The Senses and Society

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rfss20

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To cite this article: Charles Spence (07 Mar 2024): The Ghost Train: a disappearing fairground entertainment, The Senses and Society, DOI: 10.1080/17458927.2024.2317486

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17458927.2024.2317486

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Published online: 07 Mar 2024.

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THE SENSES AND SOCIETY
https://doi.org/10.1080/17458927.2024.2317486

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The Ghost Train: a disappearing fairground entertainment

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ABSTRACT

The Ghost Train on the fairground connects pre-mechanized ghost shows (such as the Phantasmagoria and Dr. Pepper's Ghost type illusions) that had been popular in Britain in the latter half of the 19th century, with the increasingly mechanized rides that came to dominate the British fairground circuit during the 20th century. Intriguingly, although customers were moved along a track, the showmen themselves considered the Ghost Train to be a "show" (shocking the paying public by the unexpected multisensory stimulation of their eyes, ears, and skin), rather than a ride (the latter providing primarily proprioceptive pleasures and kinaesthetic thrills). The heyday of the Ghost Train on the fairground was during the middle decades of the 20th century. Nowadays, those interested in giving themselves a fright are more likely to seek their entertainment in a physically thrilling ride (such as a rollercoaster) or else at the cinema (a medium that also emerged out of the late 19th century ghost shows).

KEYWORDS

Fairground; Ghost Train; ghost shows; mechanization; multisensory

Introduction

This paper reviews the literature on the Ghost Train, a multisensory form of fairground entertainment, and contextualizes its appearance, and subsequent decline, in terms of wider historical changes in the nature of fairground entertainments (see Figure 1). The Ghost Train emerged as a popular form of fairground entertainment in Britain in the middle decades of the 20th century. Along with the *Waltzer* and the *House of Fun* (these two of the other popular British fairground attractions), it allowed the paying public to cross the "fair-line" (that is, to go beyond the frontage, or surface-boundary-limit, of the rides and attractions; see Walker 2018, 19), becoming enclosed within one of the fairground's so-called "dark rides" (Laister 2003; Ndalianis 2012).

The Ghost Train originated on the British fairground/amusement circuit, and hence doesn't tend to be mentioned in the emerging literature on theme parks (e.g. Cross and Walton 2005; Lukas 2008). However, it can nevertheless still be argued that it was an important element of fairground entertainments in the middle decades of the increasingly-mechanized 20th Century (at least in Britain). Often developed independently by showmen, given the cost of fully-kitted attractions (Laister 2003; cf.; Kane

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Figure 1. B. Roberts' Ghost Train – GT11 - photographed Rugby Fair 1 May 1989. [Figure "Reproduced with permission of the University of Sheffield; https://cdm15847.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15847coll3/id/7133.].

2013, 129), there is little physical trace, nor documentation, left nowadays (Rossell 2000).[1] What is more, as Starsmore (1975, 96) notes, historians have tended to remain silent on the topic of fairground machinery, meaning that it often remains something of an enigma. While books have been written documenting the construction and decoration of fairground attractions (e.g. Howell 2003), there are no patents relating specifically to the Ghost Train other than a recent application relating to the safety of such rides (see https://patents.justia.com/patent/9757658; and see Spence 2022a, for a number of the patents registered in relation to other fairground rides over the years).

While the focus in this review is on the development of the Ghost Train on the British fairground, it is worth highlighting the parallel development of thrilling mechanized rides that took place at British amusement parks such as Blackpool Pleasure Beach, which sought to distinguish themselves from the fairground at the start of the 20th Century (see Kane 2013, 32–34; Walton 2007).

Tracing the history of ghostly entertainments

According to Dallas (1971, 158): "Thomas Frost in his book on the London fairs, mentions the start of horror shows around 1830. He attended phantasmagorical exhibitions of human skeletons, Death on a pale horse, and the raising of the Devil." Meanwhile (see Frost 1874), at around the same time, Sir David Brewster writes about a show he saw at Edinburgh as follows: "The thunder and lightning were followed by the figures of ghosts, skeletons, and known individuals, whose eyes and mouths were made to move ... the head of Dr. Franklin was transformed into a skull; figures which retired with the freshness of life came back in the form of skeletons, and the retiring skeletons returned in the drapery of flesh and blood. The exhibition of these transmutations was followed by spectres, skeletons, and terrific figures .... The spectators were not only surprised, but

agitated, and many were of the opinion that they could have touched the figures" (see Brewster 1832).

