(Haunted) Cosmopolitan Spaces: World Literature, the Modern Ghost Story, and the Structure of Debt

Goethe's modern concept of world literature and Scott's modern ghost story, both the first of their kind, emerged only months apart, in January and October of 1827, respectively.¹ A connection between the concept and the literary form, or between the two authors, seems cursory at first glance. Certainly, Goethe and Scott were contemporaries: they died 13 days apart in 1832, were described by Thomas Carlyle as the "two kings of poetry," and were continuously familiar with each other's work (qtd. in Scott 1891, 379, n 1). Yet Scott never mentioned world literature in his journal or letters and even seemingly opposed the ideal of world literature in practice. As he wrote in his journal, he made it "a rule seldom to read, and never to answer, foreign letters from literary folks" – with the exception of letters from Goethe, "a wonderful fellow, the Ariosto at once, and almost the Voltaire of Germany" (Scott 1891, 234). Goethe admired Scott for his essays on the supernatural as well as for his novels, and said that Scott was "a great genius; he has not his equal, [his] art [is] wholly [...] new, with laws of its own" and "so high that it is hard to give a public opinion about it" (Goethe 1901, 358; 360). But there appears to be no evidence that Goethe read Scott's ghost stories, much less that they had been of influence on his world literature. As Eppers has argued, the Goethe-Scott relationship remained an "encounter from afar" (2006, 166, my translation). As I aim to show in this essay, however, there is a connection between Goethe's modern world literature and Scott's modern ghost story. This connection, I argue, is historical rather than personal, by which I mean to say that both Goethe and Scott draw on the same raw material in the form of what I call the cosmopolitan space – it becomes a space of anticipation in the former and one of monstrosity in the latter.

I propose the cosmopolitan space as an instance of an 'ideologeme,' a concept first used prominently by Bakhtin and Medvedev (1981) and later developed by Kristeva as a way to analyze ideology intertextually, at "the different structural levels of the text" (1980, 36). Jameson, building on those accounts, specified ideologemes as the "smallest intelligible" (1983, 61) units or building blocks of ideology – the "ultimate raw material" (73) of cultural products. For him, they are "amphibious formation[s]," because they can manifest themselves conceptually and as a "protonarrative" or "collective class fantasy" (73). The cosmopolitan space, then, is an (ideological) unit of meaning, which can be expressed on various textual levels and in various media – in our case, Goethe's concept of modern world literature and Scott's literary form of the modern ghost story.

¹ The concepts of world literature used before Goethe, like those of Wieland and Schlözer, were classicist. As I will argue in the second section of this essay, Scott reinvented the form of the ghost story with "The Highland Widow."
The ideological content of the cosmopolitan space is necessarily imprecise due to its "amphibious" nature. Its defining ideological quality, I argue, is relatively unobstructed mobility (of commodities and individuals alike). This ideogeme is productive, and connotes predominantly positively, in different class contexts—relatively unobstructed mobility may be considered a realm of potentials, a realm to be excluded from, to desire inclusion into/access to, and so on. This cosmopolitan space is ideological because, to different extents, it is severed from its conditions of possibility—the system of production of which it is a function. In the Grundrisse, Marx shows that because the creation of surplus value ("the self-realization of capital") is prioritized in the capitalist system of production, "[c]apital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier" to open new markets after its current ones are saturated (1973, 524-5). This constitutes a problem from the perspective of the physical conditions of exchange, i.e. communication and transport. Creating new markets implies an increase in the necessary distance to cover for circulation and exchange, and an increase in (socially) necessary labor time. Thus, the necessary expansion of the capitalist world-system for capital's self-realization also increases the cost of circulation and exchange, impeding that self-realization. To resolve this contradiction, Marx argues, the "annihilation of space by time […] becomes an extraordinary necessity," and "for that reason" the production of cheap means of communication and transport is promoted by capital (Marx 1973, 525; original emphasis). He summarizes that

while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital […], the more extensive the market over which it circulates […], the more does it strive […] for greater annihilation of space by time. (Marx 1973, 539)

Relatively unobstructed mobility is thus a function of the capitalist world-system. However, the cosmopolitan space is severed from the system of production and appears as autonomous, which constitutes that space as ideological.

