Givenness and Loss: Gender, Genre, and the Ghost Story

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Abstract:

The logic of the ghost story requires certain assumptions from its audience. There must be that willing suspension of disbelief from the very start. Part of this is, doubtless, an assumption that we take the spirit, spectre, phantom, phantasm, ghost or apparition at face value, that we believe what it seems as a sign of what it is, or if no long 'is', then 'was': the revenant in the form of a man or woman, a trace of either. Yet, is it really that straightforward? Can we be so certain? Is it not the case that our logic is in fact haunted by this play of presence and absence, and that the spectral trace is, in 'reality', merely a figure of loss? To assume the ghost as mere representative is to enter into a logic that is traditionally, conventionally, masculine, metaphysical and phallocentric. The ghost is always haunted by a masculinity not necessarily its own, and by a certain relation to the very question of Being itself. Yet, the ghost also 'gives'. Its appearance is an event of what Jean-Luc Marion calls 'givenness', the appearance of the other that escapes and exceeds metaphysical thinking, and which calls to its audience to respond ethically, and to bear witness. Pursuing this line of inquiry, in this essay I propose to consider the question of givenness in relation to the ghost story, and to take a line through the argument that challenges the implicit 'gender' of the logic that haunts the 'genre'. In order to do so, I will consider the way in which, in the stories of Henry James, Margaret Oliphant, and Thomas Hardy, amongst others, trouble our epistemological certainties through a play on form that challenges, as much as it relies on, the conventions of form and the logic underpinning it.

Keywords: haunting, hospitality, givenness, the phantom, the spectral

A voice arrives, as if from nowhere. It gives itself to you, nakedly, without the clothing of context, without the covering of any justification:

> I will go so far as to risk this hypothesis: The sex of the addresser awaits its determination by or from the other (Derrida 1985: 52).

There is, in this, a question of gender, and of genre also. But before you can halt its progress, the voice retreats, disappearing as it came, leaving you with only the memory of its echo.

With this in mind, I want to explore how the ghost story at a crucial cultural moment opens itself to possibilities of transformation from within its very conventions. It is as if the ghost story discovers what has always been present, but invisibly so; the arrival, the becoming visible of particular epistemologies and discourses thus constitutes a form of haunting within the house, so to speak, of the genre. In pursuing this thread, I can do no more than touch on the briefest of examples, gesturing towards readings rather than offering fully realized readings of particular texts. What I will propose, however, is that the ghost story, as genre and *genos*, as form that gives a specific place, structure or architecture in which the play of spectrality can take place, gives itself to the manifestation of a particular spectral *ethos* through which, in singular ways, the *eidolon* of modern thought, and modern subjectivity, comes to take form.

If this true, then 'Ghostliness is not an unnatural effect, to be sure, of ardent dissection; [this is] a fact which has appeared very strikingly in the age in which we live. … Little ghosts…are all about the edges of our scientificized age, like figures on the mist' (Elliot 1928: 1186). Thus, G. R. Elliott, in a now little read piece from 1928, the year of Thomas Hardy's death, on the subject of what Elliott called in his title, the 'spectral etchings' of Hardy's poetry; a form for the critic which was, at once, as ghostly as it was precise, and which perceptively identified the spectral as that which took place in the poetry as a condition of its form. There is in the writing of Thomas Hardy a spectatorial disinterest, but with that, a spectral immediacy, which emerges from out the intense scrutiny of phenomena, from what is always an involved subjective perception of the world. In this, and the effect it seeks to transmit to the reader, there is about Hardy's work something insistently phenomenological rather than empirical. Hardy requires that we 'bracket' reality, or at least our habitual and,

therefore, unreflective, if not unthinking ways of seeing the world and our lived relationship to it. In this, from that very immediacy of the apprehension of how intimately we are in the world, of the world we perceive, there is also, the apperception of loss. The immediacy of the material world, the sense of all that is no longer there but leaves its trace for my perception; this gives to me the haunting sense that at the heart of my being my own ghostliness, my own loss, loss of myself awaits. I think, therefore I am my own ghost.

