The Phantasmagoric Dispositif –

an Approach to Uncanniness

by

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Abstract

The phantasmagoria was a multimedia projection show with animated visuals from the end of the 18th until the end of the 19th century, having developed from the magic lantern's projection culture. The *phantasmagoric*, here, functions as an umbrella term for the examined *dispositif* on the part of the production and of the audience: the medium, the audio-visual representation, the (human) agency – all these in their particular space and time and in their interplay and mutual reaction, in a certain context, loaded with certain meanings, as an ideological agenda of established and sustained cultural convictions.

Theories concerning the production and reception of 'illusions' have already been developed by various philosophers throughout the centuries, and have later been supplemented with notions on *the uncanny* by social scientists, psychologists, and neuroscientists. It is the main goal of this thesis to approach *the uncanny* via the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

In the first part, I will introduce to the main topics' theories of my thesis: a variation of media theoretical discussions on the *cinematic* and the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

In the second part, I will present the history of the phantasmagoria, its predecessors, and further theory: some philosophical thoughts on perception and illusion, on *the uncanny*, and some theories of the affiliation to uncanny media content.

In the third part I will present the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, analyse the motivations and ideologies of the production dispositif, and the modes of reception based on the theories mentioned before.

In the fourth part, I will examine the phantasmagoria's media techniques, their impact on, and possible re-enacting for contemporary media practice. Further, I will define the constitutive elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

In the fifth chapter, I will scrutinize some suggested examples from the art world, to investigate, if a classification as 'phantasmagoric' artworks would be tenable, and if the *phantasmagoric dispositif* is viable for approaching *the uncanny*.

In the final conclusion I will discuss my primary assumptions, if they proved successful.

Introduction

The phantasmagoria was a multimedia projection show with animated visuals from the end of the 18th until the end of the 19th century, having developed from the magic lantern's projection culture. The progress of the projection techniques is specifically interesting for the analysis of the directions that the cinema took and even more for the speculations on alternative developments that the cinematic could have taken.

The topics of the phantasmagoria were scary, macabre, and supernatural. In a completely dark room with an advanced magic lantern, mounted on rails, sudden approaching and rising spectres (ghosts, skeletons, graveyard scenes, but also other topics) were projected from rear-side onto a half transparent – from the point of view of the spectators unseen – screen and on smoke that rose from boxes distributed within the spectator's area. An eerie soundscape and the narratives of a master of ceremonies accompanied the spectacle. The show was deeply rooted in older ghost-raising and performative projection cultures and techniques. It also was a child of the Enlightenment's awakened curiosity in the extraordinary, pretending to provide education and enjoyment in demonstrating the science of optical illusion.

For the concept of my thesis I got inspired by the phantasmagoria's media-technological as well as its thematic aspects: the performance practice and projection technique that in many respects outshines some contemporary media-techniques' approaches; a setting that pretended to offer a how-to demonstration of creating optical illusions and an educational lecture against superstition, but that rather gave everything to hide the actual technical mechanisms and to playfully savour the presented 'magic'. The *phantasmagoric*, here, functions as an umbrella term for the examined *dispositif* on the part of the production and of the audience: the medium, the audio-visual representation, the (human) agency – all these in their particular space and time and in their interplay and mutual reaction, in a certain context, loaded with certain meanings, as an ideological agenda of established and sustained cultural convictions. The notion of the *dispositif* developed from *apparatus theory* that was commonly used since the first half of the 20th century. I will mainly focus on the discussion of the production motives and their reception – i.e., the experience of uncanniness, and on the impact of the phantasmagoria and its modes of representation on the contemporary media practice.

Concerning the phantasmagoria's reception, two main preconditions are frequently pointed at: On the one hand, at the state of practice of audio-visual experience, or, as the literary scholar

Terry Castle (*1953) indicates: "One should not underestimate, by any means, the powerful effect of magic-lantern illusionism on eyes untrained by photography and cinematography." (Castle 1988, p. 39). And on the other hand, at the particular emotional and psychic state of the spectator (see ibid. p. 30f). However, the immediate experience of the performance in combination with the current mental state or the 'attunement' of each spectator would produce a specific creepiness. Therefore, these experiences could be perceived as, e.g., astonishing, serious, amusing, or playful. Theories concerning the production and reception of 'illusions' have already been developed by various philosophers throughout the centuries, and have later been supplemented with notions on *the uncanny* by social scientists, psychologists, and neuroscientists. These theories – particularly the psychoanalytic notions – have influenced several media- and cinematic theorists since the 1950ies.

It is the main goal of this thesis to approach *the uncanny* via the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

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In the third part I will present the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, analyse the motivations and ideologies of the production dispositif,[1] and the modes of reception based on the theories mentioned before.

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[1] One note to the format: I set the *dispositif* in italics when I refer to the whole 'apparatus', while I do not emphasize some of its particular elements or the term per se. The same format is valid for *the uncanny* as a concept.

1.   The Phantasmagoria and its *Dispositif*

The phantasmagoria was a multimedia projection show with animated visuals from the end of the 18th until the end of the 19th century, having developed from the magic lantern's projection culture. The progress of the projection techniques is specifically interesting for the analysis of the directions that the cinema took and even more for the speculations on alternative developments that the cinematic could have taken.

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Even if it is contested whether the *dispositif* may be used as a method, I am convinced that it – in combination with media archaeology and cultural sciences – at least provides a fruitful basis for analysing the phantasmagoria. The information scientist Valérie Larroche defines the 'dispositif' (she tends to use it in the English form dispositive) first of all as linked "with technique and an organizational form" (Larroche 2019, p. xv), with the technique becoming "a skill, a know-how, a tool and a practice, which leads to a relationship between humans and technical objects" (ibid.).

I have chosen to use the term in its media theoretical actual common notation 'dispositif' and with regards to content in its varied forms proposed by Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Louis Comolli, Mary Ann Doane, Thomas Elsaesser, Hans Belting, Lev Manovič, Tom Gunning, and Noam M. Elcott (see Baudry 1976 [1975], 2003; Comolli 2015; Doane 2004; Elsaesser 2014; Belting 2005; Manovich 1997; Gunning 2019; Elcott 2016a). Besides Elcott's ideas, who especially scrutinizes the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, all the other scholar's concepts deal with the *cinematic dispositif*. Yet, most of the *cinematic dispositif's* theoretical constituents are excellently applicable to the phantasmagoria, or, at least, provide an interesting source for a theorization of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. Especially fruitful prove the items by Elsaesser and Gunning, who offer their media archaeological insight and expertise. In comparing the

phantasmagoric with the *cinematic dispositif* it could affect and challenge the notions of the cinematic apparatus, as the film historian and theorist Tom Gunning (*1949) states: "Once we break with the teleology of the archaeology and origins of the cinema, our field might expand in a dramatic manner, as it will not only enrich our understanding of broader cultural history but, paradoxically, will also generate new ways of thinking about cinema specifically" (Gunning 2019, p. 32).

The notion of the *dispositif* developed from *apparatus theory* that was commonly used since the first half of the 20th century. Its constituents are the machine itself (the fixed components), the visual and audible representations (the mobile components), and the human productive along with the receptive agents. However, all scholars mentioned, clearly emphasize the necessity to augment the theoretical concept that provides the basis of the *dispositif* to an understanding of all its constituents' mutual interaction in their time and their space, the (ideological) modes of their production, and the valuation of their respective modes of (subjectivist) reception.

But the fruitfulness of the *dispositif* for an analysis of the phantasmagoria is only one of my hypothesis. Continuatively, I will act on the assumption that the *phantasmagoric dispositif* inheres a natural ability to induce uncanniness in its audience. In this thesis, I would like to track the phantasmagoric elements that are responsible for this effect.

In the first chapter, I will provide a short survey of the various theories and aspects regarding the *cinematic dispositif*, and Elcott's *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

1.1 The *Cinematic Dispositif*

1.1.1 Jean-Louis Baudry

In 1975, based on his analysis of the 'Allegory of the Cave' by the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (~ 375 BCE),[2] the film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry (1930-2015) proposed a cinematic production and reception theory inspired by psychoanalysis. He points to the analogy of subjects in Plato's cave, captive in the same way as the spectators in the cinema are bound to their seats, forced to only look in one direction: on the screen, where illusions are presented. Baudry accentuates that the whole *dispositif* must be understood as a "simulation apparatus" (Baudry 1976 [1975], p. 118), a simulation of reality, not reality itself: not only the presented (audio)visual acts (which already are simulacra of the presented illusions (see ibid. p. 110), also the artificiality of the whole setting, and, significantly, the perception modes of the spectators, comparable to a hallucinatory, dreamlike state, but with a certain capability to control the self and the rationalization of the perceptions (see ibid. p. 118-123).

Five years before, Baudry took a close look on the "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" and identified the main "ideological mechanism […] in the relationship between the camera and the subject" (Baudry 1975 [1970], 46). With the phantasmagoria, obviously, there is not yet a camera in use. Still, Baudry's findings are valid in scrutinizing the relationship between the hidden projection device (the magic lantern) and the spectators. I will come back to this when discussing the production *dispositif's* "Uses and Ideologies".

1.1.2 Jean-Louis Comolli

The central hypothesis of the film-critic and director Jean-Louis Comolli (*1941) is the dependence of cinematic existence and representation from the society's modes of representation, i.e., a strongly ideological motivation of production must be assumed. This addresses a *cinematic dispositif* which is deeply rooted in its social function (see Comolli 2015, p. 283f), containing the "the arrangement of demands, desires, fantasies, speculations (in the two senses of commerce and the imaginary)" (ibid.). Concerning the analogical representation, he underscores the role of the spectator, who likewise contributes to its effects, rather than the technological mechanisms, only, because the spectators willingly commit themselves to

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[2] In the following CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before the Common Era) will be used as year notation.

believing in the presented illusion: "analogy in the cinema is a deception, a lie, a fiction that must be straddled – in disavowing, knowing but not wanting to know – by the *will to believe* of the spectator, the spectator who expects to be fooled and wants to be fooled, thus becoming the first agent of his or her own fooling" (ibid. p. 287f [italics in the text]).

1.1.3   Mary Ann Doane

The film scholar and pioneer in gender studies in film Mary Ann Doane (*1952) in her study on "The Voice in the Cinema" (1980) provides interesting thoughts that offer a basis for further considerations regarding the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. One of the latter notions "[w]hile it is true that sound is almost always discussed with reference to the image, it does not necessarily follow that this automatically makes sound subordinate" (Doane 2004, p. 377). I will compare and discuss this below in connection with the "Uses and Ideologies" of "The Tools' Side". Doane describes further that "[t]he cinema presents a spectacle composed of disparate elements – images, voices, sound effects, music, writing – which the *mise-en-scène* [in both the theatre and the cinema] in its broadest sense, organizes and aims at the body of the spectator, sensory receptacle of various stimuli. [...] Classical mise-en-scène has a stake in perpetuating the image of unity and identity sustained by this body and in starving off the fear of fragmentation. The different sensory elements work in collusion, and this work denies the material heterogeneity of the 'body' of the film'" (ibid. p. 382f [italics in the text]). In the phantasmagoria it is not so much about fragmentation (as the *dispositif* is slightly different with the invisible screen, the different distances between the projected image and the spectator, the different modes of possible identification, the additional attractions, and the hidden projection machinery), merely, how every element *adds* to the phantasmagoric experience.

1.1.4   Thomas Elsaesser

The media-archaeologist and film-historian Thomas Elsaesser (1942-2019) characterizes the *dispositif* as "complex interactions that bring different media together into relations of interdependence, competition and complementarity" (Elsaesser 2014, p. 50), and as "a dynamic, ongoing process of re-alignment and interaction" (ibid. p. 52). He points to the different disciplines within film studies and their respective approaches and emphases in dealing with the *dispositif's* notions, especially with the role of the spectator, e.g., "'subjectified' belongs to the psychoanalytic terminology of miscognition and disavowal; 'addressed' recalls Marxist[3]

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[3] Thoughts that derived from the opus by the philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883).

cultural studies, via interpellation and negotiation; while 'affectively and cognitively engaged' comes from studies of narrative comprehension and cognitivist film theory" (ibid. p. 52, FN 12). Consequently, Elsaesser suggests to characterize "the cinema as a *dispositif* for subjectification" (ibid. p. 61 [italics in the text]).

Elsaesser aims to even broaden the conception of the *dispositif* and in this regard, on the one hand, he considers the term of the 'body' by the art- and media theorist Hans Belting (*1935) "as both 'performing' and 'perceiving'" (Elsaesser 2014, p. 52), specifically in the context of conceding a capability of agency to non-human agents (see Elsaesser 2014, p. 52). On the other hand, he reflects on the term 'interface' by the media theorist Lev Manovič (or Lew Manowitsch or Manovich) (*1960) (see Elsaesser 2014, p. 68) in stating "this [Foucauldian] idea of a contact space or contact zone between human perceptual faculties and mechanical elements may lead one to opt, not for 'dispositive,' but instead for the term 'interface,' understood as a boundary across which different systems meet, act on, interfere or communicate with one another" (ibid. p. 55).

Elsaesser, then, discusses the space of the "post- or para-epistemological idea of cinema" (ibid. p. 72) and suggests to use the terms "event and encounter, taking place" (ibid. p. 71) along with "ubiquity orientation" (see ibid.), which he defines as

> the felt presence of pure space, whose temporality is neither *chronos* nor *kairos*, but an 'indefinite,' reversible time, and whose ocular counterpart would be […] the paradox (or mystery) of an *un-located situatedness*. Such ubiquity, in other words, produces its own forms of embodiment and agency in response to unrepresentability and to the unlocalizable sense of presence. Ubiquity gives imagined vison and sight to on-sentient objects, to machines, organisms or 'things,' as these enter the realm of the visible in seemingly contradictory forms: as effigies (imprints, moulds, installations, photographs) and as apparitions (ghosts, revenants, zombies and other post-mortem creatures). Together, the effigy (as index) and the apparition (as presence) constitute elements of a new modality of evidence and authenticity, sometimes called 'the virtual,' but which I prefer to regard as constitutive for all cinema. (ibid. p. 71f [italics in the text])

1.1.5 Hans Belting

While the media and visual culture scholar William John Thomas Mitchell (*1942) theorizes iconology in the terms of *image*, *text*, and *ideology*, Belting exchanges *text* for *medium* and *ideology* for *body*. As Belting explains: "*Medium*, here, is to be understood […] in the sense of the agent by which images are transmitted, while body means either the performing or the perceiving *body* on which images depend no less than on their respective media" (Belting 2005, p. 302). Comparable to Elsaesser's 'ubiquity' Belting's images also *happen* and *take place*: "They happen via transmission and perception" (ibid. p. 302f). Belting considers "internal and external representations, or mental and physical images […] as two sides of the same coin"

(ibid, p. 304), while their interaction depends on "the politics of images no less than what the French call the *imaginaire* of a given society" (ibid. [italics in the text]), i.e., as I would suggest, *ideological* in its socio-political dimensions. The same applies to 'cultural bodies' as "living media", which do not exist outside the cultural environment, they "transcend the capacities of their prosthetic media" (ibid, p. 311). Belting emphasizes that

> [n]o visible images reach us unmediated. […] We even remember images from specific Mediality in which we first encountered them, and remembering means first disembodying them from their original media and then reembodying them in our brain. […] Media use symbolic techniques through which they transmit images and imprint them on the collective memory. (ibid, p. 304f)

To more neatly explain the function of the body toward images Belting explains:

> We know that we all *have* or that we all *own* images, that they live *in* our bodies or in our dreams and wait to be summoned *by* our bodies to show up. […] [W]e both *own* and *produce* images. In each case, bodies (that is, brains) serve as living medium that makes us *perceive*, *project*, or *remember* images and that also enables our imagination to censor our imagination or to transform them. (ibid. p. 305f)
> *Representation* and *perception* closely interact in any politics of images. Both are charged with symbolic energy, which easily lends itself to political use. Representation surely is meant to rule over perception, but the symmetry between the two acts is far from certain. There is no automatism in *what* we perceive and *how* we perceive despite all attempts to prove the contrary. Perception may also led us to resist the claims of representation. (ibid. p. 310 [italics in the text])

Though, our natural bodies' 'mediality' can correspondingly become substituted by "technical or artificial bodies […] via a symbolic procedure" (ibid, p. 306). This comprises, for example, interacting with images of the deceased, and with this, "creating iconic presence as against bodily presence" (ibid, p. 308). Today's media tend to become more hybrid in their digitalized appearance. Therefore, Belting indicates that

> Visual media not only act as the body's prosthesis but also serve as the body's reflection, which lends itself to the body's self-inspection. […] The loss of the body has already haunted the mirror fantasies of the nineteenth century, when the doppelgänger no longer obeyed the spectator but abandoned the mimesis of the reflecting body. Digital images usually address our bodies' imagination and cross the borderline between visual images and virtual images, images *seen* and images *projected*. […] External and internal representations are encouraged to merge. (ibid. p. 309 [italics in the text])

1.1.6 Lev Manovič

In his essay "Cinema as a Cultural Interface" Manovič investigates current media as a *cultural interface*. Even if he refers "to culture encoded in digital from" (Manovich 1997, p. 4), I will investigate its usability on the *phantasmagoric dispositif* "as a set of techniques and tools which can be used to interact with any cultural data" (ibid. p. 5). Manovič also suggests the *dispositif's* analogies of, e.g., cinema to earlier media history, in the "mobile camera [thus, here it would be the projection device; V.W.], representation of space, editing techniques, narrative

conventions, activity of a spectator" (Manovich 1997, p. 6). Manovič states "A hundred years after cinema's birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, of structuring time, of narrating a story, of linking one experience to the next, are being extended to become the basic ways in which computer users success and interact with all cultural data" (ibid. p. 12). However, I would suggest (in the same line with Gunning and in contradiction to Manovič), cinema adopted to its inherent material possibilities and cultural current worldviews more than adopting the "cultural language" of the pre-cinematic practices' and experiments' "already familiar cultural forms" (ibid. p. 13). According to Manovič, screen based or VR-interface virtual worlds "are often discussed as the logical successor to cinema [...]. So, the typical scenario for twenty-first century cinema involves a user represented as an avatar existing literally 'inside' the narrative space, rendered with photorealistic 3-D computer graphics, interacting with virtual characters and perhaps other users, and affecting the course of narrative events" (ibid. p. 15). In this context, again, it will be interesting to take a closer look on the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, whether it could kick off other alternative approaches to virtual media techniques, instead of following the path of 'logical' and linear media-technological evolution.

1.1.7 Tom Gunning

Tom Gunning suggests to consider the cultural optical history before cinema to rethink the cinematic notions of illusion and reality as well as the role of the spectator and the *perception dispositif*: "I would also claim the 'illusion' or perhaps better, the sensation, of the Phantasmagoria performed something more complex than either effacing of the labour of illustration or the ideological positioning of a docile spectator" (Gunning 2019, p. 35). He even criticizes the 'puritanism' of apparatus theory (see ibid. p. 41ff). His research leads him to further investigate the pre-cinematic history of media-techniques, and he concludes that:

> While a historical investigation of the cinematic apparatus and its relation to a cultural optics must not seek an essential determining nature of the apparatus, we can see in cinema's genealogy, its early history, its recurring devices and (if we wanted to extend this discussion beyond the period of early cinema) in its genres and special effects, a recurring if not always dominant fascination with the visually uncertain and uncanny, with flickering illusion. (ibid. p. 43).

Gunning is well known for his theory on 'the cinema of attractions', a cinema that seeks "the attention of the spectator" (Gunning 1994, p. 57). As its characteristics he describes the early cinema's "exhibitionist" character, the direct address to the spectator, the nourishing of curiosity, and its practice to offer shocking moments (see Gunning 1993, p. 5). He says that "[a]ttractions' fundamental hold on spectators depends on arousing and satisfying visual curiosity through a direct and acknowledged act of display" (ibid. p. 6). The time scheme of

attractions relates to the here and now. It is an "alternation of presence/absence which is embodied in the act of display" (ibid.). This means that the duration of the displayed attraction is typically held short. Additionally, the effect is often framed "with a variety of gestures of display" (ibid.), like a magician, "who through a sweep of the hand […], focusing not only the attention but the anticipation of the audience" (ibid.) and "creates a temporal frame of expectation and even suspense. […] It simply redoubles the basic effect of an attraction, cathecting curiosity through delay and creating a satisfying discharge by unleashing the suspended rush of time" (ibid. p. 7f). Moreover, the show "involved orchestrating the intensity, elaborateness, and emotional tone of the attractions […], with a particularly spectacular attraction or with a gag" (ibid. p. 10). In discussing the *Hale's Tours*[4] Gunning points out that "[s]uch viewing experiences relate more to the attractions of the fairground than to the traditions of legitimate theatre. The relation between films and the emergence of great amusement parks, such as Coney Island, at the turn of the century provides rich ground for rethinking the roots of early cinema" (Gunning 1994, p. 58). This is exactly the approach that I will take on in my thesis. I will repeatedly refer to Gunning, when discussing the phantasmagoric media-techniques and the *phantasmagoric dispositif* and when comparing them to their cinematic sibling.

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[4] I'll present the *Hale's Tours* and some *Coney Island* amusement park attractions in more detail in the passage on the "Dark Ride".

1.2 The *Phantasmagoric Dispositif*

1.2.1 Noam M. Elcott

The art historian Noam Milgrom Elcott (*1978) is – as far as I know – the only scholar who decidedly provided theoretical considerations on the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. He considers the rejection of any illusionism within the avant-garde art's and cinematic theory since the 1960s as the main cause that the *phantasmagoric dispositif* had been neglected so far (see Elcott 2016a, p. 48f).

Elcott conceives the phantasmagoria as "a fundamental configuration of image and spectator […] in relation to specific modes of spectatorship", and as an "assembly, in a single space and time, of spectators and images (seemingly) freed from material support" (ibid. p. 46). Other elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif* are the "mysterious lighting from hidden sources, fictitious architectures, hyperrealism" (ibid. p. 48). Besides the *cinematic* and the *phantasmagoric*, Elcott identifies a third *dispositif*, the *domestic dispositif*, and contrasts all three *dispositif*s with each other. According to Elcott, "each *dispositif* […] [is] internally multifaceted and externally porous to other *dispositifs*" (ibid. p. 51 [italics in the text]). To watch a film in a cinematic setting (spectators are seated in a fixed distance to the screen in a darkened room) is utterly different from watching the same film in a domestic environment or on a hand-held screen, where the film becomes "a commodity" (ibid. p. 54), while the darkness of the room and the distance between the spectator and the screen are secondary. In the *domestic dispositif* "the images [are] contained within objects" (ibid. p. 55). In contrast, in a phantasmagoric setting the spectators were seated *within* the visual attractions, they shared "the same dark space" (ibid. p. 54)[5] and "a common […] time" (ibid. p. 55). Elcott states: "Phantasmagoria is a matter of performance or, more broadly, theatre, where living beings and mediated images can assemble" (ibid.). The phantasmagoric aims at to engaging "our bodies directly" (ibid.). He explains further:

> Phantasmagoria, once again, poses the least familiar and most unsettling form of spatiality and embodiment among the *dispositifs* in question. Here we are often hyperaware of our bodies and surroundings. In a reversal of the cinematic, the phantasmagoric must guarantee the highest degree of image detachedness – that is, it must unmoor images from any material support, including screens – in order to enhance their local boundedness. The phantasmagoric image cannot be perceived as trapped inside a device or on a screen, nor as absolutely separated from the space we inhabit; rather, the phantasmagoric image must occupy the same space we occupy. (ibid. p. 56 [italics in the text])

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[5] Unfortunately there are two imprecisions in Elcott's article on p. 54: The phantasmagoria did not *only* present "assembled ghosts" and just *not* Louis XVI (at least intentionally, see FN 26).

Last but not least, the phantasmagoric presentation happens in real time. Elcott suggests 'the phantasmagoric' to be "a fundamental, perhaps *the* fundamental, image logic of our time. When real time prevails over real space, real space becomes phantasmagoric, an assembly of bodies and images" (ibid. p. 57 [italics in the text]).

The here presented thoughts on the various elements of the various *dispositifs* will provide the theoretical references for the investigation of the phantasmagoria's production and reception below.

Prior to this, the phantasmagoria's history and its precursors will be introduced.

2. The Phantasmagoria and its History

The term phantasmagoria derived from Ancient Greek φάντασμα (phántasma, meaning: phantasm, illusion, phantom, ghost) and supposedly either αγορά (agorá, meaning: assembly, gathering) or ἀγορεύω (agoreúō, meaning: to speak publicly). According to the contemporary specialist on the prehistory of cinema Laurent Mannoni, this would either "suggest[…] a dialogue between the audience and the ghost called up by the magic lantern" or the "'gathering of ghosts' (phantasma/agora)" (Mannoni 2006, p. 136).

2.1 Preconditions

Mannoni provides a highly recommendable overview on the prehistory of film with his brilliant research work *The Great Art of Light and Shadow*.[6] Albeit every step in the development that had eventually led to the phantasmagoria would certainly be worth mentioning, for lack of space, I will only present the most immediate devices and practices here. Yet, the presented preconditions must not only concentrate on the technical developments. The phantasmagoria is similarly deeply rooted in the dialectics of its cultural role models, in the spirits of the Enlightenment, and in the implications of the *French Revolution*.

2.1.1 Optics

First of all we have to mention the first studies in optics and the experiments with curved glasses that eventually led to the first lenses (see "the Achromatic Lens" in this chapter), and catoptrics, a technique for reflecting light with the help of a concave mirror. Heron of Alexandria (1st century BCE)[7] seems to have been the first person to have experimented with visual effects. The sociologist and media and cultural studies theorist Ludwig Vogl-Bienek suggests that already in the Old Testament's Book of Daniel the story of Belshazzar's feast, that the 'magic' of an inscription that appeared on the wall predicting the king to be doomed, had been done with the help of a mirror (see Vogl-Bienek 1994, p. 15f). I would question that biblical stories could be taken for granted in this literal manner, in the first place, and proper (lead glass or tin-mercury amalgam coated glass) mirrors were not invented before the 15th

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[6] See Mannoni (2006).

[7] Heron, by the way, was also famous for his use of hydraulics, pneumatics, steam powered devices, and mechanical transmission for artificial automatons, like automat theatres and pneumatic fountains with amazing automatic statues and animals (see Heckmann (1982, p. 31-45), all first re-discovered during the late European Renaissance.

century. Mirror-like reflecting surfaces at biblical times were made from polished obsidian or metals – therefore, it is arguable, if the quality of the text's appearance would have been that spectacular as, e.g., Rembrandt has imagined in his painting *Belshazzar's Feast* (~1635-1638). In this context, in his doctoral thesis the literary scholar Volkmar Rummel indicates that until the middle of the 19th century, before the term 'projection' became common (according to Rummel around 1910), the casted images on a surface via light and a concave mirror were called 'shadows', most likely because of the reflecting surfaces' poor quality, that desaturated the colours to dark shadows (see Rummel 2015, p. 173f).

Particularly advanced lenses and, furthermore, the reflecting mirror to increase and to direct the light from the source to some surface were both essential for the phantasmagoric projection devices.

2.1.2 The Magic Lantern

The *magic lantern* (or *laterna magica*) was invented by the astronomer, mathematician, physicist and inventor, Christiaan Huygens (1629-1695) around 1659. All magic lanterns were constructed in a similar way, as "optical boxes" (see Mannoni 2006, p. 33) in a variety of materials and shapes, all with a chimney, for the smoke by the lit candle or oil lamp in the inside to escape (see fig. 1a and 1b).

Fig. 1a: Magic lantern at the Schloss-Museum Aulendorf (Germany)[8]
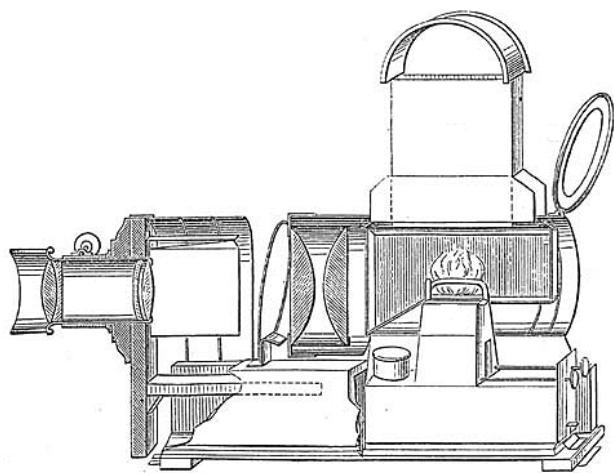

Fig. 1b: Laterna magica[9]

The images for projection, painted on glass slides, were placed into a construction between the lantern's body and the lantern's lens tube, which held the lenses. According to Mannoni "[t]he arrangement of the lenses in the tube varied from design to design, especially in the nineteenth century, but in general consisted of a powerful plano-convex lens, with its flat side facing the light source, which converged the light rays onto the painted slide, followed at the end of the lens tube by one (in the simpler designs) or two plano-convex lenses which enlarged the image and projected it the right way up" (ibid. p. 33f), and "[s]ometimes a silvered reflector was placed behind the flame or lamp, to concentrate the light towards the lens tube at the front of the lantern" (ibid. p. 33). To project the images the room had to be dark with a white surface opposite the lantern that served as screen.

Even if the images presented by magic lanterns "covered every subject: diabolic, grotesque, erotic, scatological, religious, historical, scientific, political, and satirical" (ibid.), most often scary images were presented.

2.1.3   Animated and Moving Slides

For the phantasmagoria animated slides were essential. Probably the first one was also designed by Huygens (see fig. 2), as Mannoni illustrates:

> In 1659, already at the height of fame after his discovery of the rings of Saturn, Huygens drew ten macabre little pictures in one of his manuscripts, described as 'For representations by means of convex glasses in a lantern'. The images represent a skeleton, sometimes enclosed in a circle, removing its skull from its shoulders and replacing it, and also moving its right arm. In the penultimate illustration the skeleton, with its own head on its shoulders, is shown juggling a second head in the air. The sequence of images is quite remarkable because of its clearly indicated desire for artificial recreation of motion: dotted lines show the required movement of the skeleton's arm. This is the earliest known representation of a moving slide for the magic lantern […]. To make this moving slide, Huygens probably superimposed two sheets of glass: one fixed, representing the skeleton without the skull and perhaps without the right arm; and one movable, on which he painted the right arm and skull only. This type of slide remained in widespread use until the end of the nineteenth century. (ibid. p. 38)

The slides were made from thin glass plates with the motives painted on with water colour or oil paint. To create animated effects, two glass slides were placed above each other with parts of the motive slightly changed, and then, quickly, to trick the eye, shifting the position of one of the slides. There existed quite elaborate mechanisms for these moveable slides with levers, mounted in wooden or copper racks (see Barnes 1985, p. 3).
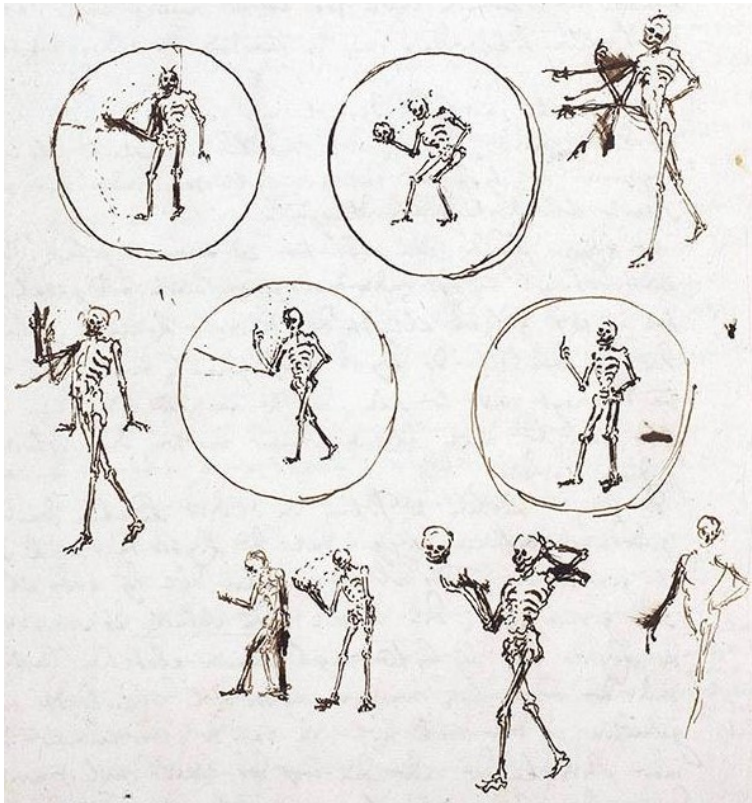
Fig. 2: Draft for an animated slide (1659) by Ch. Huygens[10]

2.1.4 The *Nebulous Lantern*

The *nebulous lantern* is another development that has to be mentioned (see fig. 3).
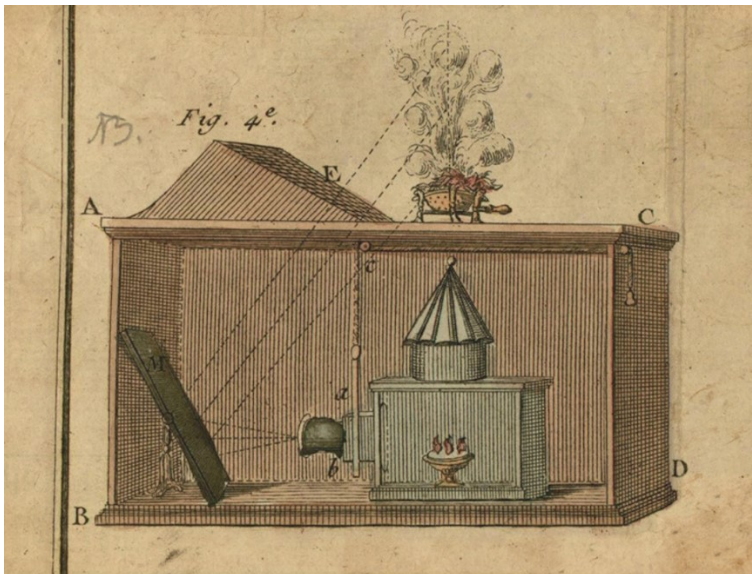
Fig. 3: Nebulous lantern (1769/70) by E.-G. Guyot[11]

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[10] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1659_huygens_-_figure1.jpg, accessed 19.08.2021, 00:43; public domain.

[11] http://www.marianotomatis.it/biblioteca/specials/images/fantasmagoria_guyot_01.jpg, accessed 19.08.2021, 00:50; CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, copied from Edme-Gilles Guyot: *Nouvelles récréations physiques et mathématiques*, Volume 4, Paris: Gueffier, 1770 by Mariano Tomatis, the image was cropped.

It was first used by the postmaster, physician, inventor and magician Edme-Gilles Guyot (1706-1786) in 1769/70 to project images "onto a curtain of smoke" (Mannoni 2006, p. 139):

> For this, Guyot used a type of brazier, with the beam of the lantern directed onto the smoke which emerged as a sheet through the top of the brazier casing […]. Guyot could also make 'a phantom on a pedestal' appear, thanks to a small magic lantern hidden inside a wooden chest. This projected its pictures onto an inclined mirror, which reflected the images onto the smoke screen given off by a simple stove located above the chest. (ibid.)

2.1.5   The Achromatic Lens

In the middle of the 16th century the quality of glass for lenses had become much more advanced (before, there had been, e.g., entrapped air, and the transparency was poor). Now, the problem of the 'chromatic aberration' (the rim of the projected images showed spectral colours and was not very sharp) waited to be solved.

There had been many attempts and solutions before,[12] but a patent for the achromatic lens was first given to the English optician John Dollond (1706–61). Mannoni explains:

> This miracle was achieved by the juxtaposition of two lenses. One was concave, made of 'flint glass' (white English crystal glass), and gave a strong dispersal of light; the other was convex or biconvex, made of 'crown glass' (slightly greenish glass), and gave a weak dispersal. The solution lay in bringing a convergent crown glass lens against the concave surface of a divergent flint glass lens. This revolutionary lens was not immediately adopted by lanternists: at first it was very expensive, because of the difficulty of obtaining flint glass. In addition, Dollond had taken out a patent, and his son Peter prosecuted anyone who dared to make achromatic combinations without his authorization. But at the end of the eighteenth century it was becoming more widespread, and the magic lantern used by Robertson for his phantasmagoria was definitely equipped with this indispensable lens. (ibid. p. 125)

2.1.6   The *Megascope*

The first prototype of the *Megascope* was designed by the Swiss mathematician, physicist, and engineer, Leonhard Euler (1717-1783) in 1756. Again, Mannoni had researched most accurately:

> [I]n a paper published by the St Petersburg Academy, Euler not only described some improvements to the solar microscope[13], but also gave the first description of the Megascope. This name (from the Greek mega, 'large', and skopeo, 'I see') did not come directly from Euler's pen; he preferred to refer to the magic lantern or the improved camera obscura. The word 'Megascope' was not used until the 1780s, when Jacques Charles used this device to illustrate his lectures. Its invention was therefore attributed to him, in ignorance of Euler's innovative

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[12] It seems to have been the British lawyer Chester Moore Hall (1703-1771), who first invented the achromatic lens.

[13] The solar microscope was invented by the German anatomist Nathanael Lieberkühn (1711-1756) in 1739, but was first practicable for use when a mirror had been added by the English constructor of scientific instruments John Cuff (1708-1772) in 1742, to catch the sunlight (see Heering 2008, p. 346). The device could – with the use of sunlight – project microscopic samples (e.g., a drop of water, parts of an insect, parts of a plant) in a hugely enlarged mode onto a white surface and was used for scientific demonstrations within science, education, and for public shows until the beginning of the 19th century.

work. […] The Megascope lantern could project a painting, a statue, a bas-relief scene, and all types of small opaque objects. (ibid. p. 131).

To solve the problem that "the image of the opaque object formed at the focus of the lens had to be very bright for projection onto a screen" (ibid.) Euler consequently constructed the case big enough to situate two light sources and two mirrors to illuminate the opaque objects. "The magic lantern could now throw fixed or moving images, microscopic images, or faithful reproductions of opaque objects, onto the screen" (ibid. p. 132).

2.1.7   The Argand Lamp

The Argand oil lamp was patented in 1783 by the Genevan physicist and chemist François-Pierre-Amédée Argand (1750-1803) in 1783. Its wick was to be trimmed quite less frequently than candles and earlier oil lamps. The flame was covered by a glass tube that let the air circulate and, thus, was about 6 to 10 times brighter than the light of a candle and brighter than other oil lamps, too (see fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Argand lamp[14]

Shortly thereafter, the French pharmacist Antoine-Arnoult Quinquet (1745-1803) improved Argand's lamp with a glass chimney that helps to steady the flame and the air circulation. He, then, distributed the lamp as 'Quinquet'. As the magic lantern performer and researcher Mervyn Heard (1948-2017) indicates, "the Argand/Quinquet lamp became the standard for all lantern

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[14] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Argand01.jpg, accessed 20.08.2021, 21:00; public domain.

work, and remained so until the adoption of the oxy-hydrogen lamp in the 1830s" (Heard 2001, p. 129).

2.1.8 The Tradition of Schröpfer's 'Gespenstermacherei'

Another important aspect that contributes to comprehending the phantasmagoria with regard to contents is to present its general principles. There has to be mentioned the 'Gespenstermacher' (ghost-maker) and showman Johann Georg Schröpfer (1738?- 1774), but also successors, who copied Schröpfer's entertaining concept or at least performed it very similarly: The events took place in a darkened room, decorated with all sorts of creepy objects like skulls or cemetery symbols, and with bursts of light frequently flashing from different locations of the room; its floor was covered with a black cloth with wires hidden underneath and a circle drawn on the floor marked the area that the spectators were not allowed to leave during the performance (to send sudden, but apparently not dangerous electric shocks through the spectators); sound effects were used, such as simulating thunder, storm, rain, and hail; sometimes ventriloquism (lending some nearby object one's voice without moving one's lips) would make the projected phantom seemingly talk (often 'answering' questions); sometimes the eerie sound of a glass harmonica completed the show; a light source (candles, torches, or a funeral lamp) was installed in a way that it could be quickly extinguished and lit again; at least one surface was prepared that served as screen for the projections like a (half-)transparent paper or cloth (in this case back-projection with a magic lantern was used from a room behind the screen), or smoke (in this case either a concave mirror or a *nebulous lantern* was used) that was produced from foul or pleasant incense materials (depending on whether a 'dangerous' or 'well-meaning' spectre was called up); sometimes actors were hired to mime ghosts. Alternatively, "[t]he acoustic effects were created with a tin-plate tube. A second conspirator, hidden in an adjacent room, spoke in a sinister voice through this hollow tube, playing the role of the 'spokesman of Elysium', the kingdom of the dead" (Mannoni 2006, p. 141).

As Mannoni writes, to be able to speak of a phantasmagoric show, the essential features still had to be figured out:

> the image which advanced and grew, or retreated and diminished, and always remained sharp. Far from being a trivial detail, this innovation transformed the frame, perspective and scenic space of the projection. […] The combination of the movable lantern and the moving slide were an essential step forward in the history of 'moving' projection. (ibid.)

Before we have a look at the phantasmagoria, we first have to get an idea of the spirits of the time.

