HAUNTING FUTURES:
Spectral value in retro semiocommodities

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Abstact: Jacques Derrida's hauntology has been explored on several occasions as a conceptual framework in the study of the production and consumption of retro themes in marketing and futures studies (see Ahlberg et al. 2021). Through this paper, we hope to contribute by outlining a speculative model for locating spectral semiotic values within retro-pop cultural consumer products. Guided by Mark Fisher among others, we will use examples of contemporary pop music culture characterised by postmodern retro-fascination in contrast with subversive countercultural music, and show that both are semiocommodities that homologously originate in the valuation and embodiment of the 'haunting' of abandoned futures and lost utopias of the past. The spectral presence of these abandoned futures grant retro pop culture its affective allure, but the process of this commodification is nebulous. For this we will turn to Jean Baudrillard's political economy of the sign, to examine the different forms of value of sign commodities and the processes of their transformation. We wish to demonstrate that the haunting of such utopias and abandoned futures, which were earlier excluded from the present system (of signification, Being and value) are, in the case of retro semiocommodities, forcibly re-instrumentalised as semiotic exchange— values. We will thus develop a model of the spectral semiocommodity as one of dual values — a dominant *differential value* following the logic of sign-exchange, and a repressed *spectral value* which follows the logic of haunting as a trace-value of its previous form as an extrasemiotic Baudrillardian symbol.

Keywords: hauntology, Baudrillard, semiocommodity, futures, nostalgia, retro

Kummitavad tulevikud: retro semiokaupade spektraalne väärtus

Abstrakt: Jacques Derrida tontoloogiat on kasutatud kontseptuaalse raamistuna retro teemade loomise ja tarbimise uurimisel turunduses ja tulevikuuuringutes (vt Ahlberg et al. 2021). Käesolevas artiklis loodetakse neid uurimuse täiendada, pakkudes spekulatiivse mudeli spektraalsete semiootiliste väärtuste uurimiseks retropopilikes kultuuritoodetes. Lähtudes teiste seas Mark Fisherist, toome näiteid nüüdisaegsest popmuusika kultuurist, mida erinevalt subversiivsest vastukultuurilisest muusikast iseloomustab postmodernne retrohuvi, ja näitame, et mõlemad on semiokaubad, mille algeks on minevikus hüljatud tulevike ja kaotatud utoopiate 'kummitamise' väärtustamine ja kehastamine. Taoliste hüljatud tulevike spektraalne kohalolu annabretropopi kultuurile selle afektiivse külgetõmbe, ent selline kaubastamise protsess on ebamäärane. Selle mõtestamiseks pöördume Baudrillard'i märgi poliitökonoomia poole, uurimaks märgilise kauba väärtuse erinevaid vorme ja nende transformatsiooniprotsesse. Meie eesmärgiks on näidata, et taoliste, varasemalt

oleviku (signifikatsiooni, Olemise ja väärtuse) süsteemist välja jäetud utoopiate ja hüljatud tulevike kummitamine on retro semiokauba puhul semiootilise *vahetus*väärtusena jõuliselt taasinstrumentaliseeritud. Sellest lähuvalt pakume spektraalse semiokauba duaalse väärtuse mudeli: domineeriv *eristav väärtus*, mis järgib märgivahetuse loogikat, ning allasurutud *spektraalne väärtus*, mis järgib varasema ekstrasemiootilise baudrillardliku sümboli vormi jälje-väärtusena kummituslikkuse loogikat.

Märksõnad: tontoloogia, Baudrillard, semiokaup, tulevikud, nostalgia, retro

Introduction

Derrida in the 1983 film *Ghost Dance* directed by Ken McMullen described the future as 'belonging to ghosts'. He celebrated the emancipatory and deconstructive potential of the ghost as one that should-have proved to be an anti-hegemonic entity leveraged to disturb, reinvigorate and 'set-right' a world that is out of joint. It is curious, then, that today we do really 'live with ghosts' but perhaps not in a way Derrida would have envisioned. Instead today, ghosts are deployed by consumer marketing infrastructure, through retro-themed pop-cultural 'semiocommodities'. Hauntology has become by design the mode of production of cultural texts across popular media. The spectre has been described by Derrida to be an extrasemiotic[1] entity that disturbs the present semiotic order from outside (from the past or unfulfilled futures) — so our first objective in this paper is to understand the logics of this impossible commodification of the spectre into the realm of sign-exchange.

We will first introduce the retro semiocommodity[2] as a hauntological device as described by Fisher (2014), Grafton Tanner (2016), and Massimo Leone (2015) to see how retro cultural texts are in fact 'haunted' by spectres of lost futures. Through their readings, we will note how this spectral culture industry can be read as a 'phantomachia' or spectral warfare between two sides — those spectres deployed on behalf of capital like in retro pop music, and those that deconstruct and subvert the

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[1] Our use of the term 'extra-semiotic' (or extra-systemic) is rooted in our understanding of Daniele Monticelli's (2008) articulation of theoretical procedures of totalization and detotalization. According to him, both Saussure's and Marx's systemic thought are characteristic of a procedure of totalization, wherein the "significance, identity and existence of (linguistic) beings" (Monticelli 2008: 13) that cannot be articulated in value are destined to non-existence or exclusion. On the other hand, and to our interests, the theoretical procedures of both Baudrillard and Derrida (alongside Juri Lotman, Jacque Lacan and others) are identified as detotalizing in that they critique this concrete delimitation of the inside vs outside in totalizing theories. In our reading, Derrida's spectres and Baudrillard's symbolic both occupy a space 'outside' of the present system, occupying a role of absolute anteriority and internal untranslatability. In this view, semiotic exchange value and its associated systems of commodification and spectacularisation are totalizing theoretical procedures.

[2] Our use of the term 'semiocommodity' draws inspiration from Bifo Berardi's concept of semiocapitalism and semiocapital, defined as "capital-flux that coagulates in semiotic artefacts without materialising itself" (Berardi 2009: 34). A semiocommodity is thus a semiotic artefact with a distinct commodity fetish produced as part of a system of (capitalist) production.

present order by performatively bringing into focus the uncanny, haunting nature of the spectre that haunts. We will then look at Derrida's hauntology and his concept of the trace-sign, so that the trace-sign may be used as a fundamental unit of semiotic value to be applied to Baudrillard's tabulation of sign form values. Our observations on the conversions and reconversions in Baudrillard's table will lead us to conclusions about the multiplicity of values attached to any semiocommodity, the transformations required in such processes of semiommodification, and further about the trace-values 'trapped' within the hauntological semiocommodity.

We will conclude that in the case of retro cultural semiocommodities like retro pop cultural products or subversive spectral media, there are two critical value forms- a dominant *differential value* following the logic of sign-exchange, and a repressed *spectral value* which follows the logic of haunting as a spectre. This spectral value is the sign-value of the trace of the sign-object's previous form — when it was an extrasemiotic Baudrillardian symbol, outside the realm of sign-exchange that now has been impossibly brought into the logic of the dual values of the sign-object.

Through this essay, we will use Baudrillard's table of transgressive conversions of value forms to understand how an entity like the spectre, which earlier was violently excluded from and imposing onto the present semiotic system (of presence and value) has been impossibly 'trapped' inside the sign-object as a trace-sign, and how its haunting potential is mobilised in different ways by different retro semiocommodities. Commodified ghosts in media arguably have a dominant value form of the logic of sign-exchange, while subversive ghosts in media are a performative harnessing of the spectre's earlier form as a radically deconstructive haunting. Thus our hypothesis is that:

- Both the conciliatory and disturbing spectres of this hauntological conflict follow the logic of a dual value inside the retro semiocommodity – only with varying degrees of a power balance between the two value logics; and
- The impossible commodification of the extrasemiotic spectre in the production of both types of retro semiocommodities can be read through Baudrillard's simulative 'reinstrumentalisation' of symbolic exchange (which we have equated with the spectre) into the form of a sign-object. In one type, this simulation is spectacular, while in the other, it is for the purposes of subversion.

