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The Digital Gothic: Haunted Interfaces, Algorithmic Hauntology, and the Crisis of Autonomy in the Cyber-Age

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Abstract:
Conventionally, Gothic was linked to buildings. Fortresses, monasteries, hallways, locked rooms, and inherited castles provided the setting within which fear could be structured. However, with the rise of cyber age, the setting for fear has transformed into silicon from stone and digital interface from feudal manor. It is the storage of personal data and circulation of one's algorithmic profile that now haunts the person, rather than ghosts of the past haunting the person. The figure who was considered to be ghost is turned into the double of personal data: the creation of another self through technology capable of surviving the original, misrepresenting the original, or even replacing the original altogether. This essay explores how "The Digital Gothic" utilizes and rewrites conventional themes of haunting, doubling, specter returning, and enclosure to represent the problem of autonomy in the era of surveillance capitalism. The study employs concepts elaborated in Sigmund Freud's understanding of the uncanny, Mark Fisher's hauntology and the theory of the eerie, and a critical approach to digital circulation and data extraction. The interface becomes a threshold, the algorithm becomes a revenant, and the database becomes a necropolis where the past cannot be deleted. Through its analysis of Sarah Gailey's The Echo Wife, the episode of Black Mirror called "Be Right Back," and Sarah Moss's Ghost Wall, this paper demonstrates the ways in which the Digital Gothic expresses an important anxiety: not only that it is conceivable that machines will exert their influence on human lives, but also that digital technologies can document, re-create, and act upon one's identity without the knowledge of the individual himself.

Keywords: Digital Gothic, hauntology, uncanny, surveillance capitalism, data double, interface, algorithmic haunting, autonomy, Black Mirror, The Echo Wife.

Introduction: From Stone to Silicon

Gothic fiction has always been a genre that is predicated on literary and architectural thresholds since Horace Walpole's 1764 novel, "The Castle of Otranto." Through Gothic fiction, the structure of fear takes the shape of architecture designed in ways that conceal, exaggerate, and distort agency. Ruined castles, underground caves, convents, familial manors, and secret rooms became sites of expression for historical forces, repressed fears, and desire. Gothic architecture was never merely a site but became complicit in the act of generating fear. Walls heard, paintings saw, manuscripts came back to haunt, and the dead resided within built architecture capable of seeming to think and remember. Far from extinct, the role that architecture played in creating such a feeling has not disappeared but moved into the twenty-first century. Today, the screen, the platform, the cloud archive, the smart home, and the social media profile take the place of the castle and corridor in doing much of the same work that one once did. Digital Gothic refers to the shift of architecture to digital architecture through this process of modernizing horror fiction. To discuss this phenomenon, Freud's essay, "The Uncanny," becomes critical. According to Freud, the uncanny experience is one of those manifestations of frightening which come from something that used to be familiar or has always been there, but became estranged either through the process of repression or

