Stefan Andriopoulos

Ghostly Apparitions

German Idealism,
the Gothic Novel,
and Optical Media

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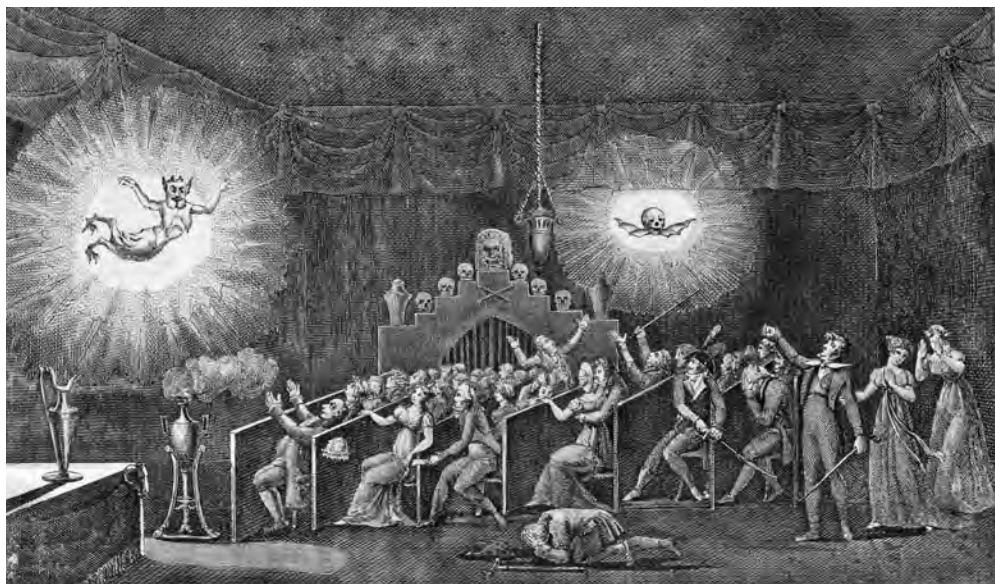**Figure 1.** "Fantasmagorie de Robertson dans la Cour des Capucines," frontispiece of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques* (Paris, 1834). The darkness of the theater, the black ground of the magic lantern slides, and the back projection onto hidden screens and smoke allowed for the special effect of magnifications that were perceived as a terrifying approach of the projected figure.

Introduction

In the fall semester of 1805–1806 Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel gave a lecture course, The Philosophy of Nature and Spirit, at the University of Jena. It was at the same time that he wrote his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), which described a succession of different "spiritual shapes"[1] in the progress toward absolute knowledge—from subjective through objective to absolute spirit. A teleological sequence of spirits was also at the center of Hegel's Jena lectures, in which he explicitly referred to the optical technologies involved in the visual medium of the phantasmagoria. These spectral performances, first staged in postrevolutionary Paris by Paul Philidor and Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, perfected the use of the magic lantern for the purpose of simulating spirit apparitions. In the dark subterranean vault of a former Capuchin monastery, Robertson achieved stunning effects by suddenly magnifying ghostly projections that seemed to loom out at terrified audiences (Figure 1).

In Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of nature and spirit, one early passage describes a stage of interiority that has to be overcome in the subject's teleological progress toward knowing. In representing pure selfhood, Hegel invokes the darkness and terror that were at the center of Robertson's phantasmagoria: "This is the night, the inner of nature that exists here—pure self. In phantasmagorical presentations it is night on all sides; here a bloody head suddenly surges forward, there another white form abruptly appears, before vanishing again. One catches sight of this night when looking into the eye of man—into a night that turns dreadful; it is the night of the world that presents itself here."[2]

