

# A Haunting

Russell Dueck-Price

I've never had a ghostly encounter. I can't say that I've wanted one. I used to cower in fear at the mention of ghost stories. Sometimes, when my wife is away and I'm shutting down for the night, I get in my head about all the sights and sounds of the house settling in. Which is strange - our home is quite new, and definitely not enough time for "a haunting" to be established here. Often, when I talk about my love for the horror genre with people, they ask me about ghosts. So, that's what we are going to talk about. I'm not going to give you some biblical or theological explanation of ghosts; It's unnecessary, because ghosts are real. An embodied-christocentric-biblical-holistic-theology-toward-an-ecothology-of-phantoms is irrelevant.

Philosopher Dylan Trigg wrote a book called *The Memory of Place*, and it's about ghosts. Not quite, its actually about phenomenology. I often describe phenomenology as "the philosophy of vibes," but, ghosts and vibes go together like axe-murderers and machetes. A ghost, to Trigg, is that presence of something which exists beyond ourselves.

Last Christmas was my first time returning to my parent's house after I "officially" moved out. I'm a married man now! What do I need a room at my parents for? I remember walking into my room, a place I inhabited for nearly 15 years. Sure, it went through all kinds of changes; my bed used to be over there, I had more posters, and my T.V slowly grew, but it was my room. I walk in, there's a different bed in there, the bookshelves are filled with puzzles and knick-knacks instead of my books; my room has turned into a storage closet. It's different, it's no longer my room, yet the memories of the time I spent in here will not leave me. There's dissonance. It was one way, now it's another. The feeling hangs over me as I try to find a place to put my suitcase. Normally, my clothes would just be in here, now I'm a stranger in my own home. That's interesting, my room is haunted by myself.

"That's fine, Russ," you say, "So you have some unresolved feelings about your childhood, but what about ghosts, y'know? Like, spooky scary ghosts: the Grey Lady, the Vanishing Hitchhiker, the whispers, and noises people hear in an abandoned building. Those ghosts?"

A friend of mine used to do photoshoots in an old abandoned mental hospital in north Edmonton. She later did a photoshoot in the underground abandoned remnants of Victoria School. Places that were haunted.

These places, bear the same weight as my childhood bedroom. People lived there, memories (good or bad) were made, and there was a physical presence. Stories were told. Then one day, they shut down, the people left. But, as people do, they left their traces, furniture, food, books, a mug, a pipe, a memory. The people left, and the place became haunted. Sigmund Freud, amongst other things, wrote about the *unheimlich*, the uncanny. It's what is "not home" or "familiar," yet, as many authors have suggested, real

uncanniness is something that is almost familiar. Something that almost looks right. A prime example being mannequins. Mannequins look like people. Not in a convincing way, but in a way that is supposed to be convincing. It's supposed to be enough for me to say "wow, that's a cute top, I'm sure it would look great on me!" It serves a purpose. Mannequins sit in the "uncanny valley" - familiar and yet totally not familiar. We've gotten so accustomed to our plastic friends that seeing a mannequin in a store is not uncanny, it's a neutral experience. However, seeing a mannequin in a place where a mannequin shouldn't be? An alley, a forest, the middle of the street? That's unsettling.

We return to our haunted locations. Gazing upon these abandoned places we see a world where people once lived, but now, they sit uninhabited. All these things chairs, books, coffee mugs, need people for them to have being, to fill their purpose, the people are the spirits of these objects. Now, they exist only as a reminder. Without people they look wrong; they lack a presence. We are reminded that there were worlds that once existed that we will never know. They make us consider that there are places in the world that have been forgotten. They remind us that one day we will be gone. My favourite mug will remain, containing the memories of a life well lived, and I'll be a distant thought. An old, abandoned dining room is uncanny because a dining room was never built to be empty.

Humans cannot exist without leaving a trace of ourselves. That trace is what haunts all the old buildings and places we have constructed. Places that experienced memories, good and evil, they were lived in. Someone fell in love there, a couple fought over there, someone sat there for just a moment on a Tuesday afternoon before their lives erupted into chaos. This place is haunted.

It is a privilege to experiencing a haunting. For the existence of a haunted house implies the existence of people, of memories. To experience lives lived, is to remember. We feel the ghosts of this place, and we are reminded of the hurt that was caused here. We whisper to ourselves "never again." We stand in an abandoned school and say, "I'm sorry this happened." It would be a shame to remove such a place, to leave these ghosts without a home. There are stories in these haunted places. A ghost implies a history. Without a history, there are no ghosts. Without ghosts there are no reminders of our past. It's a privilege to participate in a haunting; to leave a ghost behind. I hope one day to haunt this place, there are many who can't.

