

The Haunted Novel



Nineteenth-Century Spectrality

Lecture Aims:

1. Offer some examples of ghostly forms, hauntings actual and imagined, or figurative spectral presences in C19th novels, and approaches you might take as scholars.
2. Get you to think about how the C19th novel (and literature more widely) itself can be considered haunted, and the possible external forces involved.

Haunted: Vocabulary and Terminology

GHOSTS

MEMORY

"Frequented by many people"

APPARITION

REVENANT

"Frequented or much visited by spirits, imaginary beings, apparitions, spectres"

UNCANNY

RETURN

*"Regret of another kind still seems to haunt you".
E. Bulwer-Lytton, Alice (1838)*

SPECTRAL

Illusion

"One of the most noted haunts of the ancient highwaymen." W. Spalding (1841)

PLAGUED

INFESTED

displacement

Psychology

REPRESSED

HAUNTING

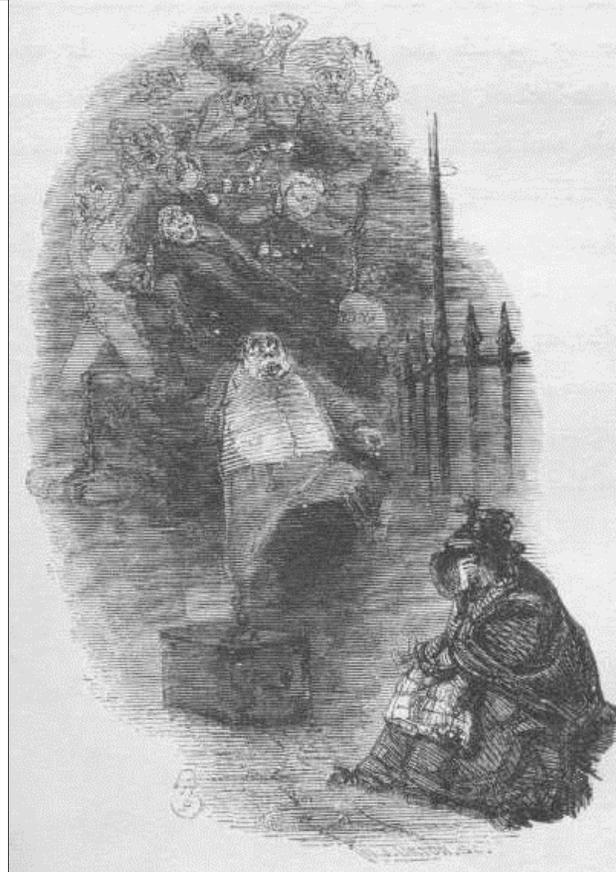
Trauma

PHANTOMS

POSSESSION

PURSUED

SUPERNATURAL



Example: C19th “ghosts”



[above] The first page of contents for Walter Cooper Dendy's *The Philosophy of Mystery* (1841)

THE CHALLENGE.

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FIENDS, GHOSTS, AND SPIRITS:

INCLUDING AN ACCOUNT OF
THE ORIGIN AND NATURE
OF
BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL.

BY JOHN NETTEN RADCLIFFE

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1854.

A N
E S S A Y
ON THE
R E C O V E R Y
OF THE
APPARENTLY DEAD.

BY CHARLES KITE,

Member of the Corporation of Surgeons in London,
and Surgeon at Gravesend in Kent.

Being the Essay to which the Humane Society's Medal was adjudged.

To which is prefixed,

DR. LETTSOM'S ADDRESS
ON THE DELIVERY OF THE MEDAL.

*— bac animas ille evocat Orco
Pallentes. VIRG.*

LONDON;

PRINTED FOR C. DILLY IN THE POULTRY.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

1788.

SONNET.

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charactry,
Hold like rich garner's the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

John Keats, 1818

THE
PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH;
OR
A GENERAL MEDICAL AND STATISTICAL
TREATISE
ON THE
NATURE AND CAUSES OF HUMAN
MORTALITY.

BY
JOHN REID,

LICENTIATE OF THE FACULTY OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, GLASGOW.

"Nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet."
Being born we die, and our end depends upon our origin.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY S. HIGHLEY, 32, FLEET STREET;
MACLACHLAN & STEWART, EDINBURGH;
HODGES & SMITH, DUBLIN;
A. RUTHERGLEN, GLASGOW;
G. S. TULLIS, CUPAR.

