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Jonah Siegel: Haunted Museum

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INTRODUCTION

A Haunted Form

THE MUSEUM AND THE JOURNEY

A LONELY ARCADE of ornate classical columns leads from the beautiful sky of a tranquil day to an elaborate but rationally ordered interior. In this light-filled space elegantly dressed men are surrounded by canvases showing ruined buildings or fragments from classical sites or paintings and statues also from antiquity. Among the many admired objects, the eye picks out a few at a time: the *Farnese Hercules* and the *Dying Gladiator* are visible in the left foreground, the *Laocoön* is on the right, along with a statue far more famous in Panini's day than our own—*Silenus with the Infant Bacchus*. Down the central arcade heading out, the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Borghese Gladiator* are visible, accompanied by numerous other noted works. Near the center of the image, connoisseurs contemplate a rare example of antique painting—the “Aldobrandini Marriage”—while artists gathered near the *Dying Gladiator* look up, perhaps momentarily distracted from their studies. On the fancifully imagined walls, famous sites have been transformed into paintings—the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and various triumphal arches from the Forum among them.

Recent years have seen renewed popular affection for Giovanni Paolo Panini's 1757 *Views of Ancient Rome*, a piece, like its companion, *Views of Modern Rome*, designed to evoke in some measure nostalgia, but also pleasure at the elegant conceit of an abundance of beauty elegantly displayed.¹ At once souvenirs of a voyage and fantasies of a perfect collection of admired art, these works of Panini, of which several versions exist, all painted for foreigners, may be understood to occupy an important point of transition between the soon-to-be-outmoded culture of the Grand Tour and the emergence of a dream that was to preoccupy later eras, that of the perfect museum. For a vision of clarity and organization such as that which covers Panini's canvas to come into being, however, as much needs to be left out as invented. To experience all the admired works of ancient Rome together is an evident impossibility. Indeed, to transmute the Colosseum into a size comparable with that of the Pantheon is just one of the flamboyant and necessary falsifications required in order to gather all these admired objects into an assimilable form. We might go further and propose that the straightforward quality of Panini's work

stands against what we know of museums in general: that they are not perfect, that they cannot show us all we want to see, that we do not want to see everything they hold. Even in the most well-lit gallery each component part on display as much as the ensemble those parts constitute is shadowed by ghosts of promise or of disappointment.

Unmasked-for gifts, trophies of plunder, voids suggested by the presence of objects always in surfeit though never quite sufficient—*all* museums are haunted in some measure. To gather together prized material in the hope that the Muses will thereby be encouraged to manifest themselves—that is the magic or necromancy promised by the institution. But every collection, be its aim novelty or conservation, becomes immediately historic, and it is the nature of repositories of the past to intimate more than any visitor can ever realize, to evoke memories not entirely one's own, to speak at once about the endurance of things and the impermanence of individuals, about the seductions of fame along with its evanescence.

To describe Italy as a museum is to evoke the aspiration for a world like that imagined in the fanciful views of Panini, one of order, light, and clarity, of learning and pleasure coexisting in comfort, of the simulacrum of the thing successfully standing in for the thing itself. To describe Italy as a museum, however, is also to acknowledge the world in which that aspiration is born, one that is the absolute antithesis of Panini's image, one in which admired sites can never be taken in at a view, in which works known from beloved reproduction seem different when confronted in their actual existence or, worse, in which the self that longed for a thing seems disturbingly different from the self experiencing the desired object.

Each of the texts discussed in this book describes a voyage at once toward something precious and new and toward something dangerous and old—a voyage in which the route is only valuable insofar as it is felt to offer the prospect of novelty, but is only recognizable because it is to an important degree already known. Although the museum and the voyage can seem all-too-material—and, indeed, the promise of the materialization of one's desires is a vital part of their importance—both phenomena are traceable to notably conceptual drives. Whether something is displaced in order to be shown and admired or individuals make their way to centers of culture to see marvels that exist nowhere else, the aim is evidently to move from ignorance to immediate knowledge, to make actual or tangible an object of desire. As travelers never stop discovering, however, the objectification of desire entailed in journeys and collections will tend to yield—as Proust will put it—something less and something more than satisfaction.

