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The Pleasure of Haunting in Judith
Hermann’s *Nichts als Gespenster*

Brad Gerhardt

Given the title of her 2003 best-selling collection of stories, *Nichts als Gespenster* [*Nothing but Ghosts*], it is surprising that Judith Hermann included so few ghosts in the stories themselves. However, in the flurry of reviews, radio broadcasts, television interviews, and general hype which surrounded the debut, most commentators seem to have ignored the title of the collection as a point of reference for understanding the text. Hermann’s reputation as an author was mostly built on the success of her 1998 collection of stories, *Sommerhaus, später*, which became a critical and popular success based on its participation in a new, distinctively non-political wave of German fiction; its title, with its emphasis on *später* (later), was seized as indicative of the larger trend in pop fiction of infinitely deferring active participation in anything productive or positive. Because it was released less than five years

¹ “Not really spooky; more like comfortable, in a terrible way”; all translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

after her first wildly successful collection, perhaps too much attention was paid to the parallels between the two collections to appreciate *Nichts als Gespenster* on its own merits. This collection of stories, although it can hardly be termed horror fiction, nevertheless lends itself to an interpretation through the lens of haunting. Its title is decidedly vague but intriguing: Is Hermann discounting the presence of ghosts in her texts, or is she claiming that all her figures are, in their melancholy searching, nothing but ghosts themselves?

Although never precisely applying the term “ghost” to the book, many of the immediate press reactions focused on the haunting tone of Hermann’s stories: Christine Cosentio of Rutgers University writes that “alle Figuren befinden sich in einer Art Schwebezustand, der zumeist fortdauert [all of her figures find themselves in a sort of ‘floating’ condition which never really ends],” while Barbara Wegmann explains that “die Orte, an die Judith Hermann den Leser entführt, sie haben etwas Magisches, Verträumtes [the places to which Judith Hermann misleads the reader all have something magical, unreal about them].” Both these reviewers touch on the ephemerality of the figures in the stories, but do not pronounce judgment as to what this haunting quality might mean. In the decade that has passed since the debut of the novel, critics have reexamined this “haunting” aspect of the novel which contemporary commentators first articulated. In her analysis on the role of domesticity in Hermann’s collection, Monika Shafi pinpoints the restlessness of the characters as an update to the Gothic tradition of the haunted house, “no longer haunted by ghosts from the past but by the horror of the ennui and the everyday” (343). Fleeing the quotidian is a theme upon which nearly all Hermann scholars agree, but there have been a number of critics who have termed this tendency as being neo-Romantic in nature, most notably Thomas Borgstedt in his essay, “Imaginary Worlds: Judith Hermann and the Neoromanticism of the Present.”

Although the term neo-Romantic may be applicable in some respects (as Borgstedt notes for Hermann’s melancholy tone, rejection of social constructions, and yearning for the indefinable), the radical individuality posited by Romanticism is completely incompatible with Hermann’s characters, whose very identity and existence as subjects capable of thought and feeling are frequently called into question. Hermann’s reformation of the subject as a delocalized individual can be read more productively as an inversion of the Romantic idea of haunting as a projection of the self, where the modern subject—always already possessed by conflicting histories and identities—is the ghost who longs for any real place to call home. The effects of this “placelessness” can be

examined through both Foucault's model of heterotopia as well as Marc Augé's exploration of non-places in contemporary society. While neither of these texts specifically address the idea of haunting, they do both acknowledge the ruptures of modernity as being evident in particular places, whether imaginary or literal. In two of Hermann's stories, "Zuhälter" and "Nichts als Gespenster," haunted spaces appear as reflections of or parallels to the placelessness of her characters. These wraith-like characters in Hermann's texts are descriptions of the ways in which identity is constructed and deconstructed by the subject in the modern world as a function of both space and time—an acknowledgement that the pleasure in haunting in the postmodern world is a function of our disturbed relation to it. The textual sites of these hauntings are the palimpsests of identity, the contested areas between past and present.

