

## Hand of Hysteria: The Bipartite Body of the Brothers Quay

by Amir Mogharabi

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The Brothers Quay

The desire to animate, or give life to, what is otherwise lifeless is a tendency rooted originally in human interactions between interiority and exteriority, invisibility and visibility. Furthermore, it is out of the distinction between these two facets of the world, and man in the world, that puppetry, or autonomisation of inanimate matter, is born. Puppetry has traditionally served as a visible means of materializing the world of the fantastic, of the invisible. Through the interplay between what is animated and that which animates, fantasy is represented by the illusory sovereignty of objects that are metaphysically connected (within the world of the puppet) by the physical beings on which they depend for the spontaneity and efficacy of these illusions. The metaphysical world of the puppet is the physical world of the human. The metaphysical world of the human is depicted by the puppet. It is vis-à-vis the animate agent that the object sublimates into a fictitious form, or representation, of subjectivity, and it is vis-à-vis this representation that the fundamental nature of human subjectivity has been recreated in the past.

Puppet animation is, as Suzanne Buchan notes, "by default associated with folklore traditions" (1) and the attempt to signify the religious, metaphysical and moral foundations of mankind, through puppetry, can be identified originally in the ancient tradition of Indonesian shadow puppetry. By employing a simple skein consisting of an oil lamp, intricately detailed cut-outs of fantastic figures, and cloth or canvas as a backdrop, Indonesian puppeteers portray mythical tales of the duality between the two distinct dominions of morality: good and evil. Posited originally by early Zoroastrian philosophy, the distinction between good and evil is emblematic of a primordial attempt to create an invisible system that precedes, and characterizes, human existence. It is the function of Indonesian folklore then, by animating inanimate figures, to portray this invisibility through a moral narrative that figuratively symbolizes its participants.

The hand-crafted puppets cast shadows upon the canvas, and participate in the configuration of a basic dispositif where light, figure and shadow simultaneously coalesce to create a visible narrative from which the human figure is excluded. For Michel Foucault, visibility does not refer to light as an original source for the illumination of pre-existing

objects. It is, instead,

*made up of lines of light that form variable figures inseparable from an apparatus (a dispositif). Each apparatus has its regimen of light, the way it falls, softens and spreads, distributing the visible and the invisible, generating or eliminating an object.*  
(2)

Through puppetry however, one can say that it is the human subject who is eliminated, who is an invisible trace, who is ultimately the metaphysical correlate of the puppet world; and, as mentioned, it is often the role of the puppet world to portray an invisible correlate of the human world. Thus, puppetry distributes the visible and the invisible in a special way. It has the privileged status of being the apparatus through which the human subject is rendered *perdu*, generating the interplay between its constituent parts responsible for the illusory quality of identity in the inanimate.

The distinction between visibility and invisibility, in Indonesian shadow puppetry, is further supported by a philological analysis of the traditional term "Wayang Kulit", used to describe Javanese shadow plays. The title "Wayang Kulit" derives from two terms: *bayang* meaning shadow or imagination and *kulit* meaning skin. The duality, therefore, between the anatomical body and the fantasized, or imaginary, body is already inherent in one of the earliest terms used to nominate the world of the puppet. The complicated cut-outs used as figures in these early plays are literally made out of skin (*kulit*), or hide, and it is through the projection of these anatomical bodies onto the blank canvas that the imaginary bodies of the narrative are entertained. The shadows are projections, or images, of their anatomical complements.

Shortly following the advent of cinema and the movement image, film was employed as a means for further developing the magical quality of puppetry as attempted by folkloric plays. Film presented itself as the perfect medium for portraying otherwise lifeless objects as autonomous and alive. By employing the complex cinematographic technique of stop-motion animation, the director could manipulate the motion of inanimate objects while simultaneously disappearing from the frame. Moving the intended object in between recorded frames, and then removing himself from the foreground during recorded scenes, the director could produce the illusion of movement, and therefore of life, in figures that are otherwise static. The fragmentation of time into a distinct series of divided images is what gives the filmic medium the potential to be magical. By chopping the continuous flux of the visual field into individual frames, the potential for utilizing the space *in-between* the frames becomes apparent. What hides in between the frames, what is responsible for affecting the motion within the frames, ultimately remains the undisclosed magician, the invisible agent. Therefore, the physical body of the human can completely disappear while contemporarily leaving traces upon the inanimate characters for which it is the guiding force, the god if you will, the creator of life.

