

PARANORMAL



Haunting Images · **GHOST STORIES** · Occult Practices

2nd issue - Fall 2022
The Land of Ghosts



Photograph by Teye Gerbracht





2nd issue • Fall 2022

Thanks to

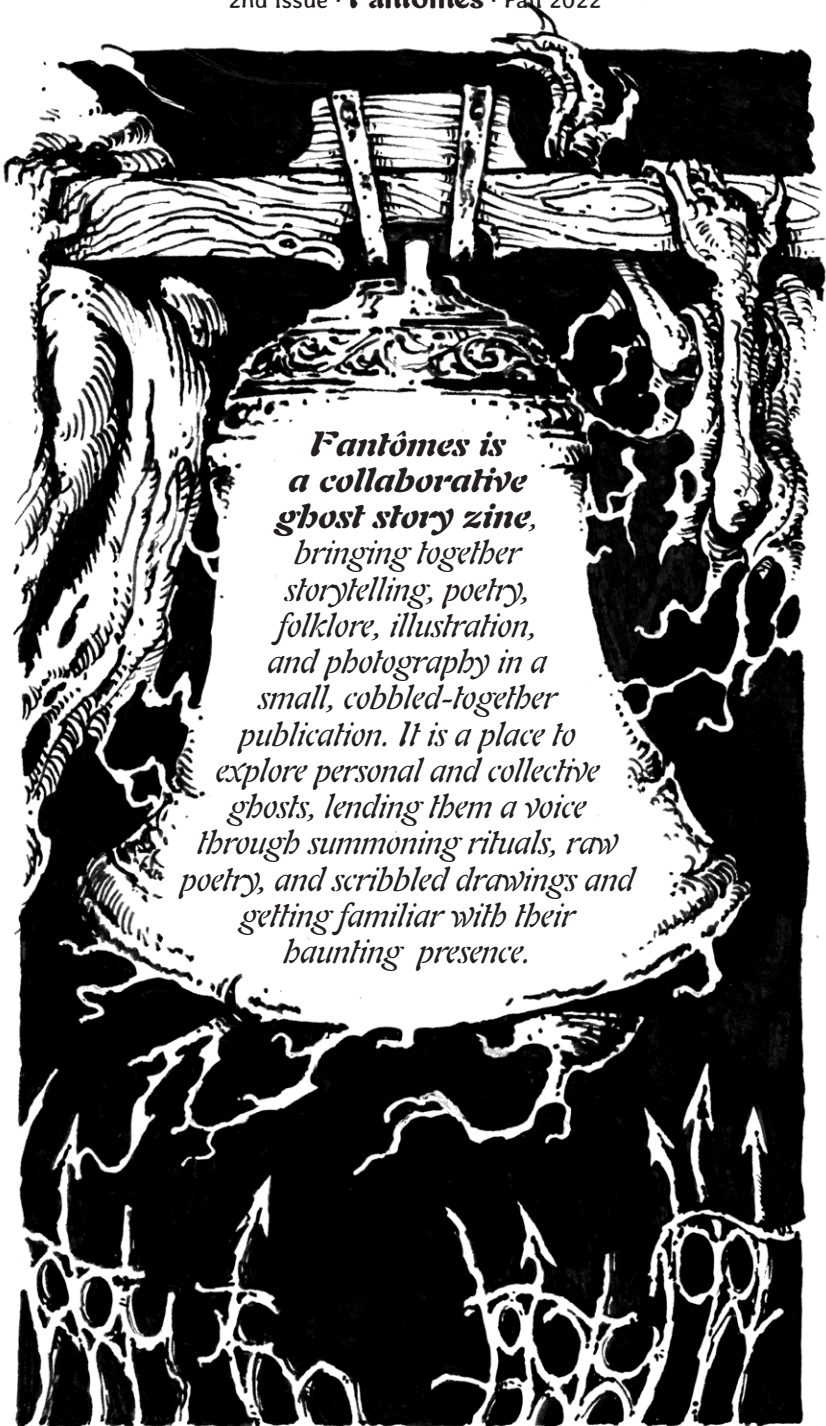
all the artists who submitted their personal ghost stories and haunting images, to Hex for editing this zine, to my patrons and to the Merveilles community for the support.

Behind this zine

This zine was put together, laid out and, partly illustrated by myself: Lizbeth Poirier. I've been called a ghost and felt quite a lot like one in the past. I'm quite glad to finally put my love for spirits into a physical thing.

fantomeszine.com

Send all enquiries to fantomeszine@gmail.com



***Fantômes is
a collaborative
ghost story zine,
bringing together
storytelling, poetry,
folklore, illustration,
and photography in a
small, cobbled-together
publication. It is a place to
explore personal and collective
ghosts, lending them a voice
through summoning rituals, raw
poetry, and scribbled drawings and
getting familiar with their
haunting presence.***



Photograph by Teye Gerbracht

amputecture

Words by Deianeira

*This home shows no guilt and
tells no tales*

*It indulges in deep exhales
Imagine our surprise tearing the
door down in investigation of a
death*

*Only to find more life than we
had bargained for*

*An architecture of organs
Bubbling and buckling
Heaving and beating
Concrete, drywall, sinew, blood,
bone*

*The most godly and ungodly
sight ever to be known
Impossible to pull or even make
out the remains of its maker from
the hull*

*A sickening beauty in being more
like us than not*

*Haunted in a way that should
never be described*

*(Most especially not here in this
writing)*

*And the stone in my stomach that
came hell to a close*

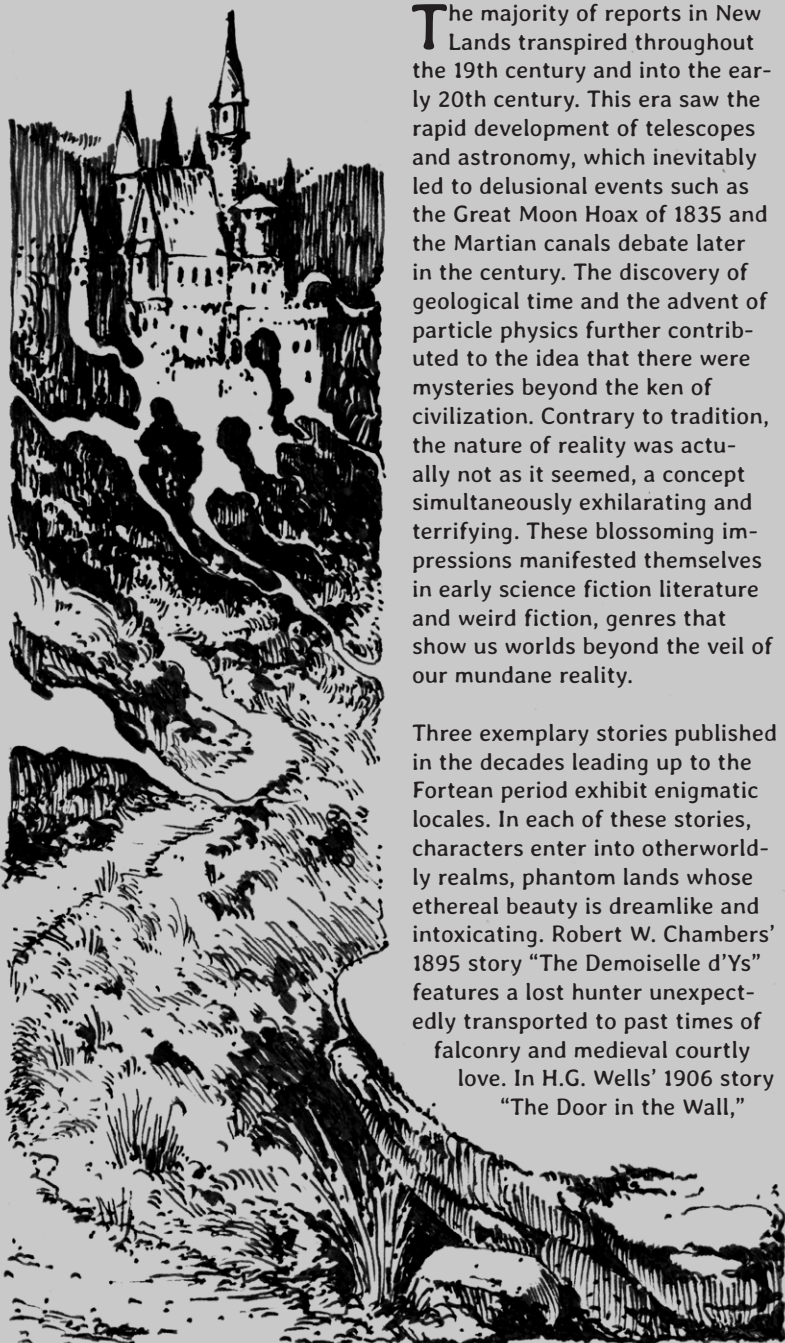
When it began to offer a whisper



Phantom Lands

Words by Aleco Julius

In his 1923 book *New Lands*, Charles Fort, the occult researcher and chronicler of bizarre phenomena, wrote of eerie visions. These mystifying appearances include mirages of unknown landscapes, cities floating in the sky, and ghost armies marching in the vague distance.