The profound changes posited as a result of modernity, which shape the characterization in Hermann's texts, are described by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* [*Dialectic of the Enlightenment*]. They address, in particular, the idea of haunting in their section entitled "Theorie der Gespenster" ["On the Theory of Ghosts"], in which they diagnose modernity as having a "disturbed relationship [gestörte Verhältnis] to the dead," explaining the cause as such:

man verdrängt die Geschichte bei sich und anderen, aus Angst, daß sie einen an den Zerfall der eigenen Existenz gemahnen könne, der selber weitgehend im Verdrängen der Geschichte besteht.

[We suppress history out of the fear that it could remind us of the breakdown of our own existence; that we are forgotten, however, is in large measure a result of this suppression of history.] ("Theorie der Gespenster")

Postmodern haunting is therefore not merely a resurgence of the past to inform the present, as was largely the case in Gothic fiction, but a reminder that the past remains inaccessible and suppressed. Adorno and Horkheimer make an important distinction when they note that the modern subject does not fear being destroyed and forgotten, but rather only fears being reminded of this inevitable fate. It is not a fear of death in particular, but a fear of the meaningless remains, the reminder that with death comes the institutionalized process of decay and oblivion: "die Individuen reduzieren sich auf die bloße Abfolge punkthafter Gegenwart, die keine Spur hinterlassen [individuals are reduced to a simple procession of tiny presents (in the temporal sense), which leave no traces]." Because the Enlightenment's project of rationality stripped ghosts of

their supernatural power, in relation to the dead, when we are confronted with their physical remains we are forced to consider life merely as a succession of temporal “presents” (Gegenwarten) that cease with death, and we must consider the individual as a construction of these presents, denying the idea of their continuity. And that is the horror of it: Everything we consider contemporaneous with ourselves is destroyed at death, and the past can never actually be recalled into the present because all footsteps of meaning are erased by the physical reality of death.

In a similar vein, Michel Foucault, in his famous essay, “Des espaces autres” [“On Other Spaces”], explains what he considers to be another reaction to this “disturbed” relationship to the dead that Adorno and Horkheimer describe. Foucault develops the term “hétérotopie” to explain the conflation of physical spaces in contemporary society, and one of his prime examples of this is the cemetery. He explains that while an earlier era with a belief in the utopic “heaven” of an afterlife kept cemeteries at the center of their cities, that with the advent of modernity, death was seen as a disease and cemeteries were pushed farther away, being shut off from everyday life. He claims that this is because:

à partir du moment où l'on n'est plus très sûr d'avoir une âme, que le corps ressuscitera, il faut peut-être porter beaucoup plus d'attention à cette dépouille mortelle, qui est finalement la seule trace de notre existence parmi le monde et parmi les mots.

[At precisely the moment at which people are no longer sure whether they have souls or whether their bodies will regain life, they find it necessary to begin paying more attention to the mortal body, which is after all the only trace of our existence between the world and language.] (“Des espaces autres”)

The object of fascination here is the physical body (cette dépouille mortelle); attention must be paid to the physical because we have lost faith in the idea of the soul, and all we are left with as a referent for our idea of ourselves is the body itself. But this is unsatisfying because, although it is the only element of ourselves which continues after death, the longing for a soul and a resurrection remains. Thus the body becomes a site for imaginative remapping, for aberrance, and for rewriting history. Although this can certainly be read pessimistically as a negation of individuality, the reappearance of ghosts in two of Hermann's stories is actually associated with pleasure through accepting one's own existence as a fractured self or a ghost. The positive inscription of this loss of individuality is part of a postmodern fascination with surfaces and collage;

the body itself becomes a heterotopia, another ahistorical surface upon which identities write and erase themselves.

The postmodern flair to Hermann's descriptions of haunting is evident in "Zuhälter," where she uses the interrelation between bodies and ghosts to discount the value of depth (in Foucault's model, the utopia) in favor of surfaces (heterotopias). "Zuhälter" tells the story of a narrator's visit to a former lover, the painter Johannes, in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic. The apartment in which Johannes is living belonged to a dead Chinese woman whose daughter runs his gallery, and this is where the haunting begins. The Chinese woman appears during rather strange moments throughout the story, and although the narrator is fascinated by her appearances, she seems to have little interest in learning about the history of the woman. She does not appear during moments of turmoil or anger, but rather she is seen sitting at the table with Johannes and the narrator during a moment of sheer boredom or walking through the apartment while Johannes laughs. The narrator is also endlessly fascinated by the objects belonging to the dead woman: "ich faßte alles an, roch an allem [I touched everything, smelled everything]" (Hermann 162). Yet her interest remains in the objects themselves; she does not seem to be curious about the life of the woman behind them. This paradoxical disinterest/attraction ties together both Adorno and Horkheimer's claim that the modern subject wants to suppress history, as well as Foucault's claim that the interest in the body increases as the belief in the soul wanes. The narrator tries on the clothes of the dead woman, wondering what she must have looked like; she ignores the political, ethnic, and personal implications of the clothes, and they become a merely physical signifier. This is the opposite of the archive, which contains objects because of their meaning, because they "prove" the histories they are said to relate. The objects in this story do not tell a story; they attempt no grand narrative and they reference no social, political, or emotional past.

