



Haunted Presence: The Numinous in Gothic Fiction

By S. L. Varnado

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Are ghosts, vampires, and other forms of “haunted presence” related to universal religious instincts? Are emotions that play a part in religious ritual and narrative similar to those in classical works of Gothic fiction such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and the tales of Edgar Allan Poe? *Haunted Presence: The Numinous in Gothic Fiction* reveals the intersection of Gothic literature and contemporary theories about the psychology of religious experience, positing that the two share the concept of the *numinous*, the human response of awe in the face of the eternal.

Varnado offers a fresh and audacious analysis of the literature of the supernatural by employing insights derived from the philosophy of religious experience. Ranging from the Gothic novel of the eighteenth century to ghostly tales from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Varnado frames ghost stories as ontological challenge to the reader. The challenge is not in the form of philosophical proposition, however. Rather it is in the form of feelings and emotions that maintain a connection with the sense of reality. It is this area of reality that Rudolph Otto called the numinous—the *feeling* of the supernatural—that stands at the center of Gothic literature.

An understanding of this unique category of experience, aligned with its associated concept of “the sacred and the profane,” exposes the purpose of ghostly literature and demonstrates the enduring relevance of this mesmerizing genre.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Haunted Presence* is stimulating, and the author deserves a sincere compliment for exceptionally clear, graceful, and colorful writing."

—*Nineteenth-Century Literature*

"In [Varnado's] hands, the Gothic tale and horror story are shown to have significance beyond the entertainment purpose of both genres. They are forms in which serious readers may take legitimate interest and pleasure."

—*Modern Fiction Studies*

About the Author

S. L. Varnado is a professor emeritus at the University of South Alabama and has written articles for *National Review*, *Reader's Digest*, the *New Oxford Review*, and the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Goldstein:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your trouble; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled *Haunted Presence: The Numinous in Gothic Fiction*. Try to the actual book *Haunted Presence: The Numinous in Gothic Fiction* as your good friend. It means that it can to get your friend when you feel alone and beside those of course make you smarter than ever before. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you more confidence because you can know every thing by the book. So , let us make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

Tiffany Lyons:

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Maurice Lamothe:

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