

Dances with Spectres: Theorising the Cybergothic

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The old duality of body and soul has become shrouded in scientific terminology, and we can laugh at it as merely an obsolete prejudice.

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*¹

When William Gibson coined the term 'cyberspace' in his cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (1984), he hailed a virtual world designed through a combination of direct neural interfaces and simulated realities creating 'a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators'.² As this 'hallucination' transcends space, time and the body, it offers entirely new ways of experiencing reality. Transhumanist utopias and dystopias are concerned with various forms of such technological transcendency. In the 1996 *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*, John Perry Barlow celebrates cyberspace as 'the new home of the mind', a world that 'is not where bodies live'.³ This world is exclusively called forth by technology, and is the diametrical antithesis of nature. Jean Baudrillard argues that it is a third order simulacrum, which 'murders' the distinction between the real and the unreal.⁴ Should we really celebrate that, we ask ourselves not without panic? If the tangible realities of space, time and the body are no longer necessary for human identity, what does define humanness?⁵ And ultimately, what will happen when technology acquires agency and the golem comes to life?

The expansion of the real with the virtual requires a retheorisation of the Gothic. Cyberspace can be analysed as one of those transdialectical places that the Gothic occupies and challenges. In this article I will theorise the transgressive faculties of this new Gothic labyrinth. I will address the mixed feelings regarding technological transcendency through what I would like to call 'cyberspace hauntology'. I will argue that cyberspace is a spectral place haunted by the dualism of information and materiality,⁶ a ghost that is embodied amongst others in a relatively new Goth (sub-)subculture, the cybergothic.⁷ Whilst the digital music in this subculture creates a gateway to the borderland between biological and virtual

realities, dancing enables cybergoths to physically enact the transgression of the boundaries between the two.

Labyrinths, Liminality, Ghosts

Why a Gothic approach to cyberspace?

Many theorists have argued that we live in an age of technocultural crisis in which the presence of non-human agents has rendered our familiar world uncanny by shaking our notions of reality and humanity. Since the eighteenth century the Gothic has served as a signifier of such cultural crises and negotiated the anxieties that accompany them through an active confrontation with feelings of unease. Fred Botting has demonstrated how the Gothic genre offers a means to reflect upon the possibly uncanny sides of new technology as it may highlight the 'spectres, monsters and undead' that appear in the interplay between a medium and its user.⁸ When examined through this Gothic lens, cyberspace appears as a new deserted and uncanny place, simultaneously arousing enthusiasm and fright for the potencies of technology. In order to gain insight in these ambivalent feelings, I want to try and identify the ghost that haunts our evaluation of technology⁹

Within the varying cultural contexts of the late eighteenth century through the Victorian, modernist and postmodern ages, the Gothic genre has highlighted the fragmentation, distortion and hidden dimensions of the Self and of the Real. The Gothic unveils the absent presence of the past, of the Other, of desire, of fear within the here and now. By foregrounding the uncanny borderlands beyond existing categories it forces one to discern the spectres that roam the spaces in between opposites – Dracula, for instance, moves between life and death, Frankenstein's monster (popularly) is half man, half machine. The liminalised perspective of the Gothic's 'epistemological slit from origin' as Joost de Bloois calls it¹⁰ is consistent in Gothic genres of various historical periods, and also characterises attitudes and expressions in present-day Goth subcultures. While moving to and fro between opposites the Gothic reaches for the borderland beyond dialectic: that is to say that the Gothic eternalises the principle of dialectic in a paradoxical quest for the *end* of dialectic. The result is twofold. The inner core of the Gothic is characterised by the uncanny stillness of liminal spaces,¹¹ whereas the outward face of the Gothic – the destabilised Self¹² – shows sweeping, disruptive irony: she who has experienced the other side of the world and of herself will refrain from choosing sides, but will, rather, laugh at the very thought of categorisation. In its perpetual dialogue with variegated Others, the Gothic is located in an eternal in-between, beyond binary opposites. Simultaneously dialectic and motionless, it signals and negotiates cultural crises through a radical incorporation of ambivalence. For these reasons, Carol Siegel considers the Gothic stance to be 'a state of continual becoming', in the Deleuzian sense.¹³ She argues that '[Goths] take deterritorialization beyond limits; they come undone. [And] to come undone is to become'.¹⁴ Siegel is reflecting on Goth subculture here, but her argument holds equally true

for historical Gothic genres; indeed, it is this aspect of the Gothic that makes it transhistorical.