2.1.9 The Spirits of Enlightenment

The art philosopher and film theorist Noël Carroll (*1947) indicates the 18th century as a starting point for the horror genre. Carroll points to the "overlap" with the period of the Enlightenment (see Carroll 1990, p. 55), but stresses that this "connection" merely "can be based on conceptual considerations rather than empirical ones" and drops the hypothesis that "the genre presupposed something like an Enlightenment view of scientific reality in order to generate the requisite sense of a violation of nature. That is, the Enlightenment made available the kind of conception of nature the kind of cosmology needed to create a sense of horror" (ibid. p. 57). It is true that the literary genre of the 'gothic novel' could be allocated to this time, but because he later includes non-literary content into the *horror genre*, too, I would like add to this predication, here. Carroll himself admits that this is not the starting point for the tradition of confronting people with fearsome content. Amongst others, he lists examples from the literature of the Classical Antiquity, and *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) (ibid. p. 13). Latest in the middle of the 15th century, pictures (printed with woodblocks and sold by hucksters) were quite popular, often depicting religious but also scary motives like the devil, skeletons, and the *Danse Macabre* (*Dance of Death*). Furthermore, with magic mirrors, the *camera obscura*,[15] the *laterne vive*,[16] and later the magic lantern, the same or similar motives of 'other realities' (like angles, ghosts, the devil, …) were very common (see Mannoni 2006, p. 1-73). The 'violated nature' was already there long before. People had suffered from the Black Death and famine, they had witnessed the violent times, i.e., wars and the European witch-trials. Besides, Gunning explains that the scientific use of optical instruments was not clearly separable from optical devices that produced illusions: "[s]cientific and occult beliefs, as well as a fascination with the devices of wonder, mixed promiscuously in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century natural magic, creating a tangle that later scientists and philosophers tried hard to sort out. […] Controversies and scepticism initially met images mediated by new optical devices, partly because the effect of mirrors and lenses were primarily associated with the catoptric illusions managed by conjurers and charlatans" (Gunning 2007, p. 101). Superstition had maybe weakened, but it had surely not suddenly disappeared in consequence of the 'Age of Reason'. Though, the spirit of reason may not have been the cause for the 'existence' of spectres per se, but for the

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[15] A tiny hole in a room's wall will, at daylight, project the outside scene upside down on the opposite wall. As soon as grinded lenses were used with the camera obscura, a bigger opening and a sharper projection was possible (about 1550). Some year later, the first portable devices were constructed. Frequent 'performances' seem to have been rare, but certainly the first conjurers have tried to deceive people with camera obscura tricks.

[16] Colourful but scary figures were painted on translucent paper that was bent to a cylinder. Due to a horizontal propeller in the middle, it could rotate by the heat of a candle light, and at night project the figures in an uncanny largeness and mobility onto the surrounding walls (see Mannoni 2006, p. 28 ff).

development of *the uncanny*. Castle refers to the analysis by the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1936) on *das Unheimliche* (*the uncanny*)[17] and states that "[t]he crucial developmental process on which the Freudian uncanny depends is rationalization: the 'surmounting' of infantile belief" (Castle 1995, p. 10). To identify the moment when *the uncanny* seems to have come into existence as a regular topic in literature, informed by the mystic séances, magical performances, the exhibitions of the most elaborate automata, experiments in Galvanism, and – last but not least – the phantasmagoria, Castle specifies that "it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it was during the eighteenth century, with its confident rejection of transcendental explanations, compulsive quest for systematic knowledge, and self-conscious valorisation of 'reason' over 'superstition', that human beings first experienced that encompassing sense of strangeness and unease Freud finds so characteristic of modern life" (ibid.). Below she adds as another result the "distinctively 'eighteenth-century' urge toward technological mastery and control" (ibid. p. 11). Castle points out another interesting fact concerning Freud's "central insight":

> [T]hat it is precisely the historic internalization of rationalist protocols that produces the uncanny – not only sheds light, it seems to me, on the peculiar emotional ambivalence the Enlightenment now evokes in us (it has both freed us and cursed us), it also offers a powerful dialectical model for understanding many of the haunting paradoxes of eighteenth-century literature and culture. […] [T]he more we seek enlightenment, the more alienating our world becomes; the more we seek to free ourselves, Houdini-like, from the coils of superstition, mystery, and magic, the more tightly, paradoxically, the uncanny holds us in its grip. (ibid., p. 15)

Heard argues in the same line with Castle, stressing the great 'gothic' influence in Britain around 1800. "to a great extent it was born of a feeling for the need to turn back und escape from the harsh politics and cold uncertainties espoused by the rational theorists" (Heard 2001, p. 175). But he puts another interesting aspect into play. To connect to the 'spiritualistic' in combination with a reference to science and education in one's phantasmagoric performances would guarantee prosperity: "One of the commercial advantages of the phantasmagoria was that it bridged the great divide between the fictional preferences of the romantics on the one side and the rationalists on the other" (ibid. p. 177).

In addition, Castle emphasizes that "[t]he venerable notion of 'Enlightenment rationalism' has itself come under pressing ideological attack […]: to control and dominate rather than to emancipate" (Castle 1995, p. 6). And she continues: "we now see the period [of the 'Age of Reason'; V.W.] more darkly – as riven by class and social tensions, as brutal and often neurotic in underlying character, and fraught with political, moral, and psychic instabilities" (ibid. p. 7).

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[17] See Freud (1919).

Concerning the phantasmagoria Castle argues "that the historic Enlightenment internalization for the spectral – the gradual reinterpretation of ghosts and apparitions as *hallucinations*, or projections of the mind – introduced a new uncanniness into human consciousness itself. The mind became a "world of phantoms" and thinking itself as an act of ghost-seeing. […] [T]he self-conscious debunking of stories of ghosts and apparitions coincides with an uncanny 'spectralization' of human psychology" (ibid. p. 17 [italics in the text]).

2.1.10 The French Revolution

The *Reign of Terror* climaxed during 1793 and lasted until the execution of Maximilien de Robespierre (1758-1794), the leading figure of the French Revolution, and his associates. During this time seemingly no one – of neither political conviction nor some of the closest supporters of Robespierre's regime – were to be trusted, and only a trivial incident could mean a severe penalty, prison, or death. Even if people tried not to (openly) arouse suspicion, there still lurked the danger of a (unjustified) denunciation. To shed light on this period of the French Revolution, it is maybe done best with illustrating the impact it had, seen from after it had come to an end. The historian Ronen Steinberg clarifies that "the most urgent political tasks facing revolutionary France after the fall of Robespierre was liquidating the heritage of the Terror" (Steinberg 2019, p. 118) and that it felt as if the terror would reappear, "not necessarily as an actual revival of the repression, but rather in spectral forms. […] [T]he Terror was over but not gone" (ibid.). This persistent haunting of collective traumata is probably best described by the social scientist Avery Gordon:

> Haunting raises spectres, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These spectres or ghosts appear when the trouble they present and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view. The ghost, as I understand it, is not the invisible or some ineffable excess. The whole essence, if you can use that word, of a ghost is that it has a real presence and demands its due, your attention. Haunting and the appearance of spectres or ghosts is one way, I tried to suggest, we are notified that what's been concealed is very much alive and present, interfering precisely with those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed towards us. (Gordon 2008, p. xvi)

Themes of the phantasmagoria in the years after 1794, therefore, often deal with Robespierre or the phantoms of other late revolutionary leaders as monsters.

2.2   The Invention of the Phantasmagoria

There flourish some myths concerning the two (or three) main initial phantasmagoric showmen: the inventor of the phantasmagoria, the probably Flemish or Brabantian Paul Filidort or Phylidor or Philidor (17??-????), who performed the *Phantasmagoria* on continental Europe since 1789, the Flemish Étienne-Gaspard Robert or Robertson (1763-1837), who, in 1798, copied Philidor's show and elaborately expanded and presented it as *Fantasmagorie* (and as his own invention), and Paul de Phillipsthall or De Phillipsthall (17??-1829), who performed the *Phantasmagoria* in England since 1801. There is no ultimate evidence, whether Philidor and de Phillipsthall were the same person, even if very likely;[18] in case that he was not Philidor, de Phillipsthall then, again, copied the *Fantasmagorie* from Robertson, as suggested by the film and theatre historian X. Theodore Barber[19] (see Barber 1989, pp. 77–78).

2.2.1   Philidor's *Phantasmagoria*

A first prototype of a phantasmagoric show took place in Berlin on 30th March 1789, announced by Philidor as "Expériences *Physiques* du St. Philidor" (von der Reck 1789, p. 475, FN* [italics in the text]), however, in former newspapers announced as "magische Experimente" [ibid.]. One of the attendees reported the circumstances of the event to the executive authorities and caused Philidor's banishment from Berlin "[auf; V.W.] Allerhöchsten Befehl […] dergleichen gegen die Religion und guten Sitten anstoßende Gaukeleien nicht zu gestatten, vielmehr den Zauberer so fort [sic!] von hier [Berlin, V.W.] zu entfernen" (ibid. p. 473). It seems as if the reason was not really the performance itself but Philidor's attempts to

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[18] Mervyn Heard is supporting this assumption, (see Heard 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001). Comparing the show-bills and show advertisements from Vienna 1790-1792 (see Heard 2001, p. 105-111, p. 122), and from England 1801 and 1808 (see ibid., p. 233f), they seem to provide a very similar mode of expression. Also, the motives on the de Phillipsthall's slides in London 1824 (see ibid., p. 183), seem to have been painted as poor as it has been conveyed from the Philidor's occasion in Berlin 1789 (see below "Philidor's Phantasmagoria"). However, if Philidor and de Phillipsthall were the same person, it is unclear, why he would not have claimed to be the real originator of the phantasmagoria during the time of Robertson's and Clisorius' trial concerning the invention, or at least would have related to his long lasting experience with phantasmagoric performance. The case is also discussed in-depth by the media archaeologist Erkki Huhtamo (*1958) see Huhtamo (2006).

[19] I have to drop this footnote here, as I find the connections remarkable: X. Theodore Barber is the son of Theodore X. Barber (1927-2005), who was a specialist on hypnosis and known for his criticisms of the common hypnosis research, which – not in form and content but in his approach – very much reminds me of the practices of 'mesmerism', a hypnotical technique developed by the physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) that Mesmer denoted as 'animal magnetism'. Mesmer is often mentioned together with two other contemporaries, Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) who discovered the effect of the electrical current on muscle tissue and 'animal electricity' and the physicist Alexander Volta (1745-1827) who invented the battery – the two which, again, Robertson highly admired. Robertson reproduced Galvani's experiment with the dead frog (that moves its legs through induced electrical current) in the exhibition that was presented before the actual phantasmagoria show started, and he used the glass harmonica for his performance, that also Mesmer played, sometimes in combination with his treatments. Robertson announced these attractions as "[e]xperiments with the new fluid known by the name of Galvanism, whose application gives temporary movement to bodies whose life has departed. An artist noted for his talents will play the Harmonica" (Mannoni 2006, p. 150).

take the attendees for fools, almost desperately trying to convince them of his necromantic skills.[20] This is probably the reason, why Philidor, Robertson and de Phillipsthall in their subsequent shows emphasized their skills in presenting mere optical illusions and with this 'prove of respectability' at the outset to give the impression that every superstition would be untenable.[21] By starting his *Phantasmagoria* in Paris at the latest he had dropped the idea to integrate electrical shocks within his show's choreography, while keeping all other of the above-mentioned Schröpfer's elements, and having already mounted the magic lantern on rails. Mannoni describes the most essential improvements of the phantasmagoric practice as follows:

> The technique of the phantasmagoria depended on several constant principles. The spectators must never see the projection equipment, which was hidden behind the screen. When the lights in the room were extinguished, a ghost would appear on the screen, very small at first; it would increase in size rapidly and so appear to move towards the audience. This could also be done in the opposite direction, with the ghost moving away and appearing to grow smaller.[22] The backprojection always had to be sharp: this was possible because of an improved lens tube of the magic lantern, which now included a diaphragm and a rack mechanism, allowing adjustment of the position of the lenses as the lantern was moved along rails or on wheels.
> The pictures shown were animated and mobile, appearing to rush towards a terrified audience who were certainly not used to such an assault of images. In addition, the macabre show devised around this new type of projection heightened the impression of unease and fear in the spectators. (Mannoni 2006, p. 136)

In 1790 Philidor came to Vienna and "[a]fter giving private shows for a few weeks [announced as *Phantasmorasi*[23]], […] Philidor built a special theatre in the Josephstadt next to

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[20] For example, Philidor tried to apply the practice of Schröpfer and Guyot to give his audience an electric shock, which failed, because the attendees figured this out and refused to hold each other's hands. If the projections and the artwork of the painted slides would have been less stuporous and his attitude less presumptuous (see von der Reck 1789) and (Anonymus 1789), it could have met with the same success like some of his later shows, or like similar shows, that were common before, e.g., the necromantic shows by Georg Schröpfer around 1774 in Leipzig (see Mannoni 2006, p. 138).

[21] For example Philidor stated at the beginning of his shows: "I will bring before you all the illustrious dead, all those whose memory is dear to you and whose image is still present for you. I will not show you ghosts, because there are no such things; but I will produce before you enactments and images, which are imagined to be ghosts, in the dreams of the imagination or in the falsehoods of charlatans. I am neither priest nor magician; I do not wish to deceive you; but I will astonish you. It is not up to me to create illusions; I prefer to serve education" (cited in Mannoni 2006, p. 144); Robertson stated his aim to demonstrate in a comparable manner: "[T]he 'absurd tales with which our childhood was deluded: we wish to speak of the terror inspired by the ghosts, spells and occult plots of magic'. […] Robertson is a scientist, engineer, painter, optician; he is all that he has to be to work the greatest effects on the imagination through the senses, except that which he does not wish to be, magician, necromancer, in a century where all those tricks have vanished before the reason of man" (ibid., p. 151), and Mannoni also records that "Robertson never gave up his claim to be a scientist, even though the phantasmagoria made him rich and fashionable" (ibid., p. 152); De Phillipsthall announced his show as "to expose the practices of artful impostors and pretended Exorcists, and to open the eyes of those who still foster an absurd belief in GHOSTS, or DISEMBODIED SPIRITS", and promised "an interesting and pleasing Entertainment" (The Morning Chronicle 1801).

[22] For this effect the magic lantern is moved inversely: the nearer to the screen, the smaller the ghost; the further away from the screen, the bigger the projection becomes.

[23] The front side of a handbill for two shows on 15th and 17th of March 1790 displays that Philidor called himself "Physikus Phylidor" and that he called his performance a "Darstellung der sogenannten PHANTASMORASI, oder natürlicher Geister Erscheinungen" (see Tomatis 2018).

the Royal Auersperg's Palais that was draped completely in black cloth, outfitted with skulls and a white magic circle" (Rossell 2002b; see also Rossell 2002a, p. 142), where he performed ghost shows with a rear-projecting magic lantern. The last months he announced his show "as 'Schröpferische Geister Erscheinungen' ('Schröpfer's Ghost Appearances')" (Rossell 2001). In 1792 he sold his equipment and decorations "reputedly to the master illusionist Johann Carl Enslen" (Rossell 2002b; see also Rossell 2002a, p. 142).[24]

On 16th December 1792 Philidor announced his PHANTASMAGORIA in Paris for the first time (see Mannoni 2006, p. 141), performing his "apparition of Ghosts and invocation of the Shades of famous Persons" (ibid.) twice per day. In the following, he hired a painter, according to Mannoni probably to be able to present other and maybe more elaborate painted ghosts to his audience,[25] but likewise to offer individual performances where 'requested apparitions' could be presented (with some lead time for the painter on behalf of the required slide's production) (see ibid. p. 142f). Philidor's shows were well frequented and for several months he made quite some wealth with it (see ibid. p. 144). The mystery is not solved yet, why Philidor's very successful Parisian shows suddenly stopped and why he, afterwards, apparently never entered France again. During the very dangerous times of the French Revolution, especially at that time, it could happen very quickly for a person to turn into a suspect in the view of the respective ruling authorities. It has been suggested that Philidor held private and confidential sessions where he, as the closing act, presented a very grotesque portrait of the devil with the face of one of the main revolutionary leaders (e.g., Robespierre, Marat, or Danton) (ibid. p. 146), which certainly – if being publicized – would have been extremely risky for Philidor.[26] In 1793 Philidor went to Switzerland, but after just one show, he lost the permission for further performances (Huhtamo 2006, p. 11). Between 1794 and 1800 he

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[24] Rossell further writes on Enslen: "Renowned across Europe for his "air hunts" and flying sculptures, as well as a series of meticulously organized illusions, Enslen from at least June 1796 gave phantasmagoria shows in Berlin that enlarged the narrative content of Philidor's ghost shows" (Rossell 2002b; see also Rossell 2002a, p. 142).

[25] Which is very likely, in case he still used the slides he had in Berlin, as they got quite a bad review (see von der Reck 1789; Anonymus 1789).

[26] There is another narrative that the beheaded Louis XVI was presented as if rising into heaven (either on purpose or accidently) – which would indeed have been a huge attack towards the revolutionary leaders, but this story was attributed both to Philidor and to Robertson (see Huhtamo 2006, p. 12). At another (or the same?) occurrence, on 28th March 1798, François-Martin Poultier (1753-1826), the director of the revolutionary journal *l'Ami des Lois*, writes in an article about Robertson's show, that Robertson was asked for the appearance of Louis XVI: "To this indiscreet question Robertson wisely replied: 'I had a recipe for it, before the 18 fructidor [the date of the 'coup d'état', 4th Sept 1797; V.W.] I have lost it since that time: it is probable that I shall never find it again, and it will henceforth be impossible to get the kings back into France" (Robertson 1831, p. 220, quoting Poultier [translated with DeepL, www.deepl.com]). According to Mannoni, "[a] few days after the article appeared, Robertson was raided by the police" (Mannoni 2006, p. 152). In his *Mémoires*, Robertson states that this "ingenious" supposed response had been ascribed to him by Poultier and that the request to present the audience with the former, beheaded king must have been someone who wanted to provoke and a police agent's revenge, whom he earlier had denied a favour (see Robertson 1831, p. 220).

travelled through Germany and the Netherlands, only, it is not mentioned, whether he still exhibited his *Phantasmagorie* (see ibid.).[27]

2.2.2 Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*

Regarding Robertson, Mannoni states:

> Whoever he may have been, Philidor was completely overshadowed by an adversary of genius: Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, who opened his 'Fantasmagorie' in Paris in 1798. He achieved fortune and fame by exploiting a spectacle whose mystery remained intact for two years, before it was abruptly thrown away through his own mistake. […]
> Robertson was the most celebrated and skilled projectionist of his time. […] He stole everything from Philidor, but he did so with such a scientific approach, such an impassioned mastery, and in such a lasting manner (1798–1837, nearly forty years of projection), that he played a far more prominent role in pre-cinema history than his unfortunate predecessor. (Mannoni 2006, p. 147)

If we study Robertson's *Mémoires*, we find a slightly different portrayal. Hence, he had experimented with the solar microscope and with the projection of huge apparitions, and then translated his practises to the magic lantern, already five years earlier before Philidor had tried his first experiments in Berlin:

> From the year 1784, I had added to Kirker's lantern some improvements which enabled me to make, as well as I could, shadows hobble in the presence of my good friend M. Villette, and of some people of our intimate society. The encouragement I received from them made me improve my methods day by day. The circle of initiates was also growing day by day; and the noise of these apparitions, though imperfect, spreading more and more throughout the world, I soon had numerous assemblies; I must even say that I owe no less to these attempts at the fantasmagorie than to my experiments in physics […].[28] (Robertson 1831, p. 196 [translated with DeepL, www.deepl.com])[29]
> The object of my researches was then to obtain a great intensity of light, gathered on a surface whose smallest diameter would be five pouces [about 13,5cm;[30] V.W.], and the largest eight feet [about 260cm; V.W.]; and then to find an apparatus for representing with artificial light the optical image of opaque bodies. (ibid. 197; [DeepL])

Robertson's first *Fantasmagorie* took place on 23rd January 1798. As the room of his location soon turned out to be too small for his audience,[31] from 3rd of January 1799, he relocated this show to the former Couvent des Capucines. This location had a macabre touch per se. Its "forty-two nuns had been driven out by the Revolution in 1790 […] [and] [i]n the

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[27] Huhtamo in both notes refers to Heards book *Phantasmagoria. The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern*. Hastings 2006, of which, unfortunately, I could not get a copy. Regrettably, these stages in Philidor's life are neither mentioned in Heards dissertation nor in his articles on "Paul de Philipstahl" in the *new magic lantern journal* (see Heard 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001).

[28] It probably were these sessions that Robertson held in this room at the Couvent des Capucines and that were 'documented' by the engraver Lejeune (see FN 110).

[29] In the following, all translations into English with DeepL, www.deepl.com, will be abbreviated as '[DeepL]', if not stated otherwise.

[30] I've converted the old French units of measurement (ligne, pouce, and pied) into the current metric system. The 'pied' (foot) at Robertson's time in Paris had a length of 32,48cm, the 'pouce' 27,07mm, and the 'ligne' 2,256mm.

[31] And because his hitherto show was set on hold because of the reputed 'king-apparition-affair' (see FN 26).

church demolished in 1806 rested the body of Louise de Lorraine, Queen of France and founder of the convent; also to be seen were the tombs of the Marquis de Louvois (1638–91) and the Marquise de la Pompadour (1721–64). The crypt where this high society rested was used as a cesspool during the Revolution" (Mannoni 2006, p. 157). Visitors had to "avoid walking over tombstones" (ibid. p. 159) before entering the cloister. At his location Robertson had created a new exhibition space with a lot of curiosities, optical illusions, peepshows, paintings and caricatures, the galvanic frog-experiment, and from 1800 on, in an adjacent room, he exhibited the "Invisible Woman", "where one could ask questions in front of a glass chest suspended in the air. […] An assistant was hidden in the neighbouring room, speaking through a hollow tin-plate tube, a method previously used by the fantasmagores of the 1780s" (ibid. p. 160).[32] And Robertson "employed the acoustic talents of citizen Fitz-James [(17??-1815) (see Robertson 1831, p. 411); V.W], a ventriloquist, who could 'throw his voice to the end of a gallery, make it heard at five or six places at the same time, and produce illusions in all parts of the room'" (Mannoni 2006, p. 160). Moreover, the room, where the main phantasmagoric show took place was newly decorated. It was "protected by an 'ancient' door covered in hieroglyphics, which seemed to open onto the mysteries of Isis. As usual, the hall was dimly lit by a lamp hanging from the ceiling. 'A profound calm, an absolute silence, a sudden sense of isolation' overtook the audience" (ibid.). The Egyptian connection quite likely is to be understood as reference to the 'Egyptian freemasonry' of the magician and mystic Cagliostro.[33] It seems that even the doors got locked, after the spectators were seated, to increase the claustrophobic feeling (see Robertson 1831, p. 211).[34]

In 1799 Robertson's former assistants found a new employer, Léonard André Clisorius, who began to offer phantasmagoric shows, too, first the *Fantomagie*, shortly after the *Fantasmaparastasie*. Robertson quickly tried to place a patent on his *Fantasmascope* (a magic lantern on wheels and rails that could also be used as a *Megascope*) and took court action, but in the end, the trial led to the public revelation of Robertson having copied most of the show

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[32] Actually, the method to speak through a tube from an adjacent room was already used in antiquity by priestesses and priests, to lend their voice to the statues of their goddesses and gods. It is to mention that in this case not an entertaining illusion should be created, but it was understood as the priestesses or priests offering their bodies to be taken over by their goddesses or gods, which spoke through them to the believer(s) in front of the statue (see Weitmann 2011, 17f).

[33] Guiseppe Balsamo (or in France: Joseph Balsamo) a.k.a. Count Allessandro de Cagliostro (1743-1795), well-known at this time in Europe, performed as a magician and occult practitioner around Europe. Cagliostro invented the freemasonic *Egyptian Rite*, which had developed into the *Memphis-Misraïm Rite* that was particularly popular in France at that time.

[34] This information is given by a Mr. Molin, who wrote a review in *l'Ami des Lois* that is quoted by Robertson, unfortunately without date. I could not find a confirmation by Robertson himself, if the door really got locked, or if this sound of a key was one of Robertson's special theatre effects (or if this acoustic sensation was imagined by Mr. Molin).

from Philidor and – even worse – Philidor's techniques and the functioning of his tools. This initiated an increasing number of similar phantasmagoric shows by other carneys, and devices for phantasmagoric projections were produced and became common all over Europe. According to Mannoni "in 1803, Robertson took his own *Fantasmagorie* abroad for a tour of many European cities" (Mannoni 2006, p. 173). In Paris he performed his *Fantasmagorie* until 1837.

2.2.3 De Phillipsthall's *Phantasmagoria*

In October 1801, Paul de Phillipsthall opened his *Phantasmagoria* at the Lyceum Theatre in London. As in 1802 another showman, Gulielmus Frederico, exhibited his phantasmagoric show in several places in England, de Phillipsthall applied for a patent for his *Phantasmagoria*, which was granted the same year, "in an attempt to safeguard his interests" (Mannoni 2006, p. 175). According to Heard, the patent did not mention the main components of neither his projecting device nor of the performative environments and preconditions (see Heard 2001, p. 190f). During the following years, de Phillipsthall did not rely on his phantasmagoric performances only, but started to include other sequences into his show, like a ventriloquist, and announced this new conglomerate of attractions as an "optical, mechanical, acoustical, hydraulic and aerostatic exhibition" (ibid. p. 202). In 1802, he established a partnership for a collective exhibition with the specialist for wax sculptures Marie Tussaud (née Anna Maria Grosholtz, 1761-1850), a contract which only lasted until 1804 (ibid. p. 202-211). In 1807, de Phillipsthall hired the elaborate painter and scenic artist Henry Langdon Childe (1781-1874) which finally resulted in the development of the *dissolving views* projection technique.[35] In 1811, de Phillipsthall collaborated with the Swiss technician Jean Henri Nicholas Maillardet (1745-1830), who had studied under the watchmaker and automata constructor Pierre Jaquet-Droz (1721-1790)[36] and who, himself, had built several amazing automata as well. They opened shows together at a few venues in England, but the collaboration seems to have ended already in 1812 (see ibid. p. 242f). In 1828, announcements in newspapers and handbills point to de Phillipsthalls last shows with "optical and mechanical effects" and – quite likely – phantasmagoric performances, enhanced with the technique of the dissolving views (see ibid. p. 250).

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[35] It is not certain, if de Phillipsthall actually had been involved. It seems that the invention should have been credited to de Phillipsthall, but commonly it is attributed to Childe see Heard (2001, p. 240f). See also below "Phantasmagoric Media-and Performance Techniques".

[36] He is famous for his most awesome, still functioning automata *The Writer*, *The Musician* and *The Draughtsman*, created between 1768 and 1774, exhibited at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, see https://www.j3l.ch/en/P34111/the-jaquet-droz-automata, accessed 21.06.2021, 23:43.

2.2.4　Other Phantasmagoric Shows

The German showman and painter Johann Carl Enslen (1759-1848), who, since 1796, performed spectacular phantasmagoric sequences as part of his shows, where he used to demonstrate his self-designed aeronautic automata that actually displayed whole stories and to exhibit his own constructed automatons and panoramas. With his shows he toured through Germany and to other places in Europe, e.g. Vienna, Copenhagen, Königsberg, St. Petersburg, and Breslau (see Rummel 2015, pp. 190–193).

According to Barber, the phantasmagoria came to the United States in 1803 and was successfully performed until about 1839 (see Barber 1989, p. 78). The first *Phantasmagory* show[37] "was given in New York in May 1803 and in 1825 Eugène Robertson, the son of Étienne-Gaspard, represented his father with dignity in the same city" (Mannoni 2006, p. 173).

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[37] Barber indicates that the name of the showman was not reported in the related announcement (see Barber 1989, p. 79).

2.3 Speculations on 'Ghost-Seers' ('Geisterseher') and Perception

In this chapter, I will provide some philosophical discussions on the possibility of ghostly appearances, though, limited to these provided by Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, as they were actual contemporary witnesses of the performative illusions by the magic lantern and the phantasmagoria, and refer to these optical demonstrations in their texts.

I first got inspired to search for phantasmagoric mentions in the works of 18th century and later philosophers by the study *Ghostly Apparitions. German Idealism, the Gothic Novel, and Optical Media* of literature and media history scholar Stefan Andriopoulos. However, he draws on a body of only very rarely existing text passages and, in my opinion, occasionally over-interprets them to build upon his theory of a link to the early attempts in television technology. He, for example, writes: "Concomitantly, the medium's [the use of back projection to generate phantasmagorical images; V.W.] deceptive power became an important discursive figure in epistemological discussions about the unreliability of sensory perception and the limits of philosophical knowledge. Kant's critical epistemology describes a subject that projects its forms of intuition onto the external world and that is inclined to mistake subjective ideas for objectively substances." (Andriopoulos 2013, p. 14) Truly, the term phantasmagoria got – sparsely – adopted as a metaphor in philosophy (and other disciplines). But it did in no example represent the "limits of philosophical knowledge". Just the opposite: it led philosophers like, e.g., Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer – inspired and fascinated by the developing sciences of human physiology – to philosophically analyse human sensory perception and to work out theories on psychic phenomena. To highlight his theory, Andriopoulos provides a reference to Kant's Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. If you look it up, the mentioned passage reads like this:

> Aus diesen Erinnerungen wird der Leser der Krit. d. r. spek. Vernunft sich vollkommen überzeugen: wie höchstnötig, wie ersprießlich für Theologie und Moral, jene mühsame D e d u k t i o n der Kategorien war. Denn dadurch allein kann verhütet werden, sie, wenn man sie im reinen Verstande setzt, mit P l a t o , für angeboren zu halten, und darauf überschwengliche Anmaßungen mit Theorien des Übersinnlichen, wovon man kein Ende absieht, zu gründen, dadurch aber die Theologie zur Zauberlaterne von Hirngespinsten zu machen; wenn man sie aber für erworben hält, zu verhüten, daß man nicht, mit E p i k u r , allen und jeden Gebrauch derselben, selbst den in praktischer Absicht, bloß auf Gegenstände und Bestimmungsgründe der Sinne einschränke. (Kant 2017, p. 275 [spaced in the text])

Here, Kant draws on the ideas of *Idealism*, rooted in Plato's philosophy that suggests that the experience of 'reality' can only be perceived through the human mind. This is, sensory perception would be unreliable per se.[38] Or, as Gunning states: „In theories of human vision,

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[38] For the philosophy of *Idealism* (Plato, 428/27 BCE-348/47 BCE) materialism is less relevant; for the philosophy of *Dualism*, e.g., of the philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), physis and mind (i.e. self-consciousness) are separated from reasoning. Descartes, by the way, got inspired by one of the early exhibited automatons, like the

the ghostly and the phantasmatic play a complex role, as sight has often been conceived as quasi-spiritual, somehow ethereal, as if the process of vision itself were almost phantom-like" (Gunning 2007, p. 104). In contrast, Epikur's materialist philosophy could lead to a 'missing out' on reasoning. Relying more on an idealistic worldview Kant, nevertheless, reviewed the functionality of sensual perception:

> Wir finden aber bei dem Gebrauch der äußeren Sinne, daß über die Klarheit, darin die Gegenstände vorgestellt werden, man in der Empfindung auch ihren Ort mit begreife, vielleicht bisweilen nicht allemal mit gleicher Richtigkeit, dennoch als eine notwendige Bedingung der Empfindung, ohne welche es unmöglich wäre, die Dinge als außer uns vorzustellen. Hiebei wird es sehr wahrscheinlich: daß unsere Seele das empfundene Objekt dahin in ihrer Vorstellung versetze, wo die verschiedene Richtungslinien des Eindrucks, die dasselbe gemacht hat, wenn sie fortgezogen werden, zusammenstoßen. Daher sieht man einen strahlenden Punkt an demjenigen Orte, wo die von dem Auge in der Richtung des Einfalls der Lichtstrahlen zurückgezogene Linien sich schneiden. Dieser Punkt, welchen man den Sehepunkt nennt, ist zwar in der Wirkung der Z e r s t r e u u n g s p u n k t, aber in der Vorstellung der S a m m l u n g s p u n k t der Direktionslinien, nach welchen die Empfindung eingedrückt wird (focus imaginarius). So bestimmt man selbst durch ein einziges Auge einem sichtbaren Objekte den Ort, wie unter andern geschieht, wenn das Spektrum eines Körpers vermittelst eines Hohlspiegels in der Luft gesehen wird, gerade da, wo die Strahlen, welche aus einem Punkte des Objekts ausfließen, sich schneiden, ehe sie ins Auge fallen. (Kant 2018 [1976/1766], pp. 42–43 [spaced in the text])

The quotes show two occasions where optical media – the magic lantern and the concave mirror – are used by Kant, yet, in no deeper metaphorical but in an explicating way. People were used to their contemporary media (like in Kant's case the magic lantern projections and the physics of a concave mirror) and it therefore could be used as an example to illustrate one's theories on sensory perception as everyone could relate to such an example.[39] My critique of Andriopoulos does not in any aspect deny that a common ground from historic to contemporary media technologies could be revealed – just the opposite, as I am demonstrating in this thesis. But I do not consider the speculations on the metaphorical aspects to be a productive path to gain this knowledge, rather, to follow the paths of sensory perception and psychological theories. Paradoxically enough, with this latter point of view, the very same philosophical quotes can be referred to, but then, it provides much more substantial and constructive lines of thought for further reflection. My following approach will be an investigation of the

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Heron of Alexandria inspired hydraulic renaissance fountains (see Cottingham 1978, pp. 553–554; Werrett 2001). The philosophy of *Materialism* (Epikur, 341 BCE-271/70 BCE) understands everything as related to the laws of physics. The philosophers of the *German Idealism* (*Deutscher Idealismus*), e.g. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), based their thoughts on the human mind and started from there to develop their ideas on humanness and its material condition. Marx, in contrast, was convinced of the inseparability of the material and the intellectual, depending on the context and their mutual relatedness.

[39] This is also valid for the phantasmagoria, see below "Related Aspects to the Spectators' Reception", the mode of explaining one's impression of the 19th century's rapid transportation technology with a phantasmagoric metaphor.

philosophical theories on perception and illusion, limited to these provided by Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, as contemporary witnesses of performative illusions by the magic lantern and the phantasmagoria. First, let us ask Gunning for an introduction to the theme. Gunning refers to Descartes in emphasizing the role of "Western metaphysics" and its "reflection upon the fallibility of the senses or human perception" (Gunning 2019, p. 42). He says that "[c]onsciousness which leads to knowledge for Descartes takes a different road than perception. […] The fascination of the trick itself, its contradictory rather than self-founding nature, opens a delight in, perhaps even an unprincipled passion for, an illusion whose very nature would seem to undermine the metaphysics of reassuring certainty" (ibid. p. 42f). This, we will precisely rediscover in Kant.

2.3.1   Kant

In his third part "Antikabbala. Ein Fragment der gemeinen Philosophie, die Gemeinschaft mit der Geisterwelt aufzuheben" of his pamphlet *Träume eines Geistersehers*, Kant states:

> In gewisser Verwandtschaft mit den T r ä u m e r n der V e r n u n f t stehen die Träumer der E m p f i n d u n g , und unter dieselbe werden gemeiniglich diejenige, so bisweilen mit Geistern zu tun haben, gezählt, und zwar aus dem nämlichen Grunde, wie die vorigen, weil sie etwas sehen, was kein anderer gesunder Mensch sieht, und ihre eigene Gemeinschaft mit Wesen haben, die sich niemanden sonst offenbaren, so gute Sinne er auch haben mag. (Kant 2018 [1976/1766], p. 40 [spaced in the text])
> Von wachenden Träumern sind demnach die Geisterseher nicht bloß dem Grade, sondern der Art nach gänzlich unterschieden. Denn diese referieren im Wachen und oft bei der größten Lebhaftigkeit anderer Empfindungen gewisse Gegenstände unter die äußerliche Stellen der andern Dinge, die sie wirklich um sich wahrnehmen, und die Frage ist hie nur, wie es zugehe, daß sie das Blendwerk ihrer Einbildung außer sich versetzen, und zwar in Verhältnis auf ihren Körper, den sie auch durch äußere Sinne empfinden. (ibid. p. 41f)

Kant, here, already points to his later conclusion that the occurrence of seeing ghosts is not a healthy mind's condition. Nonetheless, he is interested in how these sensations are projected into the outside world where clairvoyants seem to perceive them with their senses as objects of this very world.

Before he wrote *Träume eines Geistersehers*, Kant, first, seemed to be quite interested in the phenomenon of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedberg a.k.a. Swedenborg (1699-1772), if not even fascinated by it.[40] When he heard about the – quite convincing – reports on Swedenborg's abilities in clairvoyance and in getting in touch with the deceased, he ordered Swedenborgs volume *Arcana Coelestia*. But he was deeply disappointed as soon as he studied Swedenborg's metaphysical ideas.

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[40] See „Brief an Fräulein Charlotte von Knobloch" (10.08.1763) (Kant 2018 [1976/1766], p. 99-106).

Albeit Kant does not deny the possibility that clairvoyance could be possible, he fully refuses the idea of any contact with ghosts, and their 'existence' per se. Apart from his text *Träume eines Geistersehers* he explicates this view in several of his manuscripts and philosophical tests, e.g., in two of his lectures in metaphysics (see ibid. p. 107-110), and in his *Anthropology*, where he, conclusively, attributes the imaginations of ghostly apparitions to a mental or affective disorder:

> daß der Mensch die Erscheinungen desselben [the organ of inner sense; V.W.] entweder für äußere Erscheinungen, d.i. Einbildungen für Empfindungen, nimmt, oder aber gar für Eingebungen hält, von denen ein anderes Wesen, welches doch kein Gegenstand äußerer Sinne ist, die Ursache sei: wo die Illusion alsdann S c h w ä r m e r e i oder auch G e i s t e r s e h e r e i und beides B e t r u g des inneren Sinnes ist. In beiden Fällen ist es eine G e m ü t s k r a n k h e i t […] Denn nachgerade hält der Mensch das, was er sich selbst vorsätzlich in Gemüt hineingetragen hat, für etwas, das schon vorher in demselben gelegen hätte, und glaubt das, was er sich selbst aufdrang, in den Tiefen seiner Seele nur entdeckt zu haben. (Kant 2017 [1983/1798], p. 80 [spaced in the text])

In his *Anthropology* (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*), Kant investigates the difference regarding illusions. He opposes the true or playful illusion with speciousness, which dissolves if it gets unmasked, while the sincere (like optical) illusion persists even if one finds out how it was produced:

> Das B l e n d w e r k , welches durch Sinnenvorstellungen dem Verstande gemacht wird (*praestigiae*), kann natürlich, o d e r auch künstliche sein und ist entweder T ä u s c h u n g (*illusio*), oder B e t r u g (*fraus*). […]
> I l l u s i o n ist dasjenige Blendwerk, welches bleibt, ob man gleich weiß, daß der vermeinte Gegenstand nicht wirklich ist. – Dieses Spiel des Gemüts mit dem Sinnenschein ist sehr angenehm und unterhaltend […].[41]
> B e t r u g aber der Sinne ist: wenn, so bald man weiß, wie es mit dem Gegenstand beschaffen ist, auch der Schein sogleich aufhört. Dergleichen sind die Taschensspielerkünste von allerlei Art […] Daher kommt es auch, daß man mit Farben nach der Natur bemalte S t a t ü e n menschlicher oder thierischer Gestalten nicht leiden mag: indem man jeden Augenblick betrogen wird, sie für lebendig zu halten, so oft sie unversehens zu Gesichte kommen.[42]
> B e z a u b e r u n g (*fascinatio*) in einem sonst gesunden Gemütszustand ist ein Blendwerk der Sinne, von dem man sagt, daß es nicht mit natürlichen Dingen zugehe: weil das Urteil, daß ein Gegenstand (oder eine Beschaffenheit desselben) s e i , bei darauf verwandter Attention mit dem Urteil, d a ß e r n i c h t (oder anderes gestaltet) s e i , unwiderstehlich wechselt, - der Sinn sich also zu widersprechen scheint […]. Gröber, wenigstens schändlicher war der Betrug, den die B a u c h r e d n e r , die Gaßnere, die M e s m e r i a n e r u.d.g. vermeinte Schwarzkünstler verübten. (ibid. p. 65f [spaced and italics in the text])

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[41] Kant mentions optical illusions here, like trompe-l'œil. Elsewhere, Kant says: „Bei optischen Täuschungen dagegen durchschaue ich zwar den Schein ganz gut und bin gegen Irrtum gesichert, empfinde aber dennoch immer wieder Freude. Hier löst der Schein unzweifelhaft deshalb Freude aus, weil er nicht täuscht, sondern stark, aber vergeblich zum Irrtum lockt" (Schmidt-Königsberg 1911, p. 9).

[42] Which is an especially remarkable notion, as we know that the statues of the Classical Antiquity were colourfully painted (not the colourless state that we are used to of their relics).

Especially interesting in this passage is Kant's division between what he would rank among the pleasant illusions and what he calls a fraud and what disgraceful. It seems to me as if the latter terms already are a subliminal indication of *the uncanny*,[43] and could even be interchanged.

2.3.2 Hegel

Hegel very distinctively places the object and the "I" within the realm of the mind, as being *within* the mind. Though, only the mind is *the being in itself*: "Das Bestehen des Gegenstandes, sein R a u m ist im Geiste S e i n; […][the mind] ist nicht i m Sein, sondern es i s t selbst" (Hegel 1969 [1805], p. 179 [spaced in the text]). The main idea of an object is not the object itself but the mind's ability to envision this object, to picturing it. In this very Platonic, Hegel is convinced that the Human is blank (only unconscious 'night') without these *ideas of the things* that are passing through the mind. To illustrate his idea, he refers to the phantasmagoria: "In phantasmagorischen Vorstellungen ist es ringsherum Nacht; hier schießt dann ein blutig[er] Kopf, dort ein[e] andere weiße Gestalt plötzlich hervor und verschwinden ebenso. Diese Nacht erblickt man, wenn man dem Menschen ins Auge blickt – in eine Nacht hinein, die f u r c h t b a r wird; es hängt die Nacht der Welt hier einem entgegen" (ibid. p. 180f [spaced in the text]). In his last notion Hegel recalls the same 'disturbing' blankness of all matter (i.e., also humans) that is lacking the ideas on which the mind – with conscious awareness – reflects. Only this "Anschauung" ('view' in the sense of 'concept', 'idea') enables *being*, as it provides significance to the idea of an object. Only this idea generates the object's image, its form, its content, and its name in the mind (see ibid. p. 181-185).

2.3.3 Schopenhauer

In his Kantian and Idealism inspired text "*Versuch über das Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt*" the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) indicates as a precondition for the "Anschauungen" (views) of the outside world to understand that they are not only sensual, but most of all "cerebral" (see Schopenhauer 1988 [1851], p. 228), i.e., intellectual. Schopenhauer calls the core of human agency, underlying all psychic phenomena, "der Wille" (the will) and he identifies it as being of metaphysical essence: "Meiner Lehre zufolge hat allein der WILLE eine metaphysische Wesenheit, vermöge welcher er durch den Tod unzerstörbar ist; der Intellekt hingegen ist, als Funktion eines körperlichen Organs, bloß physisch und geht

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[43] See below "The Freudian Uncanny".

mit demselben unter" (ibid. p. 308). Only 'the will' is *the thing in itself* that exists independently from their medium.

