

# RE-ANIMATING GHOSTS

## MATERIALITY AND MEMORY IN HAUNTOLOGICAL APPROPRIATION

MICHAEL PETER SCHOFIELD

### Abstract

This research examines the spectrality of animation and other media based on the photographic trace. Using diverse examples from popular culture and the author's own investigative practice in media art, this paper looks at how archival media is re-used and can be brought back to life in new moving image works, in a gesture we might call hauntological appropriation.

While sampling and re-using old materials is nothing new, over the last 15 years we have seen an ongoing tendency to foreground the ghostly qualities of vintage recordings and found footage, and a recurrent fetishisation and simulation of obsolete technologies. Here we examine the philosophies and productions behind this hauntological turn and why the materiality of still and moving image media has become such a focus. We ask how that materiality effects the machines that remember for us, and how we re-use these analogue memories in digital cultures.

Due to the multimodal nature of the author's creative practice, photography, video art, documentary film and animation, are interrogated here theoretically. Re-animating the ghosts of old media can reveal ontological differences between these forms, and a ghostly synergy between the animated and the photographic.

**Keywords:** *hauntology, animation, memory, media archaeology, appropriation, ontology, animated documentary*

\* University of Leeds, United Kingdom  
[m.p.schofield@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:m.p.schofield@leeds.ac.uk)

Every culture has its phantoms and the spectral-ity that is conditioned by its technology (Derrida, Amelunxen, Wetzell, Richter, & Fort, 2010, p. 39).

While much has been written about 'hauntology' in music, television and photography in recent years, there is certainly less to be found examining this key cultural concept in relation to animation. Despite it being heralded variously as the current "zeitgeist" (Fisher, 2006); as a common musical trope that "passed into ubiquity long ago... as familiar today as the sounds it fetishizes" (Turner, 2019: 51); and even as the "most important, political-philosophical concept we have right now" (Whyman, 2019) – hauntology remains a fairly opaque umbrella term, a "difficult but trendy philosophy word" (Whyman, 2019) which lacks precise definition or simple application. This apparent obscurity could possibly explain why the obvious connections with animated media haven't been firmly established, but equally, the cause may lie with a misconception about the indexicality of the animated image. As we shall see, the ghost-like properties of both photography and film are seemingly dependent upon us seeing them as disembodied traces of a *real* past – as with Roland Barthes' haunting certification of presence, the "that-has-been" (Barthes, 1993, p. 76) of the photographic. Should this really disqualify animation from such spectrality on semiotic grounds?

Addressing these issues and their relationship to the materiality and memory of media, I will draw on key examples from art and popular culture, and also my own recent practice, which appropriates and "re-animates" vintage animation, disintegrating archival photographic plates and other obsolete media materials. This work includes *The Remote Viewer* (2018), a two screen projection piece which re-presents shifting archival photography, and *Zoetrope.space* (2019), a multimodal project re-scoring appropriated video loops presented in various forms: a website; a series of AV performances; a cassette tape album. Both these pieces attempted to conjure the ghosts from superseded media, repurposing fragments of analogue photography and old cartoon excerpts, to investigate

how we can foreground their specific materiality, and the haunting associations with personal and cultural memory which that process can invoke. Both works pose fundamental questions about hauntology and animation as a medium, as they play in a critical liminal zone between motion and stillness; between past and present; between life and death. In comparing the two works it may be possible to see if there are key ontological differences between the animated and the photographic, even as the latter evidently underpins the former: "all works of celluloid animation were *photographic* in origin" (Frank, 2016). The lines are blurred still further once we acknowledge that transplanted into the digital era, the indexicality and authenticity of all these media is thrown into question (Gunning, 2004).

As a philosophical idea, originally coined by Jacques Derrida, hauntology is a fundamental refutation of ontology (Häggglund, 2008, p. 82). It is an acknowledgement that the past is always a continual, yet often irreconcilable, part of the present. The present moment is seen as a metaphysical illusion, any given point in time cannot be defined in isolation, as it is inevitably stained by the ghosts of all moments that preceded it – the material constituted through what is now immaterial – the trace. For Derrida, there is no possible definition of 'now' which omits 'then' (Derrida, 2006, p. 10) – much like the persistence of vision required for us to see moving images as animated at all – the past must always underlie the experienced present: without it, any given moment is meaningless. In a hauntology of media, rather than seeking fixed definitions and categories of forms and practices as we see them now, we might examine how moving images are haunted by their origin in stills photography; how digital media is haunted by its analogue forbears; and how contemporary animation practices are haunted by earlier techniques, and crucially, our fuzzy memories of them on screen. In its more recent cultural incarnations, hauntological work often addresses the mediation of memory, the effects of recording technology on our perception of time passing and our view of the past, and our changing attitudes in the present towards notions of both

technological and political progress. We see in these cultural artefacts digital media's effects on culture and the pervasive foregrounding of nostalgia – the fetishisation of old media forms in contemporary works that draw on the digital archive for source materials or inspiration (Drenda, 2013). In its manifestation as a specific genre of media, hauntology often takes one of two approaches. The ghosts can either be re-animated through appropriation or via mimesis.

