

After the Fact

Spectral Evidence, Cultural Haunting, and Gothic Sensibility

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Haunting is a core feature of social life, mediating the borders between the thinkable and unthinkable, presence and absence, while speaking to the enduring human obsession with the remains of the dead. As the editors of this collection emphasize, ghost criminology is ultimately concerned with the politics of (dis)appearance. I suspect one reason why criminologists have begun to deploy spectral metaphors in their writing is that they provide provocative ways of drawing attention to issues of invisibility, marginality, and exclusion, as well as the processes of forgetting, repressing, and denial that feature in our subject matter. Although some will be skeptical of this focus, I begin by providing the key resources that have proved to be extraordinarily fertile in this turn to spectral politics. Avery Gordon's (1997/2008) now classic text on *Ghostly Matters* was an emphatic call for a new sociology, which could reveal and learn from subjugated knowledge. As she put it, the "ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (Gordon 1997/2008, 8). Inevitably, Sigmund Freud features prominently in the book and the "return of the repressed" is a defining concept in psychoanalysis, while his essay on "The Uncanny" (1919/1958) addresses a form of haunting bound up with a frightening otherness. These ideas develop arguments from Freud's earlier *Totem and Taboo* (1913), where he maintains that the historical origins of a belief in ghosts is intimately connected to the divided, emotional impulses characterizing all close relationships, especially those between the living and the dead.

The insistence that haunting is an essential element in modern life and that to "study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of

it” was an argument conveying “the relevance of ghostly matters to the sociological enterprise” (Gordon 1997/2008, 7). With this thought in mind, it is instructive to look at the origins of classical social science to see how haunting and the afterlife played a significant role in the development of social theory, before addressing the ways in which historians have addressed the work of the dead. As will become clear, the figure of the ghost has been a haunting presence for a very long time, possibly forever, so that it is important to distinguish between the ghost as an actuality, a metaphor, and a concept (see Blanco and Peeren 2013, 2–10 for a concise summary of these efforts). Indeed, Freud’s famous essay on the estranging experience of the uncanny or *unheimlich* (literally translated as “unhomely”) is ostensibly a study of a literary genre and an aesthetic sensation, where he goes to considerable lengths to avoid any suggestion of the supernatural in his elaboration of the concept. The publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1993) was the catalyst for the recent turn to all things spectral across the academy, and while there are times when ghosts and haunting have been used excessively, granted too much explanatory force, there still remain “productive new roads to explore and old ones to revisit” (Peeren 2014, 13). Consequently, the chapter turns to the field of representation to explore how the ideas of spectral evidence and cultural haunting can shed light on things barely seen.

Sociology

Max Weber’s (1930/1992) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is one of the most celebrated works in the social sciences, demonstrating an affinity between competitive, modern bourgeois individualism and the way of life embraced on religious grounds by ascetic Protestant sects in the past. The “spirit” was first published as a two-part article in 1904–1905; it sought to explain the historically specific emergence of this strange conjunction of the entrepreneurial drive to accumulate wealth combined with a disavowal of all the worldly pleasures money can buy. Puritanism not only inspired the sequence of change creating industrial capitalism, but also led to the eradication of all the specifically religious elements in the ethic that helped produce the modern economic order. Weber (1930/1992, 105) locates this as part of the “great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the

world,” and the “basis for a fundamental antagonism to sensuous culture of all kinds.” For Weber, such disenchantment lay at the heart of modernity and the renunciation of mystery meant that everything becomes subjected to the impersonal “interpretive schema of science and rational government” (Jenkins 2000, 12). His famous characterization of the “iron cage” in which we are compelled to live and the increasingly bureaucratic order from which the “spontaneous enjoyment of life” is brutally purged are distilled in his conclusion that the “Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so” (Weber 1930/1992, 181). Clearly, the “ghost of dead religious beliefs” is fundamental to Weber’s sociological understanding of the “spirit of capitalism” (182).

Although they were contemporaries, Weber and Durkheim took little notice of each other’s work (as far as we know), and while they are often presented as the polar opposites of classical social theory, there is an important sense in which “ghosts inhabit the work of Emile Durkheim just as much as Weber” (Hudson 2017, xi). To many sociologists Durkheim is the founding figure in sociology, defining the discipline as the study of social facts and highlighting the significance in all societies of binary categories, such as sacred and profane, pure and polluted, the individual and the collective. He was initially convinced that religion was coming to play a diminishing role in social life, but he later radically reversed his thinking, coming to see how modern, social institutions are deeply religious in character. Many secular beliefs are, he claimed, “indistinguishable from religious beliefs proper,” and taking modern France as an example, he maintained that, like traditional societies, it had an unshakeable, shared faith:

The mother country, the French Revolution, Joan of Arc, etc., are for us sacred things which we do not permit to be touched. Public opinion does not willingly permit one to contest the moral superiority of democracy, the reality of progress, and the idea of equality. (Durkheim 1899, 20, in Cladis 2001, xiii–xiv)

By the time of his last book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/2001), which set itself the task of discovering the enduring source of human social identity, he was drawn to what he considered the most basic form of documented religion—totemism among the indigenous

“tribes” of Australia and North America—to demonstrate how the most fundamental “collective representations” reflect past and present social organization. These collective representations are the concepts, images, symbols, myths, and stories through which a society comes to understand itself as such in a shared moral universe. Certain “sacred” collective representations (such as the totem) serve the purpose of giving members of a society a common identity and promoting allegiance to it.

Much of Durkheim’s work on religion, especially on animism, the materialization of the dead, spirits, and the supernatural, can be seen as foundational to a sociology of ghosts. As he put it:

the idea of the supernatural, as we understand it, is of a recent vintage: it presupposes its opposite, which it negates and which is not at all primitive. In order to call certain phenomena supernatural, one must already have the sense that there is a *natural order of things*, in other words, that the phenomena of the universe are connected to one another according to certain necessary relationships called laws. (Durkheim 1912/2001, 28, emphasis in original)

Such an approach encourages us to take the long view. Reverence for the “remains” of the dead goes back to the Palaeolithic and funeral customs are often less about grief and mourning than about providing a means to offer rituals and sacraments that will ease the dead gently out of this world, holding them securely in their graves because of an ingrained “terror of the ghosts of the unquiet dead” (Taylor 2001, 171). It was a student of Durkheim’s, Robert Hertz (1907/1960) who made the crucial point that the dead have two lives: one in nature, another in culture. The relationship between these two conceptions—the dead as decaying organic matter, and as entities who have a social existence after death—is a variable one. How the “dead make social worlds” is the theme of Thomas Lacquer’s (2015, 1) recent historical exploration of this cultural work and is indebted to this Durkheimian tradition, to which we will return in the next section.