These objects, as well as the characters, remain ahistorical and (in some sense) misunderstood, but this very lack of understanding creates a new method of relation to haunting which engenders pleasure instead of terror. In her analysis of the role of houses in Hermann's oeuvre, Monika Shafi interprets the Chinese woman as a sort of liminal space in the narrative or a convergence of the past and present: "Thus [she] seems to be both dead and alive, a ghost who simultaneously haunts the narrator's imagination and appears to comfort her" (348). This dead woman indeed seems more alive to the narrator than Johannes does, for while lying next to him, she thinks to herself, "ich hätte

ebensogut neben einem Toten liegen können [I could have just as well been lying next to a corpse]” (169). The border between dead and living is pushed further by the overly sexualized women with whom the narrator is frequently confronted (an unsurprising reality, considering that a “Zuhälter” is a pimp). As soon as she passes the border into the Czech Republic, she is appalled by the sights that greet her:

am Straßenrand standen jetzt kleine Holzbuden, in denen man Coca-Cola und Süßigkeiten kaufen konnte und hinter deren bis zum Boden reichenden Fensterscheiben nackte Mädchen unter einer Discokugel und in rotes Licht getaucht vor sich hin tanzten. (156)

[On the side of the road there were these little wooden shacks in which you could buy Coca-Cola and candy and in whose front, behind floor-to-ceiling windows, danced naked girls under a disco ball, bathed in red light.]

The language points to the dead consumerism of the sex industry—these girls are as available as a Coca-Cola and grant them about as much life as the spinning disco ball has. The lifelessness of prostitutes is carried further when Johannes takes the narrator to the nightclub in which the prostitutes “trugen weiße Kleider, die im Schwarzlicht gespenstisch aufleuchteten [wore white dresses, which gleamed ghostly in the black light]” (187). Ghosts, in this sense, are figures for which there is a discrepancy between their apparent physical state (dead or alive) and their corresponding perceived condition. The last image of Johannes that the narrator describes as she climbs into bed with him, and he holds her hand “solange, bis ich endlich nicht mehr an ihn denken mußte [so long, that finally I didn’t have to think about him at all]” (192), is a haunting one because Johannes literally disappears from her memory and from the text, even while his physical body remains beside her. For all of these seemingly real characters, their physical bodies are profoundly meaningless; they are merely sites of pleasure and dissipation—liminal zones of contact between life and death—but they neither recall nor create any sense of history or meaning.

The importance of liminal spaces in this text is clear when the narrator describes her drive home, which is engulfed in a thick fog. In the midst of her fears, she explains:

mit einem Mal hatte ich das Gefühl, mich in einer Art Zwischenwelt zu befinden. Ich dachte: Und wenn der Nebel sich lichtet, dann wird da etwas anderes sein, etwas Fremdes und Neues. (193)

[All at once I had the feeling that I was in some sort of in-between world. I thought that when the fog lifts, there will be something different, something strange and new.]