MDCCCXLI.

1841.





Raymond and the bleeding Nun.



Belinda at Lady Delacour's feet
from *Belinda* by Maria Edgeworth (1850 version)



Virginia St Pierre alias Rachel Hartley
from *Belinda* by Maria Edgeworth (1896 version)

Revenant Past in *The Antiquary*

“In the name of all our religion holds most holy, tell me, reverend father, what am I to expect from a communication opened by a token connected with **such horrible recollections?**”

[...] “Tell me,” continued the Earl, in a tone of increasing trepidation and agony—“tell me, do you come to say that all that has been done to **expiate guilt so horrible**, has been too little and too trivial for the offence, and to point out new and more efficacious modes of severe penance?—I will not blench from it, father—**let me suffer the pains of my crime here in the body, rather than hereafter in the spirit!**”

(ch. 18)



The Priory of St. Bath.

Engraved by R. B. Smith.

—This ring.—

This little ring, with necromantic force,
Has raised the ghost of pleasure to my fears,
Conjured the sense of honour and of love
Into such shapes, they fright me from myself.

The Fatal Marriage.

Her long and bony hand held out to Lord Glenallan a gold bodkin,
down which in fancy he saw the blood of his infant trickling.

(ch. 23)

Revenant Pasts in *The Antiquary*

The lantern had been thrown down and extinguished in the scuffle. The wind, which formerly howled so loudly through the aisles of the ruin, had now greatly fallen, lulled by the rain, which was descending very fast. The moon, from the same cause, was totally obscured, and though Dousterswivel had some experience of the ruins, and knew that he must endeavour to regain the eastern door of the chancel, **yet the confusion of his ideas was such**, that he hesitated for some time ere he could ascertain in what direction he was to seek it. In this perplexity, **the suggestions of superstition, taking the advantage of darkness and his evil conscience, began again to present themselves to his disturbed imagination**. “But bah!” quoth he valiantly to himself, “it is all nonsense all one part of de damn big trick and imposture. Devil! that one thick-skulled Scotch Baronet, as I have led by the nose for five year, should cheat Herman Dousterswivel!”

As he had come to this conclusion, an incident occurred which tended greatly to shake the grounds on which he had adopted it. Amid the **melancholy *sough* of the dying wind**, and the splash of the rain-drops on leaves and stones, arose, and apparently at no great distance from the listener, **a strain of vocal music so sad and solemn, as if the departed spirits of the churchmen who had once inhabited these deserted ruins were mourning the solitude and desolation to which their hallowed precincts had been abandoned**. Dousterswivel, who had now got upon his feet, and was groping around the wall of the chancel, stood rooted to the ground on the occurrence of this new phenomenon. **Each faculty of his soul seemed for the moment centred in the sense of hearing**, and all rushed back with the unanimous information, that the deep, wild, and prolonged chant which he now heard, was the appropriate music of one of the most solemn dirges of the Church of Rome. Why performed in such a solitude, and by what class of choristers, were questions which the **terrified imagination** of the adept, stirred with all the German superstitions of nixies, oak-kings, wer-wolves, hobgoblins, black spirits and white, blue spirits and grey, durst not even attempt to solve.

Revenant Pasts in The Antiquary

“I am seldom in this apartment [...] and never without yielding to a melancholy feeling [...] but owing to circumstances of an early and unhappy attachment. It is at such moments as these, Mr. Lovel, that we feel the **changes of time**.

The same objects are before us [...] they are permanent and the same; but [...] can we be ourselves called the same? or do we not rather look back with a sort of wonder upon our former selves, as being separate and distinct from what we now are? [...]

Well, time cures every wound, **and though the scar may remain and occasionally ache**, yet the earliest agony of its recent infliction is felt no more.”

(ch. 10)

Revenant Pasts in The Antiquary

“enables a plot twist that attests at once to Scott's determination to make haunting something like a family affair and to a parallel determination to make literature something like a family heirloom. When Scott's foundling hero Lovel [...] enters the room with his host, the eponymous antiquary, neither is in the frame of mind requisite for the ghostseeing [...] For Lovel, however, this deficit in what Scott (describing the reader of the Gothic) elsewhere calls ‘that secret and reserved feeling of love for the marvellous and supernatural’ proves temporary.”