The claim that I put forward in this essay is that Goethe's world literature and Scott's modern ghost story—and in particular "The Highland Widow," my main case study—share the cosmopolitan space as their fundamental ideological unit, but that this ideogeme functions drastically differently in the works of these two authors. In Goethe's account, as I will show in the first section, relatively unobstructed mobility is not considered a function of capitalism, but rather results from post-Napoleonic cosmopolitan humanism. It constitutes the condition of world literature and therefore anticipates the annihilation of space by time. In other words, Goethe, writing from a proto-industrial, proto-capitalist Germany, anticipates the developments that a fuller

---

2 Even if the "annihilation of space by time" is ultimately a function of a system of production, its potential extends far beyond the self-realization of capital. Marx's own work demonstrates this on more than one occasion: In "On Imperialism in India" he shows how the means of transportation formed the possibility of the nation state. In his (and Engels') Communist Manifesto, he argues that from the network of circulation and exchange arises a world literature.
integration into the capitalist world-system may bring. By contrast, Scott writes from post-1825 Britain where the (negative) consequences of such an integration have just materialized as a financial crisis. This crisis had a profound impact on the type of literature that was produced and the way in which it was produced, prompting an upsurge in supernatural fiction.3 Scott, in particular, creates the new genre of the British modern ghost story, of which "Widow" is the first expression and in which the crisis is doubly inscribed: the monstrosity of the supernatural is here intensified,4 and "Widow" is organized via what I call the 'structure of debt.' As I will show in the second section, in Scott's "Widow" the cosmopolitan space finds expression through the protagonist's excessive praise of the roads that make possible her Highland tour, which is central to the narrative. But while the journey starts "fearless[ly]" (Scott 2003, 68), mobility is negated and praise is replaced by "dreadful terror" (121) as the narrative progresses; mobility leads to and ends in monstrosity.

1. Goethe's World Literature: Cosmopolitan Space

Writer and critic Theodor Mundt complained in 1838 that Goethe's notion of world literature was so vague that he would rather not engage with it at all. That proved impossible because the term followed him around "like the Marlborough-tune" (qtd. in Lawall 2010, 20). Mundt might well have been writing in the first two decades of the 2000s. After the publication of Casanova's World Republic of Letters (2004) and Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000), 'world literature' rapidly became one of the most important terms for the (comparative) study of literature, arguably only rivaled by the related terms 'translation' and 'globalization.' And as Beecroft noted disapprovingly, most studies on the topic "necessarily and automatically begin with Goethe's use of the term Weltliteratur in conversation with the young Johann Peter Eckermann" (2008, 87). It seems redundant, then, to once again discuss at length the twenty fragments in which Goethe elaborated his concept (or rather, 'proto-concept') of international exchange, announced that world literature "is at hand," and urged that "everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (1901, 175). Instead, I shall provide a characterization of that proto-concept based on a brief outline of its political and economic context, to highlight the centrality of the cosmopolitan space to it.

What is paramount to Goethe's conception of modern world literature is the peculiar, pre-nation state, quasi-feudal political unity of Germany at the time. After the Napoleonic wars, during the 1815 Congress of Vienna, an association of German-speaking states was formed under the name German Federation. Its formation had been

---

3 This is in line with Stephen Shapiro's suggestion that an increase in the supernatural "emerges as a cultural marker" with the incorporation into capitalism, and "reappears with each new turn of the screw" (2008, 32).

4 Note that this is often but not necessarily expressed through a ghost figure because monstrosity in the modern ghost story is formal/structural. Hence, Sullivan even argues that "stories where we never see a ghost can be ghost stories" (1978, 10). On the relationship between ghosts and monsters, see the entry on "Ghosts" in Weinstock (2013, 251-252) and McNally (2011, 2).
discussed before and had met with resistance, but Napoleon's escape from Elba (during the Congress), and the clear economic and defensive advantage it would offer, led 39 "sovereign princes and free cities of Germany" to sign the agreement (Dorn Brose 1997, 81). Paradoxically, Germany was both exceptional in and characteristic of the post-Napoleonic European political landscape. On the one hand, nationalism and the nation state had become dominant in Europe, but on the other hand, a supra-national socio-political philosophy had arisen on the continent in the form of cosmopolitanism. As Fillafer and Osterhammel (2011) showed, this specifically modern form of cosmopolitanism initially emerged in the Dutch Republic during its Golden Age, where it was a function of religious tolerance and the transnational expansion of business interests. After the decline of the Dutch empire, cosmopolitanism disappeared and re-emerged several times in Europe, in the process of which it "transcended mercantile egoism" and took on a more humanist content (Fillafer and Osterhammel 2011, 121). The Napoleonic Wars catalyzed this modern cosmopolitan sentiment in Europe. It functioned as a tool to avoid future conflict and to support trade, but the Wars had also generated, as Conway maintained, a humanist "belief in the essential unity of humankind and in the values and sympathies that underpin that unity" (2018, 30). Post-Napoleonic cosmopolitanism, then, had a specific economic and cultural dimension. 