A foreword on Derrida's hauntology of lost futures

In our interpretation, Derrida's hauntology is the logic or study of the spectre as a conceptual metaphor for the trace-sign. Later, we will describe Derrida's concept of the trace-sign as a particular model of the sign, but first we must introduce how the trace-sign operates through the logic of haunting as a spectre. This will help us

understand how retro commodities are understood through the lens of haunting by lost futures as described by Fisher, Tanner and Leone.

The spectre is deployed by Derrida as a conceptual metaphor for the buried traumas of the past and the unfulfilled potentialities that 'haunt' the present. The spectre serves the purpose of an injunction, to demand 'justice' for a wrong that has been done, and thereby impact the future. This justice is a radical deconstruction of the present, and the spectre demands a productive setting-right of this disjunctive world: it produces the "chance of the future" (Derrida 2011 [1993]: 33). What haunts, then, is the spectre of what-could-have-been, of abandoned futures, of alternative presents buried under a repressive hegemony. "Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (ibid, 46). The effort of the dominant hegemony in the present, for Derrida, is to mourn them, to repress them, to keep the ghosts dead. As Fisher writes, haunting can be construed then as "a failed mourning", where we fail to give up on the ghosts, or the ghosts fail to give up on us or allow us to slip into the banal everyday (Fisher 2014:30). Derrida's hauntology was developed as a response to the questions over the future of forsaken possibilities of social organisation based on Marxist ideas in the post-Soviet Western world. As Ahlberg et al. (2021) have articulated, that derelict future's foregone possibility still reverberates today, in social relations, in identities of self-becoming, and in the affective media of pop culture. The spectre is an entity that haunts and deconstructs the present semiotic order from an 'outside'.

But the spectre always needs a medium to haunt through. In *Ghost Dance*, Derrida describes cinema as a "battle of phantoms" – a 'phantomachia.' It is an "art of allowing ghosts to come back" – these are the ghosts of the subjects filmed who are long dead, cryogenized through the medium[3]. Derrida's phantomachia in tele-media and tele-discourse can be extended beyond film. In the extensive literature of a "minor academic industry" (Davis 2013) inspired by Derrida's legacy, many have already applied a hauntological lens in pop cultural media (see Blanco and Peeren 2013 for an overview of the field).

As we will argue, spectral media that mediate and are possessed by the haunting of the spectre require first a capturing of the spectre into the logic of sign production, differentiation and exchange. These media exist in a spectral battleground between commodified ghosts and ghosts that subvert the dominant culture industry – between 'friendly' conciliatory ghosts, and 'unfriendly' disturbing, deconstructive ghosts. We can now look at the two as both representing lost futures, shown primarily through pop music culture.

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[3] In the semi-improvised scene, Derrida spoke of the 'exchange' between film and psychoanalysis to produce an artistic science of ghosts. Derrida is interrupted by a phone call, and we are left to imagine what he could-have said about the phantomachia (the unresolved concept itself haunts us, lingering without being put to rest beyond all doubt). After the call, he talks of how modern technologies of tele-communication and film directly engage with ghosts rather than exorcise them as scientific rational thought does.

Pop Cultural Phantomachia: All that is solid melts into vapour

Fisher (2014) examines pop music such as those of artists like Adele, Amy Winehouse and Arctic Monkeys that draw heavily from retro production styles established in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. He argues that the sound of artists such as these that rely on styles of bygone eras suggest that the current cultural moment is in "the grips of a formal nostalgia" (Fisher 2014: 18). This formal nostalgia is read by Fisher as Frederic Jameson's 'nostalgia mode', which is a kind of performed anachronism, where the music sounds or feels historical enough to appear to be from a past epoch (ibid). But this affective historicity is uncanny – the synthetic texture of 21st century audio production is layered with the 'classic' qualities of music from the past, and the result is retro-simulative music that belongs to "some implied 'timeless' era, an eternal 1960s or an eternal 80s" (ibid). The new music in effect harvests the retro aesthetic from history, but this is solely a reproduction of form – it culls out the content and context so as to liberate it from the responsibility of teleology and becoming. However this 'dyschronia'[4] has become naturalised into the banal absurdity of the everyday in postmodern capitalism. With artists like Adele, The Killers, Oasis, Arctic Monkeys or Taylor Swift, "anachronism is now taken for granted" and has *lost its uncanny charge* (Fisher 2014:23). The effect, and the task, of the nostalgia mode is to refurbish the old and thereby *disguise the disappearance of the future as its coming* (its return) (ibid).[5]

We can read Leone (2015) in parallel here. His reading of the "temporal tourism" that vintage objects offer to generations who never experienced the time to which the objects were contemporary is akin to a Jamesonian museum where the past is cryogenized for consumption and critique. As Leone writes, "It is no longer sufficient to argue, as recently proposed by Eco, that youths nowadays buy vintage clothes and watch retro TV series because fashion persuades them to do so through imposing a taste." (Leone, 2015: 12). Neither is the purchase of vintage objects the same as Baudrillard's (1968) purchase of antiques which is a suppression and capturing of time (death) – which would be more in tune with Jameson's postmodern retro-pastiche[6]. Nor is it simply a "temporal tourism" via the purchase of authenticity and a sense of manufactured originality. Instead:

> Through vintage, young European individuals are now purchasing a nostalgic journey into the future […] The future embedded in those objects was a future of hopeful

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[4] Fisher supposedly attributes this term to Simon Reynolds, but we were unable to locate Reynold's original mention of it.

[5] Mark Fisher also adds to examples of such ghosts later by his term 'Party hauntology', referring to "the dominant 21st century form of pop, the transnational club music produced by Guetta, Flo-Rida, Calvin Harris and will.i.am." (Fisher, 2014, 163)

[6] Retrospection and retro-pastiche are the two tendencies of Jameson's postmodernism, as according to Fisher (2014: 23). This 'retro-mania' has become naturalised, according to Fisher and Simon Reynolds.

expectation, vibrant incertitude, and energetic élan. [...] A 1950s' Brown radio meant existential progress to come when it was bought in the 1950s. Today, it sadly means nostalgia for that feeling of existential progress to come. It is a 'futuro anteriore,' as the Italian grammar denominates one of its tenses, a sort of future perfect that is used to designate actions that take place in a past projected into the future. [...] Like the Aymara, they do not see [the future] anymore as something that is ahead of them, to be seized, grasped, and conquered, but as something that, mysteriously, lies in the past, hidden in potential paths that history never took. Aborted threads of collective life, they linger in an invisible limbo, unfathomable to all" (Leone 2015:12).

Thus, these are examples of what we have termed 'conciliatory ghosts', deployed by the marketing apparatuses of capitalist production. What is captured for commercial reproduction in retro-affective cultural products such as these are the spectres of lost futures and the aura of youthful optimism and revolutionary kinetic potential of the 1960's, 70's and 80's proceeding from social processes of cultural and political imagination in Western Europe. It is important to note that although Leone has dismissed Eco's proposition of the function of the retro commodity being that of identity formation, authenticity and fashion according to the logic of sign-differences as 'insufficient', we will keep these aspects in mind alongside that of haunting, and elaborate on this duality of values in the proceeding sections.

