesis.
Runia, *Moved by the Past*, 147. This echoes Tom Gunning’s observation that the cinema of attractions did not cease to exist after 1906, but went underground only to appear at certain instances.

On the relevance of early film history to today’s rapidly changing media situation, see Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).


Notes to Chapter 1


10 Gumbrecht, “Why Intermediality – if at All?,” 177.

11 See, for example, John Fullerton, “Introduction,” in *Screen Culture: History and Textuality*, ed. John Fullerton (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2004), vii-xvi; and Shail, “Intermediality: Disciplinary flux or formalist retrenchment?,” 3-15.


13 Gaudreault, *From Plato to Lumière*, 156.


16 Musser, explicitly addressing Gaudreault, writes that “Motion picture practices were not merely at the intersection of various other established practices, they constituted their own practice from the outset. . . In this respect, I [Musser] disagree with André Gaudreault: cinema, or at least motion pictures as a field, did exist from the outset.” In Musser, “The Stereopticon and Cinema: Media Form or Platform?,” 149.


19 Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing,* 56.

20 Ágnes Pethő’s work might be a sole exception to this. See Pethő, *Cinema and Intermediality: The Passion for the In-between* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2011).

21 See, for example, the article “Iets over the kinematograaf,” in Vragen van den Dag 7 (1898) (reprinted in Tilburgsche Courant, July 28, 1898; and De Volksstem, August 31, 1898). This response of the kinematograph in lack of a purpose was also evident in Antoine Lumière’s now famous prediction of cinema as “an invention without a future.” Yet, this is a trope that is often voiced with the introduction of new and disruptive media. For a discussion of Lumière’s observation, see Thomas Elsaesser, “Eine Erfindung ohne Zukunft: Thomas A. Edison und die Gebrüder Lumière,” in Filmgeschichte und frühes kino: Archäologie eines Medienwandels (Munich: Text + Kritik, 2002), 47-68.


23 For an in-depth historical overview of the fairground in the Netherlands see Jansen, *Een roes van vrijheid,* 13-110. This first chapter from Jansen’s seminal work stretches roughly one-thousand years of church celebrations and commercial fairs.

24 Several European languages also still use a religiously connotated words for the fairground, for example, *Kirmes* in German. The Dutch *kermesse* became borrowed in French and English.

25 As Guido Convents notes, the French word for fairground, *foire,* comes from the Latin ‘foras’, connoting “he who comes from abroad” or “stranger.” Guido Con-

26 John Helsloot, “Feest en vermaak. Sinterklaasfeesten in de 19e en 20e eeuw,” *Nehalennia* 129 (2000): 25-34. Helsloot cites the Vereniging voor Volksvermaak in Goes who had as their objective: “by way of pleasant activities and festivities as useful as possible, occupy the people, in order to instigate a taste for the good and the beautiful.” (“het volk door gepaste uitspanningen en feestelijke bijeenkomsten, aangenaam en zoo nuttig mogelijk bezig te houden, opdat de smaak voor het goede en schoone aangewakkerd worde.”)

27 After the first trade journal, *De Komeet*, is established in 1900-1901, local governments start advertising for specific kinds of attractions. The city of Dordrecht advertises, for example, two lots on the 1901 fairground for kinematograph tents, while in Hellevoetsluis one place is reserved for a hippodrome or bioscope (*De Komeet*, February 16, 1901).


29 I borrow the term liminal space from theater theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte who, in turn, adopts it from the anthropologist Victor Turner. The liminal is separated from daily life. The liminal space is defined by different rules and practices that are ritualistically given. Subsequently, it allows for an aesthetic experience. The liminal state is still under supervision but this is a different social order. It is, in Turner’s terms, “on the threshold” and “betwixt and between.” The liminal is temporal, it is followed by a reassimilation. See Fischer-Lichte, “Introduction: Transformative Aesthetics—Reflections on the metamorphic power of art,” 1-25, 1-2.

30 The Amsterdam-based music hall owner Anton Nöggerath senior, for example, was one of the earliest to program moving pictures in October 1896. Together with his son, Anton Nöggerath would become an important early film producer and distributor. See Ivo Blom, “Chapters from the Life of a Camera-Operator. The Recollections of Anton Nöggerath – filming news and non-fiction,” *Film History* 11 (1999): 262-281.


32 For a complete overview of the introduction of film in the Netherlands, see Ansje van Beusekom, *Film als kunst: reacties op een nieuw medium in Nederland* (dissertation Vrije Universiteit, 1998); see also Frank van der Maden, “De komst van de film,” in *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Film en Bioscoop tot 1940*, eds. Karel Dibbets and Frank van der Maden (Amsterdam: Het Wereldvenster, 1986), 11-52.

Henri Grünkorn was, for example, not a member of the professional association for fairground showmen in The Netherlands which was founded, together with their trade journal *De Komeet*, in 1900-1901.


Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 11.


The word *rutsch* is not included in the dictionaries by I.M. Calisch and N.S. Calisch, *Nieuw woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*; not in the first edition from 1864 and also not in the third edition from 1878. Still the word appears in several late nineteenth-century texts (books and newspapers), most often as synonymous with rapid or *vlug*. The word *rutsch* comes from German. Today, *rutsch* is still used in the south of the Netherlands (Limburg), particularly in relation to New Year greetings (as in: “eine goje roetsj!” Stemming from the German expression “Guten Rutsch,” people wish one other a good ‘slide’ into the new year). As of 2018, the word is seeing a revival as several popular Christmas markets nowadays offer a spectacular ‘ice roetsjbaan’ (thereby merging German-Dutch with English).

“Een karretje of lorrie loopt eerst over een paar in sterk hellende richting aangebrachte rails door zijn eigene zwaarte en die der daarop zittende personen, met zoo-veel kracht naar beneden, dat het, op het laatste gedeelte der rails gekomen zijnde, door zijn vaart tegen weer in opwaartse richting gestelde rails, over een heuveltje vliegt, weer daalt en dus weer gang krijgt om tegen eene volgende hoogte op te vliegen, waarna het dezelfde baan weer terug aflegt.” *Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en ’s Hertogenbossche Courant*, April 29, 1889.

Personal correspondence with Hennie van Oers, historian at Stichting Kermiscultuur Nederland.
44 Nieuws van den Dag, August 2, 1888.

45 Algemeen Handelsblad, June 13, 1889.

46 “De directeur van bovengenoemde inrichting maakt het geëerde publiek bijzonder attent op de solide constructie van deze rutschbaan, waarin een ieder geheel zonder gevaar kan plaatsnemen, daar zich in het midden der baan een veiligheidsrail bevindt en de aan de wagen bevestigde tangen, die daarom grijpen, het derailleeren voorkomen.” Provinciale Overijselsche en Zwolsche Courant, July 26, 1890.

47 “Het ding zit steviger in elkaar dan menige Amerikaansche spoorweg.” Schuitemakers Purmerender Courant, October 20, 1889.


49 Leeuwarder Courant, July 8, 1889.

50 Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en ’s Hertogenbossche Courant, 29 August 1889.


53 Friedberg, Window Shopping, 3.


55 Leeuwarder Courant, July 8, 1891.

56 The term mechanical theater was a term signifying a show with several elements, parts, or tableaux. Grünkorn’s closest contemporary M. P. Okhuijsen, for example, exhibited a mechanical theater in several Dutch theaters and musical halls between 1886 and 1888. Okhuijsen’s mechanical theater entailed a set of moving panoramas representing distant parts of the world, including an orientalist palace, a crystal-
diamond tableaux which was a colorful play with lights, a set of artificial light attractions, and a set of automata or small machinery. (Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, June 15, 1887; De Maasbode, June 18, 1887; De Maasbode, June 26, 1887; Nieuws van den Dag, September 5, 1887; De Tijd, September 5, 1887.) Also Le Théâtre Mécanique Morieux de Paris, which was acquired and exhibited by the Ghent-based mechanic Jean-Henri Van de Voorde and his son Léon, comprised multiple tableaux and elements, including a magic lantern and, from 1906, a cinematograph. As Huhtamo explains, mechanical theaters left only faint traces but the remarkable recent finding of the Morieux Theatre is an exception to that. See Erkki Huhtamo, Illusions in Motion, where the Morieux features on the cover, and Huhtamo, “Mechanisms in the Mist: A Media Archaeological Excavation of the Mechanical Theater,” in Media Archaeology and Intermedial Performance: Deep Time of the Theatre, ed. Nele Wynants (London: Palgrave 2019), 23-81. Henri Grünkorn’s attraction, on the contrary, entailed only one tableau. Therefore ‘De wereld in het klein’ might have not qualified for the term mechanical theater. It is engaging, though, that both Van de Voorde and Grünkorn were, at a later stage, based in Ghent.

57 Arnhemsche Courant, December 22, 1890.

58 “De aanblik van het stadje in de bergen, waar alles in beweging en leven is, mag verrassend genoemd worden. De natuurlijkheid van het loopen, het werken in alle ambachten, de spoortrein met de wuivende passagiers, de processie die onder het luiden van de klok en het spelen van het orgel de kleine kapel binnentreedt, het is alles zeer bezienswaardig” Arnhemsche Courant, January 9, 1891.

59 Jean-Henri Van de Voorde and his mechanical Morieux Theatre were also spending time in Bremen in the early 1890s, constituting an interesting parallel between the two (semi) Ghent-based exhibitors. See Huhtamo, Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 296.

60 Officieller Katalog der Nordwestdeutschen Gewerbe- und Industrie-Ausstellung Bremen 1890 (Berlin: Mosse, 1890). Grünkorn’s attraction may have been incorporated into a larger element of the exhibition (even though the catalog is quite extensive). Another possibility is that Grünkorn exhibited his ‘De wereld in het klein’ outside the official exposition grounds. His name does not appear in local newspapers.