In Gothic fiction, liminal spaces are often symbolised by deserted houses, land- or cityscapes, or labyrinths. These desolate spaces are invariably haunted, as they house repressed or tabooed desires and anxieties that are otherwise safely tucked away in categorised truths. Gothic ghosts like Dracula and Frankenstein, Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and the elusive Bob in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990) represent the concrete (and anthropomorphical) manifestation of the ambivalences of being human – fear and desire for eternal life, technological agency, irrational, all-consuming love, the unknown lands of the unconscious. Nor is it only *within* the Gothic narrative that a liminal borderland comes into being. As Julian Wolfreys has argued, every act of writing (and thereby also filming, recording, streaming, . . .) itself opens up a Gothic space,¹⁵ which is the gap between fantasy and fantasist, or – with Botting – between medium and spectator. The Gothic narrative is thus encapsulated in the Gothic technology of mediation. The ghost story entails both layers of Gothic alienation.

It is in dealing with these ghost story principles that the subcultural Gothic differs from the historical Gothic. Rather than reading about them or feeling the horror of seeing them on film, Goths actively embody the ghosts that appear in liminal spaces: at neoromantic Goth parties you may encounter modern vampires, and at cybergothic parties you meet cyborgs. The body here functions as a mediator, and inhabiting it means opening up the abyss between writer and narrative. Participation in Goth subculture means at once enacting a Gothic narrative and mediating it. The Goth Self is thereby slit from its own origin, which could be one explanation why Goths are often experienced as scary or even dangerous: they enact the spectres that roam between categories, and by doing so create an hiatus between their own narrative and their spectator. Knock knock – who's there?

The Gothic, in short, criticises cultural dichotomies through the acceptance and radical incorporation of ambivalence. Overstepping the insecurity of moving in between opposites, the uncanniness and the spectres of such in-between spaces are wilfully confronted. If there is anything subversive about historical or modern Gothic genres alike, its insubordination lies in the conscious dwelling in the uncanny spaces beyond existing taxonomies, rather than in actively attacking them.

It seems to me that these critical aspects of the Gothic offer an interesting analytical angle through which to look at cyberspace, and at the way in which its re-evaluations of the balance between technology and nature, and of the real and the virtual, have been expressed in societal debate. I propose a 'cyberspace hauntology'. Hauntology, introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (1994), describes in essence the double performativity of the Gothic ghost story. It seeks to excavate the absent presences belonging both to the concepts we use to understand the world and to the genesis of those very concepts:

To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts

of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration.¹⁶

Turning the search light of hauntology to the shadows of cyberspace, consequently, the following questions arise: to what extent is cyberspace a spectral place, what or who is the spectre that haunts it and how does the cybergothic embodiment of this ghost play out?

Spectral and Vectral: Cyberspace Hauntology

Cyberspace, with its non-locality, non-temporality and indirect (if any) physicality, works like an inverted (or photo negative) Gothic labyrinth. If a labyrinth destabilises notions of location, cyberspace is a Gothic space *par excellence*: besides its radically immaterial negotiation of spatiality, this labyrinth is made up out of bits and bytes only, a location depending for its very existence upon its own mediation. In its sort it is less tangible even than the textual web presented in, for instance, Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000).¹⁷ Hypertextuality, the collaborative structures of web 2.0, web 3.0's semantic software, and an exponentially growing multitude of interactive virtual life forms have not only made sure that 'everything is deeply intertwined' in cyberspace, as Ted Nelson announced in 1974,¹⁸ but also that everything has become deeply confusing. The navigation through non-space via non-linear routes has an even more disorienting effect upon the cyberspace flâneur than that through the classical deserted space: he himself seems to have become an absent presence wandering away from any form of origin and selfhood.¹⁹ Cyberspace, like the Deleuzoguattarian rhizome, is antimemory: it undoes existing notions of space and time.²⁰ Navigating this hollow space²¹ means embarking upon lines of flight with unknown destination; or, as Carol Siegel would say, upon 'continual becoming.' The only factor that remains constant in the transition from biological to virtual life (as in the rhizome) seems to be affect.