The conjuring of ghosts and unseen forces features perhaps surprisingly in the writing of Karl Marx, not least since he advocated a materialist conception of history that took issue with the importance of ideas

and consciousness in understanding the real conditions of worldly existence. He was a profound and subtle thinker, which has led to fundamentally conflicting interpretations of his project in and beyond Marxism. The doctrine of historical materialism was advanced most powerfully in *The Communist Manifesto*, which Marx co-authored with Friedrich Engels. Written in haste for a small club of exiled German workers in London, it was published in 1848 on the eve of the great revolutionary upheavals of that year, stretching from the Balkans to the Baltic, providing a highly distinctive and striking modernist vision of historical change and class struggle. The *Manifesto*'s impact was initially muted, but by the end of the nineteenth century it underpinned the creation of a global labor movement, eventually fueling the political conflicts and many wars that tore the world apart in the twentieth century. It remains an astonishing text, combining powerful slogans and crystal-clear exposition, switching from apocalyptic to ironic registers with blistering effect. The tone is established from the opening sentence, which memorably declares that a "spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism" (Marx and Engels 1848/2002, 218). Communism was indeed an apparition, a scattered network of barely more than a thousand people, yet one that spoke to a "mounting fear of mobs, of beggars, of violence during a decade of endemic economic crisis" (Stedman Jones 2002, 39). It has been said that Marx's distinctive ideas were a blending of German philosophy, English economics, and French politics and the *Manifesto* integrated these currents into an entirely novel history of class conflict.

The insight that the revolutionary process is a struggle between the past and future, new against the old, is developed in the exceptional commentaries Marx wrote in the early 1850s on the doomed French revolutions of 1848—*Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. The latter essay contains some of his most important insights on historical repetition and the ghosts of the past, opening with this striking passage:

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce . . . Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly

encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. (Marx and Engels 1968, 96)

In examining the weight of the past on the present, the piece addresses the relationship between Napoleon Bonaparte's imperial situation in the 1790s and the French Revolution of 1789 with that of his witless nephew's in the 1840s and 1850s. It is through reclaiming and "reassembling the fragments of the Napoleonic imageries and histories the new generation of 'petty' Napoleons would turn the tragic tales of the past into a farce" (Hudson 2017, 52).

More recently, Jacques Derrida (1994, 133) has detected in the "bereaved parody" of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* a "genealogy of ghosts" and thereby presents a radically new reading of Marx, in which he is understood to be obsessed with haunting, phantoms, and repetition. Derrida's (1994) *Specters* is not only a crucial addition to his philosophical project of deconstruction but is also a book preoccupied with the "death" of communism and how Marxism will continue to haunt capitalist societies long after its supposed demise. Indeed, his concept of "hauntology" is a pun on the more traditional concept of ontology, the philosophical study of what can be said to exist. Derrida's "rehabilitation of ghosts" as a reputable academic topic has been immensely influential, and hauntology offers a way of supplanting ontology by "replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (Davis 2005, 373). There are parallels here with Judith Butler's (2004) examination of the politics of mourning, whereby some forms of grief become nationally recognized and other losses of life are ungrievable. Yet, sometime before Derrida's intervention Foucault criticized historians for what he called their "impoverished idea of the real" (cited in Burke 2008, 64), as they left no space for what is imagined. French historians have since responded to this accusation in significant ways and have developed a formidable history of the imaginary.

History

Until quite recently historians have been wary of dealing with ghosts and straying into the realm of the dead, treating the subject with "undue

contempt” (Le Goff 1981/1984, 269). The wealth of the imaginary and the complexities surrounding it are explored in Jacques Le Goff’s (1981/1984) *The Birth of Purgatory*, which traces the origins of the idea of a netherworld in the Middle Ages by connecting it to changing conceptions of space and time. He argued that the idea of a “third place” in the afterlife, along with heaven and hell, came into full bloom as a formal Catholic belief and doctrine rather late—in the twelfth century. It was gradually established as an intermediate space in which some lost souls were subjected to a trial that could be reduced through the prayers of perishable mortals. A distinct geography of the other world took shape in a detailed theology of retribution, sacrifice, penalties, pardons, and spiritual exchange between the living and the dead. A key function of the third place in the hereafter was the imprisonment of ghosts and confining the uncertain wanderings of suffering souls. Le Goff was also one of the first scholars to examine the history of dreams, so that studies of visions, ghosts, and the supernatural have become central to the new concern in cultural history with the active role of the imagination. Such studies have explored “apparitions of the ordinary dead, of everyday ghosts,” and those occasions when the departed might return from the grave (Schmitt 1994/1999, 2). The very special dead—saints and martyrs—deserved extraordinary attention and it was beneficial for the ordinary dead to be buried near them (Brown 1981).

These groundbreaking French medievalists did not conclude that the dead were ubiquitous in the concerns of the living or that the living expected to see apparitions of their dead ancestors wherever they looked. Ghosts did not just appear to anyone, at any time, or anywhere. There is a fundamental anthropological point here:

In medieval society, as in many other traditional societies, the specific type of existence attributed to the deceased depended on how the “rite of passage” of death occurred: the dead generally returned when the funeral and mourning rituals could not be performed in the prescribed way, for example, if the body of a drowning victim disappeared and could not be buried according to custom or if a murder victim, a suicide, a woman who died during childbirth, or a stillborn baby presented the members of the community with the danger of a blemish on their group. Such deaths were deemed unlucky. (Schmitt 1994/1999, 2–3)

This anthropological view is given historical specificity through the detailed examination of the mentalities and sensibilities of the period. It offers a history of the imaginary that is attuned to the very real social implications of the fantastic belief structures found in the tales and images, words and dreams of that distant time.

Others have built on historical anthropology to vastly broaden the ways that earlier systems of belief are now approached. Recent research has sought to further establish the nature of the relationship between living communities and the dead in Europe. Éva Pócs (1999) has explored the techniques and practices used to communicate professionally with the other world in the villages and towns of early modern Hungary. These shamanistic mediators were the magical specialists of everyday community life and they participated in gatherings of the dead when they were possessed by witches. Her account rests almost entirely on the records of witch trials, so the documents yield insights into several areas of witchcraft and reveal the communication techniques used by seers, sorcerers, and healers, but also the more general, everyday practices of ordinary people. She regards witchcraft both as an ideology that explains human misfortune and as an institution regulating communal conflict, yet the seers and sorcerers worked both inside and outside the system of supernatural witchcraft. Here she highlights the close relationship between the living and the dead, where the “dead, primarily individual or ‘personal dead’ *revenants*, that is, the returning dead, arrived and stayed according to various time frameworks” (Pócs 1999, 30, emphasis in original). The communal, or impersonal dead, also returned periodically during certain “death” periods and they were largely ambivalent about the fate of the living, though diverse forms of exchange relationships evolved between them.

