Stop-Motion, an Uncanny Educational Tool:

Exploring Stop-Motion Puppetry as a Storytelling Medium Capable of Teaching Child Audiences Lessons Through Fear

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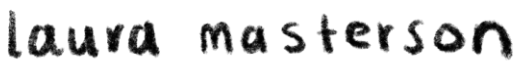
Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) (Animation DL832). It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.



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Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore the medium of stop-motion under the context of Marshall McLuhan's philosophies on a medium's ability to carry a message. I will be exploring how the medium of stop-motion embodies Freud's uncanny and can be utilised as an educational tool in children's media. Using ideas from Derrin Crawte and Barry Purves on stop-motion mechanics combined with child developmental psychology I will investigate the links between uncanny stop-motion content and fear as a catalyst for learning susceptibility in children.

Starting in 18th Century Czechoslovakia I will dive into the world of puppet theatre and how the core ideologies of this artform went onto inspire filmmaker Jan Švankmajer. This will fuel an intertextual discussion of Švankmajer's 1980 film *The Fall of the House of Usher* and Henry Selick's 2009 *Coraline*, and their positions as uncanny stop-motion pieces that carry their messaging to children through their medium. My investigation will then move into a more contemporary context, looking at Claude Barras' 2016 *Ma Vie De Courgette* as a visual turning point. I will document the decline of uncanny stop-motion in favour of softer, more narrative based educational storytelling for children. Leading me to the question: within the world of children's stop-motion, is the medium still the message?

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Introduction

'Regardless of the media, we are all consumers of story and always have been'

("Storytelling", 2023)

Storytelling is something that humans have engaged with for milenia, the earliest examples being found within cave paintings in Lascaux and Chavaux, France, dating back roughly 30,000 years ago ("Storytelling", 2023). Although it comes in many different forms the idea of storytelling has always been connected to the idea of education ("Storytelling", 2023). An ability to place the reader or listener at the centre of a situation, creating an educational susceptibility, increases their engagement and willingness to learn (Boris). Such concepts are bolstered by research in neuroimaging proving this enhanced engagement exists through physical reactions in people's bodies while listening to stories, such as dilated pupils and increased heart rates (Nyhout).

It is, however interesting to note that, as discussed by Gotz, Maya, e.t al in their book *Fear in Front of the Screen: Children's Fears, Nightmares and Thrills from TV* (2019), such an engagement brought about through fear as an immersive agent manages to convey these lessons in a more solidified way, particularly for children, often resulting in fear retention cycles that extend into adulthood. This idea is notably seen in children in their middle childhood (ages eight to nine). Here, we see an age group that are still young enough to be frightened by audio-visual cues (e.g. loud noises) but are old enough to comprehend frightening concepts such as war (Gotz, Maya, e.t al, IX - XIII).

Although the idea of the story and fear's role in educational tactics are important in themselves, it's the opinion of philosopher and author Marshall McLuhan that '*the medium is the message',* i.e. the medium (here defined as '*a means of effecting or conveying something'* ("Definition of MEDIUM")) in which a story is delivered to an audience carries the story's main message (McLuhan, pp. 9 - 23).

'Any medium has the power of imposing its own assumptions on the unwary'

(McLuhan, p. 17)

Here, he explores media as an extension of oneself, linking to film as an extension of not only the director but as an exercise in the *'enrichment of the human experience'* (Mcluhan, p. 327). McLuhan also points to film as an educational tool, mainly in its ability to visually represent a wealth of knowledge and research. All the work that would have gone into the making of the film condensed into its limited timespan. Such visual representation therefore allows children to learn without requiring them to have adult-like research capabilities (McLuhan, p. 319). On top of this, Mcluhan states that film, as a mechanical process, creates the illusion of life:

"Film is itself a jerky mechanical ballet of flicks that yields a sheer dream world of romantic illusions. But the film form is not just a puppet like dance of arrested still shots, for it manages to approximate and even to surpass real life by means of illusion"

(McLuhan, p. 321)

Such ideas are amplified when we consider how the uncanny and frightening medium of stop-motion animation operates to carry its messages through the already illusionary medium of film.

Stop-motion as a medium can be defined as:

'*an animation technique in which an object is physically manipulated and photographed on a single frame of motion picture so that it <u>appears to move on its own</u>'*

(Maselli, p. 54).

As discussed by Derrin Crawte in their essay ‘Darkness Visible: Contemporary Stop-Motion and the Uncanny*’,* a clear link is made between stop-motion as a medium and an overwhelming sense of fear. This fear can be associated directly with Sigmund Freud’s idea of the uncanny discussed in his essay ‘Das Unheimlich*’* (1919). The uncanny, as defined by Freud, manifests in two distinct ways: A) a repression of fears leading to a sense of uncanny when these fears resurface and B) resurrection, accidental manifestation or doubling. Both of which can be summed up simply with the phrase familiar yet unfamiliar (Freud, p. 17).

Such ideas become manifest in stop-motion when we consider the fact that the puppet is both alive and dead simultaneously (being an inanimate object that is brought to life through animation) (Crawte, p. 5) surfacing the concept of aminism, discussed by Freud in relation to objects that shouldn’t have life being given life almost as if they were possessed (Freud, p. 14). The possession in question is then amplified by the concept of eyes, a topic Freud preoccupies himself with in his essay, mainly in relation to his discussion of E.T.A Hoffman’s short story *The Sandman* (1816), in which the keys to the soul are the eyes of the characters. *‘The eyes are the window to the soul’,* originally stated by William Shakespeare (“The Eyes are the Window to your Soul”), is a statement that holds true in the amplification of uncanniness displayed by the lifelessness present in a stop-motion puppet’s eyes, similar to that of the automation Olympia in *The Sandman*. Here, the viewer or reader feels the uncanniness through the feigned life presented by these mechanical objects which isn’t reflected in their eyes (Freud, p. 7).

‘*All stop-motion has the potential to unsettle, but … its discomforting nature is amplified by … the innate uncanniness of its form.’*

(Crawte, p. 198)

Such concepts are furthered by the work of Barry Purves, who discusses the physicality of the puppets and how a human hand can often be seen in their animation, furthered by a roughness in their movements which is innately inhuman (Purves, p. 7). Purves's considerations draw us to the idea of the persistence of movement, or the eye's ability to fill in the blanks when watching something move. In relation to on screen movement, the phenomenon relies heavily on motion blur, which is not present in stop-motion (Purves, p. 19). If we examine this further, we can point towards Zeno's Arrow Paradox, which claims that at any given instance no object is actually in motion, it's simply our brain's ability to stitch these moments together that allows us to perceive motion (Dowden). The illusion of cinema is held together through this rapid stitching of moments, which is then exaggerated and brought to light within stop-motion animation, where the gaps between the poses are longer and more pronounced, making us more acutely aware of a process that we normally wouldn't be, pronouncing the uncanniness of the medium. Moving back we can link such an uncanniness with a frightening viewing experience for children, heightening their senses and susceptibility to the message of the medium.