Deidre Lynch, “Gothic Libraries and National Subjects.”
Studies in Romanticism. 40.1 2001. 29-48

Revenant Pasts in The Antiquary

if there should be so much old-fashioned faith left among this shrewd and sceptical generation, as to suppose that what follows was an impression conveyed rather by the eye than by the imagination, I do not impugn their doctrine.

He was, then, **or imagined himself**, broad awake in the Green Chamber, [...] Insensibly the legend of Aldobrand Oldenbuck, and his mysterious visits to the inmates of the chamber, awoke in his mind

[...] The tapestry waved wildly on the wall, till its dusky forms seemed to become animated. The hunters blew their horns—the stag seemed to fly, the boar to resist, and the hounds to assail the one and pursue the other; the cry of deer, mangled by throttling dogs—the shouts of men, and the clatter of horses' hoofs, seemed at once to surround him—while every group pursued, with all the fury of the chase, the employment in which the artist had represented them as engaged. **Lovel looked on this strange scene devoid of wonder (which seldom intrudes itself upon the sleeping fancy), but with an anxious sensation of awful fear.**

(ch. 10)

Revenant Pasts in The Antiquary

“This mark of favor from Monkbarns' most permanent resident, its ancestral dead, is extended – as Scott intimates via the conclusion that discloses Lovel's parentage which proves his legitimacy and makes his fortune – because Lovel virtually is family.”

Deidre Lynch, “Gothic Libraries and National Subjects.” 2001.



“in which the wife oversaw the needs of the household and managed a monetary budget as part of her duties” for a “masculine sphere of professional economics” of “national and global finance”

“the language of panic and crisis so elemental to the nineteenth-century Gothic novel paralleled references to the Victorian bourgeoisie as the ‘uneasy classes,’ haunted not by the Gothic novel but by the Gothic marketplace and the households it had consumed.”

Gail Turley Houston, *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction* (2005)



Our Housekeeping.