In the latter we find a substantial intersection between the hauntological and what we might normally categorise as pastiche, or even parody. These can be faithful recreations of fondly remembered cultural artefacts, or a total reimagining of old forms and ideas – a fictitious or idealised past conjured from the fog of memory and archaic media technologies. Whether or not this mimetic approach adopts a celebratory, ironic or critical stance upon the past, is open for debate (Tanner, 2016) – often it seems more like a fetishisation of past forms. We certainly see this in Elodie Roy's investigations of hauntological music, namely the seminal Ghost Box recordings, and their "meticulous homages to past realms" (Roy, 2015, p. 68). The label has certainly moved in this direction, from something more allusive of a forgotten past, to something precise, detailed and closer to traditional pastiche in many ways – the more meticulous those homages became, the closer to the actual past forms they imitated, the less pronounced the haunting gaps in memory; the temporal disjunctures of media; the perceived loss of time. Mimesis is the less hauntological of the two approaches for this reason.

### Hauntological Appropriation

A material ghost must have a dual nature: the present object, the support or medium (which can often be invisible to us), and the spectral trace of the past that it channels – the usual focus of our attentions: the absent referent (Schofield, 2018, p. 24).

In my own work, and in the rest of this article, I examine the alternative hauntological approach: appropriation. Rather than recreating or alluding to past forms in new creations, hauntological appropriation re-uses old media directly, sampling and recontextualising archival fragments in haunting new media art. There is often still a fetishisation of the medium over the message, but in using media that has an authentic and indexical link to the past, appropriation in this mode converses with 'real' ghosts, so to speak – the materiality of the medium often signifying both this authenticity and the spectrality of media itself.

*For Marks, analogue nostalgia expresses a 'desire for indexicality' and 'a retrospective fondness for the "problems" of decay and generational loss that analog video posed'.*

*To put it in terms of communication theory, analogue nostalgia is directed towards the noise, not the signal. In the broadest sense, it operates as a strategy of re-enchanting an object through aesthetic defamiliarisation as it is characterised by deliberate imperfection (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 34).*

The foregrounding of background noise and such analogue flaws - "the hiss of vinyl, the decay of old tape" (Turner, 2019, p. 51) – is a familiar hauntological strategy by now, if not a cliché. Alongside the defamiliarisation role mentioned above – rendering the banal strange, the familiar uncanny – this noise indexically signifies the authentic aura of the old media in question, whilst also drawing focus on the temporal disjuncture taking place in all recordings – in the "crackle" we can "hear that time is out of joint" (Fisher, 2013). In other words, through the foregrounding of a medium's specific material qualities, we notice that the trace it carries is not co-present with us – not material at all in fact – but a ghost of something long gone, a vestige from the past resurrected in the present using technology. The greater the noisy materiality, the further away in time the trace seems. In its post-modern usage, however, the provenance of these ghosts

becomes much less important, and this haunting noise is readily copied and simulated within digital software, applied to traces of the present not the past. We see this common trope in Hipstamatic and Instagram retro-photo filters, and in the current fashion in digital video production for 35mm film and VHS overlay packs – production gimmicks often favoured by students who are too young to remember the original analogue aesthetics for themselves (Nicholas, 2009, p. 152f). This seems to suggest that these specific trends in digital culture have little or nothing to do with personal memory – that they are superficial “hollow signifiers” (Sconce, 2000, p. 171), perhaps, or not signs at all. There is a theory that noise of all kinds is the antithesis of communication, embodying, or at least alluding to, the Lacanian “real” (Castanheira, 2012, p. 91): that which cannot be signified at all. This may well be the case in some creative uses of noise, where signals are obliterated entirely, but here the noise in question, though simulated in the examples mentioned above, is always recognisable and specific to certain media from a particular time. So what is the link to memory for those who don’t remember?

