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Photography and Film in Nineteenth-Century France: Negative Space Performance and Projected Unreality in a Joint Doctoral Program

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre (Joint Doctoral with UCI)

by

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The dissertation of William Allan Given, Jr. is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Photography and Film in Nineteenth-Century France: Negative Space Performance and Projected Unreality for the Joint Doctoral Program

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre (Joint Doctoral with UCI)

University of California, San Diego, 2016
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Through an examination of the performative work of illusionists, artists, photographers, and filmmakers in the latter half of nineteenth century France, including Robert-Houdin, the Davenport Brothers, Edgar Degas, Auguste and Louis Lumière, and Georges Méliès, I argue for the existence of a *negative-space performance* that is created solely within the mind of the spectator. Negative-space performance involves the spectators attempting to coalesce all of the various components of a performance, i.e. what they perceive to be taking place on stage, their own previous knowledge about the material, their own belief systems, etc. into a unique form of reality in an effort to subsequently delineate their own identity.

Within this model, there can be no singular reality, but there instead exists a complex multiverse, where new realities are consistently generated as the boundaries between spectator/performer are blurred and as the previous framework of the static and passive photograph is replaced with one of the active construction of reality. Even when perceptions of reality are challenged, as the performers I am examining routinely did, and when a spectator can no longer differentiate between what they perceive to be as "real" and as "illusion," the subsequent fracturing that occurs is what becomes the catalyst for new forms of reality to emerge. Reality, I assert, can only exist within the two-dimensional space of the text, the photograph, or the film. I argue that the three-dimensional world is falsely considered to be the actual whereas it is in instead a simulacrum; it is a projection of two-dimensional reality.

Within my dissertation, I also attempt to counter scholarship that positions films by the Lumière brothers or by Méliès as a form of "proto-cinema" and claim that these films need to be examined outside of an encompassing film theory and instead be viewed as theatrical performances designed specifically to break down pre-conceived notions of a linear temporality and to introduce an entanglement model of time.

Introduction

It would be remiss to suggest that photography and motion pictures originated in a single location, or that their invention was the work of only a specific individual. In reality, both the mediums of photography and film were the result of numerous individuals working simultaneously, sometimes unknowingly of each other, while other times in direct competition, in order to fix an image permanently in time and thus allowing it to be viewed later. While we take the process of photography for granted in the twenty-first century as we are immersed on a daily basis in a deluge of images, and where the image becomes a devalued surplus commodity, for the early explorers of the medium, results were oftentimes achieved through an amalgamation of careful scientific experimentation, trial and error, and blind luck. The results though were magical. Photons, travelling at 299,792,458 meters per second hit objects and are absorbed or reflected at varying wavelengths. This light passes through a series of glass elements of a lens, all arranged mathematically with the correct concavity and convexity in order to produce a viable representation of the image being photographed with the minimal amount of distortion or aberrations for the focal length being utilized. The light then moves through the dark box of the camera body and onto an emulsion that has been photosynthesized with different chemicals and put onto a plate made of glass, metal, or celluloid. This plate is developed in total darkness utilizing even more chemicals mixed in precise quantities. The development process is then chemically stopped at some point in the process determined through experience and experimentation by the photographer, and then another chemical bath is used to hopefully permanently fix the image to its

substrate. If anything was done incorrectly during the process the finished photograph could instantly turn black and disappear when it is brought out and shown in natural lighting. The labor-intensive process does not produce equal or exact results and is subject to a plethora of conditions, both atmospheric and chemical, that make it difficult to achieve a viable result. In the early days of photography, the treated plates would oftentimes have to be exposed for hours, or even days, in order to produce a single image. These early photographs could not be duplicated and became one-of-a-kind objects, thus adding to their mystique. When everything did go according to plan though, and one could look down onto an image created elsewhere, both geographically and temporally, the magic of the medium became revealed.

For the purposes of my dissertation, I find it necessary to not attempt to trace all of the various threads that constitute the invention of photography and film in Europe, Asia, and the United States, as much of this is already well documented. I instead will be situating my argument in Paris, France during the latter half of the nineteenth century and will be examining how both photography and film ultimately helped redefine how an audience engages with a theatrical event while challenging, and reconstituting, perceptions of reality. To be even more specific, I will be centering the locus of my argument at a building that once stood on the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris, a building that housed salles belonging to magicians, performers, and photographers, allowing the disparate forms to come together, both directly and indirectly, in order to create something unique. Those who would engage in the various new artistic forms that were being created at 8 Boulevard des Italiens were operating on the periphery of theatre, attempting to balance between being performer, scientist, inventor, charlatan, and

huckster. They were businessmen trying to attract new audiences and new clientele to increase their revenue. In the fifty years though that would close out the nineteenth century, France was going through monumental changes both politically and socially, and audiences were becoming more discerning and increasingly in need of new forms of escapism within the theatre.

As the population of Paris was expanding exponentially, and as living conditions were increasingly becoming unhealthy and dangerous, citizens demanded reform and this led to numerous riots and uprisings that would come to define the first half of nineteenth century Parisian history.[1] In 1848, King Louis-Philippe abdicated his throne, leading to Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to become the first elected President of France in December 1848. Just three years later though, Bonaparte led a coup d'état and became Emperor Napoleon III on 2 December 1851. Working with the prefect of the Seine, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Emperor Napoleon III began large-scale public works projects under the new Second Republic in an attempt to modernize Paris, improve its connectivity, and to eliminate its pollution. Under the rebuilding movement, "The main emphasis of this campaign was on the streets: old neighborhoods of narrow, winding medieval streets were demolished and replaced with wide avenues, broad boulevards, and circular plazas…Haussmann (and his followers in cities all over Europe) would seek to replace overcrowded slums, with their disease and radicalism, with more sanitary streets and housing" (Winks and Neuberger 189). The Second Republic was thus about the performance of idealisms; by dismantling the old and replacing it with the new, both

[1] In 1848, Paris had a population that exceeded one million people. A cholera epidemic that year killed over 20,000 Parisians, just as a similar epidemic did in 1830.

literally and metaphorically, it would give the appearance of progress and modernity. In reality though, it was a carefully constructed move to quell the radicalism of the revolutionary, for if the Emperor could cite all of the improvements his Empire has brought to the living conditions of the populace, it would become increasingly difficult for those who question some of the Empire's policies to garner enough support to overthrow the ruling political body just as had happened in 1848.

While it is true that under Napoleon III Paris improved dramatically and made its move into becoming one of the leading modern cities in Europe, a lot of the Second Empire becomes centered on the dichotomy of progress. While railways, roads, and sanitation was being revolutionized, there was also a practice of vehement censorship of any of those who would criticize the Second Empire taking place. An illusion of modernity was being created. Even when Napoleon III entered into a war with Prussia, there was still the sentiment that, "France might be at war, and that war bogged down in bloody stalemate, but Napoleon was determined that the world should see that it had the wealth, vigor, and confidence to fight and build at the same time" (Bierman 159). This leads to Paris being presented as façade; that there is a projected reality that is being ascribed as being truth, but that doesn't necessarily operate in accordance with the lived realities of those in the city itself.[2] This becomes best evidenced when Napoleon III hosts the Exposition Universelle des produits de l'Agriculture, de l'Industrie et des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 1855 in order to showcase the vast progress that the Second Empire has made

[2] The building façades of Haussmann's Paris are still vehemently protected and maintained today. This does not trap the city in a form of stasis of the imagined reality that was created though, but rather has transformed the projected reality into actuality, i.e. people now believe the façade as truth.

in its first years of existence in those respective areas.[3] The Exposition Universelles become an integral way to convey the successes of France, but they also become a way to construct and to perform a distinctively calculated Parisian and French identity to the outside world.

The Second Empire ended though with the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, and Emperor Napoleon III surrendered and was captured following the Battle of Sedan on 2 September 1870. The Third Republic was subsequently formed, but the Prussians continued their march on Paris, and after a bloody four-month bombardment, Paris eventually surrendered on 26 January 1871. The French government was able to negotiate that Paris would not being taken over by the Prussians, but the long siege on the city had taken its toll on its inhabitants. Many were now starving, and as Edmond Goncourt noted in a journal entry written during the siege on 8 December 1870, "Hunger is beginning and famine is on the horizon. Elegant Parisian women are beginning to turn their dressing rooms into henhouses. You figure, you count, and you wonder whether even by using all the waste, all the scrappings, all the pairings, there will be anything left to eat in two weeks" (167). There was thus complete political and social disarray in Paris and radical groups and anarchists eventually were elected to take over the Paris City Council in what became known as the Paris Commune. The French army entered Paris though in order to take power back from the Communards, and in what became known as *la semaine sanglante*, over 6,500 Communards were killed and the Commune fell on 28 May 1871. The strongly Republican government of the Third Republic focused again on

[3] Paris would actually host five Exposition Universelles in the latter half of the nineteenth century: in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900.

recreating the appearance and perception of Paris and began new construction projects as well as a systematic renaming of some key Parisian streets, all in an attempt to rebrand the image of Paris once again.

With this constantly shifting backdrop, where the average citizen finds himself trying to reconcile a dramatically changing internal political landscape, while also trying to navigate a space where the very nature of a city is in perpetual flux, with new monuments being constructed over the newly dismantled ones from the older regimes, there is a disorientation that occurs. Even the very orientation of the individual within the city is being disrupted as new streets are installed where buildings once stood and old streets are given new names. Even for those born there, Paris suddenly becomes a continuously unfamiliar city throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, and it is here where I situate my argument. I approach this as a space where the reality of the three-dimensional world no longer seems concrete, and with the advent of photography and film, the two-dimensional space is permitted to give rise to a multiverse of realities. Even in examining the historical events surrounding the brief time of the Paris Commune, photography now allowed for the struggles to be captured and then disseminated to a larger number of individuals. In one of the surviving historical photographs from the Paris Commune, the photographer Pierre-Ambrose Richebourg, who was known from his early portrait of one of the early pioneers of photography, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in 1844, took a photograph of men manning cannons behind barricades outside the Hotel de Ville in Paris (*Barricades de la Commune*). Due to the long exposure necessary to capture the image, there is a ghosting of transparent individuals moving in an out of the frame of the picture (Image 1). Only one individual appears to be solid, his

back to the camera, suggesting that he remained immobile during the entirety of the exposure as the world went by at a frenetic pace around him. The single photograph is imbued with a sense of movement and vibrancy; it is not simply a relic that gives an audience that is now detached historically from the events that occurred in 1871 a pictorial representation of what transpired, but it instead engages the spectator within the performance of its own reality.

Image 1: Barricades de la Commune, avril 71. Coin de la place Hotel de Ville & de la rue de Rivoli. Photograph by Pierre-Ambroise Richebourg.

It is from here where I position my argument in this dissertation. I view the two-dimensional photograph, and the later two-dimensional filmstrip, as reality and the subsequent three-dimensional realm existing as performative projections of the two-dimensional reality. A key concept I utilize to support my argument on the nature of performative reality throughout my dissertation is that which I define as *negative-space performance*. The negative-space performance is entirely constructed in the mind of the spectator and allows her to fill in any of the missing information that is necessary for her to engage with either two-dimensional actual reality or three-dimensional projected reality. The negative-space performance is what allows the spectator to look at Richebourg's photograph and instantly build a scene around it, either from embodied knowledge (the spectator was there as witness/the spectator has read about the events/the spectator has been told about the events), or through imagination (the spectator does not know why people are manning cannons or even where, or when, the cannons are and so creates her own imagined scenario). Negative-space performance is necessary with any engagement between spectator and artwork, and ultimately shapes the individual's unique perception of the real and the possible. The two-dimensional is thus permitted to be a constant of reality, even when it is manipulated, because it is not necessarily bound to the temporality of the moment of its creation, but instead creates infinite numbers of negative-space performances as it moves through its own space-time progression. The three-dimensional performance of the projected, and falsely perceived to be as authentic reality, is transitory and impermanent, leaving behind only the vague recollection of the event and the negative-space performance it generated.

I begin Chapter One of my dissertation then by examining how live performance can serve to usurp the spectator's understanding and engagement with reality. By focusing on a peripheral form of theatre, magic, I argue how illusionists such as Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin create uncanny situations that serve to physically disrupt the belief systems of the spectators and thus, in turn, serve to manipulate them through the careful construction of a negative-space performance that in actuality could not exist. This creates a fracturing of the perceived unified nature of reality, and instead supplants it with a reality that is malleable and entirely able to be constructed. A space is created where the spectator no longer questions how a magician is accomplishing a certain trick, but actually believes that some form of magic has taken place. I conclude Chapter One by looking at how the automaton and the theatrical ghost were also used by the magician on stage to likewise create a similar perception of the technological having the ability to create magic as well. In Chapter Two, I extend this argument by also incorporating what happens when a collective form of reality becomes fractured. This I do through an examination of illusionists who perform trickery not as a mastery of arcane magical knowledge, but rather as a conduit to the spiritual world. This also leads into an engagement with the two-dimensional space as reality through an examination of the spirit photography craze that was spreading throughout Europe at the time.

For Chapter Three, I focus entirely on photography as performance and begin to question the effects of reality no longer being bound by temporality. I argue against the incorrectly perceived static nature of photographs and show how a single photograph can be utilized to convey the complexities of a story, complete with action and movement. I examine the works of Marey and Muybridge and their early experimentations with

movement and how that subsequently alters the spectators' engagement with the two-dimensional photograph through the conscious activation of the negative-space performance. I also address how individuals such as Degas and Disdéri likewise were able to utilize photographs to challenge notions of how identity and character are performed and what the subsequent perceptions of reality are within portraiture. This leads to my final chapter, where I look at the introduction of film in 1895 in Paris and how there is the realization that reality exists in the two-dimensional realm and not in the projections of the three-dimensional naturalistic world. I argue against those scholars who state that the actualités created by the Lumière brothers and by Georges Méliès are a form of "proto-cinema" and instead claim that these films introduced spectators to the possibilities of engaging with performances not bound by a singular space-time.

Paris at the end of the nineteenth century was a vibrant time where artists were challenging various performative modes against a constantly shifting political, social, and technological landscape. It was a time where there was a blurring of the lines between the definition of magician and scientist, performer and photographer, and revolutionary and heretic. It was a time where there were those who sought to dream of a world where the magical was possible and then work tirelessly to invent that world in actuality. It was a world where the magical became the spiritual, the technological became the magical, and the performer was imbued with powers that allowed for the creation of a rapidly expanding multitude of realities. It is my goal with this dissertation to argue how the mediums of photography and film in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Paris ultimately led to the understanding of the negative-space performance as a necessity to the theatrical event, that a spectator cannot engage in any form of theatre without also

engaging in an individually unique negative-space performance, and to ultimately convince my readers of the power of the performer to create a multiverse of reality within the two-dimensional space.

Chapter One

Magic, Technology, and the Cohesion of Reality

On 3 July 1845, close to one hundred people, some who had paid up to four francs for a ticket, were gathered at 164 Galerie de Valois at the Palais-Royal in Paris to view a new show, *Soirées Fantastiques*, by the clockmaker, and newly turned magician, Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. The theatre was decorated in an elaborately elegant Louis XV style, and as the magician walked out onto the stage and the gas lamps dimmed[4], the audience witnessed a show that combined both technology and magic in way that had never been seen before. In one segment of the show, Robert-Houdin presented his "L'oranger mystérieux," which he began by asking a lady in the audience to borrow her handkerchief. As he took the handkerchief from her, he clearly rolled it into a small ball, and then slowly started rolling it between his hands. In the opulent theatre, all eyes were focused on Robert-Houdin's hands and the minute movements of rolling the balled up handkerchief back and forth. Inexplicably, the handkerchief soon vanished, and Robert-Houdin showed that his hands were now completely empty. On a small table on the stage, and in clear view of the audience the entire time, were an egg, a lemon, and an orange. Robert-Houdin picked up the egg, and explained how the handkerchief must have passed from his hands and into the egg. He slowly began to roll the egg between his hands until this too disappeared. Picking up the lemon, he surmised that it must now be inside the lemon. The lemon, however, also vanished from his hands. With only the

[4] While gas lamps were widely used theatrically throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the 1840s saw the implementation of the control board in which a technician could change any of the footlights, border lights, or wing lights during a performance. Light thus became not something to merely illuminate what was taking place on stage, but a vital element that could create mood and ambiance, and to direct what spectators could see, or should not see, in order to begin to alter their perceived realities.

orange remaining, Robert-Houdin picked it up and rolled it between his hands. Like the other objects, the orange too vanished, but now it left behind a pile of orange powder in Robert-Houdin's hand. The magician put this powder in a container and lit it on fire as assistants carried out an orange tree in a planter. As the smoke from the burning powder began to rise, the tree began to blossom. Eventually, four of the blossoms turned into large, and very real, oranges, which Robert-Houdin would pluck from the tree and toss into the audience for them to eat. The single remaining orange on the top of the tree soon split open and two mechanical butterflies, beating their wings feverishly, flew up into the air, carrying the lady's handkerchief with them and displaying it in full view to the audience. This elaborate new form of magic amazed spectators, and with it, Robert-Houdin became a celebrity, ushering in the Golden Age of Magic.

This distinctive turning point in the performance of magic in the mid-nineteenth century, where performers did not rely solely on sleight of hand to accomplish a trick, but now melded complex mechanical principles to achieve previously unimaginable effects, completely reshaped how magic was presented in Western Europe and was indicative of a rapidly changing technological culture. Magic moved from being performed primarily on the street, where it was oftentimes associated with a lower stratum of society as buskers hustled, and oftentimes conned, spectators out of their money, and into a new, and respectable space in the theatre. Here, there was an intense focus put on the legitimizing of magic as a theatrical art form as well, and as audiences began to respond favorably to what they were seeing, there soon came a proliferation of performers who challenged and reconstructed the very idea of what a magician is. Magicians were no longer conmen or grifters, buskers or deviants, shamans or healers. Now, they became

imbued with a form of social and cultural power that allowed them to challenge individuals' perceptions of reality through their performances and through their usage and manipulation of technologies in the forms of the mechanized automatons, as well as in photographs and film. Focusing on what was transpiring in Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century in regard to the theatrical, magical, and technological, I will be arguing that there is a distinctive trajectory of the perception of reality as influenced by the performativity of magic on stage to show how perceived unified realities are at first coalesced into an equalized form of balance, how these realities are ultimately fractured, and are subsequently constituted into entirely new forms of believed reality, and how, ultimately, through an examination of photography and film, how what is perceived as the real world is nothing more than a projected reality constituting a simulacrum of a two-dimensional actuality. Throughout the course of my argument, I will be incorporating the social and cultural factors in regard to how the individual is viewed in relation to technology, in relation to the supernatural, and in the end, in relation to his or her own self to support my claims surrounding the effects of the destabilization of perceptions of reality.

Robert-Houdin and the *Soirées Fantastiques*

It is through the burgeoning technologized culture that magicians such as Robert-Houdin were able to rise to prominence, for I argue that, in actuality, Robert-Houdin's performance was a direct response to a prolific undercurrent of fear that had been increasingly woven into the social fabric since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution roughly a century before the premiere of *Soirées Fantastiques*. As mechanized processes began to radically alter the daily lives of individuals, and with cities like Paris expanding

at previously unseen rates, shifting the balance from agrarian to more urban landscapes, there exists the subsequent possibility that while technology could be making life more convenient, it could also be a consuming force that would eventually overshadow humanity. Technology could give material and economic power, but it could do so at the expense of the individual and free will, creating a scenario where technology becomes the master that humanity serves. This is reflected in William Stanley Jevons's examination of the coal industry in 1865, where he writes:

> This question concerning the duration of our present cheap supplies of coal cannot but excite deep interest and anxiety wherever or whenever it is mentioned: for a little reflection will show that coal is almost the sole necessary basis of our material power, and is that, consequently, which gives efficiency to our moral and intellectual capabilities. England's manufacturing and commercial greatness, at least, is at stake in this question, nor can we be sure that material decay may not involve us in moral and intellectual retrogression. (15)

What is important to note here is the anxiety that Jevons indicates as existing in relation to the technology that has given material power to a nation, for this positions the power precariously as the nation must constantly then chase the technology, both in its need to keep it from becoming obsolete, as well as in the depletion of its finite resources. This led to what economists refer to as the "Jevons Paradox," where as a society streamlines the processes of its technologies, it increases its consumption of the related resources, thus establishing a seemingly self-perpetuating cycle where we become increasingly more reliant on technology as our needs continue to increase until the two, man and machine, can no longer be separated without a complete breakdown, and subsequent failure of, the entirety of the system.

The Industrial Revolution though was going through a transitional stage during the timeframe of Robert-Houdin's *Soirées Fantastiques* as well,[5] as the machinery of manufacturing improved exponentially and became far more intricate, and as rapid advancements were made in scientific fields of electricity, chemistry, and magnetism, thus allowing for a further expansion of technological possibilities that were previously not even theorized.[6] What these new concepts did, on a macro level, was directly challenge the perception of the natural world; suddenly there were unseen magical forces that could dramatically change one's perception of reality and radically alter a previously accepted way of life. On the micro level, these emerging scientific concepts also suggested that the individual could discover and thereby access this magic, opening up a realm of possibilities for the creation of a powerful new individual identity. Faraday writes in a laboratory journal entry on 19 March 1849, "ALL THIS IS A DREAM. Still examine it by a few experiments. Nothing is too wonderful to be true, if it be consistent with the laws of nature; and in such things as these, experiment is the best test of such consistency" (qtd. in Jones 253). The dream state that Faraday alludes to, where the waking world is in actuality a dream, is indicative of a space where anything is possible. This is a space where magic can truly exist, and where the individual can reconstruct his own identity to capitalize on the power of possibility, effectively setting up an initial unified cohesion of reality, for humanity is viewed in relation to the mysterious forces of

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[5] This era is referred to as the Second Industrial Revolution after Sir Patrick Geddes coined the phrase in his book, *Cities in Evolution*, in 1915.

[6] The British scientist, Michael Faraday, developed the electric motor in 1821, and introduced his concept of diamagnetism, where materials can repel a magnetic field, in 1845, the same year Robert-Houdin premiered his *Soirées Fantastiques*.

science and technology and the ensuing struggle to gain access to the wealth of knowledge it offers, but ideally, mastery over it.

The Display of French Magic in Algeria

This relationship becomes best evidenced in an 1856 performance by Robert-Houdin in Algiers, when the magician utilized science as magic in order to convince people of his power, and subsequently in the process, avert a war. Robert-Houdin was asked to travel[7] to French occupied Algeria[8] in order to perform his magic in an attempt to convince the Algerians that French magic was much more powerful than that of the local marabouts.[9] The marabouts had been utilizing standard magic tricks such as the "Bullet Catch," where a spectator puts an identifying mark on a bullet that is then placed into a rifle and fired at the magician who immediately shows that he caught the very bullet in his teeth, in order to develop a religious fanaticism and imbue the locals with the power to rise and fight the French occupiers in Kabilya and in the Saharan region. Robert-Houdin arrived in Algiers in September 1856 and began a series of weekly performances in the local theatre, demonstrating his standard act that he performed in France. Special performances were arranged though for 28 October and 29 October, as the country's various tribal leaders were invited to witness a display of how powerful the French conjurer was. For these shows, Robert-Houdin incorporated the "Light and Heavy Chest," an effect that would allow for a small wooden box to be easily lifted by a child on stage, but when a tribal leader was then invited up, and Robert-Houdin waved

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[7] The request for Robert-Houdin to travel to Algeria came from the head of the French Bureau of Arab Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel de Neveu, and not from, as has been assumed in this much celebrated and retold story, Emperor Napoléon III. De Neveu's request is related by Robert-Houdin himself in his memoirs from 1859.

[8] France invaded Algeria in June 1830 and occupied the country until July 1962.

[9] Marabouts are Muslim holy men who are oftentimes said to possess magical powers.

his hands over the man to sap away any of his magical power, the tribal leader found himself devoid of strength and was unable to lift the same box.[10] The clever effect was achieved utilizing electromagnets and allowed for the magician to incorporate newly discovered scientific principles to convince not only a lay audience, but also those in attendance who themselves were magicians, that he actually possessed magic powers. The results were effective, and when Robert-Houdin later met with the tribal leaders, "He had to quickly refrain from shaking hands, however, because several of them seemed terrified at the idea of touching the hand of such a powerful white wizard" (Fechner 48). Here, it becomes clear how there is a fundamental shift in the understanding of magic occurring, for both the marabouts and Robert-Houdin are utilizing it to manipulate others through the fear of the unknown by usurping the very perceptions of what is capable through magic. Magic is now no longer about inspiring a sense of wonder or amazement, but is about control.

Robert-Houdin is profoundly aware of this notion of establishing power through the control of spectators' beliefs, and in addition to the "Light and Heavy Chest," he also included a segment in his shows on the two evenings where he vanished an Algerian boy on the stage who was supposedly just a random person selected from the audience. The boy was an accomplice, and although the vanishing of an object is one of the standard

[10] I had the opportunity to examine the actual box Robert-Houdin used in the collection of Ken Klosterman. The box is unremarkable in appearance; it is just stained wood with simple brass hardware. This adds to its innocuousness though since it does not look like the usual heavily ornate magic props that were being utilized in shows such as *Soirées Fantastiques*. While these ornate props suggested an otherworldly reality for spectators who had never seen them and thus believed the props to contain mystical powers, the plainness of the Light and Heavy Chest removed the perception of magic from the object and situated it directly within the performer for the audience.

foundations of magic,[11] the impetus of this trick was the elevation of the performer to a seemingly religious standing, as being able to effectively challenge mortality. This becomes mirrored in the very words Robert-Houdin utilizes to describe the performance. He states, "Comparées aux simples tours de leurs prétendus sorciers, mes expériences devaient être pour les Arabes de véritables miracles" (Robert-Houdin 262).[12] Robert-Houdin chooses the word "miracles" to describe the tricks he performs, positioning himself as not simply a performer, but actually as someone who possesses a perceived form of a deified level of power. He further elaborates on this, describing, "Je commençai ma séance au milieu du silence le plus profond, je dirais presque le plus religieux, et l'attention des spectateurs était telle, qu'ils paraissaient comme pétrifiés sur place" (Robert-Houdin 262).[13] Robert-Houdin has transformed the theatre into an altar for religious ceremony, a space enveloped in silence as the masses are asked to believe in the possibilities of the miraculously divine. The performance here though extends past the basic value of magic as entertainment and is functioning to further colonizing rhetoric by the French where they are superior to the Algerians. The theatricality of the magic then is not about simply showing the superiority of a French magician over the marabouts, and positioning him as someone who has the power to take away an individual's strength, or as someone who can make a random person disappear at will, but rather is about proselytizing to the native population in order to garner social and

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[11] There are certain basic categories that magic tricks can fall into, and although some performers have differing beliefs on these, they are generally understood to include: vanishes, appearances, transpositions, transformations, restorations, levitations, penetrations, predictions, and escapes.

[12] "Compared to the simple tricks of their pretend sorcerers, my experiments must be for the Arabs veritable miracles."

[13] "I began my performance amidst the most profound silence, I would almost say the most religious, and the spectator's attention was such that they appeared like petrified on the spot."

political power and establish a control through fear in the process. Magic becomes carefully constructed political propaganda theatre.

There are two key elements at work here performatively that must be addressed in order to decipher how magic is functioning in this scenario. First, is the fact that once the magician begins to align himself, even subliminally, with being able to perform the miraculous through tricks, and once the subsequent audiences begin to subscribe to this viewpoint, then a unification begins to occur in regard to the spectators' perceptions of reality that extends even beyond the theatrical space. The fact that this story of Robert-Houdin's dealings with the marabouts has been retold myriad times, even appearing in a series of French comic books for children, could simply relegate it into the realm of folk tale, but this is not the case.[14] As Campbell differentiates, "the folk tale is for entertainment. The myth is for spiritual instruction" (71). With the religious underpinnings of Robert-Houdin's performative act with the marabouts, the story itself becomes mythologized; it is infused with a more profound agency than his tricks on the Parisian stage previous to the trip to Algeria. But there is an implied activeness in Campbell's statement, where the act that becomes mythologized must be working to transform its witnesses. This is not simply confined though to a transformation of the Algerians to a pro-French ascription, but is indicative of something much more profound. Even though the spectators may know that they are being tricked, they are brought together into a form of a shared reality then; they are witnesses to an event that becomes

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[14] Fechner includes many examples from the comic book, *Magiciens et Sorciers, Le monde qui nous entoure*, published in 1961 by Publications classiques Internationales in the second volume of his biography on Robert-Houdin. One such panel from the comic book illustrates a man in Arab garb fleeing from the stage after attempting to lift the "Light and Heavy Chest," his arms raised dramatically over his head, and exclaiming "C'est le Diable!" (It is the devil!) as Robert-Houdin watches smugly (Fechner *Un Vie d'Artiste* 47).

subsequently celebrated, so this establishes an insider status for them as those being a part of the perceived "authentic" original. It validates their existence.

If this is not merely a folk tale that functions as entertainment, but, as I argue, is working more within a mythologizing structure tempered with the religiosity of the performance, then the second element in this scenario that needs to be questioned is the very notion of the theatrical space itself. For the "Light and Heavy Chest," this was performed in the city theatre in Algiers, but I do not believe that this is enough to establish the mythology of the event that it eventually undertook, for if an audience views something in a specifically constructed performative space, then they are already encoding that event as being theatrical. No matter what the miraculous feats are that are performed, audiences can still come away from the performance attributing what they saw to some form of manipulative trickery. Just as modern audiences can leave a theatre after seeing a multi-million dollar illusion performed, and can easily dismiss it as "being done with mirrors," without any true understanding of the optical principles employed to achieve the desired effect, so too could audiences leave the theatre in Algiers not entirely convinced of Robert-Houdin's pseudo-religious status from performing the miraculous, but can simply believe it was achieved with machinery, even if there was not a widespread knowledge of, or subsequent conceptualization of, the principles of electromagnetism at the time. It was only when Robert-Houdin left the theatre and went

into the desert to meet with tribal leaders, and perform magic for them, that the actual transcendence to myth was able to occur.[15]

While little is known about his travels in the desert, Robert-Houdin did perform a "Bullet Catch" trick, where a spectator marks a bullet, loads it into a gun, and fires it at the magician. The magician then "catches" the marked bullet in his teeth and is unharmed in the process. In his memoirs, Robert-Houdin describes that after the marabout shot him, and after he then revealed the caught bullet in his teeth, the marabout tried to grab the other pistol, but Robert-Houdin was able to take it and fire it at a nearby wall, which then proceeded to bleed. He states, "Le Marabout s'approcha, trempa son doigt dans cette empreinte rouge, et, le portant à sa bouche, il s'assura en goûtant que c'était véritablement du sang. Quand il en eut acquis la certitude, ses bras retombèrent et sa tête se pencha sur sa poitrine, comme s'il eût été anéanti. Il était évident qu'en ce moment il doutait de tout, même du Prophète. Les assistants levaient les mains au Ciel, marmottaient des prières et me regardaient avec une sorte d'effroi" (308).[16] The entirety of the tone of Robert-Houdin's description here is reflective of the event as being aligned with more of a religious ceremony than with illusion as entertainment. There is the drawing of blood from an inanimate object, one that Robert-Houdin seemingly has the power to imbue with life, coupled with the marabout fundamentally questioning his own religious certainty, and the crowd of followers raiding their hands to the heavens in

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[15] Immediately following the two closing performances in Algiers, where he performed the "Light and Heavy Chest," Robert-Houdin was requested to go into the desert for four days to meet with and perform magic for tribal leaders. He ended up staying for twelve days.

[16] "The Marabout approached it, dipping his finger in this red paint, and, bringing it to his mouth, he assured himself by tasting that it was truly blood. When he had acquired this certainty, his arms fell and his head stooped over his chest, like it had been annihilated. It was evident in that moment he doubted everything, even the Prophet. The assistants raised their hand to heaven, muttered some prayers and looked at me with a sort of terror."

prayer. As will be seen in the second chapter and my argument regarding the Davenport brothers, there is a repositioning of magic that is taking place, where the perception of magic in performance outdoors becomes encoded with a greater sense of the supernatural, and in the process, becomes theoretically more powerful in the ascribing of a mythology, than the magic that is taking place inside in an easily recognizable theatrical space.

The Legitimization of Magic as Art through the Scientific

The movement of magic out of the realm of mere entertainment, and the inscribing of it with an undercurrent of religiosity, is not done solely to propagate one set of religious ideologies into an Othered group, but is also trying to legitimize the art form for a public. This desire for legitimizing becomes paramount in the establishing of magic as a distinctive theatrical genre. Just as Robert-Houdin dressed in evening wear and created a décor of elegance in his *Soirées Fantastiques* in order to convince his audience that the two hours they were going to spend watching his show was time spent engaging with a legitimate theatrical event, so too is the aligning of magic with the divine or the miraculous, and the subsequent reportage of these events in the form of multiple volumes of memoirs, designed to elevate the status of magic, and the magician, in the eyes of the public. Magic performances become synonymous with the scientific presentations that were en vogue at the time, where spectators would purchase tickets to attend special lectures where scientists would present their latest findings complete with demonstrations of the phenomena they were investigating. Schaffer argues that, "As an article of fashion and trade, electricity controlled the interests of several sections of eighteenth-century society. It was used by natural philosophy lecturers to swell their audiences" (491), and

that in actuality, "The difference between entrepreneur, demonstrator and philosopher was effaced in the market-place, the theatre and the coffee house" (492). This eighteenth-century model of the scientific performer commodifying experiments and turning them into in-demand fashions, becomes the basis for the very structure of the magic performances themselves, as shows such as the *Soirées Fantastiques* are designed to show a series of separate presentations without interconnecting storyline.[17] In this legitimizing framework, the magician becomes paralleled to the scientific lecturer, and the tricks become likened to experiments proving the existence of unseen and mysterious forces.

