

The Haunted Theatre: Mark Ravenhill's *The Haunting of Susan A*

Perili Tiyatro: Mark Ravenhill'in *The Haunting of Susan A* Oyunu

Abstract

Mesut GÜNENÇ*



* Assoc.Prof., Aydın Adnan Menderes University, Faculty Of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature, Aydın, Türkiye,
mesut.gunenc@gmail.com,
ORCID: 0000-0002-7077-1914
ROR ID: ror.org/03n7yzv56

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This paper, focusing on Jacques Derrida and Merlin Coverley's notions about hauntology and specters, scrutinizes Mark Ravenhill's play *The Haunting of Susan A* (2022). Derrida, one of the most influential but incomprehensible philosophers, coined the term hauntology in his *Specters of Marx* (1993). Nothing is fixed in the Hauntology system; time, space, and characters are all deconstructed, thus every period creates its own specter who returns to haunt each detail of the culture and shape the present. Ravenhill, honing in on the history of the King's Head pub, famous people's stories over ale, and the possibilities of what once could have happened in the room where the audiences are gathered, represents cultural history, heritage, passions, and fears and portrays a ghost story using light and sound techniques and various narratives related to the King's Head Theatre in London. Ravenhill portrays a distinctive ghost and haunted story in *The Haunting of Susan A*. The ghost takes place in the world of Susan, and a private trauma is witnessed when Susan mentions the ghost or feels the ghost during the performance. King's Head creates its own spectre. The purpose of this paper is to study the effect of hauntology and spectres on the play, *The Haunting of Susan A* and analyse how Ravenhill's text and Susan's role make connection with the past and create uncanny feelings through memories and repetitions within the performance. Taking my cue from theoretical conceptualisations of hauntology and haunted theatre, this paper provides an analysis of the haunted story through the character Suzanne Ahmet in King's Head Theatre in London. Hence, this paper focuses on the character Susan and the historical significance and atmosphere of the King's Head theatre and pub.

Keywords: Hauntology, Haunted Theatre, Mark Ravenhill, *The Haunting of Susan A*, King's Head Theatre.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Jacques Derrida ve Merlin Coverley'nin hauntoloji ve hayalet konusundaki görüşlerine odaklanarak, Mark Ravenhill'in *The Haunting of Susan A* oyununu (2022) incelemektedir. En etkili ama anlaşılması en güç filozoflardan biri olan Derrida, hauntoloji/hayaletbilimi terimini ilk kez *Specters of Marx* (1993) (*Marx'ın Hayaletleri*) eserinde gündeme getirmiştir. Hauntoloji sisteminde hiçbir şey değişmez değildir; zaman, mekân ve karakterlerin hepsi yapıbozuma uğratılır, böylece her dönem, kültürün her ayrıntısına musallat olmak ve bugünü şekillendirmek için geri dönüp gelen kendi hayaletini yaratır. Ravenhill, King's Head Pub'ın tarihine, ünlü kişilerin birayla ilgili hikâyelerine ve seyircilerin toplandığı odada bir zamanlar neler yaşanmış olabileceğine dair olasılıklara odaklanarak, kültürel tarihi, mirası, tutkuları ve korkuları yansıtır ve Londra'daki King's Head Tiyatrosu ile ilgili çeşitli anlatılar ile ışık ve ses tekniklerini kullanarak bir hayalet hikâyesini canlandırır. Ravenhill, *The Haunting of Susan A* oyununda kendine özgü bir hayalet ve perili bir hikâye tasvir eder. Hayalet Susan'ın dünyasında yer alır ve Susan hayaletten bahsettiğinde ya da performans sırasında hayaleti hissettiğinde özel bir travmaya tanık olunur. King's Head kendi hayaletini yaratır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, hauntoloji ve hayaletlerin *The Haunting of Susan A* oyunu üzerindeki etkisini incelemek ve Ravenhill'in metninin ve Susan rolünün geçmişle nasıl bağlantı kurduğunu ve anılar ve yeniden canlandırılmalar aracılığıyla performanstaki tekinsiz duyguları nasıl yarattığını analiz etmektir. Bu çalışma, hauntoloji ve perili tiyatronun teorik kavramsallaştırmalarından yola çıkarak, Londra'daki King's Head Tiyatrosu'nda Suzanne Ahmet karakteri üzerinden musallat olma hikâyesinin bir analizini sunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu makale Susan karakterine ve King's Head tiyatrosu ve barının tarihi önemine ve atmosferine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hauntoloji, Perili Tiyatro, Mark Ravenhill, *The Haunting of Susan A*, King's Head Tiyatrosu.