Crucially, Fisher contrasts his critique of retro pop music with an analysis of underground hauntological music that deliberately and performatively brings into focus the anachronic nature of our present cultural malaise, without superficially 'retro-washing' it. These musical texts' "principal sonic signature [is] the use of crackle, the surface noise made by vinyl" (Fisher 2014:29). Deliberately introduced artefacts, glitches and errors such as these bring into sudden focus the recorded and produced nature of the music, and this self-reflexivity is crucial to the postmodern self-critical power of hauntological music. 90's Jungle music[7], for Fisher, is emblematic of this radical reflexivity and provided an alternative to mainstream retro-pastiche music. Quoting Kodwo Eshun, Fisher argues that Jungle was a "libidinisation of anxiety itself" (ibid, 37), escalating the jouissance of uncertainties and precarities of late capitalism. Jungle, as any hauntological music, exposed the true inhuman nature of capitalism, and the music felt as if it were created independently of human intervention, and the producers were simply ventriloquists for a machinic narrative. Small-town nostalgia (simulated by pop artists today like The Killer, Taylor Swift, etc.) was rejected in favour of the uncomfortable, dystopian metropolis, celebrating the thrill of the cutthroat chase where strangers and corporations stalk each other in "the Hobbesian scenarios of 1980s films such as Blade Runner, Terminator and Predator 2" (ibid). Jungle was an accelerationist music, in the hopes to drive through rather than away from capitalism would lead to its self-destructive nadir and thus the *messianic*[8] arrival of the future – "at a certain point,

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[7] Jungle music in the 1990's was (in retrospect) a revolutionary new type of electronic music — characterised by high-speed drum breaks and extensive digital audio manipulation, led by artists and DJs from low-income urban communities in post-Thatcherite London.

[8] By messianic we are specifically referring to Derrida's use of the word to describe the returning of the spectre – who is both an arrivant (to-come) and a revenant (return). The

the unrelieved negativity of the dystopian drive trips over into a perversely utopian gesture, and annihilation becomes the condition of the radically new" (ibid). Interestingly from a hauntological perspective, Fisher also mentions Jungle's characteristically alien feel, as if it emanated from an otherworldly artificial intelligence that only *ventriloquized* the human producers (ibid, 38).

Fisher, however, lamented that this radical alternative represented by Jungle has all but declined today (barring some examples of alternative music by artists like Burial). But a year before Fisher's tragic passing, Tanner (2016) updated Fisher's sonic hauntology by pointing to genres of vaporwave[9] and synthwave as the successors to Fisher's jungle or anti-rock Joy Division. Vaporwave music is "sceptical of capitalism's promise to redeem us in the name of material goods and of the nostalgia that hangs over an era obsessed with the clichés of history" (Tanner 2016: 9), and attempts to subvert the deliberate capitalist commodification of nostalgia for a pre-9/11, pre-Internet era. "By forcing us to recognize the unfamiliarity of ubiquitous technology" (ibid, 18), vaporwave brings into sudden and often ridiculous focus the uncanny, unsettling and ghostly nature of electronic media through glitches, malfunctions, and looping repetition, to "undermine the smooth, professional-grade production heard in mainstream Western popular music" (ibid, 19). Through sampling of previous music as "an art form of remediation and appropriation" it exposes spectral "gaps in authorship, continuity, and the information needed to determine originality" (ibid, 16). Hauntological music too, then, is characteristic of self-reflexively deconstructive postmodernism.

Tanner also writes about vaporwave's alien and ghostly ventriloquizing function, similar to Fisher, and engages with Graham Harman's Object Oriented Ontology (OOO). Through malfunctions and glitches, the listener is afforded a glimpse of the supernatural at work,

> [an] alien intelligence [which] could be the very inside-ness of the machine at hand, the interior workings that remain entirely hidden unless we disassemble the tool and risk facing the uncanny in its destabilising guise [...] These glitches interrupt our expectations while deceiving and annoying us. They undermine our notion of what the machine is supposed to do for us, not without us. In this way, our electronic machines take on lives of their own and appear capable of functioning perfectly well without humans – a complete transcendence into otherworldly sentience" (Tanner 2016: 19).

Thus, we have termed these examples as 'disturbing' or subversive ghosts that turn the spectral culture industry's tools against itself in order to expose the hauntological nature of our times. We can already see the phantomachia being waged in the culture

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messianic nature of the spectre is in its hope and promise for a future to-come. The ghost presents itself as a possible future – a polemic. (Derrida 2011: 33-45)

[9] Vaporwave, synthwave, and associated genres were created in the 2010's and are a combination of visual art of a specific aesthetic, Internet meme culture, and music characterised by slowed-down and glitchy audio samples of retro pop songs and shopping mall muzak. The surrounding discourse was widely recognised as satirical nostalgia and surrealism, critical of retro-fetishistic consumer culture.

industry of today, between mainstream retro-fetishistic pop cultural industry dependent on the endless recycling of the abandoned futures of the early and pre-Internet era into the productive commodity-forms of retro styles on the one hand, and subversive subcultures that perform hauntological counter-offensives against capital that seeks to colonise the spectres. Both 'sides' of this war of ghosts have weaponized spectres that lurk within and haunt through culture (in general, although we have only looked at a few music cultural references as our research objects here).

But the spectres that are recruited and deployed by both sides have volatile allegiances. For an example, 80's vaporwave and 80's retro-pastiche pop music draw from the same source of cultural haunting:

Figure 1: Frame from the music video of Save Your Tears (2022) by The Weeknd

Figure 2: Frame from the music video of Blinding Lights (2021) by The Weeknd

Figure 3: Frame from the music video of Excuses (2020) by AP Dhillon

Figure 4: Album Artwork of Future Nostalgia by Dua Lipa

The retro sound of mainstream big-budget 80's retro-pastiche pop productions like those of The Weeknd (Figures. 1, 2) or Dua Lipa (Fig. 4) that are anything but subversive of capitalism. Acoustically, they are unmistakably similar to those of synthesiser-based European electronic music from the 1970's and 1980's. The classic sound of then cutting-edge digital synthesisers like the Yamaha DX7 made legendary by pioneers such as Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream and Daft Punk. However, the same classic sound is sampled, manipulated and performed by hauntological vaporwave, synthwave and retrowave, as heard in some already-classics of the genre (Figures. 5, 6).

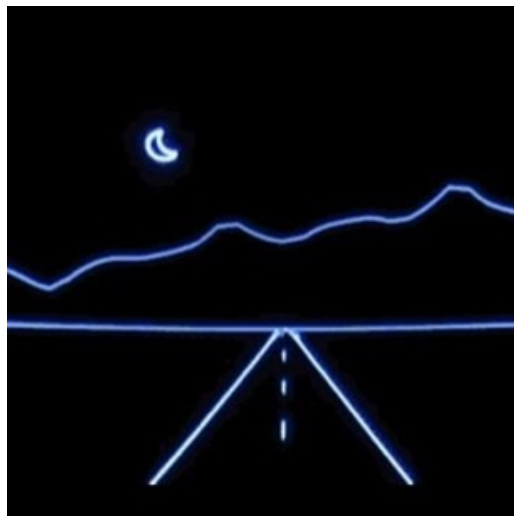Figure 5: Album Artwork for Floral Shoppe (2011) by Macintosh Plus

Figure 6: Artwork for All Night (2011) by Midnight Television

And the motifs of retro haunting go beyond the recycling of sonic production techniques. One can see the conscious recycling of visual aesthetics of cyberpunk themes made classic through films such as *Blade Runner* (1982) and animes such as *Akira* (1989). See, for example, the omnipresent aesthetics of speed and acceleration, the use of geometric figures in the portrayal of cyberspace, the colours of neon pinks and purples, and the use of retro text fonts in the aptly-named *Future Nostalgia* by Dua Lipa (Fig. 4), in films such as *Blade Runner* 2049 (2017), TV series like *Mrs Marvel* (2021) (whose cinematic trailer features the Weeknd's music), or in the album artwork of AP Dhillon (Fig. 4). But their vaporwave counterparts use and warp similar aesthetics as well.