Throughout my dissertation, I plan on exploring the medium of stop-motion under the context of its uncanniness and how this is used to teach children lessons through fear. In order to do so I plan on discussing the films *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Jan Svankmajer, 1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher")), *Coraline* (Henry Selick, 2009 ("Coraline")) and *Ma Vie De La Courgette* (Claude Barras, 2016 ("Ma Vie de Courgette")) through the ideas presented by Gotz, Maya, e.t al., Freud, Crawte, McLuan and Purves in relation to fear, the uncanny, medium and stop-motion mechanics.

Chapter One

Czechoslovakian Puppet Theatre and the Uncanny Political Messaging of Jan Švankmajer

1.1 Puppet Theatre in 19 and 20th Century Czechoslovakia

In order to discuss the uncanniness of stop-motion puppetry and its position as an educational medium I've decided to examine one of its predecessors, European puppet theatre, and its position as a political tool within Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Odlozilik and Wiskemann)) during the 19th and 20th century (Cowen, p. 128). During the 19th century, puppet theatre ('*making and manipulation of puppets for use in some kind of theatrical show'* (Speaight)) was rising in popularity throughout Europe (Billing, p. 6) as a form of entertainment, especially within Czechoslovakia.

Czech puppet theatre was a product of its historical context, constantly shifting as a medium in an attempt to better deliver its messaging, an example of McLuhan's concepts regarding media. Early puppets were influenced by Baroque traditions ('*a style of artistic expression prevalent especially in the 17th century'* ("Definition of BAROQUE")) popular at the time, appearing in the form of wooden carved, string operated pieces. A lack of mobility in the puppets led to dialogue heavy shows. (Dubska and Malikova), meaning puppet theatre became popular in more rural areas, where audiences did not have to be literate to understand the messaging, making it a folk art (Cowen, p. 128).

FIG 1. Baroque style, Wooden carved, string puppet, fitting with the

Cultural shifts in late 19th century Czechoslovakia saw a rise in educational opportunities.

Combined with the increasing influence of realism (*'a mid nineteenth century artistic movement characterised by subjects painted from everyday life in a naturalistic manner'* ("Realism")), Baroque style string puppets, as a medium, no longer delivered messages in the way they once could (Dubska and Malikova).

FIG 2. Czech rod operated puppet for more realistic movement

Such shifts coincided with a rough period politically, socially and culturally for Czechoslovakia in the early 20th century (Cowen, p. 127). In February 1948, Czechoslovakia was occupied by Soviet Russia, becoming a part of the Communist Party ("Milestones: 1961–1968 - Office of the Historian"). The new government introduced media censorship (Odolozilik and Wiskemann). During this period Czechoslovakian puppet theatre retained a strong presence within the country, providing the country with the ability to retain their culture and nationalism through folk art. When printed forms of communication were banned it also provided a space to spread political messages and words of protest through a native tongue (Crawte, p. 128).

'Despite the ups and downs of the political, economic and cultural turmoil of the (sometimes terrifyingly) eventful twentieth century, Czech puppet theatre thus grew in importance and in its artistic achievements'

(Billing, p. 18)

Its new position as a mouthpiece for nationalism and politics created a Czech puppet theatre revival. High quality puppets were now being mass produced for children. Running alongside this was a rise in cabaret culture (‘*a restaurant serving liquor and providing entertainment’* (“Definition of CABARET”)) in which puppeteers could experiment with fresh ways of puppeteering to better deliver more serious topics. This can be seen in rod operated puppets which better imitated human movement, bolstering the realism of the puppeteering and therefore the realism of the messaging (Dubska and Malikova).

It can be noted here that the process of puppetry, be it stop-motion or otherwise, likens itself to a child’s mode of play. While playing and engaging with toys, objects and concepts children are participating in storytelling, bolstering their imagination and narrative abilities (“Learning Through Play”). Here, we could see the child as a puppeteer or animator, bringing stories to life by animating inanimate objects. A predisposition for directing stories allows them to engage with puppet animation in an involved and informed way, even if only subconsciously.

Similar to the idea of uncanniness related to stop-motion puppets explored by Crawte, we see a clear example of Freud’s discussion on objects being both dead and alive, or aminism, within the puppets discussed above. Such opportunities in the uncanny were picked up on by various puppeteers at the time, who used puppetry as a medium to deliver some particularly political messaging, most notably puppeteer come filmmaker, Jan Švankmajer.

1.2 Jan Švankmajer and Realism Disrupting Puppets

FIG 3. Jan Švankmajer's *Faust* (1994 ("Faust")), which blended mediums in order to disrupt reality and present its theme of manipulation

Jan Švankmajer, who began his career in puppet theatre at the age of eight (Cowen, p. 134), working his way up to direct the puppet department of a theatre company, *Diavlo Masek* (*Theatre of Masks*) in 1964 (Frost, p. 3) is the perfect example of an artist who consciously chose their medium in order to better deliver their intended messages. Despite his avid interest in folk puppetry, Švankmajer began his life as a filmmaker in 1964 (Cowen, p. 134). This move was inspired by his desire to make work that was more experimental and political. He felt that film, as a medium, would better suit his needs, as an audience could wait for a finished product, unlike the live spectators present at a puppet performance (Frost, p. 4). Švankmajer quickly became enamoured by animation, claiming that its use worked to disrupt the sense of realism within his pieces (Frost, p. 4). He applied a mixture of live-action filming, puppetry and stop-motion animation. This created a grey area where anything on screen could spring to life. Conceptually, we can see how this reflects Freud's uncanny, by

confusing the viewer's ability to define whether the objects on screen were alive or dead. A prime example of this method can be seen in Švankmajer's *Faust* (1994 ("Faust")) in which the main themes of manipulation are showcased through a live actor being strung up like a Baroque style, Czechoslovakin theatre puppet.

Discussed by J. Frost in his article *'*Jan Švankmajer and Puppetry*',* Švankmajer's puppets physically emulated Freud's uncanny. Australian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, notes that children emotionally invest in dolls, as if they're empty vessels waiting to be filled. Linking this to Crawte, and the stop-motion puppet starting its life as an inanimate object, we can claim that through the animator giving life to the puppet they are filling an empty vessel. Švankmajer held similar ideologies, never considering himself an animator but someone who brought objects to life to explore '*altered states of consciousness and the hidden life of the inanimate'* (Crawte, p. 99). Švankmajer believed that objects only take on meaning which we apply to or fill them with, meanings which can only be extended into the puppet through the work of the animator (Frost, p. 7). Conceptually, these ideas draw strong comparisons to McLuhan's idea of media being an extension of oneself.