Media itself forms the time bridge. Not only in photography, which is often theorised in terms of memory prosthesis (Bate, 2010) (Lury, 2013), but animation and live-action film as well. While we might not actively use these as aide-mémoires in the same way, animation and film still have an uncanny ability to affect memory, become memories themselves, and allow us to remember the memory of others, almost like ‘postmemory’ (Hirsch, 1997), to appropriate a term from Marianne Hirsch. Because the material traits of obsolete technologies are part of media history and the cultural memory that we share, these tropes become desirable and synonymous with authenticity or quality, even in those who have no living memory of their original use. Technological imperfections that were once seen as inhibitive, even annoying, at the time in which they were still in general use, become sentimentalised and fetishized decades later, and this rose-tinted view is then passed on into ‘postmemory’, as well.

Excerpts of found recordings, TV programmes, signals, and musical tropes together form the sound picture that comprises the material of memory (Drenda, 2013).

In hauntological appropriation, this materiality, of what we might instead call ‘media postmemory’, is recognised, re-used and foregrounded, hence the focus “towards the noise, not the signal” (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 34), in these types of works. This becomes particularly apparent in the non-narrative, and sometimes fairly abstract moving images of music video. The characteristic memory-noise of obsolete media is foregrounded, to the exclusion of all else, in promotional films such as *Boards of Canada – Tomorrow’s Harvest Transmission* (2013) and in the proto-Vapowave (Tanner, 2016) of *Oneohtrix Point Never - Nobody Here (Memory Vague 11/11)* (2009) – both of which use the lo-fi aesthetics of sampled VHS tapes to invoke memory-states that are too abstracted to trigger any specific memory. What they create instead, through their visible materiality, is an eerie semblance of the experience of remembering, an atmosphere of repressed or vanishing memory that surfaces in inexplicable ways – like some Freudian ‘screen memory’ (Freud, 1962). In The Caretaker’s mammoth project *Everywhere at the end of time (Stages 1-6)* (2016-2019), this link between hauntological appropriation and amnesia (or paramnesia), is rendered explicit. Musician and artist James Leyland Kirby, samples and manipulates noisy recordings of 1920s ballroom music. Each album represents a different stage in the progression of Alzheimer’s disease. As memory is lost, anxiety increases, the noise that initially triggered nostalgia and signified the authenticity or provenance of the memory/recording, begins to take over instead, distorting and finally obliterating the traces of the past entirely. The work is deeply thought-provoking, not just as a study of the fallibility of human memory and mental illness – as originally intended by Kirby – but as an analogue for technology’s potential effects on how we remember, misremember, and ultimately forget. Celia Lury investigates similar concerns from a sociological position, connecting photography, memory prosthesis and various mental illnesses, in *Prosthetic Culture* (1998). Here

she attempts to establish a link between image technologies and false memories:

Multiple personality and false memory syndrome are taken to be (historically specific) examples of the implications of seeing photographically (Lury, 2013, p. 106).

While such 'media effects' are really difficult, if not impossible, to link causally, we can say one thing about such technology and memory without equivocation. Recordings are always false memories in that they are never real *human* memories. In getting machines to remember for us, we're always engaged in false memory worlds, to some extent. The background noise of that mnemonic technology is a reliable aide-mémoire of this virtuality, and it is in a subliminal realisation of this as memory loss, that hauntological work often becomes truly haunting.

Extending the search for this kind of appropriation beyond these niches of popular music and music video, we see similar associations between memory and materiality buried in video art, documentary film and narrative cinema. In the BFI's intriguing DVD, *Misinformation* (Dykes, 2010) a bridge is built between these worlds in which hauntological musician Mordant Music, selects and re-scores public information films from the BFI's Central Office of Information archives. These appropriated short films are redolent of UK culture in a specific era: primarily the 1970s. This also happens to correlate with Baron Mordant's own childhood – but this isn't just an exercise in reminiscence. The very act of re-scoring these films begins to alter and delete that memory. Removing the original audio is a gesture akin to suppression, the partially recalled past silently returning as an unnerving dream. This is definitely intentional, as Baron Mordant states in the sleeve notes:

A selection of COI films, redolent of my youth, unearthed me and I duly smeared them with my detritus... I imagined sounds and characters leaving one

film & cropping up in another and that's the way it eventually spooled (Dykes, 2010).

In true hauntological fashion, the materiality of the source materials on deteriorating celluloid and noisy analogue video, is foregrounded in their digital re-presentation. Usually hidden elements such as flickering film leaders, labels and test cards, are left in place and emphasised via the new electronic score. The dust, scratches and bleached colours are also somehow accentuated by Baron Mordant's transfixing rhythmic noise. The materiality of the medium effectively reminds us of the temporal disjunctures taking place, and the strange spectrality of these silent ghosts from many decades before. There is no pastiche or wistful nostalgia in this hauntological treatment. Frightening analogue sounds defamiliarise banal scenes, such as crime prevention adverts and trade fair promotions. Nauseating tape warble renders everyday memory into a hauntingly bad trip – perhaps one that you would rather forget than remember.