The fact that ghosts were a grave matter in early modern Europe is an issue pursued by David Lederer (2002, 26) in a study of Bavaria, which demonstrates “just how dangerously politicized the supernatural had become in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” In his analysis, cases of shamanism, apparitions, and spirit possession graphically rendered explicit the confrontation between theological doctrine and popular belief. These beliefs and practices were not the product of backward medieval superstitions, rather they were given a new lease on life in the Renaissance, at the very dawn of the “rational” age. Nicole

Jacques-Lefèvre (2002) insists that the belief in witches, and in her analysis werewolves, has most often and mistakenly been tied to the Middle Ages and to peasants, but rather these beliefs were in fact elaborated with most conviction by Renaissance intellectuals. As a figure of disorder, a symbol of trouble that must be warded off, the werewolf that appears in these texts is rich in political allegory, tied to the most serious aspects of monstrous degeneration in the social body. Scholars since have “linked the idea of diabolic witchcraft developing in the fifteenth century to notions of a distinctly elite, learned form of demonic magic known as necromancy” (Bailey 2013, 11). Popular belief in witches, ghosts, and other supernatural forces persisted in Europe across all social groups well into the eighteenth century, troubling the authorities on a variety of levels. Both Catholic and Protestant reformers sought to impose a more rigid and disciplined social and political order during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in their efforts to extinguish superstition and establish firm boundaries between licit and illicit action.

Appearances of ghosts that took conventional and unconventional forms increased in seventeenth-century Bavaria, where attempts to banish congress with the supernatural cost many their lives. In eighteenth-century Paris, “a series of trials of ‘false witches’ occurred during the beginning of the so-called Enlightenment, after the time when trials and penalties for witchcraft are perceived as being on the decline and some courts even declared that witches did not exist” (Edwards 2002, xix). The overall lesson from this scholarship is that there is considerable nuance in the levels of serious belief in supernatural or occult forces, and it cautions against interpreting the eradication of superstition or defeat of magic by the inexorable advance of modern rationality. Undoubtedly the most enduring overall narrative is the classic Weberian diagnosis of the progression from an “enchanted” premodern world rife with magic and superstitious thought to our “disenchanted” modern world governed by scientific rationality. The suggestion that these are two irreconcilable belief systems often misses the point. These transformations need not be linear or progressive, and while it may well be more useful to think of oscillating cycles of disenchantment and re-enchantment (Bailey 2013, 12), they can also unleash dangerous forces. Lederer (2002, 27) argues that such a volatile mix was to the fore in his analysis of ghosts and the treatment of mediums in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bavaria,

where traditional and modernizing “attitudes mixed all too easily, concocting a heady cocktail of fear and repression and facilitated the worst stupor of witchcraft hysteria in European history.”

Above all else what this historical work informed by anthropological and sociological themes points to is the importance of “deep time” in our understanding of how our species lives with the dead. This point is central to Thomas Laqueur’s epic account of how the dead make civilization on a grand and intimate level. As he explains:

the living need the dead far more than the dead need the living. It matters because the dead make social worlds. It matters because we cannot bear to live at the borders of our mortality. (Laqueur 2015, 1)

Death is not just a moment in time, it is also a ritualized process. It occupies a place in human existence that anthropologists describe as liminal, as it involves a threshold crossing, and such transitions (birth, puberty, marriage, and death) are fraught with peril. In fact, the “most dangerous person at a funeral,” wrote Richard Cobb (1970, 8), an English historian of the French Revolution, “is the body in the coffin.” Death is similar to birth in the sense that it is an event that cannot belong to us, but only to those who surround us, binding us into social relationships that take time to repair and rebuild. If society is pictured as a house, then people need permission to enter new rooms, and the threshold, or *limen*, was the key to their transition from one room (or state) to another (Van Gennep 1908/1960, 26). For a period of time, then, the person occupies an in-between status and liminality rituals are aimed at reducing this potential threat through securing the successful passage from one category to the next. Although the response to death and dying has changed dramatically over the last millennium, an abiding concern for some reassurance against the finality of death has endured, as Phillipe Ariès (1981) influentially argued and who inspired much of the literature and art that form our cultural heritage. He declared that death had become increasingly marginalized in contemporary culture, relegated to the secret, private space of the home or the anonymity of the hospital, yet representations of death remain absolutely central to it. In the next section we turn to how cultural representations have addressed death and how the ghostly offer “haunting reminders of lingering trouble” (Gordon 1997/2008, xix).

Representation

The rich variety of ways in which artists and writers have interpreted and invented ghosts further indicates a deep-seated fascination with the texture of death and the difficulty of confronting our own demise. As Hélène Cixous (1976, 542) has put it, there “is nothing more notorious and uncanny to our thought than mortality,” so that the encounter between the human and ghost constitutes in literary form the “fiction” of our relationship to death. Ghosts have always been with us, but they are not what they used to be. It is, as we have just seen, possible to trace a history of ghosts, as well as to regard history itself as ghostly. Up until the eighteenth century the explicitly fictional appearance of ghosts was somewhat sporadic. Men and women may have “stopped seeing ghosts” not simply because ghosts came to seem “intellectually impossible” (though this was indeed the case) but because ghosts gradually lost their “social relevance” (Thomas 1971, 606) as the dead no longer exerted such a powerful influence over the living. This will now be a familiar sociological theme of modern disenchantment, but what is also clear is that the subsequent popularity of ghost stories throughout the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth centuries drew inspiration from the Gothic literary imagination flourishing in England from the 1760s onward.

The greatest work in the English language has a ghost at its heart. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1600–1601) draws on a revenge tragedy tradition and his plays feature more ghostly apparitions than those of any of his contemporaries. The range of his dramatic use of ghosts is perhaps an indication of an understanding that ghosts, real or imagined, make for good theatre (Greenblatt 2001). The vengeful ghost in *Hamlet* is an enigmatic manifestation, cryptic and elusive, eliciting the widest range of possible responses. Much has since been written on whether Shakespeare intended his ghosts to be subjective or objective: figments of overwrought imaginations or unremittingly corporeal realities grounded in theology and folklore. All these explanations are voiced in the play to such an extent that the ghost has an indefinable quality, a strangeness that cannot be contained by conventional thought. *Hamlet*, the prince of a rotten state, dwells on the problems of memory and forgetting, how the suppressed past rises like a terrifying revenant,

manifest in bad dreams and hallucinations. Such themes are to the fore in psychanalytic accounts of the play, which have given radically new interpretations of it. Rather than thinking *Hamlet* is about revenge—a familiar, safe subject—the real driving force of the drama is Oedipal desire. Jacques Lacan (1977) developed this controversial reading (in a seminar in 1959) and transforms the play into an allegory of phallogocentric culture. According to Lacan all desire springs from a lack, which it strives continually to fill, so that in a more recent twist on this theme the play has been cast as a story about love and its many contradictions (Critchley and Webster 2013).