FIG 4. Jan Švankmajer's uncanny object animation in *Alice* (1988 ("Neco Z Alenky")) which utilises inanimate objects and puppets with immovable facial expressions

Švankmajer's puppets reflect his philosophies. He mainly animated inanimate objects. Švankmajer was not the first to use the anthropomorphism ('*the interpretation of nonhuman things or events in terms of human characteristics'* (Guthrie)) of objects, this tactic appearing in early traditional animation (e.g., the broom in Disney's '*Fantasia'* (1940)("Fantasia")) (Learoyd). Within '*Fantasia'*, however, all objects on screen are equally unreal, therefore their animation doesn't appear unrealistic or uncanny (linking to the suspension of disbelief in which an audience must assume what is on screen to be true (Heckmann)), as opposed to the blended live-action utilised by Švankmajer, which is innately more unsettling and harder for an audience to apply their suspended disbelief to.

Švankmajer's choice of objects, mostly dolls and toys, were intended to evoke a sense of childhood fear. Such fear is emphasised through their uncannily realistic motion which becomes more frightening when we consider the puppet's are normally carrying out an act of violence against themselves or others (Crawte, p. 100). They often appear weathered and beaten, telling the audience they have a life outside of what they see on screen, heightening ambiguous realism and therefore Freud's uncanny (Frost, p. 7). These same puppets tended not to have faces or they had immovable facial expressions, emphasising their inanimate nature once more (Frost, p. 7). Interestingly, this also links us back to the concept of life being found in a person's eyes and how the lack of eye movement on Švankmajer's objects emphasises their uncanniness. A prime example of this style of object puppet can be seen in Svankmajer's 1988 adaptation ('*a film, book, play, etc., that has been made from another film, book, pay, etc.'* ("ADAPTATION")) of Lewis Carol's 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Bauer and Lowne) , *'Alice'* ("Neco Z Alenky"), most prominently when the titular character, Alice, is shrunk down and represented by an animated doll.

FIG 5. Claymation in Švankmajer's *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1983 ("Moznosti Dialogu")), showing the hand of the animator in the animation

These object style puppets coincided with claymation ('*used for animation that features images of clay figures'* ("Definition of CLAYMATION")), which has a great physicality, emphasising Purves's concepts of showing human involvement in animation, bringing into question the puppet's position as an independent being (Purves, p. 29). This style of animation can be seen in Švankmajer's film '*Dimensions of Dialogue'* (1983 ("Moznosti Dialogu")), which explores the political state of Czechoslovakia at the time and civilian experience in an anti-individualist Communist regime. The film was banned in Czechoslovakia when it was released due to its political nature (Cowen, p. 135).

'Animation does not consist of moving dead things around but of reanimating them'

Švankmajer

(Frost, p. 10)

Apparent in Švankmajer's work is a clear understanding of medium as a driver for message, as well as the uncanny capabilities of the stop-motion puppet. Throughout his portfolio, Švankmajer presents a number of films exploring the idea of childhood, simultaneously inviting children in as audience members (Frost, p. 1) often leading to a frightening experience. Here, a perfect storm is created for learning opportunities, a clear example of which can be seen in the political messaging of Švankmajer's film *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher")).

1.3 *The Fall of the House of Usher,* Subliminal Political Messaging

FIG 6. Objects as puppets in Švankmajer's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher")), showcasing Freud's idea of aminism (Freud, p14)

Švankmajer took conscious consideration when choosing which medium he would be using to display his messaging to an audience, particularly during the period of heavy censorship within Czechoslovakia (Odlosilik and Wiskemann). Most of Švankmajer's work at the time was banned, including a period where he was banned from filmmaking in Czechoslovakia between 1972 and 1979

(Cowen, p. 135). To avoid any further censors, Švankmajer turned to adaptation to continue spreading his political messages in a more subverted manner (Crawte, p. 112). One such adaptation was a short film titled *Zánik Domu Usher* or *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher")) based on Edgar Allan Poe's 1839 short story of the same title (Rush). Within this film Švankmajer uses a sense of uncanniness evoked by his chosen puppets to deliver a poignant political message to children on the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, which would be retained through fear (Crawte, p. 112).

Going back to Crawte, we find an extensive discussion on the film's place as a political piece. Firstly, Švankmajer's puppets within this film are objects representing the human characters of the story, displaying Freud's idea of animism (a sense of life within the objects that should be inanimate (Freud, p. 14)), and forefronting the objectification of Czechoslovakian citizens during Soviet occupation. The protagonists, Roderick Usher and his deceased sister Madeline, are represented by a chair and a coffin respectively (Crawte, p. 112). Such use of objects creates an uncanny doubling effect (Crawte, p. 116), with the coffin representing the bloodshed witnessed within Czechoslovakia since 1945 (Crawte, p. 113).

'*The film is an unsettling representation of the animistic tone of Poe's story but also a very real human horror, expressed metaphorically through the animation of objects that undo the fabric of the home'*

(Crawte, p. 112)

Various other household objects are used as puppets, most prominently a hammer and set of nails that wiggle as if they are afraid. Nearing the climax of the film we witness the hammer's handle crumble into pieces and the nails bend themselves into unusable loops, disrupting their sense of belonging in the home and creating a sense of inability to aid in the damage done within

Czechoslovakia. However, it is the climax of the film, and Švankmajer's decision to use the whole house as a puppet, which truly cements his political messaging.

Important to note here is Poe's original discussion of the house within his 1839 short story. The home here is described as having, *'vacant, eye-like windows'* ("The Fall of the House of Usher | Symbols"). This creates a character out of the house while harkening back to previous discussions on the eyes being the windows to the soul, suggesting that there is something strange and uncanny about the home. Similar descriptions of the light leaving protagonist Roderick Usher's eyes suggest an emotional death which foreshadows his actual

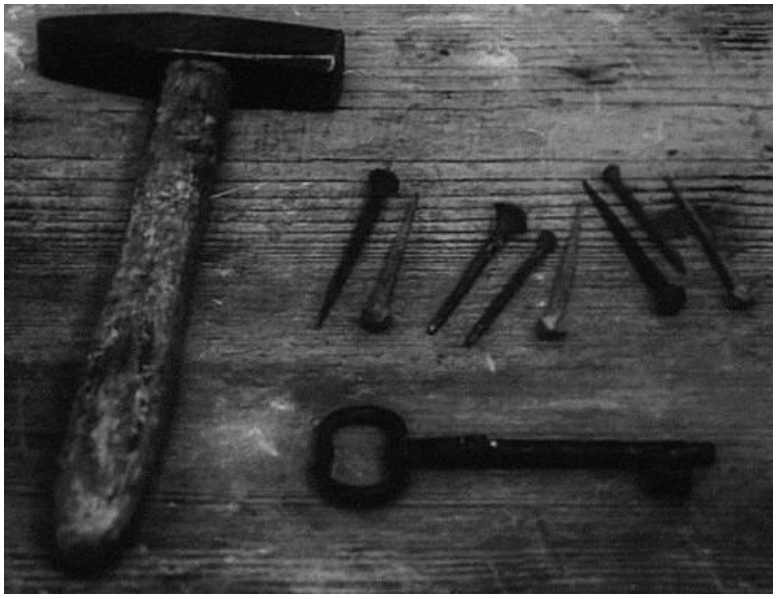

FIG 7. Hammer and nails in Jan Švankmajer's *The Fall of the House of Usher,* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher")), another example of aminism (Freud, p14)

FIG 8. Objects fall from windows as house begins to crumble, Jan Švankmajer's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher"))

death at the climax of the story. All pointing towards the uncanniness of lifelessness in the eyes, suggesting inanimateness, and how this can be used for subliminal messaging ("The Fall of the House of Usher | Symbols").

