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# Applied Hauntologies:
## Spectral Crossings and Interdisciplinary Deconstructions

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This issue of AVANT is dedicated to hauntology, an approach originally defined by Jacques Derrida as a "logic of haunting" that is "larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being," and that "harbor[s] within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves" (Derrida, 1994, p. 10). At a most general level, hauntology is a study of spectrality and spectres—that is, entities and processes that exceed any definite categorization; accordingly, it inevitably questions the established notions of being, thereby transforming the status of the objects and subjects of knowledge, and contesting the possibility of objectivity. The very idea of spectres—positioned as they are between worlds and times—disrupts the conventional means of measuring time and space, as well as all kinds of dichotomous conceptualizations, including "the sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being" (Derrida, 1994, p. 11). Significantly for the articles collected in this issue, the figure of the spectre questions the divisions between texts, and the separation between the individual and the social/communal, thus palpably demonstrating the impossibility of examining any concept or text independently of others. Accordingly, instead of looking for certainties, the scholar of spectres looks for sites of crossings, borrowings, and contaminations, re-discovering traces of other times, places, and beings in the seemingly solid here and now, and producing somewhat melancholic accounts of a culture that is both already haunted and potentially haunting.

The publication of Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993—itself an interdisciplinary study embracing philosophy and its various sub-disciplines, ontology and ethics in particular, political science, history, literary theory and criticism, and psychoanalysis—brought about a number of other interdisciplinary publications, uses and appropriations, reaching beyond the scope of the original book and crossing into the fields already partly occupied by the

studies of the Gothic, the uncanny and trauma.[1] Hauntology has proved a capacious concept lending itself to surprisingly practical applications in a range of cross-, inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary studies, which could be named "applied hauntology." Applied hauntology can be thought of as embracing the practical uses of the spectral categories and deconstructive approaches in literary and cultural analyses, media studies, new and digital media research, and art criticism, among many other fields. Hauntology and its variations have been deployed to account for a variety of tendencies and phenomena eluding more traditional and systematic approaches, running across disciplines and fields of inquiry.[2] In this context hauntology calls for a radical reformulation of what constitutes the object of "respectable" knowledge and might be considered, as Colin Davis argues, "a new aspect of, the ethical turn of deconstruction" (2005, p. 373).[3] Both the ethical and the spectral turns evidence how the concepts located within and in-between ontology, epistemology and ethics feed into the fields of cultural, literary and media studies, and how they bear upon cultural and social practices of remembrance, representation, visibility, and vulnerability. Opening up spaces for re-considering "something lost or barely visible, or seemingly not there" (Gordon, 2004, p. 8), hauntology helps us to understand and define our relation to the past, responsibility for the others, and imaginings of the future.

Hauntology has been used to describe and problematize the indeterminacy and interconnectedness of texts, the presence of memory and traumatic experience in the present time, the identity and legitimacy of various Others and their suppressed representations and haunting absences, and what goes with it—our responsibility for preserving them, the validity and persistence of the past, the demands of the dispossessed, the presence of the uncanny, mourning practices, the uncertainty and non-finality of death, the transformation and redefinition of mediated and technological selves. The studies collected in this issue of AVANT address all of these questions, highlighting various ways in which hauntology can be used to destabilize conventional divisions and established analytical tools, so as to offer a potentially different kind of reading. The articles relate to a variety of texts—literary, cinematic, musical, and visual—and explore an array of questions. They are divided into four parts, whose titles indicate their varying focus. Thus, the articles in "Ghost Writing" highlight the importance of writing both about and with ghosts, while the studies in "Un-burying Ghosts" illustrate the persistence of the traces of the past, especially traumatic, in the present. The texts in "Spectral Media" examine the work of ghosts in various media and technologies, and the articles in "Ghostly Legacies" aim at recovering some of

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[1] For an overview of the major contributions to the development, see *Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* edited by M. del Pilar Blanco and E. Peeren (2013).

[2] Geography is a good example of a discipline where the figure of the spectre has been applied by scholars such as John Wylie, Steve Pile, Tim Edensor, and Cheryl McEwan to analyse a variety of phenomena, including everyday practices, colonial experiences, or geographies of visual art. For a discussion of "spectral geographies," see D. Matless (2008).