With these characteristics in mind I would argue that cyberspace is not a post-colonial third place nor a Baudrillardian third order simulacrum, for these are defined dialectically through or against a physical, 'real life' timespace. Rather, cyberspace is a *vectral non-timespace*²² that does not subvert fixed categories but simultaneously transgresses and amalgamates all of them. This non-timespace is a plane of immanence²³ that may continuously become, through the perpetual progression of the vectors that are its only determining ontological quality.

And as such it is a Gothic space that invites all kinds of spectres.

Cyberspace is a labyrinthine, desolate borderland void of meanings and taxonomies. Its basis vectral rather than static, the cyberspace vagrant cannot but transgress binary opposites, and thus unnoticedly moves into the borderlands of Gothic liminality. A flâneur's navigation, moreover, is dialectic *per se*, but in cyberspace those dialectics acquire a Gothic dimension. Because of the slippery nature of this labyrinth's locality, chronology and epistemology, the cybervagrant

cannot appropriate its possibilities in any lasting manner. Thus in Cyberia the dialectics of *flânerie* are eternalised into the decontextualised stillness of the Gothic.

Cyberspace is, moreover, a narrative space operated by the vectors of digital synchretism. Its visitors may build up their own virtual world in a syncretic way, and in the process of building new worlds from old, they may have the feeling they appropriate the unknown.²⁴ As Greg Bechtel has demonstrated, however, syncretic world building is a form of narration ultimately resulting in a far-reaching blending of the Real and the fantastic.²⁵ Therefore one's appropriation of this borderland is only as real as one's narrative makes it: cyberspace only becomes when we enter it and activate its vectors.

Cyberspace, thus, entails all the prerequisites of Gothic media. It is a liminal space that depends for its existence upon mediation, and thus makes the hiatus between fantasy and fantasist tangible. Yet we, fantasists, fear to be in this world as much as we desire it. Who, then, is the ghost that inhabits this hollow space and that haunts its narrative performance?

Cyberian ghost stories are manifold, be they utopian or dystopian. They represent the ambivalent visions evoked by the technological transcendence of space, time and direct embodiment in this non-timespace.²⁶ Mark Poster argues that the transgression of time and space in virtual reality is 'dangerous', because 'it suggests that reality may be multiple or take more forms',²⁷ yet it is exactly this quality of VR that is so enticing about video games or films such as *eXistenz* (1999). The transgression of direct embodiment in cyberspace has given rise to (often romanticised) appropriations of the cyborg body in cyberpunk, feminist and queer genres.²⁸ But complete disembodiment is scary – in the novel *Synners* (1991), Visual Mark asks himself in panic 'out of the meat jail . . . And into what?' The answer is, 'his own context'²⁹ – and that is a typically spectral place, full of suppressed old feelings. On the other hand, cyberspace dis/embodiment has also led to horror scenarios such as *The Matrix* (1999), playing on the fear of being invaded or duplicated (the Gothic *doppelgänger*) by technology. But we do imagine that that disembodied reality looks and feels cool – we like to watch Neo and Trinity in their slick PVC outfits fighting gravity as well as Evil. All of our worries regarding technological transcendence, then, are accompanied by curiosity and eagerness; and our fascination is accompanied by suspicion and dread. There seems to be no unambivalent emotional or intellectual way of approaching it – and that makes it eerie.

Such tension between fear and fascination is characteristic of our encounter with Gothic spectres, who represent those desires and anxieties that do not quite fit into the standards of our daily life. Cyberspace, as opposed to everyday life, is liminal *per se*, it is at once 'live' and virtual ambivalence; and when we dwell in it, we do not need to take sides for or against those desires and anxieties. It allows us to encounter them, and experiment with binaries such as body/disembodiment, past/present, reality/fantasy etc – binaries that are all traditional topoi in Gothic hauntology.³⁰ Douglas Rushkoff stated a long ago that 'Cyberia is frightening to everyone'³¹, since it creates an opportunity to play 'edge-games', 'pushing over or

testing the boundaries'.³² These 'edge-games' are nothing more or less than confrontations with prowling spectres. The fact, in short, that categories which are fixed in 'real life' (RL) become destabilised beyond binaries and indeed boundaries through technological transcendence, renders cyberspace spectral. Like any classical spectral place, it is 'neither, nor:' it lies between opposites, and houses both.