The house crumbles and falls apart, amplifying its position as a puppet. Walls melt, both chair and coffin smash into pieces and furniture flees from the home. Claymation techniques, as discussed in relation to '*Dimensions of Dialogue'* (1983 ("Moznosti Dialogu")), were utilised to break apart the walls of the house. Švankmajer's poignant decision to have furniture jump from the higher windows of the home mirrors the executions of Czechoslovakian political leaders in the 1950's (Crawte, p. 112). The idea of the house as a puppet draws interesting parallels to Freud's concept of *'heimlich'* versus *'unheimlich'*. '*Heimlich',* which directly translates from German as familiar, congenial or concealed, is often mistakenly translated as '*homely'* (Freud, p. 4), and so the position of the house in this film is important and can be discussed in two ways.

Firstly, by using the home as a puppet we can see an object space which is '*heimlich'*, or familiar. It is only through the ambiguous animation within the space do we move into an *'unheimlich',* or unfamiliar territory, as the audience cannot tell what is alive and what is not (Crawte, p. 111), similar to the animation showcased in '*Faust'* (1994 ("Faust")).

Secondly, the objects within the home are a perfect example of a '*heimlich*' to '*unheimlich'*, switch on the grounds of *'something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light'* (Freud, p. 13), derived from concepts originally written by Joseph Von Schelling. This can be witnessed in the breaking of the coffin or reanimation of the deceased sister who was being kept under the home (also mirroring the concept of animating the inanimate). Such destruction was a common feature of Švankmajer's work and most commonly represented death and a sense of rebirth experienced by him while staying in a safe house, away from unrest

in Czechoslovakia (Crawte, pp. 112 - p118). Here Švankmajer extends himself into the animation of his objects, as per McLuhan's ideas.

'The breaking and battering of Svankmajer's objects, activated through stop-motion, seems to connote death and morality, but also embody freedom and liberation, the release from repression, that is extended to the form of objects'

(Crawte, p. 118)

We can also look at this film as directed at children. On a visual level, this is seen in the black humour of the coffin, which is appealing to a child audience, because of playfulness felt in the object animation within the film. Paul Wells, author of *Understanding Animation,* discusses such object animation, linking it to '*creating a fictionalised notion of consciousness'* which reminds him of *'the playful and liberal apparatus of childhood'* (Crawte, p. 111), note previous discussions on the child as a puppeteer. Švankmajer's use of narration within the film

FIG 9. Playful animation of coffin exudes a black humour that is appealing to children, Jan Švankmajer's *The Fall of the House of Usher,* (1980 ("The Fall of the House of Usher"))

aids this (Crawte, p. 116). Through narrative storytelling, the child audience can be pulled into a susceptibility for learning as discussed earlier. Altogether, this creates a space in which real trauma is accessible to children (Crawte, p. 125) as if he were telling the story from a child's point of view (Crawte, p. 221).

> *'Švankmajer's animation … is clearly informed by his … proclaimed connection to his inner child; at the same time, it evokes a wider, disturbing context that related to his upbringing in war-torn Czechoslovakia'*
>
> (Crawte, p. 221)

On a psychological level, we can apply the idea of children's emotional investment in inanimate objects, previously discussed in relation to Rilke and bolstered by studies conducted by Rachel L. Steverson and Shailee R. Woodard. They state that children anthropomorphise inanimate objects while their Theory of Mind (how we predict what others are thinking or feeling) is developing. Children will create internal states for and emotionally invest in a wide range of objects, most evidently when they're in a state of play (Steverson and Woodard). As Švankamjer cultivates this state of play through his object animation, the destruction witnessed at the climax of the film produces a space where fear is felt by emotionally invested children, therefore broadening their susceptibility for learning and retention.

Here, we witness a filmmaker taking advantage of an innately uncanny medium and a clever form of storytelling which lays the groundwork to present a particularly political piece to a child audience during a period of heavy censorship.

Throughout this chapter I have discussed the puppet as an uncanny device within the cultural context of 19th and 20th century Czechoslovakia. I have explored the ways in which the puppet

theatre and the stop-motion filmmaking of Jan Švankmajer took advantage of their mediums to deliver political ideas to a child audience who were left susceptible to learning through fright, the uncanny, black humour, emotional investment and playfulness.

Chapter Two

The Animator's Hands: Issues of Control and Intertextuality in Henry Selick's '*Coraline'*

2.1 A Horror Adaptation for Children

Chapter One discussed how the uncanniness of the medium of stop-motion was used to present political messages to child audiences in 19th and 20th century Czechoslovakia, specifically focusing on filmmaker Jan Švankmajer. Moving forward, I plan to discuss how the processes previously explored apply to and are developed upon in a more contemporary context, while retaining a knowledge of work that came before. In order to do so, I will be discussing the puppetry methods within Henry Selick's 2009 child horror film *Coraline* ("Coraline") and how they perpetuate the ideas of control and the animator. Ultimately, frightening children into learning to be grateful for what they have.

FIG 10. *Coraline* puppet theatre by Irish puppet troupe Púca Puppets, 2006.

Similar to Švankmajer's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Coraline,* is an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's 2002 novel of the same title (Mihailova, p. 5). Gaiman's novel, which was accused of being too frightening for children (Mihailova, pp. 5-6), required a medium which could translate its

uncanny themes and imagery[1]. Gaiman selected Henry Selick[2] to take on the task, stating that Selick '*understands something that people often forget - that children love to be scared'* (Mihailova, p. 6). Early doors debate occurred over the film's medium, with original plans to incorporate traditional hand-drawn animation being scrapped as it would dampen the film's uncanniness (Mihailova, p. 59), showing awareness of McLuhan's ideas on medium.

Important to note here is the idea of intertextuality, originally discussed by Julia Kristeva in her 1967 essay 'World, Dialogue and Novel*'* and described as:

FIG 11. Two worlds that are similar yet different in Henry Selick's 2009 *Coraline* ("Coraline").

'A mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another'

(Kristeva, p. 37)

This was expanded by Jonathan Culler within his essay 'Presupposition and Intertextuality*'* (1976 (Culler)), who states that for intertextuality to exist, it needs to take place in relation to pre-existing discourse. Within *Coraline,* we see a conversation

[1] Interesting to note here is the 2006 puppet theatre adaptation of the novel by Irish puppet troupe Púca Puppets (Mihalova, p6).
[2] Director of previous stop-motion horror films for children, most namely '*The Nightmare Before Christmas'* (1993)(IMDB)

between the film and the original novel, and numerous nods to early stop-motion, particularly work done in Czechoslovakia, (Harris, p. 44). Important, is Selick's historical awareness of stop-motion as a medium, allowing him to truly develop and display its uncanny inclinations.