[3] For a more extensive discussion of knowledge and Derridean hauntology, see Lorek-Jezińska and Więckowska (2017, pp. 8–11).

the Others that have been silenced in (canonical) literary and social spaces. All the articles focus on the examination of specific ghosts from the past and unbury spectres that haunt contemporary culture, thereby binding the present with the past and demonstrating that "everyone reads, acts, writes with *his* or *her* ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other" (Derrida, 1994, p. 139; emphasis in original).

The articles included in "Part One: Ghost Writing" examine various spaces in which and through which haunting may appear, focusing especially on the relations between various kinds of writing, including philosophical and autobiographical ones, and the spectral practices of reading. These investigations uncover numerous series of ghosts and hauntings behind seemingly solid surfaces, thus demonstrating that there never appears merely one spectre, but that always "already there are too many" (Derrida, 1994, p. 138), and that their appearance inevitably complicates the existing divisions, including those between death and life, or reading and writing. The section opens with Tadeusz Rachwał's "Spectres of Paper: Writing, Digitization, and the End(s) of the Book," which traces the spectral existence of paper in the supposedly "paperless" era of digitized media. Stressing its haunting persistence, Rachwał approaches paper as not merely designating the surface or the carrier of writing, but as signifying "the possibility of writing which lives on and survives even now in the epoch of digitization," and speculates what its disappearance or end might mean for a culture which, as he suggests, should be called "a paper culture." In this lucid examination of the interdependencies between paper, analog, and digitized media, Rachwał enquires into the relations between writing, uncertainty, and vulnerability, the potential meanings of ends and beginnings, as well as the making of the human.

In "*J'accepte:* Jacques Derrida's Cryptic Love by Unsealed Writing," Michał Krzykawski conjures up the ghost of what is conventionally absent or excluded from philosophy, that is, the life and body of the thinker, so as to propose an auto/biographical approach to philosophy that would be also bound with questions of responsibility and ethics. Krzykawski's consideration of Derrida's ghosts focuses on the relation between autobiography and philosophy, or life and writing, and traces the interrelations between the philosopher's conception of love, as conveyed in his "Envois," and such fundamental deconstructive concepts as *différance*, trace, and dissemination. Arguing for the necessity of a critical way of reading—and thus also of living—the article approaches Derrida's text as a cryptic writing that harbours a secret, or a cipher, whose reading necessitates the use of "the cryptonymic procedure" proposed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok.

"'The Art of Writing Posthumous Papers': Kierkegaard and the Spectral Audience" by Juan Evaristo Valls Boix turns to the Derridean concepts of secret, hospitality, and spectrality to explore the challenge to the metaphysics of reading in Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* Part I (1843). Valls Boix's analysis of "Shadowgraphs" and "The Unhappiest One" deconstructs the established notions of author, work, and reader and convincingly argues for the use of a distinctively spectral logic of reading/interpreting, where "[t]he text comes from an unknown place, carries an impossible message of sorrow, and flows towards alterity." Accordingly, with the text figured as an empty grave and the reader as a

figure of alterity, the search for the meaning of a text becomes indeterminate or spectral, so that literature, as Valls Boix argues, must be thought of as "a space of dispossession that demarcates the dissolution of all identity."

Hauntology has been preoccupied with the consequences of memory and incomplete or failed mourning processes. The articles in "Part Two: Un-burying Ghosts," investigate the rituals of burial and remembering the dead, commenting on the persistence of the past, and how "mourning, and its peculiar failures and dissatisfactions," to use Jameson's words, "opens a vulnerable space and entry-point through which ghosts might make their appearance" (Jameson, 2008, p. 43). Haunting and the figure of the ghost embody both the individual process and the social and cultural response to past trauma and unfinished burials, in which mourning develops a visible spatial dimension of travel, pilgrimage, introspection. While the first two articles in this part reconsider the gothic tradition, of the American South and Canadian literature respectively, the remaining two examine the persistence of the memory of the First World War in contemporary fiction and drama.