Importantly, the ghost train was considered by the showmen themselves to be a show (i.e. rather than ride; cf. Walker 2015, Figure 8, for the absence of the Ghost Train from the author's inventory of "new rides"). As such, it sits somewhere between the phantasmagoria, which originated as a form of entertainment in a Parisian crypt at the start of the 18th century, coming to the fairground via the London Polytechnic Institute (see Spence 2022b, for a review) in the latter half of the 19th century, and the mechanization of fairground rides which really started to take off in earnest in the 20th century (see Table 1). The focus of the latter being increasingly on the delivery of kinaesthetic thrills and proprioceptive pleasures, i.e. a focus on more extreme multisensory experiences (see Lynn 2006; Spence 2022c, c). Connecting the two, the Ghost Train is more than a stationary show (where the paying public would sit passive and immobile), rather it is a dynamic form of multisensory entertainment, where the ghostly thrills come from the surprises that are delivered unexpectedly to eye, ear, and skin (rather than from any proprioceptive pleasures associated with movement itself).[2] The Ghost Train can thus be seen as a natural progression/updating of the (audiovisual) phantasmagoria that preceded it (Laister 2003; Spence 2022b),[3] introducing a dynamic element as mechanization became increasingly available to a number of those who were part of the traveling fairground community.

According to Laister (2003), a key part of the appeal of "dark rides" such as the Ghost Train was the uncertainty and lack of control experienced by the members of the public.[4] One of the particularly innovative sensory elements introduced into the Ghost Train was the unexpected tactile stimulation that would undoubtedly have helped to enhance the sense of immersion in the proceedings (cf. Curtis and Voss 2008). Tangentially supporting this suggestion, Clepper et al. (2022) experimentally demonstrated the importance of (vibro-)tactile elements in terms of enhancing the sense of immersion in a simulated haunted house (see also Clepper et al. 2020, for an earlier publication along similar lines). The Ghost Train also adds a dynamic element to the entertainment, though according to

Table 1. An approximate timeline detailing the rise of various ghostly, thrilling, and possibly also immersive rides.

Time/Period	Thrilling/Ghostly entertainment
1790s	1st magic lantern/phantasmagoria shows in Paris (Barber 1989)
1830s–1890s	Phantasmagoria shows popular on British fairground (Dallas 1971; Laister 2003)
1860s–1900	Dr. Pepper's Ghost introduced in London Polytechnic Institute (Pepper & Dircks' patent application, 1863), and thereafter popularized on the British Fairground
1890s	Biddall's Ghost Illusion (Cameron 1998)
1890s	Moving pictures first shown on English fairground, after first appearing at London Polytechnic Institute in February 1896 (Starsmore 1975)
c. 1900	Brief popularity of Hale's Tours (Fielding 1970)
1906	Van der Decken's Haunted Cabin opens at Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Kane 2013)
1900–1930s	Walk-through Ghost Shows on British Fairground (Toulmin 2003)
1910s	Steam Yachts and Cake Walk attractions become popular, delivering proprioceptive entertainment and vestibular pleasures to the British (Anon 2007; Starsmore 1975)
1930	First Ghost Train ride opened at Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Kane 2013; Walton 2007)
1936	Joseph Emberton builds huge Ghost Train at Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Anon n.d.-b)
1940s–1960s	Ghost Train popular fairground entertainment (Laister 2003)
End of 1960s	Rollercoasters and other rides delivering kinaesthetic thrills become increasingly popular (Lynn 2006; Spence 2022a; Starsmore 1975; Trowell 2020)

Starsmore (1975, 33), there were also a few walk-through Ghost Shows), including Van der Decken's Haunted Cabin operated at Blackpool Pleasure Beach from 1906 (Kane 2013, 33) However, unlike the rollercoaster, Steam Yachts, etc., the movement in the Ghost Train ride was not in-and-of itself especially thrilling.

As Dallas (1971, 159) puts it: "The Ghost Train is always classified by showmen as a show and not as a ride, as it is selling horror, not movement. On the whole showmen feel that the Ghost Train is more successful than a show which the visitor walks through, as there is hardly any time to do damage, and any illusion of the unnatural is preserved it is a show not a ride." Rather, the surprise comes from the unexpected multisensory stimulation: In fact, the principal reason for moving the paying public along was so that they would not have time to destroy the props, rather than necessarily because of anything integral to the nature of the show itself! As Gilbert Chadwick put it when talking about the two-storey Ghost Train he was building: "We found if you walk into something in the dark you can stop yourself fast. Say like a bit of string hanging up, you stop, bump! If you're in the Ghost Train the strings hit you, and then its [sic] passed. If you walk into it you rip it down in temper, because it's fear. But if you ride you get the horror and the ride" (cited in Dallas 1971, 161).

