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Haunting the Boundaries: Liminality, Spectral Desire, and the Female Body in David Lindsay's *The Haunted Woman* and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a cross-cultural comparative study of David Lindsay's The Haunted Woman (1922) and three selected tales from Pu Songling's Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (聊斋志异)— "Nie Xiaoqian," "Liancheng," and "A Bao." It argues that both writers employ the supernatural not as an escapist motif but as a critical discourse that exposes the liminal boundaries between body and spirit, morality and desire, East and West. Through an analysis of liminality and spectral desire, the paper reveals that the female ghost or "haunted woman" operates as a mediator between conflicting systems of ethics and metaphysics. Drawing on theories of hauntology (Derrida), liminality (Turner, Bhabha), psychoanalysis (Freud, Kristeva), and feminist corporeality (Irigaray, Mulvey), this study reinterprets the supernatural as a mode of cultural translation that articulates the suppressed tensions of modernity. By juxtaposing the haunted spaces of British modernism with the ghostly cosmologies of Qing China, the paper demonstrates how the spectral feminine becomes a cross-cultural figure of resistance and transcendence. Ultimately, the study contributes to comparative literature and cultural philosophy by proposing "haunting" as a universal metaphor for the human condition—an ever-returning negotiation between rationality and imagination, repression and renewal.

Keywords

The Haunted Woman; David Lindsay; Morality; Desire

The study of haunting and the supernatural has long occupied a central position in comparative literary scholarship. Since Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) and Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), critics have understood the fantastic as a space where cultural anxieties are negotiated through symbolic displacement.

Jackson, in particular, interprets fantasy as a "literature of desire," a form that unveils the repressed or the excluded within the cultural unconscious (Jackson 4). In Western literary studies, the Gothic and the fantastic have therefore been read as modes of psychological revelation, mediating between Enlightenment rationality and Romantic subjectivity. Meanwhile, Chinese literary scholarship has treated Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* as a moral allegory and a repository of folk imagination. Scholars such as Ma Ruifang

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and Judith Zeitlin have highlighted Pu's innovation in transforming vernacular ghost stories into vehicles of emotional and ethical reflection. Zeitlin's *Historian of the Strange* (1993) identifies *Strange Tales* as a hybrid genre that "domesticates the supernatural" within Confucian moral discourse while simultaneously subverting it from within (Zeitlin 7).

Within the field of cross-cultural studies, comparative readings of *Strange Tales* and Western supernatural fiction have appeared only sporadically. Most have focused on narrative typology rather than philosophical resonance. For instance, David Wang's *The Monster That Is History* (2004) situates Chinese ghost fiction within the continuum of trauma and historical allegory, whereas Marina Warner's *Phantasmagoria* (2006) explores the Western ghost as a metaphor for memory and technology. Yet few studies have placed Lindsay and Pu Songling in direct conversation, partly because of the perceived distance between British modernism and Qing-dynasty allegory. This absence, however, conceals a remarkable convergence: both authors employ female figures as agents of moral critique and as embodiments of metaphysical inquiry. By reading *The Haunted Woman* alongside Pu's tales, this study enters a largely unexplored area of intercultural hauntology.

The haunted imagination is a meeting ground where the visible and the invisible, the rational and the irrational, converge in acts of cultural self-revelation. David Lindsay's *The Haunted Woman* (1922) and Pu Songling's Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (c. 1679) stand, despite their chronological and geographical distance, as parallel meditations on boundaries—spatial, temporal, and corporeal—through which the human psyche negotiates its own estrangement. Both employ the supernatural not as ornament but as an epistemological instrument that exposes the thresholds of reason and the anxieties of desire. Their ghosts, chambers, and revenant bodies become metaphors for what Victor Turner called the "liminal" condition—an interval of suspension in which identities are unmade and reconstituted (Turner 95). In these haunted zones, the feminine body repeatedly becomes the privileged surface upon which cultural contradictions are inscribed: moral restraint and erotic longing, Confucian chastity and Daoist naturalism, Protestant guilt and mystical transcendence. This paper re-examines *The Haunted Woman* and three emblematic tales from *Strange Tales*—"Nie Xiaoqian," "Liancheng," and "A Bao"—to argue that both corpora imagine the female spectral body as a liminal mediator between incompatible systems of value. The supernatural thus functions as a comparative discourse of being that joins British modernist introspection with Qing-dynasty moral allegory.