> *'Through … strategies of multi-textural referencing that integrate dark literary and cinematic tropes within the body of the film, '*Coraline' … *also challenge*(s) *what is considered too frightening for animated children's fare'*
>
> (Harris, p. 46)

Despite the story's potential to frighten, Selick worked hard to make it accessible to a child audience to broaden their learning susceptibility, as discussed in previous chapters, then using fear as a retention tool. This is done through tactics such as: creating a childlike perspective through the presentation of boredom, passive parental neglect and lack of choice based autonomy (Hollinger), a fairytale style story structure (Lessons From The Screenplay), black humour (comic relief during frightening moments, similar to the work of Švankmajer (Harris, p. 47)), and a sense of play within the exaggerated animation of the puppets (Mihailova, p. 62). These engagement tactics are then combined with the implementation of Freud's uncanny to frighten.

On a surface level the story within both the novel and the film is innately uncanny. The Other World, an almost carbon copy of Coraline's Real World, is an embodiment of Freud's uncanny in the context of familiar yet unfamiliar. The real uncanniness, however, is not found within the similarities and differences forefronted by the two worlds but is subliminally coded into the craftsmanship of the film.

2.2 Puppets That Aren't Shy About Being Puppets

Differing from Švankmajer's object and clay animation, *Coraline,* utilises intricately designed and built ball and socket armature puppets (Torre, p. 97). These are mechanical skeletons built with ball and socket joints allowing for more flexibility and tension and therefore more human-like movement (Kalif). Originally utilised by Eastern European animator Jiri Trnka (Brashear), this method has been adopted by the makers at Laika[3]. Such over-exaggeration and detailed motion links to Crawte's discussion of uncanny stop-motion and its ability to forefront the mechanics of movement we are usually unaware of (Crawte, p. 6).

Fig 12. Titular character Coraline with her ball and socket armature for Selicks's *Coraline* (2009 ("Coraline"))

This unnatural smoothness is aided by Laika's advancements in 3D printing (Torre, p. 97) which allowed them to print over 15,000 replacement faces for the characters in the film ("CORALINE"). Replacement animation, defined as: '*the creation of multiple completed images or forms that are then successively replaced (one image or form at a time), in order to create the illusion of a singular and persistent, yet moving, form'* (Torre, p. 98), was utilised for both the facial and mouse animation within the film. Intertextually conversing with George Pal's 1930's '*Puppetoons'* series ("Puppetoons") these advancements created more squash and stretch ('*contrasting change of shape … to give a feeling of fleshiness, flexibility and life'* (Hurtt)) and intricate dialogue (Torre, p.

[3] The studio in which *Coraline* was produced (Laika Studios)

99). This increased the uncanniness of the puppets through realism, emphasising the uncanniness in their lack of motion.

Henri Bergson, French philosopher, spoke about multiplicity in his 1889 book, *Time and Free Will* (Bergson). He states that any object split into smaller forms still remains the same object (Bergson, pp. 75-140). Applying this idea to replacement animation, discussed by Dan Torre in his essay 'Replacing Coraline' (Mihailova)), we witness an uncanny discrepancy. Referencing Zeno's Paradox and the notion of persistence of motion, stop-motion film is a duration split into a series of moments. Within such moments, the replacement object, which the audience had perceived to be one persistent form, appears as multiple different objects. This jarring stray from what we believed to be true evokes Freud's ideas of the uncanny under the pretence of bringing what should have been hidden to light (Freud, p. 13).

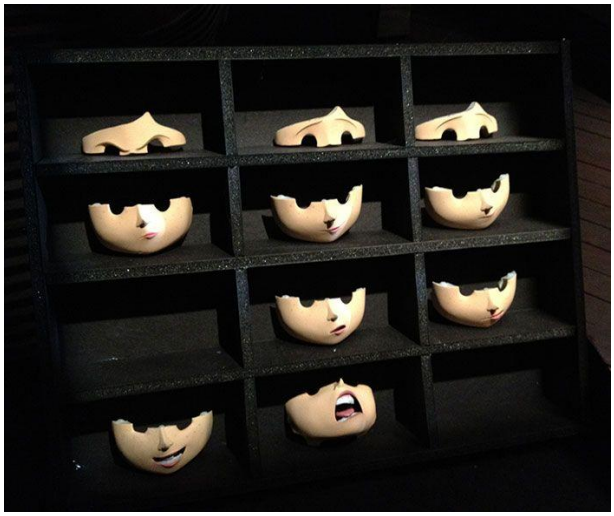

Fig 13. 3D printed replacement faces in *Coraline* (2009 ("Coraline")), which add to the uncanny realism of the puppet performance.

Interesting too, is the way replacement animation triggers our Visio-Spatial Working Memory System or our brain's way of storing imagery and movement separately, as these belong to two differing cognitive systems. While dreaming, our subconscious will mix and match these images and movements, not always presenting us with images and movements that are aligned in the way we first witnessed them. The replacement animation, a

mixture of images and movements that are unrelated but play back in a way that suggests regularity, reminds us of our own dreams and subconscious (Torre, p. 106). Similarly, this provides a strong link to Freud's uncanny in the context of bringing notions that were once hidden to light (Freud, p. 13).

The ways in which these realistic puppets are presented on screen too brings about an uncanny sensation. Throughout the film the puppets point to the fact that they themselves are puppets, inanimate objects being brought to life, as discussed by Crawte (Crawte, p. 4). This can be seen when the audience are shown that the characters in the Other World are constructed of sawdust (e.g., Other Wybie and the mice-come-rats) (Torre, p. 108). Such a reveal points directly to the physicality of the puppets, as discussed by Purves, making the audience aware of their position as an inanimate object. This also operates intertextually harkening back to the work of Jan Švankmajer, satisfying his empty vessel theory as well as taking direct reference from his film *'Alice'* (1990 ("Neco Z Alensky")), in which the white rabbit is similarly filled with sawdust (Mihailova, p. 66). Here we see a deep rooted understanding of the medium's historical context and a push to emphasise its uncanny tendencies, aligning with McLuhan's ideas on medium.