Why a 'train'?

While the link to the ghostly entertainments of the late 19th century fairground (such as the phantasmagoria and Dr. Pepper's Ghost; Brooker 2007, 2019) should by now hopefully be clear, one relevant question remains as to why this ghostly form of entertainment should come to have been described as a "train." Why not a ship, tram, or carriage, which were, after all, more common types of transportation (cf. Ndalianis 2012, 7–8)?[5] Why draw attention to the mode of transportation, especially given that the showmen's own assertion that the Ghost Train was a show rather than a ride? Here, it is perhaps worth considering the psychic shock of the modern that Schivelbusch (2014) has suggested was associated with the emergence of the new form of transportation offered by the railways during the middle of the 19th century (see also Rennie 2015). At the same time, however, the public would presumably already have become familiar with the sensory overload that would have been associated with early train travel and hence would no longer have considered it as shocking.

According to one suggestion, a stage comedy-thriller, that was written in 1923 by the English actor and playwright Arnold Ridley called *The Ghost Train* may have provided the name, if not the inspiration for the ride (see Anon n.d.-a; Gregson 2019). It is, though, perhaps worth noting that the story itself centers upon the social interaction of a group of railway passengers who have been stranded at a remote rural station overnight, hence seemingly having less in common with the Ghost Train than with the phantasmagoria-type shows that were popular on the fairground until the closing years of the 19th century. Nevertheless, in 1936, Blackpool Pleasure Beach commissioned the British architect Joseph Emberton to design one of the most famous Ghost Trains for the amusement park (Anon n.d.-b).[6] It had a huge frontage and a rollercoaster-type rail instead of the simple single rail that was part of the original ghost train that had been introduced there in 1930. According to Gregson (2019): "As the name Pretzel was unknown in the UK and did not give much of a clue

as to the ride itself, in 1931, the park changed the name to The Ghost Train – taken from the hit film of that name, starring Jack Hulbert." (see also https://www.joylandbooks.com/themagiceye/bitsofthebeach/ghosttrain.htm).

Indeed, according to several online sources, this was the first time that the descriptor "Ghost Train" had been was used as the name of a ride (Rennie 2015). It was apparently very similar to the ghost trains that one occasionally still finds in fairgrounds and amusement parks today. The Ghost Train consisted of a boxcar on a single rail, taking passengers on a circuitous route past scary visuals and spooky characters. That said, early photos of Ghost Shows can be found in Toulmin (2003), and are also mentioned in various other published histories of the British fairground; e.g. see Smith (1989), thus suggesting a much more continuous history of ghostly entertainments.

Hale's tours

One other potential inspiration for the emphasis on the train was, in fact, the largely now forgotten Hale's Tours (sometimes referred to as Hale's Tours and Scenes of the World, Hale's Tours Cars of the World, etc.; Fielding 1970; Nead 2007). This was a virtual travel experience in which the passengers would enter a phantom train carriage (Hayes 2009; Rabinovitz 2004; 2006; see Figure 2). Hale's Tours was introduced commercially at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. In a train carriage, projection recording the scene from the front of the train (i.e. the cowcatcher) was shown. Apparently, on occasion, an artificially produced rush of air was presented, and the whole car pivoted on its longitudinal axis so that the operator could, by throwing a lever, sway the car from side to side during the show. Later, however, with the increasing sophistication of the design, many of these manual operations would have been accomplished electrically; see Keefe, 1904, for the original patent application. However, as Fielding (1970) highlights, the enthusiasm for these rides (together with problems acquiring new footage) meant that interest in this early form of multisensory attraction soon waned.[7]