Though Thomas Hardy never wrote a ghost story, ghosts in Hardy do make their appearances, in two guises, and are separated by genre. There are the ghosts of the poetry, and those of the novels, which return either through passing reference on the part of the narrator, or otherwise as tales told mostly by otherwise minor and insignificant characters. The ghost story arrives to interrupt momentarily the 'modern' and principal narrative of the novels, and in doing so, it gives us pause, requiring that we suspend in the moment our habitual ways of seeing the world, that we bracket our knowingness, becoming conscious in the process of other modes of perception. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, there are the ghosts of Roman soldiers, who appear at Maumbury Rings 'at certain moments in the summer time, in broad daylight'. This is a tale recounted by 'some old people', of a scene, with accompanying sound, which 'would remain but a moment, like a lightning flash, and then disappear'. In *The Woodlanders*, an old villager tells the story of the two brothers, who, until exorcised, had haunted King's Hintock Court. Last of Hardy's ghost tales to interrupt a novel is, perhaps, the most familiar, being that of the phantom D'Urberville coach, which Tess believes she has seen. As with the tale of the Cockstride Ghosts of Melbury House, the source of the tale of the two brothers, the phantom coach narrative has its origin in Dorset folklore. Though no ghosts of Roman legionnaires were seen at the Rings on the outskirts of Dorset until the twentieth century, there is no evidence to contradict the possibility that, with the tale mentioned in passing in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, that this may not also have been local folklore; in each example though, the experience of haunting is always understood to be shaped by 'communal tradition'(Robson 2011: 29). Equally, ghosts in the poetry are either manifestations related to seasonal and communal experience, or otherwise a solitary spectre who haunts because of an injustice, or from a general sense of disquiet. There is nothing about Hardy's ghosts that can be said to be 'modern'.

Yet, to call back that sense of the spectral that persists in Hardy's poetry, there is a haunting difference to be found at work in his writing, this having to do not with the trace of the dead returning in human form, so much as a general spectral pervasiveness, a sense that what we call too easily 'the past' simply is that which haunts, disturbing, disrupting the present. To put this another way, Hardy's text repeatedly, and insistently on occasions, maintains the spectral as the loss that informs our identities and our Being, as these are given reified form in custom, behaviour, understanding and, in general, any perception of the world. Haunting is therefore in the text of Hardy as this irreducibly forceful reminder—and remainder too—that memory, individual, cultural, involuntary, or communal, is the place, or more strictly speaking, non-place wherein the spectral comes to pass. Memory for Hardy is nothing other than the loss that haunts, and when Hardy's characters forget or have lost apprehension of the significance of particular memories, there is the moment when the spectral seeks to unravel the logic and economy of forgetfulness and self-sufficient, habitually blind assumption.

The idea of haunting, the spectral, and the ghostly, is therefore everywhere in Hardy; but it is everywhere in a manner that serves to mark a departure from, and with that an implicit perspective on, if not perception of, the conventions of the traditional ghost story on the one hand, and the 'modern'—when Hardy wrote at least—tendency to introduce into the ghost story a psychological element or dimension. I will return to Hardy briefly in conclusion, but for now, I want to leave him standing at the margins of this discussion, a ghostly figure if you will, haunting this reading of what comes to give itself in the ghost story, and its relation to loss, gender, and genre. Imagine therefore, Hardy, a ghostly double or other, always felt to be there, and troubling to some, not least Henry James. I say James with good reason, positioning him and opposing him to Hardy as the master, if you will, of the psychologically inflected, modern ghost story *par excellence*. If we consider in passing merely a brief passage from a Jamesian ghost story, 'The Third Person', we witness this inflection at work.

In James's 1900 tale, involving the inheritance of a house in the town of Marr of a house by two relatively impecunious cousins, the Misses Frush, Amy and Susan, the spectre of a hanged ancestor begins to manifest itself. Of the occasions of apparition, the women develop a 'prompt theory', which is 'a connection between the finding of the box in the vault and the appearance in Miss Susan's room' (James 1990: 23). From this assumed

association—discovery followed by appearance, logic typical of the conventions of the genre—the reader is told that '[t]he heavy air of the past had been stirred by the bringing to light of what had so long been hidden' (23). The return of the 'queer roused inmate' is, for the Misses Frush, 'the sign of a violated secret' (23). The only way to lay the ghost of their ancestor, hanged for smuggling, to rest, the cousins decide, is to smuggle something themselves, which in the end is a novel, banned in England, from Paris. To a number of scholars, the 'echo'—or more properly, the unintentionally foreshadowed definition—in the quotation will resound immediately. For, do we not hear in that observation concerning the 'heavy air of the past' and its disturbance by that which 'had so long been hidden', the ghost, as it were, of Freud? Here is the latter from his all too well known essay, 'The "Uncanny"': 'According to [Schelling], everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light' (Freud 1997: 200). Later in the same essay, having worked through the tropes of repetition and doubling, Freud shifts the ground from acknowledging Schelling's claim to making a modified assertion now wholly his own: 'for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (216). James's mildly comic tale dispenses with the uncanny, but maintains the spectral, and in doing so shifts ground itself.