In contrast, Nicolas Abraham's (1988) ideas on transgenerational trauma and unspeakable secrets were developed through a close analysis of *Hamlet*. He notes how all the main characters appear to be driven by "some stranger within them" and the overwhelming sense of secrets taken to the grave, going so far as to say that "entire libraries of enigmas in literature would yield up their key, were we but to reconsider the 'supernatural element' responsible for them: to be precise, the manifestation of a Specter" (Abraham 1988, 3). Literature becomes then a place of ghosts, of what's unfinished, unhealed, and harboring secrets about which characters, and perhaps authors themselves, are largely unaware. These ideas are developed by Esther Rashkin (1992) in a nuanced analysis of literary texts and their phantom structures. She is careful not to overstretch the approach, insisting that not every text is possessed by phantoms, but rather she attends the specificity of each individual text and the distress that might be found in them. It is also worth recalling that in Derrida's (1994) account of Marx one of the most repeated phrases in it is from *Hamlet*, "the time is out of joint," and this theme of broken time is crucial to understanding his concept of hauntology.

Gothic fiction itself emerged somewhat suddenly as a popular form in the late eighteenth century, catering to a decadent appetite for all things gloomy, taboo, and medieval. The origins of the genre are usually traced to Horace Walpole's (1764) *Castle of Otranto*, the second edition of which was subtitled "A Gothick Story," that did much to establish narrative conventions that are revisited and reworked in subsequent writing. The emphasis on the returning past, transgression and decay, imprisonment and escape, the anticipation of the supernatural, usurpation and dynastic intrigue, are all present in *Otranto*. By the 1790s these trappings were

famously elaborated in Anne Radcliffe's (1794) *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which adopts the castle setting as well as the theme of inheritance and dreamlike wanderings through an oppressive Catholic landscape. If the fictional tempo in Radcliffe is somewhat meandering, then Matthew Lewis's (1796) *The Monk* opted for visceral sensation. Set in a Spanish monastery the plot revels in excess and corruption, where ambition, murder, and incest combine to provoke disgust and fascination in equal measure. Of course, the coherence (or otherwise) of gothic conventions (Sedgwick 1980) has received considerable attention, and the gothic novels of the 1790s can be read as a British reckoning with the carnage of the French Revolution and the stirring of guilty memories of the regicide of Charles I, which led to the founding of the Commonwealth some 150 years earlier. The eighteenth-century sense of British identity that came to replace the earlier ones of the home nations was forged in sectarian conflict so that to be "British was to be Protestant, with both identities drawing strengths from residual anti-Catholicism" (Miles 2007, 15) and the brutal repression of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh uprisings in the process of nation-building.

The early gothic novel mobilizes these tensions and hovers ambiguously between them, contrasting progressive and regressive forces, both implicitly (British and Protestant) and explicitly (European and Catholic). It feeds off a "Catholic" aesthetic, while taking its morality from its Protestantism. In the high camp theater of *The Monk*, for example, anyone who appears "to be more tolerant and possesses powers of rationality is really a closet Anglican" (McEvoy 1995, xxix). Gothic fiction also found an enthusiastic audience in North America, arriving in a completely different context from the old world and without a feudal past. Lacking all those ruins that furnished the European landscape—the castles, crypts, monasteries, and graveyards that evoked the fallen majesty and mystery of the Middle Ages—the new country seemed an unlikely place to establish a gothic literary tradition. Yet a distinctive set of factors were to prove decisive. These include the frontier mentality, the Puritan legacy, chattel slavery, political utopianism, and a migrant culture steeped in European folklore and importing literature from the thriving British and German publishing trade. It is this context that led Leslie Fielder to famously declare, in 1966, that American fiction was still "bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, non-realistic

and negative, sadist and melodramatic—a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation” (cited in Smith 2012, 165). Among the most celebrated exponents of such fiction was Edgar Allan Poe, and his legacy is considerable, introducing new dimensions to gothic tales.

Poe tended to use recognizably European settings for his stories in symbolic ways, most memorably in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), which exudes claustrophobic menace. The crumbling mansion is home to incest and perversion, which becomes increasingly apparent as the story unfolds—the narrator explains that since time immemorial the inhabitants have practiced a bizarre form of intermarriage ensuring that the “entire family lay in the direct line of descent” (Poe 1839/2009, 172). When Roderick Usher prematurely buries his twin sister Madeline in the family vault, the decaying edifice finally collapses as she rises from the grave, emaciated and bloody. It is never clear whether the reader has been trapped by the ancient house or its disturbing inhabitants and their brooding secrets. The sense of past as burden is apparent in Poe’s treatment of race and the haunting legacy of slaveholding, where the fears of insurrection and miscegenation are never far from the surface. In his story “Hop-Frog” (1849), for example, a much tormented dwarf court jester enacts his vengeance by persuading the king and his courtiers to dress up as chained orang-utans. Hop-Frog then strings them up to the ceiling and their tarred costumes are set on fire in what has been read as a grim parody of a Southern lynching. The dread of slave retribution also pervades his tale of “The Black Cat” (1843), where the narrator explains how he blinds and hangs his pet black cat in a drunken rage. Later he takes a shine to another cat that in time haunts him with memories of his cruelty. Determined to kill this cat too, he accidentally strikes his wife dead with an axe. Seemingly unconcerned, he bricks her up behind a wall, where he inadvertently also seals in the cat who proceeds to feed on her decaying face. When the authorities eventually investigate his wife’s disappearance, a wailing noise from the cat reveals the location of the corpse and the guilt of the narrator. Here the story invokes the impulsive character of the lynch mob and the dehumanization of slaves as pets. It also highlights the violent subordination of women that features so prominently in Poe’s fiction.