Immediately recognizing the alchemical potential of cinema and aesthetic anthropomorphisms, certain animators, notably Ladislav Starevich, began to experiment with animation techniques at the same time film came to be considered an expressive medium. Starevich paved the way for the Polish- and Czech-dominated animation traditions, which came to characterize the most common, and obscure, forms of contemporary animation. The work of the prominent surrealist Czech animator Jan Svankmajer is particularly influenced by his Eastern-European predecessors. Although Starevich was especially preoccupied with humanizing, through movement and narrative, the actions of insects, animals and amphibians, Svankmajer diverged from these interests, while at the same time remaining faithful to the anthropomorphic techniques Starevich invented.



*Dimensions of Dialogue*

Jan Svankmajer used stop-motion animation primarily as a medium for dissolving disparities between facets of human life that are otherwise impossible to unify in a real, a-cinematographic context. In a film entitled *Možnosti dialogu (Dimensions of Dialogue, 1982)*, Svankmajer employs techniques mirroring paintings by Arcimboldo through which the distinction between masculine and feminine sexuality is ruptured. *Jouissance* as asexual and undifferentiated is portrayed through the dissolution of a clay male figure into a female body. In

other films, the difference between the anatomical and imaginary body is explicitly eliminated as pieces of raw meat awake from their slumber and begin to dance around the dinner table. Psychoanalytic notions of sexuality and fantasy, both items of invisibility, were therefore introduced into the medium. Considering the privileged status of puppetry/animation as a vehicle for representing and producing dialectic between the visible and invisible, phenomenon and epiphenomenon, psychoanalytic principles could be effectively portrayed. Again, adhering to the folkloric tradition of puppetry as responsible for depicting something fundamental, but invisible, to the subjective nature of man, so stop-motion animation became a means of representing the invisible structure of the human psyche.

Two especially profound and enigmatic figures followed the Eastern-Europeans, recognizing puppetry and stop-motion animation as fertile terrain for their visual and lyrical imaginations in this way. Influenced highly by Jan Svankmajer, filmmakers Stephen and Timothy Quay are twin brothers from Pennsylvania who settled in England more than thirty years ago. Combining artistic and literary influences from Art Brut to Robert Walser, the Brothers Quay create an elusive, poetic world of puppetry that does not readily lend itself to interpretation. "We want to make a world that is seen through a dirty plane of glass" (3), they profess while discussing the interaction between cinematography and animation in their work. For anyone familiar with their images, the opacity inherent in their analysis is rendered evident when one attempts to classify their films, to subsume them under a pre-determined system of cinematographic and literary styles. It seems impossible. It appears that all their films address a certain 'plurality of margins', precisely because they deny all forms of distinct classification, because they transgress margins. The world from out of which their uncanny characters emerge is one created by the subtleties of the characters themselves, a world "that is totally self-sufficient in its freakiness". As Suzanne Buchan notes, "their imagery obeys the enigmatic laws of their idiosyncratic cinematic universe" (4). As such, there is a difficulty in analysing their "poetry of shadowy encounters and almost conspiratorial secretness". An attempt at doing so generally evades the secrecy the films are about. To define the secrecy of an object is to disclose what makes it a secret. We can, thus, approach the films of the Brothers Quay through this very idea of secrecy as apparent – not as an attempt to delineate the semantics of their secrecy, but to see their films as representations of secret elements in the meta narrative of life and death, films that are secretive in themselves.

When discussing the 'secret order of things' in their work, the Brothers Quay see the discordant objects they portray as 'distinct emblems' belonging to the same occulted universe of secrecy. This universe, then, is set into motion by taking static objects, and rendering them subjective and dynamic. It is "their initial banality that allows them to be

fulfilled, to take on another life, to free themselves of their own geographies" (5). In freeing themselves from the material conventions to which they naturally adhere, the objects in the Quay films rise to "reveal subjectivity within an objective system". It is this revelatory function of the figures in the Quays' work that is ironically the simultaneous function of the secretive. By revealing a hidden subjectivity in objects that are originally lifeless, they expose us to a secret world of alchemy and animation, to the potentiality of life in the lifeless, to the undisclosed magic of the disclosed object.

*[You] accept their [the objects] very physicalities palpably as objectified dream or as music, and it's at this point that you can convey compound zones, darker ranges, deeper possibilities as well as perpetuate other narratives, other secret liberties. (6)*

The objects themselves are familiar, but their actions are alien to their form; they display the secret motions of the motionless that. In this way, a general statement can be made about the impression the Quay films leave on the spectator. Their work hints at a special intimacy, at *unheimlich*, at "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (7).