Introduction

In this article, I examine the intersection of hauntology, specters and deconstruction of linear time through Jacques Derrida and Merlin Coverley's notions about hauntology and specters, as focussed on one of the distinctive contemporary haunting stories. Mark Ravenhill's *The Haunting of Susan A* (2022) indicates that each period can create its own specter within the eerie atmosphere of the London's oldest pub, King's Head Theatre. Ravenhill's play explores the intertemporal transition and untimeliness. Ravenhill chooses London's oldest pub to create his specter because it is a remarkable place with a historical location to support the theory of hauntology. The play analysed in this study is evaluated by theoretical conceptualisations of hauntology, haunted theatre, memories and specters. Ravenhill tries to emphasize the 'cultural heritage' (Carlson, 2003, p. 11) of the King's Head theatre and this cultural heritage is transferred to the audience through light and 'ambient noise' (Walfisz, 2022) techniques. These techniques evoke the feeling that a ghost will spontaneously appear in the audience and participate in the performance. Susan, retelling the event in King's Head theatre, tries to haunt the present and creates untimeliness. Focusing on theoretical conceptualisations of hauntology, this paper analyses how Ravenhill's text and the role of Susan make connection with the past and create the uncanny within the performance in King's Head Theatre. This study offers a general explanation of the theory of hauntology and haunted theatre with different definitions and establishes a relationship between the theory and Ravenhill's play *The Haunting of Susan A*.

Definition of Hauntology

Hauntology was first proposed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the early 1990s. As Lorek-Jezińska identifies, "Hauntology is a theoretical approach postulated by Jacques Derrida in his *Specters of Marx* (1993)" (2013, p. 7). Merlin Coverley lays bare that hauntology "is a term that was first coined in the early 1990s by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida [...] Since then, however, hauntology has evolved and entered the cultural mainstream, becoming a shorthand for the ways in which the past returns to haunt the present" (2021, p. 7). During historical periods and cultural mainstream, hauntology shapes policy and movements. Derrida, one of the most influential but incomprehensible philosophers, has influenced many movements, works and writers with his concept of deconstruction. Deconstruction always explores unfixed or unstable conditions, interpretations and subjectivity. Hauntology as a system deconstructs space, time and characters. Nothing is fixed and "every period has its ghosts" (Derrida, 1994, p. 241). In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida notes that the post-cold war period, the end of communism, and the fall of the Berlin Wall do not represent any definite ending or fixed period. Through hauntology and ghosts, we can revisit any period, understanding the events and observing the characters. Every period has a "central concept of hauntology. Haunting looks back to the past and points forward to the future from the moment of the present. In doing so, it signals towards a legacy as well as to a promise of something to come, drawing attention to the structuring role of absence" (Shaw, 2018, p. 7). Hauntology stocks the memory and events in each period. Through technological development and techniques in the present, "hauntology re-emerged, as a cultural and political response to the temporality of a present in which the past no longer dies" (Coverley, 2021, p.12), in this way every period creates its own spectre. Each spectre returns to haunt each detail of the culture and shape the present. The idea of the ghost deconstructs the linear time and at the same time, leads to recreation of characters in novels, poems and plays. The spectre in literary works attempts to question the readers' and audiences' belief and thoughts in a linear time.