In tales like “Ligeia” (1838), and especially “Berenice” (1835), the protagonists objectify and dismember the women they love. But they will not stay buried. By refusing to stay dead it can be argued that most of Poe’s women refuse idealization. Moreover, his fiction reveals “the inalienable bond between the illusions of reverent attachment and the matter of human bondage” (Dayan 1994, 245). In making perverse desire the driving force of his central characters, the supernatural elements are usually explained by the narrator’s insanity, so that he directs the sensationalism of European gothic toward inner conflicts while always suggesting “there is a dark impulse beyond understanding which wreaks havoc” (Smith 2012, 169). It was through his fiction that Poe transformed familiar and well-worn gothic plots, setting, and characters into the very stuff of modern literature, most evidently in the focus on the tortured mind suffering agonizing pressures, where the key idea is that “of the internally haunted self” (Brogan 1995, 152). The same can also be said of his invention of the detective story, which inspired a remarkable dispute over the meaning of language and truth that we will look at in more detail in the next section.

Purloining Poe

Poe’s invention of the detective story introduced the crucial innovation of organizing the narrative around the intellectual genius of a detective hero, Auguste Dupin, who reconstructs the scene of a crime through the deductive powers of rationality to apprehend the guilty culprit through the clues left behind. In “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), the first of the Dupin stories, the detective reveals that the mysterious atrocities were committed by an escaped orang-utan. This explanation is totally rational in the context of the narrative, but at the same time bizarre and strange. It is this combination of reason and unreason that animates the detective story, which oscillates between the idea that modern life can be mastered and controlled, yet it is also dangerous, since that social order is delicate and vulnerable to the destructive forces of nature or premodern threats. In this rendering of urban modernity as gothic, he foreshadows how the city would become Other as the nineteenth century progressed, becoming an incomprehensible landscape frequently

depicted as “labyrinth, jungle, swamp and ruin and described as blackened, rotten, shadowed and diseased” where, most significantly, this “city of dreadful night is populated by others who threaten to overrun or undermine the fabric of the imperial metropolis” (Warwick 2007, 34). Poe’s final Dupin story, “The Purloined Letter” (1844), has also proven to be a remarkable site for textual interpretation and is worth looking at in more detail.

Set in modern Paris, the story begins with Dupin’s invitation to solve a mystery concerning the theft of a letter from the royal apartments, the contents of which have the potential to jeopardize the Queen. The cunning “Minister D,” sensing political advantage, steals the compromising letter before her very eyes, exchanging it for a worthless letter he happens to be holding, which she is unable to prevent owing to the King’s presence. She is now open to blackmail, and every attempt by the police to discreetly retrieve the letter fails. Dupin is called upon to recover it. He makes an excuse to visit the Minister’s house and manages to spot the letter openly displayed, hanging from the mantelpiece. Later Dupin returns and substitutes a copy for the original letter, rescuing the now doubly purloined letter for the Queen. Detective fiction is usually understood to have a highly conservative ideological form because its generic codes demand the restoration of the status quo. Yet what is particularly striking about Poe’s story is not so much the way it inaugurates and reinforces these conventions, but how it opens up a range of paradoxes, sites of disruption and displacement.

The whole story is organized around the movement of letters from one place to another, and it was this sense of shifting signifiers that initially attracted Lacan to the text. Indeed, he chose his 1956 “Seminar on the ‘The Purloined Letter’” to introduce the collection of his *Ecrits* (1966), whose essays otherwise appear chronologically. It is generally recognized that his interpretation of the story set off a radically new conception of psychoanalysis (by highlighting the dynamic of miss-seeing in the tale, thus offering an instance of how the gaze operates) and pioneered a type of reading unprecedented in literary criticism. Lacan (1956/1988, 28) situates his interpretation of the story in the Freudian problem of “repetition automatism” (the tendency of patients to mechanically repeat traumatic experiences) and a broader question over the nature of memory itself. His analysis hinges on two

issues: the anomalous position of the letter, which while serving as the principal subject of the story, we come to know so little about it; and the pattern of intersubjective relationships and repetitions that arise in the tale.

It is striking that the story leaves us entirely ignorant of the nature of the letter, the sender, and the contents. Whether it is a love “letter or conspiratorial letter, letter of betrayal or letter of mission, letter of summons or letter of distress, we are assured of but one thing: the Queen must not bring it to the knowledge of her lord and master” (Lacan 1956/1988, 41–42). Thus, Lacan takes up the theme of lack in the symbolic order and makes it a key element in his analysis. Moreover, it is not the message in the letter, but the position of the letter within the group that determines what each character will do next. This is because “the letter does not function as a unit of meaning (a *signified*) but as that which produces certain effects (a *signifier*)” so that it becomes for Lacan “a kind of *allegory of the signifier*” (Johnson 1988, 217, emphasis in original). The letter generates a rotating pattern of human relationships and subject positions that different characters occupy in successive scenes. In Lacan’s reading there are three subject positions in play: one subject sees nothing, so is “blind” to the situation (the King and the police); a second “sees” that the first subject sees nothing and thereby “deludes itself as to the secrecy of which it hides” (the Queen, then the Minister), that is, unaware of being “seen”; the third sees that “the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whoever would seize it” (the Minister, and finally Dupin) and exploits the situation (Lacan 1956/1988, 32). The far-reaching claims about language and truth set out in Lacan’s seminar have been influential and the source of fierce contention.

Among the most serious challenges to Lacan’s interpretation of the story is Derrida’s (1975/1988) critical deconstruction of it. Derrida’s objections focus on the tacit assumptions and overall method deployed by Lacan. Although Lacan recognizes that the story is multiply narrated, he ignores the complexity of narration itself and the curious place of the narrator in the tale. For “once it is glimpsed, the analytic deciphering excludes this place, neutralizes it” and this neutralizing exclusion “transforms the entire Seminar into an analysis fascinated by content” (Derrida 1975/1988, 179). By overlooking the frame of narrative, Lacan

misconstrues the entire structure of the text, missing the literary dimensions that make it Literature. Derrida also takes issue with Lacan's (and Freud's) use of fiction as a means of presenting the truth of psychoanalysis. To lay the ground for his critique Derrida (1975/1988, 175) begins by discussing how the structure of truth in Freud is based on familiar metaphors—exhibiting, denuding, undressing, unveiling—coordinated with “naked truth, but also with truth as nakedness,” the concept is unwittingly problematized by Freud's own analysis of exhibitionism and neurotic dreams of nakedness. Derrida finds the very same problem at work in Lacan's use of the Poe story, so his critique is directed not only at what Lacan dispenses with in the text, but also at what he reads into the letter. By insisting that the letter's meaning is lacking, Lacan transforms this “lack into *the* meaning of the letter” (Johnson 1977/1988, 217, emphasis in original). As Derrida (1975/1988, 184) puts it, the “letter—place of the signifier—is found in the place where Dupin and the psychoanalyst expect to find it: on the immense body of a woman, between the ‘legs’ of the fireplace” and such “is its proper place, the terminus of its circular itinerary.”