According to the "Music Hall Gossip" column of the 9 April 1898 issue of *The Era*, though, the earliest version of this form of entertainment may actually have been introduced prior to 1900: "The most startling of the series of train pictures taken by Chard's Vitagraph is a phantom ride (these silent visual experiences also referred to as a Phantom Ride,' Gauthier 2009; Grieveson and Krämer 2004, 55–57), "snapped" from the front of an engine of the S.E.R. The scene depicted is through Chiselhurst Tunnel and station, the surrounding being very distinct, and the pictures remarkably steady" (as cited in Fielding 1970; see also Slide 1966). A few years later, Phantom Rides were presented by the American Biograph Company at the Palace Theatre in London in 1901 (see Hepworth 1951, 44–45). In Great Britain, Henry Iles acquired a franchise for Hale's Tours and opened it in central London at 165 Oxford Street. It also opened at Hammersmith and in the provinces. In England, as in America, it has been suggested that these virtual train rides were the first permanent, widespread, specialized motion picture shows that the public would have experienced, and that they played an important role in introducing the British public to the motion picture medium. For a while at least the shows would play to as many as 1,000 people a day. In time, just as in America, the novelty wore off, and the Hale's Tours shows were replaced by the motion picture houses that provided a regular change of bill (Brown 1916, 372).

a)

b)

Figure 2. A) Entrance to Hale's tours. [Figure reprinted from Brown (1916).]; B) Interior of one of Hale's Tours. [Figure appears in Curtis and Voss (2008).].

As Fielding (1970, 47) notes: "Hale's crude attempts to simulate reality may seem ludicrous to us now, but the influence of his little show on the emerging motion picture should not be underestimated. It served not only to introduce and popularize the early projected motion picture, but also acted as a bridge which linked the primitive arcade peep shows and vaudeville presentations of the day with the makeshift motion picture theaters which spread across the United States between 1905 and 1910" (Thomas 1916; and see Ogata 2002, on the history of the peep show). As well as the sight of the train racing down the track, the tilting of the carriage when the train was seen going round a bend, and the wind blown on the audience's face when the train picked up speed, there was also an auditory accompaniment. As Brown (1916, 372) describes it: "The train bell rang, the locomotive whistle shrieked warnings as crossings were neared, and the air exhaust was plainly heard as the train pulled to a stop." In the opening years of the 20th

century, this early form of multisensory virtual reality (VR) was likely to have been highly absorbing/immersive for those who were there (Bottomore 1999; Gauthier 2009; Gunning 1994, 2009; Rushton 2004, 2007).

As Rabinovitz, (1998a, 146–147) writes: "In Hale's Tours installations, the railway car theater was rocked from side to side, steam whistles tooted, and the sound of wheels clattering was made in order to simulate railroad travel and to foreground the body itself as a site for sensory experience." Bennett (1983, 151) writes that "Whereas thrill rides take the normally stationary body and hurtle it through space, [cinema illusion rides, including Hale's Tours] hurtle the vision through space whilst fixing the body as stationary. Yet the cinema shows also compete with the thrill rides by claiming to outdate them, to reproduce all the thrills and excitement of the big rides by means of a more advanced, simpler and safer technology."

The Ghost Train ride can therefore be positioned as the combination of the sensorial shock of the modern (as represented by transportation on one of the then relatively-recently invented trains) with the multisensory development of the phantasmagoria. Note here also how the ghosts of the phantasmagoria, and Dr. Pepper's Ghost-type illusions led directly on to the silent images on the screen in the early days of cinema (Rossell 2000).[8] Relevant here, in Britain, the King of Showmen, Randall Williams (the author's great great grandfather) converted his Grand Phantascopical Exhibition, a ghost show, to moving pictures in late 1896 (Toulmin 1998, 22–23), shortly before his death.

Whatever happened to the ghost train?

In the 1940s and 1950s, ghost trains were very popular with the British public, playing an important role in the traveling fairs at this time. However, as Laister (2003) notes: "the original ghost trains required a large team of people to construct them and then take them down again afterwards. By the 1970s, travelling fairs wanted to invest in rides that were easier to construct at each location." As Starsmore (1975, 114) states: "The amusement ride gave the fairs new life" during the 20th century. Trowell (2020, 21) points to the fact that: "Towards the end of the 1960s the fairground machine underwent a further shift, and moved from being about simulation (a hunting-horse, a fast car, an aeroplane, a space-ship) to pure machinery, in which thrill-seekers sought out extreme speed, spins, inversions and physical jerks. In the same way that Savage united agriculture and the fairground, the Eyerly Aircraft Company of Salem, Oregon, enacted a technology transfer between fighter-pilot training devices and the fairground." Such a focus on proprioceptive pleasures and new kinds of kinaesthetic experience in-and-of-themselves (Crary 2001, 13; Lynn 2006; Spence 2022c) is presumably likely to have further reduced the appeal of the Ghost Train amongst a British public who were hungry for all the forms of multisensory overload that the fairground sensorium had to offer (see Kane 2013; Spence 2022a).

