

# **The Folklore of Ghosts**

**Edited by  
H. R. E. Davidson  
and  
W. M. S. Russell**



Many books on ghosts have appeared, but most have been concerned either with listing supposed apparitions or with discussing the possibility of manifestations being genuine. The first type of book has varied from the worst kind of fiction disguised as fact to reputable attempts to document alleged hauntings. The second type has tried to apply scientific criteria to such events.

There is however a third approach possible, that of the folklorists, who are not concerned with the extent to which a manifestation may be genuine, but how the stories themselves develop and become embroidered as they are retold. As Hilda Davidson writes in her foreword: 'We may not accept that ghosts have an objective existence, or that ghostly manifestations are caused by departed spirits, but we are bound to accept that stories and traditions about such things have long existed, and obstinately continue to do so.' This book attempts, possibly for the first time, to examine a number of ghost traditions and to analyse them, to see what characteristics emerge. The papers examine not only present traditions, but also the place of ghosts in ancient and medieval culture; and the central section of the book, *Ghosts in Perspective*, is an important paper by Claire Russell which offers a challenging new analysis of various well-attested reports of haunting, relating them to the wider context of family and community.







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## INTRODUCTION

MANY BOOKS ON ghosts have appeared, but they fall for the most part into two classes. One type lists apparitions, manifestations, haunted houses and the like, with varying degrees of reliability. The poorest examples, devoid of precise references, or, worse still, furnished with fictitious ones, rank with vampire films and horror fiction, bringing the subject into such disrepute that serious scholars retreat in disgust from such polluted territory and conclude that ghosts are not worthy of academic interest. The fact that such books continue to be welcomed by publishers, however, is in itself noteworthy. The best publications of this kind, like Christina Hole's *Haunted England*, provide a valuable basis for serious study; the more objective the account and the more carefully mapped the background, the more reason we have to be grateful to the recorder. The second type of book is that produced by investigators like E.J. Dingwall and other members of the Society for Psychical Research. Their laudable intention is to separate what could be genuine manifestations from ingenious fakes or innocent misrepresentations, and to produce evidence which will stand up to scientific investigation of the most rigorous kind.

For the folklorist a different approach is required. We are not concerned with how far reported manifestations may be genuine, although Theo Brown's detailed study of Old Mrs Leakey brings out one important element in the reporting of ghostly appearances, that of deliberate fabrication for deceitful, even criminal, ends. Most of the papers in this book deal with opinions voiced about ghosts, with tales told about them for entertainment as well as from conviction, and the means used to prevent their appearance, so that it would not be possible to pronounce judgement on the cases involved. We may not accept that ghosts have an objective existence, or that ghostly manifestations are caused by departed spirits, but we are bound to accept that stories and traditions about such things have long existed, and obstinately continue to do so. As wise old Samuel Johnson remarked:

It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it, but all belief is for it.

(Boswell's *Life of Johnson* 3 Apr.1778)

Although he may have underestimated the age of the world, his comment on the pertinacity of belief in ghosts remains as valid today as in 1778.

In this book an attempt has been made — the first, to my knowledge — to examine a number of ghost traditions and to attempt to analyse them, and to see what characteristics emerge when the various studies are put together. We have first, traditions of hauntings, serious or frivolous, from our own times or in the last century. Claire Russell's paper, forming the middle section of the book, challenges us with a new analysis of various well-attested reports of haunting by both the dead and the living. As Neil Philip has pointed out;<sup>1</sup> 'Like Andrew Lang before her, she traces an intimate connection between such experiences and the dreaming process'. She emphasises the importance of associations aroused by places, and of relationships between the living family or community involved and the person reporting the experience. The papers of Linda-May Ballard on practices and beliefs in Ulster, and of Venetia Newall on those of West Indians in Britain, both widely illustrated by recorded statements, confirm the soundness of this approach, as does also Joan Rockwell's account of traditions recorded by the Danish folklorist Evald Tang Kristensen in the second half of the 19th century. Two important elements emerge in other papers. Katharine Briggs, in the last paper she gave before her death, points out the difficult borderline between immediate reporting of an experience and the account given after the creative imagination has been at work on the recollection of it. Carmen Blacker describes how an ancient and well-established Japanese tradition of angry ghosts returning to torment the living is made the basis for therapeutic ceremonies to cure illness and neurosis, which she herself has witnessed in Japan.

This should be sufficient to convince anyone of the



major importance of the serious study of traditions about ghosts and haunting by the living or the dead. The third section, however, takes the study further. This deals with ghosts of the past, and it becomes possible to perceive certain patterns in the persistent tradition of the return of the dead, occasionally to help the living, but more often, alas, to trouble and injure them. Beginning with the scandalous case of Mrs. Leakey's ghost in the 17th century, it ends with Canon Porter's survey of the earliest evidence available to us, that from the literature of the Ancient Near East. In the ghost traditions of medieval Europe, two conflicting conceptions can be seen. We have that of elusive spirits moving independently of their bodies, set beside that of the hideous corporeal dead quitting their graves to bring terror and pestilence to men, as illustrated by the papers of Richard Bowyer and Hilda Davidson. The same double image of the returning dead puzzled thoughtful men in Ancient Greece and Rome, as W.M.S. Russell establishes in his study of ghost stories in classical literature. In an earlier period still, the activities of the dead inspired poignant passages in the literature of the Ancient Near East. Some of Canon Porter's quotations show how long-lived are certain conceptions of the returning dead, for they might be applied to the malignant ghosts of modern Tokyo or to the West Indian 'duppies', 'revealing in embryo', as he concludes, 'features .... paralleled and developed elsewhere'.

This book does not bring a solution to the problem posed by Dr. Johnson, but it leaves us with a series of question-marks, and new food for further thought and study. It is only by means of co-operation and objective work of this kind that we are likely to make real progress in this elusive subject, the question of why ghosts and hauntings have so long occupied men's imaginations, and continue to do so for all our advances in science and in the understanding of the workings of the human mind.<sup>2</sup>

HILDA R. ELLIS DAVIDSON  
Cambridge, 1981



I

*GHOSTS IN RECENT TIMES*

Ghost stories are innumerable and their number is added to every day.

CHRISTINA HOLE, *Haunted England*



## 1. TRADITION AND INVENTION IN GHOST STORIES

Katharine M. Briggs

I AM NOT sure that the title of my paper exactly expresses the meaning I had in mind, but I think perhaps this is a convenient ambiguity because it gives me the opportunity of attacking the subject from two sides. In the first place I was thinking of the accretions which grow round a story when it has been told several times with an interval, perhaps of several years, between the tellings. I am not speaking of wilful alterations by the teller to make the story more effective, so much as a kind of creative memory by which folk elements filter into the story without the conscious knowledge of the teller. A parallel but more drastic change occurs when the story is transmitted through a number of tellers with all the unconscious additions and omissions which in the end shape it into a folk-tale, the water-moulded pebble instead of the carved crystal.

I am always delighted to hear a first-hand ghost story and even more delighted to hear it recounted again after it has made itself at home in the observer's mind. A good many years ago I was so privileged as to have this experience. It happened some fifty years ago, about 1930, when we were living near Dunkeld in Perthshire, on the edge of a region rich in tradition. Dunkeld was nearly three miles from us, up the Tay, and in those days a touring company called The Arts League of Service used to visit the place every year. We went to the performance, and a friend came too who lived above Dunkeld in a house called 'St Jeromes' after a ruined chapel standing in the next field to the house. She walked down into Dunkeld by a rough lane which used to be the main road from the south before the low road was built which ran along beside the Tay. Our friend came in rather late and did not find a place near us, and the next day she was ill, so that we did not see her for some weeks. When she met my sister again she told her that she had had a strange experience on her way to the performance. As she stepped out of her gate onto the little rough lane she felt that she was stepping into

a slow-moving crowd. She was ordinarily a quick walker, but she couldn't make her way through it. She felt a buzzing in her ears and had to struggle to go on, but her torch showed her nothing but the ordinarily dark night around her. She was not strong — she had a weak heart — but suddenly the pressure ceased and she was free to go on. She felt very weak and shaky, but she did not turn back, whether because of her dogged Scots nature or because she was afraid of being involved again in the crowd I don't know. We gave her a lift back, but she said nothing of it then, though no doubt she was glad not to have to risk involvement with the procession again. When I heard of the experience I was inclined to think that the onset of her illness had produced a kind of hallucination, but she had come to the conclusion that she had walked into the middle of a ghostly funeral procession, carrying some much-esteemed corpse to be buried in St Jerome's chapel some thousand years before, for that is how she explained the experience. We heard no more of it for a good many years. By that time she had become a close friend, and she was still living in St Jerome's with one sister, the rest of her family having died. Now she told the story in great detail, but it had changed. By that time she had not only felt the pressure round her but she had seen the procession, dressed in monkish cloaks and carrying flickering torches, and she had heard their chants too. I said — "You didn't really see them or hear them did you? You only felt them pressing against you." But she was quite sure that she had seen them and heard them; and one day she and her sister told us that they sometimes saw lights at night streaming out of the ruined walls of St Jerome's chapel and that the sheep in the field sometimes stopped grazing and all looked towards the chapel. The two sisters were sure that what they were gazing at was the Elevation of the Host. This seemed strange from two staunch Presbyterians, but they were of Highland blood, Robertsons, the prevalent clan in that district, which was generally called The Gateway to the Highlands. Our friend was a very downright and exact woman, who would never wittingly have tampered with the truth. But they were in an area of tradition. The Celtic missionaries,

"The Culdees" as they were called (that is, The Servants), had travelled up the Tay in coracles to Loch Tay and then up the Lym, leaving many traces and legends behind. Dunkeld Cathedral was originally a Culdee Church, a long rectangle, not cruciform, and St Ninian was the chief missionary to Dunkeld — one of the little closes there was still called St Ninian's Wynd — so that there were many traditions of the Culdees still hanging about the place. Yet it was strange to find these two educated women, the one a doctor and the other a teacher, and reared in the strictest Presbyterian background, so much imbued with the local traditions that they took root, and became native to their mind and memory.

There was another tradition which we heard from some friends who lived near us, some three miles away from the lane. It was of a servant girl working in Stenton, a house newly built at the beginning of the century, who drowned herself in Stenton pond. She must have been a Dunkeld girl, for her funeral was said to haunt the lane on the way to the Cathedral. It would have been a quiet, simple procession, though a good deal of heartbreak would surround it. The neighbours who told us this tradition were apt to pick up ghost stories with rather flimsy foundations, but this one seems to show that there was some foundation of a ghostly funeral following that path.

Where we have not personally witnessed accretions we can often deduce them from anachronisms in the traditional stories. From the first introduction of coaches into England at the end of the sixteenth century they have hypnotised the imagination of the people. A striking example is to be found in Thistleton Dyer's rather indiscriminative book, *The Ghost World*. He is giving examples of ghostly coaches. "In the little village of Acton, Suffolk," he says, "it was currently reported not many years ago that on certain occasions the park gates were wont to fly open at midnight 'withouten hands', and that a soach, drawn by four spectral horses, and accompanied by headless grooms and outriders, proceeded with great rapidity from the park to a spot called *the nursery corner*, a spot where tradition affirms a very bloody engagement took place in olden times, when the Romans were

governors of England." This statement is a miracle of vagueness, taken from *Notes and Queries*, in which no explicit authority is given for any statement, but what first strikes us is the incongruity of an eighteenth century coach on a Roman battlefield. On the other hand this point may be taken to prove that this is no literary invention but has sprung up from the timeless garden of tradition where crinolines and chitons rank indifferently as "old-fashioned".

Baring-Gould, another skirmisher over the fields of Folklore, accepts the spectral coach as the descendant of *Herla's Hell-Wain* and the Wagon of *Ankon*. He gives Lady Howard's death coach as the West Country example, and quotes a folk-poem about it from the many which he had collected.

The coach is all black, with a headless coachman, black horses and a black hound running before. Riding in this, Lady Howard drives round the countryside, picking up those who are destined for death.

"Now pray step in! my lady saith;

Now pray step in and ride!"

"I thank thee, I had rather walk

Than gather to thy side."

The wheels go round without a sound

Of tramp or turn of wheels,

As cloud at night, in pale moonlight

Along the carriage steals.

I'd rather walk a hundred miles

And run by night and day,

Than have that carriage halt for me,

And hear my lady say —

"Now pray step in and make no din,

Step in with me to ride:

There's room I trow by me for you,

And all the world beside."

These coaches were very common in the Cotswold countryside. One, described by Mrs Falconer of Leafield, one of my best informants, seems rather a ghostly record of an accident than a phantom coach.

She and her mother were glovemakers, and indeed she continued to make gloves almost to the day of her death. It was the custom for the cut-out leather of the gloves to be distributed at The George Inn at



Leaffield and picked up by the gloviers, who brought back their finished goods, picked up the new patterns, and were paid accordingly — not very lavishly. Mrs Falconer and her mother had taken back their finished gloves, picked up the cut-outs and were returning home to Kingstanding in Wychwood Forest when they heard a great trampling and jingling behind them. The road was narrow and the verges steep there, and they climbed up into the bushes to get out of the way. A coach and four passed them at a gallop along the narrow road where coaches never went, failed to turn the corner, went straight over into the ditch, — and vanished. They never saw it again, but they never forgot it.

This seemed a re-enacting of a past accident rather than the usual spectral coach, but most of the Cotswold coaches were occupied by people, like Lady Howard of Devon, who had been very unpopular in their lifetime.

Round Burford the prime villainess was Lady Tanfield, with her husband close behind her in unpopularity. He was the first resident Lord of the Manor since the Norman Conquest, and the burgesses, who had behaved for centuries as if the town was a Royal Borough, soon learned their mistake. Sir Lawrence, who was a Law Lord, stripped them of all the rights they had assumed, and a few to which they were entitled as well. Lady Tanfield was supposed to have said that she would have liked to grind the people of Burford to powder beneath her chariot wheels, and when she died it was in her chariot that she haunted Burford, riding in a fiery flame over the roofs, up one side of the street and down the other. At length, the townspeople got seven clergymen to lay her. They called her into the Church, conjured her into a bottle, sealed it firmly and threw it into the river under the southernmost arch. There she stayed, but in the long drought at the beginning of this century people began to imagine that they heard an ominous sizzling sound coming from under the southernmost arch.

A rumour went round that if that arch went dry Lady Tanfield would come out; so the public-spirited old ladies from the almshouse came out with buckets and

and soused the arch until the rain came. In the meantime Sir Lawrence had a haunting of his own at Whittington, as I learned from Mrs Haynes, born a Waller of Burford, whose grandparents owned Whittington Manor. Sir Lawrence Tanfield had a coach of his own, which he rode along "The Wicked Lord's Lane", and it was believed that anyone who saw him would die. Mrs Haynes, arriving at Whittington for her holidays, was told by the groom who met her that The Wicked Lord had been at it again. It seemed that a traveller had engaged a wagonette to drive him from the station, and, sitting up beside the driver, he had been taken suddenly ill. The driver set him down by the roadside covered with a rug and went to fetch help. Whilst he was gone the stranger died. The groom found his body, and like most of the village believed that the Wicked Lord has passed that way. Presumably it was before Lady Tanfield was laid that the couple kept a coach together, driving from Wilcote to North Leigh with flame coming from their horses' nostrils.

The dating of these stories of the Tanfields seems to be rather a tricky matter. They lived in the reign of King James I. Sir Lawrence died in 1625. Lady Tanfield is supposed to have been laid in the eighteenth century, but Sir Lawrence, as we have seen, had a haunting of his own at Whittington until the beginning of the twentieth, and he and Lady Tanfield are reported as driving along the road from Wilcote to North Leigh by Angela Parker in "Folklore Notes" of 1923, published in *Folklore* in that year. She says that an old North Leigh man had seen the coach, and that his horse, which was blind, trembled and broke into a lather as it passed. This seems to suggest that the clergy who exorcised Lady Tanfield had only acted in a purely local way, since the Burford people were satisfied that the bottle held her spirit satisfactorily as long as the water of the Windrush covered it. There is however another possible explanation; Sir William and Lady Wilcote, a medieval couple buried under a handsome tomb in Wilcote Church, were also supposed to ride from Wilcote to North Leigh, and this ride is curiously connected with the Tanfields, for it is said to be in protest because Sir Lawrence had diverted a charity left by Sir

William to the poor of Wilcote to enrich his ever hungry and covetous pocket. So it may have been Sir William and his Lady whom the old man with the blind horse had seen.

Lady Tanfield's ghost is also said to haunt Great Tew, which Lord Falkland inherited from the Tanfields. It had been a little paradise in his time, — that 'University in a purer air,' as Lord Clarendon called it. But it seemed that nothing could efface the dark shadow that Lady Tanfield cast. She was a harsh mother to her gentle daughter Lettice Carey, one of the learned ladies of the seventeenth century, who pursued her learning under difficulties in her youth, forced to hoard candle-ends to read by night. Yet, termagant though she was, Lady Tanfield had her soft spot — it seems that she really loved her slippery unscrupulous husband. She herself wrote the epitaph inscribed on the elaborate tomb which she had erected in a side-chapel of Burford Church — without consulting the Vicar, nor the Churchwardens. It ends rather touchingly:

"Love made me poet,  
Not my witt."

Yet even in that place, where we have a glimpse of her usually hard heart, there is a shadow cast. A few years ago the paintwork of the tomb was being freshened, and the craftsman working there did not like to stay in the side-chapel alone.

I shall conclude with a story which is just off the track of my subject, because it was told me quite a number of years after the experience, when the creative memory would have had time to build details around it, and I only heard it once, so that I had no chance of evaluating any changes. I found it most interesting, however, because it was built round a tradition of an unexplained event just before the Massacre of Glencoe, which, so far as I know, has never got into the history books.

It was told me by a sister of Sidney Steel, the animal painter, who was a great friend of my father's. Carrie Steel might have been called a typical Scottish spinster of the small laird class, whose conversation was generally what you might call *genealogical small talk*. When I was young and impatient I found that

kind of thing very boring, but if you go on opening mussels long enough you'll find a pearl in one of them at least; and one day she told us about how she had gone once to stay at Glencoe with Carrie Macdonald, a school-friend of hers. It was in the season of Beltane (Midsummer), which in the Highlands is one of the seasons sacred to the dead. Carrie Macdonald had a touch of "the sight". At any rate, when they had gone out that day she suddenly said: "I must go back. Something's wrong with Mother". They turned back and found that her mother had been taken suddenly ill. They put her to bed and got the doctor, and she was comfortably settled. It was not a matter of sitting up with her, so everyone went to bed. There was a good deal of company in the house, so the two Carries were sharing a room. They talked a little and went to sleep, but at twelve o'clock they were wakened by all the dogs in the house beginning to howl.

Carrie Macdonald said: "I wonder if anything's wrong with mother." and she slipped out to see.

She soon came back and said, "No, it's all right; she's sleeping peacefully." The moon was shining brightly outside, and she went to the window to look out. Then she said, in a low voice, "Carrie, come here and tell me if you see what I see."

Carrie Steele came to the window and looked out. The moon was so bright that they could see almost as clearly as if it had been day, but more eerily. They looked straight across the valley to the low hill on the other side. For the most part it was covered in heather, but there was a smooth green patch in front of them and a little above them, and at one end of it there was a big grey stone lying, — it looked as if it had been a standing stone that had been toppled down. It was quite far off, but in that clear air and in the bright, uncanny moonlight it looked quite near. What they were looking at was the figure of a man who had come out of the heather, and was walking across the pale, short grass towards the stone. They could see him quite clearly. He was wearing a long, dark cloak and a broad-brimmed, high hat, cut off flat at the top. He walked slowly across the patch of green until he reached the stone, and then — he disappeared. And all the dogs in the house stopped

howling. The girls shivered a little and went to bed.

As they pulled up the bed-clothes Carrie Macdonald said: "There's an old woman that lives at the foot of the glen, and she knows all that there is to be known about the place. We'll go and ask her about it to-morrow."

So next day they went down the glen to a little, white-washed cottage with a low thatch. They got a great welcome from the old lady in it. She took them in and gave them some clear white liquid to drink, but it was very strong: it was illicit whisky. And Carrie Macdonald told her just what they had seen. "Ah yes," she said, "that would be the Spaniard. At least they guessed he was a Spaniard from his way of dressing, but he had no word of the Gaelic and only one or two of the English. He came here a week or two before the Redcoats came, and wandered about the place, but men could make nothing of him, and two nights before the Massacre they found him lying by the stone up there with a dirk in his wame. And they had no notion what to do with him, so they digged a hole and laid him in. The Massacre put it out of our heads, but he's been up and down there ever since. I often see him myself in the summer evenings, when I'm sitting at the door shedding peas, but there's -one knows where he came from or what he had in mind."

So that is all they learned of the ghost; but they had little doubt that he was tangled up in some way with the Massacre.



## 2. BEFORE DEATH & BEYOND - A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF DEATH & GHOST TRADITIONS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ULSTER

Linda-May Ballard

SINCE MANY OF the customs and traditions associated with death are also associated with religion, it might be expected that, in Ulster, these traditions would be divided into two classes, those belonging to Catholics and those belonging to protestants. While membership of either denomination may govern funeral ritual and certain elements of the beliefs surrounding death, it is by no means the case that there are two distinct groups of practices, beliefs and observations. In theory, Catholic theology, with its provision of purgatory, may offer greater justification for ghost beliefs than does the protestant band. When asking questions in the course of field research on the subject of ghosts, I have met with a response to the effect of 'Well, if he's in heaven he'll not want to get out, and if he's in the other place, he'll not be able to', a typical protestant reaction. It would be a gross over-simplification, however, to suggest that Ulster ghost beliefs and tales are confined to the Catholic section of the community. Many Catholics do not, and several protestants do, believe in ghosts.

Doubtless, feelings of awe and fear, and perhaps of reassurance on the part of the living, help to account for many ghost beliefs and practices associated with death. However, at least one death-custom, if it may be so called, owed more to expediency than to feelings of respect. There is a corpus of folklore on the subject of body-snatching, an occupation which caused special provisions to be made in certain cemeteries. A 'resurrection lamp' in Mallusk cemetery was used by armed relatives who might have watched over fresh graves. In other grave-yards iron bars were bolted over graves, or the coffin might be locked into a cage for a period of three weeks after the death. The baggage of medical students travelling from Ulster to Glasgow and Edinburgh was carefully examined, and sometimes found to contain cadavers. A certain sexton, suspected of trafficking in corpses, was dismissed

from his post. Burke and Hare, who supplied the medical schools of Edinburgh with specimens for dissection, and who accelerated their rate of supply by murdering victims, came from Ulster.<sup>1</sup>

'Burke and Hare' were the nicknames applied to two women who undertook the preparation of dead bodies in the Falls Road area of Belfast. They were self-trained, and cannot be described as having plied a trade, as they demanded no payment for their services. They kept their own accoutrements, including bed linen, which the bereaved family would have laundered and returned, and an old door on which the corpse was laid out. This, though it was referred to as 'the death board' was not given any special treatment, as it might double as a support when home redecorations were in progress.<sup>2</sup>

In some regions, when a body has been laid out it is still 'waked' between the time of the death and the funeral, generally two or three nights. Waking nowadays is a fairly subdued practice, in comparison with the custom in the past. Activities considered to be appropriate at wakes included, along with praying and lamenting, story telling and card playing, a hand of cards often being given to the corpse, in whose presence the wakes must be held. Tobacco, clay pipes and whiskey had to be provided for all who attended the wake, and doubtless they helped to attract crowds. The drinking of whiskey in particular may have led to the rowdy behaviour characteristics of wakes, at which wild games were often played, participants hurling potatoes or lumps of turf at each other and at the corpse. Sean O'Sullivan, describing how a rowdy wake in Co. Mayo amazed him, accustomed as he was to quiet wakes in his home county of Kerry, remarks:

..... what surprised me most of all was that the people of the house, who were mourning the loss of a relative, made no attempt to curb this unruly behaviour ... none of them seemed to be resentful of the behaviour, nor did they appear to take any notice of it.<sup>3</sup>

He stresses that this behaviour was not intended to be disrespectful, suggests that it was formerly the rule, and gives many examples of efforts made by the



clergy to modify it. One Co. Tyrone woman, a Roman Catholic now in her 70s, remembers as a child attending rowdy wakes, which she termed 'disrespectful'. Wakes in her area became more subdued when the priest spoke from the altar against them.<sup>4</sup>

Rowdy behaviour at wakes was not confined to the Catholic section of the community although, doubtless for a variety of reasons, it persisted longer amongst Catholics. In 1831, 1st Magherafelt Presbyterian Church issued the following Resolution:

We, the Minister, Elders, committee and members of the presbyterian congregation of Magherafelt being fully convinced that public wakes are a great nuisance to those families which are visited by death, and from the manner in which they are conducted, from the exhibition of levity and even profanity which they not infrequently present, are an outrage upon decency and religion, and highly unbecoming such solemn occasions, are aware that the evil is greatly increased, if not entirely promoted by the distribution of ardent spirits and tobacco and pipes at such places, in order as far as possible to abolish this evil - Do hereby resolve - That when it may please God in future to visit our families by death, we will refrain from all public distribution of spirits and tobacco at both wake and funeral.<sup>5</sup>

This behaviour had long been the subject of clerical condemnation, due both to its apparent unsuitability and to the fact that the provision of tobacco and whiskey often made heavy demands on the material well-being of the bereaved. Similarly it deeply wounded Victorian sensibilities. In 1829, a pamphlet entitled 'The Wake House', went into its second edition. Its horrified writer describes the mirth and amusement of those attending a wake, and reports that

Through the small window of the inner room might be seen men playing cards and drinking, while the awful name of God was not only taken in vain, but was frequently made use of in calling down the most dreadful curses on themselves and others. The pamphlet concludes with an exhortation:

Reader, Have you been used to attend wakes? Think how awful it is to engage in amusement and folly when God's providence, by the death of a fellow creature, is calling you to reflect upon the awful evil of sin, which brought death and all its sorrows into the world; to remember your latter end and prepare you to die. Determine never to go yourself, and on every proper occasion endeavour to persuade others not to go, and whenever you see a fellow creature dead, think thus:- I may be called away next to the bar of God, Am I ready to die? And look up to God, that for Christ's sake he may pardon your sin and change your heart, and then you will be ready to die whenever death comes.

For whatever reason, not all wakes were wild, unruly events. A description of the custom in the Ards peninsula includes the telling of ghost stories, and recommends touching the corpse before leaving, to avoid seeing ghosts on the way home. Touching a corpse is also considered to be a satisfactory method of relieving squeamishness related to dead bodies.

One interesting element of Ulster wakes was the custom of laying the corpse out 'underboard'. In the course of telling a ghost story, one narrator explained what was meant by this:

.... they took the door off, and you were laid out on the rail of the table, under the table, and the candles, and everything that would be attached to the ...wake ... would be lit on the top of the table and in the old days they put the pipe and tobacco and snuff and different things ... all on the table.<sup>6</sup>

Doors, incidentally, might be unhinged to perform other functions, for example, to provide a regular floor for a step dancer. The description of laying out underboard is confirmed by Henry Morris, who states:

.... when the corpse was washed and dressed for the coffin, it was placed under the table, not on the floor but on a shelf about eight or nine inches above the floor, ... old tables had two rails fixed longitudinally about this height from the floor, and a door-leaf or some boards

made an improvised shelf on which the corpse was laid out. In South Ulster, as well as in North Connacht, the corpse was always laid out in this fashion, under the table; in Co. Donegal, on the other hand, the corpse was placed on the table.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes a corpse would be laid out but not waked. Instead, last respects would be paid in a room specially prepared for the purpose. The body would be dressed usually in a white shroud, and laid out in a bed made up with white linen sheets kept only for such occasions. The room would be draped in white, and any exposed mirrors would be covered in white cloths intended for that purpose, to prevent the appearance of the reflection of the departing spirit.

The paying of respects sometimes included the custom of keening. While reference is occasionally made to keening in the course of field-work, the present writer has not come across a sample keen. It is difficult, from a description of keening, to know whether people used the word to refer to a formalised lament, or whether it is used to mean the informal grieving of mourners. In the past, keening was a formal lamentation. A description of the small town of Portaferry includes the comment:

The keen or Irish wail could ... be heard at funerals in the streets of our town. My father told me that the last time he heard it was in the year 1833...<sup>8</sup>

Nineteenth century sources refer regularly to keening. For example, the obituary notice for one Mary Gauly, printed in the Belfast News Letter of 3rd May 1814, tells that

she was waked in the old Irish manner, having six women placed on each side of the corpse, who continued singing the ulleloo, or Irish cry, with short intervals during the two nights previous to her interment.<sup>9</sup>

Keening might be practised for deceased relatives at the anniversary of a funeral, as recorded in a letter written in the 1820s from Connemara, Co. Galway. Of the keen the writer remarks,

Their funeral cry or howl, as it is called is not liable to the same objections (as those made to wakes) and must be allowed to be an innocent,

although perhaps a barbarous expression of grief. I grant you that it may appear disgusting when it is heard as the voice of a hireling but that the aspect of real sorrow should be assumed and caricatured is not peculiar to Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

Keening however did come under the censure of the clergy. Dr. Bray, Archbishop of Cashel between 1792 and 1820, objected strongly to keening in his pastoral letter of 1797. It seems that he objected as much to its 'barbarous' nature as to the fact that keeners were paid for their services.

A keen was recorded by Sidney Cowell, apparently on Inishmore, one of the Aran Islands which lie across the mouth of Galway Bay. Cowell, whose remarks indicate that keening was still, in the 1950s, a professional occupation, says, of the woman who agreed to make the recording:

.... she asked that she not be named, so that her relatives in Ireland and America need not know that she had done it. It is of course, risking bad luck to 'wail' or 'cry' at random what is a ceremonial expression of grief ... but I gathered that there was also some question of presumption since 'crying the dead' is a professional thing, for which mourners are brought in from outside, and are paid.<sup>11</sup>

Croker, writing in the 1820s, remarks:

The Irish funeral howl is notorious, and although this vociferous expression of grief is on the decline, there is still, in the less civilized parts of the country, a strong attachment to the custom, and many may yet be found who are keeners or mourners for the dead by profession.<sup>12</sup>

The actual funeral may be governed by religious observation, although a letter sent from Connemara in the 1820s remarks of a funeral party:

.... these poor people were not accompanied by their priest, the grave was dug, and the body was committed to its parent earth, without a single prayer, with the word of exhortation to the bystanders.<sup>13</sup>

It may be that it was not convenient for the priest to attend this funeral, or perhaps the people involved did not wish to incur funeral dues. The circum-

stances of the funeral are more likely to reflect the material than the spiritual state of the deceased.

In his description of funeral customs, Croker records an interesting tradition which he encountered in the south of Ireland:

It is a general opinion amongst the lower orders, that the last buried corpse has to perform an office like that of a 'fag' in our public schools by the junior boy, or at a regimental mess by the youngest officer, and that the attendance on his churchyard companions is only relieved by the interment of some other person. The notion may seem too absurd, yet serious consequences have sometimes resulted from it, and an instance comes within my recollection where two funerals, proceeding to the same burial ground, arrived within view of each other, a short distance from their place of destination. Both immediately halted, and a messenger was mutually dispatched to demand precedence; their conference terminated in blows, and the throng on both sides forsaking the coffins, rushed impetuously forward, when a furious contest ensued, in which some lives were lost.<sup>14</sup>

Donaldson, a contemporary of Croker, mentions this belief in his account of the barony of Upper Fews, Co. Armagh. He adds the information that—superstition has assigned another reason (to account for this demand for precedence) — namely, that the corpse that first enters the graveyard will be first getting through purgatory and coming to judgment, and will be first entering into the everlasting happiness in the heavenly mansions.<sup>15</sup>

Life after death is here closely related to life on earth.

Burial sometimes took place on islands. In Co. Fermanagh in the past, travel by water was often more convenient than travel by land. Certain islands in Lower Lough Erne were the sites of cemeteries, those to be buried taken out by boat. Inishmacsaint was one such site, but the following description, given by Mr & Mrs Hall, writing in 1847, relates to Devenish. They state:

A circumstance was related to us by a gentleman who was an eye-witness of the sad scene, and who furnished us with the following particulars, upon the accuracy of which the reader may depend:-

'The boat was duly prepared to convey 'the funeral' from the mainland to the picturesque island in Lough Erne. It was a quiet, grayish day, heavy clouds hung low beneath the canopy of heaven, and the air had a cool, breezy feel, there was, however, no swell upon the water, and neither wind nor rain. The coffin was laid across the boat, and was followed first by the mother, but all the cousins and 'near friends' made way for the poor weeping girl (who had been betrothed to the dead young man). One by one, the people followed, silently at first, until the entire party who were to accompany the corpse, fourteen in number, were arranged as many as could be accommodated sitting, while others stood in the midst, then, when the boat was pushed and so fairly launched upon the lake, they one and all commenced the wild keen, lamenting the death '...of him of the fair hair and fairer heart, whose eyes were as blue as the sky he had looked at in many lands - whose voice was the music his mother loved - whose swift feet could not outrun death - whose strong arm was but as a stem of flax in the grasp of the destroyer'. 'Oh why - why - why' exclaimed the first keener - whose grizzled hair streamed from beneath the red kerchief that was tied loosely under her chin, as she formed the centre of the standing group - and clapped her hands above her head each time she repeated, 'why - why did you leave us? When the colleen - das - the girl whose eyes were drowned with tears and whose feet failed her through heart sorrow, when she was coming from the great city, where many wooed her to stay, to twine her white arms round you, and made you bide till she was ready - ready as willing to fly to you from all, but you alone - why did you not wait? Why - why - why? And all in that funeral boat repeated 'why - why - why?' And those on the mainland took up the

melancholy chant and echoed the sound to him who heard it not.<sup>16</sup>

More prosaically, in the 1960s, there were several funeral processions to the Copeland Islands. These marked the return of inhabitants who left when the islands were evacuated during the second world war. The boats travelled in a line, the one containing the coffined body leading the procession. This is echoed by an account of funeral customs in the Rosses, Co. Donegal, contained in a letter dated 10th April, 1788:

Their funeral processions were no less worth of notice than their other customs. Wrapped in a coarse woollen cloth, by them called Ebed, the corpse was put into a curragh, with the feet and legs dangling over the stern, and (with it) a man with a paddle, to conduct the whole train to the Isle of Aran, where their burial ground was; this curragh was followed by that which carried the priest; next to him went the relations of the deceased, in order of their proximity of kindred, and then as many as had curraghs- and of these Mr. N-. saw sixty or eighty in a train.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the feet and legs dangled over the side of the boat implies that the body was uncoffined, and buried simply in its shroud or winding sheet. A letter written from Co. Galway during the 1820s describes a funeral procession: '.... the body was not in a coffin, but on a bier, with a linen cloth thrown over it, and confined at the four corners, to prevent its being blown away..<sup>18</sup> Although the writer remarks that this was not a common practice, as most people were buried in coffins, the description corresponds with one from Co. Donegal. In this account, it is claimed that the body, wrapped in a piece of flannel, was placed on a bier constructed of wooden slats joined by ropes. The body was then secured in place, again using ropes. The wooden structure was placed on a mat of plaited straw which had holes at each corner. A loop of rope was passed through each hole. Four men put these ropes over their shoulders, and in this way carried the corpse to the graveyard.<sup>19</sup>

Uncoffined burial might be practised for reasons of economy, although regularly people made coffins for

deceased relatives. The writer of the letter from Co. Galway, mentioned above, remarks that the people of Connemara had a 'superstitious horror of selling wood for coffins.'<sup>20</sup> He goes on to tell of a scheme which proposed to replace wooden coffins with '.... a patent one, made of metal, of a peculiar construction, in which the bodies might be successively carried to the grave and dropped into the earth.'<sup>21</sup> He reports that the scheme was unpopular, although such a device was used during the Great Famine period of the 1840s. A coffin made from hazel and interwoven sally rods, found in an old graveyard in Co. Down, is believed to date from the same time.<sup>22</sup>

A description of coffin-carrying in Rathlin Island is encapsulated in a story of a sea rescue. The description reads as follows:-

....in them days when they were carrying a coffin to the graveyard, not the way they do it now, carrying a coffin on their shoulder, they used to have two long pieces of stick which they rested the coffin on and four people carried it, about waist height... at arms length... these poles were always kept inside the gate of the graveyard ... 'spags' is the name of these things that they carried the coffin on.<sup>23</sup>

In the tale, the spags were broken and used to row the boat which made the rescue. The place in which this event occurred was known thereafter as Port na Spaig. Although there are several grave sites on Rathlin Island, there is now only a graveyard. It is situated in Church Bay, approximately four miles from Kebbly, where the death in the following tale occurred:

....one time, Kebbly, up at the far end of the island there was an old women em she died up there and eh they put her in the coffin and no mat... you know no matter where they died in the island they always carried them to the church or to the chapel, and eh they were carrying her down, you see... it was quite... quite a long, long road you know, and he they come to a place called the Grey Stone, this particular place is supposed to be haunted you know, and quite a few rare things seen about it. But eh anyway they



come as far as the Grey Stone, and they thought they heard 'a... a knocking noise in the coffin you see, so they went on about another quarter of a mile and... and you know they hea.. felt movement in the coffin you see. So there was nobody brave enough to eh.. to open the coffin, so at the finish up they met an old man coming to meet the funeral coming down. And eh they stopped for a rest you see. So they set the coffin down along the side the road and eh, the old boy was talking to them and eh, they said to him, 'You know by God we thought we felt her moving in the coffin.' 'Oh by God,' he says, 'If you did, why didn't you take the lid off?' Some of them said, 'Maybe she would have got out.' And well by God, I suppose they allowed whenever they carried her that far, they weren't going to let her out!'

Laughter

....but anyway he says, 'By jove,' he says 'we'll open it and see.' By God they took the lid off the coffin and the woman sat up, and eh there she was in her shroud and all and eh of course they'd no clothes to put on her and there was nothing for it, she was able to walk back home. So the mourners were in... in them times you know, they didn't... the mourners didn't go to church or the chapel or wherever they were taking her and eh here by God doesn't eh the... she arrive back home in the house and them mourning her death in the house... it was the wife of the man of the house there had died you see and the old grandfather was there, quite a... supposed to have been quite an elderly man. So naturally enough when she walked in he immediately dropped dead!<sup>24</sup>

Premature burial is, of course, the theme of A.T. 990, The Seemingly Dead Revives. Recently a version of this tale was told to the present writer with reference to a grave stone inscription, 'Buried twice, died once' which may be found in a graveyard in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. The tale relates that a woman was buried with much jewellery. Grave robbers could not remove her rings and so cut off her fingers. When they did this, her blood began to flow and she

revived and went home.

Within Irish tradition, as in the traditions of other countries, there are special categories of the dead. Clearly, the teaching of the church(es) exercised influence over the burial of unbaptised children, who were to be buried in unconsecrated ground, or, at best, in a specially reserved part of the graveyard. Church teaching nowadays permits such children to be buried in consecrated ground. From discussions with representatives of various churches, it was discovered that some denominations do not demand baptism, the Church of Ireland considers it desirable, but not essential, and the Roman Catholic church acknowledges 'Baptism by Desire'. This last presupposes that parents who seek to have their child buried in consecrated ground wish him to be 'in a state of grace'. This wish constitutes a 'baptism by desire'.

Unbaptised children were not alone in having burial sites set aside for them. Suicides, for example, were not considered to be suitable candidates for hallowed graves. One Belfast paper, the News Letter, records in the issue for 7th October, 1775, a Tuesday, that

On Saturday last, one James Havran a Farmer, who lived near Dunmurry, hanged himself in his own barn, and on Sunday night his relations privately buried his corpse within the Sea-mark, near the Lime-kilns.

Women who died in childbirth might also be given an irregular burial. Such people might be buried at road sides, or at cross roads. 'Killeens', disused graveyards which might have medieval or early Christian origins, were also considered suitable sites. Occasionally graves might be made in the northern part of a consecrated graveyard.

Specialist burial areas can be found at a site in Co. Tyrone, at Carrickmore. Tradition forges close association between this region of St. Columcille, who, according to folklore, established Relic na Lanin, Relic na Fir Gaunta, and Relic na mBan. 'Relic' translates from Irish as 'graveyard', 'na Lanin' would translate as 'of children', 'na For Gaunta' as 'of the wounded men', and 'na mBan' as

'of the women'. A MS. from the Department of Irish Folklore entitled 'Old Frank Conlon's Recollections of Carrickmore history (died 1906)' refers to these sites, describing the first two as follows:

Relic na Lanay. The saint allowed a little square for unbaptised children. It is situated some fifty perches west or north west from the site of the old monastery and is now adjoining the new cemetery.

Relic na fir gaunta. This was an other-plot reserved for anyone murdered or found dead by the wayside. It is situated right opposite to the back door of the present church...

The tradition of Relic na mBan is better known. On 5th June 1980, the following version was recorded from a woman living in the Carrickmore area:

Columcille lived here at one time and he, eh, there was some woman and she blamed a man for being father of her baby, and he was an, an arbiter, he would settle all disputes, there was no such thing as law and Columcille would settle all these disputes and eh, they complained about this woman blaming this man. Some would tell you it was Columcille himself. I don't know, I'm sure that's not right, but anyway Columcille was taken to the fore and ah, Columcille asked her three times to tell the truth, and she wouldn't deny, she just said the same thing three times. 'Begone' he says, 'woman', he says 'and, walk on' he says 'to you hear the bell' he says. And he, they rung the bell, and she walked on and walked on away on, down by the quarry and when the bell stopped, she fell dead. And that spot's marked off, and about six women buried in it. A man, dead man, a dead woman can be buried in it, but what's this now? A living woman can't enter it or something like that, can't mind it now, what was it?

L.B. What I heard was 'No living woman, and no dead man.' Would that be right?

Yes, that's it, that's it.

L.B. I was just wondering what the details of it were. Well that's what it is, now, that's what it is; that's Relic-na-mBan.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that particular categories of people are buried apart from the rest raises the question, 'why them?'. It may be possible to go some distance towards an answer by referring to Juha Pentikainen, who, in his study 'Nordic Dead-Child Beings' states 'The majority of supra-normal dead children are those without status in the communities of the living and the dead.' He goes on to warn, 'It should of course be remembered that analysis of the belief tradition concerning dead children does not concern folklore alone.'<sup>26</sup> The ramifications of dating and of the place of these traditions in the general context of held belief apply equally to all traditions discussed in this paper. Bearing these ramifications in mind, it is possible (and not original) to apply Pentikainen's ideas to Irish traditional belief.<sup>27</sup>

It is felt, however, that the peculiar status of certain members of the community of the dead is not solely reflected by their segregated burial. Van Gennep included funeral ceremonial in his analysis of 'rites of passage'. Of course, Pentikainen remarks, 'In the case of ceremonies for the dead, the central theme is the joining of the dead person to the departed, and the reorganisations of the surviving community.'<sup>28</sup> Viewed from a religious, rather than from a folkloristic standpoint, the community of the dead belong, if protestant, either in heaven or in hell, if Catholic, most probably in Purgatory, the exceptional going elsewhere and those purified passing eventually to heaven. Catholic theology, at least prior to Vatican II, did of course assign the souls of unbaptised children a place in Limbo. On this point, religious and folk beliefs come into close contact and conflict. While some of the aforementioned segregated dead may become ghosts, they are also to be found amongst the fairies. The fairies themselves have an ambiguous spiritual status. The segregated dead have died out of their time, and perhaps, as with certain of 'na fir gaunta' out of their place. Their status is therefore neither that of the living nor that of the dead. Sanderson's remark that folk tradition forms a '... body of doctrine, complex, changing, unformulated, full of inconsonancies and contradictions' is clearly

illustrated by the beliefs surrounding the segregated dead.<sup>29</sup>

Before leaving the subject of burial to pursue that of ghost beliefs, it is necessary to consider one further matter, that of the orientation of a body for burial. Recent conversations with undertakers led to the conclusion that nowadays, orientation may be more a matter of convenience than of convention. Graveyards may be laid out to use the land most economically, rather than to observe the practice of aligning bodies east-west. However, the consensus would still appear to be that a body should be taken from the house 'feet first'. This, it seems, is felt to be appropriate, although those who expressed this opinion explained it simply by saying that it is due to the fact that 'feet do the walking.' No one went so far as to state that this would deny the ghost access, and prevent him from appearing in the house. It may be relevant here that one informant, now deceased, insisted that the toes were cut from the socks in which he was to be buried, but present research has not indicated either the meaning or the distribution of this custom. There is a traditional prohibition against lying on a piece of furniture, a sofa, for example, with one's feet pointing towards the door, as to do this would pre-empt being 'carried out'.<sup>30</sup>

During the funeral service, at least in the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland churches, the feet of the corpse of a member of the religious congregation would point towards the sanctuary, that is, facing east. The body of a man ordained, however, would be placed in the opposite direction. These are, of course, the orientations which would be observed if the individuals to be buried were live participants in the service. In certain cemeteries, clergymen are buried in an alignment different to that of members of the congregation. An explanation for this was furnished by a clergyman who had in turn received it from an elderly member of his congregation, which observed this practice. The ordination vows of the clergy obtain through death, and by orienting the dead bodies in this way dead clergy continue to keep watch over their dead flock.<sup>31</sup>

While, with regard particularly to death and ghost

traditions, religious and folk beliefs may be held in tension, they are closely intertwined. An example of this may be observed in the following remark made by a Protestant:

Some person that doesn't believe in such a thing as the hereafter and such a thing as their Bible and such things as this. You see, they say that they keep going, even when they're dead and gone. This is their ghost still going.<sup>32</sup>

The following, more extended, remark, shows a Catholic similarly assimilating folk and religious beliefs. His reticence with regard to the doctrine of purgatory possibly owes less to his uncertainty than to an awareness that he was speaking to a protestant, for whom the doctrine could have profound implications:

The man that told me this story is dead, he was Joe .....and he went out on.... All Souls' Day to take down a shed which wasn't much use in the field for what they had it for, and he went to take it down, to bring it into the yard to make a house for chickens or something like that, and he had started to take the door off, and during the wrecking up of the house a voice spoke and it was his mother's and she said to him, 'Joe, son, are you going to take my shelter away?' So that makes me think over some of the things that I heard, if that were true, and he told it to be true, and he heard... whether it was or not, I don't know, but his... the voice of his mother spoke out and it may have been that the... this thing of... which some people believe exists, Purgatory, and others don't, and I don't know if it was or not, for my part, but there was some place or state of rest, for the people who weren't fit to go to heaven, where they remained for a certain length of time unto their soul was purified.<sup>33</sup>

'All Souls' Day', by which the speaker means Hallowe'en, October 31st, is specially marked in the Irish traditional calendar. Festivities are still in order on Hallowe'en night, which in the past overshadowed Christmas, at least as a time for celebrations. The Co. Armagh Catholic, quoted above,

retaining his reticence about Purgatory, gave the following explanation:

All Souls' Night was a peculiar night for the old people. They had a strange idea that All Souls' Night... All Souls' Night was a night of fear for the old people. Most of these old people had an imagination or it may have been true, that on All Souls' Night some of the souls that were detained, that weren't... hadn't... couldn't get into heaven, because something they had done, something, and they were detailed in a certain place, wherever that place would be. And on Souls' Night, All Souls' Night was the prayers of the people in those days. That would release these souls and they paid a visit to... back to their homes and places, and would knock windows, made sounds of certain kinds.<sup>34</sup>

There follows a rationalisation that these 'cries' might have been the moaning and whistling of the wind. These visitations seem to have been rather horrifying, especially as, later on, the speaker refers to the sounds as the 'cry of a lost soul'. There was a tradition of unofficial praying in Catholic churches for the release of souls from Purgatory. Perhaps the quoted remarks imply that unpurified souls might be released on All Souls' Night to remind relatives to pray for them on All Saints' Day, 1st November.

A much less harrowing tradition of Hallowe'en, this one from Co. Tyrone, again blends folk and religious tradition:

And then, on... Holly Eve you would... they used to sweep up the ashes and clean the floor all round, and in near the grate here they would leave a lock of ashes, and smooth it down, and when they came down in the morning they would see the tracks of the feet, where they were sitting, warming themselves. That's on All Souls' Night too. They're supposed to get out on All Souls' Night, you see. The souls will get out of Purgatory, and get into heaven, and they would say they'd always get home... This would be the tracks of the people's toes where they would be sitting round the fire warming themselves on All Souls' Night, you know. That

was a custom in them days. My mother always done it, she always swept up the ashes and left a wee ... round the grate here, and smoothed it down, the way she would see if they had come. If... if you see, if they seen the tracks of the toes in the fire ashes, they would say they were going to (sic) Purgatory.<sup>35</sup>

This appears to be more an act of affection than of propitiation, the dead being welcomed into the house.

The dead belong to a status group which is clearly not that of the living. Reference has already been made to funeral observances and post-death behaviour on the part of the living which effect the rite of passage for the dead. Reference has also been made to various ways in which the dead are not completely cut off from the living. Many examples may be used. The corpse is often involved in wake games. In the funeral service, the dead are viewed as being a part of the entire congregation. Clerical vows obtain after death. There is a tradition that people should be buried amongst their families so as to be together on the last day. Souls leaving Purgatory return to their former homes. In this may be found much of the ambivalence of ghost beliefs. Ghosts and the state of death are alien and therefore abhorrent to the living. However, all who belong to one group must ultimately change sides, and for this reason, the very existence of even the most virulent and horrifying ghost carries with it implications which are reassuring.

Certainly, the event of death is a matter of great significance, surrounded by manifestations which cannot be considered to be a part of ghost tradition proper. Perhaps the most familiar of these is the 'banshee' tradition. There is considerable differentiation throughout Ireland in the attributes and behaviour of the banshee. Even in the northern part of Ireland, the beliefs are not standardised. For some, the banshee's disembodied cry is heard coming as if from the ground- for others, it comes from the walls of the house where it is heard. Others simply hear the cry, while others again may see the banshee. Her form may vary, but often she is described as a small woman. One informant compared her to a cat sitting on a windowsill.



The banshee, of course, is selective, crying only for certain families. Some people state that these are old Irish families- others are more specific, stating that she cries only for people whose name begins with 'O' or with 'Mac'. An extract from the O.S. Memoirs of 1838, for Drumaul Parish, deals with the banshee which follows, or followed, the O'Neill family of Co. Antrim:

It is confidently affirmed by persons of all denominations that the banshee follows or is attached to certain families, and is only heard to cry in the (tune ?) of och, oh, och, oh, och, oh, previous to the death of someone of the family, or of some remarkable circumstance, to occur connected with some of the family or the house. The banshee which followed the O'Neill family was locally called Neane Roe, or Catherine O'Neill, supposed to have been a beautiful virgin or young lady; who was enchanted or taken away by the fairies. The Banshee was never seen or heard after the castle was burned, but was heard at the same frequently before it by Bernard Moore, the second butler of Shane's Castle.

A particularly interesting feature of this tale is the origin which it claims for the Banshee. In stating that she was '.... a beautiful virgin.... taken away by the fairies', it assigns her a place amongst the segregated dead. There are several traditions which account for the origin of the Banshee (or Banshees), and, while they differ widely in detail, many of them place the Banshee in the group of 'segregated dead'.

Other strange manifestations are also believed to attend the occurrence of death. A picture falling from the wall, knocks of an unseen hand at door or window, birds flying at windows and stray dogs howling at night are among the phenomena which herald death. Mysterious lights may be seen. According to a Co. Down tradition, lights may be seen at one's birthplace at the time of death. As is the case with the banshee, particular families may be favoured with specific happenings. For example, a death in a certain Co. Down family is heralded by a landslide

on a particular part of an earthen bank. In coastal areas, the 'warning', or sign of approaching death, may be given by the appearance of a ghost ship. The following tradition was recorded from a young Rathlin Islander:

Well there's this family on the island the... ah... before any of them died there's usually ah... a boat seen, and I have seen it myself, and other people on the island have seen it, and ah... there's a boat with six... six oarsmen in it and ah... you know it's seen at different times, and not so very long ago it was seen on the island and you'll get ones on the island would... would tell you about it. One particular instance of it, two men were working at the forest away at the far end of the island and e... they seen the boat putting out from the harbour here. So they were waiting on their pay coming by the post and one of them set off you know he allowed how long it would take the boat and he knew it must have been, they thought it was the mail boat and they come down and there was no boat ever left the quay and there was no boat ever in at the quay and ah... you know, yet and all they had seen a boat going out with the sail on it and all, sailing out the bay, and within a couple of days one of this particular family had died.<sup>36</sup>

Death is also betokened by the appearance of a wraith. A wraith differs from a ghost in that it is a spiritual manifestation of a person who is living, on the point of dying, or dead within the immediate past. There is a tradition that the appearance of a wraith may betoken various things apart from death, and that its significance may be deduced from its actions. A story which may relate to wraith tradition tells of a young man who believes he sees his mother summoning him. He goes home to find out why and discovers that his mother has not left the house. When he returns to the place where he had been working, he discovers that huge rocks have fallen on to the site.<sup>37</sup> A further tradition deals with a man who gives aid to another who has come to help with his mare, which is in foal. When the mare foals, the

man who had given help discovers that the owner is on his death-bed.<sup>38</sup> These wraiths however, are not typical, in that they do not appear purely as death-tokens. Most commonly, the appearance of a wraith either presages death or announces the death of someone, possibly someone at a distance.