Extending Schaffer's model then, including something that appeared to be scientific on the same bill as an evening of magic and illusion would serve to not only legitimize the performance, but to also generate box office as well due to its novelty. Spectators would come to the theatre of magic to be amazed, to have an evening where they witnessed things they could not explain, and that they could then not reconstruct in their minds later when they would return home. They came for a sense of wonderment, with the suggestion that there does exist a world of infinite possibilities that could be tapped into if one could simply perceive things differently; this was a burgeoning notion for nineteenth century audiences as the scientific lecture began to rapidly grow in popularity as continuous new, and previously unimagined, discoveries were being made. I argue that while some may believe this to be the function of illusion on the magic stage, it is not, for audiences approach the illusion with the predication that they are going to be

[17] The concept of magic performance as a form of play, with distinctive characters and a through storyline, would not become popularized until after 1865 when John Nevil Maskelyne and George Cooke began presenting magical "skits" such as *La Dame et la Gorilla* and *The Mystic Freaks of Gyges* in London.

willfully deceived and can then dismiss the illusion as mere trickery, thus assuaging any of the feeling of wonder they may have initially experienced. When the scientific becomes represented by the technological and the mechanical on the magic stage however, there is a shock to the spectator's reality that occurs, for there is a subtly embedded perception of an authenticity to the mechanical that begins to obscure the backtracking of attempting to reconstruct what was seen for the audience member. This is not to suggest that there is not a sense of wonder when one witnesses something that does not rely on the overtly mechanical, such as a skilled sleight of hand magician producing a billiard ball or a playing card out of seemingly thin air, but that the wonder is tempered with the knowledge that the spectator is being manipulated by the performer. When the mechanical apparatus is introduced to the nineteenth century spectator though, there is another layer of removal from the deception that is being instilled, thus challenging her accepted perceptions of reality.[18]

The Rise of the Automaton on the Magic Stage

Robert-Houdin understood this and drew upon his former career as a watchmaker to populate his *Soirées Fantastiques* with automatas such as the "L'oranger mystérieux," which was described at the beginning of this chapter, interspersed amidst the other illusions that comprised the over two-hour long performance. Robert-Houdin though

[18] It must be understood that this holds true for an audience only at transitional stages of technological development when new forms of technology are beginning to emerge. In these instances, if the performer puts more of the focus on the apparatus, there will be an intensification of the feeling of wonder for the spectator since the spectator is not yet familiar with technology. Once the technology becomes commonplace though, the performer needs to seek out a newer form of technology to employ, or find another way to instill wonder through performance. The reason modern magic has become mundane is the fact that the vast majority of performers are still putting the focus on the technological apparatuses that audiences have already deciphered and that constitute a reality modern audiences are thus no longer a part of. Magic has, in many ways, becomes stuck in its own past and no longer able to radically challenge spectators' beliefs on what is real and what is possible.

began to focus less on automatas as magical apparatus and more on the creation of humanistic automatas that could then perform alongside him in his shows. While automatas, including those crafted to resemble people, were certainly not new to the stage, how Robert-Houdin utilized them, as characters within his performance, is what is of importance here. Just four years after the premiere of *Soirées Fantastiques*, a broadside advertising a run of performances at the St. James Theatre in London in 1849 includes six engravings of tricks that audience members would be able to see. Three of these, "La Corne d'Abondance," "Equilibre Remarquable," and "Le Favori des Dames" fall into the category of standardized magic tricks where the magician stands alone on stage in front of an audience and produces an effect. The other three engravings, "Le Chasseur," "Le Patissier Escamoteur," and "La Voltice du Trapèze," each show Robert-Houdin interacting with an automaton performing a very specific role (*Robert Houdin's Soirées Fantastiques—St. James Theatre*). The automaton from "Le Chasseur" would fire a gun at a target Robert-Houdin held. The miniature patissier would appear at a doorway in the structure that housed him, and after receiving instructions, would disappear to bake something for the audience. The trapeze artist would perform an act as Robert-Houdin watched. The automatas effectively split the power of the performer, for whereas with standard mechanical apparatus that commands an audience's gaze, the performer still overtly directs and controls that gaze. When the automatas become characters though, symbolically sharing in the demands of the routine as presented by the magician, they are essentially given a performative power that begins to reshape the spectator's perceptions of reality.

This gaze becomes of paramount importance in regard to the technologies of photography, examined in chapters two and three, and in film, as found in chapter four, but the same principles are at work here when the mechanized technology is presented in the three-dimensional space of the theatre. Whereas Mulvey asserts that with "the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy" ("Visual Pleasure" 17), I fundamentally disagree, for the performance, no matter if in the cinematic space or in the theatrical space, can never be indifferent to the presence of the audience. In fact, it cannot exist without an active audience that has agency. Each form of performance I analyze, whether it be photography, film, or theatre, needs to be at all times engaged with the spectators, and it is within this reciprocity that the voyeuristic fantasy is created as a form of collective consciousness. Mulvey's claim postulates a unidirectional relational flow from performance to spectator, where there is already a prescribed reality that is being imparted, but this is simply not the case. In actuality, this reality is being shaped within the interplay of the collective and the performance, and is dynamic in its lack of structure, for no two audiences will, of course, react the same way to the same set of stimuli. While this suggests that the singular performance can generate multiple trajectories of reality, there is an initial formulation of an assumed cohesive reality as both performers and spectators navigate their relationship within the theatrical event. There is no hermetically sealed world of Mulvey then, self-contained and authoritative of the view of reality the performer may wish to impart, though which may be in opposition to spectators' own believed realities, but rather there

exists an incredibly porous world where the boundaries between performer and spectator are consistently being challenged, blurred, and, ultimately, broken down as the two bodies work together to generate a collective reality both groups can subscribe to.

This blurred space where performer/spectator become indistinguishable from one another is effectively generated with the presentation of the mechanized technology on the stage then in the form of humanistic automata, and one of Robert-Houdin's creations, "Antonio Diavolo," best exemplifies the active engagement between performer and spectator, and, likewise, machine. "Antonio Diavolo" first appeared on stage with Robert-Houdin on 1 October 1849.[19] The routine began with Robert-Houdin carrying out the small, childlike mechanical creation and setting him on a trapeze that hung on the stage. Robert-Houdin would introduce Antonio to the audience and ask him if he would like to demonstrate to the audience what he could do on the trapeze. With help from Robert-Houdin, the trapeze would start to swing and Antonio would go through a series of moves, including doing handstands, before coming to rest seated on the trapeze once again. After some more dialogue from Robert-Houdin, Antonio would begin swinging on the trapeze seemingly under his own power, once again going through the motions of a trapeze artist, including letting go of the trapeze bar with his hands, before being chastised by Robert-Houdin for being so reckless. The incredibly intricate machine took on a personality for the audience, and even when, in 1977, 128 years after he was created, master illusion builder John Gaughan[20] began to restore him, his character still was

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[19] It is very likely that Robert-Houdin presented earlier incarnations of "Antonio Diavolo" on his stage before this date as it was common practice for him to test out and perfect his automatons before making them a regular feature in his show.

[20] The most sought after illusion builder for the past four decades, John Gaughan has designed signature illusions for magicians such as David Copperfield, Penn & Teller, and Doug Henning. One of his most

evident. Gaughan describes, "Befitting a daring acrobat, he has been given an expression of confidence, and his dark glass eyes display an intelligence which one might properly associate with years of experience" (19). Here, the performative power of the automaton become best exemplified, for, even removed from the theatrical space, Gaughan saw not a pile of weathered and deteriorated mechanical parts in desperate need of restoration, but instead a character possessing a form of confidence, intelligence, and experience. Audiences in nineteenth century theatres would most likely not have simply seen Antonio as a prop being manipulated by Robert-Houdin, but would have ascribed to it a similar level of character understanding that Gaughan does due to its apparent interaction with the performer, creating a tripartite power relation between performer, spectator, and automaton.

The fact is though, there is still a distinctive manipulation going on between what is being presented as reality and the actual, for "Antonio Diavolo," is not a true automaton. As Gaughan explains, "The trapeze figure was not only the product of a magician, but of a magician's craft. Like all of the automata exhibited at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, he was actually a false automaton, operated not by clockwork but by pistons and pullcords. Seemingly isolated onstage, he was under the direction of an offstage assistant" (7). So now there is another layer added into the construction and formulation of the collective reality in the performative space: that of the unseen assistant. In essence, by wanting to present the mechanical and the technological on the

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famous illusions had Copperfield flying on stage in front of a live audience, even after being trapped inside of an enclosed plastic box. He is a prominent collector and has an extensive collection of vintage magic apparatus and automatons in his museum, including Robert-Houdin's "Antonio Diavolo," which he restored to performance quality. He is one of the organizers of the LA Conference on Magic History where he performs vintage illusions to a select audience. Pieces from his collection have been featured in exhibitions at the Getty and the Skirball museums.

stage in order to legitimize a magical performance and draw audiences in who were likewise fascinated by the scientific demonstrations of the time, and by wanting to create a space where an audience could be unified under a collective consciousness of witnessing man's mastery over machine, a reversal is occurring that would be prevalent throughout the rest of century, and that still continues to this day, where there is an undercurrent of fear that technology will consume humanity. The unseen assistant standing backstage and manipulating the cords running to Antonio's trapeze is literally another cog in the machinery; he is no different within the performance than the gears inside of the apparatus. Man is automaton, doing a precise series of movements to elicit a set of desired responses. This can even be further extended to Robert-Houdin himself, as the magician becomes the speaking interface of the machinery of the illusion, for he must follow a precise script, hit precise marks on the stage, and go through a structured sequence of events, otherwise his trick will fail and the audience will dismiss his performance and deem it as not being magical. For the magician to be considered skilled generally assumes a high level of precision in the craft of his artistry, but this precision indicates repeated movements to gain a machinic perfection. The magician (as well as the operator backstage) each lose their own autonomy by making the mechanical automaton a character in the performance, in essence becoming puppets in the performative reality that they have created on stage.

The Technological and Consumption

This initial fear of technology consuming the individual and creating a world where humanity serves the machine thus becomes the catalyst for the unification of reality to occur, and through the performance of man's interaction with the machine on

the stages of magic in the form of the automaton as character, the struggle of the transition into a Second Industrial Age becomes evident. While this would become a common artistic trope at the time, and would later be dramatized effectively on the silver screen in films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in 1927 and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* in 1936, where characters are literally consumed by the perpetually moving machines they work tirelessly to keep in operating order, technology was greatly challenging the collective's very perception of the world in which they lived through its rapidity of development. To truly understand the manifestations of this underlying fear, it is essential to look forward briefly at the function of *La Tour Eiffel*, which opened forty years after "Antonio Diavolo" first appeared on the stage. Built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, *La Tour Eiffel* embodies the dichotomous relation of man and machine. On one level, like "Antonio Diavolo," it suggests man's mastery over technology, as the over 300m tower became the tallest structure on Earth, a title it would hold for over four decades. However, the tower also requires a constancy of human attention in order to keep it functional, for, being made of iron, it must be regularly repainted in order to prevent it from rusting. Even when it opened for the Exposition, "while the Eiffel Tower might appear finished, workmen were still laboring around the clock in two twelve-hour shifts, night and day. The tower was crawling with painters coating the wrought-iron sections with a bronze red that lightened in the higher reaches almost to a yellow. As for the elevators, the galling truth was that the machines were *still* not operational, as all three elevator companies continued to work frantically to get their machines running smoothly" (Jonnes 99). Once again, the human element has become integrated with the machine to the point of becoming simply another facet of its

construction and necessary for it to function. There is no individual identity; there is no agency. Workers now crawl across its surface en masse, focused solely on the needs of the machine. The workers are interchangeable and, ultimately, expendable. They are there simply to keep the apparatus of the machine viable.

What though is the function of a machine such as *La Tour Eiffel* on a metaphoric or symbolic level? A machine like "Antonio Diavolo" may have humanistic characteristics grafted onto it in order to develop a personality, allowing for technology to be seemingly more accessible, relatable, and, ultimately, controlled. With a structure such as *La Tour Eiffel* however, its garish form rises above all of Paris, monstrously looming over the city and visible from all points. Now, the individual can no longer escape the machine, but must be reminded of its presence constantly. *La Tour Eiffel* though is designed as a theatrical space, and I argue that the work it is doing is paralleled with the same function of Robert-Houdin's automatas decades earlier. This is a theatre of consumption, where the spectator must first be consumed by the machine in order to have her perceptions challenged and, at the end of the performance, reconstituted. The spectator first approaches the structure and is able to only focus on its sheer height as the tower directs the gaze upward. Standing underneath *La Tour Eiffel* then, the spectator is presented with the immensity of its weight, but now when the gaze is directed upward, it begins to be more difficult to discern the details of the naturalistic world that exists outside of the space of the tower for it is now obscured by an intricate iron latticework. As the spectator ascends the tower, or is literally consumed by it, she is presented first with two different platforms at various heights from which to view the surrounding scenery. Here, the spectator is on the stage of the machine and the performance she

views becomes that of the city itself. She can watch pedestrians on the streets below as they go about the routines of their daily lives. The third and final platform becomes the most disorientating, for the extreme narrow platform at the very top gives the individual, especially in the days before air travel, a perspective on the world never before experienced. This becomes a space where one's perception is an abstraction of myriad views, and where, "The spectator, Boccioni declared in one of the Futurist *manifesti* (1912), 'must in future be placed in the centre of the picture,' exposed to the whole surrounding jabber of lines, planes, light, and noise that Futurism extracted from its motifs" (Hughes 44). After the spectator has been placed in the center of the picture of the machine of *La Tour Eiffel*, it then excretes her back to the ground below, fundamentally changed as her perceptions are vividly expanded to a new dimension of possibilities of reality. Being at the center then does not become indicative of importance, nor does it ascribe significance or importance to the human element in the picture, it instead demonstrates how easily the individual becomes lost in the web of realities created in the multiplicity of realities being generated by the engagement with the new forms of technology.

The Function of the Audience

Returning though to the magic stage and the automatons in a city before the construction of such a monolith of technological symbology, and before the writing of any Futurist manifesti, the question must be posed of if the spectator is still allowed to maintain the necessary active agency that I have thus posited so far in this chapter. One could argue that the spectators are machinic as well, just like the workers laboring high above the ground on *La Tour Eifel,* going through an understood and prescribed series of

movements that define a particular mode of Western theatergoing experience: the spectators gather at a theatre, converse with one another in a lobby, are shown to their seats by ushers, sit facing the stage waiting for the lights to dim and the performance to begin, behaviors that have been learned throughout the centuries and which are now considered normative. While this is a ritual repeated countless times, the spectator could dramatically impact the performance and fundamentally change it. Take for example a scenario where, while "Antonio Diavolo" was in the middle of a routine, a spectator left his seat, walked up on stage, and began to examine the automaton. Or, perhaps, the spectator decides to venture backstage to begin a dialogue with the hidden assistant. The spectators hold the power in the theatrical space because they can cause myriad outcomes of the performance that can dramatically alter the original intended meaning of the performance. They choose not to exercise this power however. While, fundamentally, the same is true for the performers, they are more strictly committed to the performance's originally intended message. This suggests that, "the dominant chronotype is that of liminality and the actor's denial of his role; sometimes himself, sometimes already in character, he is alienated in the etymological sense, that is, he belongs to another. This corporeality is *fictive* (or theatrical), in the sense of a continuous movement between representation and reality, illusion and disillusion" (Pavis 161). The performer thus becomes bound to the role as he belongs to the spectator; once the mechanism of the performance is set in motion, the human cogs in its machination perform their functions in order to keep it running smoothly. The spectators assume that they are likewise bound to the show in a similar fashion and are expected to play the role of audience, but in

actuality, they are the ones with the freedom to make choices in the space of the theatrical event.

The problem is, especially in the context of the magic show, this positions the audience as a potential threat to the performer. The magician builds a performance from the foundation of secrets, carefully crafting a world where the spectator believes that there is some form of arcane knowledge that has been garnered, or in some extreme cases as will be examined in the following chapter, that the objects utilized on stage possess magical powers themselves. While within the course of a standard theatrical event the performer relies on the forward movement of the dramatic narrative to hold the audience in check, by theoretically not allowing them to realize the power they ultimately hold, when this movement is disrupted, there is a space opened up where the audience can quickly understand that they have been made to unknowingly be complicit in a passive role. The audience can then try to regain the power that is rightfully theirs and, in the process, change the course of performance.[21] The magic show though is comprised of numerous individual tricks that are each self-contained smaller dramatic narratives, so the audience is consistently experiencing an endless stream of set-ups and resolutions, with the space in between the tricks being a form of *punctum*, to borrow from Barthes (*Camera Lucida* 27). While Barthes was utilizing his theory of the punctum, or that which disrupts the spectator's engagement with a work, in regard to photographs, since

[21] I witnessed an example of this when I performed in a production of *Party for Six* by Wolfgang Bauer. The second act involved my character passed out on a couch; there was no dialogue, no discernible forward movement of the dramatic narrative. Only the sounds of trains passing by filled the theatre. During each performance, I experienced the audience reacting to this disruption in precisely the same manner. First, spectators would begin to cough or make subtle noises, fearing that I, as performer, had perhaps actually fallen asleep on stage. Then, audience members began to get angry, actively speaking to me directly and conveying their dislike of the performance and how they were tired of waiting for something to happen.

one of the sub-claims of my argument that will be developed in the following chapters is also centered on the photograph as performance, then I believe the concept is salient to my analysis of the magic stage and can be employed here as well. At the climax of a trick the audience is faced with something they cannot explain, and, if given enough time, they will thus attempt to backtrack the events that have just occurred in order to decipher the secret of the trick. The magician is aware that this is a space where his performative power can be seized, so he will quickly move on to the next effect in an effort to not only obscure the punctum, but to create a sense of uneasiness for the audience on the track of a disjointed progression of false dramatic narrative.

The magician though can also try to include the audience in the performance, generally bringing a spectator up on stage to experience the magic firsthand. The experienced magician knows that magic needs to happen in the hands of the spectator, and not at their expense, so by including someone from the audience on the stage, there is a subtle acknowledgement of the power dynamics at work on a subliminal level. By making the fourth wall permeable, but only on his own terms, the magician is helping to foster the notion of the collective reality that is being created. All are now part of a world with a multiplicitous layering of access. There is the magician who holds the supposed secrets, the invited spectator who can walk around in the space where the magic is created, and the audience who witnesses the magic. Rather than create an exclusionary outsider/insider dichotomy, this effectively establishes an environment of inclusion, only with a hierarchical structure with the magician being the one presumed to have the power. The magician encourages this belief by choosing the person he believes should join him on stage and then instructing her what to do before allowing her to return to her

seat. The magician is thus perpetuating the false myth of power in a performance with numerous inherent punctums, constantly fighting a space where, "The spectator must be removed from the position of observer calmly examining the spectacle offered to her. She must be dispossessed of this illusory mastery, drawn into the magic circle of theatrical action where she will exchange the privilege of rational observer for that of the being in possession of all her vital energies" (Rancière 4). The magician needs to disenfranchise the rational spectator so she feels that she is not in possession of her vital energies and that she is experiencing a sense of wonder on a personally emotional level. He cannot do this through distancing, because once the spectator realizes that she is an outsider in the magical world being created, her rationality will engage, and she will revolt against the confines of her role as mere observer. It becomes imperative then to, at first, lull the spectator into a false sense of security through the unification of assumed reality, before, as will be seen, those realities are challenged, and then, ultimately, fractured because they exist only as a projected perception.

The utilization of the automatas then helps to facilitate this sense of security, for by designing them to be humanlike, and by giving them distinctive personality traits, the audience is allowed to connect with them on a more personal level than other imposing and foreign magical apparatus on the stage. Unlike a magic prop such as one that was featured prominently in Robert-Houdin's show, "The Crystal Casket," where the magician throws coins through the air and they mysteriously seem to be able to penetrate the walls of a small crystal box that hangs from ribbons suspended above the stage in order to appear inside, and which the audience has no frame of reference for, the humanlike automaton, dressed in clothing, and with a painted expression, gives the

audience something to instantly relate to. Even though it is a mechanical curiosity, it still resonates as familiar. The size of the automatas is key however, and by making them small and childlike, the magician is able to exert a controlling patriarchal relationship over them that he then allows to extend to the audience. In order for this to truly occur though, the automaton needed to be moved from that of spectacle, being presented as a mere scientific curiosity on display before the spectator as investigator, and into something that could interact with the audience. If the automatas were presented as just spectacle, or, to further borrow from Barthes, a degree zero of performance, which I define as something that does not engage the audience, this would not allow for the unification of the collective assumed reality to emerge, for, "The spectacle originates in the loss of the unity of the world, and the gigantic expansion of the modern spectacle expresses the totality of this loss: the abstraction of all specific labor and the general abstraction of the entirety of production are perfectly rendered in the spectacle, whose *mode of being concrete* is precisely abstraction. In the spectacle, one part of the world *represents itself* to the world and is superior to it. The spectacle is nothing more than the common language of this separation" (Debord 29). The spectator must assume a collective perceived mastery over the mechanized figure of the automaton then in order for this inherent separation to not be overtly visible, for once the delineations of spectator/performer become easily recognizable, the illusory space begins to break down and the magician performer's lack of true power or control becomes transparent.

A New Form of Automatas

In order to continuously find new ways to engage directly with the audience, new automatas were developed that could perform a variety of different and increasingly more

complicated tasks. Two of these automatas, "Psycho," and "Zoe," which appeared on the Victorian London stage of John Nevil Maskelyne's Egyptian Hall, best exemplify this new generation of automaton and their subsequent evolution from the Parisian stage of Robert-Houdin. "Psycho" was revealed to the public on 13 January 1875 and became an instant success, performing generally two shows a day for over seven years. The automaton "had been given an eastern countenance, with weighty eyelids and a droopy moustache, dressed in an oriental robe and silk turban. He poised, crossleged [sic], atop a wooden box. Unlike Ajeeb, Maskelyne's android was far too small to contain a person. The figure was but twenty-two inches tall, and filled with machinery. Once isolated in the middle of the stage, it gave every indication that it could think and act for itself" (Gaughan and Steinmeyer 15).[22] Just like Robert-Houdin outfitted "Antonio Diavolo" in an exotic garb to capitalize on the growing fascination with Orientalism, "Psycho" was established as an Other in order to further strengthen the collective bond linking performer and spectator. Now though, instead of simply performing for the audience as a spectacle as "Antonio Diavolo" did, "Psycho" was able to interact seemingly directly with the audience, with a perceived form of intelligence and agency. It is described that, "Psycho's accomplishments were far beyond those of any normal person. A member of the audience would secretly write a word on a sheet of paper, and Psycho would spell it, choosing letters from alphabetical cards arranged in slots in front of him. A sum would be written down, and Psycho would give the answer by selecting numbered cards. A playing-card [sic] would be secretly chosen, and Psycho would indicate its value and suit

[22] Ajeeb was a chess-playing automaton that appeared at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London in 1868.

by striking a bell. Most remarkable of all, he would take part in a game of whist, playing his cards with the skill of an expert" (Lamb 80). Even in this modern accounting of the historical performance of "Psycho," the automaton is ascribed a sense of individuality and agency as the author consistently refers to the machine utilizing personal pronouns. "Psycho" marks then the transition to an even more profound illustration of man's mastery over machine, for by imbuing the automaton with a perceived intelligence, and now making it demonstrate more complex feats, it elevates the magician performer as one who is able to create the mechanical enigma that was previously not imagined as being possible.

Image 2: Maskelyne & Cooke in their Unique Entertainment. Poster from 1879 performance.

Maskelyne followed the success of "Psycho" with "Zoe," an automaton designed to look like a young girl, which he introduced in 1877. In performance, "A small figure is placed on a pedestal on the stage. A frame to hold sheets of drawing paper is placed in front of the figure, and the audience are [sic] invited to select one name from a number of names of celebrities. A soft crayon is put into the right hand of the figure, who then draws a sketch of the chosen person" (Goldston 474). Zoe was presented as being more than just a drawing automaton, and was instead the mechanized child, with Maskelyne playing the role of surrogate father/creator. This relationship becomes best exemplified in an 1879 poster (Image 2) advertising what audience members could expect to see at any of the two daily performances, excepting Mondays, at the Egyptian Hall (*Maskelyne & Cooke in their Unique Entertainment*). This poster highlights the automatas that were now a key element of the show, and four of them, "Labial," "Fanfare," "Zoe," and "Psycho" are given direct billing, with the names of the automatas featured boldly on a red banner that stretches across the bottom of the poster, just as the names of the founders of the theatre, Maskelyne and Cooke, are on a similar banner that spans the top portion of the advertisement.[23] The center of the poster features engravings of other attractions including a plate spinning routine, and a decapitation illusion, "Elixir Vitae." Zoe though is the only automaton that is depicted twice on the poster. In one of the images, she is seated, drawing a portrait, as was part of the performance. In the other though, Zoe is depicted being held in the arms of Maskelyne as they both stare into one another's eyes under the caption "Zoe and her Papa." There is a unique gendering going on here, where

[23] "Labial" and "Fanfare" were two automatas resembling small men who would play instruments on stage with Maskelyne. Both appeared in 1878 with "Labial" playing the euphonium and "Fanfare" the coronet.

the constructed “female” automaton is treated as daughter while the ones depicted as males are not positioned as Maskelyne’s sons. This alludes to an underlying control of the representational generative female as the magician positions himself as someone who can create the illusion of life on the stage.

Image 3: Maskelyne and Zoe. Photograph c.1885.

This representation of the feminine child automaton becomes complicated though in a photograph of Maskelyne and “Zoe” (c.1885). In the studio portrait done by the

London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company (Image 3), Maskelyne stands in full tuxedo looking directly at the camera, his left arm straight down along his side while his right arm crosses in front of him, his hand seemingly frozen in the act of pointing. To his left is "Zoe," sitting atop a pedestal and holding a brush while drawing on a pad that is directly in front of her. "Zoe" wears a high lace collar dress with long sleeves with laced cuffs, long pants, and shoes. "Zoe's" hair is pulled back and tied with ribbons. There is an uncanny reversal happening within the photograph though. With Maskelyne's unnatural position, he appears almost as a standing automaton, devoid of expression or emotion. While uncomfortable positions were commonplace for subjects in early photographs, where any movement or change in expression could ruin the exposure and create a blurred image, the medium had advanced substantially at the time this photograph was taken that elongated sitting times were no longer required, thus suggesting that Maskelyne's pose is a conscious aesthetic choice made by either the magician or the photographer. Juxtaposed against the machinic Maskelyne though is the figure of "Zoe," which appears not to be an automaton at all, but an actual girl. Even though "Zoe's" face is in profile, there is a distinct humanlike quality to its expression and a level of detail that isn't seen on "Psycho" or Maskelyne's other automatas, leading the spectator to question whether what she is seeing is an automaton or a living person. By replacing the mechanized version of "Zoe" with an actual person, Maskelyne is simultaneously blurring the lines between the living and the mechanical, which, in turn, serves to elevate his status, making him a magician Frankenstein, whose powers now extend to being able to create life at will, much like Robert-Houdin demonstrating his power to the Marabouts by giving a living essence to the inanimate.

Now, after seeing a widely circulated stereoscopic card where the automaton "Zoe" is replaced by the human surrogate, a tangible card that a spectator can hold in her hand and examine up close, an imprinting occurs outside of the theatre that radically alters the perception of the actual performance within the negative-space performance. The spectator will associate the mechanized "Zoe" that is on stage with the subconscious image of the human actress playing "Zoe" in the photograph, making the presentation of the automaton far more impactful. When this is coupled with how the automaton is represented in the press at the time, it becomes even more precisely clear how the spectator's perception of reality is being manipulated outside of the performative space. As the *Morning Post* reported:

> Mr. Maskelyne, more complacent than Frankenstein, has created a Titania for his Oberon. Psycho is to be envied. A lovely companion, always smiling, never contradicting him, never troubling him about bills, or talking of the last sweet thing in bonnets! As graceful as Angelica Kauffman, the mystery of her being is enhanced by the sheet of glass under the stand upon which she sits. A marvellous piece of mechanism, and does great honour to her maker, whose creative ingenuity is wholly without precedent, and seems to defy rivalry. (qtd. in J. Maskelyne 48-49)

"Zoe" is now the female companion, both wife and daughter, created by man to serve his own needs and to ultimately control. This bizarre conflation of the relationship between performer and automaton and the open swapping of mechanized and human characteristics between the two begins to challenge the spectator's understanding of reality through its multiple layerings. "Zoe" is human/machine and substitute wife/daughter, controlled yet still seemingly possessive of the power to recreate the human figure as representational object through the drawings the automaton produces, drawings that then become commodified and that are still actively sought out and

collected more than a century after they were first produced. Now, audiences begin to move away from perceiving the machine on stage as only novelty and begin to question exactly how the scientific can redefine their own roles in the world.

Bringing the Supernatural to the Stage

Aside from including the mechanical, or the faux automatons as was the case with Robert-Houdin's "Antonio Diavolo," and Maskelyne's "Psycho" and "Zoe," magicians were incredibly interested in the scientific lectures taking place at the time themselves, for not only was there a new world of possibilities for methodologies to accomplish previously unimagined illusions being offered by the scientists in their presentations, as seen in Robert-Houdin's utilization of electromagnetism with the "Light and Heavy Chest," but the lectures themselves also became performance models in which to draw from in order to further challenge spectators' notions of reality. As will be shown in the next chapter, acts such as the Davenport brothers even routinely traveled with a lecturer, usually an educated man with a degree acting as a certified "expert" who could speak to the validity of the phenomena occurring on the stage in an effort to further legitimize magic as performance. The scientific lectures were partly didactic and partly sensationalistic, with the lecturer/performer balancing between scientist and performer, all in an effort to pique a public's interest in the work that was being done, while also assuaging a perceived fear of technological developments by some. One such scientific demonstration, given by John Henry Pepper at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London in 1862 effectively tapped into the fervor that was taking place over Spiritualism and the

performances of the Fox sisters[24] and the Davenport brothers[25] and created a new form of performance that effectively blended the scientific with Spiritualism, illusion, and the theatrical, and fundamentally changed the course of magic as presented on the stage. For the first time ever, Pepper introduced audiences to a visible ghost on the stage that could interact with the live actor.

Having been conceived in principle originally by a patent agent, Henry Dircks, "The Ghost" illusion was reworked by Pepper in order for it to be performed in a regular theatre (Dircks's proposition required that a special theatre be built with limited viewing, having the audience looking down onto the stage as sunlight streamed in from above in order to achieve the effect of seeing the ghost). Pepper devised a way to rework the optical illusion created by the Dircks model and instead utilized large mirrors, set into the floor of the stage at an angle and lit, outside of the sightlines of the audience, in order to project a semi-transparent figure onto the stage. He employed this for the first time on 24 December 1862 in a performance of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's supernatural themed play, *A Strange Story*. He describes the very brief scene in which the ghost first appears as: "It represented the room of a student who was engaged with burning the midnight oil, and, looking up from his work, sees and apparition of a skeleton. Resenting the intrusion he rises, seizes a sword or a hatchet which is ready to his hand, and aims a blow at the ghost; which instantly disappeared again and again to return" (Pepper 29). Through this, there is the dreamlike state that is being invoked, where the character on the stage cannot

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[24] On 31 March 1848, two young children in upstate New York, Margaret and Kate Fox, played a prank on their parents and claimed that they had the ability to communicate with the spirits of the deceased. The Fox sisters kept this ruse going and ended up touring the United States and Europe demonstrating their uncanny and unnatural abilities.

[25] The Davenport Brothers are examined in detail in Chapter 2.

trust his own eyes with what he is seeing as he is supposedly exhausted from his late night studies, and through the brevity of the ghost's appearance, this dream state is then transferred to the audience members, who, without any prior framing reference for seeing a ghost image in a three-dimensional space, suddenly find themselves questioning their own perceived vision as well. According to Pepper, "The effect [sic] of the first appearance of the apparition on my illustrious audience was startling in the extreme, and far beyond anything I could have hoped for and expected, so much so that, although I had previously settled to explain the whole *modus operandi* on that evening, I deferred doing so, and went the next day to Messrs. Carpmael, the patent agents, and took out a provisional patent for the ghost illusion, in the names, at my request, of Dircks and Pepper" (3). From the dramatic reaction of the audience as their entire perception of reality became unraveled in a singular moment, the scientist became the magician and realized the valued necessity of the secret in being able to manipulate and reshape those realities of the spectators. A liminal space needs to be created where the implausible suddenly seems to be possible in order to undermine the spectators' belief that there is a single, unified form of reality. By presenting the uncanny, without explanation, there is the introduction, even on the most minute of scales, that there can exist alternate possibilities to reality. Reality becomes no longer concrete, but rather is now malleable and able to be reconstituted by the performer.

While Pepper followed the success of the opening of *A Strange Story*[26] by including more prolonged scenes with ghosts in the Royal Polytechnic's performances of

[26] Pepper claims that the short demonstration brought in "hundreds and thousands of pounds to the treasury of the Polytechnic" (29).

Dickens's *The Haunted Man* and in a short vignette entitled *Cupid and the Love-Letter*, he soon began to employ the ghost illusion in plays such as *Hamlet*. Once the audience becomes accustomed to seeing the ghosts on stage though, and begins to accept them as part of the performance, the ghosts lose their magic and are no longer looked at as tricks or as puzzles needing to be solved. Instead, there is a similar imprinting occurring just as with the photograph of Maskelyne and "Zoe" where the spectator creates a subconscious image of something he believes he witnesses and then utilizes this as a basis for framing his subsequent perceptions. This reforms the subconscious engagement with the magical then, for, "minds are not just about images entering their procession naturally. They are about the cinema like editing choices that our pervasive system of biological value has promoted. The mind procession is not about first come, first served. It is about value-stamped selections inserted in a logical frame over time" (Damasio 76). The spectator sees something (the ghost) she cannot at first explain and this creates a disruption in her consciousness, a punctum. She attempts to reconstruct a negative-space performance of what she saw and tires to find rationality or logic within it in order to maintain her harmonious balance within a collective. She can dismiss it based on an explanation even if she does not understand the explanation (the ghost was achieved through mirrors). When she is faced with another representation of the phenomena (she sees another ghost on stage), she begins to subconsciously accept the ghosts as part of her perceived reality and begins to make editing choices with her memories of the events that now comprise her frame of reference for ghosts. Now, ghosts look a certain way and behave in a certain manner for her. Even if she still arrives at a logical conclusion (ghosts are not real, therefore what I see is trickery), she still has created a mental representation of ghost in a

negative-space performance that is now no longer dependent on the technology of the theatre. This imagined construct of ghost now has more freedom than the theatrically staged ghost and can grow and develop through each subsequent reediting of the subconscious cinema that is taking place inside the spectator's subsequent negative-space performances.