Schopenhauer refers to the dream, when he stresses out that there, indeed, exist other realities than the actual one. Though, the dream shows analogies to insanity (see ibid. p. 230-232). In discussing hallucinations, visions, and clairvoyance, Schopenhauer calls the 'organ' that produces these kinds of apparitions or imaginations "Traumorgan" (Dream-Organ). Comparable to the dream, there seems to be a certain amount of sleepiness, and also a certain stimulation from the inside that is affecting the sensory system. If mindfulness comes into play, the apparitions dissolve (see ibid. p. 271-276). Only one situation seems to be unexplainable, that is, if that affecting stimulation does not appear to come from the inside but from the outside of the organism (see ibid. p. 294-300). For this case he suggests: "Wie aber jedes Ding an sich, welches in der Erscheinung einer Außenwelt sich manifestiert, *toto genere* von ihr verschieden ist; so mag es sich mit Dem, was in der Geistererscheinung sich manifestirt, analog verhalten, ja, was in Beiden sich kund giebt vielleicht am Ende das Selbe seyn, nämlich WILLE" (ibid. p. 300 [italics and emphasis in the text]). To gain such a "cerebrale Erkenntniß" (intellectual insight) is only possible from the inside, that means, it is only „metaphysisch begreiflich, physisch ist sie eine Unmöglichkeit" (ibid. p. 302). Schopenhauer further explains:

> Der entschiedene Unglaube, mit welchem von jedem denkenden Menschen einerseits die Thatsachen des Hellsehens, andererseits des magischen, *vulgo* magnetischen[44] Einflusses zuerst vernommen werden, und der nur spät der eigenen Erfahrung, oder der hunderten glaubwürdigster Zeugnisse weicht, beruht auf einem und demselben Grunde: nämlich darauf, daß alle Beide den uns *a priori* bewußten Gesetzen des Raumes, der Zeit und der Kausalität, wie sie in ihrem Komplex den Hergang möglicher Erfahrung bestimmen, zuwiderlaufen, – das Hellsehen mit seinem ERKENNEN *in distans*, die Magie mit ihrem WIRKEN *in distans*. (ibid. p. 301f [italics and emphasis in the text])

Schopenhauer understands this struggle as whether to decide for or against the possibility of, e.g., clairvoyance, as proof,

> daß jene von uns a priori erkannten Gesetze keine schlechthin unbedingte, keine scholastische *veritas aeternae*, keine Bestimmung der Dinge an sich sind; sondern aus bloßen Anschauungs- und Verstandesformen, folglich aus Gehirnfunktionen entspringen. Der aus diesen bestehende Intellekt selbst ist aber bloß zum Behuf des Verfolgens und Erreichens der Zwecke individueller Willenserscheinungen, nicht aber des Auffassens der absoluten Beschaffenheit der Dinge an sich selbst entstanden. (ibid. p. 302 [italics in the text])

That is, the mind seems to be the source for any of these phenomena, and it is its task to give reason for its own volitions, but it is not capable to evaluate the very nature of the things in itself. Only the 'will' is the instrument that is qualified to recognize the essence of matter. To explicate the principle of the will Schopenhauer writes: „Da der Wille das Ding an sich, der

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[44] Here, Schopenhauer refers to 'mesmerism', see above FN 19.

innere Gehalt, das Wesentliche der Welt ist; das Leben, die Erscheinung, aber nur der Spiegel des Willens; so wird diese den Willen so unzertrennlich begleiten wie der Körpern den Schatten: und wenn Wille da ist, wird auch Leben, Welt daseyn" (Schopenhauer 2009 [1859], p. 247f). Actually this is pointing to Hegel – Schopenhauer basically exchanges Hegel's 'idea' for his notion of 'the will'.

Schopenhauer's solution to explain all phenomena like, for instance, hallucinations, visions, and clairvoyance, is that the will is not affected by any physical laws, and therefore every will could affect each other, ignoring time and space. He tries to use this notion to suggest an explanation for the apparitions of 'real' ghosts: As the will is not dying together with a person's physical matter, it could be that it somehow finds a way to 'show' itself as a spectre – albeit this would be a difficult task affording a lot of skills to enter the seer's inner imagination- and sensory system (see Schopenhauer 1988 [1851], p. 304–306). Because of Schopenhauer's theory of the will and its character, to further exist even when its medium dies, he does not come to a solution how a ghost – even if it has the power to appear – could do so in a physical, material way, not to mention how it could possibly affect material things:

> Daher ist die Art und Weise, wie ein Verstorbener von der Lebenden noch Kenntniß erlangen sollte, um solcher gemäß auf sie zu wirken, höchst problematisch. Nicht weniger ist es die Art dieses Wirkens selbst; da er mit der Leiblichkeit alle gewöhnlichen, d.i. physischen, Mittel der Einwirkung auf Andere, wie auf die Körperwelt überhaupt, verloren hat. (ibid. p. 308)

He suggests that this could be conceivable but only via the "magic" of Mesmer's animal magnetism (see ibid. p. 308f),[45] which he understands as the very force behind all these reasonably inexplicable phenomena.

If we bear in mind what Comolli had said about the 'will to believe',[46] the evolution of Schopenhauer's notion of the 'will' becomes obvious. I consider the direction that it took – especially the 'will to believe' in illusion as social representation of the society as well as the spectator entangled in social representation – a very remarkable development.

We will consistently come across other further developed ideas that derived from the here presented philosophical thoughts in the following chapters.

In the next section, I will present the theoretical concepts regarding *the uncanny* and the figure of the 'double'.

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[45] See above FN 19.

[46] See above "Jean-Louis Comolli".

2.4 The Uncanny

Freud is the most cited 'expert' when it comes to investigating the issue of *the uncanny*. He was not the first psychologist who gave attention to this phenomenon, though, and he quotes several earlier approaches. Quite some of Freud's theories on *the uncanny* (like e.g. his references on his theory of the 'castration complex') are out of date, but as this is not the right place to criticize the Freudian approach to psychoanalysis (particularly the phallocentric and the Oedipal part of it),[47] I will only sum up the essential notions and considerations, relevant for a better understanding of the phantasmagoria's reception dispositif.

I will start with an overview on *the uncanny* by psychiatrist Ernst Anton Jentsch (1867-1919), as Freud's notions do not contain significant differences. Or, to speak with the literary critic, philosopher, and writer Hélène Cixous (*1937): "Does not Jentsch say more than what Freud wishes to read?" (Cixous 1976, p. 534)

In his text "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" Jentsch identifies several core subjects. First of all the recognition that 'unheimlich' (uncanny) is akin with the German 'heimisch' (feeling at home), which is a feeling of trust, familiarity, and habituality. Uncanniness, consequently, points to a "Mangel an Orientierung" (Jentsch 1906a, p. 195) (lack of orientation) that results from an confrontation with the 'abnormal', extraordinary. He emphasizes the fact that uncanniness does not affect everyone – and not every time – at the same extent, as it is a highly subjective sensation, and as people have different strategies to react to the unknown (often suspiciousness, feelings of unease, or animosity), depending on the inner resistance to integrate the experienced cognitively (see ibid. p. 195-197). Comparable to Kant's account on the 'pleasant illusion' Jentsch states: "Je deutlicher zwar der kulturelle Werth eines räthselhaften Vorgangs in die Augen springt, um so starker nähert sich freilich die ausgelöste Empfindung dem angenehmen und freudigen Gefühl der Bewunderung" (ibid. p. 197).

The sources of the experience of uncanniness are most of all the indistinctness of an object between animate or inanimate (like automata, wax models, or other artificial figures that represent animate subjects), and suspicious noises (see ibid. p. 197f). The more the artificial simulacrum resembles its animate model the stronger the eeriness that it creates in the spectator.[48] According to Jentsch, another trigger is

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[47] A nice quote – in its very context not pointing to my concerns regarding psychoanalysis, but exactly summarizing an explanation for its flaws: „[…] Freud konnte natürlich nicht sehen, daß der Apparat, den er zu begreifen versuchte, in dem System selbst integriert war, aus dem die Neurose hervorgeht" (Baudry 1971 [1968], p. 85).

[48] The same conclusion was drawn by the roboticist Masahiro Mori (*1927) in 1970 in his article on the "Uncanny Valley" (see Mori 2012).

die natürliche Neigung des Menschen in einer Art naiver Analogie von seiner eigenen Beseelung, oder vielleicht richtiger gesagt auf eine identische Beseelung der Dinge der Aussenwelt zu schliessen.[49] […] Es ist deshalb nicht erstaunlich, wenn den Menschen das, was er selbst von seinem eigenen Wesen halbbewusst in die Dinge hineingelegt hat, jetzt an diesen Dingen wiederum zu schrecken beginnt, dass er die Geister, die der eigene Kopf erschuf, aus diesem nicht immer zu bannen im Stande ist. Diese Ohnmacht erzeugt daher leicht das Gefühl, von einem Unbekannten, Unbegreiflichen bedroht zu sein, das dem Individuum ebenso räthselhaft ist, als gewöhnlich seine eigenen Psyche auch. (Jentsch 1906b, p. 204)

Jentsch here includes the confrontation with dead body parts, like skulls or skeletons, as "bei diesen Dingen der Gedanke an eine latente Beseelung so nahe liegt" (ibid. p. 205).

Jentsch regards the desire for an 'intellectual control' of one's environment as an essential human desire and its lack as a cause for the sensation of uncanniness (see ibid.).

2.4.1 The Freudian Uncanny

Freud's definition of the etymology of 'unheimlich' is more detailed.[50] Concerning the state of 'heimisch" (feeling at home), he scrutinizes the feelings of 'heimelig' (homey) and of 'heimlich' (stealthy). Hence, 'heimlich' points to something that intends not to be discovered, while, according to Freud, 'unheimlich' refers to something that is (unconsciously) known but got trigged somehow and, now, causes a sensation of something familiar that should have better remained unrevealed:[51]

Erstens, wenn die psychoanalytische Theorie in der Behauptung recht hat, daß jeder Affekt einer Gefühlsregung, gleichgültig von welcher Art, durch die Verdrängung in Angst verwandelt wird, so muß es unter den Fällen des Ängstlichen eine Gruppe geben, in der sich zeigen läßt, daß dies Ängstliche etwas wiederkehrendes Verdrängtes ist. Diese Art des Ängstlichen wäre eben das Unheimliche und dabei muß es gleichgültig sein, ob es ursprünglich selbst ängstlich war oder von einem anderen Affekt getragen. Zweitens, wenn dies wirklich die geheime Natur des Unheimlichen ist, so verstehen wir, daß der Sprachgebrauch das Heimliche in seinen Gegensatz, das Unheimliche übergehen läßt (S. 302), denn dies Unheimliche ist wirklich nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozeß der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist. Die Beziehung auf die Verdrängung erhellt uns jetzt auch die S c h e l l i n g s c h e Definition, das Unheimliche sei etwas, was im Verborgenen hätte bleiben sollen und hervorgetreten ist. (Freud 1919, pp. 314–315 [spaced in the text])

This quote specifies that this 'something' that gets triggered is fear, linked to a repressed (and probably somewhat traumatizing) experience and to the therewith coupled feelings. And because the trigger reveals something repressed but actually deeply familiar (because it is based on one's own experience, even if a long time ago), Freud sees the familiarity between "heim-lich" (home-ly) and the "un-heim-lich" (un-home-ley).

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[49] We would now call this 'anthropomorphism'.

[50] All terms concerning *the uncanny* are taken from (Freud 1919).

[51] Here, Freud discusses a definition by the philosopher and anthropologist Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854).

In the following, Freud investigates the triggers that cause the feeling of uncanniness, however, – illuminatingly analysed by Cixous in her article on the Freudian uncanny – he is not very constant in his arguments. He turns from the before mentioned individual repressions as sources to the 'common' fears (like the fear of death) that he understands as deeply rooted in human pre-history and, because of the repression of these ancient fears, as a continuous impact on the educated, modern human:

> Im allerhöchsten Grade unheimlich erscheint vielen Menschen, was mit dem Tod, mit Leichen und mit der Wiederkehr der Toten, mit Geistern und Gespenstern zusammenhängt. […] [A]uf kaum einem anderen Gebiet hat sich unser Denken und Fühlen seit den Urzeiten so wenig verändert, ist das Alte unter dünner Decke so gut erhalten geblieben, wie in unserer Beziehung zum Tode. […] Eher könnte man bei dieser Unveränderlichkeit der Einstellung zum Tode fragen, wo die Bedingung der Verdrängung bleibt, die erfordert wird, damit das Primitive als etwas Unheimliches wiederkehren könne. Aber die besteht doch auch; offiziell glauben die sogenannten Gebildeten nicht mehr an das Sichtbarwerden der Verstorbenen als Seelen, haben deren Erscheinung an entlegene und selten verwirklichte Bedingungen geknüpft, und die ursprünglich höchst zweideutige, ambivalente Gefühlseinstellung zum Toten ist für die höheren Schichten des Seelenlebens zur eindeutigen der Pietät abgeschwächt worden. (ibid. p. 315f)

I left out Freud's – correspondingly a bit uncanny[52] – long detour into science and religion, and his comparisons of modern and, as he denotes it, of 'primitive' thinking. What interests here, though, is Freud's connection back to repression. He supposes an 'reverence' for everything that is related to death instead of an allegedly primary ambivalent relation(ship) to the matter of life and death, which would now be the source of the repression. The rationalizing human gets haunted by the fear of revenants:

> Wir – oder unsere primitiven Urahnen – haben dereinst diese Möglichkeiten für Wirklichkeit gehalten, waren von der Realität dieser Vorgänge überzeugt. Heute glauben wir nicht mehr daran, wir haben diese Denkweisen ü b e r w u n d e n , aber wir fühlen uns dieser neuen Überzeugungen nicht ganz sicher, die alten leben noch in uns fort und lauern auf Bestätigung. (ibid. p. 319f [spaced in the text])

These, in themselves, very ambivalent notions (on the one hand, Freud seems not to see anything positive in the relation to death and the deceased that he signifies as 'primitive', on the other hand, he presents the current relationship as an even worse one), do, according to Freud, cause the feeling of uncanniness in the modern human. He equals the feelings of insecurity with feelings that are a source of repression, which could be, I would suggest, questioned.

We have just learned from Freud that uncanniness derives both from repressed traumata and from feelings of insecurity. Freud tries again to explain this issue:

> Beim Unheimlichen aus infantilen Komplexen kommt die Frage der materiellen Realität gar nicht in Betracht, die psychische Realität tritt an deren Stelle. Es handelt sich um wirkliche Verdrängung eines Inhaltes und um die Wiederkehr des Verdrängten, nicht um die Aufhebung

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[52] We would read this text today as driven by racist and supremacist ideology.

des G l a u b e n s a n d i e R e a l i t ä t dieses Inhalts. Man könnte sagen, in dem einen Falle sei ein gewisser Vorstellungsinhalt, im anderen der Glaube an seine (materielle) Realität verdrängt. Aber die letztere Ausdrucksweise dehnt wahrscheinlich den Gebrauch des Terminus »Verdrängung« über seine rechtmäßigen Grenzen aus. Es ist korrekter, wenn wir einer hier spürbaren psychologischen Differenz Rechnung tragen und den Zustand, in dem sich die animistischen Überzeugungen des Kulturmenschen befinden, als ein – mehr oder wenig vollkommenes – Ü b e r w u n d e n s e i n bezeichnen. Unser Ergebnis lautete dann: Das Unheimliche des Erlebens kommt zustande, wenn v e r d r ä n g t e infantile Komplexe durch einen Eindruck wieder belebt werden, oder wenn ü b e r w u n d e n e primitive Überzeugungen wieder bestätigt scheinen. Endlich darf man sich durch die Vorliebe für glatte Erledigung und durchsichtige Darstellung nicht vom Bekenntnis abhalten lassen, daß die beiden hier aufgestellten Arten des Unheimlichen im Erleben nicht immer scharf zu sondern sind. (ibid. p. 320f [spaced in the text])

Instead of keeping the notion of insecurity, Freud now puts into play a new concept: the matter of an incomplete 'Überwundensein' (Overcoming). I would question, if this very concept – in comparison to the more plausible argument of the repressed traumata' triggering and (in a minor impact) the feeling of insecurity – could really illuminate the concrete sources of uncanniness.

To add another aspect to the Freudian uncanny, I would like to introduce the theme of the double by the psychoanalyst Otto Rank (1884-1939) and by the psychoanalyst, philosopher, cultural theorist, and film critic Mladen Dolar (*1951). Especially the latter clarifications trigger more uncanniness, at least in me, and they seem to be better connectable to some of the *cinematic dispositif's* theories, like, e.g., the one by Baudry.[53]

To bridge to the next passage, where I have a closer look on the conception of the double, I would like to cite Cixous' brilliant critique of Freud's text on "Das Unheimliche" one more time:

> If we experience uneasiness in reading Freud's essay, it is because the author is his double in a game that cannot be dissociated from his own text: it is such that he manages to escape at every turn of phrase. It is also and especially because the *Unheimliche refers* to no more profound secret than itself: every pursuit produces its own cancellation and every text dealing with death is a text which returns. (Cixous 1976, p. 547)
> So, of the *Unheimliche* (and its double, fiction) we can only say that it never completely disappears… that it "re-presents" that which in solitude, silence, and darkness will (never) be presented to you. Neither real nor fictitious, "fiction" is a secretion of death, an anticipation of nonrepresentation, a doll, a hybrid body composed of language and silence that, in the movement which turns it and which it turns, invents doubles, and death. (ibid. p. 548 [italics in the text])

2.4.2   The Figure of the Double

Due to his ethnological research, Rank locates the shadow to be equivalent to the human soul and he deduced from that "seine besondere Schätzung sowie alle darauf bezüglichen Tabus

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[53] See above "Jean-Louis Baudry".

und abergläubeige Todesbefürchtungen bei ihrer Übertretung, da Verletzung, Schädigung oder Verlust der Seele den Tod nach sich ziehen muß" (Rank 1993 [1925], p. 79). Thus, everything without a soul has no shadow, but the explanation is notable: "nicht nur die Seelen, sondern auch die ihnen nahestehenden Geister, Elfen, Dämonen, Gespenster und Zauberer sind schattenlos, weil sie ursprünglich selbst Schatten, d.i. Seelen sind" (ibid. p. 85). That is why, in literature often the devil (or other demons) tries to get hold of a person's shadow, mostly in exchange for some suspicious reward, to get back to life and, as I would suggest, therewith back to agency (as any real agency seems not to be possible without a soul).[54]

Another sensation of a personal double seems to rise from a mental disorder as a projection of inner tensions, which leads to a shift of one's life's responsibilities to one's imaginary double in combination with a huge sense of guilt. This is the reason why the double is experienced as bad or even demonic in its appearance, as kind of self-punishment, which is producing, on the one hand, a deadly terror, and, on the other hand, could lead to suicide, too (see ibid. p. 104f).

The third main cause for an envisioned double is the narcissistic disposition of early childhood (or that derived from our inbuilt relics of early humankind). As soon as children learn that they have a double (one's shadow or one's appearance in a mirror), they not think of themselves as 'whole' any more. One's own image in the mirror appears as a threat to one's integrity, which, according to Rank, somehow leads to the awareness of not being immortal, which must be corrected by one's narcissistic nature (see ibid. p. 113-115): "So sehen wir also den primitive Narzißmus, in dem die libidinösen und die der Selbsterhaltung dienenden Interessen in gleichmäßiger Intensität auf das Ich konzentriert sind, sich in gleicher Weise gegen eine Reihe von Bedrohungen schützen durch Reaktionen, die gegen die gänzliche Vernichtung des Ich oder seine Schädigung und Beeinträchtigung gerichtet sind" (ibid. p. 116).

In his epilogue to Rank's study, Dolar draws a line from Rank's latter conception to the 'mirror stage' by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), which implies that, on the one hand, in recognizing oneself in the mirror, the 'ego' is being shaped, on the other hand, it is not possible to being integrated with(in) oneself at the same time. To illustrate Lacan's theory in the words of Dolar: "Durch die Verdopplung wird ein Teil von mir abgetrennt" (Dolar 1993 [1925], p. 125). Dolar complements this in pointing to the invisible gaze: "Im Spiegel kann man die eigenen Augen sehen, aber nicht den Blick, der dieser verlorene Teil ist. Doch stellen wir uns vor, man könnte sehen, wie das eigene Spiegelbild die Augen

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[54] Recently the documentary filmmakers Moritz Riesewieck and Hans Block (*The Cleaners*) published their research on *Die digitale Seele* (*The Digital Soul*), (see Riesewieck and Block 2020), that transfers the discussion on these complex topics into the 21st century.

schließt: dies würde das Objekt als Blick im Spiegel erscheinen lassen – und das ist es, was beim Thema Doppelgänger geschieht" (ibid. p. 126). According to Dolar, Rank's fear is the threat of loss, while Lacan's fear is the threat of an overload, that is, "zu nahe an das Objekt zu geraten" (ibid.). Dolar likewise points to the popularity of the double in the Renaissance literature and to its contemporary reappearance in the psychiatric concept and individual experience of *Autoscopy*.[55] Finally, there is another interesting aspect, Freud describes in a letter to his friend Romain Rolland in 1936, referring to a personal experience of 'Entfremdungsgefühl' (feeling of alienation) that he explains with 'Depersonalisation' (depersonalization), and he finally draws a line to the phenomenon of a '*double conscience*' or 'Persönlichkeitsspaltung' (split personality or dissociation).[56]

To conclude this passage on *the uncanny* and to bridge to the next section, I would like to recall Castle. She writes: "Metaphorically speaking, we notice, the Freudian uncanny is a function of *enlightenment*: it is that which confronts us, paradoxically, after a certain *light* has been cast" (Castle 1995, p. 7 [italics in the text]). Castle suggests that "the eighteenth century in a sense 'invented the uncanny': That the very psychic and cultural transformations that led to the subsequent glorification of the period as an age of reason or enlightenment – the aggressively rationalist imperatives of the epoch – also produced, like a kind of toxic side effect, a new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, bafflement, and intellectual impasse" (ibid. p. 108).

Then, why did this historical period produce such a huge affinity to 'double' one's actual experience of anxiety with additionally confronting oneself with uncanny literary, visual, and audio-visual performative content? I will try to find some answers in the chapters of "Why One Wants to Experience Uncanniness?" and the "Modes of Reception", see below.

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[55] An out-of-body experience or a hallucinated sensation, which could emerge through a near-death situation or as a result of particular diseases.

[56] In this very case, Freud theorizes his experience as a result of a guilty conscience towards his father (see Freud 1920-1939).

2.5 Theories on "Why One Wants to Experience Uncanniness?"

There is quite some research available on the disposedness to consuming horror content (e.g., literature, movies, and games) and a lot of papers on experiencing the *uncanny valley*,[57] but I could not find much related theory on the kind of thrill-seeking, which I would imagine to more closely mirror the effects of a phantasmagoria, e.g., such as offered by the 'ghost train' or 'dark ride' (Geisterbahn) or 'haunted house' experiences in amusement parks (see also Heard 2001, p. 312).[58] Therefore, I will introduce to the major theories on 'why one wants to experience *horror*?', first, and later try to translate them to the question 'why one wants to experience *uncanniness*?'.

The best overview on the appeal of horror content is provided by the sociologist Andrew Tudor (*1942). He differs between theories that derive from psychoanalysis, and those of other approaches to the topic. As already presented in the passage on the Freudian uncanny above, the basic questions of psychoanalytical approaches are concerned with repressed desires and with fantasies that date back to childhood. Further, with repressing taboos and the dogma of rationality that negate primordial beliefs. According to Tudor, the most convincing theory from the psychoanalytical point of view would be by the medieval studies' scholar and film theorist Carol Clover (*1940), who examined the gender aspects of modern horror film. She scrutinizes the female*/male* spectators' respective involvement and identifications while consuming horror content, and analyses their inner causes, their strategies, and the actual impact (see Tudor 1997, p. 451-453). I will not dive deeper into these kinds of theories, as they only seem to make sense in a contemporary qualitative study but would be too speculative in the context of considerations on the possible reception of the historical phantasmagoria.

As examples of non-psychoanalytical theories on horror consumers, Tudor suggests particularly his own (see Tudor 1995), and the extensive inquiry on *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* by Carroll (Carroll 1990). But sociological methods would not help to demarcate the phantasmagoria's reception either, because they would require a qualitative survey as well. Therefore, I will concentrate on the summary of Carroll's philosophical approach.

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[57] See above FN 48 and, on the same page, Jentsch's conclusions on this phenomenon.

[58] A comprehensive overview on these mentioned attractions will be given in the fourth chapter in the section on the "Dark Ride".

Noël Carroll

Carroll refers to horror as a genre, more precisely, to 'art-horror', which he contextualizes within literature, film, and games, and similarly in non-narrative-plot content like, e.g., images. According to Carroll, art-horror intends to emotionally *effect* its audience, it is constructed (not natural), and it is *entity*-based (not *event*-based). At least one supernatural or sci-fi monstrous, unknowable being must be present,[59] anything that people would consider "as abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order" (Carroll 1990, p. 16), and it is its danger or 'impurity' that is supposed to cause art-horror. This emotional state depends on the individual spectator's presupposition, attunement, and anticipation, as it "has both physical and cognitive dimensions. […] In respect to art-horror some of the regularly recurring sensations, or felt-physical agitations, or automatic responses, or feelings are muscular contractions, tension, cringing, shrinking, shuddering, recoiling, tingling, frozenness, momentary arrest, chilling (hence, 'spine-chilling'), paralysis, trembling, nausea, a reflex of apprehension or physically heightened alertness (a danger response), perhaps involuntary screaming, and so on" (ibid. p. 24). These physiological responses obviously are individual and subjective, and are cognitively informed and evaluated by "beliefs and thoughts about the properties of objects and situations" (ibid. p. 26). Elsewhere, Carroll notes that "[a]n emotional state involves a feeling that is related to some object" (Carroll 2001, p. 243). That means "[f]ear must be directed at something that is perceived to be or believed to be harmful" (ibid. p. 224). To generate art-content and to trigger the images that the recipients have in their minds, the context and setting are essential, e.g., the narrative strategies (like the creation of suspense).

Carroll investigates two paradoxes: The "paradox of fiction – the question of how people can be moved (e.g., be horrified) by that which they know does not exist" and the "paradox of horror […] [that; V.W.] amounts to the question of how people can be attracted by what is repulsive" (Carroll 1990, p. 159f).

Discussing *Purity and Danger* by the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921-2007), Carroll mentions as a factor to the first paradox the "reactions of impurity with the transgression or violation of schemes of cultural categorization [or conceptual scheme; V.W.]" (ibid. p. 31). "They [the monsters; V.W.] are threats to common knowledge" (ibid. p. 34) because they are "classificatory misfits" (ibid. p. 191). That is, e.g., an ambiguous or contradictory appearance (like living/dead, inside/outside, flesh/machine, insect/human, animate/inanimate, spatially or

[59] Carroll indicates it as a being of 'objective reality', something that we can think of as a being but that does not really exist (like, e.g., a unicorn), in contrast to a 'formal reality' (i.e., an existing object) (see Carroll 1990, p. 29f).

temporally indistinctness, fission[60]), incompleteness, formlessness, and all kinds of impureness, nauseousness, disintegration, and nastiness. Often a monstrous being is a 'fusion figure', i.e., it incorporates several of these disturbing characteristics or its ambiguities superimpose on each other. Also, the location and space a monstrous being is appearing in or from can add to the cognitive and physical threat or, 'un-homeliness'. Equally common is a provocation of shock, as Carroll describes: "Just before the monster appears, the music shoots up [or stops; V.W.], or there is a startling noise, or we see an unexpected, fast movement start out from 'nowhere'" (ibid. p. 36). Which emphasizes Doane's notion that sound is not subordinate to the images.[61]

To sum up with Carroll's words: "Fusion, fission, magnification, massification and horrific metonymy are the major tropes for presenting the monsters of art-horror" (ibid. p. 52).

But "why would anyone *want* to be horrified, or art-horrified? […] [I]f horror necessarily has something repulsive about it, how can audiences be attracted to it?" (ibid. p. 158 [italics in the text]) Carroll discusses two theories – one by the writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) from his book *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927), and one by the neurologist and psychoanalyst Ernest Jones (1879-1958) from his study *On the Nightmare* (1931). Lovecraft examines the 'cosmic fear', "an exhilarating mixture of fear, moral revulsion, and wonder. […] Humans, it appears, are born with a kind of fear of the unknown which verges on awe. Thus, the attraction of supernatural horror is that it provokes a sense of awe which confirms a deep-seated human conviction about the world, viz., that it contains vast unknown forces" (ibid. p. 162). But the same "instinctual intuition about reality […] is denied by the culture of materialistic sophistication" (ibid.). With 'materialistic sophistication' Carroll denotes the cultural dominance of the rational, intellectual, on the one hand, and the materialistic, the 'real things', on the other hand. This is, to only make sense of things on the basis that they are existing in 'reality'. Carroll identifies two possible interpretations to Lovecraft's ideas, an objective and a subjective one:

> The objective interpretation would be that the literature of supernatural horror emotionally enlivens our sense that there *really* are things in heaven and earth not countenanced by materialistic sophisticates; whereas the subjective interpretation would remain neutral on what is really the case, but would maintain that the literature of supernatural horror keeps alive the *instinctual feeling* of awe about the unknown. (ibid. [italics in the text])

Jones's psychoanalytic attempt scrutinizes the 'conflict or ambivalence' of dream content that is "simultaneously attractive and repellent" (ibid. p. 169). The balance or outweigh of the

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[60] E.g., more than one entity in the same shape, like a doppelganger or werewolf.

[61] See above the passage on "Mary Ann Doane".

discomfort is induced through pleasure, i.e., the release from (culturally induced) repression, which are not only the typical psychoanalytic references on sexual (or other pleasurable) repressed wishes, but also repressed anxieties (see ibid. p. 171). So to say, a matter of catharsis, as I would suggest. Evidence, articulation, and indication of subversiveness, can be listed too, assuming that the monstrous beings are representing the cultural repressed issues, a theory that is rather put into question by Carroll (see ibid. p. 174-178).

Other suggestions for answering the 'why?'-question by Carroll are 'thrill-seeking' (as a revelation of "the emotional blandness of something called modern life" (ibid. p. 167)) and 'admiration' because of the inducing of awe in awareness of the monstrous beings' powers (see ibid.) that somehow compensates for "the disgust that they engender" (ibid. p. 168).

Carroll's own theory regarding his question on the *paradox of horror*, in essence, deals with curiosity. Mostly, he refers to filmic or literary content, where the curiosity revolves around "disclosure, discovery, proof, explanation, hypothesis, and confirmation" (ibid. p. 182). The reward for exposing oneself to disgust and repulsion is the satisfaction of our dealing (in attendance, emotional involvement) with the narrative of investigation and its final outcome (the revelation, ratiocination) (see ibid. p. 185f). Concerning non-narrative content, Carroll emphasizes that the notion of curiosity is applicable because "the objects of horror are fundamentally linked with cognitive interests [...]. The plotting gambits of disclosure/discovery narratives play with, expand, sustain, and develop this initial cognitive appetite in many directions" (ibid. p. 187). The anomalousness of impure objects and our triggered disturbance "are interesting. The very fact that they are anomalies fascinate us. Their deviation from the paradigms of our classificatory scheme captures our attention immediately. [...] [I]t invites inquisitiveness about its surprising properties. One wants to gaze upon the unusual, even when it is simultaneously repelling" (ibid. p. 188). However, Carroll's precondition is the fictionality of the monstrous content, for "our curiosity [to be; V.W.] affordable" (ibid. p. 189).

Concerning 'horror and ideology' Carroll discusses several thoughts: "that horror exists because it is always in the service of the status quo, because horror is in the interest of the established order [...], thereby directly contradicting the (equally incorrect) view [...] that horror fictions are always emancipatory (i.e., politically subversive)" (Carroll 1990, p. 196). Clearly, depending on the context, there could have been a perpetuating function for the social order and "the function of scaring people into submissively accepting their social roles"[62]

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[62] Consider the – often – female* or gender-non-conform victim, either because s/he* is female or because s/he* acts non-conformal and therefore becomes an outlaw.

(ibid.), or explicate the faults of these social roles and the resulting tragedies (see ibid. p. 197).[63] In short, every issue and every subject are exploitable for each social or political content – the 'real' ones as well as the fictional ones.

But there are some critical voices on Carroll's theories, too.

Tudor criticizes that Carroll misses out to discuss the assumable 'distinctiveness' of the horror-loving audience (see Tudor 1997, p. 455), and that Carroll tries to generalize the horror genres' traits, albeit the genre and the audiences are diverse and in constant change (see ibid. p. 456). Tudor lays his own focus merely on the socially constructed aspects of the spectators' composition, their shared social and, likewise, their own experience (see ibid. p. 457). He understands "the act of genre-recognition itself […] [as; V.W.] part of the process of making sense of the social world, a source of shared frameworks through which we come to understand, among other things, what is fearful and what it is to be frightened" (ibid. p. 460). Tudor explains further:

> And although this approach does not necessarily exclude the unconscious and repression as a point of departure for at least some of the pleasures of horror, it has the virtue of insisting on the active involvement of people in the consumption and comprehension of their favoured texts. […]
> Here the appeal of horror is understood to be a product of the interaction between specific textual features and distinct social circumstances. Their tacit social oncology is one centred on active social agents who, in sustaining practical consciousness of their social and cultural environments, use cultural artefacts as resources in rendering coherent their everyday lives. In this approach the appeal of horror is not seen as need-gratifying in the sense of unconsciously tapping into deep-seated desires; it is more cognitive and constructive in emphasis. Elements of the fiction resonate, as it were, with features of the social experience of its consumers. (ibid.)

Therefore, Tudor suggests a different question: Not "why horror?" but "[W]hy do *these* people like *this* horror in *this* place at *this* particular time?" (ibid. p. 461 [italics in the text]).

Another critic, the philosopher of art Susan L. Feagin (*1948), exemplifies that Carroll grounds his 'art-horror-affection' on the consumer's (antecedent and evaluative) thoughts, which cause agitation, instead on "*all* affective or feeling responses" (Feagin 1992, p. 76 [italics in the text]). According to Feagin, Carroll overlooks the fact that content "may be constructed in such a way that it *makes us* sensitive to various things, so that we *come to* have the agitations and/or make the evaluations that we do" (ibid. [italics in the text]). Feagin also criticizes that Carroll constructs his monsters from "thought contents, which are sets of properties" (ibid. p. 78). He treats them as characters (but a set of properties is not a character) (see ibid.). This results in

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[63] Or, as I may suggest, they could also serve as distractive – and intimidating – entertainment (in the service of the established order), like the circuses in 'bread and circuses' or as historic public executions used to be.

the dubiety what, then, causes the art-horror – the character or some of the character's properties (see ibid. p. 78f). By this "over-intellectualization" (ibid. p. 80) she feels that Carroll misses the point that "it *is* possible to come to enjoy the feeling components of fear and disgust, and to seek them out as ends in themselves, rather than to find them unpleasant" (ibid. p. 81 [italics in the text]).

The philosopher Aaron Smuts points to the fact that "the contemporary horror genre […] has both supernatural and realist traditions" (Smuts 2014, p. 6). I would suggest that this is also true for the content of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*. Like Feagin, he stresses that fear is not "the price to be paid" but "that fear is precisely what we seek from a good horror movie" (ibid. p. 9). This means, that there is no 'paradox of horror' as Carroll indicates (see ibid. p. 10). Smuts further specifies that "audiences do not confuse fiction and reality" (ibid. p. 13). We can react emotionally on imaginary situations, like fiction, and we can also feel empathy with the fictional characters we are presented with (see ibid. p. 13 and 16), even if we are very much aware of their artificiality.

Peter Walschburger

The bio-psychologist Peter Walschburger (*1947) gives some additional explanations. Walschburger understands fear as rooted in humanity's early history and as an advantage in the struggle of survival. The *Angstlust* (delight in fear) trains our ability for an adequate reaction to fear (either flight or attack) in a safe environment, where no 'real' dangerous situations occur, only simulated ones. To fear at the same time as to understand that the source for our fear is not a real danger for us, generates relaxation and with this, also a feeling of delight and joy (see Herbe 2019). This appears also to be healthy for the immune system, for burning calories, it trains our reaction, and enhances the sensory perception (see Dillon 2019, fig. 1-5).[64] Our senses get thrilled by uncanny messages, like being confronted with horror characters in a movie or with experiencing the uncanny valley. The latter occurs because of a minor difference between our expectation and perception (see Tahirović 2020).

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[64] Furthermore, other reactions on fear could lead to a physical freeze, or, in the opposite case, cause one to be fidgety. This, for instance, often happens to children, if they are confronted too early with horror content that they are not able to understand and to handle, see https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/093002-007-A/xenius-gruseln/, from minute 18:07.

Further Approaches to "Angstlust" and "Horror"

Another reason for a delight in watching horror movies could be that "[t]he murderer in the film can act out the actions that you cannot act out yourself. Everyone has thought 'I wish I could'. This then has the effect of a projection screen for the viewer" (Herbe 2019, quoting cultural scientist Christian Lenz (*1938) [DeepL]). As Carroll states, watching such movies could function as an outlet for society-incompliant thoughts.

As a further possibility for the contented confrontation with art-horror, I would consider it to be an individual form of taking to play, similar to a dare (which is also suggested by Carroll (see Carroll 1990, p. 193)). Or (in the performative setting), as suggested by Heard (see Heard 2001, p. 312), it could be an interpersonal play between most likely teenagers or young adults, for one person takes the guardian role over another person in this dark and scary location.

Another psychological explanation would be a desire for triggers that touch inaccessible feelings located very deep inside, in order to maybe set them off, and, with this, getting more into contact with oneself and one's own body. Or, on the contrary, to possibly superimpose one's own spectres with the confrontation of horrifying illusions, and with this, to ban the ones inside.

However, probably the most comprehensive attempt on the topic is provided by the entertainment culture and media technology scholar Angela Ndalianis (see Ndalianis 2012), as she takes both into account: "the sensory mechanisms of the human body, but also […] the intellectual and cognitive functions connected to it" (ibid. p. 16).[65] Ndalianis is the only theorist that I could find, who also directly refers to the multimedia show's immersive experience that is especially interesting for the *phantasmagoric dispositif* (see Ndalianis 2010; Ndalianis and Balanzategui 2019). I will come to her analyses below, in the chapter on the "Dark Ride".

In this section, I presented the most relevant propositions for the fascination for horror content, in order to provide a foundation for the discussion on *the uncanny* below in the contexts of the "Uses and Ideologies" and the "Modes of Reception" of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*.

Now, having presented some theories on the (*cinematic*) *dispositif*, the historical preconditions to the phantasmagoria and its history, the philosophical and psychological

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[65] Unfortunately, I could only get the first 39 pages of this book, and so I will not review it in detail.

theories on *the uncanny*, and on the affinity to 'art-horror', we now can turn to the introduction to the *production dispositif* of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*.

3. Production Dispositif

I have chosen to describe the *dispositif* of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*. The core of it, clearly, was the phantasmagoric projection performance. It was rooted in earlier séances and traditions of Schröpfer's 'Gespenstermacherei' and similar illusion-performances that the public certainly had been aware of, not at least due to Cagliostro.[66] Though, the whole setting added to the experience and was part of the concept: the location per se (its gloomy history,[67] the tombstones one had to pass, its surrounding wall that had been in a somewhat desolate state, the ruins of the cloister (see Mannoni 2006, p. 159)); the overall dimly lit and labyrinthine space that hampered the visitor's orientation and caused a "sense of isolation" (ibid. p. 160); the 'scientific' exhibition with all the curiosities, electrical, chemical, and physical experiments (e.g., a galvanic demonstration with a dead frog, and the tactile sensations and savour of electric currency produced by an early battery), and optical illusions; the entrance to the final auditorium that was decorated with mystical signs and hieroglyphs, pointing to Cagliostro's freemasonry. Moreover, the times of the French Revolution still haunted society and people's minds.

'Borrowing' most of the initial ideas from Philidor, Robertson, finally provided the most advanced techniques and projection techniques and the most elaborated choreography of the phantasmagoric spectacles at that time. He started with a machine that he had called *Fantascop*, which he had in use from 1798 to 1837 in Paris (and had patented in 1799), and which he successively improved.

In describing the *dispositif's* elements, I will only concentrate on its most important components and only allude to the location or the exhibition if it adds to the discussions, namely, the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* ideological and receptive perspectives. In this respect, I very much appreciate Manovič's term of the *cultural interface* and I will repeatedly point to the term in the following analyses. Even if Manovič probably did not have the commercial aspect in his mind when arguing for the *cultural interface*, it for sure is not only a minor factor of the productive intentions, and I will for that reason suggest to expand his theoretical concept in this regard.

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[66] See also FN 33.

[67] See above "Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*".

The phantasmagoria, and especially the *Fantasmagorie*, produced – as also Gunning states – certainly more complex settings and sensations than the later cinematic apparatus offered (see Gunning 2019, p. 35). A phantasmagoric performance cannot be reduced to the analysis of the positioning of the spectator to any presentation on a fixed screen (albeit there was one, yet hidden).

In the following, I will present the production dispositif of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* and its elements.

3.1   The Machinery, its Operators, and the Presented Contents

Here I will list a description of the essential instruments, tools, human agents, and performance techniques that were needed for Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*.

3.1.1   The Auditorium

Robertson had a clear idea of his performance location: A theatre for the *Fantasmagorie* needed to be a large, stretched room (in his view at least of 19,5m to 26m length) that was divided by the screen into the spectator's area and the performance area; for the latter at least 8m length were reserved and the projection devices should be placed on a stage of about 1,3m to 1,5m above floor level. The whole room must be painted black or covered with black cloth (see Robertson 1831, p. 325).

> After the spectator's seating the single funeral lamp was extinguished with the help of

> a brass wire which passed to the other side of the screen: the projectionist only had to pull on the wire to lower the wick, making the room dark. […] While the lamp was lit, the screen was hidden from the eyes of the spectators by a curtain which was raised once the room had been plunged into darkness. In Robertson's arrangement, the curtain showed a picture of a tomb […]. A small door formed in the wall which supported the screen led into the second room [where the *Megascope Animé* was installed; V.W.]" (Mannoni 2006, p. 169).