There is a tradition that, at a death, the clocks in a house should be stopped. The only explanation the present writer has been given for this custom is that those coming to the wake will know without asking at what time the death occurred. The wife of one man who gave this explanation told of an experience she had had. To her surprise, a new clock, which had hitherto given no trouble, stopped functioning. The woman was even more surprised by this when her husband told her of a death which had occurred at the time when the clock stopped. It remained stopped for a few days until, as she was watching the funeral procession pass the house, she heard from behind her the sound of the clock ticking once again.<sup>39</sup> Accounts of this personal experience have been recorded on more than one occasion. No explanation of the phenomenon is here volunteered, but the custom of clock stopping and this associated anecdote are of interest. This tradition would seem to indicate that for both the person who has died and for the bereaved, death causes a suspension of time. From the fact that, in the story, the clock started again as the funeral procession passed, it would seem that, with the funeral rites, this should mark the final separation of the dead and the living.<sup>40</sup>

There are cases, some already cited, where funeral rites do not achieve this end, and a ghost may appear, either on a single occasion or on a regular basis. Ghosts may wander as a punishment to themselves, as in the case of suicides and those who have led evil lives. This punishment may also affect the living, as it can be dangerous to encounter a ghost. One Co. Fermanagh woman remarked '... people used to say that if the spirit does talk to you, you won't live long.'<sup>41</sup> To safeguard against this, a ghost should always be addressed in the name of God. Considerable stress is laid on the inadvisability of interfering with ghosts:

there's a story told about...what do you call her? Killeavy old church is up there, up the road there. And... there was ceili house, not far from it, Henry's. I think they called the people. And they used to go to this house and play cars and have a dance, and one thing and another, a bit of diversion, and all. And it would be coming round about Christmas time, they played for a turkey, played cards for a turkey, you see? But there was a... certain class of people, like, of neighbours went to that house, and among them was a girl. And this girl lived on the other side of the graveyard, you see? And the boys used to offer to leave her home at night. She was a young girl, you see, brave and good-looking, and all the boys would offer to leave her home, and at night, and she would never let them you see? And she would always say, 'I'm not a bit afraid.' And she went home herself. Well, now she would be going home about two o'clock, and in the middle of the night, you know. So, this night anyway they made it up with the woman of the house, one of the boys, to give her a bit of a fright. So he got the lend of a sheet off her and he went in, and stood in the graveyard with the sheet draped round him, when she was coming along. So, 'Ah', she says, 'You'll not frighten me like that!' And, you know, the wall round the graveyard is well broken down, you could cross it, you see, at places. Sure, she stepped across the wall into the graveyard and whipped the sheet off him. And away back to the house with her. Ah, there was a great laugh in the house you see. The joke had misfired, you know, and she wasn't frightened at all.

But where was he? He never came back. So they waited for him to come, and he arrived in about twenty minutes, or half an hour after her, and there was a great laugh when he came in. But he had his sheet with him, and his sheet was warm and dry, but the sheet that she had pulled off him, as she thought, was damp and wet. You see? So eh, the one looked at the other, 'And what are

we going to do about that?' Like, you know? So eh, she decided then that she was afraid to to past the graveyard then, you see? So a couple of boys decided to leave her home, you see. So she had no objection. So away they left the house, and the woman of the house shouts, 'Here,' she says 'Come on, take your sheet with you.' She handed out the sheet to the girl. 'You have to take your sheet with you,' she says. 'And put it back on that figure you took it off.' So she was afraid to go into the graveyard. So she took the sheet home and she hid it outside. You see? Till the next day, she went away down to the priest, and she told him. I think it was Canon Toner was in Killeavy, up at Killeavy. At that time. And she told the priest about it, and he says, 'What do you want me to do?' She says 'Father, I don't know what I'm going to do.' 'I took that.... sheet off the figure,' she says 'and I.... I don't know what I'll do.' 'Oh' says he, 'You don't mean to say', says he, 'that I'm going to go back with you? I'm going to go back and leave that sheet back? No fear' says he. 'You have to do it. You were the person that took it off him, so you'll have to leave it back.' 'I couldn't do it,' she says, 'I haven't the nerve.' 'Well, you had the nerve to go in,' he says, 'and take it off. So you'll just have to pluck up your nerve,' he says, 'and take... and leave it back. But I tell you,' says he, 'what you'll do. Get the lend, if somebody is foolish enough to lend it to you, of a.... of about a week old baby. A baby as young as you can get, and take it with you.' So, some friend of her own lent her a baby. She took the baby and the sheet, and she had the appointment with her.... made with the priest, she he... she was to see him at a certain place. The priest come along, and they went, the two of them went along to the graveyard. And she had to cross the wall, with the sheet, and the baby on the other arm. And got it very difficult, to drape the sheet round the figure again, and there was the figure, standing in the graveyard

that she had took the sheet off. And she had to drape the sheet round him again and keep the baby in this arm, you see? And whenever she had the sheet round him, he spoke, under the sheet, he says, 'I would kill you where you're standing.' It was the baby that saved her life, and she put the sheet... but that put an end to her exploits in the graveyard!'<sup>42</sup>

According to tradition, it is dangerous to whistle in case a ghost might be about, as ghosts are said to be attracted by whistling. One way of escaping them is to cross running water, for ghosts cannot then follow.

Ghosts may be experienced by animals as well as by people. The tradition is that dogs and horses are particularly sensitive to ghosts. A horse's ability to see ghosts may be transmitted to humans, as is illustrated by this Co. Down narrative:

Well, this farm place, anyway, got the name of being haunted. You know? And as people went past at night in those days, you were very late at twelve o'clock, you know, you were really late at twelve o'clock. Well a haunted place, usually, these things happens at twelve o'clock at night. Midnight hour. And eh this chap was going up the road this night on horseback, and the horse shied and wouldn't go any further. And he couldn't get it.... of course, it was dark, you see, way at midnight. Wouldn't get it to go anyway, no way, he couldn't get it to go. So he gets right down flat on its back and he looks direct, right, you know its ears, sitting up like this? Right, flat on it, and he looks through his two ears, and then you can see what the horse sees. And what did he see, that he was passing? He saw a coffin, going right across, and four men carrying it. Right across the road. And that scared the horse. The horse wouldn't go past. And that was quite, supposed to be, right, at that hour, of the night, you could see that, providing you had the horse. You see, the horse shied, it wouldn't go any further.<sup>43</sup>

There are an infinite number of ghost traditions current in Ulster. The violence associated with the political unrest of the last twelve years has generated a corpus of material which itself would form a topic for research. In tradition, violent death is often the cause of ghostly manifestations, as is the case, for example, on Croc-an-Screadhlan, the Hill of the Screaming, on Rathlin Island, where, according to the story, the ghostly voices of women may still be heard screaming at the site of a huge battle which had tragic consequences for the islanders.

Many ghost stories deal with the reasons which cause the manifestation. There is a tradition that to disregard the wishes of the dying, particularly where burial is concerned, may well lead to a haunting. The entire responsibility for the appearance of a ghost may rest with the living. Inordinate grief on the part of the living may prevent the dead from resting, and the ghost may appear to request that an end be put to mourning for him.

Behaviour which would have been distasteful to the dead during his lifetime may also occasion the appearance of a ghost, as in the following case:

About eight miles from Cavan there's a place called Ashgrove House, which was owned by a Miss Sheridan, she lived alone there, very wealthy woman, had a retinue of servants, kept very well run house, always drove carriage and pair and had great love of all things in the line of nature. For instance on the night of a storm if any branches blew off trees she was absolutely overwrought with sympathy and worry and everything, and if people came and asked her for timber in the winter time she'd always say to them, 'Never ask me to cut a tree, but I'll give you the money for it.' But the avenue up to the house was really beautiful, it was a mass of all flowering trees, laburnams, er lilacs, rhododendrons and everything that was beautiful. And the interior of her house was equally so, she had everything in the line of equipment. My mother used to spend most of her time before she was married down with this lady,

they were great friends and even continued to keep in great harmony with her. She was god-father (sic) to my brother, and when she died she left him a thousand pounds in her will and in those days of course a thousand pounds was a fortune, absolutely. But she died and she left the house to a gentleman the name of Spencer Brown who was a relative of hers in America and whose sister was a Mrs. Kelser. The two of them came over to take possession of the house, or rather to see what it was like and the very first thing they did was, they cut down the whole avenue of rhododendrons, lilacs, everything, they cut the whole thing, cut all the trees and sold the whole lot for cash. And the locals, particularly her coachman, who used to drive her and who lived on the road to the house, was very upset about this and her name was Miss Jane Sheridan and he'd always say to my mother, 'Well if Miss Jane was alive, God knows she'll be very upset about this, and it's tight if she doesn't come back' You know, he took it that way?

So this particular day Mrs. Kelser was in the house, she'd never seen this Miss Sheridan, she'd never met her and eh the top corridor, was the top corridor of an old fashioned house with a landing window, two side windows and a corridor running right to the back of the house which was divided by a velvet curtain and she was coming out of one of the rooms when this lady which she described to my mother afterwards eh dressed in all taffeta, black taffeta with violet trimmings on it, came out of these curtains and she stood in front of Mrs. Kelser and looked at her and she said, 'How dare you cut all my beautiful trees', she said 'Had I known that', she said, 'I would have never have allowed' she said, 'yourself or Mr. Brown', she said, 'to come near Ashgrove', and she disappeared. And Mrs. Kelser was very perturbed about it and she told several people, and she included the coach man who identified of course Miss



Sheridan, and my mother heard the story and she identified Miss Sheridan also. And the result of the thing was that neither of the people, they never prospered in that house... they had no happiness and things... everything went wrong with them, they had cattle, cattle died and generally the staff seemed to not agree with them and bit by bit they found that they were loosing ground and they sold the place and went back to America.<sup>44</sup>

The theme of return from the dead to punish acts committed before or after death is quite common. These traditions help to underline that the worlds of the living and of the dead are closely interconnected. The world of the dead, as has been mentioned, may extend beyond the realms of ghosts. Certain of the dead may be found amongst the fairies, and the tale of Jane Sheridan, while dealing with a ghost, closely parallels a theme familiar from fairy tradition.

Responsibility for ghostly manifestation is not confined to the living. Wilful or unintentional neglect of even minor promises and duties while living may cause a ghost to appear after death. There is a tale of a man who had promised to make a visit, but had died before the promise could be kept. His ghost, or possibly, in this case, his wraith, was seen by the family at the time of his death.

A dead man may be tied to the earth because of unpaid debts, and will cease his haunting if his debts are paid on his behalf. The most serious visitation of this kind is possibly the widespread tradition of the priest who failed to say funeral Masses for which he had been paid. Due to his own untimely death, either through accident or through negligence, the Masses remained unsaid, the consequence being that he had to haunt his church until another priest said the Masses, thus fulfilling the obligation. The dead mother of a young baby is also likely to reappear as a ghost, in order to care for her child, particularly if the child is in danger of being neglected.

These ghosts, as a rule, disappear when their responsibilities have been discharged. Some ghosts however require active dismissal, or exorcism. These ghosts are generally the perpetrators of unprovoked

malicious attacks. Exorcism may also be practised on evil spirits who are not ghosts, and on those who have indulged in Black Magic. Usually, exorcism is performed by a priest or at least involves the use of religious symbolism, a point which reemphasises the impossibility of separating religious and folk belief into two distinct categories. The experience of exorcism is usually described as arduous if not fatal to the exorcist. The expelled ghost may be banished, usually for a stated length of time, after which he may return, his powers undiminished. Otherwise, he may be confined in a specific place. The following Co. Fermanagh tradition illustrates several aspects of the process of exorcism.

There was supposed to be a ghost in a house up above Garrison, one time. It was supposed to be true. And eh... it was for years and years there. Aw, they could get no sleep or anything like that, so the Priest was brought in to it anyway and eh prayed, long time, there in the house. And he made his man stand alongside with him, with candles, you know, blessed candles, a candle lit in his hand. And he gave him a rod and he told him not to let anything between him and the candle, you know? And they could actually feel the spits going round them.

That's a true story, for I heard a man telling it in our house there. You know, an old man at that time, you know? And eh... he prayed away. He went away and prayed, prayed away, anyway, and didn't eh... aw, it was terrible. He asked for a drink, in the middle of it, the clergyman was there at the time. Asked for a drink. And he gave him... got a drink, and he prayed away and prayed away, and he brought the thing, whatever it was, out of the house to a tree in the garden. And that's... that was supposed to be in that... up there at Garrison.<sup>45</sup>

Exorcised spirits are sometimes confined in bottles, and, if released, may be very dangerous, perhaps possessing their deliverer.

Exorcism is regarded as the province of Catholic priests. This opinion is held both by protestants

and by Catholics. A. Co. Down man, a protestant, was recorded to state that a certain protestant required a service of exorcism and sent for a clergyman. On being asked if a Catholic priest would be needed, he gave the reply, 'I don't think that a protestant priest, or protestant clergyman, would do... they wouldn't have the belief to do that.'<sup>46</sup>

There is a further tradition which ascribes even greater power to Catholic clergymen, attributing to them the power to call up spirits. The story goes that a certain Catholic priest witnessed a prominent protestant being carried off to hell, and remarked on this. Relatives or friends of the protestant heard the report, and bound the priest to prove it on pain of death. The priest had to call three times on the spirit, and was about to be killed, when the spirit appeared. When asked why it had not come the first time, it replied that it had been in the deepest pit in hell. At the second call, it was being released from its chains. Of course, the protestants see the folly of their ways and must plead with the priest to dispatch the spirit whence it came. This tale, however, seems to be confined to the Catholic section of the community, as does the idea that Catholics alone can see ghosts.<sup>47</sup>

Ghost stories state more than attitudes to death. As is the case with other narrative types, they may reveal the general outlook and morality of their teller, if not also of their audience. The ghost stories and death traditions cited here reveal an ambivalent attitude to death, as they indicate that there are close connections between the worlds of the living and of the dead. This impression, both terrifying and attractive, is well expressed by these beliefs. While some ghosts have attributes which are benign, the fact that a category 'segregated dead' can be isolated suggests that there may be considerable danger especially from this group. It should be noted, however, that ghostly manifestations are not confined to members of the groups which qualified for segregated burial. In closing, it should be stated that Ulster attitudes to death range from the profoundly mystical to the absolutely realistic. Banshees, ghosts and wraiths may abound, but the

tomb-stone of Dr. Young, erected in the cemetery in  
CarlisleCircus, Belfast, in 1831, carried the  
epitaph 'Young moulders here.'

### 3. THE GHOSTS OF EVALD TANG KRISTENSEN

Joan Rockwell

NOT EVERYONE BELIEVES in ghosts, but a belief in ghosts is deeply rooted in our culture. They appear in the literature of classical Greece and Rome, in the Bible (sparsely) and in peasant culture and folk-belief throughout the European Middle Ages, despite the strictures of the established Catholic Church which forbade commerce with them, regarded them as demons disguised, but nevertheless evolved the rituals of exorcism to get rid of them. These beliefs and practices still exist today even in modern and highly industrialised societies.

Because these beliefs are widespread over time and space, it is tempting to suppose they are universal. But this temptation must be resisted: there are not only individuals, but whole cultures which do not contain the concept of the spirits of the dead returning. Laura Bohannon, the American anthropologist, discovered this when she tried to tell the story of *Hamlet* to the Tiv, a hunting people in Nigeria. Their norms and their beliefs were so different from ours as to make the story incomprehensible: not only did they believe in the immediate remarriage of widows, preferably to the dead man's brother, but "'dead men can't walk!' they protested as one man."<sup>1</sup>

I would venture the speculation that belief in ghosts can only be a significant part of a culture where long-continued intensive agriculture makes a continuity both of habitation and of human family generations possible. It is to the established hearth that the ancestors return to give advice and warning.

This condition is abundantly fulfilled in Denmark, settled for 8,000 years and where the agricultural villages are assumed by Danish scholars to have existed for possibly 6,000. A fairly homogenous population, whose economic life was agricultural, developed slowly over a long period in the same place, with few abrupt cultural changes until the 19th century. During the previous centuries there were shifts in religious belief, but these were perhaps cumulative,

rather than abrupt reversals.

Evald Tang Kristensen, the Danish ethnographer (1843-1929), published more material on peasant culture in his 79 books than any other person. He was interested in every aspect of peasant society, and his impossible goal was to record it all. Born into the second generation of village school-masters of peasant origin, he worked as a village school-master for many years and at the same time he was able to make his massive collections ("I keep school by day and go out on the hunt at night"). As much of his material remains unpublished as appeared in print - helped by grants from Foundations, by his legendary diligence and curiosity, by having dialect as his first language, and by sharing many of the beliefs and norms of the culture he investigated. He believed in ghosts himself, mocked at other researchers who did not, and recorded some apparitions he had seen in his autobiography. He recorded probably more than 10,000 ghost stories. They are scattered throughout his publications, but a concentration of them is to be found in Volume V of *Dansk Sagn* (*Danish Legends*) which is the principal source for this paper. This one book, of 609 pages, contains 2168 stories or statements about ghosts.<sup>2</sup>

The sheer volume of his material makes it sociologically possible to look for a pattern, to attempt in this essentially irrational material to find clues which may tell us whether ghost-stories have any social or rational purpose.

Kristensen's own categories are not much help. He attempted to divide his material by type of ghost, but there is a great overlapping of themes and personae. His lifelong policy of continuous collection and publication made it impossible for him ever to arrange his material systematically, as might have been possible with a small collection. For example, in *Dansk Sagn* V, by far the longest section is the first: Section A (pp.3-289) which is a succession of miscellaneous themes in chapters, one of which is Chapter 20: "Ghosts of hanged persons: female"; nevertheless, Section B (pp.292-397) is called "Female Ghosts". There are approximately equal numbers of male and female ghosts, but the themes

overlap and the same motif of haunting is used for very different characters, as in the following:

Every New Year's Eve, Marsk Stig drives in a carriage drawn by six cocks, from Hjortholm by way of Onsbjærg, Pilemark and Permelille, through Kolby to Visborg, where he must remain until the next year. In Permelille he is met by the so-called Visborg sow and her farrow, and they run as outriders ahead of him to Visborg. The Visborg sow is well-known and has often been seen going through Kolby with her piglets; she is so tall her back shows over the roofs.

(D.S. V:A:15:300)

In the same region, the same story is attached to local gentry in a slightly confused narrative:

In old days the former gentry of Visborg were seen to drive by night along the road to Kolby in a wagon hitched to six Pomeranian cocks. It was not good for a traveller to meet them, so he stepped over into the field, as where the scythe had gone the ghost could not follow. It shouted to him "Follow the furrow and not the mown!", but he paid no attention and so escaped.

(D.S. V:A:15:301)

The third story has the same theme but a different type of protagonist:

A girl who had worked in Haarlev had secretly borne two children whom she murdered and buried in the churchyard, and later she moved to Herfølge where she died. As a punishment she must now ride from Herfølge to Haarlev in the armchair where she gave birth to her children. She rides through Vedskølle past St Anna House, past Vallø, through Vallø village and by way of Taarnby to Haarlev. But they also say in Himlingøje that they have heard her pass through. The bailiff of a farm in Taarnby once opened the gate for her and said he saw a red cock running in front of her armchair.

(D.S. V:B:9:1205)

These compulsory journeys are evidently seen as a form of punishment, although the central figures are very different: first, Marsk Stig, an historical person, atoning no doubt for his 13th century crimes,

especially the murder of King Erik Klipping; secondly, "the former gentry", atoning for class crimes against the peasantry and still trying to harm them; and the peasant girl atoning for her sexual life as well as for the murder of her babies. There are interesting auxiliary themes: the phantom sow, who in Marsk Stig's case is gigantic; the magic protection of the scythe, "as where the scythe has gone the ghost can't follow" in the somewhat confused narrative; *steel* is elsewhere also called on for protection against ghosts:

To thrust a naked sword through the air drives away ghosts.

(D.S. V:A:57:918)

To drive away ghosts, set your slippers backwards by the bed, or else take a piece of steel to bed with you.

(D.S. V:A:57:919)

And the red or Pomeranian cocks as well as the ghostly sow - the cocks appear in 15th and 16th century witchcraft trials.

Despite the variation in auxiliary themes, these three ghosts seem to me to illustrate one of the grand purposes of ghost stories: to punish symbolically those who cannot otherwise be punished, those who personify the breaking of norms but are out of reach of peasant sanctions, and thus to restore natural justice. Marsk Stig and "the gentry" are out of reach because of their rank, the girl because she died before her guilt was discovered.

The chief classification I would make of Kristensen's material is to separate ghosts which are seen as representatives of classes over which the peasant has no control: kings, nobility, gentry, and the petty oppressors of agricultural life, such as bailiffs and even priests - from those which are seen as members of peasant society: relatives, neighbours, folk with whom one has to do in life. With the former no interaction is desirable nor usually possible: they are simply perceived to be carrying out their atonement. The latter frequently have unfinished business with the living, can be contacted, and had better be attended to. I would distinguish these two types as "distant" and "immediate"



ghosts. As in life, gentry are observed by peasants but not interfered with.

The great fascination of Kristensen's material is the enormous number of "immediate" ghosts he reports, and this is doubtless due to the fact that almost all of his narrators recorded a peasant viewpoint. The numerous but not vast amount of ghost material from England is almost always reported by middle-class persons, and records primarily sightings of phantoms which can only be called "upper class ghosts". Again, as in real life, gentry do not notice peasantry.

Aside from the class criterion, there is another type of haunting which is distant in time, as in the following:

Where I was born there was a ghost who couldn't be dealt with because it was so old - none of the good folk there knew its language and so nothing could be done about it.

(D.S. V:A:10:172)

Some of these embody elements of former beliefs confusedly maintained as themes; as we know, beliefs are not eradicated by edicts, and it is not surprising that shreds of former religions surface, sometimes entangled with Biblical imagery. Thus, the Death Horse which appears in a Jutland village before a death may be the *Helhest* of pagan Scandinavian mythology, or perhaps the Pale Horse of Revelation (or both); while the Death Lamb may be confused with the Lamb of God. The same can hardly be said of the ghostly sow, usually with nine farrow, said to haunt lonely valleys away from villages; Kristensen feared such a valley as a boy in Jutland. These sows are ill-omened and people are often ill after seeing them - and so are the black galloping calves which may embody the Evil One.

Many spectral animals are mentioned: horses, headless or not, sometimes with ghostly riders or phantom carriages or wagons; cows with udders which touch the ground; mysterious grey rams and also common farmyard animals; flocks of sheep and ghostly geese and hens which horses will not pass through on the road, and of course also phantom dogs, and the cats, hares and toads associated with witchcraft.

But there are one or two more specific and

frequently mentioned types of haunting which seem to point back to definite rituals and beliefs from pre-history.

Thus, Chapter 28 in *D.S. V:A* contains 33 accounts (*D.S. V:A:479-512*) of serious onslaughts of poltergeist-like haunting as the result of disturbing human or animal bones, usually skulls, embedded or otherwise attached to a house or other farm building:

In the loft over the brewhouse at Holme vicarage there was a human skull. I don't know how long it had been there but once - it was before my time at the vicarage - some of the men took it down and buried it in the churchyard. There was immediately a great tumult, and the pastor came out and said they must have moved that skull and buried it, which they had to admit. "Well," said the priest, "you shouldn't have done it, but now go and get it and put it back where you found it", which they did, and the haunting stopped.

(*D.S. V:A:28:479*)

At another place, a skull lies always out in a field and "no matter how much they move it, it is back in the same place next morning" (:497). Disturbing the bones causes pandemonium: their secure placement is what keeps order. In one case, the new owner of a farm understandably removed two human skeletons, one on each side of the ladder to the loft (:498); in (:499), it is a human rib-cage which must lie undisturbed in the cellar. But in most cases it is a head or skull which maintains order, although in (:500) a whole naked corpse is said to lie in the portal to the farm, ignored by all. Many of the remains are of animals, and some are mummified:

In my father's attic in Farup up under the roof lies an old calf, and that has lain there the whole time my father had the farm. When they take it away they can't stay in the house because of the haunting which begins. They tried it once, the man who had the farm before the man who had it before my father, but had to put it back .....

(*D.S. V:A:28:502*)

In this case there is an auxiliary ghost, a white lady who murdered her child, and in some of the others also, a beheaded criminal or other ghostly figure. But the emphasis is on the bones: a steer's head in one place, a pig's head on a pole, a dried-out boar's head nailed to the thatch, again a pig's head and a clause in the lease that it shall never be moved (:507); a bull's head, a cow's head and four cow bones. It is notable that there is no horse's head anywhere: human beings, cattle and swine seem to be the implicated species. The last in the series is not even an animal, but the top of an old forgotten gig or "caleche" which they wanted to throw out but couldn't because of the haunting which began (:512). In one story, (:501), a church had been torn down and the bricks used to build a farm, where the old massy church key and the top of a human skull were cemented in over the door. When these were removed, tumultuous haunting was the result. The placing of the objects was perhaps propitiatory after destroying the church (which happened with fair frequency in the 18th and 19th centuries). It is impossible not to be reminded of the ancient custom, fairly recent in Tibet, of burying a sacrifice, whether human or animal, in a newly-built house to protect it.

Another type of haunting which seems to point to former beliefs is the rolling object, sometimes a fiery wheel, which incorporates a supernatural being and appears in many contexts. Kristensen reports a number of these in the very first chapter of *Dansk Sagn*. Two schoolboys see a couple of fiery wheels on the road and run home in terror (*D.S.* V:A:1:11); a stone rolls regularly over stone and bridge near a farm at Stokely (A:1:13); a man reports that "something" rolled beside him on the road and that "a wheel rolls through Arapgaard at night" (A:1:14); a beer-barrel rolls through Ormslev village street every night (A:1:16). These rumbling objects seem related to the "wagon which runs on three wheels" which frequently appears in stories about exorcism. In these, the evil influence has the power to paralyse a wagon on the road, like the English demon Black-stocking. The remedy is for the Pastor, who is usually on his way to perform an exorcism, to tell

his driver to remove the rear off-wheel and throw it up in the wagon. The ghost, demon, witch or sometimes the Evil One himself, is then obliged to take the form of the wheel and support the wagon to the place where he can be disposed of. We know that the sun was worshipped in the form of a fiery wheel, that former gods are reduced to evil spirits by the new religion, and that exorcism is a conflict in which the Pastor (usually) routs the forces of evil.

Sometimes rolling objects seem to be guardian spirits of forests who frighten peasants out of the woods where they are about to steal timber. The demon, who suddenly laughs beside them in the night, is sometimes significantly named Marcus Calve, explained as a bailiff who was very hard on the peasants in his life-time (*D.S.* V:A:1:10; A:29:522; 523-526). In three other stories, A:29:535-537, it all happens on *Kalvø* manor: the word *Calv* is evidently important here.

There are other wheeled objects which are best avoided: these include the ghostly wagons or carriages belonging to the dead gentry who try to involve the peasant narrator in a continuation of former roles. They are emphatically to be ignored, and in Chapter 15 there are 25 examples (*D.S.* V:A:15:256-281), of which this is typical:

I took service one time in Fussing. The other hostler, Jakob Hvid, told me when I came "If you hear a wagon drive up in the night, don't get up unless I call you". That night I did hear something drive in, making enough noise to shake the house down, and I also heard a strange dog howl. There was only a plank wall between my bed and Jakob's, so I called to him, "Shouldn't I get up?", but he answered "No, just stay where you are". He also told me to be sure there was never a wagon standing in the yard at night, they should always be pulled into the shed.

(*D.S.* V:A:15:270)

Normally, his duty would be to get up and attend any wagon arriving at whatever hour, but in these cases the customary requirement "to hear and obey" the gentry is cancelled, even when they tap on the

window of the stable-chambers with their whip and shout "Are you asleep?". Their world, their sins and their atonement, are distant from the peasant narrator and his best course is to avoid them as much as possible.

There are other ghostly wagons which are best ignored. One of these was the plague-wagon taking the dead from the hospital, which Mo'er Sidse "often heard" rumbling through the streets of Helsingør, (Elsinor). One midnight she peeped through her curtains and saw it - "she crossed herself and never looked again". The reference is presumably to the plague of 1711 when hospitals existed, not the Black Death of the 14th century: but it is interesting that this old woman is reported as *crossing herself* ca. 1875 in Lutheran Denmark, 350 years after the Reformation (1536). It is most unlikely that she was a Catholic, but this proven method against ghosts persists in the long peasant memory.

The functionaries and entrepreneurs who are the hereditary enemies of peasants, the bailiffs, merchants and lawyers who have oppressed them, are typically condemned to work forever, endlessly repeating their evil deeds. The grain merchant measures corn all night, and both he and the lawyer are seen at their desks without a fire or a candle, busy falsifying their accounts; and this they must do until doomsday. These were, of course, people who were untouchable in real life.

But a form of agricultural swindle so old it is specifically forbidden in the Bible, to move your neighbour's landmark, is a frequent reason for haunting. About this, the peasant moralist says:

Those who move the land-markers must move them back again; and what is worse, they must hammer them in with their foreheads. Many have seen them at this work at midnight.

(D.S. V:C:2:1447)

Sometimes the ghost is heard moaning "Where shall I put it down?", and it is wisest not to answer; in some stories a boy replies, while adults try to prevent him doing so. Sometimes it is all right; in two stories (D.S. V:C:4:1500 and 1501), when he tells the ghost to "put it down where you are", he is thus

released and is very grateful, but in nine other versions (*D.S.* V:C:4:1502-1510), he is told to put it down where he took it up - i.e. where it belongs. Although one ghost is thus released from his burden which he has carried for 100 years, and gives thanks, it is a dangerous thing to do: in (C:4:1510), they are harvesting and a man shouts to the boy he had better have held his tongue; and, sure enough, a "big black thing" comes round to his side of the wagon to thank him, "but a year later the boy died and then he had to carry the marker himself". Helping, or even answering, a ghost can involve the helper in the punishment.

The peasant who, before the redistribution of land which started in 1820, plowed a furrow of his neighbour's land onto his own strip, was too powerful to be affected by village sanctions in real life. He can, however, be made into a ghost, sometimes heard shouting "Plow fifteen furrows back", and often he is condemned to plow it back by night forever. Two chapters and 57 examples are devoted to the Night-Plowman and encounters with him:

My father's mother told me that one of the big farmers in Volling plowed at night. He had taken land from the farm where I was born. He had three red horses hitched to his plow, and fiery flames shot out from the plow-share, so they could see where he turned when he came to the end of the strip. So far as I know, we never got back what he had plowed away.

(*D.S.* V:C:6:1524)

Here, too, there is a danger of being obliged to substitute for the sinner, even if one only stops for an instant by the field where he is at work.

My father walked past a haunted place on Smollerup Field, and when he got home he said to my mother "Mette, I've been run off my legs" - "What happened to you, you never had to plow for a Plow-man?" "Yes, I did, something was put into my hand, like a slimy cow-gut, and then I had to follow. I fell down a few times, but it pulled me up again because I couldn't let go of the gut I was holding. When I came to the place where it was put into my hand, it

dropped away and I was free. I sat me down to rest as I was so tired, but was almost about to be sitting too long and have to plow another turn around the field, because it had almost got back to where I was.

(*D.S.* V:C:6:1534)

This is similar to the laws of blood-feud where one person may be substituted for another.

The division of land, when modern agriculture gradually replaced the old collective strip-cultivation, gave rise to a whole new category of ghosts: the Dishonest Land-Surveyor to whom Kristensen devotes a whole chapter, the first in Section C whose topic is "Ghosts on Usurped Ground", with 37 examples (*D.S.* V:C:1:1409-1446). They are heard dragging their surveying chains - sometimes in pairs - and shouting the boundaries; this they must do forever because they took bribes to give some of the farms too much and too good land at the re-distribution.

But a whole village, in the person of its farm-owners, could combine to steal land from another village when boundaries were being drawn:

In heathen times the Oath-Takers ("Sandemaend") were like a court. When people went to them and swore on their word, it was taken to be the absolute truth. When they divided the fields "the men" (i.e. owners of farms) of Stjaar village put leaves from their own trees in their hats and earth from their own land in their clogs, and swore that what they stood on and what they stood under was their own, and might they turn into grey stones if they swore falsely. And that is what happened to them on the way home.

(*D.S.* V:C:8:1599)

The description of this exercise in peasant shrewdness has the merit of criticising the greedy "men", and also offers an elegant explanation of numerous circles of megaliths round the countryside. One such circle near Slagelse had six tall and straight stones, and one smaller and bent over, at a little distance - these were six farmers and a little hunchbacked tailor from their town who couldn't keep up with them (*D.S.* V:C:8:1600). Private swindling of others out of their land, as where a contract has been torn up, can

also cause haunting.

We may say that one principle of haunting is that people are condemned to become ghosts as a punishment; it can come as a shock if this is said to have happened to someone previously well thought of:

Our "great lad" Mikkell came home one evening from Brovst and said that as he passed the churchyard he had seen our maid-servant Johanne who had recently died of measles (which were epidemic in 1830), together with another woman who had recently died, standing at attention in front of the great stone at the corner of the stone cairn. Even though I really could not literally believe every word he said, I am sure Mikkell believed in what he had seen, and it pained me very much to hear that our good Johanne, whom we had all been so fond of, should stand there like that.

(D.S. V:B:3:1068)

There are quite a few examples similar to this, which seem at first sight very innocent and even pathetic:

My grandmother died in Barmosehusene near Lørup, and afterwards they completely re-decorated the room. A little boy there had said he could see grandmother going around the walls and feeling the new wallpaper. He should never have said this, as the result was that he lay ill for 12 weeks afterwards.

(D.S. V:B:3:1062)

In several such stories these old women seem after death to be revealed as witches, as they are often seen (always by children) riding a beam in the roof or riding the fire-raker, always with a disagreeable result.

But, sometimes the dead seem to want to return out of a mere nostalgic wish to continue their former life:

In Møsebol, Strellev parish, an old retired cottar and his wife died very close together. Folk saw them afterwards, sitting in their little room feeding peat-turves to their stove. There was also a man who met them one evening, coming from the churchyard arm-in-arm on their way home.

(D.S. V:D:1:1625)



or the following:

On one farm the dead owner returned and foddered the cattle every night. He wore his ordinary clothes and foddered them every one, but they got no food from this.

(D.S. V:D:1:1609)

This wish of some of the dead just to go on as before is emphasised in their appearance in their ordinary clothes - "she came and haunted both day and night in her old clothes and with a rope around her waist exactly as she wore it in life" (D.S. V:D:1:1626) - and the fact that they are seen doing their ordinary work in house, barn or field. This ghostly labour is totally without real effect however - food prepared by ghosts cannot be eaten, the farmer's cattle got no nourishment, and ghostly liquor vanishes:

When my great-grandmother's husband died, they were very worried about what might happen. The night before the funeral she heard someone come in and set a big jug down hard on the table and say "Here is some brandy for the funeral", but next morning there was nothing there and only a deep round dent in the table.

(D.S. V:D:1:1614)

A ghostly carriage will take you nowhere, even if you ride in it for miles. A young man who often met one on the road, going home from visiting his sweetheart at night, got so used to it that one night he got up into it and rode until he could see the roofs of Julskov where he lived; but when he jumped down he was in the same place where he got up "despite the fact that he was neither drunk nor sleepy" (D.S. V:A:16:293). Often these nostalgic returnees simply hang about and are a minor nuisance: people fall over them and they are blamed for minor accidents.

More serious is the fact that family ghosts sometimes reveal a vicious mocking side to their character. There are many stories of coming home from the funeral to find the dead man squatted grinning on top of the stove, in the byre, in the kitchen, in his room, or riding the roof-tree. These encounters have always the quality of astonishment on one side and malicious glee on the other:

... some days after he was buried, one of the girls came into the room where he usually sat, and saw the bailiff sitting by his desk, "Good God, Papa, is that you sitting there?", but the ghost could not repeat the words, Good God, and only said "heh heh"...

(D.S. V:A:29:515)

... When they came home to the farm after his funeral, the wife was by the fireplace and the girl nearby in the kitchen, when she saw he sat in the ingle-nook and was eating. "Mother," the girl said softly, "there sits father in the nook". The man said in a loud sneering tone, "There sits father in the nook", and it was impossible to drive him away from the farm, many priests were called ...

(D.S. V:D:1:1607)

These mocking ghosts, who seem only able to repeat the words of others and sneer at them, seem to have no particular errand, and perhaps represent the guilty conscience of a family which was glad to see them go. It can be dangerous to challenge any of them though, even in a casual neighbourly joke:

There was a reckless fellow who lived out in Aarslev. So when he was coming home one night and had had a few, he saw his dead neighbour in his ordinary clothes, wearing his knitted cap, standing and cleaning out his ditch.

"What are you doing here, you old fool, can't you stay where you belong and keep out of the way of the rest of us?" But hardly had he said these words when he got a mighty thump which threw him into the ditch and he lay ill for three weeks after.

(D.S. V:D:1:1619)

Various offences against the work ethic, either neglecting work or working at a forbidden time, are the occasion of haunting. The sanctions against neglect of work extend into the upper classes, and may appear as a general statement or criticism:

A noble lady did nothing but read and pray and let her farm run down without lifting a finger. After she died, she "walked", and now she shared in all the work: she rocked the cradle, etc.

The new owner asked her why she was there, and she answered "Everyone is born to work, and since I neglected this in life I must do it now as a punishment".

(D.S. V:B:4:1086)

This smacks perhaps more of the schoolroom than the kitchen fire, and the following is perhaps merely sarcasm from an irritable, insomniac village sceptic:

People often saw the pastor here walking at midnight with a book under his arm, and going into the church. When asked why he did it he replied, "I walk now while I am alive so I don't have to do it when I am dead".

(D.S. V:A:47:801)

Ghostly priests usually are belatedly making up for their gross neglect of their duties in life, by continual labours in the church at midnight.

But the work sanctions operate on a more simple and didactic level as well:

In the evening, before the maids go to bed they must sweep the room, as otherwise the mountain-trolls come to the farm at night; but if they forget to do this on a Thursday, all the dead who ever lived on the farm will come and make merry.

(D.S. V:D:2:1628)

If a labourer neglects to clean his tools, they will go on working in the barn at night and keep him awake - and in fact ghostly threshing is fairly often heard.

On the other hand, it is dangerous to break taboos against working on holy days. Between Christmas and New Year's Day, no wheel should turn: spinning wheels and mill-wheels must be still, and various other types of work should not be done. Offences are punished as severely as plowing away your neighbour's land or murder: by eternal repetition of the deed:

The old people say that every Ascension Day a couple of people can be seen, wading out in Randers Fjord just under Törring but over on the Rugsø side. They drowned catching eels on an Ascension Day. Many have told me they have seen them over there. On a clear day they can be seen in broad daylight.

(D.S. V:D:19:2100)

as for women:

Old people in Skalmstrup, especially Ane Larsdatter, said that every year on one holiday, I think it was St. Martin's Eve, they could hear a woman who stood and beat clothes down by a spring where they got water for the nearest houses. That spring was at the end of the village and it is still there. They could stand in their doors and hear her at work very clearly, but no one dared go down. The story is that she had washed clothes there on a holiday, and now she must stand there and do it until doomsday.

(D.S. V:D:19:2111)

All of these exemplary figures are almost as "distant" as *gentry* or *prehistoric* ghosts: no interaction is attempted, they are merely observed at their atonement.

Those who have something untimely or unnatural about their death are very apt to "walk again" or become ghosts. Peasant cosmology has a clear idea of the normal course of life and the appropriate time for death<sup>3</sup> and suicides, who have clearly broken this rule, are very often required to go on until the time when they should have died. Victims of accidents, too, are subject to this: quite a few come back because they have been killed by a falling stack of peat when going out at night to get a few turves, or drowned at sea or while fishing, or at a ferry place, or killed by runaway horses.

Special care must be taken of women who died while pregnant - not so much to prevent them walking, although there was a case of a ghost-woman who snatched a scarf from a girl's head to use as a nappy - but because the assumption is that the pregnancy will continue in the grave, the child will be born and she will need holy water to christen it, her money for churching, swaddling clothes and needle and thread; and all these are to be given her in the coffin as grave-goods. J.S. Møller gives examples even from the 20th century, including one in which a widow gave her husband a sailor-suit in the grave to take to the child who had died some years previously.<sup>4</sup> This presumes the kind of continuation of ordinary

life which we read of in Old Norse literature, where the side of the barrow opens and the hero is seen riding into it, or his wife visits him there. But these women, although they undoubtedly died untimely and must continue with their commitment to the child, are not in the ambiguous position of suicides. Sometimes these find peace and forgiveness after a time, sometimes they have to be exorcised. Kristensen divides suicides into categories according to method of death (hanging, drowning) and further divides the hanged into male and female.

Drowned suicides seem merely to revisit the place where it happened, while the hanged are far more active, both men and women. It is curious that while the women seem to have good reasons to take their lives, the men seem to have trifling motivations, often mere pique. Thus, a farmer who quarrelled with his wife and son about a calf (he wanted it killed, they didn't) hanged himself in the barn; later he came back, killed the calf in the byre and did other mischief (*D.S.* V:A:19:330). Again, a young labourer who was rebuked for getting drunk at market and coming home with the wrong wagon, hanged himself from chagrin. A week after he was buried he joined his former work-mates walking behind a load of turves the farmer was driving home. The farmer exclaimed: "Isn't that Jens Peter? Here, boy, take the reins", sprang from the wagon and walked beside the ghost, asking what he was doing there when they all knew he was dead and buried. "But Jens Peter only smiled" (*D.S.* V:A:19:343). Sometimes, however, there are more serious grounds:

There were two women, one was married; and they lived in a rented room at Nörbeg. The women were sisters and the husband was a beggar. So on Christmas Eve he came home with his bags full of whatever folk would give him at the farms, bread and meat and other things, and those two women emptied out his bags and drove him out of the house. It was on Christmas Eve itself, you understand, and so he went and hanged himself in the shed ....

(*D.S.* V:D:1:1621)

Even here, one might say that he took his life from

the shock of rejection "on Christmas Eve itself".

The "gossip-network" function of ghost stories which carry an explanation of what really happened in this or that family or farm, is well illustrated in the five versions Kristensen records of the miller-wife at Ry who hanged herself (*D.S.* V:A:20:359-366). She was a widow with two sons, who had inherited the mill and fell in love with one of the men who worked there. Her family was very much opposed to her marrying him, and when she found out he had another sweetheart, a girl who also worked on the place, she hanged herself. In some versions the girl peered through a knothole and saw her do it, but did nothing to save her (illegal as well as immoral, in Denmark). The miller-wife "walked" in her old home, in her usual clothes and doing her usual work. She came to the bedside of (a different?) labourer and asked him how he was: "Thanks, little mother, all is well with me, but how is she herself?" he replies, using the respectful third-person, and the respectful familiar title of the mistress of a farm. She told him she now had peace but had had some pains at first (*D.S.* V:A:20:362): in one version that she had waded in glowing embers up to her waist (*D.S.* V:A:20:364). In another version, she elaborates, "Seven years I had to suffer, as I went seven years too early" (*D.S.* V:A:20:359). Her two sons were drunkards and one of them sat and moaned "Mother is 'forced down' in Ravensborg" (a piece of meadow where demons could be exorcised) whenever he was drunk (*D.S.* V:A:363). This same son, Per Blok, when he married was met on the road by a black sow who made the horses rear and run away (*D.S.* V:A:364). Despite all this detail, in the first version, :359, the narrator begins: "In the mill at Ry there was once a miller-wife who hanged herself; no one knew why she did it, but everyone knew she haunted the place". An explanation is sought.

Another important category of ghosts includes those who seek justice against the living. In all cultures which have ghosts, murdered persons rise up to accuse their murderers, and even minor offences may be paid for - on many coasts of Europe besides Jutland, the drowned seaman returns to get his boots (and some-

times also his wooden leg) stolen from him while he lay dead on the beach.

There are those among the dead who have unfinished business with the living, such as revealing where they have hidden money, enforcing good treatment of children by a stepmother, or other practical matters. Some living people will not let the dead go, and some bereaved husbands have to be restrained by the pastor when they fling themselves on their dead wife's grave. But it can be dangerous to try to manipulate the dead:

There was a man in Ølsemagle who was very cruel to his wife; they lived together very badly and never had any enjoyment in life. Finally, after many years of suffering, the wife died. The man married again almost immediately, and the new wife was a young girl who soon became his master, and now it was meted to him as he had meted before. He, who had been used to dominate and tyrannise over his wife, was now the victim. This he couldn't stand, and at last he became half crazy. One holiday, as all the people stood waiting for the church to open, he came into the church-yard and flung himself on his dead wife's grave and sobbed out: "O Kirsten, Kirsten, come back again and get rid of this damned female I am tied to. I know that I never treated you as I should, but forgive me that, and if the dead can walk come back and break her neck." All the people wondered to hear this, but especially two of his present wife's brothers, who now heard for the first time how their sister was tortured. The next night the dead woman did come home and broke *his* neck instead.

(D.S. V:B:6:1133)

It might of course have been the brothers who broke it, and the narrator may be, wilfully or not, confused between which wife it was to whom they were brothers. But revenge, here, is attributable squarely to the wronged first wife after death, restoring a state of justice.

Usually what is wanted is not so dramatic:

A widow in Øster-Assels says that she often saw her dead husband come and sit down at the head of the table. Finally she plucked up courage

to ask him: "Sören, what do you want here?" And he said there were some small money matters he hadn't put in order, and when this was done he would find peace in the grave. She saw him as clearly as she saw my father.

(D.S. V:A:58:958)

These forgotten promises and small debts can usually be dealt with quite easily. Sometimes the ghost cannot rest until it has revealed where its money is hidden. The principle here is very clear:

When anyone dies who has hidden money and none of the heirs knows where it is, the dead must walk. If anyone has courage enough to ask him, he will say where the money is hidden and then it belongs to the questioner. Then the dead will find peace in his grave.

(D.S. V:A:60:1000)

The questioner nevertheless sometimes turns over the money to the widow, which is doubtless prudent.

Some of these stories give a chilling picture of the poverty of the period:

On a farm in Vejby, where many children had died, one of them, a little five-year-old boy, came back one night, gliding white and silent past the table to the window where he picked at the window-sill. When they searched, they found a one-*skilling* coin [Not the equivalent of an English *shilling* but a very small coin indeed, about a farthing] which he had hidden in a crack.

(D.S. V:A:61:1021)

Or this:

A beggar-woman came to a farm and begged for lodging for the night. This she was granted, but in the morning she was dead. Her old clothes, which were nothing but rags, were thrown on the midden. But she came back after death, and they always saw her standing on the midden and shaking these old clothes, and when they looked through them they found two *skillings*. When the coins were taken out, she came no more.

(D.S. V:A:60:1018)

The old couple who died close together also appear in



this role: coming arm-in-arm from church, they are asked why, and reveal where they have hidden money in their bed (D.S. V:A:60:1016). Just occasionally there is a real sunshine story about these money-revealing ghosts, as the following:

There was an old village herdsman in Asaa, and he got his wage as long as he lived. He died at the place where he lodged and afterwards he "walked" - he stood and scratched away at a beam in the byre. A very young boy came there to work and the others told him not to go out at such and such a time at night because that was when the herd came. "Then I would like to talk to him", said the boy, and out he went. The herd was there, and, "What are you doing here?" asked the lad, as free as you please. "I'm looking for a 24-*skillling* piece". Then he went far out on the heath and sat down on a stone. The boy followed him. "What are you sitting there for?". "This is where I buried my wage" The boy went home, and next day he went to the beam in the cowhouse - there was a crack in it and there he found the 24-*skillling*. "So there must be something to find at that stone as well," he thought. He had marked the place, and one day he went out and scratched away the earth on one side, and there he found an old stocking, and in it was a lot of silver money: some ten-*skillings* which counted as *marks* and were over-printed as 12-*skillings*, also various other kinds: all small coins but there were a lot of them. He took the stocking with him and hid the money, and when he grew up he bought a farm and became a rich man, on Asaa Village-herd's money. And they never saw the ghost again.

(D.S. V:A:60:1002)

To understand this it is necessary to know that when they had common pasturage, the village hired a herdsman to collect and drive out all the cows, and this was a very desirable post, in some places considered "as good as a poor vicarage".<sup>5</sup> The herd had the right to milk the cows of one farm each day in rotation, but the Asaa-herd seems to have taken his wage in money instead, as he was both single and

miserly, and thus saved up the fortune which the boy was able to win by displaying the folktale virtues of innocence, fearlessness and peasant shrewdness.

There are dead who cannot find peace for other, less benevolent, reasons, however, usually connected with the need to be forgiven by someone. These cannot rot in their graves, and their bodies or skeletons are exposed when church-yards are periodically cleaned out to prepare for new burials. Skeletons or parts of them were sometimes propped up against church walls, and made the object of reckless games; but, as with the cruel husband, it is foolhardy to challenge them. At Astrup, one such exhumed skeleton was "named Skaris, and anyone who had sinned had to go up and kiss him" (*D.S. V:A:55:900*). In many versions, one of the lads shoves a bit of bread into his jaws, whereupon he flies up, throws his arms around the mocker, and forces him to carry him on an errand to ask forgiveness.

Sometimes this story is an elaboration of the frequently-found narrative about "Brave Maren", the pastor's maidservant, who dares to go to the church at midnight and fetch the Book from the altar. In many versions, in *Jyske Almueliv* and *Dansk Sagn VI*, this is a debunking story, ridiculing superstition, but here it is serious enough. Typically, the brave girl bets one of the men "a pair of fine slippers" that she dares to carry the miraculously preserved body of Per Vinter, which has been put into the church-tower to be buried after the Christmas holiday, to the vicarage kitchen. This she does; but as she triumphantly collects her bet, the pastor suddenly appears in the kitchen and promises her "10 times as much as the slippers are worth" to carry it back again. She also accomplishes this but, as she is about to leave the corpse in the tower,

...It throws its arms around her: "Now you have had your fun," it says, "Now you can go on an errand for me, go up to the third pew on the women's side of the church and ask the figure there if she forgives me". She goes there, and asks the question. "No," the figure says, very hard. So the girl tries to leave again, but again the figure springs onto her back and

makes her go and ask again, when she gets the same answer. Again she tries to leave, but Per Vinter comes again and says, "Now go there for the third time and tell her if she won't do it for my sake, she must for God's sake". She went again, and this time the figure answers, "Yes, for His sake I will," and the girl could go. She went back to the vicarage and hung up the key. She told what she had seen and became very ill. The pastor went up to the church next morning with a couple of elderly respectable men, and found a little pile of earth instead of Per Vinter. "How can this be?" asked the men, but the pastor answered, "Yes, it is long past the time, he should have been dust long since".

(D.S. V:A:55:895)

Sometimes it is the living who must forgive the dead: once a very old skeleton was unearthed, and the pastor asked the many people who came to see it

... if anyone knew who it was? A very old woman was there, and she said "Yes, I know her right enough, she took my sweetheart from me many times, and I never would forgive her". "Will you forgive her now?" "Yes," she said, "Now I'll forgive her everything," and with these words the skeleton fell to dust.

(D.S. V:A:55:904)

But sometimes it is the dead who are out for revenge, as in this case of a broken betrothal:

Once when they dug up a grave at Egtved churchyard they found a whole corpse. The coffin was so rotten it fell to pieces but the corpse was as fresh as if it had just been buried. It was a man from Torsted who had died some years ago, and he had had a sweetheart in Egtved. This happened just before Christmas, so they took the corpse on a bier and laid it up in the church and went to tell the pastor. But on Christmas Eve, when the folk at the parsonage had eaten, they were talking about the extraordinary corpse, and they promised an old half-crazy cowman who was there a pint of brandy if he would go up to the church and give the corpse a spoonful of rice-pudding. When he got there

and bent over it, it threw its arms around his neck, and said that now he should carry it to the house in Egtved where his sweetheart lived. When they got there, the dead man knocked on the window and a woman came and opened it. He asked if she would give him her right hand, which she had done once before. "You gave me your hand when you promised to marry me, but that promise you broke". Now he wanted her to give her hand back (?), but she was afraid to and ran up to the pastor to ask advice. He said, "Not to give him her hand, but her right-hand glove on a stick". The cowman was standing there with the dead man on his back all this while. She followed the advice, and when she pulled back the stick, the glove had been crushed to shreds. The dead man now said to take him back where he had been taken from. This he did, and on Christmas Day, when the people came to church all eager to see the corpse, there was only a little handful of earth on the bier. Now he had found peace.

(D.S. V:A:55:902)

But there are also some ghosts who seem intent on malevolence only, to frighten and injure, with no aspect of restoring natural justice or righting old wrongs. Prominent among these are the "fiery ghosts" who often appear as impersonations of absent sweethearts:

A girl who was betrothed and whose sweetheart was away was always thinking of him. One dark evening as she walked a lonesome path beside a meadow someone came and walked beside her. She felt it was strange, for she thought it was her sweetheart, and yet not he. The stranger spoke to her so sweetly and she thought it was her sweetheart's voice, and yet not his. Then he stopped in front of her, stretched out his arms and said, "Won't you give your sweetheart a kiss?" and she woke from her trance to see that his eyes were glowing like red-hot coals. She turned to run, and he snatched at her apron, but she tore it away. When she got home she saw that five small holes were burnt right

through it, and she kept it all her life to show to people who didn't believe her story.

(*D.S.* V:B:1403)

Sometimes the spectre says, "My name is Hans, but not the Hans you think I am", sometimes all the wool is burned out of the linsey-woolsey apron but not the linen warp, and sometimes she saves herself by reciting the first three questions in Luther's Shorter Catechism. These stories, which seem always to happen to girls walking alone at night, perhaps personified a generalised terror of rapists.