Arthur Redding in his article on "Burial Grounds and Dead Lovers: Places of Interment in the Gothic Modernism of the American South" explores the vitality and articulacy of the dead and the dramatic significance of the burial motif in Southern Gothic literature. Drawing upon Roach's argument that modernity as such can be defined "as a new way of handling (and thinking about) the dead" (1996, p. 48), blurring the separations and distinctions between the dead and the living, Redding comments on the novels by American South modernist writers, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Frances Newman's *Dead Lovers are Faithful Lovers*. The author argues that the "constitutive power of the dead" consists in two major aspects: corporeality of their language and the geographic dimension of the mourning process.

Burial also strongly features in Zuzanna Szatanik's article "On the Threshold: Haunting Transgressions in Gaétan Soucy's *The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond of Matches*" as a point of departure and a beginning of the pervasively traumatic narrative. Placing the discussion in the context of both English and French Canadian gothic literature, the author embarks on the analysis of Soucy's novel by exploring three aspects of gothic transgressions concerning space, gender and nature. Her analysis of crossing the borders between the inside and the outside, between male and female, and humans and animals leads Szatanik to the conclusion that it is "gothic transgression which becomes the most haunting—and also the most Canadian—presence in Soucy's novel."

In "Crypts, Phantoms, and Cultural Trauma: A Hauntological Approach to Recent British First World War Fiction," Anna Branach-Kallas draws upon Abraham and Torok's concepts of melancholia, melancholic incorporation and transgenerational effect of trauma to comment on the persistence of the First World War as the theme of the turn of the 20th century British fiction. In an illuminating analysis of five novels, the author examines the complex processes of the characters' passage from melancholia to mourning, showing how contemporary loss and bereavement are tied to the past, and how the characters can

resolve their existential dilemmas only by relating to the First World War. An important aspect of all texts examined by Branach-Kallas is the significance of silence and the unspeakable secret related to the past, posing questions of memory and collective trauma.

In "Dermot Bolger's Ghosting the War," Aleksandra Kędzierska examines Bolger's play published in 2007, *Walking the Road*, a tribute to Francis Ledwidge, an Irish poet of the First World War. The author persuasively argues that spectrality is an effective means for expressing the aspects of historical memory and forgetting. Silences and spectral ambiguities in particular pose questions about the problematic relation of Ireland to the Great War. The article explores the symbolic significance of ghostly figures, their journey and homelessness as representative of the suppression of memory about Irish soldiers fighting in the First World War in the British army. The author also comments on the role of spectrality in depicting the effects of shell shock, trauma and disintegration of identity.

The articles gathered in the third part of this volume, "Spectral Media," focus on aspects of haunting and spectrality enabled by and resulting from the use of various media and technologies. Three out of four articles presented in this part discuss some form of adaptation from one medium to another. In each case ambiguity, absence or indefinite presence are created by the means of a camera, a digital projection or the radio medium, which, to use Derrida's diction, "capture" and "possess" their object "by spectrality in advance" (2013, p. 39). All articles in this section consider aspects of ontological ambiguity and uncertainty, sometimes implying the uncanny presence or mystery, but in all cases inviting deconstructive questioning of subjectivity, authority, certainty and definition.

In the opening article of this section, "The Gaze of the Spectral Setting in the 1968 BBC Adaptation of M. R. James's 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad'," Anne Keithline and Jacek Mydla examine the spectral effect created by means of the movie camera in the film adaptation of M. R. James's ghost story. The authors focus on the way the film adaptation constructs the spectral point of view nonexistent in the original story. Elaborating on the concepts of the spectral gaze and sympathetic spectreship, the authors conduct an illuminating and detailed analysis of the effects produced by the camera shot and angle and of the ways in which the viewer is manipulated into the position of the haunting setting. The article shows the effectiveness of the technologically produced *uncanny* and how it can re-create the subjective yet indefinite viewing position of something simultaneously present and absent.