Thus, these genres from both 'sides' are homologous[10] — both capture the utopian impulse of the 1970's and early 1980's neo-futurism through recycled motifs and aesthetics of technological innovation, neo-modernist obsessions with accelerationism and cyber-transhumanism. But they deploy them in oppositional ways. If vaporwave is the viral ghost sent back in time to haunt the Reagan era, retro-pop is the programmer trying to code it back into existence.[11] [12] This tendency of volatility of allegiance is characteristically one of the spectre — as Derrida has written that it is dangerous and difficult to separate and classify friendly and unfriendly ghosts as their intentions are never fully revealed (Derrida 2011 [1993]: 134). And

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[10]We use 'homologous' because of their common source of haunting — what Massimo Leone called the 'youthful elan' or spirit of the times — and this is not simply a zeitgeist but the affective dimension of potentiality and anticipation for a future-to-come. In the sense that the two sides of our phantomachia share a common origin, they are hauntogenetically homologous.

[11] An adaptation of a tweet from Grafton Tanner.

[12] The subversive element of haunting weaponised in vaporwave and hauntological music is exactly that which is actively reified and commodified, gentrified by commercial music. In the Weeknd or Dua Lipa, the spectre's tendency towards anachrony and subverting of the time-liness of the present is commodified.

because we can never truly ascertain its true identity, it is easy for other subjects and objects, i.e., commodities, to usurp the identity of a spectre (ibid, 7).

This phantomachia is a confusing and chaotic battleground of murky intentions. However, we want to try to make sense of the logic of this marketing-warfare, and how the performative weaponization of hauntological texts on either side follows the logic of simulative commodification. First, we must dive into the technics of Derrida's hauntology so we may apply it to Baudrillard's sign exchange.

Derrida's trace-sign

Derrida's "theory of spectres" (Derrida, 2011: 152), is a theory of the unrepresented, of signs and subjects that are entombed beneath the repressive weight of paradigmatic and syntagmatic signification in the present. It is a theory of how all signs carry traces of other signs, from a national flag hiding ideology and genocide, to a note in a melody carrying the traces of previous and future notes, to a glitch or malfunction indicating a machinic non-human presence. Derrida's hauntology is a climactic synthesis of many of his major theses, including those of deconstruction (1972, 1976) and *differance* (1968).

Sigmund Freud's concept of a trace (1961[1924]) first appeared in a short paper entitled *A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'*, where he explored the concept of a memory-trace. Freud considered the child's toy of a cellulose writing pad as a metaphor to illustrate the unconscious that retains traces of whatever is inscribed on it. Derrida would later extend the trace beyond Freud's use as a metaphor. He uses the concept extensively (1976, 1972) in order to support his deconstruction of logocentrism and the binary opposition of speech and writing. In the transformation from speech to writing, there is no metaphysically identifiable point of origin. He critiques the Saussurean structures of sign-value and sign-identity being produced by a concrete and identifiable difference, and instead purports that this difference is not an identity nor a difference between identities. Writing as a system of signs is a system of traces, in which traces do not derive from an empirical presence (of identity), but instead from an "absence of another here-now […] presenting itself as irreducible absence in the presence of the trace" (Derrida 1976: 57). Instead of a structural oppositional system, the trace offers a deconstructive tool. In his reading of Freud, memory and thus the psyche originates in the difference between the neural facilitations, metaphorized through the written trace. The identitarian quality of memory would only be produced by the set of periodic oppositions of memory

objects, and the trace-as-memory is the invisible difference between memories, i.e., objects that could be recalled into the conscious mind[13, 14]

Derrida elaborates on the trace to show that it does not only occult and reject its own origins but is the "origin of origins" (Derrida 1976: 61) — the trace produces meaning, it is the "difference which opens up appearance and signification "(ibid, 65). This is because signs contain traces of other signs — for example, the word "gay" contains "happy", "homosexual", even "bear", and so on. This is a precursor to Derrida's *differance* (1968), where the absence of the adjacent signs are both spatial and temporal. The trace then is seen as a sign that conceals something, including its own production — the original movement that created the trace is occulted. Secrecy itself is held in secret. In this light, signs always manage to conceal something that they signify, and there is always some meaning that escapes explicit signification.

The purpose of the spectre is that of the injunction to remedy (remediate) the present through the trace-sign. Its intrusion into the semiotic realm where its voice is to be heard is a violent one. As we have described above through the examples of hauntological media like Fisher's jungle or Tanner's vaporwave, the spectre as the unrepresented and elusive haunting subverts and antagonises the present semiotic order. While the present semiotic order apparently represents the signified opaquely, the logic of this haunting is to bring into sudden visibility that which is excluded from the present signification. As shown above, they do this by using glitches and errors to bring into focus the mediated nature of the text and its methods of production, to thus signify a trace-sign i.e., the trace of that which is not opaquely represented.

Today, when the present semiotic order is itself hauntological by design, vaporwave for example brings into sudden focus the non-transparency or semi-transparency of retro-pop media by ironically turning the very motifs of retro-pastiche postmodernisms against itself. In another example, the unrepresented or unembodied form of the spectre in syntagmatic musical composition would be the unplayed musical notes in a sequence — literally, the aptly named 'ghost notes'.

We can then look at retro-pastiche pop, in turn, as a spectacular reproduction of the spectre. But the spectre is not a simple countercultural mechanism that can be reified seamlessly. Its haunting nature makes it a difficult thing to lay our finger on and thus categorise its transition beyond all doubt. The interstitial, volatile and ambivalent nature makes it necessary to locate this commodification in the process of the simulation of the symbolic.

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[13] The trace always contains a trace of memory, of what has already happened. This is never an absolute memory in a Peircean iconic sense, but is a trace of pre-adjacent trace-signs that differ through absolute temporality of periodicity and continuity. We may recall here Lotman's observation about how art and play type models do not have static meanings but "twinkle"- retaining memories of earlier meanings and possible future ones (Lotman, 2011).

[14] For further reading, Andrade (2016) succinctly captures how Derrida's reading of Freud's temporalities in the psyche produce, metaphorically, his conception of language through difference in traces. Such an outlining is beyond our current mandate, however, we can continue with Derrida's concept of the trace-sign as the fundamental ephemeral unit of language and the psyche, as a quasi-concept that deconstructs the sign.

For this, we will need to look to Baudrillard's tabulation of sign-value forms and the simulative transformations of the extra-semiotic 'symbolic'. In doing so, we will attempt to read Derrida's spectre as an extra-semiotic entity like Baudrillard's symbolic exchange, that is then brought back into the logic of sign exchange through reconversion of its value form. However, we will then argue that this is not a zero-sum reconversion but that reconversion leaves behind a trace of the previous form before reconversion. This will lead us to a repressive model of dual sign-values inside the sign-object, between a sign exchange-value and a spectral value as the trace sign.

Baudrillard's table of values

We must first examine Baudrillard's value-forms that relate to the systematics of sign exchange in the semiotic political economy, as read through Genosko's (1994) commentary.