# Et Cetera

Special Issue  
Halloween, 2022

## The Belief in Ghosts

John Doyle

For tasselled tan buckskin with feathers,  
They cast their lots,  
Then tricked and treated,  
On unceded land.

Filling their bags.  
Taking, taking,  
With a few tricks given,  
On unceded land.

A field trip to a museum next week,  
No talk of smallpox blankets,  
Or a culture in peril,  
On unceded land.

Not far from the costume parade,  
Little bones in a schoolyard,  
Of former Students.

Each one made in the image of Jesus.  
Each one made in the image of God.  
Crying,  
"Was I not made to be loved and cherished?"  
"Will I be forgotten on unceded land?"

(The belief in ghosts, a moral imperative.)

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### ETC. Submission Guidelines

ETC. welcomes submissions from all members of the Regent community, including students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

ETC. publishes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual artwork.

ETC. welcomes submissions on any topic, but preference will be given to pieces that are directly relevant to the Regent community.

Written submissions may not exceed 1000 words in length.

Visual artwork will only be printed in black and white.

All submissions are subject to minor edits. If substantial edits are needed, the submission may be returned.

All submissions are to be sent to:  
[etcetera@regent-college.edu](mailto:etcetera@regent-college.edu)

# The Cookie Cutter

*Mo Hickman*

My family had many holiday traditions throughout the year, and even though we were too Christian to watch Harry Potter or the Simpsons, Halloween was celebrated with decorations, food, festive sweaters, and homemade costumes. These traditions were managed by my grandmother on my mother's side. Even when I was still in the NICU on Halloween, my grandmother made sure my mother was given her Jack-o-Lantern burger for dinner. (This is a cheeseburger with a jack-o-lantern style face cut out of the cheese slice.)

But no grinning cheeseburger or homemade halloween costume can top the legacy that is the jack-o-lantern cookie. Family and friends traveled from all over town and even from other provinces on Halloween night to get a perfectly wrapped molasses cookie baked by my grandmother. Soon after Thanksgiving, she would start preparing by making dozens of these golden brown, oval-shaped cookies. They would cover her kitchen and back room as they cooled and then each would be delicately placed between rows of parchment paper and stacked into old ice cream tubs for safe keeping. My sister and I were among the lucky few that got to enjoy the treat before the actual night, but also among those tasked with eating the leftovers well into November. Even when I moved across the country, a package would arrive each October with a container full of cookies. I have eaten these cookies every Halloween for two and a half decades.

I cannot tell you why these cookies are so special. I have no idea where the recipe came from but no other molasses cookie tastes quite the same. We all believed the magic was in the cookie cutter. It was a very specific cookie cutter. My grandmother made every single one of these cookies with a single red plastic vintage Tupperware jack-o-lantern cookie cutter. No other jack-o-lantern cutter gets the face quite right.

That's why when I spotted an identical one in a bag of random cookie cutters on a Facebook auction one day, I made sure I had the winning bid. For you see, I was not the only one dedicated to the legacy of these cookies. I have a cousin, one who would travel over an hour with two small children each year just for a cookie, who wanted that cookie cutter when my grandmother passed on. Some families fight over inheriting money or real estate. We had a cookie cutter. And since she is my elder by a number of years, it seemed appropriate that I should let the original go to her and keep this exact replica for myself. But here is the twist - as every good Halloween tale should have - the original cookie cutter has gone missing, perhaps never to be seen again. This means that I am now the only member of my family with the proper cookie cutter and recipe for the iconic jack-o-lantern molasses cookies. The responsibility to maintain this tradition weighs heavily upon me. I confess, in recent years I have forsaken most of the holiday traditions my family bestowed upon me. But with God's strength and grace, there will be cookies. And these cookies will be offered generously with every ounce of maritime hospitality I have left in me, just as my grandmother would have wanted.

## Sacred Stumps

*Caleb Berberich*

All Hallows' Eve bit with fast snow.  
Treading home in dirtied dungarees.  
Caught 'twixt muted wood in shadow.  
Silent spell sounds from croak of crow,

“Harken here now! traveler in the trees”  
From hewn hollow, hoarse hurried call.  
For fear I froze, rigid in the frosted breeze  
Midst harrowed stumps sown; knotted knees.

There it stood, skeletal and tall.  
Silhouetted in umber blue,  
Twilight cracked with early nightfall.  
Arms grieved to grasp, gripped in grim gall.

Aged Oak, mourned over forgotten few,  
Undressed with weeping; I wept too.  
Sky traced with promise of somber hue.  
Sacred seeds laced in sanguine hue.

## Dad Joke of the Hallo-Week

Why did the scarecrow win an award?

He was outstanding in his field.