What is Venice to London, Naples to Weimar, or even Paris to Boston? As with any object of longing, so with an important cultural center: certainty as to its importance cannot to be confused with clarity as to the

sources of a passion. The new significance of the aesthetic in nineteenth-century culture, with the attendant interest in art, artists, and prized art objects still evident today, was contemporaneous with the development of a new set of relationships, practical and imaginary, between an ascendant North and a politically weak but culturally rich South. The nature of travel itself was bound to change from the eighteenth century on, and not simply due to the ever-greater practical ease brought about by technological developments or to the collapse of old political dispensations and the consolidation of new ones. The period of this study saw concepts of cultural identity that had been emergent throughout the eighteenth century meet new social arrangements in a manner that ensured ever-greater ease of arrival at longed-for destinations but that did not make arrival itself any less troubling.

Recent decades have witnessed a flowering of interest in travel writing, an important general category subsuming many forms. Promising lines of research have studied nineteenth-century literature in relation to the rise of modern tourism, scientific exploration, and the development of anthropology, and all of these cultural phenomena have been fruitfully considered in the context of imperial expansion. Analysis of the art romance benefits from work done in these areas, but the mode's particular commitment to the fantastic and to the unavoidable force of other texts, its thoroughgoing intertextuality, makes it particularly resistant to forms of analysis that want to return to a real it has never inhabited, whether experiential or political. The argument of this book depends on recognizing the unblinking artificiality of the romance as its only access to whatever of the real it is able to represent.² While the cultural exploitation of an economically faded southern Europe by a newly predominant North may well offer insights for the understanding of forms of exploration or more self-evident modes of dominance that came to the fore late in the century, studies attempting to make the connection will need to begin from the insight that in the art romance access to the real is not an alternative to the tradition but the most florid and most dangerous symptom of fantasy. More convincingly the literary descendant of the Grand Tour than the ancestor of imperial exploration, the mode also only goes so far with recent work on travel and wonder.³

This is a book about the kind of story that emerges at the confluence of two related but distinct cultural phenomena, the nineteenth century's fascination with creative genius and the same period's insatiable appetite for tales of the European South, Italy in particular. As such, *Haunted Museum* draws on two further concerns, the genius as type and cultural difference as destiny. Where is genius born? Does it have a native land, the source of a fundamental nostalgia motivating creative souls? Today such queries, like the presuppositions about temperament and national

characteristics underlying them, are likely to seem not only old-fashioned but deeply misguided. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century offered bracingly clear answers to both. Southern Europe—most compellingly Greece, most accessibly Italy (and sometimes France)—was considered to be, consistently, and with real practical results, the natural home of genius. And, indeed, longing for the South as for a lost birthright or homeland of the creative soul is a recurrent element in representations of the psychic makeup of the artist in the period, a wishful naturalization of a relation to classical antiquity that was not new in European culture but that saw a notable efflorescence in the era we have come to call neoclassical.

Haunted Museum is concerned with the two-way traffic between fiction and the culture of art during a period for which poems and novels often served as conceptual and even practical guides to the experience of art. The overlap between the exigencies of fiction and the elements of art culture was capitalized on by storytellers throughout the century, usually by referencing earlier texts in the tradition. While the art romance plays an important part in the diffusion of a notably troubled yet productive relation to art characteristic of the nineteenth century, its special interest in the phenomenon of creative ambition insistently foregrounds the complex and even embarrassing relations between passion and artifice.⁴ Behind the characteristically modern notion that true creativity takes no color from convention, that genius has no necessary native home, we may detect a wish to avoid recognition of the fact that important sources of creativity develop in the interplay of received idea and emotion. The works studied in *Haunted Museum*, however, are characterized by a tendency to run counter to modern wishes—indeed, to represent passion itself as running straight (back) into the arms of convention.

The special case of artists in an era committed to the idea that the sources of culture were only accessible at certain prized locations, the resting places of admired relics, is a particularly important instance of the difficulty of arrival. As artists and critics struggled to negotiate the relationship between modern creativity and admired art, the repeated productive crisis was to find representation not only in the nascent field of art history, but in works of self-conscious fantasy. That European culture has tended to trace the origins of much it admires, much that it aspires to do or to be, to the South, that Italy in particular and Greece are not only the sources of certain traditions in pictorial and literary arts but subsequently the resting places for the chief relics of those traditions—these are inescapable historical facts. That modern achievement came to find its validation in often unsatisfactory returns to these sources is no less deniable, if not quite so self-evidently necessary.⁵ The period in which the art romance emerged was one in which the possibility of fulfillment of aspirations toward the encounter with admired foreign culture was running only slightly behind