Even though Hegel's representation of the "night of the world" has been analyzed in several readings, it has not been linked to the visual medium whose name introduced the word "phantasmagoria" into French, German, and English in the 1790s.[3] Tracing the interaction between the cultural use of media technologies and new philosophical theories, the following explorations juxtapose idealist philosophy with phantasmagorical projections and a scientific debate about the possibility of spiritual apparitions. For it is not only Hegel's notion of spirit and his invocation of "phantasmagorical presentations" that link the emergence of German idealism to optical media and theories of the occult that gained widespread currency in the late eighteenth century. Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology also draws on spiritualist notions when conceiving of *Erscheinung* as an "appearance" or "apparition" that is constituted by our forms of intuition, but nonetheless related to a supersensory thing in itself. At the same time, Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion described the "mirage" (*Blendwerk*) of speculative metaphysics by invoking the phantasmagorical images of the magic lantern, which are real, even if no material bodies correspond to them. This recourse to contemporaneous media technology becomes even more pronounced in the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer, who described our perception of the empirical world as a "cerebral phantasmagoria."[4]

This book explores the intersection of the ghostly with various media and discursive fields between 1750 and 1930. The opening chapters reveal the central role of the magic lantern and of spiritualist notions in the work of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer. Shifting to contemporaneous print culture, the book then examines ghost narratives, the Gothic novel, and Romantic representations of clairvoyance. Contextualizing a more recent visual medium from the early twentieth century, the final chapter centers on the dynamic relationship between occultism and the emergence of television. By merging media archaeology with a historicist reading of philosophical discourse, my analysis of German idealism highlights previously ignored preconditions that made thinking Kant's, Hegel's, and Schopenhauer's philosophical arguments possible.[5] However, I do not

contend that their theories were solely or primarily determined by optical media and spiritualism. Each of these authors draws on the same set of ghostly and medial figures, but they do so in various ways, surreptitious or overt, and for different argumentative purposes.

Kant emphasizes the structural affinity of philosophical metaphysics and spiritualism in an early, precritical treatise entitled *Dreams of a Spirit Seer, Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics* (1766). There, he develops the surprising "metaphysical hypothesis" of genuine apparitions that arise from a "real, internal spiritual impression."[6] In certain persons of unusual sensitivity, these internal impressions could be transposed to the external world, Kant suggests, thereby creating "the outer appearance of objects corresponding to them."[7] Yet immediately after establishing how genuine appearances might be conceptualized, Kant develops a second, diametrically opposed explanation. In order to expose spiritual visions as a sensory delusion, Kant compares the "brain phantoms" (*Hirngespenster*) of an inflamed, enthusiastic imagination to an optical "spectre" (*Spectrum*) created by means of a concave mirror.[8] This skeptical account of ghostly apparitions anticipates Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion, for in his critical writings, he repeatedly draws on contemporaneous optical media in order to describe the fallacies of speculative reason. Kant characterizes speculative metaphysics as a "magic lantern of brain phantoms."[9] In doing so, he transforms the optical instrument into an epistemic figure for the limits of philosophical knowledge.

The ghostly apparitions from this period also intersect with an emerging popular print culture that gave rise to the Gothic novel and immersive reading practices, an interrelation analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4. In *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, Kant deplored the "haunting circulation" of ostensibly authentic ghost narratives.[10] In a criticism similar to current indictments of the Internet, he responds to an exploding print market and the concomitant proliferation of nonscholarly writings by warning against "rumor" and "hearsay" as undermining critical reasoning and scientific judgment. At the same time, the new literary genre of the Gothic novel adapted spiritual apparitions as a serial narrative device of shock and terror. The immersive appeal of

these popular tales even raised concerns about "reading addiction" (*Lesesucht*) as leading to a pathological loss of reality.

Literary, scientific, and philosophical representations of animal magnetism and clairvoyance also blurred the boundary between the factual and the fictional in the first half of the nineteenth century. Adapting an allegedly factual German case history about a somnambulist clairvoyant who was for seven years arrested between life and death, Edgar Allan Poe published a fictional tale about a mesmerist experiment that was reprinted as an authentic news item in various newspapers and popular-science journals. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will explore a reciprocal interaction between occultism and engineering in the early twentieth century. At that time, spiritualist research into the psychic "television" of somnambulist clairvoyants enabled the gradual invention and implementation of electrical television.