Before indicating the role of the uncanny in the Quay films, it is important to notice their general tendency to symbolize the secrecy of psychoanalysis, the hidden topography of unconscious desire, through the secrecy of objects. Their work displays a veiled erotic psychopathology that, for the brothers, figures forth by animating the inanimate. In distinguishing between puppets and humans, the Brothers Quay think, following the tradition of Heinrich von Kleist, "a puppet can achieve other things, on a more symbolic level" (8). It is safe to say that the objects and puppets in the Quay films often serve as a symbol for a function of invisibility in the human mind. The Quays "stir up mnemonics of sublimated and unconscious obsession" (9). Even structurally their work is an isomorphism for the topography of the human psyche. This is portrayed explicitly in *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies* (1988) where the camera discursively pans from a pallid, white, organized room to a dark, messy, sick room down below, possibly symbolizing the basic separation between conscious and unconscious desire. Furthermore, the sets for their films are consistently structured like a labyrinth, mirroring the intricacies and topographical organization of the mind. The camera makes its way through an architecture of drawers, openings and holes in walls which are characteristic Quay representations of entrances and thresholds between the various dominions of the human psyche. The camera's transgression of these boundaries can be considered the structural/cinematographic equivalent of sublimation itself. That is, by cinematographically transferring from one realm of the illustrated mind to the next, the camera assumes the motion of sublimation, the transference and reformation of psychic energy between unconscious and conscious states.



*Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies*

In approaching psychoanalysis through puppetry, the brothers by default deal with the quality fundamental to an experience of the uncanny: the blurring of the distinction between the animate and the inanimate. *Streets of Crocodiles* (1987) begins with a very important scene in which the hand of a human figure liberates a puppet, and its surrounding objects, from an ontological dependency on the human world, by cutting the strings attached to its limbs. These strings are symbolic of the connection between the

inanimate and the animate, symbolic of the impossible sovereignty of inanimate objects. It is their severing that indicates the autonomisation of lifeless matter, and also reflects what cinema instead made possible: the illusory elimination of the human subject in the actualisation of the inanimate. This is a cinematic expression of Bruno Schulz's *generatio aequivoca*, "a species of beings only half organic, a kind of pseudo-fauna the result of a fantastic fermentation of matter" (10). The Brothers Quay are metaphysically responsible, and invisible, in fermenting the world of the puppet, while their puppets are simultaneously responsible for symbolizing a metaphysical model of the human psyche. This is the same dynamic, as we have seen, folkloric puppet traditions followed.

For Sigmund Freud, an experience of the uncanny will almost certainly derive from the witnessing of an event in which "vague notions of automatic-mechanical processes that may lie hidden behind a familiar image" (11) are entertained. This is exactly what we encounter in Quay films, the bringing to life of familiar objects in a way that betrays our familiar impression of them. The revelation of a secret life undisclosed by them as inanimate. E. Jentsch noted a case of the uncanny in which a patient doubted "as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate" (12) exemplified by wax figures, dolls and automata. Freud's paradigmatic case of the uncanny, as manifest through automata, follows E. T. W. Hoffman's story, "The Sand-Man". We know that the Brothers Quay themselves were influenced by Hoffman's tale and brought the story to life in a short dance film also entitled *The Sandman* (2000). Since an "uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred" (13), we can say that the Brothers Quay's oeuvre is characterized by an experience of the uncanny, their work participates in the dissolution of the boundaries between real and imaginary, visible and invisible.

In their film, *The Comb* (1990), the elements of fantasy and reality are distinctly expressed, not necessarily through a disruption of the difference between them, but as symbolized by component parts of the film. In order to recognize the apparent symbolism, it is first necessary to approach the dialectic between fantasy and reality in a very particular form of the body: that of the hysteric. In *Timaeus*, Plato pronounces:

*The matrix or womb in women [...] is a living creature within them which longs to bear children. And if it is left unfertilized long beyond the normal time, it causes extreme unrest, strays about the body, blocks the channels of the breath and causes in consequence acute distress and disorders of all kinds.*

The platonic notion of an autonomous, unfertilised womb was used, mainly, to explain the characterization of hysteria by a radically distinct sign: the transitory notion of straying symptoms that, in their bodily localization, follow no linear law of pathology. The hysteric exhibits physical manifestations in any number of body parts, with disturbances ranging from motor to sensory maladies that appear spontaneously in seemingly unrelated parts of the body. While Plato posited the reason for the unpredictability of hysterical symptoms in something physical, namely the movement of the womb throughout the entire body, modern-day psychoanalysis claims that hysterical symptoms are rooted in a fantasy, or the exchange between a fantasy and reality. This exchange is entertained by the correspondence of a real, anatomical body with a fantasized, imaginary body to which it is concatenated.