Previous studies on David Lindsay has tended to concentrate on his philosophical novel *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), which has overshadowed *The Haunted Woman.* Critics such as Colin Manlove and Bernard Sellin view Lindsay as a metaphysical allegorist whose fiction translates spiritual longing into narrative form. However, *The Haunted Woman* diverges from his cosmic allegories by localising transcendence within the domestic and the psychological. It deserves to be reconsidered as a feminist and philosophical text that articulates the crisis of modern selfhood. Isabel's divided consciousness and her encounters with the spectral room have rarely been interpreted through gendered or cross-cultural lenses. Thus, this paper fills a significant gap by situating Lindsay's haunted female subject within a comparative framework that links Western introspective modernism with Chinese moral imagination.

Similarly, studies of *Strange Tales* have seldom engaged with Western theories of the fantastic or psychoanalysis. Traditional Chinese criticism emphasizes ethical didacticism and folklore origins, while

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Western sinology often frames Pu's ghosts through anthropological exoticism. By applying Western critical theory—hauntology, psychoanalysis, and feminist corporeality—to *Strange Tales*, this paper offers a more dialogic model of interpretation that respects cultural specificity while identifying universal structures of haunting. The dialogue between Lindsay's haunted rooms and Pu's spectral women reveals how both traditions stage the self's encounter with its own repression.

The theoretical grounding of this study synthesises four interrelated frameworks. First, Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993) provides a vocabulary for the "return of the repressed" as a historical and ethical imperative. Derrida's notion that every presence is haunted by absence enables us to read haunting as a metaphysical condition rather than a mere narrative device. Second, Victor Turner's concept of liminality and Homi Bhabha's "third space" theory together illuminate how cultural and psychological thresholds become sites of transformation. Both Lindsay's echoing room and Pu's liminal underworld operate as such thresholds, mediating between self and other, order and chaos. Third, psychoanalytic and feminist theories—from Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919) to Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982) and Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985)—explain why the female body so often functions as the surface upon which haunting inscribes itself. Finally, Daoist metaphysics of yin-yang complement these Western paradigms by offering a non-dualistic view of being, where boundaries are fluid rather than fixed. This theoretical synthesis not only bridges cultural difference but also challenges the binary logic that separates the rational from the mystical, the masculine from the feminine.

Lindsay's modernist allegory, published in the disenchanted aftermath of the First World War, situates haunting within the fractured interiority of the individual mind. His heroine, Isabel Lindsay, discovers a forbidden upper floor in an ancestral house; each time she ascends, temporal continuity falters and a second consciousness awakens. The haunted chamber is less Gothic décor than spatialised psychology: a projection of the repressed Ego that Freud identified as das Unheimliche, the uncanny return of the familiar rendered strange (Freud 241). Pu Songling's fox-spirits and ghost-maidens, conversely, emerge from a late-imperial culture of moral didacticism. Yet beneath their didactic surface lies the same metaphysical inquietude that haunts Lindsay's modern woman—the restlessness of a soul divided between moral law and the call of passion. When read together through the twin lenses of Derrida's hauntology and feminist psychoanalysis, these works disclose a shared grammar of haunting that transcends civilisational boundaries.

Haunting as Liminal Experience

Liminality first manifests as a disturbance of space. In *The Haunted Woman*, the Sussex house operates as a palimpsest of consciousness: its echoing corridors mirror Isabel's divided self. Jacques Derrida's remark that the ghost "begins by coming back" (Specters of Marx 11) clarifies the paradox of this architecture—the past is never gone but returns to inhabit the present, rendering every room a threshold between presence and absence. Isabel's ascents enact what Homi Bhabha terms a "third space," an interstitial site of negotiation where meaning is produced in the act of translation (Bhabha 56). The staircase mediates between the daylight world of social propriety and the shadowed floor of forbidden desire; each step literalises the passage from external conformity to interior truth. Similarly, Pu Songling's "Nie Xiaoqian" transforms the graveyard into a corridor of liminality. The ghost maiden who dwells there is neither wholly spirit nor fully flesh but a

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figure of transition, oscillating between afterlife and domesticity. In rescuing her through love, the scholar Ning Caichen crosses not only the threshold of the tomb but the moral boundary that separates Confucian orthodoxy from personal compassion. The graveyard and the haunted chamber alike are zones where social law is suspended and new moral configurations briefly become imaginable.