This “Zwischenwelt” (in-between world) is a heterotopia; it is a real place which is set apart from other real places and yet is designed to create imaginary space. Foucault’s primary example of heterotopia is the mirror; in a mirror we imagine that we see ourselves, but what we actually see is merely the surface of the mirror. In this case, the heterotopia’s transparency helps us to forget the real and lose ourselves in the imaginary. For the narrator, the fog enables the car to become a heterotopia, a real object with mythical dimensions as it will transport her beyond the world. Unfortunately the fog only lasts until the German border. Although she imagines the freedom of a new world because she is an object in motion, the illusion collapses with the arrival in familiar space. This can be read as a critique of Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia, because it relies on a stable subject. For Hermann’s postmodern globetrotter, the apartment in Berlin is as strange and as distant as the one in Karlovy Vary; because she has no real home, she has no stable subject position. Therefore, to her, the “real” world is just as strange, as different, and as imaginary as any heterotopia she could come up with. Real and imaginary are just different modes of self-construction depending on where the subject considers itself to be. For a subject in motion, like the narrator, the transgression of spaces is not a progressive journey, or one that implies history, but a stagnant journey through successive “presents” which remain self-enclosed and transitory.

The instability of the subject is emphasized further by the link between the physical body and the textual body. In Foucault’s analysis, he claims that the physical body is “la seule trace de notre existence parmi le monde et parmi les mots [the only trace of our existence between the world and language]” (“Des espaces autres”). Foucault consciously distinguishes between the physical world (le monde) and the linguistic world (les mots), a distinction which is reasonable in terms of haunting; people can be haunted either by ghosts (physical manifestations), or by the lingering writings, memories, or words of the deceased (linguistic manifestations). Not only is “Zuhälter” the only one of the seven stories to feature an actual ghost, but it is also the most heavily intertextual by far. The narrator describes Johannes’s reading of an Italian poet (177) and Nietzsche (183); reads the obscene letters from his girlfriend (184); and describes his habits picked up from Berthold Brecht (163). She also

notices the choir singing “Ave Maria” (166), and Johannes quoting lyrics from pop songs (169, 177). She references the French fairy tale of Bluebeard as she enters Johannes’s atelier (182), and the entire motif of the dead Chinese haunting the house comes directly from Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest*. With such a vast archive of cultural intertexts, the question remains: Why? The narrator quotes all of these in passing, as though she is uninterested in exploring their implications. They remain fragmentary and meaningless, closely resembling the description of memory that the narrator gives:

Es ist so, als würde ich eine Kiste schließen, eine Kiste voll von altem, sinnlosem, wundervollem Zeug, und im letzten Moment fiel mir etwas ein, ein einziger, winziger Gegenstand ganz auf dem Boden der Kiste, zuunterst, und ich würde die Kiste noch einmal öffnen und alles wieder herausholen, aber das kleine Ding bleibe unauffindbar, der einzige Beweis seiner Existenz meine Ahnung. (192)

[It is as though I were closing a box, a box full of old, meaningless, wonderful stuff, and at the last moment I remembered something, some single, silly thing down at the very bottom of the box, and then I would open up the box again and take everything out, but the tiny thing would remain untraceable, the only evidence for its existence being my premonition.]

For the narrator, the only proof of existence is the premonition of existence; she feels as though there might actually be something there, but because the object cannot be grasped, all that proves its reality is her own feeling. This is the world of language: the play and interplay of meanings and premonitions, rather than the actual world of referents and objects. And so the haunting is a pleasant one because it is not burdened with meaning; the Chinese woman appears and disappears, as does the narrator. The words remain, but they themselves are a sort of heterotopia that alludes to an imaginary chain of events because of their harsh physical existence on the page. Thus the reader is also haunted by an imagined history that gives real pleasure.

Along a similar line of discourse, in the introduction to the second edition of his *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, Marc Augé acknowledges that contemporary authors are increasingly driven to reject current events and seek beauty in “non-places”: “they may do this by highlighting the enigmatic character of objects, of things disconnected from any exegesis of practical use” (xxii). This describes Judith Hermann’s style quite accurately, and it also acknowledges the possibility of beauty and pleasure in “non-places.” This term

was coined by Augé to describe the anthropological division of space in post-modernity. Postmodernity, or what he calls “supermodernity,” is not plagued with the same angst toward the past as modernity was. Instead of constructing places that make reference to the fractured and multiple pasts, supermodernity creates ahistorical places or non-places. He defines them as non-places because they are consciously not anthropological—they intentionally eschew history and individuality, and they do not integrate elements from previous eras which carry meaning. Augé juxtaposes place and non-place as being “rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased and the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten” (64). The palimpsestic nature of identity is an important concept to understanding haunting, for a palimpsest functions only as such over time; although the layers of text occupy the same space, through the constant erasure and rewriting, they do not occur simultaneously. The same is true of haunting; it requires figures who occupy the same place but whose presence at the time is called into question or seems ahistorical. In this sense, a ghost is a being both temporally and spatially disconnected from its natural anthropological surroundings.