3.1.2   The Screen

The projection screen that was called 'mirror' by Robertson, was invisible to the audience, as it was hidden behind a movable black curtain, the so-called 'dark veil' that covered the screen from view until the lights got extinguished. The screen is best described by Robertson himself, quoted by Mannoni from Robertson's patent documents: [68]

> I have acquired a sheet of three aunes [about 3.5 m] in width, such that it does not require a seam, and to render it translucent I have melted very white pure wax into which I have immersed it while it was boiling; I nailed it immediately into the opening formed in the wall and, passing

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[68] French Patent 109 of the 17th of March 1799 (that expired on the 17th of March 1804) (see Mannoni 2006, p. 491, FN 34).

a well-lit burner over it gradually, I spread the wax which gave my sheet the diaphanous quality I have sought for so long. (ibid. p. 155)

In his *Mémoires*, Robertson recommends a mixture of white starch and exclusive Arabic gum instead of the white wax as coating, and a width of at least 6,5m for the screen, which should be made from a quite tight woven percale fabric (see Robertson 1831, p. 325).

The screen allowed for back-projection, so that the rail-mounted *Fantascop* could remain hidden for the audience and be operated secretly without the special features and performative techniques of the ghostly appearances to be exposed, and it could not have accidentally happened that spectators blunder into any projection lights, casting their shadows on the screen.

3.1.3 The *Fantascop*

The most essential component of the *Fantascop* was a magic lantern adapted for mobile back-projection (see fig. 5a and 5b).
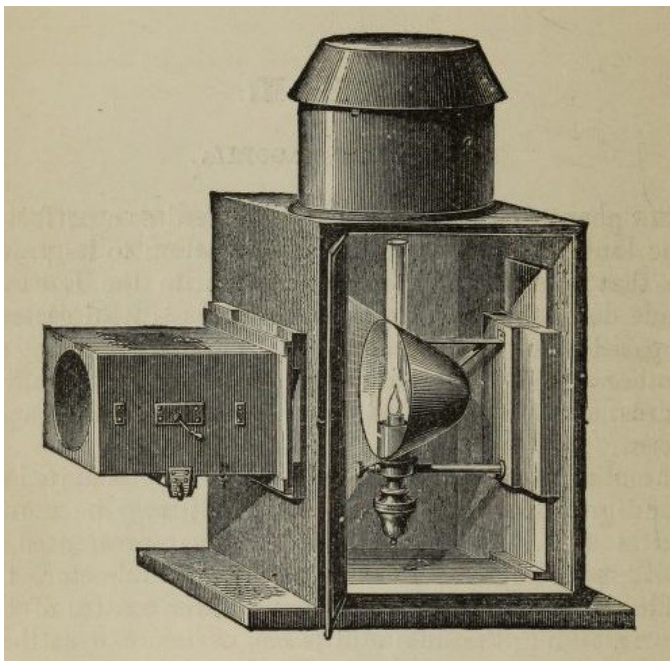
Fig. 5a: Robertson's *Fantascop* (early version)[69]   Fig. 5b: *Fantascop* (advanced version)[70]
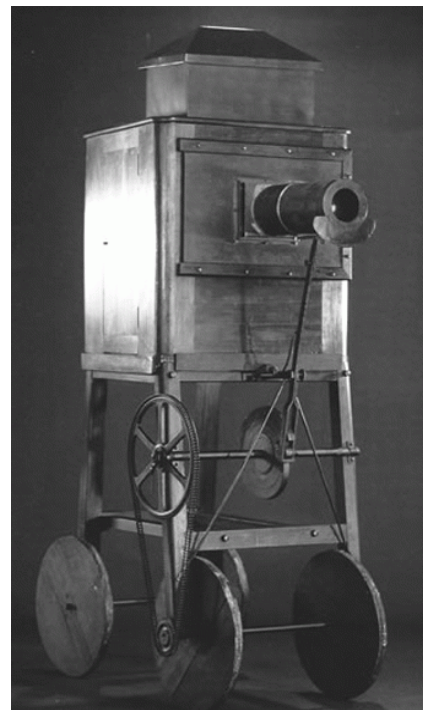
The machine was a wooden box, about 65cm square, and painted black outside and white on the inside (if it was used as a *Megascope*, it was necessary to cover the inside with black cloth). It had two to three doors for operation, all covered with a black veil, for no light to be visible if

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[69] Fulgence (1869, p. 184).

[70] https://artefake.fr/spook-show/, accessed 19.08.2021, 01:16, I just wonder, if this one really had been Robertson's *Fantascop* as declared on the website (according to Mannoni it is missing (see Mannoni 2006, p. 155f)).

a door was opened. For the same reason, to prevent light emittance, its chimney was either curved or, if straight, equipped with intervals inside. To move the lantern quickly towards or away from the screen, for the downscaling or enlargement of the projected image, the box was mounted on a table of about 1m height. At the end of each table leg a little copper wheel was mounted, so that the table could smoothly slide along two strictly parallel wooden rails of about 5 to 6m length that were placed mid to the screen. At the front side of the box, a wooden tube was mounted in a hole of about 11cm diameter.[71] In the tube the lenses were placed: at the one end, facing the box, there was half a glass sphere with about 11cm diameter and 11cm focal length, and on the inside of the tube a lens of about 34mm diameter with a focal length of about 8cm. The position of the latter could be adjusted with the help of a toothed rack (and with this its focal length). At the front of the tube a diaphragm (consisting of two copper plates which were arranged like scissors) could be attuned with a knob to control the amount of light. With these fine-tuning adjustments, the image could be kept sharp while moving the table backwards or forwards. Inside the box, at about 11cm distance to the half glass sphere, an argand lamp was placed, equipped with a high-polished silver parabolic reflector. A space of a few millimetres between the lens-tube and the box allowed for the insertion of the painted glass slides (see fig. 6 and for a description see Robertson 1831, p. 325–329).
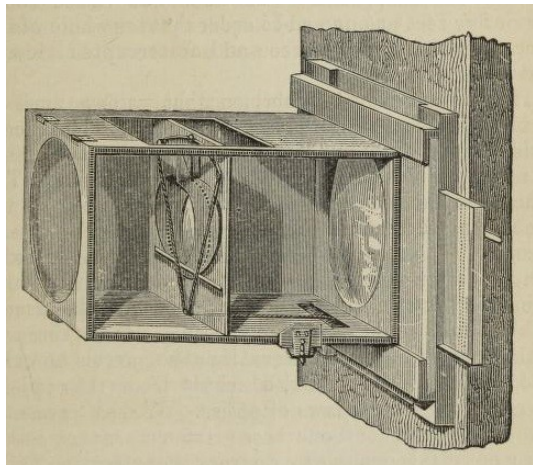

Fig. 6: The *Fantascop*'s lens tube.[72]

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[71] In my opinion, little copper wheels on wood (with such a heavily used machine to support) do not appear to last very long and to be very stable. In Mannoni, quoted from Robertson's patent documents, we find brass rails (see Mannoni 2006, p. 154), and according to the designer and magic lantern and slide collector Herman Hecht's (1923-1985) notions, who has compiled an absolutely impressive and rich bibliography on probably *any* document in connection with the pre-cinematic history, we are informed about copper rails (see Hecht 1993, p. 60). We know that Robertson continuously enhanced his equipment, but it could also be the case that he still took care not to reveal *all* the details of his instruments, even if he really seems to lay open everything in his *Mémoires*. See also Hecht's description of Robertson's improvements (below in this very section on "The *Fantascop*") that probably confirms my suspicion of Robertson's inconsistency in his supposed knowledge sharing. Or maybe it is only a misunderstanding due to my wrong expectations to find in Robertsons *Mémories* from 1832 not the description of his machine from 1799 but of his latest model.

[72] Fulgence (1869, p. 185).

Mannoni and Hecht speak of three lenses altogether (the middle one is the adjustable one) and of the necessity to use achromatic lenses to prevent the usual iridescent glow around the edges of the projected image, which was obtained by combining two different sorts of glass for the lenses (see Mannoni 2006, p. 125):

> One of the great novelties, certainly the product of Robertson's inventive mind, was that the lens could very easily be replaced by another of different focal length. The lenses themselves were enclosed in casings which could slide easily in recesses in the tube. There were three lenses altogether, but the one in the middle was movable […]. If the lantern was set up as a Megascope, […], [a] powerful four-wick oil lamp [a four-burner argand lamp instead of the quinquet (see Hecht 1993, p. 60); V.W.], with a single reservoir of 'very pure'oil and a reflector (which Robertson called a 'German mirror') strongly lit the object, whose image was projected through the lenses. (Mannoni 2006, 154f)

The *Fantascop* could likewise be used as a *Megascope*, to project opaque items ("a skull, an engraving, a mask, or a mechanical scene made of metal or cardboard" (ibid. p. 155)); and they allowed for the animation of these objects. Mannoni also mentions

> a fragile mechanical puppet representing a skeleton emerging from its tomb. The skeleton, moved by a handle, turns its head and moves its mouth. It was projected by the Megascope; it had to be placed upside down in the body of the lantern and powerfully lit. (ibid. p. 157)

It is not assured if Mannoni, here, references the tool for the scene *l'Apothéose d'Héloïse* that Robertson mentions in his *Mémoires*: a little movable figure in a completely black coffin (see Robertson 1831, p. 336 and 346).

To meet the *Megascope* functionality, a different lens-tube to project the artefact was required, and it had to be illuminated much more intensely than with the glass-slide projections. It was about 16cm in diameter, with two very pure achromatic lenses of about 13,5cm in diameter (that provided together a focal length of about 21,5cm to 25cm). Additionally, a piece of frosted glass dimmed the light, if the *Fantasmagorie* switched from the *Megascope* mode back into a magic lantern mode (see Mannoni 2006, p. 155). Some information we can only find in Robertson's *Mémoires*: "the opaque bodies […] always had to be of a whitish colour" (Robertson 1831, p. 328 [translated V.W.]), to let them appear exceptionally bright and vivid. Besides, inside the box the bottom plate had to be covered with black velvet (see Robertson 1831, p. 328) to avoid the display of shadows.

According to Hecht "Robertson had improved the 'Fantascop' over the years and that this is in marked contrast to the rather primitive one described in his patent" (Hecht 1993, p. 59). While, in the patent's description, the machine was mounted on wheels, later, its legs were directly sliding on the rails;[73] there, it contained a concave mirror and a plano-convex condenser

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[73] I would suggest that it was the other way round, as on the patent's documents' drawing of the *Fantascop* the table is directly placed on the rails (see Mannoni 2006, p. 154, fig. 20), while a quite advanced model of the

plus two achromatic lenses (see ibid. p. 59) like in Robertson's description above, while the lens tube later "contained a plano-convex condensing lens and a biconvex objective adjustable by rack and pinion […]. Two bi-convex lenses placed close together [double condenser] were suggested in place of the plano-convex condensing lens if desired" (ibid. p. 60).

It appears that the *Fantascop* required a highly skilled operator, specifically if the device shifted between two or more modes of operation. Nevertheless, the *Fantascop* was not the only magic lantern that Robertson had in use during his show.

3.1.4   The *Mégascope Animé*

Robertson had another *Megascope* installed that was operated from an adjacent room. With this specially designed device Robertson could even project the movement of real actors. Robertson gives as examples "a portrait, a statue, or a living person" (Robertson 1831, p. 328 [translated V.W.])). Mannoni reveals that the *Mégascope Animé* had been

> embedded in the wall, a square lens tube [was; V.W.] directed towards the [rear side of the; V.W.] screen.
> This was a second megascope, used for objects (or actors) too large or too heavy to be placed in the movable lantern. In this third room, […] [were; V.W.] two four-burner oil lamps mounted on stands. To demonstrate the power of his megascope, Robertson presented his face to the light of the lamps; immediately his image was projected onto the screen. (Mannoni 2006, p. 170)

This record is particularly interesting because it proves that Robertson had equipped this second *Megascope* with an inside mirror on the upper side of the box and had directed the lens-tube in an angle to capture the image of the actor from this mirror, to project images directly upright onto the screen (see fig. 7).
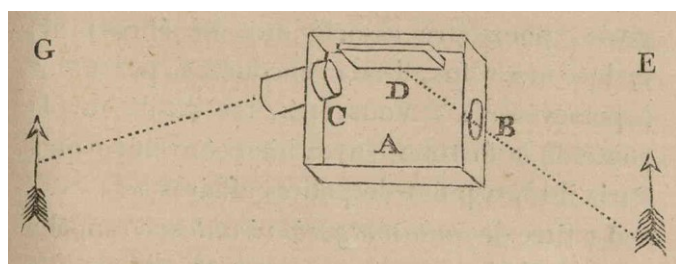
Fig. 7: Mirror inside the *Megacope Animé*[74]

With his *Fantascop* in *Megascope* mode, an upright placed object would have shown upside down – objects therefore had to be placed the wrong way up into the device to show up in the correct position on the screen. With this special *Megascope* (it is called 'Mégascope Animé' or

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Fantascop from the 1840s had wheels that allowed for a mechanism to directly adjust the lenses' focal length in moving the machine forwards or backwards (probably on rails as well) (see Mannoni 2006, 156, fig. 21). See also fig. 5b.

[74] See Robertson (1831, p. 333).

'Fantasmagorie Vivante' by Robertson), the actor, clothed in white, had to stand behind the box. The person's well-lit shape fell through the rear opening of the box and was reproduced in the mirror. A sudden opening of the diaphragm allowed for a sudden projection of the person on the screen, if the person stood in a certain distance to the lenses' focal point behind the box (see Robertson 1831, p. 333f). Moreover, the whole box had to be painted black, also on the inside, to avoid shadows being displayed.

3.1.5 The Backdrop's Magic Lantern

Another – probably ordinary – magic lantern was installed on the spectator's side of the screen in the front of the first seats and hidden in a box to be invisible to them. This lantern provided the backgrounds for more complex scenes, e.g., the cloister for the *Bleeding Nun* or for graveyard scenes (see fig. 8).
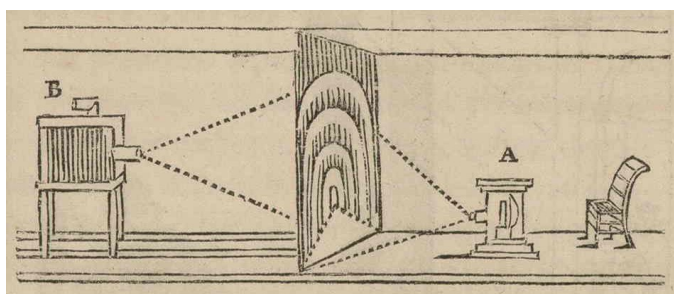
Fig. 8: Magic lantern for projecting backdrops from the audience's side[75]

3.1.6 The *Nebulous Lantern(s)*

In the same room with the spectators, at least one *nebulous lantern* was installed. However, it got adapted by Robertson as well (probably to ease the operation of the device according to the scenario): The mirror was not placed inside the box together with the other instruments (the lantern, the image slide, and the incense's basin). Instead, a hole in the front of the box was directed towards an outside hanging mirror (see fig. 9).

Adjustable mechanisms could open a second hole in the upper side of the box to let the smoke escape, open the front hole to direct the light rays onto the mirror, and to change the motives of the slides (see Heard 2001, p. 171, fig. 4:11 a & b).[76] For the *nebulous lantern* individual glass slides were used with portraits of ghostly appearances; a good result of the projected image required "a portrait with a predominance of white" (ibid. p. 144). Incandescent incense produced controllable smoke, which provided the projection 'screen' for the images.

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[75] Robertson (1831, p. 343).

[76] Fig. 4:11a in Heard (2001, p. 171) is the same as below fig. 9.

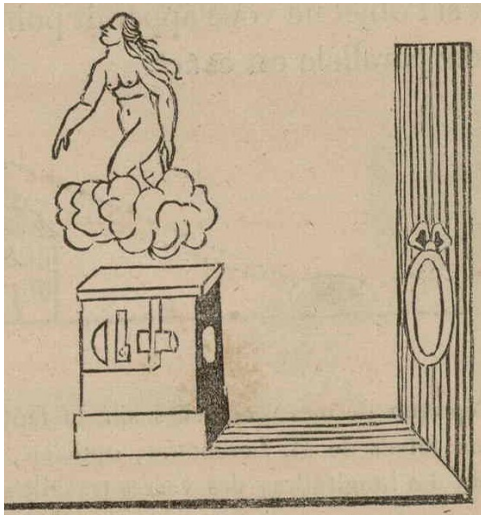Fig. 9: *Nebulous lantern* with extra mirror, inside the auditorium[77]

3.1.7 The Image Slides

The image slides were slices of thin, plain glass, the motive painted and coloured with watercolours (to gain transparency) on one surface of the glass slice, everything outside the motive covered with black oil paint to avoid showing outlines, to gain a sharper image, and, therewith, to make the appearances look more natural.[78] A varnish protected the painting and colours. Some of the slices were created as animations (or merely as productive for an illusion of motion). An animation effect was composed of several glass slides that could be shoved over each other during the projection (very fast to trick the eye), and, thus, added parts of an image to change the scene. As already mentioned above, there existed highly ingenious mechanisms for the movable slides, and it could be expected that Robertson had them in use as well (see Barnes 1985).[79] Unfortunately it seems as if none of Robertson's slides have survived.[80]

3.1.8 Additional Ghostly Appearances

Above the audience several planks hung from the wall with at least a skull, a 'hibou lugubre' (scary owl), a phantom, a hand with a dagger, and Diogenes' head.[81] A mechanism allowed for

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[77] See Robertson (1831, p. 354). Heard and Schmidt point both to the fact that this sketch is aready displayed in Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1803): *Aufschlüsse zur Magie aus geprüften Erfahrungen über verborgene philosophische Wissenschaften und verdeckte Geheimnisse der Natur*, Vol 1, but I could neither find it in the first print from 1788 nor in the second print from 1791 (see Heard 2001, p. 171; Schmidt 2011, p. 17).

[78] In his *Mémoires*, Robertson declares that the image slides had to be colored with oil paint in transparent layers, while Mannoni states: "From the start oil-based paints were ruled out, because of their opacity, and water-colours were generally preferred" (Mannoni 2006, p. 104).

[79] See also above "Animated and Moving Slides".

[80] See Mannoni's quote (see Mannoni 2006, p. 163) at the end of "Content" in this chapter.

[81] The story goes that the Ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes (~413 BCE-~323 BCE) was searching in full daylight with his lantern 'for a man' (but found only delinquents).

a remote hiding of the dim light sources or a sudden illumination of the respective object, and another, to move the objects above the heads of the spectators.

In combination with a concave mirror, a hand with a dagger mounted on one of these planks, could create the illusion of this hand directly approaching the audience, if illuminated and navigated towards the mirror (see Robertson 1831, p. 347f).

Robertson, further, used several special machines for special scenes (like, e.g., for *l'Apothéose d'Héloïse*), all in combination with a concave mirror and all described in his *Mémoires* (see ibid. p. 339-346). Though, it is not clear to me if all of them were used during the main phantasmagoric show additionally to the *Fantascop* projections, or as demonstrations of optical illusions in his exhibition.

3.1.9   The Multipliers

Robertson also had multiplication instruments (built from at least three or more glass slices arranged to a prism) that had to be placed about 8cm from the *Fantascop's* lens to multiply an image (see fig. 10). Another one of Robertson's techniques was to place one or several cardboards (or one copper figure with movable arms and legs) in the box of the *Fantascop* and illuminate them from behind with as many candles as possible – every candle flame provides one duplication and moving the candles creates a dance of these figures. In addition, Robertson used mechanisms to spin some of his figures to let them swing or tumble (see ibid. p. 336-339).
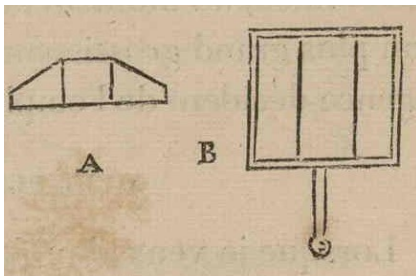
Fig. 10: Prism shaped multiplier[82]

3.1.10 The Soundscape

The soundscape was part of the choreography, too: silence, voices, and sounds of nature like thunder, hail, and rain,[83] a funeral bell, a 'Tamtam Chinois' (Chinese gong), as well as spherical melodies from a glass organ: "The melodious sounds of Franklin's harmonica contribute mightily to the effects of the fantasmagorie, preparing not only the minds, but the very senses

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[82] See Robertson (1831, p. 358).

[83] The instructions how to build the instruments for rain and hail, wind, and thunder See Robertson (1831, p. 358-360).

for strange impressions by a melody so sweet that it sometimes irritates the nervous system very vigorously" (ibid. p. 356f [DeepL]).

The soundscape had several functions: to drown out the possible operating noises, to create the atmosphere and suspense, to usher a new scene or event, and to accompany the narratives.

3.1.11 The Operators

A phantasmagoric performance required at least one operator for the *Fantascop*, the people, who operated the curtain that hid the *Fantascop* and its operator(s), who produced the noises, lit or darkened the room, took care of the smoke basin(s) and operated the *nebulous lantern*-slides, maintained the backdrop's magic lantern, moved the ghostly masks that slid above the audience once in a while and operated its illumination mechanisms, and who executed other operational tasks.

3.1.12 The Artists

Lantern Slide Painter

As an Artist, first of all, a skilled painter for the lantern slides was needed. In the case of Robertson, as he himself was a skilled painter,[84] it is expected – at least in the beginning – that he had painted his own slides. In his *Mémoires*, he mentions that he had only met a painter in Berlin who understood how to execute the technique (see ibid. p. 328, FN).[85]

Actors

There were several tasks for actors: lending their voices to the projected 'ghosts'; according to Mannoni, Robertson's phantasmagoric shows also featured real actors who wore black clothes and masks lit from inside, "to walk among the rows of spectators in the darkness, with papier-mâché masks lit from inside (a surviving example can be seen at the CNAM in Paris)" (Mannoni 2006, p. 162), e.g., representing *Diogenes and His Lantern*.[86] At the end of the scene,

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[84] „[M]y first successes in painting, and my taste for this art, having always made me consider it as my only means of fortune and reputation" (Robertson 1831, p. 198 [DeepL]). There is one incident where he definitely painted a slide himself, see below, p. 78.

[85] Which seems not reliable, as we have seen that the techniques were already quite elaborated at the time of Robertson's first phantasmagoric experiments (see above "The Image Slides"). Unfortunately, I did not find out when he had been travelling to Berlin.

[86] According to Robertson, these masks had not been worn by actors but were mounted on movable planks above the audience (see above, "Additional Ghostly Appearances"). Or there were indeed different masks, but then, in his *Mémoires*, Robertson does not mention the ones that Mannoni is describing. Or, it is even possible

the actor wrote with glowing letters: "I am looking for a man" (Robertson 1831, p. 331 [DeepL]). Robertson explains how to make the lantern and the pen for Diogenes:

> The lantern is a simple cylindrical white glass bottle containing essential oil of clove, in which several grains of phosphorus have been dissolved; when the bottle is opened, the air that enters it illuminates the entire interior. This glow disappears when the bottle is closed. As for writing, it is done with a phosphorus pencil whose trace is luminous. (Robertson 1831, p. 355 [DeepL])

According to Castle, Robertson had paid actors as 'spectators' in the audience, who 'recognized' their late spouse or wife, or demanded to be presented with a famous deceased character, as agreed upon before (see Castle 1988, p. 35).[87]

Musician

The glass organ or glass harmonica was a central part of the *Fantasmagorie's* soundscape. The player of this instrument added significantly to the overall atmosphere.

Master of Ceremonies

The master of ceremonies – in the person of Robertson – introduced to the show and occasionally to the different tales presented. Additionally, he used sophisticated ingredients for 'magic portions' and casted spells. In the end of the show he mostly unveiled a skeleton on a pedestal and addressed the audience directly in pointing to the final lot of all human beings (see Robertson 1831, p. 284).[88]

3.1.13 Content

Here, I will only give a few examples, listed after themes. Due to his meticulous research in press advertisements, Mannoni gathered a compilation of the subjects, Robertson had performed during the years. There had been, on the one hand, an "unending procession of spectres and phantoms" (Mannoni 2006, p. 162), and, on the other hand, a list of themes for elaborated scenes, derived from literature, theatre, religious texts and mythologies, mythologies from Classical Antiquity, legends, folktales, freemasonry, and (actual) politics.

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that there was the walking actor as Diogenes, all in black and with only his lantern visible, while the Diogenes mask on the planks was operated separately to increase the uncanny effect.

[87] This is not confirmed in Robertson's *Mémoires*, though very likely, as he quotes several reviews of his show, reporting that spectators asked for apparitions of particular persons, which Robertson every time was able to present them with (like Wilhelm Tell).

[88] For details see also below FN 99.

Literature

Macbeth after William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) tragedy from 1611 about the Scottish general Macbeth who took the crown of Scotland from the current king by murder, but then, becomes paranoid and tyrannous.

Young Burying his Daughter after Edward Young's (1683-1765) collection of five poems *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality,* referencing the *Third Night. Narcissa.*[89] Young wrote the texts after the deaths of his beloved stepdaughter, his stepson, and his own wife.

The Bleeding Nun after *The Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818). The nun Antonia gets raped and later stabbed to death by her own brother, the monk Ambrosius.

Religious Content

Witch of Endor[90] from the *First Book of Samuel* (28:3-25). King Saul had banned fortune telling, but secretly visit a soothsayer for help during Israel's war against the Philistines. She demands his word not to harm her if she helps him to contact the prophet Samuel. Samuel reminds him of not having followed God's will in a previous war, and that is why he now will lose the current war and his life.

Belshazzar's Feast from the *Book of Daniel* (5). Belshazzar had destroyed Solomon's temple and was holding a feast there. A hand appears writing an inscription, stating that Belshazzar had to die and his kingdom will be given to others, because he had blasphemed God.

The Apotheosis of Héloïse. This theme is based on the real life of the scholar, philosopher, nun and later abbess Héloïse (1092-1164).

The Temptation of Saint Antony is a mythological motive, written by the Bishop Athanasios of Alexandria (~300-373), which became a popular subject in arts and literature.

Freemasonry

The Sibyl of Memphis. Unfortunately I did not find the narrative to this scene.

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[89] https://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/ayo19-w0030.shtml#reading, accessed, 28.06.21, 20:17.

[90] This title is given by Mannoni from his researches in Robertson's advertisements (see Mannoni 2006, p. 162). In Robertson's *Mémoires* the title is *L'ombre de Samuel* (Samuel's Shadow) (see Robertson 1831, p. 299).

Ghost Stories

Death of Lord Littleton is based on the life of Thomas, Second Baron Lyttelton (1744-1779), who told his friends that he had seen a spirit at night that presaged his death within three days. Three days later around midnight Lyttelton, in fact, died.[91]

Preparation for the Sabbath:[92] Witches, demons, and other figures dance for the Sabbath until the exorcism of some holy men end the spook.

Other ghost stories were *A Beautiful Woman* – a beautiful young woman transforming into a skeleton, or as variations with *The Three Graces* turning into skeletons.

A Gravedigger. A gravedigger wants to take a gem from a skeleton's head but drops dead because he found a rat inside.

Convent de Saint-Bruno. In a monastery a former monk, Bruno, should be declared a saint, but he comes out of his tomb and confesses that he had led an unworthy life. He is condemned and disappears together with demons.

The ghost of *Cagliostro*.

Classical Antiquity

The Head of the Medusa, *Orpheus forfeits Eurydice*, *Persephone and Pluto*.[93]

Diogenes with his Tub. Diogenes comes out of his tub and searches with his lantern for a man.[94]

Love Stories

The Dream or the Nightmare – a nightmare of a young woman. She gets nearly stabbed to death by jealousy, but love cures her with a rose; *Birth of Country Love* – a rose tree as liaison between a villager girl and a shepherd; *Story of a Love* – the coming-of-age of a young man;

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[91] https://the-history-girls.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-death-of-peer-or-lord-lytteltons.html, accessed 28.06.2021, 23:53.

[92] Like FN 60; In Robertson's *Mémoires* the title is *The Dance of the Witches* (see Robertson 1831, p. 302).

[93] Around 700 BCE it had been *Persephone and Hades*: Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and his sister Demeter, got abducted by Zeus' brother Hades, the god of the Underworld. Her mother, the goddess of fertility, was so desperate that plants could not grow any more. Therefore, it was negotiated for Persephone only to spend some of the time in the Underworld and the other time living with her mother. That is why we have seasons. Later, Hades, in his function, seems to have been replaced by the god Pluto.

[94] See above FN 81 and FN 86.

Politics

Robertson presented the ghosts of the physician, natural scientist, and politician Jean Paul *Marat* (1743-1793); the philosopher and writer François-Marie Arouet a.k.a. *Voltaire* (1694-1778); the philosopher, pedagogue, writer, and composer Jean-Jacques *Rousseau* (1712-1778); the philosopher, mathematician, and politician Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de *Condorcet* (1743-1794); the chemist, scholar of natural sciences, and lawyer Antoine Laurent de *Lavoisier* (1743-1794); the polymath and playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de *Beaumarchais* (1732-1799); the writer, natural scientist, inventor, and politician Benjamin *Franklin* (1706-1790); the writer Jean-François *Marmontel* (1723-1799); and the *18 Brumaire and Napoléon Bonaparte* (1769-1821).[95]

According to Mannoni, Robertson also offered the *Ghost of the Plenipotentiary Claude Roberjot* (1752-1799). This apparition took place fourteen days after Roberjot's assassination in 1799.

Charon and his Boat: "Caron brings the soul of Admiral Nelson to the Champs-Elysées in his boat" (Robertson 1831, p. 301 [DeepL]). I will come back to this in the next chapter.

To conclude the overview of the machinery, its operators, and the presented contents, I would like to quote Mannoni again, because he already contrasts Robertson's subjects with cinematic practices, which will be important for the next section. He states:

> What is noticeable from that account is the length of these projected scenes: it is a little like reading a film scenario, with precise directions for *mise en scène*. […] Of course all this was portrayed not on film, but on a series of glass slides or engravings projected with the Fantascope-Megascope. However these projected images were in colour and accompanied with sound, and their duration was certainly greater than that of the first cinematographic subjects. It is truly regrettable that the slides representing Robertson's repertoire have yet not been found. (Mannoni 2006, p. 163)

Certainly the invention of the phantasmagoria was a logical and technical consequence of the visual media machines invented before (like the 'lanterne vive', and – together with the invention of painted and animated glass slides as well as more advanced lenses and modes of generating a brighter projection light – the *Megascope* and the 'magic lantern'). However, to generate an all-encompassing idea of the phantasmagoric production dispositif, it is further essential, to have a look on the productions' 'uses and ideologies' and its 'reception'. Now, it seems to be a good moment for a transition to the next chapter, as we until now have gathered

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[95] The date of 18 Brumaire (9th of November 1799) stands for the end of the French Revolution with the Coup d'état of General Napoleon Bonaparte becoming First Consul of France.

most of the necessary information to be able to analyse Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, and could even extend Mannoni's considerations.

I will link these next sections with their respective connection to *the uncanny*, in its production, its attraction, and its impact.

3.2 Uses and Ideologies

Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* was embedded in the time of the Enlightenment, and was likewise influenced by its predecessors, by the insecure times during the French Revolution, as by the spirit of Enlightenment with its fascination for technology and science, on the one hand, and by the huge fascination for magic, ancient rites, freemasonry, and the occult, on the other hand.

With the notions by the media-archaeologist Siegfried Zielinski (*1951) the *dispositif* of the *Fantasmagorie* could be described as deeply connected with illusion, mystery, and the magical (see Zielinski 2003, p. 164f). Last but not least, the *Fantasmagorie* was a societal event that was well reviewed in important newspapers and journals. The show could be booked for private communities, as well.

In the following I will have a closer look on the uses and ideologies of the producer's side and the tools' side to gain a more complete idea of the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* internal mechanisms and mutual impact of its components, and in exchange with its audience and society per se.

3.2.1 The Producer's Side

For Robertson, there were various reasons for presenting his show. When reading his *Mémoires*, one gets the impression that he was very ambitious to offer the best possible overall experience, in perfecting all details, i.e., his media technique, his performative skills, his special effects, the 'realness' and suddenness of the apparitions to take their scary effect to a maximum, the whole setting (the location itself, its several barely lit rooms, the exhibition's contents, the black decoration of the walls) in order to make his spectators lose their orientation and to nourish their suspense. It does not seem to have been very important *what* narrations he performed, *but how suitable* the respective theme was to deploy his machinery at its best. Moreover, his societal reputation seems to have been very central for Robertson. Then, he also wanted to make money. He knew – especially since there had appeared some competitors – that he had to offer the qualitatively best and most interesting show of them all. And, last but not least, he seemed to have a lot of fun with what he was doing, and that he was keen of pushing the limits in constantly experimenting, inventing, and enhancing his equipment. He seems to have enjoyed entertaining people with his scientific demonstrations and, equally, with his spectres, the play with illusions and *the uncanny*, and with some factors of uncertainty. That is, if his apparitions were, maybe, real after all.

Throughout his *Mémoires*, Robertson emphasizes that he deeply condemns charlatans,[96] particularly those, who "take the good faith and the money of the public by surprise" (Robertson 1831, p. 150 [DeepL]), and that he, in contrast, perceives himself as a 'philosopher', whose mission is to 'enlighten' uneducated people:

> How many people do not have time to read, and perhaps will never read the books in which it is taught not to be afraid of spectres, to despise the so-called resurrections or apparitions of the dead? Let us try, however, to frighten away most of the people to whom a few séances have made the fantasmagorie familiar; we shall certainly be greeted only with the laughter and sarcasm of disbelief. (ibid. p. 148 [DeepL])

In Robertson's view, his approach is very different to a charlatan's, because he, before presenting these people with apparitions, warned them against the moral impression of the effects:

> On the contrary, instead of a man using science to deceive them, let a philosopher come forward who is prepared to enlighten them: after having warned them by means of warnings placed within reach of their intelligence, against the moral impression of the effects which he is going to make them witness, he will do more to spread enlightenment among these simple men than has been done, since the invention of printing, by thousands of volumes, none of which has yet reached them. (ibid. p. 149f [DeepL])

Robertson underscores that he grounds his presentations on his experiments, which he had undertaken as a painstaking physicist (ibid.).

These statements are remarkable in at least four ways: First, Robertson did quite the same as the so called charlatans, i.e., presenting his spectators with necromantic illusions. Second, even if he *did* remind his spectators that they were presented with optical illusions, he *also* dropped some insinuations that left the question open, whether, in fact, he *had* necromantic abilities. Third, the entrance-prices for his show were for sure not affordable for the target group he had claimed to educate and to enlighten – and though the prices were high, the house seemed to have been well attended and he made a lot of money with his *Fantasmagorie*. Furthermore, the content of his whole show was not ordinary[97] – he had created his narratives around mythological, literary, or societal characters he did not have to introduce to a bourgeois and educated audience. Fourth, albeit Robertson presented himself as a scientist, it must be clarified that he was hugely fascinated by any descriptions of apparitions, clairvoyance, occult séances,

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[96] Nevertheless, there even were some priests (because some priests were in fact lanternists) trying to convince their parish with some optical illusions (see Robertson 1831, p. 149). Robertson states elsewhere: „I preferred to harm, in a way, the complete illusion of my experiments, than to allow the slightest suspicion of charlatanism or imposture to hang over my views" (Robertson 1831, p. 210 [DeepL]).

[97] Robertson stressed that he had to constantly keep sight with his ventriloquist Fitz-James because otherwise this man would switch into unrefined talk, which Robertson definitely wanted to avert (see Robertson 1831, p. 403).

oracles, necromancy, and mystery cults (he mentions the mysteries of the goddess Isis)[98], as he depicts in his *Mémoires* (see ibid. p. 153f).

Let us take a closer look at each of these four discrepancies.

First objection ("Robertson did quite the same as the so called charlatans"). Mannoni has similar doubts:

> The aim of the show was always stated as the destruction of 'absurd beliefs, the childish terrors which dishonour the intelligence of man'. However, with habitual ambiguity, Robertson kept the actual method of producing the phantoms and spectres which he created before the assembled crowd very much to himself. The aim of the phantasmagoria was therefore rather dubious: it sought more to create fear than to dispel the occult source of fear, and by showing the mysteries of ancient Egypt it was certain to disturb the most rational of its spectators (some of whom may perhaps have been freemasons). (Mannoni 2006, p. 161)

Robertson did not only present his audience with quite similar apparitions as the necromantic show business traditionally used to create, he, moreover, deployed every possible trick and special effect, to even increase the realness of these spectres and of the uncanny effects as a whole. For example, in the choice of the location. Robertson clearly admits that he had chosen the place mainly because it already seemed to be haunted, given its dreadful history:

> It will easily be felt that, if philosophical ideas were to raise the mind above the involuntary fear that ghosts can inspire, the effect of the spectacle demanded that the apparitions spread, at least while they were taking place, a sort of religious terror. I could not, therefore, choose a more suitable place than a vast abandoned chapel in the middle of a cloister. Not only did the ancient purpose of the building create in the souls a favourable disposition to recollection, but the memory of the tombs expelled from this asylum, as they had been from all the temples, from all the convents, and which had been seen piled up by the hundreds on the steps of the squares, added to this first impression, in harmony with the ancient belief of the shadows: They seemed to emerge, as it were, from real sepulchres, and to want to flutter around the mortal remains which they had animated, and which were thus delivered to profanation. (Robertson 1831, p. 276 [DeepL])

Another example would be his presentation of galvanic experiments:

> In restoring to an animal, dead for several hours, dead for a day, very rapid movements, agile jumps, a singular irritability, a sort of life, so to speak, I was careful to warn my listeners that they should not give in to this disappointing hope, which the imagination would so actively seize upon, of the possibility of resurrections: 'Everything that is stricken with the finger of death, I told them, is irrevocably condemned to nothingness, or at least to the decomposition of its primitive form; but science, by making new progress every day, sometimes with the help of the genius of man, sometimes by the blessings of chance, would also provide the impostor with new means of deceiving credulous minds, if this science had not become the common heritage and the field which all are admitted to explore.' (ibid. p. 285 [DeepL])

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[98] A reference for this cult can be found in the *Metamorphoses* by the Roman writer and philosopher Apuleius (~123-170 CE).

I am not convinced whether this 'warning' would really have kept Robertson's audience from speculating on resurrection. In my opinion he leaves it open, whether science had found, or will be able to discover, possibilities to somehow undo death, which, again, increased the uncanny effect of his phantoms presented subsequently, after these galvanic demonstrations.

Similarly, Robertson's infamous ending of the show in directly addressing his audience and reminding them of their collective lot as human beings,[99] could be interpreted in various ways. Certainly, everybody knows that they have to die. But why reminding his spectators? It could have been a product of a (post-) revolutionary spirit of equality (we are all equal in death), or it owed to Robertson's nature that he felt he had to educate people in presenting them with a 'mirror'. I would prefer to understand it as a last moment to appeal to his spectators emotionally and to tie them to their immersive experience, and, with this, to reinforce the overall phantasmagoric impression. It was possibly a mixture between having experienced a thrill and having got surprised by shock and scary content, feeling emotionally more or less agitated, and having enjoyed an entertaining and interesting show in a very special setting. Interestingly, this very scene is linked to the Freudian uncanny – an arousal of possibly suppressed fears. It may be trilling to watch scary content, while all of a sudden (as the last projected scene, the *18th Brumaire*, was a delightful one) being forced to confront oneself with one's own death could probably be experienced as shocking.

Robertson tried to keep the secrets about how he produced his spectres hidden and the actual technology remained hidden not only during the performance but also afterwards. Nonetheless, in the exhibition that he presented before the actual phantasmagoric projections, he demonstrated a whole series of different mechanisms for optical illusions. They were very elaborately done,[100] yet, it should have been obvious for every visitor that they were attending a show of optical illusions and could deduce from this previous event that, with quite a certainty, the latter was similarly executed.

Robertson created a very special, timeless space, which he persistently improved to attract as many people as possible. But he never tried to appeal a different target audience than the educated bourgeoisie, who were familiar with the figures from mythology or literature that

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[99] Robertson stated in his *Mémoires*: 'Often, to strike a final blow, I would end the sessions with this address: '[...] You who may have experienced a few moments of terror, here is the only truly terrible spectacle, truly to be feared: Strong men, weak men, powerful men, and subjects, credulous or atheist, beautiful or ugly, this is the fate that is reserved for you, this is what you will be someday; remember the fantasmagorie.' Here the light would reappear, and a young woman's skeleton could be seen in the middle of the room, standing on a pedestal. (Robertson 1831, p. 284 [DeepL])

[100] See ibid. p. 339-340, 345-347, 351-352.

Robertson 'exploited' as characters for his *Fantasmagorie*. He never turned to more trivial themes or ordinary subjects to attract the people he had actually identified as necessary to educate and to 'cure' from superstition and whose he had, primarily, pretended to enlighten by the means of his show.

Nevertheless, Robertson could not shrug off his still a bit dubious reputation – in the words of Mannoni: "The scientist Robert, in becoming the fantasmagore Robertson, passed from science to spectacle, and from here on his scientific contemporaries considered him a semi-charlatan, a type of Savoyard,[101] or even worse" (Mannoni 2006, p. 152). To this, there maybe is a second, slightly more differentiated point of view. The theatre scholar Kati Röttger notes that the negatively connoted term 'spectacle' had quite a different meaning before the 19th century: it only indicated an event as public, sharing the resemblance to provoke emotions in the spectators (see Röttger 2017, p. 10). The latter undoubtedly was Robertson's ambition. Furthermore, the spectacle introduced new technologies to the audiences, e.g., in the case of the phantasmagoria, and with this, it played an important role "in the teaching of a scientific attitude that eventually made audiences familiar with new technologies of a modernizing age" (ibid. p. 14). For that reason, I guess, we have to be careful in demonstrating an attitude too suspicious or condemning towards Robertson's assertions, even if his exhibition along with his show were built on people's curiosity. Besides, curiosity is one of the best motivations to confront oneself with new subjects and to encourage inquisitiveness.

But then, I think, we must not make the mistake to overrate Robertson's educational motivation, either.