It is in this moment where the spectator begins to inadvertently give up the power she holds in the theatrical space, for once her perceptions are manipulated by the performer to the point where she begins to question her own realities, those very realities become susceptible to being fractured, as will be seen in the Spiritualist performances where the supernatural is presented without the tempering of the dramatic or comedic play to frame it. Even with the Spiritualist performances basing their proof of the supernatural in the auditory, the manifestation of spirit rappings, or musical instruments being played inexplicably in the dark, and not in the technical phantasmagoric of Pepper's ghosts on stage, there is a similar imbalance being created that serves to attempt to strip agency away from the spectator. As the conceptual inventor of "The Ghost" explains, "Spirit-rapping is but another phase of the old superstition—love of the marvellous, and a strong inkling to rend the veil that interposes between the obvious present and the dark mysterious future" (Dircks 30). The spectator is actively drawn to the magical and to the supernatural in performance because both suggest a realm of possibilities that theoretically can only exist in the mind, while also tying the spectators to a shared history or belief system. This is a way for the individual to regain a sense of the power she feels slipping away from her as the magician/scientist lecturer challenges her perceptions or reality. With the "dark and mysterious future," there is the fear of the

unknown, but also the excitement of discovery. The superstition is the link to the past, a link to a collective that shared in a unified form of reality. The spectator then, within these performances, finds herself balancing precariously in the liminal space between that shared past and the future that is in the process of being reformulated through the outside manipulation by the performer and through the spectator's own internal reconstitution of understood perception. It is here where the perception of reality becomes the most subject to a complete fracturing as will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Immortality and the Fracturing of a Unified Reality

While the individual struggled to find an individualized identity within a rapidly progressing technologized world and to not be consumed by the machine so as to simply become the operator and thus lose his or her power as creator, ironically a form of collective reality is formed as the individuals unify their belief systems. Even though there is the desire for individual autonomy and the ability to express unique identities, there is still the overarching binary of man versus machine that is being created. In aligning with others, the individual feels validation in the reality that he or she has created and any believed outside threats are diminished. Collective reality thus leads to the false perception of a state of safe equilibrium, but it must be understood that there are consistently forces at work designed to upset this balance, and to challenge perceived notions of constructs of a unified form of reality.

I begin this chapter by examining the effects of what happens when magic is taken off of the stage and, as Robert-Houdin did in Algeria, is presented as being the "real," by specifically looking at the séance phenomenon that was popular in Europe at the time as a distinctively theatrical performance. By specifically focusing on the Davenport brothers, who first began performing in New York around 1853 and who began their European tour in September 1864, I argue that the séances constitute a new form of theatre that not only challenges the harmony of a collective reality, but ultimately fractures it into disparate parts. Here, the theatrical environment is transferred from its traditional Western setting with a clear delineation between performer/audience and fictional/imagined authentic into the domestic sphere, effectively blurring the lines

between what is considered performance, and what is perceived to be real in the three-dimensional space, a claim that becomes even further reinforced when viewed in conjunction with the two-dimensional realm of spirit photography, which I will also address in this chapter. The Davenport brothers were not framing what they were doing as being performative; they were instead subliminally suggesting that there was a much larger world that they had privileged access to, and that through their abilities to communicate with the spirit world, they were essentially breaking free from the confines of the collective reality and thus becoming more fully realized individuals. Just as audiences believed that magicians such as Robert-Houdin had special powers, so too did those spectators who took part in the séances of the Davenport brothers. The pairs of siblings positioned themselves in a more passive role, allowing them to be received as simply conduits through which spirits could communicate. From a performative standpoint, these two distinctively different models had profoundly diametrically opposed effects on the audience, although both did create an environment where spectators' understandings of reality were at first challenged, and then fractured as they made the cognitive leap from perceiving magic as tricks to perceiving magic as actually being real.

Beginning a Religion with a Prank

Beginning in the United States in 1848, the Spiritualist movement expanded rapidly across the U.S. and Europe through the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.[27] Spiritualism posited that there was life after death; that once an individual died, he or she was still able to interact with the world of the living, thus

[27] The New York Times estimated that by 1897, there were already eight million followers of Spiritualism in the U.S. and in Europe.

transforming the world into one that was vibrantly rich with both the souls of the living and those of the dead. The spirits communicated through mediums, who were purportedly sensitive to this supernatural phenomenon, thus tying the experience not to a specific location, but rather to the performer in a pseudo-embodied form of a mobile theatre. Now, untethered from the specifically delineated theatrical space, the medium performers were free to bring their new form of theatre anywhere, and, in turn, could now communicate with a plethora of other spirits. This begins to create a situation where the living individual has the power to claim a form of immortality, for as Baudrillard posits, "It is only to the extent that they [the dead] are excluded by the living that they quietly become immortal, and idealized survival is only the mark of their social exile" (*Simulacra* 128). So if the dead gain their immortality by being excluded by the living, once the living partners with the dead, there is a conflation taking place that immortalizes the living active agent. By the mediums framing themselves through their performances as having powers others do not possess, and are thereby able to freely transgress the liminal space between the living and the dead, they are essentially creating a bridge to the realm of the social exile of immortality. This becomes manifested in the formation of celebrity, a point I will be arguing in the latter portion of this chapter.

While mediums such as the Fox sisters and the Davenport brothers gained worldwide fame, it is not just the power derived from celebrity though that is enough to foster the growth of Spiritualism as the popular form of religious theatre that it eventually became, but rather it is the subsequent commodification and marketing of the performances themselves that allowed the movement to truly grow and flourish. Various forms of paid public séances began to appear and over the years, in an ever-increasing

drive to attract new audiences of believers in this carefully constructed and staged form of the magical, these séances developed to include more than just spirit rappings, where disembodied knocks on a hard surface could be heard as the spirits supposedly answered questions that were posed to them, but also displays of direct writing[28] and later, as photography began to become more widely utilized, ectoplasmic manifestations. Ectoplasm was believed to be tangible invisible rods of energy that emanated from the medium and these seemingly unexplained phenomena further challenge spectators' understandings of scientific realities. During a pitch-black séance, a flashlight was shone on the medium in order to show the supposed proof of the effects caused by the interaction with the spirit world (Image 4). The ectoplasm was manifested as either a grotesque extension of a fibrous mass protruding from the medium's body, oftentimes coming from the mouth or the ear, or as the absurd, with the ectoplasm being shaped into a hand, or even in more extreme circumstances, as a face of the spirit that was being contacted. Both manifestations were designed first and foremost to shock the audience; they instantly and unexpectedly jolted the spectator out of the reality that he subscribed to before he took part in the séance by positioning the medium as not entirely human. It conditioned the spectators and through the theatrical display, allowed for the medium performer to be elevated to operating outside of the believed normative, thus creating a new form of celebrity, that of the freak, to emerge.

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[28] Direct, or automatic, writing refers to a performance where the spirits supposedly take control of the medium's hand in order to write messages for the spectators. The medium is supposed to be unconscious of the entire process. Forms of direct writing were later incorporated into magic performances as "slate writing" or "spirit writing" tricks.

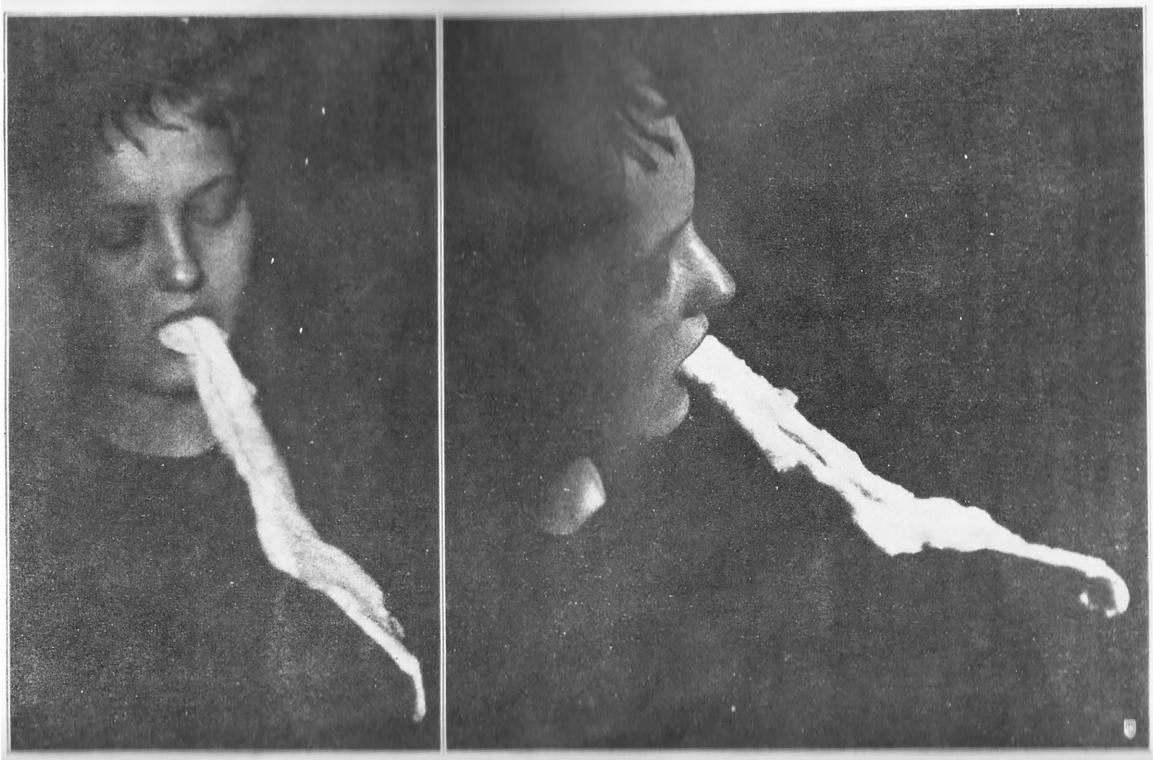

Image 4: Ectoplasm coming from the mouth of a medium. Photograph taken with aid of a flashlight by Dr. Albert von Schrenck Notzing on 25 January 1913 (*Phenomena of Materialisation* 253)

There is a distinctive shift occurring here though as what was being marketed was not only the pseudo-celebrity status of the medium, where audiences would come, in part, solely to see the individual who possessed the superhuman abilities as a proto-sideshow attraction, but also a desire to engage spectators with the supernatural as a form of theatre. If this is viewed then through the claim that "the very concept of live performance presupposes that of reproductivity—that the live can exist only *within* an economy of reproduction" (Auslander 54; original emphasis), it was necessary to make the *experience* of the performances reproducible in order to draw crowds, and thus, sell tickets. The spiritualistic performer creates a stock set of expectations for the experience of the séance that the audience willingly enters into a performative contract with, even if

it is on a subconscious level. If the medium is able to reproduce the experience of the negative-space performance of the séance the spectator has constructed then the spectator's needs are satisfied, but if the performer deviates from the performance, then it is not regarded as being authentic, and thus the credibility of the performer will be diluted. It is not about what the audience is witnessing in the live performance, but rather what they are experiencing through being a part of the performance. Through repetition, the various mediums' performance of the live séance created a stereotyped mode of magic theatre that spread to other performers of the time such as the Davenport brothers, and that still exists to this day. For instance, at the Magic Castle in Hollywood, participants can pay to attend "an evening that recreates the elegance and mystery of a classic Victorian séance," and where, it is billed that, "In this experience you are guaranteed to see things you have never seen before" ("Houdini Séance").[29] An audience member can thus believe that the séance they are a part of is legitimate because it meets the understood parameters of a séance, without the spectator aware of being a participant in a self-perpetuating cycle that began with a carefully manipulated priming of the performance.

This reproducibility though will eventually erase the initial incarnation of the performance, and, in turn, can even counterintuitively serve to further strengthen the believed powers of the magical performer. This happened with many of the spiritualistic performers, for as they performed the same séances over and over again, séances that

[29] Elsewhere on the website, all of the performances are billed as magic "shows," whereas the séance is only referred to as an "experience." It is further claimed that the "medium" will "open the veil between this world and the next. The medium will begin with fascinating experiments in the power of the unseen and then, forming a magic circle, will summon the spirits to demonstrate their awesome ability to manifest in our physical world." This essentially differentiates this type of performance from that of mere entertainment by highlighting the audience's involvement as active participants in the show.

were centered on the aforementioned de rigueur rappings, direct writing, and ectoplasmic manifestations, and through the precise framing of the shows as demonstrations of supernatural abilities, some audience members began to view what they were witnessing as not simply entertainment, but as validation of personally held religious beliefs. By tapping into questions of immortality, the mediums' heavily reproduced performances capitalize on this and essentially become ritualistic in nature and can thus be accepted to possess a perceived authenticity when viewed in tandem with the individual's religiosity. Writing about the Spiritualist movement, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle argued, "one of the ultimate results of this movement will be to unite religion upon a common basis so strong, and, indeed, so self-sufficient, that the quibbles which separate the Churches of today will be seen in their true proportions and will be swept away or disregarded. One could even hope that such a movement might spread beyond the bounds of Christianity and throw down some of the barriers which stand between great sections of the human race" (82). Through the ritualization of the performance of the supernatural, and through the grafting onto these performances notions of religion, the reproduced theatrical event is imbued with agency, and it is through this empowerment where a severe fragmentation of reality begins to occur as logic becomes challenged, reinterpreted, and reconstituted.

A collective reality is again formed though, for as individuals partake in the ritualistic performances, and as they parallel those performances with their own religious beliefs, they will then begin to actively seek out others who share in the same interpretations of the experience. When they begin to coalesce their constituted realities together, to ultimately form a movement as Doyle describes it, there is essentially a cult mentality being created in support of the newly formed mythologies. Barthes states that,

"Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact" (143). So while mediums were at times subjected to a plethora of scientific tests to prove/disprove the nature of their abilities, and while the Spiritualist movement was consistently under scrutiny, for those who fully subscribed to the new forms of reality, there is the fundamental transition being made from the need to justify beliefs through explanation to that of stating believed facts. Just as the newly constituted collective is able to construct an alternate form of reality once the initial fragmentation to a larger shared group reality occurs, so too are they able to generate facts to support that reality. In this model, there can never be any form of the authentic, since the authentic is merely a subjective concept relative to the reality it occupies. This becomes evident when one of the children who was responsible for the entirety of the Spiritualism movement, Margaret Fox, publically recants what she and her sister did as nothing more than tricks,[30] yet Spiritualists believed that she was coerced into the admission by nonbelievers, prompting Margaret to retract her disavowal and proclaim that Spiritualism's "genuineness is an incontrovertible fact" (qtd. in Doyle 108).[31] Transitioning something first from the fictionalized performative, then to the debated belief, and finally to the realm of incontrovertible fact, demonstrates how polarizing fractured realities can become, and as

[30] The admission took place on 21 October 1888 at the Hall of Music in New York. While Kate was present, she remained silent. Margaret demonstrated how she made the rapping sounds by clicking a joint in her toe and would subsequently tour demonstrating how she and her sister tricked people.

[31] The interview where Margaret supposedly reverted back to Spiritualism was reported in the New York press on 20 November 1889.

will be seen with audiences' reactions to the Davenport brothers, this entrenchment can lead to a dramatic further fracturing of perceived forms of stable collective realities.

The Davenport Brothers and the Danger of Ambiguous Reality

Whereas some mediums were basing their performances firmly within the realm of Spiritualism, allowing audiences to ascribe supernatural explanations to the events they witnessed, the Davenport brothers incorporated an ambiguity into their act by never fully addressing the issue. They simply presented the spiritualistic occurrences and allowed the spectators to interpret that what they were seeing was either the work of the spirit world, or was merely a series of carefully constructed tricks, without ever giving a definitive explanation supporting either belief. This led to a questioning of not only the magic that was being presented in the séances and on the stages by the Davenports, but also of their performative identity as well, for while medium performers such as Margaret and Kate Fox were regarded as the prophets of the new Spiritualism movement, the Davenports were consistently negotiating the lines between mediums, magicians, escape artists, and charlatans. I argue that a spectatorial cohesive reality could thus not be formed due to the uncertainty generated on how to categorize the Davenport brothers as performers, and that through the simultaneous perceptual positioning of the Davenports as innocent vessels the spirit world is able to speak through, as charlatans out to deceive their audiences, and as powerful individuals actually possessing supernatural abilities, a profound fracturing of reality ultimately begins to occur for the spectators. A unity of a shared reality is no longer able to exist, and instead, varying factions are constructed as audience members actively seek out to coalesce their beliefs with others. On a cursory level, these factions are comprised of individuals split along simply trying to decide

which stance of the binary (the performers do/do not possess supernatural powers) to support, but once the newly constructed form of reality begins to move from the individual negative-space performance to the collective, an impassioned fanaticism can begin to occur, and, as later will be seen, the fragmented spectators will begin to attribute more power to the performer as they fill in information on a subconscious level in order to justify the new form of reality.

Ira Erastus Davenport was born on 17 September 1839 in Buffalo, New York, and his brother, William Henry Harrison Davenport, was born two years later on 1 February 1841. They had a younger sister, Elizabeth Louisa, born 23 December 1844, and the Davenport household was rounded out with the father, Ira Davenport, Sr. working in the police department and the mother, Virtue Honeysett, staying at home to take care of the children.[32] In a biographical account of the Davenports published in 1864, it is suggested that the contact with the supernatural world was not solely centered on the two brothers, but was rather something that was inherent with the family itself: "Mrs. Davenport, while a girl, heard, or imagined, she heard, one day, a voice directing her to observe the time as marked upon a clock standing near her, which proved to be the moment of her mother's death at a distance" (Nichols 10). This is even further extended by the assertion that Virtue possesses "extraordinary gifts of healing, similar to those formerly attributed to the sovereigns of England, and something of the second-sight, or prevision, which many believe to have formerly been common in Scotland" (Nichols 10-11). Nichols includes this at the beginning of his biography to legitimate the subsequent claims of the

[32] There is not much mention of Elizabeth in the literature on the Davenport brothers, but further research needs to be done to evaluate her participation in the Spiritualistic performances. For instance, spectators oftentimes described that the spirit hands they felt were those of a female. It would be interesting to explore if Elizabeth was actually an unseen confederate in the performances.

abilities of the Davenport brothers, demonstrating that it was not simply a spontaneous abnormality that just happened to occur without warning, but was, in essence, part of their very genetic makeup. This, in effect, imbues the supposed powers of the Davenports with a perceived form of authenticity. Virtue is linked not to a distinctively American past, but directly to the English sovereignty in an attempt to elevate the value of her social status, and the subsequent inherency of her sons to a power reserved for only a very select few. Interestingly though, this also distances Virtue from any notion of witchcraft, and the persecution of those in both America and Europe who claim to possess the "prevision" as Nichols refers to here. This is a very subtle alignment of the Davenports with a more religious based supernatruality, where the English monarch is viewed in a direct relationship with God, as opposed to a perceived perversion of this spirituality as was attested to the dark arts of witchcraft in a superstitious society.

Within this model, there is also an innocence attributed to the Davenports, and they are being positioned as simply children who have a gift, a gift that has been inherited from a direct lineage, that they may not necessarily understand or be able to control. Their first spiritualistic performances began in 1853 when Ira was only fourteen and William was twelve. While this very much allowed for a similar affirmation of their innocence for an audience as was seen in the aforementioned young Fox sisters, there is a very distinctive differentiation between the two groups of performers. The Fox sisters were very active in their presentations of dealings with the spiritual manifestations, directly asking the spirits questions and carrying on conversations with them. The Fox sisters were thus in control, able to shape the performative experience for the audience as a very carefully constructed event. With the Davenports though, a much more passive

performativity was embraced as Ira and William were presented as simply vessels for the spirit world to communicate through. This becomes best evidenced in Nichols's account of travelling with the Davenports in Europe, where he claims, "When they were, to all appearance, sound asleep, some of the most marked of the manifestations have occurred. In travelling by rail, when entering a dark tunnel, I have, to a mental wish, received them in tangible and unmistakable forms; and this experience has been repeated in England" (323). Here, the Davenports do not even need to be conscious for the spiritual manifestations to occur, but are established as being nothing more than conduits for the supernatural world. What is of greater significance though is the fact that the performance has been completely shifted to take place solely within the mind of the spectator; there is no stage, there is no parlour, and there is in actuality no outwardly apparent performance, but instead there is simply a man sitting on a train with two sleeping performers. The condition of darkness needed for the spirits to manifest as found in the Davenports' actual performances is still present, for the train must first enter the darkened tunnel before Nichols is able to experience the event, but the passivity of the performers now forces the spectator to actively construct the theatrical event himself as a negative-space performance. This formula is one that I argue begins to augment the theatrical presentation of magic as audiences are given more power to construct performances subconsciously, piecing together seemingly disparate fragments of information into a thus apparently remarkable feat of magic. Magic becomes operative in the negative space then and not necessarily in the actuality of what is being seen in the live performance space.

From one perspective, the positioning of the Davenports as innocent vessels who were born with a supernatural gift, one they cannot control but that is omnipresent and operating at all times, even when they are not "performing," is important so that they do not appear to their audiences as merely performers, but rather as individuals always in possession of the powers. This creates the underlying assertion that there is an authenticity to the supernatural powers that needs to be believed by the audience, that the supernatural is, in fact, real, for if the supposed spiritual manifestations occurred only in the obvious theatrical space, such as in a theatre or in a prepared parlour for a séance, then it suggests the simple fact that what the spectators are witnessing is only an act, entirely constructed for entertainment and amusement, thus undermining the unspoken claims being made in the Davenports' performances of the existence of a spiritual world. The active spectator that is being created from the passivity of the Davenports' performative characters must only be afforded the power to be active if done so within the acceptance of the authentic nature of the performance, for, as will be seen with the Davenports' performances in Liverpool, England, if the authenticity is not first subscribed to, the entirety of the performance becomes nullified. Those spectators who have gone to the show already with the belief that there is a remote possibility of the spiritual world, no matter if they are believers or skeptics, are doing so under the predication that what they will witness will either further confirm a belief, or help sway a still unformulated opinion. This directly relates to one of Rancière's parameters for a reformed theatre, where he states that, "the spectator must be roused from the stupefaction of spectators enthralled by appearances and won over by the empathy that makes them identify with the characters on the stage. He will be shown a strange,

unusual spectacle, a mystery whose meaning he must seek out" (4). The active spectators thus become "scientific investigators," as Rancière labels them, not swayed by the spectacle of the performance, but rather focused on gathering facts as evidence to either confirm or deny a working hypothesis. This even further shifts the balance of the power in the passive performer/active spectator dynamic to the latter and creates the space where the new realities can begin to be formed.

The desire for an authenticity directly addresses the question of the mimetic within these performances as well however. If the Davenports were merely copying other mediums, producing the same question and answer format with rappings, audiences would quickly tire of the genre of performance and then move onto something else entirely. So while some mediums had been garnering fame through newspaper accounts of their abilities and through word of mouth as people attended their performances, if the Davenports suddenly appeared on the scene with a similar act, it would be easy to dismiss it as only a copy; it would be nothing more than another increasingly exhaustive example of those in tune with the spiritual world. It thus became necessary to further extend the authenticity of the Davenports to not only show that these were powers they did not happen to stumble upon, but were actually born with, but also that their performances actually predated those of the originators of the act that others in both the U.S. and in Europe were emulating, the Fox sisters. This becomes a strategic marketing ploy in order to draw in audiences, because in a strictly mimetic situation, a spectator could choose not to come to see a performance by the Davenport brothers because she had already observed or read about something similar occurring with the Fox sisters. Nichols though states that, "In 1846 the family was disturbed by what they described as 'raps, thumps,

loud noises, snaps, cracking noises, in the dead of the night.' They were startling and annoying, but what could they do? Disconnected from the subsequent events, they were scarcely worthy of remembrance" (12). This indicates that the furor over the rappings that constituted the Fox sisters' performances was something that not only had happened as well with the Davenports two years before Margaret and Kate even began to be in supposed contact with the spiritual world, but also that it was commonplace, mundane, and "scarcely worthy of remembrance." This conveys to a ticket buying audience an authenticity predating the Fox sisters while also suggesting that what a spectator could witness at a performance by the Davenports is something far more advanced and spectacular than the simple rappings one would get with the Fox sisters. Perceived authenticity here is used to bolster one performing group's fame, credibility, and ultimately, ticket sales, while undermining those aspects of other performers.

The Davenports even try to subtly assert this authenticity when they arrive in Paris in September 1865 and begin to perform their séances. They attempt to differentiate what they are doing from that which Robert-Houdin is staging in his *Soirées Fantastiques*, creating a distinction between the spiritualistic magic(k) they are performing and the illusions that Robert-Houdin is building his fame and reputation on. In one account, in a book by Ira Davenport himself, various testimonies are given as to the legitimacy of the Davenports, including one from M. Rhys. It is stated that, "M. Rhys is the maker of all of the articles used by the well-known Robert Houdin [sic], who is himself the inventor and originator of almost the whole of the tricks performed by the less accomplished jugglers, and who declared, some time since, that nothing in the magic art could account for the so-called spiritual phenomena which he had witnessed"

(Davenport 424). While this is definitely a case of publicity and bravado, as it would seem incredibly unlikely that someone who worked so closely with illusion apparatus could not be able to decipher how the Davenports were accomplishing their tricks, there is also a clear break being made from the magic community. Robert-Houdin had so closely realigned magic with the theatre, and thus with a fantastical form of fiction that now the Davenports were wanting to dissuade audiences from believing that what they were doing was theatrical in nature. Even the addendum to the lengthy title of Ira Davenport's book, *Truth is Stranger than Fiction*, suggests that what the Davenports are offering is not theatre, but a form of reality that they have somehow, or through some power, been able to uncover for the spectators. This situates the Davenports in a position of having the ability to control not only what transpires in the theatrical event space, but it also allows them to condition the spectators to engage with a specifically constructed negative-space performance as well.

It becomes necessary then to examine exactly what the Davenports' early performances looked like in order to analyze the theatricality of the pieces. The audience would be seated at a table in a circle with Ira and William sitting next to one another and would interlock arms or hold hands. The spirits would manifest themselves only once the lights had been extinguished, so the crux of the shows took place in the dark with the spectators first hearing ghostly sounds around the room. Soon, spectators would feel light touches on their faces and bodies as the supposed spirits began to physically manifest themselves within the room. Loud musical noises soon followed until, at the climax of the séance, the glowing instruments, covered in phosphorescent paint, began to appear and seemingly float in midair around the room. The instruments would disappear

and the lights would come up to reveal that the two brothers were still sitting at the table with the other spectators; the physically linked circle would appear to be unbroken. In these early séances held in private parlours and recital halls the spectators were a distinctive part of the action. This builds off of the form of the empowered spectator I have argued and completely establishes the theatrical séance as one that takes place primarily within the negative-space performance for each spectator. A shift must occur here in the understanding of perception so that "perception is not a process of passive absorption but of active construction. When you see, hear, or feel something, the incoming information is always fragmentary and ambiguous" (Macknik and Martinez-Conde 141). Thus, in the theatrical model of the séance, there is an environment of sensory deprivation being constructed in order to limit the perceived reliance on that which can be seen, in order to be able to exploit that which can be heard and felt. Audience members are primed prior to even arriving at the séance by the semiotics encountered outside of the performative space. For instance, firsthand accounts in newspapers or from other individuals about experiences at séances or with the supernatural, introduce to the viewer the possibilities of perception. The viewer then constructs a mental representation of that which she is expecting to experience and brings this into the space of the actualized séance. When the lights are turned out then, and the spirits are manifested through a cacophony of musical instrument noises, ghostly voices, and the laying of hands on the participants, the fragmented information is actively utilized to construct a mental picture of that which is taking place in the darkness within the negative-space performance.

This allows for the supernatural to occur, albeit at first only on quasi-consciousness level, as spectators create an imagined performance out of the limited information made available. Eventually though, the supernatural is able to extend outward from an internalized form of actively constructed perception and become grafted onto the performance in the physical space as well. In the Davenports' séances, there are numerous accounts of the brothers being able to float either freely, or while still seated in their chairs, up above the gathered audience. While this was a technical impossibility at the time, especially within the confines of a parlour in a private home and without the aid of a full theatrical fly section, audiences would not have even had a frame of reference for such an illusion since the first levitations did not occur on stage until the 1890s with the experiments of John Nevil Maskelyne at the Egyptian Hall in London.[33] This was not a case then of spectators conflating different performances in recollecting the events that took place at the séance, but rather an instance of the imagined performance becoming regarded as the authentic. Even if only a single individual believed that he saw the Davenports floating at the séance, through his retelling of the events that transpired, the levitation becomes interwoven into the mythology of the performers' abilities. As Barthes explains, "*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (*Mythologies* 121; original emphasis). In the creation of the supernatural myth of the Davenports, the distortion that is taking place is not based on the visible, but simply on the imagined, and just as Barthes asserts that "the function of myth is to empty reality"

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[33] While Robert-Houdin first performed his "Ethereal Suspension," where his son appeared to be inexplicably balanced horizontally on the edge of a vertical cane after inhaling the magical properties of ether, in 1849, full levitations such as described here, did not begin to appear until Makelyne's shows *Modern Witchery* in 1894 and *Trapped by Magic* in 1897. The levitation became further refined into its most recognizable form today in *The Entranced Fakir*, which premiered on 6 April 1901.

(*Mythologies* 143), there is the subtextual suggestion that the more an experience is mythologized, the less authentically "real" it is. This leads to the question of reality itself, and if we extend from Barthes and accept that the world in which we live is based on a multitude of mythologies, and if myth empties reality, then is there, in actuality, any reality remaining outside that which is constructed by the individual? The spectator who constructs the image of the Davenports levitating in the parlour in his mind believes that to be the real, whereas those who did not have the same theatrical experience view it as an exaggerated myth and this ultimately leads to a fragmentation of the perception of reality on the individualized level when viewed against the collective.

While the performances did take place in the dark in order to create a hypersensitizing to the sounds being heard, the Davenports also relied on a tactile approach to their séances that was, in some cases, violent in nature. Spectators would be hit with the supposedly floating guitars and tambourines, and at one performance in Lowell, Massachusetts a spectator "received a blow over the forehead, with a trumpet, which cut a deep gash, from which the blood spirited freely" (Nichols 122). When the lights would be turned back on after an attack, the brothers would be seen, sitting innocently, and seemingly not involved in the mayhem that had occurred. This introduces an element of fear into the performances that further serves to heighten the engagement of the spectator with the imagined supernatural world, for if the spirits could be manifested physically, and could in turn inflict harm on those within the seemingly protected circle of the séance, there is a hyperemotionality that is being constructed, where the spectator becomes so consumed with fear, nervousness, and anxiety generated by the uncertainty of the situation that this, in turn, leads to him being more susceptible to

suggestion. It is a way for the supposed passive performer to still actively control the performance and to create a space where the spectators are then more prone to creating the mythology needed to bolster the reputation of the performer's abilities. Even the levitations that were reported as occurring at the séances (yet that were curiously not present once the performances moved to the stage in front of large audiences, where they theoretically could have been accomplished) became more violent in their descriptions, with it stated that William "was raised up with such force that his head broke through the ceiling of lath and plaster…the people who heard the crash thought the boy was killed" (Nichols 35). This establishes then not a split between performer/spectator, but rather one between performer *and* spectator/supernatural force, further reinforcing the belief that the tricks being experienced were not magic, but rather were attributable to unseen forces. In the eyes of the spectators, the performer is then supposedly not dictating the performance, but is rather part of the small collective; he is merely the passive liaison and still subject to the same violence as is the audience. It is also imbuing the spiritualistic performer, just as is found with the automatons and Robert-Houdin's performances, a sense of immortality, for if the spectator can suffer such a wound that he bleeds profusely, yet if the same spirits can then violently thrust the medium into the ceiling hard enough to fracture plaster, yet the medium is unscathed, the imagined strength of the medium's very life force is remarkably magnified so that he becomes not just incorruptible, but also seemingly immortal, thus further giving credence to the offered supernatural realities being presented.

As spectators were physically hit, and as the Davenports were allegedly able to break free from the hold of audience members and crash into the ceiling with enough

force to shatter plaster, there was a further imagined reality being attributed to the performances in the fact that some participants believed they saw the manifestation of monstrous disembodied arms actually present in the room and guiding the action. These claims serve to bolster the belief that supernatural forces were at work and that there are elements that cannot be explained by the natural scientific world, but what is important here is how the imagination begins to usurp logic as spectators begin to look outside that which is physically present in the room, and start accepting the subconscious constructs as a perceived reality. This becomes even further evidenced by the subtle sensuality of the performances, a topic that is avoided in the accounts of the time. For instance, in one performance it is stated that the spirits "exhibited hands, placing them upon our persons, and handling us freely" (Nichols 130). Taking into account that in many of the séances all of the participants were tied together and holding hands or arms in order to prove that trickery could not be taking place, and were generally sitting in complete darkness, there is an undercurrent of Victorian era repressed sensuality pervading the experience. Coupling this with the fact that the performers are two teenage boys, it becomes curious as to why the fondling, as well as the hitting that was previously examined, is not, of course, immediately attributed to the Davenports and is instead illogically believed to be the work of spirits. As was seen in my first chapter, where man wrestled with his role within the rapidly modernizing world, here man is felt to need to belong to something greater than the previous understanding of the human experience. It is a way for individuals to assert a sense of modernity on a personal level, for if they had the power to construct an imagined reality that did include a spiritual world, one that could manifest itself and interact with the living, then not only are they positing that there are still greater

frontiers still yet to explore, instilling a sense of hope about the future, but also that man has the intellect to do so through an openness to the possibilities of accepting its existence.