Fig 14. Sawdust filled puppets point to their position as inanimate objects In Selick's *Coraline* (2009 ("Coraline"))

*'What unites '*Coraline*' with its predecessors is their shared preoccupation with puppet viscera and their capacity to summon terror out of tactility. By exposing the fragility of the crafted body, stop-motion films destroy the illusion of life, underscoring the artifice of the puppet and breaking it down - sometimes literally - into its constituent parts'*

(Mihailova, p. 67)

Fig 15. *Coraline'*s (Henry Slick, 2009 ("Coraline")) opening sequence that hints at control and the Beldam's position as an animator

The most jarring example of this physicality is witnessed in the film's opening sequence. Here, the hands of the Beldam (Other Mother), pull the stuffing from a doll only to reconstruct her in the likeness of Coraline. This scene nods to the idea of puppet making (Mihailova, p. 66). Intertextually, this look to early stop-motion filmmaking, like Stuart J. Blackton's '*Humorous Phases of Funny Faces'* (1906 ("Humorous Phases of Funny Faces")), and the concept of self figuration, where the animator's hands can be seen on screen. This opening introduces us to the ideas of control within the film as well as the notion of the Beldam as an animator (Mihailova, p. 59).

Control is reinforced by scenes where rigging devices, normally used to keep the puppet upright while shooting, are visible to the audience (Mihailova, p. 60). For example, the scene in which the Other Father is being played by the mechanical arms of his piano. In response, the audience becomes aware of the process of stop-motion where the puppet is given life through the control and hands of the animator, nodding to Crawte's animate versus inanimate argument (Crawte, p4). The Other World can also be seen as an allegory for the process of stop-motion itself, as it's constructed and controlled by the Beldam (the animator) for the entertainment of Coraline (the audience) (Torre, p. 107).

Fig 16. Visible rigging setups which put focus on the puppet as an inanimate object under control of an animator. Selick's *Coraline,* (2009 ("Coraline"))

Here, we see a film utilising a medium in a way in which it's happy to nod to its position as a controlled and artificial environment in order to emphasise its uncanniness. The realism of the armatures and replacement animation work simultaneously with the puppet's ability to forefront their position as inanimate objects. This combined with a knowledge of its predecessors and the capability of its medium allows *Coraline to* subliminally set the stage of fright and learning for its child audience.

2.3 The Eyes Have It

Fig 17. Button eyes that operate as an uncanny tool within the Other World. Selick's *Coraline,* (2009 ("Coraline"))

As previously discussed, life is communicated through the eyes. Therefore a lack of life behind the eyes conjoined with seemingly animate movement points towards an inanimate object being controlled by an external force (animism (Freud p. 14)). Such notions link to Freud's discussion of the character Olympia within E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1816) who, before being revealed as an automation rather than human, is discussed by the titular character, Nathaniel's, friend:

'She might pass for beautiful if her glance were not so utterly without a ray of life'

(Hoffman, p. 14)

After finding out that Olympia '*was, indeed, a lifeless doll'* (Hoffman, p. 15) Nathaniel goes mad, unable to deal with the uncanny reality of what he believed to be a living person, being a machine powered by external forces. The key to this revelation was the eyes.

Intertextually, *Coraline* converses with Hoffman's story through the button eyes of the characters that inhabit the Other World. These buttons operate on a surface level, stating their uncanniness in their distinction from real eyes and their objectness or lifelessness. It is, however, the subconscious ways in which these eyes operate that emphasises their role in harbouring uncanniness.

Fig 18. The Beldam's exposed armature, made from full sized needles, subconsciously portraying threat to a child audience. Seick's *Coraline,* (2009 ("Coraline"))

The buttons serve an important purpose: through scale, they remind us of the puppet's real size (Owen, p. 143). This points to the fact that the puppets are inanimate objects controlled by an animator, referencing Crawte's arguments on the uncanny (Crawte, p. 4), also highlighting Ann Owen's ideas on the tactility of puppets in her essay, 'A World Within Reach: A Neurotic Perspective on Themes of Threat in the Miniature World of Coraline*'.* Owen states that

subconsciously humans know how it would feel to pick any object up (Owen, p. 138). The button eyes as a scale indicator allow a child to imagine picking the puppets up. Conceptually this comes into play when the Beldam transforms, exposing her armature. Her hands, constructed with full sized needles, are read as sharp and painful for a child, making her more subconsciously threatening and dangerous (Owen, pp. 145-146).

'Although children may not have the range of experience to fully empathise with every situation, they will most certainly have had some experience that would allow them to simulate harm to the flesh'.

(Owen, p. 148)

Freud also discusses harm and injury to the eye and how it reminds us of our 'death drive', or the inevitability of death (Freud, p. 14), a repressed notion which produces uncanniness when brought to light (Freud, p. 13). Within '*Coraline',* injury to the eye is referenced when the Beldam suggests sewing buttons into Coraline's eyes, taking her eyes and operating in the same way The Sandman does in Hoffman's short story, showing intertextuality and an understanding of stop-motion's potential as an uncanny medium.

This scene also perpetuates the theme of control, in that Coraline, through giving up her eyes, would be relinquishing her control to The Beldam (the animator) becoming her puppet. Only through rejecting this offer, does Coraline retain her individual identity, showing a multi-layered puppet awareness. The puppets within the film point out their inanimate position, simultaneously Coraline is aware that giving up control and identity would turn her into a puppet. As an audience, who is aware that Coraline is already a puppet, we get a sense of the uncanny towards her trapped position within the filmic sphere (Herhuth). In reality, she has no control and is an

inanimate object being given life by a director, a studio, a model making team and a set of animators.

"In this sense, the puppet is defined as a medium that expresses agency as a problem, as existing in a conflicted space between autonomy and passivity, between controlling oneself and being controlled by other forces"

(Herhuth, p. 191)

Here, we see how *Coraline* converses intertextually with E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman,* similarly to Freud in his discussion on the uncanny. Button eyes, which utilise the uncanniness of stop-motion as a medium, subconsciously feed uncanny messaging through the ideas of scale, injury and identity. This, combined with child neuro processing discussed by Owen, creates a world of fright and danger for a younger audience, who will therefore be more susceptible to learning the film's core message: be grateful for what you have.

Throughout this chapter I have discussed the puppetry and stop-motion techniques utilised within Henry Selick's 2009 film *Coraline,* ("Coraline") and how their ability to converse intertextually with various uncanny media as well as stop motion history, exploring the idea of control, essentially acting as an allegory for stop-motion itself, lays the groundwork for an overwhelming understanding of stop-motion as a medium. This then allows the film to make the most of its medium, utilising it to carry the film's main message to a child audience who have been engaged only to be frightened subconsciously through an application of Freud's uncanny.

Extended Conclusion

Unheimlich in an Increasingly *Heimlich* World: the Softening of Contemporary Stop-Motion

C.1 *Coraline*'s Unintended Impact: Base Recognition

As previously discussed, McLuhan states the medium is the message (McLuhan, p9-23). Švankmajer and Selick, as filmmakers, use their knowledge of stop-motion as a medium and its uncanny capabilities (seen in discussion by Freud, Crawte and Purves) to inform how they imbed the message of their films into their stop-motion puppets creating the foundations for children to be frightened on a subconscious level (through developmental psychology and the idea of play examined by Wells) and therefore broadening their susceptibility for learning (Gotz, Maya, e.t. al). Creating a cycle where the stop-motion puppets facilitate educational opportunities for children.

