



Haunted Houses, Haunted Texts

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My work aims at analysing the dynamics of the haunted house by considering it under a postcolonial perspective. I considered this issue from the *identity, literary* and *textual* point of view, by trying to find out the characteristics the ghostly identity shares with contemporary selfhoods and particularly with queer identities. This is the reason why I kept as landmarks the main symbolic frames adopted in cultural studies that is hybridity, otherness and body.

Then I focussed my attention on the domestic setting as a meaningful frame where ghosts haunting may be represented as symbolising the postcolonial relationship between Self and Other. In doing that I considered three accounts of *haunted texts* that is three different representations featuring the ghost and the domestic setting: Lewis Carroll's poem *Phantasmagoria*, Will Self's novel *How the Dead Live* and finally the film *The Others* by Alejandro Amenabar.

What I found out in my path of analysis is that the ghost haunting, besides being a traditional and standardised literary *topos*, also works as a symbolic representation carrying on some relevant meanings – related to hybridity, otherness, body and postcolonial criticism.

The ghost emerges as a queer identity, since it inhabits the third space existing across the main boundary human mind can think about: life/death dichotomy. Thanks to its hybridity, the ghosts may be easily associated to other postcolonial identities perceived as "bastards" in terms of gender, ethnicity and class.



As an expression of the living death, which violates not only the borders of life, but also those of the home –the identity’s safe place – the domestic ghost plays the symbolic role of the Other, that means it embodies the absolute Otherness in opposition to living identities. The haunting may then be seen as a symbolic representation of the postcolonial relationship – or conflict – between Identity and Otherness, which involves fascination, fear, crossing of boundaries and self-construction.

Finally, even in considering the frame of the body, we can consider the ghost as a postmodern Self because it exists in spite of the lack of a physical structure. Since the spectre embodies the remoulding of biological boundaries, it can be compared to one of the most radical examples of post-human identity that is the virtual Self existing on the web as conceived in cyberpunk narration.

All those reasons make the domestic ghost an archetype of postcolonial Self. Far from being merely a literary cliché the spectre is also a symbolic, psychological and political shadow coming from our heart of darkness to haunt our lives, our identities and our houses.

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