61 Arnhemsche Courant, December 22, 1890.

62 The success of ‘De wereld in het klein’ is difficult to judge. But when he appeared outside the fairground, frequently occupying a storefront, Grünkorn usually remained in a town for over a month, indicating that there must have been more than enough paying customers. According to newspaper coverage, Grünkorn’s stay in a town was extended on a number of occasions. Yet, this was also a common market-
ing technique. It is striking that the newspaper Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, a paper with distribution in the Dutch East Indies, also reported the attraction.

63 Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, June 16, 1891. The original reads: “Het grootste Mechanisch Plantatisch [sic] Kunstwerk van den tegenwoordigen tijd, op een open en vrij Toneel, alles leven en beweging.”

64 “De kermis,” Leeuwarder Courant, July 15, 1891.

65 Panorama Mesdag in The Hague, for example, opened in 1881 after the panorama craze that originated in Belgium in 1875. In 1885 the Panorama Mesdag faced bankruptcy. Panorama Wauters, located in a different part of The Hague, also had a short life from 1881 to 1887. See Evelyn J. Fruitema and Paul A. Zoetmulder, eds., Het panorama fenomeen (The Hague: Panorama Mesdag, 1981). From the 1890s onwards, the term ‘panorama’ could refer to a multitude of visual practices and representations.

66 As mentioned above, Grünkorn’s closest contemporary was M. H. Okhuijsen who exhibited a mechanical theater in 1887-1889 in several theaters and musical halls, but not on the fairground.


68 Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, June 20, 1891. The original reads: “De bewegingen der poppen (...) zijn uiterst natuurlijk. . . als ware ’t werkelijkheid.” And, Arnhem-sche Courant, January 9, 1891; Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, June 20, 1891.

69 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, April 7, 1891. The article presents Grünkorn as the creator of the attraction, an attribution that seems unlikely.


71 Alison Griffiths, Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). The notion of immersion remains a topic of debate. Alison Griffiths argues that immersion was the main objective for the panorama (as well as for many other modern large-screen media). William Uricchio, however, maintains that the ultimate goal of the panorama was to “lure viewers into seeing in a particular way.” This was a reflexive mode of viewing concerned with the process of seeing, rather than just with immersion and “being there.” See also, Griffiths, “‘The Largest Picture Ever Executed by Man’: Panoramas and the Emergence of Large-Screen and 360 Degree Internet Technologies,” in Screen Culture: History and Textuality, 199-220; and William Uricchio, “A ‘proper point of view’: The panorama and some of its early media iterations,” Early Popular Visual Culture 9, 3 (August 2011): 225-238.

72 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, April 7, 1891.


75 During the last season with ‘De wereld in het klein,’ Grünkorn occasionally had a second attraction at the fairground. This was named ‘Les Vagues de l’Océan of de Golven van de Oceaan’. Apart from an occasional advertisement that described this attraction as “the newest construction and a beautiful piece of engineering,” I have been unable to find any more information.


77 *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant*, March 25, 1895; and *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* April 20, 1895.

78 Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*, 197–199.

79 In general, Dutch audiences widely celebrated the plunderings. The reported treasure was worth approximately 1,8 million Dutch guilder. An extended description of the treasure appeared in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* as “De Lombokschat” (August 18, 1895). Sporadically, critical voices were heard, for example, in the sarcasticly titled article “Niet om te rooven en moorden, maar voor het recht!” (“Not for plundering and murder, but for justice!”) in *Recht voor allen: orgaan der Sociaal Demokratische Partij*, November 24 and 25, 1894.

80 Paul Post, “Het toneel op de kermis, het theater van later,” in *Kennis, kunstjes en kunnen*, 169-186, 169. As Post explains, in the summer months, from June to August, theaters in the cities were usually closed for the season. During these months actors were practically unemployed. Because there were many, they were relatively cheap to hire. To these actors, in turn, the fairground circuit provided a modest, temporary income. Unfortunately, I did not find any information regarding which actors were part of Grünkorn’s company, or what their professional background was.

81 *Amersfoortsche Courant*, October 21, 1895.


84 *Van Dale Online*, “Tafereel,” accessed August 8, 2018,
Apart from illustrated magazines several books were published as well. These books gave way to forms of collective mourning as well as nationalistic celebrations. *Nederland-Lombok* (Rotterdam: Van Ditmar, 1894), for example, contained a collection of testimonies, endorsements, letters from the public, popular songs, and photographs.

Interestingly, *beelden* in Dutch can signify both statues and images.


Daniel Wiegand, *Gebannter Bewegung: Tableaux Vivants und früher Film in der Kultur der Moderne* (Marburg: Schüren, 2017); and Adriaensens and Jacobs, "The Sculptor’s Dream."


Ibid., 26.


Ibid., 256.

Ben Singer, “Introduction: Modernism, Modernity, and the Senses,” *Monatshefte* 98, 2 (2006): 175-179, 177. Singer’s text is the introduction to a special journal issue containing relating to experimentation and new sensory faculties in modernity, such as sonic hypersensitivity. The sensorial reorientation that accompanied modernity has also been described in detail by Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999) and


102 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 83.

103 Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*, 182.


106 Messter wrote a complaint that got published in *Der Komet*: “a Berlin firm, which calls itself a cinematograph ‘factory’ […] not only tried to copy my legally protected apparatus, but also almost exactly reprinted the text and form of my catalogue.” As cited in Rossell, “Beyond Messter,” 56.

107 Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*, 93n141.


109 Georges Mendel sales catalogue 1897. I thank Laurent Mannoni at the Cinémathèque française for supplying me with a scan of this document.

110 For example, *Dagblad van het Noorden* printed an article on June 24, 1898, titled “Toepassing van de Kinematograaf” (“Application of the kinematograph”), which stated that “so far, the kinematograph has been used only for entertainment and to satisfy curiosity (tot dusverre bijna alleen gebruikt als middel ter vermaak of ter bevrediging van de nieuwsgierigheid)” but after Dr. Watkins’ invention, the microkinetoscope [sic], the “now probably has a great future ahead (na alle waarschijnlijkheid wacht het nieuwe toestel een grootsche toekomst.)”

111 Built in 1884-1885 as a seaside resort hotel and concert hall, the Kurhaus was (and still is) the center point of Scheveningen’s entertainment area. Historian Jan Hein Furnée cites a local newspaper describing the Kurhaus: “The colossal building with its enormous terrace was bluntly ‘the glory of the residence and seaside district, the focal point of our public life, the forum where everything merges’.” [“Het kolossale gebouw met zijn enorme terras was rondtuit ‘de glorie van residentie en bad-
plaats, het middelpunt van ons openbare leven, het forum waar alles samenvloeit."


114 The Lumière Cinématographe at the Kurhaus had an entrance fee of 50 cents for non-members and 40 cents for members, whereas Grünkorn’s prices were 25 cent for front row seats, 15 cents for second row seats, and 10 cents for the stalls. These were very common prices for kinematograph shows at the fairground in 1897 and 1898. However, it is remarkable that Christiaan Slieker, who introduced the first to the Dutch fairgrounds, would charge up to 50 cents for front-row seats.

115 “gezichten van alle landen, aankomsten van treinen en trams, gezichten der zee, serpetine-dansen, acrobaten, smeden, schilders, vissers, enz. enz.” *Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en ’s Hertogenbossche Courant*, September 14, 1897.


117 It is hard to determine what the precise institutional practices were, but I would hold that a newspaper coverage of the Rotterdam fairground is illustrative, describing that at least five attractions had a portrait of Thomas Edison.

118 As Vanessa Toulmin concludes: “Everything and anything was exhibited under the banner of education and entertainment.” Or, as Toulmin cites the famous showman, Tom Norman, “You could exhibit anything... yes, anything from a needle to an anchor, a flea to an elephant, a bloater you could exhibit as a whale. It was not the show; it was the tale you told.” Vanessa Toulmin, “‘Curios Things in Curios Places’: Temporary exhibition venues in the Victorian and Edwardian entertainment environment,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, 2 (July 2006): 113-137.


120 André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 64. However, as Frank Kessler remarks, Gaudreault fails to employ the concept of cultural paradigm in his study, which leaves the term relatively underdeveloped. Frank Kessler, “Notes on the Concept of ‘Cultural Series’,” Research paper delivered at Utrecht University, December 2013, 2n2.

121 This important distinction is particularly put forward, and problematized, by Frank Kessler in Frank Kessler, “Notes on the Concept of ‘Cultural Series’,” Research paper delivered at Utrecht University, December 2013.

123 “het langs fotografischen weg, en met behulp van elektriciteit reproduceren van natuurlijke bewegingen.” Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad August 10, 1896.

124 It should be noted here that in comparison with U.S. or British newspapers, Dutch newspapers had little regard for entertainment.

125 “De Kinematograaf,” Haarlem’s Dagblad, August 3, 1898.

126 “De Kinematograaf van Grünkorn,” Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche Courant, October 6, 1898.

127 John Fullerton, Picturing Mexico: From the Camera Lucida to Film (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2014), 67.

128 Haarlem’s Dagblad, August 2, 1898; Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 15, 1898.

129 “Verder verschillende komieke en hoogst interessante number zoowel voor kinderen als volwassenen.” The sentence appears both in Haarlem’s Dagblad, August 2, 1898 and in Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 15, 1898.

130 The idea of film as “canned (magic) theater” has been used from an early stage to disqualify cinema as art. Yet, as Mario Slugan argues, the discourse on “canned magic theater” nevertheless shows the spectator’s emphasis on the profilmic, i.e. the screen as a stage in Paris. See Mario Slugan, “Revisiting the Fiction/Non-Fiction Distinction: Early Cinema and the Philosophy of Imagination,” unpublished manuscript, Ghent University, November 2018.


132 “De Kinematograaf,” Haarlem’s Dagblad, August 3, 1898.