There is another interesting section in Robertson's *Mémoires*, where he reflects on the possible maximisation of a spectator's impression "[t]o move and astonish in all the arts, but particularly in those that speak only to the imagination, one must know even the most secret affections" (Robertson 1831, p. 286 [DeepL]) and on the charlatans' very sophisticated habit to "never undertook the operations of their sciences except with persons whose character they had penetrated, and to whom they had inspired the most blind confidence" (ibid. p. 287 [DeepL]). He states that he would have had numerous opportunities to exploit some people's trust, but, certainly, rather applied his 'great intellect' in honourable ways.[102]

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[101] Mannoni explains that the French regions Savoie and Auvergne were very poor and maybe therefore the 'Savoyards' and the 'Auvergnats' "dominated the field of travelling projection shows" Mannoni (2006, p. 79).

[102] See Robertson (1831, p. 287-292).

I would expect that he for sure 'knew his people' and as an excellent businessman, on the one hand, and a highly talented showman, on the other hand, he maxed out his abilities in every respect to attract, allure, and thrill people – he presented the scientific and educational content, e.g., the optical and auditory illusions, in a frame of attraction to incite curiosity and he presented the people with the content, they were interested in.

To complement Mannoni's objections, I may have to add that phantasmagores were not only looked down on by scientists. Apparently, there had been a contest between magical shows and phantasmagoric or similar attractions, where the magical shows seem to appear as the 'high(er)' art form in comparison to the (slightly) objectionable phantasmagoria, or at least the former transmitted the Enlightenment's doctrine to fight superstition with scientific demonstrations more convincingly.[103] Here, Kant's distinction between deceptive and pleasant illusion falls into line – not too obvious in the case of the phantasmagoria (which seems to have been a more individual experience) – but very certain for the magical shows to be considered as providing a delightful illusion. Gunning likewise refers to the Robert-Houdin's magic theatre in discussing the "Aesthetic of Astonishment" in early film: "the magic theatre labored to make visual that which was impossible to believe. Its visual power consisted of a trompe l'œil play of give-and-take, an obsessive desire to test the limits of an intellectual disavowal – I know, but yet I see" (Gunning 1995, p. 117).

Second objection ("Robertson left the question open, if, in fact, he *had* necromantic abilities"). Robertson did not only rear-project his uncanny or fantastic apparitions from behind the screen (his 'mirror') hiding himself from view. But he neither was the serious master of ceremonies, the 'philosopher', who tried to enlighten his audience with his remarks. Robertson also wanted to *entertain* them. And at this very intersection his intention becomes cloudy, because he acted as a – very sophisticated – magician, as we can learn from a contemporary review[104] that describes Robertson's performance:

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[103] As a side-note: I found the copy of Robertson's *Mémoires* in the digitalized library of the escape artist, magician and illusionist Erik Weisz a.k.a. Harry Houdini (1874-1926). Houdini's alias was an homage to the watch- and automata-maker, magician and illusionist Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin (1805-1871), whose theatre, in 1888, was purchased by the magician and early filmmaker Marie-Georges-Jean Méliès (1821-1938). A very informative booklet on the closeness of practices and attitudes and the mutual influence in performance practices and topics of magicians, phantasmagorists, automata-makers, mesmerists, galvanists, and early filmmakers is the guide to an exhibition on 'rare arts' *Rare Künste. Zauberkunst in Zauberbüchern*, from 2006 (see Felderer and Strouhal 2006).

[104] In the gazette *L'Ami des Lois* (*Friend of the Laws*, a revolutionary paper 1794-1800) from 28th of March 1798, written by the politician and editor of *L'Ami des lois* François-Martin Poultier d'Elmotte (1753-1826).

In a well lit flat, in the Pavillon de l'Echiquier, n° 18, I found myself, with about sixty people, on the 4th of Germinal. At seven o'clock precisely, a pale, dry man entered the flat where we were; after having extinguished the candles, he said: 'Citizens and gentlemen, I am not one of those adventurers, those shameless charlatans who promise more than they deliver: I have assured, in the Journal de Paris, that I would raise the dead, I will raise them. Those in the company who desire the appearance of people who have been dear to them, and whose lives have been ended by illness or otherwise, have only to speak; I will obey their command.' […] [a man asked for the apparition of Marat: ; V.W.]

Robertson poured two glasses of blood, a bottle of vitriol, twelve drops of etchant, and two copies of the *Hommes-Libres* journal[105] onto a burning stove; immediately a small, livid, hideous phantom, armed with a dagger and covered with a red cap, rose up: the man with the bristly hair recognised it as Marat; he wanted to embrace it; the phantom made a frightful grimace and disappeared….

[…]

'Citizens and gentlemen,' said Robertson, 'so far I have only shown you one shadow at a time; my art is not limited to these trifles, it is only the prelude to the skill of your servant. I can show to good men the crowd of shadows of those who, during their lives, have been helped by them; conversely I can show to bad men the shadows of the victims they have made.'

Robertson was invited to this test by an almost general acclamation; only two individuals opposed it; but their opposition only irritated the wishes of the assembly.

The fantasmagore immediately threw into the inferno the minutes of the 3rd of May[106], those of the massacre in the prisons of Aix, Marseilles and Tarascon, a collection of denunciations and arrests, a list of suspects, the collection of judgments of the revolutionary tribunal, a bundle of demagogic and aristocratic newspapers, a copy of the *Réveil du Peuple*[107]; then he pronounced, emphatically, the magic words: '*Conspirators, humanity, terrorist, justice, Jacobin, public salvation, exaggerated, alarmist, buyer, Girondin, moderate, Orleanist....*' At once we see groups of shadows covered with bloody veils rise up; they surround, they press the two individuals who had refused to surrender to the general vow, and who, frightened by this terrible spectacle, hurried out of the room, uttering frightful howls.... One was Barrère[108] and the other Chambon[109].... (Robertson 1831, pp. 216–220 [italics in the text; DeepL])

In this section we find a lot of interesting information. Poultier not only describes the magician Robertson; his speeches; his 'potions'; that Robertson either used a *nebulous lantern* for these apparitions or that he worked together with an assistant who operated Robertson's *Fantascop* by rear-projection; when entering the room that it had been well lit (just to the opposite of the otherwise very barely lit auditorium – so it would have been difficult not to realize the separation of the room if there had been rear-projection); that some people seemed

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[105] Revolutionary journal (1792-1799).

[106] See https://www.persee.fr/doc/arcpa_0000-0000_1883_num_15_1_6761_t1_0374_0000_3, accessed 02.07.2021, 23:41.

[107] Presumably a copy of the revolutionary song "Le Réveil du peuple", see https://www.univie.ac.at/igl.geschichte/europa/FR/Petz/Reveil%20du%20peuple.htm, accessed 02.07.2021, 23:58.

[108] Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac (1755-1841) was a revolutionary politician who initiated the vote for the king's death and was responsible for the despoliation of the kings' graves in Saint-Denis (1793-94). However, he also tried to hold the accountable initiators responsible for the September massacres in 1792.

[109] Nicolas Chambon de Montaux (1748-1826), a physician who had been Paris' mayor from 1st of December 1792-the 2nd February 1793, and who had tried to save the king.

to have been *really* frightened and not only a little bit 'art-horror'-affected, but, nonetheless, delighted by the performance (see fig. 11).

Fig. 11: Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* at the Couvent des Capucines (1797)[110]

It is the same review, Poultier was putting fictitious words in the mouth of Robertson when he was asked to bring back Louis XVI,[111] which is the part of the review, Robertson is commenting on. But Robertson does not comment on the other parts, whether they maybe contain some fiction as well. To me, some of the ingredients Robertson is said by Poultier to have put into the fire and some expressions of his other incantations appear quite daring. After all, the times were not at ease yet. Besides, that a fire lit with all these inflammable ingredients seems a bit too massive to take place in a closed room, and it is maybe questionable, whether Chambon, who suffered from gout and probably still lived at Blois at that time, really could have attended the show in 1798.[112] Anyway, *what* we know is that Robertson's show got closed

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[110] See Robertson (1831, p. 2 (frontispiece)), maybe by the engraver Louis-François Lejeune (1775-1848), at least it was the only engraver I could find from that time with the name Lejeune. The date is very interesting, as we know that the official start of Robertson's show was in January 1898 at the Pavillon de l'Echiquier and from 1899 at the Couvent des Capucines. However, in his *Mémoires*, Robertson refers to an earlier performance at the Couvent des Capucines with his first presentations of galvanic experiments and his first attempts in a phantasmagoric projection show (see Robertson 1831, p. 206 and p. 275, FN 1). This would not only explain the early date but also the small room and the relative few spectators (his shows from 1898 were attended by about 60 spectators each, and the new rooms at the Couvent des Capucines were considerably bigger).

[111] See above FN 26.

[112] See https://archive.org/details/b24862502/page/30/mode/2up, accessed 03.07.2021, 00:48.

by the police some days after the release of this issue of *L'Ami des Lois* (see Mannoni 2006, p. 152). I do not think that it only was because of the fear that someone could bring the kings back to France. Also the use of the *Réveil du Peuple* – at that time already banned – as an ingredient of his 'portion', and to call the Jacobins, the Girondists, and the Orleanists seem not to be very wise. Hence it is not clear if Robertson had to stop his performances because of the authorities' fear that he *really* had necromantic abilities, or, because he behaved dubiously and maybe therefore appeared to be dangerous to the political regime. It is remarkable that he left Paris for Bordeaux for some time after that incident.

We know from Robertson's *Mémoires* that a lot of people disbelieved his affirmations not to have any supernatural abilities. Instead, "[e]very day people came to ask me for some revelation about the future, and for information about the past; they wanted me to know what had taken place at great distances, and it was not uncommon for me to see people, after the first pleasantries, to begin with these words: "I should like you, sir, to tell me who robbed my house last night" (Robertson 1831, p. 288 [DeepL]). Robertson emphasizes that he had "disabused them of their credulity" (ibid. p. 291 [DeepL]) every time. However, there is an interesting story where a woman did not stop asking Robertson for the shadow of her late husband and he feared her psychic health to be damaged if he would not help her:

> My efforts were, nevertheless, unsuccessful in the face of the exaltation of a woman whose husband had been known to me; he was master of music in the chapel of Versailles; his wife was inconsolable at his death; she conceived the hope that I could make his shadow appear before her; from then on it was a fixed idea which nothing could weaken. She accused me of taking pleasure in prolonging and increasing her pain by my refusal. I saw a woman ready to lose her mind; I went to the police station, and asked permission to ease her grief by completing a mistake which could only be dissipated by making it. This permission was granted; I endeavored to persuade her that, if this evocation was possible, the power existed only to make use of it once. I drew the features of her husband from memory, certain that the sick imagination of the spectator would do the rest. Indeed, the shadow hardly appeared when she cried out: "Oh my husband! my dear husband! I see you again... It is you; stay, stay, do not leave me for a moment." The shadow had come up to her eyes; she wanted to get up, but the shadow disappeared, and then she was speechless, then shed abundant tears. Her pain was more tender; she thanked me in an expressive way, said that she was certain that her husband still heard her and saw her, and that this would be a sweet consolation all her life.
> The lines we have just read prove how far the imagination can be led astray. (ibid. p. 291f [DeepL])

There can be drawn some conclusions from this and related descriptions from Robertson's *Mémoires* (ibid. p. 288-292). First of all, again, that Robertson had consorted and communicated with a decent society, where people held a certain wealth and upper grade positions. Second, Robertson even bothers to inform the police and to get the permission to act like a charlatan this one time. We can only assume that this was either to guard against further suspicion towards his reputation (throughout his whole *Mémoires* Robertson claimed to always

have enjoyed the best name, but a lot of his stories appear to 'leak' another impression of a more problematic stand), or to establish a trustworthy relationship with the authorities to stay unoffended in his further plans with his *Fantasmagorie* at the Couvent des Capucines. Third: In fact, Robertson *did* paint (at least some of) his slides by himself. Fourth, Robertson availed himself of every opportunity of putting the blame for believing in what he presented to the receivers, i.e., to his spectators, not to himself as the creator of these intended and – usually – very well made illusions (here, he disclaimed to have painted the portrait accurately and it had merely been the imagination of the woman to see her husband in his sketch because she wanted to).

To conclude this passage – Robertson's attempts to present an impression of an absolute integrity of himself is not thoroughly compelling.

Third objection (Robertson evidently did not address the target group he had claimed to educate and to enlighten).

Albeit from 1795 the *Franc* did replace the *Livre*, Robertson anyway uses the amount of Livres to account for the prices of his show.[113] From a today's perspective it is difficult to ascertain the actual value of a Livre in 1799 (the time, Robertson installed his show at the Couvent des Capucines. In Robertson's *Mémoires* there is some evidence to be found that Robertson had gained quite some wealth with his show. The show was well attended, although, as Robertson states, the seats had fixed prices of 3 and 6 Livres (see ibid. p. 206). A male* day labourer earned about 1 Livre a day,[114] so the entrance would have been 10 to 20% of his* month's income (if he* had work every day). I guess we could assume that people with lower wages would usually search for cheaper amusements than Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*.

Then, Robertson advertised his show with the titles of his apparitions. At least some of the announced figures can be assumed to aim at an educated audience, as they were probably not known by less educated people: *The Three Witches* of *Macbeth*, *Young Burying his Daughter*, *Witch of Endor*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, *The Apotheosis of Héloïse*, *The Temptation of Saint Antony*, *The Sibyl of Memphis*, *Death of Lord Littleton*, *The Head of the Medusa*, *Orpheus forfeits Eurydice*, *Persephone and Pluto*, *Diogenes with his Tub*, *Charon and his Boat*. However, for most of these characters it did not really matter if they were well-known, as, in my view, the content was not the most essential factor of the phantasmagoric apparitions, but

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[113] The Livre was first finally disestablished in 1834 (see de la Rive 2005, p. 12).

[114] https://www.währungsrechner.org/die-livre---w%C3%A4hrung-der-franz%C3%B6sische-revolution, accessed 04.07.2021, 14:49.

the apparitions themselves. Although Robertson borrowed his tales from, e.g., literature and mythology, he only took a sequence out of the story that fitted best into the succession of his projected ghosts, skeletons, demons, and witches. Often, the narrative was not even accurate, e.g., in the *Death of Lord Littleton* and in *Young Burying his Daughter*, and only framed his own, freely composed phantasmagoric plot. I would anyway suggest that the composition of an advertisement (and also how it is published – in a newspaper, or as poster, or with leaflets) is an important instrument to allure an audience.

In his speeches during the performance Robertson's language was elevated, his syntax and diction complicated and probably not easily understandable for a less educated spectator. And Robertson undoubtedly had set a high value on elevated language for his show: he stressed that he had to constantly keep sight with his ventriloquist Fitz-James because otherwise his employee would have switched into unrefined talk, which Robertson definitely wanted to avert (see ibid. p. 403]).

I guess it is possible to assume that Robertson attracted as a vast majority a bourgeois audience. Thus, despite the prices, I could image that a working class spectator would maybe not have felt too comfortable in company with them.

Robertson's twofold aim to present his spectators with what they were curious in as well as gaining wealth through his performances, perfectly falls into line with Comolli's conclusions on the (*cinematic*, here: the *phantasmagoric*) *dispositif's* social function (see Comolli 2015, p. 283f).

Fourth objection (Robertson presented himself as a scientist, but he was hugely fascinated by the occult – and ensured to maximize the uncanny effects).

Robertson researched and studied the authors of ancient Greece, Rome, and Druids, especially focussing on the sacrifices and predictions (Robertson 1831, p. 154), and (Cagliostro's) freemasonry (see ibid. p. 174–194). Robertson similarly was very fond of the writer and politician Anne Joseph Eusèbe Baconnière de Salverte (1771-1839), whom he entitled a philosopher and who had written a two-volume treatise on 'the art of illusions', and several essays on the occult sciences, magic, and miracles.[115] Nonetheless, in announcing his show, Robertson indicated "to give a class in Phantasmagoria, a science which deals with all the physical methods which have been misused in all ages and by all peoples to create belief in the resurrection and apparition of the dead" (Mannoni 2006, p. 148). But the 'real science' was

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[115] Eusèbe Saverte: *Des sciences occultes ou Essai sur la Magie, les prodiges et les miracles*, Paris, Sédillot, 1829, 2 vol.

sparsely performed, and only in his exhibition, not in his phantasmagoric projections.[116] To illustrate this, I want to provide a second insight into the elements of Robertson's intended uncanniness. Interestingly, Carrol identifies 'art-horror' as only entity-based, not event-based. Carrol, here, noticeably refers to the 'cinematic art-horror' (even if he says that the same will be true for other media). When transferred to Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, we notice that Robertson was not at all reliant on the uncanniness of his phantoms only. This aspect was merely one of a whole variety of other components. Even though he for sure had painstakingly chosen his figures, the whole concept of his show used every detail to affect the audience emotionally already in advance, and his performance techniques additionally ensured to establish an overall uncanny impact. That allows for the conclusion that the *cinematic dispositif* does not have at all the possibilities that the setting of the *Fantasmagorie* had. This, definitely is a verification of Gunning's suggestion that the *phantasmagoric dispositif* could challenge the ideas of the cinematic apparatus (see Gunning 2019, p. 32) and even more, it is questioning the direct lineage of some precursory media to finally developing into cinema.

Fig. 10: Robertson's *Physical Experiments* (1797)[117]

A *Fantasmagorie* consisted of all the following components: The spooky cloister as a location; the long hallway that led into the inner building, all barely lit, to confuse people's

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[116] It crystallizes in his investigations and inventions that he made to increase uncanniness as a total work of art, though.

[117] See Robertson (1833, p. 2 (frontispiece)), by the same engraver as the frontispiece of the first volume of Robertson's *Mémoires* (see above FN 110).

orientation; several exhibition rooms with scurrile and odd but likewise fascinating items; tiny peep shows with optical illusions; the ventriloquist's performances and the gallery of the invisible woman; Robertson's scientific demonstrations of Volta's batteries' taste, smell, and tangible peculiarity as well as his galvanic experiments with apparently reviving a dead frog (see fig. 10). After a while, the eerie sound of the glass harmonica called the visitors to the auditorium, which entry was decorated with hieroglyphs, referencing the freemasonry of Cagliostro.[118] Mannoni is pointing to this detail in suggesting that "by showing the mysteries of ancient Egypt it was certain to disturb the most rational of its spectators (some of whom may perhaps have been freemasons)" (Mannoni 2006, p. 161).[119] While the people found their seats in the completely black decorated room, a faint funeral lamp hanging from the ceiling allowed a glimpse at the image of a tomb that was painted on the vail in the front. After Robertson had held his introductory speech (or if he had already spoken before people were seated) the lamp extinguished,

> and leaves the spectator in a deep dark night. Storms, the harmonica, the funeral bell which calls the shades from their tombs, everything inspires a religious silence: the phantoms appear in the distance, they grow larger and come closer before your eyes and disappear with the speed of light. Robespierre comes out of his tomb, begins to stand, a thunderbolt falls and reduces the monster and his tomb to dust. Beloved shades appear to lighten the picture: Voltaire, Lavoisier, J.J. Rousseau appear in turn, and Diogenes, his lantern in his hand, searches for a man and to find him goes up and down the rows, rudely causing fright to the ladies, which entertains everyone. (ibid.)[120]

Or, as described by Robertson himself:

> As soon as I ceased to speak, the antique lamp hanging over the heads of the spectators went out, plunging them into a deep darkness, into dreadful gloom. The sound of the rain, the thunder, the funeral bell evoking the shadows of their tombs, were followed by the heart-rending sounds of the harmonica; the sky was uncovered, but criss-crossed in all directions by lightning. In the far distance, a luminous point seemed to emerge: a figure, at first small, would take shape, then approach with slow steps, and with each step seemed to grow; soon, of enormous size, the ghost would advance right before the eyes of the spectator, and, at the moment when the latter was about to utter a cry, would disappear with unimaginable rapidity. At other times the spectres came out of a subterranean space in a ready-made form, and presented themselves in an unexpected manner. (Robertson 1831, p. 282 [DeepL])

Two other reviews report their experiences as follows:

> 'Robespierre,' said the *Courrier des Spectacles*,[121] 'emerges from his tomb, wants to rise again... lightning falls and turns the monster and his tomb into powder. Cherished shadows soften the picture: Voltaire, Lavoisier, J. J. Rousseau, appear in turn; Diogenes, with his lantern in his hand, looks for a man, and, in order to find him, crosses the ranks, so to speak, and impolitely causes

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[118] See also above FN 33.

[119] *Also Robertson's scene The Sibyl of Memphis very likely recalled this rite.*

[120] Mannoni's quote is from a review in the *Courrier des Spectacles*, 1086 (23 February 1800), p. 4.

[121] According to Robertson from the 4th Ventôse year VIII (22. February 1799). Parts of it seem to be very similar to the quote above, see FN 120, but maybe Robertson referred to the second writer.

the ladies a fright that each one of them enjoys. Such are the effects of optics that each one believes he is touching these approaching objects with his hand.'

Another writer said that nothing could be more magical and ingenious than the experience that ends the phantasmagoria, the idea of which is as follows: in the midst of chaos, in the midst of lightning and thunderstorms, a brilliant star rises, the centre of which bears these characters: 18 *brumaire*. Soon the clouds dissipate and allow the peacemaker to be seen; he comes to offer an olive branch to Minerva, who receives it; but she forms a crown from it and places it on the head of the French hero. Needless to say, this ingenious allegory is always welcomed with enthusiasm. (ibid. p. 283f [DeepL])

The complete darkness of the auditorium – together with the soundscape of the harmonica, the funeral bell, storm, rain, and thunder to mute all other noises – should lead to a feeling of isolation and to forget sitting in a crowd of other people, again, to augment everyone's alertness. This impressive impact was increased through Robertson's performance techniques: To let the ghosts appear from unexpected locations in the room, and growing them by a huge speed into a scary size, together with sudden and shocking sounds (Carroll calls the sudden and unexpected appearance of a monster as "cognitive and physical threat" and the escorting sound design to art-horror as an additional "provocation of shock" (see Carroll 1990, p. 34ff)), and with special effects such as lightning, mixed with Robertson's conjurations (maybe in combination with his 'magic portions'), embedded into a convincing narrative, and occasionally disturbed by the unforeseen emergence of his other ghosts, like Diogenes wandering through the spectator's rows or Robertson's ghostly lit objects suddenly gliding through the darkness above the audience's heads. We also learn from the last review that Robertson used performance tricks, like alternately presenting his scary images with 'beloved' ones or with episodes that made his audience laugh, to increase the effects of this uncanny content, when he, first, had invited his spectators to relaxation. Robertson played with this feature in ad hoc reactions to incidents, e.g., when he presented his show in Bordeaux in 1798:

> This illusion was so complete, moreover, that in the middle of a session, as a skull appeared to be hovering above the assembly, M. Cazalès tried several times to strike it with his cane, and although he delivered his blows lightly, none of them, of course, reached it. Hilarity broke out in the assembly; I took advantage of this disposition to continue the joke, and sent the same head right in front of the assailant's eyes, with these words written in letters of fire: Beware, it is a skull. Mr. Cazalès redoubled his attacks with a new impetuosity, and this combat of a very amiable living man against a cramped ghost, in which the advantage remained completely with the latter, gave rise to universal laughter. I doubt if the most buffoonish spectacle could excite more gaiety. (Robertson 1831, pp. 221–222 [DeepL])[122]

We read before that Robertson concluded his projections with an embraced allegory of the *18th Brumaire*. Now I can confirm my assumption from above concerning Robertson's ending

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[122] Here, Robertson features the conservative politician and royalist Jacques Antoine Marie de Cazalès (1758-1805), who had returned back from his English exile to France after Napoleon Bonaparte's coming into power. Consequently, the presence of Cazalès already in 1798 seems a bit strange, but he had been in Germany this year and maybe he took his route back to London via Bordeaux.

of the show in pointing to everyone's death ("Remember the *Fantasmagorie*") that Robertson, for one last time, exploited the moment of his spectator's relaxation to terminally shock them as a reinforcement of the phantasmagoric experience of uncanniness.

Having so far scrutinized Robertson's uses, intentions, and related techniques, some more words on the content seem to be necessary. On the one hand, on the screenplay, and on the other hand, on some other interesting details.

First, I would like to present some of Robertson's scene descriptions.

> *Macbeth.* The king comes to Macbeth's house; he is received with the respectful demonstrations of a submissive subject. Macbeth's wife, driven by ambition, urges him to kill the king: he is undecided. His wife goes to three witches, who appear and promise him the throne: he no longer hesitates, and kills the king. The vengeful shadow appears and Macbeth is punished.
> *Young burying his daughter*. Sounds of a belfry; view of a moonlit cemetery. Young carrying the lifeless body of his daughter. He enters an underground passage where a series of rich tombs are discovered. Young knocks on the first one; a skeleton appears, he runs away. He returns, works with a pickaxe: a second appearance and another fright. He knocks on the third tomb; a shadow rises up and asks him: "*What do you want from me? -* "A tomb for my daughter", replies Young. The shadow recognizes him and gives up his place. Young places his daughter in it. As soon as the lid is closed, the soul rises to the sky; Young prostrates himself and remains in ecstasy.... (ibid. p. 297 [DeepL])

Both scenes consist of several partitions that had to been presented in a meticulous continuity and – together with a related soundscape and very likely with special effects like lightning – numerous glass slides with the mentioned illustrations, presumably at least some of them animated, were needed. For me, it is nearly inconceivable how one or even several performers could have handled the *Fantascop* with all its moving and adjusting sharpness and changing slides (and animating them) at once. Robertson's script for the following scene is particularly elaborated and it is absolutely awesome to imagine how it was possibly done:

> *Temptation of Saint Anthony*. We see a church; Saint Anthony leaves it, abandoning the pious ceremonies for an even more austere life; the church disappears, and Saint Anthony is in the desert; it is the devil who, out of malice, has led him to this place, where he shows him a cave, a bed, and the attributes of mortification. Anthony is kneeling in the middle of the cave; the Loves appear, and Saint Anthony is threatened; they take away his crown of thorns and his cross; a demon pulls his pig by the ear. In one hand, a lover holds the discipline with the words: *Here are his weapons*, and in the other a quiver full of arrows, with this inscription: *Here are ours.* - Temptations of all kinds follow one another. A kind of soothsayer, next to a vase, brings out different objects; a flag, *glory*; two swords, *power*, *riches*, *pleasures*, etc. In order to impose on the holy hermit by the force of the example, we see a kind of pope (no doubt a Borgia) with a mitre and a crozier; a devil removes the mitre from him, and a woman, unclothed, undresses him. Saint Anthony replies only with these words: "*Withdraw, Satan*"; but the tocsin sounds; the Loves set fire to the hermitage, and a young beauty takes the solitary man away, her forehead girded with garlands. (ibid. p. 298f [DeepL])

For the following scenario, Robertson had a lot of "special effects" in use to accentuate the narration:

Littleton is at the table between two people. -A ghost; the clock strikes seven. - A voice is heard: *At midnight you will die*. - Littleton falls back into his chair, and the ghost disappears. - Littleton's torments and worries....

...We see a bed. - A few will-o'-the-wisps flutter about. -The ghost of the night before, or Death, lifts the latch of the door, enters, moves towards the sky and opens the curtains. - We hear the words: *Littleton, wake up*. - Littleton rises, the clock strikes. -The same voice: *Here is the time*. - At the last blow of the hammer, thunder, rain of fire, Littleton falls, and everything disappears. (ibid. p. 295f [italics in the text; DeepL])

The same applies to the *Preparation for the Sabbath*:

Preparations for the Sabbath. A clock strikes midnight: a witch, with her nose in a book, raises her arm three times. The moon descends, stands in front of her, and becomes the colour of blood; the witch strikes it with her wand and cuts it in two. She raises her left hand again; on the third time, cats, bats, skulls and crossbones flutter around with fireflies. In the middle of a magic circle we read these words: START FOR THE SABBAT. A woman astride a broom and climbing into the air arrives; a demon, an incredible man on a broom, and many figures following one another. Two monks appear with the cross, then a hermit, to exorcize, and everything dissipates. (ibid. p. 296 [italics in the text; DeepL])

For the projection of *The Head of the Medusa* Robertson emphasizes the importance of the shocking sound effect of the "Chinese TamTam or Gong":

Let this instrument be used with reserve, with its loud and terrible noise, and only in important moments. Any object, the head of Medusa, for example, which seems to come from afar to hurl itself at the public, will produce more effect if this instrument is struck violently at the moment when this head has acquired its greatest magnification. (ibid. p. 357 [DeepL])

Therewith, Robertson follows the main recipes presented by Carrol of how to create 'art-horror', or, in this case, uncanniness: Ambiguous or contradictory appearances, like living/death, animate/inanimate, impureness, nastiness; the sudden and unexpected presence of the phantom as a cognitive and physical threat, and the provocation of shock by ushering sounds. This also confirms Doane's notions on the importance of the "various [sensory] stimuli" (Doane 2004, p. 382), where none of all elements would be subordinate to each other. In Robertson's case I would add multiplication, magnification, and the phantoms' spreading all over the room, rising themselves in the front, out of the corners, from above, from in between the spectator's rows. In comparison to Gunning's descriptions of the (very) early film: "The viewer's curiosity is aroused and fulfilled through a marked encounter, a direct stimulus, a succession of shocks" (Gunning 1995, p. 123f), we could say the same about a phantasmagoric projection.

Interestingly Robertson only presented the audience with the 'persons' (if spectres, witches, and gods may count to this category). He did not show, e.g. werewolves.[123]

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[123] Albeit there existed an example of rural belief that a village near Nantes was haunted by a wolf, possessed by the executed revolutionary Jean-Baptiste Carrier (1756-1794), who was responsible for the death of about 4000 civilians in Nantes see Steinberg (2019, p. 124f).

Regarding other details of Robertson's themes, I consider the most interesting ones the 'political' spectres, as Robertson tended to refer to the actual political situation and incidents, like with the *Ghost of the Plenipotentiary Claude Roberjot*.[124] Correspondingly, his *Gravedigger* could be read politically, in pointing to the looting of the king's graves of Saint-Denis at the height of the French Revolution's terror. In his *Mémoires*, Robertson provided several hints to not have been very keen to come into conflict with whatever current regime or executive was in power. Therefore, it is especially remarkable that he referred to politics at all, but as his shows do not seem to have happened without any political references, this intentionality appears striking. I regard Robertson's scene *Charon and his Boat* as particularly interesting: "Caron brings the soul of Admiral Nelson to the Champs-Elysées in his boat" (Robertson 1831, p. 301 [DeepL]). In 1805 Admiral Nelson had hindered Napoleon from conquering Britain in a devastating defeat. We can only speculate why Robertson had chosen such a delicate theme, as we can be convinced that he, for sure, would have wanted to keep a neutral or good relation with Napoleon.[125] Maybe that is the reason why he ended his phantasmagoric projections with the *18th Brumaire*-allegory.

To conclude this chapter on Robertson's possible ideologies, I would like to make some last remarks on the capitalistic aspect.

When Robertson was betrayed by a former assistant, who started his own phantasmagoric performances, Robertson hurried to apply for a patent and to file a patent lawsuit, to sue out the closing of this new show. His argument in his *Mémoires* was threefold: He wanted to stop the others, to earn money with his ideas; to penalize the betrayal of trust; and to prevent others to discredit the *Fantasmagorie* due to their lousy imitation of his art that he had created with "the experiments to which I had attached my name, and whose perfection made all the charm (Robertson 1831, p. 317 [DeepL]). As we already know, this lawsuit went wrong for Robertson – very much because of his efforts to keep the secret of his projection techniques for himself, and he tried to deceive the experts that had been appointed to review the machines of both parties, by showing them a fake machine, and to keep the doors locked to his secret room hiding the *Megascope* (see Mannoni 2006, p. 167–191).

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[124] See above p. 68.

[125] In his *Mémoires*, Robertson points to one encounter, as Robertson assisted Volta, who presented his theories in front of the members of the *Institut National des Sciences et Arts* (since 1795, today: *Institut de France*), where the First Consul Bonaparte was present, (see Robertson 1831, p. 257).

Robertson's assertion that he would never betray fellow artists in stealing their ideas, which he exemplifies with the *Panorama*,[126] is curious in this respect, apart from the question of how much of his invention he had actually 'borrowed' from Philidor in the first place. He indicates that he was in fact the first to come up with the idea to introduce the *Panorama* in Paris in the garden of the Couvent des Capucines, if he would not have been hindered due to an 'indiscretion' of a hitherto friend that led to the patent application of two English investors (see Robertson 1831, p. 322f). The dubious detail in Robertson's description of the incident is the fact that he already knew the name of the actual inventor of the Panorama, the Irish painter Robert Baker (1739-1806), who had patented his idea in 1787 in England, and that there were English attempts to introduce the *Panorama* in France, before he started to invest into this obviously lucrative business.

The uses and ideologies of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* would not be complete without having a look onto the tools' side as well.

3.2.2   The Tools' Side

The cinematic apparatus has been mentioned several times so far, and it is also the point of reference from where to analyse the *phantasmagoric dispositif* best, as most contemporary people have an idea of what a film is and maybe of a cinematic projection, too (even if not in a cinema itself but on some screen or bright wall). I think it is also dependent to which kind of cinematic setting we relate to, if we want to compare the *phantasmagoric dispositif* on the basis of the *cinematic dispositif*. If we act on the assumption that the *Fantasmagorie* had much more in common with the 'cinema of attractions' than with the later cinematic development, we certainly proceed different findings. In the following, I will therefore specify to which cinematic situation I relate to in each particular case.

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[126] A *Panorama* is a 360° perspective view of a current or historical landscape or city view that could be enjoyed from a platform in the centre of the painting and that sometimes had several floors. Mannoni gives the following description: "a circular room, inside which was an enclosure which kept the spectator at some distance from the canvas. The lighting came from above, through a glazed roof or simple opening. Entry to the enclosure had to be made from underground, in order not to distract the audience's attention. As in Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, the spectators – deprived of light – passed through gloomy corridors before arriving in front of the brightly illuminated circular painting, a surprise effect which accounted for a large part of the *Panorama*'s success. Barker also included ventilators to allow a natural circulation of air in the building." Mannoni (2006, p. 177). Two excellent works of research and insights on the history of *Panoramas* are (Oettermann 1997) and (Huhtamo 2013).

Besides the difference of the cinematic visible screen and the phantasmagoric invisible screen,[127] the other most divergent part of the *cinematic dispositif* and the *phantasmagoric dispositif* would be their mobile matter for the display as visual content and their tools for generating the soundscape. With the phantasmagoria there already were animated slides, sound, and voice – so we essentially could compare the phantasmagoric projections to an animated short with sound. But this is not possible without comparing the audience's reception as well, and this cannot be done – for the simple reason that we cannot put ourselves into the visual potential of the people back then. As Castle convincingly points out: "One should not underestimate, by any means, the powerful effect of magic-lantern illusionism on eyes untrained by photography and cinematography" (Castle 1988, p. 39). Another argument against a comparison of the visuals is that film (at least 'real' film) is coupled with the presence of a camera, in the first place, in filming a scene, before it is presented on a screen. This is, what Baudry calls the 'simulation apparatus': a filmic scene already is a simulacrum of the displayed illusion of reality. Then, the whole theoretical cinematic discussion on the spectator's identification with the 'reality' of a better illusion they are presented with, very much depends on this inbuilt fraud or deception of the cinematic apparatus. All this is more or less valid for the narrative film, however, not to the same extent for the 'cinema of attractions'. As Gunning emphasizes, the elements are different, focussing on "the temporality of surprise, shock, and trauma, the sudden rupture of stability by the irruption of transformation" (Gunning 1993, p. 11). This, I think, sounds much more comparable to the *Fantasmagorie*. I would like to give it a try by contrasting this early cinematic standard with the phantasmagoric.

One possibility to compare the cinematic visuals with the phantasmagoric visuals, perhaps, would be to ask, first, if a similar deception could be embedded in a painted slide. Is a film still, captured by a camera, in its illusory effect on the spectator the same as a painted still in the form of a glass slide? This is, first of all, dependent on its recorded motive. In a phantasmagoric performance the focus, for sure, was not on 'reality', but on 'presence', like Gunning exemplifies for the early cinema. This is, what Elsaesser refers to, in his notion of the "ubiquity orientation" or "event and encounter, taking place", though he regards this "as constitutive for all cinema" (Elsaesser 2014, p. 72). As already mentioned and to recall Elsaesser's theory of the *un-located situatedness*: "Such ubiquity, in other words, produces its own forms of embodiment and agency in response to unrepresentability and to the unlocalizable sense of presence. […] Together, the effigy (as index) and the apparition (as presence) constitute

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elements of a new modality of evidence and authenticity" (ibid. [italics in the text]). With this, Elsaesser exchanges Baudry's layer of simulation with a time-independent and 'reality'-independent one, in focussing on 'presence' and the indexical representation – also for cinema.

The natural scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce's (1839-1914) theoretical term *index* as a type of sign is described by the art historian Margaret Iversen as having "some physical or existential connection" (Iversen 2012) to an object.[128] Iversen recalls Doane's observation that there are two meanings of index – the index as a direct reference to an object and the index as a trace to an absent object (see Iversen 2012; Doane 2007, p. 2). Doane explains further:

> In its iconicity, the index as trace has, unfortunately, suggested for many theorists an alliance with realism as both style and ideology. In its intimacy with the symbolic, the index as shifter (or *deixis*) forces language to adhere to the spatiotemporal frame of its articulation. […] Yet, the index as *deixis* implies an emptiness, a hollowness that can only be filled in specific, contingent, always mutating situations. It is this dialectic of the empty and the full that lends the index an eeriness and uncanniness not associated with the realms of the icon or symbol. (Doane 2007, p. 2)
> […] While realism claims to build a mimetic copy, an illusion of an inhabitable world, the index only purports to point, to connect, to touch, to make language and representation adhere to the world as tangent – to reference a real without realism. (ibid. p. 4)

According to Elsaesser, the phantasmagoric visual apparatus could be divided into two categories, on the one hand, the 'effigies' (e.g., the lit ghostly objects moving along the ceiling, the actor in the role of Diogenes with his lantern and his phosphorescent pen), and, on the other hand, the apparitions (e.g., the projected ghosts, phantoms, and shadows). But I do not see Elsaesser's analogy, given that division (and given that I interpreted Elsaesser's thoughts in the right way, or better, given that Elsaesser's notions are applicable to the *Fantasmagorie*), in denoting the 'effigies' to the *index* and the 'apparitions' to the *presence*. As I supposed above, the phantasmagoric visuals *all* worked with *presence*. Furthermore, I would rather recognize the 'apparitions' as *indexical*, as they point to their source, while the 'effigies' are merely *icons* in themselves, rather than functioning as *indexical*. In contrast, Elsaesser's 'ubiquity' along with his notion of the 'un-located situatedness' seem to be, in fact, suitable for the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

Turning back to the comparison of the cinematic and the phantasmagoric visuals: If it is a hand painted still of an animation, maybe there could be found some likeness, at least in the image itself. Let us say, it is a hand drawn animation of the outlines of a ghost on a black surface. We could now compare the two stills. But we won't extract any answers on their impact

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[128] Peirce's two other signs, the *icon* and the *symbol*, Iversen indicates as depending "on similarity" (the *icon*), and "on convention" (the *symbol*) (see Iversen 2012).

on the spectator in a cinematic or phantasmagoric projection, because they, now, do not move (although, we could compare them in a gallery setting). Therefore, I would ask instead, what the essentials to the cinematic and phantasmagoric visuals are. Here, the answer could be found in the respective ways how the stills are set into movement and how they are displayed. In cinema, we know, at least 12 frames per second are necessary for the contemporary (and not especially trained) eye to perceive a series of stills as 'moving images'.[129] With the phantasmagoric visuals there are some more specifics. For the animated slides that already consisted of two or three image-slides, which could be exchanged or combined with each other through mechanisms, we can assume a similar possibility of speed in animating the stills and therewith the same deception of the eye as we have in cinema. But for having a series of moving images, we would need more than two or three animated stills. Consequently, I would suggest two conclusions. First, I could imagine that the smoothness of Robertson's scenes' narratives very much depended on the ability of the spectators to cognitively connect the particular visuals. It would possibly more sufficient to compare them with the *graphic novel* or *comic strip* than with the cinematic visuals, since the former comprise single images that we combine to a coherent story in our imagination (and this works out quite well for many people). Second, I think that in the phantasmagoric performance with its complete darkness in the room, the sudden approach and growth of the projected images together with their unexpected locations of appearance, the sudden hugeness of the displayed spectres, and – maybe the most important factor – the *invisibility of the screen* maybe outweigh some of the absent speed of the cinematic moving image. Considering the before mentioned supposedly 'untrained' eyes of the spectators to moving images, I may put forward the hypothesis that the phantasmagoric projection even tricked the spectator's eye at that time more comprehensively than a current cinematic audience could be tricked with just the speed of subsequent stills on a fixed, visible screen in an incompletely shaded cinematic projection room.[130] Moreover, there were further effects on the spectators that distracted them from focussing on just one event. While an early cinematic audience could feel somehow safe in its certainty that the shocking content will be presented on the distant screen in the front only,[131] a phantasmagoric audience could never be sure where

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[129] Because the eyes in the beginning of the 19th century were not so much trained to speed, maybe a few frames less?

[130] Even if this is now a bit simplified – for the current cinema we have to consider, e.g., SFX (Special Effects) and a much more elaborated control of the camera and a highly increased image sequence (frame rate) as well.

[131] The often and very diversely discussed presumed threat for the early cinematic audience that the displayed subject rushing towards the camera, e.g., the train or vehicle or angry elephant, could rise from the screen and enter the auditorium (see, e.g., Bottomore 2010; Gunning 1993, p. 7f, 1995, p. 117ff), *if* true for some of these early spectators, could have certainly caused shock effects similar to the phantasmagoric triggers.

from they would had to expect the next uncanny surprise. The *Fantasmagorie* operated with supplementary visuals, like the 'ambulant' ghosts above the audience, the *nebulous lantern(s)* within the auditorium, and with the real actor, Diogenes, having only his lantern lit while wandering through the audience's rows.[132] As Elcott remarked, the phantasmagoric setting intends to involve "our bodies directly" (Elcott 2016a, p. 55). Here, also Elsaessers's notions of an 'indefinite time' and 'un-localizability' seem to be very appropriate.[133]

'Indefinite time' clearly does not refer to the duration of the performance. It is arguable, if the latter is comparable between both *dispositifs*. We have to consider the duration of the several scenes separately, on the one hand, and the duration of the whole projection performance, on the one hand. We know from Mannoni that the first event at the Couvent des Capucines started at 7:30pm, while the whole venue was closed when his show ended before 10pm (see Mannoni 2006, p. 158f). This (minus the supposed time the visitors spent in the exhibition) leaves about 1 ½ hours for the phantasmagoric projection show. This appears to be just a bit longer or even equal, if we compare this to cinematic programmes with a lot of shorts that normally are screened for a duration of about one hour to 1 ½ hours. Probably in this is not so much difference to the cinema of attraction programmes, too.