Temporal liminality compounds this spatial disruption. In Lindsay's novel, chronological time collapses whenever Isabel enters the secret room; past and present interpenetrate as if echoing Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. The English modernist sense of temporal fragmentation—so pronounced in contemporaries like Virginia Woolf—is here refigured as supernatural experience. By contrast, Pu Songling's tales operate within a cyclical cosmology rooted in Daoist and Buddhist notions of transmigration. Ghosts do not so much return as persist in endless transformation, revealing what David Der-wei Wang calls "the monster that is history" (Wang 17)—a history in which violence and emotion eternally recur beneath Confucian veneers. The temporal boundary between life and death thus mirrors the cultural difference between linear progress and cyclical regeneration. Yet both systems employ haunting to critique their respective ideologies: Lindsay exposes the paralysis of post-Victorian rationality, while Pu undermines patriarchal Confucianism through spectral empathy.

Spectral Desire and the Gendered Body

The haunted feminine body is central to these critiques. Freud's theory of repression and Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection illuminate how the female form becomes a site of both fascination and fear. In *The Haunted Woman*, Isabel's bodily responses—shuddering, faintness, trance—signal the eruption of what Kristeva terms the abject: that which threatens the subject's clean boundaries (Powers of Horror 4). The room compels her to confront desires incompatible with her social identity as a respectable fiancée. Lindsay's Protestant milieu frames this conflict as moral temptation, yet his narrative sympathy subtly subverts patriarchal judgement. Isabel's eventual renunciation is less a moral victory than a tragic repression of vitality, turning her into a living ghost within modernity's ethical architecture.

Pu Songling's female ghosts, by contrast, transform abjection into agency. Nie Xiaoqian's corporeal transparency—she feeds on incense smoke yet yearns for human touch—materialises what Luce Irigaray calls "a body without language" (Irigaray 75). Her desire to marry Ning and bear a child represents a reclamation of the body's generative power denied to women within Confucian order. In "A Bao," the spectral heroine possesses a man's wife not to destroy her but to experience embodiment again; the act is simultaneously transgressive and restorative, revealing a Daoist acceptance of permeability between forms. "The Liancheng Story" intensifies this by depicting a woman whose soul wanders while her body sleeps, observing her own lovers with detached irony. Such soul-flight literalises the female subject's division between social façade and inner autonomy. Across these tales, the ghostly body becomes a language of protest: it articulates what the living female could not utter.

Socio-historically, the difference between Isabel and Pu's ghost-maidens derives from divergent moral economies. Lindsay writes from within a culture traumatised by industrial modernity and war; his haunted woman embodies the collapse of Victorian certainties and the modernist search for spiritual meaning. Her

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spectral experiences critique a civilisation governed by rationality and patriarchal discipline. Pu Songling, writing in the early Qing, projects similar tensions into a Neo-Confucian world that represses individual emotion in favour of ritual propriety. His ghosts articulate what the Confucian scholar could not express without risk of censure. The liminal woman, oscillating between life and death, becomes a safe mask through which to voice forbidden affect. Thus, haunting in both traditions performs a philosophical function: it is the form through which repressed truth insists on return.

From a cultural-philosophical standpoint, these haunted bodies negotiate two metaphysical grammars. The Western ghost emerges from the Christian dialectic of sin and redemption; the Eastern ghost participates in the Daoist continuum of you (有 , being) and wu (无 , non-being). Derrida's hauntology bridges these by positing that every presence contains the trace of its own absence—an idea strikingly akin to Daoist relational ontology. In both Lindsay and Pu, the feminine intermediary embodies this paradox: she is the trace that makes relation possible. Her haunting demonstrates that identity is never self-contained but always haunted by the other—be it moral law, suppressed desire, or historical memory.

If haunting exposes the instability of boundaries, desire provides the energy that crosses them. Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze clarifies how visuality organises power in narrative. In *The Haunted Woman*, the haunted chamber suspends that gaze: Isabel is not merely looked at but becomes the perceiving subject of the supernatural. The mirror motif—her seeing herself as if from outside—reverses cinematic scopophilia into introspection. In Pu's stories, the gaze functions differently. The ghost's visibility destabilises the patriarchal eye; the scholar who beholds the ghost often becomes the object of her scrutiny. Nie Xiaoqian observes Ning's moral hesitation with gentle irony, implying a feminine moral superiority. The shift from being seen to seeing constitutes what feminist critics identify as the emergence of spectral agency.