While the haunting of the house is caused by that moment where what 'ought to have remained secret and hidden…has come to light', the visible penetration of the house of two unmarried women by a transgressive male phantasm—he first appears in Miss Susan's bedroom, causing her to respond with a sound somewhere 'between a gurgle and a shriek' (21)—the subsequent unfolding of the tale allows for that which is 'familiar and old-established…which has become alienated…through the process of repression' to surface. The something is, all too predictably, sexuality, or at least a displaced sexuality signalled in that proscribed French novel. (We may not know the title but we are told it is a 'Tauchnitz', the German publishing house, some of whose editions carried the warning printed on the cover, 'Not to be introduced into the British Empire'.) The 'deed' of smuggling, an act of what Miss Amy calls '"the old wild kind"' (44) is achieved by carrying the book '"hid"' about her '"person"' (45). James's story, a tale told by an American of English women, cannot naturally specify *where* this literary example of French letters is secreted exactly, but Miss Susan's

response at the confession, is a shiver, a sudden standing up, and the question '"was it so small"?' (45); to which the reply comes that it was chosen from the '"forbidden list"' and that '"[i]t was big enough to have satisfied him"' (45).

So far, we might say, so predictable, and I will leave James there. The distinction I am drawing though between Hardy and James is grounded by a perception that if the latter writes ghost stories, the former produces a mode of representation and perception best described as haunted writing. It is a distinction which may not hold but which nevertheless allows for a thinking of the spectral and the ghost story apropos gender and genre, givenness and loss. While Henry James creates narratives in which characters are affected by incidents of ghostly manifestation, whether in the conventional supernatural sense or inflected through a psychological prism, Thomas Hardy writes out of a sense that our world, who we are, that which determines our apprehension of our world, and all that informs memory and any understanding or perception of a past is indelibly, inescapably haunted. If Hardy is the phenomenologist of the spectral then, James is its psychoanalyst; and though there is neither time nor space to dwell in any greater detail on the Jamesian or other ghost, given that I am pursuing the idea of a phenomenology of loss as constituent of our being-in-the-world, it is necessary to situate what, in the final decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries, a decisive event in any literary thinking on the ghost and the narratives that enfold any event of spectral revenance. This event has to do with a choice, perhaps occasioned by crises of subjectivity, wherein is given us to read either the psychological or the phenomenological turn in the production of the ghost story, for which Hardy stands on one side, and James on the other. Such a choice, such a crisis, has an effect not only on modes of spectral representation; but also, within the genre of the haunted and ghostly tale itself, a decisive rupture between modalities of apperception, presentation and representation, which come down to questions of gender also.

As Henry James illustrates, the logic of the ghost story, conventional or psychologically updated, requires certain assumptions from its audience. There must be that willing suspension of disbelief from the very start. Part of this is, doubtless, an assumption that we take the spirit, spectre, phantom, ghost, or apparition at face value, that we believe what it seems: a sign of what it is, or if no longer 'is', then 'was': the revenant in the form of a woman is the spirit of a woman, that of a man, a man. Such 'logic', which, in reality, is just

the structure of convention given narrative justification, and whether relying on the supernatural or psychological registers (or indeed, both simultaneously, as James's 'The Third Person' demonstrates), appears unimpeachable. Yet, can we be so certain? Is it not the case that our understanding is in fact haunted by the ghost of what, for want of a better phrase, I would like to call, for now, a 'masculine' logic? Or, further, simply ask whether such logic is, if not, simply masculine, then at least presumptively phallocentric? Such a logic is related to particular assumptions about representation, as should be apparent. If something appears before me, or before a protagonist in a ghost story, then, the particular logics of phallocentrism and mimetic representation would have it, the figure—arriving to make its 'presence' felt or coming into view to disturb my field of vision, thereby giving visible form to that which otherwise has no form as such—; this 'figure', trope and phantasmal form or agency, is the spectral presence or representation of the one who is absent.

