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| Méliès, Georges (1861-1938) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Georges Méliès (born Marie-Georges-Jean Méliès**)** was a French showman, illusionist, and filmmaker best known for his early silent fantasy and science fiction films, such as *Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *Impossible Voyage* (1904). While most early films were actualities, he took an innovative, non-realist approach to the medium, employing its unique capacities for altering space and time to produce allegorical and dream imagery. He is sometimes called the first cinemagician due to his pioneering work in special effects, including the stop-trick film, double exposure, split screen, dissolve, and superimposition.  Méliès launched his entertainment career as a magician in the arcades of late nineteenth century Paris. In 1888, he purchased the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the most famous magic theater at the time, which came complete with stage props, illusions, automata (whose parts he used to build his first film camera), and performers, including Jeanne d’Alcy, who became his muse, long-time mistress, and second wife. The performance skills that he developed at the theatre were later incorporated into filmmaking, an occupation he began pursuing passionately after attending the premiere screening of the Lumière brothers’ Cinématographe at the Grand Café in 1895. A year later, he helped found the Star-Film Company and built what is considered the first film studio of the silent period, whose main stage area featured a steel frame surrounded by glass walls to capture the sunlight. |
| File: Melies\_Portrait.jpg  Figure Portrait of Georges Méliès  Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges\_M%C3%A9li%C3%A8s#/media/File:George\_Melies.jpg  Georges Méliès (born Marie-Georges-Jean Méliès**)** was a French showman, illusionist, and filmmaker best known for his early silent fantasy and science fiction films, such as *Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *Impossible Voyage* (1904). While most early films were actualities, he took an innovative, non-realist approach to the medium, employing its unique capacities for altering space and time to produce allegorical and dream imagery. He is sometimes called the first cinemagician due to his pioneering work in special effects, including the stop-trick film, double exposure, split screen, dissolve, and superimposition.  Méliès launched his entertainment career as a magician in the arcades of late nineteenth century Paris. In 1888, he purchased the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the most famous magic theater at the time, which came complete with stage props, illusions, automata (whose parts he used to build his first film camera), and performers, including Jeanne d’Alcy, who became his muse, long-time mistress, and second wife. The performance skills that he developed at the theatre were later incorporated into filmmaking, an occupation he began pursuing passionately after attending the premiere screening of the Lumière brothers’ Cinématographe at the Grand Café in 1895. A year later, he helped found the Star-Film Company and built what is considered the first film studio of the silent period, whose main stage area featured a steel frame surrounded by glass walls to capture the sunlight. From 1896-1912 he produced over five hundred films of which only about one hundred seventy are still extant. Although he dabbled in many genres, including dramas, comedies, and documentaries, he specialized in fantasy and science fiction films focusing on imaginary scenes, impossible voyages, and magical transformations, particularly of the human body, which he changed in size, moved through space, decapitated, dismembered, and duplicated. While some have found his manipulation of the female body in particular as objectifying, others have noted the extent to which his techniques and motifs drew from the spectacle shows of his day, including the circus, vaudeville, and the féerie, as well as their destabilizing effects, which often served as a form of social and political satire.  Méliès controlled almost every aspect of film production, as well as performing in many of his films as a magician, mad scientist, or demon. While this handcrafted approach was immensely popular at the turn of the century, it became less viable as film production and distribution were systematized. Méliès went bankrupt in 1910, abandoned filmmaking shortly thereafter, and slipped into obscurity following World War I. He was, however, rediscovered by young cinephiles in the 1920s while working at a toy and candy kiosk in the Montparnasse train station in Paris. His work began to receive renewed interest, retrospectives, and in 1931, he was awarded the Legion of Honor. Aspects of Méliès’s life, work, and rediscovery were featured in the book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007) and its filmic adaptation *Hugo* (2011), directed by Martin Scorcese. Selected Filmography: *The Vanishing of a Woman at Robert-Houdin's*(1896)  *Nightmare* (1896)  *Panorama from the Top of a Train*(1897)  *A Trip to the Moon*(1898)  *The Kingdom of Fairies* (1903)  *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) Paratextual Materials: *Trip to the Moon* (1902)  http://archive.org/details/TripToTheMoon  *The Impossible Voyage* (1904)  <http://archive.org/details/The_Impossible_Voyage> |
| Further reading:  (Ezra)  Frazer, John. *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of**Georges Méliès*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Company, 1979.  Gunning, Tom. “‘Primitive’ Cinema—A Frame-up? or The Trick’s on Us,” *Cinema Journal* 28.2 (Winter 1989): 3-12.  Hammond, Paul. Marvellous Méliès. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974.  Jacobson, Brian R. (May 2010) “The ‘imponderable fluidity' of modernity: Georges Méliès and the architectural origins of cinema,” Early Popular Visual Culture 8, no. 2, 189-207.  Kovács, Katherine Singer “Georges Méliès and the ‘Féerie,’” *Cinema Journal* 16.1  (Autumn 1976), 1-13.  O’Donogue, Darragh. “Georges Méliès,” *Senses of Cinema*, Great Directors, Issue 32, July 2004.  Robinson, David. Georges Méliès: Father of Film Fantasy. London: Museum of the Moving Image, 1992.  Selznick, Brian. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret.* New York: Scholastic Press, 2007.  Solomon, Mathew, Ed. *Fantastic Voyages of the Cinematic Imagination: Georges Méliès’s Trip to the Moon.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011. |