Thus, cyberspace offers an ultimate opportunity to experiment with transgression in the conception of Georges Bataille. Just like he was eternally searching for the boundaries of Humanness and Being through hysterical laughter, religious sacrifice, and erotic excess, the non-locality, non-temporality and dis/embodiment (base materialism, in Bataille's terms) of cyberspace make its travellers test the boundaries of being human in a technological world—and that is dangerous, as Rushkoff said. In his evaluation of Bataillean transgression, Stephen Daniel notes that:

In all thinking, the limit is what cannot be thought, which (as Heidegger notes) is the thought that Western philosophy leaves unthought. Because transgression within the system cannot be thought, the other to the system becomes the possibility of transgression . . .³³

By the same token, cyberspace could be the unthinkable Other to RL, the possibility of its transgression. It is precisely those unthinkable – in this case non-spatial, non-temporal, non-physical, therefore ultimately liminal – places that the Gothic inhabits. The liminality of the Gothic realm, as argued above, is transdialectic. That is precisely what Bataillean transgression aims at: in *Eroticism* (1962) Bataille contends that indulging in the frantic dialectic of erotic experience can offer a transgression that eventually suspends dialectics.³⁴ By ultimately, if temporarily, transgressing the boundaries between Beings, eroticism endorses what Bataille calls 'sovereign communication', communication without dialectic.³⁵ Like eroticism, navigating cyberspace is a way of approaching postdialectic transcendence;³⁶ like the experience of eroticism, the experience of virtuality is as ground-breaking and exciting as it is scary. Both entail a loss of boundaries, both may lead to an encounter with the shadow dimensions of known and knowable realities. The Gothic overtones are striking.

And that seems to be precisely the problem. The common ground for the mixed feelings regarding 'the condition of virtuality' is the absence of stable boundaries. Outside Cyberia these boundaries can be explored and perhaps subverted in a dialectic way, but in the Gothic borderland of VR 'edge games' occur beyond edges. I think that cyberspace hauntology revolves around the unthinkable limits of reality as we know it; that is, a reality conceived of in terms of material-information dualism. Cyberutopists, most famously Donna Haraway in her 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985) have hailed technology's capacities to challenge Cartesian dualism (cf. the excerpt from Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being* in the motto to this article), yet societal and academic debate shows that we are also afraid of that notion. At once attracted and abhorred by the im/possibility of

overstepping its well-defined boundaries,³⁷ we self-consciously take a few steps into the uncanny borderlands of cyberspace, and confront our spectres of time, space, and body. The concrete manifestation of the spectre has a Janushead, a binary ghost symbolising binary thought: it appears both as pre-technological reality – anthropomorphically the ‘natural’ body – and as post-technological reality – the cyborg body. The shape it takes depends on the eye of the beholder: the cyber-utopian will perceive the ‘dreaded sight’ of a primitive savage, the dystopian that of the golem come to life.

Having identified this spectre, it becomes clear that it haunts not only cyberspace, but also ‘real life’. The borders between RL and VR seem to have become fluid, and it is precisely the fear of losing grip of our well-defined conception of reality that is making our day-to-day life uncanny, or literally *unheimlich*: our home has become unhomey.³⁸ That is not to say that technology has taken over as it has in cyberpunk literature or film – but rather, that the spectre of technological transcendence is always virtually there,³⁹ silently present and potentially awakened to disturb our safe borders. The dualistic outline of cyberpunk is too tangible to be uncanny, as it is conceived within the dualism of material and information.⁴⁰ The cyber-Gothic, conversely, transgresses its borders and meets the ambivalence of the borderland beyond. Cybergoths can be seen as creatures from this borderland roaming the liminal spaces of technological transcendence.