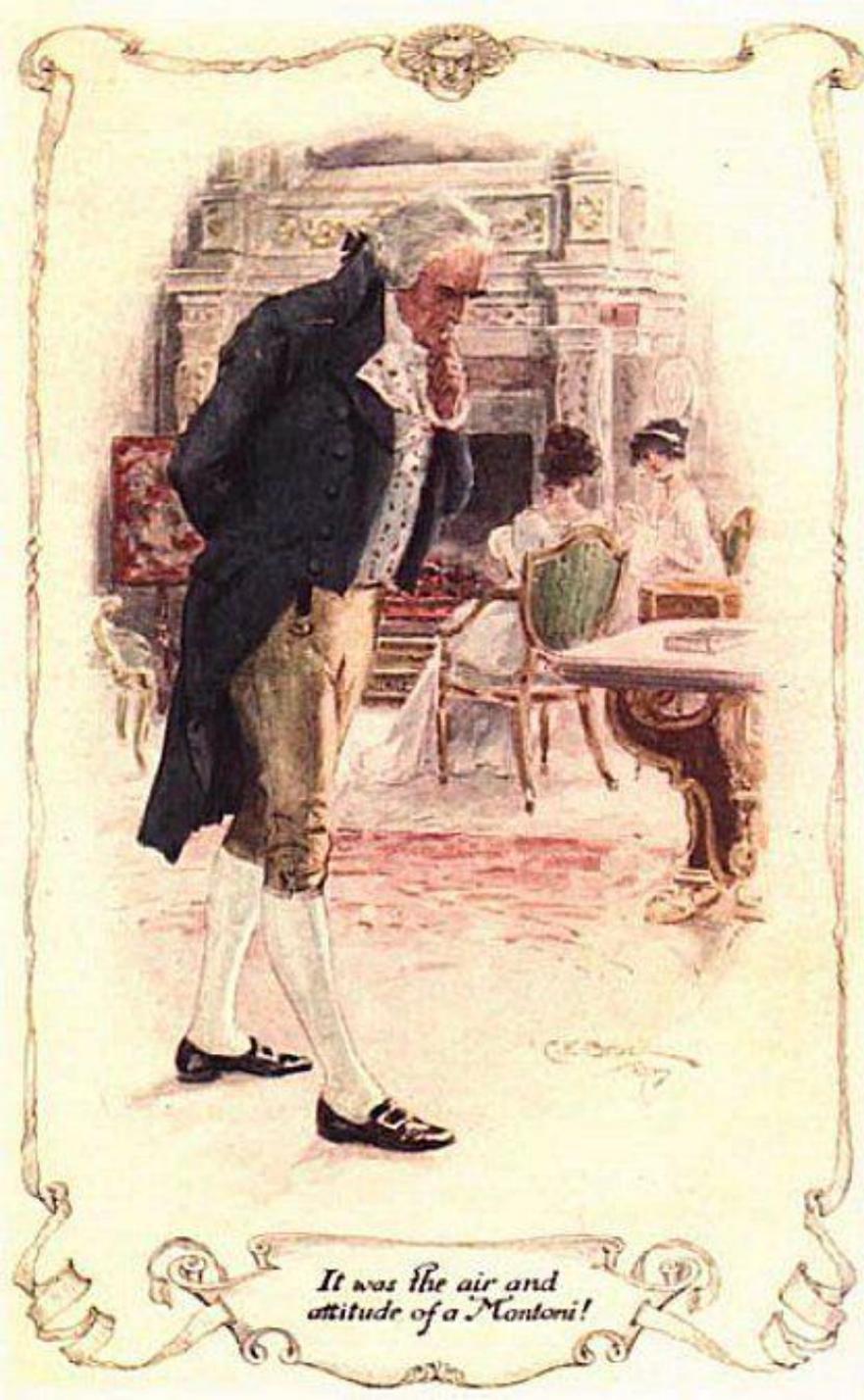


TALES of WONDER!

Copyright 1870. Published by H. Sampson & Co.

“That women readers, trapped in the new domestic economy, made up the Gothic novel’s consumers throughout the ages goes in tandem with the domestication of the Gothic novel as it moved from the exotic to trivialized domestic spaces”

Gail Turley Houston, *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction* (2005)



*It was the air and
attitude of a Montoni!*

‘Periodicals of the 1790s were full of discussions of enclosures and their impact on the displacement of the rural poor’ with one proposal suggesting any ‘such workers and their families be provided with a new cottage’

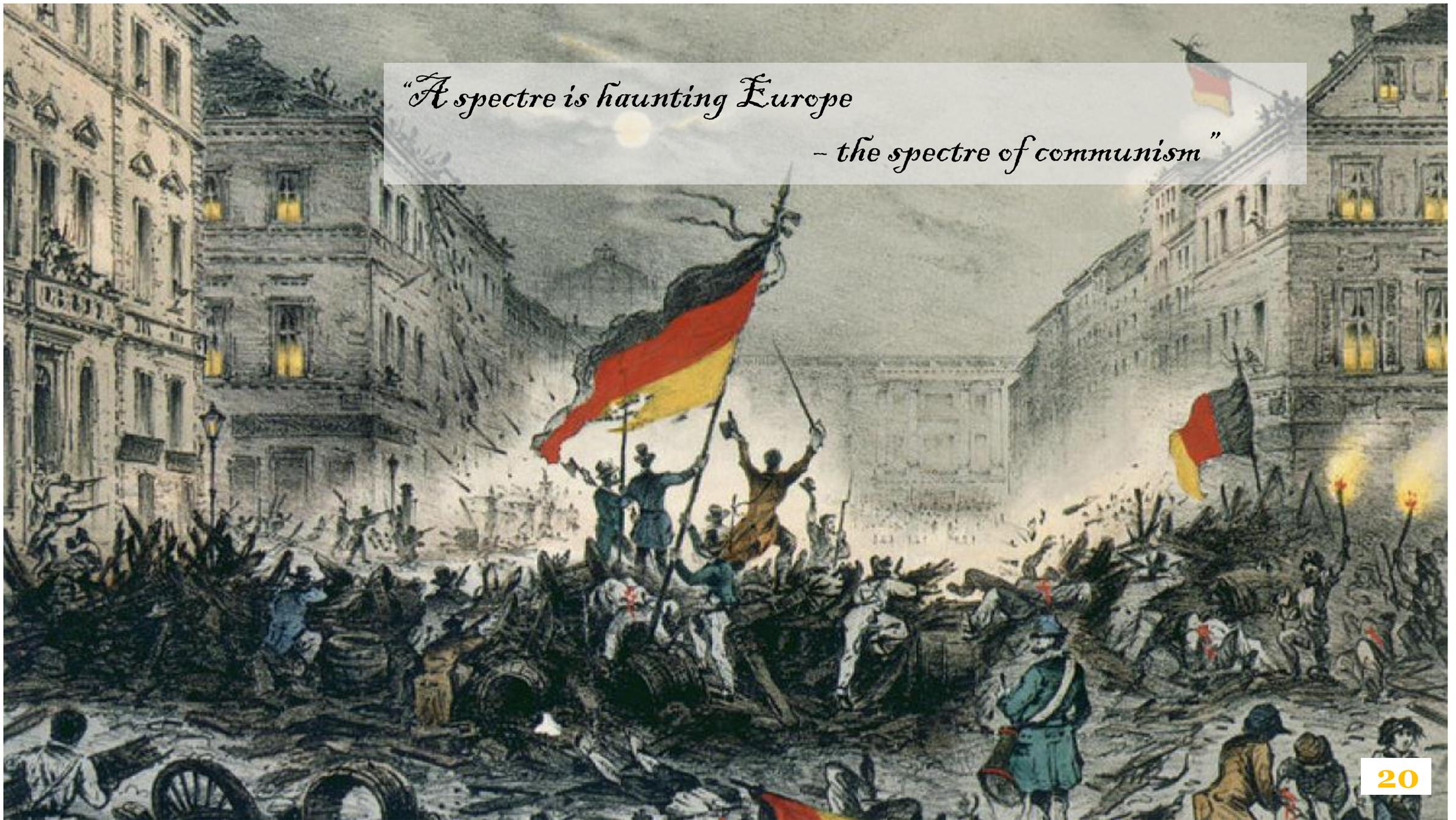
“callous lack of concern for the common weal”