Goethe, whose "keen sense of history" even Lukács admired (Vazsonyi 1997, 136), was explicitly aware of Germany's position in Europe and of post-Napoleonic cosmopolitanism, and suggested both as conditions for his world literature. Cosmopolitanism and nationalism were not contradictory, but the absence of a German nation state and the newly-established semi-cosmopolitan formation of the Federation were a comfortable position from which to claim, as Goethe did, that "[n]ational literature is now rather an unmeaning term" (1901, 175). Not accidentally, he emphasized the "honorable role […] reserved for us Germans" in the development of world literature and stressed that the "German nation can and should be more involved" in that process than other nations (Goethe qtd. in Strich 1946, 397; my translation). Further, in his foreword to the German translation of Carlyle's The Life of Schiller, Goethe says that the "reason" that world literature could emerge is that all the [European] nations that had been unsettled in the most horrible [Napoleonic] wars and afterwards had fallen back into isolation came to realize that they had become aware of a number of foreign things, had adopted some, and had, on occasion, felt intellectual, spiritual/mental needs that had hitherto been unknown. This recognition had given them a sense of being neighbors; and instead of closing in on itself, as had been the habit in the past, the mind eventually developed a desire to have a share in a more or less free trade in matters of the mind and spirit [freien geistigen Handelsverkehr]. (Goethe qtd. in Frank 2007, 1515)

I want to highlight two aspects of Goethe's foreword. First, Goethe suggests post-Napoleonic cosmopolitanism as the main condition of world literature, and importantly, he foregrounds the cultural and specifically the humanist dimension of that socio-political philosophy. He would do so consistently and specified on a different occasion that world literature meant that authors found a "common spirit" in each other's works, and as a result started working as a "community" (Goethe 1960, 392-3). This is not to
say that the economic dimension of cosmopolitanism was absent from Goethe's work on world literature. He addressed what Marx would later call the "annihilation of space by time" on several occasions, and even cited the "ever-increasing speed" of "intercourse [Verkehr]" and the "efficiency of today's book trade" (Goethe qtd. in Strich 1946, 400; my translation) as essential to the formation of such a world literature – leading Birus to praise him for his "great pragmatic rationality" (1995, 16; my translation). Yet that dimension is not identified as such. Rather, as in the case of "free trade" in the citation above, which is framed explicitly and solely as an intellectual and humanist project ("freie[r] geistige[r] Handelsverkehr"), the humanist scope severs allusions to the system of production.

This ambiguous shape of cosmopolitanism's economic dimension in Goethe's writing on world literature is not in contradiction to his "keen sense of history" or his "pragmatic rationality." Rather, as Goethe's conversations on economic exchange illustrate, it is symptomatic of the way in which he perceived certain historical developments. For example, when Goethe and Eckermann discuss the possibility of a Panama Canal, the former expresses his hopes that the "young Nation" of the "United States" will take an active role in that project (Goethe 1901, 179-80). He goes on to predict that the US will soon populate the vast area "beyond the Rocky Mountains." Together, he continues, these "great works," which he wishes he would "live to see – but [which he realizes he] shall not" will allow opening up new and "important commercial towns," and the "furtherance of a great intercourse between China and the East Indies and the United States" (1901, 180). Remarkably, even in this discussion, in which culture does not play a role, Goethe frames the annihilation of space by time as a humanist project, and he argues that it will have "innumerable benefits" (179) for the "whole human race, civilized and uncivilized" (180). In Goethe's writing on both cultural and economic exchange, then, capitalism collapses into humanism, and the latter mystifies the former as well as the (physical) conditions associated with it.

It may be evident by now that I am arguing that Goethe's world literature relies on the cosmopolitan space as its main ideological building block, because his elaborations on the proto-concept did not connect its physical conditions of possibility to the emerging capitalist system of production. The second aspect of Goethe's foreword to Carlyle's The Life of Schiller that I want to highlight, i.e. the novelty it assigns to world literature, illustrates why this may be the case. In line with Birus (2000), who emphasized the ambiguity of Goethe's language, it has become commonplace to argue that world literature for Goethe was either arriving or had just arrived, based on his comment that world literature "is at hand [an der Zeit]," which signifies both (Goethe 1901, 175). But it is important to stress that world literature for Goethe was more of the future than of the present. His relation to the international magazine Le Globe, which he saw as an early example of what world literature could be, illustrates this. Having read in that magazine a review of his own work that he particularly liked, Goethe invited the reviewer, J.J. Ampère, to a meeting and a dinner. When Ampère arrived, Goethe and Eckermann were "extremely surprised" that he was only "some twenty years old," and even more so when they learned that "the whole of the contributors to the 'Globe,' […] were only young people like [Ampère] himself" (Goethe 1901, 205). After their
Goethe tells Eckermann that this phenomenon of *Le Globe* is "entirely new," and he praises Ampère as a "citizen of the world," contrasting him to the national "narrow-mindedness of many of his countrymen" (209).