Somewhat unexpectedly perhaps, the most haunting re-used scenes in the compilation are those featuring animation rather than 'real' footage of the past. In *A Dark Social Template*, Mordant Music adds abstract analogue noise and distorted drones to a largely animated documentary entitled *New Towns in Britain* (1974).

The COI casts off squalor and poverty in this vision of a bright new town in Britain. Colourful post-war animation from Halas & Batchelor adds extra glow (Dykes, 2010).

This piece is hauntological *politically* as well as aesthetically. It not only deals in haunting screen memories and their fading echoes on film, but in what Mark Fisher referred to as the "slow cancellation of the future" (Fisher, 2014, p. 8) that began in the 1970s and 1980s. Extending both Franco Berardi's ideas in *After the Future* (Berardi, 2011), and Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, Fisher argued that culture has become

backwards-looking since the fall of communism and the triumph of neoliberal hegemony. The sense of a progressive future that defined much 20<sup>th</sup> century culture was replaced by a rampant consumerism, and a 'retromania' (Reynolds, 2011) haunted by the failure of that progressive future to materialise – this then perpetuated and endlessly recycled by the internet and digital archiving.

This lost future is represented here in the failed dream of mass social housing. The hopeful images of these new build estates is haunted from the future by what we know now about what happened to them. We can almost hear the riots, police sirens and bulldozers moving in, half-heard in Mordant's pulsing industrial soundtrack. The animation is particularly haunting in its childlike naiveté. While it might not index the reality of these places, it very successfully indexes the original dream – the "ecstatic truth" (Herzog & Weigel, 2010), the utopian ideal that led to their construction in the first place. The sound subverts this idea, and ambiguities in the animation help this process immensely. Dark drones render animated people flocking to the new towns, a swarm. Cartoon contortions of people and faces slip from humorous and childlike to uncanny and disturbing. A hand-drawn town grows like germs in a petri dish. The stroboscopic quality of the low frame-rate in the animated sequences suggests the material artifice at work – the temporal illusion underlying animation – as the individual photographic frames burst forth, shattering the hallucination.

*MisinforMation* is a very appropriate name for this hauntological exercise. As we watch we become acutely aware of the role sound plays in establishing meaning in film – in how even simple decontextualisation can lead us to be misinformed. This throws into question the role of archival contexts and how they change meaning too. The acute "hypomnesia" (Derrida, 1996, p. 11) of the archive – not only exemplified in its tendency to misremember and forget, but that the archive "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory" (Derrida, 1996, p. 11). We begin to

see that any re-presentation of archival 'memories' will haunt them with some imposed concept or narrative from outside – that inevitably, their original meaning will be lost entirely.

*Memory Hole* is a website that collects amateur video tapes rejected from television clip shows such as *America's Funniest Home Videos*. These grainy VHS excerpts were originally censored for being too weird for TV. Using a similar technique to *MisinforMation*, these clips are edited and re-scored with creepy new audio, to create a strange alternative vision of America's recent past.

Even the stuff that they have aired, if you remove the zany voiceover and the dorky music and the laugh track and everything, it's horrifying (Farah, 2014).

This interview in *Vice* magazine seems to suggest that the makers of *Memory Hole* intended to reveal unnerving hidden truths through this intervention in the archive. This certainly resonates with the origin of their chosen name: taken from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the term 'memory hole' has come to refer to any mechanism for repressing, censoring or deleting from cultural memory, truths which are too inconvenient for those in power. Unlike *MisinforMation*, however, there doesn't seem to be much social or political commentary in this memory manipulation. The result is more akin to a collection of video nasties or found-footage horror films. The website may be solely for entertainment, but the hauntological element is very much present in its bending and recontextualisation of time, and in the use of VHS materiality to further defamiliarise the banal. These appropriated clips are it turn both hilarious, haunting and genuinely disturbing. American home life in the 1980s is represented by *Memory Hole* as a veritable little shop of horrors.