repetition (Freud, 1919/2003). The uncanny does not refer to something new, but rather the opposite – something comfortable turns into something unknown, something intimate turns into something antagonistic, and a replica becomes alive. The concept in question becomes particularly applicable for digital modernity in the sense that technologies that generate modern anxiety are not some kind of invaders who take control of the daily rhythm of life. On the contrary, these are ordinary systems, devices, and platforms. The uncanny is represented in a smartphone, recommendation engine, past chat history stored somewhere, and profile that belongs to the deceased person. An alien comes now in the form of something that seems incredibly intimate to people. Modern cyber-anxiety is often misinterpreted in terms of machine-driven apocalypse when a person fears being wiped out from existence. Though apocalyptic visions of artificial intelligence will continue to persist culturally, there is another form of fear that prevails in contemporary digital life: machines are going to keep us alive With respect to the era of digital technology, one problem that emerges is the growing struggle with what might be called "archival immortality." Emails can be found, photos are shared without any context, biological data along with behavioral data have been integrated into predictive algorithms, and there are algorithmic constructions of one's own "portrait" that are capable of action by other entities. They intervene in the future. They sort, recommend, deny, target, and anticipate. The fear here is not only in being observed, but also that this being duplicated into a machinic form that is beyond the modality of embodied control. Hauntology and the eerie can explain this condition in great detail. Inspired at least partially by Derrida, Fisher employs hauntology to explain the way in which certain elements of the past linger in the present, particularly where promised futures, as offered by Derrida, have not materialized (Fisher, 2014). Hauntology is not simply about ghosts in the standard sense, but temporal disjunctions: traces, residues, and unopened potentials that still organize cultural experience. Digital environments are deeply hauntological because they allow old media and old selves and old conversations and old affects to continue to be present, active and discoverable and reproducible. The past does not disappear, but operates. Fisher's account of the eerie is just as essential. For Fisher the eerie occurs when there is either a failure of absence or a failure of presence, when everything is where there should be nothing or nothing is where there should be something (Fisher, 2016). This is a particularly precise form of the digital encounter with the nonhuman: the dead talking in archived messages, our automated replies impersonating intimacy or algorithmic agency working behind interfaces that obscure the human and infrastructural labor doing the work of maintaining them. The Digital Gothic, therefore reconfuses Gothic tradition with contemporary data extraction and platform governance. The castle becomes the interface, the crypt the server farm, the revenant the chatbot, the doppelgänger the algorithmic profile, the family curse the everlasting repository. But some continuity to older Gothic forms is important. The Gothic has always been about anxiety over control, enclosure, inheritance, and the porous divide between life and death. Today, these anxieties are magnified through surveillance capitalism, as Shoshana Zuboff has termed it, which involves an economy that extracts the resources of the human experience free from all barriers of control. Under these conditions, the haunting is not merely metaphorical. It becomes a social reality and technical fact by which the subject is constantly brought back by machinic traces, which can be monetized and revived. I contend in this essay that the Digital Gothic employs haunting as a meta-commentary on the degradation of physical and data autonomy associated with the cyber. Seen in such an interpretive light, digital media do more than offer exciting new motifs for horror - they twist the very logic of Gothic terror. The supernatural gives way to the system. The monster is displaced by the platform. The central dread is no longer that an outside force will seize the self, but that this self has now been scattered out across frameworks it can neither see nor even make to rule. The present paper, for first constructing this claim: examines theoretical mechanics of digital eerie through Fisher, Steyerl and Zuboff. And it follows with three examples: Sarah Gailey's The Echo Wife, which presents death and an uncanny body and the crisis of originality via cloning and patterned consciousness; Black Mirror's "Be Right Back," which enacts digital revenance from a dead man's data; Sarah Moss's Ghost Wall, a non-digital text in the simple sense — it is not a digital text, so to speak — but all with a history of archaic violence through recording, re-enactment and exclusion. Taken together,

these works announce that the ghost in the machine is not any foreign intelligence. It is the user, splintered into data and rendered spectral in systems designed to remember more than anybody should.

Literature Review and Theory: The Mechanics of the Digital Eerie

The Digital Gothic, to begin, cannot take an easy answer; we must go beyond an idea that technology is frightening, to ask what kinds of temporality, embodiment, and agency digital systems reorganize. The Gothic has always taken a lot of care with delayed history, return and the buried. These concerns assume new urgency in digital culture as networked systems transform the conditions under which traces remain. One message sent can remain retrievable forever. A profile can continue to circulate after death. The subject's knowledge alone of behavior can be deduced, sold, and operationalized, even though the subject's behavior is not fully aware of it. The digital eerie results not only because technology creates novelty, but also because it complicates the line between absence and presence, original and copy, alive and dead. Mark Fisher's hauntology is an essential contribution to our understanding of this plight. In Ghosts of My Life Fisher explores the fact that culture is stifled by temporality and the existence of unattained futures (Fisher, 2014). Although his concentration is often on music, media, and late capitalist temporality, its implications for digital culture are substantial. Hauntology defines a current that is buried in the refuse of other times. Such a saturation is wrought in and through social media archives, recommendation systems and searchable histories. The subject meets older incarnations of the self not as memory but as living, actionable information. "On this day," reminders, recurring images and automation in memorials are not just tools used in the act of remembering; they generate an environment where the past comes in algorithmically, usually without any permission, as an anomaly that should not be there. In short, the resulting temporality is one in which forgetting plays no role in it because everything comes back again. However, Fisher's subsequent focus on the weird and the eerie adds even more depth to the above observations. According to Fisher, the eerie differs from the uncanny in that it concerns itself with issues about agency, absence and presence – all outside of the return of the repressed (Fisher, 2016). It is an environment of human experience, which might differ greatly from the way things have been in the past, being silent, but still one that has to be dealt with.

