

■ Haunting Objects, Material Diaspora, and the Unhomely Home: Ghostliness in Amelia B. Edwards' Ghost Stories

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Abstract

Renowned for her expeditions and travelogues, Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards was not merely an Egyptologist and journalist, but also a celebrated author of many literary works. One literary genre she is particularly prolific in is ghost stories. However, while Dickens's eerie spirits have become a Victorian archetype, Edwards's ghosts, often appearing in the same periodicals alongside Dickens's, are seldom ghostlike. Furthermore, as Simon Cooke points out, the Victorian ghost story is "firmly located within the bourgeois household, a modern haunted house of up-to-date fittings, prosaic décor and mundane ritual." Thus essentially the Victorian ghost story is the story of a haunted house. However, Edwards's ghosts almost never appear in the domestic space, for her narrator—usually the sole witness of the ghost—is usually an Englishman travelling or working away from home. On the other hand, according to Edwards, her home is "filled and over-filled with curiosities of all descriptions," especially Egyptian objects. She even goes as far as to claim that the two mummified human heads in her bedroom might "talk to each other in the watches of the night" when she is asleep. Here a sense of the uncanny permeates into her house, and both her stories and her own home are characterized by a plenitude of curious objects. It is the contention of this paper that, without ghostlike ghosts and without a haunted house, Edwards's stories are still ghostly. I argue that their ghostliness

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does not lie in the ghosts themselves, but in the material details. Furthermore, as exotic objects pervade her texts, a sense of material diaspora becomes prominent, and such diaspora brings forth a sense of haunting. Together the curious details, haunting diaspora, and the *unheimlich* home create a sense of ghostliness that her ghosts and setting seem to lack.

Keywords: Amelia B. Edwards, ghost stories, the uncanny, diaspora, Egyptology

The Victorians loved their ghost stories. Alfred Russel Wallace wrote in 1875 that the nineteenth-century fascination with the supernatural was unrivalled “in the history of human thought,” because “there never before existed so strong, and apparently so well-founded a conviction that phenomena of this kind never have happened and never can happen” (153). With the rapid development of science and technology, and the expectedness of the pragmatic and the realistic, an imagination of the inexplicable and the unknown paradoxically ran wild. Andrew Lang also observes the popularity of ghosts in the Victorian culture as compared to the medieval period, the “dark ages” of superstition: “The last forty enlightened years give us more bogles than all the ages between St. Augustine and the Restoration,” wrote Lang in 1894 (30). Vanessa D. Dickerson argues in *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural* that the ghost has become one of the “signs of the times” of the nineteenth century, a term coined by Carlyle (13).¹ Dickerson maintains that the Victorians found themselves “between medieval god and modern machine, monarchy and democracy, religion and science, spirituality and materiality, faith and doubt, authority and liberalism,” and thus they could identify with the ghost, whose condition bespeaks “betweenness” (14). Thus as almost a zeitgeist of the age, the supernatural reached the height of its popularity as the publishing industry thrived throughout the nineteenth century, and such renowned authors as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, J. S. Le Fanu, Henry James, and Margaret Oliphant regularly contributed to the publication of ghost stories in periodicals.

According to Dickerson, men and women write supernatural stories “in different voices” (6-7), and those written by male writers, such as Sheridan Le Fanu, Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton, and Robert Louis Stevenson, tend to be “more diagnostic, clinical, journalistic, vested in mensuration” (7).² Dickerson lists several examples, including the “medical sleuth, Dr. Hesselius” in Le Fanu’s “Green Tea,” the “haunted technologized space, the railroad” in Dickens’s “The Signalman,” and the “mixture of medicine and the supernatural” in Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (7n8). However, as a female writer, Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards’s narratives, with their technical details of railroads, battles, the handicraft industry, or hiking and other types of traveling, seem to align more with these male voices. Indeed, Edwards’s narrators

¹ Please see Carlyle, “Signs of the Times.”

² For the discussions of these stories please see Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*; Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*; Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*.

are almost exclusively practical-minded men—barristers, shrewd businessmen, or engineers. The narrator of “The New Pass” even goes as far as to claim himself a “plain, prosaic man” than whom “it would be difficult to find many persons less given to look upon life from a romantic or imaginative point of view” (35). These narrators all claim to have recorded the events as they were, without passing any personal judgements. As Simon Cooke suggests, ghost stories sometimes “validate their mystical claims” by “rooting [them] in the mundane and factual,” and Edwards’s narrative style gives the inexplicable events “a documentary texture” (I). Furthermore, not only does Edwards’s male narrative voice set her apart from other female writers of the ghost story, but the issues often addressed in these female texts are relatively scarce in her stories. Cooke has summarized three aspects in which the “female ghost story” is read (III). First of all, ghost stories are seen as exposing the liminality of women in the nineteenth century, for, as Dickerson argues, “Further and further removed from the power-welding occupations of the world . . . yet relegated to the higher realm of moral influence,” the nineteenth-century woman seems “equivocal, ambiguous, marginal, *ghostly*” (5; my emphasis). On the other hand, some critics maintain that the “male threat”—in Jarlath Killeen’s terms (Killeen 93)—in these stories highlights the victimized situation of women (Cooke, III). The third way of reading female ghost stories, as Cooke suggests, emphasizes the ghostly “as a metaphor for specific issues which had a direct impact on the way women lived their lives” (III).³ In Edwards’s case, however, such concerns are lacking. Not only are there almost no female narrators, but female characters seldom feature in her stories at all, and even the ghosts are almost exclusively male ghosts; one of the very few exceptions is Salome the Jewess in “The Story of Salome,”⁴ whose ghost manifests due to her inability, while alive, to persuade her father of her conversion to Christianity—she has been buried with Jewish rites. While this story indeed discloses Salome’s inability to be heard by her father while alive, her voice is nevertheless strong and resolute as a ghost, imploring the narrator to trace a cross over her headstone. While she is indeed a ghost, she is far from ghostlike, nor does the narrator recognize her as such. As a matter of fact, while the eerie spirit delineated by Dickens has become a quintessential Victorian archetype, Edwards’s ghosts, often appearing in the same publication

³ For more discussions of how supernatural stories by female writers address social issues concerning women’s situations, please see Basham, *The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Sciences in Victorian Literature and Society*; Kerr, *Mediums, and Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900*; and Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*.

⁴ Hereafter referred to as “Salome.”

alongside Dickens's, are never ghostlike. Thus while Edwards's texts seem to lie outside of the realm of feminist studies, as they usually do not address issues concerning women's situations, they also seem un-ghostly and thus exterior to the Victorian convention of ghost stories.

Edwards's peculiarity as a writer of ghost stories can also be illustrated by her settings. According to Cooke, unlike "the neo-medieval fantasies of the eighteenth century Gothicists Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, with their exotic castles and abbeys," Victorian ghost stories are "firmly located within the bourgeois household, a modern haunted house of up-to-date fittings, prosaic décor and mundane rituals" (1). As Julian Wolfreys points out, the uncanny, in Freud's terms, "relies on the literal meaning and the slippage of, and within, the German *unheimlich*, meaning literally 'unhomely,'" and haunting "cannot take place without the possibility of its internal eruption and interruption within and as a condition of a familiar, everyday place and space" (Wolfreys 5). Jacques Derrida also states in his reading of Freud's theory that "haunting implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house" (86). Essentially, the Victorian ghost story is the story of a haunted house. However, although popular within this genre, Edwards's ghost stories seem to be somewhat removed from its tradition. Edwards's ghost stories are usually located outside the home, as the narrator and the main characters are on a journey. However, if we put into consideration that her academic and literary careers are highlighted by the volumes chronicling her excursions, *Sights and Stories: A Holiday Tour Through Northern Belgium* (1862), *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (1873), and *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile* (1877), then it becomes less surprising where this famed lady traveler sets her stories.