In its selection and recontextualisation of past media, work based on this type of appropriation always has a problematic relationship with truth. Unlike most historical/archival projects, hauntologists are largely self-aware of this issue,

and play with these very pitfalls as part of their methodology. However, after decades of 'remix culture' and cultural appropriation dominating western art and media, there is something of a theoretical and cultural move against stealing as a form of creativity. This is not the place to fully explore the current discourse on appropriation, but we can certainly see within its hauntological variant, parallels with a questionable postmodern pastiche, "where distinctions between tradition, authenticity and modernity dissolve, demonstrating the 'loss of referentiality' and the triumph of the culture of the simulacrum" (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 28). The 'lossless' copying and re-using of materials is fundamental to digital technologies and the cultures that have emerged alongside them. What Jaimie Baron calls "the archive effect" is impossible to avoid in digital culture, where "the meanings of archival documents are modified when they are placed in new texts and contexts, constructing the viewer's experience of and relationship to the past" (Baron, 2013). Once digitised and disseminated the past is there for people to re-use as they wish, accelerating "archive fever" (Derrida, 1996).

Appropriation and recontextualisation can be as much about the search for meaning as its dissolution, however. We can see this in the hauntological documentary films of Adam Curtis. His work is created almost completely from found footage: grainy clips from old adverts, entertainment programmes and newsreels raided from the BBC archives. Much like the examples we have already examined, these appropriated materials are brought to life, and cast in a new light, using new music – but also, crucially, with Curtis's own inimitable narration. More akin to essay films than conventional documentaries, it is his discursive writing that ties the disparate threads together, trying to make sense of the chaos of 20<sup>th</sup> century history, using its partial traces on video tape. *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace* (2011) is particularly hauntological in its dark view of the history of technology, apparently haunted by Sigmund Freud's mistaken view that the human brain is an electrical machine. Curtis connects the seemingly unconnected, weaving together an alternative view that appears to

reveal a hidden intention or teleological coherence to events. For some this narrative is dubious or insufficiently evidenced:

Everything was connected [in *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace*]. This, of course, is the dark, muttered rubric of conspiracy theorists everywhere. Except that everything isn't connected and sometimes connections that look intriguing in the first place become fragile and fraudulent when scrutinised more closely (Preston, 2011).

Either way, Curtis's work articulates more about the present than it reliably bestows historical facts upon the viewer. The films show how our current view of reality is haunted by ideas and visions of the past, some of which are certainly distorted fantasies – this is what makes his works of archival appropriation culturally significant and deeply hauntological. Despite the use of appropriation and remix, his work is also a rejection of one of postmodernism's central tenets, the denial of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1999, p. 169). In making these connections, this seems to be exactly what Curtis is looking for. The primary grand narrative in his work is actually the same as the one at the heart of Mark Fisher's hauntological view – that "our culture has become pessimistic and backward-looking, constantly referring to the past because it is too afraid to face up to the future" (Anthony, 2015) and that Curtis investigates this by doing the same thing himself - looking at "fragments from the past to examine the present" (Anthony, 2015). Whether or not the connections are all real, their ghosts are nonetheless exerting a real presence on things as they are now, and it is this profound absence that marks a presence that Curtis successfully exploits and expounds in his work:

Documents in the physical archive are of no relevance to a society at all if they are not circulated, and thus remain "dead" archival matter (Mayer, 2011).

None of these examples of hauntological appropriation would work without the archival artefacts as indexical links to the

past – these are the things that haunt and disturb in these works, notwithstanding their various recalibrations. Yet, despite these real connections to an earlier time, works using appropriated materials are just as likely as the mimetic variants of hauntology to misremember and deliberately create idealised or unreliable views of our past. Recontextualisation of media fragments, and the foregrounding of the medium over the message, create a space in which mediated memory is destabilised by itself, pushing it further towards the realm of the imaginary. But perhaps this is the point. If we are to examine cultural memory as something which haunts and even defines the present, historical accuracy is of secondary importance to the perception of the past in the popular consciousness today, however inaccurate that might be. We see something similar in Chris Marker's *A Grain Without A Cat* (1993), another essay film made entirely using archival footage.

The true authors of this film, although they have not been informed about the use we have made of their documents, are the numerous cameramen, recordists, witnesses and activists whose work is constantly opposed to the Powers, *who wish we had no memory* (Marker, 1993).

The work looks at revolution and the failure of the left unity movement from a strangely disorienting position. Again, we see the spectralising effects of sound on these grainy images as they are brought together under a new narrative. I would not be surprised if this film was an influence on both Adam Curtis and Baron Mordant's practice. For Fisher, this film was not made to explain or historicise 1960s counterculture, but to keep it immanent somehow - "to present the events 'in becoming', to restore to them a subjectivity (in the Kierkegaardian sense) that retrospection structurally forecloses" (Fisher, 2018, p. 161). In taking ghosts out of the museum – out of that lifeless historical and archival context – we might get closer to their origin through their reanimation, even as we inevitably distort and destroy them, we might bring them back to life.