Use value (UV)	Economic exchange value (EcEV)	Sign exchange value (SgEV)	Symbolic exchange (SbE)
1. UV–EcEV	4. EcEV–UV	7. SgEV–UV	10. SbE–UV
2. UV–SgEV	5. EcEV–SgEV	8. SgEV–EcEV	11. SbE–EcEV
3. UV–SbE	6. EcEV–SbE	9. SgEV–SbE	12. SbE–SgEV

Figure 7: Genosko's tabulation of Baudrillard's logics of value

Baudrillard's table of values (Fig. 7) formalises the conversions and reconversions along 4 logics of value with their own forms, logics and operations:

1. *Use Value* (UV) based on logic of value of utility, based on functional determinations, in the form of an instrument
2. *Economic Exchange Value* (EcEV) based on logic of equivalence, based on commercial determinations, in the form of a commodity
3. *Sign Exchange Value* (SgEV) based on logic of difference, with structural determinations, in the form of the sign
4. *Symbolic Exchange* (SbE) based on logic of ambivalence, with psychical determination, in the form of the symbol

The table is organised in three clusters of conversions and reconversions: (Fig. 8)

Production-Consumption	*Transfiguration*	*Transgression*
C1—R4	C2—R7	C3—R10
	C5—R8	C6—R11
		C9—R12

Figure 8: Genosko's tabulation of the three clusters of conversions (C) / reconversions (R), referenced to Fig. 7 where C1 represents UV-EcEV and so on.

The first cluster (UV - EcEV and its reconversion) is the process of production and consumption in classical Marxist political economy, where the instrument becomes exchanged on the economic marketplace and is in turn consumed to gratify personal needs.

The second cluster (UV - SgEV and its reconversion, and EcEV - SgEV and its reconversion) enters into the domain of the systematic identity of material and sign production (Baudrillard has, throughout, emphasised the analogous structuration of the sign and the commodity).Through reorganisations according to the polar differential positions and combinatory rules of 'the code', (Baudrillard 2019 [1972]) the principles and forms of UV and EcEv are transfigured into SgEV. This is a magically immaterial transfiguration, where Marx's phrase 'all that is solid melts into air' comes to mind. This "vaporisation" of use value into "strange airs" is not of a single instrument but of the differences between the many; seen, for example, in the cultural qualities of the air of the sea as compared to the air of the country (Genosko 1994: 9).

Crucially, when we reconvert SgEV back into UV (or EcEV), one does not receive the restored UV that was first converted, but instead one consumes as well the culturally significant differences in a semiotic utility of sorts. This sense of secondary utility is a meta-functional and metaphysical function alongside the satisfaction of needs. When we consume the air of the sea, we are consuming it as different from the air of the country. This dual consumption is associated with the means of social, cultural, personal and aesthetic profit (ibid). This logic of dual consumption will be later extended by us to apply to other reconverted value-forms as well.

The third cluster (UV - SbE, EcEV - SbE and SgEv - SbE and their respective reconversions) are transgressive conversions into the realm of the symbolic exchange which is "the other side of political economy". The conversion occurs through "a symbolic consumption which liquidates value" (Genosko 1994: 10). In this process, "hyperconsumption replaces underconsumption" (ibid) and the logic of the potlatch of surplus replaces that of cold rational calculation. Baudrillard argues that the consumption of UV has become today the chaotic destructive logic of potlatch (Baudrillard 2019[1972]: 49). The notion of 'needs' and sign exchange is supplanted by that of a "hypersimulation of sign value, a pathological manipulation which overcomes and upends the differential relations of the sign system" (Genosko 1994: 10). The Baudrillardian potlatch in symbolic exchange highlights Marcel Mauss'

understanding of the gift-relation as a spiritual mechanism that is associated with the obligation of a return, and a return with interest. [15]

On the other hand, the transgressive reconversion and revaluing of SbE back into SgEV, UV and EcEV occurs through the symbolic's "reinstrumentalization as *a commodity or a sign*" (*Genosko* 1994: 10). We can examine the technics of transgressions while examining some important characteristics of Baudrillard's symbolic exchange (and noticing their parallels with Derrida's spectre).

Symbolic exchange and the symbolic-as-spectre

The symbolic is arbitrary, absolute and incomparable

Baudrilard's symbol is a semiotic object that represents a relationship between two individual or collective subjects. Baudrillard's primary example of the symbolic is the gift — for example, of a wedding ring between a married couple, or the gift of death. The symbol "is inseparable from the concrete relation in which it is exchanged". For our purposes, we can read the injunction of the spectre as a relationship of symbolic exchange between the haunted and the spectre.

The symbolic is an absolute relation, in the sense that one can never quantify the value of a wedding ring, or the value of death, and if one were to do so, it would be in a transgressive revaluation or reinstrumentalization. The symbolic in fact has "neither use value nor (economic) exchange value". The object itself is arbitrary, but "the gift is unique, specified by the people exchanging and the unique moment of the exchange. It is arbitrary, and yet absolutely singular" and incomparable (Baudrillard 2019 [1972]: 68).

The symbolic relation is reciprocal

"The symbol refers to lack (absence) as a virtual relation of desire" (Baudrillard 2019 [1972]: 68). The logic of this desire is of reciprocity, but not a calculative transactional reciprocity that tends towards equalisation and hence an annulment of the relationship, but instead the reciprocity of the potlatch. Baudrillard's reading of Mauss' Trobriand Islanders sees potlatch to be a "provocation, a competition, a

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[15] This is where Derrida is at odds with Baudrillard's reading of Mauss because according to Derrida (2011), the exchange between the spectre and the haunted is unidirectional, univocal — we cannot reason or exchange with ghosts, only listen. Further, there is no reciprocal escalation in the exchange with the spectre, unlike that in the symbolic relation. However, this is an idealistic praxis of engagement with ghosts, not that which is practised today by industry. And we may choose to re-read Derrida's spectre's demand for justice and the endless debt to the spectre that inheritors find themselves as a parallel to the Baudrillardian symbolic relation's endless potlatch, to further bolster our comparison between the two concepts. While symbolic exchange tends towards escalation without calculation ad infinitum, the spectre is *always already* infinite, absolute, without calculation.

challenge" (ibid, 44). The gift received is seen as a threat against the social position of the receiver, whose legitimacy is questioned, and the receiver is obligated to overcompensate with an even greater gift. The nature of the symbolic relation is an arms race, accelerating and trying to one-up the other in scale. And the attitude in the destruction of the potlatch is one of insolence and defiance. Thus, the symbol refers to the most recent infraction or challenge that has produced a lack or imbalance in the relationship, and itself produces and represents the obligatory desire to reciprocate.

In our case, the spectre's injunction is a 'challenge' to us to re-order history and is a violent and traumatic call to action. The 'imbalance' it demands to set right is between the future that should-have-been or the world that could-be free, and the present order which represses those potentialities.

The symbolic is ambivalent, transparent and total

In a symbolic object, there is never an opaque positive or negative that is signified, as with the differential weights in sign exchange systems. Instead, symbolic relationships are ambivalent, they include both the positive and negative histories and contexts that have led up to this particular unique gift (e.g. all the particular unquantifiable moments of a relationship, both good and bad, that are represented by a wedding ring). This ambivalence of the relationship is what makes the symbolic a "concrete manifestation of a total relationship of desire". The symbolic also manifests "the transparency of social relations in a dual or integrated group relationship" (ibid, 69). This transparency is in the open challenge of reciprocity, and in the clear visibility of the depth of the relationship's totality.

The spectre can be read as a 'total' object, one whose true identity we can never ascertain for sure. We only know it through the visor and armour it wears for our gaze, and we can only converse with it through its spoken injunction. It oscillates between visibility and invisibility, transparency and obfuscation.