In the 1970s, a wondering photographer captured a series of anonymous urban scenes from the streets of depressed post-industrial Yorkshire. One image that is particularly relevant for the present article shows what appears to be the isolated proprietor of a Ghost Train, taken on the university end of Woodhouse Moor, Leeds (see Figure 3).[9] The picture hints at the isolation of this ride in particular and perhaps also of the decline of the fairground in general during the closing decades of the 20th Century. One of the other factors that helped to cement the long-term decline of the fair as popular entertainment on Woodhouse Moor is the introduction of the Leeds St Valentine's Fair, back in 1992. This fair, the biggest street fair in Europe (which attracted an estimated half a million visitors in 1996,

Figure 3. The Ghost train. Photo taken on Woodhouse Moor in Leeds. [Attribution: Francis Gavan, Ghost Train Ride, Woodhouse Moor, Leeds, Spring 1986 © Peter Mitchell, courtesy of RRB Photobooks.]

see BBC North 1996), takes place for a week in February of each year in the city center (i.e. less than a mile from Woodhouse Moor). As Tony Harcup (2000, 215) puts it, the St Valentine's Fair: "was conceived and developed to help transform the image of the West Yorkshire city of Leeds from that of a rather dirty northern English industrial town to that of a vibrant European 'city of culture.'" At the same time, however, it is striking how the majority of the rides focus on delivering the latest highly-arousing proprioceptive pleasures and kinaesthetic thrills rather than any of the more traditional forms of fairground entertainment.

Angela Ndalians (2012, 7) persuasively argues that the Ghost Train may have been used as inspiration for the latest theme and amusement park rides, though now associated with big-budget successful films. She writes about the various ways in which Revenge of the Mummy – the Ride (Universal 2004): "takes elements from past amusement rides into a new theme park hybrid (that the Universal marketing department dubbed a 'psychological thrill ride')." According to such a suggestion, a slightly more positive conclusion regarding the ultimate fate of the Ghost Train would be to say that it continues, at least in spirit, in certain of the rides in the larger (mostly US-based) theme parks, as well as, of course, in a few far-flung amusement parks in the British Isles. It should also be stressed that immersive rides, which propel the audience through a series of supernatural or gothic-horror scenes, continue to be one of the most enduring features of the fairground and related entertainments. Hence, a more positive conclusion might be that while the Ghost Train as a specific named ride may have largely disappeared, nevertheless, the kind of entertainment continues, in some sense at least, to be provided but under different names. More generally, of course, immersive installations also appear to retain their popularity in a number of countries (e.g. Eskins 2022; Rabinovitz 1998b), albeit more often found outside the confines of fairground or amusement/theme park.

Conclusions

The Ghost Train, whose heyday as a fairground attraction was in the middle decades of the twentieth century (Laister 2003; https://www.dreamland.co.uk/ride/ghost-train/), stands at the intersection of historic static fairground ghost shows, such as the phantasmagoria and Dr. Pepper's Ghost (see Cameron 1998, 43, for Biddall's Ghost Illusion, from the 1890s; Groth 2007; Rennie 2015; Spence 2022c; Toulmin 2003, 40, for Billy Keyes' Temple of Death, Leicester, 1961) that were popular in the latter decades of the 19th Century, and the mechanization of fairground rides that really started to emerge in the opening decades of the 20th Century (see Spence 2022b).[10] Here, one should not forget the role of the British fairground attractions in helping to popularize new technologies (Spence 2022b). As this review has made clear, the majority of the pleasure derived from the Ghost Train relies on unexpected visual, auditory and tactile stimulation. While proprioception was also involved, this would merely appear to facilitate tactile surprise. Nowadays, those interested in giving themselves a fright are far more likely to seek (and to find) their entertainment in a physically thrilling ride (such as a rollercoaster) or else at the cinema (a medium that interestingly also emerged out of the ghost shows of the late 19th century; Spence 2022a; Toulmin 1996).