Another way in which we might approach the question of that which appears, that which gives itself to our perception, is to consider what might seem obvious: the ghost is always related to the human, and more particularly, to Being. The trace of Being, though neither Being itself nor *a being*, the figure of the ghost, the effect of ghosting, apparitioning, spectrality, these are all inescapably that which gives itself. In the spectral trace there is, there *arrives*, a certain givennness, singular on each occasion, perhaps to be comprehended as aide-memoires, souvenirs of all that which in Being is given, which remains, and remains to return as all that is not Being, all that is other than Being. The ghost, if there is such a thing, is nothing other than that which gives itself as the reminder—and remainder—that the most 'essential' aspect of one's Being is, apparently paradoxically, its most inessential condition: that of spirit, soul if you prefer, memory, or simply the loss of Being, Being's other, Being's loss. To reiterate an earlier observation: I think; therefore, I am the ghost of myself; I am not merely an other, I am my own other, that which most properly I cannot call my own, that which in its absolute alterity deconstructs any assumption of, pretence to presence or full phallic selfhood. I am an other, indelibly haunted by loss. What I am, but where I am not, in the remembrance of my own alterity; my uncanny strangeness to myself; whenever I think, reflecting on the uncanny experience of consciousness; *there* is the experience and perception of that otherness which is most near, most intimate, but also at an irreparable distance. In this, the experience of 'the ghost' is an experience of a loss, of loss at the heart of Being; not just a

memento mori, more and less than this, my Being is haunted by a loss, by that loss that is always already the trace of Being, of one's own Being-to-come, of that which is to come when Being is no more.

Fair enough; this is not unreasonable. If we are speaking of ghosts in narratives as the manifestations of the dead, if this is a given, then I have no wish to cast suspicion on the logics at work save to undo the phallocentric assumptions of convention through this other approach to the topic. What I do wish to suggest however, and in this I am following the well-known lead of Virginia Woolf on Henry James's ghost stories, is that from the generation of James (and Thomas Hardy) onwards, the phallo-mimetic logics of the conventional ghost narrative, with their masculinist authority, are called into question. Put another way, something haunts the logic of the traditional ghost story. In order to apprehend this fully, it is necessary therefore, to reflect on what it means for something to appear, and what takes place through the phenomena of apparitionality and spectrality, which contests the logics of which I have spoken.

The apparition is pure appearance. It is nothing other than this, nothing save for its coming to pass. Not a being, neither living nor dead, not definable according to any fixed ontological category, the apparition, the ghost, the spectre, the phantom or phantasm: all reject implicitly, and thus point to the limitations of, any thinking, critical, aesthetic or philosophical, which relies on, seeks to come to rest upon, or else appears to begin from a tacit acknowledgement of Being as fixed. Whether metaphysical or materialist, the thinking of Being requires an irrefutable, and irrefutably stable, condition of existence, all other arguments concerning mind-body dualisms, the *a priori* condition of Being, or Being as a Being-there, being supplements to the assumption of Being. Whatever the thought of Being, whether Platonic, Cartesian, or Heideggerian, all motivate themselves on the assumption of a coherence in concept and existence, a coherence, the very ontological nature of which is phallocentric and logocentric in fact and in principle. If it is not too great a leap, the very thinking of Being, and all the attendant categoremes by which it is maintained in its different philosophical guises and personae (presence / absence, living / dead), is, it might be argued, masculine in orientation.

Neither there nor not there, neither a being nor nothing as such, the apparition, on the other hand, is other; 'it'—and the very use of this term must be treated suspiciously, given its