133 Gaudreault, Film and Attraction, 63.


135 Irina O. Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation,” 46


Seel writes that “Perceptions refer to objects and states that reside within the reach of the execution of these perceptions; sensuous imagination refers to objects and states that are not within the reach of perception—to the extent that they exist at all.” In Aesthetics of Appearing, 70. Hugo Münsterberg describes the involvement of imagination (alongside memory and expectations) as elementary to the medium-specific film experience in “Memory and Imagination,” in Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay, a Psychological Study and Other Writings, ed. Allan Langdale (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 89-98.


Throughout the following sections I use the English spelling ‘Aladdin’ when the name is not employed as part of an original title.


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.

Georges Mendel 1897 sales catalogue. I thank Laurant Mannoni for putting this document into my hands.


Alexander Bevilacqua, The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 7-27. Contrary to Edward Said writing in Orientalism, Bevilacqua portrays a picture of European intellectuals, such as Galland, as having a sincere interest in Islamic and Arab culture. Travelling, collecting, and translating these manuscript was laborious work and European intellectuals went into great lengths learning Persian and Arab languages. For a critique by Bevilacqua on Said’s Orientalism albeit in a popular publication, see Alexander Bevilacqua, “Beyond Orientalism,” n+1 magazine, June 6, 2011.

Ibid., 1.


Elisabeth Oxfeldt describes how orientalism was popular in cosmopolitan Paris but also in the Nordic countries of Denmark and Norway, in Nordic Orientalism: Paris and the Cosmopolitan Imagination 1800-1900 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum and University of Copenhagen, 2005). Interestingly, Oxfeldt situates her argument specifically around the representation of Aladdin in nineteenth-century literature.

De Hond, Verlangen naar het Oosten. It should be noted that De Hond does not pay specific attention to Aladdin. For a brief overview of orientalism in the Netherlands, see Jan de Hond, “Nederlandse oriëntalisten,” Kunstschrift 5 (2004): 9-19.


De Hond, Verlangen naar het Oosten, 181.

Algemeen Handelsblad, October 11, 1837.

Algemeen Handelsblad, December 2, 1847, and Algemeen Handelsblad, January 8, 1868.

Algemeen Handelsblad, November 9, 1870.

Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 12, 1890.

“Kleurige decoratiën en costumes, welgeslaagde ‘changements à vue’, vrolijke, bekende muziek, welgeregelde baletten, . . . Dat alles maakt ‘Aladyn’ tot een stuk, waarin de toeschouwer zich somwijlen afvraagt: ‘waak ik of droom ik?’” Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 12, 1890.

On Marius Bauer’s orientalism, see De Hond, Verlangen naar het Oosten, 170-178.


De Hond, Verlangen naar het Oosten, 164.

De tooverlantaarn. De wijze van samenstelling en gebruik alsmede de kunst om een geest op te wekken door een spook (Amsterdam: C.L. Brinkman, 1873), 46.
I have only found two mentions of Aladdin in the eighteen French magic lantern catalogues I have retrieved. These slide series appear in the 1898 E. Mazo catalogue and in the Projections Molteni catalogue from 1897 (no. 55). Both publications are available through the Magic Lantern and Lantern Slide Catalog Collection from the Media History Digital Library. http://mediahistoryproject.org/magiclantern/index.html


Journal de La Haye, September 19, 1834.


Le Figaro, January 17, 1891. Original: “Les décors et les constumes sont, a ce qu’il paraît splendides. Toute la troupe enfantine, conduite par Paul Legrand, jouera dans cette féeerie.”

Charles-Guillaume Étienne, Aladin, ou la lampe merveilleuse-Opéra Féerie en cinq actes. First presented at Théâtre de l’Académie Royale du Musique, February 6, 1822, 22.

Rajewsky, Intermedialität, 3


Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 12, 1890. The original review reads: “Aladyn [sic] is een goed kermisstuk en om geen al te hoge eisen te stellen aan de verbeeldingskracht van de brede rij der ongeloovigen van onze 19e eeuw, die alles wil onderzoeken en napluizen, heeft men tot stuk gekozen een der veel Arabische nachtvertellingen, die ons verplaatsen in het verre Oosten, waar alles overtrokken is met een was van geheimzinnigheid en waar nu letterlijk alles mogelijk is” (“Aladin is a good performance for the fairground. It does not demand too much of the imagination of the many nonbelievers in our nineteenth century, people who want to investigate and research everything. They relocated this piece, part of the Arabian-night tales, to the far east, a place where everything is surrounded by the air of mysticism and where everything is possible.”)

Said, Orientalism, 9-10.

See, for example, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.)
“Het wonderlijke der Aladinsche wonderlamp was, dat zij gisteravond te negen uur in het Grand-theater uitging.” De Telegraaf, July 24, 1895. The article observes that the darkness leaves the audiences anxious. And, Nieuws van den Dag, July 26, 1895.

“Behoudens deze kleine interruptie heeft de Aladinsche lamp goed geschenen.” De Telegraaf, July 24, 1895, and Nieuws van den Dag, July 26, 1895.

De Grondwet, December 1, 1874.

Van Goens and Van Hamme, De Tooverlamp, groot ballet-pantomime, in drie Bedrijven, 11. The original reads: “

Ziter, The Orient on the Victorian Stage, 5-6.

Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, August 12, 1890.

Leeuwarder Courant, February 6, 1896.

An example of this can be found in a story concerning the American millionaire John W. Mackay who, according to a newspaper account, can hardly sleep at night because of the burdens of his money. “De Amerikaansche Aladin,” Algemeen Handelsblad, December 1, 1877.


Nieuws van den Dag, November 3, 1875.

Groninger Courant, October 25, 1850.

Kessler, “In the Realm of the Fairies,” 11.

As Yuri Tsivian remarks: “there is also a possibility that what we today misread as continuity was read as discontinuity in 1914. We may assume that the historical viewer was more sensitive to certain types of discontinuity signals than we are to the same signals nowadays.” In Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1994]), 181.


De Nieuwe Amsterdammer, March 14, 1896. “Wij kunnen de Cinematograaf het best vergelijken met een tooverlantaarn, met dien verstande, dat de lichtbeelden, die op het doek worden geworpen, leven.” (“The cinématographe is best to be compared
to the magic lantern, with the difference that the light images that are thrown on the screen, are alive.”


204 Kearney, Poetics of Imagining, 100-101.

205 Gumbrecht, Production of Presence, 98. This citation echoes Gunning’s analysis of the temporality of the cinema of attractions as “now you see it, now you don’t.”

206 Ibid., 84-85.

207 Sobchack, Address of the Eye, 3.


209 Convents, Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné, 153 and 182-185.

210 Ivo Blom, Jean Desmet and the Early Dutch Film Trade (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 53.

211 The distinction between the first and second generation is proposed by Frank van der Maden in “De komst van de film,” in Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse film en bioscoop tot 1940, eds. Karel Dibbets and Frank van der Maden (Houten: Wereldvenster, 1986), 36-38. Van der Maden describes how the earliest showmen, including Slieker, Rizzi, Gubbels, and Vincken, sold their kinematograph attractions between 1900 and 1905 while a second generation of young fairground showmen, mostly coming from established fairground families, successfully introduced more luxurious and spectacular traveling cinemas.

212 “Hoe de beelden en tafereelen van den kinematograaf ontstaan,” Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, December 20, 1897.

213 Gumbrecht, Production of Presence, 107.

Notes to Chapter 2

1 Chicago Inter-Ocean, July 5, 1896.


3 Adrienne Janus writes that Nancy’s aesthetic philosophy (on presence and beyond) is organized around three different definitions of the word “sense;” sense as meaning, sense as sensual perception, and sense as movement, sense of direction, and


6 Following Frank Ankersmit’s suggestion that historical representation (the presentation of an historical idea) is already explanation: “by presenting a nation’s or an epoch’s historical idea the historian has, in a way, explained its history.” “For in the historicist view, the issue of explanation is coextensive with that of representation.” Frank Ankersmit, *Meaning, Truth, and Reference in Historical Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 11.


13 Judith Thissen and Clemens Zimmerman, eds., *Cinema Beyond the City: Small-Town and Rural Film Culture in Europe* (London: BFI, 2016).


Studies that address the pre-1900 years of film exhibition in Chicago, albeit not as the sole focus, include: Michael Glover Smith and Adam Selzer, Flickering Empire: How Chicago Invented the U.S. Film Industry (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2015); Konrad Schiecke, Downtown Chicago’s Historic Movie Theatres (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012); Lauren Rabinovitz, For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); and Charles Musser, The Emergence of Cinema. Most studies into Chicago’s early film culture concern the nickelodeon years and later, while evaluating social reform, race or gender in these years, for example: Moya Luckett, Cinema and Community: Progressivism, Exhibition, and Film Culture in Chicago, 1907-1917 (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2013); Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Julie Ann Lindstrom, “‘Getting a hold Deeper in the Life of the City’: Chicago Nickelodeons, 1905-1914,” PhD diss. (Northwestern University, 1998); Mary Carbine, “‘The Finest Outside the Loop’: Motion Picture Exhibition in Chicago’s Black Metropolis,” Camera Obscura 23 (May 1990): 9-41.


Sobchack, Carnal Thoughts.


Bruno, Atlas of Emotion, 6. Bruno explains that: “The Latin root of the word emotion speaks clearly about the ‘moving’ force, stemming as it does from emovere, an active verb composed of movere, ‘to move,’ and e, ‘out.’ The meaning of emotion, then, is historically associated with ‘a moving out, migration, transference from one place to another.”


As cited in Donald L. Miller, City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 551.


Miller, City of the Century, 16.

The number of twenty-five theaters in downtown Chicago is based on amusement bulletins in the Chicago Advertiser and Amusement Guide and advertisements in newspapers. The exact number of theaters operative remains difficult to determine not just because new places were opened and old theaters disappeared, but also because theaters were sometimes closed temporarily or changed management before they reopened under another name.

Friedberg, Window Shopping.

Miller, City of the Century, 261.


Platt, The Electric City, 28.

Chicago Tribune, July 14, 1895. Chicago Inter-Ocean, July 16, 1895. According to Musser, Latham’s eidoloscope suffered from problems stabilizing the picture. It was not until 1896 that the Lathams “discovered the secret of ‘intermittent’.” In Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 134.