Coda: who gets to write the history of the fairground

One final point to consider here is that the history of the fairground, its rides and attractions, has largely been written by "flatties:" This, the possibly pejorative term used by the traveller community for those who live in static accommodation, rather than those who are seemingly always on the move. For example, Dallas (1971, 178–179) notably separates his bibliography into those works written by showmen (albeit with likely embellishment and so to be taken with a pinch of salt, he implicitly implies) and those works written by flatties (like Dallas himself).[11] The question of who gets to write the history of the fairground would seem especially pertinent given the longstanding discrimination that travelers have experienced at the hands of the non-traveller community (e.g. see Scullion, Brown, and Niner 2012).

Notes

1. The Great Randall Williams' Bioscope show was, for instance, simply left abandoned in a field outside Silsden in Yorkshire, by Richard Monti, one of his sons-in-law, when fashions changed (see Mellor 1996).
2. Given that sulfurous smells have been incorporated in the setting of life performance for centuries to set a hell-like scene (Critten and Kern-Stähler 2016; and see Spence 2021a, for a review), and well as, more recently, in the context of larger-scale fairground rides (see Spence 2021b, for a review), it is perhaps surprising that there is no mention of such smells ever having been intentionally incorporated on the fairground's Ghost Train (and see De Groot, Semin, and Smeets 2014).
3. Laister (2003) writes that: "The history of ghost trains in the UK can be traced back to the travelling fairground shows of the 1800s. In the days before thrilling rides, travelling fairs were primarily about shows- freak shows, waxworks and theatrical booths – and the ghost train takes its roots from this tradition. By the mid-1800s, Ghost Shows (theatrical productions, which often took place in booths on the fairground) were a major part of the travelling fairground scene."

4. Here, it is interesting to consider how the increased arousal likely elicited in those who ride the Ghost Train (or enter the Haunted House), or take a ride on the rollercoaster, is often misattributed to romantic arousal amongst couples (see Meston and Frohlich 2003; Slosson 1904; Spence 2021c; Tashjian et al. 2022).
5. Note that Steam Yachts, sometimes referred to as “Flying Yachts,” were already a very popular ride at British fairgrounds at the start of the 20th century (see Starsmore 1975, 108).
6. According to Anon (n.d.-b): “Emberton got the idea for this amazing ride from ‘pretzel rides’ over in the USA. These rides were named after the Pretzel Company, and they took passengers on magical journeys in the dark, showing images of faraway places and exotic destinations.” In his history of Blackpool Pleasure Beach, John Walton (2007, 65) also alludes to the *Pretzel Ride* and the origins of the Ghost Train name, it being a dark ride and the Pretzel Company not being familiar in Britain.
7. “With the closing of the summer comes what eventually will mean the last of what are known as ‘Hale’s Tours.’ Little success has followed the car enclosed picture machines. The rocking has caused the women to remain away after the first visit, and the difficulty in securing sufficient scenic views has been another reason. Close confinement also contributes its share of disagreeable features. Some cars made money in the beginning, but lost it later.” (Variety, September 22nd, 1906, 11)” (as quoted in Fielding 1970, 46).
8. As Starsmore (1975, 65) notes: “The first exhibition of animated pictures in London took place in February of 1896 at the Polytechnic, and from this date until 1914 showmen took the films to people all over Great Britain. There were no established picture houses, nor was there any suitable means of transport for the public, so naturally the cinemas themselves had to travel! The first one to do so was owned by Randall Williams, and went as part of his Ghost Show” (Nead 2007; Toulmin 1998, 20–23).
9. Though, according to the author’s father, whose family had a number of small stalls at the March and September fairs held every year on Woodhouse Moor, the big rides (including the Ghost Train) would always be set-up on the more spacious half of the site (closer to Hyde Park corner, for those familiar with the area).
10. For a revival of the concept (or at the very least the name), see Carnesky’s Ghost Train (Anon n.d.-a). This standalone work operated at the borders of art and entertainment. The ride itself opened in Dagenham Docks, London, UK in January, 2004, and had a 5 year residency on the Golden Mile, Blackpool, UK, from Jan 2009 through December 2014. The ride incorporated 50 m of track, along with illusions, and aerial performances from a cast of eight performers. This raises the question of whether showmen ever performed live vignettes as part of the Ghost Train experience (see the movie Funny Bones, 1995; see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funny_Bones). This would have seemed likely given the important role played by the “spieler.” However, I am not aware of any evidence suggesting that this was, in fact, the case.
11. Although your author would undoubtedly also be counted as a flattie, he at least has a number of relatives who grew up and/or spent their life on the fairground.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [AH/L007053/1].

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