Goethe thus seems to suggest a generational shift relative to world literature, which is already present in his comment that he will not live to see the Panama Canal. This shift is further elucidated by the specific context of the German Federation. As Ogilvie points out, even though some regions of the Federation had forms of "pre-industrialization," predominantly the Rhineland and Saxony, the majority of the German States "failed to industrialize" at the same pace as other countries did (most notably Britain and France) (Ogilvie 1996, 122). This included the undeveloped modes of exchange necessary for world literature, and it was a direct consequence of the different principalities – a transitioning, fragmented feudal system, with "different legacies of social institutions, and thus different framework[s] for economic activity" (122). Goethe formulated this as a problem to be overcome and expressed his faith in "our good high roads and future railroads [which] will of themselves do their part," i.e. establish a more solid German unification and free exchange (1901, 287). Goethe's prediction was not far from the truth, although he, typically, failed to recognize capitalism as the main catalyst of the creation of the physical conditions of exchange. Indeed, the elimination of the Federation's tariff barriers with the introduction of the *Zollverein* (a customs union) in 1834 would be a catalyst for the German unification of 1871, as would the start of the development of a more extended railway system one year later. Nevertheless, even though Germany would become the largest European industrialized capitalist economy in the 20th century, through much of the 19th century, as Ogilvie has shown, Germany remained proto-industrial (Ogilvie 1996, 122).

Goethe's modern world literature, then, can be characterized as a proto-conceptual expression of post-Napoleonic, European modern cosmopolitanism, from a proto-industrial, proto-capitalist, non-nation state Federation. Paradoxically, the constellation that provided fruitful ground for the conceptualization of world literature also formed an obstacle to its realization. Hence, when Goethe advocates the hastening of the approach of world literature, this includes the trans-national collaboration between literati as well as the physical conditions of exchange. And it may precisely have been this anticipation that made world literature particularly susceptible to the fantasy of the cosmopolitan space.

2. "The Highland Widow:" Structure of Debt and Haunted Cosmopolitan Space

2.1 Historical Context: Death and Financial Crisis

As for Goethe's world literature, the context of production is essential to understanding Scott's "Widow" and its relation to the cosmopolitan space. Scott indicated in his journal that he started "Widow" on the evening of 27 May 1826, during a sleepless night, only thirteen days after his wife had passed away. Her death affected him greatly and he repeatedly addressed his distressed condition in his journal. A break from writing, however, was no option: "I must not fail myself and my family – and the necessity of exertion becomes apparent" (Scott 1891, 129).
This necessity to write resulted from the financial crisis of 1825, initially known as "The Panic." Some commentators, such as Dick, consider The Panic somewhat tautologically the "first modern financial crisis," because it "came about not because of exogenous circumstances, like war, but through the normal course of financial circulation and diversification" (2013, 146). Indeed, although the crisis was in many ways connected to the Napoleonic wars – i.e. to the debt that had been created during that period, and to the fact that the flow of capital out of Britain after the Wars had ended – debt had started rising with the development of the banking system during the Industrial Revolution. In order to reduce debt, the British government took measures including the implementation of a gold standard. This resulted in a panic, a (brief) crash of the English financial sector, and the failure of over 60 banks (Neal 1998).

The crisis severely affected Scott and left him indebted for the rest of his life due to two mechanisms. First, in the period leading up to the crisis, Scott was granted credit by his publishers, Archibald Constable and Co., and Ballantyne and Co., based on the promise to deliver work at a later moment. By 1824, Scott was to write nine works, for which he had received a £10,000 advance. Part of this Scott had spent on his Abbotsford estate, which served as security for the debt. Second, his publishers plentifully used so-called 'accommodation-bills,' which were granted by a first party to provide a loan to a second party. A creditor would provide that loan, and the debtors would retire the bill on its due date. If they did or could not, the first party would stand guarantee for the second party's debt – if the creditor demanded the money on that date, which was not always the case. When The Panic occurred, as McKinstry and Fletcher explain, those debts were collected, and as a result, the system collapsed: "The London agents of Constable defaulted on a bill payable to Constables whose own credit dried up and who were linked through indebtedness with James Ballantyne and Company. The latter firm, whose capital had for some time belonged to Scott alone, was obliged to stop payment and thus became bankrupt" (McKinstry and Fletcher 2002, 83-84).