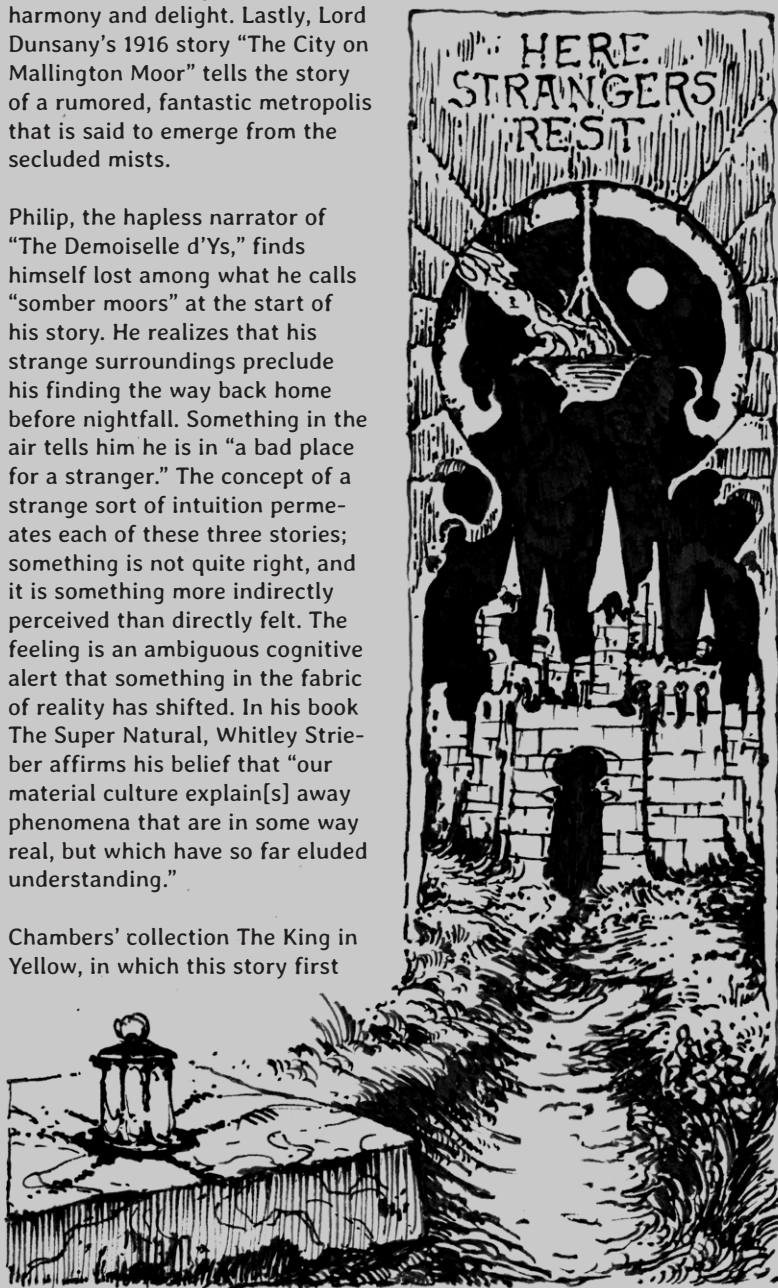
The majority of reports in New Lands transpired throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century. This era saw the rapid development of telescopes and astronomy, which inevitably led to delusional events such as the Great Moon Hoax of 1835 and the Martian canals debate later in the century. The discovery of geological time and the advent of particle physics further contributed to the idea that there were mysteries beyond the ken of civilization. Contrary to tradition, the nature of reality was actually not as it seemed, a concept simultaneously exhilarating and terrifying. These blossoming impressions manifested themselves in early science fiction literature and weird fiction, genres that show us worlds beyond the veil of our mundane reality.

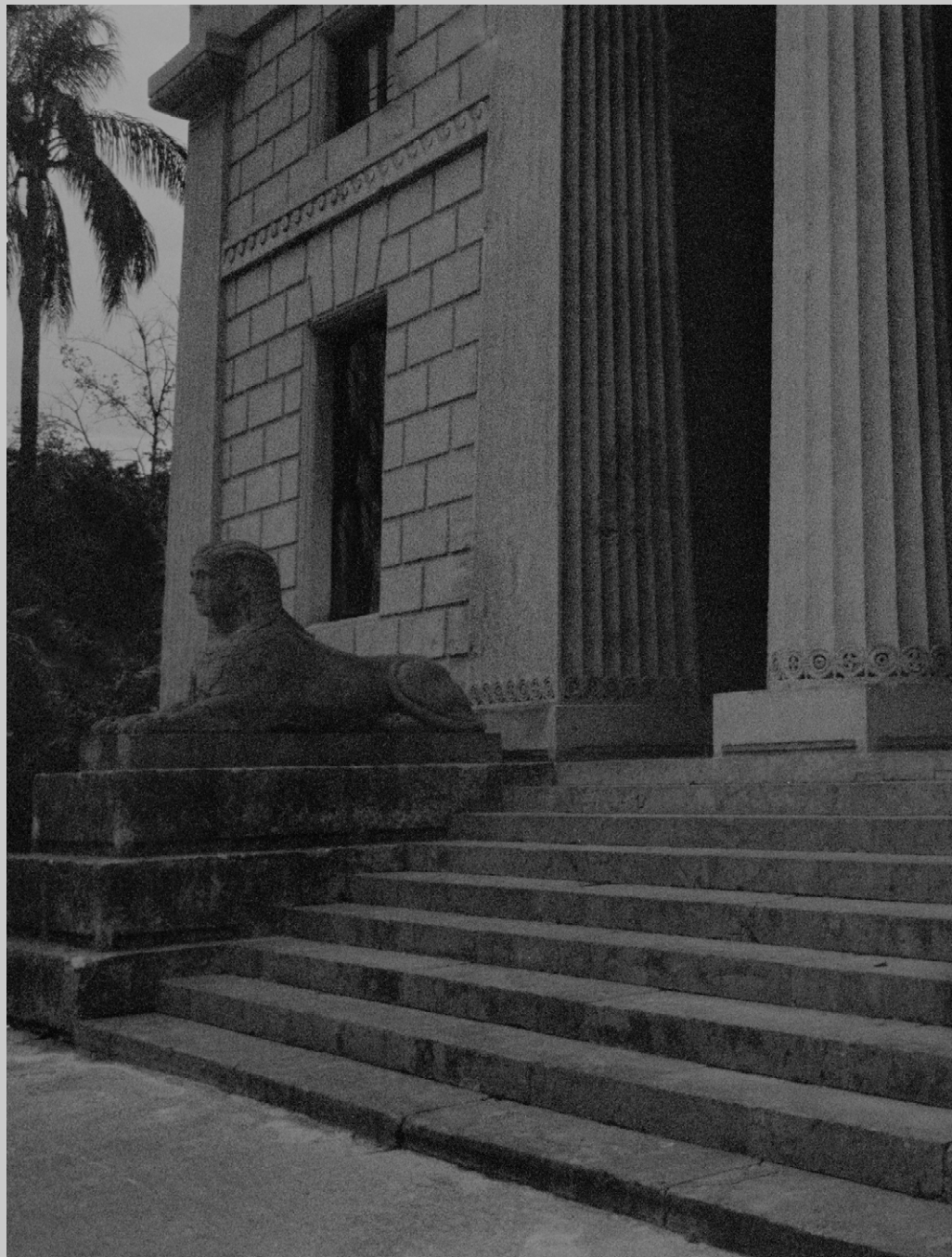
Three exemplary stories published in the decades leading up to the Fortean period exhibit enigmatic locales. In each of these stories, characters enter into otherworldly realms, phantom lands whose ethereal beauty is dreamlike and intoxicating. Robert W. Chambers' 1895 story "The Demoiselle d'Ys" features a lost hunter unexpectedly transported to past times of falconry and medieval courtly love. In H.G. Wells' 1906 story "The Door in the Wall,"

a man is haunted by a strange childhood visit to gardens of harmony and delight. Lastly, Lord Dunsany's 1916 story "The City on Mallington Moor" tells the story of a rumored, fantastic metropolis that is said to emerge from the secluded mists.

