MARGARET COHEN
The gothic imagination: from castle to shipwreck

Margaret Cohen teaches in the Departments of English and Comparative Literature at Stanford, where she is Andrew B. Hammond Professor of French Language, Literature and Civilization. Her most recent book is *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), which was awarded the Louis R. Gottschalk Prize from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the George and Barbara Perkins Prize from the International Society for the Study of the Narrative. Other books include *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), which received the Modern Language Association’s Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione prize in French and Francophone literature. She is currently writing a book about how the modern imagination of the remote, underwater environment has been shaped by its access through visual technologies, from the aquarium to underwater photography and film.

The gothic is a term designating a style in medieval architecture, which inspired a mode of the imagination in the Enlightenment and Romantic era. This mode found its fullest expression in narrative, popularized by the gothic novel in the British Isles, before spreading across the continent and indeed across the globe. My talk starts with an overview of the gothic mode as conceived by modernity, involved heightened sensation, melodrama, the persistence of irrational forces and fantasies shaped by the tortured, claustrophobic architecture patterned on medieval cloisters, churches, and castles.

While inspired by architectures of power from the feudal era, gothic spaces were adapted by the modern imagination to express haunted or otherwise uncanny features of other types of environments. An urban gothic proliferated in the 19th century across the globe, peopled by the ghosts of the marginalized and the displaced. In the United States, Southern gothic, as well as the suburban gothic are two examples of how the gothic travels: in the case of the suburban gothic, to rend the façade of middle-class banality and in the case of the Southern gothic, to express tormented race relations still shaping consciousness and history. The paper ends by adding to these familiar gothic topoi a form of environmental gothic: the underwater gothic, enabled by the invention of technologies to take human vision beneath the ocean and record it with film, which is the subject of my current research. It shows how the vista of the shipwreck fits the criteria for the gothic using James Cameron’s virtuostic sequence filming the historical wreck of *The Titanic* in *Titanic* (1997). Under the sea as well, the gothic confronts Enlightenment modernity with irrational forces – staging, however, not a form of human power but rather the menace to modernity of the indifferent, natural environment. This menace has an uncanny beauty as strange natural forms recolonize technologies that were the epitome of modern aspiration, and give an alluring afterlife to a tragic grave.
DOUGLAS SPENCER

*Space After Spectacle: Infrastructure, Indifference and the Phantasmagoria of Transit*

Douglas Spencer is the author of *The Architecture of Neoliberalism* (Bloomsbury, 2016). He teaches and writes on critical theories of architecture, landscape and urbanism at the AA's Graduate School of Design at the Architectural Association and at the University of Westminster, London. A regular contributor to *Radical Philosophy*, he has also written chapters for collections such as *Architecture Against the Post-Political* (Nadir Lahiji, ed. Routledge, 2014), and *This Thing Called Theory* (eds Teresa Stoppani, Giorgio Ponzo, and George Themistokleous, Routledge, November 2016), and published numerous essays in journals such *The Journal of Architecture, AD, AA Files, New Geographies, Volume* and *Praznine."

Andreotti and Lahiji's *The Architecture of Phantasmagoria* presents an incisive critique of the discourse of spectacle in architecture. ‘Spectacle’, they note, has become the ‘tired mantra’ of a supposedly critical posture lazily reiterating its complaints against architecture as image and missing the critical thrust of Debord’s writing. Without wanting to abandon what remains for them still pertinent in Debord’s thought they suggest, in response, phantasmagoria as a model more adequate to grasping the machinations of contemporary architecture as an apparatus of power and subjectivation than that of spectacle.