the desire for that encounter. New technologies and new social arrangements made the wonders of the continent ever more available.⁶ And yet, the new ease of travel did not make much-longed-for arrival any less troubling for the artist. The art romance evokes the conventional frustrations of the romance form broadly understood in order to represent an overdetermined anxiety about intimacy with culture that is particularly pressing in the artistic self-imagination of the period. If romance has at its heart the inability to arrive at a prized but ever-deferred goal, Italy is an overdetermined destination for the artist, a passionately desired space combining the prospect of erotic pleasure with the hope for intimacy with the most profound sources of culture.

Starting with the fundamental influence of eighteenth-century neoclassicism, the nineteenth-century culture of art came to be marked by a tendency to validate itself in relation to privileged historical moments linked to specific locations. Rome, Florence, Athens, eventually Venice, and in its own way Paris—art always had its home elsewhere. Indeed, a related structure underlies and makes inevitable even such variations as the claims for southern France, Polynesia, Japan, Africa, and other lands championed by avant-garde art movements that have often been seen as antithetical to nineteenth-century historicism. Yet, on the other side of the power inherent in the longing for a distant center of art, authors recognized from early on a danger inherent in satisfaction itself. There is far more at stake than a romantic challenge to neoclassical values in William Hazlitt's claim in 1827 that "Rome is of all places the worst to study in, for the same reason that it is the best to lounge in," because "[t]here is no end of objects to divert and distract the mind." While art throughout the century made recourse to admired models from the past for its validation, Hazlitt's "English Students at Rome" recognizes a recurrent anxiety: "If it were nothing else, the having the works of the great masters of former times always before us is enough to discourage and defeat all ordinary attempts." In his account of the challenge to modern achievement presented by the heterogeneity that is most recognizable in Rome, the critic draws on a striking classical reference: "Modern art is indeed like the fabled Sphinx, that imposes impossible tasks on her votaries, and as she clasps them to her bosom pierces them to the heart."⁷ The Sphinx is a doubly appropriate image for the challenge Hazlitt has in mind; not only does the riddle it poses contain the shape of human development, but, as Oedipus discovered, the hero's problems only worsen when he overcomes the challenge and enters the desired city.

To such high-cultural determinants as the centrality of Rome in culture and art education throughout the period of this study, we must add another, apparently more trivial source for the fascination of Italy: its temperate climate and the related tradition (not to say wishful reputation) of

sensual license that from the eighteenth century forward made the South not only the native place of artistic beauty but the site of a much-desired physical liberation. As will be clear throughout this study, the distinction between physical passion and inspiration was not always clearly maintained, even in cases where it might be insisted on in theory. In Winckelmann's seminal *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755), for example, the ideal beauty of classical statues is in some measure traceable to a contingent fact of no little interest to the author—that the temperate climate of Greece allowed the natives of that fortunate land to pass much of their lives nude. Forty years later, Goethe's "Now on classical soil I stand, inspired and elated," like the rest of the *Roman Elegies* (1795) to which it belongs, only more forcefully links erotic passion, creativity, and the South. The student of Winckelmann counts out hexameters on his Roman lover's back, a playfully erotic and naturalizing culmination of the yearning for culture indicated by the opening line of the poem.⁸

IN THE PALACE OF ART / THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Although the kind of elation Goethe discovers on arrival in Rome is expressed by literary visitor after visitor in later years, the fantastic harmony between creativity and sexual passion suggested in his verse is far rarer. The sometimes overwhelming love for art of the past that is characteristic of the period running from the eighteenth century to our own day is, as Hazlitt noted, far more likely to result in the emergence of an apparently unavoidable and contradictory conflict between desire and fulfillment, aspiration and achievement than in simple pleasure. In the art romance the satisfaction of longing, particularly the apparent satisfaction of a longed-for return to sources, inevitably provokes a crisis. The balance of this introduction revolves around two such crises, one provoked by the fantasy of the perfect museum, the other by the fact of travel to a much-desired center of culture.

