

Idea for a Ghost Story

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'Our Ghost Stories', 'Ghostland', 'The Ghosts of Spirit', 'I am a Ghost', 'A Treatise on Ghosts'. These titles would all do the job for what is the most fantastic of all ghost stories – ourselves.

I have seen at least three excellent movies where the characters are haunted by ghosts, only to discover in a surprising twist of events that they are the ghosts. And something deep, very deep, resonates with us, for we, the audience, are the actual ghosts; we always have been and always will be. And when we see this, Spirit descends, and we are at peace – real peace – for there's nothing to frighten us anymore, because we don't really exist.

We inhabit a literal ghost land, made up of seeming appearances, that when looked at very, very closely, disappear before our own ghostly eyes. We run in terror to our grand stories – the stories of saviours and science and everything in between – and all we find are more stories; mostly dry, self-deceptive academic treatises that desperately hide what they truly are – treatises on ghosts.

And in this ghost land we, the real ghosts, like the characters in the movies, are often frightened by our stories of the ghosts of the so-called dead. But actually, more terrifying than our ghost stories, are our stories of the so-called living. And our bad stories have an extraordinary power to terrify, because we have such powerful stories of what is good.

As ghosts we simultaneously exist and don't; we are the ghosts of Spirit playing at being haunted. And Spirit is the eternal mystery, the ever Unseen, playing the game, I am Ghost. Just look. Try to find yourself. You can't, because all we have to prove that we exist is a story, a thought, a sensation of life happening. And yet, something is. That is undeniable. Something is looking, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling... and thinking, but it's not me; I am a ghost. Or, you could say more accurately, I Am; I'm just not what I think I am – a real person in a real, real world.

You read this, and a great resistance arises. You scream in anger as you point to your body and your mind and the world, with its history now documented on Facebook and Twitter, and say, 'See, I exist.'

And I say, yes, as an apparition conjured up by my senses, you do. As does the world, as do I. Like movies on the screen, we have the qualities of colour and shape and sound, and even more, but we're still flickering images appearing real, that's all. We can't even say that these ephemeral wisps are produced by the brain, for even the brain is a ghost. But the apparent world is not the problem; it's the ghosts who inhabit it and who feel separate from it that are.

The ghosts of our stories are frightened to death by mirrors; because in these reflective surfaces they see that they don't exist. But we, the real ghosts, have mirrors that deceive and keep us from recognizing what we truly are. First, we have our physical mirrors that confirm that we are real (although not so for babies, who see something, but not their fictional selves). Then we have each other, and the stories that we tell. These, more than anything else, tell us that we're actually real. Rather than just images on a screen.

And yet, even in the mirrors that we have, we have clues for our utter lack of real substance. The image in the silvered glass changes imperceptibly over time, which, amazingly, is always now. And the stories of self and other, they too change, until, like the image in the old photo, we can hardly recognize then and now. Like the old woman who rejects the picture taken a few seconds ago as being

of herself, now; for she is either clutching onto the memory of years gone past, or re-entering the innocence of babies, and the mystery of what truly is. Or maybe a bit of both, until she dissolves into Spirit.

Can we easily see this, our ghostly nature, and be free, knowing that words themselves are ghost-like; shifting like sand as we try to grasp with our ghostly minds, knowing that language is the primary ingredient in the recipe for creating ghosts. Language is like the veritable hall of mirrors that gives us so many versions of ourselves, except what actually is. If language does work, as in a poem by Rumi or Kabir, it's because Spirit has infused its words with mystery, and they have become a wonder, not easily grasped, and like a crack in a mirror, lets in a sliver of light.

For some, the ghost story of the living is so fearful that there is the sudden recognition that they are the ghost. And there is a great freedom in that, but not for the ghost, but from it. There is just a great freedom, but for no separate one. If it is claimed and storied, then we're back in ghost land. And there's also nothing wrong with that, either; after all, nothing's really going on, except the Mystery.

But for the ghosts, it's an awful haunting.

27 February 2018