DRAFT

IGNIS FATUUS
Ghost lights: all the dead voices.

HIC SUNT DRACONES

THE DOXA OF THE SPECTRE.

Speculative Tate Seminars: Haunters and the haunted

If as Derrida supposes each era has creates its own ghosts, we live in extraordinarily creative times. Each era creates its own spectres, its own phantoms, and ultimately itself becomes a spectral legacy.
An era's technologies are both the creator of this new spectrality and a reflection of the preoccupations that created them.
We make new tools to find the ghosts we need and fashion the ghosts we seek from the tools that we have made.
Our rational, technological world is more bepopulus with phantoms than ever. Each ghost exorcised by science precipitates a host of new phantoms rushing to supersede it.

I want to look at the frameworks and rules that we impose on the ghost or if you prefer that constrain the ghost. Repetition. Geographic tethering. A need for energy. No wonder ghosts it seems that in their popular cinematic manifestations they just want to die. Perhaps reflecting our own suspicions that the hereafter might be just another induction event.

The boundaries of our sensoria have become porous, liminal, fungible. Technological augmentation has enabled us to transpose our perceptual framework to regions previously unknown, not just to explore the further reaches of the electro magnetic spectrum but into the chaotic 'spookiness' of the quantum realm. Quantum cameras construct images from particles that have never interacted with the objects they portray. In the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, the gaps in the schema are wider than ever.

We are haunted by the loss of body that the faustian pact of digital omnipresence entailed. The digital world is populated with the ghost of the object. The ghost, rather than supernatural relic of a primitive age, is an increasingly prevalent aspect of the modern world. Immateriality and spectrality are axiomatic to the digital realms we inhabit. Whether these persistent incursions are understood in religious, ontological, scientific or epistemological terms, they taunt us by flouting our schemata. Life has become an immense accumulation of ghosts. Everything that was once directly lived is now haunted by itself.

The map is haunted by the ghost of the territory it has superceeded and by the places it does not know or cannot show. The territory is in turn both defined and haunted by the absences indicated and thereby created by the map.

The geometry of these peripheries is the trajectory of the future.
They are not as Melville knew "marked on any maps", for such hyperstitial
territories by their nature, cofound our doxa and defy categorisation.

We make new tools to find and eliminate such ghosts and in doing so
fashion new ghosts from the detritus they create, incoherent voices, jumbled
and incomplete, a collection of damaged and unverifiable artefacts,
impenetrable to all current hermeneutics. A quantity of faded images
accompanied by only partial notations. Initially our desperate scrutiny of
this debris suggests spaces both real and metaphoric. A savage region of
previously unimaginable topographies and trajectories, notional, obscured
territories, simultaneously inhabiting the past, the present and perhaps even
the future. With familiarity we assemble from our existing doxa a semi
coherent palliative that we cling to despite its insufficiencies to patch the
rupture, the shadows of the void.

Physics is increasingly bepopulus with invisible ghosts, strange limpid
intangibilities that none the less curve our realities, empty locations in
space, containing neither Sun nor planet. The seeming madness and
volatility of the quantum world perhaps only chaotic to our pre- Copernican
concentricity and epicyclic doxa, that we hesitate on the meniscus of some
profound inversion of time space able to make sense of the baroque
mathematics we deploy to stabilise our outmoded perspective. Or perhaps
accommodate ourselves to the notion that there is no harmony in the
universe, that the patterns we seek are

Perhaps consequently our rational, technological world is more bepopulous
with phantoms than ever. Each ghost exorcised by science precipitates a
host of new phantoms rushing to supersede it. Paralyzed in a frozen now,
smothered by the massed murmurings of the past, stalked by the angry
revenants of forgotten radicals and the awful twins of a future, that is at
once inconceivable and yet inevitable, 'come and play with us for ever and
ever and ever" From avatars and chat-bots to bump maps and page curls,
The digital world is populated with a host of Skeuomorphic
phantoms clothed in shroud sails of the dust scratches and imperfections of
lost surface patination and the process noise of unfulfilled modernism.
Haunted by the loss of body that the Faustian pact of digital omnipresence
entailed. The digital world is haunted by the spectre of materiality. It does
seem strange that the digital world promised us a limitless future but has
instead serves us the ever unfolding past wrapped in a perpetual present.
The ghost, that persistent recurrent visitation of a recalcitrant past, rather
than supernatural relic of a primitive age, is an increasingly prevalent aspect
of the modern world. Immateriality and spectrality are axiomatic to the
digital realms we inhabit.
Atavistic urges in the digital 'modern' the lack of an object raising ontic
issues in the digital that can be traced back to Benjamin. Tropes such as
Instagram and the use of 3d printers to print 12 inch vinyl records. Suggest
not so much as a nostalgia for the present in a temporal sense as Jameson
proposed but a 'nostalgia for the present' as object. For the presence of the

object. In a digital world where the physicality of everyday life has been dematerialised into the spectral world of the digital. The digital is therefore haunted by the ghost of the object. The digital rather is the ghost of the object.