A reexamination of transgressive reinstrumentalization

The transgressive reconversion of SbE back into SgEV, UV and EcEV can be reexamined. In each transgression, there is an attribution of value and an annulment of the incomparability of the object. The object becomes like any other, interchangeable and valuable in a system of differences. [16]

In the reconversion of SbE into SgEV or EcEV, we firstly see the repressive conjuring away of ambivalence, instead becoming the opaque currency of exchange.

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[16] In SbE - UV, we can see the logic of the gift and destructive hyperconsumption being replaced for sake of the gratification of needs. However, this is not a reduction in the same way that SbE becomes reinstrumentalized into exchange value, and we will revisit the curious homology between UV and SbE later.

"The symbol is reified as a sign whose value emanates from the system, its ambivalence becomes structural equivalence, rendering social relations of production and consumption abstract and opaque" (Genosko 1994: 5). This opacity is that "of social relations of production and the reality of the division of labour […] the total constraint of the code that governs social value: it is the specific weight of signs that regulates the social logic of exchange"(Baudrillard 2019 [1972]: 69). This reorganisation of the principles of the symbolic by "the semiotic disposition to heterogeneousness 'unsettles' the homogeneous transparency of the symbolic" (ibid).

When the spectre is reinstrumentalised, it loses its total potentiality and ambivalence. It is taken literally at 'face' value[17], i.e., the value of its possessed body as an affective medium. Its haunting becomes opaque, reduced to the differential value of its visor or armour.

Also, when incomparable symbolic objects become autonomous from their manifested relations and freely codifiable, they begin to signify an annulment of the reciprocity and thus the death or abolishment of the relationship. "It is no longer the mobile signifier of a lack between two beings. […] Whereas the symbol refers to lack (to absence) as a virtual relation of desire, the sign object only refers to the absence of relation itself, and to isolated individual subjects" (ibid). The erstwhile symbolic object becomes a sign of difference or imbalance between two subjects, of "coded difference" i.e., an IOU.

For our purposes, we can read this as the 'annulment' of the injunction of the spectre and imbalance between the abandoned futures and the present. The 'reinstrumentalisation' of the spectre amounts to the reduction of the haunting potential to the logic of difference.

The symbolic is repressed by the sign-relation

Baudrillard also aims to show how the symbolic is a heterogeneous entity that exists outside the homogenising logical domain of value. He does so by exploring two equations and considering the logical impossibility of their horizontal coherence. Below we have shown a combined expression of the horizontal expressions of the first (Fig.9), and in the second we have shown Baudrillard's homology of the general political economy of commodities with that of the sign (Fig. 10).

$$\frac{\text{SgEV}}{\text{SbE}} = \frac{\text{EcEV}}{\text{UV}}$$

Figure 9: The horizontal implications of Baudrillard's domain of sign value. This is an impossible equation as UV and SbE cannot be equated and the symbolic lies outside the semiological (Fig. 11)

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[17] Or perhaps 'visor-value' – as the face of the ghost is unknowable.

In this first equation, the two sides when taken in isolation are logically sound. There is a reduction in the concrete in both vertical implications, in SbE-SgEV and in EcEV-UV. However, they fail the test of horizontal coherence. UV and SbE cannot be equated because SbE is incommensurable, transparent, ambivalent and incomparable. However, there is an unmistakable resemblance between the two in that they are both subjects of repressive reductions (Genosko 1994: 14-15).

$$\frac{EcEV}{UV} = \frac{Sr}{Sd}$$

Figure 10: The domain of general political economy equated with that of the sign expressed in Baudrillard's horizontally and vertically coherent equation

The second equation highlights Baudrillard's homology between the commodity and the sign (Fig. 10). Both "exchange value and the signifier have a 'strategic value' greater than the 'tactical value' of use value and the signified [...] Use value and the signified are 'effects' or 'simulation models' of their antecedent terms" (Genosko 1994: 5). The signifier and UV both are exploited as sources of non-differentiable value, before they become subjected to Marx's commodity fetishism and enter the market of difference and circulation.

The bars that separate the terms on both sides are Saussurean bars that guarantee the separation of the terms, but it also excludes the possibility of the copulation of the terms, and in doing so "conjures a phantasm of the unity of signification" (Genosko 1994: 15). SbE represents the *potential* total reconciliation of the opposing terms of the signified and signifier[18] in the logic of gift exchange. The ambivalence and totality of the symbolic is repressively excluded from this equation, as a potential value, represented as so (Fig. 11):

$$\frac{EcEV}{UV} = \frac{Sr}{Sd} \Big/ SbE$$

Figure 11: The radical exclusion of the symbolic from the Saussurean sign-structure

This bar is a quasi-Lacanian bar "of radical exclusion" (Genosko 1994: 16) in that it censors and represses the transgressive symbolic potentialities.[19] This "power bar is the archetype of all the disjunctions which found the simulative structure of the real" and "the referential real is an effect of the sign just as UV is said to be an effect of EcEV" (Genosko 1994: 17). The bar is a bar of repression, one between life and death

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[18] Thus SbE follows the logic of the spectre – what haunts from the outside is the potentiality of a total reconciliation, of a world that could-be-free today or of futures that can be reconciled with their abandonment.

[19] However, in Baudrillard's reading of Lacan's semiopsychoanalysis, "the symbolic bears no relation to the repressed and does not occupy the place of the Lacanian signified" (Genosko, 1994:15). This is yet another place we have to decide to ignore Baudrillard — the spectre, like the symbolic, is repressed and returns as in a Lacanian crossing into the conscious mind. Baudrillard would disagree, stating that the symbolic never had a place in the semiologic so can never 'return'.

which interrupts the symbolic gift-exchange between the two. "The bar represses death. It is invested with the social power to do so" and its "power lies in its ability to block an ineluctable relation in which there is an incessant obligation to give, to receive and to return, and thus to enter into a symbolic communion." (Genosko 1994: 1). This bar is an unbridgeable gap that makes a crossing over impossible, and this crossing over is precisely the transgression of conversions and reconversions of SbE highlighted earlier. Genosko points out an excellent example of Baudrillard's critique of Roman Jakobson's model of communication as one of sign exchange that represses and excludes the symbolic, separating and silencing the receiver from the sender (Genosko 1994: 6).

      Again, for us, the spectre is literally the figure of a repressed 'death', when 'death' is read as a gift in symbolic exchange. The spectre is according to Derrida repressed by the present semiotic order, i.e., by the present linguistic exchange and networks of signification.

The symbolic is deconstructive

But the symbolic is active in its effort to disbar this disjunction. It "continues to haunt the sign, to dismantle the formal correlation of signifier and signified" (Baudrillard 2019 [1972]: 196) by means of a "violent 'effraction' (break and entry) into the sanctuary of value by means of revolutionary consumptive practices" (Genosko 1994: 4). However, in its haunting, "the symbolic [...] cannot be named except by allusion, by effraction, because signification, which names everything after itself, only speaks of value, and the symbolic is not value" (Baudrillard 2019 [1972]: 196).[20]

The symbolic-as-spectre

We may return here temporarily to Derrida to point out an important parallel between Baudrillard's symbolic and Derrida's spectre (2011 [1993]). Although outside the scope of the present essay, we can bring notice to Derrida's concept of the spectre as that which haunts the present, representing repressed traumas and unfulfilled potentialities, and demanding a 'setting-right' of the disjunctive present. Some similarities that we can note for now:

1. The spectre represents the unfulfilled potentialities of history, just as the symbolic as repressed represents the unfulfilled potential reconciliation of the

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[20] Baudrillard here is at odds with Julia Kristeva (Kristeva 1980:146) when he notes the absolute purity of the symbolic and hence that the disjunctive bar is not exactly Lacanian. Kristeva's semiotic resembles Baudrillard's symbolic, while her symbolic parallels his semiotic domain of signs. For Kristeva, "the semiotic and the symbolic dispositions are in 'permanent contradiction' and are thus 'inseparable'" and her semiotic has "the tendency to establish symbolic-like 'signifying apparatuses'" (Genosko 1994: 13). For Baudrillard, however, his symbolic never contains a trace of the semiotic since "it does not return, like the repressed, since it has never had a place in the territory of the sign." (Genosko 1994: 11)

repressive division of the signifier and the signified. The symbolic represents thus a potentially pure totality of meaning, but that is repressed and divided for the sake of sign-exchange in language and culture. The symbolic in its efforts to 'break' into the semiotic realm can be read as a haunting.