Renowned for her expeditions and travelogues, Amelia Edwards was not merely an Egyptologist and journalist, but also a celebrated author of many literary works. One literary genre she is particularly prolific in is ghost stories. As a regular contributor to Dickens's *All the Year Round* and other periodicals, Edwards was renowned for such stories as "The Phantom Coach,"⁵ "How the Third Floor Knew the Potteries,"⁶ and "An Engineer's Story."⁷ Edwards's interest in ghost stories goes hand in hand with her exposure to the culture of ancient Egypt and her personal collections of objects from her travels. According to Edwards, her home is "filled and over-filled with curiosities of all descriptions" ("My Home Life" 304). She even jokingly suggests that perhaps

⁵ Hereafter "Phantom."

⁶ Hereafter "Potteries."

⁷ Hereafter "Engineer."

the two mummified human heads in her bedroom would talk to each other when she is asleep (309). Like her home, her narrative is filled and over-filled with compilations of oddments and curiosities, and exotic or fantastic objects. Her stories are also filled with seemingly unnecessary details and lengthy digressions, often delineated through the description of objects. Thus, if Edwards's ghosts are neither at home—"homely"—nor ghostlike, then her narrative style seems to be further encumbered by meticulous material details and digressions. It is the main contention of this paper that, without a haunted house, without the marginalized and thus "ghostly" women, and even without ghostly ghosts, Edwards's ghost stories are still haunting. The purpose of this paper is thus to tease out what constitutes the ghostliness/uncanniness in Edwards's ghost stories. I argue that the spectrality, or ghostliness, of Edwards's texts does not lie in the ghosts themselves, but lies precisely in the material details. Furthermore, as exotic objects pervade her texts, a sense of material diaspora becomes prominent, and such a sense of diaspora brings forth a sense of haunting. While Edwards's ghosts do not emerge in the domestic space, her description of her own home life corresponds to the narrative style in her ghost stories. Together the curious objects, material diaspora, and the home as a haunting—rather than haunted—space create a sense of ghostliness that her ghosts and the setting seem to lack.

Studies of material culture have long been a prominent part among the scholarship of Victorian literature. Elaine Freedgood, for example, points out that "the mid-Victorian novel" is a "particularly rich site for tracing the fugitive meanings of apparently nonsymbolic objects" (4), for the objects in the Victorian novel "threaten to burst out of its covers" with their sheer plenitude (4). Freedgood also observes that we have learned to understand things in Victorian novels "as largely meaningless," for "the protocols for reading the realist novel have long focused us on subjects and plots; they have implicitly enjoined us not to interpret many or most of its objects" (1). Thus, to study the "fugitive meaning" of these objects, Freedgood investigates the Victorian "thing culture" in *The Ideas in Things*, first taking these objects "beyond the immediate context in which they appear" and tracing their historical, cultural, and material backgrounds, and then "return[ing]" these objects to "their novelistic homes"—reading them as they were in their original narrative context, yet with their thingness already illuminated by their histories (5-6). This paper shares Freedgood's belief that when objects are seen as metaphors, they suffer a loss—they can no longer be themselves, for "[o]bjects become metaphorical (and meaningful) through a loss of many of their specific qualities" (10). Thus the object "is allowed no history of its own"; objects are "indentured to a metaphorical relation in which

they must give up most of their own qualities in the service of a symbolic relation" (10). In order to see objects as objects while not seeing them as merely part of the "generic real" in realist novels (9), this paper intends not to read them symbolically, but instead discuss their *placement* throughout Edwards's texts, both in terms of the narrative itself and the actual spaces delineated in the narrative. Given the limited narrative space within short stories, the objects in Edwards's stories seem too eclectic, too geographically and historically diverse in proportion to be systematically analyzed, but their placement does generate meaning in the narrative, creating a sense of ghostliness where the ghosts themselves seem to be lacking.

This paper consists of three parts, and they deal with different aspects of materiality across Edwards's texts. The first section analyzes how Edwards dwells on the delineation of material details and how she sometimes creates seemingly unnecessary digressions. These narrative devices appear and disappear throughout the texts, creating gaps in the narrative, and thus seem erratic and spectral. The second part explores how indications of material diaspora—a sense of homelessness of objects inherent in the activity of Egyptian diggings—permeates Edwards's texts. Removed from their original contexts, these objects seem misplaced, thus creating a sense of eeriness. Furthermore, often when the diasporic objects are "brought home" through narratives that reconnect them to their original contexts, the ghosts associated with these objects are finally identified—and at times their state of death is thus finally confirmed. In other words, these diasporic objects haunt the texts with a sense of uncanny return, of a haunting past threatening to come back. The third part discusses Edwards's own home life, and how the way she delineates her home life, specifically the objects in her house, corresponds to the way she tells her stories, so even in her own home there is a sense of the "unhomely."

Haunting Objects: Overwhelming Material Details and Seemingly Unnecessary Subplots

Edwards's short fictions are not set within the domestic domain. Her stories usually take place in the public domain, and often the narrator is travelling or touring. Even in "Sister Johanna's Story,"⁸ her only short story with a female narrator and a domestic setting, the manifestation of the ghost takes place right

⁸ Hereafter "Johanna."

outside of Johanna's window, with a clear demarcation between the domestic domain and the external world. As her narrators are Englishmen who are, in Indu Ohri's words, "touring Continental Europe and forming close homosocial bonds with other men," Edwards spends bulks of her narratives on enumerating the details of these men's travels and their professions—sometimes these details seem excessive. In "A Service of Danger,"⁹ for example, the narrator spends more than two-thirds of the narrative delineating the battles, the strategy and tactics applied, the ambushes and defeats, and the night patrols. However, the most important mission that Gustav von Lichtenstein—the narrator's best friend—is to perform, the titular "service of danger" from which Gustav returns with fatal wounds while the rest of his troop return only as ghosts, is entirely unseen and unrelated, entirely renounced from the narrative. In "The Four-Fifteen Express,"¹⁰ before the news of his previous disappearance is revealed to either the narrator or the reader, Mr. Dwerrihouse—or rather his ghost—meets the narrator on the train, and the narrative turns to the lengthy minutiae of Dwerrihouse's work as a representative of his company, his responsibilities, and the obstacles he encounters; in other words, excessive and unnecessary details. Other examples of disproportionate details abound throughout Edwards's short stories. In "Potteries," the narrator, working in a porcelain manufactory, explains in detail the procedure of baking potteries, how the furnaces work, and how the person sitting up overnight must check the temperatures using lumps of fire-clay, even though the story essentially concerns a love triangle and the consequent murder of his friend George—in other words, these details contribute very little to the main storyline.

In all of these examples, the narrative dwells on details that, when reading the story as a whole, seem out of proportion or unnecessary, especially when we compare these descriptions to the wildly bypassed details of the deaths. Edwards's narrator is usually the sole witness of the ghost, yet the death or murder is never directly described. They are usually briefly summarized towards the end of the story in the forms of speculations, hearsays, or confessions. Thus, dwelling on certain details yet completely skirting around others, Edwards's narrative choices seem sporadic, arbitrary, and circumstantial. However, these details, especially the material details, help create a sense of reality necessary as a prerequisite for the uncanny to emerge. As Freud points out, in literature it is only when the writer "take[s] up his stance on the ground of common reality" that "the conditions that apply to the emergence of a sense of the uncanny

⁹ Hereafter "Danger."