While not the central focus of individual chapters in this book, other media that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as photography, telegraphy, cinema, and radio, were also closely connected with the occult. This striking proximity between different waves of spiritualism and the rise of various new technologies has been noted by several scholars.[11] Among the first to highlight the double sense of the term "medium" was the influential media theorist Friedrich Kittler, who at one point went so far as to suggest that there is "no difference between occult and technical media."[12] Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993), by contrast, adopts an exclusive focus on language as a source of spectrality. In his reading of Marx, Derrida disregards the cultural use of the magic lantern in phantasmagorical projections, and he subscribes to a common, but incorrect etymology of "phantasmagoria" as describing a public speech act.[13] The following explorations, however, do not privilege either language or technology as a sole, determining cause; instead, they seek to preserve the historical specificity of these various conjunctures of media and the occult by analyzing the complex and reciprocal interaction between technological innovation and cultural change.

Kittler's work has shaped the field of German media studies in

the 1980s and 1990s by providing important insights into the history of new information technologies and their cultural impact. Yet ultimately, Kittler considers "hardware" to be more important than the discourses and imaginations that allow for its emergence and shape its contingent realization and appropriation. This focus on a technological a priori led Kittler to reintroduce the distinction between spiritualism and technology by making the one-sided claim that "from the very beginning occult media have necessarily presupposed technical ones."[14] According to Kittler, it was the invention of the Morse alphabet that "was promptly followed by the tapping specters" of American spiritualism, and he dismisses "literatures or fantasies" as "irrelevant" for the conception and implementation of television.[15] In short, Kittler asserts a general primacy of technology over culture. Technological innovation may generate spiritualism, but not vice versa.

This book adopts a more nuanced, post-Kittlerian approach that does not claim to reconstruct a comprehensive a priori—be it cultural or technological. Its chapters examine several, but not all, of the various cultural and technical materialities that allowed for the philosophical, literary, and medial invocations of ghosts around 1800 and for the emergence of television around 1900. In this vein, I establish late nineteenth-century spiritualist research into the psychic television of somnambulist clairvoyants as crucial for the construction and implementation of the technical medium. Spanning from the 1890s into the first decades of the twentieth century, television's gradual emergence in no sense relied exclusively on "factors immanent to technology."[16] The slow accumulation of technical and physical knowledge that led to the first experimental television broadcasts in the late 1920s cannot be separated from its contingent cultural contexts. Psychical research on telepathy and "television" (*Fernsehen*), carried out in the same period by spiritualists who emulated the rules and procedures of science, played a constitutive role for the technological inventions and developments of the medium. The archaeology of television reveals not a one-sided primacy of hardware or culture, but a reciprocal interaction between the newly

emerging technology and spiritualist research. Electrical and psychic television mutually presuppose each other.

Technological innovation and its cultural and epistemic conditions feature less prominently in my analysis of ghostly apparitions from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet in exploring optical and print media from that period, I also avoid a simple determinism that would reduce culture to a mere epiphenomenon. In juxtaposing Kant's critical epistemology with the cultural use of the magic lantern in phantasmagorical projections, I conceive of the magic lantern as both a material object in an arrangement of cultural practices and a discursive figure within philosophical texts. This approach builds on Jonathan Crary's account of the camera obscura's mixed status as optical instrument and epistemological figure in his *Techniques of the Observer* (1990). At the same time, I propose a revision of Crary's description of the magic lantern as preserving and adhering to the epistemological model of the camera obscura, a model predicated on a paradigm of disembodied and purely receptive perception.[17] *Techniques of the Observer* describes an epistemic shift that occurred in the early nineteenth century and that was linked to the emergence of optical instruments such as the stereoscope and the phenakistoscope. My interpolation of Kant and the magic lantern, by contrast, has its focus on the second half of the eighteenth century. At that time, the magic lantern's open display in scientific demonstrations was gradually supplanted by its use for the back projection of phantasmagorical images.[18] Concomitantly, the medium's deceptive power became an important discursive figure in epistemological discussions about the unreliability of sensory perception and the limits of philosophical knowledge. Kant's critical epistemology describes a subject that projects its forms of intuition onto the external world and that is inclined to mistake subjective ideas for objectively given substances.[19]