Historically, such spectral femininity participates in broader negotiations of modernity and enlightenment. Isabel's divided self mirrors the crisis of the Western Enlightenment project, in which reason estranged itself from passion. Pu Songling's revenants, conversely, prefigure the Chinese intellectual's oscillation between Confucian orthodoxy and the emotive individualism that would later inform May Fourth humanism. The haunted woman, whether British or Chinese, symbolises the ethical unconscious of her civilisation—a repository of values suppressed by hegemonic rationalism. Her liminality offers what Turner termed communitas, a temporary state of equality that challenges hierarchical order (Turner 102). By entering the ghostly threshold, both authors momentarily dissolve social distinctions—between gender, class, and even the living and the dead.

The philosophical depth of these narratives lies in their shared interrogation of being. Heidegger's distinction between Sein and Seiendes finds uncanny resonance in Daoist notions of Dao as the unnamable source. In both metaphysical idioms, the ghost signifies the impossibility of absolute presence. *The haunted woman* is thus an ontological event: a disclosure of the limits of knowledge. Her body, half-opaque, half-luminous, reveals the porousness of material reality. Lindsay's modernism approaches this through phenomenological doubt; Pu's tales enact it through parable and allegory. Each, however, arrives at a comparable insight—that to be human is to be haunted.

The recurrence of the female body as the privileged vessel of haunting indicates that neither Lindsay

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nor Pu Songling could imagine liminality apart from gender. In both corpora, the woman's body is the site where metaphysical uncertainty meets social prohibition. The body is porous, receptive, and symbolically fertile; it mediates between material and immaterial orders precisely because patriarchal discourse defines it as unstable. Julia Kristeva's Powers of Horror insists that abjection attaches to "that which disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 4). The ghostly woman therefore performs the work of abjection on behalf of the culture that conjures her: she keeps its boundaries visible by transgressing them. In Isabel's trances and in Nie Xiaoqia's spectral embraces, the same drama unfolds—the haunted female body discloses the fault-line between moral authority and affective truth.

Lindsay's novel frames this embodiment through the moral vocabulary of early twentieth-century Britain, a moment when female independence was both desired and feared. Isabel is engaged to a widower whose household carries the sediment of patriarchal inheritance. The haunted upper floor, belonging to an earlier generation, materialises the repression of feminine agency within that lineage. When Isabel ascends, she encounters her own divided corporeality: the trembling limbs, the heightened sensual perception, the voice that is hers yet not hers. Psychoanalytically, this doubling recalls the Freudian Doppelgänger—the projection of an ego that has become alien (Freud 234). Culturally, it mirrors what historian Carolyn Steedman calls the "haunted domestic" of late-Victorian consciousness, where femininity was imagined as the threshold between sanctity and contamination. The haunted room literalises that threshold, allowing Lindsay to expose the psychic cost of moral respectability.

Pu Songling's women inhabit an older but equally constraining order. Qing society idealised female chastity to the point of sanctifying suicide, yet Pu's ghost-heroines violate these injunctions with serenity. Nie Xiaoqian's desire is erotic but also moral; she yearns not for seduction but for relational sincerity. When she tells Ning that she wishes to serve his household and bear a child, her spectral body challenges the Confucian hierarchy that confined women to silence. Her liminality—neither alive nor dead—becomes a space of ethical invention. The narrator rewards her transgression with restoration: after death she is reborn, purified by love. Pu's gentle irony turns orthodoxy against itself; the moral tale that was meant to discipline desire ends by vindicating it. In "A Bao," bodily possession inverts patriarchal control. The ghost's temporary habitation of a living woman's body allows two feminine identities to coexist, forming what Irigaray would call a "two-lipped" subjectivity—dialogic rather than hierarchical (Irigaray 74). Where Lindsay's heroine must renounce desire to remain socially legible, Pu's ghosts convert desire into moral revelation.