This paper builds upon and extends Andreotti and Lahiji’s critique. The discourse of spectacle, I will argue, rests upon the assumption of a cinematic mode of reception in which subjects are distracted from everyday realities under the spell-like influence of star architects and their iconic productions. This mode of reception is, though, exceptional rather than typical. As such, it is itself a distraction from the more everyday experience of the built environment and the analysis of its subjectifying powers. This subjectifying power, I will argue, operates through forms of attention that are very much divided rather than undivided; the fleeting glance rather than the focused gaze, the habitual as opposed to the extraordinary. In order to explore these more habitual and habituating forms of attention - exemplified here in the spaces of contemporary transit and their sobrely dressed interiors - I draw methodologically upon Benjamin and Kracauer’s concern with the everyday experience of the city as a ubiquitous environmental condition and, reaching further back still, to Simmel’s account of the metropolis as, in its economic and experiential essence, a ‘sphere of indifference’.

JOAN OCKMAN

*Culture of Circulation*

Joan Ockman is Distinguished Senior Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design and Visiting Professor at Cooper Union School of Architecture. An architecture educator, historian, writer, and editor, she has edited *"Architecture Culture 1943--1968", "The Pragmatist Imagination", and "Out of Ground Zero"*. She is currently completing a collection of essays titled *Architecture Among Other Things*, to be published next year by *Actar*.

Once upon a time, in the days when modern architecture was young, circulation through a building was primarily a functional problem. By the mid-twentieth century, when the monument building morphed into the spectacle-building, the circulation system began to take on aesthetic implications of its own and to become a central feature of a building’s architectural identity. Think of Wright’s Guggenheim Museum or Saarinen’s TWA Terminal. Of course, Baroque architects already appreciated the
expressive potential of dynamic scenography four centuries ago. But today the mania for circulation spaces manifest in cutting-edge architecture goes well beyond formal virtuosity. Escalators, ramps, elevators, stairs, bridges, catwalks—these privileged elements of contemporary buildings not only belong to a form-making culture that at all costs (figuratively and literally) wishes to avoid the appearance of fixity, but emanate from the very structure of the neocapitalist imaginary. In this talk we attempt an allegorical reading of architecture’s “culture of circulation.” What are the implications of an architecture that is about circulation?

3:00-3:30 DAVID KISHIK

A Specter is Haunting Babel--The Specter of Language

David Kishik is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Institute for Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies at Emerson College. His most recent book is The Manhattan Project: A Theory of a City, just released in paperback by Stanford University Press.

Urban theology begins with a biblical tale of two cities: Enoch, built by Cain, and Babel, destroyed by God. The fact that the pithy primeval story in Genesis 1-11 finds it necessary to develop separate critiques of the same phenomenon (soon to be tripled with the account of Sodom and Gomorrah) is enough to show why the city is seen not only as the foundation of the created world, but also as the fountain of our deepest human anxieties. Assuming that all our modern urban sensibilities are secularized theological sensibilities, I will take in this talk a tiger’s leap from the observation deck of the World Trade Center to the locked room at the seventh floor of the Babylonian Ziggurat.

3:30-3:45 Coffee Break

Session 2

3:45-4:30 GRAEME GILLOCH

Haunts: a Eulogy to Phantasmagoria?

Graeme Gilloch is Reader in Sociology at Lancaster University UK. He is the author of three books with Polity Press ([Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City] [1996]; [Critical Constellation: Walter Benjamin] [2002], and [Our Companion in Misfortune: Siegfried Kracauer] [2015]) and numerous essays and articles on film, memory and urban space. His co-authored book Landscapes of Loneliness: The Cinema of Nuri Bilge Ceylan is forthcoming (2017) with I.B. Taurus. He is currently writing: a rhythmanalysis of the city of Busan, South Korea; a study of Critical Theory and Nordic Noir; a series of essays on the Parisian writings of Marc Augé; and co-editing a collection of Kracauer’s works on propaganda. With Invisible Print Studio, London, he has co-curated the exhibition The Arca Project, 1st April - 7th May 2017.