There is an uneasy co-existence with ghosts in the Danish material but, unlike spiritualists, the Danish peasant believers are intent to get rid of them, not attract them. Precautions begin when the dead is "laid on straw" before burial. Sometimes this is on a bed, but formerly on a special "corpse table", longer, narrower and taller than an ordinary table. The table is covered with bundles of straw on which the dead person is placed, wrapped in a sheet. The great toes are tied together, according to J.S. Møller (ref.cit), or the four other toes are tied, leaving the great toe free (*D.S.* V:D:22:2148): both methods are to prevent "walking". The pennies on the eyes and the open scissors placed on the stomach are metal preventatives and the scissors form a cross as well: perhaps a Lutheran substitute for a crucifix? Care must be taken that no tears fall on the face of the corpse, as this will prevent peace in the grave (*D.S.* V:D:22:2141-42). Before the burial, nothing must move in a circular way in the house: neither mustard nor malt may be ground, as the circular movement is disturbing to the dead (*D.S.* V:D:22:2147). Everything connected with the laying-out - such as coins from the eyes and hair and nail clippings - must go into the coffin (*D.S.* V:D:22:2149-50), and the water with which the corpse was washed must be thrown after it as it leaves the house.

Care must be taken that the dead have everything with them they are likely to need: many priests are buried with their sermons under their heads (*D.S.* V:D:22:2151) and the grave-goods required by pregnant women have already been noted. Special care must be taken with suicides, who are in any case restless and

at risk, to keep them from having a reason to come back and collect their belongings. In case of hanging, the hook and the rope must go with them, also part of the beam or branch on which they did it, if possible:

... I have known a funeral stop on the road to fetch the rope.

(*D.S.* V:A:57:944)

Those who hang themselves must have the knife and rope in their coffin. When the smith's wife here in the village hanged herself, the rope was put in the coffin and also their breadknife, for they had cut her down with that. An' Fisker's, who cut her down, saw to it that it was done.

(*D.S.* V:A:57:948)

Furthermore, everything they had on them at the time of death must also be buried with them: their clothes, money, tobacco, also their clogs, and even if everything is new and good and worth saving - otherwise they will come back for it (*D.S.* V:A:57:942-948).

When the coffin is taken from the house the straw on which the body was laid should be burned, or sometimes thrown out at the edge of the village, or sometimes put up in the attic: when the straw is rotted, the corpse will be rotted in the grave and find peace. As the corpse leaves the house, water is thrown after it: sometimes the washing-water as above, but sometimes just water ( *D.S.* V:A:59:926-929). In a parody of this, water is thrown after a disliked workmate who leaves the farm "so he won't come back" (*D.S.* V:A:57:928).

Many plays were used to confuse and delay a ghost: sometimes the hearse was unhitched and turned, with the corpse on it, before entering the church-yard (*D.S.* V:A:57:936-7), sometimes the coffin is carried several times around the church or around the grave. Burial at a cross-roads or where three ways meet is for criminals or specially dangerous persons like witches: they are to be confused as to which way to take, if they "walk" (this is also known in England). A frequent Danish trick was to hang a wagon-wheel or spinning-wheel up outside the house: the ghost is compelled to go round the house as many times as the wheel has turned, before entering, and cannot do this before cock-crow. For this purpose, an old wheel is

obviously better than a new one. Impossible tasks are set: flaxseed is sprinkled round the grave or around the house, and the ghost must count every single seed before proceeding, since flax is a magic plant: it will be remembered that the linen threads resisted burning by the fiery ghost:

... when my grandfather died my grandmother bought two pounds of flax-seed and went all round the house and sowed it.

(D.S. V:A:57:925)

Another magic plant is rowan, which in Catholic belief is a blessed tree:

A corpse can be prevented from coming out of the coffin if it is fastened down with splints made of rowan. But it is impossible to prevent his getting out of his grave with coffin and all, which he has to drag with him wherever he goes. Many reliable people have met a coffin on the road at midnight, thumping along on end.

(D.S. V:A:57:933)

If the ghost does not appear immediately after the funeral, and if no signs of haunting appear in 3 days - analogous perhaps with the resurrection of Christ - these precautions may be assumed to be effective. Otherwise it may be necessary to call in professional help for exorcism.

It is possible, however, as we have seen, to defend oneself against a sudden onslaught of haunting: usually by calling on the more powerful spiritual force of the Christian religion. Certain sensible precautions may be taken:

Since it may be very dangerous to speak to a ghost or any supernatural being, it would be wise on meeting any dubious figure to address it as follows: "If you are a human being, then speak! If you are a spirit, then begone!"

(D.S. V:D:1:2159)

As we have seen, Mo'er Sidse crossed herself, and often calling on the name of God is enough, or answering biblical questions, but where the evil spirit seems powerful in the conflict, the priest must be sent for, and sometimes it takes three priests and the deacon. Sometimes these all fail and they have to call on a young student or someone even more unexpected, an old beggar or the local cunning-man whom

someone knows how to find; but never apparently the local wise-woman.

Danish peasant exorcism, called *forcing down* (at *mane ned*) has little in common, except the purpose, with that officially practised by the Anglican Church in England. There is no question of salt or holy water, and the spirit is not ordered to go "to the place appointed for you" but made to sink into the ground at as great a distance from the haunted place as the priest can force it to go, and this distance, or even whether he succeeds at all, depends on who has the most spiritual power. Good spots to *mane ned* are out in a swamp, at a cross-road, or a town-gate, perhaps far out in the fields; but sometimes the spirit cannot be forced to go further than the main farm gate, the midden, the church door or the churchyard.

Outside the churchyard wall at Bov, in the vicarage garden, there is a stone under which someone is supposed to have been "forced down". There is an old inscription in German on the stone.

(D.S. V:A:38:683)

In Bramstrup there is a woman "forced down" right under the main living room, and a stake is driven down through her. Her name was Lundorret. In the cellar of the vicarage at Voldum there is also someone "forced down".

(D.S. V:A:38:684)

My father told me that in Søbæk in Ullits there was a woman who killed herself and so she went home again after she was buried. Finally, there were three priests together who couldn't manage to get rid of her. No priest could. There was an old beggar-man sitting by the stove, listening to them talk about what they should try next. He was an old student who had slid down hill. He took three sticks and stuck them in a crack in the table and said, "When the first one falls, she will come up out of her grave; when the second one falls, she will come across the fields; when the third one falls she will come in the farm gate". So they went out to catch her before she came into the house, for if she did, it would be hard to get her out again. She came,



and she defeated them one by one, telling them their sins and they had no reply. Then the old beggar came, and he was too tough for her. The first she said was, "I have given you many a piece of bread in my life here on the farm". "You have, and I thank you for it", said he. Then she told him he had stolen a loaf of rye-bread worth 2 *skilling* when he was at school, but he answered that it was out of need, and threw down a two-*skilling*, you wretch!" Then he drew her out to a pond a little east of the farm, and there he forced her down. He must have known he could do it, or he wouldn't have taken it on.

(D.S. V:A:38:685)

This third story contains most of the motifs of the ritual, with two important exceptions: the first is silence, as with other magic. No one must speak but the exorciser, and to hear the voice of a passer-by ("But isn't that Pastor Larsen's voice?") or of the priest's wife, is enough to break the spell. Also, the Bible is often used, and sometimes the ghost strikes two out of the exorciser's hands, but the third he has concealed, produces it triumphantly and conquers. Regularly, the ghost gains moral superiority by reminding the priest of his sins and the theme of the stolen bread which is now paid for is frequent. It is always a contest, and often there is a race to get to the place of exorcism first, and then the three-wheeled wagon appears.

As we see, there is great emphasis on the magic number three: 3 priests, 3 Bibles, 3 wheels, and, in this story, 3 sticks, 3 stages of her journey, and often also 3 questions to be answered. The success of the young student or the old beggar or cunning-man is part of the "last shall be first" element in folklore:<sup>6</sup> the humble, the young, the simple, the innocent (relatively - he did steal the bread but he pays for it) conquer where authority fails.

Having "forced down" a malevolent spirit into the ground the next step is to drive a stake through it and to keep it there. For such spirits are not fully

dispersed as in Anglican exorcism; they lie in wait only hoping for a chance to escape; if they do they are much harder to force down a second time and even more vicious than before. In Kristensen's time, new owners of farms were seriously warned not to move any mysterious stakes in the fields, however awkwardly they might be placed. Chapter 46 of *Dansk Sagn*, which is called "Pull, and I'll push" has seven stories devoted to this - sometimes the voice from underground says "Get a better grip!"

At a three-cornered field-marker between Baegaard and Mosegaard (two farms) and Rosenlund (a manor) stands a stake under which a woman named Røde-Dands was "forced down". And, to this day, if you move the stake a little, a voice can be heard underground saying "You pull and I'll push!"

(D.S. V:A:46:798)

I hope it will appear, from the few examples I have been able to give from this massive collection, that the content and form of the ghost story can serve as a container for many moral and social attitudes. Besides the accretion of fragments of obsolete beliefs and practices, sanctions can be applied, and explanations offered for local or historical events. Like other literature, the ghost story, however absurd and fantastic it seems by definition to be, can cast a net of explanation over the infinite amount of data which exists even in an apparently simple and uniform peasant society. The types of haunting and reasons given for it are so various, that no single explanation is adequate to account for all the phenomena. There may, as I have indicated, be a sociological foundation for the *concept* of haunting a population rooted in a continuity of habitation and occupation; but once that principle is established, it can, as we see, be made to bear many different themes, and in its exemplary didacticism is no different from other literature: the Athenian drama, the bourgeois novel and fiction on TV.

#### 4. WEST INDIAN GHOSTS

Venetia Newall

DUPPY, A WORD of African origin, is used by West Indian Negroes to mean a ghost or spirit. Its first appearance in print occurs in 1774 in *The History of Jamaica* by Edward Long: "They firmly believe in the apparition of spectres. Those of deceased friends are *duppies*; others... like our raw-head - and bloody bones, are called *bugaboos*". The distinction that he makes here is no longer observed and all apparitions are known as duppies. Other, later, nineteenth-century references include, for example, M.G. Lewis in *Journal of a West India Proprietor* in 1834: "The negroes are... very much afraid of ghosts, whom they call the duppy". Towards the end of the last century Lady Brassey wrote: "After dark nothing would induce them to pass the mangrove - swamps or cockle-ponds, for fear of 'Duppies'". Finally N. Darnell Davis observed in 1896: "Only last Saturday morning, my butler was told by a man that 'the Duppies had been troubling the telephone wire'".<sup>1</sup>

Cassidy refers to: "...the belief in *duppies*, *shadows*, and so on. The distinction was once clearly made between these two terms, following the West African concept of the multiple soul: the soul within the body and the shadow outside it. At death the soul goes to heaven, but the shadow lingers near the corpse. Unless it is laid, it becomes a *duppy*, as one man explained it. But the two words have now become confounded; *duppy* is the usual one, and when *shadow* is used it means very much the same".<sup>2</sup> The nature and habits of the duppy vary a good deal, as reported, but almost invariably it is portrayed as malevolent. West Indian traditional belief seems to lack our own notion of the beloved dead, perhaps best summed up by the famous passage in *Wuthering Heights*, when Heathcliff pleads with the ghost of his sweetheart: "He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. 'Come in! Come in!' he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come. Oh do - *once* more! Oh! my heart's darling- hear me *this* time, Catherine, at

last!' The spectre showed a spectre's ordinary caprice: it gave no sign of being; but the snow and wind whirled wildly through, even reaching my station, and blowing out the light".<sup>3</sup> As we shall see later, in West Indian belief even a spouse, parent or child can become an object of terror when dead. Despite the fact that English literature is invariably part of the curriculum in Jamaican schools and literary influences can have an effect, the only story of a truly benevolent ghost - the girl who was visited by her father, later in the paper - derives from an informant who was born and educated in this country.

There is present, as Cassidy terms it, "a personifying tendency, which implies a ritualistic view of the world of nature", and man, who lives with a perpetual awareness of spirits thronging around him, sees duppies assuming the forms of plants and animals. About half a dozen or so plants have duppy names e.g. duppy pumpkins, duppy calalu - a kind of spinach - duppy peas, and duppy soursop. Vegetables and fruits thus described look good but are inedible.<sup>4</sup>

The duppy is not a tree spirit, but Jamaicans fear large trees because the spectres are said to live in them. The silk-cotton tree has an awe-inspiring, almost ghostly appearance and, traditionally, duppies inhabit the great chambers formed by its gigantic roots and congregate on the branches, sometimes even holding parties there. This is an extension of the old African belief that spirits of the dead cluster in cotton trees: the Ashanti name, *odum* tree, persisted among the Maroons, descendants of Spanish slaves who fled into the Jamaican mountains to escape Cromwell's men in 1655. Stories of this kind are rare among immigrants in England, perhaps because areas where West Indians have settled, e.g. Brixton and Peckham in London, have few sufficiently large trees to attract a duppy population. One informant, shown a model of the tree beside a house at a Jamaican exhibition in London, observed that no-one would readily live near such a thing, and, if they did, there would be no peace: for the duppies come out at night, stand gossiping under the branches, and hold their parties.<sup>5</sup>

Other large trees are associated with duppies. It

is said, for instance, that if a paw-paw tree is planted near the house it will sap the strength of those who live in it. One informant was sceptical about a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture which says of papaya, known to Jamaicans as paw-paw: "It is well recognized that the papaya contains peculiar and digestive properties which make it of great value in the diet". She said she didn't much care for the fruit because duppies live under the papaya tree. The same informant saw tinned jack-fruit in a shop in London, and was very surprised: this, by the way, is a West Indian fruit, introduced to the islands at about the same time as bread-fruit. She said it must have been brought over on an English ship, because no Jamaican would ever transport it. You can't even get it in town in Jamaica. It is only available in the countryside because bus and lorry drivers won't touch it. They think it attracts duppies, and will cause an accident.<sup>6</sup> On inspection it turned out that the tin was imported from Malaysia.

Duppy narratives are often anthropomorphic and the Rolling Calf, with its terrible glowing eyes and clanking chains, is a well-known example, "rolling" being a dialect term for "roaring". An informant's uncle enjoyed walking out after dark, something which most people do not care to risk, when he heard the creature roaring behind him and clanking its chain - Jamaican cows wear bells, as in some continental countries. It was catching up on him so he ran into the local shop. The calf, unable to stop, went rushing on down the road as far as the crossroads. Being a duppy it could not pass them and disappeared. After that experience he took no more late night walks.<sup>7</sup>

The Rolling Calf lives in the roots of the silk-cotton tree and is active at night. An account dating from 1952, describes it as follows: "Rollin' calf is a *demon*, not a ghost; look like hog; cohabit with hog or pig; eat out hog food; have eyes like fire itself; travel around in darkness, have a chain trailin' behind. Can't counteract motor car. If you're travelling with light, you have the advantage; if without light, it have the advantage". It is very malignant and can appear in the form of a hornless

goat, or a cat, dog, horse, bull or brindled cat. The Rolling Calf chases travellers, dragging its chain behind it, but it fears the moon, so the victim can escape by staying in the moonlight.<sup>8</sup>

Obeah men - the practitioners of black magic - become Rolling Calves and "set" them upon people. It is also generally thought that butchers, especially those who give short change or short measure, become Rolling Calves. Jekyll, writing in 1907, quotes local tradition as "Shopkeeper an butcher tief too much (i.e. rob their customers) and when they dead they turn Rolling Calf", and this belief is substantially the same today. It seems not illogical that a butcher should be changed in his ghostly life into the spirit of one of his victims. Any very contentious person is also a candidate and one might say to someone of this type who was causing trouble and aggravation: "Mind! you become a Rolling Calf!" The same informant's mother considered that her husband's family were just like that.<sup>9</sup>

The duppy can assume any animal form except those of the lamb and the donkey,<sup>10</sup> presumably because of their Christian associations, and reptiles are often suspect, especially in connection with the dead. "Do not knock a green lizard that lives in a graveyard", warns an old saying, "for he is a duppy and will hurt you". Reptile duppies are also used in obeah or black magic. An informant tells me that about thirty years ago her father's cousin became involved in litigation and appeared in Court. He arrived and saw to his horror a lizard wearing a red bow-tie. He knew immediately that "it was some kind of a cook-up lizard", i.e. it was not a proper lizard but a duppy, which someone had put up to influence the proceedings in Court. He took to wearing a red bandage on his head, red being the colour that frightens away duppies, and then he wore more and more red items: a red scarf, red shirt and, finally anything red that he could find. He became insane and his condition was blamed on the appearance of the duppy lizard in Court. My informant's father never revealed many of the details of the story because he doesn't like talking about it. The reason given is that he is a Christian and Christians

don't believe in such things and regard them as foolish. In fact, it seems that he was nervous, as people often are, to talk about supernatural occurrences.<sup>11</sup>

A few years ago the London edition of the *Jamaican Gleaner* contained a humorous story about Jamaican judges complaining that a tourist attended Court improperly dressed. But one person was very correct in his attire. This was a frog, which arrived wearing a neat brown suit and black velvet bow-tie. It sat quietly throughout the proceedings, observing everything. When the sitting was over, someone who was not superstitious picked him up and removed him. This facetious account echoes a well-known event which occurred about sixteen years ago, during my informant's childhood, of a frog which came to Court. Instead of wearing a bow-tie, it had a padlock on its mouth. The story goes that it sat on the benches with the general public, observing the proceedings. Everyone thought it was a "cook-up" frog, i.e. a duppy in frog form. Someone had persuaded it to go along and support his case, terrifying everyone present. It is said to be a true story.<sup>12</sup>

Duppies behave in many respects like human beings and frequently take this form. For they are the souls of the dead, often "spectres of deceased friends", as Long put it, or, in the words of an informant "someone you know personally". It may be a member of the family returning, or a dead spouse. When one informant was a child, her father died. Soon after, she heard his familiar footfall coming up the stairs. He came into the room and went over to the bed as if to tuck her in. Terrified, she jumped out of the window into the garden. She was not hurt, either by the glass or by the fall. This was attributed to the fact that the ghost was not malevolent; she had, in fact, been on good terms with her father.<sup>13</sup>

This desire of a parent to visit a loved child after death occurs in another memorate in similar form, this time from a male informant, who was also a young child when his father died. He too heard footsteps on the stairs and knew it was his father's duppy, because his father had a very odd way of walking, due to a slight limp. He lay in bed

horrified and heard the duppy come into the room. It began to light the lamp, whereupon he ran out of the room and got the neighbours, who filled his mouth with lumps of salt to ward off the duppy. Another informant, hearing this story, commented that this was usual practice, but the salt might also be thrown over the shoulder.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most common reasons for the return of the deceased that I have encountered is the desire to have sexual relations with a spouse. One widow was told that she must buy a pair of red knickers pretty quickly, the reason being that ghosts do not like red.<sup>15</sup> The male informant mentioned earlier described the death of his grandfather in these terms. The old man was in his eighties when he lost his wife and the family said he must be very careful to tie up his genitals in black cloth every night before going to bed, to keep the duppy away. He ignored this advice and several nights after her death he was lying in bed when he let out a terrible yell. The family rushed in to find out what was wrong and, before he died, he managed to tell them that the duppy had come and squeezed his testicles. This was supposed to have frightened him to death. The story was told by the man to another informant, who had ceased to believe in duppies, to convince her that they really exist. Her reaction was that she thought it very funny, and he was deeply shocked.<sup>16</sup> She also remarked that she didn't think the duppy would have got much joy out of him at that age.

Leach says that nine nights after death is the most dangerous time for the living spouse. Sexual relations with a duppy are thought to make a woman barren or cause her to bear dead children. She can avoid this by publicly renouncing her husband at the confining. Leach witnessed such a ceremony when the widow approached the open coffin, looked at the corpse, and said, "I'm through with you. Don't ever come back". Then she placed a handkerchief containing a few of her pubic hairs under its hands.<sup>17</sup>

A third memorate concerns a so-called brother and sister. A very prim and proper lady let rooms in her house and kept herself very much to herself. One day she went to the country to her brother's funeral, and



returned in great distress: it seems that her brother had died of consumption. She was completely changed, seemed very worried and sad, and wouldn't go to bed at all on the first night. The second night one of the men who lived in the house came back and found the lady asleep in his bed. He was very surprised because she was so prim and proper and anyway he didn't know her very well. However she begged him to let her stay so, rather unwillingly, he agreed and slept in the armchair. The next day he locked the door so she couldn't get in. That night she sat on the edge of her bed and tried to stay awake, but eventually she lay down and dozed off. She said afterwards that no sooner had she begun to sleep than she felt a shadowy figure bend over and kiss her on the forehead. In the morning she woke with a strange little dry cough. It got worse and worse and she coughed and coughed. The doctor could find nothing wrong, but she shrivelled to a shadow of her former self. They took her to hospital, where again they could find nothing wrong, but she became steadily weaker and died six months later. After her death it was revealed that the "brother" was in fact her husband. He had been a jealous man and they were living apart.<sup>18</sup>

In country districts of Jamaica it was the custom to make up ghost stories and tell them as entertainment in the evenings. One of my informants, Audrey Hughes, who had been in London for eight years and now lives in Camberwell, was brought up in a strict religious environment by her grandparents in Denbigh, which is a Jamaican country district and part of May Pen. She lived in their house with four cousins and, until television came, they used to tell ghost stories after supper, rather competitively. The stories, which were made up as they went along, terrified the little ones and they wouldn't listen. Audrey's youngest aunt, Peaches, was thought to be the best because she was very good at putting on a duppy voice and making the sinister sounds that duppies are supposed to make. They traditionally speak in curious nasal tones, like someone afflicted with a cleft palate. Another informant, referring to a Kingston school girl with this disability, said she was known as "the duppy girl".<sup>19</sup>

Audrey, who is now twenty-four, hates television and has never bought a set because she regards it as having destroyed a very pleasant pastime. When she learned that I was preparing this paper, Audrey at once made up four stories for me, as she used to in her childhood. The first is about a duppy child.

"Once upon a time there was a man who was living in Hanover. In that part of Jamaica, especially in the hills, people were very superstitious. This man, about whom the story goes, came from Kingston and like most city dwellers he dismissed ghosts and obeah men as complete nonsense.

One night he was going home after a full day's work on his ground, dreaming about what he would have for dinner, when his donkey suddenly stopped walking. The creature began to make a woeful noise quite unlike its usual stubborn braying when it didn't want to work. The man tried in vain to get the donkey moving again, so he decided to find out what was wrong. For the first time he looked around and there, in front of him some yards away, a child was standing on the side of the road. There were no street lamps, but the moon was bright enough for him to make out that it was a little girl.

He asked what she was doing out so late, where were her parents, and where she lived, but the child did not make a sound. He put her to sit on the donkey, intending to leave her in the village with people who could take care of her until her parents came for her, or perhaps some villager will know who she is.

Anyway they got going and he talked and talked and got no reply, but he was so glad for the company that he took no notice of that. After travelling about two miles from the spot where he picked up the child, and within sight of the village, the child suddenly squealed: 'You better carry me back where you take me from'. The man was surprised, not so much by what she said, but how she'd said it. Again he tried to find out who she was and where she really wanted to go, but it was no use. She only squealed the same demand.

He was tired but felt that he had to do what she wanted, so back he went up the road. When he got to the spot he noticed that she was nowhere in sight.

How she'd got off the donkey or where and when she did go was a mystery. Nevertheless this practical man went home hungry, very tired and irritable.

But in the morning he felt guilty about the way he treated the child, so he thought some villagers might help him to find her if he told his story and gave a full description. And off he went.

When he went to ol' maa's hut there were only two children playing in the yard. Yet by the time he began his story every inch of the hut was occupied. They listened attentively and, when he'd finished ol' maa said that the description fitted Miss Brown's seven-year-old daughter who had died three years before when a cow fatally kicked her at the very spot he found her.

So now everyone in Hanover believes in ghosts".<sup>20</sup> An interesting feature of this narrative is the curious way the duppy child speaks.

Audrey's second story is about three drinking companions:

"Three men who built up a friendship while they were in the army decided to keep in touch when their service came to an end. So every Christmas Eve they were to meet at a certain pub and discuss old times over friendly drinks. This they did for several years in succession.

But one year, Joe, the youngest, didn't turn up. As he lived in Mocho, and the pub was in Denbigh, Lynford and Roy had to settle down without him. Around closing time Joe came into the pub looking as bright as usual, but he was limping. They couldn't buy him a drink since the bar-tender refused to serve the already drunken men. So they started the usual gossip. 'What's up man? Where y'u been? Wha' 'appen to y'u foot?'

Joe told them about this road accident earlier that year. He was going to work on his bicycle when the back of a lorry knocked him off as it was turning out of a side road. He sustained multiple fractures and was in hospital for a long time. 'It's a miracle y'u still alive!', chirped Lynford and Roy. Joe agreed and added that, as a result he was fitted with a wooden leg. This admission would have horrified Joe's colleagues had they been sober. They felt that -

'better dead than half a man' - in which case a leg constitutes half a person.

Now all the other drinkers had gone, so they were thrust into the dark to make their way home. After this reunion it was customary to put up at Miss Etty's inn some two hundred yards away. But, when they got there, the dogs were hostile and kept up a vicious barking. Etty came out and greeted Lynford and Roy, because Joe was standing at the side of the house where she couldn't see him. On the point of going in, they look about for Joe, who came hurrying up. Etty took a step backwards and gasped: 'Is whe' y'u a' go wi' the duppy-man?'. With that she flew inside and bolted the door. The two men looked at each other in exasperation and then at Joe, who seemed twice his usual height. He was an upright version of one's extended shadow. As men who professed no disbelief in ghosts they began running in the direction of Roy's home - the nearer of the two. Joe, quite oblivious to what had happened, went after them with his wooden leg: 'bam-skadap, bam-skadap! Oon wait - ah - fah - me - nah'.

Apparently Joe had been killed on the spot by that lorry, and his body was later taken to hospital. He only had time to glimpse the lorry before his death, seconds later. He therefore couldn't imagine that he was dead".

Audrey has built this story around some interesting features - the old saying, the perceptions of the two friends dulled by alcohol, the possibility for sound effects, the gigantic size of the duppy, the double-entendre joke that the duppy is still alive, contrasted with the ghost itself, which does not understand that it is dead.<sup>21</sup>

Audrey's third narrative is about a gennep tree, formerly known as the honey-berry.<sup>22</sup>

"Long, long ago in May Pen, before it became a proper town, a gennep tree stood at the point where Chapleton Road joins the main road to May Pen. It was the largest tree you could ever imagine, with roots spreading yards away.

This gennep tree was the home of hundreds of lizards, especially 'croaking' and 'green' ones. By day the green lizards would take their colour from

the leaves, but if someone disturbed them in seconds they would change to brown. For country people who believed in ghosts, this was given a mystic significance, so that when the croaking lizards set up their tune at night, no-one would be seen near that gennep tree. (You might well think it strange that croaking lizards choose to live in that tree when they are usually regarded as house pests!).

Anyway the tree became much too big and was interfering with telegraph wires and nearby buildings, so the authorities tried to get rid of it by deciding to cut it down. They could find no local woodcutters to agree to do the job despite the large sum offered as payment.

The men denied any belief in the age-old story that everyone in May Pen was familiar with. The story goes that a certain obeah man practised his workings in the dead of night at that 'crossroad'. A Christian lady had a talk with him to try to persuade him to give up his sinful life. This obeah man swore at her and uttered blasphemous words, threatening "to beat the God out of her!". No-one has seen him since that day and, shortly afterwards, the gennep tree began to grow and grow, but it bore no fruit. On top of that, it harboured the very reptiles that the obeah man used in his workings. Small wonder that people believed that God punished him by turning him into a gennep tree.

The local men said that their wives would have nothing to do with them if they chopped down that tree since the whole family would be cursed by the deed. At last some unmarried and childless men from Kingston, who were looking for work, agreed to do the job. They would take up temporary residence in the area in order to complete it. The tree was felled and the men were paid.

The area was rapidly urbanised and consequently a number of road accidents occurred at the spot where the tree used to be, or thereabouts. A man began telling the locals about 'his personal experience' that one night while walking alone past the gennep tree (for it was now officially known as such) he thought what a lovely night it was, and began to whistle. (Of course, he couldn't tell them that he was afraid, especially since it was dark!). All of a

sudden a voice asked 'a whoo-pp?', he quickly replied that 'I's me, John Brown. A who y'u?', but the voice kept asking the same question to which he gave the same answer. He heard a rustling noise, looked round suddenly and glimpsed what he thought was a ghost. Needless to say, he ran as fast as his legs could go.

But these very foolish people did not realise that it was mainly the fault of incompetent traffic direction and planning that caused the road accidents. Neither did they know that the superstitious Brown spoke to an owl and ran away from his shadow".<sup>23</sup>

This story is characterized by its rational flavour, by the tension between Christianity and the practice of black magic, and by the traditional fear of cutting down any large and impressive-looking tree. Audrey's final narrative concerns the breaking of a taboo.

"There was once a family that lived in the only house next door to the cemetery. They religiously adhered to the common practices like not sweeping the house after dark, boiling rice without salt at night, and never commenting on the smell of food after twilight.

The children took these warnings lightly, but would not deliberately disobey them. One evening as the youngest child went into the yard, she could smell the familiar aroma of fried dumplings, which she was extremely fond of. And, without thinking, she took a deep, satisfying breath and shouted that the fried dumplings smelled good.

With that, she was struck across the face at once, and fell to the ground in a coma, foaming at the mouth. Her mother heard her scream before falling and rushed out to see what was happening. As soon as she saw the child looking so pale and distorted, she knew that a ghost (more commonly known as 'duppy') was responsible. She had seen their victims many times in the past and knew various remedies to counteract the death-blow. So she sent one of the other children to fetch her bible, from which she read a psalm. Then, using it to beat the motionless child, she uttered some strange words and repeated the name of God. After this ceremony the child was splashed with a whole bucket of cold water, which

most certainly brought her out of her swoon. The family prayed and gave thanks to God, vowing never again to show disrespect to duppies".<sup>24</sup>

Here, in what appears to be an account of an epileptic fit, the bible and a psalm are used as Christian charms. In Jamaican tradition anyone falling into a sudden convulsive fit, especially a child or infant, is thought to have been "knocked" by a duppy.<sup>25</sup> One of my informants lives beside a cemetery in London but is not in the least afraid. "It's a disused cemetery, so everyone in there has been buried quite a long time ago. Anyway, white ghosts are less alarming and less noisy than black. White people", she observed, "are so quiet the way they live that you can't imagine them causing all that trouble after they are dead"<sup>26</sup> an interesting comment on race relations from a Jamaican immigrant.

She thought of returning to Jamaica some time in her life, but one thing deterred her - she would be afraid of all the duppies. At least, it wasn't so much the duppies, but the thought of all those people buried beside the houses - a local custom - and some of them interred quite recently. She wouldn't like to stay at Sister Lull's, for example, because her dead son is buried just outside the front door. Give a year or so after the death and maybe you could accept it, but the idea of all those recently buried people there made her nervous. As a child she had disliked the Jamaican countryside at night. It was completely black because there is no electricity, the next house would be some distance away, and it was completely silent except for the croaking of the frogs. If one of the traditional funerary customs happened to be in progress and you could hear "Abide with me" and other hymns being sung, it was a truly terrifying experience.<sup>27</sup>

This informant used to believe in duppies but "there can't be anything in it because they've got all those witch doctors in Africa, and with all those witch doctors they could send duppies into South Africa and they would have the whites out in five minutes, if they were any good". When it was pointed out to her that "the whites have got the guns", she remarked that "guns were no good against duppies; they don't take

any notice of them", which seemed to be a circular argument.<sup>28</sup>

The subject of race relations is also reflected in the notion that the most malignant duppy is Coolie Duppy.<sup>29</sup> A coolie in Jamaican terms means an East Indian living in the West Indies, or an East Indian resident in Britain, because West Indians refer to our Pakistani immigrants in this way.<sup>30</sup> One informant tells a story of a duppy set by someone in Jamaica on someone in this country who lived in Birmingham. She said it was a coolie duppy and "coolie duppy will stop at nothing". It made its way across the water to England, though a duppy isn't supposed to cross water, arrived in London and strayed onto the M1, where it got completely lost because it had never seen anything like it before. It's still wandering on the M1 to this day, trying to find the way to Birmingham. The trouble is that the duppy is angry and that's why there are so many accidents on the M1. In winter, when it snows, the ghost gets cold and very angry and that's why there are more accidents in winter.<sup>31</sup>

Accident spots are traditionally associated with duppies. One informant knew there were many ghosts round her mother's house in Jamaica, because they lived by a very dangerous piece of road "and plenty people had been killed just there".<sup>32</sup> The crossroads have magical associations in traditional belief; they must also have been quite dangerous before the invention of traffic lights and accidents of various kinds must have occurred; hence, perhaps their association with duppies. One story describes: "A man who used to go walking late at night on the country roads, and everyone said that it was a stupid thing to do, because he would get into trouble with the duppies. But he persisted. Anyway, one night he was out particularly late and he thought that perhaps he should have listened to people. He came to a crossroad where he saw a man leaning up against the crossroad sign, so he went over to him and said, 'Why don't you and I walk home together?'. The man opened his mouth and smiled, and he had teeth two inches long" - long pointed teeth are an attribute of duppies. "So the man, who had been out on the walk,



took to his heels, and ran, and ran, until he came to another crossroad and saw a man sitting there. So he went up to him and said, 'We must run! I had a terrible fright at the last crossroads. I spoke to a man who opened his mouth, and there were great long teeth in it!' So the man sitting at the crossroads opened his mouth and said, 'As long as this?'. It was the same duppy".<sup>33</sup>

Duppies sometimes appear in sleep and then it is said that they "dream to" a person or "dream him".<sup>34</sup> An informant named Gem describes how a friend of her mother's died and appeared to her in a dream, asking for one of her daughters. Naturally, Gem's mother refused and the ghost said, 'Well, alright, I'm going to take one anyway'. A few days later Gem and her eldest sister became ill. They both recovered but the sister fell ill again and later died. The family were sure that the dead woman had taken one of the daughters, as she had said; she couldn't make up her mind so, finally, she settled on the oldest.<sup>35</sup>

Mrs. Ferguson, the mother of another informant, has a half-sister known as Aunt Maisie. When their joint mother died, she appeared to Mrs. Ferguson in a dream. Aunt Maisie had done a great deal for her half-sister, said the ghost, and she should spend £16 on her by way of recompense. Mrs. Ferguson then went to visit Aunt Maisie in Jamaica and looked after her children for 16 months. She saw this as a version of the £16 she was told to send her half-sister.<sup>36</sup>

Here the ghost advises, very properly, on the correct course of conduct and no doubt Mrs. Ferguson was feeling guilty for neglecting her sister when she had this dream. But sometimes a duppy appears to complain about a grievance. In this account there were two brothers. One called Cecil who lived in England, planned to go back to Jamaica to build a tomb for his late mother. The family were very annoyed because no-one had erected a tomb for his father, who had died some years ago. The father appeared to a cousin in a dream and said that 'Him want him house. Him no feel comfortable'. The second brother, called Douglas, was living in Jamaica. His father's duppy often appeared to him in dreams and gave him racing tips. This was in gratitude because

'Him built the box', that is to say, Douglas had made the coffin for the old man's burial.<sup>37</sup>

Sometimes it is possible to smell the presence of a duppy. In accounts from informants they may smell of medicaments, probably because old people in Jamaica use a lot of liniment to ease their joints. Aunt Maisie always smelt her mother's duppy when she entered the room. She complained to Mrs. Ferguson that the old lady's ghost never appeared once during her visit. "From since you come, I don't get a sniff of her". "Well", said her half-sister, "she doesn't come because now she knows that I'm here to look after you. When I've gone, she'll be back".<sup>38</sup>

Gem observed that duppies don't seem to be as numerous as they used to be - perhaps an intended contrast between England and Jamaica was at the back of her mind. She wondered whether it was because of all the electricity and traffic lights, which they didn't really understand. A more intelligent informant observed dryly that "perhaps they were afraid of getting killed".<sup>39</sup>

Colleen, another informant, hopes that a woman she dislikes, who is ill, will not die. She has been so troublesome in life, whatever would she be like if she became a duppy? However there should be no problem because the woman wanted to be buried in Jamaica, where the ground is warmer than in England.<sup>40</sup> The thinking behind this comment is that duppies can't cross water and come from Jamaica to England. But this tradition is becoming eroded and there are various stories of Jamaican ghosts appearing in Brixton and elsewhere in London.<sup>41</sup>

The neighbour of an informant living in north London is going insane: she thinks her husband is haunting her. She visited him in Jamaica and found he's become a drunk. One night, when he arrived home in this condition, she locked him into the house and left. The house subsequently burned down, no doubt due to his drunken carelessness, and she returned to England convinced that his duppy would get her. My informant said: "The way she is going, it looks as though she will soon follow him into the grave", adding, "it looks as if duppy can cross water now". This is an interesting cultural adaptation, which

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beginning with the cleansing of the corpse. If you wash it and use the water to wash yourself, it will protect you from duppies;<sup>47</sup> if the children are made to drink it, it will protect them in the same way.<sup>48</sup> The water must be thrown after the hearse or the duppy will haunt the house<sup>49</sup>. When washing the corpse it is very important not to wet the back or it will haunt you, complaining of being cold.<sup>50</sup> This old belief, recorded at the beginning of the century in Jamaica, persists. An informant, trained as a nurse, worked in a London hospital. She was terrified when a patient died and a colleague asked her to help wash the back of the body, for she could not refuse. When time passed and nothing happened, she stopped believing this. The nurse is, in fact, the same informant who now no longer believes in duppies.

As a little girl in Jamaica she remembered the horse-drawn hearse, the animals dressed in black capes and plumes - a custom still observed to this day. It looks terrifying, especially to a child, and one tied a knot in one's hankie, to keep off the duppies. But as far as she was concerned, there was no time to be wasted tying knots in handkerchiefs. If she saw this frightful apparition coming towards her down the road, she took to her heels and ran away as fast as she could.<sup>51</sup> My informant had never seen this handkerchief-knotting done in England, even though funerals often pass down her road because there is a cemetery near by. She thought this was because funerals in England seem "so remote, with all those indifferent-looking people sitting in motor cars".<sup>52</sup>

Funeral ceremonies normally last nine nights. This period begins with the wake or "set-up" i.e. sit-up, and this is followed by the funeral. The next eight nights are passed in hymn-singing and reading of the scriptures, the intention being that the corpse should not be left alone at any time during this period.<sup>53</sup> Unless all this is done properly, the spirit will become restless and roam and make trouble.<sup>54</sup> The ghost is said to rise on the third night after burial and return home, taking its final leave on the ninth night.<sup>55</sup> The nine nights is a very important ritual, still observed by some

Jamaicans in this country. People come from all over to see the corpse and the cooking is continuous, so that those who arrive can be properly fed. Hymns are sung in a peculiar wailing manner; two particular favourites are "Oh God our help in ages past" and "Abide with me".<sup>56</sup>

Various methods are used to prevent the ghost returning. One involves measuring. Children are measured with pieces of string, or something similar, which is then buried with the corpse. This will also protect the children.<sup>57</sup> One informant lost her baby and laid a tape measure beside the body to keep away the ghost. She took up the measure to use for some sewing and forgot to replace it, whereupon "all sorts of things started happening" - noises, keys turned in locks and doors opening, when no-one was there. When the tape measure was put back everything returned to normal. All this was told in a very matter-of-fact way by a girl who said that she didn't really believe in ghosts.<sup>58</sup>

The relationship between duppy belief and Christianity is rather strained. When church people are bothered by duppies, they become very upset. They cannot tell their friends, who are also Christians and will say that they must not have such notions. Nor can they go to the Minister, who would be very annoyed and tell them that they were not "abiding". So they keep it all to themselves.

A Christian acquaintance of one informant became very worried because every night a black rat came and sat at the foot of her bed. Eventually she plucked up courage to take some action. There is said to be a special bond between people who were christened together and were therefore converted at the same time. They stick together as a group. So she went to see a man in her group, who was a carpenter by trade, and told him her problem. He was sympathetic and agreed to help. He came at bed-time and she got into bed, whereupon the black rat appeared and sat on the cover. She shooed it off and the carpenter smashed it on the head with his chisel. But the tool went straight through the animal and there was no blood. It had completely disappeared.<sup>59</sup>

Another Christian family were troubled by a disem-

bodied hand which appeared across the doorway every night at nine o'clock. Friends who agreed to help brought along a Chinese firecracker, which they lit and flung at the hand. Like the ghostly rat in the last story it disappeared without trace.<sup>60</sup>

When one Christian informant was a child in Jamaica she and her brother and sisters went to church every evening. They went of their own accord, because they enjoyed it and thought it the best amusement. There were a lot of churches in the neighbourhood, so they went from one to another, depending on which had a service on a particular evening. They liked to sit in the front row, but the sermon bored them so they would get up and walk out, their strong heavy boots making quite a noise. There was an old lady at one church who disapproved of anyone going out during a service, so they had to pretend they were going to the lavatory, which was at the back of the church. But she knew what they were up to, and shook her finger at them. When she died they were much too frightened to go on doing this. They felt sure that, if they went into the lavatory, the old lady's duppy would appear and shake a ghostly finger at them.<sup>61</sup>

We saw earlier that duppies often desire to have sexual relations with a spouse. An informant described a couple living in Kilburn, in one of those tenement houses that are split up into single rooms. The husband died and other tenant had a dream about him: the dead man felt cold and wanted his wife to come and keep him warm. The terrified widow rushed downstairs to a Mrs. Francis, who does sewing and is a pillar of the church, and said: "Cut me some red knickers". Mrs. Francis, who didn't hold with that sort of thing, refused. Probably due to the power of suggestion, the girl often felt a coldness following her around ever since she was told about the dream. She knew it was her cold husband, coming to warm himself with her. To protect herself, she put crosses all over her room - even in the corners - and she invited two men in the tenement to sleep with her, one on either side of the bed, the reason being that duppies won't cross another person to reach the one they desire. As long as she has someone on either side, she's safe from her husband's

approaches. My informant's sister commented that the widow would be better off with the ghost than sleeping with two strange men.<sup>62</sup>

Duppy belief is all-pervasive and has even left its mark on the language.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless one does hear the occasional little joke about it. One boy, confronted with a very religious girl - who thought that even dancing was sinful - remarked: "Not everything is for the spirit, unless you are a duppy".<sup>64</sup>





## 5. THE ANGRY GHOST IN JAPAN

Carmen Blacker

A RICH FOLKLORE of ghosts exists in Japan which, despite a certain weight of Confucian disapproval, has found its way prominently into literature, drama and art. Ghosts appear in profusion throughout the literature of the medieval period, and again during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when a sudden vogue for ghosts resulted in several distinguished collections of weird and strange tales. Ghosts appear in some celebrated Kabuki plays, while nearly half the repertory of the Nō theatre is concerned with the salvation of lost and distracted spirits. The ghost prints of Kuniyoshi and Hokusai are familiar to all connoisseurs of the woodblock art of Japan.<sup>1</sup>

The source of all this inspiration lies in the traditional folklore of ghosts. Beliefs concerning the fate of the dead, that is to say, have been 'strong' enough to provide some of the most powerful themes in Japanese traditional culture. Here, however, we shall be concerned with one aspect only of these beliefs: the fear of the angry ghost, *onryō* or *goryō*. Angry ghosts, moreover, will be treated as they appear in folklore. We shall not be concerned with first-hand testimonies of apparitions such as might interest the student of psychical research, but rather with what Dr Briggs has called the 'tradition' of ghosts, what is made of the shocking and often horrifying experience of perceiving an apparition of the dead, and the stereotypes into which, as though by some magnetic force, the mind tends to elaborate these bare perceptions.

A ghost becomes angry in Japan when its death has been violent or disgraceful, or when its descendants neglect the obsequies necessary to its contentment in the other world and its progress to final release.

A preliminary word is necessary to explain some of our background problems. What kind of entity is believed to survive the death of the body? How should that entity be treated by its surviving relatives? And what is liable to happen if these measures are neglected?<sup>2</sup>

Spirits of the dead are known in general as *tama* or *tamashii*. This term connotes first something round, such as a round jewel or a pearl. Hence it comes to mean a soul, which frequently appears in the form of a round floating ball. The *tama* resides in a host, to which it imparts life and vitality. Thus human beings, animals, plants, and even certain words, are believed to be animated and empowered by a *tama*. The *tama* may in certain circumstances detach itself from the body and wander about the countryside at will, revealing itself from time to time in the form of a shining sphere. In cases of sickness or violent shock, for example, the *tama* is apt to part company with the body, leaving it in a state of cataleptic trance, but may be recalled by certain rituals such as shouting down a well.

At the time of death, however, the *tama* leaves the body for good and passes to the next phase of its existence. It now requires from its surviving relations certain 'nourishment' if it is to achieve its proper state of salvation and release. This nourishment is provided through attention to the tablets in the household shrine. Offerings of a physical nature such as rice and water must be renewed every day, as well as spiritual obsequies in the form of words of power. Recitations of powerful Buddhist sutras such as the Lotus or the Heart Sutra have been for centuries credited with the power of *metasuzai* or annihilation of sin, thus promoting the passage of the soul to its final rest.

If these attentions are kept up by the descendants of the dead person assiduously for 33 years, the spirit will eventually slough off its individuality and blend itself with the corporate spiritual entity, the Ancestor, in which all the past forebears of the family are believed to be incapsulated, and which is often represented by the figure of a beaming, benevolent old man known as *okina*.

Two kinds of benign ghost thus present themselves: the Ancestor, and those individual spirits who have not yet accomplished the 33 years necessary to their final release, but who are properly nourished and hence kept tranquil and benevolent, by careful cult attention on the part of their descendants. These

kindly spirits are believed to return to their old homes at the midsummer season of O-Bon. They are welcomed with special dances and songs, sometimes a special path is cut for them in the grass of the mountain to facilitate their journey, and at the end of their three-day stay they are despatched from the house with the same polite valedictory words that might be addressed to a human guest of standing.

If, however, the necessary obsequies of food, drink and words of power are neglected, then with fearful suddenness the nature of the ghost will change. The dear old grandfather, the tender loving mother, will in an instant be transformed to a vicious, capricious, even demoniacal tyrant, ruthlessly inflicting curses on its descendants in the form of sickness, pain or misfortune.

These are the angry spirits with which we are concerned. They fall into roughly three categories.

First there are those who during the 33 years between death and the attainment of salvation are neglected by their descendants. The necessary nourishment of rice, water and potent sutras is denied to them, so that in their starved rage they will attack their surviving relatives in a variety of painful ways such as sickness, headaches, lumbago, or persistent bad luck. This they do in order to call attention to their plight. Once the correct obsequies are resumed, however, these angry ghosts will usually revert to their former benevolence.

A second class of discontented ghost may be seen in the *muenbotoke*, or ghosts of no affinity. People who died childless, with no descendants to offer them the proper obsequies, or who die in the midst of a journey, anonymous and friendless, are considered to be starved, wandering, rootless and desperate. In their misery they may attack any passing stranger whose condition, through illness or weakness, lays him open to spiritual invasion.

Most dangerous and powerful of all, however, are those ghosts whose manner of death was violent, disgraceful or untoward — *higō no shi*. Warriors killed in battle, courtiers dying in disgrace, men who were murdered with rage or resentment in their hearts, women who died tormented by an undiscovered shame,

all these become *onyrō* or *goryō*, furious ghosts of an extra powerful kind who need for their appeasement measures a good deal stronger than those which suffice with the other two categories. Indeed, the term *onyrō* is often confined to this particular type of furious ghost.

How do ghosts, non-physical entities, manage to wreak such havoc in the human, material world? Chiefly by what is best described as 'possession'. Our own ghosts may haunt a place or even a person. But they do not enter into the body of the person they haunt, causing agonising headaches, fever, debility or even madness. In Japan the ghost is believed to be capable of exactly such feats. A thousand years ago, during the Heian period, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that all sickness and misfortune was laid at the door of malign spiritual agencies. Healing, therefore, as well as prosperity, was a matter of exorcism.

At this early period it seems that angry ghosts were confined to those who were powerful or aristocratic during their lifetime, thus exemplifying Frazer's contention that only ghosts who were of superior rank and power before their death need be feared afterwards.<sup>3</sup> An early recorded example of an angry ghost is that of the Prince Sawara, who died a horrifying death in the year 785, starved, degraded, exiled and finally poisoned. His ghost was later credited with a series of calamities which included not only the sickness and death of individual persons, but also a general pestilence which affected the entire Capital. The usual requiem prayers were offered at his grave, but these proved ineffectual. It was only when the posthumous title of Emperor was conferred on the dead prince, his body exhumed and reinterred in a grave of the rank of Imperial tumulus, that the disasters stopped.

A century or so later the elegant society of the Capital, of which we know so much from literature of the period such as the long novel *Genji Monogatari*, was ravaged by a crescendo of terror of angry ghosts. The learned and ambitious minister Sugawara Michizane, for example, a talented scholar and calligrapher, rose so quickly to such a height of power and favour

at the Emperor's court, that he incurred the jealousy of other courtiers. Slandered by these enemies, he was unjustly disgraced, and in the year 901 exiled to the wilds of Kyūshū far from the elegance of the Capital. There, two years later, he died in lonely misery and disgrace.

Between the years 910 and 923 a series of fearful disasters struck the Capital: flood, plague, drought, the palace struck by lightning, the untimely death of the Crown Prince. These calamities were unhesitatingly attributed to the fury of Sagawara Michizane's angry ghost. Specially powerful measures were taken to appease the spirit, culminating in its apotheosis into a divinity of superior rank under the name of Kitano Tenjin. Only then did the calamities cease. The shrine established for the worship of the spirit, the Kitano Jinja, is to this day one of the largest, richest and most popular in Kyoto, boasting a notable fair on the 25th of every month.<sup>4</sup>

By the seventeenth century, however, it seems that not only princes, warriors and powerful courtiers were capable of becoming angry ghosts, but also farmers and merchants. The story of Sakura Sōgorō, a good and courageous farmer cruelly crucified by his feudal lord, provides us with a good instance.<sup>5</sup>

The lord of the Sakura fief, Hotta Kōtsuke-no-suke Masanobu, in order to defray his own extravagant expenditure, year after year imposed additional and unjust taxes upon the villages in his domain. Eventually, reduced to a desperate condition of poverty, the elders of 136 villages met together and petitioned him for mercy. They were met with only churlish rebuffs by the lord's chamberlains. At last Sōgorō, the headman of one of the villages, resorted to a desperate and unusual measure. Lying in wait under one of the bridges in the city of Edo for the passage of the Shōgun's palanquin, he climbed up from below and thrust inside the palanquin a document describing the plight of the farmers and begging for the clement intervention of the Shōgun. This plan was successful. The Shōgun deigned to read the document, and at once ordered an enquiry into the state of the mismanaged domain. But for the crime of appealing to an authority higher than that of his feudal lord Hotta Kōtsuke-

no-suke decreed that Sōgorō and his wife should both be crucified, and their three young sons beheaded before their eyes as they hung from the crosses.

It should be explained that the punishment of crucifixion, *haritsuke*, was inflicted in feudal Japan for the crimes of parricide, coining counterfeit money, attempting to leave the country without permission, and *lèse majeste* against one's lord. The victim was tied to a wooden cross with ropes, while a member of the *eta* or pariah class thrust spears into him until he died.

The lord Hotta was besought by all his councillors at least to spare Sōgorō's wife and family from so horrifying a fate. Representatives of all 136 villages begged him for clemency. But he refused all appeals, even decreeing that Sōgorō's body should be dishonoured and exposed for three days and nights after death.

Sōgorō and his wife were accordingly tied to crosses in the castle town before a horrified and lamenting crowd of spectators. One by one before their eyes their three sons were beheaded, the youngest so small that he was butchered as he was guilelessly eating sweets thrown to him by the spectators. Sōgorō as he watched this deed from the cross cried out that he would revenge himself after his death on the house of Hotta, and as he spoke 'his eyes became vermilion red and flashed like the sun and moon.' The pariah Shigaemon then stabbed him and his wife with a spear until they died.

A few weeks afterwards a series of calamities fell upon the house of Hotta. The wife of the lord, being pregnant, was seized with violent pains, and was tormented by night with visions of Sōgorō and his wife with red flaming eyes, bound to crosses and yelling with hideous laughter. The lord Hotta himself soon afterwards was involved in a quarrel in the castle at Edo. He was attainted of treason, arrested, and brought into the castle in a litter covered with nets of green silk.

In prison he repented for the first time of his cruelty to Sōgorō and offered heartfelt prayers to his spirit. At the same time in the fief Sōgorō was canonised and a shrine erected in his honour.

With these attentions, the ghost of Sōgorō relaxed its anger and ceased to persecute the house of Hotta. The lord thereupon found himself pardoned and released, and in due course reinstated in all his lands and revenues.

To this day the shrine erected in his honour, known as Sōgo Reidō, flourishes with streams of visitors, holding its principal feast in early September.

Already from these examples we can see a consistent pattern emerging. A man dies with rage in his heart against a violent, unjust or premature death. Rage inflames the ghost to merciless revenge, which finds expression in sickness, death, fire and thunder. This range can be appeased by certain ritual measures, among which the canonisation or apotheosis of the spirit — that is to say according to it the name, worship and cult attention due to a divinity — is the most efficacious. Such measures will not only annihilate the hatred and rage, but will convert the power that lies behind the rage into a force for good. The ghost in its new divinised form can be expected to extend protection and benevolence to anyone who petitions it, in exact proportion to the power of its former curses. The worse and more furious the ghost, the more powerful the favours it will bestow after its appeasement and conversion.