The ubiquity of social media has extended notions of spectral communication, a Social spectrality. Telephonic dematerialisation; the meeting in a mutual void, rather than relayed exchange over distance, a temporary consensual occupancy of a shared undefined, immaterial conceptual area that is neither one place or the other, both places and neither, what Gibson called cyberspace, Digitally mediated social spaces, social media, have connected these exchanges in a totality that has laid such claims on the popular imagination to supersede or underwrite reality. As per the social media page entitled *If It's Not On Facebook It's Not Official*[1]. Social Spectrality then is what we have acquiesced to our social exchanges being mediated in a dematerialised state that renders us into a perpetual ghost like state, an etheric space in which we the spectres, encounter other spectral beings. Brocken Spectres: haunted prosthetic projections, hollow phantom magnifications.

This spectral realm is plagued by anxieties of authenticity at every level, seeking not to embrace its modernity in a conceptual freedom, but instead clinging to a series of simulacra, ersatz analogue artefacts, page curls, bump maps, lens flare filters, rather in the way ghosts popularly seem to manifest dressed in clothes no longer needed. Does a shirt have a ghost? So not only is the mediated world of social media a constructed simulacra, an ersatz replica, it is one that seeks to shore up its claims to superseding reality not by transcending it, but by wearing its skin like a mask. And yet its totality is such that it does not so much enable a dialogue of experience as propose that it IS the experience. See the popular practice of participants recording their presence at key events on camera phones. The witnessing of the event itself becomes subordinate to the need to capture and record for later authentication, even if this is at the cost of effective awareness, presence as it happens, but inhabiting its simulacra on line indefinitely. A moment of life thus becomes subordinate to the perpetuation of its revenant.

Whether these persistent incursions are understood in religious, ontological, scientific or epistemological terms, they taunt us by flouting our schemata. Perhaps, as Jameson suggests, "Such ghosts express the fear of modern people that they have not really lived or fulfilled their lives, in a world organized to deprive them of that satisfaction; yet is this suspicion not itself a kind of specter, haunting our lives with its enigmatic doubt that nothing can dispel or exorcise"

The ghost with its ambiguous and irregular relationship with the physics we rely on to underscore our sensorial continuity: materiality, temporality, locality, linearity provides us with a useful cipher for the connected digital networked experiences of hyper modernity. Increasingly our world is populated by and occupies spaces that are immaterial. This being and nothing state can be said to be analogous with that of the ghost.

Contradictions in the 'superficial' nature of simulacrum and the very loss if 'surface' per se in the digital. It is without some small irony that we can note that what is often lamented most about pre digital media, and therefore most studiously recreated skeuomorphically is that very patinal surface that has been lost. Why is it the superficial we still seem to crave most as a signifiers of depth, authenticity, integrity and meaning; Film Grain, page curls, drop shadows, process glyphs and flaws. things have bit become superficial as such, but as code can be re-skinned many times with new content. Your 'desktop' image for instance so the structures that populate our life from adverts to artworks, computers and phones have become surficial. Below the surface. Equally adrift if meaning and anchor less but profoundly opposed methodologically.

Why do we seek out the ghost? Perhaps to regain the past but perhaps to establish its past ness. Perhaps in out atemporality we not only recognise ghosts as collapsed moments synonymous with ourselves but we seek a time when there was a historical past. We seek ghosts to both challenge but in doing so to somehow validate our lives as lived. Is the ghost a signifier of lives lived. A nostalgia for a past that had a future. We are afraid that as we are already ghosts we will in fact leave no traces. The ghost could be said to represent the collapse of time space.

Ghost the returning past rupturing the present. The past insubordinate and unshackled threatens immanence and potentiality. Time and space unbound.