Robert Hopkins. “General Tilney and Affairs of State: The Political Gothic of *Northanger Abbey*” *Philological Quarterly*; 57.2 1978.

“The walls seemed countless in number, endless in length; a village of hot-houses seemed to arise among them, and a whole parish to be at work within the inclosure [*sic*]”

"A spectre is haunting Europe

- the spectre of communism"



Mary Barton

THE DRUNKARD'S CHILDREN.



PLATE VIII.—THE MANIAC FATHER AND THE CONVICT BROTHER ARE GONE.—THE POOR GIRL, HOMELESS, FRIENDLESS, DESERTED, DESTITUTE, AND GIN MAD, COMMITS SELF-MURDER.



THE HAUNTED LADY, OR "THE GHOST" IN THE LOOKING-GLASS.

MADAME LA MONTTE. "WE WOULD NOT HAVE DISAPPOINTED YOUR LADYSHIP, AT ANY SACRIFICE, AND THE ROBE IS FINISHED J. MERVILLE"

— some broader contexts.

“Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him”

Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 (1867)



From E.M. Lillen illustration for Morris Rosenfeld's *Lieder des Ghetto* (1903)

The Haunting of David Copperfield

‘Both the child's and the narrator's acts of memory are oppressive. Both levels of recollection suggest the haunting and potentially debilitating effect of memory’

Rosemary Mundhenk. “David Copperfield and ‘The Oppression of Remembrance.’” (1987)

I was a posthumous child. My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months, when mine opened on it. **There is something strange to me, even now, in the reflection that he never saw me;** and something stranger yet in the **shadowy remembrance that I have of my first childish associations** with his white grave-stone in the churchyard, and of the **indefinable** compassion I used to feel for it lying out alone there in the dark night, when our little parlour was warm and bright with fire and candle, and the doors of our house were—almost cruelly, it seemed to me sometimes—bolted and locked against it. (ch. 1)

The Haunting of David Copperfield

How well I recollect, when I became quiet, what an unnatural stillness seemed to reign through the whole house! **How well I remember**, when my smart and passion began to cool, how wicked I began to feel! [...]

I never shall forget the waking, next morning; [...]