To Scott, the situation was "unintelligible," because Constable made "[g]reat profits on almost all the adventures [and made] no bad speculations" (Scott 1891, 62). Nevertheless, Constable's bankruptcy and Scott's involvement with Ballantyne made him responsible for a total amount of £120,899 (Anderson 1998, xxx). Abbotsford had initially served as a guarantee for the debts, but Scott had transferred ownership of his estate to his son – a precondition for the son to marry the wealthy heiress Jane Jobson, of which Scott's partners in debt had been unaware. With no material security, the best hope of the creditors was, as Anderson points out, "to trust in Scott's own resolve to write his way out of his difficulties" (1998, xxxi). They constructed a trust fund based on the promise that Scott would produce texts, the profits of which would be directed to the funds. It initiated the most ferocious writing period of Scott's life. In the two-and-a-half years that followed, he wrote 1.5 million words. And while the quality of his work suffered, his popularity did not. Nevertheless, as Quayle (1968) showed, the debt outlasted the author and was only paid off fifteen years after Scott's death – in 1847, after the sale of the remaining copyrights.

The first work that Scott started after financial ruin hit was "Widow." At that point, he had been working on his majestic The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte, but as he wrote
in his journal, before being able to finish "Nap," he "must try a hors d'oeuvre" (Scott 1891, 129) – "Widow." Scott wanted to base "Widow" on "Mrs. M. K.'s [Murray Keith's] Tale of the Deserter," which required expansion because it was too short (1891, 129). He chose to add a "frame-work [that] may be a Highland Tour, under the guardianship of [a] postilion" (129). A day later, he commented on the structure of the work, which he intended to be "an olla podrida, into which any species of narrative or discussion may be thrown" (130).

I shall return to the importance of the "Highland tour" below, which in "Widow" is the way the cosmopolitan space is expressed, and which as I will show is not a space of anticipation as in Goethe, but of monstrosity. For now, I want to point out that this provisional generic specifier olla podrida, referring to a Spanish dish the name of which translates as 'rotten pot,' is symptomatic of the novelty of "Widow," both on the level of species and genre. "Widow" can retrospectively be labeled as a short story, but that term did not signify as clearly then as it does now. It may be an exaggeration to claim, as Allen did, that the short story was absent before Scott's Chronicles of the Canongate, the collection in which "Widow" was published (1981, 5-16). But in 1826 Britain, it was certainly not a dominant form. Scott also reinvented the genre of supernatural fiction through "Widow." The best account of what this reinvention entailed is arguably Scott's own 1827 "On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition," published in the same year as "Widow." "On the Supernatural" is an essay in definition, in which Scott redefines the supernatural genre using German supernatural fiction and the gothic novel/romance as negative examples. In the former, Scott argues, everything, "however ludicrous," is possible (Scott 1827, 72). In the latter, the supernatural is plentiful and talkative. For Scott, however, the excess of the German genre would not work in Britain, not even "in translations" (1827, 73). Scott viewed the excess of the gothic novel/romance as counterproductive; while he does not explicate this, it is evident that he means it was counterproductive for the construction of the monstrosity of the supernatural entity, and for the associated terror experienced by the reader. To increase monstrosity, he questions if supernatural creatures (he uses the generalizer "goblin," 63) should be "permit[ed] to speak at all" (63). He continues that the supernatural is "of a character which is extremely difficult to sustain" (62). It loses its "effect by being brought much into view," and a "small proportion may [therefore] be said to be better than the whole" (62). "[I]f possible," he says, the "imagination of the reader" should even be excited "without being gratified" (62). Scott sums up that

the exhibition of the supernatural appearances in fictitious narrative ought to be rare, brief, indistinct, and such as may become a being to us so incomprehensible, and so different from ourselves, of whom we cannot justly conjecture whence he comes, or for what purpose, and of whose attributes we can have no regular or distinct perception. (Scott 1827, 63)

In brief, then, in redefining the genre of the supernatural, Scott replaced excess by scarcity and comprehensibility by incomprehensibility. In other words, he used the effects of the crisis as he experienced them to intensify the monstrosity of the supernatural in fiction.
"Widow"5 is the first instance of this new, literary (or para-literary) form – the modern ghost story – and it is shaped by two coinciding and catastrophic events: the death of Scott’s wife and the implosion of his fortune. Both events are deeply historical, albeit in different ways. First, Scott had been fascinated by the supernatural for most of his life, and his wife’s passing arguably played a role in his choice for a work involving ghosts. It is worth noting, in this context, that Scott wrote in his journal how Charlotte’s ghost appeared to him after her death (e.g. Scott 1891, 136). But as the sales of Scott’s works on the supernatural and the rise of the supernatural genre that followed the publication of Scott’s works attested to, his interest in the supernatural was widely shared. Second, and more importantly, Scott's financial situation was exemplary for "the problem of London" at that time (Millgate 1996, 110). As Checkland (1975) pointed out, the two mechanisms that left Scott indebted had become a standard in publishing in 1825. Erickson (1996) and Mason (2005) showed that this caused bankruptcies among all the dominant publishers in Britain and led to a paradigm shift in literary production. Before the crash, dominant publishers mainly printed romantic novels, for which their authors were paid (large) sums in advance. After the crash, the emphasis was on serials and low-priced reprints instead. This catalyzed the popularity of the short story, and the rise of the literary magazine, in which the modern ghost story was a protagonist. As Mason put it, The Panic, fittingly occurring shortly after the death of Shelley, Keats, and Byron, meant the death of romanticism in Britain (2005, 4). "Widow" was located at the heart of this transition from romantic to modern literary production in 19th-century Britain, and as I shall show presently, was thoroughly shaped by it.