Not all though were so readily receptive to this supposed gift of the Davenports to be able to commune with the spirit world, and there were those who dismissed them as nothing more than charlatans trying to capitalize on a naïve public. The Davenports though quickly repositioned themselves as persecuted subjects, a trend that would continue throughout the rest of their performing career. In 1859, the Davenports were incarcerated in New York for performing a séance without a permit, though in a text written by Luke P. Rand, a lecturer who was travelling with the Davenports at the time, it is not the issue of the legalities of the performative space that is the focus, but instead, an element of religiosity is introduced that blurs the lines between Spiritualism and Christianity. Rand parallels the persecution of the Davenports to that of Christ, claiming that, "He had taught doctrines too, not in keeping with established opinions—doctrines subversive of the errors, corruptions and institutions of the times…He had introduced an entirely new system of Spiritual Philosophy and adjudication, and forever abrogated the Mosaic code. He was an innovator. He had consummate skill in deceiving the people" (19). The Davenports are aligned now as prophets of a new spiritual philosophy, not as performers, and whereas Christ's skills in deceiving the people are centered on miracles, so too is it being suggested that what the Davenports are doing is not magic tricks, but the work of divine influence. There is a substantial shift here in the function of the spiritual world, no longer are the sprits simply beloved relatives who had passed away, or, as seen in the Davenports' earlier performances, monstrous arms that could lift a person nine feet

off of the ground or draw blood, but now the spirits guiding the Davenports, are angels. Rand utilizes his publication to convey, through sworn testimony, how angels spoke to the Davenports, and also intervened to allow Rand to escape from the jail cell he was sharing with the brothers after their arrest.[34] This adds a new dimension to the performative identities of the Davenport brothers, that of victims being persecuted for their religious beliefs, and as their audiences begin to grow, and the performance venues begin to shift to larger stages, the Davenports will be ostracized as a public becomes galvanized to question that which they are being asked to believe as real.

This is illustrative of the key moment when a collective reality begins to be fragmented, as audiences are presented with something they cannot logically explain in their minds and then try to immediately ascribe another framing mechanism to the scenario that will allow for an equilibrium in their reality to be achieved once again. For some, as with Rand, there is the acculturated reliance on a personal mythological belief system, such as Christianity, where the Davenports' tricks must be explained through the intervention of angels. This helps not only assuage the shock of the fracturing of reality, by reconstituting reality through that of the already familiar, but also it allows for a burgeoning new collective to be formed based around this fragmented shard of reality. Rand can proselytize through the need to publish his book in order to reach out and connect himself with others who believe that the Davenports are conduits for a purely Christian message in order to quickly align himself with something he has already accepted on a subconscious level; his brain does not need to try to come up with a new

[34] Rand, indeed, did leave the jail cell the night before they were to be released, claiming that the angels had opened the doors. The Davenport brothers did not leave though, and instead served out the full thirty-day sentence.

explanation to the events he has supposedly witness. Examining Noë's work on virtual perception, especially in regard to those of dream states, there is a fundamental difference here with the standard neuroscientific approach of "filling in" missing information, whereas our subconscious minds actively work to construct links to connect two disjointed visual stimuli, that becomes evident with Rand's assertion of the work of angels taking place in the Davenports' performances. Noë states that, "in normal perception, there is no need to store detail, since the world is available to serve as a repository of information about itself," and that, "actual perceptual consciousness is anchored by the fact that we interact with, refer to, and have access to the environment. The stability of the environment is what gives our experiences their familiar stability. The stability of normal experience is explained by the involvement of the world in our experience" (214). Once this stability of experience is disrupted, we are unable to fill in the missing information, but instead rely on stored references to experiential stabilities to help constitute a newly balanced form of reality. Oftentimes, these stored references are in the form of the memories of the negative-space performances and not necessarily on the performance that took place in the three-dimensional space. At times then it becomes preferable to remember the constructed imagination as opposed to the experience itself, allowing for reality to remain constantly fluid and adaptable. We then become our own director to the reality that we are constantly creating.

Moving from the Parlour and Into the Cabinet

For others though, the shock to their perceived forms of reality creates an enigmatic puzzle that must be solved, as they do not rely on ingrained forms of experiential models of stability to reconstruct their seemingly fractured realities.

Spectators began to smuggle lanterns into the Davenports' dark séances in order to expose the "spirits" at work, and this led to the creation of the next incarnation of the Davenports' performances to be developed, and the one that would become their most famous, that of the "spirit cabinet." The Davenports built a wooden cabinet, six to eight feet wide, by eight to ten feet high, by two to three feet deep, where they could be bound and locked inside in order to be in darkness for the spirits to manifest while still allowing the audience to be in the light. This permitted the Davenports to control the situation to an even greater degree and also allowed for them to play larger houses, as now more people could be able to see and experience the spiritual manifestations. A typical performance would involve the Davenports being bound with around 150' of rope they carried with them by a committee from the audience. Other spectators would also add to the binding with rope, cord, or wire that they brought to the theatre themselves. After the cabinet was thoroughly examined, the Davenports were then put inside on small seats at either end, which they were tied to. Musical instruments were hung between the brothers and the three doors of the cabinet were then closed, creating the space of darkness for the spirits to manifest while also precluding any exposure by curious spectators with smuggled lanterns. As soon as the doors were shut, they were heard to instantly bolt from the inside. Then audiences waited in anticipation as the gas lamps to the theatre were dimmed, creating an atmosphere strongly rooted in the uncanny.

The center door to the cabinet had a small aperture that allowed for spirit hands from inside to be thrust out, holding and ringing bells, or touching the spectators. This occurrence was described as, "In the shadowy darkness a long white spectral human arm is seen slowly moving through the aperture. The audience is hushed. A sensation is

created. There is something supernatural in the appearance of this ghostly-white arm" (Nichols 198). While the audience is fixating on the spirit arm, and being mesmerized by its languid movement, and as a spectator on stage is encouraged by the emcee of the performance to approach the cabinet and touch the arm to make sure it is real, "a sturdy red hand at the end of it seizes his own hand and drags the unfortunate man's arm clear into the aperture with a grip that made him wince with pain" (Nichols 198). This performance structure introduces the spectators to a slightly augmented familiar setting situated at the edge of the liminal space of reality, a space where the supernatural does exist, and after they are lulled into a false sense of security, the spectators are startled by the sudden possibility of violence by the spirit world as the events are then accelerated at a rapidly increasing pace. What the Davenports were presenting in their stage shows was a mode that many in their audiences would have been familiar with from previous encounters with accounts of what happens at a large stage séance, and this further extends the subliminal implanting of the spiritualistic experience for the spectators. By framing the performance within a now recognizable genre that so closely parallels the Gothic horror literature that was popular at the time as well, audience members would now also bring to the performances the possibilities of the fictionalized occurrences found in stories by Poe or the Brontë sisters. This cross-pollination of genres, manipulating an audience to bring their embedded experiences of the Gothic novel to a stage performance structured as being an exhibition rather than mere entertainment suggests that, "instead of reproducing or representing reality, art tends to be structured in order to produce certain effects. Meanings are not recovered, they are produced. Much contemporary art and literature is very consciously geared toward a manipulation of the reader's expectations

and plays with our desire for comprehension" (Edson 76). So just as Rand immediately went to a model of Christianity to frame his experience with the spirit world as presented by the Davenports, audiences' expectations were being manipulated to ascribe events experienced in previously read Gothic fiction to that which was supposedly taking place on the stage, but in actuality, was taking place in the minds of the viewers. This allowed for multiple forms of comprehension to take place, and different spectators described the hands coming from the cabinet as belonging to those of ghosts, goblins, men, and even women, as was related in one account where a spectator claimed that "a feminine hand and two-thirds of a bare arm was reached through the hole in the middle door, and the whole interior was exposed in a moment, with the same result as before" (Nichols 291). Audiences were quick to attribute what could surely not be clearly seen from most seats in a dimly lit theatre house based on subconscious models they already possessed. The spectators were fully engaged individually with their own negative-space performances and in the process, were creating multiple forms of reality not in alignment or reflective of the perceived actuality of the physical space.

I propose though that this lack of committal on behalf of the Davenport brothers is what eventually led to their downfall. With other mediums, who outwardly claimed from the onset that what they were doing was communing with spirits, spectators could actively choose if they were going to buy into the premise intellectually, or simply refute it and ignore it as nothing more than a childish ruse from the onset. Since the Davenports though were relying on the audiences to construct the majority of the performances internally, and were consciously avoiding making any direct claims themselves as to the nature of their performances, this created a confrontational atmosphere for some, who

then set out to debunk the brothers. Magicians such as John Henry Anderson from Scotland, who billed himself as, "The Great Wizard of the North," and John Nevil Maskelyne from London, incorporated an exposure of the methods of the Davenport brothers into their acts.[35] While the entire notion of secrets is of paramount importance to magicians, not simply in regard to protecting methodology behind tricks, but more significantly to help create the magician's performative identity as being someone who possesses specialized knowledge, an insider privy to facts the general population on the outside do not know, it would break the magician's code to present the secrets behind another performer's tricks to a lay audience. By Anderson and Maskelyne choosing to do this with the Davenports though, it is indicative that they did not view the brothers as magicians, but rather as imposters interloping in the world of the illusionists. The bizarre dynamic that is created here though is that of the magicians, whose livelihood is built around deceiving an audience, becoming the champions to protect the public from the deception of the Spiritualist performers. Had the Davenports presented themselves as magicians, or even as adept escape artists as they in actuality were, there would not have been this backlash from other magicians. Rather, their methods would have been closely studied, stolen, and then subsequently incorporated into other magicians' acts, as was the trend throughout the Golden Age of Magic. By not making a claim though, and merely presenting themselves as being receptive of unseen forces, the Davenports tremendously weakened any form of performative authenticity that could be ascribed to them, and even

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[35] Just as Houdini would do decades later, Anderson dedicated the latter portion of his career to exposing Spiritualism acts such as the Davenport brothers. He published the book *Spirit Rapping Exposed* that illustrated the secrets being employed by Spiritualists in an effort to educate the general public. Maskelyne actually began his career by exposing the Davenport brothers in a show in Cheltenham, England in June 1865.

P.T. Barnum, a showman who built his reputation on creating tongue-in-cheek forms of questionable authenticity for the public, denounced the brothers as nothing more than "humbugs" who were trying to deceive the public by featuring them prominently in his 1866 book, *The Humbugs of the World*.

What is interesting here though is how the supposed closely guarded secrets of the Davenports functioned. With magicians such as Anderson and Maskelyne selling tickets to shows built around exposure, and with books being published revealing their methodology, it would be imagined that there would be a response by the Davenport brothers, who would thus alter their show in an attempt to stay one step ahead of their challengers, and to keep the routine fresh for the public. This was not the case however, and the Davenports continued to present precisely the same exact shows. The audience would bind them. They would be put into the spirit cabinet. The doors would lock from the inside. A hand would appear through the aperture in the door. Musical instruments would be played inside the cabinet. The doors would be opened and the brothers would be seen to still be bound and sitting in their original spots. A spectator would be invited into the cabinet. The spirits would manifest themselves again. This would occur night after night, performance after performance. Their presentation and their methodology did not change. Almost a half a century later, Houdini met with an elderly Ira Davenport on 5 July 1911, and, in his usual self-aggrandizing manner, Houdini conveyed how Ira bestowed on him the secrets to the rope tie that he and William had utilized in their spirit cabinet routine, stating, "I firmly believe he made a confidant of me and initiated me into the secrets which up to the present day have been and are unknown to the world" (*Magician Among the Spirits* 199). Houdini framed this event as being a fellow insider, a

worthy heir apparent in a club of escape artists that in Houdini's mind included only himself and the Davenports. The fact is though that the "secret" to the escape had already been exposed, in print, for the general public by a non-magician. In *The Humbugs of the World*, where Barnum exposes varying scams that are used to dupe the public, ranging from financial con games to medical quackery, he devotes a section to the Davenports, and simply observes that, "it is a common thing for these imposters to give the rope between their hands a twist while those limbs are being bound; and that movement, if dexterously made, while the attention of the committee is momentarily diverted, is not likely to be detected. Reversing that movement will let the hand out" (78). Thus, woven within myriad other tales of humbugs, is the entirety of the secret to the Davenports' séance and spirit cabinet performances. With something that has such a logical methodology, and one that is even easily deciphered from a supposed outsider to the magical community such as Barnum, the distinctive fracturing of reality occurring for some audience members who begin looking to supernatural religious explanations becomes even more readily apparent. For those individuals, it was more important that they *wanted* to believe in what they were seeing as opposed to actually believing that what they were witnessing was real.

For others though, there was a polarized response, and some audiences began to become impatient with the unframed claims being implied by the Davenports' performances. When the Davenports appeared in Liverpool, England for a two night run on 14-15 February 1865, both shows ended in a profound confrontation between performer and spectator that completely eliminated the fourth wall of the theatrical space. On the first night, the Davenports protested that they were being tied too brutally by the

committee from the audience, and one of the brothers was untied before they continued with their performance. This incensed the spectators, and on the second night, the same committee members once again tried to tie Ira in a similar manner. Ira complained again about the knots that were being utilized, and, "Ira called to Ferguson [their agent] to cut the knot! Ferguson did so, and cut Ira's hand. Ira now showed the blood to the audience, and the Brothers, with an immense pretense of indignation, went off the stage" (Barnum 136). The audience, not buying into the fact that it mattered how the brothers, who were supposedly simply conduits for the spirit world to work through, and who were allegedly doing so without trickery, were tied, rushed the stage and tore apart the Davenports' cabinet. These pieces became commodified, and as Ira later related in a letter to Houdini, "All England seemed to have gone mad on the subject of cabinet smashing and speculative sharpers reaped a rich harvest selling bogus pieces of smashed Davenport cabinet" (qtd. in Houdini *Magician Among the Spirits* 204). Now though, the fetish object of the piece of a Davenport brothers' cabinet becomes an inverted form of religious relic as another trajectory of the fragmented reality begins to take shape. For those who construct the reality of Spiritualism as religion, something that is imbued with the power of the performer serves as a connecting object to a shared belief. When I lectured on the Davenports at the Symposium on Magic History in Washington DC on 27 April 2013, and demonstrated an actual spirit bell the Davenports used in their performances,[36] audience members approached me afterwards asking me if they could lay hands on and touch the bell. They wanted the perceived connection to the performers, and indirectly likewise to the possible alternative realities purported to exist within

[36] The bell was provided courtesy of Ken Klosterman, from his collection.

Spiritualistic performances. For those who bought and sold smashed fragments of the Davenports' cabinet, a similar connection is being made, but this time to the refutation of Spiritualism. Both objects then become totemic to the opposing fragmentations of reality.

Fetish objects are common within the magical performance; one need only think of the magic wand as represented throughout literature and which oftentimes gives the magician his power.[37] Even aside from the wand though, the props that the magician utilizes in a performance are similarly elevated to a privileged status, believed, on one end of the spectrum, to possess magical properties, and on the other, coveted because they contain the mechanical, technological, or optical secrets of the magic trick, thus giving even the non-magician access to an exclusive body of knowledge, and in the process, transferring him to a closer status of being considered an insider in the relatively closed community of magicians. These fetish objects are religiously collected, and major auction houses including Swann, Potter & Potter, and Butterfield & Butterfield have held auctions specifically targeting magic apparatus, books, and posters, with prices for single objects extending well into the six-figure range.[38] The pieces that people collect possess an aura, to borrow Benjamin's terminology, and effectively close the distance between elevated magical performer and spectator once the ownership of the props changes hands.

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[37] One of the earliest appearances of a magic wand in literature is found in Homer's *Odyssey*.

[38] The illusionist, David Copperfield, purchased Houdini's "Water Torture Cell" at auction in 2004 for $300,000. Copperfield maintains the largest collection of magic related items in his private museum in Las Vegas, Nevada and he actively accumulates magic pieces that come up for auction. At the Washington Symposium on Magic History referenced in the last paragraph, he easily outbid everyone in the room, through proxy, to pay $10,000 for a Houdini performance contract written in Russian. While other collectors bemoan his ability to inflate auction prices due to his vast wealth, he is effectively preserving a rich magical performative heritage and his collection even includes multiple copies of the first known book of magic, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* from 1584. His museum is not open to the public, and even magicians must be personally invited by Copperfield to visit. This creates an even more selective group of insiders in a community already predicated on the multiple layers of access and belonging.

This establishes a space where, "Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function" (Benjamin 223-224). On a superficial level, the prop used in the ritual of magical performance is the work of art that ties the holder of the object to the perceived magic that took place, becoming the totemic proof of the existence of that magic. On a much deeper level though, that object also ties the individual to the religiosity of their newly constructed reality, allowing him to become part of a collective through his worship of the fetishized object.

While I have focused my attention on the negative-space performance that is taking place within the spectators' minds, and is thus creating fault lines in perception that lead to the fragmenting of reality, it would be remiss to exclude an analysis of the actual show as it is presented on the stage. Even though the Davenports' séances were completely theatrical events, once they moved to the stage, it becomes easy to see how they fit the mold of an expected, standardized Western theatrical experience. The shows are now presented in a theatre, with a proscenium and footlights creating a barrier between seated audience and performer. The lighting is controlled; the staging is specifically designed to invoke a certain mood for the audience. So while the elements were present for theatre, what was missing, and what would be greatly experimented with in the magic performances at Maskelyne's Egyptian Hall in London, was a story. The Davenports' silence, through the lack of asserting claims about the nature of their abilities, did not allow for a story to be constructed, and diminished the power of the

theatricality of their performances, paralleling them with technological demonstrations that were popular during the Victorian era discussed in the previous chapter. Audience members could not invest in the "characters" of Ira and William, and this, from a purely theatrical standpoint, led to a rather dull theatergoing experience. Newspaper reviews at the time concluded that nothing truly happened in the performances, with statements such as was found in the *London Standard* on 1 October 1864: "But what, after all, is the social use of these enchanters? They do nothing for us. They cannot trace a pickpocket, or find a lost watch, or reclaim a missing relative" (qtd. in Nichols 275-276). Similarly, the *Morning Star* commented that the Davenports' performance "appeared to us tedious, dull, and vulgar. If the exhibition were an avowed display of conjuring cleverness it would be but a poor and vapid entertainment. Only those who believe it to be performed by some supernatural or extra-natural power can feel any genuine interest in it" (qtd. in Nichols 282). Removing then any of the purported supernaturalistic elements of the performance, the reality of the theatrical situation was that audiences sat in a dim theatre and watched a large piece of furniture, listening for the sounds of instruments coming from the inside after two boys, whom they really knew nothing about, were put inside. There was no sense of drama, no character arcs for the performers to explore in order to engage an audience outside of a purely subconsciously imagined level of theatre.

The Performativity of Early Photography and the Cult of Celebrity

While the Davenports did not make any formal spoken claims as to their belief in Spiritualism, and while descriptions of their performances either focused on wild embellishments of their accomplishments, or on the mundaneness of their show itself, if we examine the sparse photographic record, specifically an 1866 albumen portrait of the

brothers by the noted French photographer André Adolphe Disdéri, I argue that the Davenports are positioning themselves not as magicians, but are creating a distinctive performative identity as elevated mediums, evolved to a much more sophisticated degree than their predecessors, with supernatural powers allowing them the ability to communicate with the spirit world in any situation and in any location. They are no longer confined to the parlour, or the stage, or to darkness. They exist in an offered reality where they are always mediums. The uniquely large portrait[39] shows the brothers sitting in their ornate cabinet, untied and posing for the camera with the ropes that generally bind them hanging from the chairs they sit on (Image 5). The three doors of the cabinet are open, and in the center between them is a guitar, a violin, and a small table with two large hand bells on it. The cabinet itself is perched atop three stands in order to demonstrate that nothing can enter from underneath (Disdéri *Davenport Brothers*). What is of interest though is the fact that the entire scene is staged outside, in the daylight on the street in front of Disdéri's studio at 8 Boulevard des Italiens in Paris.[40] While this was likely due in part to the inability to get the large cabinet up to the fifth floor of Disdéri's studio, it was also indicative of the technological limitations of photography, since photographs required the need for an exceptional amount of light in order to capture a large image with such a high level of detail. The photograph though is a performance; it is staged with characters on a set with props. Even though some would argue that, outside of the chronophotographs discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, a

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[39] The surviving print measures 30x24cm, which is unusual since Disdéri was famous for his CDV (carte-de-visites) photographs that generally measured 6x9cm.

[40] Disdéri's atelier was on the fifth floor of the Théâtre de Robert-Houdin, the same theatre Georges Méliès would later purchase and run.

photograph is static, I would disagree, for I believe that the same process of filling in that the spectator did in his mind in the early dark séances by the brothers is similarly at work here. The spectator sees the image and immediately imagines what events preceded the captured moment, and likewise, what events directly followed. The photograph becomes not a briefly frozen moment (unless specifically staged as so as in the case of the "Maskelyne and Zoe" photograph), but a subconsciously constructed moving performance. With the Disdéri photograph of the Davenports though, there is a disconnect that will then take place with the viewer that creates a disruption of his understanding of the scene. Since the photograph is staged in daylight, and since Spiritualism performances are structured around the need to communicate with the spirit world in the dark, the viewer begins to make the seemingly logical psychological leap as she engages with the negative-space performance that the Davenports possess powers beyond this, that they are not bound by the interior of the theatrical space where trickery is more likely to occur, and where it is easier to deceive an audience. The subliminal suggestion then is that the Davenports can demonstrate their abilities in any situation, thus establishing them as outsiders to the scores of other individuals claiming to possess mediumistic powers.

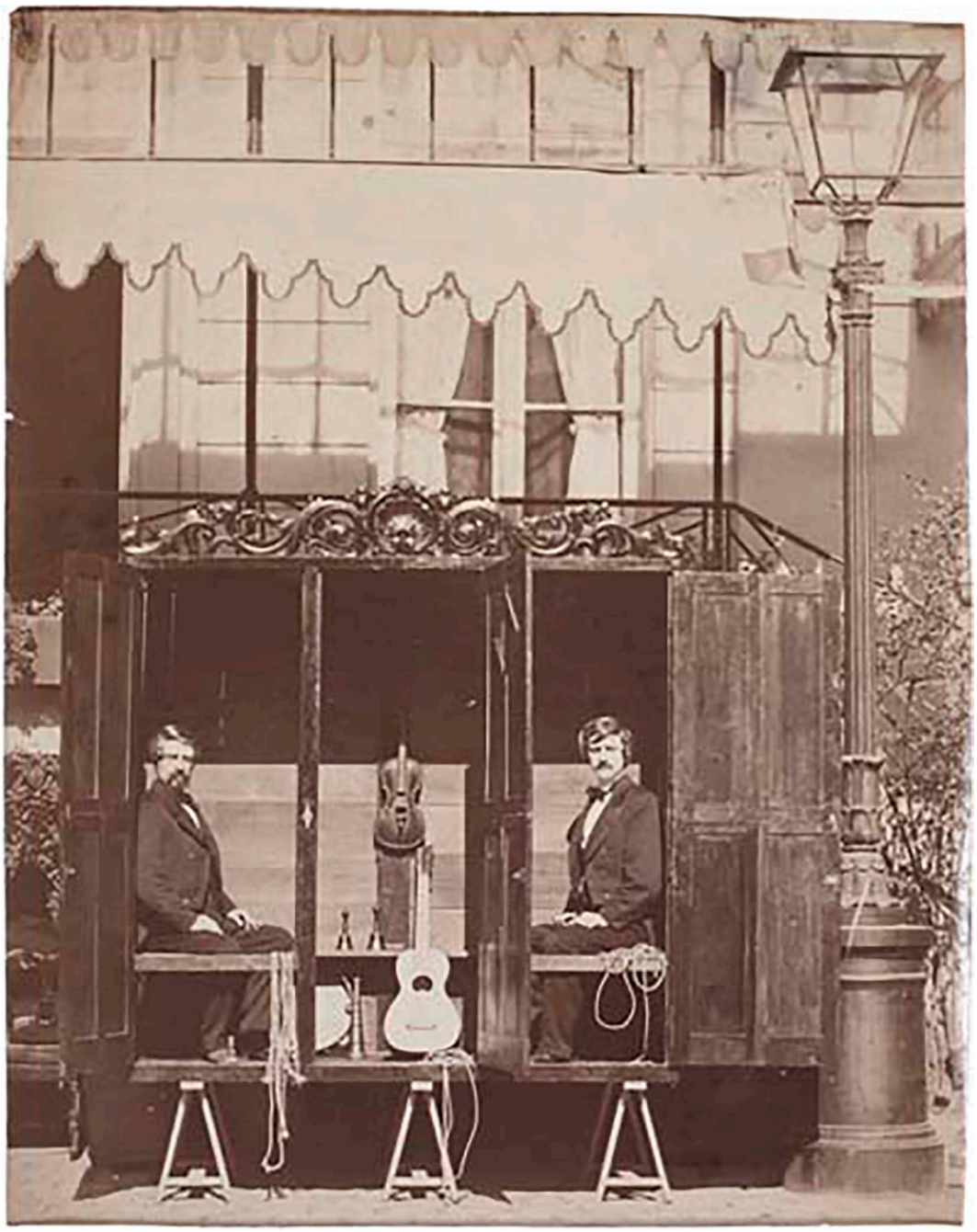

Image 5: The Davenport brothers in Paris. Photograph taken in 1866 by Disdéri. Photograph courtesy of John Gaughan.

This is even further reinforced by the large street gas lamp that dominates the entire right side of the photograph, creating an intense verticality to the composition that suggests a theatrical space where the two brothers are in the spotlight. In this carefully

arranged photograph then, the Davenports are not just simply entertainers posing with props, but rather they are constructing unique performative identities, and in the process, creating a cult of celebrity around those personas. As Joseph Roach develops Elinor Glyn's notion of "It," the elusive quality of celebrity, he posits that, "Theatrical performance and the social performances that resemble it consist of struggle, the simultaneous experience of mutually exclusive possibilities—truth and illusion, presence and absence, face and mask" (9). With the staging of this photograph there is, on the superficial level, the overt and obvious melding of the theatrical and the social, for it would be impossible to not imagine a crowd gathered to witness Disdéri taking the photo of the well-known performers, turning the very act of creating the image into a form of street theatre. Disdéri watches the Davenports; spectators on the street watch Disdéri watching the Davenports; the Davenports watch Disdéri, the assembled crowd, and in extension, us. The layering of meaning in the photograph though further reinforces the celebrity status of the brothers. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the very act of posing in their spirit cabinet, completely open and on display for the public, establishes a form of truth as a direct counter to those who think that what the Davenports are doing is simply illusion. There is a distinctive performative presence in the photograph as well; the brothers do not appear outside of the cabinet and posing next to it, or even tied up as if in mid-performance, but rather somehow weigh down either end of the large apparatus that is made seemingly light by its openness, their bodies anchoring it in the frame, as they each stare directly into the camera and at the plethora of spectators who will engage with the photograph throughout time. This heaviness in the bottom of the frame leaves the top third of the photograph relatively empty, but Disdéri does not crop the image in

order to make the open cabinet a surrogate theatrical proscenium arch, but instead allows for numerous windows to fill the remainder of the frame, creating another layered metaphor for viewing that further alludes to the notion of numerous eyes focused on the new celebrities, the idolized performers who actively draw the gaze of the myriad layers of spectatorship.

If the photograph is in itself an active performance, and not a simple moment frozen in time, devoid of dimensionality and temporality, then it must be subject to the same level of analysis as that which transpires on the stage, for by relegating it to merely representative obscures its potential affect and power. As the Spiritualism movement began to gain momentum, and as more individuals began to believe that spirits were actively walking among us, there arose the desire to actually see the spirits as opposed to just hear there manifestations as was normally the only offered proof in séances. This led to the rise of spirit photography, where an individual would sit for a photograph in a studio, and when the print was developed, there would be revealed the spirit(s) present in the room, but invisible to the naked eye.[41] Here, the camera becomes imbued with special powers, and the entire process of constructing the photograph is staged as a counter-performance to the dark séances of the Davenport brothers. The photographer becomes magician, and just as was seen with the utilization of automatons and ghost images on the stage previously, he is manipulating technology to facilitate the construction of a new form of reality through trickery (Image 6). Even though the sittings were done in the light, the spirit world was manifested in a darkroom that now

[41] One of the most well-known, and prolific, spirit photographers was William H. Mumler (1832-1884) who most famously photographed the former First Lady, Mary Todd Lincoln, surrounded by the supposed ghosts of her husband Abraham and son Thaddeus c.1872.

stands in for the spirit cabinet, and is accomplished through processes that were not understood by a lay audience, thus making it suggestive of another realm of reality that exists, but that can only be accessed by a privileged few. An augmented form of the negative-space performance begins to occur, creating a definitive split between the two-dimensional reality of the photograph and the supposed three-dimensional reality existing elsewhere.

Image 6: Mary Todd Lincoln spirit photo by William H. Mumler, c.1872.

Although the spirit images were accomplished through the relatively simple technique of double exposing the film to achieve a composite image, what was important was that the images could also be subsequently reproduced, ad infinitum. This allowed them to reach a much greater audience without the constraint of the geography or

temporality of a live performance as spectators could now partake in the performance of Spiritualism from anywhere. While Deleuze and Guattari state that graphic arts such as photography operate outside of the rhizome, the space where there exists a connectivity of all points, since the rhizome "pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight" (21), I suggest that photographs must actually be considered in exactly the same way. Even though they are reproducible, it is wrong to think that there is an embedded meaning that is also reproduced along with that of the image. The experience of the photograph, how the viewer actively constructs it in her mind to build an entirety of performance, is not static, nor can it be homogenized. The photograph becomes a malleable map with no single entry point or exit; it is not that various people may simply view it differently, their eyes being drawn to different elements of its composition, but it is that they each profoundly experience the photograph in a completely unique manner apart from any other spectator. It, just like the séances and the spirit cabinet shows, relies on the spectator to actively produce and construct meaning in order to develop a negative-space performance, a point that will be developed in further detail in the following chapter.

With the spirit photograph, an individual could go into a studio and, just as is the case with the medium, pay someone who claims to have special powers to communicate with a loved one who has passed away. Now though, technology is an intimate part of the experience, for it is not simply the photographer himself who has the ability to transcend the barrier into the spirit world, but he must do so with the fetishized and magical object of the camera, and through the scientific manipulation of chemistry. The

patron poses for a photograph, an experience that was still new and not understood by the average person, but when the photographer then took the exposed plate into the darkness, he emerged with an image of the sitter as well as a transparent and ghostly image of another individual in the frame as well, thus proving the existence of the spiritualistic. There is a sharp interruption of the individual's own personal version of reality as the negative-space performance no longer correlates to an accepted form of belief. Unlike Pepper's ghosts on stage, here it is not readily apparent if the ghosts appear on the image as a result of technology (the camera), science (the chemicals that are used to develop the plate and whose smells permeate the space of the performance of the taking of the photography, of mediumistic powers (possessed by the photographer), or through the actuality of a spiritual world. One of the pioneers of the spirit photography movement, William Mumler stated in 1875:

> Suppose for a moment that some ignoramus should say to the photographer, 'I don't believe it is necessary for you to go into that dark closet to prepare your plate. I believe you are preparing some deceptive arrangement! Come out here in daylight, under the broad canopy of heaven, where you will be above suspicion, and perform your work! Then I will believe it!' The photographer would necessarily reply: 'That is an impossibility; the closet is the necessary condition for taking a picture.' Then if material things require conditions for their successful accomplishment, how much more delicate must necessarily be the conditions in order to obtain true spiritual manifestations. (qtd. in Kaplan 220)

Within this scenario, the entirety of the experience is predicated on the notion of belief; the spectator must believe in what the photographer is doing, not because of the scientific principles involved with capturing and fixing light into a state of permanence, but because of the implications this has on the religiosity of the individual. If an action then is not performed under "the canopy of heaven," it cannot exist in the mind of the

spectator. The tangible object, the photograph, isn't proof enough, but there needs to be an acceptance of what has transpired into a personalized belief system as well for it to thus be deemed as a "true spiritual manifestation." A strong binary is created where truth and trickery exist in diametrically opposing poles to one another without the understanding of the fact that both are, in fact, solely created within the negative-space performance.

What precisely though is being ghosted in the spirit photographs? On the superficial level, it is that which the participant spectator wants to see. It is a double exposure compositing their image with an image of their loved one. It is an amalgamation of time to create a new reality. What becomes interesting though is when the burden of proof is shifted outside of the negative-space performance and into the three-dimensional world. As spirit photography grew in popularity during the nineteenth century, the demand for it afforded the environment for numerous studios to open up, as Spiritualism became a viable business. In 1874 in Paris, the photographer Edouard Isidore Buguet opened his photographic studio and quickly began operating in the lucrative world of spirit photography. Whereas the photographs Mumler was making in the United States were simple double exposures, generally featuring the spirit behind the sitter and sometimes laying hands on the individual, Buguet presented a more highly theatrical and dramatized version of the spirit photograph with the transparent garments of the spirit being held in front of the sitter, giving a distinct dimensionality to the photographs that is missing in those of Mumler. Soon after beginning his business though, the French government arrested Buguet on counts of fraud after the discovery of numerous dummies and photographs of disembodied heads in his studio. Buguet though

"immediately admitted fraud, demonstrated how he manipulated the spirit photos, and not only retracted his claims to mediumship but promptly repositioned himself as an exposer of frauds. However, the artist's own admission of guilt did nothing to dissuade many of the veracity of his former ghosts" (Guiterrez 69). Just as happened when mediums such as the Davenport brothers were exposed as being nothing more than magicians willfully deceiving an audience, yet Spiritualists claimed that there were other unseen forces operating to keep a truth hidden from the general public about the existence of an alternate form of reality, so too did the spirit photographs function in the same manner. Once the participant spectator began to believe that what they were seeing was not the result of trickery, whether illusionistic or scientific, but that his mind had been opened to another reality previously believed to be false, his own reality has been irrevocably changed. He now exists in a completely new reality that can no longer work in harmony with any former beliefs, no matter how grounded in accepted facts they may be.

Ultimately, when spectators' realities are challenged by notions of the immortal, and when the subconscious mind begins to move away from logical explanations to magical events that are difficult to explain based off of previously held beliefs and knowledge, and thus begins to fill in information in a negative-space performance in order to reconstruct what was witnessed, there is a dramatic fracturing of perceived reality that occurs. These shards of reality continuously move outward away from the initial point of impact and create gaps of space between each competing reality, a liminality where one begins to question what they fundamentally believe. Eventually, as a form of equilibrium is actively sought in order to validate the individual's experience and understanding of his newly constituted reality, similar realities begin to coalesce,

until various smaller collectives are formed. These realities begin to generate their own belief systems and facts, and with the growing liminal space between the fragmented shards, there arises fewer opportunities for the ability to understand those individuals now occupying another formed reality. People become entrenched in these beliefs. They know that Spiritualism is a fact, despite any evidence that may be presented to them, because they have seen proof with their own eyes via a live performance or through a photographic representation, or because they have been relayed accounts of its existence from those they trust, those that occupy the same shard of reality that they do. In this scenario, individuals such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a man who held the degree of M.D. and who was known for creating and writing tales of the most logical of detectives, subscribes to the new reality and is unable to be swayed from it.[42] Likewise, others know without a doubt that Spiritualism is nothing more than bad parlour tricks designed to deceive a gullible public. As the competing realities continuously challenge one another, they are even further repelled, until eventually they become extreme. As will be seen in the next chapter, by following the trajectory of one of these extremes, spectators can begin to operate solely within the surrealistic and the hyperreal of the three-dimensional world without the understanding or realization that actual reality can only be found in the two-dimensional space.