¹⁰ Hereafter "Express."

in normal experience” would be accomplished (156-57). Furthermore, the disproportional length of these details creates a sense of uneasiness in the narrative, a prolonged sense of suspense, and an eerie feeling of something out of place.

At times Edwards dwells on the delineation of objects entirely unrelated to the story. In “Potteries,” during the night watch, the narrator reads a book to keep himself awake. However, instead of briefly summarizing this choice, the narrator clearly states the title and content of the book: “I remember the title of the book as well as possible. It was called Bowlker’s Art of Angling, and contained little rude cuts of all kinds of artificial flies, hooks, and other tackle.” The clarity with which he remembers such a detail seems out of place, for the narrator is now an old man, and the incident he relates took place decades ago. Furthermore, this detail serves neither contextual nor symbolic function in the story. However, due to its sudden emergence, it becomes one of the most memorable details in the story, especially when its emergence takes place on the second night of the narrator’s watch—the spectre of his friend George already appeared the night before, and, reported missing during the day, George’s unfortunate fate is becoming certain; thus the readers are already on the watch for the ghost’s second appearance. Here this material detail slows down the narration; it creates a temporary fissure in the story, just as the story is coming to its crisis. It serves to create an effect of defamiliarization, as this particular detail seems misplaced. In “In the Confessional,”¹¹ this sense of defamiliarization again emerges. The travelling narrator checks into a hostelry that makes sleep difficult for him, for not only his room but the entire house is filled with clocks, as “an army of clocks and ornamental timepieces” occupy “every shelf, table, and chest of drawers in the room,” and they make different noises at varying intervals. The landlord is also a clock-maker, and there are “no less than one hundred and eighteen clocks” in the entire house. However, while Edwards spends almost an entire page delineating this fascinating detail, it is soon abandoned in the narrative, nor is it ever mentioned again. Again, within the limited length of a short story, Edwards’s choice to dwell on this detail seems odd and out of place. However, it is precisely such an odd sense of out-of-place-ness, of misplacement or excess, that brings forth an uncanny feeling. Furthermore, even though the clocks are usually very specifically interior, they seem “unhomely” since they are an extension of the hostel owner’s profession, and their sheer quantity not only recalls the sense of repetition in the

¹¹ Hereafter “Confessional.”

Freudian uncanny/unhomely, but keeps the narrator from falling asleep—from feeling at home.

Besides at times dwelling on material details, Edwards's narrator sometimes digresses entirely from the main storyline. It is worthy of note that, due to the editorial choices of its publication, "Potteries" is itself a long digression. It was published in the 1863 Christmas number of Dickens's *All the Year Round*, as one of a series of stories entitled "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings." While the first and last stories were written by Dickens, the stories sandwiched between were written by other authors, including Edwards.¹² As a series of stories told by the tenants and other people in Mrs. Lirriper's house, these stories have very little to do with the main storyline created by Dickens. It is quite accurate for Philip V. Allingham to claim that, while the American Household Edition "reprints only parts one and seven," the "coherence" is intact, since "what lies between those pieces is digressive."

Even without such contextual design, Edwards's texts themselves are characterized by long digressions. In "Phantom," Edwards's most renowned short story, the narrator is lost in the snow and follows an old man to the house of an eccentric old pedant. The narrator delineates the strange objects in the house: The floor is "carpetless," there are "strange diagrams" on the "whitewashed walls," and scattered in the rooms are "philosophical instruments," "dingy folios," a "small organ" with mediaeval carvings, "geological specimens," "surgical preparations," "crucibles," "retorts," and "jars of chemicals." On the mantelshelf are "a model of the solar system, a small galvanic battery, and a microscope." The narrator observes that "[e]very chair had its burden. Every corner was heaped high with books. The very floor was littered over with maps, casts, papers, tracings, and learned lumber of all conceivable kinds." Such delineation of overwhelming materiality is typical of Edwards. After a long conversation with the old scholar, the content of which ranges from general science to the occult, the narrator learns that he can still catch a night mail a few miles away. It is again the old servant that takes the narrator to the cross-road where the coach is due. It is here that the narrator accidentally boards the phantom coach supposedly having fallen over the cliff nine years before, with the phantom passengers who have died nine years since. This latter part of the story constitutes its namesake, and it is here that the main storyline supposedly lies. The detailed

¹² The authors are: Elizabeth Gaskell ("How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle"), Andrew Halliday ("How the Side-Room Was Attended by a Doctor"), Edmund H. Yates ("How the Second-Floor Kept a Dog"), Amelia Edwards ("How the Third-Floor Knew the Potteries"), and Charles Allston Collins ("How the Best Attic Was Under a Cloud").

delineation of the encounter with the scholar seems quite digressive. However, this encounter and the material details obsessively delineated help create a sense of bizarreness, for the narrator seems to have entered a physical space entirely detached from his every-day reality. Such derealization not only foreshadows the spectral events that are to come, but together the entire experience with the house—the snow that traps and disorients the narrator, the peculiar and uncouth servant, the odd scholar and the accumulation of strange objects—intensifies the sense of defamiliarization or disorientation that constitutes a significant part of the uncanny.

Such a long digression with a character that could have been entirely removed again appears in “Was it an Illusion? A Parson’s Story.”¹³ The narrator is a parson who works as an inspector of schools and is constantly on the move due to his profession. Before he arrives at the remote town where his mission lies, he sees the ghost of a boy carrying a fishing rod—the titular “illusion.” Meanwhile, in this town the narrator reunites with his friend from university, Phil Wolstenholme, the young and rich land-owner of the town. Entering Wolstenholme’s house, the narrator is taken through “a long suite of unfurnished rooms” in which are piled “packing cases of all sizes and shapes, labelled with the names of various foreign ports and the addresses of foreign agents.” These cases contain things that Wolstenholme has acquired throughout his travels:

Precious marbles from Italy and Greece and Asia Minor; priceless paintings by old and modern masters; antiquities from the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates; enamels from Persia, porcelain from China, bronzes from Japan, strange sculptures from Peru; arms, mosaics, ivories, wood-carvings, skins, tapestries, old Italian cabinets, painted bride-chests, Etruscan terracottas; treasures of all countries, of all ages. . .

Given the fact that the story mainly surrounds the illusions that the narrator witnesses, it seems odd that Edwards has not only delineated Wolstenholme’s person in detail, just like the scholar in “Phantom,” but has carefully related these objects. Again without Wolstenholme the coherence of the entire story would still stay intact, for he has nothing to do with the “illusion,” the murder, or how the boy’s body is eventually found. However, here the enumerated objects again create a sense of the uncanny, for they are misplaced. The domestic space is filled with objects not belonging there; what belongs outside of the home is now taken inside, and thus the home becomes “unhomely.”