Embodying the Cybergothic Spectre: Goths in Space

The Goth scene has appropriated technological developments from an early stage. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818/1831) has been followed by numerous technogothic books and films, the Net.goth communities of the early 1990s have evolved into countless Gothic web communities,⁴¹ and since the mid-nineties cybergoths have incorporated technology in clothing, music and lyrics. As I argued above, one difference between the historical Gothic and Goth subcultures is that the latter embody the Gothic spectres of their age. Cybergoths embody the Janusheaded ghost of dualism, and thus perform the uncanniness of the technocultural era. Just like that ghost, they symbolise ambivalence; neither rejecting nor embracing technology, neither judgemental nor ecstatic about it, they are a living emblem testifying that cyberreality is not dualistic but liminal, and is not to be approached in a dialectic but in a transgressive way. This Gothic stance is performed by cybergoths in various ways.

Embodiment is also representation, and the cybergoth gear is carefully chosen (Fig. 1). Many elements of the outfit are highly technological: ‘plastic hair extensions, stretchy synthetic fabrics beamed back from the future, goggles that never come off the forehead, fluorescent make-up, plastic weaponry’.⁴² These are combined with sensual elements stressing the ‘natural’ aspects of these semi-cyborgs: the stretch and transparent materials that their clothes are made to show almost every part of the body, the corsets and lingerie that are used as outerwear establish a kind of in-your-face erotica, and cybergoth dance styles are flowing rather



Fig. 1 Cyberwear (photo © Ilona van der Bildt)

than robotic. Through this recontextualised representation of elements taken from Goth-, club- and cyberculture, cybergoths simultaneously incorporate the pretechnological 'biological' body and the posttechnological 'golem' body. Presenting themselves as part man, part machine, they employ clothing as a performative agent oozing techno-biological liminality. Added to this are the other expressions of Goth ambiguity. Cybergoths are androgynous, as cybergothic male and female outfits are barely distinguishable; and they play with being part dangerous, part seductive.

Gothic music, too, is heavily imbued with technology, with regards to instrumentation, compositional processes, and lyrics. In the 1980s, the Belgian band Front 242 created Electronic Body Music (EBM). Front 242 mixed Depeche Mode's synthpop, The Cure's new wave, and Kraftwerk's industrial noise, and garnished the resulting mechanical drones with dark lyrics celebrating undeath and science fiction. EBM became very influential in Gothic and industrial musical scenes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. From the early nineties on, bands such as Feindflug in Germany and VNV Nation in England started to combine EBM with the ultimately computer-made musical style, trance, into cybergothic music. The dark lyrics of cybergothic music show that its appropriation of technology is by no means uncritical, but rather ambivalent; in this sense, cybergothic bands give a more differentiated (if somewhat cynical) reaction to the musical cyberutopianism of artists such as Justin Timberlake and Missy Elliott.⁴³ As an example follow the intro to and very last line of 'Kathy's Song (Come Lie Next To Me)' (2000) by the Norwegian cybergoths of Apoptygya Berzerk:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth
 And the earth was without form and void
 And darkness was upon the face of the dead
 And God said: let there be light
 And there was light
 And God saw the light, that it was good
 And God divided the light from the darkness
 And God called the light day and the darkness he called night
 And God saw everything that he had made and behold: it was good
 And God created man
 And man created Machine
 And Machine created music
 And Machine saw everything it had created and said – behold
 [. . .]
 And on the seventh day, Machine pressed stop.

As in any Goth scene, parties are important meeting places for cybergoths. At a party, cybers can see and be seen, hear music, and perform their technological edge-game in various cultural practices. The most effective of such practices is doubtlessly dancing.

If every act of mediation evokes a Gothic conflation of overlapping temporalities