The mutual complication of art and passion at the point of satisfaction is a theme vividly developed in Tennyson's 1832 poem, "The Palace of Art," not an art romance but perhaps the most economical literary representation of the haunted museum. "I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house," declares the speaker boldly at the outset,

Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well."⁹

The speaker divides into a self and a soul at the moment of secluding himself from the rest of mankind, as if the fantasy of a perfect museum

housing ideal aesthetic isolation somehow requires or provokes a doubling form of self-alienation.

Through nearly fifty stanzas the poem traces with loving attention the furnishing of the palace for the soul's enjoyment, in itself beautiful and filled with works inviting aesthetic appreciation—an ideal museum before anything close to it was available in England. But, the claim of artificial perfection is not the main burden of the poem. The fundamental split determining the opening separation of self and soul returns with force at the center of the poem as the text swerves abruptly away from ease, merriment, carousal, and even from the indifferent intellectual self-indulgence in which the soul's pleasures culminate:

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
 Flashed thro' her as she sat alone,
 Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
 And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prospered: so three years
 She prospered; on the fourth she fell,
 Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
 Struck through with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
 God, before whom ever lie bare
 The abysmal deeps of personality,
 Plagued her with sore despair. (213–24)

At once a moralist and a psychologist, God summons an *inborn* despair to rescue the soul from selfish isolation:

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
 The airy hand confusion wrought,
 Wrote, "Mene, mene," and divided quite
 The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
 Fell on her, from which mood was born
 Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
 Laughter at her self-scorn. (225–32)

When the soul tries to reassure herself she traces the power of the palace not to that external, and therefore describable, beauty that had characterized it up to this point in the poem, but to its source in her earliest desires and knowledge:

"What! is not this my place of strength," she said,
 "My spacious mansion built for me,

Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
 Since my first memory?" (233–36)

The question is never answered directly. Indeed, the insistent conjunctions that characterize the stanzas that follow link nothing that is logically connected; the parataxis serves rather to evoke the shock of sudden unpleasant discovery of things that were always there, decaying though hidden:

But in dark corners of her palace stood
 Uncertain shapes; and unawares
 On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
 And horrible nightmares,
 And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
 And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
 On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
 That stood against the wall. (237–44)

The poem's cruel response to the soul's plea raises the possibility that it may well be precisely *because* the palace of art is founded on her memories that the walls of the museum contain nightmares, blood, corpses, and phantasms. Appalling figures lurching out at soul (and reader) characterize the failure of the structure to offer the shelter promised at the outset; its stately beauty is transfigured into appalling images that are hellish, immediate, and grotesquely physical.

It is little wonder that the soul is finally driven out of the palace of art and down to the valley where the rest of humanity dwells. She dedicates herself to remorse and prayer, though her ambivalence toward the structure she has escaped is in no way resolved. If the opening of the poem identifies the museum as an everlasting site of solipsistic pleasure, its concluding lines make the palace of art into a place not of permanent habitation but of return: "[P]ull not down my palace towers," the soul declares, "that are / So lightly, beautifully built: / Perchance I may return with others there / When I have purged my guilt" (293–96).

"The Palace of Art" belongs to a discourse about self-consciousness, isolation, and art that is familiar from any number of Victorian authors. Tennyson himself links the work to debates on the practical and aesthetic life traceable to the Cambridge Apostles. The poem has more recently been studied in the context of the reception of Goethe as a figure standing for a relationship to taste and erudition so dispassionate, so free from conventional human concerns, as to risk immortality.¹⁰ And yet, the ethical claims of "The Palace of Art" are overwhelmed by the more pressing claim for representation of the crisis of satisfaction. Recent critics, like many readers since the poem was written, have been struck by what Christopher Ricks describes as a despair that is "grimly disproportionate to the soul's error

of Aestheticism.” The combination of gorgeous fantasy with grotesque physicality, like the conclusion of so dramatic a crisis in so thoroughgoing an ambivalence, intimates something different from the moral-aesthetic themes openly present in the poem. Herbert Tucker writes of “an extraneous moralism that invades the parable to deform its conclusion,” an idea that contributes to his identification of “a poem that is conspicuously of two minds.”¹¹ The reading I propose emphasizes the force of the doubling Tucker identifies, but sees the undermotivated or “disproportionate” crisis less as a result of forced moralism than as an instantiation of the uncanny challenge provoked by the fantasy of satisfied desire.