"Hauntology, Performance and Remix: *Paradise // Now?*" by Edyta Lorek-Jezińska explores the deconstructive strategies employed by the Polish theatre group Komuna Warszawa in their attempt to remix the Living Theatre's performance *Paradise Now!*. The author examines the process of spectralizing the live performance by means of onstage mediatization and video projections. Suspended between nostalgic re-creation and critical deconstruction, the performance is argued to bring back to life the spectre of political theatre that has lost validity and perhaps also its naïve appeal. The article comments on the difference between live and mediated performance, the aspects of performative memory and generational reception of past political theatre as well as spectral and phantasmatic quality of mediated images.

Anna Kisiel in her "Spectral—Fragile—(Un)homely: The Haunting Presence of Francesca Woodman in the *House* and *Space²* Series" delves into the spectrality of photography and its capacity to create the effect of indefinite presence and blurred subjectivity evading objectifying gaze and recognition. Focusing on the relation between the uncanny setting of an abandoned, yet uninhabited house and the artist's blurred figure, the author notices a possibility of viewing Woodman's photographs through the prism of disappearance, erasure, loss of self and failing subjectivity. However, instead she chooses to read spectrality in Woodman's art in affirmative terms through Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial theory as self-fragilization and positive ghostly subjectivity.

Tymon Adamczewski's "Hauntology of Responsibility: Tom Stoppard's *Darkside*" focuses on the aspects of responsibility in the face of death, subversively questioning the very possibility of making right ethical choices. Hauntology is here employed to signal the validity of uncertainty and hesitation, of undecidability and unverifiable emergency of critical situations. These aspects can be fully explored by examining the way the radio medium—with its use of sound and music—makes it possible to suspend voices, situations, or events between reality and imagination, existence and non-existence, truth and falsehood. Perhaps the most significant aspect of hauntology in Adamczewski's article is how Pink Floyd's album keeps haunting Stoppard's play and contemporary culture.

The articles collected in "Part Four: Ghostly Legacies" address two crucial aspects of haunting related to otherness and inheritance that are also intricately connected to matters of visibility and ways of (critical) looking. The spectre, as Derrida notes, "is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible" (Derrida, 1994, p. 100; emphasis in original), and therefore haunting requires a different kind of optics that may make it possible to notice what usually remains unseen, but what, though positioned on the margins or off centre, is still (in)visibly there. Haunting reverses the usual investigative procedures and requires that scholars "start with the marginal, with what we normally exclude or banish, or more commonly, with what we never even notice" (Gordon, 2004, p. 120), so as to finally acknowledge it as a significant part of the social. The recognition of the presence of the spectre entails a call to responsibility for choosing how to react to what the ghosts represent and to the inheritance that they make present. This possibility of choice fully uncovers the ethical dimension of hauntology and demonstrates that "inheritance is never a given, it is always a task" (Derrida, 1994, p. 54). The articles included in this part in various ways relate to the question of inheritance, or ghostly legacies, re-presenting the Others excluded from official histories and investigating some of the ways in which inheritance may be rejected or accepted.

In "Haunting across the Class Divide: Sarah Waters's *Affinity* and *The Little Stranger*," Barbara Klonowska proposes to approach haunting as a sign of social and political, rather than merely psychological phenomena, where the appearance of ghosts is a symptom of suppressed social conflicts and hidden animosities. Following Avery Gordon's suggestion that haunting should be seen as "a generalizable social phenomenon of great import" (Gordon, 2004, p. 106), Klonowska's analysis of Sarah Waters's *Affinity* and *The Little*

*Stranger* focuses on class conflicts and economic inferiority to examine the ways in which ghosts function in the novels as a means of revenge and of "retribution exacted by the helpless and mistreated." Accordingly, Klonowska's article demonstrates that haunting is a means of social critique and a tool of justice, uncovering the seemingly invisible processes of social hierarchization and bringing in a different political agenda.