The Haunted Theatre

In their 'Introduction: Theatre and Spectrality', Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin note that "ghosts are hard to escape in modern and contemporary culture: in film and television dramas, novels, poetry, fine art and installation-and, particularly, we argue in this book, in theatre" (2014, p. 1). Ghosts began to be staged in ancient Greek (Clytaemnestra, *Oresteia*) Roman (*Phaedra*), Elizabethan (*Hamlet*) and Jacobean (*The Spanish Tragedy*, ghost of Don Andrea) period. However, representations of ghosts or supernatural events are not related exclusively to western society. Luckhurst and Morin argue that "every culture forms its version of the supernatural and theatre is often a primary vehicle for its transmission, as is the case in Noh drama, with its ghost-warriors revisiting battles, and in much African drama" (2014, p. 2). Representation of the ghost can be observed in every region of the world because rituals and destructive events such as World War I and II, genocide, terrorism and natural disasters create post-traumatic stress disorders, traumatic memories and paranormal events and ghost stories. Marvin Carlson accentuates that "the practice of theatre has been in all periods and cultures particularly obsessed with memory and ghosting" (2003, p. 7). Memories and historical events create new ghosting stories and spectres. "The concept of haunting is used to expose the significance of performative memory, in which theatre events are stored" (Jezińska, 2017, p.134). Devastation, anxieties, fears, joys and memories of the past create uncertainty and this uncertainty is uncanny. The uncanny reappears together with characters in cities, streets and spaces. These recollections, along with ghosts, are brought to the stage where they are transferred to the present and shed light on the future to the audience. Avant-garde movements and periods deconstruct traditional space in theatre; however, deconstruction has eliminated traditional space in the theatre, but the theatre has a cultural heritage formed by memory and haunted by repetition (Carlson, 2003, p. 11) and this cultural heritage is transferred to the audience in the historical process through an invisible and ghostly space. The ghostly space hones in on the "audience's collective and individual memories of previous experience" (Carlson 2003, p. 165). The idea of the ghost "as that which comes from the past to manifest itself in the present and yet which belongs to neither, simultaneously both absent and present, challenges our belief in the unbroken progression of linear time" (Coverley, 2021, p. 6). Along with recollections, historical events and eras, hauntology, ghosts, "parallel universes and the living dead abound in plays and performance texts of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries: W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Samuel Beckett, Alan Ayckbourn, Arthur Miller, Noel Coward, Michael Frayn, Caryl Churchill, Thornton Wilder, Marina Carr, Judith Thompson, Sam Shepard and Conor McPherson are but a few of the playwrights who have famously written ghosts and paranormal events into their work" (Luckhurst, 2014, pp. 2-3)

Through postmodern techniques and fictional characters, ghosts or ghost stories with different purposes have taken place in contemporary British drama. Actually, postmodern philosophy creates speakers and the "creation of traditional dramatic characters would jar with postmodern philosophy's rejection of the idea of the subject's essentialist identity with him/herself and the impossibility of his/her representation" (Zimmermann, 2003, p. 74). In the twentieth and twenty first centuries different ghost stories have affected the British stage. "Ghosts have proved popular subjects on the English stage, but in theatre produced after the year 2000, the popularity of ghosts not only continued, but exploded" (Shaw, 2018, p. 43). Rachel Clements clarifies that "Susan Hill's *Woman in Black* (1989) by Stephen Mallatratt, Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), Shelagh Stevenson's *Five Kinds of Silence* (2000), David Harrower's *Blackbird* (2005),

Philip Ridley's *Leaves of Glass* (2007), Anthony Neilson's *God in Ruins* (2007), Simon Stephens' *Pornography* (2007), Howard Brenton's *In Never so Good* (2008) and Dan Rebellato's *Static* (2008)" (2010, pp.10-18) are distinctive examples and productions of ghost stories in British Drama. Through electricity, sound effects, historical feature of King's Head Theatre/Pub forces audiences to become more active during the performance and represents more powerful metaphor for haunting. As Jezińska writes, "haunting has become a powerful metaphor that can be used quite surprisingly to explain the modes of existence of both live performance and mediated and recorded image and action" (Jezińska, 2017, p. 134), a powerful metaphor haunting the British stage. Haunting is a favoured metaphor to tell the story and offer the audience an experiential performance. Through haunting, a playwright can reproduce and raise past periods and stories by live performances.