2.2 Narrative Structure

Commentators have prominently considered "Widow" as the expression of the (traumatic) transition from feudalism to capitalist modernity. Hay, for example, roughly understands "Widow" as follows: Mrs. Bethune Baliol takes a Highland tour with her guide Donald MacLeish. They encounter a widow living in poverty and misery at a large oak as the result of her preventing her son Hamish, who was based on the "Deserter" from Keith's "Tale," from fulfilling his duties to the English army, for which he was executed. Elspat (the widow) wanted her son Hamish to follow the example of his father and become a Highland cattle thief, and her character is thus taken by Hay to represent the feudal past. Hamish sensed that times were changing for Scotland and that a new economic system was becoming dominant. He considers signing up for the army the honorable thing to do, and the ghost of his father convinces him that this is the right choice. Their characters are taken by Hay to represent the shift to the capitalist present, in which the widow now exists despite her attempt to stop a transition (Hay 2011, 30).

Yet "Widow's" historical moment is inscribed in it in a much more specific and drastic way than Hay suggests. The story is opened by the extradiegetic narrator Croftangry, who writes that "Mrs. Bethune Baliol's memorandum begins thus: –" (Scott

5 Scott's "The Tapestried Chamber," written shortly after "Widow" but published only in 1829, is a more paradigmatic example of the modern ghost story than "Widow" is, likely because Scott had had more time to develop the specific narrative structure he envisioned.
2003, 68, Baliol was based on Scott's friend Mrs. Murray Keith). After the first sentence, "Widow" switches to a second level of narration, that of Baliol, who is the inrsidegetic narrator and tells of her highland tour. The tour leads Baliol and her guide Donald to the widow, and Donald tells Baliol the widow's story in a conversation that is hidden from the reader. Indeed, the readers are only told that "in a few hurried words, [Donald] made [Baliol] acquainted with the story which I [Baliol] am now to tell in more detail" (74-75) and they do not find out where Donald heard the story. Rather than a third level of narration, then, in which the events of Elspat and Hamish are told by Donald, those events are seemingly mediated to the readers by Baliol, keeping the story within her narrative level, although shifting from internal to zero focalization. However, the story is concluded not by Baliol but by Croftangry, who says that, while he, and not Baliol, told the reader the story of the widow's life, of the story of her "death, I can tell [the reader] nothing. It is supposed to have happened several years after [the widow] had attracted the attention of my excellent friend Mrs. Bethune Baliol" (120).

This mise-en-abyme-like narrative structure of the ghost story has been much discussed and has been understood as a way to distance the empirical author and reader from the supernatural (e.g. Wood 2017, 92). I would argue that in the case of "Widow," there appears to be an overlap between its narrative structure and the context in which it was shaped. Specifically, the narrative structure mimics the structure of the 'accommodation bills,' and by extension the structure of the 1825 financial crash. Similar to the accommodation bills, the reader of "Widow" is confronted with an event that may be real or that allegedly has a real source (Anne Murray Keith), but the responsibility of which is deferred from one narrative level to another. And while there appear to be several narrative levels, each one supposedly guaranteeing the veracity of the other, certain transfers of knowledge, such as those between Donald and Baliol, and between Donald and an unknown interlocutor, are missing. Unclear, too, is how Baliol hears the story from Donald in a "few hurried words," and subsequently spends 45 pages retelling it to the reader – an unintelligible increase in value. In the case of the widow's story, it is unclear who is responsible for the narration, because the narrations produced by the two narrators flow over into each other; the threshold between them is erased. Finally, the ultimate guarantor of "Widow" is Anne Murray Keith, the empirical person who told the empirical Scott the "tale of the Deserter," of which it is uncertain if it was fictional or not. But Keith died in 1818, almost a decade before the story was published. This leaves the reader with a narrative system that at first sight appears to be firmly grounded, but which on closer inspection appears to be, to adopt Scott's term, an "incomprehensible" system of narratives – a narrative bubble, 'the structure of debt.' I suggest understanding this structure of debt, which in its incomprehensibility echoes the monstrosity as envisioned in Scott's revision of the supernatural, as the foundation of the narrative form of the modern ghost story. Having established this, I can move on to how the cosmopolitan space is constructed in "Widow," and to how the ideologeme's juxtaposition with the structure of debt differs from Goethe.
2.3 (Haunted) Cosmopolitan Space