These long digressions, seemingly unnecessary characters, and excessive

¹³ Hereafter “Illusion.”

material details not only slow down the narrative but sometimes put it on hiatus. They appear time and again, creating fissures in the story, forcing the reader to stop and think. At times these details seem out of place, putting the readers ill at ease as they expect action where digressions intervene. While Edwards's ghosts are usually neither terrifying nor haunting—with the exception of "Phantom"—these erratic and ephemeral details and characters at times seem more ghostly than actual ghosts, for they emerge and disappear, leaving the readers wondering. If, as Wolfreys states, "The haunting process puts into play a disruptive structure . . . recalling the idea of the phantom or phantasm as 'gap,' a disruption that is other to the familiarity of particular structures wherein the disruption is itself structural and irreducible to a simple, stabilized representation" (6), then I argue here that for Edwards the digressions and material details, though seemingly more "simple" and "stabilized" than ghosts, can nevertheless also initiate a "haunting process" as they create a "gap," a disruption, for their application can also defamiliarize the narrative structure. If in most ghost stories the manifestation of a ghost creates a gap, in Edwards's texts the gap is created not by the ghosts, but by such material details. Here Neil Hertz's reading of Freud's uncanny can be adopted to explicate the eeriness of Edwards's narrative style. Hertz maintains that "[t]he feeling of the uncanny would seem to be generated by being reminded of the repetition compulsion, not by being reminded of whatever it is that is repeated. The becoming aware of the process is felt as eerie, not the becoming aware of some particular item in the unconscious" (102). In the same vein, in Edwards's text, regardless of the specific objects themselves, it is the reader's being reminded of the act of compulsively listing objects that highlights the sense of abnormality, of weirdness, in the narrative process. Edwards's excessive reiteration of objects, seemingly unnecessary for the storyline, can thus be read as a version of "repetition compulsion" that, as the reader becomes aware of it, creates a sense of unease. It is not the individual items that create the sense of uncanniness, but the collected weight of reiterated materiality—Edwards's reader becomes aware, through lengthy inventories of strange objects and physical reality, of a sense of obsessive and recurrent narrative attempt to enumerate. Furthermore, Edwards's narrators usually tell the story many years after the incidents have transpired.¹⁴ It is quite obvious that most of Edwards's narrators have told and retold the story many

¹⁴ It would have been "a few years" ("The Story of Salome"), "four autumns" ("The New Pass"), "between nine and ten years" ("Express"), "fifteen or eighteen years" ("Confessional"), "sixteen or eighteen years" ("Illusion"), "twenty years" ("Phantom"), or seventy-three years ("Danger") since the strange events take place, and in several other stories the elderly narrator tells the story of his/her youth ("Johanna," "Potteries," etc.).

times, and such retelling also denotes a sense of repetition compulsion. The narrative always threatens to return, and this persistent emergence of the past in the present echoes the Freudian uncanny, which consists of the returning of something “that was long familiar to the psyche” and yet repressed or surmounted (Freud 148). The narrators’ compulsion to repeatedly tell the stories, even though they seem too supernatural to be true, denotes a sense of the haunting—the haunting of a past that should stay in the past yet reemerges time and again.

Due to the setting of the stories, the digressions and their material details are characterized by their association with the professional, the public, and the foreign—in other words, with the spaces exterior to the home. In Wolstenholm’s case, like the “carpetless” hall where the scholar’s books, apparatuses, and collections in “Phantom” are kept, the rooms in which he keeps his spoils are unfurnished. Even within the house, these foreign or strange objects create non-domestic spaces around them. If Victorian ghosts usually invade the domestic space, and if Freud’s *unheimlich* is stipulated by the prerequisite of home, of something disrupting and misplaced within the home space, Edwards’s ghost stories are haunted by things unhomely—neither do they belong in the home space nor are they at home, as they are removed from their origins.

Material Diaspora: The Exiled Objects and Their Return

As a traveler herself, Edwards is especially fond of enumerating cumulated foreign objects, and they fill up the entire space with a sense of cornucopia. In “Salome,” entering the narrative Salome is surrounded by exotic things. Sitting in her father’s shop, she is delineated as “a young Empress” surrounded by “costly merchandise”:

Cases of gorgeous Oriental jewelry; embroideries and fringes of massive gold and silver bullion . . . jewelled yataghans; scimitars of state, rich with “barbaric pearl and gold,” bales of Cashmere shawls, China silks, India muslins, gauzes, and the like, filled every inch of available space from floor to ceiling . . .

Her “unconscious dignity,” “perfect nobleness and refinement” is in correspondence to the costliness of the objects around her, and their exoticness answers to Salome’s charm as a Jewess. As in “Illusion,” there is a consistency of exoticness or foreignness to Edwards’s material world. Here, a reading into her experience as a traveler and Egyptologist would help elucidate what role these objects play in her texts.

The exotic things and their overwhelming plenitude is a theme that occurs throughout Edwards’s writings. As a traveler, her own residence is said to

be “filled and over-filled with curiosities of all descriptions” (“My Home Life” 304), among which are the things she has brought back from her travels:

On the pedestals stand plaster casts of busts from antique originals in the Louvre, the Uffizzi Gallery, and the British Museum; and yonder . . . stands a small white marble torso of a semi-recumbent river god which I picked up . . . from amid the dusty stores of a little curiosity-shop . . . near Soho Square. . . . On the opposite side of the archway . . . stands a large terra-cotta amphora found in the cellar of a Roman villa discovered in 1872, close behind the Baths of Caracalla. . . . That Majolica jar painted with the Medici arms, and those Montelupo plates, were bought in Florence; those brass salvers with heads of Doges in repoussé work were picked up in a dark old shop on one of the side canals of Venice. The tall jars, yellow, green, white, and brown, with grotesque dragon mouths and twisted handles, are of Gallipoli make . . . (307-08)

Such meticulously listed exotic objects echo those in her fictional delineations. Here she writes, “each object recalls the place and circumstances of its purchase, brings back incidents of foreign travel, and opens up long vistas of delightful memories . . .” (307). For Edwards, the objects obtained during travels are substantial records of such experiences, through which the memories of these travels can be recalled. It is interesting that Edwards uses the word “vista” while describing these memories, for here the material things bring about immaterial memories through a sense of visualization, almost like spirits being summoned during a séance: the manifestation of spirits, as well as the vision that the medium sees, are visual experiences. This sense of spectral invocation created through collected foreign objects can be further elucidated by Edwards’s experiences as an Egyptologist and the exposure of her era to the concept of psychometry.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, interest in Egyptology cannot be completely separated from the belief of psychometry, a concept developed by Joseph Rodes Buchanan in 1842. Exclaiming that “[t]he Past is entombed in the Present!” (73; emphasis in source), Buchanan claims that the histories, memories, and even senses and emotions, inherent in an object can be psychically summoned through physical touch. Studying the material history of Egyptology, Alice Stevenson observes that such occult societies as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in London in 1887, “relied heavily upon antiquities for spiritual epiphany”; its members “maintained an arcane image of Egypt, fusing cryptic and Egyptological presentations of Egypt within their rituals” (52). These believers of psychometry sometimes spent “long hours . . . among Egyptian antiquities in places such as the British Museum” (52). Even members of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF), the most important Victorian academic organization of Egyptology, are not entirely exempt from such esoteric belief. For example, Marcus W. Blackden, an Archaeological Survey participant of

EEF, became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1896. Thus concepts of psychometry would have been quite familiar to Edwards and her readers; although Edwards herself did not participate in the activities of psychometry, nor do her narratives indicate any aspects of it, she did write about how things would bring about visual memories. Furthermore, as far as the reading public was concerned, the exotic and antique objects in her texts would inevitably summon a sense of the mystic and supernatural. If Edwards's reiterated exotic objects seem erratic and somewhat elusive, they would inexorably also carry a sense of the uncanny for both her professional circle and the general readership.