Chicago Inter-Ocean, July 25, 1895.

Chicago Tribune, July 21, 1895

Chicago Tribune, August 25, 1895; Chicago Tribune, August 27, 1895.

Chicago Tribune, September 1, 1895; Chicago Tribune, September 15, 1895.

Miller, City of the Century, illustration 16.


42 Chicago by Day and Night, 19.


44 Miller, City of the Century, 268.

45 Miller, City of the Century, 269.

46 Miller, City of the Century, 268.


48 Miller, City of the Century, 16.


51 Miller, City of the Century, 679.

52 Väliaho, Mapping the Moving Image, 79-85.


54 Ben Highmore, “Street Life in London: Towards a Rhythmanalysis of London in the Late Nineteenth Century,” New Formations 47 (2002): 171-193. As Michael Cowan explains, writing about modernism in the early twentieth century, there were contradictory ideas about rhythm circulating. On the one hand, rhythm was fetishized by modernist artists as a premodern expression of primordial human energy, while, at the same time, the rhythm of industrial modernity was seen as a threat. In this latter sense, the rhythm of modernity would take over and exhaust the individual. In Europe this was considered a form of Americanization. Cowan, for example,
cites Fritz Giese who observes in 1925: “A rhythm that this new artificial world now develops and promotes on its own, as if detached from its human creator. The metropolis controls us; technology controls us; the economy controls us - not the other way round!” In Cowan, Technology’s Pulse, 29-30.

55 As cited in Frisby, Fragments of Modernity, 67.


57 Ibid., 111-116.

58 Christoph Asendorf, Ströme und Strahlen: Das langsane Verschwinden der Materie um 1900 (Giessen: Anabas Verlag, 1989).


60 Theater historian Robert Lewis states that basically all stage entertainment in the late nineteenth century can be considered variety theater, as there were always several acts and attractions programmed. Therefore a distinction needs to be made between variety theater and vaudeville. In Robert Lewis, From Traveling Show to Vaudeville (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 9.

61 Chicago Tribune, January 1 1897.


63 Chicago Tribune, February 10, 1895; Chicago Inter-Ocean, February 11, 1895.

64 Coshocton Daily Times, October 25, 1909. This article seems to be a syndicated piece. Another short obituary on Hopkins appeared in Variety, October 1909.

65 Chicago Inter-Ocean, February 10, 1895.

66 Chicago Evening Journal, August 8, 1896.


68 Chicago Times-Herald, July 26, 1896. The newspaper article describes the vitascope as the “absolute novelty” in the “usually dull season.”

69 Even Hopkins’ West Side Theatre, John D. Hopkins’ other venue located outside the Loop, was closed for the summer season.

70 Chicago Times-Herald, July 14, 1896.

71 Chicago Tribune, July 19, 1896.

72 Chicago Times-Herald, July 12, 1896.
By the 1890s, however, Chicago’s population was, by a large majority, white. In both the 1890 and the 1900 census, white people made up 98% of the population. Black people were the largest minority, measuring 1.8% of the population in 1900. Gibson and Jung, “Historical Census Statistics On Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990.”


Dixon Evening Telegraph, August 27, 1896.

Nasaw, Going Out, 30.

Chicago Tribune, November 4, 1896.


Chicago Tribune, November 4, 1896.

Chicago Inter-Ocean, July 5, 1896.

Well before the vitascope came to Chicago, the Inter-Ocean mentioned that John D. Hopkins was well connected to Koster & Bail’s theater in New York. This might explain the recurring patterns between the New York, Boston, and Chicago vitascope exhibitions.


Chicago Inter-Ocean, February 11, 1895. Chicago Tribune, February 20, 1895.

Chicago Inter-Ocean, February 15, 1895.

Chicago Inter-Ocean, February 11, 1895.


Whereas the Edison vitascope had seen a whole run of advance newspaper publicity, this was not so much the case with the Lumière cinematograph. There were, however, reports from New York and Boston mentioning reviewing the cinematograph when it was introduced there, for example in the Chicago Evening Post, August 12, 1896.

The phantoscope was actually the main invention behind the vitascope. It was developed by C. Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat. After a dispute, however, Armat sold their patent to Raff & Gammon who took it to Edison in order to secure commercial exploitation. Jenkins, in turn, continued small scale exhibition with the phantoscope while he sold some of his devices. See Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 100-105.

Chicago Journal, August 11, 1896.

Chicago Tribune, August 11, 1896.

Chicago Journal, August 11, 1896. The phantoscope, however, reappeared at the Imperial theater, a vaudeville theater located outside downtown Chicago, from September 22 onward. This second run seems to have been more successful as there were no reports of technical failure, although shows at the Imperial were hardly mentioned in press at all. Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 22, 1896.

Charles Musser, “The Stereopticon and Cinema: Media Form or Platform,” 149.

Miller, City of the Century, 259-260.

The block at the corner of Randolph and Dearborn would really become the heart of the theater scene in Chicago in the twentieth century. The block included next to the Schiller (renamed the Garrick theatre), the Olympic Theatre, the Woods Theater, the Harris Theater, and the Selwyn Theater.


The Schiller Theatre was renamed the Garrick Theatre in 1903 and the building was better known under this name. There seems to have been quite some protest when the building was demolished in the 1960s. See Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, “Man Out of Time,” Chicago Magazine, November 2015. http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/November-2015/Richard-Nickel/ (last retrieved August 19, 2016).

Germans constituted the largest group of immigrants in Chicago: “In 1900, 470,000 Chicagoans—one out of every four residents—had either been born in Germany or had a parent born there.” Christiane Harzig, “Germans,” in Encyclo-

101 Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News, August 30, 1896.

102 Chicago Times-Herald, September 15, 1896.

103 Chicago Evening Journal, September 16, 1896.

104 Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News, September 13, 1896.


106 Chicago Tribune, January 1, 1897.

107 Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News, November 22, 1896.


110 Chicago Evening Post, July 3, 1896.

111 Mario Slugan argues that the fiction/non-fiction distinction is, from the perspective of the viewer’s experience, untenable in very early cinema. He even argues, for example, that the approaching train scenes can be seen as more fictional in terms of imagination than Méliès’ trick films. See Mario Slugan, “Revisiting the Fiction/Non-Fiction Distinction: Early Cinema and the Philosophy of Imagination.”

112 Chicago Tribune, October 5, 1896.

113 Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 118.

114 Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 20, 1896.


116 Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 13, 1896.

117 “Picture Man Loose,” Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 20, 1896.

118 Musser, “Nationalism and the Beginnings of Cinema,” 159.

119 In Europe and Great Britain local films would develop into possibly the most popular genre around 1900. See Vanessa Toulmin, “‘Local Films for Local People’: Traveling Showmen and the Commissioning of Local Films in Great Britain, 1900-1902,” Film History 13, 2 (2001): 118-137.
For example, *The San Francisco Call*, June 9, 1896, describes “with cars etc., in motion.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1896, writes “Next came a representation of Herald Square, New York, with street-cars and vans moving up and down.”

*Boston Post*, May 17, 1896.

*Boston Post*, May 17, 1896.

*Boston Post*, May 18, 1896.

*Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 27, 1896.


As cited in Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 102.

*Dayton Herald*, January 7, 1897.

André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 58.


Lytard, *The Inhuman*, 41.


Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 144.


*Chicago Times-Herald*, July 14, 1896. The review describes that ROUGH SEA AT DOVER (R. W. Paul, 1895) was screened “several times in response to the demonstration of appreciation.”

Simmel’s views on aesthetics differ significantly from those of Baudelaire, Benjamin, and Kracauer. Although Simmel acknowledges, like the others, both the so-
cial dimension of art as well as the aesthetics of daily life in modernity, he maintains a more Kantian perspective arguing that life and art belong to separate realms. Simmel, for example, celebrates the work of Rembrandt for creating from the forms of everyday life a singular artistic experience. Meanwhile, David Frisby stresses that Simmel did address the aesthetic dimension of social relations, and of society as such. This perspective is also maintained by Eduardo de la Fuente in his most recent contribution to the Simmel-aesthetics debate. See Georg Simmel, Rembrandt: An Essay in the Philosophy of Art, translated and edited by Alan Scott and Helmut Staubmann (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 75-80; David Frisby, “The Aesthetics of Modern Life: Simmel’s Interpretation,” Theory, Culture & Society 8 (1991): 73-93; Eduardo de la Fuente, “Frames, Handles and Landscapes: Georg Simmel and the Aesthetic Ecology of Things,” in The Anthem Companion to Georg Simmel, eds. Thomas Kemple and Olli Pyyhtinen (London: Anthem Press, 2016), 161-184.


150 Singer, Melodrama and Modernity, 102.

151 Chicago Inter-Ocean, July 5, 1896.

152 Charles Musser describes a viewer who is actively contemplating and comparing the screen version with the original performance. Musser’s emphasis on the intellectual activity of comparison is problematic, in my view, but I agree with him that the audience’s familiarity with the screened performances was important to viewing experiences. For a more detailed discussion of live performances versus screen recordings, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation. See Charles Musser, “A Cinema of Contemplation, A Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s,” in The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 159-180.


154 Chicago Inter-Ocean, October 4, 1896.


159 Alison Ross, The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy, 159; and Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Existence of the World is Always Unexpected: Jean-Luc Nancy in conversation with John Paul Ricco,” in Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Poli-


163 Seel, Aesthetics of Appearing, 145.

164 Chicago Inter-Ocean, August 30, 1896; Chicago Tribune, October 5, 1896; Chicago Tribune, July 5, 1896.

165 Gordon, “From Charcot to Charlot,” 543.


167 Väliaho, Mapping the Moving Image, 10.


172 Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 10, 1896.

173 Chicago Tribune, August 30, 1896; Chicago Tribune, July 21, 1896.

174 Chicago Tribune, October 5, 1896.

175 Chicago Times-Herald, July 14, 1896.

176 “To Move as if Alive,” Chicago Tribune, April 4, 1897.