The cosmopolitan space is expressed in "Widow" in several ways – including a notion of transnational poetry, mid-sentence leaps from one geographical region to another, and even through Baliol's cosmopolitanism – but I shall focus on one aspect only: the roads. In her first sentence, Baliol indicates that "fearless[ly]," she "undertook [a] Highland tour [which] had become in some degree fashionable" (Scott 2003, 68). Baliol is a traveling enthusiast, a tourist, who aims to appreciate "the most beautiful districts" (69), "romantic retreat[s]" (71), and "the traditional stories of the country" (72). The greatest commendation is reserved for the roads themselves. She praises them as "excellent" (68) and speaks of the "substantial excellence of these great works" (72). She says that she appreciates the "legends by which the road, and the objects which occurred in traveling it, had been distinguished" (69), indicating that she enjoys the legends for their effect on the road rather than for the legends themselves. Similarly, she praises a mountain as "majestic," only to praise the (anthropomorphized) road indirectly for conquering that mountain ("[the] military road, which never or rarely condescends to turn aside from the steepest ascent, but proceeds right up and down hill," 72). She admires her guide, Donald, for his knowledge of legends, but above all for being "acquainted with the road every mile" (68). She is unbothered by Donald's drinking because it makes him drive "slower," allowing her to enjoy the road more (70).

Her praise reaches its climax in the following passage. The roads, she exclaims passionately, deserve

the compliment of the poet, who, whether he came from our sister kingdom, and spoke in his own dialect, or whether he supposed those whom he addressed might have some national pretension to the second sight, produced the celebrated couplet – 'Had you but seen these roads before they were made / You would hold up your hands, and bless General Wade.'

Nothing indeed, can be more wonderful than to see these wildernesses penetrated and pervious in every quarter by broad accesses of the best possible construction, and so superior to what the country could have demanded for many centuries for any pacific purpose of commercial intercourse. Thus the traces of war are sometimes happily accommodated to the purposes of peace. The victories of Bonaparte have been without results; but his road over the Simplon will long be the communication betwixt peaceful countries, who will apply to the ends of commerce and friendly intercourse that gigantic work, which was formed for the ambitious purpose of warlike invasion. (Scott 2003, 72)

Commentators have not failed to foreground this passage and again emphasized the way in which it symbolizes the transition to modernity. Sabiron argues that these "new constructions crisscross the Scottish body and replace the Antique body" (2015, 10), and Hay understands the section as Baliol's "approval of the modernization of Scotland" (2011, 32). Hay, who does not read the section in conjunction with Baliol's earlier celebration of the roads, adds that her praise is ambiguous because it is phrased "in terms of a military rape" (32). I would argue to the contrary, especially taking into account the earlier comments, that there is little ambiguity in Baliol's opinion of the roads. Certainly, she identifies the destruction of a past as a condition of the roads'
existence and uses the signifier "penetrated," which Hay understandably considers as a marker for "rape." But the erasure of the past does not pose a problem for Baliol. She claims that "[n]othing […] can be more wonderful." For Baliol, the roads are to be "celebrated," they are "wonderful," "excellent," of the "best possible construction," and so forth.

I am suggesting that Baliol's excessive and lyrical praise of the roads may be understood as an expression of the cosmopolitan space, and I want to foreground the resonance with Goethe's world literature: Relatively unobstructed mobility is clearly considered favorable, despite the erasure of the past, even though Baliol experiences rather than anticipates it. And while Baliol's use of hyperbole may make it redundant to emphasize the ideological nature of her comments, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that for Baliol mobility seems to exist in separation of the system of production of which it is a function. Worth highlighting in this context, too, are the post-Napoleonic cosmopolitan climate and its humanist dimension in the form of the reference to Napoleon, the universalization of the "poet" whose "dialect" and "kingdom" are deemed irrelevant, and the "communication betwixt peaceful countries."