The healthy response to danger, as to pain, should be avoidance of its causes, yet the soul looks forward to an eventual return to the palace. It is an inconclusive resolution that indicates the ambivalence driving the self from the outset, shaping not only the work’s quick shifts between desire and regret, its sudden swerve from fantasy to nightmare, but ultimately the soul’s inability to destroy this monstrous place. The poem moves from the opening claim of assured permanence, “to dwell,” to the tentative assertion of uncertain transience, “perchance I may return,” and that movement is closely related to the shift from a confident active voice, “I built,” to the passive recognition that the structure was “built for me.” Indeed, the “ease for aye” gives way to “sore despair” precisely as “I built” becomes “built for me.” The crisis of the poem suggests what the conclusion helps to clarify: at stake in the palace of art is not simply the moral error of isolating oneself in beauty while the rest of the world suffers, but the realization that the museum itself is never newly constructed.

Tennyson’s poem offers a number of useful points of departure for thinking about the special kind of disappointment inherent not in the postponement of the expected or desired, but in the realization that what lies ahead is nothing other than an appointment or return. The death of longing when faced with what appears to be satisfaction is all the more poignant when it becomes clear that what was sought with such effort was precisely what could not be avoided: this place had to be visited; this discovery had to be made; this passion had to be lived in this particular manner. The disappointing nature of such realizations tends toward uncanny terms of expression, such as those rotting corpses the soul discovers. The splitting of the self that opens the poem is a characteristic form of acknowledgment that one’s desire is at once deeply personal and alien.

“Is not this my place of strength / built for me, / Since my first memory?”—the unanswerable question at the heart of the poem is motivated by the dismayed recognition of a schism present from the outset. The alienation of the self at the very moment its desire is satisfied is represented by the question that cannot be answered. The palace of art is revealed to be a haunted castle, a shift onto the register of the gothic that in itself

provides the best response to the soul's desperate inquiry. As Freud noted in his foundational work on the topic, the fundamental source of the sensation of the uncanny is the *return* of an imperfectly forgotten original home.¹² If the palace of art offers no escape, it does provide a vivid identification of the sources of haunting; the poem's response to the unanswerable question is not clarity, but the manifestation of corpses—already in a state of putrefaction because they have been there all along.

“AT HOME I DREAM THAT AT NAPLES, AT ROME”: FREUD ON ARRIVAL

It is typical that the Soul's crisis in “The Palace of Art” should shift the poem into the register of Gothic, that mode in literature characterized by the fruitful coexistence of the shocking and the formulaic. Each story of the encounter with art in the nineteenth century is woven through with gaudy threads borrowed from unavoidable antecedents. The shocks represented in the texts in this study are those attendant on sudden confused partial recognitions, on the collapse of resistance or self-delusion that allows the embarrassed recognition of what was known all along. The writers in this study are interesting precisely because their tales of art and artists are so vividly aware of two qualities sometimes taken to be antithetical: longing and its mediation through a *tradition* of desire. More than a set of poems or novels in a sentimental mode set in southern Europe—generally Italy—and featuring artists as characters, the texts discussed in this study are linked by shared formal qualities appropriate to their shared thematic concerns. Like other forms of nineteenth-century romance, the art romance is characterized at its outset by a ready interplay of narrative and verse. Indeed, there is so much narrative to the verse, so many intercalated stories or vignettes in the early art romances, that it is sometimes impossible to think of them as involving one master narrative and subsidiary tales. In Landon's “Improvisatrice,” for example, the distinction is blurred almost to the point of incoherence, emphasizing, as such formal features always will, the essential artifice of the text in which they are contained. In the case of the novels, the flamboyant inverisimilitude running through texts apparently written in a realist vein similarly serves to emphasize the force of artifice, of the evidently fantastic, and thereby to highlight the compound of artifice and passion the genre struggles to contain.

Emerson's brief 1841 comments on travel are worth citing not only because of their skeptical candor, but because of the stark image for inescapable haunting by which the essayist expresses the inevitable limits of self-forgetfulness: “At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there

beside me is the stern Fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. . . . My giant goes with me wherever I go.”¹³ To travel is to place distance between oneself and one’s origins, but the direction chosen, as well as the measure of the success or failure of the voyage, will be determined by pressures that come to bear well before the journey begins. In the art romance the voyage out unavoidably becomes a voyage in, toward a haunting inescapable past—to the very earliest desires and fears. The sad fact that will accompany Emerson wherever he goes is given a fanciful form that only makes it more disturbing. The figure of a looming giant evokes not the troubles of adult life so much as the anxieties and hopes of childhood, making the sadness at issue of a longer duration than the melancholy voyager may readily understand, and all the less likely to be relieved by a change of scene. Freud’s work on the uncanny usefully illuminates the characteristic splitting occasioned by arrivals that feel like returns, but it will be helpful to cite a study that engages more directly with the structure of longing, anticipation, and disappointment provoked by the *traveler’s* encounter with cultural sources, the analyst’s extraordinary 1936 essay, “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis.”