178 Interestingly, in the article the camera is incorrectly identified as the magniscope. The magniscope was the name of the projecting device. Amet might have used a kinetographic camera patented by Nicolas Nelson, a mechanic who worked with Edward Amet and his brothers. In 1893, when Amet began working on his moving-picture device, he did develop a camera/projection device but he
Another instance of a press notice covering the production of films while emphasizing the machines, movements, and automata involved in the process appeared in “Of Moving Photography: How he Biograph Pictures Are Made,” *Cincinnati Enquirer* April 29, 1899.

This comment also echoes Eadweard Muybridge’s study of human movements, as well as modernity’s ongoing effort to control the human body and make it as efficient as possible in order to avoid fatigue, as Rabinbach argues in *The Human Motor*.

Vito Adriaensens and Steven Jacobs write that, paradoxically, the medium of movement “seems to have been fascinated by stasis and stillness.” In Adriaensens and Jacobs, “The sculptor’s dream: Tableaux vivants and living statues in the films of Méliès and Saturn,” 41; and Wiegand, *Gebanntes Bewegung*.

Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 57. Tsivian, writing on the introduction of cinema in Russia after 1906, focuses on how moving pictures represented Eisenstein’s theory of relativity. Mary Ann Doane, in turn, describes how the late nineteenth century saw an “emerging conceptualization of time as an arrow.” From this perspective Doane observes that: “The fascination with the tension between reversible and irreversible time (…) seems in many ways to be the mechanical incarnation of representational irreversibility.” Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 109-112.


For example, although the Chicago public was fascinated by electricity and new forms of movement at the Columbian Exposition, it fiercely resistance high-voltage lines for electric streetcars. The Tribune even published a piece titled “Death in the Air”. See Miller, *City of the Century*, illustration 16.

*Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1896. The notion of the vitascope as based on a “combination of electrical forces” also appears in *Chicago Journal*, July 3, 1896; *Chicago Evening Post*, August 8, 1896. A review from the *Los Angeles Times* even notices that “now and then one could see swift electric sparks.” Cited in Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 102.

*Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1896.

*Chicago Times-Herald*, July 5, 1896. In September that year, the animatography that was premiering at Kohl & Middleton’s Clark Street Dime Museum, was also described as “the latest of the many improvements in the combination of electricity and photography.” *Chicago Times-Herald*, September 20, 1896.

*Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1896. The writer clearly means the cinematograph itself, and not the light source, as he writes, “It is a small, square box of glass and wood hitched to a number of electric wires.”

*Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1896.

*Matter and Memory* was published in 1896; *Creative Evolution* in 1907.


*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1896.

*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 4, 1896.

In terms of the illusion of reality, the discussion about the approaching train and its spectators diving away in fear—“cinema’s founding myth”—remains unresolved. As Martin Loiperdinger argues, “no one has yet proven the existence of a panic among the audience for the cinematographic locomotive pulling into the station of La Ciotat.” Meanwhile, Stephen Bottomore used the trope of the “panicking audience” that mistook the representation for reality as an indication of the spectator’s trouble with perspective. Martin Loiperdinger, “Lumière’s Arrival of the Train: Cinema’s Founding Myth,” *The Moving Image* 4, 1 (2004): 89-118; and Stephen

Gunning, “Animating the Nineteenth Century: Bringing Pictures to Life (or Life to Pictures?),” 460.


As Gunning writes, “The nature of the encounter with [the] dynamic cinematic image was more uncanny, introducing viewers to a new immaterial, purely visual, energy and its power over the viewer’s imagination.” In Gunning, “Animating the Nineteenth Century: Bringing Pictures to Life (or Life to Pictures?),” 462.

*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, August 30, 1896.


*Chicago Evening Journal*, September 17, 1896.

The New York screenings of *Charge of the Seventh French Cuirassiers* at Keith’s Union Square Theatre were accompanied by sound effects. See Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 86. Sound effects, however, were not common practice at the Schiller Theatre. Meanwhile there are no other occasions when sound effects are mentioned for this theater.

*Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1896.

*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 11, 1896.

*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, December 27, 1896.


Gunning, “The Aesthetic of Astonishment,” 121. Gaudrault calls this mode of display in order to show “monstration.” Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*.

Tom Gunning, “‘Now You See It, Now You Don’t.’”

Directed inwardly, focused at perception itself makes the aesthetics of presence also a very modern notion. Thus for Nancy, presence is very much a form of modern existence. See Ross, *Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy*, 152.
Raff & Gammon, who commercially exploited the Edison vitascope, sold off exclusive “state rights” to vitascope distributors. These investors, in turn, distributed local exhibition rights to individual cities. Press releases were sometimes copied from one city to another. The introduction of the vitascope thus marked a more or less orchestrated event. See Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 111-118. The introduction of the cinematograph in the US initially happened along a similar route. See Musser, “Nationalism and the Beginnings of Cinema.”

Chicago Times-Herald, September 13, 1896.

Notes to Chapter 3

1 As cited in Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 117.
3 Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 139.
5 For an overview of studies on early cinema in Chicago, see p. 213n17.
7 Although it should be noted here that Chicago was hit hard by a national recession starting in late 1893 continuing well into 1894. At the end of the Exposition many stores, hotels, and theaters were bankrupt resulting in many empty lots downtown
and throughout the city. There was no money to maintain the White City. Many buildings were lost in several fires in 1894. Yet, starting late 1894, historian Donald Miller sees an important regeneration of the city. See Miller, City of the Century, 533-551.

8 Dominic A. Pacyga, Slaughterhouse: Chicago's Union Stock Yard and the World It Made (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). The Chicago Board of Trade was notorious for speculation and cornering of the market. At the time, this was portrayed in many Chicago-based novels, such as Frank Norris’ The Pit (1903) and Theodore Dreiser’s The Titan (1914).

9 There was a big reform movement that originated in Chicago in the late 1880s and 1890s. Most famous is the work of Jane Addams who, in 1889, co-founded the Hull House, a shelter for poor immigrants “to help ameliorate the ravages of industrialism in Chicago’s immigrant neighborhoods.” Hull House became a hub for intellectual and progressive social scientists who studied the (negative) effects of industrialization and modernity. Jane Addams’ work became very well-known through her memoir Twenty Years at Hull House, published in 1910. See Pacyga, Chicago: A Biography, 125-131.

10 Chicago attracted a vast number of (European) immigrants. Around 1900, 79 percent of the city’s population was an immigrant or had immigrant parents. Germans were the biggest foreign population: a quarter of the complete population was either born in Germany or one of their parents was born there, see page 122n91. According to contemporaries it was the fifth German city in the world. Meanwhile there were about 50,000 Swedes living in the city, making it “the third Swedish city in the world,” and around 75,000 Irish. From 1880 onward more eastern and southern European immigrants arrived. By 1900 Chicago had the biggest population of Poles, Swedes, Czechs, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Croatians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, and Greeks in the country. Writing in 1896, the English author George W. Steevens expected that due to immigration Chicago would shortly become the “center of gravity” in the U.S. (instead of New York). G. W. Steevens, The Land of the Dollar (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1897), 88-89; and Irving Cutler, Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent, 3rd ed. (Chicago and Duboqu, IA: The Geographic Society of Chicago and Kendall/Hunt, 1982),43-36; Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A Jones, Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).


13 Steevens, The Land of the Dollar, 144-145.


18 Miller, *City of the Century*, 185 and 192.


22 Paul S. Moore describes how newspapers mediated and “mapped” moviegoing in the city in *Now Playing*, 158-163.


24 On the urge to have things close, see Deidre Boden and Harvey L. Molotch, “The Compulsion of Proximity,” in *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity*, 257-286.


The interrupted exhibition of the phantoscope at The Great Northern Roof Theatre marks an interesting case in this respect, see pages 206-207.


In contrast to the bigger theaters, there are not archival entries on Hopkins’ theaters nor on the People’s Theatre or Holly Theatre.


According to historian Konrad Schiecke writing in his overview *Downtown Chicago’s Historic Movie Theatres*, Hopkins’ South Side Theatre had a capacity of 1,477, but considering the consulted floor plans that number seems unlikely to me.

*Chicago by Day and Night*, 29-30.

The Tri-State Amusement Company was a chain of theater owners, and not a vaudeville circuit. At that time, none of the Chicago vaudeville places seems to have been part of a circuit although there were local collaborations, for example, between Hopkins and Kohl & Middleton, the owners of the Olympic, the Chicago Opera House, and Kohl & Middleton’s Clark Street Dime Museum. In September 1898, Col. John Hopkins managed to get sole control over his theaters while the Tri-State Amusement Company started its lease of the Schiller Theatre, which they immediately renamed the Dearborn Theatre. In 1900, Hopkins, Kohl and Middleton, and other Chicago theater managers established what would become the Western Vaudeville Managers Association. In the following years this chain was known as the Orpheum Circuit. The WVMA was created in response to the national dominant Keith-Albee syndicate (the Vaudeville Managers Association).

*Chicago Journal*, October 10, 1896.


It should be noted here that also basically all theater shows were variety entertainment, including opera. See Robert Lewis, *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 9.


*Chicago Journal*, July 11, 1896.
It was the main act that received all attention in the press, also in the bi-weekly printed reviews. The vitascope succeeded the popular impersonator Tim Murphy at Hopkins’. Chicago Journal, July 3, 1896.

Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News, September 13, 1896.


Chicago Times-Herald, August 16, 1896; Abendpost, September 7, 1896; Abendpost, September 14, 1896.

This description is based on the advertisement as published in, among others, the Chicago Times-Herald, September 13, 1896. Because of the amount of detail, and the particular order of the acts, it seems likely that this was indeed the order of presentation.