The connection between haunting, spectres and justice is also explored in Katarzyna Więckowska's "Spectral Economies in Graham Swift's *Mothering Sunday: A Romance*," in which ghosts are seen as figures of repressed otherness and unwelcome reminders of what has been excluded from the dominant culture. The analysis approaches Graham Swift's novella as a commentary on (literary) history and its economy of spectres, focusing in particular on the exclusionary procedures of literary modernism. Więckowska's examination of the spectres of modernism and the First World War illustrates the ways in which Swift's book questions the canonical representation of modernism and revises the conventional means of writing about the past, memory, and history. By situating the analysis in the context of various returns to modernism in discussions of contemporary culture, the author points to the degree, often unacknowledged, to which the present borrows from the past and delineates some of the multiple modes in which inheritance can be handled.

In "The Haunting Presence of the Feminine: Virginia Woolf in the Streets of London," Agnieszka Pantuchowicz analyses the ways in which Woolf's Modernist essay "Street Haunting: A London Adventure" mobilizes the figure of the flâneur to critique the masculine style of participating in the public sphere. Referring to the Gothic literary tradition, Pantuchowicz proposes to see haunting as feminine and to approach Woolf's stroller, apparently the *flâneuse*, as a "hauntess," who joyfully and playfully blurs the borders between the public and the private, or the home and the market. In this intricate reading of Woolf's essay, haunting becomes a means of transgression which deconstructs the existing gender hierarchies and introduces a new "politics of space" by "bringing the space of the Gothic confinement, and also of entombment, to the public."

Paweł Pyrka's "Haunting Poe's Maze: Investigative Obsessions in the Weird Fictions of Stefan Grabiński and H. P. Lovecraft" traces two different modes of inheriting from Edgar Alan Poe by analysing the ways in which his ideas concerning "weird" story writing were developed in the work of Stefan Grabiński and Howard Phillips Lovecraft. The study of Grabiński's and Lovecraft's fiction deploys the concept of the labyrinth, which, as Pyrka states, in Poe's writings "is in effect already an apparition, a half-being," and in whose vague space his descendants find themselves always already lost. The author convincingly argues that it is the spectre of Poe, or his legacy, that provides the "missing link" between Lovecraft's reactionary and "mechanistic materialism," and Grabiński's progressive "sense of 'amazement'," thereby demonstrating the importance of unexorcized ghosts to the progress of fiction.

The last section of the hauntological issue of AVANT contains three reviews of books published in 2016 and 2017, whose preoccupations are either directly related to the spectral themes or concern analogous concepts or phenomena. Mirosława Buchholtz's review of

Liliana Sikorska's *Being (Non)Human, or on the Topography of "Monsters" Medieval and Modern* exposes the extent to which our contemporary understanding of humanity and monstrosity is haunted by the past conceptualizations. In their review of Tadeusz Rachwał's *Precarity and Loss: On Certain and Uncertain Properties of Life and Work* Katarzyna Więckowska and Edyta Lorek-Jezińska discuss the ways in which loss and uncertainty influence contemporary lives, identities, and conceptual systems, producing a state of unknowing that is uncannily similar to that heralded by the appearance of spectres. Finally, Olga Drenda's book whose Polish title *Duchologia polska. Rzeczy i ludzie w latach transformacji* could be translated into English as *Polish Hauntology: Things and People in the Transformation Period*, reviewed by Marek Jeziński, comments on how memory of the transformation period is dominated by ghostly recollections, disruptions, raptures and afterimages.

The artist whose works haunt the pages of this issue of AVANT is Anna Kola, a photographer, graphic designer, glass artist, working with intermedia. Her inter- and multidisciplinary art, involving combinations of tools, materials and techniques, is inspired by the surrounding world and nature, which—by artistic transformation—turn into a form of spectral image or ghostly recollection, or sometimes into an abstraction preserving only an almost invisible trace of the original object.

Among its many uses, hauntology offers the conceptual ground for both highly theoretical considerations and purely practical applications, thus blurring yet one more boundary, between thought and action. The remarkably unceasing appeal of hauntology testifies to its relevance to the concerns of the twenty-first century, whose beginning seems to be a time particularly exposed to various kinds of haunting. The articles collected in this issue illustrate the modes through which spectres may appear and delineate the methods of dealing with and inheriting from them. Hopefully, these studies may themselves become spectral, provoking further investigations of borders, gaps, and crossings in academic disciplines and research.

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