Philip, the hapless narrator of "The Demoiselle d'Ys," finds himself lost among what he calls "somber moors" at the start of his story. He realizes that his strange surroundings preclude his finding the way back home before nightfall. Something in the air tells him he is in "a bad place for a stranger." The concept of a strange sort of intuition permeates each of these three stories; something is not quite right, and it is something more indirectly perceived than directly felt. The feeling is an ambiguous cognitive alert that something in the fabric of reality has shifted. In his book *The Super Natural*, Whitley Strieber affirms his belief that "our material culture explain[s] away phenomena that are in some way real, but which have so far eluded understanding."

Chambers' collection *The King in Yellow*, in which this story first





Photograph by Teye Gerbracht



appeared in 1895, is a paramount example of early supernatural fiction. Important to note is that the ever-growing industrial materiality of the late 19th century can be seen as a fundamental influence on weird literature's beginnings, including these stories. As Philip accepts the fact that he will need to camp in the wilderness for the evening, he is confronted with the sight of a magnificent falcon capturing a hare.

This astonishing vision is accompanied by a young woman, the demoiselle Jean d'Ys, who leads him into the woods before the two fall in love. As such, Philip cannot bring himself to leave the woman's

mysterious castle in the woods, and before long he feels comfortable with riding and falconry, often out under the moorlands' "ghostly sheet of mist."

Still, Philip continues to sense an "undefinable" element to it all. In the end, he is bitten on the ankle by a poisonous snake, and he swoons. Upon waking, the ethereal world is gone and his normally-perceived reality is back. A dead snake is in the grass, and nearby is a forlorn gravestone proclaiming the 16th-century demise of Jeanne d'Ys, who died of a broken heart for her lost stranger, Philip. The young woman's warm

and fragrant glove is found upon the stone, suggesting that the liminal space between dimensions is quite fragile.

William Faulkner once wrote, "The past is never dead. It is not even past." In this way, the fluidity of time in these stories adds to their dreamlike quality. It is also a reminder to readers that we have all experienced the nebulous

quality of time at some point in our lives. Lionel Wallace, the experimenter in Wells' *The Door in the Wall*, exclaims to his confidante that he feels "haunted." As he narrates his story, we learn that he is not haunted by a

ghost, exactly, but by a memory of bliss. As a child, a mysterious green door would appear to him, one that he could see but that no one else seemingly could. He felt powerfully attracted to it, yet repelled at the same time, as if something beautiful yet dangerous lay beyond that door. When he finally plucked up the courage to open it, the paradise beyond the wall was staggering.

Compared to the harshness of the regular world, the peace and tranquility of the garden utopia beyond the door is almost too great to bear. This sentiment would have no doubt resonated



with readers of the time, as it still does today. Placed within Lionel's strict childhood and workaday adulthood, the enchanted garden serves as an escape from the din of industrial civilization. In his book *Hauntings*, psychologist James Hollis writes about how we have all desired to escape the "steady drumbeat and reiterative abuses of daily life."

Wells presents readers with the prospective question: what if we could merely open a door and leave all our stress and responsibility behind? Though the temptation to stay in that ethereal garden world was immense, Lionel was able to get back out, unable to fathom leaving his young life behind. The door continued to present itself to him throughout his life, however, and he somehow knew that the next time he entered he would never leave, for he had been haunted by "unforgettable and unattainable things." The story ends with the vanishing of Lionel Wallace. Had there ever been an actual door, muses the narrator? Or, did he seek the security of death's darkness as an ultimate relief from the relentless modern world?

In *The Moribund Portal*, Richard Gavin writes that "ghostly infusions of the land billow between worlds, that of the grosser material plane and that of immaterial nomen which infuses material forms." Lord Dunsany's "The City on Mallington Moor" certainly evinces this idea, through a numinous encounter out in the British

countryside. The narrator of the story begins his journey by tracking down an old shepherd who is said to have glimpsed a fantastical city on the moor. Notably, the narrator initially goes out to the country as a respite from the crushing weight of urban society, a common thread in these stories.

In effect, this is a story of psychogeography, where the environment shapes the narrator's wandering, which eventually leads him serendipitously to a "queer old inn." The locals there had been dismissive of the old shepherd, and were somewhat amused rather than intrigued by his alleged visions. At length the narrator finds the lonesome shepherd out on the moors, and shares his whiskey with him as a token of good faith. While the shepherd is at first reticent about sharing his visions with a stranger, he concedes when the narrator seems genuine in his interest. The old shepherd later points the way to the mysterious city, down a faint track in the ground, which itself is "no more than the track of a hare—an elf-path the old man called it, Heaven knows what he meant." Once beyond the horizon, the narrator gives up hope of finding the city and lies down to rest. He immediately is met by a thick cloud of mist, described as a "long high wall of whiteness with pinnacles here and there thrown up above it, floating towards me silent and grim as a secret."

Enveloped in the abrupt mist, the "different rules of nature"

prevail, in the words of Whitley Strieber. The narrator then falls asleep after emptying a flask that the shepherd gave him, one with "strange strong rum, or whatever it was." Upon waking, he follows the twisting track to a wide depression in the land, where the "mist flapped away like a curtain," revealing the majestic city on Mallington Moor. The narrator is stunned by its edifices of "pure white covered with carving," marble terraces, and towers topped with gold. Kindly people tell each other stories and play gentle music on balconies in this wonderful place where "there was none of that hurry of which foolish cities boast." The narrator is intoxicated by the music and falls asleep near a sign reading "Here strangers rest." When he awakes the city is gone.

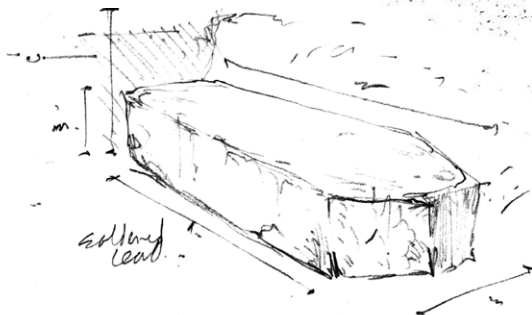
James Hollis writes that "our predecessors considered the contiguous boundaries between visible and invisible worlds highly fluid, highly permeable." This concept has returned to our own world through a recent legion of imaginative writing and art. It was disillusionment with modernity that ignited the writing of the stories in this article, much in the same way that our present state of societal turmoil has given rise to new and diverse modes of artistic form and expression. We continue to adapt to novel methods of communication and media, which impact our collective consciousness in unexpected and unpredictable ways. As the weight of our own postmodern civiliza-

tion grows heavy with crises, we adjust. As current discord and intolerance spreads, we do what we can to contain the fire. At the same time, we create new stories. We seek and find respite in our books and art, in our zines. In our own phantom lands.

Bibliography

- Chambers, Robert W. *The King in Yellow*. Dover, 1970.
- Dunsany, Lord. *Wonder Tales*. Dover, 2003.
- Fort, Charles. *New Lands*. Ace, 1973.
- Gavin, Richard. *The Moribund Portal*. Three Hands Press, 2018.
- Hollis, James. *Hauntings*. Chiron, 2013.
- Strieber, Whitley and Jeffrey Kripal. *The Super Natural*. Penguin, 2016.
- Wells, H.G. *Selected Stories of H.G. Wells*. The Modern Library, 2004.





EXHUMATION OF A WITCH | Words by Robbie Porter

Field Report:

This report concerns the excavation of the crypt at Northbrook Church, Worcestershire, and the adjacent burial ground for the purpose of collecting together and cataloging human remains that might prove to be of medico-legal and historical significance.

The church had been deconsecrated and then sold by the diocese with a view to future commercial development. Mortuary archaeologists reported the crypt cleared on August 17th. Work then proceeded to excavate the burial ground. 652 sets of remains were cataloged and removed from the site before an unusual interment was uncovered by developers working outside of the actual boundary of the churchyard. Initial assessment suggested that this was likely a burial from the late seventeenth century.

Archivist's Report: There is evidence that this land adjunct to the graveyard was actually unconsecrated ground used for the burial of non-conformists and others. There is even a singular account (1698) of a witch burial here.