The various forms of somatic suffering therefore evident in hysteria depend on a different type of anatomy, "a highly fantasmatic one, that operates unbeknownst to the patient" (14). Hysteria is the by-product of a complicated



psychic process that originates in the appearance of an unconscious sexual representation and materializes in a corporeal symptom. According to Freud's First Theory, hysterical neurosis comes about through the pathogenic action of a psychic representation, a parasitical idea that is unconscious and strongly charged with affect. There is a preponderance of affect in the body of the hysteric, for the body of the hysteric is not his real one. It is instead a fantasized body composed entirely of pure unmitigated sensations, "opening outward like a living animal, a kind of ultra-voracious amoeba that stretches out toward the other" (15). The development of the sensationalized, fantastic body derives originally from a violent form of *jouissance*, or a trauma. When a child is seductively traumatized, the violence of the trauma yields an excess of affect that cannot be confronted consciously, but is instead repressed into the dominion of the unconscious. Trauma, therefore, indicates a surplus amount of unconscious affect, with a concomitant absence of the anxiety necessary for conscious transfiguration of trauma into something organized and tolerable. This surplus of affect, therefore, remains "in the ego like a cyst, constituting there the morbid generative source of future hysterical symptoms" (16).



*The Comb*

Trauma is thus no longer an event external to the body. It becomes, by means of the pathogenic actions of a psychic, internal image, an aggravating disturbance germinating within the ego itself. The ego that bears the traumatic impact of seduction is itself a psychic surface composed of various corporeal images that are organized like a fragmented, imaginary body.

*The hysterical ego is thus a body put together in the manner of a harlequin costume, where each diamond shape of the suit corresponds to a distorted image of a particular organ, a limb, an orifice, or some other anatomical part. (17)*

At the moment of the trauma, the seductive force centralizes on one of these diamonds, or fragments of the fantasized body. The excess psychic tension is then invested in this particular diamond, until it is dissociated from the rest of the images constituting the imaginary body. Hysteria is therefore an illness produced through a representation, an unconscious image dismembered from the remainder of the imaginary body, or the ego. The image is originally isolated vis-à-vis the impact of the trauma, and "it is this imprint, this image highly charged with affect, isolated, painful to the ego, that should be considered the source of the hysterical symptom" (18).

Presented with the threat of this unbearable representation, the ego thereby attempts to defend, or neutralize, itself from its effects. It is, however, precisely at this point that the dismembered image takes on its full pathogenic potency. In its confrontation with the ego, it wages war against it. Yet, the more the ego attempts to struggle against the efficacy of this ostracized image, the more affective the image becomes in its isolation. It furthers itself from the homogeneity of the imaginary body, thereby fragmenting the aggregate of images by which the fantasy is composed. This defensive effort exercised by the ego is precisely what Freud refers to as repression. Repression primarily means isolation and, as long as the painful representation is isolated, "the ego will preserve within itself a latent internal psychic trauma" (19). The question remains, however, as to the process through which this internalised trauma re-emerges as a physical manifestation in the anatomical correlate of the imaginary body.

We have, therefore, a conflict within the ego between an isolated image seeking to

discharge its excess amount of affect and the forces of repression countering this attempt. In order to evade repression, a transformation, or conversion, of energy from a primary to a secondary state occurs. The over-investment of the affected image transubstantiates from a highly charged primary state to a burdensome secondary state of physical suffering, as a painful hypersensitivity or a sensory-motor inhibition. Thus the transitory symptoms of the hysteric, which follow no regulatory pathological principles, are originally rooted in the dialectic between a fantasized (invisible, imaginary) body and an anatomical (visible, real) one. The insoluble conflict born out of an original trauma can only lead to the repression of the image of the affected organ and "its subsequent projection onto the eye, ear, or nose: a projection or displacement that explains – at the very basis of the phenomenon – the hyperbolic valorization of the organs of the senses and the dramatization of their functions" (20).