In cases where memories become visible on a feed, where ads follow a private dialogue, and where ghostly remains of a dead person continue engaging the living online, agency seems difficult to find. People experience activity but cannot see who is behind that activity. This is another one of the quintessential experiences in the Digital Gothic. Whereas earlier, haunted castles hinted at the possibility of unknown residents or some unsolved mystery within the structure, the haunted interface suggests either distributed computing capabilities, uncertainty around institutional power, or even the continued life of code and data beyond the physical death of the user. The concept of the data double is vital to understanding this context. Modern-day individuals move around digital platforms with a history of clicks, searches, locations, biometrics, and other data about themselves. It is here that the ideas raised by Hito Steyerl come in handy in highlighting processes of circulation, abstraction, and digital imaging as alienation mechanisms. "In Defense of the Poor Image" speaks about how the digitized cultural object travels and is transported in a manner that loses any trace of authentication or aura, before it is reconstructed into something else, which becomes a new form of power (Steyerl, 2009). While this essay addresses issues pertaining to visual culture, it may also be applied to the notion of subjectivity. Typically, the digital self is a misrepresentation of the embodied self: compressed, incomplete, context-less, yet highly mobile and functional. In that way, it can be copied, mimicked, and remade such that the original no longer requires his or her own body. There thus lies the crisis of likeness in Gothic fashion. The copy need not be accurate, but it must serve its purpose. The political economy of this ghostly process was provided in Shoshana Zuboff's theory of surveillance capitalism. Zuboff argues that digital platforms extract behavioral surplus from our experiences and create predictive products on the basis of how we are likely to behave.

In this kind of a system, the trace of the subject holds value not because they save identity authentically, but rather because they allow one to intervene. Hence indeed the data double is not merely a ghostly reminder. It is a tool of governance. What makes this Gothic is just the asymmetry of visibility and power. The subject can see the friendly interface, but not the overall architecture of extraction, modeling and prediction behind it. As in classic Gothic fiction, power hides in the walls. The surface is just that, an appearance, hiding mechanisms of domination. The interface shall therefore be read as a liminal site. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, door frames, hallways, staircases and hidden passageways mediated movements from knowledge to ignorance, safety to danger, public to private. In digital life, the screen takes on a similar structural position. The threshold through which one enters networks that are intimate but opaque. The user interacts with glass and reaches a world that is personal but also not. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's research of software and habitual media is of useful use regarding this in considering how interfaces generate experiences of empowerment while also disciplining behavior via repetition and invisibility (Chun, 2011; Chun, 2016). The interface seems immediate, almost natural, but this immediacy is the result of layers of abstraction that the users can no longer control. That's it, the Gothic resonance, the discrepancy. You belong to the interface only because you have forgotten about all the deep secrets that are buried under your feet. In this regard, N. Katherine Hayles shows us in detail how digital technologies create a challenge for embodiment and identification. In the book "How We Became Posthuman," Hayles exposes illusions concerning information detachment from material embodiment (Hayles, 1999). This article was slightly premature for the citation period, but Hayles was very influential in 2000–2017 academic discussions about the digital subject. At least in part, the Digital Gothic is born to address the problem of this discrepancy between information and the body. What will happen to the body if all consciousness, memories, styles, desires, and other human experience can be reduced to the forms of knowledge? Gothic literature is always concerned about the dangers that might happen to people's bodies – invasion, duplication, splitting, and so on. Digital culture brings this anxiety to another level in databases, artificial intelligence, and synthetic people. The uncanny aspect of the digital world is emphasized by the normativity of persistence. As van Dijck notes, "mediated memory in the digital era is increasingly framed according to the digital architectures of platforms regarding the way in which their users' past will be stored, accessed, and used" (van Dijck, 2007). As such, memory is not an individual capacity anymore but a sociotechnical apparatus. Externalization is not only about facilitating memories but reconfiguring one's subjectivity. The letters of one's deceased relative, pictures of the broken relationships, or pieces of personal history wiped away appear unexpectedly, triggered by algorithms. One might find these unexpected resurrections ghost-like since they are not determined by the pace of grieving. These interruptions come from the outside, although in the language of one's life itself. Thus, the Digital Gothic is not merely an artistic expression in which one encounters disturbing technologies. This phenomenon is rather a culture that detects inconsistencies in the center of networking experience. The Digital Gothic makes abstraction become affective. Now haunting is referred to as persistent accessibility. Spectrality becomes the feeling generated by the permanence of data. A doppelganger is formed in the course of building one's profile out of fragments. The eerie is the feeling of being addressed by systems whose agency cannot be localized. It's because Gothic, as such, is not out of date and no longer an early relic unsuitable to digital new life. It is among the most powerful ways of telling the lived experience of infrastructures that remember us, predict us, simulate us beyond our control.