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# A Confession

*Katrina Steckle*

I have a confession to make: I've never gone trick-or-treating. Now, I have a hunch that I may not be the only person at Regent who shares this experience, or lack thereof. In fact, given the audience of Et Cetera, I'd guess that some people who read this article will empathize with me. With that in mind, it's only been in the past few years that I've realized that my experience wasn't necessarily the norm for Christian kids. As a kid, I thought it was common practice for Christians to generally ignore Halloween. Sure, the heathens went trick-or-treating, but good Christian kids avoided it. Halloween was obviously evil. The children dressed as princesses and race cars, visited their neighbours, and politely asked for little treats. How could that be anything but evil?

To be fair to my parents, trick-or-treating wasn't exactly a practical option for my family. Growing up on a farm meant that we would have had to drive to a town to trick-or-treat, which negates the idea of walking around your neighbourhood. And in Ontario, where I'm from, there was often snow on Halloween, and I can't blame my parents for not wanting to walk around in the snow just so that my siblings and I could get candy. And really, I didn't need all of that candy (as much as I may have wanted it).

So here I am, a full grown adult who has never gone trick-or-treating. Is this something that I need to make right? Would I be a different person now if I had been a trick-or-treating kid? How can I ever forgive my parents for depriving me of this cultural experience (and all of that candy)? I'll carry on, ignorant to the experience of trick-or-treating but yearning to know.

# A Haunted World

*Dryden Demchuk*

In my family, my maternal great-grandparents are generally thought of as the spiritual elders of the family. We remember them with tremendous respect, as examples of long, godly lives lived in devout faith and prayer. My older sister has some vague childhood memories of them, but they both passed away before I was born.

I have just as many questions regarding the eschatology of the human being as anyone else. I know that my great-grandparents lived lives of faithfulness to Christ, and I know that there is eschatological hope in that - some vague hope given to us of reunion, or of Christ's triumph over the divide between life and death. But I will be the first to admit that anything beyond what we may see "through a glass, darkly" is in the realm of speculation.

I often wonder where my great-grandparents are *now*. Not in a despairing way, but as a genuine curiosity. Is it accurate to say that they are unconsciously sleeping in expectation of the new heavens and earth? Is it more accurate to say that they are currently in the conscious presence of Christ, awaiting the fulfilment of his Kingdom? Scripture and tradition don't seem to disallow either answer, though I suspect that if it was important for us to have a definite or exact understanding in this regard, that one would have

been given to us.

I will put my own cards on the table and say that I have been uncomfortable with any theological notion of an immaterial or immortal existence without a physical embodiment - these inclinations seem to deny the goodness of God's material creation. As such, I am more theologically comfortable with the former answer (unconscious sleep) because it does not require me to accept any sort of immateriality into my understanding of the human person.

*But*, there are far more things in heaven and earth than I could possibly comprehend. I am trying my best to remain open to some mystery on this subject. Especially on days like today.

As I am sure most of us aware, today is All Hallow's Eve. A day on which we may begin thinking and reflecting on the lives of believers past, and on the triumph of Christ over death's great divide. I will admit that, though I am extremely familiar with thinking about the eschatological hope that humanity has in Christ, it is only within the last few years, through exposing myself to a wider range of Church traditions, that I have come to consider Christ's triumph over death as an event which may have implications for how we presently relate to the faithful departed.

Perhaps a story may assist in illustrating my point. Many years ago when my sister and I were very young, my sister laid in bed one night quite sick with the flu. She claims to this day that there was a moment in the night that she opened her eyes and saw the silhouette of my aforementioned great-grandmother standing in her bedroom doorway. This event did not scare her - it actually brought her great comfort to know that our late great-grandmother was there to look after her while she was sick.

And, yes, I am fully aware that the strange things that children may see or dream when they are laying in bed with a fever are not exactly things that I should base my entire theology on, but the conviction with which my sister still tells this story combined with other similar experiences that have been shared with me by trustworthy family members are enough to pique my curiosity.

I have not had any such striking experiences in this area myself, but I have in the past had dreams in which I am seated in a room with my great-grandparents, telling them about my life. It is never anything dramatic or profound, but a simple conversation between family members in which they express interest in what I am doing and pursuing in life, despite the fact that I was never able to meet them in person.

My great-grandparents have an eschatological hope in Christ, of which I am sure. But the aforementioned experiences, combined with what I have more recently learned and reflected on regarding the Communion of the Saints, have caused even this low-church-pentecostal boy to wonder on this All Hallow's Eve if my great-grandparents, along with all those "who have fallen asleep in Christ" are somehow, through the triumph of Christ over death, able to linger with us in more than just memory.

Perhaps the imperfect and fleeting moments in which the living and the dead seem to touch each other are evidence of the coming Kingdom - the present balance between the "already" and the "not yet".

Perhaps one aspect of life in the Church is the realization that a world in which Christ has conquered death is a deeply haunted world; one in which the line between the living and the dead may sometimes grow eerily thin.

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