The concept of the “referential whole” or “referential totality” originates from Heidegger, who describes the referential whole as constitutive to Dasein’s meaningful and contextual world. Heidegger positions that objects do not appear to us as separate entities in space but, rather, appear in their “referential totality,” that is, objects are constituted to us in their functionality (their “ready-to-handness”) in relation to other objects and its surrounding space. The recurring example that Heidegger refers to is the hammer which, as a tool that appears “ready-to-hand,” makes sense when it is situated in a workshop. The presence of the object thereby becomes unnoticeable. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Thought, 2008), H.75-76,105-107. For an insightful discussion of the referential whole and its position in the phenomenological theories of Husserl and Heidegger, see Sara Heinämaa, “Varieties of Presence: Heidegger’s and Husserl’s Accounts of the Useful and the Valuable,” Parrhesia 13 (2011): 28-40. Merleau-Ponty in his Phenomenology of Perception, which originates from Gestalt psychology, also points to the stages of a “unique totality” and the “totality of being,” or, at another instance, a “functional totality.” See Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 127, 159, 197.


Gumbrecht, The Production of Presence, 71.


Between 1896 and 1898 Hopkins’ South Side Theatre did not have a projection booth. However, when the property was sold and became the Holly Theatre, a projection booth was present. See Sanborn Maps, volume 1, South (1906), The Newberry Institute.
51 Chicago Journal, July 11, 1896.

52 William Paul, When Movies Were Theater, 39.

53 Hansen, Babel and Babylon, 36.


55 Hansen, Babel and Babylon, 36.

56 Ian Christie, “The Stuff of Screens,” in Screens, eds. Dominique Chateau and José Moure (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 70-79, 70.

57 Although there were successful shows in a theater context in Europe, the move to (vaudeville) theaters was not a clear-cut decision for Edison as he was afraid that it would hurt his kinetoscope business. See Musser, Emergence of Cinema, 91.

58 This “transparency thesis” is most well-known through the work of Kendall Walton, who argues that representational realism involves the viewer’s mandated imagining to look though the picture while, in a kind of playful act, we imagine as if the represented object is actually present. See Kendall L. Walton, “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,” Critical Inquiry 11, 2 (December 1984): 246-277; Kendall L. Walton, Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of Representational Arts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Mario Slugan, subsequently, argues that cinema’s earliest experiences involved this kind of mandate to imagine presented pictures as if they were real. See Slugan, “Revisiting the Fiction/Non-Fiction Distinction: Early Cinema and the Philosophy of Imagination.” Walton’s transparency thesis, however, is problematic in terms of viewing experiences because he states that spectators only feel “quasi-emotions” or “make-believe emotions.” Studies in film-phenomenology, in turn, indicate that the viewer’s emotions are very real. See, for example, Julian Hanich, Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: the Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear (New York and London: Routledge, 2010); Tarja Laine, Feeling Cinema: Emotional Dynamics in Film Studies (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).


61 *Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1896.


63 *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1896.

64 *Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News*, January 24, 1897.

65 Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*.

66 *Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News*, November 15, 1896.


68 Musser, “The Stereopticon and Cinema,” 141. A similar visceral or haptic effect of depth can also be found in the popular stereoscope, see David Trotter, “Stereoscopy: modernism and the ‘haptic’,” *Critical Quarterly* 46, 4 (December 2004): 38-58.

69 Sobchack, “The Scene of the Screen,” 145. Trevor Elkington notes that cinema does not present an illusion of depth but a real perception of it. Moreover, as Elkington paraphrases Merleau-Ponty, “depth is the first dimension, the dimension in which our bodies operate on the day to day, the space of our perception of the world around us.” Trevor G. Elkington, *Moments in Space, Spaces in Time: Phenomenology and the Embodied Depth of the Cinematic Image*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 2001.


71 *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1896. A similar effect happened with youngsters during a special family screening of the cinematograph. The *Inter Ocean* writes: “The last view shown, depicting the charge of the squadron of cavalry was especially realistic and the youngsters fairly shrieked with delight as the horses and riders came rushing onward at breakneck speed.” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, December 27, 1896.

72 *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1896.

73 *Chicago Evening Journal*, July 14, 1896.

74 *Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1896.
As Heidegger states: “The structure of the Being of what is ready-to-hand as equipment is determined by references or assignments.” Thus the “ready-to-hand” object is defined by its function while it exists as such through its functional assignment. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H74, 105.

The hammer and the nail constitute Heidegger’s recurring examples of the “ready-to-hand”: “The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H69, 98.


It should be noted here that in terms of the “un-readiness-to-hand,” the presence-at-hand still appears in relation to its function, that is, in relation to the object’s readiness-to-hand. Presence-at-hand, however, uncovers or reveals the object as equipment.


Ibid.


See, for instance, Sconce, *Haunted Media*.

Jan Holmberg, for example, writes: “I think it could be productive to view almost all of film history as a sort of striving for this illusion of presence, or immersion.” In: “Ideals of Immersion in Early Cinema,” 132. At least for early cinema, I tend to disagree with him. As this chapter outlines, the attraction of early cinema was more complex; it did not just strive for immersion as the materiality of moving pictures was equally important.

Loiperdinger, “Lumière’s Arrival of the Train: Cinema’s Founding Myth,” 102. For a more extended discussion, see pages 136-137.

*Chicago Inter Ocean*, October 4, 1896.
It is not really clear where the sounds came from, but the piece mentions "clever stage properties adding to the illusion." Similarly, the Chicago Journal, enthusiastically describing Rough Sea at Dover, writes that: "by the clever manipulation of stage properties even the angry roar is heard." Chicago Journal, July 14, 1896.


Chicago Tribune, November 15, 1896.

Chicago Tribune, March 28, 1897.

Chicago Evening Post, November 14, 1896.


The Philadelphia Enquirer, June 26, 1898.


Ibid., 98.

It should be noted here that at Hammerstein’s Olympic Theatre in New York the McKinley scenes were part of a political program whereas in Chicago the Biograph scenes were programmed in between a spectacular variety show on the popular fictional creatures The Brownies.


Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 225.

Chicago Weekly Amusement Guide, July 3, 1898; July 10, 1898; July 17, 1898; and August 21, 1898.

The Chicago Inter Ocean writes: “[the play] will be produced with new and elaborate scenic, mechanical, and electric effects.” Inter Ocean, September 25, 1898.

“Happy Colonel Hopkins,” Inter Ocean, February 4, 1899.

Chicago Times-Herald, August 15, 1898.

The films that Alexandre Promio shot in Chicago for Lumière were *Défilé de policiemen, Michigan Avenue*, and *Grand roue*.

There is but one mention of the local films programmed for the upcoming week, yet the Chicago scenes are absent from all other reviews. *Chicago Inter Ocean*, October 15, 1896.

For an overview of Edward Amet’s involvement in the early motion picture industry see Michael Glover Smith and Adam Selzer, *Flickering Empire: How Chicago Invented the U.S. Film Industry* (London and New York: Wallflower, 2015), 55-62. In November 1896, Amet’s Magniscope was temporarily on the program at Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, before Hopkins’ changed to the American Biograph. The only other occasion when the Magniscope was on the bill was in May 1897, at the Kohl & Middleton Clark Street Dime Museum. In 1898, however, Amet’s war film productions would become rather popular. Recorded on 35mm they could be shown on the vitascope, the cinématographe, and some other devices.

Actually, as Musser also notes, after the summer of 1898 there were very few moving picture attractions in Chicago, compared to other major cities. See Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 272-273.

It should also be mentioned that the majority of scenes projected with the vitascope at this early stage, were produced for the kinetoscope in 1894. Hence they appeared actually as blown-up versions of peeping pictures.

Chicago Times-Herald, July 14, 1896.

Chicago Times-Herald, October 11, 1896.

Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 33-35.

One could argue, as discussed in Chapter 2, that the stereopticon caused effects of depth similar to the kinematograph. Still, the moving pictures uniquely caused a “lived space” by the involvement of movement and time. See, for example, Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 24-25; Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 19-20.

Martine Beugnet and Annie van den Oever, “Gulliver Goes to the Movies: Screen Size, Scale, and Experiential Impact,” in *Screens*, 247-257, 249.

Chicago Times-Herald, July 14, 1896.

Chicago Inter Ocean, July 5, 1896.

Chicago Journal, July 11, 1896.

Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 130.


Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News, March 31, 1894; August 11, 1894; August 23, 1896.

Chicago Journal, September 7, 1896.


Aesthetics of unveiling is a notion raised by Gertrud Koch in “Cosmos in Film: On the Concept of Space in Walter Benjamin’s ‘Work of Arts’ Essay,” in *Walter


140 Theater and film historian Gwendolyn Waltz has published important research on hybrid performances. See Gwendolyn Waltz, “20 Mintues or Less: Short-Form Film-and-Theater Hybrids — Skits, Sketches, Playlets, and Acts in Vaudeville, Variety, Revues, &c.” in Performing New Media, eds. Kaveh Askari et al. (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2014), 245-253; Gwendolyn Waltz, “Filmed Scenery on the Live Stage,” Theatre Journal 58 (2006): 547-573; Gwendolyn Waltz, “‘Half Real-Half Reel’: Alternation Format Stage-and-Screen Hybrids,” in A Companion to Early Cinema, eds. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 360-380. However, I disagree with Waltz’ observation that “By September 1896 in the United States, film began to be integrated into full-length dramatic productions” and “soon afterwards” hybrid performances also made it to vaudeville acts and variety theater. According to my research, hybrid performances were rare, predominantly unsuccessful, and were excluded from vaudeville.

141 The vaudeville format, in contrast to both theater and combination companies, was characterized by “a specialized, fragmented format with each performer or act working autonomously and not participating in the closing sketch.” Allen, Vaudeville and Film, 48.

142 Charles Musser, The Emergence of Cinema, 134-135.
The Good Mr Best was written by John J. McNally who also wrote The Widow Jones. Different from vaudeville, combination companies presented complete evening-filling programs. These performances were less modular compared to vaudeville, yet these companies included next to a core of dramatic actors a broad range of performers, such as singers, dancers, and other specialists. See Rick Altman, Silent Film Sound (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 30.