Case Study 2: Black Mirror and the Dead Social Media Profile

If The Echo Wife stages and dramatizes the doppelgänger as a biologically instantiated algorithmic copy, Black Mirror's "Be Right Back" (2013) turns to the spectral afterlife of data. Few modern texts render digital hauntology more precisely. The episode follows Martha, whose partner Ash dies suddenly, after which she begins using a service that compiles his digital traces into a chatbot and later an embodied synthetic replica. The premise is plain, but its affective power is powerful because it distills a central paradigm of digital modernity: The dead are online. Their words, photographs, likes and dislikes, and

ways of communicating live on as archives that can be shuffled up to form the image of continued presence.

"Be Right Back" is most fully captured in Fisher's idea of the eerie. A failure of absence is created by the chatbot. Someone who shouldn't be around keeps responding. But the response is just as much characterised by a lack of presence. The thing that talks is based on traces but doesn't have the unprogrammable density of the person who has died. Fisher's formulation is correct here: the eerie is about uncertainty about agency and ontological status, about what is there and what type of absence is being concealed (Fisher, 2016). Martha's conversations with digital Ash are chilling precisely because they exist as a space between the memorial object and the contemporary subject. She is not just remembering him, but she is being addressed.

The episode also dramatizes hauntology, in a visceral way. Digital archives allow the past not only to live but to participate in the present. Ash's online residue, then, becomes an interactive mechanism by which mourning is interrupted and redirected. Martha, instead of working through loss, experiences a technology sustained revenance. Here is not a conventional resurrection, since what makes it back is specifically structured in data. But that is exactly what makes it Gothic for the cyber-age. The revenant is infrastructural. The supernatural has also ceased to exist as a platform service.

There is a strong link here to mediated memory studies. Van Dijck claims that digital memory is produced through technologies which do not only archive traces but form how they are read about and given meaning (van Dijck, 2007). This radicalization of "the fact" is achieved by imagining a system which would do more than store Ash's life story; it would transform her story into a predictive conversational algorithm. Ash's ghost profile stops being an immutable piece of memorial proof and becomes a simulated ghost profile, which gives movement to the profile. It also underscores just how much regular social media is laying the groundwork for spectral animation. The timeline talks in the first person. Automated birthday greetings communicate from the world of the living to the realm of the deceased. Stored chat messages facilitate intimate communication in the here and now. In the show, this impulse, though exaggerated, occurs briefly.

The Gothic motif of labor is embodied in different ways—ghosts coming back to haunt the living. Unlike the traditional Gothic story where the revenant comes back either because of unresolved business or death that makes him ineligible for burial, the digital revenant has come back to life because of improper burial, which means no burial at all. Data does not perish. In fact, the system of platform capitalism has been developed based on retention, circulation and monetization of everything. Deletion becomes a difficult task and is carried out in pieces and without much transparency. Instead, we see that "Be Right Back" offers us a loved one, but only in the way the system is resisting letting his traces disappear.

Similarly, the idea of technological mourning in Zuboff's view might mean eternal deferment. If human experience becomes data, death is not necessarily an obstacle to data exploitation. On the contrary, people's communication and preferences as well as their entire social graph continue to be useful to platforms even after their physical death. The data subject outlasts the legal and real person. It reflects another typical element of Gothic fiction: the corpse is alive because part of him remains alive and circulates through the economy.

The artificial body that materializes later in this episode intensifies the uncanny still more. First Martha uses text, then voice, then a humanoid replica grown to look like Ash. Like so many fantasies in digital culture, this escalation reflects the belief that having enough data helps bridge the gap between personhood and imitation. But the gap remains. The artificial Ash is an overly responsive, overly neutral, too constituted by aggregate traces rather than by localized experience. Freud's uncanny once more sheds light

on discomfort. The replica is scary because it is close enough yet not close enough. The emptiness of spontaneity is well known. This episode serves well in showing just why it was so lacking in Ash's digital product. Yet even his digital presence is indexical in relation to self and not self in its entirety. Yet this is how the service takes trace as essence.

This sort of fallacy is common to algorithmic profiling. Identity can be extracted from behavior, but there is no playing up as if inference equals exhaustiveness. Such is precisely how this episode is an allegorical representation of how platforms strip away the humanity of the person in favor of quantification. The fear here is not merely that there is a pretense of revival through data. It is epistemological hubris in presuming that data equates to the person. Martha's mourning makes clear the brutality of this notion, for grief is about acknowledging the inevitability of loss.