Marvin Carlson argues that "ghosting presents the identical thing they [the spectators] have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus, recognition not of the similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably" (2003, p. 7). A typical theatrical audience member may be unaware that the event s/he is attending overshadows him/her in some way. They may have consciously encountered instances in their own lives in which an audience position was assigned to them in an atmosphere beyond their control (Higgins, 2016); however, Ravenhill knowingly aims to draw the audience into the shadows and forces the audience to deal with ghostliness and become part of the performance. Ravenhill tries to reflect "physical depiction of a ghost or a haunting on stage is another example of theatrical ghosting" (Higgins, 2016). Theatrical ghosting deconstructs the perception of time. It can be said that the text now transcends several time periods, which is subject to interpretation, and has a new sense of time; this also applies to the space that transcends time. The new sense of time and space have deconstructed theatrical conventions, allowing the audience to experience diverse dimensional environments because different periods and cultures, especially those preoccupied with memories and specters, begin to be observed on the stage. Memories, stories and spectres are actually designed for theatrical performance; the narrative and the performance of the actors allow the audience to have the freedom of being placed in any story or haunting in the reliable atmosphere of a theatrical venue (Higgins, 2016). Soyica Diggs Colbert argues that "while death marks the demise of the physical body, theatre's presentation of ghostly figures draws attention to the body as an idea and an ideal, something we attach with meaning, desire and aspirations" (2021, p.7). The materials used in the theatre venue-the venue itself and the bodies are haunted in the past, present and always-and the state of being haunted has enabled the audience of the theatre to establish a connection between the past and present, the venue and the bodies. Ghosts have crucial roles in contemporary performances because they act as bridges between memory and history.

Hauntology and Ghost Story: Mark Ravenhill's *The Haunting of Susan A* (2022)

The play premiered at the King's Head Theatre on June 1, 2022 and I had a chance to watch and discuss the structure of the play with the author Mark Ravenhill. The play depends on performance more than words. Experiencing the performance, in which Ravenhill roles as both playwright and actor, in a historically significant venue like the King's Head, has notably enabled us audience members to create our ghosts, much as Susan's character does on stage. The narration of the performance and the history of the venue is an important part of the haunting play that Raven-

hill staged for the audience. The haunted stage also contains memory and Ravenhill, focusing on the cultural power and memories of King's Head Theatre, tries to narrate a ghost story, and cultural and memorial relations are represented in this haunted performance with the help of sound and lighting techniques. Sound, light and images, as well as historical events and characters, can travel through the ghostly space without pausing time, creating unease and the uncanny.

Before analysing Ravenhill's latest ghost story, this paper focuses on the ghosts in Ravenhill's previous plays *Faust is Dead* and *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*.¹ In his experimental play *Faust is Dead*, Ravenhill portrays the character Donny who "cuts his jugular" (Ravenhill, 2022, p. 132), dies in the play but revives in the final scene and goes on haunting the other characters during the play. Through Donny and the Chorus, Ravenhill cuts reality and creates a ghosting line between virtuality and reality in the play. Ravenhill's portrayal is "far from valorising the Baudrillardian position that everything has become a simulacrum and copy" (Clements, 2010, p. 160). Instead, Ravenhill's approach recalls Derrida's statement: "Everything comes back to haunt everything, everything is in everything, that is, 'in the class of specters'" (Derrida, 1994, p.183), Ravenhill tries to summon every period as individuals try to come back to explain something in the present through their copies:

The characters discover there are quite a few experiences that are too raw and too painful to exist in a virtual sense, that not everything has gone into that level of the virtual. There are some things that do take place, they are real and they hurt, and it's a philosophical indulgence to pretend that they don't (Aragay et al., 2007, p. 97).

Donny's conversation with the real characters goes on in the virtual world. At the same time, Donny's specter has no eyes (Clements, 2010, p.161) so audiences can "feel the pain in the scene like their own pain" (Güneç and Biçer, 2016, p. 244). *Faust is Dead* both reflects reality (real pain and events) and virtuality.

The other distinctive play I will analyse is *Shoot/Get Treasure/ Repeat*, consisting of sixteen short plays and an epilogue, *Paradise Regained*, were performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2007. Ravenhill describes his play as "an epic cycle of short plays" (2008, p. 5). In *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*, Ravenhill portrays a headless soldier in some of his short plays (*Women of Troy, War and Peace, Intolerance*): "Half-man and half-angel soldier's head blown off" (Ravenhill, pp. 16-7). *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* foreshadows Ravenhill's latest ghost story *The Haunting of Susan A*. The book cover of *The Haunting of Susan A* represents a headless woman (like a headless soldier) character in Victorian costume. Within this context, both plays deconstruct time-space unity. Derrida's work suggests a connection between deconstruction and the hosting of specters in plays, which:

no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now," future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time. Furtive and untimely, the apparition of the spectre does not belong to that time, it does not give time, not that one: "Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost" (Hamlet). (Derrida, 1994, p.xix)

¹ Rachel Elizabeth Adelaide Clements has discussed hauntology and ghosts in Mark Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* and *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* in her Ph.D thesis in 2010.