To read these hauntings through feminist materialism is to see that each text registers historical shifts in the valuation of the body. In post-war Britain, industrial rationality had stripped matter of mystery; the haunted body re-enchants it. Isabel's sensations—auditory echoes, tactile vibrations—restore sensuous immediacy to a world numbed by mechanisation. The novel thus participates in what Anne McClintock terms "the gendering of modernity," where woman figures both the archaic and the futuristic. She is the ghost of history that progress pretends to exorcise. In late-imperial China, by contrast, the body remained the locus of cosmological order. Daoist medicine and Confucian ethics alike conceived of corporeality as relational rather than autonomous. Pu's spectral women dramatise that relational ontology: their bodies extend beyond themselves, communing with ancestors, spirits, and lovers. The philosophical ground of such permeability lies in the Daoist interplay of yin and yang, where difference is dynamic and complementary. Hence the

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Chinese ghost, far from being demonic, often appears as ethical corrector—a reminder of balance lost.

This cultural divergence has profound implications for how desire is imagined. In *The Haunted Woman*, desire is interiorised, psychologised, and ultimately moralised. It belongs to what Charles Taylor describes as the Western "buffered self," anxious to preserve its boundaries against intrusion. The haunted woman's tragedy is that she cannot remain buffered: the echoing room punctures her enclosure. Lindsay's prose lingers on the tactile, even the musical, as if the vibrations of the haunted architecture were erotic rhythms. Yet the novel's resolution—Isabel's withdrawal from love and her descent into silence—reasserts the self's isolation. Haunting becomes a negative theology of desire, its satisfaction deferred to a spiritual realm. In *Strange Tales*, by contrast, desire circulates between worlds; it is not guilt but gravity. The erotic encounter with a ghost is a transaction of qi, the vital breath that animates cosmos and body alike. Pu's narrators often end by praising such unions as morally edifying, because they reveal the sincerity of feeling (qing). Through this logic, the ghostly woman transforms lust into virtue, the spectral embrace into metaphysical harmony.

Both writers, nevertheless, use haunting to interrogate the moral foundations of their societies. Lindsay's England, steeped in Protestant introspection, reads the supernatural as temptation; Pu's China, shaped by Confucian rationalism, treats it as allegory. Yet each system represses the same energies—desire, imagination, the feminine principle—that haunting releases. Derrida's Specters of Marx reminds us that haunting is "the mark of the living on the living" (Derrida 126). To be haunted is to recognise the other within the self, the excluded that sustains identity. Isabel's spectral double and Pu's revenant women are thus dialectical figures: they return as the ethical unconscious of their respective cultures. Their bodies perform what philosopher Elizabeth Grosz calls "corporeal feminism"—a politics of the flesh that resists reduction to sign or spirit.

The social resonance of this embodiment extends beyond gender. In both traditions, the haunted woman mediates class and historical trauma. Lindsay's Sussex mansion is a relic of English aristocracy decaying under modernity's pressure; the ghostly architecture registers the dissolution of inherited hierarchies. The servants' silence and the isolation of the countryside evoke the dislocation of post-industrial Britain, where spiritual vacuum replaced social cohesion. Isabel's haunting, then, is national as well as personal: she bears the anxiety of a civilisation losing faith in its metaphysical centre. Pu's Liaozhai world likewise reflects the contradictions of a scholar-official class facing bureaucratic stagnation and moral exhaustion. His ghosts offer redemption through affect precisely because official ideology could no longer inspire belief. In both contexts, the spectral feminine becomes the voice of a disenchanted order seeking renewal.

Philosophy, Culture, and Desire

From a philosophical perspective, the haunted woman functions as an experiment in ontology. She unsettles the binary of spirit and matter by existing in both simultaneously. Heidegger's notion that Dasein is "being-toward-death" resonates with Lindsay's and Pu's treatment of women who live beyond death to illuminate life. Their partial transparency reveals, in Kristeva's phrase, "the intimate revolt" against finite identity (The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt 12). The ghostly heroine revolts not through speech but through persistence—she continues to affect the living. This persistence aligns with Derrida's insistence that the

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spectre is the ethical demand of the past upon the present. By listening to ghosts, both authors rehearse an ethics of remembrance.