Fig.1 Still from *The Remote Viewer*, 2018

## Re-animating the Photographic

Documentary films, like all other media based on the photographic trace, are always both true and false simultaneously, for the selfsame reason that we can conceive of photographs as metaphorical ghosts – their paradoxical relationship to time. They are true in that the photograph always delivers some real trace of the past – as with Barthes' "that-has-been" – but they are always untrue in that they are fundamentally illusory, presenting something that should be absent, as a new presence. In *The Material Ghost* (2000), Gilberto Perez considers film "a construction made out of pieces of reality" (Perez, 2000, p. 43), where those photographic fragments are certainly 'true' indexes of the past, how they are presented and compiled in the present is always an act of artifice – and one that can profoundly change how those pieces are interpreted.

Every film has an aspect of documentary and an aspect of fiction. How, then, can we talk about documentary as a kind of film distinct from fiction? (Perez, 2000, p. 43).

In his research on animated documentary, Paul Wells tackles a similar dilemma regarding the truth of the medium. For some it is hard to see how animation can present any sort of unmediated reality, but the real error here is to assume that



documentary film ever manages to do this – “all documentary is to a certain extent ideologically driven” (Wells, 2016).

This problem is not limited to the moving image, of course. The archival documentary photographs I appropriated for *The Remote Viewer* (2018) installation were certainly ideological and politically motivated too – despite presenting themselves as objective documents – they certainly skew our view today of life in 19<sup>th</sup> century slums. We don't know who the original photographers were, but we know the images were commissioned by Leeds Corporation to make the case for mass demolition in the city. The images are highly selective – the inhabitants set to be displaced are conveniently missing from most of these old photographs, which are predominantly gloomy and underexposed. For John Tagg, these images, under the guise of forensic evidence, actually showed the dangerous rhetorical power of the photograph:

The camera is never merely an instrument. Its technical limitations and the resultant distortions register as meaning (Tagg, 1988, p. 150).

*The Remote Viewer* was originally a rephotography research project, in which I aimed to take these noteworthy photographic artefacts back to where they came from – problematizing the unrecognisable sites of former slum clearance in the city – a gesture towards reparation through reappropriation. As the project evolved I decided I wanted to capture and portray the performative aspect of returning and haunting these urban spaces with visions of their prior selves. With the introduction of motion, the work evolved into something closer to a video installation, where the original archival photographs, and my own images of the spaces as they exist today, were projected over one another with accompanying sound recordings, re-animating through simple tracking and rostrum movement, these decaying archival materials.

This straightforward process seemed to bring motion back to the still – life back to the lifeless – but the ghosts were only

reanimated through a realisation of their original death, their stillness, their ultimate erasure from physical and remembered space. Motion drew attention to the absence of motion, presences to conspicuous absences – loss was foregrounded in a way that would not be as evident in a simple, static presentation of the same artefacts. The strangely empty spaces shifting over one another also emphasized how forgotten these missing people were (and still are), and the disremembered working class history of the city slipping between the cracks, houses and streets long since disappeared, briefly returning and then slipping back out of existence again. As with the other examples of hauntological appropriation we have studied, the crumbling materiality of the original photographic artefacts was highlighted by their digitisation and re-presentation, becoming potent signifiers of decay and loss over time, but also the spectrality/virtuality of these strange traces they carry into the present. We start to see the photograph as a real material object in its own right, but also, paradoxically, as an illusion and a ghost. Alongside its role in helping to re-animate the silent photographs, sound also played a part in signifying spectrality and hypomnesia – while not technically re-scoring archive film as we saw in *Misinformation* and *Memory Hole* – the use of field recordings in the work, and the sounds of the media technology involved (the hum of the digital scanner, my camera shutter literally breaking time), function in the same way. Via Fisher's dyschronic and dislocating metaphysical “crackle” (Fisher, 2013), we reveal the illusory breaking of time taking place and the fading fallibility of mediated memory.

This immersive projection work arguably has more in common with the temporal media distortions of an installation artist like Douglas Gordon, than the hauntological cultural artefacts we looked at earlier, but crucially, it attempts to deal with the ontologic issues underpinning all of these works – the intrinsic spectrality of recordings. This has previously been a point of contention in theory, particularly with regard to the difference between photography and film. The spectrality of photography we see in André Bazin's ontological writing on the subject – the phantomlike “embalming” of time (Bazin,

1945, p. 14), which for him underpinned both the realism of photography and its cinematic descendants – for Roland Barthes, was unique to photography alone.