Field Report:

Because of subsequent developments the circumstances surrounding the excavation of this particular interment will be made in more detail. These are as follows. A rough stone marker indicated the spot directly above the coffin, which was intact and of soldered lead. Notwithstanding the high standard of workmanship, it had no nameplate or any other identifying marker. After preliminary assessment this coffin was raised and removed to the crypt for further examination.

Dr. Stimpson led the team that opened the coffin and undertook forensic examination of the remains.

Dr. Stimpson's Forensic Report:

"There are no surviving grave goods or floral tributes. The corpse itself was in a remarkable state of preservation. The body is that of a female aged approximately between 30 and 40 years. The face was uncovered [no funerary veil] and was waxy white. The body overall retained a significant degree of suppleness: limbs and extremities could be moved without effort. Unusually the body was dressed in what is likely to be the deceased's everyday wear. A frayed blouse and skirt, both discoloured and damp to the touch with what appeared to be limited traces of fire damage and soot. There was a distinctive aroma of wood tar (a sample of the viscous residue was taken). In respect of the actual body, however, there were no smallpox lesions or, indeed, any external evidence of disease or trauma. Immediately when the body was exposed to air the left eye, which until that point had been open and quite clear, glazed over and then disintegrated completely." This particular exhumation has left a distinct impression on all those present.

Field Report:

"Chemical tests on the residue were positive for hydrocarbons (wood tar). The presence of other culturally and period-appropriate signs suggestive of a witch burial, together with archival evidence for a 1698 internment, suggests that this case might be of historical significance. Further archival research has been requested. The media office has been informed."

Dr. Stimpson reported ill this morning with suspected conjunctivitis.

Archivist's Report (the following account from court records is reproduced in full):

"Skyler Outhwaite made no utterance at all even when evidence of her guilt was laid, to wit: that she wickedly wished Mr. Lambert drop dead to which charge there were divers witnesses, and that he did indeed expire the very next day (so it was at first thought) from an apoplexy. Even divers encouragements to make a full confession (and thereby at least to save her soul) made her speak not. The Assize judges sent her to be burnt for a witch." There is circumstantial evidence that the burial uncovered at Northbrook churchyard must be that of Skyler Outhwaite. However, there are unexplained aspects (the expensive lead soldered coffin) which justify further inquiries being made.

Field Report:

"It has been deduced that the 'rough stone marker' that lay directly above the burial was in fact a sandstone post in the form of a stake inscribed 'S.O. 98.' When in situ this was positioned directly above where the chest would have been."

The team are concerned to learn that Dr. Stimpson has now developed blisters and swellings to his hands and arms, similar to those encountered in a case of severe burning. He also has difficulty breathing. Medical experts are investigating any recent contact he might have had with caustic substances.

Archivist's Report (attached is an account from a contemporary news sheet of the burning of Skyler Outhwaite, and the subsequent disposal of her remains):

"She remained stubborn silent even until the tar was lit and the faggots—which were piled high to obscure her from the God-fearing (who should not have to behold such a sight)—began to burn. Then, as the flames began to take hold, there was from her an invocation from the Book of Job: 'If someone dies, will they live again? All the days

of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.' When it came time to rake the embers, the witch Outhwaite was found to be whole and intact, untouched by the flames, a mighty wondrous and terrible sight for those that beheld it. They took her and sealed her in a leaden coffin (so that she might not escape), which they buried at Northbrook and marked the site thereof with a stake."

Final Field Report:

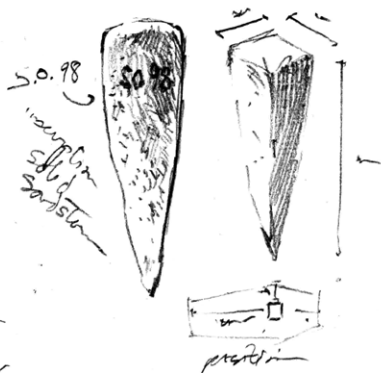
"An assessment of all the available evidence leads to the definitive conclusion that the burial at Northbrook is in fact that of Skyler Outhwaite, burnt in 1698 for witchcraft. Following completion of extensive forensic examinations, and in accordance with public health protocols, the coffin has been soldered shut and re-interred. After over 300 years the remains of Skyler Outhwaite have now been given Christian burial."

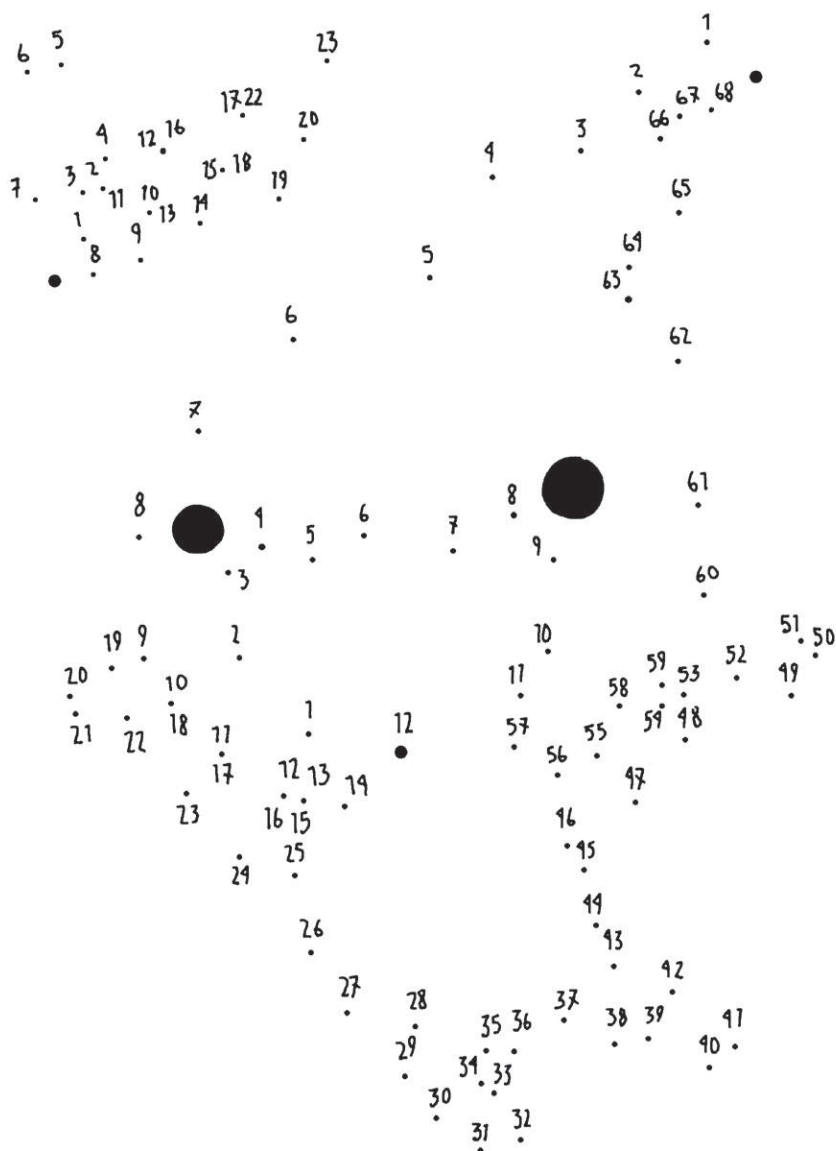
It is reported that Dr. Stimpson has begun to make a full recovery from his burn injuries. The lesions have begun to clear leaving no trace. The causal agent has not as yet been identified.

Unfortunately, the sight in his left eye has been permanently lost.

About the Author:

Robbie Porter is a lecturer and charity worker from Worcester, England. He was born in Hawick, Scotland, and studied English and History at the University of Sunderland.





Whistling in the Forest

Words by Cory Driscoll

Gorrin toiled away under the silver light. The sparrow on their shoulder, Yesi, whistled the tune of an old folk song. If you were out at night in the woods, you always took your Wing with you. Gorrin knew that being out here alone was a bad idea, but the squat orange mushrooms that Mum adored only appeared under the light of a full moon in ancient clearings.

They didn't notice how scared Yesi looked. The whistling stopped. Yesi needed to catch her breath; she had been going for hours because Gorrin kept going deeper into the woods. In the silence Gorrin felt a pressure start to build in their head, bright spots appearing in their vision. They tried to whistle the same way that Yesi did, but it didn't sound right. The silence started to feel like a rumble under the skin. Gorrin stumbled against a tree, knocking Yesi from her perch. She landed with a flap on the ground and began to whistle again, but it was a staccato rhythm, like she was forcing the air out in between gasps.