But in appropriating contemporaneous optical media and spiritualist notions, Kant was following two opposite impulses. His doctrine of transcendental illusion adapts his early account of false optical specters and transforms the visual instrument of the magic

lantern into an epistemic figure for the limits of philosophical knowledge. Kant thus describes an empirical appearance as constituted by our forms of intuition. Nonetheless, Kant still insists that an appearance can be conceived as linked to an unknowable thing in itself. In doing so, he adapts his early metaphysical hypothesis of genuine apparitions and defines *Erscheinung* as "an indication of a supersensory substrate."[20] In addition to tracing this tension between skeptical and metaphysical arguments in Kant's philosophical writings, the opening chapters contrast Schopenhauer's and Hegel's response to Kant's critical epistemology.

Schopenhauer's "Essay on Spirit Seeing" (1851) explicitly compares a spirit apparition to an appearance in the normal, empirical world. In *The World as Will and Representation*, he furthermore introduces optical categories into his summary of Kant's critical epistemology, praising Kant for "disassembling…the whole machinery of our cognitive faculties that brings about the phantasmagoria of the objective world."[21] Schopenhauer thereby foregrounds medial concepts in an altogether aggressive manner. Similar to Schopenhauer, Hegel concedes a "kinship" of speculative philosophy and magnetic clairvoyance in the third volume of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817/1830). But whereas Schopenhauer openly cites spiritualist notions and media technologies, Hegel seeks to conceal the material conditions of his ostensibly universal theories of absolute knowledge. Striving to suppress his reliance on occultist terms, Hegel also avoids acknowledging his appropriation of contemporaneous phantasmagorical projections.

The differentiation between the various surreptitious or overt adaptations of the ghostly and the magic lantern in the work of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer reveals the crucial role of spiritualism and optical media for the emergence of German idealism. But the specific philosophical theories of these authors alter and transform the medial and spiritualist notions they draw upon, adapting them in different ways. Schopenhauer highlights his reliance on physiology and media technologies by describing our intellectual faculties as a material apparatus of cognition. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by

contrast, emulates the phantasmagoric projection of spiritual shapes in the textual realm of speculative philosophy without naming the visual medium. Its final chapter describes "absolute spirit" apprehending itself in a "gallery of images" that presents a "slow motion and sequence of spirits."[22]

By tracing the divergent modes in which Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer appropriate spiritualism and optical media the following chapters contribute to and extend the kind of historical epistemology exemplified by *Techniques of the Observer* and Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's *Objectivity*.[23] Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) formulated the notion of a "historical a priori" whose rules govern all discursive utterances at a given historical moment—a concept transposed from the discursive to the technological by Kittler's media history. Rather than replicating the assumption of an ostensibly unified general a priori, this book reveals specific cultural and technological preconditions that rendered possible the emergence of new philosophical arguments. The juxtaposition of idealist philosophy, popular print culture, phantasmagorical projections, and spiritualism does not assign primacy to any of these cultural spheres. But it allows for a merging of nuanced, close readings of philosophical texts with a historical exploration of cultural and medial practices that shaped these philosophical theories without determining them.

It is this interest in seemingly marginal cultural and technical materialities that distinguishes this account of ghostly apparitions from a conventional history of ideas. Traditional intellectual historians rarely stray beyond the realm of academic discourse, thereby disregarding the constitutive exchange across the permeable boundaries between philosophical thought and contemporaneous media and culture. In doing so, they inadvertently replicate Kant's wish for an impermeable boundary between philosophy and other cultural practices. Even a recent well-researched and comprehensive historiography of German spiritualism upholds this segregation by claiming that the spirits of occultism had "nothing to do . . . with the absolute spirit of Hegel's philosophy."[24] It is of course true that German idealism and spiritualism constituted distinct cultural spheres.

But in drawing on a shared set of ghostly and phantasmagorical notions, they responded to and molded the cultural use of optical technologies and print.

