

# ANGLICA

An International Journal of English Studies

24/1

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## Reviews

**EDYTA LOREK-JEZIŃSKA, *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2013. ISBN 978-83-231-3146-5. 338 pages. (Anna Branach-Kallas)**

*Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* in most general terms is about ghosts and their relation to texts, more specifically British experimental drama by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Liz Lochhead, Deborah Levy and Bryony Lavery. The texts selected by the author focus on death, murder, incomplete rituals of mourning and various psychic crypts, yet the phantoms under analysis are also connected with the concept of alterity, repressed by the self or the status quo, the undesirable other, forbidden desire, and sexuality. The ghost gains several meanings in the book: it signifies the processes of being haunted by the secrets of the past, by cultural and literary texts, and by those who have been forced into silence. The hauntological perspective adopted by the author reveals those complexities, reaching beyond more technical descriptions offered by other intertextual approaches. Lorek-Jezińska's source of inspiration is above all Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, yet her understanding of hauntology also embraces other, less known texts, such as the psychoanalytic studies proposed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok to deal with the loss sustained by the psyche. This complex theoretical perspective, fusing deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism and intertextuality in the analysis of haunting, both cultural and psychological, repression, mourning and melancholia, represents a fascinating and intellectually challenging aspect of *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights*.

Lorek-Jezińska proposes the concept of spectral or haunted intertextuality to explore the problematic nature of the connection between the text and its pre-text – being both liberated by and imprisoned in the older text. She places the tendency described as spectral intertextuality in drama by women as a separate category within the context of the general field of women's intertextual drama and the subcategory of "spectral" plays by women. This latter category features ghost figures as significant characters although is not by definition based on intertextual patterns. In the selected texts by British women playwrights

the processes of re-writing and adapting the older texts have been inscribed into two major tendencies. The first one is the feminist tendency to retrieve the women's textual past from fictional and historical documents. The second one represents an attempt at liberating oneself from the restrictive influence of the past. The ghost figures whose function is examined in the book represent those two aspects of haunting: the restrictive aspects still haunting contemporary women's identities and the liberated Other suppressed in the former texts.

The author has decided to focus on six dramatic texts, published within the last three decades, which she examines in detail tracing the spectral connections and contradictions between the contemporary text and its prototype: *Pushing the Prince into Denmark* (1991) and *Macbeth, False Memories* (2000) by Deborah Levy, *Blood and Ice* (1988) by Liz Lochhead, *The Ash Girl* (2000) by Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Two Marias* (1989) and *Her Aching Heart* (1990) by Bryony Lavery. All of the plays examined represent to a lesser or larger degree experimental drama either by authors who have gained recognition in drama or other literary genres – Timberlake Wertenbaker and Liz Lochhead, or are still considered marginal despite the volume or nature of their contribution – Deborah Levy and Bryony Lavery.

An interesting aspect of Lorek-Jezińska's analysis is an intriguing, thought-provoking reading of selected plays in the light of William Shakespeare's drama, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in particular. She does not only highlight the Shakespearian traces in the selected plays, but offers a masterly reinterpretation of Shakespearian themes and icons in the (post)modern context. For instance, in her interpretation of *Macbeth, False Memories* (2000) by Deborah Levy, the canonical play becomes the source of concepts and metaphors in Levy's play, while the figure of "a forger, an imitator, and a stranger," inspired by the original *Macbeth*, embodies postmodern identity. Lorek-Jezińska thus approaches the spectral as a mode of representing the postmodern tension between authenticity and simulacra, presence and absence. Analysing the transposition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Levy's *Pushing the Prince into Denmark* Lorek-Jezińska explores the representation of grief and mourning in the play, as inherited from *Hamlet*, yet, exploiting the aporias of the pre-text, she uses these tropes to give voice and substance to the female characters, the Queen and Ophelia from the original play. According to the author, Ophelia becomes here a ghostly apparition of herself, another spectre in the universe of *Hamlet*; reinterpreting this iconic figure of melancholia, Lorek-Jezińska posits Levy's play as a text in distress, haunted by the original text.

In her analysis of intertextual revisions, Lorek-Jezińska also refers to other literary genres and conventions, such as the Gothic novel, the fairy tale, and melodrama. Particularly interesting is her interpretation of Liz Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* as an intertextual reworking of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

The ghostly Creature located on the margins of the playing area/society is a disquieting presence/absence that imposes the processes of othering, rejection, and belated acceptance on the other characters. Intergenerational haunting is an interesting aspect of spectral intertextuality in this chapter, while on the psychological/social level haunting highlights the problem of the ethical responsibility for the other. Wertebanker's *The Ash Girl* in turn is reinterpreted in relation to the Cinderella tale, which works as a healing force saving the melancholic characters from despair. Otherness represents here the marginalized position of women in patriarchal society. Finally, by exposing intertextual connections with the Gothic romance and melodrama in Bryony Lavery's plays, *Her Aching Heart* in particular, Lorek-Jezińska explores the connection between hauntology and non-heterosexuality. The impossible lesbian identity thus emerges from the confrontation with the trauma of loss.

In *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* the ghost figure is presented as a link between texts and times, both structural and conceptual. In intertextual drama selected by Edyta Lorek-Jezińska ghost figures point to a number of significant motifs usually associated with the psychological complexities of trauma, rejection, mourning, melancholia and loss. However, in the deconstructive perspective adopted by the author, the ghost also represents an opening or rupture in the present text, through which the Other is allowed to enter. The Others that appear in spectral forms examined in the book include postmodern fractured identities, women's creativity and monstrosity, melancholic subjects and non-heterosexual identities. All of these repressed and rejected identities are analysed in a theoretical framework that reconceptualises the notion of hauntology beyond its primary definitions. Edyta Lorek-Jezińska thus explores the persistence of tradition in contemporary drama by British women writers, yet at the same time their desire to be liberated from the past, by making its silences speak and by opening the forbidden crypts, both psychological and social ones. This sense of tension or crisis is brilliantly encapsulated by the central, destabilizing and disquieting figure of the ghost, "embodying" the Derridean concept of *différance*, evading closure and interpretation. Fusing, in a fascinating way, intertextuality, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and feminism, *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* is a significant book exploring the representation of identity anxieties in British drama at the turn of the millennium.