gesture towards an ontology, a Being—is in every coming-to-appearance, every and any becoming-visible the signature of a difference between any category reliant on the authority and truth of any phallogocentric mode of production. Apparitionality, along with its various pseudo-relations, spectrality, and so forth are pure appearance, at the risk of repeating myself. To come into view—this is the only partially in/visible 'root' in both *appearance* and *apparition*. Apparitioning comes to pass, the occasion or event being marked by impermanence in human terms, even as it is marked by and marks a temporality that does not belong to the condition of appearance. More than this though, both *appearance* and *apparition* are marked and remark through the shared root that which, in the words, is already, partially in/visible. Like the events of apparition, spectrality and phantomaticity they name, and which these terms name differently, according to a logic, an etymology, and an epistemology of frequency and bringing to light or illuminating, *appearance* and *apparition* are always already haunted from within by the partially in/visible, by the *parere* of both terms, from which source there is a cellular or genetic division, it might be said, in order that there come to appear, on the one hand, appearance, and, on the other hand, apparition. Appearance and apparition separate before coming into view, then, dividing, differing and deferring themselves from within themselves *ab ovo*, as it were. The language, the very idea, or the apparitional is thus performative, from the very moment of its inscription, its poetics, we might say; and any rhetoric of the apparitional is always haunted—the ontology troubled from within, from before any originary moment by the difference of a hauntology—by this 'genetic' alogic, that which disturbs the house of logic, the house of Being and the phallocentric logic on which the house of Being is built.

Moving to other matters, and recalling Henry James briefly, remember Virginia Woolf's trenchant observations on James's ghost stories, from her essay of that name, first published in 1921. The James ghost fiction leaves us with a remainder, something, as Woolf has it, 'unaccounted for', that little uncanny residue (Woolf 1928/1988: 325). The spectral residuum belongs to James's 'modernity' as a writer of ghosts. Here is the familiar passage from Woolf:

> Henry James's ghosts have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts—the
> bloodstained sea captains, the white horses, the headless ladies of dark lanes and

windy commons. They have their origin within us. They are present whenever the
significant overflows our powers of expressing it; whenever the ordinary appears
ringed by the strange (Woolf 324).

The inexpressible, the unaccountable, the uncanny—our others. Woolf's reading of James is
clearly indebted to a particular Freudian register, a certain apprehension of psychological
forces, and with that, of course, an internalization of spectral force, given visibility in the
narrative through the prosthetic manifestation of apparitional figures, tropes, we might call
them, of the other. But equally, these are tropes of loss, of what is lost to expression or
understanding: phenomena that remain the signs of the unknowable. What remains uncanny
in the revenant is precisely the fact that, despite its coming to view, it remains unknowable,
undecidable. Apparitioning or spectrality as the making visible of phenomena, irreducible in
their revenance to our logics, admits to that givenness, which exceeds any mere Being, when
thought as presence. If apparitionality is pure phenomenal appearance, it is a sign that, in
coming to sight, causes us to feel, even though we cannot articulate, the givenness of Being,
and thus that which, in coming to pass, is always already a sign of loss.[1] Givenness in the
form of the visible is the phenomenal reduction of Being to its effect, but—and let us remind
ourselves of that psychological resonance in Woolf's understanding of James—what is given
in the manifestation of alterity is that which, in its appearing, what is otherwise invisible in
ourselves. Such appearance is difficult to grasp precisely because, in its reduction
(phenomenologically speaking) it challenges all notions of presence, Being, representation,
ontology and the stable or homogeneous coherence of all logics by which we understand the
world.

Of course, what is notable about James and others of his generation of 'ghost writers'
is that their texts attempt to make us hear, make us feel, and before all, make us *see*, as Joseph
Conrad has it in his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, fully aware of the doubleness
within the verb of vision regarding sight and insight (Conrad 1897/1988 xlix). This is not to
say that the phenomenological work of apparitioning, spectrality and the phantasmic are not
there, beneath the surface of the more conventional, traditionally understood ghost story.
Simply because writers before James did not have the language to express the psychological
or phenomenological in ways belatedly commensurate with, or in anticipation of such modern

discourses, does not mean to say that they were not obsessed with such matters. As Maurice
Merleau-Ponty has argued,

> [e]ven when it is possible to date the emergence of a principle which exists "for
> itself," it is clear that the principle has been previously present in the culture as an
> obsession or anticipation, and that the act of consciousness which lays it down as an
> explicit signification is never without a residue (Merleau-Ponty 1960/1964: 41).[2]

The extent to which the 'act of consciousness' makes explicit or retains implicitly in its
projections and narrativizations is just the sign of that text or thought's historicity, the
signature of history's ghosts if you will.