"Such ghosts express the fear of modern people that they have not really lived or fulfilled their lives, in a world organised to deprive them of that satisfaction; yet is this suspicion not itself a kind of spectre, haunting our lives with its enigmatic doubt that nothing can dispel or exorcise"jameson, ghosts

If photography as Bresson noted always 'have something to do with death' then the physical photograph can be seen as the cadaver of a moment. Whilst it transcends the moment it captures it ossified light and bone like decays in a similar fashion. Bleaches, fades, crumbles and ultimately is dust. It's corporeality is deferred but ultimately not transcended. The digital photograph on the other hand has in its death less of a corpse like quality and is more of the ghost or the spectre. Ephemeral, flickering, requiring energy and invocations to be contoured from the ether in which it resides. It exists as a trans- dimensional ghost of the moment able to teleport and manifest when called back to this world by medium.

Rupture in the present.
Ghost as rupture in time continuum.
"out of joint'

Surely the point of Derrida's off the cuff pun 'hauntology' at least the one worth exploring is not a literal mechanics of spectres. Literality never fares well with metaphor or allusion. But rather a more circular core a reciprocal

'freudian' slip of meaning. We are haunted by our meaning or lack thereof. Hauntology cannot be deployed as a pseudo para science. It's linguistic frivolity was never designed to bear such structures. Thus can only lead to a new and dusenfrnuoyscspiligia for the nostalgia it conceals: reveals.

We construct the ghost to patch ruptures or anomalies in the schema. Incursions either generated as biological glitches and malfunctions or extra senatorial penetrations by spectral or dimensional data beyond our biological remit. To preserve the semblance of cohesion and prevent existential decomposition our brains interpolate, much as they would habitually any sensorial data into coherent and recognisable forms. That these then present ontic and ontological fears of a lesser order is collateral damage. In this way each era constructs its own ghosts as Derrida says, a montage if whatever is to hand. This is why ghosts only started to wear white in the Victorian era and hitch hiking in the sixties. In the Middle Ages ignis fatui were Jack o lanterns, now they are orbs. We don't see what we want to see. We see what we need to.

Ruptures in the fabric
Revolutionary. Insurrectionary. Riotous, Delerious, halucinatory, exstatic terrifying Breaches in the order of society of hierarchy of normality. Of hegemony of reality. The revolutionary or insubordinate moment is like the ghost a tear or rupture in the schema that we balk at and explain away. The ghost story a false light a corpse candle that we poke and itch at to provoke a semblance if sensation. escapology, escapism . A performative theatrical charade. A demonstration a reenactment. Escape scares us. Thus escapologist s and mediums occupy a space of false enacting.
Retournment as opposed to detournement, a temporal fugue that faced with the futility of overturning of detourning the status quo instead repeatedly revisits moments of glorious failure. Points that at least promised success. Ghost dances. The commune, 1968, 1988 now a point of nostalgia in itself as the high tide of emergent acid house was at the time hailed in the popular press not for its innovation but as a revenance. It was not the first summer of acid but the second summer of love. The situationists notion of permanent revolution did not manifest, instead we have perpetual recapitulation. The hacienda does not exist, the hacienda must be rebuilt.

the return of the repressed in Stalins practice of replicating his cultural detourage with photographic manifestations of his disappearances with the deft conjurers trick of the airbrush, or surgically excised or sometimes more hastily presumably as the numbers mounted and the pace accelerated, more expediently obliterated, scoured, gouged or smeared . Creating the faceless spectres, present in their brutal absence that would return as revenants that would haunt the Soviet Union and communism for generations to come. The images if the skeletal walking dead, gaping ovens and carnal piles of humanity from the liberated fascist death camps may have provided an industrial and visceral proof of the Nazi party's open secret to irradiate those that it deemed unacceptable whether by race, creed, sexuality or

disposition, but this came as shock only in its scale and efficiency. Fascism had always proclaimed its brutal atavistic intents and worn them symbolically and openly. It's modernism was methodological but it's telos was atavistic. Stalinism on the other hand still pretended to ape the utopian modernism if Marxism a modernist telos, whilst deploying beneath the pseudo industrial veneer if the five year plans a pathological method much more ancient.