In 1904 Freud found himself at a site of preeminent significance and aesthetic fame he had hoped to see since his youth. More than three decades later he wrote a description of the circumstances that took him there, mainly focusing on his incredulous response. On the Acropolis—a privileged locus of Western civilization with a cultural centrality outweighing even the wonders of Rome—Freud is fated to discover neither rest nor satisfaction, but rather a crisis reaching back to challenge what we might take to be in some measure fixed: memory itself. Not surprisingly, the analyst’s account begins well before arrival. The sudden possibility of going to Athens, which arises unexpectedly during a trip to Trieste by the analyst and his brother, provokes in both men a feeling of disbelief and anxiety. Indeed, after an acquaintance proposes in the simplest and most reasonable terms that they abandon their planned trip to Corfu and instead take a boat to the site of the Parthenon, the two men are thrown into a funk characterized by “remarkably depressed spirits . . . a discontented and irresolute frame of mind.”¹⁴ They both feel that it is impossible to put this new plan into effect, but do so nevertheless. Stranger still, the sense of disbelief does not abandon Freud, even when he actually finds himself at the Acropolis. It deepens, rather, into an episode of derealization and a strange form of melancholy:

When, finally, on the afternoon after our arrival, I stood on the Acropolis and cast my eyes around upon the landscape, a surprising thought suddenly entered my mind: “So all this really *does* exist, just as we learnt at school!” To describe the situation more accurately, the person who gave expression to the remark was

divided, far more sharply than was usually noticeable, from another person who took cognizance of the remark; and both were astonished, though not by the same thing. (240–41)

Neither side of the split individual escapes misgivings. For one part of the traveling analyst, to see the Acropolis is an event as improbable as it might be to encounter the Loch Ness monster (the analogy is Freud's). For the other part, the wonder resides in the notion that there could be any question as to the existence of the temple whose fame motivated the voyage in the first instance. That arrival at a much-desired destination should result in doubt rather than "some expression of delight or admiration" (241) is the real puzzle and surprise.

The division into two parts of the experiencing sensibility and the surprising presence of the fantastic are two formal characteristics of the art-romance tradition that are unavoidable in Freud's essay as he attempts to account for the fated relationship between personal aspirations and culture. In "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," Freud's late return to what is a long-running concern, splitting is identified as a form of derealization determined by an "intolerable real danger."¹⁵ This important fragment closes without any resolution on the question of fear of castration by the father, but not before a telling digression on Zeus's castrating revenge on Kronos, that dangerous sire who had set out to swallow his own children. The gloom that had overwhelmed the analyst and his brother at the very suggestion that it would be easy for them to get to Athens from Trieste is not unrelated to the account of fate that occurs late in "Disturbance of Memory." It is a concern that runs through the art-romance tradition and that Freud traces to a deeply anxious relationship between personal ambition and the father. The depression at Trieste is directly linked to the puzzling response on the Acropolis, and both are attributable to the problem of achievement that the analyst identifies with those "wrecked by success" (241–42). To arrive at a place such as the Acropolis is to satisfy a wish known from childhood, yet always felt to be impossible not simply for practical reasons but because we cannot admit the possibility that we will be granted what we most desire. "Fate which we expect to treat us so badly," proposes Freud, "is a materialization of our conscience, of the severe super-ego within us, itself a residue of the punitive agency of our childhood" (243). In the interplay between individual and social development that characterizes Freud's speculations on the genesis of culture in his later works, the superego has a self-controlling, even self-punishing role acquired from the internalized father, and the sense of fate is just one of its important manifestations. But many causes contribute to the presence of the father in Freud's disturbance. Both the achievement of getting to the Acropolis and the fact of knowing

enough to want to go there in the first place provoke a sense of guilt that the feeling of derealization works to avoid (247).