This entire belief is still very much alive in certain parts of Japan. Buddhist temples still exist, affiliated particularly to the Shingon and Nichiren sects, which specialise in the exorcism of cases of ghost possession. Several of the *shinkō-shukyō* or religious sects newly arisen during the last hundred years, also make their central function the deliverance of sick and unhappy people from baleful possession by ghosts. Notable among these new sects is the Mahikari Kyōkai.<sup>6</sup>

Both the authorities and the patients in such healing temples take it for granted that any ill which is unaccountable or obstinate, beyond the ordinary competence of man to set right, can be laid at the door of 'possession' by an angry ghost. Obstinate aches and pains, sicknesses which refuse to respond to any treatment, ungovernable and disgraceful habits such as drunkenness or quarrelling, persistent and

unaccountable failure in business — all these can be safely and plausibly be attributed to the work of ghosts. To get rid of the trouble it is necessary first to induce the entity to speak, to name itself, to state the reasons for its attack, and finally to agree to the terms on which it will leave its victim.

An example of the procedure whereby such a ghost is discovered, laid and finally appeased, could be seen at the Nichiren temple of Barakisan Myōgyōji in Chiba prefecture. When I last visited the temple, in 1963, it was still so full every day with patients as to resemble a hospital. People who suspected that the affliction from which they were suffering was caused by a spiritual possession, were able to board in the temple for as many days or weeks as it took to exorcise the trouble. A large dormitory wing capable of accommodating several dozen people stood near the main gate, which included a large room where the patients could practise the recitation of the holy formula of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, *Nammyōhō rengekyō*. This discipline they were expected to continue nearly all day, with short intervals for meals and services, the effect of constant repetition of these words of power being to force the possessing entity to surface, declare itself and enter into a dialogue with the exorcist.

The exorcist was the Abbot, a dignified and awe-inspiring person who had accomplished a strenuous programme of austerities. In no case, it should be noted, can the spiritual power necessary to lay a ghost be acquired without undergoing certain ascetic disciplines. The aspiring exorcist must undertake a regime which includes fasting, abstention from certain foods such as meat, cereals, salt and strong vegetables, cold water douches, and the recitation of a holy text. The Abbot of Myōgyōji had accomplished no less than five winters of a particularly excruciating programme of austerities known as the *aragyō* of the Nichiren sect, and was consequently greatly revered as a powerful exorcist.

At 11 o'clock every day of the year the resident patients gathered in a large hall, sitting in rows with eyes shut and hands clasped together. The Abbot swept in, and for some half an hour recited passages



from the powerful scripture known as the Lotus Sutra. This finished, he turned his attention to the patients, subjecting those he considered ripe for exorcism to a stern catechism.

Speaking not to the patient herself but to the possessing entity inside her, he rapped out a series of questions in a severe and commanding voice.

"When did you first attack this woman?"

"Where did you attack her? Give the precise address, town and street."

"Are you attacking any of her relatives as well as her?"

"In what manner are you attacking her?"

"For what reason are you attacking her? Is it due to spite. or because you want something?"

The patient, thus sternly addressed, would at once begin to exhibit the symptoms which in Japan are recognised to indicate possession by a malign entity, jiggling up and down on the heels and jerking the clasped hands to and fro in front of the body.

The answers often took a long time to come, and when they did they were often barely audible. But as the catechism proceeded a picture built itself up. The entity, to cite a typical example, confessed itself to be the woman's dead grandfather who was angry because the offerings at the household shrine had been neglected, and was causing the woman persistent lumbago in order to call attention to his plight. When the Abbot undertook, however, that the woman would in future be more careful over the daily offerings of rice and water and potent sutras, the entity agreed to leave her body.

"When will you leave her?" the Abbot demanded.

"I'll go now," the ghost would say. "Right," the Abbot replied, "you promise?" "Yes, I promise," the ghost agreed.

At these words the woman collapsed and lay inert on the floor, the Abbot turning his attention to the next patient on his list. At the end of the service the company would solemnly gather round the prostrate woman and congratulate her on her deliverance.

Occasionally the patient was found to be not yet ready for the full treatment. The possessing entity refused to speak clearly or coherently, merely giving

vent to moans and sobs. Proper deliverance required a full confession on the part of the entity, often a good scolding on the part of the Abbot, and a promise from the entity not only to leave the patient but also to turn over a new leaf and cease its malign activities.

Consideration of the stories alleged by the possessing entities, whether in Buddhist temples of the older sects such as Myōgyōji, or in the new sects which specialise in exorcism such as Mahikari Kyōkai, reveals them to be not at all haphazard. On the contrary they conform to fixed stereotypes of immediate interest to the folklorist. The recent ancestor offended by neglect and starved of due nourishment is one of these stereotypes. Two or three more are easily distinguished.

A warrior, for example, killed in battle, murdered or drowned three or four centuries ago, is alleged with surprising frequency. Humble people who seemed unlikely to number a samurai among their ancestors frequently produced one, who under the catechism of the exorcist recounted the story of his death and subsequent miseries in hell. Child or infant ghosts likewise appeared with odd frequency, stating that they had been killed because they were illegitimate or unwanted, and had returned to revenge themselves on later generations of their family by attempting to kill them.

Unmarried or childless women were likewise credited with terrifying malignity, frequently being held responsible for inflicting singleness or sterility on later generations of innocent girls. Indeed, any woman finding herself in one of the dreaded crises of Japanese life, unable to find a husband or unable to conceive a child, was likely to discover, under exorcism, that the reason for her failure lay not in ugliness or sterility, but in possession by a spirit which in its lifetime had suffered exactly the same kind of misery that it was now inflicting on the patient. Indeed, this 'eye for an eye' syndrome, whereby the ghost inflicts on others the same ill which has been tormenting it and obstructing its progress towards salvation, extends further than mere childless women. A ghost who died in a fire, for

example, will cause its victim unbearable sensations of heat, such as a raging fever. One who was drowned will likewise try to inflict on its victim death by water.<sup>7</sup>

These stereotypes, many of which are found in literature and drama — nearly all Zeami's Nō plays concern the salvation of the ghost of an ancient warrior — nevertheless seem to carry remarkable therapeutic powers. Having delivered herself, under catechism, of the ghostly possession, the patient recovers with remarkable frequency from the neurosis which has been tormenting her.

Such 'types' of angry ghosts clearly carry a peculiar power in the psyche for both good and evil which could well bear further investigation. For the time being let us recall that the angry ghost, once appeased, turns into a power for good. On leaving its victim the spirit demands that a special little shrine be set up to it and special worship accorded every day. Then, all the force which previously went into destruction and vicious curses will be converted and transformed into a power for protection. The 'ghost', recognised, acknowledged, no longer neglected, now becomes a guardian even more efficacious than the ancient beaming Ancestor.



II

*GHOSTS IN PERSPECTIVE*

But the ghosts themselves - do they in fact exist,  
and if so, what are they?

CHRISTINA HOLE, *Haunted England*



## 6. THE ENVIRONMENT OF GHOSTS

Claire Russell

'I BELIEVE IN ghosts', wrote the Irish doctor-poet Oliver St John Gogarty. 'I believe in ghosts: that is, I know that there are times, given the place which is capable of suggesting a phantasy, when those who are sufficiently impressionable may perceive a dream projected as if external to the dreamy mind: a waking dream due both to the dreamer and the spot.'<sup>1</sup> Gogarty believed in ghosts, because he was the owner of Renvyle House, and that house had a ghost which, practical-minded and common-sense person that he was, nonetheless manifested itself to him. Renvyle House was on the Atlantic coast of Connaught. Gogarty bought it in 1917, and the IRA burned it down on February 19th 1923; afterwards Gogarty rebuilt it as an hotel.<sup>2</sup> The house had once belonged to a member of the Clan O'Flaherty, Princes of Iar Connaught, who turned it over to the Blake family, who held it before Gogarty and who, in his words, 'left a ghost behind them to resent newcomers'.

The focussing point of the ghost was a north room, the only one on the second floor with barred windows. So here was a cheerless, sunless room, with its windows barred, a tell-tale clue suggesting someone's imprisonment. But this natural association seems to have been disregarded, and yet further reinforced by naturally not using the room, while leaving it with some odds and ends of furniture, such as it may have had, if and when someone was imprisoned in it. To anticipate, it later appeared that a boy, variously described as about 12 and about 14, may have been imprisoned in that room about sixty years before, gone mad and committed suicide. All this emerged during two seances held at Renvyle during a houseparty in the autumn of 1917, when two people saw the ghost. But before that Gogarty himself had heard some odd things. One night, when he slept alone in the house, in a room at the end of the haunted room's passage, he heard, about 1 a.m., footsteps in the passage that became louder, but never arrived. Not able to put up with it any longer, he opened the door. His candle went out, and there was deadly silence. Another time, he heard what he imagined to be a car, 'feeling its

way along the back drive to the yard by the beach'. This is an interesting point, since, if the haunting referred to a time some sixty years earlier, in about 1860, there would hardly have been a car going up the drive - so that Gogarty may have translated a carriage and horse into a car.

These occurrences happened at night, when he would have been predisposed to sleep and dreaming, and they would meet his ghost-definition of a spot suggesting a phantasy and a dreamy mind...Moreover, I too have experienced once a similar dreamy hallucination in a house in an English county town, where I heard the footsteps of a child on the stairs, while day-dreaming in the pleasant sunny sitting-room, footsteps that ceased, whenever I opened the door to investigate. I was alone in the house, which was occupied by a veterinary surgeon and his wife, who were out at the time. They were friends of the couple I was living with then, who had a house a few doors down the street, and a cat with the curious name of Jugged Joe.

After I heard the footsteps, I was told the story of the house. The similarity with the Renvyle ghost goes further, for there had been a child in this house too, a child of about three, whose mother had had an affair with a GI, in civilian life a Chicago gangster. When she went out with him, she left the child tied up in the cot. The gangster later committed suicide by jumping from a first floor window. This was the first I had heard of him, but I now learned that he had had the curious nickname of Jugged Joe.

So it appears that both the Renvyle ghost boy and this ghost child (who for all I know was still alive) were imprisoned and footstepped about the house, as presumably they had done wishfully during their imprisonment. The Renvyle boy, moreover, must have anxiously listened to every sound, as children do when left alone and anxiously waiting for parents to come home. All this goes to show that ghosts have to do with human behaviour, and with the repressed and unconscious experiences that people do not like to discuss and think about. I consider that in both these cases local people knew about the tragedy so



unbearable for a child, that either they could not or would not do anything about it, and that it was something not to talk about, and certainly not to strangers: as we shall see, the locals were not forthcoming about the ghost boy to Gogarty. For I now return to Renvyle, and to the eventful houseparty.

Among the guests were the poet William Butler Yeats and his wife Georgie, on their honeymoon; this fact enables us to date the party to the autumn of 1917, for the Yeatses were married on the 21st of October that year.<sup>3</sup> One evening, Georgie Yeats reported she had seen a face looking out of her mirror. Yeats at once set up a seance, with himself, his wife, Lord Conyngham and another guest, whose name Gogarty does not mention, perhaps because he was not a lord, for Gogarty was an incorrigible name-dropper. Yeats particularly excluded others from his seance, - his host for one, and a certain Seymour Leslie whom he called 'a regular vortex of evil spirits'. Leslie, being excluded, thereupon set up his own seance, with a sensitive young Welshman called Evan Morgan, and some others. The first Gogarty heard of this was a loud scream. Hurrying to investigate, he found young Morgan semi-conscious, supported by two fussy females, and someone said he was dying. Gogarty shooed them all out. He tried to drown the evil spirits by cheerful chatter, when Morgan regained consciousness, but Morgan insisted on talking. It turned out that Leslie had locked Morgan into the haunted room at about 12.30 a.m. So here was a social neurosis being acted out, with Leslie as the gaoler and Morgan as the child-victim. Locked in a room where the unfortunate boy had once been locked, Morgan saw the ghost, felt enormous sympathy and felt like hell, and finished up with a complete identification. He saw a boy of about 12 years old, who fixed his eyes upon him in a hypnotic manner to judge from his description. The white-faced boy, in his brown velvet costume, looked eventually mad and finished up choking himself with his hands, which Morgan interpreted as suicide, presumably by hanging. Leslie had eventually let the terrified young man out, because of the row he was making, but Morgan said he made no noise, so here was yet another manifestation.

While Gogarty was reviving Morgan and restoring him to the company, Yeats was communicating with the ghost, as he put it, by means of the ouija board. It appeared that the boy had gone mad sixty years ago. He objected to strangers in the home of his ancestors. Yeats thereupon admonished him to stop his haunting activities, and obtained his promise to appear to Georgie Yeats in his room, as he was before he went mad. This duly happened, and Georgie Yeats reported he was a boy of about 14 years of age; like Morgan, she described him as pale-faced. The ghost had asked to be placated with incense and flowers, and Lord Conyngham duly went round gathering perfume from the guests and flowers from flower-bowls throughout the house, for Georgie Yeats to present to the ghost. Incense and flowers surely suggest a kind of funeral rite. At all events, it is implied that from that time on the house was quiet.

It is striking that both Morgan and Georgie Yeats saw a pale boy in his early teens. In his impressionistic way, Gogarty never quite tells us how, or even whether, the facts about the boy were verified, but he does indicate this in connection with one particular fact. The Blakes had a custom of calling their sons after the Anglo-Saxon kings of the Heptarchy. Yeats could hardly have guessed this by chance, but he did find it out by his ouija board activities, and also the ghost's particular name, Athalstone. 'I had never gleaned it from the local people', observes Gogarty, showing that the ghost was something these locals did not readily talk about, at least to strangers.

The two stories I have just told are clearly not folk fiction but perfectly genuine events. In Gogarty's words, his apparition was 'none of your "I-heard-for-a-fact-from-a-friend" ghosts, but one I had heard myself, and two of us had *seen*'. My own experience with the footsteps was less spectacular, and only involved hearing sounds, but I can certainly vouch for it. What are we to make of events such as these? Now any investigation of this subject has to contend with a long-standing social censorship, which takes two alternative forms. Either it is simply asserted that ghost events do not take place. Or it

is asserted that they are exactly what they seem, that is, appearances of and messages from the dead. Either of these assertions will dispose of the matter, and block any further investigation of the *living* and their relationships.

It is generally found that apparitions of the living are more common than those of the dead. In the great census of hallucinations carried out by the Society for Psychical Research in 1889 to 1892, out of 768 identified human apparitions, 536 were of the living and 232 of the dead.<sup>4</sup> The two kinds of event are similar, and sometimes, as with the child's footsteps I heard, one cannot know which kind it is without further investigation. But even in the case of *ghosts*, that is, apparitions of the dead, with which I am concerned in this paper, the *living* are always involved. People do not cease to be relevant to a person or a society, when they have died. The dead used to live and have relationships, and those who remain are affected by the death, and their relationships to each other are affected by the death, and will continue to be affected until they have re-adjusted their relationships: this can indeed also occur in the case of a temporary or permanent separation among those who are alive. Irrespective of the ultimate conclusions reached about these supernatural events, it is important to understand the relationships of living people to the phenomenon, and to treat emotional relationships - be they with the living or the dead - respectfully.

The most fruitful approach to the subject of genuine hauntings or ghost stories, then, is to accept them as facts but not necessarily take them at their face value. Evidently this was Gogarty's approach; and, as W.M.S. Russell shows, (p.        below), it was also that of St. Augustine.<sup>5</sup> My own view is that ghost occurrences are due to emotional interactions between two or more living people - short-term personal interactions, family interactions, interactions in a community - all of which are predominantly unconscious. And so in this paper I shall consider relations between the living people involved, as the social *environment*, or, perhaps better, the social *context* of ghost phenomena.

Let me repeat at this point my opening quotation from Gogarty. 'I believe in ghosts: that is, I know that there are times, given the place which is capable of suggesting a phantasy, when those who are sufficiently impressionable may perceive a dream projected as if external to the dreamy mind: a waking dream due both to the dreamer and the spot'. This perceptive statement gives us an important clue. Before trying to understand the full-blown classical ghost story, such as that of Renvyle, we have to begin modestly, with dreams. Those who have seriously studied ghost events have generally done just this, studying dreams and ghosts together; St Augustine is one example of this.<sup>6</sup> Another is Andrew Lang. Early in his *Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, he observes that 'the ghostly is nothing but the experience, when men are awake, or *apparently* awake, of the every-night phenomena of dreaming'.<sup>7</sup>

So we can trace a sequence of developments from what are, in Lang's words, quite 'common-place and familiar' processes and events, to the 'undeniably startling' ones encountered in classical genuine hauntings.<sup>8</sup> To begin with, I note that all people have 'ghosts' in the sense of having had relationships with those since dead. Usually in addition to their memories, they have mementoes, and sometimes they live in homes surrounded by reminiscent furniture and atmospheres - in the case of ancient homes, for generations. In most cases, people adjust personally and socially to these 'ghosts'. There remain social localities and families and individuals who for a longer or shorter period suffer from stress and cannot adjust. This usually takes the form of shorter or longer periods of mental stress and even illness, but sometimes it takes the more unusual form of haunting. It is, for instance, quite normal to dream of a person who has died. Such dreams are attempts, usually successful, to readjust to the loss of the people who have died, to say 'goodbye' to them, so to speak. I have had such dreams myself. This sort of dream may briefly result in a haunting, since such vivid dreams may result in a hypnotic state and hallucinations. If a family has to readjust, such hauntings may be of

longer duration. The longest hauntings occur in ancestral homes, and in localities meaningful to whole communities. At this point we are in the realm of what we might call veridical folklore, and there are a number of different outcomes: usually the hauntings eventually cease, if memories fade, circumstances alter, or if the problem causing them is satisfactorily resolved. I will try to take this sequence step by step, beginning with dreams of the dead.

Ordinary dreams about people who have died scarcely need comment, but there is an interesting special class of veridical dreams in which the dead person communicates true and apparently hitherto unknown facts. Two examples will suffice. Charles Clarence Batchelder was a distinguished American Orientalist and adviser to the American Government on Far Eastern affairs. He had been a student of William James, who interested him in psychical research. When his grandfather made a will, Batchelder told the tough old man to his face the will was unfair to the family; but, in the words of William Oliver Stevens, who heard the story from Batchelder himself, 'the discussion was closed then and there'.<sup>9</sup> After the grandfather's death, when the will was in probate, Batchelder dreamed he heard the old man's voice saying, 'in characteristic ringing tones, "You were right about that first will. I made another. Don't rest till you find it!"'. Batchelder 'knew that the old man had a careless way of stuffing things unsystematically into any convenient receptacle, and so he went to work on the desk'. Amongst the untidily filed clutter, he eventually found the second will. As a second example, we may take a famous story from Boccaccio's *Life of Dante*.<sup>10</sup> When the poet died, his family were unable to find the last thirteen cantos of the *Paradiso*, and his sons Jacopo and Piero were trying to complete the poem themselves, when Jacopo dreamed his father appeared to him and indicated one of the walls of his bedroom as the hiding-place of the missing cantos. Jacopo got up, found one of Dante's disciples, Pier Giardino, and went with him to the house where Dante had lived at the time of his death. They roused the new owner, went to the bedroom wall indicated, lifted up a

hanging map, and found the cantos in a little recess in the wall.

These dreams are very similar to the creative dreams in which many scientists and artists have made great discoveries. W.M.S. Russell and I have discussed many examples, such as the dreams of Coleridge and Otto Loewi, and, interestingly, the waking reveries of the chemist Kekule, which produced, respectively, the existing lines of *Kubla Khan*, the theory of chemical transmission at nerve endings, and the benzene ring structure in organic chemistry.<sup>11</sup> William Oliver Stevens highlights the resemblance by recounting, immediately before the story of Jacopo Dante, the well-authenticated case of the Near Eastern scholar Hermann V. Hilprecht, recorded by his colleague at the University of Pennsylvania, W. Romaine Newbold.<sup>12</sup> In 1893, Hilprecht was trying to decipher the inscriptions on various objects from the site of Nippur in Iraq, with only drawings and descriptions to work from. The inscriptions on two small pieces of agate defeated him. While correcting the page proofs of his book on the subject, he dreamed a tall, thin priest from ancient Nippur told him the two pieces of agate had been cut from a single votive cylinder to meet a hurried order for a pair of earrings for the god Ninib. This and other information from the priest Hilprecht was able to verify, first on the drawings and later on the agate fragments themselves in the Imperial Museum at Istanbul. The archeologist who had classified the relics had not seen the relationship between the two pieces, and they had been put in cases far apart in the museum. When they were sawn apart in ancient times, the cut had fallen between differently coloured agate veins. Hence, in the material Hilprecht had worked from, they had been represented as unrelated and of different colour.

Some years ago, it occurred to me that artists and scientists do their creative work against a powerful cultural resistance, so that much of the work of their intelligence is *repressed*. I have since been able to confirm, again and again, that the appearance of their inspirations in dreams is really the *return of the repressed*, the work of their own exploration and

imagination, though the repressed observations and imaginings return with such force they may seem to come from some outside source, such as the Muses. In the Hilprecht case, Newbold listed six points in Hilprecht's dream that were apparently new to him, and concluded that 'a careful analysis reveals the fact that not one of these items was beyond the reach of the processes of associated reasoning which Professor Hilprecht daily employs'.<sup>13</sup> The same reasoning applies to the dreams of the dead. Jacopo Dante must surely have seen the hanging map and his failure to look behind it, when conducting a thorough search for the cantos, was surely a matter of repression and resistance. Batchelder actually knew of his grandfather's untidy habits, and though his grandfather, when alive, did not explicitly respond to his criticisms of the will, the old man may have indicated it by some posture which was unconsciously registered. Such dreams, therefore, raise no more problems than any other dreams of the recently dead.

It is, moreover, a relatively short step from dream to personal apparition. In 1882, the Duchess of Hamilton had a precognitive vision of a friend of hers who soon afterwards died.<sup>14</sup> In her own words, 'I went to bed, but after being in bed a short time, I was not exactly asleep, but thought I saw a scene as if from a play before me. The actors in it were Lord L., in a chair, as if in a fit, with a man standing over him with a red beard. He was by the side of a bath, over which a red lamp was distinctly shown'. She told this to a doctor who was attending both the Duke and Lord L., and a few days later he saw the exact scene in real life, the red-bearded man being a male nurse. The Duchess found the picture so disturbing she closed her eyes, but it was still there when she opened them again. I mention this case because it is nicely between a dream while asleep and a hallucination while awake. Such a state must involve relaxation and presumably a special balance in the brain between the waking and sleep mechanisms, regarded as natural when asleep, unusual as it is even then.

There may be a direct transition from dream to apparition. In 1883, a certain Mrs Howieson three

times heard the voice of her five-year-old daughter, who was staying with her grandmother a couple of hundred miles away, to convalesce from 'a weak, nervous state of health', and was reported to be recovering well.<sup>15</sup> The lovely country, the beautiful sun-sets, all in the course of three months had conspired to give the child good health and good spirits. But one night Mrs Howieson heard her daughter's voice, first in her sleep, so loud it woke her up, then as she was dozing off again, and a third time when she was lying wondering about it, 'broad awake'. The third time the child cried: 'Mamma, oh! Mamma, I've got scarlet fever, I've got scarlet fever!' - the exact words the child did cry out at about the same time at her grandmother's, when the doctor made his diagnosis.

William A. Lamberton, an American Professor of Greek, was a keen student of mathematics. He had been trying to solve a problem analytically, without using geometry, when he saw the solution as a geometrical diagram in a creative dream.<sup>16</sup> The diagram was laid out on the wall of his bedroom. The bedroom had formerly been a classroom, and 'along that wall had been a blackboard, now painted over'. But 'what amazed Professor Lamberton most of all was that as he opened his eyes on waking, he saw that diagram still on the wall', and was able to copy it down. Here we have a dream continued as an eidetic image. Such a thing could well form the basis of an apparition.

The visions of the Duchess and Professor Lamberton were unusually persistent; but visions are more usually fleeting. A ghost may be a sort of veridical dream while awake. It may have an objective reality, as is clear, for instance, when different observers see the same thing, as happened at Renvyle, and when facts emerge that can later be verified. However, it must depend on a particular state of mind and mood to maintain the image. It occurs to me that there is a perfect illustration, quite commonplace, that anybody can try. Looking at a bright object, there is an after-image, when the eyes are closed. Keep the eyes closed, and move the eyes, and the after-image moves also. This after-image fades, but can be reactivated by concentration, until eventually it



goes and cannot be resuscitated. The hallucination of a ghost is to some extent governed by this perfectly natural fact, and can accordingly be shorter or longer according to the length of time the concentration is maintained and not disturbed. Many a ghost vanishes when the observer puts the light on, when he changes position and gets up, when he focusses his eyes differently.

A friend of mine told such a story. When she was a child, and lived on the ground floor of a house in Berlin, she occupied a bedroom that looked out on a garden, the gate of which was locked. She saw, sitting up in bed, a lady dressed in a white Victorian dress, with something glittering in her hand, gliding past the window. She could see right through the lady. The first time she was frightened. But when she saw her the second time, she wanted to get to the bottom of the matter and got up to watch where the lady went. But the lady vanished. An economic or, as we say, materialistic association may well dispel the ghost mood particularly quickly. Bishop Creighton once slept in a haunted room in an old manor in Northamptonshire.<sup>17</sup> At breakfast, he was asked if he had seen the ghost, and replied that he had, and that the family would not be troubled again. In fact the ghost came back after the Bishop left, but he had certainly caused it to vanish promptly as far as he was concerned, by asking it for a subscription towards the restoration of Peterborough Cathedral.

The Bishop was dealing, in his highly personal way, with a family ghost. Matters do not necessarily get as far as this: the problem may be resolved at the stage of a personal apparition. Mrs Charles E. Wofford, of St Louis, Missouri, had what she calls a silly quarrel with her grandmother, with no chance for an apology before the old lady died.<sup>18</sup> The night after the funeral, she woke to see her grandmother standing at the foot of her bed. She talked to her and apologized, and clearly felt better afterwards. This is a sort of goodbye ghost, not far removed from what I have called a goodbye dream. But the problem cannot have been completely resolved after all, for Mrs Wofford and her mother occasionally heard the grandmother's footsteps afterwards.

The typical family ghost is seen by at least several members of a family, sometimes in several generations, and sometimes by people from outside the family. This at once raises the question of shared images. Here again the study of dreams is useful. For, in the words of Andrew Lang, 'cases in which two or more waking people are alleged to have seen the same "ghost", simultaneously or in succession, have *their* parallel in sleep, where two or more persons simultaneously dream the same dream'.<sup>19</sup> In 1965, T.D. Duane and Thomas Behrendt reported in *Science* they were able to produce an alpha rhythm in the electroencephalogram of one identical twin, by asking the other twin to close his eyes, when the two were in separate lighted rooms six metres apart.<sup>20</sup> They could do this regularly using two pairs of twins. If telepathic effects can be produced on the EEG, it is no wonder people can have the same dreams, especially if they are closely related and therefore have many thoughts and associations in common. The shared dream material may be fantasy, as in a case collected by Lang, in which five members of a family, two of them staying in a different house, all dreamed the same night their pet poodle went mad: in fact, the dog 'lived, sane and harmless, "all the length of his years"'.<sup>21</sup> When the shared dream material is veridical, it is often about death. Catherine Crowe, publishing in 1852, described the dreams of a mother and daughter, sleeping one night in the same bed at Cheltenham.<sup>22</sup> The mother dreamed she was called to the death-bed of her brother-in-law in Ireland, and shrank from kissing him because of his livid appearance. The daughter dreamed he came in wearing a shroud trimmed with black ribbons, and said: 'My dear niece, your mother has refused to kiss me, but I am sure you will not be so unkind'. He did indeed die in Ireland that night. Lang cites a case where three brothers dreamed correctly their mother had just died.<sup>23</sup> Dreams of the dead may also be shared; Mary E. Monteith reports hearing from a Canadian doctor how he dreamed of his dead father and his mother had a corresponding dream the same night.<sup>24</sup> The sharing of dream imagery, particularly concerning the dead, makes it more intelligible that a family

ghost may be seen by several members of a family and also by strangers.

Some ghosts may, indeed, go no further than the family, if the apparition resolves the problem that led to its appearance. The film star Ida Lupino told Danton Walker a story about a very close friend of her father and of the whole family, whom she called Uncle Andy.<sup>25</sup> One night, when she was nine years old, her parents had left her with her grandmother and gone out to play at a London variety theatre. Ida had a disturbing dream about Uncle Andy, and came downstairs to tell her grandmother about it. While she was doing so, the telephone rang. It was Uncle Andy, wanting to talk to her father. She called her grandmother to the telephone, and heard her say, 'Why, Andy - are you ill? I'll tell Stanley to call you the moment he comes in'. At this point, the grandmother was cut off, and when she rang the operator she was told there had been no call on the line for the past hour. When Ida's parents came home, it emerged that Uncle Andy had hanged himself three days before. In this case, the parents had evidently been upset and preoccupied. But they had said nothing to either Ida or her grandmother, who may well have picked up clues that something was wrong. The dream and ghost telephone call flushed the reason for the parents' upset into the open, and re-established communication in the family.

Even when a ghost is seen by strangers, it may remain very much a family affair. Ghosts, it appears, have something in common with cats. In my experience, a cat may *either* be attached to a given locality, so that, when the family leaves and takes it with them, the cat returns to its former haunts, *or* it may be attached to a person or persons, in which case it frets to be left behind. There is at least one story of a ghost behaving in the second way, travelling, so to speak, with the family rather than being attached to its ancient haunts. In the 1890s, a family had an ancient seat and a more recent additional home at Thurstaston Hall in Cheshire. One day a famous RA, executing a commission for the family at Thurstaston, was working alone in a room when he saw the ghost of an old lady in ancient

costume. The ghost staying for a while, he made a sketch of her. Allan Fea, who tells this story, states that 'for some private reason, he did not show [the sketch] to the people in the house', but he showed it freely to all and sundry on his return to London. One of those to whom he showed the sketch later stayed with the family at their older seat, and there in one of the portraits in the portrait gallery he recognized the old lady of the sketch. The ghost had evidently followed the family to Thurstaston Hall.<sup>26</sup>

Fea does not tell us what the artist's commission was, so I can only hazard a guess.<sup>27</sup> Suppose one of the members of the family was having his or her portrait painted. Evidently this would ultimately hang in the family portrait gallery, and the person concerned would thus achieve a sort of immortality in the family. Now here was an ancestress intruding, one who already hung in the portrait gallery. So I infer some emotionally stressful involvement between members of the family about having a portrait of one of them painted. It would explain that the painter intuitively said nothing of this occurrence to the people at Thurstaston, not wishing to be at the centre of a hornets' nest of emotions. The ghost, then, dramatized an unresolved problem in the family.

An artist is particularly likely to translate awareness of other living people into accurate visual images.<sup>28</sup> The American psychiatrist R.K. Greenbank tells of an extremely disturbed patient who came to one session with a razor in her pocket.<sup>29</sup> Because she was obviously particularly upset that day, Greenbank offered her an additional hour if she would wait while he saw another patient first. She accepted, but slashed her wrists in the lavatory while waiting. Greenbank treated the wounds, which were superficial. Later she was rung up by an artist girl-friend, who asked what had happened at the time of the attempted suicide. She had had a strange feeling at that time and had painted a picture of it. The picture showed a hand with blood flowing from a cut on the wrist. Now Greenbank was aware of the girl's disturbed state of mind, so why not her artist friend? Realistic perception of another person's

mood seems to play a very large part in paranormal phenomena. Picking up the mood of a person, and/or the atmosphere of a place, realistically is the first necessary step towards an enhanced awareness. The second, somewhat surprising step, giving details of circumstances and incidents, may fall into place; in this case, the event of the patient slashing her wrists, and the time when she did it. It is also worth noting that where an ordinary person may dream, an artist may execute a picture (or a poem), which shows that art can be a dream with open eyes.

However, it may also be possible to paint a picture in the mind's eye and project it, if we accept a story told by Enid Porter in her *Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore*.<sup>30</sup> This was originally published in 1927 by a certain Thomas Townley, who said he received it 'as true' from a friend. A house in Trumpington Street, Cambridge, was for sale, and a lady came to look over it. While she sat waiting in the sitting-room for the owner, she looked at a picture over the fireplace, of a woman in a green outfit with a red feather in her hat and a sinister expression on her face. Eventually the maid returned and took the lady to the owner, who showed her round the house. As they sat in the drawing-room, the owner said she hoped the prospective purchaser would not be put off by a silly story that the house was haunted by a woman in green with a red feather in her hat. The visitor said this was presumably the lady in the portrait in the room where she had waited. Of course it turned out the picture in question was really a water-colour landscape. Stories like this of pictures and ghosts make it clear why the Second Act of *Ruddigore* is so effective, when the ancestral ghosts step out of their picture-frames.

The family ghost shows one kind of cat behaviour, but many ghosts show the other kind, being clearly attached to particular places, houses, apartments or rooms, where strongly felt emotions have prevailed. It is no wonder people can be affected by the traces left by former occupants of a house or room. Many animals mark their territories. Francis Huxley quotes a pertinent observation about animals by the naturalist Bilz: 'excrement and the image

conveyed by it frighten and even terrify the intruder to a territory. Is not this similar to magic? ... The scent banner unfurled against a tree stump by a dog continues to strike terror even when the animal has long since ... gone to live on another farm'.<sup>31</sup> If it is granted that human beings do mark their territories, without going into the details of how they achieve this, then relaxed human territory marking must be different from stress territory marking and definition. In fact people dispose objects, have different smells, arrange their possessions even in the temporary territory of an hotel room, and above all decorate the interior of a room or whole house. We may well suppose that some people can mark a territory to such an extent that it elicits a response in sensitive new occupants, who still feel the territory is not their own. This at first takes the form of having strange feelings. After that it may be strengthened by hallucinations of sound or sight. A relaxed personality can readily share a territory with others as relaxed, and we do sometimes hear of ghosts that are pleasant to live with. On the other hand, a territory may well be intensely stress-marked by the previous occupancy of violent and unhappy people with stressful emotions. The resulting disturbance may even lead to the new occupant identifying himself with the previous one, as happened to Evan Morgan at Renvyle, for he can no longer maintain his identity under the stress *and* continue to occupy the stress-marked territory.

How exactly is the effect transmitted to the newcomers? If we consider first the clues and associations from the place itself, there are two useful considerations. First, it is an interesting fact that people of schizoid personality often dissociate the person from his surroundings. They do not look at a person. They meticulously inspect that person's place and make inferences about the person, whom they repress, through the indirect method of making observations on the person's home. This repression of a person and observation of a place may be important in the case of hauntings. Those who see ghosts are often sane and sensitive people, though they are liable to be treated by others

as mentally disturbed when they tell their experiences. Sensitive people may generally be affected by what we call the atmosphere of a place, with all its sights and smells, the hauntings then being the return of the repressed human personality and occurrences, as well as awareness of the ways in which other people are affected by this place and their past and present connections with the social events linked to that place.

Second, it is certainly true that some ghosts can be disposed of by remodelling and redecoration to get rid of all the perceptible marks left by previous occupants. In a case mentioned by Brad Steiger, a simple enough cure is described.<sup>32</sup> The family affected, a widow and three children, had moved into a flat where a lonely drug-addicted girl had committed suicide. There were groans, sobs and whispers at night, and one child had seen a sad-looking woman in his bedroom. Under such circumstances, the flat may be considered as an emotionally insanitary environment - analogous to an unhygienic slum causing physical ill-health. In this case a complete renovation of the flat was the remedy. The walls were repainted, the plumbing replaced, and the apartment rewired, and the ghostly disturbances ceased. There were no associations left to provoke them.

However, the stamp left on a house by the previous occupants is not the only factor in a localized ghost: there is also the attitude of people in the neighbourhood, involved emotionally with the place and what occurred in it. The haunting will generally continue as long as the emotional involvement remains relevant in the present. This may explain why exorcism sometimes works and sometimes does not. If it results in disentangling those involved from their involvement, it works - if not, not. In general, ghosts attached to a given locality focus and dramatize, in a particular spot, interpersonal involvements within the whole neighbouring community. And of course there are ghosts that continue to appear for many years, even centuries, in a particular locality. These phenomena must relate to the social emotions of the neighbourhood, and continue as long

as the disturbing emotions are socially transmitted and socially relevant. Unfortunately, the sorts of factors I have been discussing are all too liable to be left out of accounts of ghost events, in the obsession with the question whether they happened at all, and whether they were messages from the dead. A really useful account should include description of the locale, the personality of the individual affected, interactions between people in the building, and between them and the people of the neighbourhood, interactions within this neighbouring community and local involvement with the haunted place.

From time to time in this paper I have emphasized the importance of repression. On the basis of extensive observations I think it would be richly rewarding to explore ghost events, like creative and veridical dreams, as a special case of the *return of the repressed*, though unlike a creative dream a ghost generally does no more than call attention to a problem, without necessarily providing an immediate solution. That haunting is a return of the repressed is sometimes particularly obvious. Allanbank, a seat of the Stuarts, a family of Scottish baronets, had a ghost known as Pearlin Jean.<sup>33</sup> She was a Frenchwoman, who had been deserted by the first baronet in Paris, stepped on the wheel of his coach to make a last appeal to him, and fell and was killed when he ordered the postillion to drive on. After she had haunted Allanbank for some time, according to the antiquary Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, 'the picture of the ghost was hung between those of her lover and his lady, and kept her comparatively quiet; but when taken away, she became worse-natured than ever'.<sup>34</sup> In other words, when the picture was there to remind people consciously of the story, the haunting died down; when the picture was removed and the story was again repressed, the ghost came back. There could hardly be a clearer demonstration of the relation between repression and haunting, with the ghost image as the return of the repressed. In a whole community, a ghost can appear and persist if behaviour and relationships are repressed socially, that is, take place surreptit-



iously, when ostensibly the situation is treated as being in conformity with general practice - so that a dream-like state and hallucinations may result from time to time as the repressed re-emerges. So the classical kind of ghost event can be related to a social experience, tacitly admitted, not discussed and particularly not with strangers, implicitly 'spooking' in postures and behaviour, and continuing to do so until it has been resolved.

If the matter is not openly discussed, especially with strangers, how is it that people, including strangers, do see the ghost? The answer must be that the repressed material is supplied by all sorts of clues. Many communities are full of information that can be collated from stray hints by a persistent outsider: the archaeologist James Mellaert, for instance, discovered his first Neolithic site at the Turkish village of Hacilar by sifting and following up local gossip, till he found a man who had found two strangely decorated pots.<sup>35</sup> But the ordinary stranger is not deliberately looking for information about local affairs. He will get his clues incidentally and sporadically. Sometimes they are material clues, like the barred window at Renvyle. Sometimes they are odd and inconsequent names, like the name 'Jugged Joe' given by my friends to their cat. These are obvious anomalies. How much more can be conveyed, all unawares, by the implications of posture, gesture, intonation, pause, change of subject, and so on, remains to be discovered, for virtually no research has been done on this aspect of hauntings. If a family or community are focussing around some aberration, hidden from view, then a thousand little gestures and noises will give the visitor, from whom the facts are hidden and who does not participate in the aberration, a clue to something missing, a fact suppressed that, if brought to light, would make sense of this extraordinary set-up. Such curious behaviour, not always apparent to the participants, will produce its effect on the outsider.

The integration of all these clues, most of them unconsciously perceived and none of them consciously connected, must have much in common with the process of creative discovery. During the First World War,

the Austrian neurologist Otto Pötzl made some experiments which shed much light on this process of integrating a multiplicity of clues into the image of a ghost.<sup>36</sup> Pötzl worked with a tachistoscope, a device for presenting very brief glimpses of pictures to a person's view. When he flashed coloured slides of street scenes or landscapes on his screen for one hundredth of a second each, the observers reported seeing only part of the tachistoscopic scenes; but they later recovered much of the previously unreported material in their *dreams*. In the words of Edwin Diamond, in his book on dreams, 'this finding ... suggested how images and other data are recorded unknowingly in the mind and later become available for use in dreams and, perhaps, for other kinds of mental activity, including creative thinking'.<sup>37</sup> What applies to dreams when asleep may easily apply to apparitions when awake, so that ghosts can be the result of partial and incomplete behaviour and references, relevant to social relationships, which are completed in the dream-like appearance of the ghost-image.

Summing up so far, then, a ghost experience is a dream-state while awake, its appearance is subject to its continuing relevance to the social group in the neighbourhood, and it expresses the return or re-emergence of repressed information. At this point, a couple more examples may help to illustrate these ideas. There is, for instance, the well-authenticated case of the Mayor of Ilwaco, a little fishing village on the coast of the State of Washington, by the mouth of the Columbia River.<sup>38</sup> The mayor was J. Walter Seaborg; he was a member of a locally prominent family, a bachelor who lived with his widowed mother. He liked to go fishing, and one morning in June 1919, when his mother called him for breakfast, she discovered he had been out all the previous day and had not come back. The mayor was well liked, and people searched the place where he was wont to go fishing, but he was not found. They gave up.

Now the village consisted of one street. There was a cinema, only open at week-ends. The lights were put out at midnight. Off the street, there was a path down to the beach. One further point is that

fishing was dangerous at the very high seasonal tide.

A couple of week-ends later, four young people returned late from the cinema, and, as they walked, the lights on the street went out at midnight. They came to the path, when they saw a blue light - and there was the mayor, recognized by his fishing clothes. They were frightened. They ran. Subsequently the mayor was found, covered by sand, only his shoes showing.

So here was a small community, and all its members were concerned about their mayor's disappearance. Both he and his family were a focus for the community. Psychologically speaking, there is the fact that he lived with his mother and had not married; that he had gone fishing for many years at the place where he eventually drowned; that he must have known the tides. So what was it that led up to a mental aberration to ignore what he knew, so that he drowned? A curtain descends on these factors.

This repression may be relevant - the censorship on these data may also have inhibited the community, who also knew the tides. In fact the tides swept the body on to the beach, where the sand covered it up, and where another tide swept some of the sand away and began to uncover the body. The assumption was that the body had been swept out to sea. But unconsciously, I assume, *via* the apparition, the correct information was uncovered, and the mayor's body was eventually discovered.

This ghost had no doubt served its purpose when the mayor's body was properly buried. A more persistent ghost may sometimes be disposed of when the relevant background is *unrepressed*. This seems to have happened in an old house called Carrsgrove in Charlottesville, Virginia.<sup>39</sup> In 1956, it was occupied by an art-collector called Horace Burr. His wife Helen had just given birth to a child, when every morning at 3.45 a.m. she heard the mournful sighing of a woman. On being woken, her husband also heard this sighing, and he therefore endeavoured to discover what this was all about. The previous owner, a Mr. McCue, had died, but his faithful nurse was still alive. From her Horace Burr learned that McCue's daughter had been staying in the house with

her baby, and one terrible morning about 1910 she started to imagine, in a postnatal depression, the child was not going to be normal, and took poison. At exactly 3.45 a.m., McCue woke and heard his daughter's dying gasp. When he got to her room she was dead. After the explanation was given and discussed, the haunting ceased.

So here we have a woman who had recently had a baby picking up, no doubt from neighbours reminded by her condition of the previous event, an impression of a w        who had recently had a baby decades earlier. The event, however, was still consciously remembered in the neighbourhood, and the nurse was able to relate the haunting to this actual occurrence, and bring it out into the open for discussion. In psychoanalysis the repressed is supposed to be brought into consciousness in order that unconscious repression of the repressed material should cease. This case may therefore be regarded as an instance of lifting *social* repression in order that the unconscious repercussion of the socially repressed material, the haunting, should cease, which it did.

Some ghosts, however, are far more tenacious. Meggernie Castle in Perthshire once belonged to the chief of the Clan Menzies.<sup>40</sup> He was jealous of his wife, said to be a virtuous woman, popular with the gentlemen. In a fit of rage, he hit her and found he had killed her. Wishing to hide his crime, he cut her in half and put her in two drawers in a powder-closet. He then pretended she was visiting relatives, and went abroad, shutting the house and sending the servants home on board wages. Seven months later the house was reopened, and he proceeded with burial. He managed to bury half the body in the churchyard. He had just concealed the other half under a floor-board, when he was murdered by someone who had followed him into the house.

In 1862, a Mr Wood owned the castle. Two guests, accommodated in the tower in which all this had taken place, saw the apparition of the top half of a woman. One was awakened by what he called a 'burning kiss', the other awoke just before being kissed. A maid gave notice after seeing the lower half of a woman, covered with blood at the waist. Though the old

story came to light at that time, the haunting continued. The upper half of the ghost was last seen in 1928. Since then successive occupants of the castle have heard inexplicable rappings and knockings.

What are the ingredients of this gruesome tale? To begin with, though the owners of the castle changed, in the main the local population must have remained, and the servants would be recruited from that local population, among whom the tale in some form or other persisted. It is also a fact that the background story of the haunting is pretty complete, and yet somehow the emotions remain unresolved - assuming this must be the case to occasion a haunting. There is then, to begin with, the murder of a wife by her jealous husband, and the scene is set in Scotland at the time of clan organization. The husband tries to hide the murder. There remain five additional factors.

First, one point is not cleared up at all. The wife is said to be virtuous and the husband insanely jealous. Then why does the ghost give a burning kiss to a gentleman visitor, besides being in process of kissing another guest, only he wakes up before she can do so? Second, the departure of the wife, though speciously explained, can hardly have satisfied the community, especially when she failed to return with her husband. Third, and this is most important, having its ramifications from the dim past right into the present, the corpse has never been satisfactorily buried. Fourth, the spilling of all that blood may be relevant: blood should not be spattered about. Sacrificial blood was normally carefully spilt into a vessel provided for the purpose. Fifth and last, there were blood feuds in the Scottish Highlands. If the husband's conscience was not troubled, he might well be worried that someone would avenge his wife's death, if not her lover, her family. And in this context there remains the unsolved mystery of who killed the killer. Thus a possible sexual relationship, a corpse not satisfactorily buried, something that often figures in hauntings, and finally an unresolved blood feud, might all continue to be relevant to present relations in the community. What is also interesting is the fact that the dimming of such

memories with unresolved emotions, their further repression, seems to lead to rappings and knockings, much less specific phenomena, which sometimes lead on to another kind of haunting I shall not discuss in this paper, namely a poltergeist.

We are now in the realm of ghost folklore and prolonged hauntings, and it is worth noting the sort of things that disturb a community and cause such chronic ghost phenomena. One such disturbance is breach of kinship customs, even very stressful ones. In vendetta-ridden communities, an unavenged murder may lead to hauntings. During field studies in Sardinia between 1972 and 1974, Alexander Lopasic collected a case of a priest murdered in 1873 who had no relations to avenge him, and was consequently still haunting his church a century later.<sup>41</sup>

The most important disturbing factor, however, certainly present at Meggernie Castle, is a death without the proper ceremonies. Graves are of enormous importance in most communities: they are probably the original markers of human territories. Graves and burials arouse the most powerful emotions. In 1878-80, as Ronald Fletcher has shown, all England was debating the case of the interruption, by a High Church priest, of a burial service over the body of an unbaptized child of nonconformist parents.<sup>42</sup> Douglas Wilson has told me of a community on the north-western coast of Greece, who fled overseas to escape invaders, after digging up their ancestors to be taken with them. When they returned, they brought back these ancestral bones, and buried them once more in the village cemetery.<sup>43</sup> When the Kariba Dam was constructed, many of the Tonga people had to be resettled, and one reason for the Tonga riot of September 1958 was the fact that they were being moved away from the places where their ancestors were buried.<sup>44</sup> When there was an eruption in the Westmann Islands off Iceland, a whole town had to be evacuated and was largely covered with lava. When the townsfolk could return, one of their first concerns was to dig out the cemetery.<sup>45</sup> Excavation of Egyptian tombs, not only that of Tutankhamen, gave rise to lively folklore beliefs about curses on the excavators.<sup>46</sup>

A major function of burial ceremonies is to sever all emotional links or associations with the recently dead. Long-dead ancestors may be kept near at hand as territory markers, as we have just seen, at least by settled peoples. But the recently dead are often kept apart from the living. Francis Huxley has described how the Urubu of Brazil, semi-nomadic primitive farmers, bury a dead person, with most of his or her possessions, in an isolated spot outside the village, and pile up obstacles of thorny brushwood on the path between grave and village, and for a time on all paths leading to the village.<sup>47</sup> In their view, these obstacles prevent the dead person from coming to their village and haunting them. But of course it prevents live persons from going near the grave. All associations and reminders of the dead person are therefore severed, both by the inaccessibility of the grave and by the burial in it of the objects associated with him or her, for objects in constant use by a given person are naturally associated with that person in the minds of others. Theo Brown has described how in the folk beliefs of the West of England 'clothes and personal belongings [of the dead] if left in the house were supposed to attract the spirit home'.<sup>48</sup> In fact of course they would act as continual unconscious reminders. Burial of their personal possessions with the dead is of course an extremely widespread practice. Often they are bent or broken, or, as the archaeologists say, 'killed', before burial; this was done, for instance, in archaic Greece and in pre-Columbian Panama.<sup>49</sup> This will destroy the personal associations still more completely, for, the objects being made useless, there will be the less temptation to dig them up and with them the personal reminders and associations. When the dead are cremated, their possessions are often similarly burned with them, as W.M.S. Russell will be discussing in the case of the Greeks.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the funeral ceremonies themselves are designed to enable the mourners to break off their relationships with the dead.

If a death is disturbing to a community, usually because all these burial rites have not been satisfactorily completed, the resulting haunt may last a

very long time. On the 3rd of May 1971, a Mr Ivor Potter, of Bude, was attending a funeral at Poundstock Parish Church. He claims to have watched a priest, who was present in addition to the one conducting the service, for about four minutes, and that he and this priest said 'good afternoon' to each other. Later he learned there was no such priest at the funeral. The vicar, the Reverend Peter Sanderson, said there had been occasional sightings over the centuries of a priest murdered at the high altar in 1357.<sup>51</sup> Near the town of Tigara, on the coast of Alaska, Froelich G. Rainey excavated a ruined town at least a millennium old. The Eskimos of Tigara said it was haunted by a ghost with ivory eyes. In the words of Leo Deuel, 'native helpers were simply aghast when Rainey [digging in the ancient cemetery] extricated several richly ornamented skulls inlaid with eyes of ivory.'<sup>52</sup> Piet Sevenster has told me of a group of five barrows in the Northern Netherlands, dating from the end of the Neolithic.<sup>53</sup> The locals said one was particularly badly haunted, and another contained a sack of gold. When the barrows were excavated, these two were found to contain, respectively, the bones of a child and a bronze chisel, whose value in the late Neolithic could later best be represented by a sack of gold.

On my view of hauntings, such long-lived or long-undead ghosts indicate the transmission through many generations of repressed material. There is no doubt this sort of thing is possible. According to Harald Hoffding, 'in a Danish village church the custom of bowing when passing a certain spot in the church wall was maintained into the nineteenth century, but no one knew the reason for this until, on the whitewash being scraped away, a picture of the Madonna was found on the wall', evidently concealed ever since the Reformation in Denmark, three centuries earlier.<sup>54</sup> Such unconscious transmission could easily occur without words. I once saw, on documentary film, a Japanese mother in traditional dress, with her baby on her back, bowing to a Shinto shrine. As she bowed, she put her hand behind her own head, and *pushed the baby's head down*.<sup>55</sup>

In course of time and change, old emotional



involvements may fade, and ghosts with them. This may be expressed picturesquely in folktales and the literature based on them. Theo Brown has discussed West-country tales of ghosts shrunk by exorcists until they can be imprisoned in little boxes or bottles, like Arabian jinn. 'The reduction of a powerful ghost', she writes, 'is sometimes symbolized by a reduction in size. In historical terms, this may mean the gradual fading out of a folk memory'.<sup>56</sup> In a similar way, Joan Rockwell has interpreted the initial sluggishness of the avenging Furies in Aeschylus's *Eumenides* as 'perhaps a symbol of their failing powers as a religious force'.<sup>57</sup>

But the fading of a belief or memory does not necessarily mean the end of a haunting. If there are still emotions unresolved, the ghost may simply lose its specific identity, giving way to anonymous rappings as at Meggernie Castle. Or, under more stressful conditions, when the original story is forgotten, another, sometimes worse, may be substituted. T.C. Lethbridge wrote of a school that was haunted, but why and by what nobody any longer knew.<sup>58</sup> A teacher slept in the most haunted part of the building, and saw in his sleep a hairy monster. Lethbridge ingeniously traced this image to a newspaper story then being widely discussed, about a motorcyclist forced off the road between Postbridge and Moretonhampstead, when a huge pair of hairy hands suddenly materialized and seized his handlebars. In such a case, the hauntings can get more mysterious and more horrific.