2. The spectre like the symbolic is repressed by the hegemonic ontology of the present. As a conceptual tool used by Derrida, the spectre is deconstructive, and rejects the binary oppositions and structuration of the ontology of presence.

3. The ambivalent totality of the symbolic parallels that of the spectre, in that the spectre oscillates between presence and absence, and is marked by the visibility of the invisible and the presence of absence. Transparency, ambiguity and incomparability means that neither follow the logic of differences- neither can be taken at face value.

4. The "aneconomical" surplus generated and demanded in the obligatory reciprocity of the gift-exchange in SbE can be seen as similar to the spectre's demand for justice as one that is "beyond law", beyond economic calculation, beyond exchange (Derrida 2011 [1993]: 26). Referring to Heidegger's Dike, Derrida says that the surplus of the gift is excessive- it has to come from what one does not have- what properly belongs to the other already (ibid, 29).

5. The symbolic as that which cannot be named and that presents an incommensurable gift (of death) is arguably characteristic of the spectre's "messianicity without content" or "messianicity without messianicity" (Derrida 2011 [1993]: 74), which does not adhere to the logic of value and difference. The example from Derrida of the spectre's messianicity wihout messianism is that the spectre does not adhere to the messianicity of structures as is the case in Marxism or religion.

We can note then that the (re)conversion into SgEV from SbE or UV, when all that is solid melts into air, is a vaporisation into the spectral.

Value-forms of the trace-sign

There are necessarily traces left behind in the transformative processes of conversion and reconversion of value-forms. We must agree with Genosko's reading of Kristeva's inseparability of her semiotic and symbolic, and so emphasise that there is always a trace of the logic of Baudrillardian sign-exchange in his symbolic, even if this is difficult to imagine in a concrete relation using his example of the gift. We similarly see the trace of the logic of signs in the homology of UV and SbE as pointed out by Genosko, in that "even beyond the semiologic, through the mirror of use value, one

finds a strong pair, a trace of the binary logic of the code. Burnt signs leave ashes." (Genosko 1994: 15)[21]

We earlier highlighted the dual utility of reconverted UV, i.e., a metafunctional 'semiotic utility' in the consumption of differences alongside its classical satisfaction of needs. When we reconvert SgEV-UV, there is something necessarily gained that is residual from the earlier conversion (UV-SgEV). The air reconverted into solid is not simply solid but retains traces of its earlier converted form of SgEv. This secondary metafunction is a result of the trace of its earlier form. We can designate this earlier form as SgEV'. Therefore, UV in isolation is always lesser than its form returned after reconversion, which we may describe as (UV + SgEV').[22]

Just as UV contains not just UV but EcEV' or (and) SgEv', we can take the liberty to extend this reading of metafunctional residue after reconversion to the other value forms as well.

Thus, then Baudrillard's table of values can be rearranged and the reconverted value-forms can be interpreted as dual utilities including the traces of the prior conversion (Fig. 12):

	Conversions	Reconversions
Production - consumption	UV-EcEV	EcEV-(UV+EcEV')
Transfiguration	UV-SgEV	SgEV-(UV+SgEV')
Transfiguration	EcEV--SgEV	SgEV-(EcEV+ SgEV')
Transgression	UV-SbE	SbE-(UV+SbE')
Transgression	EcEV-SbE	SbE-(EcEV+SbE')
Transgression	SgEV-SbE	SbE-(SgEV+SbE')

Figure 12: Our synthesised table of reconverted values representing the presence of metafunctional residue-values of prior conversions[23, 24]

[21] We must also point out that if the symbolic is equated with Derrida's spectre, and the spectre-as-spirit that has been decorporalised is always displaced from an original corporeal body, then necessarily we must hypothesise that the first body is always that of an opaque sign relation, of a differentiated corporeal mass. So the symbolic-as-spectre contains at least a trace of its origins in the semiologic, even if the origins of the spectre are occulted.

[22] This is, in essence, the nature of reconversion rather than conversion which is always a reductive process. UV-SgEv or UV-EcEV always implies a capturing of value, its reification into exchange of differences. This captured or repressed UV is not a trace UV'. Only in its reconversion back to UV do we achieve a trace of SgEV' or EcEV'.

[23] When we combine this hypothesis with the fact that, as pointed out earlier, the nature of the Derridean trace-sign is that it is inscribed with traces of other sign-objects' value forms as per the logic of the system of differences, then we begin to get an idea of the complexity of trace-signification contained within a single reconverted value form of an object. For example, for an object (a) the EcEV(a)' in the reconverted UV(a)+ EcEV(a)' also contains the traces EcEV(b)', EcEV(c)' and so on. So (UV(a)+EcEV(a)') is actually (UV(a)+(EcEV(a)'+EcEV(b)'+EcEV(c)'+…)).

[24] Then, in Kristeva's reading of her semiotic's tendency to always establish symbolic-like apparatuses, we can see that (if interpreted in the Baudrillardian equation) SbE as an always converted SgEV always contains a trace of SgEV'

Our particular interests are in the last listed reconversion, i.e., SbE-(SgEV+SbE'). This implies that the SgEV that is a reinstrumentalized SbE also contains within it a trace of its earlier SbE form, and this earlier form of the invaluable and incomparable symbolic is captured (trapped) inside the valuated sign-object. If we are to continue with our parallel of the spectre-as-symbolic, then this trace inside the sign-object can be identified as the effect of the SbE's haunting, in its present absence. But it is more than an effect, it is appropriated as a productive component of value, and so the differential value of the sign-exchange commodity becomes that of the sum of SgEV and the spectre that is repressed underneath it. The *re-* in reinstrumentalisation can be thus read as a very real return (of the repressed) of the spectre[25].

In the sign-exchange commodity, which we have chosen to interpret as a semiocommodity in line with Baudrillard's (1976) and Berardi's (2009) semiocapitalism[26], there is thus a repressive trapping of value. This is not a simple re-encoding of differences according to the logic of the sign-system, but necessarily an embodiment of a unique symbolic sign-object. The spectre-as-symbolic is effaced, and forced into the materiality of the object.[27] So SgEV+SbE' is actually SgEV/SbE', and we may now finally formalise the spectral semiocommodity as in Fig. 13:

$$\frac{\textbf{SgEV}}{\textbf{SbE'}}$$

Figure 13: In the spectral semiocommodity, the logic of systems of sign-exchange represses the spectre SbE' which is a trace sign of its earlier deconstructive extra-semiotic form SbE.

The dual values in the retro semiocommodity

If we apply the above model to the earlier discussion on retro futuristic pop cultural media, then the hauntological semicomodity can be represented as (SgEV+SbE').