Rupture in the present.
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THE MANIFESTATION OF THE APPARITION

The power of the dead is that we think they see us all the time.
The dead have a presence. Is there a level of energy composed
solely of the dead? They are also in the ground, of course, asleep
and crumbling. Perhaps we are what they dream.[2]

In advanced consumer societies where post-modern, neo liberal conditions prevail, life is experienced as an immense accumulation of ghosts. Everything that was directly lived now haunts itself in a ghostly echo. Images and sounds extracted from every aspect of life merge into a common stream and can neither be removed nor recovered. Fragmented images regroup themselves into a new reality as a separate pseudo-world that is omnipresent and yet can only ever be partially glimpsed. These images of the world have dissolved into a digital world of autonomic phantoms. Acting out a haunted inversion of life, an autonomous movement of non living. This spectrality manifests simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a channel of communication. As a part of society, it is ostensibly the focal point of all vision and consciousness. But due to the very fact that this spectral world is immaterial, it is in reality the domain of a phantom existence, a false consciousness. The unification it achieves is nothing but a shared communion of universal separation. Social media is not merely a society of specters; it is a spectral realm that is mediated by phantoms. The spectrality inherent in social media cannot be understood as a mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies. It is both a dematerialized world that has been materialized and the dematerialization of materiality.

'Then it seemed like falling into a labyrinth: we thought we were at the finish,
but our way bent round and we found ourselves as it were back at the beginning,
and just as far from that which we were seeking at first.'[3]

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Modern life has become an immense accumulation of ghosts. Everything that was once directly lived is now haunted by itself.

[Fig. 8 Lacunae]

We make new tools to find such ghosts and in doing so fashion new ghosts from the tools that we have made, and the detritus they create, a jumbled and incomplete collection of damaged and unverifiable artefacts. A quantity of faded images accompanied by only partial notations. Our desperate scrutiny of this debris suggests spaces both real and metaphoric. Physics is increasingly bepopulus with invisible ghosts, strange limpid intangibilities that none the less curve our realities, empty locations in space, containing neither Sun nor planet.
A savage region of previously unimaginable topographies and trajectories, notional, obscured territories, simultaneously inhabiting the past, the present and perhaps even the future.

Each era creates its own specters, its own phantoms, and ultimately as its legacy itself becomes a ghost to haunt others in impotent rage or to lie forgotten and invisible.

HIC SVNT DRACONES

> 'If we look through the aperture which we have opened up onto the absolute, what we see there is a rather menacing power--something insensible, and capable of destroying both things and worlds, of bringing forth monstrous absurdities, yet also of never doing anything, of realizing every dream, but also every nightmare, of engendering random and frenetic transformations, or conversely, of producing a universe that remains motionless down to its ultimate recesses, like a cloud bearing the fiercest storms, then the eeriest bright spells, if only for an interval of disquieting calm. We see an omnipotence equal to that of the Cartesian God, and capable of anything, even the inconceivable; but an omnipotence that has become autonomous, without norms, blind, devoid of the other divine perfections, a power with neither goodness nor wisdom, ill-disposed to reassure thought about the veracity of its distinct ideas. We see something akin to Time, but a Time that is inconceivable for physics, since it is capable of destroying without cause or reason, every physical law, just as it is inconceivable for metaphysics, since it is capable of destroying every determinate entity, even a god, even God. This is not a Heraclitean time, since it is not the eternal law of becoming, but rather the eternal and lawless possible becoming of every law. It is a Time capable of destroying even becoming itself by bringing forth, perhaps forever, fixity, stasis, and death.'[6]

C'est quelque chose qu'on ne sait pas, justement, et on ne sait pas si précisément cela est, si ça existe, si ça répond à un nom et correspond à une essence. On ne le sait pas: non par ignorance, mais parce que ce non-objet, ce présent non-présent, cet être-là d'un absent ou d'un disparu ne relève pas du savoir. Du moins plus de ce qu'on croit savoir sous le nom de savoir. On ne sait pas si c'est vivant ou si c'est mort.

> This is something we do not know, precisely, and we do not know if this is exactly, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. We do not know: not by ignorance, but because non-object, this non-present, that being an absent or missing is not knowledge. At least most of what is understood as the knowledge. We do not know if it's alive or if it's dead.[vii]

For a fairly long time the dead limited themselves to uttering more or less confused oracles, but as education became obligatory and the number of illiterate people diminished they finally dictated their messages clearly to the very people who questioned them. They said 'the present is undefined, the future has no reality than as present hope and the past is no more than the present memory. The whole of time has already happened and our cosmos is but a vague memory, a distorted reflection, fragmented, flawed, perhaps even false'.

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[1] https://www.facebook.com/pages/If-Its-Not-On-Facebook-Its-Not-Official/117844541589302
[2] Don Delillo, White Noise, pp116
[3] Socrates, Kerenyi

Shapes of the Void contains themes and elements developed from work which appeared in "Doggerland: An analysis of retrieved archival material" with Ben Branagan.

[6] Quentin Meillassoux, After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency
[vii] Derrida, J. Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International. Pp26.