The Haunting of David Copperfield

The length of those five days I can convey no idea of to any one. They occupy the place of years in my remembrance. The way in which I listened to all the incidents of the house that made themselves audible to me; the ringing of bells, the opening and shutting of doors, the murmuring of voices, the footsteps on the stairs; to any laughing, whistling, or singing, outside, which seemed more dismal than anything else to me in my solitude and disgrace—the uncertain pace of the hours, especially at night, when I would wake thinking it was morning, and find that the family were not yet gone to bed, and that all the length of night had yet to come—the depressed dreams and nightmares I had—the return of day, noon, afternoon, evening, when the boys played in the churchyard, and I watched them from a distance within the room, being ashamed to show myself at the window lest they should know I was a prisoner—the strange sensation of never hearing myself speak—the fleeting intervals of something like cheerfulness, which came with eating and drinking, and went away with it—the setting in of rain one evening, with a fresh smell, and its coming down faster and faster between me and the church, until it and gathering night seemed to quench me in gloom, and fear, and remorse—**all this appears to have gone round and round for years instead of days, it is so vividly and strongly stamped on my remembrance.**

(ch 4)

The Haunting of David Copperfield

I now approach a period of my life, **which I can never lose the remembrance of**, while I remember anything: and the recollection of which has often, without my invocation, come before me like a ghost, and haunted happier times. (ch 10)

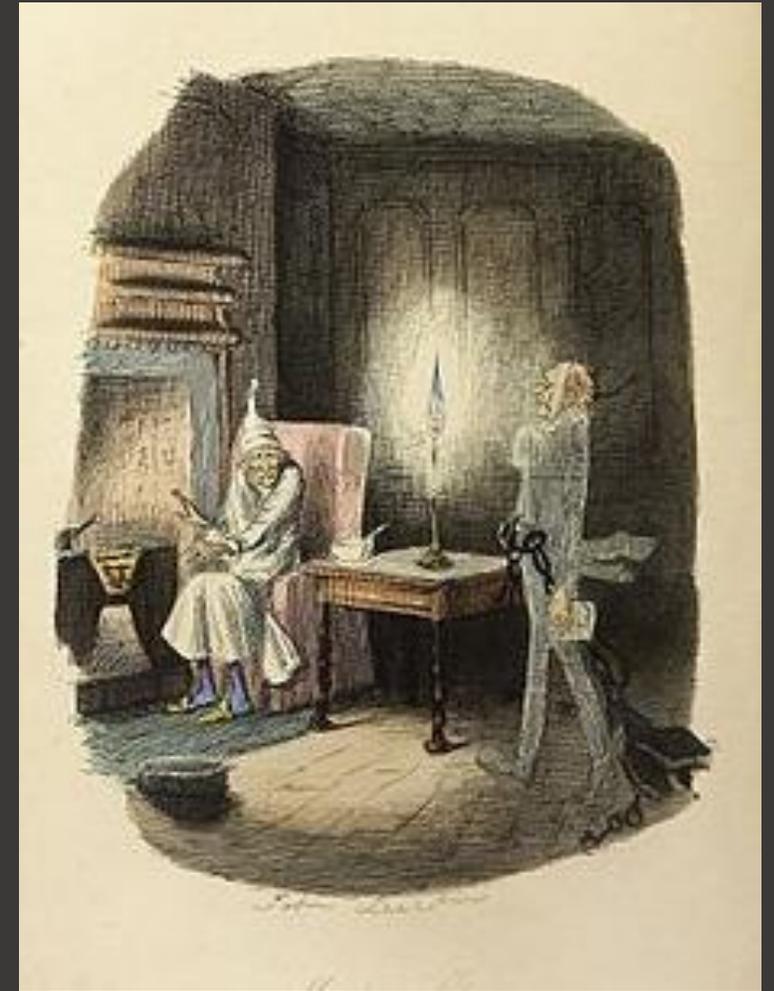
It was a long and gloomy night that gathered on me, **haunted by the ghosts of many hopes, of many dear remembrances, many errors, many unavailing sorrows and regrets.** (ch 58)

The Haunting of David Copperfield

One dark evening, when I was later than usual—for I had, that day, been making my parting visit to Blunderstone, as we were now about to return home—I found him alone in Mr. Peggotty's house, sitting thoughtfully before the fire. He was so intent upon his own reflections that he was quite unconscious of my approach. This, indeed, he might easily have been if he had been less absorbed, for footsteps fell noiselessly on the sandy ground outside; but even my entrance failed to rouse him. I was standing close to him, looking at him; and still, with a heavy brow, he was lost in his meditations.

He gave such a start when I put my hand upon his shoulder, that he made me start too.