***Attitudes passionnelles,  
from Iconographie  
photographique de la  
Salpetriere***

In the late 1800s, the development of psychology paralleled the development of photography. A neurologist by the name of Jean-Martin Charcot established himself at the notoriously known Salpetriere clinic in France where, through the photographic medium, he attempted to objectify the symptoms of hysteria by capturing images of women at the apotheosis of their conditions, in catatonic states, during epileptic fits and *attitudes passionnelles* as Charcot named them. In *Iconographie photographique de la Salpetriere* and *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpetriere*, Charcot presents a large collection of photographs purporting to represent the anomalous anatomical body of the hysteric, thereby conventionalising the manifest symptoms and allowing successive generations of psychologists to identify these symptoms in relation to classifications that Charcot created. Although the validity and efficacy of Charcot's project is consistently put into doubt, the fact that Charcot tried to mimetically delineate and secure the wandering symptoms of hysteria through photographing the anatomical correlate of the hysteric's bipartite body is certain.

In discussing the fantasized body of the hysteric, however, Hans Bellmer notes that it is not the task of photography, and furthermore it is an impossibility vis-à-vis mimesis, to

depict the imaginary Harlequin costume that participates in an intimate relation with it. Stop-motion animation, however, and puppetry in general, as discussed earlier, has the privileged status of the modern genre by which the fantastic is effectively portrayed. The Brothers Quay consistently symbolize the distinction between anatomical bodies and fantasized ones, explicitly shown in films like *Streets of Crocodiles*, in which a series of fantastic, articulated dolls stride over antique anatomical diagrams of the human body while stopping to dissect a human liver on a miniature table placed amongst the diagrams. Specifically, in *The Comb*, the two portions of the hysteric's body are treated symbolically. The Brothers Quay do not attempt to mimetically portray the fantastic facet of the hysterical body. Instead, through the symbolic function of their objects and dolls, they emblematised it, and, by way of the motion of the camera itself, present the abstract exchange between fantasy and reality involved in repression and conversion.

*The Comb* begins with a caption: "From the Museum of Sleep". The viewer is immediately led into a room, specifically with the shot of a comb placed upon a dresser. The setting is originally dark and nebulous, filmed in black and white. The camera pans away from the comb to the image of a bed placed in the corner of the frame. From the periphery of the

shot, emerges an arm that extends its hand from off the bed into the centre of the frame. The hand tremors uncontrollably. The camera then moves outward, revealing the entire room. It resembles a room in an asylum, in a hospital with an anæmic pallor that hints at the spookiness of a sanatorium. Upon the bed lays Sleeping Woman (J. Constaninides), her body contorted in an awkward position with the one arm extended outward toward the comb. She is covered in white sheets and disturbing sounds of sick patients permeate through the walls. The setting mirrors exactly the images Jean-Martin Charcot reproduced of hysterical women in his institution. From the monochromatic milieu to the awkward anatomy of the patient displayed on the sick bed, it is nearly identical in content to the uncanny photographs presented in the *Iconographie Photographique*. Therefore, mimicking Charcot's project, *The Comb* begins by depicting the anatomical body of the hysteric.

We immediately move from this scene, in towards Sleeping Woman on the bed, and suddenly emerge upon a barren, but colourful, surrealist landscape. The camera then recedes and reveals its position in a hallway looking out onto this horizon. Continuing its regressive movement, the camera stops at the end of the hall, furthest from the opening out onto the expanse, and turns to display a series of floors connected by ladders. Combining the Freudian notion of dreaming as the visual manifestations of unconscious conflict, and the topographical similarity between the levels of psychic thought and the labyrinth-like sets of the Brothers Quay, we can assume that the camera has introduced us to the secret setting of the sleeping patient's unconscious thoughts.



*The Comb*

The camera then quickly pans downward to an articulated doll at the bottom level, holding on to one of the ladders leading upward. The disjointed doll is the symbolic equivalent of the fragmented and fantasized body. The photographic eye zooms specifically onto the hands of the doll, which immediately detach themselves and autonomously carry the ladder away from the remaining portion of the fantasized doll body. The hands, in this instance, can be considered the particular image of the organ in which affect is invested, thereby causing the image to disassociate itself from the rest of the fantasy. Hysteria, as we have seen, is an illness produced through a representation, an unconscious image dismembered from the remainder of the imaginary body, or the ego. It is for this reason that, following an introduction of the psychic scene, the camera continuously alternates between the ticking hand of the anatomical body and the detached hand of the doll's body. In doing so, it inherently presents the intimate relationship between the two, the affective influence of one upon the other.