Looking up, Gorrin saw a woadkin as it rounded a sturdy oak, its eyes glowing with the same moonlight as the clearing. Gorrin picked up Yesi gently and cradled her in their hands then turned and ran, the bag of gathered mushrooms forgotten in the panic. More woadkin appeared at the edge of their vision but they ignored them. Running for what felt like hours, spurred on by fear and anger that they had not kept track of time, Gorrin eventually came to the edge of town where the ring of sand separated the forest from the streets. Yesi stopped her feeble whistling as a nightwatcher rushed over to check on them.

Gorrin turned to look back at the treeline and saw hundreds of glowing eyes staring back, unable to cross the sand.

You didn't go out in the woods alone because if the whistling stopped, then the silence would swallow you whole.

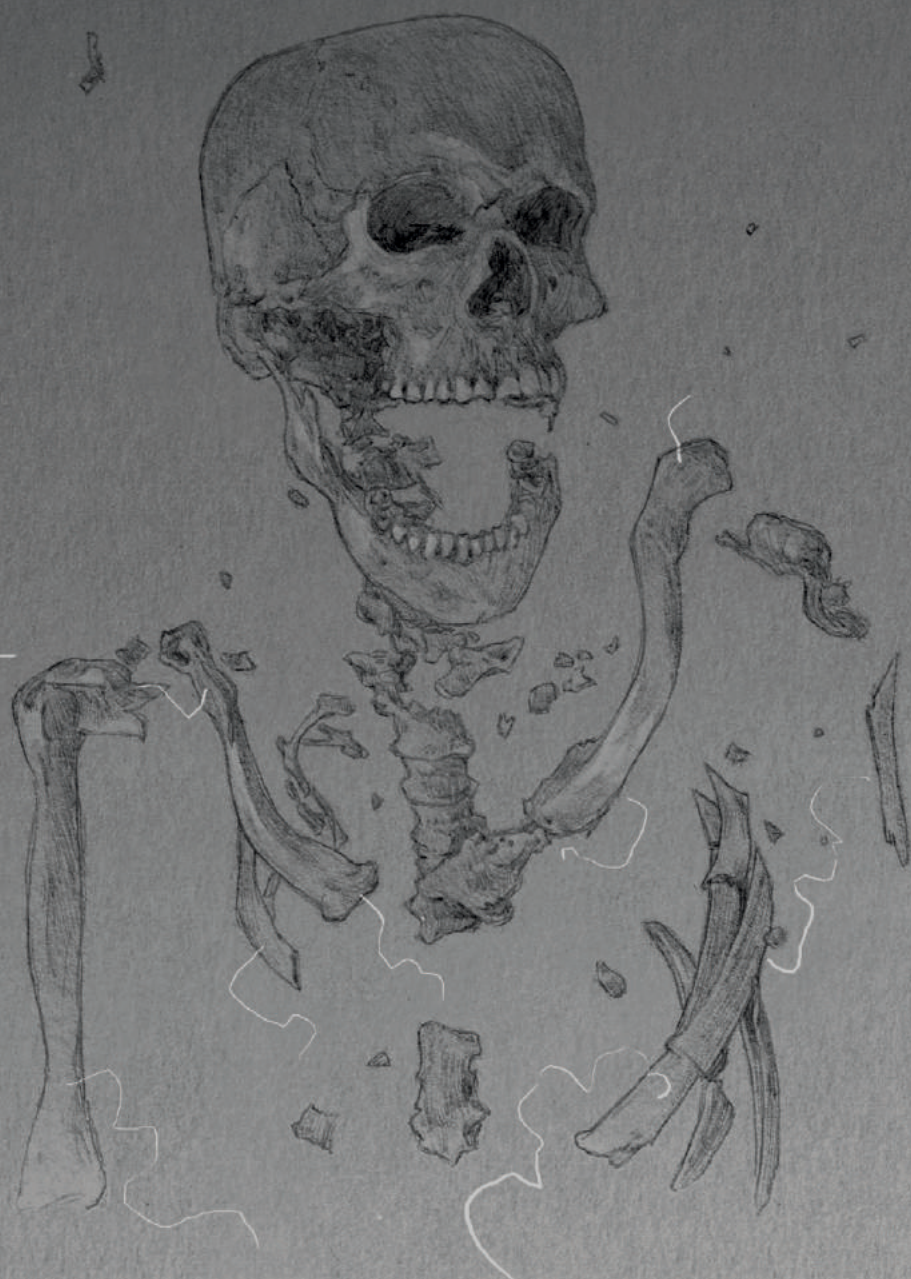
wake

Words by
Lexi Knott

I ring my bell twice to send them home
& thrice to wake the dead
they gather solemn at the foot of my bed
sheltered in late summer's gloam

within them a century's tome
but their tongues are heavy lead
I ring my bell twice to send them home
& thrice to wake the dead

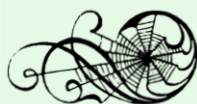
Entranced by a humming drone
before them wine & an offering of bread
their secrets whispering ahead
yet they must return to their catacomb
I ring my bell twice to send them home







Susannah



Words by Sam Derby

This run down, ruined place is mine. I have cared for it, and it for me, ever since that night. The rocks and stones speak to me as I caress them. Their dank and luminous faces take on the moonlight and project it onto my pale skin. Together we are not forgotten.

Why do I love this, the place of my demise? Why do I stay here with the white stone where my blood fell, on that cool night? Why do I watch the moon wax, wane, and shift across the sky, and never leave? At first, though I knew that I could go, I stayed; because such a desolate place, with its drab walls and thick green moss infesting everything, needed my love. So I cleaned, dug, gouged and polished with my naked hands. And I found such delight in the knowledge that I could change this small place, still, even though my earthly body was buried in the soft loam floor. For although I am a shadow now, if I work in the moonlight, if I wish with all my soul, then I can move things and feel the earth beneath the ghosts of my fingertips.

This is a lonely place. Still, very occasionally, I do see people. When they come, ramblers

and drunks, the odd junkie or dog-walker, most of them can sense that something is wrong. I have cleaned it so well that the very stone shines white in the darkness. It is cold here, because I have stripped the leaves and moss away from the walls and floor. Because the wind comes in to wrap itself around me when I dance; for I dance around my visitors, in the swirling wind, by the bone-white stones.

"Who's there?" says a voice. "I am here," I say, and she seems to hear me.

They do not usually hear me, these visitors; I sometimes speak or sing, but mostly because they do not hear me as I am silent.

"Who's there? I know someone's there," she says, this visitor, very certain, and only a little scared.

She is familiar to me. I watch her face as the breeze changes direction, and I see her start as a hedgehog rustles in the dead leaves. She knows that I am here. I walk out from the trees towards her, quite steadily. She does not see me, I don't think, but she shivers. I bring a coolness with me; she can smell the decay, too, I can tell from her face—leaf mold and

damp, from the dark earth where I sleep.

"I know you are there," she says, and suddenly I remember her.

Memory, of my life and living, is like a set of dusty and forgotten books, in a library that closed down centuries ago, with no catalog and no librarian. To remember something would mean I had to search through every page; otherwise there is only now, and the moonlight.

"Susannah," she says. So she remembers me, too. And she remembers what she did.

She opens the old oak door to the library and leads me along the corridor towards the last set of shelves. The last book, still in its chains, has been pulled out from its resting place and rudely splayed upon the desk. I can see the familiar slanting hand, my own.

"I'm sorry, Susannah," she says, in a clear but trembling voice, "forgive me."

On the page is written the end of my story, here on the cold earth floor of this place, where the stone walls give off their clean but unhealthy light. Here, where she had led me one cool summer's night.

And what can I say? That it does not matter, that I forgive her that monstrous betrayal? I cannot bring myself to say those things, so instead I make the trees sway and the shadows deepen and the clouds cover the moon.

"Susannah?" she says again.

And could I not relent, forgive, and relinquish my hold upon this place? Would that not bring me peace, and bring peace also to her?

"Will you—can you forgive me?" she says.

And in the cool of the moon, in the shadow of evening, as the sounds of night gather and I draw the darkness around me, I wonder.





Photograph by Tomas Robertson
Model: Tara-Marie Tighe (@taramarietighe)



Photograph by Lizbeth
Model: Hex Evans (@vpidxwitch)

Contributory cultists

Words by Jason Abdelhadi

Despite what it says on the title page, they are not illustrators. They are hardly even collaborators. All they do is haunt.