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[25] We have claimed this for our present expediency, despite the fact that Baudrillard has categorically said the 'breaking into' of the symbolic into the semiotic realm is not a Lacanian 'return' of the repressed

[26] Although it is possible, we have chosen not to describe the spectral semiocommodity in terms of Eva Illouz's (2018) emotional commodity or emodity. This is because, although a robust and useful concept, it fails to capture the ambivalence and tumultuous forms of value that are trapped within the hauntological commodity, instead describing it merely as a cold calculative manipulation of psychic devices in order to produce certain emotional use values on consumption. However, we may interpret a hauntological emodity from the perspective of its emotional UV, as when the (SgEV+SbE') is further reconverted into UV+SgEV' or rather UV+(SgEV+SbE')'

[27] However, this is never a perfect embodiment and the spectre is never fully converted. The spectre cannot become a loyal vassal to capital, and this is because, as we mentioned earlier, of the volatile ambivalence of the spectre and the impossibility of discerning its identity (and true allegiance). In fact, then, the SbE' inside the semiocommodity is not a trace-sign but a trace of a trace.

There are thus two functional values associated with the retro sign-object:

- A value of (social) difference with a *differential function — expressed as SgEV* for cultural, aesthetic and personal profit — the 'cool' factor, of say, retro photography[28]. This fashionableness explains the viral copycat culture that scales the semio-commodities' effectiveness beyond their symbolic's origin — for example, through AP Dhillon, an Indian Punjabi pop artist that excels at imitating artists such as the Weeknd, even though the haunting of retrowave styles is characteristically a haunting by European and American lost futures.
- A trace value with a *spectral function — expressed as SbE'* or the psychical value captured from an unquantifiable presence of a revolutionary utopia of the lost futures captured into the sign-commodity. In effect, this is the reconverted sign value of the symbolic spectre of lost futures.[29]

But the repression of SbE' is a violent one, and this spectral repression and the symbolic's effort to break into the semiotic can explain the instability and volatile nature of the hauntological semiocommodity. These two dual warring factors in the musical text also help explain why any music is not exclusively hauntological or not. Each musical text contains its potential for subversion, as with Tanner's vaporwave or Fisher's jungle, but also (and hence) the potential to be appropriated by industry, as with Dua Lipa or the Weeknd, and vice versa. Insightful commentary from those who identify fringe avant-garde pop as post-humanistic "anti-hauntology" but likewise agree with Fisher's diagnosis of hauntological pastiche (Bluemink 2021) cannot make claims in certainty that hauntology itself cannot be liberated from capital's yoke; and likewise on the other hand, a celebration of the emotional activism of mainstream pop as a commodification of disco (Rees 2021) cannot ignore these machinations of semiotic industry. This instability gives cause for both optimism and concern, as hauntological devices can prove to be powerful but fickle allies in anti-hegemonic mobilisation.

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[28] As mentioned earlier, Leone (2015) pointed out Eco's misunderstanding of this fashionableness as the only value inside the retro commodity.

[29] It is also no coincidence that Fisher (2014: 27) points to "two directions in hauntology". The first is that which is no-longer but which haunts where there once was a real referent. This is anachronic tendency grants the spectre its propensity to store and recall affect, and hence its suitability for the nostalgia mode of Jameson, or in hauntological devices where the referent becomes virtualised, and the sign-object becomes a simulative substitute for it. This fiat semiotic-currency is nothing other than the differential logic of SgEV. Fisher's second hauntology refers to that which has not yet happened but "which is already effective in the virtual [as] an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behaviour". This is the absolutist messianicity of the spectre, the anticipatory unquantifiable symbolic exchange arms race ad infinitum. It is purely virtual and never had a place in the material Real, but is pre-adjacent to the Real.

Conclusion

We have thus created a model with which to identify the multiplicity of values within (primarily artistic) semiocommodities that are produced from the reconversion of earlier semiotic forms. Specifically, we have suggested that sign-objects serve not simply the function of their current dominant value form but contain traces of prior reconversions, which provide additional metafunctional value based on the logic of the previous form. This dual presence is characterised by an unstable composition, where the dominant form represses the trace of the earlier form, in order to re-mobilise it for the new imposed logic of value.

Baudrillard's transgressive conversions and reconversions of value-forms allows us to track the impossible and nebulous commodification of the symbolic ghost. In the retro semiocommodity, the dominant value form is one of sign-exchange, which makes it 'fashionable' to consume. The metafunctional value is based on the logic of its previous form, in this case, the previous form was one of symbolic exchange. We have read the spectre as a model of the trace sign as initially existing outside the realm of sign-exchange, its injunctive exchange through haunting is a Baudrillardian symbolic exchange. So, in the case of the retro-semiocommodity, the initially extrasemiotic symbolic ghost is forcibly brought into the logic of semiotic exchange and differentiation during the process of reinstrumentalisation. The unrepresentable trace-sign is forcibly represented. Suddenly the spectre is no longer the symbolic haunting or a 'mobile signifier of a lack between two beings' (between the future and the present), but instead now 'refers to the absence of relation itself' (the absence of a specific injunction). What was earlier a specific injunctive haunting now is separated from its specificity, harvested for a vague affective indicator of haunting, and this reinstrumentalised symbolic spectre is repressed under the logic of sign-exchange.

Thus, we have explained the duality of the retro-semiocommodity — where on the one hand it follows the logic of sign-exchange, but on the other hand is a powerful medium of haunting by lost futures. We have hopefully reconciled two opposing views on retro commodities — that they are either only fashionable sign-objects, or that they are media of haunting that represent and perform time as out-of-joint. In this way, Fisher's Jamesonian retro-pop, Tanner's vaporwave and Leone's vintage objects can be read all in the same way — except each have varying degrees of balance between the two value forms. In retro-pop as with vintage, the haunting of lost futures is completely repressed and disguised and the spectre 'loses its uncanny charge', while in Tanner's vaporwave, the spectre-as-symbolic's violent 'breaking into' the semiotic is performatively brought to the fore. We have thus tried to read the hauntological phantomachia as a semiotic trade-war.

Further applications of this model, once suitably adapted and after revisions as needed, would call for an examination of a retro-semiocommodity, research into

its developmental origins, its scale and nature of its affective impact on audiences, and then an identification of trace-signs ideally through a process of eliminating dominant sign-exchange functions. Some limitations of our approach to this model include:

- Our exclusion of the study of affect theory, and emotional and psychological studies of commodities,
- A lack of a deeper dive into the technics of the repressive trapping of value through an analysis of spatial aspects of utopia and its embodiment into the material object, and
- Only a brief allusion to the analogy between Derrida's spectre and Baudrillard's symbolic exchange

These are directions we hope to pursue ourselves elsewhere. If Derrida's deconstructive hauntology is a quasi-religious "pathology of scepticism" (Fisher 2014: 25), then this paper is somewhat of a blasphemous attempt to formalise a logic of haunting. However, we must counter that we have only formalised a logic of the spectre in a semiocommodity, i.e., inside the logic of sign-exchange. We concede that the 'totality' of the spectre is difficult if not impossible to formalise, unlike the Baudrillardian symbolic exchange which is viewed as a detotalizing external which is very much real and sovereign (see Monticelli 2008).

Although we have only applied and designed this model specifically for the purposes of examining hauntological retro consumption, we hope this model can be applied elsewhere for general studies on semiocapitalism. Specifically, this may prove useful in Marxian and post-Marxian subculture and counterculture studies, in order to decode the technics of capitalist re-organization of culture, affect and subjectivity. We hope this model may be adapted for use among practitioners and scholars of hauntology in the arts, in marketing studies on retro consumption and in semiotic studies on cultural and political futures, pasts and anachronic presents alike.

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