Ravenhill applies the identical feature in *The Haunting of Susan A* (2022) as in *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*. Kate Wyver calls *The Haunting of Susan A* “a lecture, a ghost story, and a love letter to this crumbly old stage. Ravenhill opens the show with snippets of history, imagining which famous people might have stopped by for a pint, whose blood might be caked into these walls” (2022).

Contrary to his previous plays, in which characters return to hunt other characters after dying, and his “ghosts, avoiding history, and wanting the past to remain buried” (Clements, 2010, p. 193), Ravenhill portrays a haunted story and a ghost in a distinct historical place in his play *The Haunting of Susan A* (2022). As a space, King’s Head has a gloomy structure. The seating arrangement places the audience close to each other. An unsettling claustrophobic atmosphere is created with the ghosting story told by the character Susan. Both the actor and the playwright Ravenhill starts the play with the words “before I begin can I ask that everyone makes sure that they’ve switched off their phones?” (2022, p. 3) surrounding the audience and asking them to concentrate on the story. While Ravenhill is speaking, Susan, who performed at the King’s Head Theatre in the past, interrupts Ravenhill to tell “her own, much darker story of rehearsal-room hauntings” (Najip, 2022) and thus Suzanne Ahmet’s (Susan) performance begins. The story is divided into two parts and Ravenhill describes two different approaches in the play: one which treats the setting and space of King’s Head Theatre as a former pub, and one which represents a history and ghosting story of the theatre. The scene in the cramped and damp basement of the old pub indicates that the right place was chosen for a ghost story (Najip, 2022). Ravenhill’s story and Susan’s ghost are designed for theatrical performance, but the narrative, Susan and Ravenhill’s performance and an unreliable theatrical space offer the audience the feeling of being placed in the story and being haunted by the ghost itself. The space and conditions of the King’s Head theatre give the audience a chill. The King’s Head functions as a spiritual connection between a specific place, space and history.

Since its past, theatre has always had a spiritual connection. Peggy Phelan explains this spiritual connection in theatre:

Theatre, of course, has had a long romance with ghosts and it would not be too much to say that the theatricality of spiritualism, parapsychology, and other ghostly (pseudo)sciences owes something to theatre’s conviction that it can make manifest what cannot be seen. From the ghost of Hamlet’s father to the ghost in the machine of contemporary theatre’s special effects, Western theatre has had a sustained conversation with the incorporeal (1997, p. 2).

To Phelan, “[t]here is real power in remaining unmarked” (1996, p. 6). To Ravenhill, the real power of King’s Head Theatre has remained unmarked and for that reason he has brought the ghost in contemporary British drama on stage in order to manifest the importance of the King’s Head Theatre.

The ghost in the play is reflected with the help of electricity, sound effects and Susan’s speech “something that happened here” (Ravenhill, 2022, p. 6). In this way, the audience’s attention is drawn to the performance. Susan tells the story of how she transforms from a lesbian engineering student into a theatre actress and is haunted by the ghost of a murdered Victorian actress in the pub (Saville 2022). The ghost takes place in Susan’s personal world and is the product of Susan’s imagination. A private trauma is witnessed when Susan refers or feels the ghost during the per-

formance. The reason this ghost appears is because Ravenhill tries to reflect the trauma from the past experienced by the character into the present. Saville indicates that “Ravenhill’s appealingly metatheatrical story squeezes every drop of atmosphere from this dank basement space, serving up jump scares, sudden blackouts and eerie flickers of filament bulbs – alongside the deeper chills that come from reflecting on the relationship between theatregoing and ghoulish voyeurism” (2022). To do this, Ravenhill tries to harness the power of imagination with light and sound effects. The lighting design is especially prominent, with the “room often plunged into darkness” (Wyner, 2022) to create an eerie atmosphere. Along with the images, the ghost must be there during the performance, so that it makes sense for both the living character and the audience. Powell and Shaffer highlight Derrida’s intention in that “Derrida asks us to turn away from dialectical compulsions and to think outside of the identity of a thing as the marker of truth” (2009, p. 2). Aligning with Derrida’s explanation, Ravenhill attempts to create a haunting identity outside the truth.