In the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic, but its referent shifts, it does not cling to me: it is not a specter (Barthes, 1993, p. 89).

So for Barthes, the deathly stillness of the photograph was the source of its haunting ‘punctum’, paradoxically undermined or erased once those pictures come to life. The relentless motion and shifting of moving images, too distracting and too close to the life it imitates, to function as an affecting *memento mori*. What Barthes’ view doesn’t account for, is that this photographic spectrality, whilst arguably masked by such motion, is still present in every frame, waiting to be de-animated. Jacques Derrida fundamentally disagreed with Barthes about the spectrality of film, anyway. For him, all media was haunted, cinema as much an “art of ghosts” (McMullen, 1983) as the photography exhibition.

Spectrality... far from being reduced by the rationality of modern technology, found itself, on the contrary, amplified by it (Derrida et al., 2010, p. 39).

In Bazin, Barthes and Derrida’s conceptions of photographic spectrality, there is a strong link to indexicality and photography’s “truth claim” (Gunning, 2004) – the direct trace of the dead *is* the haunting photographic presence. But what about when the uncanny referents flickering across the screen were never really alive in the first place?

As we saw in *Misinformation* (2011), film and animation reveals its spectrality readily when we glimpse its base materiality as a series of photographs, when its central illusion breaks down. The emptiness of this “cinematic illusion” (Gunning, 1989, p. 129) originates in the photographic basis of each film frame, each one a shadow of something else no longer present. But this haunting shadow doesn’t have to be a trace of a

real person, object or place. We can put things before the lens to make new ghosts, as happens in cel (and other lens-based) animation. As we’ve seen in our explorations of hauntological appropriation, memory and its haunting psychological effects are *associative* – a direct trace of a past reality is not actually required for us to be haunted by it, the uncanny illusion of re-animating dead matter on screen can do that on its own. In the mesmerizing motion of decaying photographs in *The Remote Viewer* I could see a certain intersection, where the expanded field of photography (Baker, 2005) met the expanded field of animation. To explore this relationship further I decided to address the spectrality of animation directly in my next work.

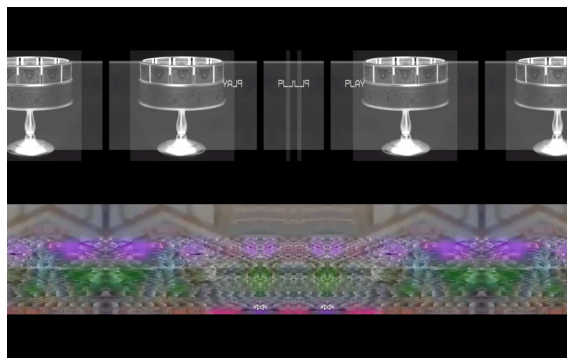


Fig. 2 Still from *Zootrope.space*, 2019

## Re-remembering with Animation

*The animatic is the uncanny reanimation of the dead as living dead, of what after Jacques Derrida we call lifedeath* (Cholodenko, 2007, p. 10).

In chronophotography and early motion toys such as the zootrope and phenakistoscope, we can clearly see the key precursors to cinema and the crucial ontological links between photography and animation. Many of these early looping animated images are profoundly haunting, and not just because they are traces from another time. As discussed earlier, the visible materiality exposes the intrinsic spectrality of the

image, and also reveals the mechanism (frames) by which the dead are uncannily brought back to life. For Alan Cholodenko animation is the hauntological root of all moving images – an illusion of “moving forms as shadows, spectres” (Cholodenko, 2007, p. 10), which has only got more convincing as technologies and practices refined over the following century. In these early forms we are haunted by an uncanny material motion, hidden in contemporary equivalents by overfamiliarity and ever-increasing technical finesse.

In *Zoetrope.space* (2019) I wanted to explore this same haunting quality with materials from my own memory of animation. A collection of video loops from children’s television shows and vintage cartoons I could barely remember from my own childhood in the 1980s, were reappropriated and re-scored with distorted tape loops of each other. As the project expanded I took loops from animation and films where I wasn’t sure whether I could remember them genuinely or not, but that haunted me nonetheless. In taking some live-action film alongside animation I began to explore the historic and ontologic link here to:

*Not only is animation a form of film, all film, including cinema by definition, is a form of animation* (Cholodenko, 2007, p. 9).