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[42] Following the death of his son, Kingsley on 28 October 1918 during World War I, Doyle became actively involved in the Spiritualist movement. He was a member of the famed Ghost Club in London, wrote two volumes on the history of Spiritualism, and was a vocal believer in the "Cottingley Fairies" photographs. His fervent belief in Spiritualism eventually led to the dissolution of his friendship with Houdini.

Chapter Three

The Ability to Free Reality from the Confines of Temporality

The two-dimensional space of the photograph becomes of paramount importance because it is here where a performative truth ultimately exists as the photograph shows a manipulated temporality existing inseparably from the negative-space performance. The photograph is atemporal as it simultaneously both freezes and expands time while also making its subject immortal. Developed separately in France by Louis-Jacques Mandé Daguerre who created a process where an image could be captured on metal utilizing mercury vapor, which he called the daguerreotype, and Henry Fox Talbot in England who pioneered a photogenic drawing process where the image was made on paper coated with silver chloride, photography was first announced to the public in 1839. While this is now generally accepted as the date for the birth of photography, the fact is, the process had been evolving for decades by myriad inventors. Early photographers were equal parts chemists, inventors, scientists, artists, and performers who sought to capture light and transform it into a permanent and tangible form. The camera obscura[43] had existed for millennia, but what was produced was only an interpretation of the actual; it was simply a copy. There was no permanence with the camera obscura aside from the traced drawing and this drive to permanently fix an image that one sees was the underlying impetus for photography.

When looking then at one of the earliest surviving photographs, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, made by the French inventor, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce c.1827, there

[43] The camera obscura is a dark box that allows light to pass into in order to give a projected image of the natural world. An individual is then able to trace the image in order to create a representation of the scene he or she is trying to capture.

is no attempt to capture a moment of importance, to tell a story, to assert a form of artistic expression; it exists solely to capture a specific instance in time (Image 7). One sees only the view from his window, nothing else. Niépce's heliograph, as he called it, was created by coating a pewter plate with a solution he developed and "after an exposure of at least eight hours, the plate was washed with a mixture of oil of lavender and white petroleum, dissolving away the parts of the bitumen that had not been hardened by light. The result was…a one-of-a-kind photograph on pewter" ("First Photograph"). With an exposure time of over a third of a day, time becomes not simply compressed, but actually rendered benign in our theoretical understanding of it. What we may describe as a moment frozen in time instead is comprised of a great expanse of time, priming the viewer to immediately engage with the negative-space performance of the image. We see not the same view that Niépce did from his upstairs window in Saint-Loup-de-Varennes, but rather we see a scene that never even existed. In the attempt to capture the perceived actuality of the natural world, a new reality has instead been created. Due to the long exposure time, anything that showed movement outside of the window would not be captured since it would be operating within a separate temporality than Niépce's camera. Birds, clouds, and people would not appear as blurred images; they simply do not exist in the new reality being created as their movements are but a fraction of an instance compared to the exposure time[44]. Those objects therefore do not exist outside of the negative-space performance. A spectator looks at the photograph and can imagine what the scene may have looked like from Niépce's perspective; he could envision a world

[44] Even when examining the first known photograph candidly capturing people, *Boulevard du Temple*, taken in 1838 by Louis Daguerre, everything else in the frame that was in motion at the time has been rendered into obsolescence aside from a man getting his shoes shined and who, with the shoeshine man, remained still for the duration of the exposure, thus allowing their images to be captured.

filled with life, but this is all simply grafted onto the actual nature of the photo as tangible object that contains infinite realities. There is thus not a single viable reality in a photograph since there is no one negative-space performance found within the infinite interpretations of the scene. The photograph, in its new reality, i.e. a scene that did not exist in the three-dimensional world but that now does in the two-dimensional photograph, becomes able to continuously generate other perceived realities.

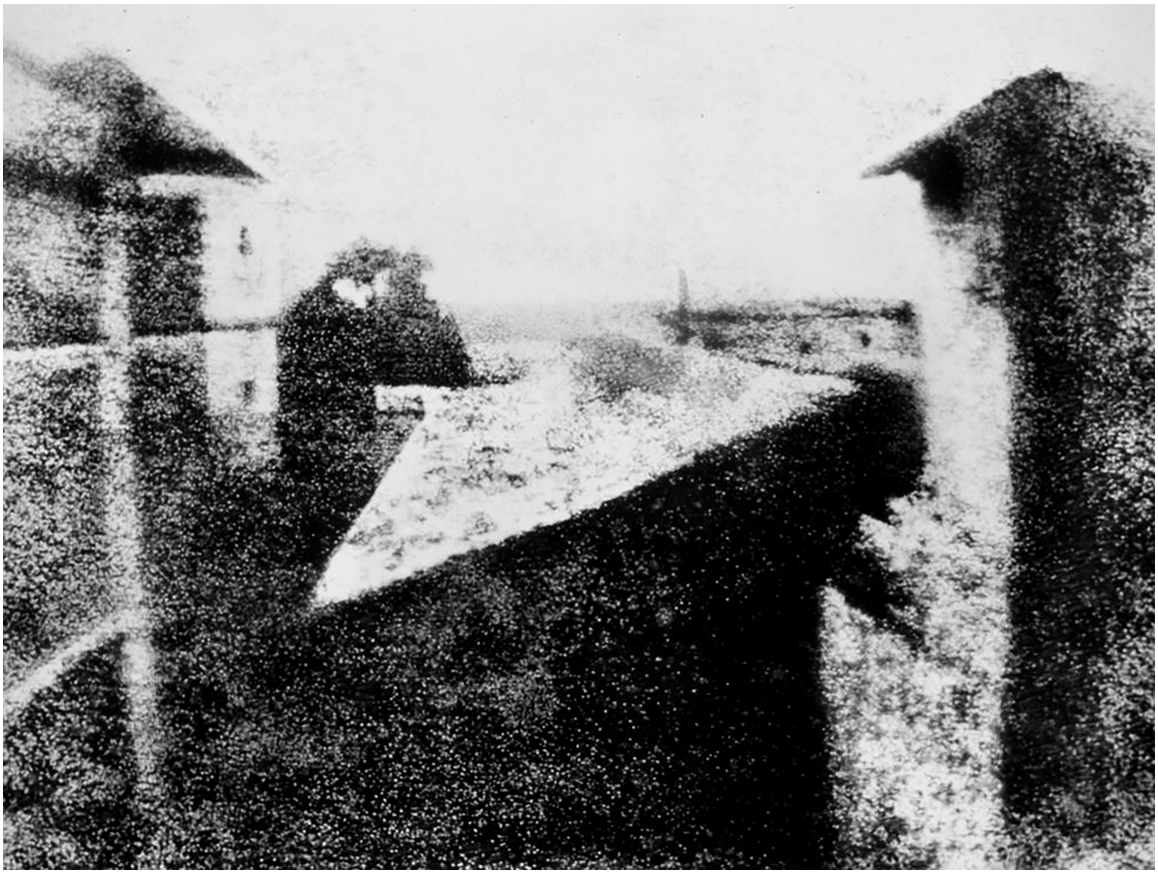

Image 7: View from the Window at Le Gras by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce c.1827

There is also the expanded temporality that exists outside of the exposure time itself, for the photograph as a tangible fetishized object also is imbued with the one hundred and eighty plus years of its existence. It is something that provides insight into not only an early photographic process and a specific historical moment when various

factors were coalescing in order to create a recognizable form of photography, but also into that which it is supposed to be representative of. The photography is a performance of a time, a culture, and a people. Aside from Niépce, there are also the various people who have owned and displayed the photograph over the ensuing decades that the photograph also becomes representative of. There are the different locales it has called home, beginning in eastern France and continuing through to where it now resides currently in the southern United States, that also influence its meaning. Terry Barrett splits a photograph into varying contexts including original, internal, and external delineations. He states, "Every photograph is intentionally, or accidently, situated within a context. Usually we see photographs in very controlled situations…The meaning of any photograph is highly dependent on the context in which it is presented: How and where a photograph is seen radically affects its meaning" (Barrett 79). This context then is constantly shifting. The context is consistently being created and there is no singular permutation of it that can be accepted as being genuine. Niépce's photograph has been transformed into the fetish object it is today not because of the meaning that is inherent within in it, but precisely because it is devoid of meaning. It simply is. Since the view that Niépce captured is a tangible two-dimensionally representational reality though, it affords the multiplicity of contexts to be associated with it, even though that view, in essence, never did exist in the naturalistic world.

Even in looking at the photograph in the state that it exists in today, barely discernible on its sheet of pewter and with the image only able to be seen when one looks at it at with the light reflecting off of its surface at a very specific angle, there is no clear indication of how the scene would have appeared to Niépce. The current image is

nothing more than an interplay between shadows and light, and even when modern computer technology has been utilized to give us a clearer idea of the image, we are once again reminded of the tracings of the camera obscura and the freedom of interpreting that which we see. The image is in a constant state of decay and it must be realized that if the two-dimensional is what I am considering to be the actualized form of reality, reality can therefore not be considered permanent in and of itself. Reality's permanence only comes from its reproducibility, but it must be understood that the reproduction of reality is not an act of preservation, but rather one of creating new interpretations of an imagined truth. With reproducibility comes the inherent augmentation of the original through choices made in the process of duplication; one can see a myriad of (re)presentations of Niépce's photograph disseminated today via countless mediums as its contrast is altered, its shadows are darkened, or any number of other changes are made to try and preserve it as an artifact of historical significance and not simply allow it to be presented as a rapidly decaying object. What though is being reproduced? If the photograph itself is actually existing in a separate temporality than the natural world it supposedly captured, and if it is in a constant state of degradation, its survival depends entirely on the confluence of the external, internal, and original contexts to establish it as a continuing viable form of reality that can thereby consistently spawn other realities. Daguerre stressed the "potential accessibility to a wide public and its automatic nature—two factors which were seen as inseparable from the imagined objectivity of the technique. 'Anyone,' he claimed, 'can take the most detailed views in a few minutes' by 'a chemical and physical process which gives *nature* the ability to reproduce herself" (qtd. in Tagg 41). The two-dimensional reality I am advocating thus does not become something that exists apart

from the individual. The accessibility of the ability to create the image quickly becomes available to everyone, not just those who possess specialized scientific knowledge. There is also the incessant march as well to make the process of creating reality even more automatic; creating today a hyperfractured reality that exists not in a unified form, but in rapidly increasing new realities not dependent on one another. As I will argue in Chapter Four, this has led to a multiverse where the world as we know it is simply a projection of a negative-space performance.

Throughout this work I have been purposefully conflating the roles of magician/scientist/Spiritualistic shaman/photographer and have been regarding the two-dimensional photograph as an active performance. I argue that there is no differentiation between these. All attempt, through the performative, to challenge the individual's perception of reality and what is considered supernatural. Take for example, Daguerre. Daguerre was an artist, specializing in artistic pursuits such as panorama painting and theatrical design as well as scientific interests such as mirror design, who, before he conducted his experiments and developed the daguerreotype process, created a diorama theatrical experience in Paris in July 1822. With the new form of theatre:

> Daguerre's aim was to produce naturalistic illusion for the public. Huge pictures, 70 x 45 feet in size, were painted on translucent material with a painting on each side. By elaborate lighting - the front picture could be seen by direct reflected light, while varied amounts and colours of light transmitted from the back revealed parts of the rear painting - the picture could 'imitate aspects of nature as presented to our sight with all the changes brought by time, wind, light, atmosphere'. By light manipulation on and through a flat surface the spectators could be convinced they were seeing a life-size three dimensional scene changing with time - in part a painter's 3-D cinema. (Wood 284)

Daguerre is in the business of illusion, creating a performative space in essence no different than those of Robert-Houdin or the Davenport brothers. Daguerre is attempting to show the public the illusionistic as reality, utilizing light and special effects to create a projected form of the naturalistic for around ten minutes. The question is though, why? Why would the public pay to experience such a thing when they could theoretically simply go outside and see it in actuality? Niépce experienced one of Daguerre's diorama shows and remarked, "These representations are so real, even in their smallest detail, that one believes that he actually sees rural and primeval nature, with all the illusion with which the charm of color and the magic of chiaroscuro can endow it. The illusion is even so great that one attempts to leave one's box in order to wander out into the open and climb to the summit of the mountain" (qtd. in Newhall 16). There is the suggestion then that the illusions being presented theatrically, whether as automaton, ghosts, spirits, or painted landscapes, demonstrate a mastery over the technology of the unnatural; in each instance the individual through an amalgamation of scientific and artistic pursuits, was able to create a situation where the technological was able to mimic the natural. What was happening though as well was that there was also the burgeoning realization that reality was not a prescribed constant, but one that could be created, manipulated, and performed for others.

With this understanding then, the seemingly innocuous photograph of the Davenport brothers on the Parisian street examined in the previous chapter is embedded with multiple meanings. It functions as both a form of portraiture, allowing viewers to now identify whom they have read about in newspapers, as well as to record a theatrical performance through a proto form of production photography. Even though there is

movement in the negative-space performance of the photograph, found within the unnaturally frozen position of the two performers is also the conscious stoppage of time and this actually serves to counter the work that was being done at the time by other artists to bring motion to the photographic image in an attempt to strip it of its misperceived confines of temporality. The French photographer, Etienne-Jules Marey, and the English photographer, Eadweard Muybridge, were experimenting with representing the object in motion. Marey utilized only one camera and plate to capture the motion in a single frame while Muybridge relied on multiple plates presented either in a sequenced strip or projected from a rotating disc to illustrate the progressive movement of the object. While Muybridge's work was punctuated by the space existing in between the successive frames, which still required the spectator to effectively fill in the missing information that would join the two frames, Marey's continuous "chronophotographs" tried to eliminate these breaks and create instead a fluidity of temporality that the viewer would not just witness, but experience. Doane argues that this absence of space in between frames in Marey's photographs, "points to a desire to represent all time—to a dream of representation without loss" (61). This desire is absent in the Maskelyne photo discussed in Chapter Two of the magician and the automaton and instead time is frozen in an effort to implant a suggestion into the minds of the spectators, that of the lifelikeness of the childlike automaton. It is a way for the magician to misdirect through stasis. If there was movement shown in the photograph, even posed movement that was supposedly captured, such as is found in other photographs of magicians beginning to emerge at the time, posing in mid-trick as the magic happens, the audience would be required to fill in the missing information through the negative-space performance and

recreate the magic in their minds. With the automaton however, the focus is not on misdirecting the gaze of the audience from the methodology of the trick, but now giving them something tangible they can refer to as they try to backtrack and reconstruct the trick in their own negative-space performances.

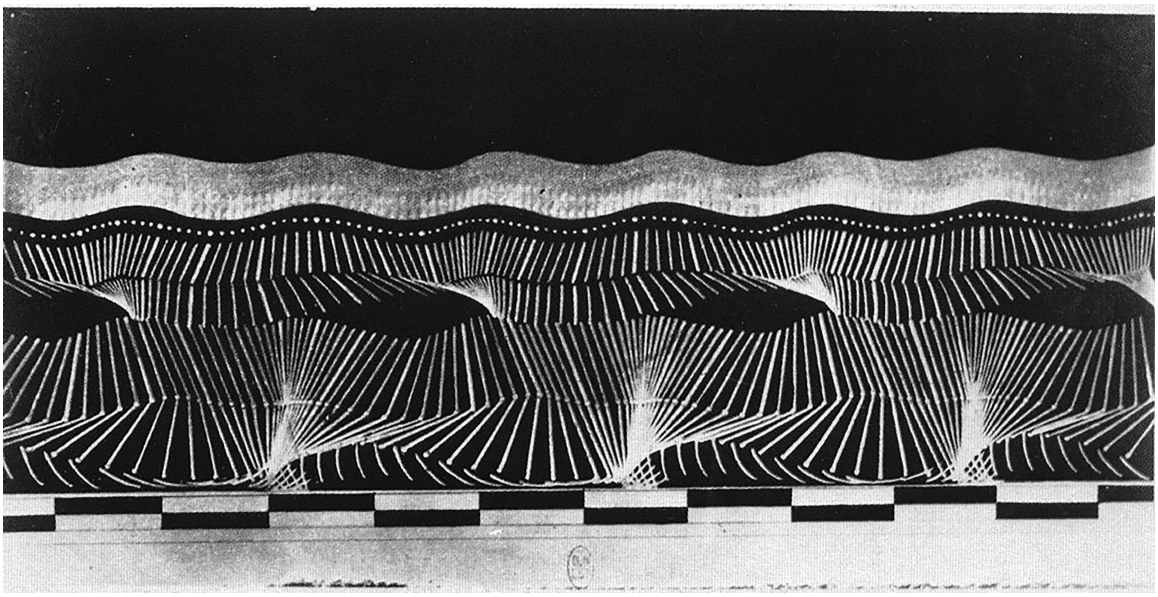

Image 8: Chronophotograph by Etienne-Jules Marey, 1883

This ability to not only freeze, but to also manipulate time, is used by the magician to create the space where the seemingly unreal can be created. It supposedly demonstrates to the spectator how the camera is able to capture a moment in time that does, in fact, exist even though it may do so just out of the realm of normal human perception. With Marey's chronophotographs though the uncertainty of the altered reality is eliminated, for by actually capturing and showing that which the human eye cannot see, this gives the spectator a form of photographic proof of the experience (Image 8). The subject itself becomes reproducible with every previously unperceived nuance of his movement through space now made easily discernible. Ellenbogen argues that,

"When Marey states that his devices are like new senses, he would seem to think of more than their autonomy vis-à-vis human perception. The very act of inserting something between observer and event informs this description, and so the questions of opacity and intervention help us understand what Marey means when he invokes new senses" (185). By asserting that there are other senses that can be unlocked by technology in order to reshape perception and by showing how the progression of movement in the two-dimensional space can allow the subject to exist in a multiplicity of states simultaneously, Marey is shifting the power of the ability to control and create reality from outside influences to the individual. The individual can now be freed from the limitations of only five senses and from confining and repressive forms of perception dictated by social, political, or religious ideologies and explore alternate forms of reality. Once the motion of the body can be reproduced and preserved through the photograph, the individual gains a performative power that does not exist within the transient nature of the live performance. Marey's chronophotographs of the body in motion still influence how we perceive the human body today, more than a century after they were first produced.

Marey's experiments eventually gave less importance to the individual identity of the subject existing in the three-dimensional world and instead transferred the power of significance to that of the two-dimensional. Erasing the actual identity of the subject in the chronophotographs, Marey "placed a metal button reflecting the bright sun on the coccyx of a man clothed all in black, and the camera captured the curves the metal button made as the now invisible man walked away from them…the disembodied, undulating lines seem like an exotic calligraphy" (Braun 100). Even when the invisible individual becomes only the graphical representation of movement though, comprised entirely of the

geometric shapes painted with the light reflected from the metal buttons placed on body across the canvas of the photograph, the negative-space performance becomes even further enhanced and the viewer engages with it on a much deeper level by now filling in the imagined identity of the performer of the motion. The viewer will look at the geometric chronophotographs and see not only the flow of the progression of movement, but also likewise picture his own movement through a similar trajectory while still simultaneously imagining the scenario that constituted the original experience with the apparent ridiculousness of someone clad all in black with reflective discs fixed to various body parts. Extending this argument a few decades into the future and examining Marcel Duchamp's 1912 painting *Nu descendant un escalier no. 2* that is often tied to Marey's (and Muybridge's) influence, the two-dimensional representation of movement does not serve to fracture the identity of the individual by relegating it to obscurity, but instead creates a hyperrealized form of identity, where the individual exists as both three-dimensional tangible body and as multiple simultaneous interpretations, symbols, beliefs, and constructs within the negative-space performance of the event being reproduced.

What this reproducibility of the experience, whether of the three-dimensional performance, or of two-dimensional reality, also does though is to suggest a presumed authority to what is represented in the photograph, and in a pre-Photoshop age, where the ability to manipulate photographs was not an inherent assumption, spectators, for the most part, accepted what they saw as truth. Early photographic trickery may have been innocuous, such as compositing naturalistic elements together to produce more dynamic backgrounds, or more problematic, such as when a subject was eliminated from a frame in order to create a more aesthetically pleasing photograph, thus bringing up the question

of the photographer's motivations in regard to the representation of presence.[45] As the technology of photography improved though, individuals began to seek out new ways to prove the existence of the supernatural, and photography made a distinctive shift from the purely representational, merely indicating a supposed view of what was there, to the authoritative. Even though Barthes views the photo as being "dead," because it suggests a state of "this has been," he extends his analysis of a photograph he is examining of a group of Polish soldiers to state that what he sees in a photograph "is not a memory, an imagination, a reconstitution, a piece of Maya, such as art lavishes upon us, but reality in a past state: at once the past and the real" (*Camera Lucida* 82). Without the referent framing of manipulated photos, spectators in the latter half of the nineteenth century viewed a photograph as being both the past and the real, and while they were free to create the negative-space performance in conjunction with the visual representation of the image, they were doing so from the understanding that what they were witnessing was reality. Later photographers such as Juliette Alexandre-Bisson and Dr. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, with their "photographic proof" of spiritualistic ectoplasm, and famous images such as the "Cottingley Fairies,"[46] played upon the viewing public's trust in photographs to ultimately construct suggestions of alternative forms of reality.

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[45] Mia Fineman's book, *Faking It: Manipulated Photography Before Photoshop*, which accompanied a 2013 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, is an invaluable resource to see how manipulated photographs were initially utilized by photographers, and subsequently understood by the viewing public. The earliest work that she analyzes is an 1846 photograph by Calvert Richard Jones of a group of four Capuchin friars in Malta. The corresponding negative reveals there to have been a fifth individual present though, who Jones removed by painting over with ink to match the over-exposed background, effectively eliminating the individual from that precise historical moment.

[46] The "Cottingley Fairies" are a series of five photographs taken between 1917-1920 by two young girls, Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, in Cottingley, West Yorkshire that purportedly showed the girls interacting with, and observing, fairies and a gnome.

This trust suggests a shift in perspective. If the images Daguerre was creating on stage with his dioramas were so realistic a spectator could seemingly leave the house of the theatre and get lost within them, yet still know that what he is witnessing was manmade, to the point of the metawareness of it that Niépce was showing in his recollection of the event, then the three-dimensional space of the theatre becomes false. Likewise, within this model, the photograph becomes truth. Looking at the photograph as a form of syntax, it is found that, "The advantage photographic syntax has over linguistic syntax is that it can change practically overnight. These advances in syntax have a remarkable effect on later generations. The syntactical advances compress the sense of historical time; they draw the past closer" (Crawford 13). Just as soon as a new syntax is developed then and becomes disseminated to the masses where it is processed, deciphered, understood, and accepted, it is quickly replaced by another syntax, driving the entire process forward at a rapidly progressing rate. For instance, the Cottingley Fairies are believed to be real (including, just as with Spiritualism, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) because the mysterious technological device is able to capture that which our own eyes cannot see and allow us access to a previously unknown reality. When it is then uncovered to be nothing more than a ruse, there is the knowledge reinforced that fairies are not real, yet the camera can still hold its magical power. One need think only of that which is still routinely purported to be able to be captured by the camera (ghosts, spirits, energy, auras, UFOs, Nessie, Bigfoot, etc.). While one syntax is disproved, there can still remain traces of it that help to define the following syntax that replaces it. It leads to a situation where one can still believe that the alternate realities of the magical fairy world still exist, that it is just the limitation of the current technology that prevents us from

experiencing it firsthand. The world remains magical despite the manipulated photographic "proof."

The Function of the Photographic Portrait

It is important though to move the argument from solely examining the photographs that are found at the extremes such as found with Buguet's spirit photos or Marey's disembodied geometric chronophotographs and also include that which predominated the early decades of photography, the portrait. Just as had been done for centuries with paintings, the portrait's main objective was to preserve and memorialize the individual, always through an artistic interpretation, and oftentimes through an idealized lens. When photography came into being though, the portrait became truth; the portrait was that which is. While, of course, the photograph could still be manipulated by the photographer and the precise formulary he used for his collodion to coat the glass or metal plates which he used to capture the image, or the myriad choices made in regard to composition, framing, lens choice, etc., the resulting image was a tangible product of a very specific moment in time. Actual rays of light reflected off of the subject in varying wavelengths, passed through the glass optics of the camera's lens, and were then captured on the plate. For the first time, the subject was able to exist in two places (the three-dimensional world of color and the two-dimensional world of black and white) and subsequently also then in two realities simultaneously. It cannot simply be viewed though as the camera recording an event, for, "Two identical photons striking two different surfaces can appear dramatically different to the eye and to the camera. The subject changes the light, and different subjects change the light in different ways. The subject plays an active role, just as the photon does" (Hunter, Biver, and Fuqua 24).

Within this model, the subject of the photograph is not assuming a passive role and allowing the photographer to have the sole agency in capturing their image. The subject is actively engaged, even if unknowingly so on a physics level, in creating and shaping the new reality that will be immortalized in the photograph. How the subject chooses to hold her expression, allowing the highlights and the shadows to fall in a very specific way based on the directionality of the light source, or what the subject focuses her thoughts on in order to affect certain microexpressions, directly contribute to the final realized product.

Just as there is an exceptional amount of light required to even register a viable image on the early emulsions being utilized, this meant that sitting times for portraits were an exceedingly tedious affair as the subject had to sit motionless for an extended duration to allow for the long exposure times needed. Even with bright sunlight streaming through the large windows necessary in a photography studio, the photosensitive plate needed enough quantities of that light passing through the lens in order to register the image. Since any small movement by the subject would render the image useless by introducing motion blur, it was imperative that the subject remained absolutely still for minutes at a time as the cap was taken off of the lens (shutters were to come later) and the exposure began. To capture the seemingly instantaneous required the forcible elongation of time. When coupled with the scientific investigations taking place at the time in regard to vision and the fascination with the image[47], it is argued that there

[47] In her book, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*, Mary Ann Doane draws from the work of Goethe, Joseph Plateau, David Brewster, Charles Wheatstone, and Herman von Helmholtz in her discussion of the afterimage. She states that these individuals "studied the phenomena associated with the posited retention of an image on the retina for varied durations after the removal of a stimulus (usually a bright light or color)" (69).

was “the assumption that the image *persists* in time, that is has a substantive duration, and hence that vision is not instantaneous” (Doane 69). The lack of instant accessibility to the image coupled with the assertion of its persistence suggests its inevitability. If we do not follow time in a linear pattern, but instead examine it from the perspective of entanglement, with the ability for multiple points of a timeline to be in continuous and constantly shifting contact with other points on the timeline, then the image always exists, but it is not until it is engaged with in the projected form of reality that will be argued in Chapter Four that a form of perceived control over the two-dimensional reality begins to be believed. If we take this belief to be true then in the hypothetical example of the sitter having her portrait taken in an early photography studio, there cannot be just a singular representation of the image then. Just as was seen with Marey’s experiments and the later interpretations of Duchamp’s simultaneity, the image exists in multiple states that, at minimum, include existing: on the photographic plate in the camera, as tangible object in the time it was taken, in the artistic and creative mind of the photographer, in the desire of projection of the sitter, as historical object that travels through time and is changed by damage or degradation to the actual photograph (or whose meaning is lost through disassociation), and as an image that is constantly being projected as the sitter moves throughout space and time and as light reflects off of her. All images persist, and any one of the images cannot exist without the others.

This becomes best evidenced in the practice of postmortem photos that became en vogue in the latter part of the nineteenth century as death became performance. While these images function as both objects of memorialization as well as objects to immortalize the individual, they also create a very distinctive juxtaposition between the

varying multiplicities of meaning. The truth of the reality of the image (the individual is deceased) is incongruent with the negative-space performance of the individual (I remember her as she was). The image disrupts our engagement with that which we consider real in the three-dimensional world, for it is argued that, "Looking at a photograph, we are given an illusion of social encounter with the individual presented. At the same time, the fact of the photograph acknowledges the distance between subject and viewer, especially when the picture has itself traveled considerably from its point of origin" (Kozloff 12). The photograph is not illusion then, even when it is manipulated, for it represents the truth of reality in its ability to exist atemporally. The illusion comes from our engagement with the image within the negative-space performance and from the attempt to ascribe reality to the three-dimensional world in the model of a progressive linearity of time. The photograph is never then tied to the individual; it is consistently distanced and from the moment of its creation possesses an infinite number of meanings, and therefore is able to also allow for the instantaneous creation of multiple realities. Its illusionary magic comes not from that which the spectator grafts onto it, but rather from how it subsequently augments and changes these multiple forms of reality for the spectator. The photograph is always active.

The fact is that portraiture is dependent on posing and this becomes formalized through repetition until it is eventually regarded as being accepted practice, i.e. there is a proper way to pose and a proper way to present the subject. This is found in the postmortem photos where either the deceased individual would be shown in repose with eyes closed, posed as if sitting for a portrait with eyes open and generally with a cherished object, or posed with family members with eyes again open. While the practice

can be viewed as traversing into the macabre today as the image is increasingly distanced from its point of origin, it simply becomes representative of how the malleability of reality outside of the two-dimensional space. Just as it is able to do with space and time, the photograph ultimately is able to move freely between the private (in the nineteenth century death normally took place in the home or in private spaces) as well as the public. In this, "Postmortem photography challenges binary notions of public and private 'spheres', because bringing together public, civil-institutional and what is usually deemed to be privy or secret around the practices of domestic figuration and its nexus activities in making the ineffable 'other' into something more familiar and knowable" (Stanley and Wise 957). Through the engagement with the postmortem photograph, the spectator becomes likewise able to transcend the imagined barriers of space-time and become projected into the reality of the photograph itself. The private and the public spheres have completely collapsed, and when the spectator looks at the performance of death and begins to ask the question, especially in photographs where the deceased are posed with their eyes open, "is that person living?," a unique conflation is created between the animate three-dimensional sphere and the inanimate reality of the two-dimensional image. The subjects of the photo do not become simply surrogate representational forms of the living; they are the living. This is something that is done even at the subconscious level without considering that the two-dimensional image is never animate; animation comes only through the subsequent performance and projection of the image.

In a sense, the post-mortem photographs are thereby inseparable from the image of Maskelyne and Zöe as the posed and manipulated human body of the deceased becomes simply another form of automaton; the human is machine. This makes the

underlying assertion that to become the machine is to become death, and a common belief about the increasingly encroaching melding of the technological with the natural is best described in an article written in 1889 where it is stated, "Mais l'ouvrier qui les emploie est a leur service, et serviteur d'une machine, il devient un peu machine lui-même. Il doit faire toujours la même chose, se répéter sans cesse, mettre son honneur à tirer cent mille copies parfaitement identiques d'un modèle qu'il n'a pas invente. Les machines sont des êtres impersonnels, qui condamnent à l'impersonnalité quiconque travaille par elles ou pour elles"[48] (Valbert 693). There is the fear that man is becoming machines, and as I have asserted previously, is nothing but the fuel for the machine to consume in order to continue its expansion into daily life. I argue that the camera and the photograph do not function in this way however, that the conflation of the automaton/corpse and the subsequent posing of each in the photograph functions as a way to exert control over the technology. When one views the portrait he sees only life as the entirety of the engagement with the photograph moves into the negative-space performance. The post-mortem photographs are not illustrative of a fear of death; just as the automaton photographs do not depict the fear of the mechanical. Both celebrate life. The fear of the mechanical that Valbert describes becomes reflective then of the technology of production, where man becomes enslaved in a relationship built on rote repetition. When the photograph allows for the negative-space performance to occur, however, the cyclical nature of mechanical repetition is broken as the negative-space

[48] "But the worker who is employed in their service, and servant of a machine, he becomes a little engine himself. He should always do the same thing, repeating himself endlessly, putting his honor to print one hundred thousand perfectly identical copies of a model that he did not invented. The machines are impersonal beings, who condemn to impersonality anyone working by them or for them."

performance takes on a plethora of incarnations in each of the different spectators who engage with it. Through the photograph, there is animation.

Motion in the Still Photograph

While it is true that the camera has the ability to freeze a moment in time in order to remove it from its temporality and preserve it in a two-dimensional form, it is of vital importance to find how the animation can exist in the still photograph. With the two extremes examined so far in this chapter, that of Marey's and Muybridge's attempts to convey motion and through the seemingly absolute stillness of the post-mortem photographs, it may be thought that it is only here where the animation of the photograph is found; that it has to exist as an extreme juxtaposed against what is commonly expected to be found in a photograph. While I argue that we impose animation on the photograph in the negative-space performance, I also believe that the still photograph itself is also possessive of motion, despite the early photographers' attempts to eradicate motion from the portrait of the living. To make a daguerreotype portrait, "The stiffly upright sitter…is clamped into a head-brace, which universally was used to insure steadiness. He clutches the arm of the chair with one hand and makes a fist with the other so that his fingers will not flutter. After being posed, the sitter remains in the same position for longer that just the time it takes to make an exposure" (Rosenblum 43). The living sitter is made into a pseudo-automaton with his head clamped into place on an armature in order to not introduce even the slightest amount of blur into the image. He is posed and positioned by the photographer and then told to remain completely still. Just like light itself though, the individual is in a constant state of motion and to pose requires an exorbitant amount of tension to be generated within the body, a form of kinetic energy existing beneath the

surface of the individual. The sitter is thus always in constant motion on both a physiological level, as well as on a level of physics as he is a body existing in three-dimensional space on a planetary body moving roughly sixteen hundred kilometers per hour through space.