When Susan tells the story of her journey from Angel to Islington, her efforts to become an actress in the theatre and the process of working at the King’s Head theatre, she asks someone from the audience to read the text in her hand, and in this way the performance advances an experiential dimension. The decision to choose the King’s Head Theatre as the uncanny place and the attempt to revive the ghost with the stories eliminated the boundaries of the dramatic structure and created an experiential performance. Using the effect of a “*Very low electrical crackle under: Felt something*” (Ravenhill, 2022, p.14), Susan expresses that another female actor is feeling something bizarre:

Neither of us felt it. But she. She said. She felt. A... presence. Someone standing behind her. At first she looked distracted, as though something behind her was bothering her, drawing her attention. She felt a hand on her shoulder. Then she turned, gasped, stumbled, shook, crashed out of the room. She’d seen a ... figure. A ghost. (p.14).

Susan’s description resembles Derrida’s definition of a spectre as: “a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other” (Derrida, 1994, p. 5). In the play, spectre can be observed as paradoxically a real person and soul: “She’s a real person. My sister. My sister who died in a car smash” (Ravenhill, 2022, p.16). Susan cannot control the time of the ghost’s arrival and movements and tries to explain the ghost with the words “It was obvious that they couldn’t see a figure but I knew she - how did I know it was a she? - She was there, at my shoulder” (Ravenhill, 2022, p. 18). She wants to convey the uneasiness of a hand passing over Susan’s shoulder to the audience or to make the audience uneasy. The attempt to present the figure of the ghost in the play is an indication of the endeavour to make it meaningful and valuable both imaginatively and bodily.

In *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*, headless soldiers are unknown ghosts and in *The Haunting of Susan A*, Susan talks about an unknown ghost, sometimes she feels her hand on her shoulder and hears a baby’s crying. Derrida suggests that people should “learn to live with ghosts, in the up-keep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghosts. To live otherwise, and better. No, not better, but more justly. But with them” (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). There is a paradoxical integration in the performance. Like the figurative ghost, which is “something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely this is,

if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence” (Derrida, 1994, p. 5), Derrida means, the ghost is a product of Susan’s imagination and she tries to live with the ghost through fantastic performance “with just a bit of lighting and ambient noise audience truly feel the presence of a ghost grasping at each of the actor’s shoulders” (Walfisz, 2022). Susan does not need a body to represent the ghost. A large audience interrogates that the ghost is present because she is embodied by Susan or absent because the ghost is not seen by the audience and Susan just describes or represents the ghost.

Through Susan’s words, a relationship can be created between the audience and the ghost. The ghostly figure, which Ravenhill is pointing to and critiquing, is essentially one of the distinctive points of the performance. Through ghosting, Ravenhill can reproduce the story and reveals the ‘performative memory’. Susan’s attempt to explain the ghost and the fact that the ghost does not react or respond is actually aimed at activating the audience and making them react by getting involved in the performance. Ravenhill and Susan both narrate and act scenes. Both Ravenhill and Susan are performers trying to impose their presence on the audience. Susan and Ravenhill’s metatheatrical story draws into the audience to the King’s Head space and performance. Ravenhill deconstructs traditional mimesis and character subjectivity and adds a spectral character to the performance. While Ravenhill opens the performance with “a love letter” (Wyver, 2022) to the King’s Head’s history envisaging which celebrities stopped by for an ale, the former actress Susan, starts to talk about her story in *The Haunting of Susan A*.

