



# Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media Into the Twenty-First Century

*Marina Warner*

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**Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media Into the Twenty-First Century** Marina Warner  
With over thirty illustrations in color and black and white, Phantasmagoria takes readers on an intellectually exhilarating tour of ideas of spirit and soul in the modern world, illuminating key questions of imagination and cognition. Warner tells the unexpected and often disturbing story about shifts in thought about consciousness and the individual person, from the first public waxworks portraits at the end of the eighteenth century to stories of hauntings, possession, and loss of self in modern times. She probes the perceived distinctions between fantasy and deception, and uncovers a host of spirit forms--angels, ghosts, fairies, revenants, and zombies--that are still actively present in contemporary culture.

## Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media Into the Twenty-First Century Details

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Author : Marina Warner

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Literary Criticism

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Twenty-First Century Marina Warner**

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## From Reader Review Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media Into the Twenty-First Century for online ebook

### Rebeca F. says

Wow! This book is a mindblower. I've always been a fan of Warner, yet I only discovered this jewel a couple of months ago and had a lot of trouble getting my hands on a copy. I was ecstatic, because I love her work and this is a subject I'm specially interested in. At the same time, I really admire her guts to take on this project, since it's so overwhelming and such an extensive area of research which she handled wonderfully leading the reader on a fantastic journey through time, space and different views of the world and myths and language to make sense of the universe, life and ourselves. Phantasmagoria is a true delight and though the subject might seem at first light and easy to digest, it's such a thick academic corpus to take in, full of details, anecdotes, great cross references, lovely criticism and reflections, with some pretty unique views thrown along the way, which shouldn't be a surprise if you're familiar with Warner's oeuvre, that once you put down the book you're actually surprised at the amount of information you just received and how tiny and clueless we all are, which is the sweetest feeling always.

Definitely a must for anyone interested in the occult or just in how we, humans, attempt desperately and pointlessly to make sense of our own existence in a dazzling world ruled by chaos and death.

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### Chris says

I didn't like this as much as I enjoy Warner's other work. This book is more of a meditation on why humans obsess about the things we do in terms of life, the afterlife, and the end of all things. It does give you much to think about, and as always, Warner points out some interesting facts ( I loved the tie to spiritualism and the use of women). It is rather dense though. It doesn't quite flow.

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### Matt Simon says

If you think your life is too crazy, read this book. You probably don't have ectoplasm coming out of your ears right now, which is good.

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### Kari says

I was really disappointed with this book. It was quite dense but I couldn't get over the impression that it read like a dissertation. I hated the extended introduction which described what each chapter was going to discuss. I don't need a heads up or summary, I'll find out soon enough by actually reading it! It's the kind of thing a student would do to bump up the word count with repetitive information! There wasn't a flow to the book and the chapters read like individual essays pieced together so perhaps the introduction was an attempt to rectify this and bring everything together. It was largely like an art history lesson which is not where my interests lie so I was disappointed that the book approached the subject so heavily in this way. Despite the density of information I didn't really learn anything new and a lot of it seems to have washed over me as I'm finding it hard to remember any details from the book. It was an okay read but could have been much better given the interesting subject matter Warner had to work with.

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## Mills College Library says

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## Simon says

A hot mess. It's like a higgledy-piggledy museum filled with weird stuff from all over the place. Certainly nice to look at. Whenever the author muses on more theoretical concerns, though, it's pretty bad. And I don't mean bad meaning good, but bad meaning bad.

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## Ed Skoog says

Catalogues, classifies and interprets phenomena that people have considered manifestations of "the spirit," tying together wax museums, mirrors, clouds, steam, shadows, etc--a poetics of spookiness.

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## Rodrigo Paris says

I am still reading it, but so far, I find it fascinating, like everything written by Marina Warner, like her previous *Alone Of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1976, A.A.Knopf, NY).

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## Elizabeth Judd Taylor says

A very engaging book about how cultures have perceived the soul, or spirit, throughout history. Mythology, theology, spiritualism, science, even popular entertainment: how do these influence our beliefs about what the soul is? And how do these beliefs change as things such as photography and moving pictures change the way we perceive ourselves and our bodies? This book covers a lot of ground but is always interesting and thought-provoking.

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## Michael says

reading this slowly. Sometimes the organization of the language leaves something to be desired, but the ideas are delicious and are fed to you at a mile a minute.

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## Suzanne says

This book treats of spirits and the search for contact with another world not in a philosophical way but

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through exploring the earnest attempts through history to be in touch with a reality beyond the everyday. Marina Warner leads us expertly through wax effigies and the fata morgana, ether and ectoplasm to modern cinema and illustrates how spirits remain a concern. While one may disagree that the presence of 'soul' is now marked by its absence, the mass of information gathered to illustrate the path to this conclusion is remarkable.

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## **Squeaky Skull says**

While I really enjoyed this book, I had to turn it back in to the library before I finished it...even with an extension. It is very dense reading, and not well-suited to my subway/lunch schedule for non-school reading. Maybe this summer I'll have time to pick it back up.

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## **Maureen says**

since i keep denouncing the enlightenment and the renaissance and their impact on community, and their impact on the human ego, i thought it might be a good time to start reading this.

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## **Steve Wiggins says**

One of those rare books that defies categorization, Phantasmagoria is indeed a phantasmagoria. Broadly based, the book addresses the question of what it means to have a soul, or ensoulment, including the concept of embodiment. Not easily grasped, not easily forgotten. See more about it on my blog: [Sects and Violence in the Ancient World](#).

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## **Leif says**

Marina Warner doesn't hit you over the head with a thesaurus, a dictionary or an encyclopedia. She feeds you an erudite tome that combines all three through thrilling chapters, each bite sized and delicious in its own right; when you're done you look back at the mountain of scholarship you've just consumed and have to admire the vivacity and grace with which it was presented and prepared.

Given her other work, there should be no surprise that Warner takes a subject and crafts of it a marvellously readable and weighty scholarly text. Unlike other reviewers, I found the book neither long nor disjointed. It is carefully thought through and demands its reader's attention, but then again would you want to learn from a book that didn't? Moreover, Warner's chosen approach to the subject – the phantasmagoria, the breath of soul or thought of psyche – is encyclopaedic and merits the length of the book. Illustrations, detailed contextual work, sympathetic to but always critical of her topics... there are many books on these subjects that could have learned a few things from Warner.

So what I'm trying to say is, in short, "what a lovely book!"

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