Thus, with the long exposures necessary at the time, the subject of the photograph exists in multiple states of being in the photograph; he is continuously in motion, and in addition to the kinetic energy surging just beneath the skin he is also blinking roughly twenty times for every minute of exposure.[49] This means that the image that we see, and that we ascribe to as being still, is in actuality a composite composed of multiple images of the sitter in various micro-poses. The single image becomes a compressed motion picture itself. Just as the "fascination exerted by photographs of dead bodies echoed the attraction held by the death masks (casts made from the faces of prominent persons immediately following their deaths); in each case, evidential powered accrued to the image because it seemed produced automatically rather than by hand" (Pultz 32). This exerts an interesting premise, that if the image itself is a composite and has power to the point of being viewed as being able to be produced automatically and not by the hand of the artist, then the photograph becomes truth. With its composited embodiment of varying moments, time itself no longer can be viewed as linear and instead must be seen in an entanglement model, an argument I will be developing further in the following chapter. Pultz recognizes this in his examination of post-mortem photography and argues that, "In depicting the dead with all the absoluteness and finality that secular empiricists

[49] If taking into account that the earliest forms of daguerreotypes required exposures that could last as long as thirty minutes, and if the average human blinks roughly twenty times a minute, that means the supposedly still photograph is comprised of the motion generated of ~600 blinks and the corresponding changes of the microexpressions of the subject.

said was their state, photography restated its claim to absolute truthfulness" (32). I agree fully with this claim, and even further assert that even when the image is manipulated, it is still truth. All photographs, no matter how seemingly benign and innocuous, are manipulated. The photographer chooses which lens to use, how to position the subject in relation to a light source, and makes myriad other choices before the image is ever captured. All resulting images are therefore a composite of these choices. As the photograph itself then moves further away from its point of origin, either temporally or spatially, its truth becomes more apparent since we can no longer be confused by the projected assumed reality of the space of origination.

Within this model, the performative cannot be viewed then solely within a three-dimensional space. The two-dimensional image, with the fact that it contains both time and motion, and with its ability to generate a negative-space performance, must be regarded as performative just as that which we would watch on stage. While Sontag claims that, "Theatre is confined to a logical or continuous use of space. Cinema…has access to an alogical or discontinuous use of space. In the theatre, people are either in the stage space or 'off'. When 'on', they are always visible or visualizable in contiguity with each other. In the cinema, no such relation is necessarily visible or even visualizable" ("Film and Theatre" 29), I believe that the exact same is taking place with the photograph, and that the relation that Sontag is claiming to be difficult to visualize is actually that of the negative-space performance. The reason that the performance that is taking place in the theatre seems logically confined in Sontag's model is because it is a space where we are witnessing a projection of a two-dimensional truth. A distinctive delineation must be made here in order to ground the remainder of this chapter and to

position the following; we cannot view the notion of a theatrical performance, or "play," as a unified whole with only a singularity in meaning. A play must, of course, be looked at through its differentiated components of "performance" (both onstage and in the negative-space performance space) and "text," the actual book of the show. The two elements exist separately from one another and only coalesce for a finite amount of time. The two are not inextricably linked to one another for a text can exist without the performance but the myriad performances that are projected from the text cannot exist without the text itself. Extending this further, the photograph (and cinema) are also delineated into "performance" (inclusive of the act of posing/taking the photograph and the negative-space performance), and "text," the tangible photograph (or strip of film) itself. In each of these models, the truth is found only in the two-dimensional text.

The relationship between these separate parts becomes most readily apparent, and made much more complex, when the two various forms are brought together in the form of production photography. While on a cursory level it may appear that production photography simply shows that which was, in actuality two disparate truths exist simultaneously in regard to a photographed theatrical event: the text of the show in the form of its script and the text of the photographs of the staged performance. It is imperative though not to view the production photographs as being a recording of the event, a way to show others that the performance took place at a certain point in time. Production photographs are always indicative of their own form of truth; they are not dependent on the text of the play itself or even on the actors performing the roles, but instead emerge from the photographer's own engagement with the negative-space performance of the piece. The photographer creates the new form of reality. Thus, I

fundamentally disagree with Bazin when he argues, "The personality of the photographer enters into the proceedings only in his selection of the object to be photographed and by way of the purpose he has in mind. Although the final result may reflect something of his personality, this does not play the same role as is played by that of the painter" (7). Bazin wrongfully asserts the model of photography as a way of recording, and through this strips the power away from the photographer and the agency necessary to create a new form of reality. This is done so, and echoed by other scholars such as Sontag who says that even though a photograph does have "multiple meanings," "Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it" (*On Photography* 23). This becomes reflective of an outmoded belief that there is only one reality and that within the singular reality is found truth. This is simply not the case, and as I will address in the following chapter, the number of rapidly created realities of individuals in possession of their own forms of agency ultimately form a multiverse.

Photography through the Eyes of Degas

Photographs do not record. Photographs are created and staged performances. They are not autonomic, but instead are completely dependent on very specific choices made by the artist. To bridge the supposed gap between the different disciplines that Bazin asserts, it becomes necessary to examine the work that Edgar Degas was doing in Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Degas's work, of course, was very influenced by the theatrical, with a large number of his paintings focused on balletic performance and the body in motion. Degas kept extensive notebooks on that which influenced him, and in *Carnet 23*, Degas scribbled a quick note on the bottom of an inversed page stating, "Journal: La Nature/Victor Masson (année 1878)" (Reff 136). As

Reff observes, there was an article on Marey in the 5 October 1878 issue of *La Nature* entitled, "Moteurs animés, expériences de physiologie graphique" and Muybridge was featured in the article, "Les Allures du cheval" in the 14 December 1878 issue (136). Degas was interested in how both Marey and Muybridge were utilizing the burgeoning technology of the camera to shape time and motion artistically, but it is important to note that Degas did not just allow the influence of the two photographers to shape the work he was doing on the canvas, for Degas began to experiment with photography himself and in the process, began to lay the foundation for what would become production photography.

The 14 December 1878 issue of *La Nature* is of paramount importance, for it is here where the varying spheres of artist, scientist, photographer, and performer begin to overlap and to coalesce into a new form of reality as the two-dimensional performance space of the photograph is able to project not only the subject, but now that subject could also be put into motion. The short article, "Les Allures du cheval," contained Muybridge's photographs of a galloping horse in motion, proving that all four of the horse's hooves do come off of the ground at the same time (Image 9). This was the first time that Muybridge's photographs were seen in France, and as was stated in the article, "Nous avons reproduit directement les photographies du savant Américain par les procédés d'héliogravure en relief; le lecteur a donc sous les yeux la représentation mathématique de documents qui perdraient tout leur intérêt, s'ils avaient été copies par un dessinateur si consciencieux qu'il puisse être. Nous avons sacrifié la valeur artistique de la gravure à son exactitude, qui importe ici d'une façon capitale"[50] (Tissandier 23). There

[50] "We have reproduced the photographs directly by the American scholar of relief gravure processes; the reader has before his eyes the mathematical representation of documents that would lose their interest if

is a great importance here put on the very process of reproducing the photographs in the journal with an emphasis put on how the héliogravure en relief printing style[51] was actually sacrificing the artistic value of what an etched figure, as most were that were in print at the time, could provide. The two-dimensional photograph becomes an amalgamation of scientific experiment, artistic creation, and a form of proof for something in the natural world. No matter how many times an individual observes a galloping horse without photographic aid there is no indication of the precise movements that are being made and if there is, in fact, a moment of apparent weightlessness as all four hooves come off of the ground in a nanosecond that seemingly defies conceptually the laws set forth in the physical world. The false reality that comes through observation states that logically at least one hoof must remain on the ground at any given moment while the horse is running. Muybridge's photographs being shown in *La Nature* though disrupt this assumed reality and present a new truth in reality that can only exist in the two-dimensional space of the photograph.

In looking at Degas's artistic experimentations then with the presence of body and movement of the subject, there is a distinct differentiation between the function of the three-dimensional sculptures he produced during this time as well as the two-dimensional works on canvas and through photography. In addition to the sculptures he did of ballerinas, Degas also did a series of horse sculptures. One of the most interesting pieces

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they were copies by a conscientious designer as it may be. We sacrificed the artistic value of the etching to his accuracy, this matters here in a major way."

[51] There is a very subtle shift taking place here from the graphical to the photographic creation of reality in the two-dimensional space. The héliogravure en relief printing process actually has its origins with Niépce and his early photographic experimentations in France. By Tissandier suggesting that the presentation of Muybridge's photographs in *La Nature* are mathematical representations, not produced by an exacting hand, and therefore, objects of curiosity.

he created, *Horse Trotting, the Feet Not Touching the Ground*, is in a very precise conversation with the work that Muybridge was doing (Image 10). Although not cast until 1920, three years after his death in 1917[52], the piece shows the influence that Muybridge had on the artist, especially in the private realm of his artistic experimentations.[53] Degas's horse sculpture though differs dramatically from the Muybridge photograph. While both do depict representationally the exact moment where all four of a horse's hooves are off the ground during a gallop, Muybridge's photograph is full of an active kinetic energy that is devoid in the brass sculpture. The sculptural form mires the horse in a form of stasis; the horse may have tensed muscles displayed in the bronze, but they do not give the animal any form of locomotion. This is due essentially to three different reasons. First, being made of bronze, there is already an inherent heaviness that roots the piece into a specific footprint; since the photograph is created from light, there is a perceived ethereality to it. Second, the horse is literally staked to the base in the sculpture; necessary, of course, due to gravity, but this never allows the horse to progress. Finally, how the figure of the horse occupies its space is radically different. Muybridge's horse is contained in a frame, but it is not confined here. The frame suggests forward momentum; that there is something outside of the frame the horse is moving toward. This allows for a full engagement with the negative-space

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[52] This is an important aspect to take into consideration. By not committing the sculpture to bronze, Degas was allowing it, in its original wax form, to be malleable. This in itself gives the desired motion to the static sculpture, for the artist can continuously amend the work and change its form. Once it has been cast though, the sculpture loses its ability to have the energy of movement imbued into it.

[53] In John Rewald's 1944 book, *Degas: Works in Sculpture A Complete Catalogue,* there is the incorrect assertion made that Degas's first exposure to Muybridge's galloping horse photo did not occur until 27 September 1881 when it appeared in *Le Globe* (20). As has already been shown though, this is not true since Degas made note of the articles in *La Nature* in 1878. By shifting the timeframe of engagement with the photographic model three years later, Rewald is effectively diluting the impact and influence the medium of photography had on Degas. Now, instead of being able to intensely study the two-dimensional reality of the photograph for an extended period of time, the photograph becomes simply a curiosity.

performance of the piece as the movement of the horse is projected into the imagination of the viewer. With Degas's horse though, the spectator becomes a barrier for the horse. By being able to move all around the horse in the three-dimensional space of the museum, the spectator halts perceived movement in every direction, essentially trapping the horse in a form of suspended animation.

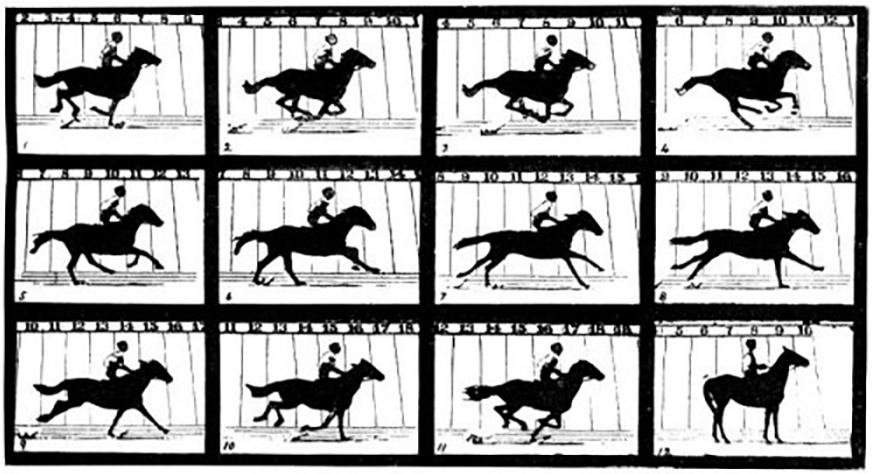

Image 9: Galloping horses by Eadweard Muybridge, 1878.

Image 10: *Horse Trotting, the Feet Not Touching the Ground* by Edgar Degas

It is when we turn then from Degas's engagement with both the Muybridge photographic influence as well as his own experimentations in the sculptural form to how he chooses to display motion in the two-dimensional medium that the true impact of the possibilities photography offered in regard to the performative is found. The photographs featured in the 14 Décembre 1878 issue of *La Nature* "showed aspects of movement never before seen by the eye and gave irrefutable proof of the true nature of the horse's paces. They were the first successive photographs of movement analyzed in real time; the pictures were not merely startling, they were revelations" (Braun 43). This revelation then is to another form of reality that was previously unknown. Truth in the three-dimensional world becomes malleable, whereas in the two-dimensional space of the photograph, the truth is always an irrefutable proof of a constructed reality. As will be argued in the following chapter, this still holds true even when the image itself is manipulated. There is a cyclical model being exhibited here where the three-dimensional individual existing in the physical world creates the two-dimensional object (text, photograph, artwork, etc.) that serves to define a new reality that is then subsequently projected back into the physical world to begin the cycle over once again. Degas was conscious of this and extended his exploration of movement beyond the attempts with clay and wax sculpture in his private studio and began to experiment with photography as well to bring new dimensions to his artistic vision.

While the (known) photographic output of Degas is not extensive, it is of great importance in regard to what I am arguing in this chapter. As Degas would oftentimes

assert, he was not an impressionist, but a realist[54]. This differentiation between the nomenclatures utilized to describe his artistic output subtextually creates a divide between that which is merely an impression, an interpretation by an individual, and that which is real, a way to present a form of truth. Both though are created; the individual manufactures the imagined as well as the real forms in order to show the world as he or she sees it within the negative-space performance. Just as Degas experimented in a private space with his sculptures, so too did he begin to do so with photographs, and these were never circulated amongst art collectors during his lifetime. They functioned as studies in form, but while Degas began to challenge himself further with movement in his sculptural work, his photographs were focused on a definitive form of realism for the majority of his known output is centered on the portrait. During the years 1894 and 1895, Degas did the majority of his experimentations with photography, utilizing the still relatively fascinating medium for both artistic explorations as well as for practical means in the creation of his paintings. It is possible that Degas, a man who consistently employed myriad experimental approaches with his artworks, was employing photographic studies for his paintings from the onset of his experimentation with photography beginning in 1895. In the painting, *Henri Rouart and His Son Alexis* (1895-1898), Jean Sutherland Boggs finds that "although this painting, which is now in Munich, seems completely different from a photograph in its scale, in the texture of the opaquely applied paint, and in its unusual color, there may have been a photographic source for it" (542). Degas even refers to a photograph taken of "an elderly invalid, in black skullcap;

[54] In a letter to Tissot, Degas stated, "The realist movement no longer needs *to oppose* the others. *It is, it exists*, it must *reveal its separate existence*—there *must be a realist salon*" (qtd. in Gordon and Forge 31). Gordon and Forge also claim that Degas "objected violently to the label Impressionist that the press hung on them" (31).

a friend stands behind his armchair" in a letter to Tasset, the man who developed his photographs, dated 11 August 1895 (qtd. in Boggs 542). The description very closely matches the painting itself, creating the reasonable assumption of the utilization of the photographic proof. Degas then is effectively blending both the impressionistic, that of the interpreted painting, with the realistic, the photograph, in order to create a two-dimensional performative space[55].

This speaks directly then to the power that the two-dimensional performative space has in the creation of the new forms of reality. While Degas was utilizing both painting and photography in the overlapping and symbiotic roles of work of art/artistic study, he was also very cognizant of the subsequent implications of the restructuring of the two-dimensional artistic space from being falsely perceived as simple passive object into that of an active performance space. It was here that, "Degas seems to have believed for a while in the 1870s that modern life would offer the painter of sufficient skill a new set of characteristic physiognomies; he would be able to elaborate a repertoire of types, gestures, and expressions to stand for his century and give the viewer the feel of its life" (Clark 255). The three-dimensional world that Clark is referring to becomes the fragmented and undefined elements that can only be transformed into signifiers and symbols once they are incorporated into the two-dimensional performance that is taking place on the canvas or in the photograph. What seemingly defined the modernity of late nineteenth-century Paris in the three-dimensional space was transient; by fixing it in the

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[55] A year later, in 1896, there is direct proof of Degas utilizing photographs as studies for his paintings. His photograph, *After the Bath, Woman Drying her Back*, is in direct conversation with his painting of the same name done the same year. While other artists may have adopted early uses of photography to create studies for their works, I argue that Degas was focused more on composing and creating a theatrical event within the photograph itself.

two-dimensional did it thus become tangible and able to ultimately affect the viewer, transcending space-time in order to allow one to actually feel that world. It becomes then important to view the three-dimensional space as a series of disjointed projections without a unified through line to a narrative. The two-dimensional performance creates the projections; it is not representative of them. It is the artist who has the power to take the varying competing projections and decipher them into an entirely new performance in the two-dimensional space.

Degas did see the photograph as a viable performance space and not just simply as a medium utilized to record a moment from a detached perspective. The camera allowed the individual to instantaneously construct a new vision of reality, effectively combining the negative-space performance with the physical world. Degas exemplified this not through one of his own photographs, but rather through a work that he had commissioned by the English photographer, Walter Barnes, in 1885[56]. In the photograph entitled, *Apotheosis de Degas*, Degas helped to arrange the six subjects to be reflective of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's painting from 1827, *L'Apothéose d'Homère*. In the photograph, "On l'y voit entouré de jeune gens: la composition est une parodie de *L'Apothéose d'Homère* par Ingres—une parodie, plus certainement encore, de ces *tableaux vivants* effectués par les photographes s'inspirants des grands sujets de la peinture"[57] (Terrasse 23). The act of creating a parody is creating a performance; Degas

[56] The photograph was taken while Degas was in northern France in the city of Dieppe to visit friends.

[57] "We see him surrounded by young people, the composition is a parody of *The Apotheosis of Homer* by Ingres - parody, certainly even more, of those living pictures made by photographers inspired by the great subjects of painting."

is not only paying homage to the earlier neoclassical French painting style[58], but he is also illustrating through his directed composition how the photograph image can convey story. The photograph is not to show that the subjects existed at one point in a particular space and time, but they now are performing characters. There is a duality of emotion displayed in the faces: a distance shown in Degas's face at the center of the image and who has fully embraced the role he is playing as the surrogate Homeric figure, while the Lemoinne sisters and Halévy brothers who surround him constituting the rest of the scene attempt to suppress smiles, aware of the humor of the situation on a meta level. There are props being utilized as the Lemoinne sisters in the back hold branches extended over Degas's head as Degas himself clutches an upturned hat while cradling his walking stick close to his chest. The scene is allowed to exist on multiple levels, for it is simultaneously photographic object, now part of a curated collection in a museum and with its ascribed provenance, as well as a performance for the subjects, the photographer, and the spectator, allowed to change over time, but still grounded in the historical homage to Ingres (Image 11).

[58] Terrasse's choice to use the word "parody" may not be the best way to describe what Degas is doing. Degas was an admirer of Ingres, and, "What was remarkable about his apartment was on the walls—not only his own work but the art he collected so assiduously in the 1890s: works by his friends and contemporaries Édouard Manet, Mary Cassatt, Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and many others, as well as the drawings and paintings he so prized by Ingres, Delacroix, and El Greco" (Daniel 17).

Image 11: *Apotheosis de Degas* by Walter Barnes, 1885

I have made the claim in this chapter that what Degas was doing was an early form of production photography, though in examining the surviving images that are known to be is, this point may not be readily apparent. While we oftentimes associate production photography today as a form to record, a way to document a particular performance that took place, the photographs that emerge from this genre generally exist in two categories. First are photographs that are designed to show what a production looked like aesthetically, through images of lighting cues or various costume changes, in order for designers to have portfolio pieces to show the work they are capable of. Second are the photographs involving actors, either posed during a relevant point of emotion in

the scene, or captured during a live performance and culled from a plethora of competing images to most effectively show a specific beat of emotionality in a scene. Once the live performance ends though, it ceases to exist. The only remaining reality of the performance comes through our engagement then with the photographic record. Meanings, emotions, intentions, all become malleable. They are what the spectator subsequently ascribes to the photograph. Degas's portraits are given action. They are not allowed to remain static, but individuals are given a task to do and this puts the photographs in alignment with production photography for the spectator must immediately navigate if the image is a posed representation of the subject, or if it is a depiction of the subject in a moment of performance.

A striking example of this is in the portrait Degas did of the French historian, Daniel Halévy, in Paris on 14 October 1895[59]. There are two factors inherent in the photograph that differentiate it from the majority of other portraiture at the time. First, is the setting. This is not a photograph taken in a studio as most commonly done, but taken in the home. This creates a space of realism while also suggesting a story behind the image. The subject is not posed with random props in the static studio, but is instead inhabiting a world that we cannot see clearly, inviting us to engage with the photograph in order to explore it in greater detail. More importantly though is the fact that in the photograph Halévy is posed reclining in an armchair, his right arm crossed across his body and his left hand held against his chin, the right thumb pushing in on the skin of the cheek. Halévy looks not directly at the camera, but rather off to camera left, appearing to

[59] Degas also shot Louise Halévy at the same time, positioning her in the same armchair that Daniel was photographed in.

be in deep concentration. Halévy does not seem to be composed of light in the photograph however, for due to the weight of his chin in his hand and the indentation this leaves on his cheek, along with the overall darkness of the photograph itself, Degas is instilling within it a substantial gravity that strongly contradicts the other light and airy portraiture that was en vogue at the time. Photography fed on light; Degas starved it to create something new. Utilizing the Rembrandt lighting technique on Halévy, Degas is creating a direct lineage to the past master. What he is also doing though is linking the photograph, now no longer a simple portrait, but instead a performative work of art, with echoes of Rembrandt's own work where, "By heavily inking their [Rembrandt and Castiglione] subjects, they were not literally depicting night but conjuring spiritual atmospheres" (Parry 67). Through his heavy usage of darkness, and by photographing his subjects by gas lamp, Degas creates now a clear space of liminality, a space where the subject balances between the darkness and the light. It is a dark space comprised of dreams; it is a space of imagination. Degas is creating a distinctive theatrical experience by a keen understanding of the negative-space performance.

The Mass-Market Portraiture of the CDV

This is in direct contradiction to how portraiture was being utilized at the time. In Paris, Disdéri, the photographer who shot the image of the Davenport brothers examined in the previous chapter, helped transition the very genre of the photographic portrait from its beginnings involving long sitting times and complicated chemical processes, to something that was much quicker to produce, and also more marketable. While the Davenport photograph is an anomaly due to its large size and its staging outdoors, Disdéri focused his work on creating the carte-de-visite (CDV), a small photograph

albumen printed on paper measuring 54mm by 89mm and mounted on a heavier cardstock generally measuring 64mm by 100mm.[60] This small size allowed it to be portable, but whereas with daguerreotypes, that were also small enough to be carried in pockets, the CDV did not require a complex and costly mounting process[61]. Disdéri patented his CDV process in Paris in November 1854 and this soon led to a mania throughout Europe as the photograph became commodity. As Newhall claims, "Disdéri, a brilliant showman, made this system of mass production portraiture world famous. Napoleon III halted a column of troops he was leading out of Paris on their way to Italy in front of Disdéri's studio while he had his portrait taken. So great was the publicity that all Paris, it seems, wanted portraits" (49). The paper photographs were also reproducible unlike the one-of-a-kind images of the daguerreotype and this allowed the images to begin to be circulated more freely. Individuals could use the CDVs as a form of calling card and thus begin to use their own image as a form of currency; for people began to feverishly collect and trade in the images of the various celebrity and public figures like Napoleon III that sat for Disdéri in his studio. A collector market was born with the showman Disdéri marketing the ability to perform identity.

While photography allowed for the possibility of the individual to be created out of the chemistry applied to the glass, metal, or later, celluloid substrate, the simplification of portraiture production allowed for the exploration of constructed and performed identities to a much greater degree than was afforded with the lengthy processes of the

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[60] By the 1870s, Disdéri was also using a larger size, a "cabinet card" with a total mounted size that measured 110mm by 170mm.

[61] The daguerreotype needed to be mounted in a case to keep the image surface away from the air. This generally involved matting the image to keep it away from the glass and then sealing the edges of the stack of glass, mat, and plate with paper coated with gum arabic before encasing it all in a hinged wooden frame that could open and close like a book.

daguerreotype, or even painted, portraits. Napoleon III can actually stop the flow of traffic and the forward progression of his soldiers down the Boulevard des Italiens, to allow for the now almost instantaneous capture of the image. In the act of the portrait, he is performing power; both over the individual, as well as over time itself. Likewise, Robert-Houdin had his portrait taken by Disdéri as well around 1860.[62] In the photograph, Robert-Houdin is formally posed in order to ground the image in a mode of classicism; he is dressed in formal wear including bow tie and overcoat with his left hand on his hip in a confident manner while using his right hand to rest against the ornate desk in the scene with him. He directs his gaze upwards to his left to further emphasize the subtle contrapposto being established in the photograph (Disdéri *Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin*). What Robert-Houdin is doing with Disdéri is performing an identity. As was argued in Chapter One, Robert-Houdin is attempting to reestablish the art of magic as a legitimized theatrical event and not a peripheral art form existing on the street and outside of the normative. Robert-Houdin is utilizing the CDV to establish the new identity of the magician, not through highly elaborate costuming to suggest his magical abilities, but through simple eveningwear. Robert-Houdin is demonstrating an aristocratic flair and assumed elegance for his character of the illusionist, but he is also subliminally asserting that magic itself is tangible and can be touched. The spectator can now hold the image of the powerful magician in her hand.

[62] Robert-Houdin's theatre was actually located on the ground floor of the same building housing Disdéri's studio at 8 Boulevard des Italiens in Paris.

The CDV then becomes fetishized object[63] and with their proliferation, now allow individuals to scrutinize how identities are being performed across multiple CDVs representing different forms of celebrity. This would allow the individual to consciously choose what elements from which individuals could be best combined to establish their own form of identity as photographic costs became increasing lower and thus allowing an accessibility by a greater number of people. Since Robert-Houdin, the magician, was photographed in eveningwear, this became the standard costume for that category of performer, one that could be argued, still exists to this day. Identity, especially through the photographic medium, becomes entirely performance, and if examining this within the model of Rancière's discussion of the "visual demonstration," we find that, "if everything is nothing but spectacular exhibition, the contrast between appearance and reality that grounded the effectiveness of the critical discourse disappears, and with it, any guilt about the beings situated on the side of the dark or denied reality" (29). I believe that this holds true for portraiture and the performance of identity just as Rancière argues it within the context of protest imagery. Once the individual performs his or her identity in the CDV, that identity is now real. One cannot simply dismiss the photograph then of the magician performer as being one merely copying Robert-Houdin, for each iteration of the interpretation of the identity creates a legitimate new identity. While it is true that the subsequent impact or effectiveness of that identity can become subsequently diluted and rendered obsolete by a spectator, it does not mean that they are any less real. Each incarnation of the performative identity has the ability to thus go through a cycle of

[63] At a 2013 auction on 26 October by Potter & Potter, a Robert-Houdin CDV received eight competing bids before eventually selling for $1200.

inspiration/creation/depiction/mimicry/reproduction that continues to perpetuate itself until the original two-dimensional primary source is discontinued through destruction or through loss of contextual attribution.

This means that there needs to be the mass production of the identity being performed on the photographic image and this is precisely what Disdéri understood with the adoption of his CDV process. Disdéri approached the procedure of sitting for the portrait from a strict economic viewpoint and knew that the faster he could produce photographs, the more subjects he could photograph in a day, and thus the more income he could generate. As one German visitor found, Disdéri's studio was "really the Temple of Photography—a place unique in its luxury and elegance. Daily he sells three to four thousand francs' worth of portraits" (Newhall 49-50). This is an exceptional amount of money for the time period, and while it may be an exaggeration by the tourist, it actually alludes to the efficiency that Disdéri had built into taking a photograph. The CDV was not about creating art, nor was it about recording that which was. It was about mounting a performance in the shortest amount of time that would earn its maximum monetary potential before then moving onto the next subject and beginning the process once again. It is of great importance to note though that this performance was entirely up to the subject. Disdéri was there simply to capitalize on the performance. He was not director; he was not artist. His impact though on photography in the nineteenth century in Paris cannot be overlooked. He was a man in the business of mass-producing realities as created by others.

The very nature of the function of the photograph as object was being changed here as well. No longer were photographs personal objects that could be carried on the

person and shared with those one chose, but now, as commodity, they were objects that could be printed and sold outside of just the subject's initial desires. Soon CDV albums appeared, allowing families to collect different cards and put on display as conversation piece within the home. To help achieve this level of reproduction, Disdéri actually helped pioneer the usage of a camera with multiple lenses that would allow for the creation of more than one image on a single plate, thus improving efficiency by shortening the time necessary to change out plate holders in the camera[64]. This was described in one visitor's account when he states, "What is extraordinary is that on this same day, February 25 [1858], from 10:00am to 3:00pm, six different people posed before us and each posed six times, and of the 42 portraits obtained on only six plates, not one was ruined" (McCauley 34). Disdéri's multiplying camera allowed for two different approaches to taking a photograph: first, it allowed for the simultaneous capturing of four images (eight if the subject did not move) of the subject with a small shift in perspective due to the angle the light would hit the sensitized plate as it entered through each different lens to essentially instantaneously create four separate realities, or the camera could record incrementally, allowing Disdéri to close off one lens, while opening another and sliding the back into a new position. This latter approach would afford eight different poses, and as Gustavson finds, "Innovations that make picture taking easier encourage play. Subjects still had to remain frozen when the shutter was open. But the process had become less formal somehow, and mischief entered the pictures. People

[64] While there were stereo cameras in existence at the time, the usage of the four-lens camera to record onto a single plate via a moveable back was exceptionally innovative for 1858. Other manufactures began making cameras with even more lenses in order to further speed up the process of the CDV. These cameras became known as "multiplying cameras" and were used throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. Disdéri's camera, now part of the George Eastman House collection, had four lenses that would record eight images on a single plate.

rakishly tipped their hats, leaned on canes, and began to project a certain gleam in the eye" (68). This notion of play and experimentation, by both the subject, as well as the photographer, in the creation of the portrait is what strengthens my argumentation of Disdéri's importance as a photographer of the time and one that should not be dismissed simply because of his mass-marketing strategies, for he is creating a performative space that is firmly rooted in the two-dimensional space of the photograph.

What became a hallmark of the CDV style was to show the full body of the subject posed in a specific manner, in costume, and amidst some scenic elements to suggest a setting for the mise-en-scène. While this was done in order to echo traditional portraiture that had been painted for centuries, it is also essentially creating a proscenium framing of the individual, allowing for the photograph itself to become the performative space in the theatre of identity. Degas even satirizes this style in his notebooks, doing a quick ink sketch of two women, both in full dresses, and posing for the imagined camera. There are further suggestions of the CDV: the ornate chair placed stage left and the semblance of drapery hanging upstage right. In the border at the bottom left of the sketch, Degas titles the piece simply, "Disdéri photog" (Degas *Disdéri photog*). I believe that for the artist, this satirizing of the popular French photographer is an actual critique on the hollowness of the performance being created and not specifically directed on the unimaginative artistic merit of Disdéri. What was being created in the mass production technological assembly line of the CDV photographic studio was content without substance. With all of the focus put on the speed of capturing the image, and quicker turnaround times for the next customer, there is not much time left to establish, or even find, the drama of the piece. There is only a superficial engagement with the negative-

space performance; the spectator only need look at the image and equivocate it to myriad other CDV's that she has previously seen. The image become trapped then within its own proscenium as the spectator can thus only imagine the act of the subjects posing for a photographer to have their pictures taken in the studio, and can not envision anything existing outside of that scenario. The CDV operates too heavily on a detached meta level and is no longer as effective artistically as it could be.[65]

In looking at Degas's photographs then, especially in his absolute break from what was the dominant established tradition of portraiture at the time through no longer showing the full body, but instead doing headshots focused not on posing, but on realism and emotion, it becomes necessary to examine that which influenced him and began to take photography on a much different trajectory in nineteenth century France. Whereas Disdéri was focused on the expediency of the portrait, Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) attempted to show his subjects as they truly were, allowing them the space to create and perform their identity through their expressiveness and without the gimmickry Disdéri relied on.[66] In a striking example, there can be a connection made between a self-portrait made c.1895 of Degas and Nadar's famous portrait of George Sand made in 1864. In the Degas photo, there are definite elements of Disdéri as Degas positions himself posing against a bust barely visible photo left with the highlights on the books in the library behind him giving the illusion of drapery, much as he depicted in his

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[65] Disdéri's work was exhibited in the Rue Drouot in December 1861 (Reff 93). This begins to problematically position the CDV not as novelty, but as art. This is after Disdéri had his peak year of production, with just under 10,000 negatives produced in 1860 alone. By 1861, this number had declined to just over 8,000 negatives (McCauley 228). It can be speculated then that with the dramatic downturn in the CDV business, Disdéri was attempting to find new avenues of revenue by showing the CDV as art, something I believe Degas is responding directly to.

[66] Nadar opened his photographic studio in Paris at 25 Boulevard des Capucines in 1855.

satirical sketch of Disdéri. There is also though an homage to the Nadar portrait of Sand as Degas looks off photo right, just as the majority of subjects do in Nadar's work, but Degas also adopts a similar expression reminiscent of the late French author. This becomes evident of the multiple layers of engagement that are created within the photograph, for as Barthes argues, "In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art" (*Camera Lucida* 13). I would also extend this though to include also the representation of the self through an entangled temporality. The photograph is not just Degas in 1895, but also a performance of self through the preceding decades. He is not bound by time (or in this example, even by the performance of gender). Degas is simultaneously satirizing Disdéri once again, paying homage to the artistic style of Nadar, and aligning himself with the iconography of the French artistic scene. Now the photographic portrait, even in its seemingly static form, is freed to give room for the negative-space performance to begin to develop.

The movement that Degas begins to instill in his photographs through approaching them as performative is further strengthened by some of the last known images he took, those of a subject he was exceedingly familiar with, dancers. I conclude this chapter by arguing that the three surviving photographs Degas did of dancers in late 1895 or early 1896 help bridge the gap between my discussion of the reality of the two-dimensional space of the photograph and the nature of projected reality that will be addressed in the following chapter. There are no known vintage prints of the three images and they exist solely as glass dry plate negatives (Degas *Dancer (Adjusting Both Shoulder Straps), Dancer (Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap), Dancer (Arm Outstretched)*).