Augé goes on to explain that “the traveller’s space may thus be the archetype of *non-place*” (70), meaning that tourists may enter or even transgress some legitimately anthropological places of a culture, but since it is not their own culture, and thus they remain detached and ahistorical. Travelers must position themselves as outsiders and must “observe” the culture rather than participate in it. In doing so, they may gain a “melancholy pleasure” (70). Later in Augé’s analysis, it becomes clear that this feeling of pleasure is not related to the traveler as a unique subject but to the position of the traveler as a performance. The interplay between subject and place is always negotiated not by the traveler but by the owner of that place; therefore the traveler is both isolated and standardized, “the only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard, in the silent dialogue he holds with the landscape-text addressed to him along with others, are his own: the face and voice of a solitude made all the more baffling by the fact that it echoes millions of others” (83). The traveler’s identity is ephemeral and relational; it is not dependent on an individual but on a role. Augé’s analysis resembles an insight by Günter Blamberg about one of Hermann’s characters: “seine Identität ist keine Frage der Substanz mehr, sondern der Performanz, der medialen Inszenierung [her identity is not a question of substance any longer, but rather a question of performance, of production through media]” (200).

A character without substance is, in other words, a ghost. The convergence of ghosts, travelers, and media takes place in Hermann's title story, "Nichts als Gespenster." While Helga Meise's analysis of Augé's concept of place and non-place has already linked Hermann to the category of writers and artists Augé speaks of in his introduction (128), her analysis is confined to *Sommerhaus, später*, warranting expansion into *Nichts als Gespenster*.

As the central story in her second collection, "Nichts als Gespenster" is one of the few Hermann stories that is told in third person; in this case, it is the story of Ellen and Felix, a German couple driving across America. The story is actually a frame story in which the present Ellen, living in Berlin with Felix and their child, looks back to a formative experience in Austin, Nevada. They stop in this tiny desert town for only one night, but in that time they meet two memorable individuals: a woman who they call a "ghost hunter" because she photographs ghosts, and Buddy, a local who talks to them so movingly about his son that they decide to have one of their own. The location in the middle of the desert is vital to an interpretation through Augé's concept of non-place because Hermann describes it as both a place and a non-place, or a place "zwischen den Orten [between places]" (223). Ellen's impression of the place is, however, also filtered through media as she sits in the desert looking at the abandoned hotel, "Amerika war ein Amerika der Kinofilme . . . Amerika existierte nicht, nicht wirklich [America was an America of the movies; America didn't exist, not really]" (205). The question of reality is a frequent one, whether something is "wirklich [real]" or not. When asking Annie, the bartender, about the ghosts that she assumes are in the second floor of the hotel, Ellen is told: "nein, nicht wirklich, nicht wirklich unheimlich, vielleicht gemütlich, auf eine gemeine Art [no, not really, not really spooky; more like comfortable, in a terrible way]" (211). Here, although Annie takes the presence of ghosts to be a fact, she does not find it to be "really" frightening; instead, it is a rather comfortable and pleasurable haunting.

The ghosts themselves are inseparable from the hotel; they are attached to the place almost parasitically, and the description of them blurs the distinction between the hotel as a previously historical place and the current displacement of its historicity:

Annie erwiderte ebenfalls ohne jede Ironie, daß das Hotel International vor vielleicht hundert Jahren von einem Goldgräber aus Virginia nach Austin, Nevada, in die Wüste gebracht worden sei, Balken für Balken und Stück für Stück. Mit dem Hotel seien die Geister gekommen, aus ihren Zufluchten und Nischen

gerissen und aufgeschreckt, sie seien mit dem alten Hotel nach Austin gekommen, und die Leute würden versuchen, ihnen in ihrer Heimatlosigkeit ein wenig beizustehen, das sei alles, fürchten würde man sie nicht. (210–11)

[Annie responded without a trace of irony that the Hotel International had been brought by a goldminer, maybe a hundred years or so ago, from Virginia to Austin, Nevada, beam by beam and piece by piece, carried into the desert. And with the hotel came all of its ghosts, frightened out of their hiding places and niches, they all came with the hotel to Austin, and the people here tried to comfort them in their homelessness, that was all; no one feared them.]