‘You come upon me,’ he said, almost angrily, ‘**like a reproachful ghost!**’ (ch 22)



The Haunting of David Copperfield

“the recollection of it is oppressive to him even now’.

‘King Charles the First’ is an ‘allegorical way of expressing’ the trauma he has faced. ‘He **connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation**, naturally, and that’s the figure, or the simile, or whatever it’s called, which he chooses to use...’

[...]

In fact, I found out afterwards that Mr. Dick had been for upwards of ten years **endeavouring to keep King Charles the First out** of the Memorial; but he had been constantly getting into it, and was there now.” (ch 14)

Literary Hauntings

“we frequently reanimate the text. We speak of the text as ‘saying something’, we write that the text does things or makes things occur, as though it had a life or will of its own; or [...] we substitute the author’s propername in rhetorical formulae such as ‘Dickens comments’ ... ‘George Eliot remarks’, as though the text were merely a conduit, a spirit-medium if you like, by which the author communicates” at the same time as acknowledging the “author is dead”, that writing and texts are “strictly speaking neither alive nor dead, neither simply material nor immaterial”

Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings* (2002)



Literary Hauntings

“that the text is haunted by its author, or [...] by the historical moment of its production. Rather it is **the text itself which haunts and which is haunted by the traces which come together in this structure we call textual**”, being simultaneously and paradoxically phantasmatic in nature while “having an undeniably real of material effect, if not presence.”

Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings* (2002)



Literary Hauntings

“the author-medium will become one of the dead voices that he or she now invokes, part of a diachronic wave of ghostly energy that others will give shape to in the future.”

To what extent do these “these author-mediums *ventriloquize* the dead? If the dead speak through the medium, then surely we can argue that the medium also speaks through them?” The writing and reading of fiction, then, can be configured then as a “spectral dialogue between two worlds”.

“the literary text can therefore be understood as a ‘materialized spirit’”

(Tatiana Kontou, *Spiritualism and Women’s Writing*, 2009)



Author as “medium” for “the dead” > channels voice of the past [prosopopoeia]. So the dead speak through the author.



In transcribing this text, the author has, in turn, spoken *through* the dead (i.e. used the dead to represent the author’s own voice).



Author dies and their work becomes one of the dead voices in text form.



Readers and critics further act as “medium” for the dead authorial voice/text.

Literary Hauntings

“The experience of the spectral is [...] the experience of being touched **through reading** by that which is other, that which is prosopopoeic: ‘a voice or a face of the absent’, as J. Hillis Miller has it, ‘the inanimate, or the dead’ [...] **the dead continue to live on, to survive beyond life, in the afterlife that we call reading.**”

Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings* (2002)



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Spectral Soundscapes

‘Sound suggests presence even when this presence is invisible or intangible, and is thus closely related to the ghostly’

‘Elaborately described soundscapes contribute to the eerie mood of a novel...the advent of terror is generally preceded by an unworldly silence, aided by meteorological (wind, thunder, rain) or technical (rattling fences, hissing pipes) circumstances and announced by sounds that suggest presence (creaks, echoes, voices, music).’

Isabella van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (2012)