As a fervid Egyptologist, Edwards played an important role in the founding of EEF, spending the bulk of her adult life promoting archeological works and advocating the cultural and educational significance of Egyptian antiquities. Nor did she refrain from the actual fieldwork. Her 1873 sojourn in Egypt, for example, is recorded in her most famed book, *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*. It is worthy of note that although larger Egyptian relics such as sarcophaguses or wall paintings were more popular among museums, as commercially speaking they brought in significant amounts of revenue, she was fully aware of the value of smaller, every-day things found in the Egyptian diggings. In a letter published in 1885 to the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, she wrote, “. . . it is hard to make people understand that very small things, of no intrinsic value, can be precious . . . You have some very curious and precious specimens of Egyptian glass . . . these look like chips and rubbish, but they testify to the level which the art of glass working had reached” (qtd. in Stevenson 36; ellipses in source). Such observation is also reflected in the detailed things in her texts. Things—even those seemingly insignificant in terms of the storyline—can produce meaning once the narrative around them is established. In her own house, each hidden corner is filled up with such small Egyptian antiquities:

Stowed away in all kinds of nooks and corners, in upstairs cupboards, in boxes, drawers, and cases innumerable, behind books, and invading the sanctity of glass closets and wardrobes, are hundreds, nay, thousands, of those fascinating objects . . . which are the delight of archæologists and collectors. (“My Home Life” 308)

Among these objects are small porcelain figures of Egyptian deities, libation tables, and actual food offerings from thousands of years ago (308). Furthermore, carefully hidden away and rarely shown to guests are the “fragments of spiced and bituminized humanity”: a baby's foot, mummied hands, and even “the heads of two ancient Egyptians,” which, according to Edwards, perhaps “talk to each other in the watches of the night, when [she is] sound asleep” (308-09). From small daily objects, the worship of gods, to macabre human remnants—

from the every-day to the paranormal—these accrued Egyptian objects, their foreignness, sporadic appearances, and esoterism answer to Edwards's taste for material details in her ghost stories.

As a woman, Edwards's participation in the implementation of Victorian archeological studies was not a rare case. Many lady travelers like herself were influential to the archeological work in Egypt, and many diggings were funded by female investors.¹⁵ Stevenson thus points out that Egyptology, "more than any other museum discipline, was created by women" (57). According to Stevenson, in the actual field, women's responsibilities lie in "marking objects with context numbers, drawing and photographing finds, packing crates of artefacts, surveying sites, and occasionally directing fieldwork itself" (60). In short, it is the women's responsibility to keep the "general orderliness" of the finds (60). The marking of objects is especially important when it comes to the unearthen every-day objects, for it is such markings that would transform "a curio or unprepossessing article" into "a certified archaeological object": "excavated trinkets, trifles and oddments" especially need these markings in order to assume meaning (60). Furthermore, once the finds are removed from the field, they become "orphaned objects" whose connection to their history can only be established through the "neat ciphers inked onto finds," marked by the women on site (61). Stevenson thus claims that in Egyptology "finds organization," in which these female explorers play essential roles, is crucial to "the very production of knowledge" (60).

Stevenson writes of such "material diaspora" (1) in her study of the Egyptian finds scattered throughout the world. According to Stevenson, over the course of a century "an estimated 350 institutions across twenty-seven countries in five continents benefited materially from [the Egyptian] excavations," and thus "no other endeavor in world archaeology is comparable in terms of its scope and material legacy" (1). Stevenson thus attempts to "relocate" the narrative of these diasporic objects (2), establishing a "multi-sited" history that, in Matei Candea's words, follows "the layering of partly incommensurable experiences in different places through time, and trac[es] the connections and disjunctions between them" (qtd. in Stevenson 2). Here I argue that such a sense of "material diaspora" of the exhumed objects and the attempt to "relocate" their narrative can also be applied to the discussions of Edwards's ghost stories. Edwards's ghosts are usually neither nightmarish, ominous, nor formidable; they seem like

¹⁵ For more examples of women participating in both sponsorship and field work, please see Stevenson 56-57, and Hill, *Women and Museums 1850-1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge*; see also Whitelaw.

normal, living human beings. This is also why the narrators are often neither aware of their state nor alarmed after witnessing their manifestations. In other words, in Edwards's stories the ghosts are not self-evident. Their appearances—in terms of both external appearance and emergence—do not betoken their precedent death. It is only when things—the things they left behind, the things surrounding them or directly bearing their identities—are reconnected to their history that the dead and their deaths find a way to verbalize their stories. In other words, these objects are diasporic, and the “neat ciphers inked onto finds,” in Stevenson's words, must be found so as to give meaning to not only these “orphaned” objects but the entire story (61). I argue that the diasporic objects are haunting because they are taken out of context and always threaten to return; when they do return, they bring a sense of ghostliness, for, like ghosts, they are something once familiar yet forgotten or lost, and coming back in a different form or context as something that is now unfamiliar and thus *unheimlich*. While diaspora is a culturally loaded term, here I apply it specifically to objects that are misplaced and threaten to return to its narrative context and thus disclose the ghostly state of the ghost.

In “Express,” for example, even though the narrator recognizes the ghost he witnesses, he is unaware of the preexisting condition of demise of the person in front of him. As Dwerrihouse has disappeared for months, supposedly having absconded with his company's money—a condition unknown to the narrator—when the narrator later talks about their rendezvous on the train, no one believes him; it is the monogrammed cigar-case Dwerrihouse has left behind that serves as the physical evidence of their experience of sharing a compartment, verifying that the narrator “was not dreaming.” Furthermore, when the narrator finds the cigar-case after Dwerrihouse alights, he runs out of the train to return it and witnesses Dwerrihouse talking to an unidentified young man—and then they both magically disappear from the platform. It is only when the cigar-case is later presented as evidence in court that this same young man betrays his sense of guilt, for he has murdered Dwerrihouse months before. It is later explained that the cigar-case must have been left in the compartment by Dwerrihouse on the day of his disappearance and murder, and, months later, the narrator happens to be travelling in the exact same compartment, where he witnesses the ghost. As the narrative accompanying the diasporic cigar-case is established, the mystery is finally solved, the death of Dwerrihouse is confirmed, and the ghost is finally recognized as such.

In other cases the ghost is not identified until the narrative surrounding the diasporic object is established. In “Confessional,” as a traveler, the narrator enters a town near the bank of the Upper Rhine, where he visits a small church.

In the church he sees the German inscription on a tablet commemorating the late Reverend Père Chessez, which peculiarly reads, “He lived a saint; he died a martyr.” He then peeps into the confessional, deeming it empty, and is surprised by the priest sitting within—at least he seems the priest, for he is “dressed in a black soutane.” When later the narrator learns from the landlord of the hostelry that the current pastor is the younger brother of the late Père Chessez, he immediately recalls this man in the confessional, who stared at him with “large, and bright, and wild-looking” eyes, eyes like those of “some fierce animal.” It is not until the story is coming to an end, when the narrator meets the real younger Père Chessez, that he realizes the man he saw in the confessional is actually the ghost of an executed murderer; he killed the late Père Chessez in order to disguise himself as the priest to hear the confession of his adulterous wife. He was then hanged for the double murder of Père Chessez and his own wife. For the narrator, the things presumably surrounding “Père Chessez”—the soutane and hat, the memorial tablet, and the confessional, do nothing towards certifying the identity of the actual person/ghost he sees. They actually denote three different Père Chessezes. It is only through the narrative accompanying these things that the person is finally identified. The objects themselves, though inherent with the signs of priesthood, seem diasporic until their history is revealed. In this case it is precisely the sense of material diaspora that brings forth the uncanniness—it is because these objects are taken out of their context that the confusion amongst the three different Père Chessezes is created. In other words, the diasporic state of these objects becomes a prerequisite for the uncanny sense of Freud’s uncanny double—in this case triple—to emerge. Freud claims that originally the double serves as “an insurance against the extinction of the self,” for the soul is “the first double of the body” (142), and yet when the phase of this belief is surmounted, the double changes from “an assurance of immortality” to “the uncanny harbinger of death” (142). Here the memorial tablet serves foremost as a symbol of immortality, yet when its narrative intersects the narrative surrounding other diasporic objects, the comforting belief of immortality is surmounted and then return with a sense of the haunting.