The Story the Biograph Told acts on the familiar trope of a man caught cheating by the moving picture. As Musser observes, the film was an adaptation from a 1901 vaudeville skit “In the Biograph.” Musser, Emergence of Cinema, 355-357. See also Noël Burch, Life to Those Shadows, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 160-161.

The Pittsburgh Press, September 19, 1897.

Chicago Weekly Amusement Guide, October 17, 1897.

Chicago Journal, October 16, 1897.

The Sun, August 24, 1897.

Chicago Chronicle, June 11, 1898. Waltz maintains that the premiere was earlier, on April 19, but I have not found any mention of that performance. Moreover, it is
not until June that the Chronicle describes it as a “brand-new” war play. The Chicago Evening Post also describes a “first presentation” in June. The same newspaper also mentions that the production was so large that it could not have been organized during the regular season as it was playing during summer. Chicago Chronicle, June 26, 1898.

158 Waltz, “Filmed Scenery on the Live Stage,” 564.
159 Waltz, “Filmed Scenery on the Live Stage,” 567.

Chicago Chronicle, June 18, 1898.

161 The review published in the Chicago Evening Post, for example, devotes half of its text to a scene-by-scene analysis of scenery depicting historical locations. Chicago Evening Post, June 25, 1898.


Chicago Times-Herald, July 10, 1898.

Chicago Journal, September 19, 1896. Loie Fuller was the standard for all serpentine dance performances although there were many imitators. Chicago Daily News, for example, mistakenly spoke of “beautiful La Loie dances” with Hopkins’ vitascope exhibition on July 3, 1896. But real imitations were manifold. In August, 1896, for example, the Masonic Temple Roof Garden programmed Ida Fuller, who claimed to be Loie’s sister, although this was not the case. Chicago Journal, August 23, 1896. For an account of Loie Fuller imitations, see Anthea Kraut, Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 80-83.

Chicago Times-Herald, September 22, 1896.

166 Seel, Aesthetics of Appearing, 135.


This was, of course, one of Walter Benjamin’s main arguments that he delivers in “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction,” that, in the age of an everyday perception marked by distraction, film can “by virtue of its shock effects” provide a (political) training ground against collective distraction. Benjamin, “The Work of Art…,” 40-41. See also Hansen, Cinema and Experience, 75-103.


Notes to Conclusion

Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 3. The term “inferential walks” originates from Umberto Eco who describes the reader’s activity of “walking outside” the text to enrich his/her interpretive framework. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 32-33. The philosopher of history Ethan Kleinberg describes a similar approach of *aporia*, which means that the historian supplies “walks” of explanation that do not always lead up to a clear-cut understanding (and thus simplification) of the past, but rather acknowledge its chaotic dimensions. See Kleinberg *Haunting History*.

Kleinberg, *Haunting History*, 142.


As Dominic LaCapra writes: “One tendency in the New Historicism is to resemble old historicisms in taking necessary contextualization to the point of overcontextualization that is construed as explanatory. On this view, an adequate historical interpretation is characterized by a superabundance of information, and there is a tendency to extend Clifford Geertz’s valuable stress upon ‘thick description’ into the indiscriminate, unqualified rule: the thicker the description, the better.” LaCapra, *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 191.


Thomas Elsaesser, for example, writes that early cinema, not as a film but as a mechanical-sensorial spectacle or performance, “would seem to be a quintessential Dada artifact.” Elsaesser, “Dada/Cinema,” 13-27, 13.

Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, 161. For the same reasons, Nancy states, the past is also, strictly speaking, unrepresentable; because of temporal distortion it always escapes representation.

See Nancy, “Finite History,” in *The Birth to Presence*, 143-166. The distinction between the past and history is a recurring theme in the work of Hayden White. White states that: “the term ‘history’ is the signifier of a concept rather than a reference to a thing or domain of being having material presence. This concept may have as its signified either ‘the past’ or something like ‘temporal process’ but these, too, are concepts rather than things. Neither has material presence. Both are known only by way of ‘traces’ or material entities which indicate not so much what the things that produced them were, as, rather, the fact that ‘some thing’ passed by a certain place or did something in that place.” See White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), x.

Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, xvi.


Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Revising the Past/Revisiting the Present: How Change Happens in Historiography,” *History and Theory* 46 (December 2006): 1-19, 4. This quote originates from Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*, who, actually, never phrases it as such.


Gumbercht, however, is skeptical to the possibility of experiences of presence in narrative forms. His study *In 1926: Living on the Edge of Time*, for example, presents a ‘nonnarrative’ historical account in order to evoke an experience of presence with the reader. In this respect, however, Gumbrecht’s theory differs from Erika Fischer-Lichte’s and Martin Seel’s accounts of presence, as well as from philosophers of history Frank Ankersmit and Eelco Runia, who locate presence within narrative experiences.


Bibliography

Archives (on site)

The Netherlands
Koninklijke Bibliotheek / National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague
Universiteit van Amsterdam, Theatercollectie, Amsterdam
EYE Film Institute, Amsterdam
Internationaal instituut voor sociale geschiedenis / International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

France
Cinémathèque française, Paris
Bibliothèque nationale de France, site Richelieu (performing arts collections), Paris
Bibliothèque nationale de France, site François-Mitterrand (newspapers and magazines), Paris

U.S.
Chicago History Museum
The Newberry Institute, Chicago
Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Library Center

U.K.
National Fairground Archive, Sheffield
The Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter
Digital collections and databases

Catalogue Lumière Online (https://catalogue-lumiere.com/)
Chronicling America, Library of Congress (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/)
Cinema Context, Universiteit van Amsterdam (www.cinemacontext.nl/)
Delpher, Koninklijke Bibliotheek (https://www.delpher.nl/)
Eye Filmdatabase (https://www.eyefilm.nl/collectie/filmgeschiedenis)
Filmographie Pathé, Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé (http://www.fondation-jeromeseydoux-pathe.com/filmographie)
Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France (https://gallica.bnf.fr/)
Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource (https://www.slides.uni-trier.de/)
Media History Digital Library (http://mediahistoryproject.org/)
Newspapers.com (https://www.newspapers.com/)
ProQuest (http://proquest.com)

Newspapers and Magazines

The Netherlands:

Algemeen Handelsblad
Amersfoortsche Courant
Arnhemsche Courant
Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad
Dagblad van Zuidholland en ’s Gravenhage
De Grondwet
De Telegraaf
De Volksstem
Echo van het Zuiden
Groninger Courant
Haarlem’s Dagblad
Journal de La Haye
Leeuwarder Courant
Leidsch Dagblad
Leydse Courant
Nieuws van den Dag
Nieuwsblad van het Noorden
Provinciale Drechtsche en Asser Courant
Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche Courant
Provinciale Noordbrabantse en ’s Hertogenbossche Courant
Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant
Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad
Schuitemakers Purmerender Courant
Tilburgsche Courant

258
France
Le Figaro

U.S.
Abendpost
Boston Globe
Chicago (Evening) Journal
Chicago Advertiser and Amusement News
Chicago Chronicle
Chicago Daily News
Chicago Evening Post
Chicago Inter-Ocean
Chicago Times-Herald
Chicago Tribune
Chicago Weekly Amusement Guide
Citizen

Books, Book Length Manuscripts, and Scholarly Articles


—. “In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity,” in Charney and Schwartz, Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life, 279-294.


—. “The Stuff of Screens,” In Chateau and Moure, Screens, 70-79.


—. “The Féerie between Stage and Screen.” In Gaudreault, Dulac, and Hidalgo, A Companion to Early Cinema, 64-79.


La Production cinématographique des Frères Lumière. Compiled and edited by Michelle Aubert and Jean-Claude Seguin. Paris and Lyon: Centre national de la Cinématographie and Bibliothèque du Film, 1996.


—. *Die Künstes des Kinos.* Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2013.


Sobchack, Vivian. “Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-presencing the Past,” in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications,* edited by

Toulmin, Venessa. “‘Local Films for Local People’: Traveling Showmen and the Commissioning of Local Films in Great Britain, 1900-1902.” Film History 13, no. 2 (2001): 118-137.


—. “Storage, Simultaneity, and the Media Technologies of Modernity.” In Fullerton and Olsson, Allegories of Communication, 123-138.

—. Sensitizing the Viewer: The Impact of New Techniques and the Art Experience. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2011.


Index

“A Milk White Flag”, 171
A Chicago Street (Biograph, 1898), 168
Aankomst eener trein te Leiden (Grünkorn, 1899), 88
Ade, George, 149
Adler, Dankmar, 115
Adriaensens, Vito, 55
Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse (1897 film), 32, 38, 67-72, 76, 78-83, 85, 86
Albera, François, 11
American Mutoscope Company, 165
Amet, Edward H., 131-133, 168
Amsterdam, 42, 45, 51, 60, 71, 72, 73, 76
Annabelle Serpentine Dance (Edison, 1894), 126, 169, 178
Arnhem, 49, 51
Arrivée en bateau (Lumière, 1897) 61
Asendorf, Christoph, 103, 135
Assassinat du duc de Guise (Lumière, 1897), 64
Auerbach, Erich, 171
Aveugle malgré lui (Pathé, 1897), 62
Baignade de nègres (Lumière, 1896), 61
Band Drill (Edison, 1894), 126, 169, 171-173
Baron, Jamie, 18
Bass Warner, Samuel, 102