The philosophical affinities between Derridean hauntology and Daoist non-dualism invite a genuinely intercultural reading. In Daoist thought, boundaries are provisional; form arises from formlessness and returns to it. The Dao produces the One; the One produces the Two; the Two produce the Three; the Three produce the ten thousand things (Daodejing ch. 42). Pu's ghosts inhabit this continuum, exemplifying transformation rather than rupture. Lindsay's metaphysics, though couched in Western dualism, gestures toward a similar continuity: his haunted spaces dissolve distinctions between inner and outer, past and present. W hen read together, the two writers outline a global ontology of haunting in which the feminine mediates the rhythm of being. Such an ontology challenges the Enlightenment division of reason and myth, proposing instead a dialogic metaphysics grounded in relational existence.

The critical value of revisiting these works today lies in their anticipation of contemporary theoretical concerns. Hauntology has re-emerged in late-capitalist critique as a language for absence, loss, and spectral persistence; feminist theory has turned toward materiality and affect; post-secular philosophy re-examines the sacred within modernity. Lindsay and Pu prefigure all three. Their spectral women are affective archives, storing the sensations that rational modernity suppresses. To read them now is to recover a transhistorical discourse of embodiment that speaks to twenty-first-century anxieties about technology, ecology, and identity. The haunted body, once an emblem of superstition, becomes a model for thinking interconnection.

In this light, the female ghost also symbolises the politics of voice. Both authors write from within systems that denied women authorship. By granting speech to the spectral feminine, they enact what Hélène Cixous would later call écriture féminine—writing that inscribes the rhythms of the body. Nie Xiaoqian's tender dialogue with Ning, Isabel's whispered recognitions within the echo chamber, are instances of such corporeal writing. Their language is affective rather than declarative; it trembles, echoes, haunts. Through them, the unsayable becomes audible. The cross-cultural convergence of these voices attests to what comparative literature, in its global turn, now seeks: not sameness but resonance.

The enduring academic value of studying these haunted women lies in how they compel us to re-think the relation between literature, philosophy, and society. They show that metaphysics need not be abstract; it is felt through skin, breath, and sound. They expose the historical contingency of "rational" worldviews by staging encounters with what those worldviews exclude. And they offer a comparative model of humanism grounded not in universality but in shared vulnerability. The haunted body becomes the philosophical bridge across cultures—a "cultural bridge," to recall the metaphor Lindsay's own students might use, spanning the echoing chambers of East and West.

In conclusion, *The Haunted Woman* and *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* are united by their commitment to exploring the thresholds of being through the figure of the spectral feminine. Both employ haunting to dramatise the process of becoming—ethical, emotional, and ontological. Their ghosts are not simply remnants of superstition but interlocutors in a trans-historical dialogue about the limits of reason and the necessity of desire. By attending to the liminal boundaries and spectral desires that animate these texts, we discover a comparative poetics of haunting that continues to speak to the modern world. The haunted woman,

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British or Chinese, remains the emblem of our own divided consciousness: haunted by history, animated by longing, and forever poised between dissolution and renewal.

The significance of this research is threefold. First, it contributes to comparative literature by establishing a cross-cultural poetics of haunting that links British modernism with Chinese classical storytelling. Rather than treating cultural difference as opposition, it interprets haunting as a shared human language of introspection. Second, the study expands feminist literary theory beyond its Western genealogy by incorporating Chinese conceptions of embodiment, virtue, and emotional sincerity (qing). In Pu Songling's world, the female ghost becomes a vehicle of ethical enlightenment rather than an object of fear—a contrast that enriches global feminist discourse. Third, the research engages philosophy by proposing haunting as a universal metaphor for the negotiation between being and non-being. The haunted woman, whether British or Chinese, symbolises the oscillation between presence and absence, self and other, that defines human existence. Through this lens, the study addresses broader questions about modernity, spirituality, and cross-cultural communication in the humanities.

In sum, this paper intervenes in three intersecting academic conversations: the reassessment of Lindsay's neglected modernism, the reinterpretation of Pu Songling's supernatural ethics, and the global turn in literary theory that seeks to decolonise comparative practice. It aims to demonstrate that the ghostly feminine is not a marginal curiosity but a central figure through which civilisations articulate their deepest metaphysical and moral anxieties. By situating *The Haunted Woman* and *Strange Tales* within a shared hauntological framework, the research illuminates the enduring power of the supernatural to reveal the invisible logics of culture, gender, and being itself.

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