If the original emotions persist, and no additional stress is involved, a fading ghost may simply be reactivated. This sort of thing very probably happens with religious beliefs. A huge statue of the repulsive Aztec goddess Coatlicue was dug up in Mexico City in 1790, and promptly buried again by the horrified Catholic priests. In 1822, William Bullock got leave to have it briefly disinterred for him to make a cast, and while it was exposed chaplets of flowers were surreptitiously placed on it at night by the Indians, who clearly retained their feelings for her after three centuries.<sup>59</sup> On Crete in 1971, two days before Good Friday according to the Greek

Orthodox calendar, I saw a recently picked, carefully arranged bunch of flowers on a *Minoan* altar, excavated in 1931, including red poppies, known to be sacred to the Minoan Great Goddess.<sup>60</sup> We may therefore expect such reactivations for ghosts. Margaret Murray observed to Dennis Bardens 'that ghosts are frequently seen, or appear to manifest themselves, during the course of demolitions', when old landmarks are liable to come to light; and Bardens has collected examples of such cases.<sup>61</sup> At Bradwell-on-Sea, a ghostly horseman (elsewhere often associated with very old sites, as Ian Rodger has shown) made his appearance only after the Saxon chapel, long used for secular purposes, was reconsecrated in 1920.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, it may happen that a repressed emotional problem is resolved, and a haunting thus brought to a more or less peaceful end, after a lapse of centuries. A hillside at Dynved in Denmark was a much-haunted place until, about the year 1920, a clergyman skilled in exorcism came to the hill, walked around for a while, and finally drove a heavy oak stake into the ground at a particular spot. This is said to have laid the ghost. Forty years later, a museum official made a survey of the hill, and found a thousand-year-old Viking grave. The Viking's breast was still transfixed by the point of the stake the clergyman had driven in.<sup>63</sup>

But I should like to end on a less macabre and more human note. My source, a press report in an English newspaper, makes no mention of ghosts or haunting.<sup>64</sup> It is quite possible this is not a ghost story at all. But it does show strikingly just how long an emotionally unfinished story can rankle in the minds of a community, leading at last to a ceremonial solution. During the 14th century, the leading families of the Spanish town of Teruel were the Seguras and the Marcillas. Isabel Seguras and Diego Marcillas were about to be married when Diego's family got into financial difficulties, and Isabel's parents postponed the match. Diego went to seek his fortune as a soldier. He eventually returned home rich and renowned, to learn that Isabel was betrothed to another man. He went to say goodbye to her, asked for a last kiss, was refused, and dropped dead. Isabel attended

his funeral, blew a kiss at his coffin, and died in her turn. The lovers were buried in different cemeteries. And so matters stood until April 1965, 613 years later, when the townsfolk of Teruel dug up the two coffins and reburied them together in the old church where they were to have been married. On top of the tombs their effigies have been carved, holding hands. And so, for more than six centuries, a repressed emotional problem had nagged at the people of the town, until they finally brought the story to its emotional logical conclusion.



III

*GHOSTS THROUGH THE AGES*

Belief in ghosts is almost as old as the human race.

CHRISTINA HOLE, *Haunted England*



## 7. THE GHOST OF OLD MRS LEAKEY

Theo Brown

THE SUBJECT OF this paper is very different from others in this collection. It appears at first sight to be concerned with but a single case of haunting, and a bogus one at that, and of a very limited local interest. But I hope to show that its implications involved political and ecclesiastical issues far beyond the parish-pump gossip of the small west-country seaside town where it all started.

In Sir Walter Scott's poem *Rokeby*, which was published in 1811, occurs the line:-

How whistle rash bids tempests roar.<sup>1</sup>

Not, one would say, a very impressive line, but to it he attached a very long note on the subject of raising storms by whistling. To illustrate this he went on to say: "The most formidable whistler that I remember to have met with was the apparition of a certain Mrs Leakey..." and proceeded to recount the legend at great length, and he did so at even greater length in his *Letters on Demonology & Witch-craft*<sup>2</sup> which he wrote after his first stroke in 1830 (he died in 1832). Now I don't propose to wade through the text, which is entirely derived from John Dunton's *Athenianism*<sup>3</sup>, published in 1710, two or three generations after the events described - even Scott had his reservations about its accuracy, but will summarise it here.

In the 1630s, in the reign of Charles I, there was a charming old widowed gentlewoman, called Susannah Leakey, living in Minehead with her merchant son Alexander who ran a prosperous trade with Waterford in Ireland. Mrs Leakey, said to be a regular attender at church, was extremely popular with her neighbours, but she often warned them that if she returned after death to visit them, as she might, they might well not enjoy her company so much. And indeed such was the case. She died and was buried on the 5th of November, 1634. Not many months afterwards a rumour got around that she was haunting her son's house. Then she was seen about the town and the fields nearby, where she accosted the doctor, and deeming him

deficient in good manners, dismissed him with a kick in his pants. Curiously, in her son's house the only person who actually saw her - and then sometimes in a mirror - was her daughter-in-law, Elizabeth; Alexander firmly maintained that she never appeared to him. She took to hanging round the quay, calling for a boat, but whether they obliged or not, she used to sink them. Finally she began to appear on her son's ships as they came in sight of land: she would stand by the mainmast and blow a whistle, a storm would arise and the ships would be sunk. Oddly, no lives were lost on any occasion, but poor Alexander was all but ruined by his losses.

The climax came when Old Mrs Leakey was reported to have strangled her little grand-daughter, aged five or six, in her cot. At last Elizabeth thought of asking the ghost what it was she wanted? The answer came promptly: young Mrs Leakey must go over to Ireland and deliver a message to the Bishop of Waterford to the effect that he must repent of a certain sin, that if he did not he would be hanged. Young Mrs Leakey commented that the Bishop was a great man and would hardly be impressed by her message. Moreover, was it reasonable to expect her to attempt such a journey seeing her mother-in-law was busily sinking all her husband's ships trading with Waterford? So the ghost promised to lay off the ships for thirty days and young Elizabeth duly made the journey. She entered the Bishop's Palace, boldly accosted him and delivered her message, which the prelate received very coolly, merely remarking that if he was to hang, at least he was assured he would not drown - and let her depart without offering her accommodation or even a drink. So she returned home by the next ship to Minehead, where she was taken up by the local magistrates and questioned. She flatly refused to explain her mysterious message. Plainly they did not know what to make of her, and beyond forwarding a report to the Privy Council (which report I cannot trace), did nothing further in the matter and the affair lapsed, or would have if Mrs Leakey had not kept the pot boiling by her continual chatter about the 'spectre'. Eventually the Bishop of Bath and Wells, prompted either by the persistent



rumours or by the Privy Council, set up a small commission, consisting of himself, Sir Robert Phelips of Montacute (a previous head of the House of Commons) and Paul Godwin, a local magistrate, to investigate 'the business concerning the reported Apparition at Minehead...' The Commission's Report, dated 24th February 1637/8 and endorsed by Archbishop Laud, is still in existence at the Public Record Office in London<sup>4</sup>. Several witnesses are interviewed, the principal being young Mrs Elizabeth Leakey. On the whole the Commission took a pretty poor view of them, with the possible exception of Mrs Leakey herself, whom they obviously did not trust for a moment, for they commented: "We find Mrs Leakey to be an understanding woman but bold and subtle enough", but she was so foolish as to contradict some of her earlier statements which she had not thought out carefully enough and could not sustain. The other witnesses, all being friends or employees of the family, they described as "phantasticall" and willing to agree to any yarn. They were feeble-witted or drunk, while others, such as Alexander, found it convenient to be absent at sea, ostensibly to avoid being caught for irregularities perhaps not unconnected with excise.

In her examination young Mrs Leakey commenced by stating: "that her Mother in Law said (lying upon her death-bed in her house) she would come againe after her death, to whom she replied, 'What, will you be a Divell?' 'Noe but I will come in the Divell's Liknesse'." Which seems an odd promise coming from a respectable churchwoman, though it reflects the confused ideas of the period about ghosts.<sup>5</sup>

About the small girl supposedly choked by its grandmother, she now said it was a boy, John, aged eight (Later, she said his age was fourteen; he seems to have been the child that the ghost had ordered home from Cambridgeshire, so presumably he was the son of her elder daughter Susan)<sup>6</sup>. He died of "a languis-singe disease". Towards the end he complained that he "could not be quiett from his Grandmother," but said nothing about seeing her, though as he was dying "he cryed out that he saw the Divell".

Concerning the message to the Bishop of Waterford, she refused to enlarge on this. "She will not reveale

it to any body but only unto the Kinge, and not un-  
lesse he commands her, soe to doe, and then she must  
and will tell his Ma<sup>tie</sup> (illegible words) he is a  
gracious Kinge."

Towards the end of her statement comes an inter-  
esting passage: "that her husband and she suspect all  
this to be witcherie, because he hath had greate  
losses of late by sea, and that they suspect a woman  
to be the witch but she will not yet tell her name  
for fear this Examinee should be troubled". There  
is no mention of a whistling ghost.

The Commission concluded "that there was never any  
such Apparition but that it is an Imposture devised  
and framed for some particular End, but what they are  
wee know not."

And responsible men of the following years seem to  
have accepted this verdict. I find it most signifi-  
cant that, as far as I know, the two west country  
writers on ghosts, Joseph Glanvil and Richard Bovet,  
made no mention of the case in their books.

We may take it then that there was in fact no  
ghostly Old Mrs Leakey at all. So what precisely was  
going on at Minehead? As far as one can ascertain  
the real story is very complicated, obscure and  
horrible, though not without fascination and even  
humour. The documentary evidence is both scattered  
and scanty, though there is an abundance of rumour  
and gossip which serves only to increase the diffi-  
culty of arriving at a coherent narrative. Vital  
documents are missing, incomplete or illegible,  
statements are incompatable and genealogies hopeless-  
ly muddled, while even important historical and  
political implications are by no means easy to follow.  
In such a tangle it is difficult even to decide  
where to begin. I propose to start with the wider  
context and work inwards.

At the period of Charles I's reign immediately  
preceding the Great Rebellion Ireland was, as usual,  
in a state nearing anarchy, lacking firm government,  
a helpless prey to the depredations of Algerian  
corsairs raiding the coasts and, within, a church  
impoverished by numerous gentry - frequently Roman  
Catholics<sup>7</sup> - who had since the Reformation been  
quietly appropriating livings and other ecclesiastical

resources. The King, concerned about these injustices, appointed Wentworth Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1632 and Lord Lieutenant in 1640. The choice was a wise one, for Wentworth at once set to work with great energy and efficiency to reduce the country to some sort of order and peace. Due to his efficiency and sometimes autocratic methods he obviously made enemies, and these eventually procured his downfall and execution in 1641.

In the course of his trial the prosecution accused him of having advised the King to appoint a notorious evil-liver, John Atherton, as Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. This man had been tried for a variety of nasty offences and had been hanged in 1640, six months before Wentworth's execution, the only Anglican bishop known to have been judicially hanged while still in office. Naturally Wentworth argued that at the time of the appointment he had no knowledge of Atherton's bad reputation, but the case plainly did his own no good.<sup>7</sup>

So we come to John Atherton<sup>8</sup>, the real centre of the legend. This Irish bishop was born in 1598 in West Somerset, at Bawdrip, where his father was the Rector and also a Prebendary of St Paul's cathedral. Prebendary John Atherton was buried at Bawdrip in July 1609 and his widow remarried the following November. John junior went to Oxford when only sixteen and passed MA in 1619, having acquired a great reputation as an expert in canon law. In 1622 he was presented to a family living at Huish Champflower on the edge of Exmoor. About this time he seems to have married. And here we return to the Leakeys.

It appears that Old Mrs Leahey must have been living at Huish Champflower about this time. She had four grown-up children: one son, William, lived at Barnstaple, married to a woman with the astounding Puritan name of Lordisneare; Lordisneare predeceased his mother and Lordisneare seems to have married a certain John Knill. The younger son was Alexander the merchant who lived at Minehead. Then there were two daughters, Susan and Joanne. Atherton married Joanne, and in 1623 they had a daughter baptised Sarah, and later at least one other daughter.

However, it appears that the young rector was also attracted by his wife's elder sister, Susan, while she was resident at Huish, for she produced an illegitimate baby about Easter 1623. She was excommunicated most of that year, and she and her baby were packed off to Cambridgeshire, while enquiries were made into the behaviour of "Master John Atherton" who was alleged to be the father by some of his parishioners, but no case was brought against him, presumably from lack of evidence, and he continued his vocation unhindered, whatever his flock thought or knew about him.

At some point he must have met Wentworth, perhaps at Oxford, and impressed him with his erudition. However in 1630, the year in which the latter went to Ireland, Atherton was appointed to a prebend at St John's Dublin and was granted a dispensation to retain his living at Huish. One supposes he employed a curate to serve his old parish, and presumably he visited the west country from time to time, for at some time, about 1632, he was staying in the house of his Puritan sister-in-law, Lordisneare, at Barnstable, and landed his own niece with a baby. This poor mite was doomed to have a very brief glimpse of this wicked world, for the charming old Mrs Leahey solved the embarrassing problem quite simply. After Atherton had baptised it, she smothered the infant and they concealed the body under the floorboards. The erring daughter was sent over to Wales for a very long holiday.<sup>9</sup>

In 1634 old Mrs Leahey died at Minehead. She had probably moved there after her elder daughter's mishap at Huish. She left a small amount of property at Bridgewater to her grandson, Alexander, and also "a spruse chest" which she had left at Huish. She was buried in an unmarked grave at Minehead.

Meanwhile Atherton was proving himself a most efficient tool of Wentworth's, recovering much church property even though he appears to have pursued his objectives with great severity. He enjoyed a very rapid promotion indeed, till in 1636 he was consecrated Bishop of Waterford and Lismore in order to recover the money and Palace for the diocese. It was thought, reasonably enough, that the man would

have a double incentive in this instance. On other grounds Wentworth had serious misgivings, as he informed Laud when discussing the matter in his correspondence, for he admitted he disliked Atherton personally very much indeed. However, his choice was amply justified, as the new Bishop revived the financial assets of the diocese and recovered the site of the palace which one gathers he rebuilt<sup>10</sup>.

In his private life he appears to have behaved himself to begin with; publicly he became notorious for his ferocious condemnation of sexual immorality. Indeed it is recorded that on one occasion he so overdid his moralising in court that the accused, provoked beyond endurance, rounded on the Bishop and said he was just as bad as himself - and was promptly committed to the Irish Star Chamber for contempt. In fact Atherton was beginning to slip, and his numerous affairs were such common property that his enemies, dispossessed of their unlawful assets, had little difficulty in setting up a convincing case against him. He foolishly ignored the danger signs and arrogantly continued on his suicidal course<sup>11</sup>.

I have not been able to ascertain the exact charges, nor do I think it is possible to do so now as all records of Irish law cases were destroyed in the troubled period of the Civil War. It is however clear that the main charge was embezzlement of the recovered church funds, but of this he was cleared absolutely. The secondary one probably related to his sexual misdemeanours and mainly rested on the evidence of one of his own officers who was himself hanged soon afterwards and on the gallows confessed he had given false evidence at the Bishop's trial. But this came too late. Atherton was sentenced to be degraded and hanged on 5th December 1640. During the trial he had maintained an arrogant indifference, but when the verdict was reached he suddenly changed completely and solemnly declared that, although he was innocent of the actual crimes for which he was convicted, yet he deemed the sentence a just one because in his youth he had sinned horribly and fully deserved to die.

In prison his only visitor was Nicholas Bernard, the Dean of Ardagh, who received his confession and

reconciled him, and afterwards wrote a moving account of the man's last days as a most penitent sinner<sup>12</sup>. We do not know - and it is not our business to know - what he admitted to, and on the gallows he refused to satisfy the curiosity of the crowd beyond acknowledging in general terms his past wickedness sufficiently to relieve the Church of the scandal. He owned "that his Reading of bad Books, viewing immodest pictures, frequenting Plays, Drunkenness, etc., enticed him to his acts."<sup>13</sup> (It is important to recollect that Gilles de Rez attributed his moral downfall to having read too much of Suetonius, and in our time the young couple who achieved so dreadful a notoriety in the Moors Case had been reading the works of De Sade.) Atherton refused to claim his right as a spiritual lord to be beheaded; by mere chance he was not degraded because the high official whose duty this was died suddenly the night before, and so he was hanged as a bishop, and was buried, at his own request, in a remote corner of St John's churchyard by the rubbish heap<sup>14</sup>. There is an oral tradition at Bawdrip that he was buried in the chancel of his childhood church, but I think this is due to confusion with his father.

To this day historians differ in their assessment of the verdict. To my mind it is pretty certain that Atherton was framed by his enemies and his foul reputation made the charges only too plausible. He had reasonably refused to satisfy the nasty curiosity of the populace, but this only left a vacuum which was to be filled with endless streams of silly gossip and scurrilous ballads and tracts<sup>15</sup> for many years to come. It was alleged he had seduced no less than sixty-four women during his brief episcopacy, giving as his excuses it purified his blood, it was necessary to stave off the stone, or it was in charity to his hostesses, or a reward for a good meal, besides even sillier suggestions best forgotten. If in fact the wretched man had committed half the crimes attributed to him we may well ask how he found the time to eat his meals, let alone carry out the vigorous campaign he did on behalf of his Church and King. It cannot be denied that he was a thoroughly evil and most unpleasant man, and also his own worst

enemy, but he died an equally notorious penitent who exonerated the Roman Catholics who had most cause to hate him and seems to have genuinely cared for his wife and children. Bernard, who knew the worst of him, could yet write: "He was undoubtedly a man of rare and bright parts."

Dunton's essay on the whole story, "The Apparition-Evidence" which he included in his *Athenianism*, was mainly a copy of an MS compiled by the Rev. John Quick, a South Devon parson in 1690; it gave the legend of Old Mrs Leahey as later repeated by Scott, but adding that the ghost claimed while living to have murdered the baby at Barnstaple.

There is also a long narrative of the events at Barnstaple by a man called Chamberlain who said he was an apprentice living in the house of the Town Clerk in 1639 (William Leahey seems to have been dead by then, his widow remarried and the miserable daughter living in South Wales). Now yet another ghost turned up, this time an unidentified old man who brought about the discovery of the strangled baby's remains concealed in the house. The story is far too lengthy and involved to discuss now, but the implication is that this murder was brought home to Atherton at his trial; Dunton does not hesitate in his introduction to describe him as a "proud, incestuous, and bloody prelate" and there is mention there of his dipping his fingers in the "Blood of his own innocent bowels". One can detect a tendency to exaggerate the squalor of Atherton's misdeed in order to enlarge the drama of his repentance which was so much to the credit of Christendom. Other sinful clergy were exhorted to follow his example. This and the miraculous intervention of the ghost made profitable and exciting reading for the respectable faithful, and pamphlets on the case sold like hot cakes. However, in the absence of official records we cannot know the terms of the charges, what the ghosts said is not evidence, and at this distance in time all is sordid speculation and gossip.

But what, we may still ask, was his sister-in-law's motive in starting the bogus ghost-hunt and the futile visit to Ireland? Mr Douglas Stevens of Minehead, who has done much research into the case,

considers she merely wished to turn him from his horrid ways. My own view is that when he became a Bishop she saw the glowing possibility of a little discreet blackmail. She kept a delicate balance between his vulnerability and the interest of the authorities, hence the secrecy over the famous message which could only be revealed to the King: hush-money from Atherton or a handsome reward from the King would have suited her equally well. The 'ghost' was an excellent device for drawing attention to the Bishop with an obviously bogus story of infanticide (for it was not John Leakey of Minehead who was murdered) to remind the Bishop of the real murder at Barnstaple and show him that Elizabeth had no intention of letting him put this horrible episode behind him.

So much for John Atherton. Why then am I interested in the case? Digging up ancient scandals better forgotten is not our affair. I *am* fascinated by Old Mrs. Leakey, and I found it impossible to study her without reference to her deplorable family and Atherton; they are inextricably linked. My original interest in Mrs. Leakey was the folklore she represents, and secondly her possible, if slight, influence on Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1797, the period when he was living in that area and working on *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*.

Nether Stowey is on the eastern side of the Quantock Hills, and within easy walking distance of Foxdown where William and Dorothy Wordsworth were staying. They all met frequently and made long excursions round the whole area, discussing and planning their poems. We have a fair idea of what they were reading and of the notions both fantastic and macabre that Coleridge was toying with from that brilliant and exhaustive study, *The Road to Xanadu* by the American scholar John Livingstone Lowes<sup>16</sup>: we can never hope to know much more about the sources of Coleridge's inspiration. Over and over again Lowes stresses the influence of local traditions on the poet, though to my mind that influence is limited: he shewed very little awareness of his childhood environment at Ottery St Mary in Devon. When he did write about pixies they seem to bear little resemblance to the native breed. Lowes



cites some west country lore, but it is mostly Cornish; I would suspect he cannot have visited Somerset and can hardly have been in a position to assess what Coleridge may have encountered on his wanderings. However, seeing how vividly Mrs Leakey is remembered locally it hardly seems possible Coleridge could have avoided her. She even has her own 'Candy Shop' on the quay at Minehead!

Scott concluded his story thus:

So deep was the impression made by the story on the inhabitants of Mynehead (sic), that it is said the tradition of Mrs Leckie (sic) still remains in the port, and that mariners belonging to it often, amid tempestuous weather, conceive they hear the wistle-call of the implacable hag who was the source of so much mischief to her own family.<sup>17</sup>

First let us consider the spectral ship. There are numerous tales of phantom ships all along the northern coast of the peninsula: Ruth Tongue has told me of some off Somerset. There is one at Lillstock, and one is seen on a certain day once every fifty years. There was one at Minehead, too, a spook "Mary Celeste". Discussing the Mayday Hobby-Horse there, the late Herbert Kille cited a paragraph from a local newspaper of 1863:

The origin professes to be in commemoration of the wreck of a vessel at Minehead in remote times, or the advent of a sort of phantom ship which entered the harbour without captain or crew.<sup>18</sup>

The motif of a witch figure controlling the weather is well known to us all. Priestesses and witches have been doing this since the time of Circe all round our coasts from Lapland to Brittany where every island seems to have had its own resident "groac'h" - old woman - who fixed and sold the winds but also enticed and entranced foolish young men.<sup>19</sup> Not every sailor is a Ulysses who can dally for a whole year with an enchantress without suffering transformation and at the end can wheedle a favourable wind out of her and escape. Only about ten years ago a journalist heard North Cornish people speaking of women who sold good winds to sailors, and recently in that area I myself

was introduced to an old lady who was credited with weather-controlling powers. She was a charmer, she went to church and there was nothing at all sinister about her. I don't think she took her reputation very seriously; she laughed about it in fact, but as it was harvest time then and her son was getting in the corn she admitted she was praying hard for fine weather and was quite confident that God would do something about it for her!

Witches of the nastier kind used their powers destructively. In Devon we had the famous Three Witches of Barnstaple who were hanged at Exeter in 1682. Of the two contemporary tracts the rarest one - and the more fanciful - reported<sup>20</sup>:

the Old one Confessed plainly that she had caused several Ships at Sea to be cast away, to the loss of many mens lives and the prejudice of many others.

Witches of course were not the only hazard of that area. Frequent fogs and Atlantic breakers plus plenty of rocks and quicksands for ships to founder on would be sufficient, but there were also Algerian corsairs, raiding fishing villages, and pirates based on Lundy Isle to intercept merchant vessels. Just inland the Doone family were establishing themselves on Exmoor<sup>21</sup>, and a little further west, at Clovelly, there were traditions of cannibals living in a cave under the cliff<sup>22</sup>. Wreckers were all too familiar. It is said that Morte Point in Devon is still haunted by a white horse with a lantern tied to its head to decoy lost ships. One of the gangs was led by a frightful woman so evil that when she came to die it was said that the Devil sat by her bedside waiting to grab her soul. Seamen in difficulties would take to their boats and head out to sea rather than attempt to land and fall into the clutches of the gangs. When, at long last, Trinity House erected a lighthouse on Bull Point the locals were disgusted. One woman was heard to lament "It'll be the ruin of Morthoe men!"

Coleridge's ghastly 'Life-in-Death' woman plays dice with her 'Death-mate'. I was absurdly reminded of this recently when I first saw the famous Salt in the Victoria and Albert Museum known as 'The Burghley Nef'. It is a fairy ship, of gold and silver based on a

nautilus shell, born along by a mermaid clinging to the keel. On the deck by the mainmast sit a diminutive Tristan and Iseult endlessly playing chess. Coleridge's grim couple seem a shadow double of this enchanted scene.

The Woman wins the life of the Mariner:  
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

.....  
Off shot the spectre bark.<sup>24</sup>

To whistle brings the wind, possibly a hurricane: hence the taboo on whistling at sea, but in this case it causes the ghost ship to vanish. So it may sometimes disperse illusions. James Howell, writing in the seventeenth century<sup>25</sup>, told this anecdote: an officer stationed at Lyons was starting on his nightly rounds with two men. He had been drinking heavily and was so inflamed he boasted he would take the first lady he met with in the street, were it the Devil's Dam in person. Soon he did encounter a fascinating female who took him and his men to her house where everything was most richly and luxuriously appointed. After a while, she abruptly brought the evening's entertainment to a close by whistling three times, when she and her gorgeous surroundings vanished, and the soldiers found themselves standing in a dark and draughty street...

Mrs Leakey used to stand by the mainmast to blow her whistle. A naval correspondent wrote to me about this:

When I was serving on the China Station in 1912 it was the usual practice for Chinese junks to have a whippy bamboo eight or ten feet tall secured to the mast-head to prevent witches sitting on them. The next time (I was there in the mid 1930's) I didn't notice this precaution nearly so much... I never noticed these bamboos on the masts of Japanese sailing craft, or indeed anywhere else.<sup>25</sup>

Not only whistling brings storms: Ruth Tongue used to tell me of a sinister old woman she used to know, whom she overheard, while standing out on a cliff, singing a secret song with no very benevolent intention. It was a long time before Ruth decided to

entrust me with a recording of Sea Morgans and then only on condition I never sang it myself as this would be so dangerous.

So what are Sea Morgans? Ruth Tongue says they are sea-nymphs that haunt the Bristol Channel from Lundy Island up to Burnham, but it seems to me they are rather like mermaids and not very nice to know. Dr Briggs tells us they are known round Wales and Brittany and she sees a clear relationship between them and Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's malicious sorcerer-sister<sup>27</sup>. At Padstow there is a notoriously dangerous bar of quicksand across the opening of the Camel estuary, which has foundered many a ship trying to enter harbour. This is supposedly presided over by a mermaid<sup>28</sup>. Mermaids are of course well-known throughout the west country; one was reported off Exmouth in 1812<sup>29</sup>, and within the last twenty years a summer visitor sent an eye-witness account to a local editor of a newspaper.

Mermaids, like the mediaeval *remora*, clutched keels and sank them or held the ship immobile, unable to come or go<sup>30</sup>. The Burghley Nef's mermaid, nearly as large as the ship, clings to its bottom but no one seems worried about her. Perhaps she is the kind that helps the ship to go? Ruth Tongue says of ships wrecked along the Somerset coast that the Sea Morgans (or wreckers?) convey the cargoes into the Morgan's Pantry. This was a cave on the side of a cliff now eroded away by storms. The drowned seamen must not be buried in a churchyard or their ghosts will wander; they should be buried in the sand below the high-tide mark, and then their spirits will hover harmlessly in the form of seagulls.

These are some of the Somerset motifs that come to my mind when I think of Coleridge walking along that haunted coast and hearing tales of Old Mrs Leakey.

## 8. THE RESTLESS DEAD: AN ICELANDIC GHOST STORY

H.R. Ellis Davidson

THE STORY OF the hauntings at Frodwater (Froða, a farm on the north coast of Snaefellsness in western Iceland), is one which has fascinated me for many years, and which contains some puzzling material. Well known though it is, there is no adequate commentary on this tale of a haunting, or rather series of hauntings, which includes many of the main elements of one particular type of ghost story, that of the return of the newly dead.

*Eyrbyggja Saga* composed probably about the middle of the thirteenth century, is one of the great family sagas of Iceland, a superb example of narrative skill and delineation of character.<sup>1</sup> It is the tale of a group of people living in Snaefellsness, in the early days of the Icelandic settlement, and includes an account of the first arrivals before 900 AD, and the rise to power of a well-known historical figure, Snorri Thorgrímsson the *Goði*. The saga is made up of a number of episodes in which he plays a part, usually finding a way out of a dangerous or desperate situation. As an outstandingly successful *goði*, (a position rather like that of a nineteenth-century squire who was also a member of parliament, but dependent on ability, not birth) Snorri acts like a Mafia 'Godfather', and his discreet, unobtrusive but utterly ruthless methods resemble those of Don Corleone in the novel of that name. The people who come into the story of the hauntings are characters already familiar to the reader, since it forms part of the last section of the book, dealing with the period soon after the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland (1000 AD). It plays no essential part in the plot, but builds up some of the characters, such as young Kjartan, the only person in the house respected by the returning dead, and the farmer's wife, Kjartan's mother Thurid, who shows herself to be vain, foolish and grasping, and whose behaviour is the immediate cause of the trouble which results in the death of her husband and seventeen other people. It may be noted that the house was one in which there

must have been considerable tension. Thurid disliked and despised her husband Thorodd, and it was known that the boy Kjartan, although brought up as Thorodd's son, owed his existence to a passionate love affair between Thurid and a splendid heroic character, Bjorn, Champion of Broadwick, a man whom Snorri failed to destroy, but who had finally to leave Iceland on Thurid's account. At the time of the hauntings, however, Kjartan was about fourteen, and the old scandal more or less forgotten.

One day a ship arrived from Dublin, which had called at the Hebrides and taken on as passenger there a strange woman called Thorgunna. The saga tells us nothing further about her origins. She is described as a large woman, tall and broadly built and putting on weight, probably in her late fifties, with dark eyebrows, narrow eyes, and beautiful chestnut hair; she did not talk much, kept herself to herself, and was a Christian. The only person she seemed to take to on the farm was the lad Kjartan, and he was not very responsive. Thorgunna had brought out some fine possessions, and when the housewife Thurid heard of this, she lost no time in getting down to the ship to see if the newcomer had any clothes to sell. Thorgunna refused, so Thurid offered to put her up at Frodwater, hoping to win her over later on. Thorgunna was given a bed opening out of the hall, and she took from her sea-chest a splendid set of bedclothes and hangings. English sheets, a silk quilt, curtains and a canopy; no one had ever seen anything to equal them. Thurid was entranced: 'How much would you take for the whole set?', she asked. Thorgunna did not mince her words: 'I don't intend to lie on straw for you', she retorted, 'even though you may be very fine and think a great deal of yourself'. Thurid was annoyed at this, and did not ask again.

We do not know how Thorgunna obtained these things, but there seems little doubt that she was thought to be the same as the Thorgunna mentioned in the saga of Erik the Red, of roughly the same date as *Eyrbyggja Saga*.<sup>2</sup> This Thorgunna was a girl of good family in the Hebrides, said to possess supernatural gifts; she saw a good deal of Leif the Lucky, Erik's son, one of the men believed to have discovered America,

who spent some time in the Hebrides on his way from Greenland to Norway. She wanted him to take her with him when he left, but he refused, saying that her family would object. She then told him that she expected to bear his child, and that it would be a boy; she would send him out later to Greenland, but Leif would have little joy of his son, and she herself meant to go out to Greenland 'before the end'. Leif parted from Thorgunna, giving her a gold ring, a cloak of Greenland cloth, and a belt of ivory, and the saga adds that the boy went to Greenland in due course, and later to Iceland, arriving there the summer before the Frodwater hauntings. In *Eyrbyggja Saga*, however, it is Thorgunna herself who comes out to Iceland that summer, and as she is represented as an elderly woman, the chronology does not fit; for Leif's visit could hardly have taken place before 999, and this would have meant that Thorgunna's child was still an infant when the voyage to Iceland took place. Possibly in *Eiríks Saga* the boy's name (Thorgils) has been written in mistake for that of his mother. It is conceivable that Thorgunna's fondness for Kjartan, another boy born of an illicit love affair, was prompted by the saga-writer's knowledge of the other tradition. The idea of her supernatural powers and her delight in fine possessions are consistent with the account in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, where it may also be noted that a ring and a cloak are among her things when she dies. But the reason why she comes to Iceland (unless on her way to Greenland, as indicated in *Eiríks Saga*), and the fate of her son, remain a mystery.

At Frodwater, Thorgunna helped with the hay-making, using her own rake to turn the hay. They began in cloudless weather, but in the afternoon a black cloud was seen in the sky, and farmer Thorodd told the hay-makers to start stacking, in case of rain. Thorgunna took no notice and went on raking; it grew very dark, and there was a sudden cloudburst, and when the cloud passed they saw that the shower had been one of blood. This dried quickly, except where Thorgunna had been working, and on her rake and clothes. The farmer asked what this meant; she said she did not know, 'but it seems likely that it forbodes death to

someone here'. A rain of blood is mentioned more than once in the sagas, for instance in *Njáls Saga* before the Battle of Clontarf, and in ominous verses spoken by figures in dreams in *Sturlunga Saga*,<sup>3</sup> but not used, as here, in a realistic, homely setting.<sup>4</sup> Such showers are also mentioned in the Irish Annals, and were regarded as a portent of death and of pestilence; they were frequently reported in the Middle Ages, and such reports caused panic. A possible basis for the tradition is the reddening of rain through an appearance of the Aurora Borealis or by volcanic dust. Schove points out that such showers were generally seen at night, due to a reflected auroral glow,<sup>5</sup> and it may be noted that in the Thorgunna episode the cloud caused darkness for a time. After this alarming happening, Thorgunna went back to the house and took to her bed. When Thorodd visited her next day, she told him her sickness would not last long, and that since he seemed a sensible man, she would give him instructions as to what was to be done after her death; it was essential that her wishes be carried out, or trouble would follow.

Thorgunna directed that her body be taken to Skalholt, since this would later become one of the holiest places in Iceland,<sup>6</sup> and there were priests there who could sing Masses for her soul. Thorodd could repay himself for the expense from the goods she left behind, and Thurid might have her scarlet cloak, to console her for the loss of the other treasures. Her gold ring was to go with her to the church, but all her bed furnishings were to be burned, since they would bring no good fortune to anyone who owned them. Here we have another familiar element in ghost stories, the last commands of the dying, which must be fulfilled if those who are left are to avoid the return of the angry dead. The reason why bed-linen and hanging were to be burned is not given, but an obvious parallel here is with the destruction of the bedstraw, the *likhalm* on which the dead had lain in the final illness, or on which the corpse had been laid out.<sup>7</sup> In Norway, Sweden and Denmark it was customary until the late 19th century to burn this immediately death had taken place, and the way in which the smoke rose from the fire was judged to be a



good or bad omen, one belief being that if the smoke blew towards the house another death would follow; it also gave notice to the neighbours that death had taken place. On this occasion as is usual in tales of haunting, the wishes of the dead were not fully carried out. Thorodd indeed took out the bedclothes and was about to burn them, but Thurid intervened, and by arguments and coaxing wore down his resistance, so that in the end he only destroyed the eiderdown and pillows, and let her keep the sheets and hangings; neither of them, we are told, was satisfied with this compromise. Thorgunna's body was wrapped in a loose shroud and placed in a coffin, and Thorodd let his best horses be used for the journey to Skalholt in southern Iceland. At first all went well, but when they reached boggy ground the coffin fell off the horse more than once, and they had to ford a deep river. Then the weather grew worse, with heavy rain and sleet, so that as night drew on they were forced to stop at a farm. The people here were unusually churlish, and refused to provide a meal or anything beyond shelter for the night, so the Frodwater party left the coffin in a shed and went into the hall to take off their wet clothes and settle down as best they could, while the household went to bed. But they were soon aroused by noises from the pantry, and there they found a large woman, stark naked, busy preparing food; the Frodwater men at once recognised Thorgunna, and it was felt by all that it would be wiser not to meddle with her. Thorgunna brought in a meal and laid it on the table, and at this the terrified farmer and his wife offered at once to give the visitors all they needed; on hearing these words, Thorgunna forthwith went back to her coffin. Everything was now done for the travellers' comfort, and no one took any harm from the food the dead woman had prepared, although as a precaution the house was sprinkled with holy water. In the morning the party moved on, and since news of Thorgunna's activities had gone before them, they got the warmest of welcomes wherever they stopped on their way to Skalholt. They reached the church, handed over Thorgunna's gifts to the priests and then set out for home.

I suspect that this tale has been modelled on that

of the funeral journey of the old chieftain Víga-Styr, the father-in-law of Snorri *Godi*, to which indeed there is a reference in *Eyrbyggja Saga*.<sup>8</sup> He was a tyrant and bully, much given to violence, and it is hardly surprising that he did not stay quiet after death. We are told in *Heidarvíga Saga*<sup>9</sup> that when the old man died, his body was sewn up in a skin, and Snorri set out to take it to the church. The weather was terrible, and the head of the corpse got wet when they were fording a river, so that when they stopped for the night they undid the top of the skin and left the corpse to dry out by the fire. In this case they received good hospitality, and all went to bed. But the farmer's two daughters stayed awake, and the elder, about fifteen, announced that she was determined to have a look at this notorious man while she had the chance. They crept into the hall, but to their horror the dead man sat up in the skin and uttered a verse; another account states that he put his arm round the girl's waist; whatever happened she became violently hysterical, and shouted and struggled so that several men could hardly hold her, and at daybreak she died. Snorri and his party, much distressed, left as soon as they could, and struggled on through a blizzard; the corpse was so restless that it slipped off the horse more than once, and finally proved so heavy that they were forced to leave it under a cairn on a sand-dune. Snorri, a man of considerable force of character, went back in the spring and got it to the church without further incident. In this unpleasant story Víga-Styr acts after death as in life, dealing out malice and destruction, whereas Thorgunna's actions are in complete contrast; she is merely making sure that those who carry out her wishes receive proper treatment. The idea behind both tales however, that the corpse may be restless and potentially dangerous between death and burial, is widespread; it is for this reason that immense importance is always laid on carrying out the correct rites when dealing with the dead. Thorgunna is the only example known to me in the sagas where the *draugr*, the restless corpse, walks again for any reason other than a destructive or vengeful one, and it seems possible that here we have a humorous parody of the incident of Víga-Styr,

in keeping with Thorgunna's character as described in the sagas.

Evidently in popular tradition she was remembered as a somewhat unfriendly person. Jon Arnason gives a story of how, when a grave was dug for her, there was another coffin visible in the ground, but the grave-diggers ignored this and lowered her into the hole. Then they heard words coming from her coffin: 'It is cold at the feet of ugly Ani'. Whereupon a voice from the coffin in the ground was heard to reply: 'This is why few love Thorgunna'. This story, with slight variations was added to a late manuscript of *Eyrbyggja Saga*.<sup>10</sup>

After the burial party returned home, the first portent was seen at Frodwater. As they sat round the fire in the evening, a half-moon was seen on the panelled wall; it went round the house, moving backwards and widdershins, and could be seen by all as long as they stayed by the fire. Thorodd asked Thorir Woodenleg, one of the older men, if he knew the meaning of this, and Thorir replied that it was the Moon of Urd: 'It means death to some here', said he. I know no parallel to this in any ghost story, and neither William Morris nor Andrew Lang, inveterate readers of old tales and fascinated by this one, could find an explanation.<sup>11</sup> The description of the half-moon's movements is not altogether clear. The words *tungl halft* are used in the prose, *tungl* being the usual word for moon, but Thorir speaks of *Urdarmáni*, using *máni*, an older, poetic word, for the moon. *Urðr* is the name given to one of the three Norns in Norse mythology, roughly equivalent to the Three Fates, and sometimes used for Fate in general. When the half-moon is said to move backwards and widdershins (i.e. anti-clockwise, against the sun), it suggests some such symbol as that of the whirling disc, formed of crescent moons, as depicted on early memorial stones of the pre-Viking period on the island of Gotland; this symbol was a popular one, and connected with the swastika.<sup>12</sup> A revolving crescent moon could be imagined making such a pattern of light on the wall, and there is no doubt that a circle made against the sun, widdershins, is particularly dangerous in association with the dead. William

Henderson gives an interesting example of this from West Hartlepool, where a group of men bringing a coffin to the churchyard deliberately wheeled round to make a circuit of the wall before coming in at the gate. When the vicar asked the sexton why they did so, he answered: 'Why, ye wad no hae them carry the dead again the sun; the dead maun aye go wi' the sun'.<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, there could be a link with the custom of carrying a candle or a lamp round the house at the end of the old year, when the doors were opened, and everything was swept and cleaned. The housewife shone her light into all the corners as she made a circuit of the dwelling, repeating the words: 'May those stay who wish to stay, may those go who wish to go, without harm to me and mine'.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately Maurer, who records this practice in the nineteenth century, does not state the direction in which this ritual circling of the house was made, but one would expect it to be sunwise; certainly the light would move round the panelled walls as the Moon or Urd was said to do. The dead were expected to return at Christmas or the New Year, the old season of Yule which marked mid-winter; in Sweden, for instance, Christiansen notes that earth found on the chairs on Christmas morning meant that they had made their customary visit the night before, although in later folktales, it was usually the elves who returned to sit by the fire and feast on Christmas Night.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the exact nature of the portent, it is significant that it was seen immediately after Thorgunna's burial; although the men had been protected on their journey to the church, the whole household was now at risk because her last wishes had not been carried out.

Next came a series of deaths at the farm, and the return of the dead. The shepherd was the first to go; shepherds were forced by the nature of their work to be out in the winter dark, and he was apparently terrified, literally frightened to death, by something encountered outside, possibly Thorgunna herself. He came home in a shaken condition, avoided the rest and went about muttering, and not long after he took to his bed one night and was found dead in the morning. There is a parallel in the famous tale of the haunting of Glam in *Grettis Saga*; shepherds on a certain farm

were either attacked or so terrified by some unspecified encounter in the dark that they went mad or left the place. Finally Glam took on the job of shepherd, boasting that he was not easily frightened, and on Christmas Eve he was attacked and killed, to become a fearsome haunter himself.<sup>16</sup> At Frodwater the next victim was Thorir Woodenleg; he went out one night to the privy and on the way back met the dead shepherd barring his way. Thorir retreated, but the shepherd came on and threw him against the door; this resulted in his death, and from that time he and the shepherd were seen about together. As if each dead man in turn was anxious to draw more of the living to join the departed, the number of deaths increased until six were buried. By this time it was the beginning of Advent, and drawing near to Christmas, the time when the dead were most active and might be expected to revisit their old home.

At the farm there were two closets opening out of the hall; one was used for meal and the other was filled up to the ceiling with dried fish, to last out the winter. As they sat round the fire, they could hear a noise like something tearing at the fish, but when they opened the door, nothing living could be seen. Thorodd became anxious about the food supply, if some creature were robbing their store, and in the end he took five of his men out fishing, although this was dangerous so late in the year. While they were gone, a seal's head was seen coming up through the floor. A servant hit at it, but it took no notice, and rose steadily, its eyes turned towards the bed where Thorgunna had slept. It had risen up to the flippers when young Kjartan intervened; he got a sledgehammer and hit repeatedly at the seal as if he were hammering in a peg, and it slowly sank down and disappeared. They were still shaken by this experience when news came that Thorodd's boat had been lost at sea; the boat and the catch were washed ashore, but the six bodies were never found.

A funeral feast was held for the drowned men, and on the first evening of the feast, Thorodd and his crew of five were seen entering the hall, soaking wet. The saga states that this was held to be a lucky omen, since it meant that the drowned men had

been well received by Ran, the goddess of the sea. But this was no momentary glimpse of the dead; they came into the hall each night and sat by the fire, so that the living had to give up their places and go elsewhere until the fire had burned down. I know no other reference to this belief about the return of the drowned, but there are further instances in the sagas of the appearance of men lost at sea; in *Laxdæla Saga* (ch. 76) Gudrun's fourth husband, Thorkell, was drowned in a sudden storm, and the same evening, before the news had reached her, she went over to the church. As she passed through the lychgate she saw a dead man standing in her way; the *draugr* bent towards her and said: 'Urgent news, Gudrun.' 'Keep quiet about it then, you wretch', she retorted, and continued on her way, but as she came to the door, she thought she saw her husband and crew, with the seawater running from their clothes. She went into the church nonetheless, thinking that they were on their way to the house, and it was not until she came back to find the hall empty that she became anxious; two days later, news of the drowning reached the family. There are modern parallels to such appearances, such as a Cornish tale of how farmers round Helston were engaged in smuggling, but on a certain evening one of the group did not go out with the rest; as he was walking home from Helston, he came upon the boat's crew on a high cliff, their hair and clothes dripping wet, and soon afterwards he himself died.<sup>18</sup> Similarly the appearance of the drowned at Frodwater meant that more deaths were to follow.

When the feast for the dead was over and the guests departed, it felt we are told, rather dismal in the house. And indeed that evening the drowned were back as usual, squeezing the water from their clothes as they entered the hall. Even worse was to follow, for now another band entered from the churchyard, shaking off the earth from their clothes and throwing it at the others, who responded by shaking water over them. The idea of conflict between the drowned and the buried dead is found in Norwegian folk tradition, particularly from the north of Norway, and also among the Lapps.<sup>19</sup> The usual form of the tale as given by Christiansen is that a man meets a creature from the

sea, called a *draug* (the same word as that used in Iceland for the restless dead), when he goes down to the beach, throws something at it, and is chased by it. Terrified, he rushes back by the churchyard, calling on the dead for help, and gets away. Next day the churchyard is strewn with broken coffins and stalks of sea-wrack, and looks as if a great fight had taken place. No other examples in the sagas are known to me, and it looks as if once more a vague tradition about the dead has been used by the saga-writer and introduced into a realistic domestic setting.

That night the living were driven away from the fire, so next night a fire was lit in a smaller room, in the hope that the dead would not follow them there, but they were ousted from that too. Once more Kjartan intervened, and on the following evening told them to light two fires, one in the main hall and another in a separate building; the dead naturally took over the hall, where it was more comfortable, and so it continued over Christmas. Meantime sounds of something tearing away at the dried fish could still be heard by night and day. At last they opened the closet door and saw a tail among the fish; it was smooth-haired like a seal's tail, and as long as an ox-tail; they pulled at it, but could not get it out, and then suddenly it seemed to come to life, and shot through their hands, tearing the skin from their palms. Then they set about clearing the closet, only to find that all the fish had been devoured, leaving nothing but the skins behind. After that, nothing more was heard of the seal; it had done its work. Was this creature meant to be Thorgunna herself, returning in seal form? There is a parallel in *Laxæla Saga* (ch. 18) where a seal, with human-looking eyes and large flippers, encircles the boat of Thorstein Black the Wise when he is leaving the district with his family, and afterwards all but one in the boat are drowned. The implication here is that the seal was the dead Hrapp, Thorstein's brother-in-law, an unpleasant man, who had already given much trouble after death, and who seems to have been getting his own back on Thorstein for giving shelter to Hrapp's widow when she was terrified by his appearances. Grey seals have

strangely human eyes; there are many stories of the Sea People, or Selkie Folk, who come out of the sea to mingle with humans, and Thorgunna, it may be noted, came from the Hebrides, where such stories are still current.<sup>21</sup>

More sickness followed at Frodwater. Thorgrima Witchface, Thorir's wife (whom Thorgunna had disliked) now sickened and died, and was seen in company with her husband. Six in all now joined the company in the churchyard, and out of a household of thirty-two, eighteen were now dead, while five had run away, and only Thurid, the farmer's widow, her son Kjartan and seven servants remained. It was at this point that Kjartan went to seek help from his uncle, Snorri *Goði*. Snorri had a priest in the house, and when he had listened to Kjartan's tale, he sent the priest back with him, together with his own son, Thord the Cat, and six other men. He told them to burn Thorgunna's bedding and then to summon the dead to a court held at the house door, according to legal practice. They got back to Frodwater in the evening, to find that Thurid had fallen ill in the same way as those who had died; the fires were lit, and the dead sat in the hall as usual. Kjartan walked in, tore down the canopy from Thorgunna's bed, took out the sheets, and then got a brand from the fire and burned everything which had been hers. Next he and Thord the Cat formally accused the two senior dead, Thorodd and Thorir Woodenleg, of trespass, and of depriving men of life and health. They named each of the dead in turn, and did everything correctly, appointing a jury, calling witnesses to testify, summing up the cases and referring them to judgement. Evidently the sentence passed was that of banishment, although this is not stated in so many words. When each of the dead was named for sentence, he or she stood up and uttered a set phrase. It may be noted that throughout the sagas and in later folktales the speech of the dead is always in formal style; it is either in verse, particularly a form of verse with the last line repeated, or in a rhyming phrase (of the cleriheuw type) like the words exchanged between Thorgunna and her new neighbour in the grave (p. above), or an alliterative phrase, like a proverb.<sup>22</sup> Thorir now said, as



he left: 'We sat here, as long as it was bearable', while his wife said in her turn: 'We have been here as long as it was comfortable', while farmer Thorodd summed up the situation: 'It seems there's little peace here, so let's all be gone'. Each went out after speaking, and seemed reluctant to go; afterwards the priest hallowed the house, as Snorri had advised, with holy water and sacred relics, and next day said Mass. Thurid recovered from her sickness, and there were no more hauntings. Kjartan ran the farm for a long time, and was thought by all to be a man of strength and courage.

In this Icelandic ghost story we find a number of familiar motifs, mentioned in other papers in this collection, which belong to one special category of tales, those concerned with activity of the dead immediately after death or soon after burial. As Christiansen points out, there is a universal tendency to see death as a threat to the living; it is essential to give the dead his rights, and to conceal the fact of final separation, in order to avoid something dangerous and contagious.<sup>23</sup> If the dead feels himself cheated, he can prove a menace to those left behind, and in the Icelandic sagas the *draugr* are not spirits but the dead themselves, coming in bodily form out of their graves to cause physical harm to the survivors. A typical instance is found in *Floamanna Saga* (ch.22) when there is a loud knock on the door during the night; a man goes to see who it is, thinking someone is bringing news, but he is immediately seized with madness, and dies by morning. Next evening the knocking is heard again, and one of them sees the man who had died running towards him; he is the next to go, and so it goes on until six are dead. Not until the dead bodies are burned do the hauntings cease. Experience of epidemics in the cold and dark of winter in primitive conditions must have strengthened such beliefs. There is a gruesome description in *Eiríks Saga rauða* (ch.6) where one of the women fallen ill in the Greenland settlement went outside to the privy in the bitter cold, and saw the dead lined up before the door, together with the fetches of those about to die, including her own. 'We have acted stupidly' said the woman with her, hearing her cry of distress, 'and you

should not be out here in the cold', but it was too late. The really evil and powerful *draugr*, like Thorolf Clubfoot in *Eyrbyggja Saga* and Glam in *Grettis Saga*, come out of their graves and roam the countryside in the winter nights, attacking and destroying both men and beasts if they come upon them, so that even birds which land on Thorolf's cairn drop dead, and no one dares to bring a horse or a dog into Glam's valley, since it will be killed immediately.<sup>24</sup> Thus the district round the graves is laid waste, and in the winter nights the *draugr* sits on the roof of the farmhouse, thumping and drumming with his heels until the building shakes, a conception no doubt strengthened by the terrifying force of winter storms in Iceland. The only way to deal with such dangerous visitants was to destroy their bodies, and those dug up were black, swollen and heavy, an obvious link with the vampire tradition.

A modern example of the same kind of haunting by the newly dead, close to the Icelandic tales in detail and spirit, is given by June Knox-Mawer in an account of the Pacific Islands, published in 1974; she heard it on Tuvalu from Dr Teleke Kofe, who told it as an experience of his boyhood, the first time he knew fear of the dead.<sup>25</sup> A man climbing for coconuts fell from a tree and was killed; he was buried in the cemetery. Three nights later the boy and his brothers came in late from a dance and went to bed on the sleeping platform, but were disturbed by stones thrown at it. Their father called to them from his bed and told them to get under the mosquito net: 'Don't be frightened', he said, 'it's him — Noa. He has been with us earlier, singing hymns, and knocking on the beams'. Then knocking began again, going round the room in a circle. Their father called out: 'Why don't you go back to your grave, Noa, instead of disturbing the living?' After this they heard footsteps round the house, and the sound of a stick dragging in the sand, and then all the screens flew out, as if there were a gale, although the night was quite calm. Next came the sound of a key turning in the storeroom door, and the sound of smashing glass, as if bottles were being broken. 'If that's a ghost, it's all right', commented his father; 'If not,

someone's going to be charged tomorrow for being drunk and disorderly'. But next morning everything was intact; no marks in the sand, and no broken bottles. Meanwhile a young gravedigger had gone to the District Commissioner, saying he was worried in case he had not made Noa's grave deep enough, since it was known that a man who met with a violent death must be laid at a good safe depth. So the grave was opened, the coffin replaced six feet down and turned face downwards, and after that no more was heard of Noa.

In the sagas there are no stories of wraiths or disembodied spirits, such as we are accustomed to in our English traditions. We too, however, preserve a tradition of the restless dead similar to that in Iceland, although such stories are in the minority, as a search through Dr Briggs' collection of ghost tales in the *Dictionary of British Folktales* makes evident. There is for instance, the story of the Wee Tailor, recorded by Hamish Hamilton;<sup>26</sup> a crippled tailor sat stitching on a tombstone, and half an hour after midnight the grave opened and a huge head looked out; finally a figure eight feet high emerged, but the tailor remained cool, and replied to the questions of the *draugr* in the correct formal manner; to the enquiry: 'Do you see this head, without flesh or blood?', he retorted: 'Yes, I see that, but I sew this', and so on. By the time the horrible thing was fully out and clutching at him with its clawed hand, he had finished his sewing, bitten off the thread, and leapt over the wall, to find that his lameness was cured. The truth of this story was vouched for by the fact that a mark from the hand could be seen on the flat stone. Again in Sabine Baring-Gould's story of his great-great-grandmother, Madam Gould, a local carpenter opened her coffin to have a look at her, whereupon she sat up, and then came out to chase him a quarter of a mile to his house; she was seen by his sick wife as he dashed into the bedroom, but apparently did no harm to either of them.<sup>27</sup> In a terrifying tale of the Lincolnshire Carrs, *The Dead Moon*, among those collected by Mrs Balfour at the end of the last century,<sup>28</sup> the dead who haunted the swamps wanted to destroy the moon, moaning: 'Thou keeps us in our straight coffins o'noights', because the restless

dead need darkness for their activities.