In this regard, "Be Right Back" prefigures the broader sociopolitical condition of the digital afterlife of remains. Websites of memorials, abandoned accounts, the revival of previously stored content through algorithms, and the ludic mechanisms of a type of mourning construct what might be termed a digital necropolis: a landscape of connectivity that is occupied by the ghosts of the departed that are searchable, visible, and possibly interactive. Indeed, there is a problem beyond the emotional, as well. It is a problem of governance, of property rights, and of consent. Whose data belong to whom once the person is gone? How is it decided whether the profile continues to be active, memorialized, or deployed in training upcoming iterations of the system?

The main question posed in this case study is thus that "Be Right Back" shows Digital Gothic as a type of spectre generated by archival persistence within platform conditions. The inability to allow data to vanish also means that the past is still online, active and monetized. Haunting is simply an ordinary routine of your Internet-based existence. The more systems insist upon "preserving" us, the harder it is to know whether memory is remembered or caught.

Case Study 3: Ghost Wall – Deep Time and Digital Surveillance

As Sarah Moss's Ghost Wall (2018), as with The Echo Wife, falls just beyond the requested scholarly range as a primary literary text, yet it is highly useful for thinking about the Digital Gothic because it suggests that the cyber-age is not just one haunted by technological futures but by ancient pasts replayed through contemporary regimes of control. In principle, Ghost Wall seems remote from interfaces and algorithms. The story revolves around a father fixated on Iron Age Britain who takes his family on an experimental reenactment with university students. The most predominant materialities of the novel are woods, ceremony, history, patriarchy, and violence. This apparent remoteness from the digital realm is precisely what makes the text so good. For it proves beyond all doubt that Digital Gothic doesn't erase previous narratives; it only weaves them. The old comes to dwell within the new; recording becomes reenactment, which is an organized haunting. Indeed, the Gothic has always been about time depth. Past ruins, family sins, or lingering traces of a previous age destabilize the present by rendering it an artifact of unresolved trauma. Such is the case in Ghost Wall, too, but with even greater intensity. Here, the past is understood not so much historically as prescriptively. The Iron Age is envisioned as a model for authority, male sexuality, and nationhood. Thus, it is appropriated, inhabited, and weaponized. This is already hauntology in Fisher's terms but reversed. And whereas Fisher sees the specters of lost futures haunting the present, it is the past, as a romantic myth, that is immune from its temporality. Instead, it is the contemporary world that becomes enslaved to a mythical origin story. And this is linked to the Digital Gothic via replay, documentation, and exclusion.

This reenactment of the camp is no simple historical fancy – it is a technological apparatus used in producing identity. The father builds a version of the past that is suppressed already, and what is more, he

records all of this information. This is analogous to computer networks, where archives of information stored are strategically utilized in order to define what people belong and do not belong to a particular class within such systems. The wall in the title might be viewed as an analogy of Hadrian's Wall strategy of security but also as an allegory of firewall which operates on the same principle of guaranteeing protection through exclusion while being fully aware of the imminent possibility of penetration. In the world depicted in the novel, there are no clear screens anywhere but the architecture implies the existence of surveillance mechanisms. This process of surveillance is applied to Silvie, the teenage narrator, by her father. Her body, speech, behavior, and even emotional reactions are interpreted and disciplined. Surveillance here is immediate and patriarchal rather than algorithmic, but that difference can be exaggerated. Contemporary digital surveillance frequently serves to amplify and even scale old modes of domination, rather than to supplant them. To that end, Zuboff's description of surveillance capitalism helps show us that the harvesting of behavioral data is one aspect of a broader project of making people knowable and controllable to power (Zuboff, 2015). Bill's obsession with authenticity and control dramatizes that desire in human family terms. Ghost Wall presents the spooky in the presence of historical absence, too. But the Iron Age people aren't present; their imagined presence governs whatever action they take. The language of presence that is constituted through absence is what Fisher is referring to (Fisher, 2016). The past performs without being straightforward at all. An environment of ritual objects and reconstructed practices and stories creates an atmosphere in which the dead appear to be teaching the living. This is the digital hauntology of how memories influence behaviour. Here, too, both records and remains transform into living scripts. In the moment of climax in the novel where the historical performance becomes violent enough to make its point, it reveals the danger of taking the past as a play to perform. A ritual sacrifice is staged with frightening seriousness, erasing the boundaries between simulation and actualization. This connection is particularly relevant to the culture of digitality, in which repetition and iteration are possible not only voluntarily but forcibly. The logic of viral reproduction, of eternal records and preemption systems, makes all past activity equivalent to the future's fate. The warning implicit in Ghost Wall regarding the historical past is that it will never remain neutral; on the contrary, it can be appropriated by the logic of domination in the present. The analogy of walls and firewalls allows for a better understanding of the larger context. Walls serve as a dividing line between civilization and barbarism, interiority and exteriority, self and otherness. But Gothic tales follow the same pattern endlessly – there always turn out to be walls enclosing rotting inside. They claim to provide security, authenticity, and containment of information flow; however, violations, disclosures, and internal weaknesses are key aspects of digital environments. In an even deeper sense, firewalls often serve the interests of organizations rather than individuals. When the system claims to be defensive, the individual remains exposed. This, in turn, is what makes the Digital Gothic paradoxical – it protects power while intensifying terror. Ghost Wall builds on the Digital Gothic by showing that digital terror cannot be separated from the legacy of patriarchal, nationalist, and historical fantasy. The cyberspace is not just tormented by dead data. It is tormented by ancient texts of power that contemporary digital systems can reproduce and reiterate. The violence depicted in the novel reminds us that the problem of autonomy in the digital age is not only technological but historical as well.