In looping the appropriated excerpts we are drawn to their form over their content, foregrounding the captured materiality of animation in the samples. As with the other examples of hauntological appropriation we have examined, the digital is then haunted by the visible/audible materiality of an earlier medium, linking materiality to memory, even in the immaterial. The jumpy frames of hand-drawn cartoons, the low fidelity of bad VHS copies and grainy 16mm celluloid, are evocative reminders of a past materiality in *Zoetrope.space*, but they are also cues that something uncanny is happening at the level of recording itself. Here we can see them as mediated memories – memories of media, and media as memory – our memory of the memory of others. Hauntology foregrounds

the materiality of recording devices as metaphysical and mnemonic agents. Looping itself breaks time and makes us aware of duration – that time is always broken by the photographic, even when it is stitched back together in the moving image. By sampling and looping what Paul Wells terms “orthodox” animation, we’re also abstracting it to an extent, rendering the appropriated content into “experimental film” (Wells, 2013, p. 45). Recontextualised as a loop we’re forced to look at the animation differently – as a piece of non-narrative, non-linear synthetic time – we turn our attention to the strange temporality and materiality of the underlying medium itself.

*Experimental animation thus privileges the literal evolution of materiality instead of narrative and thematic content* (Wells, 2013, p. 45).

In breaking the time of animation, we break its central illusion, the trick that allows it to deliver narrative and communicate themes in the first place, and instead we reveal something of its ontological basis in photography.

Visual imperfections that testify to cel animation’s photographic origins... include improperly placed cels, reflections of the camera apparatus, dust and dirt particles, and even the fingerprints left by anonymous labourers (Frank, 2016).

While this abstraction may direct us towards the noise rather than the signal (Niemeyer, 2014, p. 34) – the background medium over the trace it carries – in these short loops we recognise glimpses of things we may have seen before, screen memories surface out of the noise, a vague sense of déjà vu permeates the work, that originates from experiencing the mediated memories of a machine.

When we cannot remember, sensory-motor extension remains suspended... It rather enters into relation with genuinely virtual elements, feelings of déjà vu or past ‘in general’, dream-images, fantasies or theatre

scenes. In short, it is not the recollection-image or attentive recognition which gives us the proper equivalent of the optical-sound image, it is rather the disturbances of memory and the failures of recognition (Deleuze, 1989, pp. 56-57).

Even in the mediated treatment of genuine memories that were my own, in this recontextualised form they presented as disturbances or failures of memory. The hauntological technique of re-scoring archival footage, which I used here, fundamentally changed the experience of watching (Leonard, 2018) and its relation to personal recollection. As mentioned earlier the removal of the original sound is a gesture akin to partial memory loss. In the films without a clear link to memory – I used a short loop from Emilie Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (1908), widely considered to be the first animated cartoon – the re-scoring still fulfils this (mal)function. Here, the paramnesia is concerned with cultural rather than personal memory, but is no less haunting for it. The noisy medium primarily signifies forgetting.

Our ability to remember the past, and to actualise it, includes the imperfections of the human mind and endorses sometimes voluntarily embellished or falsified memories on an individual and collective level (Niemeyer, 2014).

Remembering is therefore an act of creative imagination (Morgan, 2017).

This mnemonic unreliability isn't limited to the imperfection of human and collective memory, but extends to those of our technologies of memory prosthesis too – photography, film and even animation. While there are obviously key differences between these media in conventional use, their potential to haunt us stems from the same ontological root – their ability to (mis)remember for us. Hauntological appropriation foregrounds this by accelerating what time and technology was already doing to these traces of the past – obliterating them in slow motion.

In examining the hauntology of animation as the “myth of bringing something to life”, Eric Herhuth contests “film theory's treatment of cel animation as lacking world-disclosing indexicality” (Herhuth, 2018), an oversight of how the medium is haunted by its historical basis as a form of photography. However, acknowledging the indexicality of cel animation does not mean we should treat it as we would a photographic document. Rather, the photographic of animation is another example of how the index is not to be trusted – that the trace is as much a temporal illusion in the still photograph or in film, as it is in a cartoon.

What makes all these appropriations haunting is not so much a direct indexical link to the past – their haunting referent as the ‘real’ dead miraculously brought back to life – as it is their complex association with shifting personal and cultural memory, even if this is necessarily partial, illusory, or almost completely missing. The real link to the past, or even the authenticity of the associated memory is not as important as *affect* when it comes to haunting – that the ghosts must resonate with us somehow, with some prior experience, a feeling of loss rather than any specific meaning. The flickering materiality of vintage animation, much like the auratic decay of aging photographs, ultimately reminds us of time's passing, even if what is indexed by this miraculous material surface, is more akin to a dream than a document.

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