It is now obvious that it does not make any sense to compare both *dispositifs* on the level of the still. Albeit the cinematic film still as well as the phantasmagoric slide *could* be compared with each other, they cannot give answers to their impact or presumable ideology. The projection of the stills – at least in a cinematic or phantasmagoric setting – is absolutely dependent on their environment and the situation. Thus, a comparison of just single elements of both *dispositifs* is not possible, but only of both *dispositifs* in their totality. With this approach, we even find an ideological similarity: The purpose of the whole apparatus to maximize the audience's emotional and sensual attention – in its particular feasibility. An interesting aspect is the similarity in "framing" the attraction (see Gunning 1993, p. 6f), if compared to the early cinema, which is a gimmick by the performer in order to increase the audience's suspension. Robertson's role of a master of ceremonies provided this very move: In announcing the story to be projected next, the casting of spells before summoning a ghost, to end the Fantasmagorie with sudden lighting and at once unveiling the skeleton – all these components point to the later show people, who presented the early films, respectively to the structure of these early films themselves (like, e.g., Méliès' magical trick-films). However, it

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[132] See above FN 81 and FN 86.

[133] See above "Thomas Elsaesser", p. 11.

seems as if the *Fantasmagorie* had much more additional tools at disposal to carry their audience along and to let them forget about space and time during the performance than the cinema of any period.

Last but not least, the soundscape must be considered, too. The early cinema operated very similar to the *Fantasmagorie*, with a master of ceremonies, sometimes with actors, who spoke the texts behind the screen, people, who simulated natural sounds, and background music. Regarding the 'talkies', probably first the Dolby Stereo sound would be interesting to compare to the phantasmagoric and early cinema soundscape. Elsaesser correspondingly seems to comprehend the *phantasmagoric dispositif* as outreaching the *cinematic* (see Elsaesser 2014, p. 69ff), or at least as seriously challenging.

Speaking of tools, I failed to discuss the role of technology so far. It is unquestioned that the development and quality of Robertson's performances and projections are closely joined to the development of technology (the magic lantern, the *nebulous lantern*, the *Megascope*, the argand lamp), Robertson's use of them and their further improvement, and his own inventions (e.g., the *Fantascop* and its enhancements, the *Megascope* for real actors, his other tools like the one for the multiplication of figures and for controlling the lighting and moving of his 'ambulant ghosts'). With his whole show, Robertson – to re-quote Röttger – "made audiences familiar with new technologies of a modernizing age" (Röttger 2017, p. 14). Before Robertson's trial (and probably afterwards, too) people were curious about how he created his apparitions. I wonder – in comparing the phantasmagoric reception to the cinematic reception – if this curiosity in Robertson's techniques could have been as distracting as the visible projection device in the cinema (if we turn round or look into the light beam) or the visible screen (if focusing on it). But I guess not, because Robertson knew how to maintain the spectator's tension and how to distract them. In its consequence, the cinematic illusion (in revealing the machinery) could never be as compete as the phantasmagoric illusion.[134]

In any case, with Baudry, there is to assume an ideological relationship between the spectators and the camera (in cinema) or the projection tools (in both *dispositifs*). A striking difference, for sure, is their tying in between. In the cinema that followed after the 'cinema of attractions', there exists a stronger fixation of the projection tools and of the audience than it is the case with the movable *Fantascop*, and the, indeed, principally seated but sometimes uprising and circulating spectators, together with Robertson's ability to directly react on incidences

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[134] I owe this further thought on my consideration to Gabriele Jutz.

happening in the audience and to interact with his own performance. Gunning adds to this the remark that we should not take the "'puritanism' of apparatus theory" that had "set itself against the visual pleasure and playfulness" (Gunning 2019, p. 41) too serious, as the attraction of the 'uncertainty', the illusion, and *the uncanny* always had been part of the visual and will consistently emerge as alluring themes.

Apart from that, Comolli's notion of society's modes of representation mirrored in the cinematic (see Comolli 2015, p. 283f), seems to be true for the *Fantasmagorie* in looking at the content, especially regarding the themes drawn from well-known political or societal figures, and Robertson's presentation, e.g., in addressing only the male Citizens and Gentlemen, despite the presence of other genders in the audience.

To conclude this chapter, there is a last question to answer: Did Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* have an influence on the societal discourses, like on 'illusionary fraud' and superstition, on science, or on media techniques? Certainly all elements mentioned had an impact on Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* – but the other way round?

Robertson's trial had a huge media coverage, not only because of its entertainment, also, because people were curious about his performance techniques. As soon as Robertson's techniques were revealed due to the disadvantageous outcome of his patent lawsuit, his *Megascope*-able *Fantascop* got produced by several manufacturers and spread all over Europe, even to the USA and Canada.[135] But the *Fantasmagorie* itself could not be reproduced that easily. It required not only Robertson's skills, techniques, and personality. Its impression equally depended on the location and the whole setting that Robertson had found and

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[135] Robertson reports this situation from his point of view: "From that moment, the fantasmagorie became a very common object; and executed by the fantasmagores of all classes, Paris resembled the Champs-Elysées for the quantity of shadows that inhabited it, and it only depended on a somewhat metaphorical imagination to transform the Seine into the river Lethe; for the fantasmagores assembled mainly on its banks, and there was no quay, as Ducray-Duménil says somewhere, which did not offer you a small ghost at the end of a very dark corridor, at the top of a tortuous staircase.
The phantom machines were from then on an object of commerce for Paris and London; the Dumotiez brothers and the English opticians sent several thousand of them throughout Europe. The smallest amateur of physics, in all the countries, had his fantasmagorie. I have found these carriage boxes, made in Paris, in the depths of Russia, in Odessa, and from the borders of Siberia to the extremity of Spain, even in Ceuta. These devices, which require a little physical theory and instruction, were, for the most part, useless furniture in the hands of the purchasers, and even worthless in their eyes, as soon as they knew the impossibility of executing the effects I represented. However simple, indeed, a general process may be, experience, constant research, the means suggested by the complete possession of a science, and the costly tests to which one subjects his new ideas, always establish in favour of him who is endowed with these advantages a superiority of execution and a variety of results, which simple imitators cannot approach. The theory of the fantasmagorie which I am about to expound, several experiments in optics, and a few letters from an enlightened amateur, which I have put aside for the purpose of concluding this volume, will prove that the things which are believed to be easy, when they are discovered, are not, however, obtained by the inventor without great difficulty." (Robertson 1831, p. 320-322 [DeepL]).

established in the location of the abandoned Capuchin nuns' monastery, including his exhibition with his bizarre scientific demonstrations, and its optical and audible illusions.[136]

Robertson's galvanism experiments, his friendship with Volta and their joint tests on electricity and Volta's battery, and Robertson's own physical and chemical demonstrations and papers, also led to an increased scientific exchange between the *Institut National des Sciences et Arts* and Volta. Likewise, a greater interest in these newly discovered forces had not only aroused in scientific circles, but generally in society – not least through his demonstrations during his show (see Robertson 1831, p. 229–265).

The acceptance of the illusory arts changed, too. Gunning gives some very interesting examples on this topic:

> Curiously, within a traditional cultural optics the conjurer and the juggler compose a single figure, both equally condemned as untrustworthy and potentially evil. Before the nineteenth century, legal, religious and even philosophic institutions condemned the juggler as passionately as the conjurer; sleight of hand generated as much anxiety as (false ?) claims of supernatural power. As Stafford points out, manual facility even in the arts was often viewed with suspicion, often seen as a tool of deception. I think that within the suspicion of the cinematic apparatus we find a similar anxiety about the nature of an art of vision that is also, as a mechanical art, quicker than the eye, able to make us see things we know aren't there. Linking the cinema with the juggler, we might linger over one venerable trick which predates, but I think anticipates, the Phantasmagoria: the combination of manual dexterity and visual illusion. (Gunning 2019, p. 41)

We could assume that Robertson's show would not have been that well visited, if there still had been such an anxiety towards illusory tricks. Probably, Robertson had, in fact, a certain impact on rendering the illusory and conjuring arts socially acceptable.

I guess I could now verify my early assumption above[137] that Manovič's *media as a cultural interface* correspondingly is a very appropriate description for the *Fantasmagorie*, and I would understand this cultural interface as inclusive of all ideological aspects. This cultural interface is not only a medium that sustains all these societal and media-technological developments, it is an active and productive instrument that substantially contributes to their progress.

In the next chapter I would like to put my focus on the receptors' side. I will discuss some spectator's reviews and the psychology of reception with an anew attention on *the uncanny*.

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[136] I am also deeply thankful to Gabriele Jutz for her comment, if this would actually suggest a 'side-specifity' of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*. Because then, it would confute the above proposed approval of Elsaesser's 'ubiquity' and 'un-located situatedness' for the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. I think, side-specifity is partially true for Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, but only in the sense of the historical heritage that the location possibly was emitting (if people still thought of the former terror or if they could even 'sense' this history). Otherwise, the place could have been rebuilt everywhere in the same structure, e.g., with coulisses. This specific location, the abandoned Capuchin nuns' monastery, was only one of a multiplicity of elements that constituted the *Fantasmagorie* and did not hinder other phantasmagorias to be successful as well, e.g. De Phillipsthall's *Phantasmagoria* in England.

[137] See above, p. 55.

3.3 Modes of Perception

In the previous chapter it was necessary to look at the modes of construction, because they – I will repeat Feagin's quote from above – "*makes us* sensitive to various things, so that we *come to* have the agitations and/or make the evaluations that we do" (Feagin 1992, p. 76 [italics in the text]). As we have seen in the uses of the tools, Robertson's whole setting aimed at a maximization of an overall sensory and emotional impact on his audience: When the spectators had made their way across tomb stones and had already seen and experienced some perplexing oddities in the 'scientific' exhibition, the eerie sound of a glass harmonica directed them to the main auditorium where the phantasmagoric performance took place. This, all together, created peculiar anticipations and suspense.

How Robertson's performances were affecting all the senses and rational thought is probably best described in the following review:

> It is certain that the illusion is complete. The total darkness of the place, the choice of images, the astonishing magic of their truly terrifying growth, the conjuring which accompanies them, everything combines to strike your imagination, and to seize exclusively all your observational senses. Reason has told you well that these are mere phantoms, catoptric tricks devised with artistry, carried out with skill, presented with intelligence, your weakened brain can only believe what it is made to see, and we believe ourselves to be transported into another world and into other centuries. (Mannoni 2006, p. 162)[138]

Regarding the question, why an audience of the *Fantasmagorie* would have wanted to experience *the uncanny* and to get confronted with all sorts of spectres and scary illusions, we have found some answers by Kant, Carrol, Tudor, Feagin, Smuts, Ndalianis, and Walschburger: One reason could have been, for example, curiosity. This drive, again, could have had various reasons: A delight in testing one's own abilities of sensory perception by investigating very elaborate performed sensorial illusions; a curiosity to look through the tricks behind these illusions; to see for oneself what the famous show was about; or just having an affinity to occult content or a delight in uncanny entertainment and in getting physically and emotionally stimulated. The well visited phantasmagoric show was, nonetheless, a 'safe space' where people could 'playfully' confront themselves with spooky content. They could have used the attendance of the *Fantasmagorie* to make sense of their world, to compare their experiences, worldviews, and beliefs with the presented subjects. They, maybe, wanted to find out, what seemed scary for the moment, when being presented with Robertson's illusions, and what the

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[138] This review was written by the lawyer Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière (1758-1837), who initiated the first Gourmand Guide, the *Almanach des Gourmands* (1803-1812) and was most influential for the 19th century gastronomy. His review on the Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, here quoted by Mannoni, is from the *Courrier des Spectacles*, 1092 (7 March 1800), p. 3.

things to be scared of in reality are, i.e., to confront themselves with the experience of illusionary uncanniness and to integrate this experience into their 'real' lives. Possibly, some also aimed to overlie and ban some inner phantoms (e.g., the experienced terror during the time of the Revolution) with Robertson's sudden and terrifying ones (e.g., Robespierre's ghost). Last but not least, attending the show was a social event, while the ways of reception and the reactions on the show were socially informed as well. These latter are the main aspects the analysis of this section will focus on.

3.3.1   The Spectators' Reviews

The show was announced by Robertson to be suitable for everyone, including women and children. Still, Robertson discusses this in his *Mémoires* in quoting the concerned 'citizen Molin', who questioned the suitability of the show for women and children (see Robertson 1831, p. 212ff). The first of these concerns worried about the darkness of the auditorium that could lead to sexually motivated assaults against women.[139] The second one applied to pregnant women, as the induced visual and acoustic shocks by the phantasmagoric performance were suspected to lead to a miscarriage. And the third regarded "the dangerous impressions […] on children" (ibid. p. 214 [translation V.W.]). Robertson replies to these concerns that the show admittedly affected women more intensely than his male spectators. But as he repeatedly reminded his spectators that they were presented with illusions only, and because of the experience within a large crowd of fellow spectators, there was no need to be afraid of "disastrous implications" (ibid. p. 213 [translation V.W.]). Though, he admits that once, indeed, a women became ill, not because of some spectres, but because of the eerie sound of the glass harmonica:

> It was not the fault of the ghosts: only the too soft and penetrating sounds of the harmonica gave rise to it. One can imagine, however, what strong emotion this accident caused, in the middle of a deep darkness, and in the expectation of the spectres, whose approach was already announced by a melody marked by sadness! (ibid. p. 214 [DeepL])

Here, Robertson – besides putting the blame for the woman's nervous breakdown on the harmonica's sounds, as if it had nothing to do with his show directly – does not miss the opportunity to emphasize anyway, just one sentence later, the successful impact of the before mentioned affection and suspense intensifiers: The overall darkness and the enhancement of the audience's tension through the glass harmonica's sounds.

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[139] If we have a close look at Lejeune's engraving of the *Fantasmagorie* (see fig. 11) the first one of Mr. Molin's concerns both is pictured.

Regarding the other concerns, Robertson denies that any sexual assault against women could have seriously occurred (only once as a joke by a lady) (see ibid. p. 215f). On any possible dangerous side effect of this show on children he does not comment at all.

Before presenting some spectator's reviews, first, I would like to give an idea on how Robertson operated with his tools to enhance the uncanniness of his figures (here he discusses the effect of his ambulant ghosts) and how he himself estimates his audience's experiences:

> What would the spectators say if these shadows and goblins seemed to be able to appear only in the same corners of the room? They would be taken for inanimate spectres, and for immobile simulacra; their reputation as revenants would be lost, and people would rightly laugh at these dead who want to give themselves the air of the living. But the most indiscreet and boldest of spectators are silent when they see the shadows appear unexpectedly in their midst; when they turn round they find themselves almost in the arms of a ghost, or when, looking up, they see it fluttering over their heads. How often the ladies, at the sight of the gloomy owl, or of the skull walking over the audience, have uttered a sudden cry. However, there were also a few daring people in the assembly: Diogenes, with his lantern, advanced among the spectators, and it was not uncommon to see imprudent people trying to seize his light; but suddenly the philosopher disappeared, and went to write on the wall, at the back of the room, these sardonic words: I am looking for a man. (ibid. p. 330f [DeepL])

Indeed, the media and cultural studies scholar Gunnar Schmidt points to the fact that there are several records of some spectators' behaviour, for example of loudly emotional expressions (Schmidt 2011, 13f) as well as of physical attempts to investigate the imaginative immateriality of the presented 'ghosts' (Mannoni 2006, p. 162). The projections could have been experienced from a mere distanced, more or less 'objective' position, and similarly as an emotional and physical overwhelming experience.

Robertson gathered some very sympathetic reviews that were stressing out the quality of his entertainment. The ones that were quoted in Robertson's *Mémoires* assumedly had been chosen by him in order to underline his respectability, for example, one that described his show as "the spectacle one can only be greatly amused, while learning to no longer fear revenants" (Robertson 1831, p. 181 [DeepL]).[140] Another reviewer writes about Robertson's performance that it was in such way

> marvellous, not that which abuses words, and creates imaginary worlds to frighten weak souls, but that marvellous which strikes, astonishes, and leaves to the imagination the task of searching, commenting and guessing. […]
> What would be the horror of the isolated spectator if, suddenly led into the room of phantasmagorical experiences, surrounded by the images of death, his imagination struck by the fear of invisible beings, he heard the plaintive and funereal sounds of the harmonica, and saw the threatening spectre appear! I know that such a spectacle would be prohibited by a wise and vigilant police force; but if the spectator could place himself in such a position, and in spite of

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[140] This review on the Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* was written by a Mister Aubin, from the *Journal de Paris*, 4th Pluviose year VII (23 Jan 1798).

the crowd which surrounds him, penetrate the mysteries which are presented to him, I believe that the phantasmagoric shadows could surprise and amaze him. (ibid. p. 208f [DeepL])[141]

Robertson's reviewers seemed to have unanimously appreciated his show. Certainly, writing a letter to the editor involved to present one's best side, i.e., a self-portrayal of a cultivated and educated person, who is capable to reflect on this kind of entertainment and to allow oneself to enjoy it by means of a decent inner distance. The following report exemplifies this:

> A good harmonica player finally opens the final part of the show, the ghostly apparitions, calling into a separate burial chamber lined with boy [cotton fabric; V.W.] and dimly lit by a funeral lamp. The lamp suddenly goes out, and now the harbingers of the graves appear, night owls, free-floating, with a softly audible flapping of wings; after them the ghosts of heroes and great men. Amid thunderclaps, clanking chains, hisses of flame and howls of the raging army, spirits of hell rise, and Robespierre's blood figure. The whole of this illusion is created with inventive art, the figures stand out clearly and sharply against the black background, and the ideas of a conflagration and the burning mouth of hell create a striking and picturesque effect. (Vogl-Bienek 1994, p. 18 [DeepL; revised V.W.])[142]

Except the short note by Grimod de la Reynière presented above, we probably would not be able to find many published records that would honestly admit one's *own* actual (maybe less honourable) emotional experience in all its details. But there are some stories on *other* spectators' reactions and behaviour, like their rising to embrace the presented ghost or, on the opposite, fleeing the auditorium after having recognized a spectre as personally familiar (see Robertson 1831, p. 217). And there exists, as already discussed, the documentation of Robertson's examples of some of his audience's reactions, like screams, or sometimes even taking the projections for real. Furthermore, even if it is not conveyed on whose account Lejeune's engraving (see fig. 11) is based on, it in any case demonstrates different presumable reactions to the projections: astonishment, shock, laughter, agitation, aggression, and great fear.

To summarize, it does not seem possible to get any historic, authentic, and comprehensive account on how Robertson's audiences really perceived the *Fantasmagorie*. The references that we *do* get are not separable from their social environment's habits and conventions at that time. Admittedly, the spectators were likewise entangled in these social constructs and probably accordingly restricted in the publicly uttering of their experience, i.e., they will have been informed by socially acceptable modes. How the inner, actual perception of individual spectators may have been, unfortunately, is not ascertainable.

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[141] This review was written by a Mister M. Barbié de Bercenay. Unfortunately, Robertson does not provide any reference of the quote.

[142] The quote is taken by Vogl-Bienek from Dr. F.J.L. Meyer, *Briefe aus der Hauptstadt und dem Inneren Frankreichs Band I*, Tübingen 1802, p. 189ff.

3.3.2 Related Aspects to the Spectators' Reception

In the following I would like to have a closer look on some related aspects to the spectator's modes of reception. I will not repeat the speculative and mainly psychological and philosophical reasons for why the spectators presumably were interested in the show at all. Instead, I will concentrate on the aspects, some of the above presented theories on the *cinematic* and *phantasmagoric dispositifs* suggested, and with them, connect to the before mentioned philosophical or psychological accounts.

Elsaesser, for example, reminds us of the philosopher Walter Benjamin's (1892-1940) "influential concept of the optical unconscious and his notion that cinema 'trains' the senses, in order for us to cope with the shocks and traumata of modern urban life" (Elsaesser 2014, p. 54). That is, the shocking (visual) elements of the cinema (here: the phantasmagoria), superimpose the visual shocks of the daily urban life. It could make a positive difference to share these experiences publicly instead of keeping them private. These notions join neatly with the theories of 'making sense of the world' and of mental hygiene, on the one hand, and they also open up the discourses on modern (urban) life, speed, and alienation, on the other hand.

Belting differentiates between the *medium*, i.e., the carrier of the visual content, and the spectator's body that perceives images from the external source with its senses, but adjusts them with inner, mental images. Neither the way we compare the inner images with the perceived ones, nor the provided images themselves can be separable from culture. Everything is socio-politically and ideologically informed, as Comolli has theorized. Clearly, there is a strong interaction and mutual influence of what is represented and of what is perceived.

The *Fantasmagorie* is an excellent example of Comolli's und Belting's considerations. It is obvious that the projected content was deeply rooted in the culture and in the society back then, and that it likewise delivered what people were interested in and asked for. It established an art form of its own that became a kind of societal, cultural event. Here, again, Manovič's term of the *cultural interface*, is precisely accurate and actively productive.

The emotional responses in confrontation with the immediacy of the apparitions refer to the additional disposition and preparedness (or, as I have called it before, 'attunement'), that had already been induced by Robertson with his overall enhancement of sensual arousal before the actual phantasmagoric projections, and correspondingly derived from a fact, several authors are pointing to: the efforts of the Enlightenment, secularism, and science did not erase the former

horror of the Revolution, superstition, and the external and internal ghosts. Elcott states that "media images are not radically separated from human bodies […]. […] [H]uman beings and images are assembled in a common space and time" (Elcott 2016a, p. 55), which he identified as the "paradoxical presence" of the phantasmagoric space (see ibid. p. 58). This spatial entanglement of performed visuals and objects with the spectator's bodies, this forcefulness that did not easily allow for experiencing the show from a mere, uninvolved distance, also seems to be a precondition of the illusions' shifting from the external space to the inner realms of the mind itself, as analysed by the literary theorist Terry Castle (1953) (see Castle 1988, p. 30f). That is, the spectators did not (only) intentionally become part of the operation of the apparatus itself. The images seemed to be detached from any material support (although Schmidt stresses that witnesses in agreement reported on the smoky substance of the apparitions (see Schmidt 2011, p. 16)), and to intrude the audience's space. With the total darkness and the visual appearances that approached fast and grew huge, the perceptions got constricted, controlled, and focused, as the visual studies and art history scholar Oliver Grau (*1965) explains (see Grau 2007, p. 147). The non-existent separation of the projected images and the audience's space led the spectators to involuntarily becoming part of the *Fantasmagorie*: the illusions were perceived as actual 'ghosts' and not as simple projected and animated paintings. As theorized by Kant, 'reality' is only to perceive via the human mind, the entrapment into a primarily sensorial perception would lead to misestimation. The delight – or maybe better the entanglement – in the illusion would weaken the spectator's rational method of approach and exchange it for the subliminal. Here *the uncanny* comes into play, as it derives from a state of disorientation. On the one hand, *the uncanny* refers to the sublime, and, on the other hand, to the unknown, suppressed by rational thought. Robertson individually responded to the reactions of his audience to even increase this suppression of cognitive reflection by means of his tools.

As Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* displayed other narratives than uncanny ones as well, it could be discussed, if *the uncanny* is inherent in the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. But maybe, this is a misconception. Or a question of the weight one wants to put on the narratives that, I would argue, only represented a fraction of the whole show. I would even claim that the narratives only operated as a lubricant or as a tray for the whole performance's flow and were of no significance to the actually emotional and physical impact of the show. As my analyses of the *Fantasmagorie* showed so far, the effects essentially resulted from Robertson's efforts to produce disorientation and suspense in the spectators that then allowed for a more easy stimulation of their senses through his performance techniques. Especially the alternation of deeply disturbing and delightful scenes, and with this, the induced increase of uncanniness after

short states of relaxation, helped to stir the spectators' nervous systems, which, then, presumably led to an overweight of the feelings of uncanniness. Therefore, I would suggest that *the uncanny* in fact *is* an immanent element of the *phantasmagorical dispositif*.

Due to its special mode of projecting the visuals, furthermore, the phantasmagoria became an explanation for new visual experiences due to modern life. To maybe better illustrate the impact that the phantasmagoria had on the collective visual experience (at least on them who had experienced a phantasmagoric show), Gunning recalls a 'reversed' example provided by the early cinema historian Stephen Bottomore, where a witness of a new train railway in 1830 describes the visual perception of the speed of the railway's trains: "A spectator observing their approach, when at extreme speed, can scarcely divest himself on the idea that they are not enlarging and increasing in size rather than moving. I know not how to explain my meaning better, than by referring to the enlargement of objects in a Phantasmagoria" (Bottomore 2010, p. 191).[143]

Gunning bridges Bottomore's quote with the above mentioned discourse Benjamin had nudged for philosophy, cultural studies, and media history:

> A number of early film historians, including myself, have claimed that the devices of early cinema might be approached as responses to new sensory demands of a modern environment, providing a context in which speed and immediate transitions, the shocks of modernity such as railway travel, might be mediated and represented by the direct confrontations characterizing many cinematic attractions – such as the onrushing trains and motorcars or pistols shot at close range mentioned earlier. In this eyewitness account we seem to encounter, as Bottomore observed in a slightly different manner, a reversal: a new sensory experience, the unaccustomed speed of an onrushing locomotive, could be initially processed in terms of the uncanny visual effect of the Phantasmagoria. The intensity of this new experience of mechanized speed and the disorientation it sowed in its wake should not be underestimated. (Gunning 2019, p. 36)

I regard Bottomore's and Gunning's notions as extremely interesting, as they demonstrate that we do not only explain ourselves our experiences with new forms of media in comparing them to our knowledge of the 'real' world, but correspondingly the other way round: explaining new visual (and most likely also audible) experiences of the 'real' world in referring to common media experiences,[144] or, regarding the phantasmagoria, *even to illusions*.

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[143] Here, Bottomore quotes Richard. D. Altick, *The Shows of London*, 1978, p. 219.

[144] This was true for other media, too, e.g., the public experience with early stereoscopic media, like playful devices for home entertainment or the *Kaiserpanorama* (a peepshow for several people in the shape of a large cylindrical box with seats before every binoculars that allowed for collectively enjoying one 3D scene each for a certain amount of time. After a while, an inside located motor switched for every binoculars to the next scene. There were as many scenes as binoculars, mounted on a rotating circle, so that for every binoculars an individual scene was displayed). According to Elsaesser "the practice was sufficiently remembered and embedded in the culture for the device itself to serve as a telling metaphor" (Elsaesser 2016, p. 285).

This may as well be the reason for the phenomenon that the symbolism of the phantasmagoria lived on as independent term, developing its specific meaning in its different contexts, but always in the sense of *illusion*. Gunning adds to this his criticism on Baudry and the apparatus theory:

> Rather than overturning or even questioning the dichotomy between perception and reality that broods over Western metaphysics, the ideological critique of the apparatus claimed the heritage of dispelling illusion and liberation from enthrallment, which this myth made foundational. In this it allied itself with the Enlightenment aspect of much of Marxist thought which also posed optical devices, whether the camera obscura or the Phantasmagoria, as emblems of the misrecognition of reality through the acceptance of a manipulated illusion for the real state of things. (ibid. p. 38)

Further, Gunning points out that "[o]ptical illusions form a complex figure, whose power may not lie primarily in the ability to fool someone into taking them for 'reality'. Rather they confound habitual attitudes towards perception, indeed sowing doubts about the nature of reality" (ibid. p. 40). Comolli similarly says:

> Fictional deceits, contrary to many other systems of illusions, are interesting in that they can function only from the clear designation of their deceptive character. There is no uncertainty, no mistake, no misunderstanding or manipulation. There is ambivalence, play. The spectacle is always a game, requiring the spectators' participation not as "passive," "alienated" consumers, but as players, accomplices, masters of the game even if they are also what is at stake. […] Different in this to ideological and political representations, spectatorial representations declare their existence as simulacrum and, on that contractual basis, invite the spectator to *use* the simulacrum to fool him or herself. Never "passive," the spectator works. […] It is first of all and just as much, if not more, to play the game, to fool him or herself out of pleasure […]. (Comolli 2015, p. 288f [italics in the text])

Yet, the phantasmagoric space seemed to have been much more effective for *making the visitors forget where they are* than a cinematic (or exhibition) space as such could ever provide.

To conclude this passage and at once to bridge this chapter with the following one, I would like to quote Mannoni once more:

> Robertson was an incomplete priest, a lapsed scientist, and a reed in the political wind (his shows flattered every change of regime), but he captured the attention of thousands with his animated projected images. He did not invent the phantasmagoria, but he knew how to draw every possibility out of a method of projection which was 'in the spirit of the age', as would later be said on the arrival of cinema. It was only the likes of Robertson and Méliès who were able to open up the fields of artistic creation to simple mechanical inventions. (Mannoni 2006, p. 175)

These 'simple mechanical inventions' will be examined next.

4. Phantasmagoric Media-and Performance Techniques

As it had been illustrated above, the *Fantasmagorie* was extraordinarily successful, the media-techniques of the *phantasmagoria* were even used to describe the visual appearance of the new invented transportation facilities' speed, and the term *phantasmagoria* has survived as a metaphor until today. The conceptual components on the producer's side and the multitude of spectators with their particular involvement had led to this success.

To sum up: The medium in this very form (with sudden, immediately approaching and disappearing animations directly in front of the audience without any visible material support) was new, the sources of the appearances were hidden and therefore fascinating, while the result was scary. It played with these spooky elements, which may be comparable to an attraction like a 'ghost train' in a historic amusement park. Nevertheless, the performances seem to have had a much stronger physical and emotional impact on the contemporary audience than they would have on a today's audience.

Which exactly were Robertson's performance-techniques?

The room was fully darkened. By the operator the projection device – while either projecting a glass slide or object – was moved forwards and backwards on its rails behind the semi-transparent screen, invisible for the audience. With this, the image seemed to move and was variable in size (growing from nearly invisible, i.e. the actual size of the slide, when the *Fantascop* was placed at about 25 cm distance to the screen, to about five metres height, if moved to about three metres distance from the screen) (see Robertson 1831, p. 329) and shape (through animated slices/objects). The focal length of the lenses and the amount of light were adjusted in relation to the movement of the device to keep the images' sharpness and brightness. Additionally, the images or object mostly were animated, in order to meet the requirements of the show's choreography. A second magic lantern directed from the audience's side towards the screen, hidden in a case, provided some of the backgrounds (like the sky, a graveyard, or a cloister).[145] Due to the projection on smoke the projected images gave an impression of three-dimensionality.

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[145] Barber points out that "[t]he first projection that the audience saw at the Fantasmagorie was a lightning-filled sky: this projection probably made use of the two-lantern technique, one lantern displaying the sky and the other the bolts of lightning. Then ghosts and skeletons were seen to approach and recede. Transformation occurred when a figure dwindled in size and disappeared but then gradually reappeared in another form. In this way, the Three Graces, for example, were changed into skeletons" (Barber 1989, p. 77).

Because everything of the glass slices – outside the very detailed and brightly painted motive – was covered in black paint, the projected figures or objects appeared as independently acting entities, and because the screen was invisible due to the darkness and its semi-transparent texture, they seemed to arise in the room without any material support. Within this setting and with these operations, the *Fantascop* created the illusion of absolute liveliness of the projected images.

Each scene had to be well-choreographed, exactly timed, and controlled as otherwise the performance would not have been convincing.

Robertson aimed to stir the spectators' nervous systems in inducing disorientation and suspense and to hugely stimulate their senses through his performance techniques to produce an atmosphere of uncanniness: the emergence of the visuals, ambulant props, and the real actor were sudden and fast, unpredictable in size and time and direction; a huge action radius (all the sides and from above); the appearances seemingly as autonomously acting entities; flashing lights, eerie and disturbing sounds.

All mentioned researchers concerned with the phantasmagoria emphasize the specifics that first turned a magic lantern show into a phantasmagoric show: The gothic location with its dark and mystical decorations; the theatrical light and sound effects, the glass-harmonica-play, and the fully darkened spectator's auditorium that all together produced an eerie atmosphere; the hidden machinery and advanced lanterns, allowing for sudden and fast approaching and rising slide projections that – embedded in a black, opaque surface and projected onto a hardly noticeable screen – seem to act freely in the realm of the spectators; the additional techniques like the use of shadow play, real actors, projecting on smoke directly next to the audience, sending 'ghosts' through the room above the audience by movable masks that could be quickly lit and dim out; finally, the allocution and speeches of the master of ceremonies, who pretended to reveal his 'optical tricks' and at the same time implied the realness of the spectres. To this, I would add the exhibition with the displayed curiosities and optical illusions, and the physical/chemical experiments presented by Robertson. In his *Mémoires*, Robertson reveals some of these exhibits' very interesting constructions (see ibid. p. 339f, 344-347, 349-354) and some of his performance tools' functioning (see ibid. p. 336-339). Here, I did concentrate on the latter, only.

How did the phantasmagoric media-techniques further develop?

One of the most important enhancements were the *dissolving views*, a technique that required at least either two magic lanterns or one magic lantern with two lens tubes, aligned to project onto the exact same spot, which allowed to fade from one image into another (see fig. 13). For this, two (or more) identical slides have to be painted (or later be printed on) with only slight differences of the motive, e.g., in colouring the seasons or day- and night-time. Then, with a second magic lantern the first projected image crossfades to the second one. There was a shutter involved between exchanging the (especially animation-) slides, for the eyes not to recognize the changing, only the result (the motive in a slightly other appearance). With this diaphragm "[…] light was slowly stopped down on one lens and one image and brought up on another, with perfect registration, so that the second image slowly – almost magically – replaced the first on the illuminated screen" (Marsh 2015, p. 22).[146] Combined with animated slides, the effect was very appealing. This qualified the magic lantern to become a commonly used tool for shows and performances, but also for educational or scientific lectures and presentations.[147] Moreover, the invention of printing photographic images on glass slides and the so called *Life model slides*,[148] helped the medium of projection via a magic lantern to survive quite some time aside from early cinema.
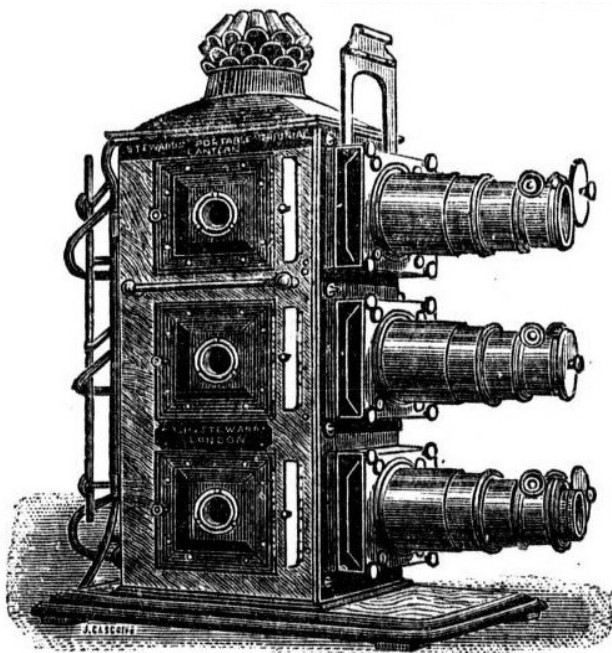

Fig. 13: Tripple magic lantern for dissolving views (1886)[149]

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[146] Presumably it was also more noiseless than the changing of the photographic slides by a 20th century slide projector.

[147] *Dissolving views* had become the state of the art in lanternism around the1840s (see Marsh 2015).

[148] *Life model slides* were industrially manufactured photographic and narrative lantern slide series (see Vogl-Bienek 1994, p. 26f).

[149] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Magiclantern.jpg, accessed 19.08.2021, 11:36.

Gunning points to the fact that if "we think more broadly about optical devices and the wonder they aspire to create, we do not necessarily need to replace previous historical models, but we can rather supplement them with new perspectives that open onto new theoretical possibilities" (Gunning 2019, p. 33). For that reason, Gunning suggests to think within the frame of "cultural optics" (see ibid.). Albeit he defines his for sure wisely chosen term very coherently, I would rather suggest to agree on 'the art of projection', as, to me, Gunning's term seems too wide-ranging if his elaborate definition for 'cultural optics' is not provided right away with the term. The media-technique of *projection* may be easier to relate to as a concept due to own experiences and ideas of its functioning. Consequently, I will rather refer to 'projection' respective the 'art of projection' than to Gunning's term. In addition, I will mainly concentrate on the *phantasmagoric dispositif* and only rudimentary on the *cinematic dispositif*. I will neglect the development that projection devises took in capturing the domestic environments, as Elcott has demonstrated (see Elcott 2016a, p. 51ff).

In the following passage I would like to present the history of some of these contemporary projection techniques.

4.1   The Art of Projection

Vogl-Bienek identifies the beginning of the evolution of the *art of projection* in the "live performances with the magic lantern: carefully arranged image sequences projected on screen, interspersed with colourful visual effects and dissolves from one image to the next" (Vogl-Bienek 2014, p. 35). Particularly geographic lectures were very popular (see ibid. p. 19). He demonstrates that in the 19th century the development of projection art to become a mass medium very much depended on social (mostly religious) organizations, who sought to entertain, but also to prevent people to become addicted to vice through visual educational messages.[150] Besides this, magic lantern projections were frequently used for religious purposes, e.g., in church service providing visualization of biblical content or the chants' texts (see ibid. p. 24f).

Some intermediate media-techniques that involved projection, were the stage based inventions of, for instance, the ghost ship projections, Pepper's Ghost, and, based on the Pepper's Ghost technique, the Alabaster (or Stereoplastics or Kinoplastikon) that Elcott

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[150] Their main target group were the poor, and their primary topic the danger of alcoholism (see Vogl-Bienek 1994, p. 24; Heard and Crangle 2005).

identifies as predecessor for the development of holograms and Augmented Reality (AR).[151] According to Elcott, the 'new' media techniques like holograms, AR, and Virtual Reality (VR) appear to be exceptionally phantasmagoric (see Elcott 2016a, p. 46). This is a plea, I would especially like to highlight and to also link with Elsaesser, who confirms this notion in stating: "Rather than speak of a 'return' of 3D, it is best to once more invoke the logic of the supplement, with 3D remaining invisible or un(re)marked because of particular historical or ideological pressures, but always inherent in both still and moving pictures" (Elsaesser 2016, p. 281). Artificial 3D had been there since the *nebulous lantern* and AR and VR was already practiced by Robertson, with the only difference that no prosthetic device was needed (no stereoscopic glasses, not headsets, no gloves), only a completely darkened room, an invisible screen, smoke, back-projection, one or more concave mirrors, and some lit or phosphorescent props. This becomes even more obvious when the reversed term *real virtuality* is used.

4.1.1 Intermediate Media-Techniques for the Art of Projection

In 1823 the optician Philip Carpenter (1776-1833) invented a process, how to print an outline onto glass slides, which made the production of dissolving views much easier (see Heard 2001, p. 246f) and, overall, exact: when dissolving from one image into the next the outlines seemed to stay the same, only colours and additional alterations to the images nearly magically changed.

Childe, the slide painter of De Phillipsthall, created a *ghost ship effect* for the theatre play *The Flying Dutchman* in 1827 to be projected on stage, which became very popular also for dissolving views' shows (see ibid. p. 249).

In the theatres, very large and – due to the invention of lime light (a block of calcium oxide was heated and could reach the intensity of up to 1000 candles) in 1825[152] – powerful magic lanterns with at least two lens tubes each allowed for "a full programme of repeated demonstrations, conjuring displays, concerts and performances with breathtaking optical effects" (see ibid. p. 270f), which attracted a large audience. Heard exemplifies further for the *Royal Polytechnic Institution* in London:

> There were illustrated expeditions with such natural wonders as the aurora borealis and volcanic eruptions brought ingeniously to life. There were pictorial accounts of recent foreign skirmished or chapters from the nation's history, compete with canon fire, explosions and similar sound effects provided by an army of percussionists hidden behind the screen. On a more lyrical note,

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[151] See a more detailed presentation of the mentioned projection techniques in the next passage below.

[152] See https://www.luikerwaal.com/newframe_uk.htm?/licht_uk.htm, accessed 08.08.2021, 15:00.

the venue staged frequently concerts of specially commissioned music inspired by classical operas or epic poetry, such as the works of Sir Walter Scott. These were often presented with full orchestra and chorus and to the visual accompaniment of slow dissolving pastoral or dramatic scenes, some with built-in mechanical effects. (ibid. p. 271)

A next invention was the so called *Pepper's Ghost* effect, named after the director of the *Royal Polytechnic Institution* since 1852, the scientist John Henry Pepper (1821-1900).[153] Essentially, this effect had been invented by the engineer Henry Dircks (1806-1873) in 1858. No other investor but Pepper dared to translate the concept of Dircks' models to an actual stage. The first *Pepper's Ghost* effect was presented at the *Royal Polytechnic Institution's* stage in December 1862 with the writer Charles Dicken's (1812-1870) play *The Haunted Man* (1848). Dircks and Pepper finally patented the concept together in 1863, though, Pepper gained exclusively the licenses' profits.