In order to examine these concepts in a more contemporary light (being the last decade, years 2015 to 2025) we must first look at the cultural impact of *Coraline,* and how it went onto shape control over children's content.

Shortly after its release, *Coraline,* suffered backlash from parents and reviewers alike, claiming it was too frightening for a child audience (Denison, p. 157). One 'Boston Globe*',* reporter going as far as to say:

*'Good news for family psychiatrists across the land, '*Coraline', *is opening today, which means on Monday they'll have a whole new clientele of traumatised young children'*

-Ty Burr

(Denison, p. 157)

This reaction can be seen as an example of what John Dewey calls '*bare recognition',* in his 1980 book *Art as Experience*. He states that upon seeing an object our brain will quickly label it and

move on, neglecting to look further and truly perceive what that object is trying to say (Dewey, pp. 84-91). Dewey's concept is displayed in controversy surrounding *Coraline*'s PG rating in both the UK and the US (Denison, p. 156). Outrage following the decision indicated a misunderstanding of what a PG rating stands for: an indication that parents should read the advisory list published by regulatory agencies rather than a guarantee of family friendly content (Denison, p. 159). This misunderstanding led to mistrust towards regulatory agencies and a market where parents began to rely on journalists and bloggers for moral guidance regarding what may or may not be suitable for children within films (Jankowski).

This shift causes a rise of softer films for children, if not in their content, certainly in their visual communication (Prisco). The question, however, is how does the uncanny medium of stop-motion puppetry fit into these trends?

'*In the right context, it's perfectly healthy for young viewers to feel fear once in a while - yet increasingly it feels as if PG movies … are being marketed at parents who don't want to suddenly find their kids sleeping with the lights on'*

(Chen)

C.2 Post-*Ma Vie De Courgette*: How Money Moulds a Medium

A good middleman for discussing changing visual trends and its impact on children's stop-motion content would be Claude Barras' 2016 stop-motion film *Ma Vie De Courgette* (*My Life as a Courgette* ("Ma Vie de Courgette")) which was intended for a child audience (Thunderbird Releasing) . Similar to both *The Fall of the House of Usher,* and *Coraline,* this feature is an

adaptation (of Gilles Paris' *Autobiographie d'une Courgette* (2002 (Thunderbird Releasing))). This film seems to operate in the same vein as those previously discussed, yet harbours major differences. As the content of the film is more direct within its discussion of child abuse the visuals actively compensate. Softer and less uncannily coded puppets and sets make for a different way of engaging children through a more narrative form of storytelling.

Although Barras mirrors *Coraline,* with ball and socket armatures that make use of 3D printed features[4]. The puppets forefront one major difference: their eyes (Thunderbird Releasing). Here, we see large 3D printed face pieces which leave room for a fully functioning eye system. This system creates a puppet which displays a wide range of emotions, communicated through the

FIG 19. Ball and socket armatures with large, emotive eyes, *Ma Vie De Courgette* (Barras, 2016 ("Ma Vie de Courgette"))

[4] Note that these aren't replacement features, simply singular face plates in which the eyes and eyebrows operate independently to create expressions.

eyes (differing from *Coraline,* which relied on replacement faces for emotion). Reflecting previous discussions regarding the eyes as the window to the soul, Barras utilises this in the opposite way to Selick and Švankmajer. Such a design also allowed the animators to be more hands on with the puppet's faces, looking them in the eye as they worked, granting them the ability to squeeze a more lively and emotive performance from the puppets (Thunderbird Releasing). Again, we see Purves' discussion on the animator's hands (Purves, p29) here being used to emphasise life rather than objectness.

FIG 20. Painterly and childlike sets for *Ma Vie De Courgette,* (Barras, 2016 ("Ma Vie de Courgette"))

These changes, along with more textural, realistic, and visually soft worlds and characters (seen in puppets that imitate clay and an environment that has a painterly, childlike quality (Thunderbird Releasing)) show an important development in children's stop-motion. I would argue that Barras' puppets still manage to uphold McLuhan's ideologies as they are imbedded with a child-like innocence the film aims to perpetuate. Outside of this, however, we witness a distinct lack of the uncanny within this film and so cannot discuss it under the theoretical frameworks applied to previously examined films. This is a fundamentally different, more narrative way of storytelling, which invites children

in through emotive puppets that exude liveliness and a set so visually soft it emulates a playset. All done in order to compensate for a harsher and more direct discussion on child abuse (note here base recognition: the content is still heavy but because the visuals are gentle parents are appeased).

'For 'My Life as a Courgette', *it wasn't about writing a film for puppets or for an animation genre, it was about writing a film for kids'*

- Céline Sciamma ((scriptwriter for *'Ma Vie De Courgette'*)(Jenkins))

This is the tipping point, one last artistic undertaking before instrumentalism begins creeping into the stop-motion industry. Defined as the idea that '*Art should serve purposes that have been determined by persistent human needs working through powerful social institutions'* (Tanzi), this model of thinking favours the functionality of artwork as a mouthpiece to children rather than its value as an artistic endeavour. Instrumentalism within an educational context, as discussed by Chris Higgins in his essay, 'Instrumentalism and the Clichés of Aesthetic Education: A Deweyan Corrective', is seeing trends where art is treated as a luxury within our work-centric world, and if it doesn't operate as a cog within the corporate machine it's the first to get cut when money comes into the question (Higgins, p. 12).

With this in mind, we must then consider economic changes in the animation industry as a whole[5]. As seen in C.1 and C.2, parental preferences now lie with visually softer films with more narrative based storytelling. This raises box office revenue for aggressively family-friendly content (Jankowski), creating an industry trend that avoids riskier, uncanny stop-motion horror that no longer profits within a younger demographic. Instead, it pours money into safer Disney-style,

[5] Note that this is a natural process, and is similar to the changing trends in relation to Czecholovakian puppet theatre as discussed in Chapter 1.1

happy ending features with guaranteed revenue. Essentially making '*assumptions about children's viewing pleasures',* based on profit margins determined by frightened parents (Havens).

FIG 21. Still from *Missing Link* (Chris Butler, 2019 ("Missing Link")), criticised for it's overly digitised appearance which negates the need for its labour intensive stop-motion production.

Interestingly, as a result, we see a digitisation of stop-motion features. A prime example would be Laika's most recent feature *Missing Link* (Chris Butler, 2019 ("Missing Link")), which was criticised over its use of digital elements, creating a film so similar to any other CGI children's content on the market that there wasn't much point in it being stop-motion (Mihailova, p. 10). This digitisation is another visual softening tool (Chen) or removal of the uncanny, hand-crafted and inanimate nature of stop-motion in an effort to drop ratings, improve profits and survive as a studio that produces films for children.

This then leads us to an unfortunate conclusion: the medium is no longer the message. The message is the message, the medium is simply an instrumentalist vehicle used to satisfy the public's bare recognition based needs and therefore could theoretically be anything.