and realities, this is especially true for musical mediation. Music itself always functions as a performative 'memory machine' that involuntarily evokes past emotions and experiences.⁴⁴ The advent of music technology, moreover, seems to have removed human agency from this dimension of musical narration. The uncanny aspect of mediation is thereby enlarged to uneasy proportions: recording technology, sampling and digitalisation not only generates musical echoes from the past, but also doubles, transforms and distorts them. Musical mediation allows the listener to perceive the 'voices of the dead' or even disembodied 'voices from the void', echoes from a hollow space, presences without origin whose sole agent seems to be the technology generating their sound.⁴⁵ The spectral narrative principle of the ghost story is thus nowhere more present than in digitally produced music, and cybergothic musical styles thrive on exactly that starting point.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that music is 'on the side of the nomadic' because the moment it is activated it challenges spatial and temporal constellations.⁴⁶ These qualities, which render music vectorial as well as spectral, are intensified by digital music production and performance. Rushkoff has described how music technology engenders a timespace of its own whose effect is Dionysian: it creates a suspension of the boundaries of everyday time and space that is nearly orgiastic in character.⁴⁷ Music's vectors, then, are an excellent vehicle for Bataillean eroticism as they can help suspend dialectics and thereby provide the gateway to Gothic borderlands. This aspect of music becomes especially tangible on the dance floor. Dancing is as physical as it is affective: sometimes harmony, rhythm, or timbre make us move our body almost involuntarily. In a club, the technology of amplifiers and speakers allows music's soundwaves to interfere physically with the human body, so that 'the bass and the sub-bass . . . are *felt* as least as much as they are heard'.⁴⁸ In a situation like this, dancing can function as a physical participation in music's transcendent qualities; we can literally dance the night away, over the rainbow, towards the unknown land beyond. . . .⁴⁹

Sounding music thus creates lines of flight towards liminal spaces of history, locality and dis/embodiment. This musical quality is especially interesting in the light of the material-information dualism that haunts technoculture. Dancing directly challenges the notion that mind and body are separate entities, for in dancing both are affected by and express musical experience at the same time. Because music challenges exactly the elements that constitute the pillars of that dichotomy, music's vectors can take the listener into a borderland beyond it. For this reason dance music has been linked to the concept of *jouissance*, the ecstatic experience of (physical) pleasure through which boundaries are transgressed.⁵⁰ In the case of cybergothic dancing perhaps eroticism is a more appropriate analytical concept for two reasons. Firstly, like Gothic transgression, eroticism manifests itself also through other experiences than pleasure only – eroticist transgression may be triggered by joy, fear, and religious experience as well. Secondly, while with *jouissance* the borders of experiencing Self and Other are investigated, in eroticism it is the dialectics of Being itself that are at stake. These two things are

what the Gothic is about. In the case of cybergothic parties, therefore, dancing to cybergoth music opens up the liminal space of technological transcendence.

Conclusions

Technological transcendence has turned the familiar world into an unhomey place where the borders between technology and nature are no longer clearly defined, where cyberreality has invaded daily life, and where intelligence and agency are not reserved for humans only. In the vacuum between the mixed feelings evoked by this condition, we are haunted by the spectre of old-fashioned, 'safe' dualism. On a more abstract level, we are haunted by what David Punter calls 'the uncanny nature of knowledge itself'⁵¹ caused by knowledge's self-reflexivity. Baudrillard describes in *The Vital Illusion* (2000) how technological knowledge is murdering the Real and turning it into the evasive hyperreal, the simulation of something which never really existed; he therefore views technology 'the definitive illusion'.⁵² But whereas Baudrillard thereupon draws the conclusion that 'it is the real that has become our true utopia', cyberspace hauntology shows that we do not know anymore what or where our utopia is, and that this knowledge-driven not-knowing invites the uncanny.⁵³ Technological knowledge has placed us in a no man's land between materiality and information, the real and the virtual, knowing and not-knowing.

The uncanny and desolate space of technological transcendence is explored with as much wonder as trepidation, and almost every endeavour to appropriate it leads to an encounter with the Janusheaded ghost of information-material dualism. It is our own fear, our own fascination that we look in the face; and thereby a new manifestation of Gothic spectrality has evolved that negotiates the shadow sides of technoculture. Cybergothic subculture self-consciously enters the virtual labyrinth between information and materiality. Dancing their biological golem-bodies to techno-sensual music, cybergoths roam Cyberia's liminal space and enact its uncanny ambivalence without, ever, taking sides.