Deconstruction presupposes both a limit and a border, the careful teasing out of competing forces of signification within the text. “The deconstructive reading,” as Barbara Johnson explains, “does not point out the flaws or weaknesses or stupidities of an author, but the *necessity* with which what he *does* see is symmetrically related to what he does *not* see” (1972, xv, emphasis in original). Nor does it imply complete interpretive license, but rather deconstruction demands considerable intellectual rigor and a forensic attention to detail. Later he would introduce the idea of “haunting into the very construction of a concept” (Derrida 1994, 161), bringing into focus the question of time that had been suppressed in his thought. The “conceptual function of spectrality” is to “call attention to and assign responsibility for social practices of marginalization and erasure, and for cultural and historical blind spots” (Peeren 2014, 13). The figure of the ghost is the trace of an absence that disturbs the taken-for-granted, suggesting that lurking beneath the surface lies another, untold story. Hauntology is not only an alternative theory (of ontology), but an ethical demand for responsibility and accountability. The usefulness of ghost stories to speak to repressed knowledge is at the core of Avery Gordon's (1997/2008) attempt

to establish a new sociological imagination through attending to that which normally escapes attention. Her reckoning with that which modern history has rendered ghostly provides the starting point for the next section.

Cultural Haunting

It is significant that Gordon's (1997/2008) analysis of social haunting as a penetrating dissection of racialized capitalism and violent injustice is based on her remarkable reading of the authors Luisa Valenzuela and Toni Morrison. Both writers use imaginative fiction to see that which is usually hidden or thought to be dead and buried. Luisa Valenzuela is a prominent Argentine author and exponent of magical realism, through which she explores the violence and repression experienced in Latin America under authoritarian regimes. The military government exercised state power through disappearance and torture in clandestine detention centers where prisoners were kept in a constant state of imminent death. Few survived, and during the dictatorship (1976–83) it is estimated that thirty thousand mostly young students and workers were abducted and killed. In her book *He Who Searches*, Valenzuela (1977/79) explores this complex system of repression and the haunted society it produces. It is one "full of ghosts" and the narration of the story invokes a "kind of inverse colonization" that retraces the "steps of the initial conquest of Latin America" (Gordon 1997/2008, 98) and tells a story of the quest to find the disappeared.

The literary turn to the supernatural to recover a traumatic past is at the forefront in Toni Morrison's (1987) *Beloved*, which examines the destructive legacy of slavery and the unfinished project of Reconstruction. It is set in the mid-1800s and chronicles the life of a young mother, Sethe, who murders her child to save her from a life of slavery. Sethe and those who live with her are haunted by the memory of the dead child, who returns as a full-bodied and increasingly demanding ghost. It is a remarkable premise and shatters the void between the living and the dead:

The ghost enters, all fleshy and real, with wants, and a fierce hunger, and she speaks, barely, of course, and in pictures and in a coded language.

This ghost, *Beloved*, forces a reckoning: she makes those who have contact with her, who love and need her, confront an event in their past that loiters in the present. But *Beloved*, the ghost, is haunted too, and therein lies the challenge Morrison poses. (Gordon 1997/2008, 139)

The haunted narrative sees slavery living in the aftermath of its abolition, and how wrestling with a real ghost, who is also haunted, reflects the crisis of a larger social group. This attention to the repressive powers of silencing and premature closures is to focus on the “phantom subjects of history,” and Gordon’s (1997/2008, 196) book concludes with some reflections on what we learn of the world when we look at it through Valenzuela’s and Morrison’s fiction. Here she maintains they recover “the evidence of things not seen” (Baldwin 1985, viii), which was also the title of James Baldwin’s searing indictment of the unsolved murders of twenty-eight black children in Atlanta in the early 1980s and the corrosive legacy of racism throughout the case. It is a powerful metaphor and compels us to see things and people who are barely visible, the trace of an absence, where haunting is both an individual and collective experience.

These stories of cultural haunting differ from earlier ghost stories for they “signal an attempt to recover and make social use of a poorly documented, partially erased cultural history” (Brogan 1995, 150). As such, they attest to the notion of “spectral evidence,” which Ulrich Baer (2005) has deployed in a nuanced analysis of the photography of trauma. Taking as his point of departure the photograph’s apparent immunity to time and the ghostly afterlife of every photograph’s subject, Baer places the viewer in the role of bearing belated witness rather than innocent onlooker. The book concentrates on photographs that compel us to consider traumatic experiences that defy absorption into larger contexts or patterns of experience. An important chapter uncovers the complex and difficult relationships between memory and place by closely examining two contemporary photographs by the German photographer Dirk Reinartz and American Mikael Levin. The two photographs are quite different from most other postwar images of Holocaust sites, in that they address the almost empty landscapes in which Nazi concentration camps once stood. Although they were both unaware of each other’s work and were pursuing quite separate objectives in their respective

projects, the photographers deploy the same artistic conventions of Romantic landscape art to give absent memory a place.

Whereas most other images of former camps or killing fields are “oversaturated referents of ruin,” decaying buildings once designed to kill are now maintained and “museumized,” these two pictures instead “force us to see that there is *nothing* to see there; and they show us that there is something in a catastrophe as vast as the Holocaust that remains inassimilable to historicist or contextual readings” (Baer 2005, 66–67). Because they do not contain any physical evidence of the crimes committed at the scenes, the photographs seem to ask to be read on purely aesthetic terms, but such a formalist analysis is also exposed as equally insufficient to the task of achieving some comprehensive meaning or secure perspective. Instead, the photographs demand a new way of looking, which Baer offers as a mode of belated witnessing rather than a form of visual analysis. In doing so, he argues that these landscape photographs oblige us to rethink our relationships with memory, mourning, and remembrance:

By creating an experience of place for areas designed to destroy the very possibility of experience, Reinartz and Levin show that Holocaust commemoration is not site-specific and that acts of secondary witnessing depend less on geographic or cultural positions than on becoming aware of our position as observers of experiences no one ever wanted to know about . . . Some former killing fields—sites such as Ohrdruf where thousands were murdered—were never marked on the itineraries of disaster tourism, are rarely mentioned in historical studies, and are likely to sink into complete oblivion once the survivors have passed away. When such sites are framed in terms of landscape art, we recognize the disappearance of the event as part of the intention of their Nazi creators, a recognition that might motivate us to halt the disappearance. (Baer 2005, 83)

The photographs are stark reminders of the contemporary subject’s responsibility to the traumatic events, and they also manage to avoid lapsing into the triviality or kitsch that characterizes so many representations of the Holocaust (see Cole 2000; Eaglestone 2017; and Friedländer 1984, for work critiquing the modern tendency to mythologize Nazism).