A ghost, when manifesting in front of the witness, is removed from its historical and spatial origin. Thus by nature a ghost is always already diasporic, for it has been detached from the body that once carries its history. Essentially the purpose of the ghost story is to reveal the ghost’s identity or explicate the mystery of its appearance—thus reconnecting it to its origin. Given the ubiquity of diasporic objects throughout Edwards’s texts, it seems quite apposite that it is often the relocation of diasporic objects that refers back to the identity of

the ghost. In the case of “Salome,” though the narrator recognizes Salome, he fails to comprehend her state as a ghost, even after he witnesses Salome thrice upon her own grave. In other words, even when the diasporic ghost is standing next to her own body, their narrative connection is not established. Due to the language barrier, the narrator is unable to read the Hebrew words engraved on the headstone. Recognizing Salome, whom he met once before, he is convinced that she is grieving over the death of a beloved person. After talking to Salome’s rabbi, he learns of Salome’s death, yet he is still convinced that the “Salome” whose death the rabbi ascertains is not the Salome he saw. It is not until one of his friends translates the engravings in a letter that he finally understands what he saw. Here at first the words on the headstone lose their contextual significance, as the signifier is disconnected from the signified. The grave becomes a pure thing—a diasporic thing. Furthermore, if each story must eventually unravel the reason behind the manifestation of the ghost, it is here worthy of note that Salome appears because she needs help with her diasporic state. Salome is indeed unhomely on many levels—besides being a ghost (*unheimlich*), she is too beautiful to be called homely, and as a Jewess her sense of diaspora, of homelessness, is inherent. Most of all, she is not resting in her final home. Salome has converted to Christianity before she died, yet her father still puts her in a Hebrew sanctuary, with Hebrew rites. In order to rest peacefully in her final home, in order to become homely and thus no longer haunting, she asks the narrator to engrave a cross on her headstone. The diasporic headstone finally seems at home as the identification between the grave and Salome is established through translation; and then the diasporic Salome finally returns home when the cross is physically engraved onto the stone. Again the returning home of the material diasporic creates a sense of uncanniness as it predicates the identification of Salome as a ghost.

It is worthy of note that Salome’s appearance in the Hebrew cemetery only becomes uncanny after the headstone is metaphorically relocated within its narrative. After meeting Salome for the first time while she is still alive, the narrator keeps traveling for around a year before returning to Venice, as he is “*haunted* by the image of the beautiful Jewess” (“Salome”; my emphasis): “Was she still so lovely? Did she still sit reading in her wonted seat by the open counter, with the gloomy shop reaching away behind, and the cases of rich robes and jewels all around?” wonders the narrator. As mentioned before, Salome has become inseparable from the exotic objects surrounding her, and here both become haunting for the narrator. Furthermore, such materiality further highlights the sense of material diaspora when the narrator returns to the Merceria and finds the shop, along with all the objects, vanished. It is with

such a haunting memory of Salome in mind that the narrator takes a stroll in the Jewish cemetery and meets Salome's ghost—and two more times afterwards. This moment is indeed a moment of wish-fulfillment, or rather a moment of what Freud calls “the omnipotence of thoughts” (147). Such immediate realization of one's wish only becomes uncanny, according to Freud, when our belief in it has been surmounted and is again confirmed (155). In other words, it is when the primitive belief returns in another form that the uncanniness becomes apparent. Here what seems a happy coincidence at the moment would immediately become something uncanny when later on the ghostly state of Salome is revealed by the headstone. The repeated return of Salome as a ghost—as something once familiar yet not entirely so—becomes ghostly only when the narrative of the headstone retrospectively confirms her state.

Edwards is not alone in at first concealing the deceased state of the ghost witnessed. Wolfreys points out that in 1705 a narrative entitled “A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal the Next Day after Her Death to One Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury the 8th of September, 1705” was published anonymously as a pamphlet, whose author was later found to be Daniel Defoe (4). This story was allegedly a true story, and, while it was republished several times, the evidence of its authenticity, including interviews and letters, was also published later by Defoe scholars.¹⁶ It is worthy of note that in every telling and retelling of the narrative, Mrs. Bargrave is not aware of her friend's deceased state when Mrs. Veal visits her, and the truth is revealed only in the end. Wolfreys explicates, “the appearance of the haunting woman is not in itself haunting . . . what is uncanny is the act of telling, the narrative act of bringing the ghost back in a temporally disjunctive manner, which destabilizes the cognition of temporal order as a perceived sequence of events” (5). As illustrated by the preceding examples, it is characteristic of Edwards to “bring the ghost back” in a “temporally disjunctive manner” and thus disrupt the narrative from within a seemingly chronologically stable framework. A sense of the uncanny thus emerges, for, as Wolfreys observes, in the Freudian sense “that which is unhomely emerges in the homely” (Wolfreys 5), and in Edwards's texts the return of the familiar person in an unfamiliar form is further set against a backdrop of seemingly ordinary, or homely, incidents.

If diasporic objects haunt Edwards's texts, on the other hand in post-colonial terms diaspora is often readily delineated in terms of ghosts or the haunting. Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, for example, have compared the history

¹⁶ For more details of the publication of the story and its accompanying evidence, please see Wolfreys, 4. See also Sherman, 2291-97.

of the African diaspora groups in Canada to “a ghost story,” for the historical past always keeps haunting the present (3). Furthermore, the diasporas are “haunted” by “a myth of return,” for, leading a life already detached from their historical past, the actual returning home might ironically jeopardize their future (223). Grace M. Cho also uses the imagery of haunting to elucidate the Korean diaspora and the trauma brought forth by the Korean War. As Avery Gordon establishes in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, “to be haunted is to be tied to historical and social effects” (190), so the diasporic, with an insurmountable historical past that constantly emerges, threatening to return, is always haunting and haunted. While the material diaspora in Edwards’s texts does not carry such cultural weight, the diasporic state of these materials does entail a past that constantly threatens to return. It is this threat of a past that keeps returning that creates a sense of ghostliness, of haunting.

In “Phantom,” the past is indeed haunting—literally, and in a very physical way. Leaving the old scholar’s house, the narrator comes to the cross-road, where he boards the phantom coach, thinking it the night mail he is supposed to catch. The air within the coach is cold and “pervaded by a singularly damp and disagreeable smell.” The three passengers within are singularly silent, and when the narrator tries to open the window, the leather strap breaks in his hand. He observes the interior of the coach more narrowly:

the glass was covered with a thick coat of mildew, the accumulation, apparently, of years. . . . Every part of [the coach] was not only out of repair, but in a condition of decay. The sashes splintered at a touch. The leather fittings were crusted over with mould, and literally rotting from the woodwork. The floor was almost breaking away beneath my feet. . .