Notes

- 1 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 40.
- 2 William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (London, Gollancz, 1984), p. 51.
- 3 <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html> accessed on ????
- 4 Jean Baudrillard, *De vitale illusie* (Kampen, Klement, 2002), Chapter 3.
- 5 Cf. Mark Poster, 'CyberDemocracy: Internet and the Public Sphere', in *Reading Digital Culture*, edited by David Trend (Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishers, 2001): 'If "public" discourse exists as pixels on screens generated at remote locations by individuals one has never and probably will never meet, as is the case of the Internet with its "virtual communities", "electronic cafes", bulletin boards, emails, computer conferencing and even video conferencing, then how is it to be distinguished from "private" letters, print face, and so forth . . . What kind of 'subject' speaks or writes or communicates in these

- conditions? What is its relation to machines? What complexes of subjects, bodies and machines are required for exchange and action?
- 6 'The condition of virtuality' itself is defined by Thomas Foster as 'the relation between information en materiality' in *The Souls of Cyberfolk: Posthumanism as Vernacular Theory* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 5.
 - 7 The term 'Goth' is used here to distinguish present-day Goth subculture from the transhistorical Gothic genre evolving from the eighteenth-century Gothic novel.
 - 8 Fred Botting, 'Reading Machines', in *Gothic Technologies: Visuality in the Romantic Era*, ed. Robert Miles (Romantic Circles 2005), p. 24. <http://www.litgothic.com/LitGothic/general.html>
 - 9 For as Andrew Smith has noted, 'Ghosts are historical beings because they are messengers about the preoccupations of a particular age'. 'Hauntings' *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, eds Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (London, Routledge, 2007), pp. 147–54, at p. 153.
 - 10 Joost de Bloois, 'A Postscript to Transgression: The Gothic in Georges Bataille's Dissident Avant-Gardism', in *Nostalgia or Perversion? Gothic Rewriting from the Eighteenth Century until the Present Day*, ed. Isabella van Elferen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 44–57, p. 46.
 - 11 The stillness, that is, of the 'absolute decontextualization' that the Gothic endorses. Cf. De Bloois, 'A Postscript to Transgression', p. 47 ff.
 - 12 Cf. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York, Methuen, 1986), pp. 12–27.
 - 13 Carol Siegel, *Goth's Dark Empire* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 158.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 167.
 - 15 Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 3.
 - 16 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of the Mourning, and the New International* (New York and London, Routledge, 2006), p. 202.
 - 17 On labyrinthine construction and spatiality in *House of Leaves*, cf. Catherine Spooner, 'Gothic in the Twentieth Century', in Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (London, Routledge, 2007), pp. 38–48, p. 44 ff.
 - 18 Ted Nelson, *Computer Lib: You can and must understand computers now/Dream Machines: New freedoms through computer screens – a minority report* (1974), *Dream Machine*, p. 45: 'Everything is deeply intertwined. In an important sense there are no "subjects" at all; there is only all knowledge, since the cross-connections among the myriad topics of this world simply cannot be divided up neatly.'
 - 19 The allusion to De Certeau is intentional. One of the reasons for the disorientation occurring during the passage through Gothic labyrinths, and especially through cyberspace, seems to be the fact that De Certeau's 'tactics' do not work there (Michel de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), Chapter VII. The flâneur cannot interact with his surroundings because their locality, chronology and epistemology are slippery; he thus fails to make lasting practical, affective, or mnemonic connections to them; the cyberspace labyrinth refuses appropriation by its visitor.
 - 20 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press), p. 21.
 - 21 Cf. Atte Oksanen, 'Hollow Spaces of Psyche: Gothic Trance-Formation from Joy

