

Editorial

Bernadette Cantrall, Dreu Harrison and James McLeod

“...when the phantasmic frame disintegrates, the subject undergoes a ‘loss of reality’ and starts to perceive reality as an ‘unreal’ nightmarish universe with no firm ontological foundation; this nightmarish universe is not ‘pure fantasy’ but, on the contrary, that which remains of reality after reality is deprived of its support in fantasy.”

- Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*

Hauntings may be understood literally as a remainder of an original and their site as literally, at least on this occasion, our journal. Recognising this, the *Philament* team has endeavoured to publish a broad range of submissions addressed to the topic of ‘hauntings’. It seems important to ask generally: where is the site of haunting? Is haunting properly speaking an aspect of fantastic composition or is it, as Žižek (via Lacan) suggests, the very signal of the unravelling of all such fantasy? Each of our authors has taken up some aspect of the spectral and situated it through one of various theoretical lenses in order to explore both its original significance and, in some cases, how this significance haunts other works.

In his elegant exploration of MacKenzie’s *Julia de Roubigné*, Hanna investigates the phantom self present in the letters of Henry MacKenzie’s eighteenth-century epistolary protagonists. Meanwhile, Langston’s writing focuses on the uneasiness of setting to rest the ghosts of colonial sins in Steffler’s novel *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*. Davidson reads Judith Wright’s poetry and autobiographical writing through Gelder and Jacob’s critical text *The Uncanny Australia* and through this offers a new approach to the Australian ghost story. Meyer takes us to the other side of the Pacific for a discussion of how the deaths of Elizabeth Short and Danny Upshaw in James Ellroy’s novels reverberate with the other characters and narratives in the city of Los Angeles. Our final Features author, Salzberg, takes Freud’s essay on the uncanny to explore the category of the “*fantôme fatale*” in William Wyler’s 1940 film *The Letter*. It is the desire of the heroine, she argues, that transforms the film from conventional dramatic conflict to unsettling and otherworldly.

Our Excursions pieces this edition range from commentary and review through to poetry and creative writing, as well as an electronic poem.

Cahill's tightly wound poems explore haunting through age, light and erasure, while Dubrau's "Post" reflects a technologically and psychoanalytically "haunted" creative process, replete with Freudian slips. Dubrau's collaboration with Havryliv [re]animates a sim[ian]ilar process[ed chicken] as an electronic poem. The Mantle piece reflects the suffocating, paralysing and haunting effect of the mind of another. Dickens' creative prose piece depicts the interplay of ambiguities to evoke a haunted space on a cold winter's night in the South Pacific, while McCay's concisely celebrates the decline of the human will. Finally, Glen's review of Brendan McNamee's *The Quest for God in the Novels of John Banville* examines the extent to which spirituality survives the postmodern fracturing of meta-narratives, while Cole's comparative review of the Star City productions of *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Rocky Horror Show* explores concurrent gothic romances, the limits of which lie in the latter's conspicuous absence of a monkey.

Appropriately, *Hauntings* comes as our thirteenth edition here at *Philament*. We've had all kinds of spooky happenings at the *Philament* office: emails disappearing from our inbox, a recurrent raven staring down our editors from a particular upstairs window in the building and documents that paginate and unpaginate at will (the card catalogue scene from *Ghostbusters* is an apt comparison). One *Philament* editor visited a friend in the tower room of an old residential college at the university who insisted that her room, like our edition, was haunted. When pressed to describe any spookiness she cited an instance of poltergeist behaviour: two action figures kept on her shelf (Jane Austen [complete with writing desk and quill] and Jesus) usually stood in an awkward embrace but one morning were found coldly lying with their backs to one another. Ghostly activity, it seems, is not limited to the animate.

As we wind up for the year we'd like to thank all our authors, editors and referees for their hard work in bringing this issue to life.