If we go further back to tales of haunting in northern England and Scotland in the twelfth century, there are a number of horror stories, indicating that the tradition of the *draugr* was at that time a familiar one. William Newburgh in Yorkshire, who spent his life in an Augustinian priory and died in 1208, includes a number of these in his history of England from 1066 to 1197.<sup>29</sup> He claims moreover that he gives a few only from a large number of cases known to him:

...Were I to write down all the instances of  
this kind which I have ascertained to have  
befallen in our times, the undertaking would  
be beyond measure laborious and troublesome.

(V.24).

The first tale is that of a man buried in the family tomb in Buckingham, who, the night after burial, came back and got into his wife's bed, nearly crushing her with 'the insupportable weight of his body'. She surrounded herself with watchers to keep him away, and he then visited his brothers in the same street, until they too kept a guard to watch for him; he was then forced to 'riot among the animals, both indoors and out, as their wildness and unwonted movements testified'. The Archdeacon, William's informant, asked the Bishop of Lincoln to investigate, and several people told the Bishop that it was essential that the man be dug up and burned. He was reluctant to do this, and told the Archdeacon to lay a letter of absolution on the breast of the corpse in the tomb, which was then closed up again; this ended the haunting. The second case William gives was at Berwick, where a rich man walked after death, 'pursued by a pack of dogs with loud barkings', terrifying the people. Some of the leading men determined on action, and a party of bold youths dug up the corpse, cut it up and burned it, whereupon the hauntings ceased; but there was a serious pestilence throughout the neighbourhood, worse at Berwick than elsewhere. The next instance was at Melrose, near the Abbey, where a worldly-minded chaplain, known as the *hundeprest* because of his love of hunting, came out of his grave and haunted the district, appearing frequently in the bedchamber of his former mistress. She asked the

friars for help and prayers, and two of them, with two strong young men, watched by the cemetery until after midnight, when three out of the four went indoors to get warm; the fourth, left alone, saw the dead man approaching, but courageously stood his ground and hit the figure with an axe. The corpse fled back to the grave, and when the others returned, they dug up the body, to find traces of the wound on it and much blood in the grave. They burned it outside the monastery grounds and scattered the ashes. The last example is from Annan in Dumfries, where a wicked man, forced to leave York, took refuge in the castle. He married a wife, but believed her to be unfaithful, so he spied on her from the roof, saw her in bed with her lover, and in his rage fell and received serious injuries. He died as a result, without making his confession, in spite of the warnings of the old monk who told William the story. The dead man came back from the grave, and like the Berwick man was pursued by a pack of barking dogs, wandering about at night until no one dared go out in the dark, for he attacked those he met, leaving them sore and bruised. Many people left the town, and the monks invited the leading townspeople to a supper-party to decide what should be done. There was evidently a pestilence in the district, since two young men whose father had died of it resolved to dig up the body and burn it while the monks and authorities were out of the way. They found the corpse swollen and the face 'turgid and suffused with blood'; they wounded the body, which bled, and then dragged it outside the village, tore out the heart, and finally burned it. The monks and their guests came out to witness the burning, and afterwards the pestilence and the haunting ceased.

These savage stories indicate traditions very close to the saga instances of the returning dead, which are only a little later in date than William's narrative. Other contemporary writers have similar examples: for instance Walter Map in *De Nugis Curialium* gives an instance from Herefordshire of a Welshman who walked after death, calling out the names of those who would fall ill and die, and another from Worcestershire of a walking corpse which was surrounded by neighbours in an orchard for three days, and

apparently unable to escape back to its grave.<sup>30</sup> It may be noted that William of Newburgh found himself puzzled by this phenomenon, to which he could find no parallel in the writings of Latin authors:

It would be strange, if such things should have happened formerly, since we can find no evidence of them in the works of ancient authors, whose vast labour it was to commit to writing every occurrence worthy of memory; for if they never neglected to register even events of moderate interest, how could they have suppressed a fact at once so amazing and horrible, supposing it to have happened in their day?

(V.24).

There is a link in these examples, as in the Frodwater tale, between haunting and epidemics, which helps us to understand the determined savagery shown towards the dead by the local people. Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish contemporary of William of Newburgh, was also familiar with such ideas, since in the first book of his history he mentions that Mithothyn, who laid claim to divine powers during Odin's absence, proved a danger to the men of Fyn after his death; anyone approaching his tomb was exterminated, and foul plagues were caused by his dead body, until people dug it up, cut off the head, and impaled it by a stake.<sup>31</sup>

I have found no close parallel to the respect shown by the dead Icelanders at Frodwater for the law, but it may be noted that the restless dead known to William of Newburgh still obeyed the laws of the church; the Buckingham man, for instance, lay quiet once he had received absolution for his sins, since the Bishop of Lincoln, like Snorri *Godi*, sought to use non-violent methods of dealing with the troublesome dead. Possibly some reported incident of this kind inspired the Icelandic saga-writer to introduce the comedy of the judgement delivered against the dead.<sup>32</sup>

Such tales of hauntings are associated with graves, coffins and churchyards, forming a different category from those concerned with dwellings, old buildings and roads where violence or suffering had once occurred, or the dead had left some problem unsolved at death. The main horror lies in the change of nature

after death, for some of the haunters, like Thorodd or Thorgunna, seem to have been peaceable enough in their lifetimes. It was assumed, however, that those evil and violent in life might cause trouble after death; in *Egils Saga*, for instance, Egill's old father Skallagrim, a man of violent temper who died in a fit of rage, is carried out through a hole in the wall and taken by boat to be buried on a distant headland, presumably to avoid trouble from possible activities. According to a story recorded by Mrs Leather, one Herefordshire ghost when asked why he was so violent, replied: 'I was fierce when I was a man, but fiercer now, for I am a devil',<sup>33</sup> and this is very much in the spirit of the saga tales. In such cases, links with the vampire tradition are sometimes apparent; although there is no mention of the dead drinking the blood of the living, the bleeding of the corpse is a recurring feature, and it is easy to see how such a literary genre might have developed from tales of the kind familiar in Iceland and twelfth-century England.

It does not seem reasonable to seek a definite fixed origin for such traditions, either in one geographical area or in any particular culture; they are probably as old as the practice of burial itself. Arthur Grimble, in *A Pattern of Islands*, suggested that among the people of the Pacific both love and fear were present in the ancient cult of the ancestors, but mostly love predominated, whereas after the early missionaries destroyed the village skull shrines and derided the old ways of thought 'affection made its exit.... and only superstition remained'.<sup>34</sup> There may be some truth in this, but a sense of the potential danger of the newly dead, as Christiansen pointed out, is something deeply rooted in men's minds, undoubtedly antedating Christianity. One result of the introduction of Christian teaching and classical learning, however, may have been a gradual change from the idea of the restless corpse to that of the wandering disembodied spirit. But if we search deeply enough, it seems probable that we shall find both conceptions present in men's beliefs in any period of which we have adequate knowledge. For example, in spite of the strong emphasis on the *draugr* returning in physical form, only rendered more monstrous by death, there

are two ways in Old Norse literature in which the spirit of the dead can communicate with the living independently of the body. One is for the dead to appear in dreams, in shape as when alive, when we may be told that the dreamer has a glimpse of a figure slipping out of sight when he awakes. Such dreams are particularly likely to take place if the sleeper lies on a burial mound, which was a recognised method of consulting the dead concerning hidden things.<sup>35</sup> A second method of return was in bird or animal form. It seems as if Thorgunna not only walked out of her coffin on the way to burial, but also came to the farmhouse, far from Skalholt, in the form of the seal which destroyed the food supply and so caused the drowning of Thorodd and his men. Most of the appearances in this particular story, however, have their basis in funeral customs and superstitions about the dead: the burning of bed-coverings after death, the journey to church, when hospitality should never be grudged to the bearers of a coffin, the funeral held for drowned men lost at sea, the appearance of a dead person in seal form, hostility between the drowned and buried dead, the return of the dead from their graves to the old home at Yule. It seems as if the saga-writer has deliberately sought out as many as possible of the vague and shadowy beliefs about the dead known to him, and then made them vivid and homely, interpreting them literally to a point bordering on absurdity, but which, through his skill in story-telling, stop just short of this. The tale has plenty of terror in it, and yet it is perhaps the most entertaining and humorous of all the Icelandic stories of hauntings.

Indeed the importance of humour and satire in ghost stories has perhaps been underestimated; there is the same mixture of terror, impudence and humour in the best of them as we find in the older impressive myths of the old gods. 'To move wild laughter in the throat of death? It cannot be; it is impossible', declares Biron at the close of *Love's Labours Lost*. But it was evidently possible in tough environments such as old Iceland, where death was ever at the door, to arouse a chuckle by such tales, while never underestimating death's terrors or the horrors of disposing



of the dead. The survivors must establish their right to continue life, to renew their energies after loss and rebuild the community again. Tales of haunting always end with the banishment of the dead to the darkness of the Underworld, where, as we are reminded in Canon Porter's paper (p.215 below), they rightly belong. Such an attitude has its crudities, and many find it offensive; as society grows more affluent and sophisticated, it is increasingly viewed as improper, irreverent, and a sin against good manners and respect for the loved dead. There is even an instinctive feeling that it is vaguely shocking for a group of scholars to concern themselves seriously with stories of ghosts and return of the dead. Yet there is no doubt that such stories have a wide, irresistible appeal, and this collection of papers makes it abundantly clear that interest in the return of the dead is something which can be traced back to our earliest roots.



## 9. THE ROLE OF THE GHOST-STORY IN MEDIAEVAL CHRISTIANITY

R.A. Bowyer

I ORIGINALLY SUGGESTED this paper under the title "The Role of the Ghost in Mediaeval Christianity", but, having now written the paper, I realise what a more appropriate (and only slightly less ambitious) title would be "The Role of the Ghost-Story in Mediaeval Christianity", for the purpose of this paper is to introduce something of the richness of mediaeval Latin ghost-literature, and to suggest some of the various contexts - theological, social, literary, and folkloric - in which these ghost-stories can be studied.

I will be including as 'ghosts' any supernatural apparitions of the dead, whether they belong in hell, purgatory, or heaven, whether they are restless sinners or benevolent saints. This is, I admit, an unusually broad definition, but I think my subject forces it upon me: the men of the Middle Ages did not share our concept of the 'ghost', and indeed there is no mediaeval word which means quite the same as our modern word 'ghost', with all its associations of distressed or malevolent 'revenants'; the Middle English word 'ghost' means merely 'spirit' (it translates and is translated by the Latin *spiritus*) and both the English and Latin words are of very general application, carrying no particularly sinister or spine-chilling nuances. The stories I shall be discussing are all about 'spirits', but spirits of every kind: for while the modern 'ghost' appears in a psychological vacuum, terrifyingly isolated from our normal, everyday experience, the mediaeval 'ghost' or 'spirit' appears as an integral part of an immense and ordered spiritual world which includes not merely tormented sinners and devils, but also guardian angels and benevolent saints.

Ghost-stories, then, in this broad sense, are abundant in all forms of mediaeval literature; in this paper I shall be concentrating almost entirely on mediaeval Latin literature, although much of my argument might equally well be applied to the verna-

cular literatures of the period. The stories I shall be discussing come from all kinds of texts - histories of the world, chronicles of contemporary life, theological and even scientific treatises, lives of saints, and the remarkable *Libri Exemplorum*, - preachers' manuals of edifying and usually miraculous tales for use in sermons. Different as the various genres sound, the material is in fact surprisingly homogeneous, and we may note three qualities common to them all. Firstly, they were all written by men who, whether English or German, French or Italian, all shared the same common literary culture - the Bible, the Church Fathers, the Lives of the Saints, and a few of the classics. This literary culture was by our standards extremely small - a hundred books would have been regarded as a very substantial academic library. Thus inevitably, all our writers betray the influence of the same models; indeed we often find exactly the same story told in exactly the same words in perhaps half a dozen different texts. Secondly, all our stories were written down by churchmen; some of them, like the preaching exempla, were written with an overtly didactic purpose; but all of them, directly or indirectly, serve to confirm the teachings of the mediaeval church: they confirm that righteousness will be rewarded and wickedness will be punished; they confirm the church's teachings about heaven, hell, and purgatory; they confirm the efficacy of the church's prayers and masses for the dead, and of its absolutions for sins committed. Thirdly, we must remember that the idea of prose-fiction in the modern sense did not exist in the Middle Ages - all these stories, without exception, were told as being absolutely and historically true.

In this paper I want to illustrate three kinds of typical mediaeval ghost-story, distinguished by the three situations in which the ghost can appear: firstly, the departing ghost, seen, usually at the moment of death, making its way from this world to the next; secondly, the ghost seen actually within the confines of the next world; and thirdly, the returning ghost or "revenant". Here of course the breadth of my definition makes itself felt, for to

most of us today, the world "ghost" conjures up specifically the third kind of story, the "revenant": but as I have said, the Middle Ages did not share our idea of the "ghost", and all three kinds of apparition were regarded as the same kind of experience of that spiritual world which was integrated into the life and theology of the mediaeval church.

### The Departing Ghost

I would like to begin with a story from Pope Gregory the Great, for he is undoubtedly the most influential single figure in the development of the mediaeval ghost-story. Gregory's *Dialogues*, written at the end of the sixth century, contain dozens of curious and incredible ghost-stories, which remained enormously popular throughout the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>; they were told and retold, translated even into Anglo-Saxon, and served as models for many similar stories. Moreover, Gregory's work was treated with a respect similar to that accorded to Holy Scripture, and was frequently adduced as the theological justification for the whole ghost tradition. Indeed, we often find the mediaeval chroniclers telling some very tall ghost-story, and then warning their readers 'Let no man doubt that this story is true: for something very similar is related in Gregory's *Dialogues*...'

Gregory tells many stories of departing ghosts, and here is a tale from the *Dialogues* concerning Theodoric the Goth, the Arian and Barbarian ruler of Italy in the early sixth century:

When I was living in a monastery, there was a man called Julian who used to visit me, to share with me godly and profitable conversation. One day he told me this story: Back in the days of King Theodoric my father-in-law's father had been serving in Sicily, and was sailing back to Italy when his ship was cast up on the Isle of Lipari. Now there was a certain hermit, a man of great sanctity, who dwelt on that island, so while the sailors were making repairs to the ship, my father-in-law's father decided to pay a visit to that holy man and ask to be remembered in his prayers. When the hermit met him and his companions, he asked, among other things, whether they knew that King Theodoric was dead. "But

that is impossible," they replied, "he was alive when we left and we have heard no news of his death." But the man of God replied: "He is dead indeed; yesterday at the ninth hour he was led along between Pope John and Symmachus the Senator, barefoot and ungirded, with gyves upon his wrists, and thrown into the mouth of the nearby volcano." When they heard this, they made a careful note of the date, and when they arrived back in Italy, they found that Theodoric had died on the very day when the holy hermit of Lipari had been shewn his passing and his punishment.<sup>2</sup>

This story is typical of many in Gregory's *Dialogues*: I do not know whether Gregory's tales can rightly be called 'folk-tales', but they can certainly be studied, like folk-tales, in terms of recurring structures and recurring motifs: thus at least four elements of the story - the holy hermit gaining news by super-natural means, the mouth of the volcano as place of punishment, the written note of the time which later proves accurate, and even the fact that Gregory claims to have the story from a reliable source - are all motifs which occur elsewhere in the *Dialogues*, and also in the many later mediaeval writers who were familiar with Gregory's work.

The purpose behind Gregory's story of the death of Theodoric is obvious enough: it confirms Christian teaching about the existence of life after death; it warns the sinner that wickedness will be punished; it comforts the oppressed with the knowledge that the oppressors, be they kings or princes, will be judged and punished according to their works. It also demonstrates a favourite point of Gregory's, that clairvoyance - in this case the hermit's ability to see the ghost - is a natural grace of the ascetic or monastic life.

The ghost being thrown into hell or purgatory is but one form of the story of the departing ghost: the other, of course, tells of the ghost being carried up to heaven, and Gregory tells many such stories too. Both kinds of story are a commonplace of the saints' lives of the later Middle Ages, adduced to demonstrate the saintliness of the saint and the sinfulness of the sinner. Indeed the two

kinds of story parallel each other very closely: the saint is carried upwards by angels, the sinner dragged downwards by devils; the saint is accompanied by heavenly music and sweet fragrance, while the sinner departs amidst hellish screams, and leaves behind a choking sulphurous stench.

If we wish to be cynical, we may attribute something of the enormous popularity of such tales in mediaeval literature to their polemical possibilities: what better way to prove the rightness of one's own cause, than to tell how its champions had been seen received into heaven; what better way to demonstrate the wickedness of one's enemies' cause, than to tell how its misguided adherents had been seen dragged down to hell by the cackling demons who had beguiled them in their lives? The ghost-story can thus take on a political aspect; a delightful example occurs in the late mediaeval *Chronicle of Scotland*, which records British history from an aggressively Scottish point of view. According to the Chronicle, when Edward I, the "Hammer of the Scots", died, his ghost was seen carried off to hell by a crowd of jubilant demons armed with whips, who chanted a chorus:

En Rex Edwardus, debacchans ut leopardus,  
Olim dum vixit populum Domini maleflixit.  
Nobis viae talis comes ibis, care sodalis,  
Quo condemneris, ut daemonibus socieris.  
Te sequimur voto prorsus torpore remoto.

- which E.C. Brewer rendered into equally diabolical English verse:

Behold Edwardus rex O, once wont the church to vex  
so,  
As raging leopard now sir, to the infernal slough  
sir,  
Where demons fleer and titter, with us dear friend  
you'll flitter,

And company for ever, henceforth we will not sever.  
But, the *Chronicle of Scotland* records, when William Wallace, the great Scottish patriot, died, a certain holy hermit (notice again the clairvoyant hermit) saw his ghost borne up to heaven by angels, in company with innumerable souls released from Purgatory by the merits of that most glorious martyrdom!<sup>3</sup>

## The Ghost in the Other World

One very familiar genre of mediaeval ghost-story tells of the man whose body lies for some time dead or in a deathlike trance, while his spirit is given a guided tour of the Other World, where he sees the ghosts of the dead suffering grotesque and horrible punishments in the fires of hell and purgatory, or enjoying sweet music and ineffable fragrance among the flowery meadows of heaven. The story, and many of its motifs, are older than Gregory the Great, but it was he who was most responsible for disseminating the tradition throughout the Christian world. One of Gregory's stories, again from the *Dialogues*, is too delightful not to be quoted:

There was a man called Stephen, who died and was taken to hell, where he saw devils and sinners tormented for their sins; but when Stephen was presented to the Judge, the Judge declared to the devils "This is the wrong Stephen: it was Stephen the blacksmith, not this Stephen, that I ordered you to bring before me!" - And at that very instant, Stephen found himself back in his body, alive again; but at the same moment, Stephen the blacksmith, who lived next door, suddenly passed away.<sup>4</sup>

Gregory claims to have heard this story from Stephen himself, but in fact - as the non-Christian image of the judgment taking place in hell indicates - the story has a classical origin, and can be found in Plutarch and Lucian as well as in Saint Augustine.

The development of the tradition of the Other World Journey - from Gregory the Great, through Bede and Celtic versions like the *Fis Adamnain*, to the most elaborate and sadistic forms of the High Middle Ages, Tindale, Turchill, Alberic, Orm and the monk of Eynsham, and ultimately to the literary creation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* - is of course well beyond the scope of this modest paper. I would like merely to make the rather obvious point that all these visions encourage the reader to think of the dead as continuing their existence in apparently physical bodies in an apparently physical world; and while certain theologians<sup>5</sup> doubted whether these visions could be taken literally, it is clear that for the majority of med-



iavel men, the next world was conceived as a mode of existence barely different from this life. All these visions place the Other World within the confines of the physical universe: thus heaven is somewhere above the earth, purgatory somewhere just below the surface of the earth, and hell deep in the bowels of the earth. This belief was held even by educated and articulate men: Caesarius of Heisterbach, a thirteenth century Cistercian who wrote a *Dialogue of Miracles* modelled in part on the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, is asked "Ubi est purgatorium?" (Where is purgatory?) and replies, without batting an eyelid, "Quantum ex variis colligitur visionibus, in diversis locis huius mundi." (As far as can be gathered from the various visions, in different places in this world.) He goes on to enumerate some of the places: Saint Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, Mount Etna, Mount Geber, and various volcanoes, like the one into which Theodoric was thrown in my first story. If the educated classes held such primitive ideas, we can only speculate on the beliefs of the illiterate peasantry.

Like the visions of the departing ghost, the visions of the ghost within the Other World may be concerned with heaven, purgatory, or hell; but it is perhaps a reflection of an inherent imbalance in mediaeval Christianity that it is the accounts of purgatory and of hell that are the most frequent, the most detailed, and the most memorable; the *Inferno*, for example, has always been the most popular book of Dante's trilogy. Somehow the elaborate torments of hell, in which the punishment is exquisitely made to fit the crime, stir the imagination rather more than the flowery meadows and rarefied delights of heaven; but there was also a feeling that heaven, of its very nature, beggared all description, and a number of theologians taught that while accounts of hell could be taken literally, all descriptions of heaven - even those in Scripture - could only be taken metaphorically.<sup>6</sup> This emphasis on hell and purgatory rather than on heaven is most lyrically evoked in the vision of one fourteenth century monk, who reported:

I saw souls descending into hell like a raging blizzard; I saw souls going into purgatory like a fine, fine shower; but I only saw three souls

entering heaven.<sup>7</sup>

Most of these visions of ghosts in the Other World are too long and too repetitive to be worth quoting in detail; but I would like to refer specifically to two visions, to illustrate particular points of interest - firstly about the nature of the ghost itself, and secondly about the way in which these stories might be used as aids to preaching.

Saint Barontus was an eighth-century French monk who one day collapsed after mattins and lay in a death-like trance for several days, during which time he was given a guided tour of heaven, hell, and purgatory. His vision is interesting not so much for the details of what he saw (which are pretty conventional), as for his quite unconventional explanation of the mechanics of the out-of-body experience: Barontus relates that while he was lying in his trance, two devils appeared, to take him to hell; but the archangel Raphael also arrived, to rescue him; there ensued a long altercation between Raphael and the devils, each side laying claim to possession of Barontus' soul. Eventually, after a whole day's wrangling, they reached a compromise, and agreed to take the matter to divine arbitration: they will leave his *spirit* in his body, and take his *soul* to the judgment-seat of God. This distinction between the soul and the spirit is most unusual, and even in the eighth century might well have been regarded as heretical.<sup>8</sup> Anyway, this is how Barontus describes his soul being removed from his body:

The archangel Raphael stretched forth his finger and touched my throat, and immediately I felt my poor soul being wrenched out of my body. I will tell you what it looked like: it seemed about as small as a newly-hatched chick when it emerges from the shell, but tiny as it is, it still has head and eyes and all other members, and carries with it all the five senses - sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch; but it cannot speak until it arrives at the judgment, where it receives a new body, made of air, identical to the one it left behind.<sup>9</sup>

So detailed an explanation of the process of leaving the body is very rare, and Barontus' account of his

separable spirit, his homunculus-soul, and his ghostly body made of air, have few parallels in comparable Christian literature.

As a final example of ghosts seen within the confines of the Other World, I would like to quote a text to illustrate how these tales might be used as aids to preaching. The story is from a thirteenth century *Liber Exemplorum* or preacher's manual, compiled by a Franciscan preacher in Ireland; this book, incomplete as the only surviving manuscript is, contains over two hundred stories, most of them miraculous, and many of them encompassing, in the broadest sense, the activities of ghosts. The stories are conveniently arranged alphabetically, under the various themes on which the preacher might be called to preach: thus 'accidy', 'advocates', 'avarice', 'baptism', 'charity' 'clerks', 'evil', and 'cogitations, carnal'. This story comes under 'gluttony', and is taken from Bede, but the story itself is by no means as interesting as advice which the compiler of the manual gives to accompany it:

This exemplum is found in Bede's Ecclesiastical History, and goes like this: I knew a certain monk who was in an excellent monastery, but who lived a most disgraceful life: he was often taken to task by the senior monks, but he never took any notice; nevertheless they used to put up with him on account of his job, for he was a skilled craftsman. But he was much addicted to drink and to other vices, and he was much happier lazing about in his workshop night and day instead of going to chapel with the other monks to say the offices. One day he fell ill, and summoning the brethren to his bedside, told them, with tears in his eyes and the look of a condemned man, how he had seen hell open, and seen Satan wallowing in the depths of the Underworld, and Caiaphas too, and the Jews who crucified Our Lord. "In the midst of these," he said, "I saw a place prepared for me." When the monks heard this, they urged him to repent of his sins; but he replied: "There is no time for repentance now, the judgment is already passed against me". And so he died, without even receiving the last

sacraments. Here ends the exemplum. As you see, the story concerns a monk who was a slave of the above-mentioned vices, but it is hardly a good idea to tell such stories about monks to the laity; so if you are preaching to a lay congregation, it is advisable to refer to him merely as a certain drinker - for such indeed he was - and to refer to the other monks merely as men - for such indeed they were; so the whole story can be told without mentioning monks, but the truth of the story will in no way be compromised. If on the other hand you are preaching to monks, then you can tell the story as it stands.<sup>10</sup>

The passage is a rather amusing comment on one aspect of mediaeval preaching; but whether he was addressing the religious or the laity, the preacher's message was the same, a simple message for simple hearts: repent and lead a right life, for the pains of hell are real and horrible.

And so to our final category.

#### The Returning Ghost

As we have seen from the stories I have told so far, communications between the living and the dead seem to have been fairly easy throughout the Middle Ages; and just as the departing ghost, and the ghost within the Other World, may be associated with heaven, purgatory, or hell, so the returning ghost may appear from any of the three places. Having defined the word 'ghost' as 'any supernatural apparition of the dead', I now find myself obliged to say that the largest single class of mediaeval ghost-story is the tale of the spirit which returns from heaven to earth to give miraculous help in an hour of need, in fact, the saint who answers the prayers of the faithful by a direct and personal intervention - like Saint George appearing at the siege of Antioch during the First Crusade and spurring on the Christian forces to victory over the Saracens. Of course, this kind of story is not what we usually understand by a 'ghost-story', but as I have said, the Middle Ages did not share our concept of the 'ghost'. The story of the saint intervening in human affairs is so well known as a genre that I hardly need quote further instances; I mention this

kind of story merely to emphasise one important point: that the idea of a spirit returning from the Other World did not necessarily mean to the men of the Middle Ages, as it does for us, something sinister, malevolent, or frightening, but could equally well mean something holy, joyful and benevolent. We shall bear this in mind as we glance at some other stories of returning ghosts.

There are quite a number of accounts of people actually arranging before their death that they would return from the dead, to bring news of the Other World. Thus the Irish Franciscan preachers' manual from which I quoted the story of the bibulous monk also tells a story, under the heading 'Joys of Heaven', of how two monks made a pact with each other, according to which whoever should die first was to return from the dead, if God should permit, and tell the other what had happened to him beyond the grave. One of the monks duly died, and six months later appeared to his surviving brother in a blaze of light, and informed him that the joys of heaven were greater than men had ever dreamed of.<sup>11</sup>

About the same time as the preachers' manual was being compiled in Ireland, another Franciscan, Fra Salimbene, in Italy, was including similar stories in his diary-cum-chronicle of contemporary life. I cannot resist telling one of his delightful, if grisly, cameos of the mediaeval world:

Brother Leo, one of our order, heard the last confession of the governor of the Milan hospital, a man of good name who had a reputation for holiness. When he was at the point of death, Brother Leo made him promise that after his death he would return to him, with news of what became of him in the Other World; and the governor of the hospital willingly promised to do this. That evening the word went round the town that he had died; so Brother Leo asked two of his most trusted companions to sit up and watch with him that night, in the gardener's cell in the corner of the monastery garden. As they watched together that night, Leo dozed off to sleep, telling his companions to wake him if they heard or saw anything. Then, all

of a sudden, they heard something coming, with wild screams of anguish, and they saw what looked like a ball of fire falling out of the sky onto the roof of the cell, like a hawk swooping on its prey. The noise and the shock started Leo from sleep: the voice wailed out "Alas, alas." "What has become of you?" asked Leo. The voice replied that he was damned, because when foundling children were abandoned at the hospital, he used to let them die without baptism, in order to save the hospital from the expense of keeping them. When Brother Leo asked him why he had never confessed the sin, the voice replied that he had forgotten about it, or didn't think it worth confessing. So brother Leo said: "Then you have nothing to do with us: depart from us and go your way."<sup>12</sup>

The story is beautifully told, and gains something of its dramatic force from being in a way a parody of the more familiar form of the story - like the one I quoted from the preachers' manual - in which the ghost returns with news of the joys of heaven: Salimbene deliberately leads his readers to expect that the respected public figure would likewise return with news of heaven, and then gives us an unpleasant shock when the truth is revealed. The story also illustrates, incidentally, that the ghost did not always appear in human form, but sometimes, as here, as a ball of fire: the motif is an international one - Japanese ghosts occasionally appear as globes of light, and West Indian witch-doctors transform themselves into fireballs.

Ghosts whose return is pre-arranged are of course in a minority; if we leave aside saints who appear from heaven, we find that the majority of mediaeval ghosts appear from purgatory, and return to earth with a very specific purpose: to escape from purgatory into heaven as quickly as possible. The transition from purgatory to heaven is usually effected by the normal sacramental means: thus ghosts return to earth to request a certain number of masses for the repose of their souls; excommunicate ghosts return to ask for their excommunications to be revoked; unshriven ghosts were even known to return

from purgatory to buy indulgences for themselves. Ghost-stories like these remained popular with the church from the time of Gregory the Great until the Reformation, for such stories offered a 'living' proof of the validity of the church's sacraments and the truth of the church's teaching.

Rather less frequently, ghosts return to make direct amends for the crimes they have committed in this life, and stories like these can reflect quite closely the social concerns of the day: thus many stock characters - the licentious priest, the oppressive lord, the dishonest tradesman - can all appear as repentant revenants. One particular social injustice of the Middle Ages was the enclosure of land for hunting reserves - with no pity or compensation for the evicted tenants. A story originally told by Thomas Walsingham in his *Historia Anglicana* (s.a. 1342) illustrates the point well:

In this same year died Harry Burwake (Burghersh), Bishop of Lincoln. And when he was dead, he appeared unto one of his squires, with a bow, arrows, and horn, in a short green coat, and said unto him: "Thou knowest well when I made this park I took many poor men's lands, and closed them in; therefore go I here, and keep this park with full muckle pain. I pray thee, go to my brethren canons of Lincoln, and pray them that they restore the poor men to their land, break down the hedges, make plain the dykes, and then shall I have rest." Then by the common assent of the chapter of Lincoln, they sent a canon, clept William Bachelor, and he fulfilled all this restoring.<sup>13</sup>

The bow, arrows, and horn, and the short green coat, are of course the uniform of a huntsman or gamekeeper; but they also suggest the garb of the fairies: is it conceivable that the bishop was bidding his time with the fairy-folk, the fallen angels who were not wicked enough to fall all the way to hell? Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the story is the fact that the canons actually did restore the land to the poor men, simply on the strength of this apparition: we see here a sociological dimension to the ghost-story - the supernatural as a means by which the oppressed

could assert their interests.

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So we have looked at three kinds of mediaeval ghost-story: the departing ghost, the ghost in the Other World, and the returning ghost. We have seen that the mediaeval church not only tolerated a belief in ghosts, but was active in disseminating the belief, and the ghost-story had an important role in the church's system of instruction - especially instruction of the populace, whose attention could more easily be caught by a good ghost-story than by a fine distinction from Thomas Aquinas. The mediaeval world accepted ghosts within its wide embrace, for the mediaeval church conceived itself as a great triangle of inter-dependent groups: the church militant, the church suffering, and the church triumphant. The church on earth supplied the membership of the church in purgatory and in heaven, and relied on the help and intercession of the latter, while the souls in purgatory looked to the church on earth for prayers and masses to expedite their promotion to heaven, whence they in turn would offer assistance to the church on earth. The ghost-stories we have been discussing can all be seen as embodying in concrete images this mystical communion between the church in this world and the church in the next world. Thus the mediaeval ghost fits into and confirms the mediaeval world-view; and while the mediaeval ghosts are often unpleasant, they are not usually terrifying in the same sense as their modern counterparts: they are a part of the world-order, and they obey the rules - they can be released from torment by prayers and masses, they can be held at bay by the sign of the cross or by a handful of holy relics.

When the Reformation came to northern Europe, the picture changed drastically: the church formally severed diplomatic relations with the Other World, ceasing to invoke the aid of the saints in heaven, and ceasing to recognise its responsibility towards the souls of the dead in purgatory. The church triumphant and the church suffering effectively ceased to exist, and the church militant was left starkly alone, between God and the Devil. The church



also ceased officially to believe in ghosts, and ascribed all such apparitions to the malevolent wiles of the Devil. This did not mean that ghosts ceased to appear, but merely that the church abdicated its authority over them, and renounced the sacramental means of laying or exorcising the ghost.

It was perhaps this change in the church's position which fostered our modern concept of the 'ghost' - a word which has come to mean not the diversity of mediaeval apparitions which we have been discussing, but rather one specific type of apparition - the sinister revenant, an unknown outsider who represents a vague threat to our world-view, who is laid by no prayers or ceremonies.

A word inextricably linked with our modern concept of the ghost is the verb 'to haunt'; there is no mediaeval word which means the same as the modern English 'haunt', and indeed, the concept is strikingly absent from our mediaeval ghost-stories: the mediaeval ghosts almost invariably appear for a specific purpose, and having achieved their end, go, or are sent, away - they do not hang about for centuries, rattling chains and worrying the visitors. An interesting corollary of this is that, unlike modern ghost-stories, mediaeval ghost-stories are rarely associated with particular places: the idea of mediaeval castles and houses having their own resident ghosts belongs to the Gothic Novel rather than to mediaeval literature itself.

We may perhaps sum up the history of the ghost-story in the history of the English word 'ghost': the Middle English 'ghost' means simply 'spirit', and can refer to one's own soul, to God himself, or to a spirit returning from beyond the grave; the multiple use of the word itself indicates the solidarity of the spiritual world, it places the 'ghost' in the context of an integrated natural and supernatural order. The modern English 'ghost', on the other hand, as taken on more specific connotations, to mean the apparition of a dead person, almost invariably sinister and frightening; this restricted use of the term embodies the isolation of the modern 'ghost' from the rest of the modern world-order.

The substance of this paper can thus be formulated

in the words of my title: the characteristic of the mediaeval ghost-story, as of the mediaeval ghost itself, is that it does indeed have an integral role in mediaeval Christianity - a role which, for good or ill, was to be taken away from it at the Reformation.

## 10. GREEK AND ROMAN GHOSTS

W.M.S. Russell

I SHALL BEGIN this survey of Greek and Roman ghosts with a legend about a hero of the Olympic Games, the champion boxer Euthymus. He only lost one fight in his life, and he was so popular that on that occasion the outraged judges made the winner pay him an indemnity. But none of his Olympic contests was as spectacular as the one he fought at the town of Temesa, according to the famous guidebook of Pausanias, written some time in the 2nd century A.D., about six centuries later.<sup>1</sup> Here is the story as Pausanias tells it:<sup>2</sup>

It was on his return to Italy [from the Olympic Games] that Euthymus fought the ghost. The story about this ghost is as follows. They say Odysseus, in his wanderings after the taking of Troy, was carried by the winds to a number of towns in Italy and Sicily, including the town of Temesa, where he arrived one day with his ships. At Temesa one of his sailors got drunk and raped a virgin, and for this crime he was stoned to death by the locals. Now Odysseus sailed away, quite unconcerned about the incident. But the ghost of the stoned man never left off killing the people of Temesa, both young and old, until they were ready to emigrate altogether from Italy to escape him. At this point the priestess of Apollo at Delphi forbade them to leave Temesa, and told them to propitiate this ghost. They were to mark off a sanctuary for him and build him a temple, and every year they must give him as wife the most beautiful virgin in Temesa. They carried out the god's orders, and had no more alarms from the ghost.

But Euthymus arrived at Temesa just at the time when the ghost was due for his usual offering. The boxer learned what was going on, and felt an urge to go into the temple and have a look at the girl who was being offered. When he saw her, he first felt pity

and then fell in love with her. The girl swore to marry him if he rescued her, and Euthymus equipped himself and awaited the coming of the ghost. He won the fight, and the ghost was driven from the land and disappeared in the sea. Euthymus had a splendid wedding, and the inhabitants were free of the ghost from that time on. ... Temesa is still inhabited in my time, as I heard from a man who went there on a trading voyage. Besides this, I have come across a copy of an old picture, which showed ... a temple and the town of Temesa, and between them the ghost that Euthymus drove out. This ghost was horribly black in colour, and altogether frightful-looking, with a wolf-skin thrown round him by way of costume. The labelling on the picture gave his name as Lycas.

Now ghost stories, like other expressions of folklore, lie along a spectrum extending between fact and fiction. At one end is the genuine haunting, in the sense that some known person reports having experienced an apparition. At the other end is the transparent fiction of a fairytale. There are many intermediate conditions. Theo Brown, for instance, in her study of ghost stories in the West of England, has shown that a 'genuine haunt' may have 'quickly gathered around it a very large number of familiar motifs' of fairytale or legend.<sup>3</sup> The story of Euthymus and the ghost is obviously nearer the fictional end of the spectrum, but it has some factual background. There are several versions of this story; the ghost's name is usually given as Polites, and sometimes instead of rescuing a girl Euthymus saves the Temesans from a crippling tax imposed by the ghost.<sup>4</sup> Euthymus himself is a composite figure of history and legend. Greek names usually had a verbal meaning, and *Euthymus* can be roughly translated, in Bunyanesque fashion, as *Mr. Good-Cheer*, a suspiciously apt name for a hero who was ready to wait up for a dangerous ghost. The boxer, who came from Locri in southern Italy, was also said to be the son of a river-god, and eventually to have disappeared in some mysterious way without dying.<sup>5</sup> According to Pliny the Elder, statues of him at Locri and Olympia were

struck by lightning on the same day, and he had sacrifices offered to him in his life-time, at the command of an oracle.<sup>6</sup> Yet this obviously popular sportsman, who won the prize for boxing at Olympia in 484, 476 and 472 B.C., is dated to a relatively well-documented period of Greek history.<sup>7</sup> The inscription for his Olympic statue has actually been found.<sup>8</sup> He was clearly one of those historical personalities who act as a magnet for scraps of legend.

Even the Temesian story has a basis in fact. The actual temple of the ghost was still to be seen there, shaded by wild olives, in the time of Strabo at the beginning of the Christian Era.<sup>9</sup> It is perfectly possible the spot really was haunted at some time. On the other hand, the story told by Pausanias has many traditional elements, familiar from folktales and heroic literature. Euthymus waiting up for the ghost is reminiscent of Grettir waiting up for the ghost of Glam in the Icelandic saga, or Beowulf waiting up for the monster Grendel in the Anglo-Saxon epic.<sup>10</sup> Like Glam, the Greek ghost was physically dangerous, and like Grendel he was driven into the water. For that matter, some of Theo Brown's West-Country folk ghosts were disposed of by being driven into a pool or thrown into the sea.<sup>11</sup> As for the rescue of the girl, this is obviously related to folktale types in which girls are saved from dragons, such as *The Dragon Slayer* and *The Two Brothers* (Types 300 and 303).<sup>12</sup> As Edwin Sidney Hartland observed long ago in his book *The Legend of Perseus*,<sup>13</sup> these tales of girls exposed to monsters are relics of human sacrifice; and in the story of Euthymus, we clearly have to do with human sacrifice at the tomb of a dead warrior, like the legendary ones at the tombs of Patroclus and Achilles, described by Homer and Euripides, respectively, the victim in the latter case being a girl.<sup>14</sup> Human skeletons were found in the approach passage of a tomb at Salamis in Cyprus, dated to the 7th century B.C.; they are believed to be the remains of such sacrificial victims.<sup>15</sup>

But I should now like to pick up one small detail. In the picture seen by Pausanias, the ghost was coloured *black*. This is not an isolated oddity. Lucian, as we shall see, tells ghost stories to

ridicule them, but no doubt he faithfully reflects the folk beliefs he thought ridiculous, and he twice refers to ghosts as black, and never as any other colour.<sup>16</sup> When the cruel Emperor Domitian wanted to terrorize his more important subjects, he used to invite them to dinner in a room decorated in black, and entertain them with dances by slave-boys painted black like ghosts.<sup>17</sup> When the philosopher Democritus took to working in a cemetery, either for peace and quiet or possibly for the purpose of psychical research, some naughty teenagers tried to scare him by dressing in black to look like ghosts and dancing round him; he only told them to stop being childish.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to this, when Richard and Eva Blum were collecting folklore in rural Greece in 1962, one man told them how he and his friends dressed up as ghosts to scare a traveller from another village; *they* dressed up in *white* sheets.<sup>19</sup> So modern Europeans, including Greeks, see white ghosts, whereas ancient Greeks and Romans saw black ghosts. Why is this?

Now in 1897 Grant Allen pointed out that the way people think of the dead depends on the way they dispose of them.<sup>20</sup> If we apply this principle, the reason for the black and white ghosts becomes obvious. Whether modern Europeans bury their dead or cremate them in a closed furnace, when last seen the dead are pale and bloodless. But the ancient Greeks and Romans sometimes burned their dead on pyres in the open air; so they last saw them as charred, blackened remains, unless indeed they supposed them to come off the pyre in the smoke. Lucian does describe one ghost as black and smoky;<sup>21</sup> and the dead are often reported in Greek and Latin literature as being insubstantial, like smoke.

It is true that most ordinary people were buried without being burned throughout Greek and Roman history, but the more prestigious and conspicuous funerals may well have dictated the general view of ghosts.<sup>22</sup> In most states of Greece for a long time after the 8th century B.C., according to the Blums, 'burial was reserved only for unimportant or polluted individuals, women, suicides, slaves and children; while male aristocrats ... were cremated'.<sup>23</sup> In Rome, cremation was used for some, though not all,

nobles, and for sporting celebrities.<sup>24</sup> It was sufficiently common to necessitate careful regulation as a precaution against fire.<sup>25</sup> Under the early Emperors, cremation grew more and more expensive, as more and more incense was used to mask the odour of burning bodies. When a top charioteer was cremated, a despairing fan flung himself on to the pyre; but supporters of the rival chariot team claimed he had merely fainted from the fumes of incense and fallen into the fire.<sup>26</sup> Frankincense, the most important incense base, was so costly that workers at the incense-refining factories in Alexandria in Egypt were stripped and searched at the end of every shift.<sup>27</sup> In A.D. 65 the Empress Poppaea died of a miscarriage brought on when the Emperor Nero kicked her in a fit of temper; at her cremation, a whole year's frankincense production was consumed.<sup>28</sup> Naturally, this sort of consumption could not last, and in the course of the 3rd century A.D. cremation finally went out of fashion, with unfortunate results for the Incense Producing and Exporting Countries, which, as it happened, were in Arabia. But during its thousand-year run, this method of disposal of the dead, even if only practised by some of the upper classes, may well have determined the colour of ghosts.

In ancient cremations, the ashes or charred remains were normally buried, and the dead, whether cremated or buried without burning, were thought of as being *underground*. The only legendary hero to have gone up to Olympus, Heracles, rose straight from his pyre, but this was so exceptional as to prove the rule. Feeding tubes were placed in graves, down which liquid offerings could be poured for the dead, and this was done even if there were only ashes there, for burned or not the dead were believed to be there underground.<sup>29</sup> In the words of L. Collison-Morley, in his excellent book on Greek and Roman ghost stories, 'in every Latin town ... a deep trench ... was dug ... and regarded as the particular entrance to the lower world for the town in question'. The trench was opened three times a year to permit offerings to be made to the town dead. They also had a special All Souls' festival in Rome from the 13th to the 21st of February, and a similar festival was held in Greece

in late September.<sup>30</sup>

These ceremonies were held for the respectable dead who were supposed to be at peace. But there were also special festivals for appeasing the restless dead, in February and March at Athens, in May in Rome.<sup>31</sup> These restless dead were those who had died prematurely and/or violently, including executed criminals, and above all those who had not been disposed of with proper rites.<sup>32</sup> These were, of course, as generally with us, the categories of dead who haunted places as ghosts. Natural death and burial, however, did not always suffice to keep the dead in the grave, as we learn from a story pieced together from works by the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus and a man called Phlegon on the staff of the Emperor Hadrian.<sup>33</sup> The story is about Philinnion, the wife of Craterus, one of the marshals of Alexander the Great. She came back from the grave six months after her death, and spent several nights with her lover Machates. Eventually an old nurse saw her and told her parents, who next day asked Machates about it; he showed them a ring Philinnion had given him. The following night the parents came to Machates's house and greeted their daughter, who promptly dropped dead for the second time. Her grave in the family vault was found to be empty except for two presents from Machates. On the advice of a skilled diviner, the body was reburied outside the city limits, and various sacrifices were made. Poor Machates was so upset he committed suicide.

Now Richard and Eva Blum, in their fieldwork in rural Greece in 1962, gathered a number of stories of such solid ghosts or *revenants*, some of whom were able to mate with living people and even have children; these ghosts are called *vrikolakes*, and are often finally disposed of by burning.<sup>34</sup> The Blums, in their interesting discussion of continuity between ancient and modern Greece, see this as a survival of cremation as a form of disposal to be used in special cases.<sup>35</sup> The *vrikolax* belief may have been influenced by the Slavs, who infiltrated Greece in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D..<sup>36</sup> But the story of Philinnion proves conclusively it is in the main a survival from the ancient Greek and Macedonian



world.

In ancient times, not even cremation was always enough to set the dead at rest. In Lucian's dialogue *Philopseudes* (The Lover of Lies), a widower called Eucrates tells how much he had loved his dead wife Demaenete. Why, he says, he had burned on her pyre all the ornaments and clothes she had enjoyed wearing while she lived. However, a week after her death, her ghost turned up complaining bitterly that she was short of one golden sandal, which he had failed to burn because it had been mislaid under a chest. At this point a pet dog barked, and the ghost vanished. The sandal was found where she had said, and was duly burned. The sceptical Tychiades comments ironically that anyone who doubts such a fine tale deserves to be spanked like a child with a golden sandal.<sup>37</sup> But it is true, as Claire Russell has observed, that a sudden distraction like a dog barking may well break the mood in which a ghost hallucination is possible.<sup>38</sup> And, as she has also observed, 'objects in constant use by a given person are naturally associated with that person in the minds of others', and burying or burning the possessions of the dead will help to sever 'all associations and reminders' of them.<sup>39</sup>

There is an elaboration of this theme in a famous story told by the historian Herodotus about Periander, tyrant of Corinth, and the ghost of his wife Melissa, whom he had himself killed.<sup>40</sup> Periander sent to the Oracle of the Dead on the river Acheron in north-western Greece, where seances were held, to ask his wife's ghost about a deposit a friend had left. She refused to cooperate, remarking bitterly that, owing to his negligence in not burning the clothes he buried with her, she had absolutely nothing to wear. Periander then assembled the ladies of Corinth at a festival, stripped them naked and burned all their clothes. He sent again to the oracle, and this time got his answer, having obviously provided his wife with enough outfits to satisfy even a ghost.

If failure to dispose of the dead properly leads to trouble, going out of one's way to do so might be expected to lead to reward. In his book on precognition, Cicero tells an already famous story of the poet Simonides, who lived from about 557 to about

470 B.C.<sup>41</sup> One day Simonides saw a corpse lying exposed, and buried it properly. Some time later, when he was about to embark on a certain ship, the dead man he had buried appeared to him in a dream, and warned him if he sailed in that ship he would perish in a shipwreck. Simonides stayed ashore, and the ship was lost with everyone aboard.

There is nothing inherently impossible in this story. People in modern times have had precognitive dreams warning against particular ships or aeroplane flights. The dead man would have been a ready association, for drowning at sea meant not only death but death without proper rites, exactly what the dead man would have suffered if the poet had not buried him. But, plausible or not, the story has also been taken as a possible starting-point for the important group of folktale types known collectively as *The Grateful Dead* (Types 505-8).<sup>42</sup>

*The Grateful Dead* was the subject of a fine monograph by G.H. Gerould, first published by the Folklore Society in 1907.<sup>43</sup> Gerould studied over one hundred stories about the Grateful Dead, and showed how the simple theme of the Simonides story entered into various combinations to make complex tales. There are two main forms of these. In one, the hero pays for the burial of a dead man. He is later joined by a companion, who offers to help him in return for half of whatever he gains. With the help of the companion, the hero wins a princess, who has to be disengaged from an enchanter and cured of a condition that makes her fatal to her suitors. The companion asks for half the princess, the hero offers to slice her in two, the companion says it was only a test, reveals himself as the Grateful Dead, and disappears. In one Irish version, he had asked to have the first kiss from the princess, and cured her while taking it. In the other main form of the tale, the hero ransoms a princess from captivity, but cannot marry her without making a voyage first, when a treacherous relative or rival throws him into the sea; the grateful dead saves him from drowning, and enables him to recover and marry the princess.

At this point I should like to quote from my Presidential Address to the Folklore Society in

March 1980.<sup>44</sup>

In all the combinations in which the Grateful Dead appears, the hero manages to bring the princess home after overcoming some obstacle, by ransoming her from slavery, disenchanting her from the clutches of a magician, or curing her of some condition that makes her deadly to suitors. In two cases the people who are trying to keep her from the hero are explicitly relatives of hers, a brother and a cousin, respectively. The whole theme may therefore be related to the problems of transition from matrilineal to patrilineal kinship, and from residence with the bride's family to residence with the husband's family. In the early days of this transition, the duty of burying relatives in the male line may still have been unfamiliar, and the story of the Grateful Dead may have begun as an object-lesson in the benefits to be obtained by doing this duty. In the existing tales, the Grateful Dead is normally represented as a stranger, but in one or two tales he is a friend and in one tale he is a brother.

Now the story of Simonides is not the only tale of the Grateful Dead in ancient Greek or Latin literature. In the words of Collison-Morley, 'some of the characteristics of the tale are to be found in the story of Pelops and Cillas...which Mr. Gerould does not mention'.<sup>45</sup> This is an understatement, for the story of Pelops and Cillas might well be the starting-point of a radically new study of the whole group of tales. The narrative and sources are conveniently available in Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*.<sup>46</sup> Oenomaus, King of Pisa and Elis in Arcadia, had a beautiful daughter, Hippodamia. He challenged suitors to carry her off in a chariot while he pursued in his. If a suitor finished the course before the king could transfix him with his spear, Oenomaus would be killed and the suitor would get princess and kingdom. Twelve princes failed the test, and their heads decorated Oenomaus's palace gates.

Pelops, exiled from Asia Minor, decided to try his

luck. On the way to Pisa, his charioteer Cillas died, and Pelops dreamed the ghost of Cillas asked him for a fine cremation. Pelops duly obliged, and the grateful dead appeared to him and advised him how to win the princess. Pelops in fact did so by bribing Myrtilus, the charioteer of Oenomaus, to sabotage his master's chariot. Pelops offered Myrtilus half the kingdom, and the bridal night with Hippodamia. Oenomaus was thrown out of the sabotaged chariot and died. Myrtilus tried to rape the princess, claiming this as part of the agreement, and Pelops took an opportunity of kicking him into the sea. As Myrtilus sank, he uttered the curse on the house of Pelops that made that family one of the main sources of plots for Athenian tragedy.

This oldest complex Grateful Dead tale clearly supports the idea that we have to do with a change in kinship and marriage customs, which was indeed taking place in the Greece of the legends. In this story we have both reward and punishment. Pelops is rewarded by the Grateful Dead, Cillas, whom he cremates, and cursed by Myrtilus, to whom he had promised half of his winnings, and whom he had drowned and so deprived of both life and the possibility of proper disposal. In one of the later forms of the Grateful Dead tale, the drowning of Myrtilus has been replaced by a danger of the hero drowning; Cillas and Myrtilus have been fused, so that the Grateful Dead bargains for half of everything, in what seems a curiously illogical complication of the simple motive of gratitude. The story of Pelops, on the other hand, has a clear moral doubly reinforced, and it is interesting that it is this theme of the disposal of the dead that introduced one of the greatest of all cycles of legend.

While we are still near the fictional end of our spectrum, I might mention some scraps of ancient Graeco-Roman ghost lore that have a familiar ring. Ancient ghosts, like the ones in *Ruddigore*, enjoyed a kind of ghosts' high noon, revelling at night with the goddess Hecate;<sup>47</sup> but they were liable to vanish at cockcrow.<sup>48</sup> They could be kept at bay by the chinking of bronze or iron,<sup>49</sup> or by the hand-sign against the evil eye, just as is practiced today in

the Mediterranean.<sup>50</sup> They could be brought under control and exorcized by suitable remarks in the Egyptian language.<sup>51</sup> This is interesting, because Theo Brown's West-Country folk ghosts also responded to exotic languages, especially Hebrew.<sup>52</sup>

Folklore, then as now, had its lunatic fringe. Getting on for fifteen-hundred years after the Trojan War, in the increasingly hag-ridden Roman Empire, the ancient heroes still stalked the plain of Troy. In these uncanny surroundings, Philostratus, himself no very reliable author, claimed to have found a vine-dresser who was on cosy conversational terms with the ghost of Protesilaus, one of the Trojan War heroes.<sup>53</sup> The ghost used to straighten him out on the history of those heroic times. This vine-dresser, if he lived today (assuming he ever existed at all), would no doubt have been entertaining little green Venusians from a saucer. Among all the other news, he was naturally told the most charming of Greek legends, which we know from other sources, about the love of Achilles and Helen, and how they were still living and loving on the mysterious White Island in the Black Sea.<sup>54</sup> This union of the greatest of warriors with the fairest of women was picked up by the omniscient James Branch Cabell in his masterpiece, *Jurgen*.