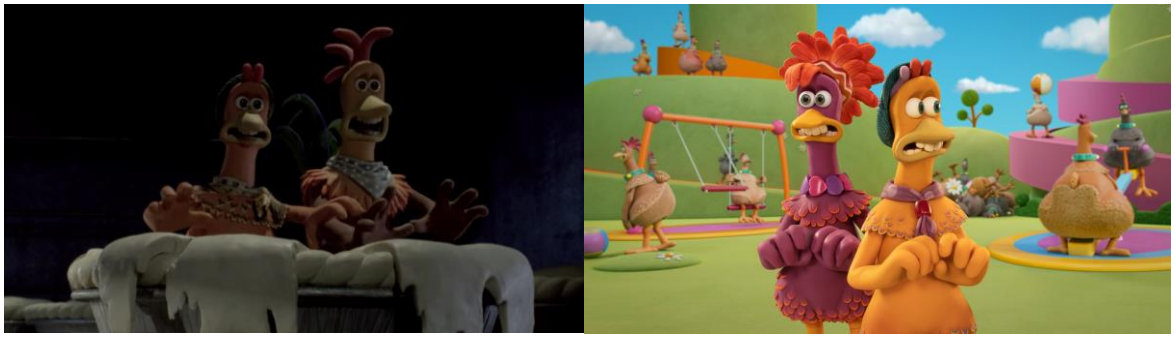

Fig 22. Digitisation of stop-motion seen in the comparison of *Chicken Run* (Peter Lord and Nick Park, 2000 ("Chicken Run")) and its sequel *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget* (Sam Fell and Jeff Newitt, 2023 (Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget")).

C.3 What's to Come? An Ostracisation of Uncanny Stop-Motion for Children

Despite the worrying trends, stop-motion which imbeds its messaging into its medium still exists, it's just found in more alternative spaces directed at a different demographic.

In the past five years a resurgence of uncanny stop-motion films has occurred, only this time directed at a mature audience. With both Phil Tippett's grotesque horror *Mad God* (2022 ("Mad God")) and Paloma Baeza and Emma De Swaef's unnerving *The House* (2022 ("The House")) being released in the same year it seems like a good time for uncanny stop-motion content

(Brewster). However, with both receiving an 18's and a 16's rating in Europe respectively ((“Mad God”)(“The House”)) and *Mad God,* making no more than $350,000 box office internationally, with little to no information on the gross profit of *The House* (“Mad God”) (as opposed to the aforementioned *Missing Link,* which received a PG rating and made over 9 million dollars internationally in 2019 (“Missing Link”)) it does point towards an alarming trend where those wishing to use stop-motion as an uncanny medium are being forced to abandon a child audience.

Outliers do exist, as some stop-motion directors are still catering uncannily frightening material to children. Take Guillermo Del Toro's 2022 *Pinocchio* (“Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio”) which displays uncanny puppets delivering a frightening message on facism to a younger audience (Brewster). It is, however, important to note that despite being awarded a PG rating (“Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio”) it was seen as a box office flop, even with its academy award (“Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio”), only making slightly more than $100,000 internationally (“Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio”). Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that uncanny stop-motion for children is being reserved for the passion projects of directors who already have a recognisable name in the film world and can therefore get funding, such as Del Toro.

This isn't to say that such a use of the medium is now unachievable by anybody who isn't a world renowned director. I simply believe that moving forward navigating the industry might be different to how it once was when Švankmajer or Selick were given the space to create their films showcasing an acute awareness of how to play with the innate uncanny aspects of stop-motion. Films which intend to fully use the potential of the medium in order to teach a child audience lessons through fear might just have to live in a more alternative sphere.

I believe, moving into the future, navigating the stop-motion industry is going to become more challenging for those wishing to make uncanny content for children. Unlike Švankmajer and

Selick, who operated during periods where the uncanny medium of stop-motion was profitable for a younger demographic[6], newer stop-motion features will fall into one of three categories: industry funded, visually soft pieces which could be realised in any medium, uncanny pieces directed to children with guaranteed funding due to the status of the director or uncanny pieces in alternative spheres either for a mature audience or with minimal funding if aimed at children. Trends and tastes circulate all of the time (Havens), within this specific cultural context uncanny content is seen as risky (Jankowski) but who knows, in the next ten years we could witness a major reversal in social tastes. It is obvious, however, that for such a reversal to occur it would have to be backed by an economic proof of success (Havens), which it doesn't currently possess. So, for the time being, softer more narrative based pieces which somewhat disregard medium and its potential as an educator rule the market.

C.4 A Final Word

'Stop-motion is sort of twitchy; you can feel the life in it. If we remove that completely, there'd be no point'

-Henry Selick

(BrainyQuote)

Throughout my dissertation I've explored how children learn through storytelling (Boris, Nyhout), more specifically how the medium in which the story is told carries that story's message (in alignment with McLuhan's theories on the medium as the message and an extension of oneself

[6] Worth noting that Selick had a project axed by Disney right after he directed '*Coraline'* due to production costs showing the beginnings of industry control on creative work as early as 2009 (Moreno)

(McLuhan, pp. 9-23)). Examining the medium of stop-motion, focusing on stop-motion puppetry and aided by previous discussion conducted by Crawte and Purves I was able to pinpoint its clear links to Freud's uncanny and how that in turn goes onto produce fear in a child audience. Such fear, which creates a higher learning susceptibility, will then go on to create fear retention cycles that last into adulthood, as examined by Gotz, Maya e.t. al. An in depth study of Czechoslovakian puppet theatre, the work of Jan Švankmajer and Henry Selick's *Coraline* (which all flow into and inform each other) provided a backbone for how Freud's uncanny operates within these puppets in order to produce this fear. I touched on topics such as: the puppet's position as an inanimate object (both alive and dead) (Crawte, p. 5), animism at the hands of the animator (Freud, p. 14), physicality and the persistence of motion (Purves, pp. 7-19), the eyes as the window to the soul, intertextuality (Kristeva, Culler, Harris) and how an in depth knowledge of the history and capabilities of the medium work to fuel its uncanniness on screen. Ultimately this led me to consider more contemporary stop-motion released in the last ten years (2015-2025). Using Barras' *Ma Vie De Courgette* as a visual turning point I explored how cultural changes regarding parental concerns surrounding children's content fueled by base recognition (Dewey) has created an instrumentalist animation industry that favours softer visuals with more narrative based storytelling (Jankowski, Havens) and how this has somewhat marginalised the more uncanny, handcrafted stop-motion features which focus on medium as a storytelling device.

Ultimately we've seen how stop-motion as a medium operates to deliver messages with a lasting impact to children through its uncanny tendencies and how despite being alienated in a more contemporary context will, I believe, find a way to survive in its medium focused and less digitised format, leaving its mark future child audiences like it has done since its first appearance in 1898 ("A Brief History of Stop-Motion").

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