Ravenhill represents a ghosted practice and forces us to reflect on the events related to the King’s Head Theatre’s past: “Derrida and Fisher see history as one characterised by repetition and disruption, as the past recurrently irrupts into the present, forcing us to reconsider events and ideas we might have regarded as safely consigned to the past” (Coverley, 2021, p. 11). Using a historical place that dates back to the sixteenth century and was the first theatre, the King’s Head is re-staged by depicting repetitions. Repetitions and the deconstruction of time create a process in which the past can be re-staged through photography and dress. As Coverley notes, repetitions and discontinuities create a process “whose uncanny effects began to be felt in the nineteenth century as new forms of media such as telegraphy, photography and later cinema allowed us to capture and control time, bringing the past back to life and allowing us to revisit it at our leisure” (Coverley, 2021, p. 7). Ravenhill chooses King’s Head Theatre because it is an uncanny place and represents uncanny effects. Susan tells the history of King’s Head and creates repetitive memories to compare with new memories. In the play, Susan, wearing a brown dress shows the picture on the wall: “She sticks the picture to the wall. Shorter than I imagined. Much slighter. And the clothes are... historical, Victorian” (Ravenhill, 2022, p. 21). Susan tries to represent Victorian memory and brings the ghost to the stage/life. Ravenhill doesn’t just introduce ghosts to the stage. In *Shoot/Get treasure/Repeat*, he has used the titles of important literary works. In *The Haunting of Susan A*, Ravenhill states that the King’s Head Inn was built in the sixteenth century and that William Shakespeare wrote four plays in 1595, perhaps walking from the Shoreditch area to the King’s Head in Islington, renting a room and continuing to write. Luckhurst and Morin write that

Every actor has a ghost story, just as all theatre spaces have their ghosts. This has been particularly marked in the case of historic theatre buildings: the most haunted theatre in the world is thought to be London’s Drury Lane, which boasts celebrity actors and actor managers among its revenants, including Charles

Macklin, Charles Kean, the nineteenth-century clown Grimaldi, who has been known to help nervous early career actors, and the comedian Dan Leno whom contemporary actors blame for inexplicable acts of mischief (2014, p. 3).

The King's Head has an earlier history than the Drury Lane theatre. Ravenhill establishes the King's Head Theatre as a haunted theatre:

Mark: The first inn on this site, the first King's Head, was built in 1595. Only twenty years before, all plays had been performed in the courtyards of inns. Half an hour's walk from here-that way, Curtain Road in Shoreditch-was a purpose-built building-the first-called The Theatre. ...That same year, 1595, when the King's Head opened for business, William Shakespeare, a shareholder in the Theatre, wrote four plays. Maybe he would walk across the fields from Shoreditch, take a room at the new King's Head (Ravenhill, 2022, pp. 24-25).

Luckhurst and Morin argue that "Tales of ghosts and ghost-seeing have a rich history in England, where ghost-belief has remained powerfully connected to religious shifts following the Protestant Reformation and to the later development of industrial capitalism" (Handley, 2007, Shell, 2007, McCorristine, 2010, Young, 2013 cited in Luckhurst and Morin, 2014, p. 6). However, Ravenhill analyses a different context of ghost-seeing with a rich history of King's Head. Ravenhill states late in the play that the King's Head Theatre will soon become a restaurant:

If you come back here in two years' time this room will be mirrors and tablecloths.

Where you are now will be tables.

You will be brought a menu.

The young, vibrant, cultural adventurers heading through the shopping mall to the new theatre- The new theatre which will be just through there- (Ravenhill, 2022, p. 35).

Derrida argues that "time is disarticulated; dislocated, dislodged, time is run down" (1994, p. 20). In a similar vein, Ravenhill deconstructs the time and the time dislocates the space of King's Head Theatre. Ravenhill forces us to deal with questions about our choices and inheritance of ghosting about King's Head for future generations. Through Susan and Mark, a ghost visits us in this eerie place. From the theatre stage in the basement to the pub section, the ghost questions the situation of the King's Head and its interaction with the audience.

Conclusion

In *The Haunting of The Susan A*, Ravenhill illustrates the ghost that takes us to the past and the present and compels us to search for answers through the King's Head's rich heritage of culture and the eerie ambience of the old theatre. Ravenhill uses live and experiential performance to reflect memories and events through the real and ghostly characters. Ravenhill calls on the past to haunt the present. While Ravenhill's previous plays have deployed ghosts to deal with universal truths such as war, destruction, deconstruction and social corruption, *The Haunting of Susan A* deals with an individual's the historical and traumatic journey in London's oldest pub. It is the right place to support the theoretical approach of hauntology in terms of space and location.