They appear in a few irregular editions as if their goal were not to grow famous but to settle some strange score with an entity making dream-like demands on their time and efforts. They live in an isolated way, and refuse to give interviews or indulge fans who of course come to know them through that one job: the singular book that disrupted the pleasant slumbers of generations of children. Obsessive attentions render the many copies distributed in repositories across the continent well mangled. Indeed, some schoolyard fighting led to their eventually being pulled from library shelves altogether.

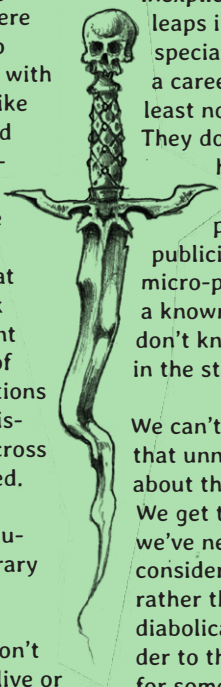
They wear all black. We don't know for sure if they're alive or dead, or as a few have intimated, some species of specter. It's like we periodically incarnate these aberrant blips of subjectivity, a spontaneous re-invention of puppeteering to tamp down the excesses of human vanity, shad-

ow representatives here from the "next step" or perhaps it is the "previous step" haunting us.

As for their "portfolios," we find inexplicable gaps, deranged leaps in time, subject matter, specialization. It's clearly not a career they are after, or at least not a conventional one. They do not climb the cursus honorum but jump down and up, never arriving, plunging from highly publicized editions to outremer micro-press pamphlets lacking a known audience. They simply don't know the floors. They live in the stairwells.

We can't say exactly what it is that unnerves us or delights us about their "interpretations." We get the sense that, although we've never spoken to them, they consider themselves inventors rather than artists and that the diabolical figures are (we shudder to think it) merely blueprints for some physical prototype kept out of sight.

Their figurations? They alike defy both analytic description and passionate ekphrasis. Any attempts will only stress their capacity to invoke failure in



Photograph by Teye Gerbracht





others. Criticism here means only a handheld ruler measuring the edges of a mouthless void. Print before our eyes, aiming for simple objectivity, we quickly lapse into impossible, delirious analogies. How can one make a shadow weigh as much as mere language? See enough of them and one learns to detect at least a skeleton of a plan—the will to exaggerate the wraithlike extremes, the radical destabilizing transparencies that lie hidden in every “normal” situation.

An “illustration” to a book of folktales for children. Only it’s barely, if at all, referring to the rather subdued narrative on the opposing page. An ecosystem of sticky blood—an otherworldly expression without the contours of a face. An axe, and an apple, and a universe of dolent mania. The texture is the true nightmare.

Or maybe a little side-drawing



for sing-a-long. The music plods along nicely but the edge of the page seems to shriek. A disembodied foot is kicking itself. It leaves trails of whimsical ectoplasm. Perhaps if we follow it, we can make our way back to its origin, to the origin of all these bleak poetics, the psychic embalming room where a few peaceful obsessives sort out some of their recently acquired collectibles.

What more can we ask of them, when clearly any further elaboration in this manner would just be a dilution of a good idea? We rather champion their silence and their darkness. We leave it up to the streetlamps to turn off at the dramatic moment when the time comes. Sleep has its prerogatives over the creative impulses of the species, it is not our way to demand constant sunny expansion where borders to the night lands tickle the fringe of good taste and mental cleanliness; rather, we are expecting an open channel.



Photograph by Grey Malkin
Sculpture by Laura Ford at
Jupiter Artland, West Lothian



Photograph by Lizbeth
Model: Hex Evans (@voidxwitch)







Night School

Words by Oz Hardwick

The new ghost on the block hasn't found its words yet, so it opens and closes its mouth like a fish. Maybe it wants to tell you about how it came to die, or maybe it wants to describe its passage to light, but all that comes out are plosive bubbles and aspirated consonants. It's a matter of life, death, and the littoral zone, with its transient population trudging through mud and knee-deep ripples; but these non-linguistic phonemes bring to mind nothing but hot water bottles and the smell of rubber that sticks to your skin on the long walk to school. The old ghosts clock your passing and ask why you're still going to school at your age, and in all honesty you can't answer. Maybe you're a teacher, or maybe you're an architect overseeing the rebuilding following the flattening of all charitable foundations, or maybe you're a cleaner with a remit to polish each lost and found lesson until it shines; but you can't find the words and you suspect that you might be a ghost. Your lips form the right kind of shapes and you can walk through walls, but when you try to Google the other symptoms you can't find the words.



Years ago, I was on a tour of Winchester Mansion. Photos were forbidden, but I snapped these two at a moment when the rest of the group had moved to the next room. It was built in 1886, erected at the advice of a Boston medium, and still stands in California. Construction was continuously under-way for decades, and the end result can only be described as labyrinthine and foreboding. The folklore says that the building might be haunted by those who died at the hands of Winchester Rifles; I couldn't say, but the building possesses a strange quality all the same.

Words and photographs
by Madeline







Photograph by Lizbeth
Ghost: Hex Evans (@voidxwitch)



Photograph by Lizbeth
Ghost: Kita (@kitathehuman)



Photograph by Amelia Wild

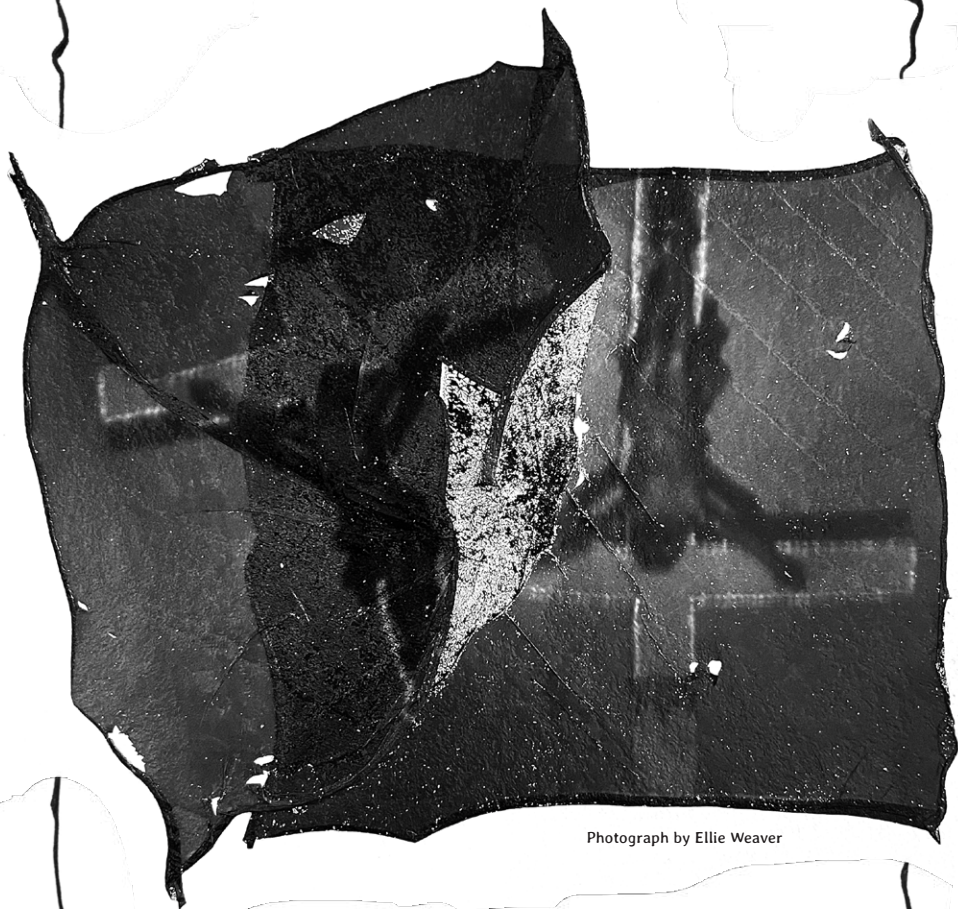


Photograph by Thomas Robertson
Model: Tara-Marie Tighe (@taramarietighe)

*Forever barrowed,
soon to follow*

Words by Deianeira

*In my youth, my foremost
fear was to cease living
And now~
As I pass on; as I come to
terms;
A fear perhaps even more
barrowing
And even more disturbed~
That I am destined forever
to be alive.*



Photograph by Ellie Weaver



Milner Field Manor

Field research and photographs by George Parr,
illustration by Bunty May Marshall

Perhaps the most fundamental yet forgotten aspect of life is that there must always be balance.