The narrator then turns to his neighbor and realizes that he is not a living person, for his eyes “glowed with a fiery unnatural lustre,” and his face is “livid as the face of a corpse,” whose “bloodless lips” and exposed teeth show “the agony of death.” All the three passengers are in fact no living men, their hair “dank with the dews of the grave,” their clothes “earth-stained and dropping to pieces,” and their hands “the hands of corpses long buried.” This is one of the very few cases in which Edwards’s ghosts actually look like ghosts, and it is also very rare that the entire experience within the phantom coach is delineated not only visually, but in tactile terms. The very materiality of the entire scene offsets the sense of immateriality and anomaly of the haunting. The physicality of the scene creates a sense of reality in which, in Freud’s terms, the author “betrays us to a superstition we thought we had ‘surmounted’; he tricks us by promising us everyday reality and then going beyond it” (157). This is the very coach that went over

the parapet and crashed in the valley below nine years before. The three passengers, the guard, the driver, and the outside passenger were all killed. They are never to return home. The unnatural death denotes a sense of diaspora as well as an inevitable return—restive even after death, the dead are unable to come home to their final rest. The dead thus returns, materially—physically—haunting.

Returning Home: Edwards's Home Life

While the diasporic are haunted by a myth of return, in Edwards's texts return, in terms of both returning home and the return of the past, is always already haunting. While "Phantom" is the story of a man striving to return home to his wife and haunted by a past that inevitably returns, in "Engineer" the diasporic narrator is incapable of returning home. The narrator and his best friend Matthew Price grow up together in a village located "about midway between the plain and the plateau," characterized by looming tors. Two paragraphs into the story, the narrator states his feelings for these tors:

These were the Tors—Druids' Tor, King's Tor, Castle Tor, and the like; sacred places, as I have heard, in the ancient time, where crownings, burnings, human sacrifices, and all kinds of bloody heathen rites were performed. Bones, too, had been found there, and arrow-heads, and ornaments of gold and glass. I had a vague awe of the Tors in those boyish days, and would not have gone near them after dark for the heaviest bribe.

The bloody histories inherent in these "Tors" would come back to haunt the narrator even after he leaves his hometown, even after he has travelled all around the world. As he says in the very beginning of the story, the friendship between Mat and him is as "fast and firm" as the tors, so what transpires between them would later prove to be as bloody as the "heathen rites" by which these tors are marked. Working as engineers, these two travel to Genoa on behalf of their Birmingham-based railway company, where they both fall in love with Gianetta, the local flirt. In an irate argument about Gianetta, the narrator accidentally injures Mat with a knife—an injury from which Mat is never to recover. The narrator takes the waning Mat to Rocca, a seaside town, where Mat spends the last days of his life. Although Mat has forgiven the narrator, "fully and freely," and their friendship is recovered before Mat passes away, the narrator is filled with regret. Feeling himself burdened by the "curse of Cain," in which "[p]eace on earth was for [him] no more," he sets out to roam the earth. He takes on many jobs around the world, moving from con-

continent to continent, visiting cities in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America. Like Cain, he is doomed to wander throughout the world, never finding a home. For him, the sense of home, the sense of “rest, and joy, and hope” dies with Mat. There is no home for him to return to, and settling down—calling a place home—would only remind him of Mat. When he finally returns, it is to return to Italy, for he wishes to spend the rest of his life near Rocca, where Mat is buried. What seems to him closest to the concept of home is marked either by the tors of his childhood or by Mat’s grave—and both are haunting and thus unhomey. If Edwards’s ghosts are unhomey, as they never appear in the domestic space—if, that is, in her texts the home is not haunted—then here home is inevitably haunting. While diaspora is always already haunted by a sense of return, by the burden of a historical past never entirely forgotten and threatening to come back time and again, here for the diasporic narrator returning home becomes a haunting burden he has to carry throughout his life. In either direction the sense of return—the return of the past or the return to the point of departure—seems haunting.

“Engineer” seems less of a ghost story: the ghost of Mat only appears towards the end to save everyone from the train crash. This is also one of the very few stories of Edwards’s in which the narrator already knows who the ghost is—thus the lack of mystery. However, more than other ghost stories, “Engineer” is a story about diaspora brought forth by a haunting past, a story starting from a hometown haunted by a bloody narrative and ending with a return, a sense of home-coming, where the narrative is brought face to face with the ghost. If the story is less spooky than a ghost story should be, the sense of haunting is not wanting. Given such a sense of haunting attributed to homecoming in Edwards’s stories, it is worthy of note that the sense of material diaspora, haunting exotic objects, and spectral digressions of material details characterize Edwards’s delineation of her own home life as much as her tales of the *unheimlich*, the unhomey.

Invited by *The Arena* to write about her home life in 1891, Edwards claims that she would “present [herself] literally ‘At Home,’ and in [her] habit as [she] live[s]” (“My Home Life” 299-300). She begins by introducing the geography and history of Westbury-on-Trym, which oddly takes up one third of the entire article (299-302). Specifically, in line with her taste for the eerie, she dwells on the portrayal of the Gothic church with a secret subterranean passage (300-01), and the old mansions “renowned for the valuable collections of paintings and other works of art which they contain” (302). Before she takes the reader inside her house, digressively she spends almost an entire page on her garden (303). Finally entering the house, she first describes the very eclectic hall filled with

curiosities (304). Having minutely chronicled the exotic objects she has collected from her travels—a typical stylistic choice across all her writings—she then spends almost half of the entire article describing, with equally minute details, her library, in which lie the enormous amount of books and foreign objects she has collected (304-09)—including spoils from her Egyptian excursions. After such an exuberant and detailed account of her library, as if suddenly remembering that she is to write about her home life, she proceeds to say:

With regard to “my manners and customs” and the course of my daily life, there is little or nothing to tell. I am essentially a worker, and a hard worker. . . . I live with the pen in my hand, not only from morning till night, but sometimes from night till morning. (310)

Thus after what seems to be lengthy digressions, she finally ends an article supposedly about her home life with a refusal to write about any domestic activities at all. In the anecdote that ends the article, she writes about the joy she feels one morning when, having just finished writing the last few words of a book, she sees a nightingale outside her library window (310). This anecdote seems to be one of the very few, if any, passages actually about her domestic bliss, yet it still pertains to her work. Furthermore, the book in question is *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys*, an account of her travels to the Dolomites: even in this short narrative of her actual home life, the sense of travel and diaspora still pervades. Her closing words are that, were she a “pious scribe of the Middle Ages who had just finished a laboriously written life of some departed saint,” she would have thought the bird a “*ghostly* messenger sent by the good saint himself” to congratulate her (310; my emphasis). While the entire article is peppered with objects quaint, curious, or even downright macabre—namely the mummified parts of the human anatomy and the two “talking” heads—this ending appositely sums up the spectrality surrounding Edwards’s narrative of home, a narrative haunted by material diaspora and a sense of the unhomely/uncanny.

Here it is worthy of note that *The Arena* was a progressive American periodical centering around political issues and social reform, and “My Home Life” is sandwiched between “Where Must Lasting Progress Begin?” by American writer and activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (293-98), and “The Tyranny of Nationalism” by Rev. Minot J. Savage (311-22). The subjects of other articles in the same issue include national and international affairs, education reform, and women’s working condition. It is quite unlikely that a reader of *The Arena* would expect anything less than extraordinary when it comes to the home life of this renowned advocate of Egyptology and women’s rights. Under these circumstances, Edward’s choice to delineate the more academic and public

aspects of her home seems understandable. However, this does not account for the element of the uncanny created by curious objects, which seems to be oozing out of the pages.