In discussing the isolation of the image through repression, and its return as somatic symptoms through conversion, psychoanalysis simply asserts the existence of these two causally related motions. It does not, however, express the medium through which repression and conversion are actualised. That is, psychoanalysis does not identify the abstract vehicle responsible for repressing the detached image, nor does it articulate the medium responsible for converting this image from a primary psychological state to a secondary corporeal one. In *The Comb*, however, it is the camera itself that acts as the medium through which repression and conversion are expressed. We have a representation of the anatomical body as presented by Sleeping Woman on the hospital bed, and a symbolic equivalent of the fantasized body as expressed by the wandering doll. It is the invisible camera that is responsible, through cinematographic techniques, for assuming the



role of the invisible medium that transfers the affective displacement of energy from one body to the next. The camera's eye is, in this instance, an epiphenomenon that does not portray movement, but is psychic movement itself.

Cinematographically, there is no rigidity when observing the camera's motions. It fluidly alternates between panning scenes of levels of unconscious thought, and the singular room in which the woman to whom those thoughts belong sleeps. It is the abstract medium responsible for affectively connecting fantasy and reality. The camera as repression is explicitly observed when it shifts quickly in towards the physical shaking hand (manifest symptom), to a pursuit of the hand detached from the fantastic doll. The pursuit itself, as assumed by the movement of the camera, is repression. Pushing the pursued, affected, organ image further and further away from its complimentary, imagistic whole, the camera becomes the motivating force for isolating the fragment. This is precisely, as noted, the function of repression. It is to isolate, to push the detached image of the fragmented body even further away. The camera as conversion is explicitly observed when, following its continued chasing away of the hand attached to the ladder, the transformation from the primary to secondary state occurs as the doll hand forces the ladder up through the innards of another doll, displaying a variety of bloody organs. The camera, following the hand's action, then immediately transgresses the boundary between the invisible reality of the woman's psyche, and spontaneously appears in front of her anatomical hand again, at which point it continues to shake convulsively.


At the end of *The Comb*, the dislocated hand of the fragmented doll returns to associate itself with the body from which it was originally detached. Slowly, Sleeping Woman then rises from her torpor and approaches the comb we see in the first scene. She picks it up with the hand that was initially affected by the hysterical symptom, and begins to stroke her hair with it. The film ends quietly. If the woman's hand still exhibited the epileptic symptoms that we were previously presented with, then she would not be able to perform such an action so peacefully. The comb itself, therefore, is an object that symbolizes the threshold between sanity and hysteria. The functionality of the comb is rendered obsolete if the hand responsible for using it is afflicted by an involuntary symptom that denies the possibility of actualising the comb's function. The comb presents the potential for participating in an act, namely combing, requiring a hand that can wilfully assume the responsibility of performing the act. Upon following the fantasized hand back to its original position on the arm of the fragmented doll, the hand of the hysterical woman is simultaneously resurrected as functional, and she voluntarily rises to use the comb that symbolically determined her position as hysteric. By using it, she is, in a sense, cured.

Modern psychoanalysis posits re-assimilating the isolated image of the imaginary body, once it is detached through repression, as an impossibility. The imaginary, fantasized body is prioritised over the real, anatomical body in that it exercises its potency over the physical. Although somatic symptoms can be alleviated, through therapy and analysis, the power of the isolated image evades a complete unification with the fantasy from which it escaped. Furthermore, the physical body cannot reverse this potency and effectively unify the status of the imaginary because the physical simply cannot shape the metaphysical. While it is our ideas and thoughts that are ultimately responsible for delineating the coordinates of each metaphysical system, we cannot reach out with our hands and physically mould such a system like clay. Through stop-motion animation and puppetry, however, as we have seen, the relationship is reversed. The physical world of the human is invisibly responsible for shaping and determining the fantasized world of the puppet. The human being is the metaphysical correlate of the puppet world. The puppetry of the Brothers Quay, therefore, represents a reverse form of hysteria, in which the anatomical body affectively constructs and animates the fragmented body. Cinema is the medium through which the Brothers work. Simultaneously, cinema is the medium through which an

impossibility inherent in psychoanalysis is surmounted. It is via the cinematic conventions of stop-motion animation that the Brothers Quay can liberate themselves from the restrictions of a psychic reality, allowing their hands to physically entertain the fantastic, while contemporarily allowing the imaginary hand of the hysteric to return to its whole.

## Endnotes

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