It is significant that the ruin provides a point of departure for his reflections on the nature of spectral evidence and the experience of trauma. The attention to the spatial dimension of haunting was earlier raised by Anthony Vidler (1992) in a nuanced account of the nineteenth century's fascination with ruins, and especially with the ancient remains of Pompeii. The analogies between archaeology and psychoanalysis are many, not least in the uncovering of that which had long been buried, but also mirroring the uncanny itself: "To some people the idea of being buried alive is the most uncanny thing of all" (Freud, cited in Vidler 1992, 45). Hidden until the middle of the eighteenth century, the experience of visiting Pompeii was one of visceral contrasts—an ancient town, that had once been homely, domestic, teeming with life, was suddenly buried alive, entombed in volcanic ash and suspended in history. The unearthing of Pompeii inspired an erotics of the ruin, confirming not only the existence of a "dark side" of classicism, but also how living beauty was transformed into dead trace. The fascination with this buried city was bound up with an aesthetic that exalted ancient remains in the eighteenth century, revered testimony of a grand but lost heritage, and came to invest in the left-over fragment more than a fragmentary significance. The fragment as a "negative petrified sign of *nature morte* easily took its place among other similar fragments in literature and art that at once signaled an irretrievable past and evoked a desire for future plenitude: the Belvedere Torso, the Elgin Marbles, the Venus de Milo" (Vidler 1992, 50). This understanding of the place of the fragment in European culture has clear affinities with Walter Benjamin's attention to the transformations an object undergoes during its life and afterlife.

In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin attempts to retrieve the baroque "mourning-play" (*Trauerspiel*) from the dismissive judgments of critics who viewed it as a crude and debased form of classical drama. In addressing this misinterpretation of minor German dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Benjamin sets out an influential, if often esoteric, argument on the nature of allegory. Crucially, he sees an affinity between the literature and art of modernity and the earlier mourning play, with its ambiguity, multiplicity of meanings, and fragmentary representations. A key feature of allegory, as a form of signification, is its unpredictability, for any "person, any object,

any relationship can mean absolutely anything else” and with “this possibility a destructive, but just verdict is passed on the profane world” (Benjamin 1928/1977, 175). As he goes on to write:

Allegories are, in the realms of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. This explains the baroque cult of the ruin . . . That which lies here in ruins, the highly significant fragment, the remnant, is, in fact, the finest material in baroque creation. For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and, in the unrelenting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification. (Benjamin 1928/1977, 178)

This idea of the “highly significant fragment” is fundamental to contemporary art. In his approach to allegory, Benjamin anticipates one of the most modern artistic means of dealing with a preceding tradition, which is through the practice of quotation, snatching a precedent out of context, effacing or obscuring an earlier meaning (Owens 1980). In the final section I will explore the relationships between allegory, landscape, and spectral evidence through the medium of photography.

Landscape, Memory, and the Unseen

Elsewhere I have described how some contemporary photographers have deliberately taken an anti-reportage position, slowing down the image-making process and arriving well after the decisive moment, yet still retaining a commitment to the social relevance of photography (Carrabine 2018). Here the use of allegory has become the means by which the enigmatic, partial, and unresolved traces of violence on the landscape ooze with repressed histories. This strategy can be found in Simon Norfolk’s various studies of war and his efforts to challenge the oversimplification of much photojournalism. In his photographs of Afghanistan (Norfolk 2002) there is a deliberate attempt to understand the country’s long struggle with colonialism; his images deploy a distinctive pictorial style, that invokes late eighteenth-century Western landscape painting and its portrayal of the decline of once-great civilizations. In this way, “the skeletons of bombed-out buildings are shown

as romantic ruins on deserted plains” to make the critical point that it is because of the destruction inflicted through more than thirty years of war that “this ancient and culturally rich region has been returned to a premodern state” (Cotton 2015, 172).

This attention to the traces of time and how to visualize the complexity of human suffering is developed in his subsequent work. The failure of Western governments to intervene in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a theme explored in Norfolk’s (2005) *Bleed*, which revisits the frozen landscapes of eastern Bosnia where thousands were massacred and the almost abstract images become powerful allegories for the secrets buried beneath the ice. For Norfolk it was crucial to know the exact location of the gravesites, to give the work a forensic credibility and visual power. As he explains, “it’s even more important when the picture uses metaphors; if the detective work was poor then the whole project would unravel quickly. The only way you can come at it in such a symbolic way is if you are one hundred percent sure that here are the locations—otherwise it’s a weak, feeble approach” (cited in Lowe 2014, 225). The tension between the arresting beauty of the images and the fact that something terrible is contained in them enables him to make a strong moral argument about the nature of guilt.

Since the 1980s, Willie Doherty has explored the representation of the conflict in his native Northern Ireland through his video and photographic work. He uses a combination of forms to explore the relationships between landscape, memory, and the legacy of trauma. His *Buried* (2009), for example, is an eight-minute film that takes the viewer on a disturbing journey through a dark forest. The creeping tension has been described as follows:

Insects crawl in the rotting wood on the forest floor and the trees themselves leak an unidentified substance. The sound in the forest becomes increasingly threatening: thunder or a suppressed roar? Doherty plays with our expectations as he reveals traces of activity amongst the trees: a sleeping bag, a smouldering campfire, pieces of wire and plastic. Is this innocent litter or forensic evidence? As with most of Doherty’s work the setting is Northern Ireland, however the pine forest suggests other European post-conflict landscapes. In Doherty’s forest the event is left unspoken. (Bevan 2015, 42)

Throughout his work Doherty has addressed how the past haunts the present. It consistently addresses the politics of vision, and *Unseen* is the title of a retrospective that demonstrates the extent to which he has engaged with the tension between what is and what is not present in the visual field over the course of his career.