From this fairytale world we may now turn to explore whether any genuine hauntings are likely to have occurred in Greek and Roman times. To begin with, it is worth considering what the Greek and Roman intellectuals thought about ghosts. Then as now, of course, there were the two extreme positions. The pious Plutarch had no doubts about the literal reality of evil spectres. Plato's friend Dion of Syracuse had seen a huge woman sweeping his house, just before his assassination;<sup>55</sup> and Brutus had twice seen a monstrous apparition that claimed to be his evil genius, before and during the battle of Philippi which ended with his suicide;<sup>56</sup> what was good enough for such great men was good enough for Plutarch.<sup>57</sup> The younger Pliny was also a devout believer in the supernatural. True, he knew dreams go by opposites, because just before his first successful court case he had dreamed his mother-in-law begged him not to undertake it, and Pliny was not the kind of man to appreciate mother-in-

-law jokes.<sup>58</sup> But in writing to a friend to ask his opinion about ghosts, he told several stories and clearly showed his belief in the ghosts as such.<sup>59</sup> He was most impressed when two of his servants had visions of apparitions who cut their hair off, and woke in the morning with their hair cut; since accused people let their hair grow shaggy to make the jury feel sorry for them, Pliny supposed he was being told he would escape prosecution during the dangerous last days of the Emperor Domitian, as indeed he did. The idea of a practical joke, or an attempt by his servants to cheer him up, never occurred to him.<sup>60</sup>

On the other side were the extreme sceptics, probably including Pliny the Elder. According to his nephew the younger Pliny, the elder one wrote a history of the German wars at the request of the ghost of Drusus Nero, Tiberius's brother, who appeared to him in a dream and wanted his campaigns properly recorded.<sup>61</sup> But Pliny the Elder himself, in his *Natural History*, is scathing about ghosts, and at another point observes drily that there are cases of people being seen after burial, if he were writing about prodigies and not about nature.<sup>62</sup> And naturally Lucian, the Voltaire of the ancient world, had no time for ghosts, and wrote his *Lover of Lies* dialogue, from which I have already quoted, to make fun of supernatural tales as sheer inventions.<sup>63</sup> In so doing, as he well knew, he was incidentally able to tell a number of excellent stories, including a splendid version of the Sorcerer's Apprentice.<sup>64</sup>

Between the outright sceptics and the simple believers, some of the best Greek and Roman thinkers tried to open up psychical research and make a scientific study of ghosts and related phenomena, as E.R. Dodds has shown in an interesting paper on supernormal phenomena in ancient times.<sup>65</sup> The most elaborate and elegant approach was that of Democritus, who developed Leucippus's idea of atoms into a general theory of physics and physiology. In a tantalizingly brief sentence, Diogenes Laertius says Democritus frequented tombs and other solitary places in an attempt to study experimentally his sense-impressions or mental images; this may well have meant some kind of psychical research.<sup>66</sup> Though

clearly not easily scared by teenagers dressed as ghosts, Democritus took paranormal events such as precognition seriously.<sup>67</sup> Now his theory of vision is based on the idea that all objects give off very thin films of atoms which drift about the world and, when they impinge on the eyes or the mind, create *images*. Until a great deal more was known about physics and physiological optics, this was not at all a silly theory; after all the sense of smell works in just this way. Now it is a bonus of this theory of vision, which must have given Democritus some satisfaction, that it explains virtually all paranormal or supernatural phenomena. Telepathy, for instance, is explained by the idea that the image-films carry marks of the mental activity of living beings from which they are thrown off.<sup>68</sup> The extensive accounts of Democritus's theory in Lucretius's great poem *On the Nature of Things* show clearly that it also explained ghosts; the image-films could continue to drift about even after the sources had decomposed.<sup>69</sup>

We come next to Aristotle. He does not discuss ghosts in any surviving passage, but he discusses precognitive dreams in several of his works.<sup>70</sup> Claire Russell has suggested ghosts are seen or heard when there is a special balance between the sleep and waking mechanisms;<sup>71</sup> so it is interesting that Aristotle thought it possible to have a mixed state of sleep and waking.<sup>72</sup> He rejected Democritus's explanation of telepathy along with his whole theory of vision, and instead explained telepathic dreams as the result of some kind of propagated vibration.<sup>73</sup> W.F. Jackson Knight, in his book on ancient beliefs about life after death, remarks that the Greeks thus introduced both particle and wave theories in the context of the paranormal.<sup>74</sup> No doubt they are the two obvious logical ways to explain effects transmitted from a distance.

The next major work in the field of psychical research was Cicero's dialogue on precognition, in which he lets his brother Quintus put the case in favour and himself gives all the arguments against the possibility of precognition occurring. The Simonides story and one or two other dreams of the dead are discussed, along with interesting passages

about probability, the presence or absence of symbolization in dreams, and the possibility of precognition by knowing all relevant present conditions.<sup>75</sup> Cicero gives his brother the excellent general point that we should not dismiss facts just because we cannot explain them; he instances magnetic attraction, which was well established and totally unexplained at the time.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, we do have one excellent ancient discussion of ghosts themselves, the essay on apparitions of the dead to the living in St. Augustine's book on *The Care of the Dead*.<sup>77</sup> In the view of E.R. Dodds, the saint 'deserves a more honourable place in the history of psychical research than any other thinker between Aristotle and Kant'.<sup>78</sup> The book on the care of the dead was written in about A.D. 421, in response to a letter from Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, who had asked Augustine for his views on the subject of burial.<sup>79</sup> Augustine concluded that it was mere superstition to suppose that burial was of any use to the dead, but that it was a natural expression of the human feeling of the living.<sup>80</sup> In discussing apparitions of the dead, he was ready to accept the facts without taking them at their face value as actual visits by and messages from the dead. To begin with, he regarded appearances of the dead in dreams and in waking life as essentially similar phenomena.<sup>81</sup> He then proceeded to show that it was not really the dead who appeared, but only their *images*. For people could have veridical dreams either about the dead or about the living, and in the latter case the person dreamed of might be either awake or asleep at the time and in any case knew nothing about it. To show the similarity between dreams of the living and the dead, he related two dreams known to him.<sup>82</sup> A certain citizen of Milan was approached with an I.O.U. for a large sum by one of his deceased father's creditors, though in fact the debt had been paid. He was greatly upset, but then he dreamed his father showed him where to find the receipt for the debt payment. He found it, showed it to the creditor, and got his I.O.U. back. Now, says Augustine, you might think the father had come to give his son the information he so badly



needed.

However, he then told a second dream. Eulogius was a teacher of rhetoric at Carthage who had studied under Augustine. One evening, when Augustine was in Milan, Eulogius in Carthage was preparing a lecture on the rhetorical works of Cicero, when he came on a passage he could not understand. When he finally got to sleep, Augustine appeared in a dream and explained the passage. 'It was not me, certainly', writes Augustine, 'but, unknown to me, my image, while I was far away across the sea doing or dreaming something else, and quite unconcerned with his problems'. It follows, he concludes, that the dead man in Milan knew nothing about his son, and that what his son saw was only his image. As to where the information came from, Augustine had an open mind. As he wrote in another book, in which he compared visions and dreams and discussed their physiological and pathological background:

If anyone can track down and definitely understand the causes and mechanisms of these visions and predictions, I would rather listen to him than be expected to hold forth on the subject myself. I make no secret of my views, hoping that the learned will not regard me as dogmatizing or the unlearned as teaching them, but that both will look on me as somebody discussing and exploring rather than knowing already'.<sup>83</sup>

We can turn now to some possibly true stories about ghosts and related matters. As Claire Russell has discussed, shared dreams may be quite relevant to the phenomenon of a ghost seen by several people, and she has given examples of members of the same family having the same or complementary dreams.<sup>84</sup> There are excellent examples from the ancient world. From the great medical centre of Epidaurus, there are two inscribed marble slabs listing forty-three case histories recorded between about 500 and 300 B.C. Among these is the case of a Spartan woman called Arata who suffered from dropsy. Her mother left her at home and came to Epidaurus to beg the god to cure her daughter. She slept at the temple and dreamed the god cut off her daughter's head, drained her, and put the head on again. On her return she found her

daughter better: she had had exactly the same dream.<sup>85</sup> A document from the 2nd century A.D. records a similar case in Egypt, where the healing god Imouthes appeared to a patient in a dream and to the patient's mother in a waking vision.<sup>86</sup>

In most cases, as Cicero pointed out, ancient stories of paranormal events are much less circumstantial than this, and go back through many hands or mouths to an unknown original source.<sup>87</sup> Still, the surviving stories give an idea of what sorts of accounts were current, and they do often seem similar to genuine cases in modern times.

Telepathic dreams of the living in grave danger, and veridical dreams of the dead at or near the moment of death, are both extremely common in the records of modern psychical research. Both are represented in ancient accounts. As an example of the first kind of event, a lady philosopher called Sosipatra is said to have broken off one of her lectures to give a circumstantial and correct account of an accident happening to a relative of hers somewhere else, which she was witnessing in a vision; as E.R. Dodds observes, 'it is a pity that this incident rests solely on the authority of Eunapius, a notorious amateur of the miraculous'.<sup>88</sup> We have much better authority for a story of the second kind, in the person of the great Roman scholar M. Terentius Varro, quoted about a century later by Pliny the Elder.<sup>89</sup> The husband of Varro's mother's sister, called Corfidius, went into a coma during which he saw his brother, who had just died, and learned from him the hiding-place of some gold. Both kinds of story are combined in a famous tale found in various versions in Aelian, Cicero, Suidas and Valerius Maximus.<sup>90</sup> It may well have begun as a genuine occurrence, but it was already a well-known and often-repeated traditional tale by Cicero's day. He tells the story, in the person of his brother, as follows:<sup>91</sup>

Two Arcadian friends were travelling together, and when they came to Megara one of them stayed at an inn, the other at a friend's house. When all was quiet after supper, in the time of first sleep, the one who was staying with a

friend dreamed his travelling companion begged him for help, as the innkeeper was planning to kill him. Terrified at first by this dream he awoke; but then, collecting his thoughts, he decided it was of no importance, and went back to bed. When he was asleep again, he dreamed his companion asked him, since he had not helped him when living, at least to avenge his death. He said the innkeeper had thrown his corpse into a cart and piled manure on top, and begged the sleeper to be at the city gate early in the morning, before the cart could leave the city. The man who had the dreams was really upset by this second one. Early in the morning he was at the city gate in time to meet the cart-driver, and asked him what he had in the cart. The driver panicked and fled, the corpse was found, the case was investigated, and the innkeeper was punished.

Besides such personal apparitions, there are a number of stories of haunted houses, some more circumstantial than others. According to Plutarch, the temple of the Lady of the Bronze House at Sparta, where the general Pausanias had committed suicide, had to be exorcized by experts from Thessaly.<sup>92</sup> In Plutarch's own home town of Chaeronea, a bandit had been murdered in the steam-bath early in the 1st century B.C. The place was badly haunted and the door had to be walled up, but even after that right down to Plutarch's time, well over a century later, the neighbours, he writes, 'think it a scene of disturbing sights and sounds'.<sup>93</sup> When the Emperor Gaius was murdered, his body was part-burned and barely covered with turf in a park; later his sisters burned it properly and buried the ashes; until they did so, there were apparitions in the park. The house where the murder took place was haunted every night until it was destroyed in a fire.<sup>94</sup> The most famous ancient ghost story of all is told in Pliny the Younger's letter about ghosts, which I mentioned earlier;<sup>95</sup> generations of schoolchildren have had to translate it. A house in Athens was haunted at night by the clanking of fetters and an apparition of a

lean old man with long hair and beard, rattling his chains. The house naturally ended up without occupants, but the owners, hoping for an ignorant tenant or purchaser, kept it on the market for sale or rent. The philosopher Athenodorus, suspicious at the low price, wormed out the whole story, but it did not deter him from renting the place. That night he concentrated hard on writing, ignoring the sound of chains, until the ghost appeared in his room, beckoning to him. Athenodorus signed to the ghost to wait, and went on writing; but the ghost rattled its chains over his head and beckoned again. Athenodorus took up his lamp and followed it into the courtyard, where it vanished. He marked the spot, and next day had it excavated: bones and chains were dug up there, the bones were collected and buried at public expense, and the haunting was at an end.

This story has a traditional air. The two known philosophers called Athenodorus both lived well over a century before Pliny. A somewhat different version of the same story, set in Corinth, was told later by Lucian, no doubt as a parody.<sup>96</sup> The most interesting detail, however, is the lowered price, which does show vividly that haunted houses must have been an economic reality in the ancient world, as they are in ours.

Though some of these stories refer vaguely to terrifying events, only sights and sounds are ever specified. E.R. Dodds reports he has 'never come across a recognizable pre-Christian tale of a poltergeist, as distinct from the traditional "haunt"'.<sup>97</sup> However, there is one story in Lucian which, however fictitious, does, I believe, show that the poltergeist phenomenon was known. In the dialogue I have so often mentioned, the physician Antigonus tells of his little bronze figurine of the great medical scientist Hippocrates, by this time regarded as a divinity. 'As soon as the light is out', he says, 'the figurine goes all round the house making noises, emptying the pots, mixing up the medicines and upsetting the mortar, especially when we're late with our annual sacrifice to him'.<sup>98</sup>

Occult practices, such as trying to raise the dead for purposes of consultation, were much in evidence

in ancient times, especially in that age of decadent paganism, from the 3rd century A.D. onwards, so brilliantly portrayed by Jacob Burckhardt in *The Age of Constantine*.<sup>99</sup> Like Saul's interview with the witch of Endor, such seances were liable to turn out unpleasantly for the enquirer. The Emperor Caracalla had murdered his brother Geta, with the famous epigram, referring to the deification of Emperors after death, *Geta sit divus dum non sit vivus* - 'let him be a god, so long as he's not alive'.<sup>100</sup> After a lot of unpleasant haunting, he is said to have tried to call up the ghost of his father, Septimius Severus, along with that of an earlier bad Emperor, Commodus. Septimius Severus had died at York, so in a conference on ghosts held at York I may perhaps introduce him by courtesy as a York ghost. The seance was not a success. Besides Severus and Commodus, who had nothing agreeable to report, the murdered Geta appeared uninvited, and the general effect was rather like Clarence's reception in the underworld in his famous dream in *Richard III*.<sup>101</sup> Not long after, Caracalla was himself assassinated.

But the most interesting occult episode was one involving the use of a sort of ouija board, reported by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>102</sup> In the year A.D. 371, a number of courtiers, with phenomenal foolishness, consulted their home-made ouija board and asked it who would succeed the reigning Eastern Emperor Valens. They had a metal disc with letters of the Greek alphabet round the rim, and swung a ring on a linen thread to pick out one letter after another. It is not stated whether they thought a ghost or a demon was using the ring to communicate, but another man was accused the following year of trying to ask ghosts seditious questions.<sup>103</sup> When asked for Valens's successor, the ring had just spelt out THEO, when someone supplied the letter D and said it was obviously Theodorus, a senior civil servant widely tipped as the next Emperor. All agreed it must be him, and they did not bother to swing the ring any more. The story inevitably leaked out, and all the participants in the seance, along with Theodorus and many other people, were tortured and executed in a ferocious witch-hunt. But now comes

the interesting point. Whether it was a coincidence, or whether there was real precognition sabotaged by wishful thinking and preconceived ideas, the fact remains that, when Valens was killed by the Goths at the battle of Adrianople in A.D. 378, he was succeeded, not of course by *Theodorus*, who had been executed, but by the young general who became known as *Theodosius the Great*.

Finally, we can get a good impression of the familiarity of the public with ghosts from their popularity in the theatre. Stage ghosts were commonplace in both the Greek and Roman theatres. There was a special slot for them to emerge from, where the curtain was also probably stowed, for it was lowered out of sight instead of being raised. A very famous scene in the Roman theatre was the opening of Pacuvius's tragedy *Iliona*, in which the ghost of Iliona's murdered son Deiphilus rouses his sleeping mother with the words: 'Mother, I'm calling you'. On one unfortunate occasion the actor playing Iliona had had a drop too much to drink and really was asleep.<sup>104</sup> The ghost wailed softly: 'Mother, I'm calling you'. Nothing happened. He tried a bit louder: '*Mother, I'm calling you*'. Still nothing happened. The sleeper was only finally woken up when the entire audience joined the ghost in yelling: 'MOTHER, I'M CALLING YOU'.

There were several later Greek comedies actually called *The Ghost*, including one by the popular comedian Philemon, who died in 262 B.C.. It was probably Philemon's play that Plautus adapted in a Latin comedy about three-quarters of a century later in Rome. He called it *Mostellaria*, which means *The Little Spook*, but it is often translated as *The Haunted House*.<sup>105</sup> The hero is the resourceful slave Tranio, one of the finest specimens in the great comic tradition of clever servants that includes Figaro, Sam Weller, Barrie's Admirable Crichton, and of course Jeeves. Shakespeare knew the *Mostellaria*, and since Tranio sounds suitably Italian he was able to use the name when he created the equally resourceful Tranio of *The Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>106</sup> The Tranio of the *Mostellaria*, left in charge of his master's son, has been helping the son to spend the family

fortune as quickly as possible, by buying the freedom of a slave girl he fancies and giving wild parties for his friends. When the father comes back unexpectedly, there is a spectacular party going on in the house. Tranio keeps the father away by telling him the house is haunted by a man murdered for his money and secretly stowed away by the previous occupant. Needless to say, the plot thickens, and Tranio has to think up more and more tricks till he is only saved from disaster at the end when one of the party guests intercedes for him. The scene in which he fends his master off from the door of the house, eventually terrifying him into headlong flight, could have been written yesterday. Plautus's vitality is well shown in the success of the musical *A Funny Thing Happened to Me on the Way to the Forum*, based closely on his plays. There was even a brief use of the haunted house trick, giving Robertson Hare an opportunity to utter his inimitable 'Oh calamity!' yet again on the London stage. In such matters we are not far removed from Greek and Roman times, in spite of the mediaeval detours shown by Richard Bowyer (see p. 177 above), and what we can mainly learn from the study of Greek and Roman ghosts is that in ancient and modern times very much the same funny things have happened to us on the way back from the funeral.





## 11. GHOSTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

J.R. Porter

AGAINST THE VERY wide context of ancient Near Eastern ideas of death and the after-life, it is necessary to attempt at least a preliminary definition of the term 'ghost', if our subject is not to get out of hand. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the current prevailing sense of the word 'ghost' is 'the soul of a deceased person spoken of as appearing in a visible form, or otherwise manifesting its presence, to the living': that is, a ghost is an aspect - we will consider what is meant by the expression 'soul' later - of a dead person, experienced by those still alive on earth. As far as the present discussion is concerned, it is the latter point, the experience of the departed by the living, which is crucial, for scholars use the term 'ghost' to denote that individual entity which survives, after the death of the body, in the grave or the underworld. Though it will be necessary to say something about the fate of the departed in general, as that was conceived of in the ancient Near Eastern world, it will be assumed that our primary concern is not so much with the state of the dead in the realm of the dead as with the activities of the dead in the realm of the living.

The material we have to consider may appear, from the point of view of the folklorist, to be rather disappointing compared with what is known about ghosts in other cultures and their literatures. As far as can at present be seen, the ghost story, as we commonly understand it, was an unknown genre in the ancient Near East and certainly there, for reasons which we shall see, ghosts were no subject to while away an idle hour. However, what may be of interest is that these ancient civilizations provide us with our earliest clear evidence for a belief in ghosts, as we have defined the word - certainly our first literary evidence - and it is the basic concepts about the nature of death and the character of the departed which they held that really make it possible

to think of, and to imagine, the existence of ghosts at all.

Now these notions about death and the departed are remarkably similar throughout the whole of ancient Near Eastern society, whether among the Egyptians, the peoples of Mesopotamia or the Hebrews and other smaller groupings, although of course, they differed in greater or less detail from one culture to another. We may notice some features which are directly relevant to the concept of a ghost.

First, it was generally held that man had a 'spirit' or 'soul' which survived death, but this was closely linked, although in a way not altogether easy to understand, with the physical body. Hence, the continued existence of the individual after death is bound up with his physical remains, as long as these survive, and this explains the universal concern for a proper burial, that is, the due preservation of the body. The idea we are considering is most clearly seen in Egypt with its elaborate practice of mummification, but we meet it also, for example, in a passage from the annals of Assurbanipal where he relates how he desecrated the ancient tombs of the kings of Elam by carrying away their bones so that he 'brought restlessness upon their ghosts and cut them off from food-offerings and libations'<sup>1</sup> - that is, once their bones were scattered, the dead could no longer receive the sustenance necessary for their continued quiet existence in the underworld. The same idea seems to underlie several verses in the Old Testament, notably in the extreme condemnation of the Moabites by the prophet Amos 'because they burnt the bones of the king of Edom to ash.'<sup>2</sup>

But, secondly, the departed is not simply to be equated with his physical components, any more than a living person is. Yet death is not the opposite of life but rather a weak form of it, and the dead, in however attenuated a form, retain many of their own distinctive features and characteristics which they had in life. No doubt they are shadows of their former selves but still it is of their former selves that they are shadows. Thus, in the famous episode of the so-called 'Witch of Endor', the shade of Samuel appears as an old man and wearing a cloak: we

must remember that, on the one hand, a man's clothes were viewed as part of his personality and, on the other, that a particular dress was often a sign of status, so the cloak was probably the indication of the prophetic office that Samuel had held in his lifetime. Again, in the famous picture of the Hebrew underworld in *Isaiah* xiv, the former kings of the nations are still sitting on thrones and stand up to greet the newly dead king of Babylon and a similar description in one of the Babylonian epics of Gilgamesh also shows how earthly distinctions were preserved in the after-life:

In the house of dust which I entered,  
I saw the kings and saw  
their crowns laid aside.  
I saw the royal princes,  
who had ruled the land in former days ...  
There dwelt the chief-priests and psalm-singers,  
There dwelt diviners and ecstasies  
and the anointed priests of the great gods.<sup>3</sup>

In view of all this, it is not surprising that, throughout the ancient Near East, the departed were thought to require sustenance just as the living did: it was the sacred duty of a dead person's relatives to provide him with food and drink - especially the latter, since the dead were viewed as perpetually thirsty - conveyed to him at his tomb, which again was a powerful motive for ensuring him proper burial.<sup>4</sup>

We see, then, the emergence of some of the traditional lineaments of the ghost - a being who looks and behaves like a living person, who has some of the same basic needs, and who still has a relationship with the world he has left, so that his surviving family and friends still have a degree of responsibility for him. But he does not belong to this world and here we come to the third important point in the ancient Near Eastern concept of what lay beyond death, although we shall only be able to treat it very briefly. The dead had their own realm, where they belonged and where they should properly always remain. The Egyptians believed that, if all went well - and it was a big 'if'! - with the departed, they would live on in an environment where they would enjoy much the same delights as they could expect on

earth, but the remainder of the peoples of the Near East recognized that the realm of the dead could be no true approximation to life in the upper world. So, on the one hand, the abode of the departed was viewed as a gloomy and cheerless pit under the earth: the words of Job which describe it can be closely paralleled in Mesopotamian and other texts:

Let me be, that I may be happy for a moment,  
before I depart to a land of gloom,  
a land of deep darkness, never to return,  
a land of gathering shadows, of deepening darkness,  
lit by no ray of light, dark upon dark.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, however, this was the right and proper place for the dead to be and the important thing was that they should be undisturbed in their new existence. A number of texts speak of their condition as one of sleep or repose,<sup>6</sup> although we must not take too rosy a view of this, and also in the book of Job there is another description of the underworld which expresses a somewhat more positive view of it:

Then I should be lying in the quiet grave,  
asleep in death, at rest,  
with kings and their ministers  
who built themselves palaces,  
with princes rich in gold  
who filled their houses with silver.  
There the wicked man chafes no more,  
there the tired labourer rests;  
the captive too finds peace there  
and hears no taskmaster's voice;  
high and low are there,  
even the slave, free from his master.<sup>7</sup>

Here, too, is another characteristic of the ghost - from the point of view of the living, he is a denizen of another world, he is out of his true element in this world and it would be better for him and everybody concerned if he were to return to where he ought to be. In the Babylonian conception, the underworld was 'the Land of No Return'<sup>8</sup> and we may note the phrase from the earlier passage quoted from *Job* that to die is 'never to return'; and that was how everyone in the ancient Near East wanted things to be. But, on occasion, the dead did seem to

return<sup>9</sup> and, in order to comprehend the reaction of the peoples of that time to this situation, we have to take note of a fourth element in their concept of the after-life. It was what we might call the official view of the religions of the ancient Near East, a view most clearly expressed in the Old Testament but by no means confined to it, that the dead in their eternal home have no power, no knowledge of events in the world above and are unable to influence them: so in *Psalms* lxxxviii, 12, the underworld is called 'the land of oblivion' and a similar idea underlies the words in *Psalms* cxlvi, 4, 'he breathes his last breath ... and in that same hour all his thinking ends.' How far statements of this kind represent a deliberate attempt to neutralize the dead is difficult to ascertain, but in any event it seems clear that much older conceptions of the departed long remained current in popular thought and superstition, according to which, at least on occasion, the dead could exercise considerable influence in human affairs. In particular, we certainly find the belief, succinctly expressed by R. Pettazzoni, as a general conclusion from the comparative study of religions, when he says, 'the dead ... know everything':<sup>10</sup> so the dead could be consulted by the living about difficult problems or about future events. In either case, what was involved was the dead leaving the underworld and indeed appearing in visible form or otherwise manifesting their presence on this earth to the living.

It is the combination of these two factors, that a ghost is a being outside his proper sphere of existence - for that is always a dangerous and unnerving situation in the thought of the ancient world - and that he has power, which in that world is again always a dangerous and ambivalent quality, which determines the attitude towards ghosts in the societies of the ancient Near East. To put it briefly, that attitude was almost invariably one of fear and hostility. There seems to be very little notion at all of the kindly ghost such as we meet with elsewhere. It is true that in his valuable book *Immortality and the Unseen World*, W.O.E. Oesterley, speaking of the ancient Near East, says that 'it is

certain that it was not always believed that the ghost was inimically inclined to the living'<sup>11</sup> but he quotes no evidence in support of his statement and what he says seems very much the exception to the rule.<sup>12</sup> That ghosts were inimical to the living appears to be the general view of all our literary evidence and such is the case even with the practice of consulting the dead, when that involved the conjuring up of a ghost. The qualification is important. In Babylonia, the spirits of the dead could receive the prayers of their descendants and families and intercede with the gods for them; as we read in one ritual text:

You, ghost of my family ...  
Ghost of my father, my grandfather, my mother,  
my grandmother, my brother, my sister,  
Ghost of my family, my clan and my kindred,  
as many of you as rest in the underworld,  
I have brought an offering for you dead,  
I have poured water for you, I have  
attended to you, praised and honoured you;  
Now today stand before Shamash and Gilgamesh,  
present my case and win a favourable decision  
for me.<sup>13</sup>

But this is not at all the same thing as conjuring up a departed spirit, as is shown by the phrase 'as many of you as rest in the underworld': the dead are where they ought to be and it is from the underworld that they make their petitions to the gods. There is also a series of letters to the dead, which the Egyptians placed in the tombs of their departed relatives,<sup>14</sup> but the real motive for this is well expressed by the distinguished Egyptologist, Jacques Vandier: 'the Egyptians greatly feared the vengeance of the dead and this fear is the reason for these curious letters to the dead.'<sup>15</sup> As is well known, necromancy in the proper sense of the term, is strictly forbidden by what came to be the dominant outlook of Israelite religion, and it plays little, if any part, in the official religious texts of either Egypt or Mesopotamia, although no doubt it was widely practiced in all these cultures: and in the only two fairly detailed accounts of necromancy in the ancient East of which the present writer is

aware, the outcome is anything but re-assuring to the enquirer. One is the story of the 'Witch of Endor' which has already been mentioned, at the conclusion of which 'Saul was overcome and fell his full length to the ground, terrified by Samuel's words.'<sup>16</sup> The other is the Sumerian epic 'Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree', in which Enki/Ea persuades Nergal, the god of the underworld, to release from there Gilgamesh's friend Enkidu, so that he may learn from him the state of the dead. Not surprisingly, Enkidu's information is extremely gloomy, so much so that he begins his narration with the words:

I will not tell thee, my friend,  
I will not tell thee.  
But if I must tell thee the ways of  
the underworld, which I have seen,  
Sit down and weep.<sup>17</sup>

The return of the ghost of Enkidu brings no comfort to the living.

What the Mesopotamians really felt about what would be the result of the return of the departed is well expressed in the Accadian myth of the descent of the goddess Ishtar to the nether world, where, on her arrival there, she threatens to release the departed ghosts with the words:

I will raise up the dead, eating the living,  
So that the dead will outnumber the living:<sup>18</sup>

or in the Sumerian original of the same myth where the goddess Inanna actually does return to earth with the *galla* demons, the constabulary of the underworld, who are not of human origin but from whom, as will be seen, the ghost proper is often not clearly distinguished, and who are described as:

beings who know not food, who know not water,  
Who eat not sprinkled flour,  
Who drink not libated water -

important expressions to the significance of which we shall return -

Who take away the wife from the loins of man,  
Who take away the child from the nursemaid;<sup>19</sup>

and the story continues by recounting how this 'ghostly, ghastly crowd'<sup>20</sup> try to carry off various human beings back to the underworld and have to be restrained by the goddess. Of course, these are only

myths but there is plenty of evidence that the Babylonians firmly believed that the dead frequently returned to earth to afflict the living in ghostly form. It is significant that most of this evidence consists of exorcism texts, the purpose of which was to drive away the ghostly visitant and to prevent it doing harm. It is equally significant that in these texts the ghosts proper, that is, the manifestations of the departed, are lumped together with a whole range of evil demons and spirits that are not of human origin. There is a constantly recurring formula in our documents which lists six of these as the objects of the exorcist's attack, 'evil spirit, evil demon, evil ghost, evil devil, evil god, evil fiend',<sup>21</sup> though these are only approximate meanings for Accadian ritual and magical terms and the precise sense of some of them will have to be discussed in a little more detail subsequently. Nor does even this six-fold list exhaust all the powers of evil mentioned in these texts, for the Mesopotamians believed in a very wide range of evil forces: we hear, for example, of a group of seven evil spirits, comprizing various malevolent deities but also some spirits of the dead, whose particular activity was to bring storms and darkness.<sup>22</sup> Hence it is not easy to distinguish at all clearly between the ghosts of the departed and other demons and spirits: much the same operations are postulated for all of them and all of them come out from the underworld. Yet this in itself tells us a good deal about the way in which the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia viewed ghosts. On the one hand, in so far as they are beings who manifest their presence to the living, they are almost invariably hostile and, in due course, we must consider the reasons for this. On the other hand, the ghost, though, as we have seen and will again see in what follows, still linked to his original humanity, now belongs to another sphere of existence, the supernatural, and has the special powers appropriate to it. So the ghosts, along with the other evil spirits, have the epithet *ilâni*, 'gods',<sup>23</sup> and when the woman of Endor saw the shade of Samuel, she employed the equivalent Hebrew term *'elôhîm*, 'I see *'elôhîm* coming up out of the earth.'<sup>24</sup> The English word 'god' does



not entirely convey the sense of the Semitic terms since it is apt to make us think of the great deities of the ancient Near Eastern pantheons, what scholars tend to describe as 'high gods'. But the terms really come from that much older substratum of religion to which we have already referred, the environment of what is loosely called ancestor-worship: their meaning is wide and often rather vague, so that some such expression as 'supernatural' comes near to conveying the true sense and the significance of the words of the woman of Endor is better brought out by the translation of the *New English Bible*, 'I see a ghostly form coming up from the earth.'

What is the effect of the presence of the ghost and these other evil beings upon the living? Primarily, it brings all kinds of diseases on their chosen victims, both what we should call physical and what we should call mental, both plagues and pestilences, but also unnamed terrors and nightmares. But almost any kind of trouble that may afflict men can be attributed to their agency. They cause domestic difficulties or cause impotence; we read that they are responsible for

driving the maiden from her chamber,  
sending the man forth from his home,  
expelling the son from the house of his father-  
in-law ...

driving away the wife from the embrace of a  
husband,  
removing the child from the knees of a man.<sup>25</sup>

And they also disturb animals and the course of nature:

hunting the pigeons from their cotes,  
driving the bird from its nest,  
making the swallow fly forth from its hole,  
smiting both oxen and sheep.

They are the great spirits, the evil ghosts  
that prowl.<sup>26</sup>

They can get at their victims anywhere and, unless met by a powerful exorcism, nothing can keep them away:

the highest roof, the thickest roofs,  
like a flood they swirl over.  
From house to house they break through,

no door can shut them out,  
no bolt can turn them back,  
through the door like a snake they glide,  
past the door pivot like the wind they blow.<sup>27</sup>

What was it that made the ghost so invariably malevolent towards humankind and the world he had left? To answer this question, it is necessary to look a little more closely at the terminology used to describe the beings that form the subject matter of the Mesopotamian texts we are reviewing. We have pointed to the difficulty of distinguishing between the character and activities of ghosts proper and other non-human spirits, between the demons and the departed, but there are some expressions which refer explicitly to the latter and two of these in particular merit our attention. The first of these is the *utukku* which, although the word is often used widely simply to indicate a spirit, seems to have been originally specifically a spectre or ghost,<sup>28</sup> since on at least one occasion it is used of the shade of a dead man raised from the underworld. When Enki/Ea asked the god Nergal to bring back Enkidu from the realm of the dead, the deity first opened a hole in the underworld, and this probably refers to an actual necromantic practice, the means by which the sorcerer, who among the Assyrians sometimes had the title 'raiser of the departed spirit', brought the dead back to earth. Then we read, 'the *utukku* of Enkidu issued forth from the underworld like a *zaqiqu*':<sup>29</sup> the word *zaqiqu* often has the sense of 'wind' and we shall find the same difficulty with the Hebrew term *rûah*, in deciding whether in a particular case it should be rendered as 'wind' or as 'a spirit'. But certainly *zaqiqu* is known from another text as a type of being which comes out from the underworld in search of mortuary offerings:

The evil *zaqiqu* has gone forth from the grave,  
so that offerings to the dead will be made and  
water libated.<sup>30</sup>

Here we have one of the commonest reasons why the departed leave their proper sphere and appear on earth as ghosts and why they are so ill-disposed towards human beings. As we have seen, the dead were only able to survive in reasonable comfort,

and so be at rest, by means of the offerings and libations paid to them at their graves by their relations and descendants on earth. If for any reason these attentions should cease, and the spirit of the dead man be forgotten, then it was forced by hunger and thirst to come out from its home in the underworld to seek the food and drink which no longer filtered through to satisfy its wants and it was compelled to roam up and down on earth to seek whatever sustenance might be available. This need of the ghost is vividly pictured in Enkidu's account of the various classes of the dead, when he says to Gilgamesh:

He whose spirit has none to take care of him,  
hast thou seen him?

What was left over in the pot and the pieces  
of bread that were thrown into the streets  
he eats.<sup>31</sup>

And in the earlier part of his narration he lists the dead in a sort of pecking order according to how many sons each has, because the more sons he has, the more numerous will be the mortuary offerings and so the more comfortable will be his existence in the underworld. So among the ghosts that are addressed individually in another text is 'a ghost that has no posterity', that is, one who has no descendants to pay him due rites.<sup>32</sup> Hunger and thirst not only made the departed desperate and reckless, so that they were liable to break out of the underworld, which the Babylonians conceived of as a great city, shut in with gates and bolts, guarded by fierce doorkeepers, but they also brought down the ghosts' anger on the living who had neglected their absolutely vital needs. It is worth noting that in some of the exorcism texts the threat used to drive away the ghost is in some such words as these:

Until thou art removed, until thou departest  
from the body of the man, the son of his god,  
thou shalt have no water to drink.<sup>33</sup>

Presumably it is implied that the ghost is to be rewarded with his due when he has left the possessed man, but this is nowhere explicitly stated, perhaps because it was realized that in many cases it would be unlikely to happen.<sup>34</sup>

There were, however, other reasons why ghosts were

considered to haunt mankind. Earlier, we saw the importance of a decent burial if the shades of the dead were to find rest in the underworld. But some corpses, for various reasons, were never buried and these could find no rest, since they had not been able to reach the underworld, of which the grave was the portal, and they remained prowling about the earth as long as their bodies were above ground. Another of the departed whom Enkidu mentions is:

He whose body lies unburied on the steppe,  
hast thou seen him?

His spirit does not rest in the earth,<sup>35</sup>  
that is, in the underworld, for the Accadian term for this region is *eršetu*, 'earth', and the cognate Hebrew word *'eretz* is used a number of times in the Old Testament with exactly this meaning.<sup>36</sup> So, again, we find detailed lists in our texts of the ghosts of those who in various ways have failed to receive due burial and so are condemned to wander still in the world of the living:

One that lies in a ditch ...

One that no grave covers ...

One that lies uncovered,

whose head is uncovered with dust,

the king's son that lies in the desert

or in the ruins,

the hero whom they have slain with the sword ...

one that comes through the waters in a boat,<sup>37</sup>

which perhaps means the ghost of someone who died by drowning.

In addition to the ghosts of the unburied dead, the spirits of those who died violent or unnatural deaths or who departed this life before completing certain duties could also obtain no rest and were compelled to remain as ghosts to haunt the living. Among these, we find the following:

he that has died of hunger and imprisonment,

he that has died of thirst and imprisonment,

the hungry man who in his hunger has not

smelt the smell (of food),

he whom the bank of a river has made to

perish so that he died,

he that died in the desert or the marshes,

he that A-dad (the storm god) has overwhelmed  
in the desert ...<sup>38</sup>

We hear also of 'an evil man that has died'<sup>39</sup> and what is implied by this last phrase is indicated in another text which speaks of the ghost 'which died for a sin against a god or a crime against a king'.<sup>40</sup>

There is a particularly interesting group of female ghosts in this category, who are thus listed in one of the Babylonian exorcism texts:

A temple prostitute who has died in sickness,

Or a nurse,

Or a wet nurse,

Or a weeping woman who is a wet nurse.<sup>43</sup>

The word 'weeping' seems to suggest a wet nurse whose baby has died, and the whole line can hardly fail to remind us of one of the most famous pictures of a ghost in the Old Testament:

Lamentation is heard in Ramah, and bitter weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her sons.

She refuses to be comforted: they are no more.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, in its context, this verse is a figurative and poetic image: Rachel is the tribal ancestress and her 'sons' are the northern Israelites who have been carried into exile. But much of the force of the image derives from the fact that it rests on ancient popular beliefs. Rachel's grave was known to be at Ramah<sup>43</sup> and she is pictured, as in the Mesopotamian material, as a restless disembodied spirit still tied to the vicinity because she cannot find peace from the loss of her children. But there may be a still further dimension to be considered here. Biblical commentators have generally realized the importance of this passage for Hebrew concepts of the departed but they have not noted that, according to *Genesis* xxxv, 16-19, Rachel died in childbirth, naming her newly-born son Ben-oni, 'son of my ill-luck', although her husband at once, and for obvious reasons, changed this to Benjamin, 'son of the right hand', that is, 'son of good luck.' Perhaps, then, we have here a combination of two folklore concepts, the ghost-figure who has died without surviving children and the ghost of a woman who died in childbirth.

In the preceding discussion, we have implicitly moved on to the second term used to denote a ghost in Mesopotamia. This is the *etimmu*, the proper term for the ghost of the dead person which cannot rest and

wanders as a spectre over the earth: how far it differed from the *utukku* is not easy to say, but it is the word most frequently used in our texts to designate what may be defined as a ghost. The *etiṣṣu* generally appeared in human form and with human characteristics, as we see from the following passage addressed to the ghost to prevent him attacking his victim:

Place not thy head upon his head,  
place not thy hand upon his hand,  
place not thy foot upon his foot,  
with thy hand touch him not,  
turn not thy neck to him,  
lift not thine eye to him.<sup>44</sup>

The last expression is particularly interesting, for the ghost, like some human beings, was considered to possess the malevolent power of the evil eye. Another piece of evidence that the ghost had a human form is provided by one of the regular rituals for getting rid of him, which consisted of making an image of the body of the ghost, affixing a human face to it, writing the ghost's name on it and even dressing it in clothes.<sup>45</sup> The ghost could also make his evil presence known audibly and so in one passage there is the command, 'gibber not against him.' The word rendered 'gibber' is *ṣābaru*, which is really to cheep or squeak like a bird and this seems to have been the characteristic sound emitted by the ghost. So in *Isaiah* viii, 19 we read:

Seek guidance of the ancestral spirits  
and ghosts who squeak and gibber,  
where both the Hebrew onomatopoeic terms *ṣāphaph* and *haghāh* are elsewhere used of the sounds made by birds: or again at *Isaiah* xxix, 4:

You shall be brought low, you will speak out  
of the ground  
and your words will issue from the earth;  
your voice will come like a ghost's from the  
ground,

and your words will squeak out of the earth.  
Behind such language may lie the idea that the departed beings had the form of birds, a notion found elsewhere in the Mediterranean area and common to many early societies, for in two Akkadian texts,

the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Descent of Ishtar*, the denizens of the underworld are identically described as being 'clothed like birds, with garments of wings.' Hence the ghost was probably often thought of as winged creature among the Babylonians.

However this may be, to return to the *etimmu*, as this being appears in the Mesopotamian texts we are considering, he is usually portrayed as carrying out his operations at night. So the ghost is often the subject of dreams and nightmares, but we must always remember that, in the ancient Near East, dreams, and what appears in them, are concrete realities - in Pedersen's words, 'when in his dream Jacob sees a ladder, then it is as real as any other.'<sup>46</sup> The ghosts of the departed were viewed not only as invading the houses and appearing at the bedside of the living but also as haunting waste and desolate places, and if a man wandered alone into such spots, they would seize on him and torment him.<sup>47</sup> It is significant that in the exorcism texts the man afflicted by a ghost is described by what is almost a technical term, *muttalliku*, 'wanderer', someone who has put himself at the mercy of a ghost by straying into these haunted regions. But, though one might thus fall in with a ghost purely by ill-luck, it was considered that there was often a good reason why a departed spirit should afflict a particular human individual. It was important to know such reasons if one needed to exorcise the ghost and hence the texts we are considering devote considerable attention to them. Often, of course, the visitant would be a member of the sufferer's family, returning to claim the mortuary offerings which his kindred had neglected to make to him. But the *etimmu* might attach itself to anyone and attempt to force him to give the hospitality which would ensure it peace. Such ghosts are denounced in some detail at the end of a long incantation where all possible kinds of spectres are listed. So, after mentioning the ghost 'that haunts the neighbourhood or that haunts the vicinity', the catalogue continues:

Whether thou be the one who says 'let me eat',  
or who on a day says 'let me drink',  
or who on a day says 'let me anoint myself',

or who on a day says 'let me clothe myself'  
 or who says 'let me enter and eat',  
 or who says 'let me enter and drink',  
 or who says 'let me enter and anoint myself',  
 or who says 'let me enter and clothe myself',  
 or whether thou be one who says 'let me eat  
 food when I am hungry',  
 or who says 'let me drink water when I am thirsty',  
 or who says 'let me anoint myself with oil when  
 I am sore',  
 or who says 'let me clothe my nakedness with a  
 garment when I am cold.'<sup>48</sup>

Another aspect of the significance of ghosts in Mesopotamia is their appearance in the texts consisting of collections of omens, which form such a large part of the extant Babylonian literature in particular. Omens were deduced from the appearance of a ghost in a house:

If there is seen in a house the dead owner of the house, his son will die,

If there is seen in a house the dead lady of the house, the owner of the house will die.<sup>49</sup>

Further omens could be deduced from whether the ghost was a merely silent apparition or whether it gibbered or spoke some words and awaited a response. Once again, however, in conformity with all that has already been said, the ghostly visitant was always viewed as an evil omen, whose appearance could only portend some disaster.

At this point, one should perhaps say something very briefly about the other great culture area in ancient Near East, Egypt, and it is possible to be brief because, as far as the topic of ghosts in the proper sense is concerned, the views of the ancient Egyptians were not fundamentally different from those of Mesopotamia. It is of course true that the Egyptians developed an elaborate set of beliefs about the possibility of a blessed immortality for the departed quite different from anything to be found elsewhere in the ancient world but, again, this was only to be enjoyed by the dead who stayed where they ought to be, in the realm beyond the tomb. Also, there is considerable evidence in Egyptian writings for the persistence of a notion that the dead were



deprived of the delights enjoyed by the living and of a somewhat gloomy view of the afterlife, corresponding much more closely to the general Semitic one.<sup>50</sup> From the point of view of our concerns two things are important. First, among the Egyptians, there was the same close connection, which we have already seen, between the departed and their bodies and secondly, as we have also seen, the continuing existence of the dead depended on their regular reception of the funerary offerings given to them by the living. Just how and in what form the dead continued to exist is difficult to determine, because in our literature we find various terms being used which are not easy to harmonize and which appear to have different meanings in different contexts and perhaps at different periods of Egypt's long history. However, we can certainly say that the dead man lived on as an incorporeal being, in a form which was the counterpart of his earthly individual existence, of which once more the body was the centre. Two expressions for this are of importance. One is the *ba*, which can best be rendered as 'external manifestation'; it was a form assumed by a man in death and, very interestingly, the most typical shape was that of a bird.<sup>51</sup> The other is the *ka*, perhaps best translated as 'spirit';<sup>52</sup> in the area with which we are concerned, it is to be viewed as a kind of double of the living person, conserving his vital being, indwelling the *ka*-statue, which was an exact portrait of the man as he had been in life.<sup>53</sup>

It is the *ka* which is of most interest to us, for it was the *ka* which was thought to receive the food offerings and to require the satisfaction of other needs. When these were not duly met, the *ka* was forced to come out of the tomb as a ghost to scavenge for whatever it could find on earth to nourish it. In chapters 52 and 53 of the famous Book of the Dead,<sup>54</sup> it is made clear that, when offerings are not paid to the deceased, he is obliged to wander into unclean places to eat such filth and drink such dirty water as he could find, and in a inscription on the pyramid of Teti, an early Egyptian monarch, the king states that he has plenty of food and so is not reduced to the same extremity as were others of the less fortunate dead: 'abhorrent to Teti is excrement, Teti

rejects urine ... abhorrent to him are faeces, he does not eat them, abhorrent to Teti is liquid filth.' The restless ghosts usually came out at night, in their human form, naked or wearing their earthly clothes, and, it has been suggested, emitting a pale light, so that they were known as *khau*, the 'luminous ones'. Like the Mesopotamian ghosts we have reviewed, they invaded houses and inflicted their victims with disease or madness. One Egyptian papyrus is full of incantations against dead men and women who take possession of a human being and cause violent headaches, in another a husband launches a formal complaint against the ghost of his wife who has returned to haunt his home, while a text from the *Book of the Dead* seems to show that such departed spirits would suck blood from their victims like a vampire.<sup>55</sup> In summary, it can therefore be said that the popular Egyptian view of ghosts, the folklore view, was much the same as the popular Mesopotamian one: the ghost is always hated and feared, as a spirit that is malevolent because it has been denied its due and is out of its proper sphere, so that the only human reaction to it must be to drive it away by magical exorcisms and incantations.

As our discussion has proceeded, there has been occasion to refer several times to the Old Testament evidence about ghosts, for the simple reason that the old Israelite view of the state of the departed was basically the same as the rest of the Semitic ancient near East. But, in conclusion, there is some material from the Old Testament which perhaps merits further notice, although this can be done briefly, since it is generally better known and has been more fully discussed than most of the evidence we have so far reviewed. Like the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the ancient Israelites believed in a close connection between the dead body and the departed spirit and there is some evidence that they too originally brought mortuary offerings for the sustenance of those beyond the grave.<sup>56</sup> Again, the ancient Hebrews' concept of the realm of the dead, which they called by the term *šêôl*, and the gloomy and feeble condition of those who dwelt there, corresponds very closely to the Mesopotamian view: similarly, the

Israelites, too, firmly held that, in general, the dead had no place in this world but ought properly to remain in their own sphere and so whenever in the Old Testament we hear of the calling up of the departed for purposes of necromancy the practice is severely condemned. Nevertheless, the mere fact of these prohibitions proves how tenacious the custom was and there are plenty of indications in Israel of that older religious substratum to which we have referred, where the dead were viewed as beings of exceptional power and knowledge, and we may glance at a few of these. The word *šêḏl* itself is most plausibly to be derived from a root meaning 'to ask', that is, the dwellers there were able to give oracles in answer to human enquiries, while the Hebrew expression most closely corresponding to our word ghost or to the Akkadian *etimmu* is *yiddē'oni*, which means 'those who have knowledge.' When, in the Old Testament, we find consultation of the *yiddē'oni* being condemned, they are generally coupled with the *'ōbōth*, the plural of the word *'ōbh*. The meaning of this term has been, and continues to be, very much disputed.<sup>57</sup> Most recently, it has been suggested that it is to be explained by the word *'ābh*, 'father', and thus refers to the spirits of the deceased ancestors living in the underworld, which certainly makes a good parallel with the *yiddē'oni*. The other current explanation of the term, based on a comparison with Hittite, Babylonian and Sumerian parallels, one of which was mentioned earlier, is that it originally denoted a ritual hole in the ground, dug to give the spirits of the deceased access to the upper world for a brief interval.<sup>58</sup> But many of those who hold this opinion note that, in course of time, the word also came to be applied to the spirits who issued from the pit and, in any case, it is clear from the story of the woman of Endor that, as we have already seen, the departed could be summoned from below the ground, to appear on this earth in ghostly human form. Another common term for the departed in the Old Testament, although there it also denotes *primaeval* giants, is *rephā'im*, again a word whose exact significance is much disputed.<sup>59</sup> However, in the Ugaritic texts, representing the outlook of Canaanite religion, the

cognate term appears in parallelism with an expression denoting divine or supernatural beings - we may compare the use of *ilâni* and *'<sup>e</sup>lôhim* to designate the dead in Mesopotamia and Israel - and it is tempting to derive the word from a root meaning 'to heal'. Hence, although in the Old Testament as we now have it, the *r<sup>e</sup>phā'im* are explicitly deprived of any special powers, they may once have been considered to enjoy the ability to cure diseases and been resorted to for that purpose.

Because the Old Testament speaks of ghosts almost exclusively in connection with the forbidden practice of necromancy, we should not expect it to provide us with a great deal of information about them. Nor does it, for the Biblical writers wished to discourage any pre-occupation with, or interest in, such wrong and dangerous beings. However, apart from the episode of the woman of Endor, which we have, it may be hoped, sufficiently considered in our various references to it, there is one striking passage in the Old Testament which may provide us with a more vivid picture of the effect on a human being of a ghostly apparition than can be found anywhere else in the ancient Near East. One says 'may' advisedly because a rather different interpretation of the passage is favoured by some notable scholars and it may well be correct. The reference, of course, is to the words of Job's friend, Eliphaz, in chapter iv of the book of Job: they run as follows in the *New English Bible* rendering:

12. A word stole into my ears,  
and they caught the whisper of it;
13. in the anxious visions of the night,  
when a man sinks into deepest sleep,
14. terror seized me and shuddering;  
the trembling of my body frightened me.
15. A wind brushed my face  
and made the hairs bristle on my flesh;
16. and a figure stood there whose shape I  
could not discern,  
an apparition loomed before me,  
and I heard the sound of a low voice.

These famous words have frequently in the past been understood clearly to indicate the visitation of an

other-worldly spirit. More recently, however, some commentators have taken them to refer to a direct revelation of the God of Israel, Yahweh himself, and as typical of the regular experience of the prophets.<sup>60</sup> If this is so, the passage has no bearing on the subject under discussion. But it is still possible to argue that it refers to a spiritual being, rather than to Yahweh himself, and more specifically even to 'the soul of a deceased person', that is, a ghost. A careful analysis of the verses, while it cannot be conclusive, seems to provide enough indications which, taken all together, would support this view.

First, the speaker's experience occurs in the dead of night, it is accompanied by terror and shuddering and by 'nightmares', the translation proposed by Dhorme,<sup>61</sup> one of the acutest commentators on the book of Job, for the word rendered as 'anxious' in the *New English Bible*. All this, as we have abundantly seen, is a very common setting for the manifestation of a ghostly visitant. Secondly, in the phrase 'a wind brushed my face', we are faced with the frequent ambiguity of the Hebrew word *rûaḥ*, which can mean either 'wind' or 'spirit'. Various points must be discussed - all too rapidly - here. The main argument that seems to be produced in favour of 'wind' is that a spirit would not brush over the sleeper's face but only stand before him, as it is said to do in the following verse. But there seems nothing odd in a spirit moving about and it would be quite natural to think of a disembodied being first rousing the sleeper's attention by touching his face and then standing still before him when it had caught his attention. Indeed, such an understanding is almost demanded by the text as it stands: in the phrase 'a figure stood there', the words 'a figure' are not in the Hebrew text, so that the whole runs 'a spirit brushed my face', etc; 'it stood there.' Most scholars, indeed, agree that the subject of the verb 'stood' has fallen out of the text, but it is noteworthy that Dhorme suggests we should supply <sup>e</sup>*lōhim*, as in the episode of the woman of Endor,<sup>62</sup> which would certainly imply a ghost in the sense here being argued. Also, in the passage, the word *rûaḥ* is masculine, whereas in the overwhelming number of cases it is

feminine, and this has been held to suggest the sense 'spirit' rather than 'wind'. However, there are several examples where *rûah*, clearly meaning 'wind', is in the masculine, so this argument is hardly conclusive. More to the point is the fact that there is a Mesopotamian demon, the *rābiṣu*, which is almost certainly mentioned in the Old Testament,<sup>63</sup> that is described as the spectre 'that makes the hair of my body to rise and the hairs of my skull to stand on end,' and this provides a very close parallel to the line in the Job passage. In any case, it may not matter too much which translation we prefer: the experience of a chill wind blowing over the body would certainly correspond well to what has often been reported in connection with the manifestation of a ghost and, as we have seen, the appearance of the incorporeal spirit of Enkidu was depicted in terms of a wind.