Without death we cannot have life, and without dark we cannot have light. Visiting the picturesque Yorkshire village of Saltaire here in the UK, it's easy to forget this. The area, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a living testament to a once booming

industry and the philanthropy of one of its key figureheads. Financed entirely by textile industry mogul Sir Titus Salt, creator and owner of Salt's Mill, the village was built to house Salt's workforce, and he spared no expense: the uniform stone houses look gorgeous even today, and he also provided wash-houses, bath-houses, almshouses, allotments, a school, a hospital, a boathouse, a

park and an institute for recreation and education, complete with a library, a reading room, a concert hall, a billiard room, a science laboratory, and a gymnasium. This might all sound like the minimum a town should provide, but at the time it was almost unheard of. Whilst Bradford's workers were living in slums just a few miles south, Salt built an area in which his workers could be proud to reside.

Naturally, today the village's history is much celebrated. Its streets are often busy with tourists, and the well-kept lawns of Roberts Park alongside the banks of the River Aire are routinely filled with folks having picnics, playing games, or taking a stroll—all overseen by a lordly statue of Sir Titus Salt himself. Standing even taller than he is the empire he created, symbolized by the towering Salt's Mill that lords over the village like a castle. Now an art centre complete with shops and restaurants, the mill is undoubtedly the jewel in Saltaire's crown even today.

But let's leave it behind for a moment. Turn your back on the mill and venture through the park and beyond, and you'll soon find yourself walking along a wide footpath with expansive views of the lush green valley in which Saltaire is nestled. Eventually you'll pass a small house marked as the South Lodge, an indication that you've entered the grounds of what was once a large estate known as Milner Field. Once here, the daylight

quickly disappears.

An impenetrable canopy of tall, overhanging trees instills a dark and eerie quiet over even the brightest of summer days. Mere minutes from the village's centre is an area that Saltaire's warming atmosphere dare not impede. Here is where it hides its ghosts, scurrying through the darkness, penned in by woodland.

As the path here winds up through the trees and eventually back to civilization where the sky once again opens up, it's hard to shake a feeling of being watched. Many who come this way will feel that familiar shudder down their spine, the irrational but unshakable sense that you are not welcome. Perhaps it's the unusually tall canopy overhead or the way the ground rises steeply either side of the path—or maybe it is what hides in the trees to the left. It may seem a normal bridleway today, but this path is actually the old coach road of a vast mansion, the ruins of which lie hidden from view less than 100 metres away.

Nestled amongst the trees are great piles of rubble, some lying loose upon the earth, others tangled amongst the roots that have embedded themselves in the mansion's foundations. Built in the early 1870s on land owned by Sir Titus Salt himself, Milner Field Manor was to be the home of his son, Titus Salt Jnr, who had had the existing structure demolished in order to construct his new residence. Even in pictures it is the quintessential haunted house, an



imposing gothic structure full of thick stone and block-like towers that stood in vast opposition to the florid Italianate buildings of Saltaire village in the valley below. Back then Milner Field Manor must have seemed an immovable and formidable structure, but today it lies in ruins. And as the survival of the manor's wreckage shows, the house's destruction was not the result of practical considerations—there were never any plans for new development here. This was a house brought down by its grim reputation, born of a history of calamity and tragedy, not to mention a penchant for sending its residents to an early grave.

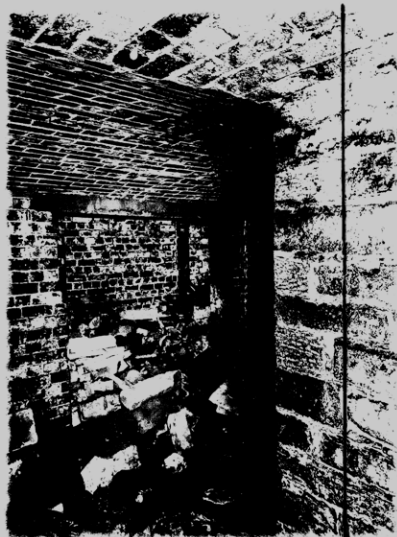
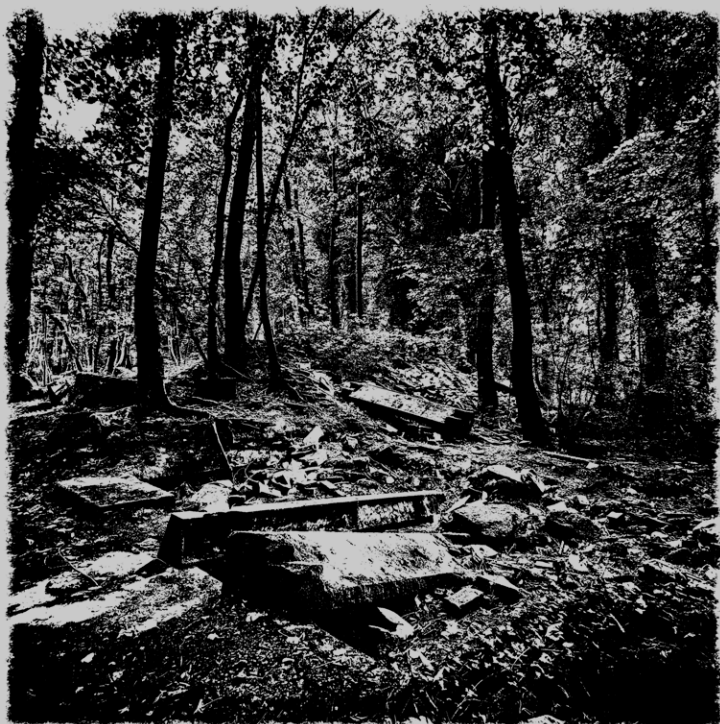
Titus Salt Jnr enjoyed just fourteen years in the grand home he had built, even hosting royalty on two separate occasions. Whilst there, the family business began to struggle, and in 1887 a seemingly healthy Salt Jnr suffered from heart failure and collapsed on the floor of the Billiard Room. Milner Field Manor was then sold off by Salt Jnr's widow in 1903 to Sir James Roberts, who had taken over the Salts company.

Several years prior, Robert's eldest son James William had died of tuberculosis, and after moving into Milner Field, more tragedy was to follow. In 1904, a year after moving into the manor, Roberts' eleven-year-old son Jack drowned whilst fishing. Eight years later, his son Bertram developed neuritis at the age of 36 and died after a seven-week bout with the

illness. His last surviving son, Harry, was then seriously wounded fighting in France during World War One. Roberts had been reliant on the help of his sons, and was forced to relinquish control of the company.

Though now free from the burdens of work, Roberts' familial woes were not quite ended. His second daughter Alice had already caused scandal by eloping with a doctor named Norman Cecil Rutherford. And in 1919, the now Lieutenant-Colonel Rutherford shot and killed one Major Miles Seton after discovering that Seton had been having an affair with Alice whilst he was away. Some time after this, Roberts and his wife moved out of Milner Field Manor and they died within a year of each other in their new home in Hastings.

By this point, selling Milner Field had already become tough. Not only did its size make it expensive to maintain, but the tragedy that beset those who moved into the house instilled panic in even the most skeptical of potential buyers. As humans we like to personify that which is inanimate, even if it means perceiving evil within the walls of a building meant to protect us. Could Milner Field truly be akin to the houses of our favourite ghost stories? One man who seemed unperturbed by its reputation was Ernest Gates, who moved into the house in 1923 after becoming Managing Director of Salts. Within weeks of moving in, his



sickly wife Eva died in the house. Just eighteen months later, Gates himself died of septicaemia.

The house's final occupant was to be Arthur Remington Hollins, Gates' successor at Salts, who moved in with his family in 1925. Within a year of moving in, Hollins' wife Anne caught pneumonia, reportedly due to the damp in the house, and she died of complications in January 1926. Hollins himself also died young at the age of 51 in perhaps the most bizarre and painful manner imaginable—an instant and severe irritation of the gallbladder, liver, and diaphragm, which led to him quite literally hiccuping to death.

In the wake of yet more disaster, Milner Field became impossible to sell, and it sat empty for decades. The tragedies experienced in the house during the time in which it was inhabited would make anyone cautious of it, but to an overactive imagination, it is perhaps even more terrifying to picture the time the building spent empty. One of the most common theories given as a "logical" explanation for the apparent existence of ghosts is that of energy left behind by those who once experienced something profound in a particular place—traces of the pain and terror they once felt left behind even after they have departed this life. What becomes of such forces when left to their own devices? In Shirley Jackson's infamous novel *The Haunting Of Hill House*, we see a home that stood "holding darkness within," the shadows

contained within its stone and wood lying silently as if in wait: "whatever walked there, walked alone." Milner Field's fate in these years seems much the same.