What connects the 'traditional' and the modern ghost story is the unconditional
appearance of ghostly phenomena to their subjects, which in that unconditionality—you
cannot choose to see or not to see, to experience the spectre—demands encounter, attestation,
and the surrender of the subject to that which arrives to appear. All spectral manifestations—
whether understood as Woolf's headless ladies or sea-captains or as James's manifestations of
unfinished business—are an address to the self in their givenness; their coming to appear,
their remaining to return, haunts precisely because what comes to be illuminated is the
consciousness that something inexpressible remains. As Paul March-Russell argues of May
Sinclair's tale 'The Flaw in the Crystal' of the protagonist-medium Agatha Verrall, 'it is not
that Agatha possesses the gift; rather, it is the gift that possesses her' (March-Russell 2006:
18). The gift, or givenness, that which is there, other than the 'I' of consciousness, is, argues
Jean-Luc Marion, '[l]ike the flow of a tidal wave, [for] givenness submerges all beings and all
thought, since the invisible…par excellence, the intelligible as…*idea*, allows itself in a sense
to be staged by an intuition that…is without limit…, without condition…, and without reserve.
'Without reserve', Marion continues in a clarification appropriate to our thinking spectrality
beyond the figure of Being, beyond presence and absence, living or dead, 'here means:
without keeping anything in the invisibility of withdrawal, but also without maintaining the
least self-restraint' (Marion 16). That analogue of the tidal flow in Marion's definition of
givenness finds an echo in Sinclair's 'The Flaw in the Crystal', a tale in which the

apparitional is a challenge to masculine rationality and certainty, self-possession and control, of self and others:

> It was now as if her being drank at every pore the swimming darkness; as if the rhythm of her heart and of her breath had ceased in the pulse of its invasion. She sank in it and was covered with wave upon wave of darkness. She sank and was upheld; she dissolved and was gathered together again,… (Sinclair 1912: 74).

Not only the flow, but also that unconditionality, the illimitability and the unreservedness of the given. As Sinclair's editor suggests, there is an echo here of Woolf's Mrs Ramsay, indicating for Paul March-Russell, 'the existence of an unknown feminine consciousness that lies outside the social construction of female identity' (March-Russell 19).

Here we might begin to apperceive a difference in genre, that difference within genre that just is of the condition of genre itself, genre as that which is always already haunted by its other. This raises a question: where does this leave us with the question of masculinity and the ghost? Most immediately, I would argue that ghost tales and stories of haunting are sites of contest. The idea of contest comes from Latin, *contestari* meaning to call to witness (*con-* [together] + *testare* [to witness]). What is being contested is the very ground of consciousness itself and the manner in which one perceives the world and others. The question of gender, but also of genus, emerges through the crisis that the contest of the ghost story unveils, and which it seeks to make us *see*. For the very *genus* of the ghost has to do not only with *gender* but also with genre; it concerns the *gender* of *genre*, if I can put it like this. To unpack this: as Jacques Derrida has given us to understand in two quite remarkable little texts, 'La Loi de Genre' and *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius*, 'genre' names gender, but does not in and of itself specify a given gender.[3] Both genders inform the idea of genre, and possibly more than two sexes. *Genre* is that which is haunted by, even as it gives place to, the very idea of 'la différence sexuelle' and 'le frayage d'un autre récit' (11/2).[4] Genre engenders: another story to be sure, but also the story of the other, the tale we tell of the other but also the other comes to tell of itself.

How is this, how does this come to appear, to give itself to our apprehension? This word *genre*, a very small word, smuggled like some French novel under the nose of custom

and customs, finds itself in English with and without transformation. The secret of *genre* remains therefore as a secret, but exposing itself to our view: for *genre* in French, names gender. Naming the possibility of all genders but refusing to assign one until given in a specific context, *genre* is haunted within itself, across languages and borders, allowing for an event—a fiction, if you like—of a coming, an arrival, an appearance, where the phallocentric law finds itself unfolded from within its certainty. Genre therefore gives place to the 'very possibility of the secret, the place…literature…begins', whilst also 'offering hospitality to the other genre, to all sorts of others which come along to…haunt it' (Derrida *Geneses*: 18-19). The ghost story is the most typical genre for such haunting, such hospitality, and thus that genre where fiction affirms the coming of the other in the figure of the undecidable, ghostliness itself. For, in the figure of the ghost, of revenance itself, '"[w]hat is called Literature…if only in the form of fiction" draws an undecidable line between the secret as absolute secret and the phenomenal appearance of the secret as such' (McQuillan vii).