Baudelaire, Charles, 12, 124-125
Bauer, Marius, 75
Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb, 20, 21
Beautiful (aesthetic category), 21, 23
Being (Heidegger), 14
Benjamin, Walter, 10, 12, , 15, 24, 26, 102, 109, 116, 151, 152, 170, 172, 173
Berg, Henning, 148
Bergson, Henri, 16, 91, 136
Biograph (American Biograph), 9, 60, 111, 152, 163
Bioskop (Skladanowsky machine), 59
Blei, Robert, 116, 141
Bonehill, Bessie, 156
Bordwell, David, 20
Boston, 107, 108, 116, 119, 121, 122
Bruno, Giuliana, 32, 33, 58, 98
Bryan, William Jennings, 108
Bullfight (Eidoloscope, 1896), 173, 177
Bünzli, René, 59
Burnham, Daniel, 110
Carter, Lincoln J., 176-177
Cattle Driven to Slaughter (Edison, 1897), 120
“Chattanooga”, 176-178
Cerf, Camille, 42
Guyau, Jean-Marie, 125
Guyer, Paul, 20
Haarlem, 44, 49, 65, 66
Hanich, Julian, 182
Hansen, Miriam Bratu, 151, 170, 180
Harman, Peter, 130
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 22
Heidegger, Martin, 14, 15, 18, 22, 23, 24, 84, 127, 162, 184
Heise, William, 118, 120, 123, 168
Hengler Sisters, 156
Herald Square, NY (Edison, 1896), 118, 121, 124, 125, 126, 169
“Heroes of ’98”, 166, 177
Het Jubileum-Feest der Koning van Engeland, 65
Het uitgaan van der katoenfabriek (Grünkorn, 1899), 88
Het uitrukken van de Utrechtsche (Grünkorn, 1899), 88
Heusden, 44
Highmore, Ben, 110
Hirn, Yrjö, 125
Historical representation, 27
Hopkins, John D., 98, 99, 102, 104, 106, 139
Hopkins’ South Side Theatre, 103, 104, 108-111, 112, 146, 156, 158, 171
Husserl, Edmund, 16
Indexicality, 14, 143
Intermediality, 32-39
Irwin, May, 146, 171
Jacobs, Steven, 55
James, William, 17
Jansen, G. H., 40, 51
Jay, Martin, 20, 183
Jenkins, Henry, 67
Kant, Immanuel, 10-22, 184
Kattenbelt, Chiel, 57
Keaton, Buster, 176
Keil, Charlie, 11
Keith’s Theaters, 116, 119
Kember, Joe, 62, 95, 124
Kern, Stephen, 15, 94, 95, 149-150, 164
Kessler, Frank, 70-71
Kleinberg, Ethan, 8, 31
Kracauer, Siegfried, 102, 124, 180
Krüger, Willem Frederik, 88
Kurhaus, 60
LaCapra, Dominic, 31
Lant, Antonia, 56, 182
L’Arrivée d’un train en gare de la Ciotat (Lumière, 1896), 140
Le Cabinet de Méphistophélès (Méliès, 1897), 85
Le Manoir du diable (Méliès, 1897), 85
Leeuwarden, 44, 49
Lefebvre, Henri, 97
Leiden, 44
Levine, Caroline E., 110
Loiperdinger, Martin, 140
Lumières, 11, 12, 51, 59, 69, 123, 131, 137, 147
Lumière cinematograph, 10, 42, 59, 60, 104, 110, 116, 126, 152, 155, 158, 179, 182
Lyotard, Jean-François 123
Magniscope (Amet machine), 130 131, 133, 153, 168, 185
Maleuvre, Didier 52
Marion, Philippe, 35
Marks, Laura U., 56, 182
Marquard, Odo, 29
McKinley, William, 10, 108, 165
McKinley at Home (Biograph, 1896), 10, 165, 166
Mechanical diorama, 42, 49-50, 80
Mechanical theater, 49, 50
Medium specificity, 38, 39, 68, 80, 87, 181-183
Méliès, Georges, 71, 85
Mendel, Georges, 59, 64, 69
Merkelbach & Co, 76
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 16, 19, 25
Mesdag, Hendrik Willem, 60
Messter, Oskar 59
Metz, Christian, 158
Mitchell, Timothy, 84, 159
Michigan Avenue (Lumière, 1896), 119
Miller, Donald L., 99
Millauser, Steven, 52
Mobile virtuality, 32, 43
Mobility, 43, 44, 55, 56, 57
Moore, Paul S., 29
Morris, William, 125
Müller, Jürgen E., 36
Multimedia, 147
Musser, Charles, 11, 37, 68, 127, 165, 166
Nancy, Jean-Luc, 8, 12, 13, 16, 18, 22-25, 93, 96, 127, 139, 141, 171, 180, 184, 186
New York, 97, 107, 108, 119
Newman, Barnett, 17
Niagara Falls, Gorge (Edison, 1896), 169
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 109
Nordwestdeutsche Gewerbe- und Industrieausstellung in Bremen, 49
Nuit Terrible (Pathé, 1897), 62
O’Keeffe, John, 72
Pacyga, Dominick, 149
Papinta, 178
Parade, Canton, Ohio (Biograph, 1896), 10, 165
Pathé (Frères), 60, 69
Paul, Robbert W., 60
Paul, William, 153, 158
Peters, Benjamin, 26
Phantoscope (Jenkins machine) 110, 111, 153
Philadelphia, 84, 165
Presence (forms of -)
  Artificial presence, 17, 187
  Real presence, 16, 184
  Telepresence, 17
  Virtual presence, 17, 43, 163, 187
Presentation, 23, 25, 58
  Darstellung, 22, 184
Promio, Alexandre, 119, 168
Purmerend, 44
Rabinbach, Alison, 130
Rabinovitz, Lauren, 56, 96
Raff & Gammon, 118, 145, 160, 164, 173
Rajewsky, Irina, 67, 68, 78
Representation, 20, 23, 25, 38, 43, 51, 56, 58
  Cinematic representation, 87, 123, 182
Vorstellung, 22
Rhythmanalysis, 97, 110
Rice, John C., 146, 171
Rollercoaster, 42, 44
Rotterdam, 44, 49, 63, 65, 66, 74
Rough Sea at Dover (Paul 1895), 169
Runia, Eelco, 18, 31, 32
Schapiro, Meyer, 102
Scheveningen, 42, 45
Schudson, Michael, 30
Sconce, Jeff, 17
Seel, Martin, 8, 9, 13, 16, 18, 21-25, 26, 58, 93, 128, 138, 139, 184
Sensationalism, 25, 30, 41, 95, 128, 150
Shail, Andrew, 37
Sheep Run, Chicago Stockyards (Edison, 1897), 120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shklovsky, Viktor</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shusterman, Richard</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmel, Georg</td>
<td>102, 103, 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singer, Ben</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skladanowsky, Max</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sliker, George Christiaan</td>
<td>42, 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, G. A.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobchack, Vivian</td>
<td>17, 18, 87, 146, 175, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American War of 1898</td>
<td>64, 166, 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoor, George K.</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steeves, George W.</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steffens, Lincoln</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sublime (aesthetic category)</td>
<td>20, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan, Louis</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tableaux vivants</td>
<td>42-43, 54-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arrival of Li Hung Chang</td>
<td>(Edison, 1896), 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Corbett-Courtney Fight</td>
<td>(Edison, 1894), 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague</td>
<td>42, 45, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The County Fair”</td>
<td>174, 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Good Mr Best”</td>
<td>174, 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Widow Jones”</td>
<td>126, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kiss (Edison, 1896)</td>
<td>169-171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Suburban Handicap</td>
<td>(Edison, 1897), 10, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatrograph (R. W. Paul machine)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermodynamics</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmedia storytelling</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmedial imagination</td>
<td>36, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmediality</td>
<td>32, 36-38, 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsivian, Yuri</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uricchio, William</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utrecht</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Väliaho, Pasi</td>
<td>103, 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van den Oever, Annie</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van der Marck, Henri</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Eeden, Frederik</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Goens, R. C.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan, Michael</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertov, Dziga</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitalism</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual mobility</td>
<td>32, 43, 53, 56, 58, 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>43, 44, 55, 56, 57, 89, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voitus van Hamme</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorhanden (present-at-hand)</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorhandenheit (presence-at-hand)</td>
<td>162, 172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waalwijk</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waller, Gregory</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waltz, Gwendolyn</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weber, Max</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Werner Brothers</td>
<td>42, 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Hayden</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, James</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiegand, Daniel</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiesing, Lambert</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wijfjes, Huub</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Tami</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, O.</td>
<td>7, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziter, Edward</td>
<td>73, 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuhanden</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zwolle,</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Svensk sammanfattning


Kapitel 1 föreslår, med hänvisning till mässor i Nederländerna, att den tidiga filmens "intermediala inblandning" är en sannolik orsak till den estetiska upplevelsen av närvaro. I detta kapitel används begreppet intermedialitet för att beskriva hur kinematografens attraktion orsakade både en semantiskt rik och en för sinnena komplicerad upplevelse. Den presenterar sedan en detaljerad studie av showmannen Henri Grünkorns aktiviteter och attraktioner innan han visade "Den elektriska cinematicatografen". Kapitel 1 undersöker också de olika diskurslagren involverade i Aladin ou la lampe merveilleuse (1897), en serie scener Grünkorn visade som var populär hos tidens lokala publiker.

Kapitel 2 fokuserar på upplevelsen av rörelse. Genom en närstudie av introduktionen av rörliga bilder i Chicago 1896 och 1897 föreslår det att rörliga bilder presenterade en radikalt välbekant form av rörelse. Den var bekant i den meningen att den samlade ett antal konstellationer av rörelse och energi som var grundläggande för moderniteten. Genom att positionera rörliga bilder i stadens rytmer blir det möjligt att konceptualisera åskådaren som fysiskt engagerad i kinematografens rörelse.

Kapitel 3 studerar paradoxen närhet och avstånd samt diskuterar attraktionser med rörliga bilder som introducerades i vaudeville och populär teater i Chicago. Det beskriver de olika konstellationerna mellan filmduk och levande föreställningar ur ett rumsligt perspektiv, genom att fokusera på kropprepresentation. På flera sätt tillåt paradoxen närhet och avstånd en rumsligt orienterad lek med former av närvaro. Studien avslutas med en diskussion om potentialen och utmaningarna i att inkludera effekter av närvaro i filmhistorisk forskning om tittarupplevelser i såväl tidig som senare film.