Some who visited the empty house, drawn in by its eerie allure, report being scared off before they could finish their sightseeing. Trevor Meek of Bradford recalled exploring the house with his friend in the early 1940s, before a sudden inexplicable darkness left him disoriented and falling down the stairs into the cellar. A surviving account from a 1947 issue of the Salt High School Magazine sees a student speak of "gazing on the shell of this palatial edifice." Later, in 1951, fifteen-year-old Anthony Davis told the Bingley Guardian of how he had fled the house after coming face-to-face with an apparition carrying a flute and dressed in green Edwardian clothes. He reported seeing a mirror on the wall in which the man's reflection did not appear, moments before both the mirror and the man disappeared before his eyes. Later reports claim to have found evidence that a mirror was once hung on the very spot Davis described. This "Green Man of Milner Field" is perhaps the most enigmatic ghost of the manor, an unnamed and unidentified character said to roam the ruins to this day. More recently, local researchers Richard Lee-Van den Daele and R David Beale, who together wrote a book on the property, visited the site to take measurements, and reported turning

their back for a moment only to find that their tape measure had inexplicably floated twelve feet into the air and nestled amongst the branches of a tree.

During WW2 the house was stripped for parts and anything of value (including its roof) were gone by the time of its demolition in the 1950s. Further destruction had been caused by grenade practice undertaken on the site during the war. Walking where the manor once stood today it is hard to shake a sense of something unsettling—not merely a feeling of loss or sadness, but a morbid darkness that permeates over the entire area. Not far from the house are the ruins of the stables and coach house, overseen by a mighty beech tree. Climbing its boughs for a bird's-eye view of the area, you can see that one of its thick branches spirals towards the stables then abruptly veers off sideways as it reaches its foundations, as if this tree in particular, old enough to remember the estate, still grows around the spectres of the house out of respect.

Today, if it isn't a flute-carrying apparition or indeed the ghost of Titus Jnr himself who scares you away from the rubble, it'll be the spiders. The woods here are a hotbed for the eight-legged delights, and it's hard not to find yourself tangled in webs as you explore the ruins. Amongst the house's eastern wing, where the tops of the kitchen's brick ovens still poke out of the ground, there is a mound of

earth seemingly in opposition to the otherwise flat landscaped area on which the house's foundations were set. In one side of this mound is a dark opening just big enough to crawl inside—do so and you'll find yourself in the same cellar Trevor Meek recalled falling into back when the house's walls still stood. Inside, the ceiling is littered with large spiders and their ominously drooping egg sacs. These cellars delve deep into the house but the vast majority of its passageways are blocked by heaps of rubble, though hints of sunlight peek through, suggesting there are multiple entrances if you can find them. Look up in the cellar's second room and you can see the underneath of a staircase, the cause of the aforementioned earth mound that cannot be viewed from above ground.

Towards the house's western wing the walkway of the orangery leading to the conservatory is clearly visible, meaning you can stand on the very spot one commonly shared picture taken inside the house was shot. Next to this are the remains of the Billiard Room, marked by a long steel beam lying atop the rubble on the very spot that Titus Salt Jnr drew his last breath. One of the most striking sites is the conservatory itself, whose large stone foundation has been cleared, revealing a tiled mosaic inspired by Roman antiquity. Elsewhere, though, the site is defined by substantial heaps of rubble, within which remnants of the house's outer facade can be seen, from the points of the tall

towers to the arches of the belfry. Within these mighty blocks of stone, mason's marks remind us that these materials were once meticulously joined together by workmen to construct a manor that was supposed to stand for centuries.

One pristine surviving brick reads "CLIFF" across its side, with research revealing that a nearby brickworks was set up by Joseph Cliff (1806-1879) in the mid-19th century. It's tempting to remove it from the site as a memorial of this house that once caused such terror, but in the end the idea

of separating it seems somehow wrong, as if the curse is contained within the very materials of the house and might follow you home. That the brick remains despite many pictures of it appearing on social media during people's visits to the manor attests that this is a shared sensation by visitors. Even after heaving the hefty foundations of the manor apart, breaking it at its very seams and leaving what remains to be reclaimed by woodland, the house's curse still weaves its sinister spell.

La fin



The Ruined Chapel

Words by
Josh Maybrook



It long has been a place of solitude—
An ancient church whose belfry tower rears
Above the trees as rays of sunlight pierce
Its dusty panes, and shadows veil its rood.
About its grounds—now overgrown—are strewn
The graves of those who lived in bygone years;
A host of souls now free from cares and fears,
They rest in peace—a silent multitude.

Yet every year upon All Hallows' Eve,
A strangely whirling mist hangs low among
The graves—and by some otherworldly power,
The bell begins to toll inside its tower—
And in the nave, a solemn mass is sung
By voices that no mortal can perceive.



In all the chaos you may find comfort among the wicked. Sightings of strange, unholy, wild creatures have been seen deep beneath the roots of the poisonous flowers—the realm of the dead—the underworld. However, these creatures are not there to harm anything. They're there to teach us to face our fears. These are solomonic protection seals carved in gold to protect whoever is brave enough to go there—protection from all evil and negative forces, for whoever dares to join these children of the grave.



Illustration and words by Echo Echo



A Ghostly Mixtape

Soul Wandering - Summoning
Hello from a corpse - Penda
Ghastly Party - The Haunted Hill
Glass coffin - Sidewalks and Skeletons
I'm still in the night - Salem
The Survival of bodily death - Tommy Creep
A sign from decay - Surachai
The Graveyard by moonlight - Cradle of Filth
Death almighty - Charnel Oubliette
Mausoleal drift - Spectral Wound
Damning the waters - Ossuary Wraith
Haunt - Clad in Black
Lost in mystic woods and cursed hollows - Stormkeep
Elm Grove Portal - The Scéance
Winter; dead white plains - Mumbles
Road to home - Arthur Kordas
Consumed - The Haxan Cloak

The Artists

Teye Gerbracht - pages 1, 2, 4, 5,
6, 7, 10, 11, 32, 33
teyegerbracht.com

Lizbeth Poirier - pages 3, 8, 9, 14,
24, 30, 31, 34, 36, 42, 45, 46, 59
ritualdust.com

Deianeira - pages 5, 49
deianeira.co

Aleco Julius - pages 7-9, 12-14
@dagger_of_the_mind (instagram)

Grey Malkin - pages 12, 35
thehareandthemoon.bandcamp.com

Robbie Porter - pages 15-18
facebook.com/robbie.porter.37/

Hundred Rabbits - page 19
100r.co

Cory Driscoll - page 20
drisc.io

Lexi Knott - page 21
@naiadpoet (instagram)

Aodren - page 23
monglob.wordpress.com

Colophon

Edited by **Hex Evans**

Design, illustration and layout
by **Lizbeth Poirier**

Printed in **Tio'tia:ke**
(so-called Montréal)

Sam Derby - pages 25, 27
samderby1975.wordpress.com

Thomas Robertson - pages 29, 48, 49
@selva_oscura_photo (instagram)

Jason Abdelhadi - pages 31, 34
peculiarmormyrid.com

Lia Vê - pages 38, 39
@lia.ve.artwork (instagram)

Fey - page 41
estfyr.net

Oz Hardwick - page 42
ozhardwick.co.uk

Madeline - pages 43, 44
maddie.info

Amelia Wild - page 47
@amelia_wild (instagram)

Ellie Weaver - page 50
@ColdHandsOfGod (instagram)

Georges Parr - pages 51-58
@georgejparr (instagram)

Bunty May Marshall - page 51
@buntymaymakes (instagram)

Josh Maybrook - page 59
@joshmaybrook (instagram)

Echo Echo - pages 60, 61
@echoechoillustrations (instagram)

Fonts used

Averia Libre • **Auriol LT Std**


Goth Ball Crap • **Macabre**

Avara • **Trattatello**

Trickster • **Bard**



Photograph by Jason Jenkins



Fantômes is a collaborative ghost story zine, bringing together storytelling, poetry, folklore, illustration, and photography. It is a place to explore personal and collective ghosts, lend them a voice through summoning rituals, raw poetry, or scribbled drawings, and get familiar with their haunting presence.

FANTÔMES

2nd issue - Fall 2022