While Edwards skirts around the subject of her own home life, the narrators in her ghost stories are not only not at home, but they are almost exclusively bachelors for whom a typical Victorian domestic felicity—marriage and children—is lacking. Even the female narrator in “Johanna,” purportedly the only female narrator throughout her short stories, is an old maid. Edwards herself was never married, and her home life is a life she shares, for thirty years, with her partner Ellen Drew Braysher. Edwards’s sexuality is not a secret—it is known that she had intimate relationships exclusively with women.¹⁷ Her friend John Addington Symonds, writer and homosexual activist, claims in a letter that she “made no secret to [him] of her Lesbian tendencies” (Brady 240). In 2016 her grave, the grave she shares with Braysher, was given a Grade-II listing by Historic England as a recognition of LGBTQ histories. While her sexuality is irrelevant to her narrative style and the subjects of her ghost stories, her unorthodox home life does augment the significance of the unhomely. For Edwards home is far from the conventional Victorian domestic space. It is of little wonder that her ghost stories are never stories about haunted houses: if, as Wolfreys points out, for Freud “that which is unhomely emerges in the homely” (5), and haunting requires an “internal eruption and interruption” (5) of the home, in Edwards’s case her home is already an eruption and interruption of the Victorian cultural prerequisites, and her house already a space haunted by exotic objects. It is worthy of note that, while Edwards has hidden her Egyptian collection in “all kinds of nooks and corners” (“My Home Life” 308), especially “the spiced and bituminized humanity” that can only be seen by “visitors who are not nervous, nor given to midnight terrors” (308), she is indeed exhibiting these hidden objects publicly by putting them down in words. In other words, this narrative about her own home has brought what is hidden back into daylight. This answers to one of the definitions of the uncanny emphasized by Freud, namely something “that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open” (132). In this aspect, the definition of the uncanny converges with its opposite, for, “starting from the homely and the domestic,” *heimlich* also denotes something “removed from the eyes of strangers, hidden, secret” (133).

¹⁷ For her relationship with Ellen Byrne, the wife of John Rice Byrne, please see the letter from Symonds to sexologist Havelock Ellis, in Brady, 240. For her relationship with Marianne North, please see the letters from North to Edwards in *The Amelia Edwards Archive*, North no. 226-266. For her relationship with other women, please see Walther, “The Eminent Lesbian or the Passionate Spinster? Posthumous Representations of Amelia Edwards’ Love for Women.”

When Edwards allows that which is hidden away to return to plain sight, the homely merges with the unhomely, and ultimately the home becomes an uncanny space.

Avery Gordon states that “haunting” is “forcing a confrontation, forking the future and the past” (xvii). The manifestation of a ghost forces us to stop and reassess the fallibility of reality; it visualizes the untowardness, the sense of something amiss latent in the narrative and embodies—though immaterial—the breaking of the status quo. I want to further point out that Edwards’s material details are even more diasporic and haunting than her ghosts, for their misplacement in the domestic space (or simply an interior space, as her narrators are usually traveling) creates a sense of break; they temporarily exile the narrative, bring back distant memories, or bring the reader to remote places. Wolstenholme’s spoils from his travels highlight how erratic the concept of home is for him—most of these souvenirs are never unpacked, for he rarely comes home; the objects in the old scholar’s house in “Phantom” mark his exile from society, and the entire house, a “lone farmhouse amid those wild and solitary moors” further emphasizes the sense of exile. The narrators themselves are more often than not diasporic, for they are almost exclusively on the road. In “Engineer” the narrator spends years wandering all over the world until he returns to Italy and continues the storyline, and in “Danger” two-thirds of the story is spent chronicling battles fought in strange lands. These long, often digressive narrative of exile and meandering inarguably denote a sense of diaspora not common in the ghost stories of other authors. Given the association of haunting in terms of material diaspora, this actual diaspora does augment the sense of haunting very specific to Edwards.

This paper embarks on a journey with Edwards’s travelling narrators, and after experiencing many digressions on the way and exploring the diaspora, it returns home to Edwards’s own life. If her ghost stories are never set within the home, where the emergence of ghosts would create a sense of uncanniness from within, they are nevertheless still unhomely. From the objects supposedly exterior to the home yet misplaced within the interior space, to the sense of homelessness and haunting home-coming of diaspora, and finally to Edwards’s unhomely home, the feeling of *not quite at home* prevails. If essential to Freud’s uncanny is the return of something familiar yet repressed or surmounted, throughout Edwards’s texts a threatening sense of return always looms behind the travels, the exotic, and the diasporic. While the digressive and spectral material details create gaps in the story and leave the readers feeling uneasy, the diasporic objects, when returning to their original narrative, often divulge the ghostliness of the ghosts; and the haunting sense of home, in both Edwards’s texts and her

own home life, brings forth a sense of the uncanny. This research has explored the ghostly, the haunting, and the uncanny in Edwards's stories, specifically in terms of the material reality she has created. In the overwhelming material details, the spectral digressions, and the haunting diaspora, the ghostliness of Edwards's ghost stories manifests.

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陰魂不散之物：愛德華茲的鬼故事

摘要

艾米莉亞·愛德華茲 (Amelia B. Edwards) 不僅是古埃及學家、作家及記者，也是維多利亞時代少見的女性探險家，其出版作品包括遊記、歷史、小說、詩、翻譯等等。有趣的是，這位聞名的學者最為人熟知的作品竟是其筆下的鬼故事。愛德華茲經常為文學性的報刊書寫短篇小說，其中有不少以靈異現象為主題。雖然她是狄更斯所主編的期刊 (*All the Year Round*) 的常設作家，她筆下的鬼魂卻缺乏狄更斯所書寫的那種毛骨悚然感。愛德華茲的鬼在外觀上與一般人並無不同，目擊者甚至完全不知道自己見到的是鬼魂。再者，在維多利亞時代以家庭為主軸的社會風氣下，恐怖氣氛的營造通常來自鬼屋——那種從居家環境內部產生的脫離常軌性；然而愛德華茲的鬼故事從不以居家環境為背景，而是發生在敘事者的旅程或是工作中——且這些敘事者絕大多數為英國男性。因此，愛德華茲的鬼故事雖引人入勝，卻缺少其他同時代鬼故事中的驚悚元素。另一方面，根據愛德華茲的自述，她家中充滿了她從旅程中蒐集的各種古怪的玩意兒，包括不少在埃及考古挖掘時所發現的古物。她臥房中甚至擺放了兩顆木乃伊人頭，她笑稱他們也許會在她睡著後互相對話。因此靈異的氣氛從她的短篇小說中蔓延到她筆下的自宅居家空間裡，而這兩者都充滿了各種稀奇古怪的物品。本文探討愛德華茲鬼故事中帶來毛骨悚然感的元素：即使沒有外觀可怕的鬼魂、沒有鬧鬼的房子，這些故事依然給讀者一種不安、詭異的感受。這樣的感受來自於故事中各種物品的呈現方式、擺放位置、及出現的時間點。愛德華茲筆下各式古怪物品的鋪陳、遺物的離散性質、以及一種對於歸賦的陰魂不散的想望及恐懼，共同營造出她的鬼魂本身及故事場景所欠缺的恐怖感。

關鍵字：艾米莉亞·愛德華茲、鬼故事、詭譎感、離散、古埃及學