Thus we read that the secret is there, it is given in the hospitality to the other that marks the ghost story; but it is given in such a fashion that the secret remains secret, inaccessible directly. In 1876, Margaret Oliphant published 'The Secret Chamber' in *Blackwood's*.[5] This tale of Scottish fancies and phantasies engages with tropes familiar enough to the Ghost Story. The opening paragraph details those aspects of Castle Gowrie, which identify both architectural commonplaces and the general materiality of place through a discourse tending towards the enigmatic, the occluded, and the inexplicable. Stairs are 'hidden', passages 'mysterious', while other features are reminiscent of 'labyrinths' (107). Such juxtaposition, between what is certain and what is uncertain, between object and phenomenal apprehension is not at all untypical of ghost stories. Figures of the hidden, the enigmatic, and the labyrinthine name the very contours of the secret, of the literary in general and the work of haunting in its fictional apparitions in particular. But it is precisely in this familiar unfamiliarity that the play of the spectral takes place, that the flux of givenness announces itself, especially when to the certain presence of architecture, memory brings to mind a history of narratives concerning place. Something gives itself, causing an apprehension of an other to which the story plays host, as the house is always the place in which ghost, guest and host come to meet in the singular event of a haunting.

At the close of the narrative's second paragraph, anticipation of the unknown is given in the relation between subject and place as what is, if not known exactly, then certainly desired: 'For anything [Lady Gowrie] knew, *it might be there*, next to her room, this mysterious lurking-place' (110). Place itself gives place, playing host to the thought of the other. A liminal space between the known and unknown is opened, and implicit in the working of such a narrative margin is the willingness of the subject, the reader or narrator, to place him- or herself in that space, to haunt the liminal, even as it promises to haunt us; to enter into a mode of perception, which determines the disposition of one's subjectivity from what is apparently the mere 'fact' of objective observation; or, as Oliphant puts it elsewhere in this tale, 'those freaks of young intelligence, those enthusiasms of the soul' (126) that haunt 'young John Randolph, Lord Lindores' (111), the protagonist of 'The Secret Chamber', almost from the moment when he comes 'of age' (111). My point here is that the language of the ghost narrative is always in some manner inflected through the subjective mediation of place, through a phenomenal apprehension that appears given in one's proximity to place. Site gives that which is not the apprehension of apperception phenomenally of any Being as such, but, as Oliphant demonstrates quite effectively, it relies on this play that opens up a space, wherein those very apparitions which we ourselves imagine as the possibility of the impossible might surface.

The arrival, or return of the spectral, this oscillating register, has to do with the unwelcome guest, a guest which is, simultaneously, a host, which is most uncanny in its being both familiar and unfamiliar. For, as I have already implied the ghost is, if a sometimes unwelcome guest, also, after a fashion, a host: its motif, its movement, its tropological recurrence, all admit to the subject's longing for the other. In this, the spectral does nothing so much in its givenness as become available as that which names hospitality, thereby assuming from within the logic of the phallic revenance the gender or genre of the other, the genre and logic of the feminine in the very place of that simulacrum or projection of a shadow masculinity: the ghost, let us remind ourselves, if there is such a thing, figures loss, gives to the subject the reminder of loss at the heart of Being instead of presence, projecting a place of absence. Its role is to host loss, even as we must be hospitable to its coming. It welcomes us and invites us to recognize loss as what is most properly that which we can never call our own, that which without property or propriety can return in the situation of the house or home,

ruining in its revenant arrival all patriarchal or masculine property rights. Ghosting therefore undoes the distinction between guest and host, hostility and hospitality, and, in giving itself, requests that we give ourselves to its other perspective, thereby welcoming us without condition into all that is secretly homely, and familiar, but which has long been forgotten and seen in a limited logic of rational, objective and empirical thought as uncanny.