The hotel is a demonstration of the tension between place and non-place that Augé describes: the historical hotel is not completely erased by the anonymity of the desert (its history is still known), but similarly the present has not completely absorbed it either. The ghosts are liminal figures, appendages to the drama of identity that the hotel embodies. They are described as “homeless,” an appellation that could be applied as equally to Ellen and Felix as to the ghosts.

Indeed the link between the ghosts and the characters is quite explicit in this story. The ghost hunter returns after several hours and shows them her album of ghost documentation, which Ellen later denies as simply being photographic errors or anomalies but is quite affected by them at that moment. The ghost hunter ends by saying, “diese Geister da oben können sich nicht abfinden mit dem Leben [those ghosts up there never could figure out life at all]” (229). She then asks whether Ellen and Felix would like to be photographed as well, and they all file out into the desert, in front of the hotel to do so. In this moment, Ellen thinks that “die wußte, daß sie dieses Foto niemals zu Gesicht bekommen würde und plötzlich voller Erstaunen dachte, daß es eines von 36 Fotos auf einem Film voller Geister sein würde [she knew that she would never see the photo, and suddenly she thought, to her amazement, that it would be simply one of 36 photos of ghosts on the roll]” (230). This moment has been the subject of a number of critical discussions. J. Alexander Bareis takes it as an example of what he terms the “Ästhetik des Augenblicks [aesthetic of the moment],” a demonstration of Hermann’s desire to highlight the ephemerality of the moment and the mortality of feeling (137). Thomas Borgstedt looks to the photographer herself as a demonstration of the neo-Romantic tendencies in Hermann’s work, or an alter ego of the narrator (222). Oliver Ruf interprets the photograph as an execution, explaining that “der symbolische Tötungsakt des Photographen kulminiert in einer Objektsbildung des photographierten

Subjekts [the symbolic murder which photography commits culminates in the objectification of the photographed subject]" (197). Uta Stuhr sees this last photo of the thirty-six as being essentially the same as those of the ghosts, claiming that Hermann's stories themselves are "eine Bestandsaufnahme nicht gelebten Lebens, die an keiner Stelle vor dem Kult der Indifferenz auch nur leise erschauert. Das ist das eigentlich Gespenstische an diesen Erzählungen [an inventory of unlived life, which in no single moment departs from the cult of indifference. That is the really haunting thing about these texts]" (51).

The pessimistic interpretation of Hermann's work that many of these critics suggest, however, is not precisely granted by the text. The photograph is a moment of triumph for Ellen, which is exactly the opposite of what Uta Stuhr claims. Ellen chooses to live in the moment of the photograph; she chooses to grab Buddy's hand and feels completely "zuversichtlich und voller Kraft und Stärke [confident and full of power and strength]" (230). Although this feeling may not last more than the moment of the photograph itself, this moment is intense and full of life. The characters may be hardly more substantial or real than the ghosts that may or may not exist, but their momentary happiness seems to nullify the critique inherent in "insubstantiality" and posit a very definite pleasure in identifying with the subjectless, the opaque, and the ghostly. This may not precisely be a Nietzschean affirmation, but it is certainly not a nihilistic resignation either.

The pleasure in ambiguity in both "Nichts als Gespenster" and "Zuhälter" is perfectly in keeping with Hermann's postmodern critique of stability and identity. In both these instances of haunting, Hermann acknowledges the "disturbed" relation of the modern subject to the dead, but in deconstructing the entire concept of a stable identity, she reveals the postmodern subject's disturbed relation to itself/selves. She does not offer a particular thesis or theory of existence, which is in keeping with her project since such a positive pronouncement would contradict her aim because, since for her, the modern subject is incapable of such pronouncements. Her travel narratives construct a world of heterotopias and non-places, but without the fear and the despair that many critics associate with these interchangeable destinations. Instead, Hermann is using travel as a metaphor for the performativity of the subject; anyone (with the means) can have these experiences, visit these places, and be comforted in that anonymity. Perhaps there are no longer such things as ghosts. Then again, by denying them, perhaps we have become the ghosts ourselves.

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