- Division to Diary of Dreams' in Van Elferen, *Nostalgia or Perversion?*, pp. 124–36, at pp. 127–9.
- 22 This non-timespace is similar to, but carefully distinguished from Marc Augé's non-places (Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London, Verso, 1995), p. 77 ff; although both are characterised by non-referentiality *per se* and by their inhabitants' cultural inscriptions, the non-place has *lost* cultural meaning through over-inscription, whereas the non-timespace of Cyberia is located beyond meaning and is therefore continually in the process of acquiring any meaning.
- 23 Mark Fisher even goes so far as to argue that the 'radical immanence' of cyberspace produces a 'Gothic flatline'. Mark Fisher, *Flatline Constructions: Gothic Materialism and Cybernetic Theory-Fiction* (<http://www.cinestatic.com/trans-mat/Fisher/FCintro.htm>), Introduction. Accessed on ????
- 24 n syncretic world-building in Gothic and fantasy literature see Greg Bechtel, 'New Worlds from Old: Syncretic World-building in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*'. Unpublished paper quoted with author's permission.
- 25 Bechtel, 'New Worlds from Old', pp. 8–11.
- 26 Of course such fears and fascinations have to be regarded as the spectral successors of the 'mystical powers' that have ascribed to all other electronic media from the telegraph onwards and that are analysed in Jeffrey Sconce's seminal work *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 6.
- 27 Poster, 'CyberDemocracy: Internet and the Public Sphere'.
- 28 Cf. Stacy Gillis, 'The (Post)Feminist Politics of Cyberpunk', *Gothic Studies* 9:2 (2007), pp. 7–19.
- 29 Pat Cadigan, *Synners* (New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2001), p. 232.
- 30 Cf. Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*, p. 7.
- 31 Douglas Rushkoff, *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Cyberspace* (London: Flamingo, 1994), p. 300.
- 32 Rushkoff, *Cyberia*, pp. 248–49.
- 33 Stephen H. Daniel, 'The Lure of the Other', p. 60 f.
- 34 Georges Bataille, *Eroticism* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 2006). Cf. Nidesh Lawtoo, 'Bataille and the Suspension of Being', *Lingua Romana*, 4/1 (2005). <http://linguaromana.byu.edu/Lawtoo4.html>. Accessed on ????
- 35 Bataille, *Eroticism*, pp. 12–13. Cf. Lawtoo, 'Bataille and the Suspension of Being'.
- 36 On the 'erotic ontology of cyberspace' cf. Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 83–91.
- 37 The ambivalent evaluation of these aspects of virtuality were recently ventilated by Sherry Turkle in "Always-on/Always-on-you: The Tethered Self," in *Handbook of Mobile Communications and Social Change*, ed. James Katz (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, forthcoming).
- 38 Cf. David Punter, 'The Uncanny', in Spooner and McEvoy, (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, pp. 129–36, at p. 129 ff.
- 39 Virtual in the Deleuzian sense. Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris, PUF, 1968). I am grateful to Imar de Vries for our discussions regarding this type of virtuality and its effects.
- 40 Cf. Gillis, 'The (Post)Feminist Politics of Cyberpunk', where Stacy Gillis reflects upon the confined nature of the (post)feminist subject in cyberpunk literature 'despite the

- promise, which is never achieved, of Gothic transgression' (16). Cf. Foster, *The Souls of Cyberfolk*, pp. 50 ff.
- 41 Cf. Jason Whittaker, 'Gothic and New Media', in Spooner and McEvoy, (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, pp. 270–79.
- 42 Voltaire, *What is Goth? Music, Makeup, Attitude, Apparel, Dance and General Skullduggery* (Boston, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2004), p. 56.
- 43 Mark A. McCutcheon describes how the appropriation of technology in pop music from George Clinton to Detroit techno has supported a 'futuristic aesthetic' that is based on musical utopias and dystopias (that is, dualistic approaches) of the Frankenstein scenario. 'Techno, Frankenstein and copyright', in *Popular Music*, 26/2 (2007), 259–80.
- 44 Cf. Ruth Benschop, 'Memory machines or musical instruments? Soundscapes, recording technologies and reference', in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10/4 (2007), 485–502.
- 45 Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000), Chapter 2; Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2003, Chapter 6.
- 46 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine* (New York, Semiotext(e), 1986), p. 88.
- 47 Rushkoff, *Cyberia*, pp. 217–18.
- 48 Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 46.
- 49 Cf. Timothy D. Taylor's evaluation of Victor Turner's liminality in goa/psychedelic trance culture, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* (New York, Routledge, 2001), p. 184 ff.
- 50 Cf. Gilbert and Pearson, *Discographies*, pp. 64–8.
- 51 David Punter, *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p. ix. The present is 'haunted, like Gothic, by the weight of a history, just behind its shoulder, which proves resistant not only to understanding but, more importantly, to change'.
- 52 Baudrillard, *De vitale illusive*, pp. 60–1.
- 53 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 123.

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