It has also been pointed out that the Hebrew word rendered as 'apparition' in verse 16 is sometimes used in the Old Testament of the numinous form of Yahweh. But it need not necessarily be confined to this and certainly other passages make it clear that it was employed in a much more general sense.<sup>64</sup> Finally, we may notice that the apparition speaks in a low voice and that its message came stealthily and in a whisper. We have already seen from *Isaiah* xxix that this is the recognized manner in which ghosts speak and scholars have called attention to accounts of the appearance of demons in night visions among the pre-Islamic Arabs, where the visitants make noises which are described as a soft whispering or cooing.<sup>65</sup>

It seems then, that there are good grounds for believing that the passage we are considering does describe the manifestation of a supernatural visitant and the powerful effect this had on the one who experienced it. But can we go a little further and claim that the being was from the realm of the dead, a ghost in the true sense? Here two considerations may be adduced. First, early inscriptions from the probable site of the 'land of Uz', where the book of Job is set, mention as a well-known phenomenon the experience of a visit by night of a man's dead

relatives.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, and more importantly, the actual message of the spirit, which follows directly on the verses we have quoted, falls into three parts - a question about man's righteousness before God, a statement that even His heavenly servants are inadequate in comparison with Him and lastly a conclusion from the first two sections about the consequences for human destiny.<sup>67</sup> This pattern occurs twice elsewhere in the book of Job<sup>68</sup> but only in the passage before us is the human condition described as determined by the gloomy death that all men must undergo and these verses have been described by one scholar as giving its distinctive tone to the whole passage:

If God mistrusts his own servants  
and finds his messengers at fault,  
how much more those that dwell in  
houses whose walls are clay,  
whose foundations are dust,  
which can be crushed like a bird's nest  
or torn down between dawn and dark,  
how much more shall such men perish  
outright and unheeded,  
die, without ever finding wisdom?

Such an observation is an obvious one and is not infrequently made in the Old Testament and the ancient Near East generally,<sup>69</sup> and so the question has been asked as to why, as one scholar puts it, it should here be presented in 'so sensational a form'.<sup>70</sup> We might say, 'it needs no ghost to come from the grave to tell us this.' But that is precisely what it does need to drive home the point. It is someone who has experienced death, with all its despair and hopelessness, who alone can speak with real authority about it, who, as we might say, from the point of view of the author of the book of Job, can get the message across. So we may suggest that the departed spirit here is doing very much what, as we saw earlier, the ghost of Enkidu does - describing, at first hand, so to speak, the real nature of the tragic fate that awaits all men.

We have ranged very widely in time and space but there remains still a good deal that could be said on our topic. In particular, one fascinating aspect

of the ancient Near Eastern folklore of ghosts would be a study of the incantations and spells that were employed against them, a subject on which our texts go into considerable detail<sup>71</sup> and which we have been only able to touch on in passing. What we have had to say has not been very exciting or entertaining, but perhaps its main interest lies in the early date of the material, providing as it does our first clear evidence for a belief in ghosts in human societies, and revealing in embryo features of them which are paralleled and developed elsewhere. How far the ancient Near East is the matrix for the folklore of ghosts in the areas that were in contact with it, as it was for so much else there - how far, for example, Greek beliefs about ghosts derive from this background<sup>72</sup> - or whether these ideas about ghosts are the common product of the human mind in every age and place, all this again is still another question.<sup>73</sup>



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

### Introduction

1. In a report on the York Conference (see below) of 1980, in the *Times Educational Supplement* 8 Aug. 1980.
2. The papers here published formed part of a conference on *The Folklore of Ghosts*, held at the University of York in July 1980. I would like here to express the gratitude of the Folklore Society to S.A.J. Bradley and the office staff of the Department of English for the help given in organising the Conference. Our lively discussions were helped by accounts of local apparitions given by Mary Stanley-Smith and Ian Rodger, to whom we are much indebted.

*Before Death and Beyond* Linda-May Ballard

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- 1 A. McClelland, 'The Resurrection Men', *Ulster Folk & Transport Museum Year Book*, 1977-78 pp. 15-17.
- 2 Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Tape Archive, R80, 40.
- 3 S. O'Suilleabhain, *Irish Wake Amusements*, Cork, 1967, p.11.
- 4 U.F.T.M., R80 55.
- 5 Transcript of Document, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum Archive, No.18 10.

- 6 U.F.T.M. C76 50 J. Donaldson, *Account of the Barony of Upper Fews*, Dundalk, 1923, also refers to the custom of having of laying out underboard and states of the candlesticks that they '... are always composed of an odd number from three to thirteen according to the ability of the deceased. It is interesting that, as with the death board, the door is used as a support for the corpse. Practically, a door might be the only available flat surface sufficiently large to fulfil this function, but those of a symbolic frame of mind might take it to reflect that the corpse was 'on the way out'. Such an idea however, has not been recorded in the course of fieldwork.
- 7 M. Morris, 'Irish Wake Games', *Bealoideas* VIII, pp.127 & 128.
- 8 Rutherford, 'Life & Times of Rev. John Orr, M.A. of Portaferry', 1912, Donaldson op.cit. pp.67, 68, also refers to the custom of keening in Armagh.
- 9 A. McClelland, 'Folklife Miscellanea from eighteenth & nineteenth century newspapers. *Ulster Folklife*, 17, p.93.
- 10 *Letters from the Irish Highlands*, London 1825, p.290.
- 11 Ethnic Folkways Album, FE 4002, 1957, introductory notes p.5.
- 12 T.C. Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland*, London 1824, pp.172, 173.
- 13 *Letters from the Irish Highlands*, p.283.
- 14 T.C. Croker, op.cit. pp.169, 170.
- 15 Donaldson, op.cit., p.69.
- 16 Mr. & Mrs. S.C. Hall, *Ireland, its Scenery, Character, etc.* III, London, 1847, pp.186, 187.
- 17 A. Gailey, 'The Rosses, Co. Donegal, in 1753-1754', *Ulster Folklife*, 19, pp.20-23, The Aran Island here referred to is one west of the Rosses and should not be confused with the Aran Islands mentioned earlier. Those are further south.

- 18 *Letters from the Irish Highlands*, p.283.
- 19 Donegal's Cloughaneely, p.16.
- 20 *Letters from the Irish Highlands*, p.284.
- 21 *Ibid*, p.285.
- 22 Gailey, A., 'A wicker coffin from Ballysheil Graveyard, Annaclone, Co. Down, *Ulster Folklife* 17, p.89.
- 23 U.F.T.M., C 19 32.
- 24 *Ibid*.
- 25 U.F.T.M., R.80 55.
- 26 Pentikainen, J., 'Nordic Dead-Child Beings', F.F.C. 202, p.62.
- 27 See O'Connor, A., 'The Placeless Dead', *Sinsear*, 1979.
- 28 Pentikainen, *op.cit.* p.51.
- 29 R. Kirk , *The Secret Commonwealth*, ed. Stewart Sanderson, Cambridge, 1976, p.46.  
Willie the Wisp owes his preternatural existence to a similar ambiguity. Having sold his soul to the devil he cannot enter heaven but having cheated the devil, he cannot enter Hell.
- 30 Croker, referring to the laying-out of a dead body, remarks, To avert misfortune arising from the death of the heads of families, when a man dies his head is placed at the foot of the bed; but this ceremony is not deemed necessary with women and they are allowed to remain in the usual position. (*op.cit.* p.170)  
The death of the head of the family might well bring misfortune in a material sense. Perhaps this simple fact contributes to an idea that he retains his power and influence after death. This idea might well account for the special treatment his body is given; it is possible that the alignment is changed in order to prevent the appearance of his ghost.

- 31 I am indebted to Canon Barry of Hillsborough for providing this anecdote and for drawing my attention to the subject referred to in this paragraph.
- 32 U.F.T.M., c.77,37.
- 33 U.F.T.M., c.76,72.
- 34 U.F.T.M., c.76,71.
- 35 U.F.T.M., c.76,52.
- 36 U.F.T.M., c.79,29.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 U.F.T.M., c.79,32.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 This idea may underlie the explanation given by Donaldson for the competition to reach the cemetery. According to him, it is the first buried, in other words, the first to have the funeral completed, which is the first to pass through Purgatory. It is also possible, of course, that there was some concern in case the 'fag' did not confine himself to the graveyard.
- 41 U.F.T.M., c.77,34.
- 42 U.F.T.M., c.76,43.
- 43 U.F.T.M., c.77,37.
- 44 U.F.T.M., c.77,11.
- 45 U.F.T.M., c.78,107.
- 46 U.F.T.M., c.77,37.
- 47 Commonly, a ghost may be seen by only one member of a group. Some stories claim that if this person touches another he too will see. Sometimes this is defined so that Catholics will see the ghost, protestants will not. This may be due to attitudes to the doctrine of Purgatory. It seems to suggest that seeing a ghost is not harmful and may be contrasted with another tradition. If a person wearing an item believed to be holy touches a person who is experiencing the

paranormal, the experience will cease. This would seem to show a rather different attitude.

*The Ghosts of Evald Tang Kristensen* Joan Rockwell

- 1 Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush", *Natural History*, 75:5, 1966, pp.22-23.
- 2 *Dansk Sagn, Som de har lydt i Folkemunde, udelukkede efter utrykte Kilder, samlede og tildels optegenede af Evald Tang Kristensen Femte Afdeling: Spøgeri og Gjenfaerd. Silkeborg, 1897.* ("Danish Legends, from the oral tradition, collected and for the most part recorded, by Evald Tang Kristensen. Volume V: Ghosts and Haunting") This title is shortened in the text to: D.S. V: followed by the Section (A, B, C or D) and number of Chapter and paragraph.
- 3 J.S. Møller, *Fester og Højtider i Gamle Dage*, 2 Volumes, Holbaek 1929. Joachim Junge, *Den Nordsiellandske Landalmues Character, Skikke, Meeninger og Sprog*, 1798. Philip Aries, *Western Attitudes to Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1974.
- 4 J.S. Møller, *op.cit.*
- 5 Evald Tang Kristensen, *Gamle Folks fortællinger om det jyske almueliv, som det er blevet ført i mands minde, samt enkelte oplysende sidestykker fra øerne*, Kolding 1891-94. ("Old people's account of the life of the common people of Jutland, as lived within living memory, and some examples from the Islands") This title is shortened in the text to *Jyske Almueliv*, or *J.A.* J.A. I, 3:28.
- 6 As defined in Axel Olrik's "Laws of Folklore": 15 or 16 of these were presented in a lecture in Berlin in 1908, but the "law" that "the last shall be first" had already been pointed out by Shütte

in 1907. In folktales it is the *youngest* brother who is the best and wisest, the youngest princess who is married first, the youngest son who inherits, and the third and last trial which is decisive and also the hardest. Olrik had also included the importance of the magic number 3 among his laws.

*West Indian Ghosts* Venetia Newall

- 1 Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London, 1774) II, 416. M.G. Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (London, 1834), 98-100, 290-96, 307, 344, 386.  
 Lady Annie Brassey, *In The Trades, The Tropics, and the Roaring Forties*, (London, 1885), 215.  
 Nicholas Darnell Davis, *Letter* (Unpublished, 1896)  
 Frederick Cassidy, *Jamaica Talk* (London, 1961), 247, 250.  
*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1971), I, 818.
- 2 Cassidy, 245.
- 3 MacEdward Leach, "Jamaican Duppy Lore", *Journal of American Folklore* (New York, 1961), LXXIV, 210.  
 Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (London, 1926), 31.
- 4 Cassidy, 248, 400.  
 Martha Beckwith, *Black Roadways* (Chapel Hill, 1929), 90.  
 Frank Cundall, "Folklore of the Negroes of Jamaica", *Folk-lore* (London, March 1904), XV, 90.
- 5 Leach, 214.  
 Fay Ferguson, tape IX, 32 (1974)  
 Ibid, tape XV, 11 (1974)  
 Beckwith, 89.  
 Carey Robinson, *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (Kingston, 1969), 16-17.  
 Venetia Newall, "The Ghost Lore of the Jamaican Ethnic Community in Britain", *Folk Narrative Research: Studia Fennica* 20 (Helsinki, 1976), 205.

- 6 Cassidy, 248.  
Fay Ferguson, tape XXI, 23 (1975).
- 7 Newall, 207.
- 8 Leach, 208.  
Cassidy, 251.  
Beckwith, 98, 100-101.
- 9 Newall, 207.
- 10 Leach, 207.
- 11 Frank Cundall, "Folklore of the Negroes of Jamaica", *Folk-Lore* (London, March 1905), XVI, 70.  
Fay Ferguson, tape IX, 2-3, (1974).
- 12 *The Gleaner*, February 20, 1974.  
Fay Ferguson, tape IX, 36 (1974).
- 13 Cundall (1904), 90.  
Walter Jekyll, *Jamaican Song and Story* (New York, 1966), XLVII.  
Long, II, 416.  
Fay Ferguson, tape XVIII, 17, (1975).
- 14 Fay Ferguson, tape XXVI, 1 (1979).
- 15 *Ibid.*, tape IX, 4 (1974).
- 16 Fay Ferguson, tape XXVI, 1 (1979).
- 17 Leach, 211.
- 18 Fay Ferguson, tape XVI (1974).
- 19 Audrey Hughes, born 1956 (1980).  
Newall, 206.
- 20 Audrey Hughes (1980).
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 See Cassidy, 353-4.
- 23 Audrey Hughes (1980).
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 Cassidy, 247.
- 26 Fay Ferguson, tape XVII, 8 (1974).  
*Ibid.*, tape XVIII, 17 (1975).

- 27 Fay Ferguson, tape XVII, 7-8, (1974).
- 28 *Ibid.*, tape IX, 22 (1974).
- 29 Leach, 210.  
Beckwith, 98.  
Jekyll, 175.
- 30 Newall, 206.
- 31 Fay Ferguson, tape XXIV, 1 (1977).
- 32 Colleen Taylor, tape XV, 6 (1974).
- 33 Fay Ferguson, tape XVIII, 16 (1975).
- 34 Cassidy, 247-8.  
Beckwith, 88.
- 35 Gem Bailey, tape XXII, 46 (1976).
- 36 Fay Ferguson, tape XXII, 73 (1976).
- 37 *Ibid.*, tape XXIII, 6 (1976).
- 38 *Ibid.*, 25.  
*Ibid.*, tape XXII, 73 (1976).
- 39 Gem Bailey and Fay Ferguson, tape XXIII, 7 (1976).
- 40 Colleen Taylor, tape XXIII, 7-8 (1976).
- 41 Mrs. Aarons, tape XVI, 20-1 (1974).  
Sister Lull, tape XVII, 7 (1974).  
Gem Bailey, tape XIX, 32 (1975).  
*Ibid.*, tape XXI, 28 (1975).
- 42 Jeannie Aarons, tape XX, 20 (1975).
- 43 Fay Ferguson, tape XIX, 32-3, (1975).
- 44 Frank Cundall, "Folklore of the Negroes of  
Jamaica", *Folk-Lore* (London, June 1904), XV, 207.
- 45 Lorna Aspinall (1972).
- 46 Fay Ferguson, tape XXVI (1979).
- 47 Leach, 212.
- 48 Colleen Taylor, tape XXIII, 6-7 (1976).
- 49 Cundall (June 1904), 206.



- 50 *Ibid.*, (December 1904), 452.  
*Ibid.*, (March, 1905), 70.
- 51 Fay Ferguson, tape XVI, 22 (1974).
- 52 *Ibid.*, tape XXIV, 7-8 (1977).
- 53 Fay Ferguson, tape XVIII, 13 (1975).
- 54 Cassidy, 254-5.
- 55 Cundall (March, 1905), 70.
- 56 Fay Ferguson, tape XVIII, 13-14 (1975).  
See Beckwith, 77.
- 57 Colleen Taylor and Gem Bailey, tape XXIII, 7 (1976)
- 58 Patricia Armstrong (1972).
- 59 Fay Ferguson, tape IX, 30 (1974).
- 60 *Ibid.*, tape IX, 31 (1974).
- 61 *Ibid.*, tape XVIII, 4-5 (1975).
- 62 Jeannie Aarons, tape XX, 21-2 (1975).
- 63 Cassidy, 395.  
Newall, 205.
- 64 Gem Bailey, tape XXI, 29 (1975).

*The Angry Ghost in Japan* Carmen Blacker

- 1 In book 7, chapter 22 of *The Analects of Confucius*, it is written that ghosts were one of the four subjects which Confucius refused to discuss.  
Examples of 18th and 19th century collections of weird tales are *Ugetsu Monogatari*, *Inuharike*, *Otogiboko*, *Hyaku Monogatari Hyōban*. These are collected in Volume 9 of *Kindai Nihon Bungaku Taikai* under the title of *Kai Shōsetsushū*.
- 2 Works in English on this complex subject are Yanagita Kunio, *About our Ancestors*, translated by Fanny Hagin Mayer and Ishiwara Yasuyo, Tokyo 1970; Robert J. Smith, *Ancestor worship in Contemporary Japan*, Stanford, California, 1974;

Matsudaira Narimitsu, "The concept of Tamashii in Japan", in *Studies in Japanese Folklore*, edited by Richard Dorson, Bloomington, Indiana, 1963. I have also discussed the problem of angry ghosts in my *Catalpa Bow: A study of shamanistic practices in Japan*, London, 1975.

On the question of the careful recording of the perceptions of apparitions little research seems so far to have been done in Japan. To my knowledge there is no work comparable with Tyrell's *Apparitions*, nor has anything been attempted in Japan on the lines of the *Census of Hallucinations* undertaken by the Society for Psychical Research during the 1890s.

- 3 Sir James Frazer, *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion*, 3 vols, London 1935-6.
- 4 The stories of Sawara Shinnō and Sugawara Michizane may be read in Richard Ponsonby-Fane's *The Vicissitudes of Shinto*, reprinted Kyoto 1963.
- 5 The story of Sakura Sōgorō is excellently told in Lord Redesdale's *Tales of Old Japan*, London 1871.
- 6 An excellent recent account of the procedure of exorcism in Mahikari Kyōkai may be found in Winston Davis, *Dōjō: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan*, Stanford, California, 1980.
- 7 Winston Davis discusses this 'homeopathic' tendency in his chapter 9, 'Women and their sexual karma.' The present writer, being unmarried and childless, was horrified to find herself accused, during the summer of 1980, by an exorcist of the Mahikari sect, of breaking up a happy marriage by the emanation of unconscious jealousy known as *ikiryo*.

*The Environment of Ghosts* Claire Russell

- 1 O.St.J. Gogarty, *As I was Going Down Sackville Street* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1954), p.204. The story that follows is told on pp.201-209.

- 2 J.B. Lyons, *Oliver St. John Gogarty* (Associated University Presses, London, 1976), pp.11-12.
- 3 R. Ellmann, *Yeats: the Man and the Masks* (University Press, Oxford, 1979), p.219.
- 4 W.T. Stead, *Borderland: a Casebook of True Supernatural Stories* (University Books, New York, 1970), pp.x-xi (introduction by L. Shepard); F.W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (Longmans, Green, London, 1909), p.174; the census report was published in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 10 (1894), pp.25-422. See also D. Bardens, *Mysterious Worlds* (Collins, London, 1972), pp.156-7. For a massive collection of material on this subject, gathered from 1882 to 1920, see E.M. Sidgwick, E. Gurney, F.W.H. Myers and F. Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living* (University Books, New York, 1962).
- 5 W.M.S. Russell, 'Greek and Roman Ghosts', this volume, p.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.
- 7 A. Lang, *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (Longmans, Green, London, 1897), p.3.
- 8 Lang, *op.cit.*, p.2.
- 9 W.O. Stevens, *The Mystery of Dreams* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1950), pp.51-2.
- 10 Stevens, *op.cit.*, pp.43-5.
- 11 C. Russell and W.M.S. Russell, 'The Natural History of Censorship', in J. Chandos (ed.), *'To Deprave and Corrupt'* (Souvenir Press, London, 1962), pp.153-74; W.M.S. Russell, 'The Two Censors' and 'Art, Science and Man', *Listener*, 67 (1962), pp.416-18, and 71 (1964), pp.43-5.
- 12 Stevens, *op.cit.*, pp.38-42.
- 13 Cited by Stevens, *op.cit.*, p.42.
- 14 Bardens, *op.cit.*, pp.90-91.

- 15 Stevens, *op.cit.*, pp.65-7.
- 16 Stevens, *op.cit.*, pp.34-5.
- 17 A. Fea, *Rooms of Mystery and Romance* (Hutchinson, London, 1931), p.277.
- 18 H. Holzer, *Ghosts I've Met* (Ace, New York, 1965), p.59.
- 19 Lang, *op.cit.*, p.3.
- 20 T.D. Duane and T. Behrendt, 'Extrasensory Electroencephalographic Induction between Identical Twins', *Science*, 150 (1965), p.367.
- 21 Lang, *op.cit.*, p.4.
- 22 Bardens, *op.cit.*, p.67.
- 23 Lang, *op.cit.*, p.5.
- 24 M.E. Monteith, *A Book of True Dreams* (Heath Cranton, London, 1929), p.108.
- 25 D. Walker, *Spooks de Luxe* (Franklin Watts, New York, 1956), pp.51-2.
- 26 Fea, *op.cit.*, pp.277-8. Christina Hole, however, in her book *Haunted England* (Batsford, London, 1940), pp.100-101, gives a rather different version, according to which the family had sold Thurstaston Hall after the death of the lady seen as a ghost; if so, she was, after all, attached to the house and not to the family.
- 27 The interpretation in this paragraph would only apply to Fea's version of the story.
- 28 This point is made by either version of the Thurstaston Hall story. In Christina Hole's version, the artist, named as Reginald Easton, kept his equipment by him after the ghost's first appearance, and was able to get several sittings.
- 29 M. Ebon, *Prophecy in Our Time* (New American Library, New York, 1968), pp.116-18.
- 30 E. Porter, *Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), pp.149-50.

- 31 F. Huxley, *The Way of the Sacred* (Aldus-Jupiter, London, 1974), p.57.
- 32 B. Steiger, *Real Ghosts, Restless Spirits and Haunted Minds* (Universal-Tandem, London, 1968), pp.20-21.
- 33 J.H. Ingram, *The Haunted Houses and Family Traditions of Great Britain* (Gibbings, London, 1901), pp.1-4.
- 34 Cited by Ingram, *op.cit.*, p.3.
- 35 K. Pearson and P. Connor, *The Dorak Affair* (Michael Joseph, London, 1967), p.31.
- 36 E. Diamond, *The Science of Dreams* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1962), pp.53-5.
- 37 Diamond, *op.cit.*, p.54.
- 38 H. Broughton, 'The Ghost that Came to Tell', in Editors of *Fate Magazine* (ed.), *The Strange World of the Occult* (Paperback Library, New York, 1968), pp.97-101.
- 39 Holzer, *op.cit.*, pp.78-9.
- 40 R. Seth, 'The Ghost in Two Halves', in J. Canning (ed.), *Fifty Great Ghost Stories* (Hamlyn, London, 1966), pp.117-28.
- 41 Personal communication from Dr. A. Lopasic, who will deal with the subject extensively in his forthcoming publication on Sardinian shepherds.
- 42 R. Fletcher, *The Akenham Burial Case* (Wildwood House, London, 1974), *passim*.
- 43 Personal communication from Dr. D.P. Wilson.
- 44 T. Scudder, 'Man-made Lakes and Population Re-settlement in Africa', in R.H. Lowe-McConnell (ed.), *Man-made Lakes* (Academic Press, London, 1966), pp.99-108, especially pp.102-3.
- 45 'The World's Newest Island', *BBC 2 TV*, 7.25 p.m., 1 February 1976.

- 46 A.P. Leca, *Les Momies* (Marabout, Verviers, 1976), pp.255-63.
- 47 F. Huxley, *Affable Savages* (Hart-Davies, London, 1956), pp.125-7.
- 48 T. Brown, *The Fate of the Dead* (D.S. Brewer for the Folklore Society, Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979), pp.25-6.
- 49 Greece: E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (University of California Press, London, 1979), p.2 and Figure 1, p.3; Panama: E. Lothrop, 'Coclé in Panama', in L. Deuel (ed.), *Conquistadors Without Swords* (Macmillan, London, 1967), pp.140-53, especially p.145.
- 50 W.M.S. Russell, 'Greek and Roman Ghosts', this volume.
- 51 M. Charleston, in *Daily Express*, Monday 3 May 1971 p.12.
- 52 Deuel, *op.cit.*, pp.557-62, quotation from p.560.
- 53 Personal communication from Professor Dr. P. Sevenster.
- 54 H. Hoffding, *The Philosophy of Religion* (transl. B.E. Meyer, Macmillan, London, 1906), p.148.
- 55 C. Russell and W.M.S. Russell, 'Language and Animal Signals', in N. Minnis (ed.), *Linguistics at Large* (Gollancz, London, 1971), pp.159-94, especially p.188.
- 56 Brown, *op.cit.*, p.60.
- 57 J. Rockwell, *Fact in Fiction* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974), p.159.
- 58 T.C. Lethbridge, *Ghost and Ghoul* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961), pp.41-7.
- 59 Deuel, *op.cit.*, pp.167-70; W. Bullock, 'Idols of Tenochtitlan', in Deuel, *op.cit.*, pp.170-74.
- 60 C. Russell and W.M.S. Russell, 'A Minoan Altar in Present-Day Use?', *Folklore*, 82 (1971), pp.317-18.

- 61 Bardens, *op.cit.*, pp.128-31.
- 62 J.W. Day, *In Search of Ghosts* (Frederick Muller, London, 1969), pp.127, 131-5; cf. Russell and Russell, *op.cit.* (Minoan Altar), p.318. For the horsemen, see I. Rodger, 'Megalithic Mathematics', *Listener*, 82 (1969), pp.731-4.
- 63 P. Glob, *The Bog People* (transl. R. Bruce-Mitford, Paladin, London, 1971), p.60.
- 64 *Evening Standard*, 27 April 1965.

*The Ghost of Old Mrs. Leakey* Theo Brown

- 1 *Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, London, 1865, p.219, Canto II, xi. Also p.610, Note 16.
- 2 Sir Walter Scott: *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 3rd Edition 1887, pp.313-6.
- 3 John Dunton: *Athenianism 1710* (STC G 14046): Project XVII, 'The Apparition-Evidence', pp.351-60. Based on an MS written in 1690 by the Rev. John Quick, one time vicar of Brixton, South Devon. It was quoted at full-length in "Narrative of a Spectre", *Western Antiquary* VI (1886) pp.36-8 and 69-71. See also p.102. Also Hilary Binding and Douglas Stevens: *Minehead: a New History*, 1977, pp.124-7.
- 4 S.P. 161/383. See also *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic) for 1637/8. Rolls Series, London 1869, vol. CCCLXXXIII, Charles I, p.276. But the summary refers to "the asserted apparition at Minehead of 'old Mr. Leakey'" (!).
- 5 Theo Brown: *The Fate of the Dead* (Mistletoe Books, 1979), p.19.
- 6 The only John Leakey buried at Minehead died 9th March 1628/9 (Parish Register), six years before his grandmother. Age not stated.
- 7 For most of my information on the political background I am indebted to Canon A.R. Winnett, DD, who has most generously allowed me to make use of

- his unpublished paper "The Strange Case of Bishop John Atherton" based very largely on the Wentworth Papers in the Sheffield Public Library. Also W.A. Phillips: *History of the Church of Ireland*, 1933-4 pp.27-8.
- 8 See entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, and comment by William Axon in *Western Antiquary* VI, p.102.
  - 9 John Dunton, *op.cit.*, p.355. I am unable to substantiate any part of The Barnstaple episodes. That William's widow, Lordisneare Leakey married John Knill in 1620 is the only solid fact we have to go on, (apart from Young Mrs. Leakey's confused report). I owe this to Mr. Morris of the Devon Athenaeum.
  - 10 Winnett, *op.cit.* (n.7 above).
  - 11 *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic) Charles I*, Rolls Series vol.16, CCCLXI (1640), pp.520-1.
  - 12 Nicholas Bernard (or Barnard), *The Penitent Death of a Woefull Sinner*, 1640 and 1642.  
       ----       ----- *The Penitent Death of John Atherton* 1641.
  - 13 Nicholas Bernard, *The Case of John Atherton...* fairly represented...1710, p.11.
  - 14 Chiefly from Bernard. See also John Quick, *Bishop Atherton's Case Discussed*....1711, which includes an eye-witness account of the execution by a Mr. John Price who was present.
  - 15 Notably *The Life and Death of John Atherton*.... 1641, in verse with a woodcut frontispiece.
  - 16 John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, 1927/ Pan Books 1978.
  - 17 Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, *op.cit.*, (note 2 above) p.316.
  - 18 Herbert Kille, "West Country Hobby-Horses & Cognate Customs", *Proceedings of the Somerset Arch. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, LXXVII (1931), pp.63-77.



- 19 Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1886 ed. vol. I, pp.253-4 (Pt.I, Sec.2, Mem.1, Subs.2.); Émile Souvêtre: "Ile de Lok" in *Le Foyer Breton*, 1856 ed., p.76, fn.1.
- 20 *The Tryall, Condemnation and Execution of Three Witches*....1682 (STC 2175).
- 21 L.B. Thorneycroft, *The Doones*, 5th ed. 1971. Cites the rare pamphlet about the family by a descendant Ida M. Browne ("Audrie Doon") of 1901.
- 22 *The History of John Gregg*....ND, c.1700?
- 23 Oral traditions collected by Mrs. Anne Church. R.F. Bidgood: *Two Villages* (Morthoe & Woolacombe), 1964, pp.27-35. Compare also with the Morwenstow traditions recorded by R.S. Hawker, *Footsteps of Former Men in Far Cornwall*, 1870/1948.
- 24 *The Poetical Works of Samuel T. Coleridge*, ed. William Michael Rossetti. N.D. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" Part III.
- 25 James Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae*, Familiar Letters, 5th Edit. 1678, p.64, I, i, No.XLIV, 'from Lions', 5th Dec. 1621.
- 26 From Rear Admiral K.M. Lawder, 29 Feb. 1980.
- 27 K.M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies*, 1976, p.303.
- 28 Robert Hunt, *The Popular Romances of the West of England*, 3rd ed. 1908, p.151.
- 29 The Rev. George Glyn Scraggs, *Questions Resolved* II, 1817, p.207.
- 30 Lowes, *op.cit.*, p.457.

#### Author's Note

I have tried to make this very complicated story as simple as I can, whittling down a vast heap of photocopy material from the British Library and the Public Record Office. But I have also spent considerable time in Libraries, looking through parish registers and have visited Bawdrip and Huish Champflower. But after 350 years the trail

is very cold indeed. The harbour at Minehead has suffered many changes since the ghost stood on the quay and hailed the boats; no one knows where her son's house stood. We don't know where her grave is at the church. Ruth Tongue used to know a Leakey descendent, but I can't trace her. However a lot of people are interested in the old mystery and I am grateful to all who have shared their knowledge with me or who have made investigations for me. Firstly Canon Winnett, who has tackled many State papers relating to the political aspects; then the Dean of Cashel, Dr. R.F.V. Heuston and Mr. R.B. MacCarthy of Trinity College, Dublin who kindly answered questions from the Irish side, albeit negatively. Then David Bromwich of the Somerset County Library and Robin Bush, Assistant County Archivist for Somerset for useful information, Mr. J.E. Hurley the Editor of the West Somerset Free Press, and Mr. Douglas Stevens for their generosity. Nor can I omit the great help given by my old friend Professor Christopher Frayling of the Royal College of Art for obtaining photo-stats of the almost illegible Report of the alleged apparition at Minehead. Also the patience and assistance of the Exeter librarians.

*The Restless Dead* H.R. Ellis Davidson

- 1 *Eyrbyggja Saga*, ed. E.O. Sveinsson and M. Thordarson, *Islendzk Fornrit* IV, Reykjavik 1935, ch. 50-55.
- 2 *Eiríks Saga rauða* 5. See G.M. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Norse Discovers of America*, reprinted Oxford 1970, p. 39.
- 3 *Brennu-Njáls Saga* 106 (shower of burning blood before Battle of Clontarf); *Sturlunga Saga* II, 41: I, pp. 331-2 in J.H. McGrew's trans., New York 1970 (series of verses spoken by figures appearing in dreams before Battle of Orlygstad; these however are slightly ambiguous, and could refer

to the blood which is to be shed in battle).

- 4 *Rev Celt* 17 (1896) pp.213, 226.
- 5 D.J. Schove, 'Visions in N.W. Europe...and Dated Auroral displays', *Journ Brit Arch Ass* (series 3) 13 (1950) pp.35ff., 43.
- 6 Skalholt became the see of the Bishop of Iceland in 1056.
- 7 R.T. Christianson, *The Dead and the Living*, *Studia Norvegica* 2, Oslo 1946, pp.38ff.
- 8 *Eyrbyggja Saga* 56: 'Snorri Goði went south to get the body, and went into the women's room at Hrossholt after Styr, when Styr had sat up and put his arm round the waist of the farmer's daughter'.
- 9 *Heiðarvíga Saga* 10 (from the early part of the saga, the original of which was destroyed in a fire and rewritten from memory).
- 10 Jón Arnason, *Íslenzkar Thjoðsögur og Æfintyri*, Reykjavík 1954, I, p.220 (I, p.227 in 1862 ed.). In the version of the story added to a late MS of *Eyrbyggja Saga*, the name has been changed to *Mani-Ljotur*, prompting the question as to whether this could have been suggested by the word *Urðarmani* used in the saga.
- 11 In a note to his translation of the sage (*Story of the Ere-Dwellers*, *Saga Library* II, London 1892, p.289), Morris writes: 'No allusion to it (i.e. the 'Moon of Weird') exists elsewhere in the literature that we are aware of'. Andrew Lang retells the tale in *A Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, London 1897, but the only parallel he suggests are the moving lights sometimes reported in tales of modern hauntings.
- 12 H.R.E. Davidson (with P. Gelling), *The Chariot of the Sun*, London 1969, pp.140ff.
- 13 W. Henderson, *Folklore of the Northern Countries*, Menston, Yorks, 1866, p.45. I owe this reference to Lance Bronnenkant.

- 14 K. Maurer, *Isländische Volkessagen*, Leipzig 1860, p.26.
- 15 Christiansen (note 7 above) pp.65ff.
- 16 Ibid. pp.70-1; cf. J. Simpson, *Icelandic Folktales and Legends*, London 1972, pp.52ff. and K. Maurer (note 14 above) pp.26-7.
- 17 *Grettis Saga* 32; for parallels in later folktales, see Simpson (above) pp.44ff.
- 18 K.M. Briggs, *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales* B1, London 1971, pp.572-3, taken from R. Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, p.367.
- 19 R.T. Christiansen, *Migratory Legends*, FFC 175, Helsinki 1958, p.72, 4065 (Ghosts from the Land fight Ghosts from the Sea). I owe this reference to Jacqueline Simpson. For Lapp eggs. see J. Quigstad, FFC 60, p.42, no.20.
- 20 For uses of the word in Norwegian, see W.A. Craigie, *Scandinavian Folklore*, London 1896, p.328.
- 21 For folklore about seals in Scotland and Ireland, see D. Thomson, *The People of the Sea: A Journey in Search of the Seal Legend*, new ed. London 1965. cf. W.T. Dennison, *Orkney Folklore and Traditions*, Kirkwall 1961, pp.62ff.
- 22 For the use of verse, see Craigie (note 20 above) p.299, Simpson (note 16 above) pp.108, 110 and Christiansen (note 7 above) p.77.
- 23 Christiansen (note 7 above) pp.13ff.
- 24 *Eyrbyggja Saga* 34: 'The oxen used to pull Thorodd were troll-ridden, and beasts which came near Thorolf's cairn went mad and howled themselves to death'; *Grettis Saga* 33 has mention of cattle driven mad so that they gored one another, and how 'no one dared venture up the valley with a horse or a dog, since it would be killed forth-with'.

- 25 J. Knox-Mawer, *A South Sea Spell*, London 1975, pp.135-6.
- 26 Briggs (note 18 above), p.597.
- 27 S. Baring-Gould, *A Book of Folklore* (undated), p.33.
- 28 M.C. Balfour, 'Legends of the Carrs', *Folklore* 2 (1891) pp.160ff.
- 29 William of Newburgh, ed. R. Howlett, London 1884, trans. J. Stevenson (*The Church Historians of England* IV, ii, 1853-6) Book V, ch.22-24.
- 30 W. Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, trans. M.R. James, London 1923 (Cymmrodorion Record Series 9) 27-8, pp.110ff.
- 31 Saxo Grammaticus, *History of the Danes*, vol.I, trans. Fisher and Davidson, Cambridge 1979, p.26.
- 32 For instance, the *Chronicle of Jervaux* has a story of an Abbot buried in a church compelled to leave before Mass because he had died excommunicated. The Archbishop summoned the dead priest responsible and ordered him to give the Abbot absolution. Other instances of a similar kind can be found in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. (J.A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable*, London 1932, p.92). I am grateful to Richard Bowyer and Theo Brown for these references.
- 33 E.M. Leather, *The Folklore of Herefordshire*, Hereford 1912, p.30 (from the story of Black Vaughan).
- 34 Sir Arthur Grimble, *A Pattern of Islands*, London 1952, pp.154-5.
- 35 N. Chadwick, 'Dreams in Early European Literature', *Celtic Studies: Essays in Memory of Angus Matheson*, ed. J. Carney, D. Greene.

- 1 Gregory's authority was not discredited until the Reformation; Lewes Lavater, for example, wrote "As touching St. Gregory's Dialogues, I cannot hide (which many have noted before me) that many things are contained in them that are nothing true, but altogether like old wives' tales. Not because the holy father hath written these things of malice, but for that he being too credulous hath put many things into his books, rather upon other men's report, than that he himself knew them certainly to be true."
- 2 Latin text in Migne, PL 77, 369.
- 3 Fordun and Bower, *Scotichronicon*, sub annis 1307, 1305; Brewer's *Dictionary of Miracles*, page 460.
- 4 Latin text in Migne, PL 77, 384; cf. Delehaye, *Legends of the Saints*, pp.186-7.
- 5 e.g. Hugh of Saint Victor, Migne, PL 176, 584.
- 6 e.g. Richard of Saint Victor, Migne, PL 196, 12-3.
- 7 Latin text in *Eulogium Historiarum* (Rolls Series 9), vol. I, page 284.
- 8 cf. Gennadius, Migne, PL 58, 985; Isidore, Migne PL 82, 398.
- 9 Latin text in *Acta Sanctorum* March III, p.571.
- 10 Latin text in *Liber Exemplorum* ed. A.G. Little (1908), pp.94-5.
- 11 *Ibid.* page 91.
- 12 Latin text in Salimbene, *Chronica*, sub anno 1233. (MGH Scriptores in Folio 32, page 74.)
- 13 The English version quoted is from Capgrave's *Chronicle of England* (Rolls Series 1) page 210. (spelling modernised).

- 1 Our knowledge of Pausanias's dates is sketchy; see H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature* (Methuen, London, 1964), p.413; P. Levi (transl.), *Pausanias, Guide to Greece, Vol.1* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971), p.1.
- 2 Pausanias, 6.6.7-11, with a few omissions (translations of Greek and Latin passages quoted are my own).
- 3 T. Brown, *The Fate of the Dead* (D.S. Brewer for the Folklore Society, Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979), p.27.
- 4 Levi, *op.cit.*, pp.303-4, nn.50,51.
- 5 Pausanias, 6.6.4-5, 10.
- 6 Pliny the Elder, 7.47.
- 7 Levi, *op.cit.*, p.302, n.49.
- 8 Levi, *op.cit.*, p.301, n.47.
- 9 Strabo, 6.1.5; for Strabo's dates, see Rose, *op.cit.*, p.382.
- 10 *Grettis Saga*, 35; *Beowulf* 651ff.
- 11 Brown, *op.cit.*, e.g. pp.28-9.
- 12 These and other Type references are to A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (Academia Scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki, 1961).
- 13 (Nutt, London, 1894-6).
- 14 Homer, *Iliad*, 23.175-6; Euripides, *Hecuba*, 521-82.
- 15 V. Karageorghis, *Salamis in Cyprus* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1969), pp.28-31; J.V. Luce, *Homer and the Heroic Age* (Futura, London, 1979), pp.111-12.
- 16 Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 16 and 31.
- 17 L. Collison-Morley, *Greek and Roman Ghost Stories* (Argonaut, Chicago, 1968), p.16.

- 18 Lucian, *op.cit.*, 32.
- 19 R. Blum and E. Blum, *The Dangerous Hour* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1970), pp.52-3. Christina Hole, in her book *Haunted England* (Batsford, London, 1940), pp.86-7, mentions that the ghost of Lady Hoby at Bisham Abbey sometimes appears 'in reverse colouring, like a photographic negative, her face and hands being black and her dress white', but this rather emphasizes the general tendency to whiteness of modern European ghosts.
- 20 G. Allen, *The Evolution of the Idea of God* (Watts, London, 1931), Chapter 3.
- 21 Lucian, *op.cit.*, 16.
- 22 On burial and cremation among the Greeks, see Luce, *op.cit.*, pp.107-13; Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, pp.317-21; and the bibliographies in E. Vermoule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (University of California Press, London, 1979), pp.261-3, 265-6.
- 23 Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, p.317.
- 24 Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.22-7; Pliny the Elder, 7.44, 52-4.
- 25 Cicero, *op.cit.*, 2.23-4.
- 26 Pliny the Elder, 7.53.
- 27 G.W.van Beek, 'Frankincense and Myrrh', *Biblical Archaeologist*, 23 (1960), pp.69-95.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1957), p.158 n.8.
- 30 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.
- 31 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.9-10.
- 32 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7, 11; see also Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, p.320.



- 33 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.65-71. For Proclus (A.D.410-85), see D.R. Dudley and D.M. Lang (ed.), *The Penguin Companion to Literature*, Vol.4 (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.121.
- 34 Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, pp.70-76, especially the stories numbered 53,60,67,69 and 70.
- 35 Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, p.319.
- 36 Blum and Blum, *op.cit.*, p.320; W.M.S. Russell and C. Russell, 'The Social Biology of Werewolves', in J.R. Porter and W.M.S. Russell (ed.), *Animals in Folklore* (D.S. Brewer for the Folklore Society, Ipswich and Cambridge, 1978), pp.143-82, 260-69, especially p.152. The word *vrikolax* itself is related to Slav words for werewolf or vampire.
- 37 Lucian, *op.cit.*, 27-8.
- 38 C. Russell, 'The Environment of Ghosts', this volume.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Herodotus, 3.50; 5.92.
- 41 Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.27; for several later writers who have retold the story, see Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, p.59; for Simonides, see Rose, *op.cit.*, pp.111-15.
- 42 See Note 12.
- 43 G.H. Gerould, *The Grateful Dead* (Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1967).
- 44 W.M.S. Russell, 'Folktales and the Theatre', *Folklore* 92, 1981, pp.3-24.
- 45 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.60-61.
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- 89 Pliny the Elder, 7.176-7.
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- 92 F.H. Sandbach (ed. and transl.), *Plutarch, Fragments* (Heinemann, London, 1969), No.126, pp.240-42 (from the Scholiast on Euripides, *Alcestis*, line 1128).
- 93 Plutarch, *Cimon*, 1.
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- 95 Pliny the Younger, *op.cit.*, 7.27.
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- 99 For an excellent translation, see J. Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (transl. M. Hadas, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1956).
- 100 *Historia Augusta, Geta*, 2; cf. W.M.S. Russell, 'Saints, Tribes and Ancestors', *Biology and Human Affairs*, 40 (1975), 118-30.
- 101 Collison-Morley, *op.cit.*, pp.42-3.
- 102 Ammianus Marcellinus, 29.1.
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- 104 W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* (Methuen, London, 1968), pp.80-81, 267, 362-3 n.4 to Chapter 10.
- 105 F.R. Merrill (ed.), *Titi Macci Plauti Mostellaria* (Macmillan, London, 1972), pp.xvii-xviii.
- 106 L. Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Tradition of Comedy* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1974), p.79.

*Ghosts in the Old Testament and the  
Ancient Near East* J.R. Porter

- 1 Cf. D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol.II, 1927, § 810.
- 2 Amos ii, 1. Quotations from the Old Testament in this paper are from the *New English Bible*.
- 3 Cf. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic & Old Testament Parallels*, second edition, 1949, pp.60-1, lines 40-2, 46-8. The rendering in the text follows the translations of A.L. Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams in the ancient Near East*, 1956, pp.247-8 and H. Schmökel, *Das Gilgamesch Epos*, 1966, pp.74-5.

- 4 Cf. H.W.F. Saggs, 'Some Ancient Semitic Conceptions of the Afterlife', *Faith and Thought* 90 (1958), pp. 161-5.
- 5 *Job* x, 20-22.
- 6 Cf. e.g. Daniel's words in the Ugaritic legend of Aqhat:  
     The wings of the eagles let Baal break,  
     let Baal break the breast-bones of them,  
     if they fly over the grave of my son  
     and wake him out of his sleep.  
 Cf. J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 1978, p.119.
- 7 *Job* iii, 13-19.
- 8 The expression is found as early as the Sumerian myth 'Inanna's Descent to the Nether World', cf. ed. J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, second edition, 1955, p.54, line 82.
- 9 Cf. Saggs, *op.cit.*, pp.172-5.
- 10 Cf. R. Pettazzoni, *The All-Knowing God*, 1956, p.3.
- 11 Cf. W.O.E. Oesterley, *Immortality and the Unseen World*, 1921, p.160.
- 12 Cf. however, P. Dhorme, *La Religion Assyro-Babylonienne*, 1910, p.46, where he gives examples of a good *utukku*, which, as will be seen later, can sometimes mean the ghost of a departed person. However, it often has a wider sense and it is not clear whether, in these examples, it denotes a 'ghost' as we are defining it.
- 13 Cf. E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier*, 1931, p.131, lines 34-41.
- 14 Cf. A.H. Gardiner, *The Attitude of the Ancient Egyptians to Death and the Dead*, 1935, pp.19-24.
- 15 Cf. J. Vandier, *La Religion Égyptienne*, 1949, p.208.
- 16 *I Samuel* xxviii, 20.

- 17 Cf. Heidel, *op.cit.*, p.99, lines 89-91.
- 18 Cf. Pritchard, *op.cit.*, p.107, lines 19-20.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.57, lines 286-90.
- 20 The phrase of S.N. Kramer in Pritchard, *op.cit.*, p.52.
- 21 Cf. R.C. Thompson, *The devils and evil spirits of Babylonia*, vol.I, 1903, p.xxiv.
- 22 The basic texts concerning the seven evil demons are translated and transcribed in P. Dhorme, *op.cit.*, pp.43ff, 61f.
- 23 Cf. the Ugaritic term for 'ghosts', 'ilnym, used especially of gods of the underworld.
- 24 *I Samuel* xxviii, 13.
- 25 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.32, lines 26ff; p.34, lines 25f.
- 26 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.32, lines 30ff.
- 27 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.52, lines 25ff.
- 28 Cf. C. Frank, *Lamastu, Pazuzu und andere Dämonen. Ein Beitrag zur babylonischen - assyrischen Dämonologie, Mitteilungen der altorientalischen Gesellschaft XIV/2*, 1941, p.33.
- 29 Cf. Heidel, *op.cit.*, p.99, lines 83-4.
- 30 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.II, p.130, line 5ff.
- 31 Cf. Heidel, *op.cit.*, p.99, lines 152-3.
- 32 So in a list of ghostly visitants, we read of:  
     a forgotten ghost, or a ghost the name of  
     which is not mentioned, or a ghost which  
     has no one to care for it.  
     Cf. G. Castellino, 'Rituals and prayers against "Appearing Ghosts"', *Orientalia* 24, 1955, p.245.
- 33 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.61, lines 54ff.
- 34 But that ghosts could be pacified by being given food and drink is shown by the following incantation:

- Dead ghosts, which I know, dead ghosts in  
number which I do not know  
not good, who appear to me, this be your food,  
be your loaf, be your drink.  
Cf. Castellino, *op.cit.*, p.265, lines 21-3; also  
p.269, line 20.
- 35 Cf. Heidel, *op.cit.*, p.101, lines 150-1. In  
another text, we read of 'a ghost that was  
abandoned in the steppe', cf. Castellino, *op.cit.*,  
p.249, line 24.
- 36 Cf. *Exodus* xv, 12; *Psalms* lxxi, 20; *Jonah* ii, 6.  
The cognate Ugaritic word 'arṣ is used in the same  
sense, cf. Gibson, *op.cit.*, p.51, line 80; p.66,  
lines 8-9.
- 37 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.XXXI; p.41, line 4.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.XXXI f.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.42, line 27.
- 40 Cf. Castellino, *op.cit.*, p.245, line 8.
- 41 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, p.40, lines 21ff.
- 42 *Jeremiah* xxxi, 15.
- 43 Cf. W. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 1947, p.167.
- 44 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, vol.I, pp.44-5, lines 5ff.
- 45 Cf. Castellino, *op.cit.*, p.249, line 27; p.255,  
line 49; p.259, lines 14-15; p.269, lines 18-19.
- 46 Cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel I-II*, 1946, p.134.
- 47 Thus a man afflicted by ghosts protests:  
Dead people, why are you appearing to me, you  
whose towns are the ruins, whose food are bones?  
I have not gone to Cutha, the gathering of the  
ghosts.  
Why do you come after me?  
Cf. Castellino, *op.cit.*, p.247, lines 13-14.
- 48 Cf. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.42, lines 35ff.
- 49 Cf. H.W.F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*,  
1962, p.322.

- 50 Cf. e.g. the 'Dispute over Suicide', lines 55-68, in Pritchard, *op.cit.*, p.405 and the 'Song of the Harper', in *ibid.*, p.467.
- 51 Cf. the illustrations in H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1952, p.76.
- 52 For these two terms, cf. A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, third edition, 1957, pp.172f.
- 53 Cf. S.G.F. Brandon, *The Judgment of the Dead*, 1967, p.13.
- 54 Cf. C.H.S. Davis, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 1894, pp.98f.
- 55 These various texts are conveniently summarized in G. Maspero, *The Dawn of Civilization*, 1894, pp. 114f.
- 56 Cf. H.W.F. Saggs, 'Some Ancient Semitic Conceptions of the Afterlife', pp.162ff.
- 57 For a recent discussion of the possibilities, cf. J. Lust, 'On wizards and prophets', *Studies on Prophecy, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. XXVI, 1974, pp.133-9.
- 58 Cf. H.A. Hoffner, 'Second Millenium Antecedents to the Hebrew 'ob'', *Journal of Biblical Literature* vol.LXXXVI, 1967, pp.385-401.
- 59 For the most recent discussion of the term, cf. S.B. Parker, 'Rephaim', *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*, 1976, p.739.
- 60 Cf. especially, G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, 1963, pp.142f.
- 61 Cf. E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 1967, pp.49f.
- 62 Cf. *ibid.*, p.51.
- 63 Cf. *Genesis* iv, 7 and the comments of E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, 1964, p.32f.



- 64 E.g. it can be used for representations of beings other than Yahweh, cf. *Exodus* xx, 4; *Deuteronomy* iv, 16, 23, 25; v, 8.
- 65 Cf. G. Hölscher, *Die Profeten*, 1914, pp.84ff.
- 66 Cf. O. Eissfeldt, 'Das Alte Testament im Lichte der safatenischen Inschriften', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol.104, 1954, p.116.
- 67 Cf. F. Horst, *Hiob*, third edition, 1974, p.78.
- 68 *Job* xv, 14-16; xxv, 4-6.
- 69 Cf. e.g. the Egyptian 'Instruction of Amen-em-opet', XIX, lines 13ff., Pritchard, *op.cit.*, p.423.
- 70 The phrase of Horst, *op.cit.*, p.78. Cf. also N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job*, 1975, p.28.
- 71 Cf. in particular Ebeling, *op.cit.*, pp.122-56 and Castellino, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
- 72 Cf. e.g. C.H. Gordon, *Before the Bible. The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations*, 1962, pp.267ff.
- 73 The important essay by Jean Bottéro, 'La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne', *Death in Mesopotamia: XXVI<sup>e</sup> Rencontre assyriologique internationale* (Mesopotamia 8), ed. B. Alster, 1980, pp.25-52, only became available after the present article was completed. It confirms, with full documentation, what has been said above about Mesopotamian ghosts. Cf., for example, with reference to the generally hostile character of such beings, Bottéro's comment on p.40: 'pour un ou deux "bons *etemmu*", le nombre des "mauvais" ne se compte pas, si bien que même la simple "apparition" [onirique ou hallucinatoire] de l'un de ces fantômes était régulièrement tenue, à elle seule, pour de mauvais augurs.'

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