Due to either the chemicals utilized on them as part of a creative developing process, or through the negatives' exposure to the elements over time, each negative is now an amalgamation of differing shades of yellows, browns, reds, oranges, black, and white. There is a surrealistic quality to each image and this gives a dramatically dynamic depth to the negatives. The dancers seem caught in the middle of a motion and not just simply posed, so there is a momentum embedded into the negatives. Due to the fact though that we cannot easily discern what the backgrounds are in the images, and are instead presented with a surrealistic space, there is the suggestion then that the uncanny can, indeed, be just as truthful of a reality as that which we believe the three-dimensional world represents. It is through this juxtaposition of movement and the surreal that we must turn from the photograph that dominated the second half of the 1800s to the new medium of film that appears to close out the nineteenth century, for it is here that notions of negative-space performances and reality ultimately coalesce.

Chapter Four

The Delusion of Three-Dimensional Reality as Truth

On 28 December 1895, spectators crowded into the Salon Indien du Grand Café at 39 Boulevard des Capucines to watch a presentation by Auguste and Louis Lumière, two brothers who had been running an enormously successful photographic dry plate company in Lyon. In the darkened basement room of the café, thirty-three people gathered, each having paid one franc as admission for something that was simply promised to amaze. Georges Méliès was one of the people in the room, having been invited earlier that day after one of the Lumière brothers had visited him in his theatre. In the small room, the spectators were seated, facing a white screen, with a machine draped in velvet positioned behind them. As Méliès later recalled: "Nous nous trouvions, les autres invités et moi, en présence d'un petit écran, semblable à ceux qui nous servaient pour les projections Molteni, et, au bout de quelques instants, une photographie *immobile* représentant la place Bellecour, à Lyon, apparut en projection. Un peu surpris, j'eus à peine le temps de dire à mon voisin : « C'est pour nous faire voir des projections qu'on nous dérange ? J'en fais depuis plus de dix ans. »"[67] (qtd. in Chardère 96). Méliès, the magician and now proprietor of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin below Disdéri's photographic studio on the Boulevard Italiens, had been promised that he would be amazed if he attended the private performance, but there he sat, in the basement looking at projected images on a screen that by 1895 had already become passé. The novelty of the projected image that used to inspire spectators to fill large theatres simply to experience the magic

[67] "We found ourselves, the other guests and I, in the presence of a small screen, similar to those that had served us for Molteni projections, and, after a few moments, a still photograph of the Place Bellecour in Lyon appeared in projection. A little surprised, I barely had time to say to my neighbor: "It is to make us see some projections that we are put out? I've been doing this for over ten years."

lantern had already worn off. Méliès was surprised by how commonplace the event was appearing to turn out to be. Audiences were used to experiencing the wonder of the technological in the three-dimensional space of the performance space of the stage, having been able to see mechanical automatons and ghosts for decades. Méliès himself was continuously seeking ways to shock and amaze his audience, performing illusions such as *Recalcitrant Decapitated Man*, where a man would have his head cut off while lecturing, yet would still continue to talk. To be invited then to a private event where the Lumière brothers were presenting outmoded technologies as the spectacular was not only surprising it was also actually insulting. What Méliès next experienced though, and what constituted the majority of the twenty-minute long performance, was so profoundly revolutionary, the entire trajectory of Méliès's own career, as well as that of how spectators engage with the image, was fundamentally changed.

The Lumière brothers concluded their program by showing ten motion pictures, short segments they had filmed with their newly invented camera, the Cinématographe,[68] which seemingly depicted normal people going about their daily business and shots of everyday life. The first film on the presentation, *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon*, simply showed employees of the Lumière's dry plate factory in Lyon leaving for the day. The film was comprised of 800 separate still images, totaling seventeen meters of film.[69] As it was run through the Cinématographe though at sixteen frames-per-second, an optical illusion was created and the spectators sitting in the basement room of the café

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[68] The Cinématographe was a machine that was not only a motion picture film camera, but it was also a film projector and a printer. It also weighed in just under sixteen pounds, allowing it to be portable. The French inventor, Léon Bouly, first conceived of the device in 1892, but then it was further developed and refined by the Lumière brothers.

[69] There are actually three different versions of the scene, differentiated by the presence of different numbers of horses, or a dog, in the shot.

witnessed for forty-six seconds what they believed to be movement within the two-dimensional space of the screen. While this may seem to be innocuous now, and not as profound of an event as it actually was, the crowd at Salon Indien du Grand Café was astounded. Modern day audiences have been conditioned to accept the illusion of movement that is taking place when watching a film, and thus do not question what they are seeing. They sit in the darkened movie theatre facing a screen, hear the projector noise, and know that what they are watching is a motion picture. I argue though that for this first commercial audience, who did not already have a frame of reference for what constitutes the cinema experience, they believed that what they were seeing was performance; that it was a way of seeing into a three-dimensional reality. Movement constituted a believed reality, so the screen became the proscenium to a three-dimensional theatrical event that is taking place. It becomes a magical experience for the spectators that transcends both time and location; the audience knows that what they are witnessing is real, there are real people moving through the frame, just as actors move across a stage, the audience just doesn't know where the stage is. The Lumières called their films *actualités*, choosing a word that in French means "topical" or "current" in order to further emphasize the modernity of their invention, but this choice of pluralized word can also translate to "news," thus positioning the films as truthful actualities. These films were designed not to simply statically show images of the world in which we live, but rather to open up other spaces of performative reality as well.

The response to the short program was overwhelming and word of mouth, coupled with heavy advertising, began to draw large numbers of spectators to the room the Lumières had rented out for thirty francs per day. In fact, while the initial private

showing on 28 December 1895 had only generated just enough money to break even on the cost of renting the space, "within a month the Cinématographe showings were earning an average of seven thousand francs a week, and motion pictures had become, overnight, an extremely lucrative commercial enterprise" (Cook 11). What was drawing the audience to the space though was not entertainment; they were coming to have their perceptions of reality challenged, and ultimately, expanded. This distinction is of paramount importance, because there has been an underlying assertion made that any analysis of the films made at the end of the nineteenth century exist as a sort of proto-film,[70] that they are essentially technological experimentations that thus allowed for what cinema became in the early decades of the twentieth century. I fundamentally disagree with this assumption since it is made from the perspective of a modern audience that has developed a much different cinematic language from which to analyze the film-going experience, and for the purposes of this chapter, I will not be categorizing these works as such. The nineteenth century films are indeed technological and scientific experiments, but they are not a primitive form of cinema. They function just as the scientific lectures that were en vogue and discussed previously do; they are designed to challenge the audience's foundational beliefs of what is possible in the natural world. Whereas we can now view cinema as being to entertain (movies), or to instruct (documentaries), the actualités, are designed to make us question realities. I believe that these films are what indicate how negative-space performance ultimately works, for they give us a tangible

[70] In *Life to Those Shadows,* Noël Burch denotes the films made before c.1900 as belonging to what he deems, the "Primitive Mode of Representation." This notion of the "primitive" is one that I have substantial problems with because this places the actualités on a linear progression toward what would later be a narrative style of cinema, implying that one developed into the other. I believe the two modes exist completely separate from one another and must therefore be examined as such.

way to explore how the actual reality we create in the two-dimensional space can be projected into the three-dimensional world and then show us what the subsequent results of that projected form of reality are.

This becomes evidenced by the large amount of mythologizing that takes place with the Cinématographe showings at the Salon Indien du Grand Café as it quickly becomes difficult to differentiate the fact from the fictional. The most prolific of stories, and one that has become part of the lore of film history, involves the reaction audiences had over seeing the film, *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, which, as the title states, shows a train arriving at its station. As the legend goes, spectators believed the train was going to hit them and would scream and jump out of the way. While it is certainly easy to believe that seeing movement within a perspective view was something that was shocking to the audience as the train grew in size and scale as it came closer to the assembled spectators, what becomes most important to the mythology is the fact that the two-dimensional space was being transformed into a three-dimensional one. Unlike other two-dimensional works of art such as paintings, where perspective gives depth, here, the movement-perspective, gave a projected form of reality that, in the Salon Indien du Grand Café, was not a depiction of that which was, but was showing that which is. Time folds in on itself so the audience believes that they are watching something that is currently taking place. They do not think that the train is actually going to enter the room they are in, but they believe that the magic is the ability of seeing what is transpiring elsewhere at that exact moment. If the projected image of the train arriving at the station is an originary world, as Deleuze defined it, then, "the originary world is a beginning of that world, but also an end of the world, and the irresistible slope from one to the other; it

carries the milieu along and also makes it into a closed world, absolutely closed off, or else opens it up on to an uncertain hope" (*Cinema 1* 126). The screen becomes the spectators' window into not only a closed world, but also a closed reality, which they are not a part of. The images that the audience sees are familiar, they do not exist in the surreal so they are easily accessible conceptually, and thereby assumed to be real. The spectator can look back and see only the bright light emanating from the projector, but finds himself even more distanced from viewing this closed off world since the light is not coalesced into the image. Even when the spectator reaches his hand up into the light and can see a portion of the reality of the closed off originary world being grafted onto his own skin, he still cannot feel it and realizes that he can never be a part of that world.

There is also a very interesting deconstruction of the three-dimensional world that is taking place once the light from the projector begins to transect the darkness of the room and to reveal the world that exists on the screen to the spectators. Just as the Impressionist painters decades earlier created works that perpetuated the myth of the bucolic Parisian countryside that allowed people to escape the city in pursuit of leisure, this was nothing more than illusion, for as Clark questions, "Is it sleight of hand when Monet looks north through the toll bridge to the Côte de Sannois, and has one pillar of the bridge block out the Joly ironworks to the right—sleight of hand or felicitous arrangement? Might not the composition speak quite well, in fact, to the modest place of such things in the landscape, to the way they hardly interrupted vision?" (176). Monet can choose to make the scene he is painting appear even more idyllic and removed from the industrialization of the city simply by shifting his perspective. He can help create the myth of the Parisian countryside that is focused specifically on the pursuit of pleasure by

removing any references to industry or to work. What was put down on the canvas though was not the myth; the myth existed solely in the projected reality of the three-dimensional space as Parisians did flock to the countryside only to find themselves occupying an overcrowded space replete with the trappings of an industrialized city including factories, pollution, and open sewers. It is not that the views depicted on the canvases of the Impressionists were untruths, for one could see the exact bridges and ponds and parks that they saw in the paintings, it was just when people began to construct their own negative-space performances of what they were seeing and then tried to reconcile those with the three-dimensional world that the myth of what was generally considered to be the real world became apparent. This creates a drive then for the spectator to attempt to reconcile this disconnect between what is seen, what is felt, and what is experienced.

An inversion takes place when we move forward and situate ourselves back in the darkened basement of the Salon Indien du Grand Café looking at the moving images of workers leaving a factory, for there is the suggestion that the artist filmmaker is now reconstructing the city of Paris as the new locus of leisure with work and industry existing elsewhere. There is a window to that world being seen on the screen, but it is now separate from the space being occupied by the spectators of the film. The countryside proved to be an illusion, so there is the implication that instead of searching for the spaces of leisure and pleasure elsewhere, to instead just relocate them to the center of Paris itself. Instead of viewers living in a space defined by work and looking at an Impressionist painting and yearning for leisure, now the spectator can live within that realm of the leisurely constantly. Work, not leisure, is something to travel to and not

something that defines life. This is reinforced by *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon,* for there the barrier between the world of work and the world of leisure is not the screen where the images are projected, but the wall to the factory itself that appears in the film separating the viewer from the interior of the factory. This wall creates the leisure/work threshold. The audience sits looking at work, but it is not the act of working that is seen, but rather the transgression of the threshold as the workers, now having finished their shifts making the photographic glass plate negatives, walk toward their downtime, toward the space occupied by the spectators, toward the space of leisure. This subtle shift in the positioning of the image of Paris itself is important, for as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the café and nightclub culture of Paris begins to flourish as people begin to believe the myth that was being created of Paris being the city of entertainment, of relaxation, and of leisure. The concept then of Bohemian Paris, much like the concept of the earlier Haussmannian Paris[71], becomes the greatest illusion.

The Character of the Machine

The projector itself assumes the role of totemic magical object, as it is able to seemingly freely bridge the expanse of space and time. While in the darkroom the photographer's own hands were able to create the individual out of the various chemicals used as developer, stop bath, and fixer, now the space of the closed world reality that the spectators are witnessing comes from a machine whose appearance and noises they are completely unfamiliar with. The artist is now distanced from the work, with the projectionist serving as a cog in the machine, standing and cranking the projected in a

[71] While Haussmann's redesign of Paris did displace a large number of citizens, it did not create a mass exodus out of Paris as is often believed. In fact, as T.J. Clark argues, workers "stayed because it seemed like they had no choice" and that "the industries of Paris were still in their neighbourhoods, as strong as ever" (53).

rhythmic manner in order to try and best represent time. He is not creator, but simply part of the mechanism, creating a space where the projected image is further solidified as being reflective of a reality and not an artistic creation. Just as was found with the introduction of the phonograph almost twenty years earlier in 1877, its inventor, Thomas Edison, "publically performed the new apparatus of the phonograph as a character with whom he carried out a dialogue…However, Edison was not acting out the archival functions of the machine, but the inscription process, which sounded out the noise of its articulated functions" (Case 80). The anthropomorphizing of the machine is similar to how the automatons discussed earlier were presented, as characters the performers interacted with. The cinema projector was different though. It was not given an embodied form of character, nor was it placed into a subservient role like the automaton or the phonograph, where the performer controlled and dictated its actions. Now, the machine controlled the individual whose voice was stripped away. The projector was not being presented as scientific marvel or mechanical curiosity to behold; the Cinématographe was instead hidden with the noises made from its interactions of gears and the heat generated from its lamp assuring that its presence was still felt by the spectators assembled in the small room. It is established from the onset as an object of mystery and this serves to create the divide in the minds of the spectators between filmmaker (the individual who created the images mechanically and chemically) and the projected reality that is taking place on the screen before them.[72]

[72] So entranced with the possibilities of the new technology, George Méliès offered to buy the Cinématographe at the conclusion of the demonstration, but the Lumières turned him down.

Even though the projectionist is able to control the speed at which the images are projected, he is still bound by the embodied knowledge of the spectators as to what precisely is the "correct" passage of time. If he overcranks or undercranks, the illusion of the real will be disrupted and the movement will seem unnatural as the subjects would thus appear to move either too fast or too slowly to how things move in the naturalistic world. If the film is overcranked, the images slow down and the subjects on screen immediately do not feel right. If he undercranks the film though, the subjects speed up on the screen and the projectionist also faces the very real danger of the heat from the bulb igniting the highly flammable film substrate in the camera. With such an emphasis on timing the cranking just right in order to mimic the three-dimensional world perceived to be the basis of reality, there is the indication then that the filmic is likewise supposed to be regarded as the real. If it was to be viewed solely as art, or as scientific experiment, then it would be more logical for the speed of the film to be explored at its extremes, capturing the nuances of the ultra slow motion image or the light painting effects achieved with fast moving imagery. The projectionist needed to establish a consistent rhythm due to the fact that, "With most standard machines, one turn of the crank runs off exactly one foot of film, so that normal speed is about 66 turns of the crank per minute, and by counting turns you know just how fast you are running" (qtd. in Brownlow 165). The Cinématographe was designed to project film at sixteen frames per second (16fps) as it was determined that would produce the most naturalistic and fluid motion on the screen. The necessity then of the projectionist to maintain a clockwork level of precision alludes to the very confines of the linearality of time; if there is any deviation from the perceived fluidness of the 16fps of the moving image, the illusory reality will begin to

collapse in on itself and the spectators will find themselves removed from the performance.

While I am focusing on the events that transpired in 1895 in regard to the Lumières and the first commercial exhibition of moving pictures, I am not asserting this to be the invention of cinema, but am rather more interested in the theatricality of the cinematic event that was established by the Lumières. On 14 October 1888, a French inventor living in Leeds, England, Louis Le Prince, filmed a scene of his family in his garden at 12fps and running just over two seconds, more than seven years before the Lumières presentation at Salon Indien du Grand Café. What Le Prince created was, "a somewhat clumsy system of gelatine [sic] positives mounted onto glass. These were slotted into belts and cranked past the arc lamp and lens. A steam generator/dynamo provided the electricity. The process was not entirely successful because of the weight and the fragility of glass. He only achieved about seven frames per second, but still, the pictures did move" (Howells 180). Le Prince realized that his methodology needed refinement, and when he discovered celluloid two months later, he planned to unveil to the public his new technology. Unfortunately, he disappeared before this could happen.[73] Le Prince certainly deserves credit for his discoveries with film, but cinema itself cannot simply be attributed to the Lumières like it oftentimes is, for there were myriad people working on various aspects of it, and making their own independent discoveries, simultaneously. While it is not certain what form Le Prince's public exhibition would

[73] Le Prince actually took a patent out on his invention in the United States on 10 January 1888. In 1889, his wife, Lizzie, rented a venue in Manhattan for a public exhibition. As Howells recounts in his article, Le Prince boarded a train in Dijon heading to Paris on 16 September 1890 and was never seen or heard from again (181). Due to his mysterious disappearance, the exhibition scheduled in New York City never took place.

have taken if it would have been realized in Manhattan, I argue that what makes the Lumière brothers' presentation so unique is in its positioning as theatrical spectacle. The technological was not being presented as a facet of a scientific lecture, but was rather the catalyst for a performance. Just as in a large number of shows within the Western European tradition, the spectators would cue, pay admission, enter an enclosed room with chairs aligned in rows facing the theatrical space, and sit in the dark and watch the performance before them in silence. Just as with a (successful) play, the exhibition at Salon Indien du Grand Café was not a singular event, but it had a run, selling out performance after performance.

The Lumières and Color

It is because of the theatrical nature of the Lumière brothers run that many individuals attribute this to the birth of the cinema and tend to overlook the accomplishments of inventors like Le Prince. The fact is though that the run that began at the Salon Indien du Grand Café was not the first public showing of the Lumières' actualités. Earlier that year, on 22 March 1895, the Lumières presented their technological experiment of the Cinématographe by showing *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* privately to the Société d'Encouragement for L'Industrie Nationale at 44 Rue de Rennes in Paris.[74] This was done in conjunction with what the Lumières believed to be just as intriguing, their new technology of a color film process they

[74] They filed for the French patent on the Cinématographe on 13 February 1895 and for an English patent on 18 April 1895. The Lumières also held private demonstrations of the technology on 10 June 1895 in Lyon to the Congrès des Sociétés Françaises de Photographie and again on 12 June 1895. They also presented the Cinématographe on 11 July 1895 for the Revue générale des sciences in Paris, on 10 November 1895 for L'Association Belge de Photographie in Brussels, on 12 November 1895 for the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire in Brussels, and on 16 November 1895 in Paris at the Sorbonne (Rittaud-Hutinet 18-19)

developed and patented on that same day. Called *ALL Chroma*, the three-color transparency process involved creating color photographs by superposing yellow, magenta, and cyan dyed plates in order to produce a rich, full-color image. The process though "proved quite difficult to produce in practice and were not within the technical reach of the general public. The exercise then became less that of marketing a new photographic material than a means of promoting the company itself—the producer of these superb color photographs" (Lavédrine and Gandolfo 69). This experiment, that was later refined and developed into the Autochrome process by the Lumières after 1900, was a way to draw the audience further into the reality of the photograph; no longer could there be a presumed distancing between the two-dimensional reality that was being presented in black and white and the natural three-dimensional world of color. When color was introduced though into the two-dimensional space, it is important to note that this is not an attempt to simply recreate what is found in the three-dimensional world, for through the limitations of only utilizing the three color transparencies, and without all of the subtle variations of color shades and tones found in the naturalistic world, there is a hyperreality being created. The ALL Chroma and Autochrome photographs that the Lumières were creating were heavily saturated and dramatic, distinctively separating them from what is perceived to be more "true" colors that are muted through degrees of variations in tonality. The hyperreal and surreal two-dimensional realities that were being formed in these additive color early examples by the Lumière brothers helped influence then precisely how we perceive color in the three-dimensional world by introducing depth through a richness in vibrancy.[75]

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[75] This additive color film process remained the primary way of creating color photographs until the

With the ALL Chroma being positioned primarily as a marketing device to demonstrate the innovative nature of the Lumière company, how the photographs were intended to function is illustrative of the group experience that was also being developed with the cinematic experience at the Salon Indien du Grand Café. The photographs were distributed with the intention of being displayed in showrooms, thus establishing them as something that one observes not in a solitary manner, but rather in a communal environment. They are designed as an impetus for discussion. This is of paramount importance to the examples that I have been addressing so far in the previous chapters; the differentiation between scientific lecture and that of the performance of technology in a theatrical manner is one of community. The scientific lectures promote discussions about the technology, whereas the theatrical performances of the technically magical encourage conversations about the possibilities of alternate forms of reality to exist. By participating in these conversations as a group, and by coming to challenge notions of the real as revealed through the performative, there is a sense of being part of something important that can thereby transcend the perceived confines of time. The two-dimensional image thus provides immortality, and through this immortalization of the group experience, "Immortality is progressive…It progresses in time, passing from limited to eternal survival; in social space, immortality becomes democratic and passes from being the privilege of a few to being everyone's virtual right. This is relatively recent, however" (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange* 128). There becomes a group understanding of the three-dimensional world as being transient, that it is only a projected

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invention of Kodachrome film in 1935. Kodachrome was a subtractive color film and remained the dominant color film choice for almost 75 years due to its rich and vibrant (and slightly surreal) colors. Kodachrome was completely discontinued in 2009.

form of reality and not one that has any substantive prolonged presence. The two-dimensional photograph and film (the actual strip of celluloid or nitrate that passes through the projector and not the images that are displayed on the screen) are the virtual right, for it allows for the rendering of an avatar of the individual to achieve immortality. It is the experience though of the democratic engagement with those images by the group though that highlights the importance of the shared experience, for the group, who sees something that usurps their previously held convictions about reality, and deem it as being magical, thus elevate its importance and the need to preserve and pass on the experience to others.

This is in complete opposition to the experience that was created by other early incarnations of motion pictures. For instance, Thomas Edison and one of his employees, William Dickson, began developing the Kinetoscope in 1888 and it made its public appearance on 9 May 1893, two-and-a-half years before the Lumières' exhibition in Paris.[76] The Kinetoscope was "a peep-show that ran fifty feet of moving film. Yet Edison's discovery was not isolated. It depended on the film roll promoted by the inventor of the Kodak, George Eastman; and Eastman in turn had profited from Hannibal Goodwin's recognition that celluloid would make a suitable base for the film strip" (Rhode 3). The description of the Kinetoscope as a "peepshow" is most telling, for it positions the device as belonging more to the private sphere of the individual as opposed to the public sphere of the group. Only one person could view the moving pictures in the Kinetoscope at a time, so even when it was on display in a public place, the spectator still

[76] An earlier prototype of the Kinetoscope was presented on 20 May 1891 to members of the National Federation of Women's Clubs at Edison's laboratory. In 1894, the first Kinetoscope parlor opened in Manhattan (*Inventing Entertainment*).

had to put his eyes up to the metal viewer and focus his gaze solely on the images. This creates a form of tunnel vision, blocking out the three-dimensional surroundings of the outside world and consuming the spectator within the two-dimensional imagery being displayed. The spectator is thus not able to look around at others in an audience, as can be done with those watching the Lumières' actualités at the Salon Indien du Grand Café, in order to gauge what an appropriate response should be to what he is witnessing. Without the social cues, the spectator is forced to focus solely on the image and to construct the negative-space performance without any outside influence.

The spectator though also becomes a voyeur in this scenario and instead of the singular engagement with the image creating a form of closeness it actually distances the viewer. He is now someone looking down and into another world. This is not a photograph that he can hold in his hand or put in an album on display for others to see. Instead, he, like the projectionist of the Cinématographe, is now part of the machine. Whereas with a film being projected onto a screen and shown in the openness of the group setting, where "the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen help promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation" (Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure" 17), this separation is not permitted to happen with the Kinetoscope. Instead, the spectator is completely consumed by the images and the negative-space performance he has created. There is no tempering. I do, however, disagree with Mulvey's assertion that the darkness of the auditorium also creates a form of isolation between the spectators. Instead, there is actually a compounding of the voyeuristic that is taking place. While the Kinetoscope allows the voyeurism to be

directed inward and focused solely on the image, the projected film permits both a screen-directed voyeurism, as well as an audience-directed voyeurism to take place. The spectator can be watching the film, but can also be watching any other individual in the room and allowing that individual to become part of the spectator's negative-space performance that is being generated. This serves to shape that single individual's engagement with the projected unreality of both the images on the screen and the three-dimensional communal space he is occupying.

The Manipulated Image and Reality

This introduction of an awareness of an engagement with unreality becomes evidenced more when manipulation of the projected imagery of the film occurs. This, of course, is predicated on the fact that the entirety of the cinematic experience is built on the optical illusion that is taking place and the negative-space performance that is being created. The rapid progression of individual photographs, each captured at a fraction of a second, allow the spectator to believe that she is seeing movement simply because her brain is filling in each of the missing frames. This suggests then that, "Perception is not a process of passive absorption but of active construction. When you see, hear, or feel something, the incoming information is always fragmentary and ambiguous" (Macknik and Martinez-Conde 141). Perception cannot be confined solely to the bond between neurochemical responses and psychology though as individuals such as John Herbert Parsons characterized it in the early twentieth century.[77] While it is, of course, a complex interaction of biological processes and consciousness, there must be the freedom to shape

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[77] Parsons, Sir John Herbert. *An Introduction to the Theory of Perception*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1925. Print.

our perceptions in an active manner that Macknik and Martinez-Conde suggest. The very act of perception is a process that is constantly and continuously being created within the individual. It is the act of actively engaging with the negative-space performance, and then attempting to reconcile that negative-space performance with what is being seen as projected into the three-dimensional space. In essence, when the individual is watching a film there are at minimum three films being engaged with, the one that is projected onto a screen, the one taking place in the mind that is comprised of the entirety of the illusion, i.e. the spectator believing she saw a moving picture with distinctive actions that created a progressive narrative, and the film that is comprised entirely out of the intermittent frames that do not actually exist on the celluloid, but that are created entirely as a negative-space performance. When this is compounded with the number of spectators watching a given performance, it becomes evident that once a two-dimensional reality is projected into the three-dimensional space of the illusory, there are rapidly expanding bubbles of new false realities being created.

This is the same phenomenon that occurs during the theatrical performance of a play, though it becomes more complicated with the liveness of the body. For the spectators watching the Lumières' films and believing that what they are seeing is real, there is a distancing that allows for a feeling of magic to be created. The spectators see the workers leaving the factory, but know that factory exists somewhere else. The magic thus comes from the technology that permits the spectators to see another individual across great distances and time. The spectators believe that whom they see on screen are actually workers; there is no precedent from which to question that what they are seeing is not actually "real." When distances of space and time can be traversed so freely, it

creates a situation where, “There are multiple series of one-directional modal transformations each of which is a time-series, and that contrary to general opinion, increments that are *equal* in one time-line may well be *unequal* when projected into another” (Brumbaugh 72). With the play though, when the spectators are now occupying the same space-time as the actors, the presence of the live body forces the spectator to consciously construct the negative-space performance on an even greater scale. The spectators must buy into the suspension of disbelief and become invested in the characters they are watching, not necessarily in the lives of the actors playing those characters. The spectators must construct what the characters do when they walk off the stage, though the spectators are also permitted the freedom to simply imagine the actor waiting in the wings for a cue, doing a quick costume change, or any myriad activities that dominate the backstage theatrical environment. Not only is every spectator creating an individualized version of a negative-space performance, but he or she is also likewise generating unique timelines with inherent rules on how people are able to operate within that constructed timescape. The theatrical performance can then exist simultaneously within an infinite number of timescapes, ranging from a time that includes only that which is being seen on the stage and passing in what is believed to be “real” time and despite any inclusions of the dramatic passage of time in the performance, to a vastly expansive time that encompasses an embodied knowledge of the history of the play’s performance and the various actors that have played the roles and the different incarnations of the show based on how directors have envisioned the script and the changes and cuts they have made to it. The actual script, just as with the actual filmstrip

that is running through the projector, is the reality; once it is projected onto the stage or the screen it immediately enters into the realm of the unreal.

One of the differentiations that is often argued between live performance and film though is centered on its reproducibility.[78] The theatrical event is seen as transitory; that even though a play can have multiple performances during a run, each and every one is a freshly unique experience that cannot be replicated. Film, on the other hand, seemingly trapped in the celluloid confines of its technology, can, assumedly, reproduce the exact same experience, over and over, once it is fed to the apparatus of the projector. Benjamin argues that through reproduction a work can lose its historicity and authenticity and that, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (120). To Benjamin, this constitutes a stripping away of the object's aura. I agree with this in part, but believe that we need to question where precisely Benjamin is situating the object's aura. With my claim that reality only exists in a two-dimensional form, in that which is written or photographed, and that the three-dimensional is a simulation of a projected reality, I do not believe that it is through mechanical reproduction that the aura is destroyed and that the mechanically produced art should be viewed as existing separately from the live performance. While I certainly do agree with Benjamin that an object can be reproduced so often as to make the originally intended message to become obscured, I offer instead that the subsequent reproductions of the original create new planes of reality. The faded and cracked nineteenth century glass plate negative,

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[78] In his discussion on copyrighting the live performance, Auslander utilizes Lury's claim that "because live performance is not fixed in a material form it can repeated but not replicated" (137).

removed now from its historicity and with the possibility that its authenticity can now be clouded, is no less real today than it was when it was first produced; its reality has just changed. Reality, as with time, is not fixed. It is malleable and it is fluid. It is constantly operating within a transmutative state. The fuzzy reproduction thus holds the same substantive weight as the perceived pure state of the original.

With my assertion that the two-dimensional reality is not fixed, but in agreeing with Benjamin in the existence and function of an artistic aura, I would move the aura from being situated with the object itself and instead locate it within the negative-space performance. This actually keeps the aura of the artistic experience protected from the barrage of distraction of meaning occurring in the three-dimensional space. As Baudrillard examines a world being consistently flooded with the creation of new information, he argues that, "Instead of causing communication, *it* [information] *exhausts itself in the act* of staging the communication; instead of producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning" (*In the Shadow* 101). This similar phenomenon is likewise happening with the aura of the object. If the aura is allowed to remain tied to the object, then as the numerous projected realities are being grafted onto it over an expanse of time, the interpretation of the aura becomes exhausted. Just as Benjamin has the reproducible object eventually losing clarity, so too does the reproduced aura. It isn't clear because it has lost meaning, but rather because it now contains too much meaning. When the aura of the object/work of art/experience/performance is located within the individual and is specifically reflective of that individual's own navigation of the space-time of the three-dimensional unreality is the meaning of Benjamin's aura allowed to be fully realized. The individual herself ascribes the historicity and authenticity to the aura

based on her own embodied knowledge and her own understanding, interpretation, and construction of space-time. Contrary to Lury's claim then, the negative-space performance allows for the experience to be not simply reproduced, but also replicated because the replication is always dependent on the individual's own engagement with the aura.

When examining the subsequent effects of from a film that violates the spectators' understanding of the natural world then, the resituating of the aura to the individual becomes best evidenced. As with the séances of the Davenport brothers and the spirit photography that seemingly permitted the permeability between the corporeal and the ethereal, the success of the performer/photographer was dependent solely on a spectator's desire to believe. Likewise, audiences were enraptured by the Lumières' actualités because they believed technology was able to give them a window into a city over 465 kilometers away from Paris. Whereas in magic the illusionist relies on misdirection to distract the audience's gaze from discovering the truth, the Lumière brothers were essentially doing the same. By creating the unique experience of how an audience engages with cinema, and thereby allowing each of them to construct an individualized aura internally based on that experience, they were misdirecting the spectators away from discovering that the reality was contained on a strip of celluloid and was instead what the light was coalescing into on the silver screen. When it is done effectively, "The art of the magician is the art of reassurance…So the first approach to devising magic must be that a theatrical illusion is in fact a little play, a brief drama with characters, situation, development, a surprise and resolution. Often magicians are, themselves, deceived and look past this necessary construction because the general form of magic performance is

deliberate and disarming: it appears to be a person presenting magic tricks, as different performers may present songs or juggle" (Steinmeyer 35). The performer is reassuring the audience on a subliminal level that it is acceptable for them to begin to entertain other interpretations of reality; that they can then form an understanding of the aura of the performance that challenges any preconceived notions they have about what is and is not possible in the three-dimensional world of physicality and liveness. Art then becomes dependent on the individual being permitted to construct an internalized aura for a work within his own negative-space performance and then to engage with another about her own differentiated aura of the similar, but never identical, experience.

When there is a visual violation though of that which is perceived to be possible, and the individual must reconcile that against his own beliefs, or fundamentally change his own perceptions of reality, the limitations of the accepted three-dimensional projected reality are revealed. One of the more spectacular stage illusions that was being performed at the time was, *The Vanishing Lady*, and after its debut in Paris in April 1886 by the illusionist Buatier de Kolta, London's *Daily Telegraph* reported:

> After spreading a newspaper on the floor, he [de Kolta] placed a chair upon it, and then asked a young lady to sit down. He threw over her a piece of silk, which barely covered her from head to foot. He then rapidly removed the drapery, and the chair was empty…There certainly was no trap in the floor, the chair was of the ordinary kind, and the trick was done in a strong light. The lady, in fact, disappeared before the very eyes of the audience; but so quickly was the trick done that no one present saw her escape. (qtd. in Warlock 58-59)

Within this account there is a distinctive and an immediate jarring of the negative-space performance space for the spectator. The correspondent tries to attempt to qualify what he just saw in order to show the readers that what he witnessed was not simply a trick or

an illusion, but something that operates on a much different level. There was adequate lighting, so there is not the possibility of something being hidden, unseen, or obscured. The chair is described as being "ordinary," and not possessive of unnatural magic powers, or incomprehensible advanced technologies. There was not an adequate amount of perceived real time to accomplish the seemingly impossible through technological means. The performance becomes elevated. When a negative-space performance cannot be constructed then to logically represent what the eyes have witnessed, the disruption to that individual's reality occurs and what remains is the possibility of new modes of belief. The reporter for the *Daily Telegraph* resists this however and utilizes words such as "trick" and "escape" to still situate the performance in a realm that can be understood. The fact is though, while the aura of the witnessing of that event will continue to grow and influence the subsequent negative-space performances of the experience for the reporter, there is also another new reality being formed from the words that he writes in his article in the newspaper. Now, others, not bound by the same space-time, and who were not even present at the actual performance, will read the description and subsequently create their own negative-space performances that may be imbued with actual magic or supernatural influences.