My aim in this paper is to rethink and reconfigure the notion of phantasmagoria not as forms of deception and domination (myth, fetishism, illusion, dreaming) but rather as sites of and encounters with ‘gatherings of ghosts’. To this end, I compare and contrast two key visions of contemporary urban space: the notion of ‘non places’ (non-lieux) identified by the French social anthropologist Marc Augé and ‘place of memory’ (lieux de memoire) as articulated by his compatriot, the historian Pierre Nora. I suggest that these may be understood as two sides of the same coin: non-lieux as spaces of alienation and individualization bereft of meaning and significance as characteristic of supermodernity (malls, airports, car parks, gas stations, fast food chains); lieux de memoire as spaces (and objects, texts, and other artefacts) of
mythological history seeking to indoctrinate a national collective consciousness in the absence of any genuine connectedness to the past (monuments, school textbooks, historical personae and stories). One produces the atomized individual; the other incorporates this individual into the mass and mythology of the nation. Both kinds of ‘spaces’ are, in fact, about amnesia: the absence of remembrance and / or its orchestration. So I will propose something else which might serve as sites of critique and counterpoint: those places that are haunted by the repressed, the down-trodden, the unsuccessful, the dead, the poor, the ‘others’ of conventional history. These are eradicated / erased by both these kinds of lieux: almost! They remain as traces and residues, they survive as ghosts. The places of the city are those that are alive with ghosts. Far from rejecting these as sites of fetish and ideology, we must redeem the crowds of ghosts that haunt the city.

‘Phantasmagoria’ is therefore to be understood here not so much as deceptive 'phantasms in the marketplace' (the fetish commodity chief among them) but more simply as a ‘gathering of ghosts’ in a certain place. And so what I am going to advocate, and this is very much in keeping with the Surrealists of course, iare what we might term lieux d’hanter or simply les hantes. Haunts because this is both an action and a place, a place which one frequents. Not ‘non-places’, not ‘places of memory’, but haunts. And this returns us to the writings of Marc Augé whose essays on Paris are very much a series of eulogies / elegies to his haunts: the metro, the little independent Left Bank cinema, the corner bistro.

**DAVID CUNNINGHAM**

*An Endless Phantasmagoria, or, Metropolitan Architecture and the Abstraction of Form*

David Cunningham is Deputy Director of the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture at the University of Westminster in London, and a long-standing editor of the journal Radical Philosophy. He has published widely on architecture and urban theory, as well as modernism, capitalism and the theory of the novel, and is currently working on a study of the philosophical concept of the metropolis.

In famously reaching for the metaphor of the phantasmagoria in describing the fetish-like character of the commodity in *Capital*, Marx deploys, as he does elsewhere, an image drawn specifically from nineteenth-century technologies of visual spectacle - one, of course, that Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* will extend into a far broader account of “the phantasmagoria of capitalist culture” that “reaches its most brilliant display in the Universal Exhibition of 1867”. Yet what Benjamin describes in 1939 as a reifying process by which the “creations” of such a culture are thereby manifested in the “immediacy of perceptible presence” is itself haunted by a certain paradox. For what is thus “manifested” is, in a sense, always only ever an abstraction which is in itself entirely devoid of “perceptible presence” or visible form. In the words of *Capital*: ‘Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values”.

How is it, then, that this spectral “objectivity” without matter comes nonetheless to be paradoxically incarnated in the apparently all-too-perceptible presence of architectural form? In addressing this question, the paper takes its cue from the fact that, before either Marx or Benjamin, the metaphor of the ‘phantasmagoria’ was actually already a fairly familiar one in attempts to define not the commodity, but the new experience of the metropolis or *Großstadt*. Hence, for example, William Hazlitt’s 1823 depiction of the Londoner as confronted by “hundreds and thousands of gay, well-dressed people” who pass him (or her) by in “an endless phantasmagoria”. It is argued that is in architecture’s subjection to the metropolis - as that which is, in the words of Simmel, both the “seat of” and “dominated by” the money form - that a
certain contradictory materialization of abstraction in modern architecture can best be understood.

5:00-5:15 Break

5:15-6:00 Panel discussion

Respondents
GEORGE JOHNSTON, Georgia Tech
MARISABEL MARRATT, Georgia Tech
TODD CRONIN, Emory University

6:00 Closing remarks