By interpolating canonical philosophical texts with visual media and popular print culture, this book also differs from most of contemporary academic philosophy. The aim of my reading of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer is not to resolve contradictions or ambiguities in their thought. Rather than reformulating these authors in a way that would make their arguments "rigorous" or consistent, my goal is to historicize their texts in a manner that takes note of the strangeness of their theories and terminology, thereby transforming our understanding of the philosophical canon. The juxtaposition of spiritualism, phantasmagorical projections, and Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer may seem frivolous or crude to a specialist in German idealism. It is, however, suggested by a reading of these texts. Kant himself decided to give his treatise *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* the subtitle *Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, and in 1767, Moses Mendelssohn reviewed the book as leaving "the reader somewhat unsure as to whether Mr. Kant would rather render metaphysics risible or ghost seeing plausible."[25]

Derrida's *Specters of Marx* was crucial for establishing the rhetoric of ghostliness as a subject worthy of serious critical study by highlighting the constitutive role of ghostly and phantasmagorical figures in Marx's writings.[26] Yet the historicist approach adopted in the following chapters differs not only from Kittler's notion of a technological a priori, but also from Derrida's poststructuralist mode of reading. In analyzing "The Communist Manifesto" (1848), "The Eighteenth Brumaire" (1852), and *The German Ideology* (1845), Derrida reveals the role of Max Stirner's philosophy in the proliferation of the spectral in Marx's early writings. In a footnote, Derrida also mentions Schopenhauer's "Essay on Spirit Seeing."[27] He does not, however, engage in a reading of any contemporaneous spiritualist texts, and his preoccupation with language as the only source of spectrality leads him to disregard the cultural and medial conditions of Marx's invocation of ghosts. In his reading of Marx's chapter on

the commodity's "phantasmagorical form," Derrida thus ignores the modes in which *Capital* (1867) appropriates optical media and Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion—an adaptation I will shortly outline here.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx represents the "camera obscura" of idealism as producing a cognitive error that is false, but that can be turned into a faithful representation of reality by a simple inversion: "In all ideologies, human beings and their circumstances [appear] upside-down as in a camera obscura."[28] But in *Capital*, Marx sets out to expose a much more intricate and persistent illusion that he describes in analogy to the magic lantern and its use in the visual medium of the phantasmagoria. Kant had explained traditional metaphysical problems as based on "hypostatizing" or reifying a "mirage" that is mistaken to be a real object, and he characterized this process as if referring to the projections of a phantasmagoria that a credulous observer falsely considers to be a real physical object.[29] In his chapter on "commodity fetishism," Marx adapts Kant's warning that we mistake "that which exists merely in thought" for a "real object outside of the thinking subject," and he transforms Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion into a critique of our tendency to reify social relations.[30] By invoking the modes in which capitalism gives a "thinglike semblance" to "the social determination of labor" Marx accounts for the commodity's "phantasmagorical form" and its "spectral objectivity."[31]

Derrida and others have ignored this appropriation of Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion in *Capital* and in later Marxist theories of "reification." The following explorations lay the groundwork for correcting that omission, but they do not engage in a detailed, diachronic history of the notion of phantasmagoria in the work of Marx, Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, or Theodor W. Adorno.[32] Instead, the main focus of my analysis is on interrelations between cultural fields and medial practices that are contemporaneous with each other.

Rather than following a strictly chronological order, the sequence of chapters in this book proceeds from the magic lantern to print

culture to television. Chapter 1 juxtaposes Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* to late eighteenth-century spiritualism and the cultural use of the magic lantern in phantasmagorical projections. Tracing Kant's transformation of the optical instrument into an epistemic figure also allows for a new, provocative reading of his critical philosophy. Chapter 2 contrasts Schopenhauer's and Hegel's response to Kant's critical epistemology and examines their diverging modes of adapting medial and spiritualist notions. Shifting from the interrelation of canonical philosophy and optical media to the realm of print culture and literary history, Chapters 3 and 4 analyze ghost narratives, the Gothic novel, and Romanticism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That period witnessed not only the emergence of new projection technologies, but also a profound change in print culture in which reading was no longer restricted to religious and scholarly purposes. The rise in popular literacy, the concurrent rise of the lending library, and the proliferation of Gothic fiction and occultism were all part of a newly emerging popular print culture, a decisive cultural transformation that has been characterized as a "reading revolution."[33] Accordingly, this book juxtaposes late eighteenth-century anxieties about "reading addiction" with the dissemination of nonscholarly writings and with the allure of new serial genres.[34]