What Freud describes as his “passionate” schoolboy yearning to travel and see the world is, of course, more than personal (243). Indeed, passion would be a strong term for describing the wish to visit a ruined site in a foreign country, except for the fact that it is precisely in rerouting the personal passions that culturally imposed desires find their force. When he arrives at the locus of his longing, Freud discovers a “feeling of the unbelievable and the unreal in the situation at the moment” (244) that he displaces backwards. Freud feels he had always doubted the existence of the place, though he understands that that feeling is impossible. Indeed, the essay offers a rich if inconclusive attempt to describe the sensation or concept of “derealization” (*Entfremdungsgefühl*), which the analyst puts in relation to what he calls its positive counterparts, “*fausse reconnaissance*,” “*déjà vu*,” “*déjà raconté*,” etc.” (245). In the latter cases, he postulates, we attempt to accept something as already part of the ego, whereas in the former we are eager to keep that thing away. Derealization leads Freud almost immediately to the idea of “split personality” before he closes off the entire speculative discussion with an acknowledgment of its obscurity and its lack of a scientific basis. Nevertheless, the student of the art romance recognizes familiar elements. From Goethe and beyond, the sense of recognition, of having seen before, of having heard before, of recognizing the never-before-seen is precisely the experience of the encounter with the desired object of art.

The analyst presents “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis” as a commemoration of current cultural achievement, a gift or tribute on the seventieth birthday of Romain Rolland, an admired novelist. A text that is addressed to genius but does not discuss it directly—how is this a tribute? The sixth chapter of this book treats the peculiar triangulation of Freud’s ambition with Italy on the one hand and with the figure of Goethe on the other, but already it is worth emphasizing how strange this piece is as an homage to an *author*. The essay is a loving gesture toward Romain Rolland, certainly, but it is also the register of a deep sense of competition. Freud points out twice in the first three paragraphs of what is an extremely brief piece that the novelist is his junior by a decade, which also makes him the same age as the brother who accompanies the analyst to the Parthenon. The complex sibling rivalry that comes into play in the Oedipal scheme Freud introduces into his account of derealization is intriguing, but not as germane to this study as the more general matter of the relationship between travel and creative ambition typical of the art romance. It is the question of Freud’s achievement—at issue as much in the rivalry with Rolland/the brother as with the internalized father—that is at stake in the journey to a devoutly desired cultural center.

Freud's imagination of his intellectual aspirations often shapes itself around voyages taken or not taken, particularly in relation to traveling (or conquering) role models matched or overtopped (Hannibal, Napoleon, etc.). Nevertheless, not unlike Emerson, the analyst traces the drive to wander to quite domestic sources. The psychic force of travel is paradoxically but also predictably established at the source of all desires: the home. The voyage is an antidomestic fantasy with its roots in the domestic space. "A great part of the pleasure of travel lies in the fulfillment of . . . early wishes," writes Freud, "it is rooted, that is, in dissatisfaction with home and family." Primal drives going back to the earliest childhood experiences of home motivate the emotional response Freud describes "when first one catches sight of the sea, crosses the ocean and experiences as realities cities and lands which for so long had been distant, unattainable things of desire—one feels oneself like a hero who has performed deeds of improbable greatness" (247).

REAL ROMANCE

Henry James will surround "Europe" with quotation marks when he wants to indicate its force in the imagination. As the South of culture can never be an idiosyncratic destination, the authors in this study are original not because they record new discoveries made in the course of their travels, but because of what they do with what they could not help taking with them on their trips. It has not gone unremarked that Italy is important for Goethe, or James, or Freud—or for Letitia Landon, the Brownings, Byron, Staël, Forster, Mann, or Proust for that matter. What is of interest in *Haunted Museum* is the role of a fantastic Europe in the self-imagination of these writers. Two motivating fantasies tend to be at stake in the art romance: the encounter with the ideal creator and the force of material and contingent experience. Yet, in spite of the longing toward the real that seems bound to underlie both these aspirations, texts in the tradition are characterized by repeated and flamboyant recourse to the artificial.

Byron writes of lands where Childe Harold was "doom'd to go," and certainly destiny, fate, and fatality are always at stake in the voyage to culture. Nevertheless, authors were not doomed simply to repeat the romance they inherited. While it is not possible to identify an absolute origin for the issues and images involved, *Haunted Museum* begins with Goethe in order to introduce formal strategies pioneered by the great poet of the North's love of the South, particularly the interplay of incestuous passion and displacement Goethe manipulates in the extraordinary generic mélange of *Wilhelm Meister*. The clash between the realism of that strangely influential novel and its more fantastic elements is as important

in my analysis as that vitally significant and impossible creation, Mignon, the personification at once of displaced creativity and of yearning for the South.