THE MAGIC LANTERN, IN ITS APPLICATION TO THE MODERN METHOD OF RAISING A GHOST.
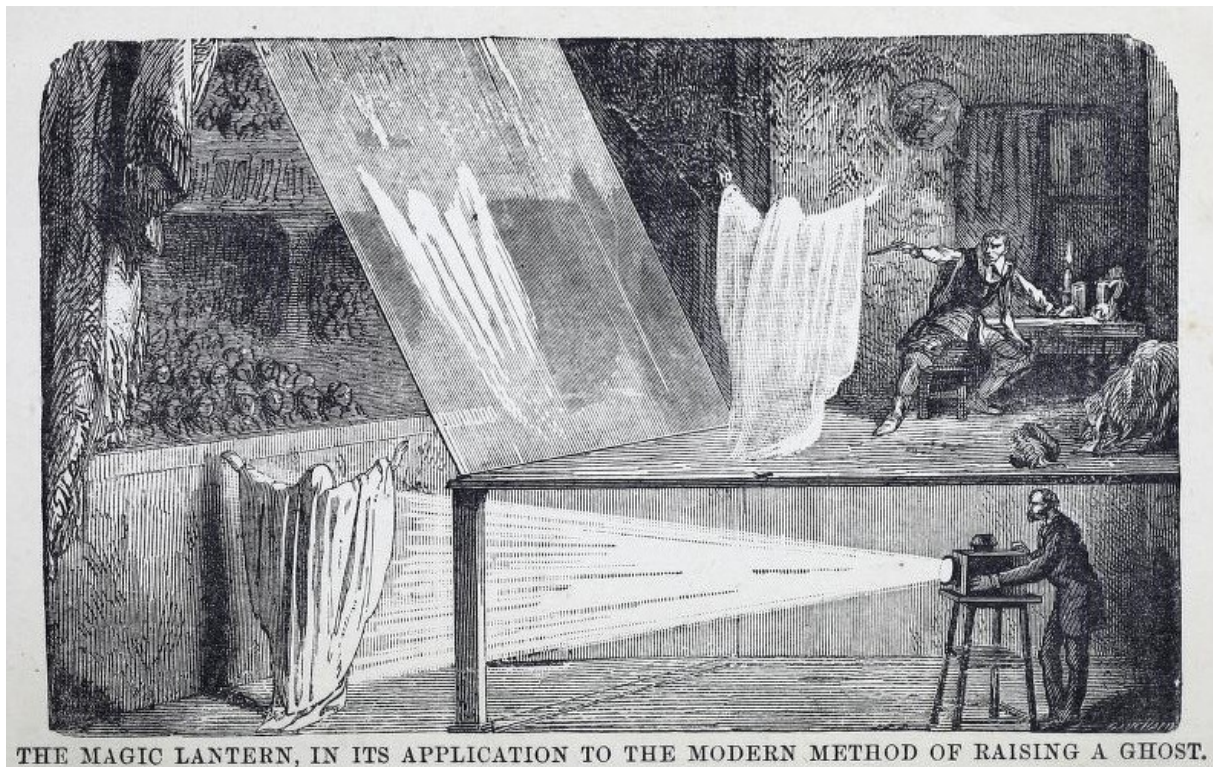
Fig. 14a: *Pepper's Ghost Effect* (since 1862)[154]

For the *Pepper's Ghost* effect, the stage needed to provide a concealed orchestra pit, open to the sub-stage area, where the actual actor, playing the ghost, was illuminated (towards a black

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background) and mirrored on an huge glass plate at the front of the stage angled about 30° towards the audience. "The proportion of light and dark controlled the reflectivity or 'silvering' of the glass screen" (Elcott 2016b, p. 95) and it was necessary to darken the background behind the actor with the help of black paint (as it was common for the phantasmagoric slides) or a black cloth (as it was used in the inside of the *Megascope*), to avoid the actor's shadow to being displayed as well (see fig. 14a).

Another method was introduced by the English magician Alfred Silvester a.k.a Fakir of Oolu (1831-1886), who used a mirror in the lower stage (see fig. 14b). Both methods produced for the audience the illusion as if the 'ghost' would, in fact, stand *on* the stage, where it seemingly interacted with the (other) actors on stage.
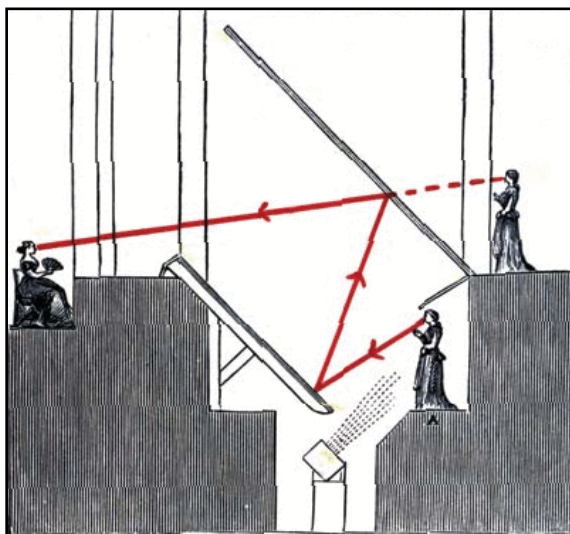
Fig. 14b: *Pepper's Ghost Effect* (with Silvester's mirror, since 1863)[155]

During the times of early cinema, further stage effects derived from the Pepper's Ghost technique, like the film pioneer Oskar Eduard Messter's (1866-1943) *Alabaster* (since 1908) that projected filmic scenes, created for this kind of display. Like Robertson's glass slides, the background of these film clips were totally blackened, so that only the motives (like some vaudeville dancers) appeared to be acting directly on stage (see Vogl-Bienek 1994, p. 21). This effect was also known as *Stereoplastics, Kinoplastikon,* or *Tanagra Theatre*.

But phantasmagoric media-and performance techniques are not limited to projection techniques. As one of the most related and comprehensive example of exploiting a huge variety of phantasmagoric instruments is the 'dark ride', which will be presented in the following passage.

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[155] Greenslade (2011).

4.1.2 The Dark Ride

As one example of the most related phantasmagoric experiences I would like to introduce to the *dark ride* and similar multimedia concepts for performative attractions.

A dark ride is an indoor entertainment, in a dark environment, and with the operator's full control on the tour's speed and the – mostly spooky – multimedia show. Gunning describes the first rides at the *Luna Park*[156] as "thrill of intense and suddenly changing situations" (Gunning 1993, p. 11). Elsewhere, he presents the concept of an early ride that displayed film clips: the *Hale's Tours*. Albeit we are researching the *phantasmagoric* and not the *cinematic dispositif* I would like to quote this passage, as I found it very informative:

> [T]he early showmen exhibitors exerted a great deal of control over the shows they presented, actually re-editing the films they had purchased and supplying a series of offscreen supplements, such as sound effects and spoken commentary. Perhaps most extreme is the Hale's Tours, the largest chain of theatres exclusively shown films before 1906. Not only did the films consist of non-narrative sequences taken from moving vehicles (usually trains), but the theatre itself was arranged as a train car with a conductor who took tickets, and sound effects simulating the click-clack of wheels and hiss of air brakes. Such viewing experiences relate more to the attractions of the fairground than to the traditions of legitimate theatre. (Gunning 1994, p. 58)

The *Hale's Tours* were very much related to the so called *Phantom Rides*, a simulated experience of a ride in a Venice gondola, for example, or a roller coaster, by sitting in a moving replica of this very craft and watching a panorama film, recorded from the point of view of the moving real one.[157] The artist Joel Zika, who graduated in digital arts and holds a PhD in media and communications, intensively explored the dark rides' history and media technology. In the following passage I will summarize his research. As elements of rides – developed with the first attractions of this kind and likewise valid for contemporary ones – Zika specifies: "a reproducible thematic journey, haptic simulations, perspectival illusions, controlled lighting, 360-degree immersion and triggered audio" (Zika 2017, p. 2). Obviously, it is not the technology itself that I found so strikingly related to the *Fantasmagorie* (already the early rides with their use of electricity, photographic views, and cinematic sequences offered absolutely new possibilities for the entertainment), but, on the one hand, the exploitation of any possible technological and illusion-increasing detail in order to maximize the effects on the spectators'

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[156] The amusement park *Luna Park* on Coney Island, New York, opened in 1903 and operated until most of the park got destroyed by a fire in 1944. It is not related to the today's amusement park *Luna Park* on Coney Island (since 2010). Yet, the term seems to have developed an independent existence: I am thankful to Melanie Faranna, who enlightened me with her remark that the amusement parks are still called "Luna Park" in Italy.

[157] On this topic, the phantom rides and the related travelling shot, a very comprehensive doctoral thesis was submitted by the film scholar John Duncan Edmond (see Edmond 2015). To give an impression of this attraction's spread: Just in North America there existed about five hundred *Hale's Tours* venues (see Baker 2013, p. 16), but Ndalianis and Balanzategui add that "this train simulator did not last very long due to a lack of new film content and thus attraction development" (Ndalianis and Balanzategui 2019, p. 21).

senses, and, on the other hand, the similarities of the spectators' experiences. Interestingly, the status of the narrative seems very much comparable, too. Although Zika counts the theme for one of the constructive elements, in fact, it seems perfectly exchangeable and to only framing the whole spectacle instead of really being accountable or constitutive for the experience's immersiveness. As in the *Fantasmagorie* the narrative only provides the frame for the performance or the induction of the actual sensory effects.[158]

The first electric dark ride seems to have been the *Ghost Train* (1896) of the *Pleasure Beach Amusement Park* at Blackpool, UK (see Zika 2018, p. 56). One of the first dark rides that was recognized by a large audience, was the *Trip to the Moon* (1901) at Buffalo World's Fair, invented by the architect, engineer, and creator of the first amusement rides and parks Frederic Williams Thompson (1873-1919). It was shaped like a *Cyclorama* (a Panorama[159] that included the roof and the floor in the painting, i.e., a 360° immersion), but instead of standing in the middle of the huge, circular canvas and being presented with the illuminated painting, the room was darkened and people had to enter a seemingly free floating vehicle in the shape of a flying ship. Above and below the ship two *Stereopticons*[160] each were mounted, which allowed for an overall control of the illuminations and a projection radius of 360° (see Zika 2017, p. 4f). For example, images of passing by clouds were projected above the swaying ship, synchronized with the flapping wings that simulated the vessel's movement and speed. To extrapolate from Zika's illustration, even a parallax effect seems to have been induced via the semi-transparent layers of the clouds (see ibid. p. 6). The use of electricity made it possible "to control light, space and sound synchronously" (ibid.). Zika emphasizes that it is too short-sighted to notice the *Trip to the Moon* only as a predecessor of cinema,[161] as it in fact "had evolved into its own medium" (see ibid. p. 7). I would accentuate even more that only the narrative was transferred to the cinema by Méliès, but the film was in no way capable to offer the dark rides' immersive features.

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[158] Brandon Kwaitek, who holds an MA in cultural studies, stresses in his master's thesis that theme rides, which are based on "fleeting trends and specific summer blockbusters, can expect shorter life spans than the older models […] [as; V.W.] a haunted house dark ride filled with uncopyrighted ghosts will have lingering appeal" (Kwiatek 1995, p. 65). However, Ndalianis sees a more important role of the themes, as the "intertextuality and intermedia tendency becomes literal: not only are multiple media referenced or alluded to, they are often literally incorporated into the ride experience. Contemporary horror is marked by an excess of self-referentiality and remediation that is as multifarious as the conglomerate structure that produces it" (Ndalianis 2010, p. 17). But she also holds the opinion that "[h]orror rides focus less on the narrative dimension" (Ndalianis 2010, p. 22).

[159] See FN 126.

[160] A *Stereopticon* was an advanced magic lantern with two lens tubes for dissolving views: one image blended very smoothly into the next image.

[161] Particularly in linking it to Georges Méliès' early film *Trip to the Moon*.

Dark rides that were built afterwards, all aimed to increase particularly the physical impact on the visitors, by controlling the speed and rotation of the carts (that were mostly designed for two to four passengers), channelling the rails through some tangible props like fake spider webs or the 'touch' of some ghost, letting them forcefully bump against seemingly solid walls or locked doors, or take sharp turns, placing *trompe-l'œil* or perspectival effects like forced perspective to induce disorientation, or by simulating a free fall with help of a projected environment on the sides of the cart that in an opposite rush upwards. Likewise, sudden unnerving, distressing or spooky sound effects and disturbing light effects like flashes or black light on fluorescent objects or text, or the sudden highlighting of some nasty props in the immediate vicinity, created shocking or at least uncanny moments. The most impressive experiences of some of these rides are described by Ndalianis (see Ndalianis 2010; Ndalianis and Balanzategui 2019).

Some contemporary dark rides let the passengers wear haptic suits and head mounted displays to increase the feedback that is choreographed with the fully controlled visual experiences and 3D illusions. Others add the dimensions of smell and temperature (see Zika 2018, p. 58). Regarding the themed rides, the amusement theorist Malcolm Burt and Zika illustrate that "*Universal's Revenge of the Mummy* and *Harry Potter's Forbidden Journey* are spectacular examples of hybrid ride environments that use discrete digital domes for each individual rider. […] This approach creates a similar relationship for the viewer as a virtual headset, but allows for a hybrid space where the user can exit the virtual content and return to the physical ride" (Burt and Zika 2018). The ride systems vary from carts that are controlled via RFID tags or GPS in combination with linear induction motors and can induce high speeds, to *RoboCoasters*, i.e., a cart that is moved by an industrial robotic arm and can simulate flight. One of the factors of this enhancement of entertainment technology, according to the screen and cultural studies graduate Graeme Stanley Baker, who researched the dark ride as well, is a result of "the *techspectations* of current audiences" (Baker 2013, p. 30 [italics in the text]) that have to be met with respective technologically boosted shows. Kwiatek understands these technological augmentations, moreover, as the attempts to reduce the occurrences of vandalism[162] by holding the visitors' attention by means of spectacular technology: "[T]he tested logic being that a captivated rider is not a mischievous one" (Kwiatek 1995, p. 10). This leads to the consideration, if the *phantasmagoric dispositif* in the form of the *Fantasmagorie* itself or the 'old' dark rides (or as, e.g., interactive installation in a gallery) only do work with

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[162] Vandalism seems to be a huge problem especially for the 'older' dark rides, (see Kwiatek 1995, p. 10).

'techies', or a non-bored, 'civilized' audience? I would like to leave the answer to this question open, as it does not seem to be the right place to discuss this further. It should yet be considered as part of the *dispositif* (who are the audiences?), as it does not seem to be a minor factor.

Interestingly, through these new technologies the weight of the components that construct the immersive experience, or, we could even say, the *dispositif*, becomes differently distributed. In the 'older' dark rides the weight lay on an immersive physical and emotional impact through spectacular visual, sound, and light effects, while the narrative seemed to be exchangeable. With the newer rides the narrative becomes more important together with an increased weight on speed and movement of the cart. Probably, they also rely on the visitors' attunement of beforehand already being emotionally connected with the narrative's theme. When reading the descriptions of the newer rides, like, e.g., *Back to the Future: The Ride* (Universal Studios 1991),[163] *Terminator 2 3D: Battle across Time* (Universal Studios 1996),[164] *The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man* (Universal's Islands of Adventure 1999),[165] *Revenge of the Mummy: The Ride* (Universal Studios 2010),[166] *Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey* (Universal-Studios 2010),[167] or *Transformers: The Ride 3D* (Universal Studios 2011),[168] the rides started off as *ride films* and motion-simulator rides, i.e., very advanced 4D IMAX cinema experiences (with the accent on the movement of the seats and some special tangible or olfactory effects synchronized with the visuals, lights, and sounds),[169] until they became more like race or flight simulator experiences, embedded in a story that is visualized with coulisses, props, and 3D film projections on screens, experienced with 3D glasses. Ndalianis states that "from a perspective of a body's reaction to being hunted, haunted, and terrorised by the horror machine that drives the ride technology, such attractions come very close to being horror experiences" (Ndalianis 2010, p. 23). Ndalianis and the screen and cultural studies' scholar Jessica Balanzategui point to the fact that our visual system does not synchronize with our inner system of proprioception and other senses – so, if we, e.g., are confronted with a high speed film's scene flight towards the ground from a first person's perspective on screen, all our senses "playing off and intensifying the experience of the other in order to make sense of the world being perceived and experienced" (Ndalianis and Balanzategui 2019, p. 25f). That is, we do not just watch the flying

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[163] See Ndalianis and Balanzategui (2019, p. 23ff).

[164] See ibid. p. 26ff.

[165] See ibid. p. 28ff.

[166] See Ndalianis (2010, p. 17f).

[167] See Baker (2013, p. 5).

[168] See ibid. p. 33ff.

[169] See also Ndalianis and Balanzategui (2019, p. 18ff).

scene, knowing that we are seated in a fixed seat, but as all the other senses are pretending a flight experience as well, our body in a certain way gets activated to 'feeling' this – in fact only visual – as a whole body experience. The film studies scholar Miriam Ross explains: "At times, negative parallax suggests to the viewer that objects exist between them [sic!] and the traditional plane of the screen. At other times, the eye is drawn into positive parallax that suggests objects and setting recede forever away from it. […] [W]e consider and reconfigure our bodily placement in relation to the screen content" (Ross 2012, p. 386).[170] Ndalianis and Balanzategui define this experience as 'real':

> At times, objects from the world on-screen appear to enter our space [of the cart; V.W.] (negative parallax), and at others, we appear to enter the space on-screen (positive parallax). […] Watching a 3D film, no matter how invasive or immersive the representation on-screen appears to be, we are nevertheless still in our seats, and our vision is (relatively) centered, occasionally roaming to take in objects and actions across the screen. The rollercoaster 3D ride film, however, propels our bodies through space, and our vision, along with our other senses, must attempt to make sense of multiple, layered realities that merge into one another: from theatrical sets, to holograms, to screens. Our vision, like our bodies, is mobile; it becomes like a camera that absorbs the events unravelling in space and time. *We* are the fiction's center. (Ndalianis and Balanzategui 2019, p. 30 [italics in the text])

Therefore, it is disputable whether these new themed rides are about to switch from the *phantasmagoric* to – an already modified – *cinematic dispositif*. Conversely, Ndalianis and also Baker stress that only the *new* rides offer the inclusion of the visitors in the story, and therewith, *add an immersive element* to the ride (see Ndalianis 2010, p. 19; Baker 2013, p. 22). I think that this notion only concerns the themed rides, as I understand even the earliest dark rides as intrinsic immersive – and they did not need a convincing narrative for this. But these considerations expose the problematic that it is at stake if the *phantasmagoric* and the *cinematic dispositif* are about to either *merge* or if the *phantasmagoric* is about to *absorb* the *cinematic*. Unfortunately it would go beyond the scope to discuss this in detail, here. But I will come back to at least part of these considerations in the sequence on the "Phantasmagoric Media-Techniques' Consequences", when scrutinising the space, an artwork inhabits.

Ndalianis notes that "[i]n an era when mainstream films are being described as being more like roller coasters and roller coasters as being closer to films, it comes as no surprise to discover that the overlaps between the two media are deeply connected on a systemic level" (Ndalianis 2010, p. 13f), or, as Burt and Zika observe "[i]mmersive games have become movies and those

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[170] Elsaesser suggests these features to function as "the vanguard of a new cinema of narrative integration introducing the malleability, scalability, fluidity, or 'curvature' of digital images into audiovisual space" (Elsaesser 2016, p. 290), and he adds: "Hence, *what is being promoted with 3D is not a special effect as special effect but as the new default value of digital vision*, presuming as layered, material, yet also mobile and pliable space. It signifies a whole spectrum of stereo-sensations for eye and ear, but also the thrills and threats of floating, falling, disorientation, and re-alignment […]. 3D would be re-tooling the semantics of embodied perception as stereo space becomes the unmarked normal" (ibid. p. 292f [italics in the text]).

movies have become rides, while rides themselves have been ported to VR gaming platforms" (Burt and Zika 2018). Ndalianis further explains the capitalistic mechanisms behind fragmentation into mixed media and mixed platforms. She understands this approach as a way of "ensuring that profit is distributed across a variety of media" (Ndalianis 2010, p. 15), because, "[i]f your film flops, maybe your games and rides will be a success (ibid. p. 16).

4.1.3 Contemporary Projection Techniques

There had been a lot of attempts to 'immersing' the cinematic experience, to offer a feeling of being part of the film to the spectator, instead of just watching it from a distance: First, by the *Hale's Tours*, with shaking cabins, sounds of train wheels rattling on rails, and fans to simulate open windows, while watching the landscape passing by in full speed. Then, by the use of shaking seats to simulate motion (first by inbuilt motors, later by hydraulics), now with RoboCoasters. The immersiveness has been increased by the use of laser light, fire explosions, minor electric shocks, induced heat, water sprays, fans, fog, and scents, all synchronized with the films contents. Through stereoscopic technology the flatness of the screen was exchanged with cinematic 3D experience, though, now stereoscopic glasses were needed: "The screen as surface may continue to exist, but a combination of negative and positive parallax explodes any singular plane of action based on the flat screen. Stereoscopy's multiple optical illusions suggest that certain objects are within reach of our fingertips or that we are situated in a 3D landscape that stretches back to infinity" (Ross 2013, p. 406). The prostheses for the recipients' senses increased: To vests or full body suits that induced vibrations, pushes, temperature changes, and the like; to gloves that allow for tactile experiences; to head mounted devices for either AR or VR experiences.

There are environments that aim to induce an immersive visual experience like projection mapping; there are the *Full Dome 360°* or the similar *Cheoptics 360°* technologies, or the *Deep Space* technology like in the *Ars Electronica Center* in Linz, Austria; there is the *Musion Eyeliner* that works with the Pepper's Ghost technique but with high definition video projection. All these projection techniques provide or could be equipped with interfaces to use them in an interactive way, e.g. for performances, installations, or games. What we can conclude from these examples is the attempt of a development in two directions. On the one hand, the enhancement of prosthetic devices, with the final goal to create tools that affect the senses directly or that use senses and brainwaves to interact with the respective media. On the other hand, the challenge to develop immersive environments that allow for the immersive impact on the senses *without* any expedients. My intention for this media archaeological research was

inspired by the latter attempt: to have a look on historical projection techniques,[171] in order to maybe develop from this point of view a new perspective on what is possible, needed, and desirable, for the concept of an immersive artwork to be received by audiences in any possible emotional and physical ways. I think the phantasmagoric media-techniques offer quite a lot ideas that probably will prove fruitful for 'transcending the prosthetic media's capacities', as Belting suggests (see Belting 2005, p. 311).

It is debatable, *how much part* of the overall impact of the *Fantasmagorie* the early 3D effect of the *nebulous lantern* and the other 3D requisites – the lit ambulant ghosts above the audience, the wandering Diogenes, and, last but not least, the unveiled skeleton on its pedestal as a spectacular ending of the show – *really* had, and if the use of 3D visuals and 3D props has to be included as part of the constructive elements for the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

Certainly, they *had* an important effect, and we have to assume that even the projected 2D glass slide images appeared three-dimensional through their very detailed painted shadows, and then, their sudden approach on the audience without any visible material support (Robertson reports that the audience automatically cleared the way for the rising figure of the *Bleeding Nun* (see Robertson 1831, p. 342)). Maybe in this case it is more plausible to ask the question from a today's perspective. As most contemporary audiences are so much used to 3D visual content, a simple two-dimensional shape would be at best identified as cartoon or graphical content, not as something that automatically integrates and merges with the environment.[172] However, it could likewise be experienced the other way round, as disturbing or uncanny, if 2D visuals would enter a 360° environment in an immersive way.[173] Because of this indecision (which probably would be a good object of investigation for an evaluative artistic research), I would opt to not including this parameter in the *phantasmagoric dispositif* – not, because it is not a constitutional one, but because it would be redundant to do so, as, according to Elsaesser,

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[171] Burt and Zika underline this latter aspect, as well: "it is important to note that VR is possibly not an advancement of cinema, but rather part of a larger canon of immersive media that can be traced back to the entertainment experiences of the late 1800s" (Burt and Zika 2018).

[172] It also seems to be culturally dependent, as, e.g., in Japan, some fictional, animated Manga-style characters are socially integrated as individual beings, for example, Hatsune Miku, or *Gatebox* https://www.gatebox.ai/en/, yet, in a Gatebox the Characters look three-dimensional, and also of Hatsune Miku 3D versions exist. Europe only some Cosplay, limited to the time during a convention, seems to be socially acceptable, not the characters as individuals themselves (maybe with one exception, if we count the walking around Mikey Mouses and others characters in Disney Worlds or other theme parks as individuals. But I would not.).

[173] This effect was used, e.g., by the animation film *Coraline* (2009) by Henry Selick, where an "[a]rtificially 'flattening' the picture, […] simulate[s] cognitive dissonances and introduce[s] perceptual mis-cues, generating a subtle sense of claustrophobia or discomfort that transmits the heroine's state of mind to the spectator as bodily sensation" (Elsaesser 2016, p. 291).

(digital) 3D it is part of the contemporary audio-visual life, anyway (see Elsaesser 2016, p. 292f).

4.2 The Phantasmagoric Media-Techniques' Consequences

The area of the digital, finally, adapted all the media-techniques presented above and transferred them to contemporary projection technologies. As Elcott states, "[t]he worlds of art, cinema, and media are saturated in phantasmagoria. But because phantasmagoria cannot be tied to any one medium or technology, genre or subject, movement or epoch, we have failed to recognize its import" (Elcott 2016, p. 46).

The *phantasmagoric dispositif*, nevertheless, remained the same: the here and now of the show and its immersiveness that aims to comprehensively affect the audience by inducing disorientation or the feeling of being lost, as well as amazement and suspense; its play with sudden changes of presence and absence of the visuals and sounds, and with the unpredictability of the direction from where the spectres (or the next visual or audible effect) will turn up next in a possibly 360° environment; its effort to not only emotionally but also physically affect the audience; the avoidance of any visible or at least fixed cinematic screen – that is, the apparent absence of any material support of the displayed visuals; moreover, its neatly choreographed and intensifying eerie and disturbing sounds and light effects. As we have learned from the *dark ride*, *ride film*, or *themed ride* examples, all these effects could be remediated and enhanced by entertainment technology, and increased by an additional sensorial impact like temperature and wind.[174]All that adds to the overall impact of the show.

Hence, it appears that – separate from the dark ride – any performance, installation, exhibition, or attraction that meets these characteristics could be denoted as *phantasmagoric*. If this last conclusion is tenable, I will discuss in the following chapter with the help of some artworks as examples.

Prior to that, I have to add a few words to the definition of the space that artworks inhabit. To define the *phantasmagoric dispositif* with Elsaesser's words:

> [T]he lineage of phantasmagoria […] functions as an ambient form of spectacle and event, where no clear spatial divisions between inside and outside pertain, and where there are strong indices of presence, while its temporality reaches into past and future (calling up the dead, soothsaying and predicting events yet to come), while the senses are anchored and the body situated in a 'here and now." As such, phantasmagoria would be the dispositive that also most closely approximates the genealogical ancestor of what I described as installation art above, one that

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[174] I only name these two as new, because all the others, like explosions, electric shocks, smell, and tangible transgressions, were already introduced by the first necromantic showmen.

does not depend on the frame or even on the upright forward orientation, one that furthermore takes 'sound' into account, but also the one whose epistemological effects are, as it were, grounded in an aesthetics of appearance as presence, rather than the other way round (Elsaesser 2014, p. 69f).

As we have seen, it is a difference for the unfolding of an artwork, its reception, and for the role of the audience if it is a domestic, cinematic, phantasmagoric, or exhibition space. Therefore, we could even add the paradigm of an *exhibition dispositif* to the list of the *domestic*, *cinematic*, and *phantasmagoric dispositif*. But the phantasmagoric seems to have more possibilities for its execution and to interfere with the other *dispositifs* (the dark space with immersive, frightening occurrences out of a 360°direction, e.g., could be installed in a domestic environment like the very early phantasmagoric performances, as well). The following quote by Elcott underlines a shift of *dispositifs*: "But cinema is no more tied to movie theatres and celluloid than sculpture is bound to temples and marble. In a word, cinema will be multiple or it will not be at all" (Elcott 2016a, p. 51). This is, the *cinematic dispositif* is in a way (forced to) 'opening up', and it does this in a phantasmagoric way. If I interpret Elcott the right way, then this was his conclusion as well. Ross similarly observed this development in her notion of the 'dissolving screen' by means of holographic and stereoscopic 3D's negative and positive parallax techniques. We still have the 'cinematic' "black box" (see Elsaesser 2014, p. 62), but it could reappear in the environment of the domestic or the amusement park or replacing the 'white cube' of the exhibition room. The phantasmagoric, furthermore, can enter the cinematic space, dissolve the screen and redefine the spectator's role and position in relation to the projection, and it could also interfere with the '*exhibition dispositif*', that Elsaesser defines as "a fixed image and a mobile spectator (museum)" (ibid. p. 63), while the reception is "embodied" and the spectator aware „of our surroundings and other bodies" (ibid. p. 64). More detailed he writes: "The kind of presence produced by standing in front of a work of art in a museum or a gallery carries very strong indices of time and place (of a 'now' and a 'there'), which in turn imply a special type of viewing subject, highly aware of itself and its surroundings and thus receptive to reflection, introspection and auto-reflection" (ibid. p. 62f [italics in the text]). First of all, as Elcott defines it (see Elcott 2016a, p. 54f), the *phantasmagoric dispositif* natively has in common main elements with the *exhibition dispositif*: the phantasmagoric effect shares the same space with its audience and the same time. As the exhibition space not necessarily is a 'white cube', we may hypothesize a coalescence of both *dispositifs*. If we stick with Elsaesser's first, shorter definition, one could definitively agree on the phantasmagoric power to change the fixation of the image and the "embodied reception" (Elsaesser 2014, p. 64). It becomes more complicated, though, with the awareness of the environment. If we talk

about other visitors, the phantasmagoric and the exhibition elements harmonize, because it had been a requirement for the phantasmagoric performance that people should not be exposed to such scary contents on their own. Although, with the sudden darkness of the space after everyone was seated, an isolation of each spectator was reinstalled shortly after, which addresses the other main parts of the 'surroundings': the space for introspection and reflection, on the one hand, and the exhibition space itself, on the other hand. Here, it will make a huge difference, whether the installation takes place in a 'black box' or in a 'white cube', and on how immersive the overall setting is designed, while it could take any direction: from a mere distance to a hyper-awareness (as Elcott proclaims the latter for the phantasmagoric setting (see Elcott 2016a, p. 56)). If we look at Elsaesser's more elaborate characterization, the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, then, obviously it is dependent from the respective context, if it may be able to rearrange the *exhibition dispositif* or to successfully integrate within. In any case it would be a challenge to modify a certain 'receptiveness' (in the sense of Elsaesser's definition) of the spectators in an exhibition setting (if an alterability would even be desirable).

I have to admit that I did not find any artwork that was made for being presented in a gallery space or museum that met *all* of my above defined elements, which are constructive for the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, and with this, reveals *the uncanny*. If this is due to my insufficient research efforts, or due to an impossibility to significantly challenge the firmness of the *exhibition dispositif*, I will leave open to be judged by my readers. At least one main dissimilarity of the spaces of a phantasmagoric show (or an amusement park) and a gallery space seems to be arbitrable: With Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* the aim, in the first place, is not contemplation and self-reflection in relation to what is experienced, while a gallery space – according to Elsaesser – seems to expect this very attitude from its visitors. The mission for the phantasmagoric – if it would want to successfully enter the gallery space – would therefore be to sound its own capabilities to adapt or to renew. One of the possible directions in a phantasmagoric conception could be an emphasis of the spectators' introspection to become part of the constitutional elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. I came across it in nearly all the artworks that seemed related, already.

5. Related Artworks

In this chapter I would like to apply the above suggested elements that I identified as being constructive for the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, to detect *the uncanny* in a variety of thirteen artworks. For a better overview, I have divided these artworks in five categories, however, most of them would qualify for other categories as well. Some of them appeared to me as related to the categories of the phantasmagoric and uncanny, others were mentioned by other scholars, who assumed them to meet the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

I will introduce to every of these artworks, compare them to the above framed theory and explain, why I've chosen them to be presented here.

Some installations I did not present, even if frequently mentioned in connection with the phantasmagoria. For example, the *Resurrection of Michael Jackson* at the *Billboard Music Awards* (2014),[175] because although it undoubtedly had some emotional impact, the audience was not part of an overall immersiveness, and the show does not seem to have been uncanny at all. For the same reason, I neither did include films nor non-immersive artworks, even if they decidedly call up *the uncanny*, like the collection *The Uncanny* (1993) by Mike Kelly (USA),[176] or the huge variety of uncanny sculptures, puppets, and the like. Moreover, I do not count AR or VR projects as phantasmagoric immersive, only works that are hauntingly affective and that can be experienced without additional expedients.

Even though I have stated above that none of the artworks presented here meet *all* of the earlier mapped criteria of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, each is very interesting in its own right in the elements it *does* inhere.

5.1 Phantasmagoric Projects

The first three artworks are academic projects. The first one (5.1.1) conforms the most to the *phantasmagoric dispositif* as well as *the uncanny*, as it artistically investigates an early dark ride. Just as the dark ride natively has a lot in common with the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, so does this one, and *the uncanny* is innate to both of them, even if the project is not theoretically based on the phantasmagoria.

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[175] See https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1w62gd.

[176] See Kelley et al. (2004).

The two other projects (5.1.2 and 5.1.3) decidedly base their concepts on the phantasmagoria by Philidor, Robertson, and/or De Phillipsthall. Each one has its own individual approach, which both are remarkable for different reasons.

5.1.1 *A Southern Dark Ride* (2016) by Joel ZIKA (Australia)

With *A Southern Dark Ride*[177] Joe Zika remediated an abandoned dark ride, a 'haunted castle' that had been rebuilt by some enthusiasts, as an art project for a limited time period of four weeks. Zika describes the installation of the perspectival and 360° illusions aligned to the cart-based ride in his yet unpublished PhD thesis; the installation of themes that create together with the controlled carts both synchronized (sometimes opposed) moving, rotating, rocking, or shaking effects for an extra physical impact on the riders' proprioception and other senses; the use of 'relaxing' motives to increase the immediately following shock effects. Additionally he re-recorded the haunting, distracting, and disorienting soundscape, placed light effects, and revived illustrations from other early dark rides via projection mapping (see fig. 15). *A Southern Dark Ride* was documented in a 360° point of view perspective for VR during the making.

Fig. 15 Still from the VR documentation of *A Southern Dark Ride* © 2016 Joel ZIKA[178] Photo Credit: Joel ZIKA

Although *A Southern Dark Ride* is not labelled as 'phantasmagoric', it *innately* encompasses all elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, and with this, inducing *the uncanny*. It includes all the constructive elements that were presented above in the passage on "The Dark Ride".

However, I do regard it as an example that places itself outside the list of the following ones below, because it displays an ambivalence of purpose. The artist actually seems to have been the only rider. Not that I consider something an artwork only when it also has or had an audience, and only if it offers only one mode of being presented. But according to Zika's thesis

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[177] https://joelzika.com/2016/08/11/a-southern-dark-ride/, accessed 22.08.2021, 22:51.

[178] https://joelzika.com/2016/08/11/a-southern-dark-ride/#jp-carousel-1093, with kind permission of the artist.

he only got permission to adapt the space for a certain period when the venue was closed to the public. He states on his website that the work is awaiting licensing or exhibition opportunities, but even if the ride probably could be rebuilt in an exhibition space, it would seem redundant. Therefore, only the VR documentation could be the subject for a show in a gallery or exhibition, which, as such, does not meet my thesis' criteria of phantasmagoric immersiveness.

5.1.2 *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance* (2018) by Harshini J. KARUNARATNE (Sri Lanka / Peru)

Afterlife: an audiovisual performance[179] is an audio-visual (AV) show by the photographer and audio-visual artist Harshini Jazmin Karunaratne, designed for the *Theatre Capstone Festival* and performed on the 30th March 2018 at Black Box, NYUAD Arts Center, Abu Dhabi (see fig. 16a and 16b).

Fig. 16a *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance* © 2018 Harshini J. KARUNARATNE
Premiere on the 30th March 2018 at Black Box, NYUAD Arts Center, Abu Dhabi. Photo Credit: Waleed SHAH[180]

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[179] https://vimeo.com/272002136, and https://harshinijk.com/portfolio_page/afterlife-av/.

[180] https://harshinijk.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WSHB0139.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

In her thesis, Karunaratne theorizes the elements that the phantasmagoria appears to have in common with the art of VJing and AV art: the immersiveness that plays with the audience's senses, the projections' hidden source, the (precise) interaction of the visuals with the sound, the use of smoke, live performed sounds, live acting, and, in some clubs, also the darkened space, where the "VJ's visuals occasionally providing illumination, a moment of revelation as one spectator makes out the features of another" (Karunaratne 2018, p. 19).

Fig. 16b *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance* © 2018 Harshini J. KARUNARATNE
Premiere on the 30th March 2018 at Black Box, NYUAD Arts Center, Abu Dhabi. Photo Credit: Waleed SHAH[181]

According to Karunaratne, "the nightclub has become the new 'cinema of attractions'" (Karunaratne 2018, p. 18). Elsewhere, she explains this notion more detailed: "AV performances transport an audience to a dreamlike state where the meaning of an image is secondary, if not absent, to the aesthetics of the image itself. AV performance resemble a cinema of attractions" (Karunaratne 2018, p. 20). This reminds to the more or less insignificant narrative of the *Fantasmagorie's* scenes, as well. The documentary images and the video indicate that even the theme Diogenes with his Lantern had been adopted and reinterpreted for the performance (see fig. 16c).

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[181] https://harshinijk.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WSHB0083.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

Regarding her artwork, Karunaratne writes: "Based on this research, Afterlife utilizes video jockeying to reimagine a phantasmagoria show and investigate the concept of afterlife as a state of intermediacy. Remixing and improvisation become central to exploring notions of time and light as disembodiment by using the techniques of VJing to play, alter and remix projected visual content in real-time."[182]

Fig. 16c *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance* © 2018 Harshini J. KARUNARATNE
Premiere on the 30th March 2018 at Black Box, NYUAD Arts Center, Abu Dhabi. Photo Credit: Waleed SHAH[183]

Finally, Karunaratne points to the fact that the image of the skull is a very common theme in VJing. Karunaratne shares her thoughts on this matter:

> Perhaps the fascination with death and the possibility of an afterlife evoked through the projected image allows for death to have a moment to exist, even on screen, within our time. In this sense, concepts of space and time are manipulated. If the image on the screen is of a skull that is animated to be alive, then what is the context within which my own body exists in the space? What place, time and even realm am I situated in? On a large screen, the visuals transform a space. (Karunaratne 2018, p. 34)

These thoughts evoke the Freudian uncanny in waking the difficult relationship that most 'modern' people have with death and its signifiers, and in bringing it to the surface.

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[182] Harshini Jazmin Karunaratne: Afterlife. In: https://harshinijk.com/portfolio_page/afterlife-av/, accessed 15.08.2021, 19:46.

[183] https://harshinijk.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DSCF6782.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

Above I stated that despite my research I have not found an artwork that contains all the elements of a *phantasmagoric dispositif*. This one (disregarding *A Southern Dark Ride* above for the mentioned reasons) seems to be the most closest to the subject of my thesis. I only doubt that the piece created disorientation in the audience, and it probably must be personally experienced to decide if an unpredictability of the visuals' and sounds' direction had been implemented. However, all the other elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif* in *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance*, convincingly reveal *the uncanny*.

5.1.3 *Eigengrau* (2019) by Zalán SZAKÁCS (Romania / Austria / Netherlands)

Eigengrau is a performative installation that was exhibited at several venues in the Netherlands since 2019 (see fig. 17).

Fig. 17 *Eigengrau* ©2019 Zalán SZAKÁCS, premiere in UBIK Slash Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 15th of July 2019, Photo Credit: Zalán SZAKÁCS[184]

The post-digital artist and audiovisual performer Zalán Szakács[185] calls his piece "a contemporary phantasmagoria"[186] that "frames the negative space, and therefore it generates an

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[184] https://www.zalan-szakacs.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/large_6-1.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

[185] See https://www.zalan-szakacs.com/about/, accessed 15.08.2021, 20:18, and https://www.behance.net/szakacsuniverse, accessed 15.08.2021, 22:50.

[186] https://www.zalan-szakacs.com/projects/eigengrau/, accessed 15.08.2021, 20:26.

illusion of immaterial space. The installation offers a suspension from the isolation and digital saturation of contemporary society."[187] With *Eigengrau*, Szakács aimed to offer to his audience "an offline non-screen mediated collective experience […], an emotional illusion, a dialogue between darkness and light."[188] The piece itself "features a custom-made LED circle, that in the timespan of 12 minutes takes the audience through a non linear time of five mental states: Deep State, Anticipation State, Weird state, Higher State and Relaxation State. This narrative is made visible through the pre-programmed motion of blue light gradients, referring to the colour of screen light."[189] As illustrated on his project's website, Szakács adopts the early necromancer's 'magic circle' (by the way which, at that time, marked the area where inside slight electric shocks were induced, here: Philidor's).[190] At *Eigengrau*, the outside and inside spaces of the circle are both accessible. Elsewhere, Szakács refers to an exhibition of Anthony McCall's *Vertical Works* (2017) from Call's *Solid Light Works* series (Szakács 2020, p. 10), but nowhere to McCalls much earlier piece *Light Describing a Cone* (1973). As Szakács explains in his master thesis, a central intent to create the installation was to generate "a strong collective ritual experience" (Szakács 2019, p. 304).

In this project it is difficult to find elements that fit neatly into the *phantasmagoric dispositif* as defined above. Furthermore, the installation does not even seem to induce any uncanniness by itself, disregarding the phantasmagoric approach. But I see the attempts to base the installation's concept on that Szakács understands as being related to an historical phantasmagoria.[191] I decided to include *Eigengrau* anyway, because the artwork meets the qualities of the 'phantasmagoric principle' that Grau identifies: "a principle that combines concepts from art and science to generate illusionism and polysensual immersion using all contemporary means available" (Grau 2007, p. 153f). Additionally, it opens up the *phantasmagoric dispositif* to merge into the *exhibition dispositif*, since (collective) introspection is a main theme in *Eigengrau*. It is an artwork that probably first unfolds when personally experienced.

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[187] https://www.zalan-szakacs.com/projects/eigengrau/, accessed 15.08.2021, 20:26.

[188] ibid.

[189] ibid.

[190] The handbill is from the 13th of April 1791 (see Rossell 2001, p. 6).

[191] See https://vimeo.com/372630431.