Chapter 3 analyzes ghost narratives, the Gothic novel—especially Friedrich Schiller's *The Ghost Seer*—and new immersive reading practices. In *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, Kant had repudiated the proliferation of ostensibly genuine ghost stories in an exploding print market, even though his own treatise contributed to their "haunting circulation." Within the realm of literary fiction, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) simultaneously became the founding text of a new genre whose enormous success was based on the literary appropriation of supernatural apparitions as a narrative device of shock. Similar to the sequence of sudden optical magnifications that assault the phantasmagoria's viewer, Friedrich Schiller's sensational novel *The Ghost Seer* (1787–89) administered a series of shocks to its protagonist and to its readers. In its wake, numerous

sequels and spin-offs by other authors sought to emulate the commercial success of Schiller's novel as one of the most widely read literary texts of the eighteenth century.

But the immersive appeal of these popular tales also caused considerable alarm. One extreme episode of "reading addiction" (*Lesesucht*), analyzed in more detail in Chapter 3, was Ludwig Tieck's recitation of a popular Gothic novel that Tieck and two of his friends read aloud to each other, taking turns for the duration of ten hours. When Tieck had finished reading the novel's second volume at two in the morning (his friends were asleep by then), he suffered a nervous breakdown marked by intense and frightening hallucinations in which he almost killed his companions. Warning against the harmful effects of "reading addiction" and "reading rage" (*Lesewut*), conservative critics drew on similar anecdotes to invoke a pathological loss of reality as the inevitable consequence of reading too many Gothic novels. According to these conservative indictments of new media in the late eighteenth century, print's dissemination of nonscholarly writings and the Gothic novel's appeal to the imagination of addicted readers paralleled the mirage of contemporaneous optical technologies.

Chapter 4 extends the analysis of literary representations of the marvelous to the first half of the nineteenth century, when Romantic texts about animal magnetism and clairvoyance also blurred the boundary between fact and fiction. E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Magnetizer" (1814) transforms its representation of the magnetic rapport between mesmerist and somnambulist into a poetological model for an immersed reader who is mentally and physically affected by Hoffmann's novella. Justinus Kerner, by contrast, presents his treatise *The Seeress of Prevorst* (1829) as a purely factual account of the somnambulist Friederike Hauffe, who remained for the duration of seven years in a state of magnetic clairvoyance. Yet by giving a peculiar explanation of Hauffe's ability to see into the beyond, Kerner's case history lent itself to a sensational literary adaptation. According to Kerner, the seeress perceived the material as well as the spiritual realms because she was—for the whole

extended period—"arrested by some fixation in the moment of dying between life and death."[35] Edgar Allan Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845) appropriates and transforms this account of the clairvoyant somnambulist in a ghastly and shocking manner. In describing an ostensibly real scientific experiment, Poe's tale replicates and undermines Kerner's claims to factuality within the realm of literary fiction. Yet even though Poe's text was a literary one, its fictional mode of producing reality effects was so compelling that the novella was reprinted as an authentic case history in various newspapers and popular-science journals—similar to the haunting circulation of ghost narratives in eighteenth-century print culture.

The final chapter reveals a reciprocal interaction between spiritualist research and the gradual emergence of electrical television in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At that time, the German spiritualist Carl du Prel appropriated Kant's critical philosophy in a curious manner that allowed him to define psychic "television in time and space" as a function of the "transcendental subject."[36] In addition to presenting occultism as the "very philosophy of technology," du Prel introduced Ernst Kapp's theory of technology as "organ projection" into his spiritualist account of new media.[37] Du Prel even imagined an engineer "well versed in occultism" who would draw on this expertise to construct an apparatus for the wireless transmission of moving images.[38] The closest real-life equivalent to this fantasy may have been the British physicist, chemist, and spiritualist William Crookes, who undertook research on thought transference and who also invented the cathode ray tube. But Crookes was not an isolated figure; under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research, other renowned scientists, such as Oliver Lodge and William James, also conducted experiments in thought transference and telepathy.

