Seeing Things: From Shakespeare to Pixar

By Alan Ackerman

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A technological revolution has changed the way we see things. The storytelling media employed by Pixar Animation Studios, Samuel Beckett, and William Shakespeare differ greatly, yet these creators share a collective fascination with the nebulous boundary between material objects and our imaginative selves. How do the acts of seeing and believing remain linked? Alan Ackerman charts the dynamic history of interactions between showing and knowing in *Seeing Things*, a richly interdisciplinary study which illuminates changing modes of perception and modern representational media.

Seeing Things demonstrates that the airy nothings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Ghost in *Hamlet*, and soulless bodies in Beckett's media experiments, alongside *Toy Story*'s digitally animated toys, all serve to illustrate the modern problem of visualizing, as Hamlet put it, 'that within which passes show.' Ackerman carefully analyses such ghostly appearances and disappearances across cultural forms and contexts from the early modern period to the present, investigating the tension between our distrust of shadows and our abiding desire to believe in invisible realities. *Seeing Things* provides a fresh and surprising cultural history through theatrical, verbal, pictorial, and cinematic representations.

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Editorial Review

Review
'… Alan Ackerman confronts us with the spectral question: *to see or not to see?* From Plato to Ibsen and Beckett to Disney *Toy Story* movies, you're asked to rehearse perception – philosophically, aesthetically, even metaphysically – in the mind's eye.' (Herbert Blau, Byron W. and Alice L. Lockwood Professor of the Humanities, University of Washington)

'In these elegant essays, at once theatrical and philosophical, Alan Ackerman offers a probing meditation on sight and on the lingering mysteries of the invisible.' (Martin Puchner, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Harvard University and author of *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*)

'I was consistently engaged and fascinated by Alan Ackerman's outstanding book, *Seeing Things*. What is most exciting about this study is Ackerman's perceptions: through compelling intellectual inquiry, he takes the reader on a wonderful journey through his complex and inquisitive mind.' (David Krasner, Department of Performing Arts, Emerson College)

About the Author
Alan Ackerman is a professor in the Department of English at the University of Toronto.

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