As the real beckons in an ever-receding distance, one of the most tantalizing forms it takes is of an overdetermined origin perhaps all too identifiable as feminine. While the second chapter of this book, "The Art-Romance Tradition," sketches out something of the afterlife of Mignon and the drives that shaped her, starting from the influential work of Letitia Landon and Germaine de Staël, she is no more bound to one chapter in this book than she could be constrained within *Wilhelm Meister*. The proliferation of Mignon figures is in itself an indication of the pervasive force of a feminine influence that will not be denied. After all, modern romance is nothing if not a female form: central texts were written by women, featured women as principal characters, and addressed emotions that in the period of this study, as today, have been typically gendered female. The suggestion presents itself inevitably that the feminine sources of the tradition make themselves known even as they are denied by male practitioners who cannot acknowledge their forebears, that elements from the prior tradition testify to their presence in the guise of a haunting, uncanny, endlessly desiring feminine form.

And yet a related but possibly more-unappeasable ghost haunts these pages, that of the natural rival for *any* form of creativity. Childe Harold does not say good-bye to his mother, but Aurora Leigh cannot say good-bye to hers. Freud's account of the guilty child overwhelmed by the shadow of fate while standing on the Acropolis evokes the memory of an unnamed classical figure that in turn may stand in for the one member of the family romance absent from the analyst's description of his disturbance of memory. If, for Hazlitt, Oedipal anxieties haunt the art student in Rome, it is Orestes, tormented matricide, who sets the precedent for the anxious voyage to the Acropolis, site of unresolved guilt and impossible expiation. The recurrence of uncanny female characters in the art romance is not coincidentally related to the difficulty of arriving at long-yearned-for destinations that is central to the tradition. What is at stake in both cases is not only the unsilenceable claims of women authors, but also the more frightening call of a return to the creative source that is always at once incestuous, impossible, and closely related to death.

The most concrete museums instantly become emblematic in Henry James, sites at which to represent a crucial ever-renegotiated relationship between a self desperately aspiring for culture and a world of culture the self cannot avoid. The innocent American overwhelmed in a vast European museum, that characteristically Jamesian figure, is a moving emblem of the promise of coming into relation with knowledge, but also of the shocks entailed in entering into a relationship that, even when new,

is always predetermined. The issue for the novelist is formal as much as thematic. As the deep desires and disappointments entailed in the drama of acculturation are not likely to be best represented by recourse to realism, inverisimilitude itself becomes a pressing question in his accounts of Americans abroad. And so it is that the 1909 prefaces to the New York edition in which James revisited his earliest work offer an important recalibration of the “romantic.” The novelist’s nuanced account of the intricate relation between romance and realism, the formal manifestation of his commitment to the play of longing and memory, makes his terms of discussion useful in illuminating not simply the fantastic place of Italy in his own work and in that of such nineteenth-century predecessors as Staël and especially Hawthorne but also in his modernist contemporaries.

James, along with Freud and a selection of authors associated with modernism, allows *Haunted Museum* to close with a set of self-conscious reflections on a literary mode that is at every point about troubled returns to origins. As the most important thinker on the forms of desire to emerge from the nineteenth century, the founder of psychoanalysis was bound to have a privileged place in this project, particularly given the inescapable force of the South of culture in his imagination. *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the topic of one chapter, but Freud inevitably recurs in this project, from his seminal account of the uncanny, to the memoir-essay on the crisis provoked by his arrival at the Parthenon discussed already, to the study of Jensen’s *Gradiva*, which is treated in the afterword of this book. A new frankness about the force of physical passion comes to the fore in the twentieth century. And, yet, not only in Freud but in the narratives of Forster, Proust, and Mann discussed in the final chapter the apparent liberation of desire in modern Italy only reopens the question of longing and satisfaction running through the art romance from the outset. The existence of a tradition of desire dating back to an earlier era becomes inspiration and humiliation all at once. The longings of the body, like the passions of the mind, are woven through with the yearnings of a past that can no more be denied than it can be satisfied.