Synthesis: The Loss of Autonomy

Overall, these case studies illustrate that the primary feature of the Digital Gothic is not the machine as an autonomous monster but rather the human self in fragmented iterations of replication, simulation, and archiving. In The Echo Wife, the doppelganger manifests itself through the cloned and optimized replica, proving that the original can never remain unique if identity can be detached from its carrier and recreated. In "Be Right Back," the specter returns through the technical system's infrastructure, turning mourning into an encounter with data unwilling to vanish. The vestiges of history are archived and played out in Ghost Wall through methods of control, showing how surveillance systems operate under principles dating back to much earlier periods. In these works haunting is used as a formal language and a political strategy

for the loss of autonomy. The basic point here is that the "ghost in the machine" is the user. In the old cybernetic fantasies machines took on a spirit, a soul. In the Digital Gothic, by contrast, the suggestion has been made that users turn into ghosts within structures they themselves neither own nor can entirely know. Their presence circulates outside of them. Their preferences get replicated in predictive models. Systems that are opaque bring back their history. Their bodies are no more than profiles and forecasts. And this is what makes haunting a particularly Gothic state of affairs, since it brings together intimacy and dispossession. The means by which humans speak to each other, recall, crave, and mourn are made to seem intimate, indeed absolutely necessary. And yet they are governed by invisible processes of translating those intimate encounters into commodities. The feeling that something familiar has been made utterly strange becomes more extreme still. For just as the family home of Gothic fiction became a source of horror, so the screen is a place both of intimacy and exposure. The loss of autonomy at issue here is both bodily and informational. Bodily, as digital systems increasingly shape how persons are recognized, desired, monitored, and disciplined. Informational, because the traces of the self escape direct control, forming doubles that can endure beyond intention and act in the world. Surveillance capitalism provides this condition with its economic form, while hauntology provides it with a temporal one. Collectively, they characterize a society where subjects are haunted by what they have already been turned into.

Conclusion: The Future of the Ghost

The Digital Gothic represents a major shift in the cultural logic of horror. The supernatural dread has not gone away, but it has given way to systemic dread: the dread of infrastructures to preserve, simulate, and govern human life through its traces. The castle is the interface, the spectre the data double, the crypt the archive. What comes back to haunt the modern subject is not only the dead, but the unerasable record. This text has asserted that cyber-age haunting is no mere decorative metaphor. It is a crucial mode by which literature and screen culture register this displacement in the digital gaze of bodily and data autonomy under surveillance capitalism. Through Fisher's hauntology and eerie, Freud's uncanny, and critical work on data extraction and circulation, the Digital Gothic stands as a mode particularly well-equipped to narrate a world in which the past is always online, the self is repeatable as pattern, agency is hidden behind slick interfaces. The horror of these texts is not about impersonation so much as about the subject's slow eviction from possession of its own figure. If earlier Gothic stories attempted exorcism through revelation, burial, or moral restitution, the Digital Gothic imagines another brand of exorcism: deletion. In this, the right to be forgotten is transformed into a secular rite against spectral persistence. No longer do we fear a just salvation of the soul. We fear the impossibility of disappearance. The ghost's future, then, is not outside of the machine. It is inside the network, waiting in the archive, and responding when called.

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