Les Trucages de Méliès

This is something that Georges Méliès understood, and after witnessing the spectacle of the Lumières' demonstration of the Cinématographe, decided to combine the illusions that he was performing on stage at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin with the new medium of film in order to create a unique and previously unseen performative mode. Even after purchasing the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, Méliès strove to present magic

performances that combined both standard stage magic with the technological automatons that he acquired with the theatre so as to challenge his spectators' engagement with reality. Méliès did not want to just present a show that audiences were familiar with, but he instead worked continuously to find ways to incorporate and design new technologies into his performances. He "created and presided over the Académie de Prestidigitation" and "between 1888 and 1907, both before and during his film career, he created some thirty illusions, some of whose mechanical features he marketed with a friend, the theatrical supplier Voisin" (Ezra 10). In a medium where magicians were increasingly relying on building shows around a single signature illusion, or on creating a performance that was simply a bricolage of famous illusions from other magicians in order to capitalize on audiences who had perhaps heard rumors of certain tricks, but may not have necessarily known precisely who the performer was, Méliès was quickly establishing his shows as being unique. He, like Robert-Houdin, shifted the audience's focus back to the magician himself. Designing thirty original illusions is a phenomenally staggering number in the world of magic, even today, and what Méliès was doing was presenting himself as extraordinary. He wanted audiences to come away from a performance not necessarily focused on the tricks they saw, but instead, like with the Marabouts and Robert-Houdin, with the belief that they had just witnessed an individual who possessed a form of arcane knowledge and abilities. While Robert-Houdin used hidden technology to position himself as one who has magical powers, Méliès used his technology overtly to show that his magic was in the ability to alter the very perceptions of reality.

Even after the Lumières declined Méliès's offer to buy the Cinématographe for 10,000 francs, Méliès was determined that the trick of cinema that he witnessed at the Salon Indien du Grand Café was precisely what he needed for his show.[79] What most attracted Méliès to the films he saw at the Salon Indien du Grand Café was their realism. In fact, "he made particular mention of the rustling of the leaves in the background of *Le Déjeuner de bébé*" (Vaughan 65). Even though the film focused on a scene of a man and a woman feeding an infant outside, it was the movement of the naturalistic elements in the background that became the magical moment of the experience for Méliès. This small and seemingly innocuous detail actually serves to differentiate the cinematic experience that Méliès envisioned from the theatrical. The entirety of the experience of going to the theatre is predicated on the willing suspension of disbelief as spectators subliminally accept the unspoken contract that the settings of each scene are indeed taking place wherever the script and the director so dictate. The spectators are essentially given the framework of a performance that they are then expected to construct themselves within the negative-space performance. With the new possibility of the screen being a window into another space-time, where spectators can see leaves rustling in a breeze and immediately know that even though they are sitting in the basement of a café they are now able to apparently see the outside world elsewhere, there is essentially the illusion of teleportation being created. A staple of classical magic, where one object or person is seen in one location only to disappear and immediately appear across the

[79] The Lumières believed that "interest in the new medium would be short-lived, and that it would be best for the family to exploit it exclusively until its popularity waned" (Ezra 12). Even though the Lumières turned down numerous offers to purchase the Cinématographe, it was a technology that could not be contained. There were simply too many other inventors who were also working simultaneously in different countries to create the moving picture and by 1896 there were numerous other camera/projectors that could be purchased

stage, the potential of this new version, one that the Lumières saw only as a novelty that they could capitalize on, was fundamentally understood by Méliès. In cinema, Méliès saw not just the illusion of projected movement, but also the impetus for an entirely new interpretation of the standard teleportation illusion: that of allowing the audience to become part of the trick and to exist in two places at once.

Méliès was determined to acquire a camera/projector for his theatre, and two months after the showing at the Salon Indien du Grand Café, he went to London and purchased one from the inventor, Robert W. Paul. Due to the fact that Edison did not apply for a European patent for his Kinetoscope, "a race began among entrepreneurs and *bricoleurs* to exploit and develop the new technology. This was all the more tempting a prospect because Edison's agents were selling Kinetoscope's and films for them at astonishingly high prices, given the relative simplicity of the machines and the low cost of the materials for their construction" (Williams 21).[80] What Méliès bought from Paul then for 1,000 francs was a pirated Kinetoscope that was given the new name of, Animatograph. It becomes apparent how fluid the boundaries are within the invention of cinema within this example and how there cannot be a singular individual credited with creating the genre. Méliès purchased films from both Paul as well as from Edison and on 4 April 1896 began incorporating them into his theatrical performances. While this was in alignment with other experiments with technologies in his previous shows including the usage of magic lantern projections, which Méliès used to create kaleidoscopic effects to enhance the otherworldliness of the theatrical space, Méliès was still not yet exploiting

[80] Williams suggests that the reason Edison did not actively seek to patent his Kinetoscope in Europe was because it was influenced so strongly by the work that Marey had done with moving pictures. If Edison had attempted to patent the device then as being of his invention, Europeans may have been more likely to question the authenticity of such a claim than the Americans.

cinema to its fullest degree in his shows. He needed to move cinema away from the novelty item that the Lumières and other exhibitors were situating it as in the first quarter of 1896 and instead make it magical. To do so, he needed to make the experience not about the trick, but about the power the performer possesses, and to accomplish this, Méliès had to invent his own camera/projector and develop an entirely new form of illusion.

Méliès begins to work with Lucien Korsten and Lucien Reulos to improve upon the basic design of Paul's pirated Kinetoscope so he can begin to produce his own films. On 2 September 1896, less than one year after first witnessing the Lumières' films at the Salon Indien du Grand Café, Méliès patents his new camera/projector and quickly after, on 2 December, forms his own motion picture production company, Star Films. Just as the invention of cinema itself is a pastiche of different inventors' contributions who each envisioned motion pictures functioning in differing manners, the device that Méliès, Korsten, and Reulos developed fittingly was likewise constructed. Utilizing parts from Paul's Animatograph, design ideas from the Isolatograph, as well as mechanical pieces from some of illusions at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the three men created their Kinétographe (Frazer 35). The machine itself literally becomes a device of illusion, and in the workshop of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, is created precisely as that. Méliès is not showing films as novelty, nor is he following a fad that was en vogue in Paris at the time; for Méliès film wasn't simply a new form of perceived passive entertainment. He was in actuality approaching cinema from the onset as a form of illusion. By blending together the technological with the suggestion of magic, Méliès was establishing a space within his theatre where entertainment became active. Spectators were being involved in the

performance as Méliès deconstructed the standard concept of the theatrical fourth wall and made it fluid. Within a single performance, the fourth wall could follow customary theatrical conventions and be found at the apron of the stage, as Méliès spoke to the audience to introduce a segment of the show. This imaginary wall could be permeated though as Méliès invited spectators up onto stage to partake in a trick, imbuing them with the power to make the transgression. With the films he was showing the fourth wall was also being moved to the screen itself. This allowed for the magician and the spectators to occupy the same space with their gazes being directed not at one another as usual, but now at the screen in order to experience the new two-dimensional reality that was being revealed.

The initial films that Méliès produced heavily resembled the work that the Lumières had already done. In fact, the first film that Méliès makes in 1896, *Une partie de cartes*, is a remake of the Lumières' film, *Partie de cartes*, from 1895. In the original version, three men sit at a table outside playing cards and smoking. One gentleman calls over a servant who enters traveling camera left and brings wine to the table. In Méliès's version though, the rather older, and stodgier, characters, are now replaced with three younger men (including Méliès) who are sitting outside at a table playing cards and smoking. Méliès calls over the servant, now a woman whose large frame is in juxtaposition to the slight stature of the servant in the Lumière film. The entirety of the scene is played more for its comedic elements than the simple actuality of Lumière scene with much looser and over-exaggerated movements by those in the Méliès interpretation. Méliès also differs by having the servant enter traveling screen right, establishing a precedent that would later become adopted as a standard editorial and cinematographic

trope, that screen right movement is indicative of forward progress whereas screen left movement signifies a return. While it is acknowledged that these are later conventions, it is interesting to note that the Lumières were relying heavily on screen left movement in the films I have examined so far. In *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, the train has a screen left movement and in *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* the workers similarly move screen left as well. While technically any of the films could be reversed in the projector and shown with contrary movements, by Méliès choosing to make the simple change in the otherwise static imagery of *Une partie de cartes*, he is subliminally rebelling against what had become, in less than a year, accepted convention. He was not making films that mimicked those of the Lumières; he was creating instead something that was uniquely his own.

Méliès delineated his early films into two distinctive main categories: the actualités such as those that were being produced by the Lumières and *scènes composées* that increasingly relied on the utilization of costuming and constructed sets to establish a scene for the story. Whereas the actualités of the Lumières provided an illusionistic window into a scene that a spectator could actually encounter in the three-dimensional naturalistic world, Méliès was now challenging that established belief and manipulating the realities of the worlds he was presenting in his films. Once the spectator becomes conditioned to the illusion of film allowing for the transgression of space-time, and is then introduced to the possibilities of the fantastical, there is a form of desire created. In fact, "Le désir est une invocation faite à l'image, disais-je un peu plus haut. Mais cette formulation n'est pas tout à fait juste: le désir est surtout une question posée par et dans l'image, une question qui émerge et grandit au fur et à mesure que la représentation se

développe"[81] (Le Maître 97). This notion of the desire appearing as a question in the image is of paramount importance. The spectator initially questions the very act of film allowing her to see across space-time, but once this is accepted, more questions continue to be developed. As each spectator finds a question in an image, answers that question, and then discovers that the answer leads to more questions, individualized negative-space performances are being created. It is not a question then of if what is being seen is real or not; it is in actuality a question of precisely how the image is real. This allows a paradox to be created; for once the individual accepts the reality that is created from the questions that were found within the image, it can then lead to subsequent explorations of the replication of the perceived impossible within the space of the three-dimensional world, which, in turn, can then allow for additional forms of reality to be constructed in subsequent two-dimensional creations.

An example of this phenomenon is found within Méliès's engagement with the de Kolta illusion, *The Vanishing Lady*, which was previously examined. In 1896, Méliès made the film, *Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert-Houdin*, which closely resembles the de Kolta illusion in its initial presentation although Méliès augments the trick dramatically. In the film, Méliès enters and bows to the audience directly. The scene is framed precisely as if the spectator is watching a theatrical performance, and to Méliès, this is exactly how he is framing his presentation of the illusion. Méliès then escorts a woman onto the stage, places a piece of newspaper on the ground just as de Kolta did, and sets a chair on top of the newspaper. The woman sits on a chair and Méliès covers

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[81] "Desire is an invocation made in the image, I said a little earlier. But this formulation is not entirely fair: the desire is mostly a question posed by and in the picture, a question which emerges and grows gradually as the performance grows."

her with an almost diaphanous piece of material. As soon as she is entirely covered, Méliès removes the cloth to show that she has indeed vanished. While de Kolta utilized an elaborate trapdoor system and a mechanical chair that would hinge downward to form a chute, allowing the assistant to slide down through the trapdoor to a hidden area under the stage, Méliès accomplished his illusion by simply editing the film in a nearly seamless manner. This may seem rudimentary to today's audiences who are accustomed to elaborate special effects and film editing trickery, but what Méliès did was revolutionary. He relied on the optical illusion that was already taking place that allowed the spectator to perceive to see motion and built on this to create *films de trucages*, illusions that were created in the negative-space performance for each spectator and not relying on elaborate mechanical stage apparatus to accomplish the same effect that he could achieve on the screen and in the minds of the spectators.

To achieve this, Méliès is manipulating time, discarding those moments that he deemed unnecessary to carry out the illusion and conflating disparate moments in order to establish a new, and entirely constructed, timeline. As Mulvey argues, "Just as the photograph's relation to time goes beyond equivalence in the grammar of tense, so the autonomy of the camera eye goes beyond the grammar of the person. The human factor is displaced" (*Death 24x* 63). As the reporter tried to reconcile to his readers what he saw when de Kolta first performed the illusion, there is still the possibility that his account of his newly perceived reality is in error. His view could have been partially obstructed, he could have missed a key moment in the trick due to misdirection or even due to blinking, or he could simply be fabricating the spectacular nature of the events in order to sell more copy. Once the human factor has been displaced though and the seemingly unblinking

lens of the autonomous camera captures an event, there is the space created for the new reality to exist within. In *Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert-Houdin*, there is a moment where, in the process of adjusting the cloth covering the woman, Méliès apparently inadvertently uncovers a portion of the woman's dress underneath the cloth. If this were done in the process of a stage illusion, the effect would be ruined for the audience would see precisely how the trick was being achieved. They would see the motion of the chair collapsing and the downward movement of the woman as she slid through the trapdoor. Even without the knowledge of the mechanics involved in staging the illusion, the spectators' eyes registering the movement that should be hidden would belie the magic that was being performed. Méliès allows the "mistake" to occur on purpose though, and the results are the image of the dress (and the woman) occupying a specific point in space-time and then instantly not.

The jarring nature of this becomes a true representation of the magic, a disappearance, which de Kolta was originally trying to create on the stage. There is no space-time created, and without the apparent time necessary to accomplish trickery, the negative-space performance becomes directed. Spectators are not able to fill in the missing information since there is no space-time in which to do so. Time as they understand it, and have come to accept it, has allowed for the impossible to become possible. The jarring would instantly signify a jump cut to today's audiences because even if they may not know the editorial terminology, they are still conditioned in the visual grammar of the image that Mulvey is operating from. For the audiences in 1896 at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, who had never experienced the visual language of film editing before, the vanish creates a significant shock, and one that can thus be proven to

have apparently actually occurred. If a spectator were permitted to examine de Kolta's chair after the illusion was performed, the magic would quickly dissipate as it was replaced with the mechanical secret employed. If the same spectator examined the film strip passing through Méliès's projector, he would see one still image where the woman's dress is visible followed immediately, in what he perceives to be perpetually linear time, by a still image showing her gone. This creates a space where, "We are no longer in the situation of a relationship between the actual image and other virtual images, recollections, or dreams, which thus become actual in turn: this is still a mode of linkage. We are in the situation of an actual image and its own virtual image, to the extent that there is no longer any linkage of the real with the imaginary, but *indiscernibility of the two*, a perpetual exchange" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 273). This means that once a spectator sees the illusion performed on screen by Méliès, and has his or her perception of the reality of space-time shocked, disallowing them to deviate from a negative-space performance that is being constructed and dictated to them by the performer, there is the subsequent acceptance that what is being projected is, in fact, reality. Thus, when that same spectator then sees a subsequent magic performance where the magician performs *The Vanishing Lady*, there is no longer the initial possibility of a reconstitution of the negative-space performance to accept that the illusion is being accomplished through mechanical trickery, but rather an engagement with a previously understood and mysterious form of reality.

Méliès continues though to compound the disruption of perceived reality though in his film by extending the magic beyond what de Kolta originally envisioned. In de Kolta's illusion, once the lady had vanished from the chair she then quickly appeared in

the house, breaking the fourth wall and effectively allowing both she and de Kolta to now encircle the audience and thereby permitting the spectators into the space where the magic was created. Méliès though looks at the empty chair and then extending his arms upward as he seemingly summons the power, makes not the lady reappear, but instead a skeleton. He acts shocked and dismayed at the new revelation as if he now understands the trick as Parisian audiences who may have already seen de Kolta's illusion previously understood it. By replacing the original stage ending, especially with an image of death, Méliès is also subtly making the allusion that the strictly mechanical approach to illusion may now be outmoded; that for the performer to be successful as the century is drawing to its close, he must embrace the technological in order to create hybridized forms of new realities. Barthes states that, "The realists do not take the photograph for a 'copy' of reality, but for an emanation of *past reality*: a *magic*, not an art…The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time" (*Camera Lucida* 88-89). The magic then is found in how a reality can exist in the past and be considered dead as belief systems have changed through the engagement with a plethora of other newly created realities. Realities follow a cyclical structure, where the actual and the virtual begin to coalesce to become indiscernible as Deleuze postulated, until one usurps the other and becomes accepted as the actual reality, only to then grow outmoded until it becomes the catalyst for the creation of augmented forms of reality only to begin the entirety of the process all over once again. Méliès demonstrates this with the conclusion of his film when he covers the skeleton, essentially burying the dead of the past, in order to then make the woman reappear once again. The

resurrection that Méliès performs reinforces the liveness of the body on the screen, even if it exists entirely within a two-dimensional form.

After the reappearance/rebirth of the woman in the newly constructed magic that Méliès creates in order to animate the image that is comprised entirely of light upon the screen, they exit stage left, giving them each a screen right movement once again. The two performers re-enter the frame immediately though and take their bows. By conflating the two-dimensional world of the projected screen reality with the three-dimensional performance space of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, Méliès also is attempting to give a sense of perceived depth to the film. The audience sits in a house facing a screen set up on a stage that is then shown on the screen. While this does provide for an immediate sense of doubling, it also begins to blur the lines of the dimensionality of the multiple spaces being employed. It creates another optical illusion and gives depth to the images on the screen by establishing a frame within a frame, i.e. the frame of the screen within the frame of the theatrical proscenium. This primes the audience to understand that what is witnessed on the screen is not solely what is contained in that which is being projected; that there exists movement through space outside of the film itself. The two-dimensional Méliès that exits from the screen after taking a bow can then immediately walk back into the three-dimensional space of the stage to present another trick. No matter what the subject matter of the film then, it becomes, "An experience such that viewers are coaxed to construe the film in ways that yield a certain experience more or less accurately foreseen by the filmmakers. Looked at this way, a film becomes a tissue of cues, and these cues can be quite fragmentary and varied" (Bordwell 124). The amalgamation that is created by the hybridization of the two-dimensional projected image

and the three-dimensional performer who is able to seamlessly pass through dimensions creates even more fragmented visual cues for the spectator to decipher and reconcile. The tissue of cues that Bordwell metaphorically utilizes becomes multilayered in the Méliès example at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin. This is purposefully done as a way to ensnare the spectator in the negative-space performance that has been created for her. With previous illusionistic examples such as Pepper's Ghost, where an audience could experience something they could not explain, but then be able to discern a logical solution to how the trick was accomplished while reconstructing what they saw in the negative-space performance, the magical effect on the audience was short-lived. Méliès though presented a quandary for his spectators through his performance and through precisely dictating the cues for how to engage with the illusion in both the theatrical space as well as the negative-space performance.

It must be understood then that for the audiences sitting in the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the Méliès that they saw on stage was no different than the Méliès they saw projected on the screen. It is not that they understood that the two-dimensional image was that of the man on stage who was filmed earlier, but rather that it is the exact same individual occupying the same space-time. To the spectators, the Méliès entering the frame on screen is no different than the Méliès walking from stage right to stage left in the theatrical space; as performer he can move between the different dimensions in real time.[82] In this instance, "It is useless to dream of revolution through content, useless to

[82] While this notion may seem to be stretching the perceived limits of believability, it is still a technique being utilized in multi-million dollar illusion shows in 2015. In one such example, David Copperfield lowers a screen on stage to show supposedly live footage of a remote island location. He then selects a member of the audience to join him on stage, and after writing down random information given to him by the audience on his arm to prove that what is about to happen is occurring in real time, Copperfield and the

dream of revolution through form, because the medium and the real are now in a single nebula whose truth is indecipherable" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 83). By utilizing Baudrillard's example in support of my argument here, I equate the revolution he refers to as one of the attempt at understanding how a specific illusion works that Méliès's audiences are embroiled in. As a collective, they do attempt to revolt against the performer to find a clue to revelation of the magical secrets being employed, but just as in the Baudrillard example, these secrets are not found within the content or the form of the performance. The audience cannot find a solution to the trick because they are unaware of what the actual illusion is. With all of the focus on the single trick in the performance, the spectators miss all of the various corresponding cues that could alert them to the suggestion that the three-dimensional space they occupy in the theatre itself is a deceptive illusion in itself. The spectators wrongfully assume that what they are experiencing in the three-dimensional world is a constant reality; that space-time in the perceived real world cannot be augmented or manipulated. With this engrained belief, early audiences unfamiliar with the cinematic language thus see Méliès freely operating between both dimensional spaces in real time as an acceptable truth and not as part of a larger illusion that is taking place.

Méliès further pushes and challenges the boundaries of reality within the two-dimensional space by directly addressing the fantastical nature of the dreamscape in his

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spectator then step onto a platform that is extended out over the audience to give the spectators a seemingly complete view and to reinforce that no trickery is being used, and then the two vanish. Copperfield and the spectator then appear on screen in the remote island location, Copperfield shows his arm to the camera with the random information generated by the audience written on it, the spectator is reunited with an estranged loved one, and then Copperfield disappears from the island, reappearing once again on the platform above the audience, allowing a stream of sand to pour from his hands to demonstrate how he is able to freely navigate between the two spaces (Copperfield).

films, and this is something that he actually develops into one of his distinctive genres. In the 1896 film, *Le Cauchemar*, Méliès presents a man who is plagued by horrific dreams as he attempts to sleep. The set utilized is of a standard theatrical design with painted flats for the walls that are more representational than actual. At the end of the film though, when the sleeping man awakes and beats his bedroom wall to check if it is solid after having witnessed it transformed into an open balcony in his nightmare, the flats of the set clearly move, signifying to the audience the fabricated nature of the scene. There are, in fact, two layers of unreality being created here: that of the dreaming state of semi-consciousness, and that of the false reality that is inherent in the world of the theatrical performance. What is perceived to be the "real" world (the actor occupying a particular place in space-time on the stage in three-dimensional space) becomes linked to the dream state in Méliès's film. The imaginary and the falsely perceived real likewise become indiscernible, and, as Pavis argues, "This space-time is both concrete (theater space and time of the performance) and abstract (fictional place and imaginary temporality). The action that results from the union is sometimes physical, sometimes imaginary. The space-time action is thus perceived in the here-and-now as a concrete world and, 'on an-other stage,' as a possible imaginary world" (149). Méliès though is positioning both the imaginary dreamscape and the physical as being firmly rooted in the fantastical; he is showing through the film (that the is being shown on the exact stage he is also performing for the audience) that one cannot be given credence over the other. Both the film, as well as the three-dimensional world the audience is operating within, are, in fact, simply constructed projections under a guise of real/imaginary. Once any form of reality is projected into the three-dimensional physical space though it becomes

open to interpretation, reconfiguration, and retransmission as it passes through each individual spectator's negative-space performance and thus cannot be considered as real any longer.

This is why Méliès's earliest films cannot be theoretically dismissed as being just "trick" films, for they are not meant to operate solely on their own but are actually part of a larger performance that is designed to challenge notions of reality through the transgression of dimensionality. Once the film becomes viewed outside of the performance it becomes only truth, but a truth that is now devoid of the functionality it could possess when synthesized with the live performance. With Méliès's films, there is a sense in current scholarship of them being nothing more than novelty; that they are merely an early filmmaker's experimentations with newly discovered editing techniques as well as in-camera special effects. While this certainly does progressively become true with Méliès, especially as his production company began to gain traction and as he started to produce films specifically to be sold for exhibition outside of his theatre in Paris, it is problematic to view the earliest films he was making without being contextualized through the lens of the live performance. There is a split that has thus developed in Méliès scholarship that has created a binary in regard to how to examine his films, where, "On one side of this divide is Georges Sadoul, who treated Méliès as a 'man of the theatre' and his films as wedded to a theatrical approach. On the other side of the divide is Pierre Jean, who asserted that Méliès was a '*cinéaste*' who used montage to transform profilmic space, to shift the film spectator's point of view, and to tell fairly complex stories" (Solomon 56). The fact is, both sides of the debate are entirely correct; Méliès is simultaneously a man of the theatre and a cinéaste. What the differing

arguments fail to acknowledge though is that Méliès is an illusionist. This is ultimately what motivates each of his decisions. Méliès treats the stage and the screen as one in the same; he utilizes them to present illusions. He utilizes sets and costuming in his film to set the scene for the story of the illusion, just as one would set a scene for actors in a play. He employs various filmmaking techniques such as close-ups, overt and implied camera movements, transitions, special effects, and cuts to misdirect the gaze of the audience. All is done so to serve the illusion that he is creating. He uses film and theatrical staging to make the barrier between the reality of the two-dimensional space and the false reality of the three-dimensional space permeable and he then moves freely between the two. He does this in order to create a magical space, for he is first and foremost the magician who ultimately and actively seeks to challenge his audiences' perceptions of the possibilities of the actual in order to introduce them to spaces where new forms of reality can, and do, exist.

Conclusion

While I end the body of my argument in 1896, with motion pictures celebrating only their first year of existence, it is necessary to address what direction their trajectory took. The early history of film has been well documented and well analyzed and differing competing schools of philosophical thought have emerged in an attempt to understand and to categorize what has been created in the art form. I extend my argument though only four years as Paris celebrated the new century by hosting the Exposition Universelle from 14 April 1900 to 12 November 1900. Just as had been done four times before in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Paris wanted to show the world how far the city had come since the upheaval that had occurred thirty years before. Paris had been rebuilt and remapped, and after the seeming success of the 1889 Exposition Universelle that commemorated the centennial of the French Revolution, the 1900 Exposition was designed to showcase Paris as a fully modern city embracing technological advancements including its substantial use of electricity (including an entire exhibit hall, the Palais d'Électricité), that would allow the Exposition to run well into the night during its entire run. For the Exposition Universelle of 1900, "The Parisian bourgeoisie of the Third Republic knew that their capital's position as an internationally acknowledged world city was inextricably linked with its role as the leading exposition venue, the 'Queen City of Expositions.' By 1900, Paris was also widely regarded as having held the 'exalted position of Queen of Municipalities' in Europe for a considerable time, so that it seemed only appropriate to hold a grand exposition as the culmination of a 45 year tradition" (Geppert 64). This notion of tradition, where Paris has been able to hold Expositions despite any of the political or social strife they have

had to endure, becomes almost revisionistic in nature. Paris has positioned itself to be a surface level projection of reality, but without any substantiality of substance behind the projection. The three-dimensional performative space has become just that, only a performance that is being staged by a multitude of players.

Méliès was present at the fair, not to showcase his films to the public, but rather as a spectator shooting newsreels and panoramic photographs along with a proliferation of other photographers who documented the event with their cameras. The Lumière brothers exhibited their films in the Hall of Festivals and one of the biggest attractions was the reimagining of the Daguerre diorama in the form of the *Cinéorama* presented by a friend of Méliès, Raoul Grimoin-Sanson. In the 360-degree projection of the Cinéorama, "Spectators standing in the center of a large circular structure could observe the simultaneous projection of ten views of a single scene, a bullfight in Barcelona, the carnival in Nice, or sensational views of the world seen from a balloon. The Cinéorama was an enormous success despite the loud clatter and intense heat produced by the projectors and the arc lights" (Frazer 45). Now, the spectator could be completely immersed within the filmic, with the projected reality completely encircling them and seemingly allowing them to leave the festival grounds in order to move across space-time to any number of places. With the heat and noise of the mechanic that allowed for this to take place, the individual was literally now being consumed by the machine in order to be afforded the opportunity to transcend his normative plane of existence. It was not simply a situation where the film was a novelty attraction at the Exposition, but rather was experiential; it seemingly magically turned the projected film on the two-dimensional screen to now be translated more effectively into the three-dimensional space. The

entirety of the three-dimensional world could thus be viewed as a perceived simulacrum, for the audience at the Exposition finding themselves immersed in the virtual reality of a projected three-dimensional world could logically also assume that others elsewhere could likewise look in on the Parisian Exposition grounds as well and interact with the assumed accompanying reality in the same way.

The Cinéorama was not the only filmic technology to challenge the audience's perceptions of reality at the Exposition Universelle of 1900 though. In addition to filmed performances of operas and ballets being shown to the spectators, allowing them to experience a live theatrical event that was already completed, there was also an exhibit that differentiated itself even further from what the spectators expected with film. The *Phono-Cinéma Théâtre* was a small venue at 43 Rue de Paris that showed films of theatrical performances, mime routines, and dances, all in color, and with sound. The results were astonishing, and, "Le Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre est une véritable « attraction » qui mêle plusieurs genres différents: il y a des films sonores synchronisés au phonographe (chansons, monologues, extraits de pièces de théâtre), mais aussi des danses et des pantomimes qui sont simplement accompagnées par un pianiste ou un orchestre. Il y eut aussi un bruiteur et probablement un bonimenteur"[83] ("Le répertoire"). Here, it becomes apparent at precisely how the three-dimensional world and the two-dimensional world are melded together in order to thoroughly challenge how the spectator at the Exposition Universelle in 1900 engaged in reality. The spectator observes a musician playing a song in the three-dimensional theatrical space the spectator also occupies, but

[83] "The Phono Cinema Theatre is a real 'attraction' that combines several different genres: there are sound films synchronized to the phonograph (songs, monologues, plays excerpts), but also dances and pantomimes that are simply accompanied by a pianist or an orchestra. There was also a noisemaker and probably a barker."

likewise also sees the two-dimensional performer on the screen reacting and performing to the music that is being played. The hand-tinted colored film also belies the artificiality of the film itself, but it is still uncanny enough, not truly representative of the colors that the spectator can see represented within the theatre itself as with the Lumières' color photography processes, to cause a complete disruption of the spectator's engagement with reality.

Throughout my dissertation I have been asserting that the three-dimensional world is thus not reflective of reality, but it rather a misleading projection that the spectator then interprets as the real and that the truth of reality can be found only in the two-dimensional. I also assert though that this reality is not singular, but has the capacity to expand exponentially to create subsequent new, and equally true, forms of reality once the spectator begins to engage with the two-dimensional performance within the negative-performance space. Take for example, *Hamlet*. The play has existed for over half a millennium and has been performed, studied, and deconstructed myriad times. The text itself constitutes the reality of the play whereas the subsequent performances of it signify the projected false reality. There is no one authentic text; one can choose to engage with the First Quarto from 1603, the Second Quarto from 1604, the First Folio from 1623, or with any of the plethora of derivatives of those texts that editors have compiled over the years. There could have existed other realities of the play that are now lost to time such as the *Ur-Hamlet*. A spectator comes to the play with an embodied knowledge that encompasses that which they have read, been taught, have seen previously, as well as all of the semiotical markers that constitute the performance of the play such as the advertising posters and ephemera associated with a given production.

No two individuals can thus have the same experience with the performance since they each construct different negative-space performances. The actors portraying the characters on stage thus become amalgamations of each spectator's previous engagement with the play; the Hamlet for one spectator can seem fresh and new, whereas to another he can appear to be a mimicry of Olivier or Branagh. Once the three-dimensional live performance is over, it no longer exists and can never exist again. Even if it is filmed, it passes into being another variation of a two-dimensional reality.

While this approach to performance may seem to be far-fetched, it is not outside of the realm of current scholarship in quantum theory, where scientists such as Leonard Susskind, Craig Hogan of Fermilab, and Stephen Hawking have developed arguments for and postulated on the possibilities of the "holographic principle," which suggests that the world is comprised of information as opposed to energy and matter and is, in essence, a three-dimensional projection of a two-dimensional reality. As Susskind argues, "Another completely different line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that the world is two dimensional. Klebanov and I and independently Charles Thorn have discovered that string theory in the light front gauge has the form of a two-plus-one-dimensional theory with no explicit mention of a longitudinal direction. In the work of Klebanov and myself the transverse two-dimensional space is taken to be a discrete lattice with no continuum limit required. Thus we find similarities between string theory and 't Hooft's holographic idea" (6378). While this is, of course, at a purely theoretical level, as it deals with the gravity at the event horizon of a black hole and the subsequent projection of vast amounts of information, it does allow for the possibility of conceptually challenging what is readily accepted as the real. Reality then becomes completely dependent on the

individual, and the world thus becomes comprised of infinite bubbles of projected unrealities, created by individuals through an engagement with their own negative-space performances of reality. These bubbles are continuously intersecting, coalescing, and dividing to form countless other forms believed to be real.

While the early days of photography and film have been seemingly exhaustively studied, future research can still be done by looking at photographs and film through the lens of constructions of reality as opposed to simply being documentary or a form of entertainment, especially now in a time where there is an excessive proliferation of the creation of images. Also, many mythologies have developed around the different art forms, some of which I have examined in this dissertation, but there are still others that future researchers should explore. For instance, there is little scholarship on the films that were created for the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, despite the fact that some of the largest theatrical stars of the time, such as Sarah Bernhardt (who performed a swordfight in a scene from *Hamlet* in one film), were involved in them. Even though twenty-three of the original forty-one films survive, there has not been a serious academic examination of the films and their function at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. Likewise, if one were to ask any pronounced film buff when the first color film, or the first sound film, was produced, in all likelihood they would be placed decades after the films produced at the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre. Just as subsequent work has been done on early color photography, and the Autochrome process developed by the Lumière brothers, a serious examination beyond mere process and instead focused on how the two-dimensional color image challenged spheres of reality for spectators who were accustomed to black and white images is also warranted.

In the end, it is oftentimes easy to look at performance as only existing in the three-dimensional space of the theatrical stage and in a space where the spectator becomes simply a passive observer, whether if sitting in a theatre watching the action unfold on the stage, or through looking at a photograph. I argue though that there is no differentiation between spectator and performer; both are performers who are actively involved in a conversation, either in the liveness of the three-dimensional space, in a space separated by space-time, or within a negative-space performance. For any performance to be successful then an immersive experience must be created and the value of the spectator's negative-space performance must be not only acknowledged, but also capitalized on. Some of the performers I have examined here, whether magician, illusionist, artist, photographer, or filmmaker understood this and used this to challenge individuals' perceptions of reality and of what is possible. Performance must be inspiring, even when it is rooted in escapist fantasy where one believes that magic, spirits, mechanical autonomous sentient men, and disappearing ladies actually do exist. Ultimately, reality becomes the myriad ways to perform the imagined, and these performances thus allow for a multiverse of possibilities to subsequently exist.

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