Through the oldest pub, Ravenhill creates his own specter. Both Derrida and Ravenhill create figurative ghosts. Susan attempts, as indicated by Derrida, to learn how to live with the ghost by utilizing conversation in the oldest pub in London. The gloomy structure of the stage, Suzanne Ahmet's performance and 'ambient noise' (Walfisz, 2022) techniques conjure the feeling that a ghost will mysteriously participate in the performance. Instead of a political and social haunting, Ravenhill analyses cultural haunting in *The Haunting of Susan A*. Like Marx, who keeps Shakespeare alive, Ravenhill gives life to the King's Head Theatre, its events, its people and its ghosts. The play is actually a farewell to the old theatre stage that will disappear forever, and the theatre will move to its new building, but it will also carry its history, story and ghosts into the future. Ravenhill and Susan's performance and history of King's Head Theatre function as memory machines and act as a go between ghosts and the audience. King's Head continues to create its specters. Drawing on hauntology, haunted theatre and Derrida's theoretical conceptualizations of deconstruction and the disruption of the present, Ravenhill's *The Haunting of Susan A* challenges the audience to create their ghosts that will haunt every detail of generations. Ravenhill's work focuses on the individual rewriting of events and stories and how the characters and events of the text have been transmitted to the audience through the ages.

Extended Abstract

In his book *Specters of Marx*, Derrida claims that the collapse of communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the post-Cold War era do not signify any particular time frame or definitive end. However, "every period has its ghosts" (Derrida, 1994, p. 241). Ghosts and hauntology allow us to observe characters, comprehend events and revisit any period. Every period creates its own spectre. Each spectre returns to haunt each detail of the culture and shape the present. The idea of the ghost deconstructs linear time and at the same time, leads to recreation of characters in novels, poems and plays. The spectre in literary works attempts to question the readers' and the audiences' belief and thoughts in a linear time.

As for the space, King's Head has a gloomy atmosphere. In *The Haunting of Susan A*, Ravenhill, himself taking part in the performance as a character, states that the King's Head Inn was built in the sixteenth century. Ravenhill also claims that William Shakespeare wrote four plays in 1595, possibly by walking from the Shoreditch area to the King's Head in Islington, renting a room and continuing to write. The scene in the cramped and damp basement of the old pub indicates that it was the right place to put the action in a ghost story (Najip, 2022). In the performance, the seating arrangement places the audience close to each other. An unsettling claustrophobic atmosphere is created with the ghosting story told by the character Susan. Ravenhill's story and Susan's ghost are designed for theatrical performance, but the narrative, Susan and Ravenhill's performance and an unreliable theatrical space offer the audience the feeling of being placed in the story and being haunted by the ghost itself. Like the figurative ghost, which is "something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely this is, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence" (Derrida, 1994, p. 5), Derrida means, the ghost is a product of Susan's imagination and she attempts to coexist with the ghost through a fantastic performance. Through Susan's words, a relationship can be created between the audience and the ghost. The ghostly figure which Ravenhill is pointing to and critiquing is essentially one of the distinctive points of the performance. Derrida argues that time is deconstructed and displaced. In a similar vein, through the spectre in the play, Ravenhill deconstructs the time and through the historical structure of

King's Head Theatre, the time dislocates the space of King's Head Theatre. Ravenhill forces us to deal with questions about our choices and inheritance of ghosting about King's Head for future generations. Through Susan and Mark, a ghost visits us in this eerie place. From the theatre stage in the basement to the pub section, the ghost questions the situation of the King's Head and its interaction with the audience.

Ravenhill uses live and experiential performance, which “tries to activate the relationship between the theatre and the audience and to involve the audience in the performance because the audience is not just a viewer and a crowd and sometimes the audience becomes a critic interpreting and attending the performance” (Güneç, 2022, p. 6) to reflect stored memories and events through the real and ghostly characters. Ravenhill calls on the past to haunt the present. While Ravenhill's previous plays have deployed ghosts to deal with universal truths such as war, destruction, deconstruction and social corruption, *The Haunting of Susan A* deals with an individual's historical and traumatic journey in London's oldest pub. London's oldest pub is the right place to support the theoretical approach of hauntology in terms of space and location. Ravenhill and Susan's performance at King's Head Theatre serves as ghosts' and the audience's memory machines. King's Head continues to produce its ghosts. Based on the theoretical conceptualisations of hauntology, haunted theatre and Derrida's notions such as deconstruction and irruption of the present, Ravenhill's play forces the audience to create their specters to haunt each detail of the generations.

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