The powerful resonance of the “unseen” is exemplified in *Ghost Story* (2007), a fifteen-minute video installation that centers on an unsettling journey around Derry. The camera tracks slowly along a deserted country path, flanked by gloomy woods and ominous barbed wire fencing, intercut with close-ups of male and female eyes that look past the camera, witnesses to something that we never see. The video’s narration, by the actor Stephen Rea, is a flat, impassive account of murder and violence, half-remembered yet potentially imaginary. He has described the underlying premise in the following way:

The sense of the landscape being the scene of the crime, so to speak, and that it is also the source of a lot of the stories that perhaps need to be told. So that links back into using the landscape as a useful means to begin constructing *Ghost Story*. Then thinking about the spectral presence suggested by the camera’s movement led me to doing some research into traditional Irish ghost stories. This has been a form that allowed people to both express grief and deal with ideas around superstition. In the ghost story there is often a kind of unhappy presence that needs to find a voice that conventional religion doesn’t offer an outlet for—a sense of unresolved guilt or remorse or whatever . . . In this post-Ceasefire context there are so many people still obviously traumatized by what happened to them. It also comes out of the sense that the relationship between the landscape and memory is very active and alive. (Doherty in Barber 2009, 196)

Doherty’s approach dispenses with any narrative resolution, but the enigmatic tone does convey how complex political situations can be addressed outside the conventions of documentary photojournalism.

Another photographer who has consistently pushed the boundaries of documentary is Paul Graham. His early work includes *House Portraits* (1979–80), which concentrated on modern English suburban housing, followed by a deadpan study of the service stations and cafes that line

the Great North Road, transposing the American road trip with the less glamorous terrain of Britain's A1 revealing its unexpectedly cinematic potential (Graham 1983/2020). His work took an explicitly political direction in the searing *Beyond Caring* (1986/2021), which examined the grim Social Security offices facing the unemployed under Thatcherism. His clandestine photographs of these spaces captured the boredom and despair of these spaces, epitomizing a nation in decline. But it was Graham's next project, *Troubled Land* (1987), that signaled a shift toward the elliptical, investing seemingly banal images with complex metaphorical and symbolic meanings. The series examined the condition of Northern Ireland at a time when the "Troubles" were at their most turbulent, but the images concentrate on what he terms the visual footnotes of the conflict. He has described how one photograph introduced this distinctive approach:

A key image that helped locate the work was *Roundabout, Andersonstown, Belfast*, 1984, where you simply see a scruffy suburban fringe of Belfast, with everything looking quite banal, at least to anyone familiar with the topology of the British Isles, but then you realise all the lights have been smashed off the stands, the posters are placed very high so that nobody can interfere with them, the roundabout's all ripped up, there's nationalist graffiti on the railings. And then finally you see the soldiers, one running over the roundabout, others walking away on the extreme right, secreted into this everyday scene. So the inventory isn't actually correct, what appears to be ordinary is quite extraordinary, and perhaps more interestingly the opposite is also true, the adoption of the extraordinary into the ordinary fabric of the place. (cited in Wilson 1996, 13)

Graham's subsequent work has developed this open-ended strategy, and his pictures have become more oblique and enigmatic, examining how the echoes of local and regional history were playing themselves out across late twentieth-century Europe.

After moving to America, Graham published *American Night* (2003), which is his most ambitious attempt to use photographic aesthetics to explore social and political divides. It takes as its subject the invisibility of the poor. Many of the photographs are bleached-out and over-exposed images of roadsides and pedestrian walkways where the

blinding whiteness of everyday life renders the solitary figures hard to distinguish in most cases. The technique is a striking comment on “the political invisibility and social blindness to poverty and racism in America” (Cotton 2015, 181) and is heightened by the juxtaposition with the vibrant, color-saturated pictures of wealthy suburban homes that punctuate the series. This work was the first of a trilogy that has become a major achievement in the history of photography, merging multiple layers of visual commentary on American society to create poetically charged vignettes of everyday life. Yet for all their artistry, these pictures are also about what cannot be seen. Indeed, Graham has recognized that this is a defining theme: “I realised that concealment . . . has run through . . . my work, from the landscape of Northern Ireland, and the unemployed tucked away in backstreet offices, to the burdens of history swept under the carpet in Europe or Japan. Concealment of our turmoil from others, from ourselves even” (Graham in Wilson 1996: *Wearing* interview). As such the work exemplifies the notion of spectral evidence that I see as crucial to the idea of cultural haunting, how it reminds us that each and every place has its own history that both haunts it and haunts us.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to outline some of the ways in which the spectral has informed work in the social sciences and the humanities. I began with classical social theory, before addressing how historians and anthropologists have explored the relationships between the living and the dead, which provided a point of entry into the world of representation. The focus here was on gothic fiction, which has given voice and shape to hidden histories, proving itself to be open to all manner of political uses and interpretations—as the quarrel between Lacan and Derrida demonstrates. Other writers have used imaginative fiction to see that which is usually suppressed or thought to be dead and buried. While haunting can be a metaphor for less tangible anxieties and traumas associated with disappearance, Gordon (1997/2008) suggests it can also draw our attention to that which lingers, as in the impact of racial slavery and the failures of Reconstruction. These stories of cultural haunting differ from earlier ghost stories for they speak to the barely

acknowledged erasure of history and memory, and in doing so they offer an instance of “spectral evidence” (Baer 2005). The final section concentrates on how photographers have sought to grapple with the traces of time and the power of the unseen in their images.

What unites these different projects is that they share a form of gothic sensibility, manifest in a preoccupation with lingering trouble and exploring dread through politicizing history. One of the appeals of ghost criminology lies in its “appreciation of the discontinuous, distorted and multiple temporalities” of social and cultural life (Kindynis 2019, 39–40). Another important theme here is the effort to make visible that which is inherently diffuse, abandoned, forgotten, overlooked, or deliberately concealed or hidden. Here, attention can be drawn to CIA “ghost” prisons and the hidden geography of state secrets (Paglen 2009) through to the money laundered in the “dead” spaces of speculative real estate and the lifeless dwellings of the super-rich (Atkinson 2019). We live in a world where power and wealth move ever farther out of sight and beyond the reach of law. In his account of the “offshore” practices of the rich and super-rich, John Urry (2014) reveals how their geographical mobility is at the heart of mammoth inequalities, which are sustained by a vast system of secrecy that damages not only democracy but the very future of the planet. There is not one secret world, but many: the offshoring of manufacturing work, of waste, especially e-waste, of energy, of torture, of leisure and pleasure, of CO₂ emissions, and of taxation.

The spectral turn in criminology can also enliven the discipline itself. On one level the study of deviance is in rude health, but on another it leads a “zombie existence” (Reiner 2016, 64). In the United States, some have noted that the sociology of deviance has lost much of its intellectual energy where the rapid growth of criminal justice as a vocational discipline had taken its toll, concluding that the concept was still alive, but not all that lively (Best 2004). Others speak of its “resurrection” (Dellwing, Kotarbe, and Pino 2014), suggesting just how helpful it is to “retain traditions while evolving with the times” (Anderson 2014, xviii). Among the many lessons one can learn from Marx is that those who are not prepared to learn from history are condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past, which still serves as an invaluable reminder as to how sociological criminology might proceed.

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