Of course, all tales of haunting have always worked after a fashion in the ways I am describing, even if—or when, especially when—such work is subterranean, out of sight. What I am attempting to read in the ghost story is simply the making manifest of the manner in which apparitional apperception gives itself to be felt, and with that, a greater consciousness, and thus recognition of the extent to which subjectivity is intimately involved in the ghostly. But what I hope makes itself felt is that which, in the revenant activity, there takes place, a place is given in the name of genre for, a struggle for the house of hauntedness, one which takes place on the very grounds of claims concerning ownership, propriety, patriarchal rights, and so forth. Ghost stories unsettle this, their economy being the economy of the haunted house, of giving in an aneconomic fashion an other *genre* which, in giving up notions of ownership implicitly, welcome us home in the place of loss, which is, I would argue, the most homely, the most familiar phenomenon in the unhomely and unfamiliar. Loss is us; of our Being and yet not a Being itself, loss gives to us an apprehension of who we are, where we dwell, and what dwells abidingly as the secret home of our ownmost sense of Being.

It is not then merely a question of posing those who come after Hardy against those who follow James (as my introduction implied might be the case), or by extension the phenomenological against the psychoanalytic; although I would argue that such oppositions are necessary if only as a strategic gesture. They serve to inform a provisional inaugural gesture of suspending the habitual and dwelling with the unfamiliar within the familiar, and with this being open to what the unfamiliar in whatever haunting manifestation might give to our understanding. Psychoanalysis, it has to be said, as a theoretical paradigm and as a practice, whether literary or medical, remains for me at least at once within a phallocentric logic and on the side of an aesthetic discourse, despite its clinical or scientific claims; like the aesthetic reading of a text, it separates subject and world, by reading affect and effect, seeking to effect its reading through the determination of an always phallic presence. At the same time, in this, the world is always separate, however close. Phenomenology, on the other hand, is

pre-theoretical; it is a fundamental mode of apprehension, which illuminates the extent to which subject and world are inseparable, and that anything which can be said to be psychoanalytic or aesthetic in nature is merely a production of that intimate involvement. Returning to those ghost tales that are recalled in the novels of Thomas Hardy, as the folkloric 'origins' of the ghost story should remind us—the ghost story was first delivered orally and often as a communal bond, a shared act of memory and communication, which maintains the self through the souvenir of all the living and all the dead implicit in its telling—narrative is an inescapable aspect of who we are: I narrate: therefore I am not; but give myself as the trace of myself, my self as other, in narration, to which another may arrive to bear witness, and so, in the event, attest to a givenness and a loss, in that place where I can no longer say: I am. That which haunts us is the involuntary memory that our oldest narratives give themselves to our most modern anxieties. The question of the ghost story must always be a question of genre, of *genos* or place and of an always-feminine hospitality as opposed to a masculine defense of property, and the proper. As Virginia Woolf's transformative phenomenal narrative 'A Haunted House' shows, we must be remain hospitable to the coming of other. Hospitality has to do with an ethics, as Derrida has shown, and with that, an ethos: 'that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and others' (Derrida 2001: 16-17). It is in addressing the manner of Being that the spectral gives itself, as spirit of this ethos, *ethos* as *genos*—; giving itself to be received and perceived without any rush to determination.

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[1] In opposing a phenomenology of givenness to any metaphysics of Being I am drawing on Jean-Luc Marion's *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (1997), trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also, Marion's *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology* (1989), trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

[2] Two years after *Sign*'s publication in French, Jacques Derrida translated and wrote the introduction to Edmund Husserl's 'Der Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem', ed. Eugen Fink, *Revue internationale de philosophie,* Vol. I, No. 2 (1939), as *Edmund Husserl's L'Origine de la Géométrie*, traduction et introduction par Jacques Derrida (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), subsequently translated as *Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans., preface, and afterword, John P. Leavey, Jr. (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), in which Derrida makes explicit the question of historicity in this late text by Husserl, which itself makes an argument apropos

geometry's 'origin', which is close to Merleau-Ponty's more general argument concerning emergence, historicity, consciousness, and anticipation.

[3] Jacques Derrida, 'La Loi de genre', in *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 249-87; trans. as 'The Law of Genre', trans. Avital Ronell, in *Parages*, ed. John P. Leavey, trans. Tom Conley, James Hulbert, John P. Leavey, and Avital Ronell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 217-50; Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

[4] Derrida, 'Introduction', *Parages*; trans. as 'Introduction', by John P. Leavey, in *Parages*.

[5] Margaret Oliphant, 'The Secret Chamber', in *A Beleaguered City and Other Tales of the Seen and Unseen*, ed. Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2000), 107-37. All further references are included parenthetically.

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