However, in contrast to Goethe's case, mobility leads to and ends in monstrosity. To demonstrate how mobility leads to monstrosity it is instrumental to briefly return to Hay, who argues that Baliol is "too English, too cosmopolitan, not agrarian or provincial enough to be haunted" (2011, 32). Hay's focus is on the apparition of the widow's husband, who is the only character explicitly identified as a ghost. Yet I would maintain that the husband-ghost is irrelevant in this context. Scott's reinvention of the modern ghost story as addressed above involves a transition from talkative, to unintelligible, silent, and therefore monstrous supernatural figures – an intensification of the monstrosity through scarcity and incomprehensibility. The husband-ghost is a friendly and talkative advisor to Hamish, and thus belongs to the former realm. The widow, on the other hand, is incomprehensible and becomes increasingly monstrous as the narrative progresses. She thus also echoes, and can even be seen as sedimentation of, the structure of debt that is organized along the same principle of incomprehensibility. To reiterate, Baliol starts her journey "fearless[ly]" (Scott 2003, 68). Arriving at the tree, she realizes that it involves a "mystery," and uses concepts of monsters known to her to attempt to grasp the situation, asking Donald, "[t]here is a bogle or a brownie, a witch of a gyre-carlin, a bodach or a fairy, in the case?" Donald replies that she is "clean aff the road [sic]" – that she is wrong (73). He tells her the story of the widow to which Baliol listens with "horror and sympathy," and which makes her want to help the widow while also being "afraid to do so" (75). Baliol attempts to understand the widow and "alleviate the condition of this most wretched woman" but her attempts are "never satisfied" (120). She gets only "indifference" and "resentment" in return and subsequently disappears from the narrative completely (120). With Baliol gone, Croftangry proceeds to tell the widow's story, increasing the uncertainty about her existence and her monstrosity. Already during the widow's life the villagers are "frightened at her looks" because she resembles a "lifeless corpse" who does not have a "mode of life [but] rather of existence" (120). But one night, Croftangry says, the widow disappeared without trace. Ever since, the villagers rise "in terror," in "dreadful terror," thinking that they "sometimes hear her voice." When a "latch
rattle[s]" at night, they still expect the "entrance of their terrible patient, animated by supernatural strength, and in the company, perhaps, of some being more dreadful than herself" (121). And "many are still unwilling, at untimely hours, to pass the oak-tree, [because] beneath [it], as they allege, [the widow] may still be seen seated" (122).

Baliol's mobility terminates with the monstrosity that haunts the tree—she is "clean off the road" (73). Transition, then, is engrained in "Widow." The short story starts as a fearless journey and ends in dreadful terror. It starts with appreciation of "romantic retreat[s]" (71) and "traditional stories of the country" (72) and ends in the unknowability of the widow's story, starts with cosmopolitan mobility and ends in monstrous petrification. Baliol, then, contrary to what Hay claims, can be said to be haunted by the widow because she is cosmopolitan—her cosmopolitanism is the condition for haunting. This transition to the haunted cosmopolitan space results from the juxtaposition of two sign systems, i.e. the ideologeme of the cosmopolitan space on the one hand and, on the other, the structure of debt and the increased monstrosity of the supernatural, which are both shaped by The Panic. The cosmopolitan space is by definition disconnected from the system of production of which it is a function. This juxtaposition reconnects it to that system, framing it in the structure of debt, and placing the effects of the crisis, shaped as the monstrous supernatural, at its center. It creates a cosmopolitan space haunted by monstrosity.

3. Conclusion

The connection between Goethe's modern world literature and Scott's modern ghost story, then, lies in their reliance on the ideologeme of the cosmopolitan space. Nevertheless, their specific location of production, and the uneven capitalist development of early-19th-century Europe, drastically affected the way in which this ideologeme took shape in their work. In Goethe, the cosmopolitan space is in line with an anticipation of the establishment of conditions of exchange connected to emerging capitalism. But rather than those conditions being connected to that system of production, they are severed from it, collapsing into a merely humanist project. Scott's modern ghost story is shaped in a Britain where an already dominant capitalism tightens its grip, and in direct response to the first modern financial crisis. Consequently, the cosmopolitan space in Scott is re-connected to the system of production via a second sign system—the structure of debt and monstrous supernaturalism, modeled after the crisis. While not demystifying the fantasy of the cosmopolitan space, this juxtaposition frames the space in the structure of debt and positions monstrosity at its center; constituting the cosmopolitan space as haunted.

Germany's peculiar situation in Europe made it both a fruitful place for world literature to be conceptualized and a complicated place for world literature to be realized. In line with this, the materialization of the conditions that Goethe anticipated was accompanied by the rise of what Pizer called a "virulent nationalism" (2006, 13-14). It culminated in German unification in 1871 and the decline of Goethe's cosmopolitan ideal of world literature—which would come to connote, as Pizer shows, "canonicity and commerce" until after WWII (2006, 14). Scott's modern ghost story,
on the other hand, would become the template of ghost stories to come, and the structure of debt, I argue, would remain its characteristic, still recognizable in contemporary ghost stories (e.g. Solomon's *An American Haunting*, 2005). The modern ghost story, then, was shaped by a specific historical trauma, the first financial crisis, which in some sense completed the entrance into modernity for 19th-century Britain – the completion of a Kondratiev wave, which like the ghost story, would repeat itself over and again.

**Works Cited**


Anglistik, Volume 30 (2019), Issue 3
© 2019 Universitätsverlag WINTER GmbH Heidelberg