The various conjunctures between the ghostly and new media technologies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would have allowed for extending this book's historical range. In the Cold War period, Günther Anders conceptualized the mass medium of television under the title "The World as Phantom and Matrix," and

the recent history of digital technologies could have served as the subject of another chapter that examines a link between the spectral and the medial. This book, however, ends with the first experimental television broadcasts in the late 1920s, when "wireless television" was described, somewhat hyperbolically, as "perhaps not only the most magical, but also the most consequential . . . of all inventions of our time."[39]

CHAPTER ONE

The Magic Lantern of Philosophy:

Specters of Kant

> Otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an
> appearance without anything that appears.
> —Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

> Illusion is the kind of mirage that persists even though one knows that
> the ostensible object is not real.
> —Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

The first edition of *Dreams of a Spirit Seer, Elucidated by Dreams of
Metaphysics* was published anonymously in 1766.[1] Two years earlier,
The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story initially came forth as the alleged
translation of a medieval Italian manuscript. In the second edition
of each book, Immanuel Kant and Horace Walpole acknowledged
their authorship and chose the same dictum from Horace as an epi-
graph.[2] In *Ars poetica*, the Roman author had criticized the pictorial
representation of monstrous bodies. But also, in the realm of litera-
ture, Horace rejected a text "whose fantastic forms are fashioned
like the dreams of a sick man so that neither head nor foot merge
to a whole."[3] Anticipating Kant's denunciation of Swedenborg as
a deluded maniac, the title page of *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* quotes
Horace almost accurately: "Empty semblances are fashioned like the
dreams of a sick man."[4] Walpole, however, altered Horace's sentence
in a manner that subverted its original meaning: "Empty shapes are
fashioned so that head and foot nonetheless merge to a whole."[5]

By inverting Horace's classical aesthetic, Walpole's "Gothic
story" affirmed a poetics of monstrous architectural and textual

bodies. Simultaneously, its narrative interest centered on the gradual manifestation of an enormous specter that materializes, literally, piece by piece. The text opens with a giant helmet suddenly falling from the sky and killing Conrad, the son of the novel's principal villain, Manfred. Later in the novel, more outsized body parts—an enormous hand, an enormous foot—appear in the castle that has been usurped by Manfred. The book ends with the apparition of Alfonso, the founder of Otranto. His "form…dilated to an immense magnitude" finally becomes visible as a whole, reinstalling the rightful heir, Theodore, before ascending to heaven.[6] In the "translator's" preface to the first edition, Walpole apologized that the medieval tale centered on "miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams and other preternatural events, which are exploded [sic] now even from romances."[7] But the enormous success of *Otranto* led Walpole to acknowledge his authorship, and it served to legitimize the literary representation of spirit apparitions.

In the preamble that introduces his theoretical treatise, Kant, by contrast, criticized the popularity of supposedly authentic ghost stories, which were intruding upon philosophical theory: "But why is it that the popular tales, which find such widespread acceptance…circulate with such futility and impunity, insinuating themselves even into scholarly theories?"[8] Three years earlier, in 1763, Kant had been favorably impressed by various reports about Swedenborg's ghostly visions, and he even characterized one incident as "remov[ing] any conceivable doubt" about the veracity of these narratives.[9] But in *Dreams*, Kant casts doubt on these stories, and he postpones their discussion to the second, "historical part" of the text, which I will analyze in Chapter 3. The first, "dogmatic part" gives a detailed theoretical account of how spirit apparitions might be conceived of—an issue that Kant deliberates in conjunction with classical metaphysical questions such as the relationship between mind and body.

The "Practical Conclusion Drawn from the Treatise as a Whole" attempts to put an end to "zealously overeager speculation," and in passing, Kant here formulates a new definition of metaphysics as the "science of the limits of human reason."[10] This delimitation of