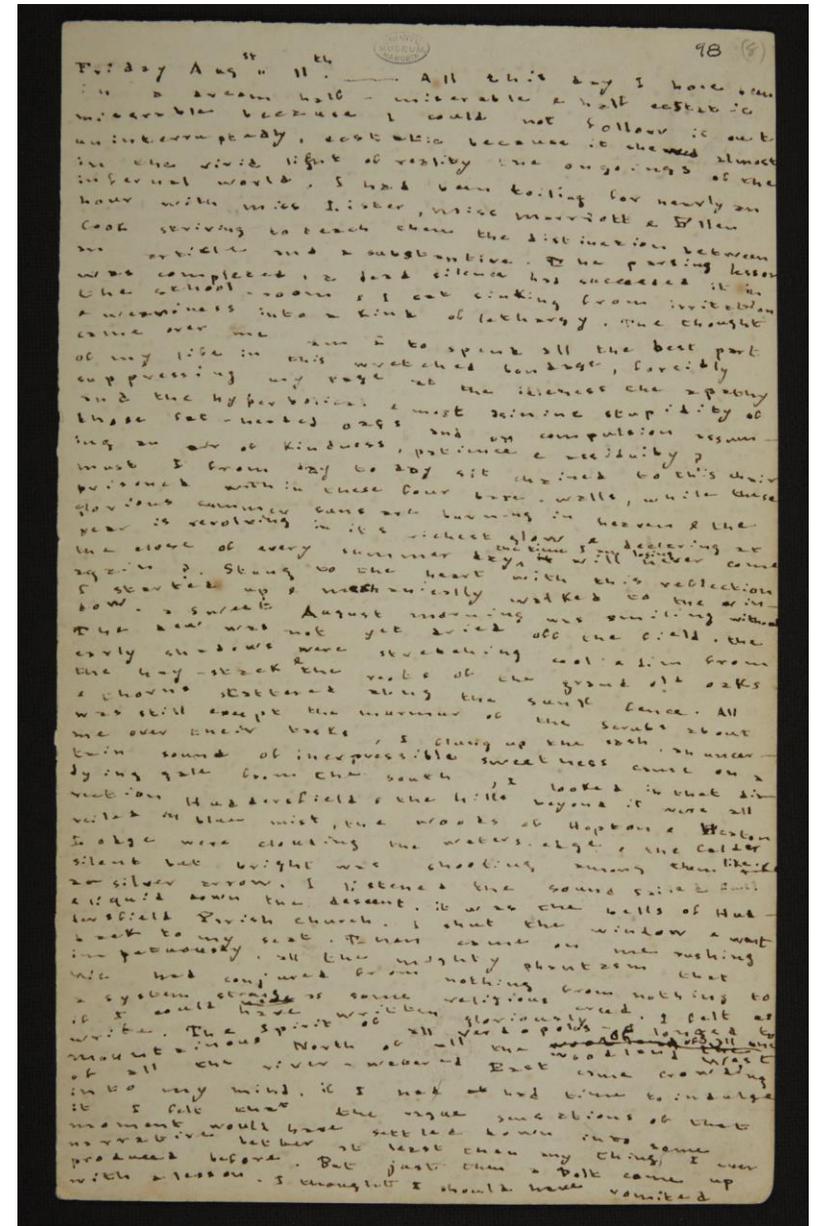
The Haunted Self - Body and Mind

‘In the course of the nineteenth century
the ghost is internalized: it becomes a
psychological symptom’

Bennett & Royle

What I imagined grew morbidly vivid, ... All this day I have been in a dream, half miserable and half ecstatic: miserable because I could not follow it out uninterruptedly; ecstatic because it shewed almost in the vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world. ... Then came on me, rushing impetuously, all the mighty phantasm that we had conjured from nothing to a system strong as some religious creed. I felt as if I could have written gloriously – I longed to write... If I had had time to indulge it, I felt that the vague sensations of that moment would have settled down into some narrative better at least than any thing I ever produced before. But just then a dolt came up with a lesson. I thought I should have vomited.

Journal of Charlotte Bronte, 11 August 1836



‘Although much of the attention paid to nervous disorders by the medical profession occurred after the publication of *Villette* in 1853, Charlotte Brontë had some exposure to prevailing theories of neurosis through consultations about her own recurring nervous symptoms. In addition, her familiarity with materialist challenges to religious doctrine, through her friendship with Harriet Martineau, and her interest in mesmerism and popular debates about body and mind suggest that Brontë was both caught up in and skeptical about the popular enthusiasm for questions of scientific rationalism, mesmerism, and spiritualism around mid-century’

Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions* (1995)

Back to the Future

‘haunting remains in place as a powerful force of displacement, as that disfiguring of the present, as the trace of non-identity within identity, and though signs of alterity, otherness, abjection or revenance.’

Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*(2002)



Three things struggled for possession of my mind: **the killing of the curate, the whereabouts of the Martians, and the possible fate of my wife.** The former gave me no sensation of horror or remorse to recall; I saw it simply as a thing done, a memory infinitely disagreeable but quite without the quality of remorse. I saw myself then as I see myself now, driven step by step towards that hasty blow, the creature of a sequence of accidents leading inevitably to that. I felt no condemnation; **yet the memory, static, unprogressive, haunted me.** In the silence of the night, with that sense of the nearness of God that sometimes comes into the stillness and the darkness, I stood my trial, my only trial, for that moment of wrath and fear.

The War of the Worlds (1898)