5.2 Uncanny and Unexpected Presence of Ghostly Appearances

My next suggested category presents three artworks that are phantasmagoric immersive in another way as so far discussed. Here the visitors of the exhibit (5.2.3) or the users of the device (5.2.1 and 5.2.2) need to act and to involve their bodies in order to produce the ghostly apparitions. The artworks in this category provide the base, but only the protagonists' bodily exertion brings the phantasmagoric elements to effect and to evoke *the uncanny*. In addition, two pieces (5.2.1 and 5.2.3) are akin with the widely practiced techniques of trick photography and spiritual photography since the 1890s.[192]

5.2.1 *Image Fulgurator* (2007–2011) by Julius von BISMARCK (Germany)

On the first sight, Julius von Bismarck's *Image Fulgurator* is hardly distinguishable from a camera. On the second look, and according to the respective manner how the operator is holding the device, it could be even received as a weapon (see fig. 18a).

Fig. 18a Julius von Bismarck with *Image Fulgurator*, 2008
Mixed media, 47 x 27 x 14,5 cm © Julius von BISMARCK[193]

However, it actually is a projection tool. It intervenes in the surrounding photographers' images. If the device is placed next to 'other' cameras, their flashes trigger the *Image Fulgurator* to project an image in a distance and at a very high speed, so that it is invisible for the eye. First on the final photographs of others the projection and intervention becomes evident (see fig. 18b and 18c).[194]

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[192] See i.a. Gunning (2007); Warner (2008, p. 205-249); Natale (2012); Schoonover (2014); Elcott (2016b, p. 111ff).

[193] http://www.resettheapparatus.net/files/images/CORPUS%20images/Bismarck/JvB_Fulgurator_Portrait_2009 .jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

[194] See http://www.resettheapparatus.net/corpus-work/image-fulgurator.html.
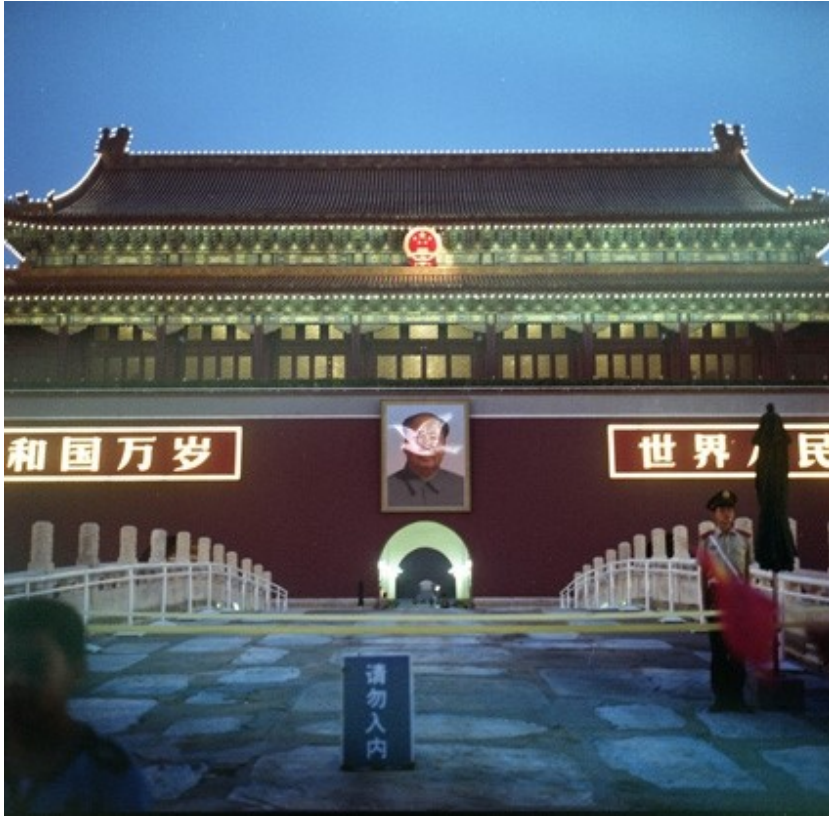
Fig. 18b *Fulguration #3 (Mao and Magritte)*, 2008
Inkjet print, 100 x 100 cm (detail)
Courtesy Julius von Bismarck; alexander levy, Berlin und Sies+Höke, Düsseldorf.
© Julius von BISMARCK[195]

Fig. 18c Julius von BISMARCK, *Fulguration #5 (May Day Riot Police)*, 2009
Inkjet print, 50 x 75 cm,
Courtesy Julius von Bismarck; alexander levy, Berlin und Sies+Höke, Düsseldorf.
© Julius von BISMARCK[196]

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[195] https://juliusvonbismarck.com/bank/files/gimgs/40_image-fulgurator--2.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

[196] https://juliusvonbismarck.com/bank/files/gimgs/40_image-fulgurator--3.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

Clearly, the *Image Fulgurator* is not immersive in a way that it affects the audience in the 'here and now', although it operates in the same time and in a possible 360° space, and with an extreme sudden, unpredictable change of presence and absence. It only intrudes visually, not audibly, but it anyway causes disorientation and amazement, albeit time-delayed. The expected response would be definitely an emotional one, though, maybe not physical (besides, perhaps an arousal by anger or delight). The ghostly appearance of something that in fact was not noticeable but now shows itself on the final photograph, seems uncanny, even spooky.

5.2.2 *Excavate* (2012) interactive installation Laurent MIGNONNEAU & Christa SOMMERER (France / Austria)

The interactive installation *Excavate* (2012) was developed by Laurent Mignonneau & Christa Sommerer for their solo show at the *The View Contemporary Art Space*, Salenstein, Switzerland, in the same year. The venue of excavate is a military shelter from World War II in Berlingen, Switzerland, a completely dark, humid, and cave like space.

Fig. 19a *Excavate* interactive installation © 2012 Laurent MIGNONNEAU & Christa SOMMERER, developed for The View Contemporary Art Space, Switzerland[197]

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[197] http://www.interface.ufg.ac.at/christa-laurent/WORKS/artworks/Excavate/images/Excavate_DSC03474_8bits_1024.jpeg, with kind permission of the artists.

With a magic lantern from the 1920ies visitors could project a light spot on the cave's wet walls. Within the illuminated spot, numerous little dark particles appeared and criss-crossed like small insects all over the visible space. Sometimes these little 'bugs' organized themselves into a children's face (see fig. 19a). According to the project's website, these portraits looked "disturbed and scared" (see fig. 19b).[198]

Fig. 19b *Excavate* interactive installation © 2012 Laurent MIGNONNEAU & Christa SOMMERER, developed for The View Contemporary Art Space, Switzerland[199]

For a phantasmagoric projection the visitors have to operate the magic lantern themselves. It can be expected that a phantom like face reveals itself within the illuminated place, but neither exactly when nor at which position. The crawling insects and the now and then emerging ghostly apparitions only exist in the light spot, as if the spot itself would be a non-material screen. Interestingly, with *Excavate* not the audience but the phantoms seem to be troubled as soon as they emerge and show themselves. Maybe they only mirror the uncanniness of the space. It also could be read as a plea for emotional response, or as a warning against this forbidding place.

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[198] http://www.interface.ufg.ac.at/christa-laurent/WORKS/FRAMES/FrameSet.html, Excavate (2012), accessed 23.04.2021, 00:15. See also the video documentation https://vimeo.com/63726856.

[199] http://www.interface.ufg.ac.at/christa-laurent/WORKS/artworks/Excavate/images/Excavate_DSC03448_8bits.jpeg, with kind permission of the artists.

It will depend on the visitors' affective reaction on the creepy-crawlies, or their empathy towards the worried children's faces that they both actively produce, how much uncanniness arises in the visitors. But the venue with its immersive 360° impact by phantasmagoric means will effectively help to induce the uncanny: the complete darkness, the sounds of the permanently but at irregular intervals dripping water, the reverberation, and the un-localizability of the other visitor's steps, probably also the cave's humid smell and moist chill. For all these reasons I would think that this artwork is a perfect example for the approach to uncanniness by means of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*.

5.2.3   *Aliento (Breath)* 1995 by Óscar MUÑOZ (Columbia)

Fig. 20 Aliento (Breath) ©1995 Óscar MUÑOZ - Nine silkscreens on metal mirrors, detail. Collection of the artist.[200]

The word 'aliento', is Spanish for 'breath' as well as for 'encouragement'. *Aliento* is an installation of nine mirrors out of highly polished steel. The surface of each mirror is covered

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[200] https://www.mor-charpentier.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/22-munoz_32-1536x1254.jpg, with kind permission of *mor-charpentier*.

by an unrecognizable silicone film, which hides the print of one or several dead persons. Only a person's exhalation onto the mirror will make the print visible for a moment (see fig. 20).

Aliento happens in the here and now. It maybe does not induce disorientation, but undoubtedly amazement. The physical immersiveness as well as the suddenness and frequency of the appearances is created by the spectators themselves: they need to get their own bodies involved in order to expose and to control the emergence of the hidden images. Even if no 'real' projection is involved, the faces of the dead persons seem to get projected by the spectator's breath onto the mirror's surface. In a phantasmagoric manner, the subjects of the apparitions are the 'ghosts' of deceased people. Therefore I would understand the piece to approach *the uncanny* via the *phantasmagoric dispositif*. Like *Afterlife: an audiovisual performance* (2018) by Harshini Jazmin Karunaratne (see above 5.1.2), it does this in the sense of Freud: *Aliento* inevitably poses the question on the relation of the spectator's own reflection in the mirror and death. The artwork makes the visitors think of the person that gets visible when becoming uncovered by a living person's breath, and the incident of one's own breath terminating one day. It also points to the uncanniness of the double, especially to the illustrations of the phenomenon by Dolar – the fear of getting too close to the mystery of one's own representation (see above, p. 45f).

5.3   The Figure of the Double, Uncanny Encounters, and the Spectator's Involvement

The following two artworks offer an encounter with one's own presence and physicality. I could have listed Óscar Muñoz' *Aliento* here as well (see above 5.2.3), but as I have stated above, no artwork meets the criteria of only one category.

As Belting indicates, digital images "cross the borderline between visual images and virtual images, images *seen* and images *projected*. […] External and internal representations are encouraged to merge" (Belting 2005, p. 309 [italics in the text]). With the first artwork (5.3.1) also the protagonist's shadow is reproduced and mirrored, while in the telematic installation (5.3.2) the persons' doubles have no shadows, which makes them per se uncanny. As we have learned above from Rank: a person without a shadow is a person without a soul, a demonic phenomenon. Additionally, the double arises from a mental disorder, as a projection of inner tensions. Furthermore, the presence of a double at the same time destroys the person's wholeness. This section clearly refers to *the uncanny*, but I will also explore its phantasmagoric elements and their contribution to the uncanny experience.

5.3.1 *Interface* (1972) by Peter CAMPUS (USA)

The installation *Interface* includes an about life-sized transparent glass plate as screen and mirror, a video camera that is installed behind the screen and directed towards the visitors, and a video projector that projects the live-recorded presence of the visitor(s) onto the front side of the screen. When visitors approach the installation and step inside a certain range in front of the screen, their presences both are mirrored in the glass plate and captured by the camera, while at the same time projected on the screen. The projected live-recordings seem to be mirrored in relation to the 'real' reflections of the visitors (see fig. 21).
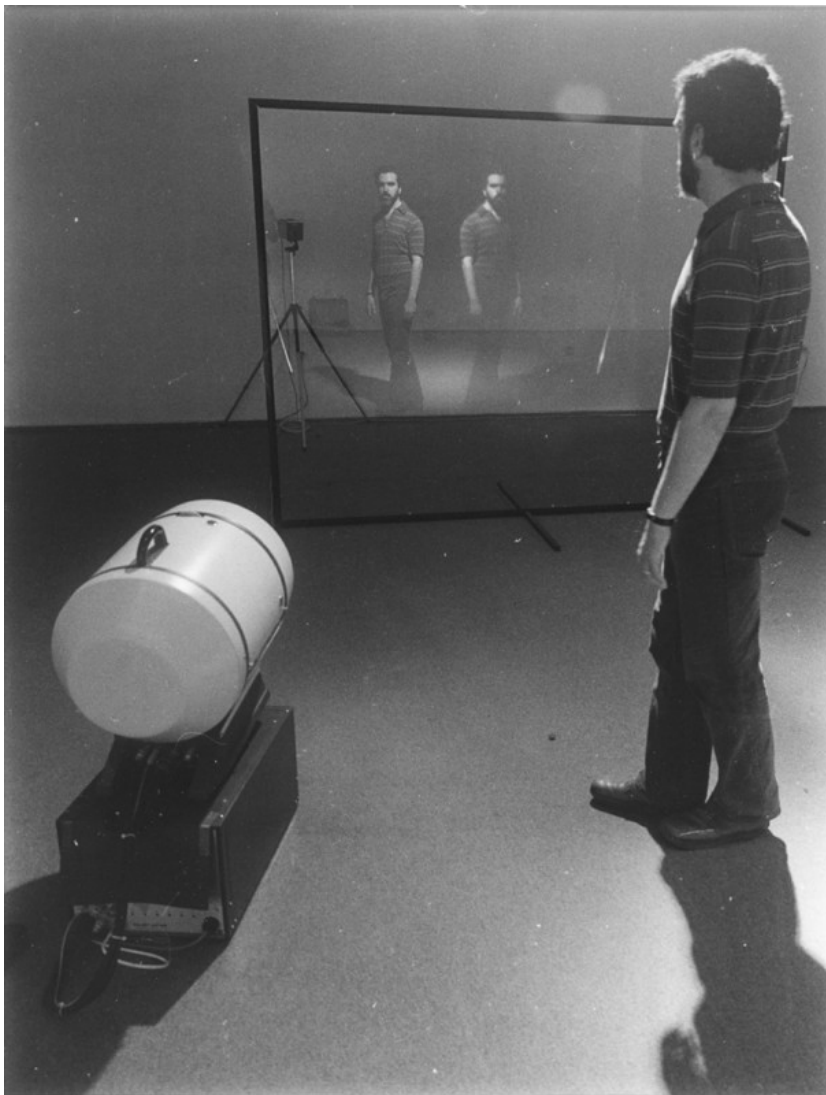
Fig. 21 *Interface* © 1972 Peter CAMPUS, Collection of the artist [201]

Even if Peter Campus' *Interface* – except the darkened space – does not obviously meet any elements of the *phantasmagoric dispositif*, I wanted to include this installation for its other

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qualities that perfectly reveal the problems concerning the figure of the double. The curator of the artist's solo-exhibition *Peter Campus. Video ergo sum* at *Jeu de Paume Paris* (14th to 28th May 2017),[202] Anne-Marie Duguet writes: "Campus explores issues of spatial awareness, and our perception of the body in the construction of identity through the use of unusual perspectives and multiple timeframes. Thanks to the live transmission of the electronic image, he embarks the visitor on a strange and unsettling experience: the confrontation with his double, separated from him in time and space, thereby challenging notions of the self" (Duguet 2017).

However, I would put the focus concerning the figure of the double less on the construction of one's own identity but instead on the modes of representation, reception, and the contrast between the inner and the external images, as Belting states. A mirror always shows one's reflection as an inverted image of the self, while in *Interface*, the visitors are simultaneously presented with their 'real' representation, namely the projected live-recording. For this reason, the project evokes a cognitive challenge to rethink perspectives, and the 'realness' of representations. Therefore, I would suggest to even concede a certain phantasmagoric feature to Peter Campus' *Interface*, as it affects (and haunts) the cognitive and emotional inner realms of the visitors.

5.3.2   *Dissociative Identity* (2006) by Paul SERMON (UK)

Fig. 22a *Dissociative Identity* © 2006 Paul SERMON[203]

Fig. 22b *Dissociative Identity* © 2006 Paul SERMON[204]

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[202] See https://jeudepaume.org/en/evenement/peter-campus-2/, accessed 30.08.2021, 18:41.

[203] http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/storyrooms/images/main/artists/new_sermon_02.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

[204] http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/storyrooms/images/main/artists/new_sermon_03.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

Dissociative Identity by Paul Sermon connects two equal installations that consist of the following elements: [205]

> [A]n octagonal shaped blacked-out room containing a large black beanbag in the centre (see fig. 22a). Each of the four camera views are luma-keyed[206] together and presented on separate monitors in each of the installation spaces. The immersed presence is captivated through the array of views presented in front of them. In effect - removing their eyes from their head and investing them solely within the cameras on which they have to rely to navigate within this space.
> The users of this installation are able to monitor and control their interacting body in an exploded montage of their individual identity (see fig. 22b). Extracted elements of the users body language will be observed through telepresent portals, by providing the performer with four sets of eyes, relocated around the installation; views from above, close up, face on, profiles and from below.[207]

Dissociative Identity plays even more with *the uncanny* – it does not only evoke Jentsch's and Freud's examples of uncanniness towards seemingly animated yet unanimated figures, but also Lacan's fear of the isolated gaze that is watching independently (when closing the eyes in front of the mirror), like the double that suddenly became independent and started its own existence. Especially, since luma-keying removes the participants' shadows, which opens up the issue of the soulless, demonic state of the actual protagonists (who get fragmented, or are forced into fragmentation and shadowlessness).

But also the space is phantasmagoric: the dark environment, the fragmented body parts that unpredictably appear, the shared same time and the same 360° space (even if the same space is simulated through the telepresence, which means that the installation spaces actually both are their respective doubles as well), the confrontation with one's own fragmentation and the merging with the other person's fragmented body parts – exactly the way 'art-horror' is created according to Carroll: with the shaping of misfits, and with this, of monsters. The participants' presence is not only doubled several times, it is also disrupted at the same time, i.e., a redoubling of *the uncanny* as well.

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[205] From the project's website the description is not clear if the "two gallery installations" actually were placed in two different galleries. See http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/storyrooms/sermon.html, accessed 29.08.2021, 22:19.

[206] In contrary to chroma keying (which uses a certain color range for transparent sections of the top layer – with mostly a blue or green screen as background) luma-keying removes pixels according to their brightness for the transparent sections of the top layer (with mostly a black background) (see Harrison 2013).

[207] http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/storyrooms/sermon.html, accessed 29.08.2021, 22:19.

5.4   Uncanny Visuals Projected on Smoke / Fog

At least since the *nebulous lantern* images were displayed on smoke by a hidden magic lantern. Heard gave the insight into the secret of generating a vivid appearance: the motive on the images must have "a predominance of white" (see Heard 2001, p. 144). We find this technique in the following two projects. However, the machinery is not hidden any more. Both artworks reveal the source of the projections as well as the production of the smoke that serves a display. While the first artwork (5.4.1) only uses smoke as a screen, the other example explores a variety of 'soft displays'[208] and solid surfaces for the projections (see 5.4.2).

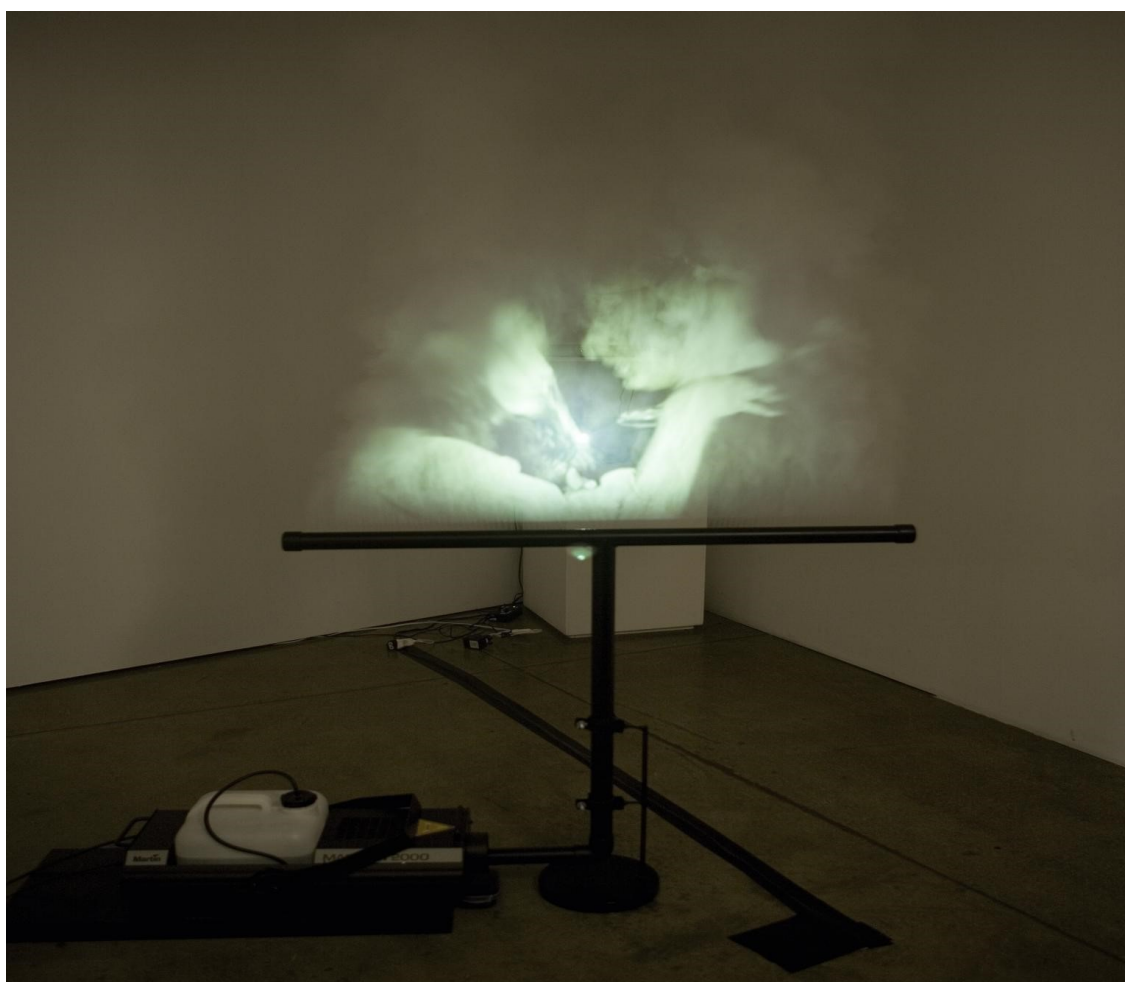### 5.4.1   *Experiência de Cinema (Experiencing Cinema)* (2004-5) by Rosângela RENNÓ (Brazil)

Fig. 23 *Experiência de Cinema* ©2004-05 Rosângela RENNÓ - Image projection on intermittent smoke curtain, Photo Credit: Ding MUSA[209]

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[208] A nice overview on 'soft displays' is Schmidt (2011).

[209] https://www.mor-charpentier.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/T12897_10.jpg, with kind permission of *mor-charpentier*. Photo Credit: Ding Musa, according to http://revuecaptures.org/image/experi%C3%AAncia-de-cinema-2004-3.

The installation *Experiencing Cinema by* Rosângela Rennó sequentially projects photographs on a smoke display. The image series consist of 4 DVD-Rs with 31 black- and white photographs each, with the themes: 'Amor' ('Love'), 'Guerra' ('War'), 'Familia' ('Family') and 'Crime', each 21 minutes. Every image is projected for 12 seconds, while the smoke is produced only a few seconds. Between every projection there is an interval of half a minute.[210]

Here, I list Rosângela Rennó's artwork as an excellent example for the impression that the technique of projecting the images on smoke is offering. Even if the smoke-display is vertically oriented only, because of the special construction of the emitter, the images still emerge in a three-dimensional shape (see fig. 23). Another analogy is the role of the narrative. Rosângela Rennó uses titles for the piece's four series. However, it does not seem to really matter for the impact the artwork has on the viewer's reception, though it is stated that "there is often a subtle connection between each photograph and the one following it. For instance, two consecutive pictures in 'War' feature figures looking out of the frame, while another two in the same group that are presented sequentially both include people touching their faces" (Hodge 2015).

Experiencing Cinema at first sight does not seem to meet most of the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* criteria. Nevertheless, judging by the impression of the video documentation,[211] the creepy sounds by the smoke machine, which are echoed by the exhibition room, together with the images' ghostly and hardly to grasp appearance,[212] has something deeply uncanny (at least to me). It probably is very individually sensed, if the relatively long rest period in between the projections is increasing the suspension or experienced as relaxing – for me, the first state is intensely felt. For a conclusion I would say that even if the artwork is presented not in a completely dark space and its media-techniques are laid entirely open, *Experiencing Cinema* nonetheless succeeds in producing a phantasmagoric experience, and with this, in inducing uncanniness.

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[210] See http://www.rosangelarenno.com.br/obras/exibir/24/1, http://www.rosangelarenno.com.br/obras/about/24, and https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/renno-experiencing-cinema-t12897, accessed 27.08.2021, 18:25.

[211] See https://vimeo.com/40170481, accessed 27.08.2021, 18:42.

[212] One possible reading is "viewers also experience the images' disappearance, often before there has been a chance to properly decipher their content, which could be regarded as a visual analogy for the way in which memories fade and are forgotten" Hodge (2015).

5.4.2 *The Influence Machine* (2000) by Tony OURSLER (USA)

Fig. 24 *The Influence Machine* 2000 © Tony OURSLER. Presented by Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, 2017. Photograph: Luke UNSWORTH. The Influence Machine is part of *The Artangel Collection*.[213]

The partly interactive multimedia outdoor installation *The Influence Machine*[214] by Tony Oursler includes several videos that are projected on the surrounding environment (treetops and a tree trunk, two buildings) and on smoke that is generated by fog machines (see fig. 24), and a projected ticker ('talking light') that can be fed with text via a website. The projections and the fog generation are operated by life performers,[215] and the soundscape is "featuring the glass

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[213] https://www.artangel.org.uk/media/filer_public_thumbnails/filer_public/1b/ef/1bef0b1b-026d-46de-8b88-1bcc04e77f05/2000im-collection-02.jpg__900x999999_q85_subsampling-2.jpg, with kind permission of *The Artangel Collection*.

[214] The title of the artwork refers to the experimental physicist Francis Hauksbee (1660-1713), who in 1906 created an 'influence machine' to mechanically spin a vacuumed bulb with some mercury inside to generate light, a discovery that he had made the year before, on the one hand. On the other hand, it also includes the reference to the description of a schizophrenia symptom in 1919 by the psychiatrist Viktor Tausk (1879-1919) 'the influencing machine'.

[215] See https://tonyoursler.com/the-influence-machine-new-york, accessed 28.08.21, 11:51.

harmonica and found spirit voices."[216] The simultaneity of the videos and their sounds and voices create an immersive and multi-auditory experience.

On the *Tate UK* website Phoebe Roberts illustrates that "Inspired in its form by son-et-lumiere animations of historic sights and historical phantasmagoria, Oursler's work explores the moment immediately after an invention in which the use of a given technology has not yet been codified by society. The Influence Machine also examines the psychological effects of what Oursler calls 'mimetic' technology" (Roberts 2016), which, in Oursler's case means the simulation of 'reality' by a technological induced oneiric state.

On Oursler's website the structure of The Influence Machine is explained as an inquiry of "a series of telecommunication inventions and […] how each was used to speak with the dead".[217]

I have chosen to present *The Influence Machine* for several reasons. It invokes the *phantasmagoric dispositif* and *the uncanny* in its modes of presentation (darkness, movable projections that un-expectantly appear on various displays, especially the projection on smoke, its immersive character, its neat choreography but also its being adapted to the given space and situations), as well as thematically. However, it is not possible to definitely speak of a *phantasmagoric dispositif* in conjunction with the artwork, as it does neither seem to induce disorientation or suspension in the visitors nor to affect the audience physically.[218]

5.5 Interactive, Immersive, Phantasmagoric Art, and the 'Other'

This category probably is nearest to the *phantasmagoric dispositif* and *the uncanny*. All three here presented artworks offer immersiveness, are unfolding in a lightless space, their visuals are unpredictable in their behaviour, or variety (and with 5.5.2 and 5.5.3 also the soundscape), and each project for various reasons induces disorientation and a physical experience. Moreover, the first two examples (5.5.1 and 5.5.2) aim to keep the screen as invisible as possible and to offer the illusion of their ghostly characters' immaterial support. The last presented project (5.5.3) seems to almost dissolve its screenness by its opposite, its huge vastness of screens and mirrors that form a 360° highly fragmented display. All three artworks evoke the 'other' that can be experienced as a fascinating as well as an uncanny encounter.

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[216] https://tonyoursler.com/the-influence-machine-new-york, accessed 28.08.21, 11:51.

[217] ibid.

[218] See https://youtu.be/e3DTdr79S8o.

5.5.1 *Tall Ships* (1992) by Gary HILL (USA)

The interactive installation *Tall Ships* by Gary Hill is best described on the artist's website:[219]

> *Tall Ships* consists of sixteen 4-inch black-and-white video monitors with sixteen angled projection lenses, which are mounted in a line down the center of the ceiling of a completely dark, corridor-like space. There is one projection approximately every five feet alternating from side to side (i.e., approximately every ten feet on each side), and the last projection is seen on the back wall. (Hill 1992 [extra spacing in the text])

According to Elcott, the movement of the figures are generated from "sequences of photographs" (Elcott 2016a, p. 44).

Fig. 25a *Tall Ships* © 1992 Gary HILL, INSTALLATION: Documenta IX, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany, 1992, Photo Credit: Dirk BLEICKER [220]

Like the painted glass slides of Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, the figures are rich in contrast with their surroundings blackened out, but at the same time have a bit of a 'ghostly' look. They are sitting, walking, or standing, and seem to move freely in their space without any visible support. When visitors enter the venue, the ghostly figures begin to approach from a distance, they grow bigger to about live-size in sync with the viewers, and they turn again as soon as the viewer walks out of the spectres' proximity. Hill explains that "[e]ach of the projections is

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independently interactive with the viewers; thus, according to the number of viewers in the space, any number of the people/projections could appear in the distance – approaching, withdrawing, or standing in the foreground – at any given time" (Hill 1992) (see fig. 25a).

Fig. 25b *Tall Ships* © 1992 Gary HILL, INSTALLATION: Documenta IX, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany, 1992, Photo Credit: Mark B. McLOUGHLIN[221]

In line with Elcott I consider *Tall Ships* as extremely interesting in regard to the *phantasmagoric dispositif*: The dark space that the visitors are 'called in' – this time not by an audible (like the glass harmonica) but a visual teaser (the distant figure that seems to pay attention to the visitor's presence); the curiosity, maybe suspension that *Tall Ships* generates in the visitors, the fascination of the encounter and the interaction with the approaching spectres; the non-existing narrative, which permits the ghostly figures a presence as 'Ding an sich' in the sense of Schopenhauer – an existence due to their own 'will' (see fig. 25b).

It is very likely that the space, with the seemingly free floating projections as its only light source, moreover, could cause a slight disorientation and a feeling of uncanniness. With *Tall Ships* the 360° immersiveness is not as obvious as with the other two projects presented here in

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[221] https://garyhill.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Tall-Ships_4-840x600.jpg, with kind permission of the artist.

this category, but I would nevertheless suggest that Hill's installation likewise affects its audience emotionally and physically, even if in a more subtle way (which, possibly, is even longer lasting in its intriguing effect, as the senses have more time to get involved than with experiencing a sensual overload).

5.5.2 *Peace Can Be Realized Even Without Order* (2013-18) by teamLab (JP / International)

The international art collective teamLab "aims to explore the relationship between the self and the world and new perceptions through art […]" and to overcome the "boundaries in our perception of the world, of the relationship between the self and the world, and of the continuity of time" (teamLab 2001).[222] *Peace Can Be Realized Even Without Order* is only one of a large number of interactive digital and immersive installations by teamLab.[223]

Fig. 26a Interactive Digital Installation *Peace Can Be Realized Even Without Order* © 2013-2018 teamLab. Photo Credit: teamLab.[224]

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[222] According to the teamLab's website teamLab exists since 2001 and is "an interdisciplinary group of various specialists such as artists, programmers, engineers, CG animators, mathematicians and architects" https://www.teamlab.art/about/, accessed 29.08.2021, 14:38.

[223] The project is rooted in an ancient Japanese dance festival, the Awa Odori ('Awa Dance') from the Tokushima (formerly Awa) Prefecture on Shikoku in Japan. As stated on the artwork's website "for some reason, the music forms into a peaceful order across the whole town. Dancers who randomly meet other groups of dancers gradually and subconsciously match the tempo of their music with that of the other group" https://www.teamlab.art/w/peace_sg/, accessed 29.08.2021, 16:20.

[224] From the public teamLab dropbox https://www.dropbox.com/sh/oxpjcsn4674yn75/AABCdRWMZFA04tDMu86DLCpaa?dl=0, on https://www.teamlab.art/w/peace_sg/, image: 06_Peace can be Realized Even without Order.jpg.

The holographic figures of *Peace Can Be Realized Even Without Order* that are dancing and playing instruments, are connected through the sound of their direct neighbours. Only the encounter with a visitor changes the closest character's behaviour (it displays another movement or gesture and stops playing music, some utter a cry or a short address), which also influences its neighbours (see fig. 26b). After a little while, the 'order' re-establishes itself.[225]

Fig. 26b Interactive Digital Installation *Peace Can Be Realized Even Without Order* © 2013-2018 teamLab. Photo Credit: teamLab.[226]

I have finally chosen this artwork from teamLab's impressive body of work, as it additionally features figural ghostly characters that interact with the visitor's presence. I also regard the holographic technique in order to render the characters' appearance three-dimensional as an remarkable solution for offering a 3D experience without any additional expedients for the visitors to wear (see fig. 26a), which perfectly connects to the phantasmagoric modes of simulating three-dimensionality.

The totally dark space is only lit by the dancing figures, which in their multitude give the impression of a 360° immersiveness, intensified by the encompassing soundscape. All the

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[225] See https://youtu.be/7gf3aRwWD-4?list=TLGGog7rL2JmsagyOTA4MjAyMQ, teamLab exhibition "We are the Future" (beta ver.) at DigiArk, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, May26-Aug12, 2012, Taichung, Taiwan, and https://youtu.be/fZLDXsTQY1o?list=TLGGVgt4FxFR6AcyOTA4MjAyMQ, Singapore Biennale 2013: "If The World Changed", Oct 26, 2013 - Feb 16, 2014, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.

[226] From the public teamLab dropbox
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/oxpjcsn4674yn75/AABCdRWMZFA04tDMu86DLCpaa?dl=0, on
https://www.teamlab.art/w/peace_sg/, image: 04_Peace-Can-Be-Realized-Even-Without-Order_main_high.jpg.

characters have their fixed space (i.e., nearly invisible screens) and height, and are permanently displayed, and also the change of sound can be located to the event of interaction. However, the figures' movement and the changes in the soundscape are dependent on the number of visitors walking in between. I would think that these phantasmagoric elements also induce a certain uncanniness in the visitors.

5.5.3 *Social Soul* (2014-2016) by Lauren Lee McCARTHY & Kyle McDONALD (USA)

Social Soul was created by Lauren Lee McCarthy and Kyle McDonald for a TED Conference in Vancouver in 2014.[227]

Fig. 27a Immersive Digital Experience *Social Soul* © 2014-2016 Lauren Lee McCARTHY & Kyle McDONALD. Collection of the artists, 2014.[228]

On McCarthy's website the project is described as "an immersive digital experience inspired by the question: How does it feel to be inside someone else's social stream? The installation brings to life a user's Twitter stream in a larger-than-life structure where their social media profile is on display in a 360-degree stream of monitors, mirrors and sound" (McCarthy 2014).

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[227] In 2016 another version "was created for Samsung 837, in collaboration with black Egg" https://lauren-mccarthy.com/Social-Soul, accessed 27.08.21, 17:05.

[228] https://freight.cargo.site/t/original/i/8bd42a1fc4396edd827d9ef1a3f9141dd1032288dd096997d4f51818ff743799/ss3.jpg, with kind permission of the artists.

The visitor's social streams are displayed within the space, and after exiting a tweet connects and heartens them to further communicate offline with each other.

Fig. 27b Immersive Digital Experience *Social Soul* © 2014-2016 Lauren Lee McCARTHY & Kyle McDONALD. Collection of the artists, 2014.[229]

Here, an uncanny disorientation seems to be induced by the sensory overload, the impression of one 360° but hugely fragmented and highly immersive surface with constantly switching colours, brightness, images, and texts.[230] Visitors know that they have just entered a relatively small box that could even be experienced as claustrophobic, but the mirrors clone and multiply the space many times over into a seemingly vast and 360° environment – an additional cognitive contradiction that could lead to disorientation (see fig. 27a and 27b). The visual content approaches the visitor from all directions, and also the sounds reverberate within the space. The phantom of the 'soul mate' reveals itself in a myriad of fragmented tweets. Maybe this is the most accurate example of a contemporary phantasmagoria, the real and deeply uncanny phantasmagoria of our time.

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[229] https://freight.cargo.site/t/original/i/5f36ea05d371c5a1b55e62100761172b4d204af388d89d00d6b291d71fca2a2b/ss2.jpg, with kind permission of the artists.

[230] See https://vimeo.com/344231381.

5.6 Summary

As it became obvious, the here presented artworks were not easily to assemble below just one category, however, I tried to find the closest one for each of them according to their main qualities.

When scrutinizing the above presented artworks, and comparing the findings to what I have stated at the end of the previous chapter, then I have to admit that I have probably underestimated the transformation ability of the *phantasmagoric dispositif* to adapt to the *exhibition dispositif*. I think we could now even add the element of 'induced introspection and cognitive challenge' to the list of constructive components for the *phantasmagoric dispositif* when applied to phantasmagoric exhibition pieces.

The overview of this huge variety of phantasmagoric artworks also allows to confirm the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* innate facility to induce uncanniness in the audiences (even when not utilised in each artwork, or, with other examples, in a mere subtitle mode).

6. Conclusion and Outlook

Having investigated the phantasmagoria's history and more neatly the *phantasmagoric dispositif* of the *Fantasmagorie* by Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, I will now discuss my various hypotheses that I have placed throughout my analyses above.

My first assumption that the *dispositif* can be deployed as a method, I've tested right away during the process. We can now confirm the evidence that this approach is marvellously applicable. The *dispositif* includes a huge variety of perspectives from all its constructive elements (the machinery, the human operators, the uses and ideologies, the reception), and it likewise has proved to be open to novel point of views. Therefore, in utilising the *dispositif* as method, it is possible to shed light on a multitude of issues concerning the respective *dispositif's* subjects, like the phantasmagoria, the cinema, or the exhibition. Additionally, it allows to compare the different *dispositifs* to each other.

Next, I explored the *phantasmagoric dispositif* and its relatedness to *the uncanny*. I tracked this kinship (or inhere phantasmagoric nature) in investigating the uses and ideologies of the *Fantasmagorie*, the phantasmagoric media-techniques, and the *Fantasmagorie's* reception. I suggested for the historic *Fantasmagorie* "that *the uncanny* in fact *is* an immanent element of the *phantasmagorical dispositif*" (above, p.101).

Then, I extrapolated the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* constructive elements, which are "its immersiveness that aims to comprehensively affect the audience by inducing disorientation or the feeling of being lost [in the same time and space], as well as amazement and suspense; its play with sudden changes of presence and absence of the visuals and sounds, and with the unpredictability of the direction from where the spectres (or the next visual or audible effect) will turn up next in a possibly 360° environment; its effort to not only emotionally but also physically affect the audience; the avoidance of any visible or at least fixed cinematic screen – that is, the apparent absence of any material support of the displayed visuals; moreover, its neatly choreographed and intensifying eerie and disturbing sounds and light effects" (above, p. 117), while the narrative turned out to be an insignificant factor.

I later applied these defined elements to an analysis of a variety of present artworks, to find out, if the phantasmagoric alliance with *the uncanny* also does hold for contemporary exhibition pieces. It also proved successful, even if this phantasmagoric feature was not exploited by every artwork, or was only deployed in a very subtle way. I could also demonstrate that "any

performance, installation, exhibition, or attraction that meets these characteristics could be denoted as *phantasmagoric*" (ibid.), an estimation that was already expressed by Grau and Elliot (see Grau 2007, p. 148ff; Elcott 2016a, p. 57ff).

In deducing and defining the *phantasmagoric dispositif's* constructive elements, I could compare the *phantasmagoric* with the *cinematic dispositif*. I could prove that the *Fantasmagorie* "even tricked the spectator's eye at that time more comprehensively than a current cinematic audience could be tricked with just the speed of subsequent stills on a fixed, visible screen in an incompletely shaded cinematic projection room" (above, p. 90), and I could definitely confirm that the *phantasmagoric dispositif* was and is outreaching the *cinematic*, despite all possible SFXs with the latter (see above also Gunning and Elsaesser, p. 8 and p. 92).

Additionally, I could demonstrate that the phantasmagoric is much more related to the early 'cinema of attractions' than to the later cinematic developments (disregarding the possible SFXs).

Inspired by Elcott (see Elcott 2016a, p. 51), I posed the question, if "the *cinematic dispositif* is in a way (forced to) 'opening up'" (above, p. 118) and if "it does this in a phantasmagoric way" (ibid.). The comparison raised the further consideration, if the *phantasmagoric dispositif* is about to even absorb the *cinematic*, at least in an installation context. Again, this led to additional concerns about the relationship between the *phantasmagoric* and the *exhibition dispositif*.

I suggested as conclusion that the *phantasmagoric* is both able to interfere with the *cinematic* as well as with the *exposition dispositif*. However, I was uncertain, if the *phantasmagoric dispositif* really could adapt to an exhibition setting. But after having looked closely at each of the above presented artworks, I could show that the *phantasmagoric dispositif* already had successfully integrated in the *exhibition dispositif*. As I already noted above, "I think we could now even add the element of 'induced introspection and cognitive challenge' to the list of constructive components for the *phantasmagoric dispositif* when applied to phantasmagoric exhibition pieces" (p. 146).

Two questions had to remain open: whom does a phantasmagoric installation that is conceived for an exhibition space would like to address as an audience? And how disturbing or uncanny it would be experienced, if 2D visuals instead of the usual 3D content would enter a 360° environment in an immersive way?

As I have stated above, I got inspired to research "historical projection techniques, in order to maybe develop from this point of view a new perspective on what is possible, needed, and desirable, for the concept of an immersive artwork to be received by audiences in any possible emotional and physical ways" (above, p. 116). I can now say that I really gained quite some fruitful insights and inspiration due to my research and analyses, and I am very motivated to work on practical solutions for artistic projects that derived from this theoretical journey.

I will leave the open issues to be answered in detail to a next inquiry. For that, I would definitively recommend the *dispositif* as a method again, especially from a *phantasmagorical* and an *exhibition dispositif's* perspective.

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