



# Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature

*Kathleen Brogan*

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Ghost stories in various forms have been a part of popular literature for centuries, from Shakespeare to Dickens to Faulkner. Over the past twenty-five years, a resurgence of haunting plots has occurred in American literature. In *Cultural Haunting*, Kathleen Brogan makes the case that this recent preoccupation with ghosts stems not from a lingering interest in Gothic themes but instead from a whole new genre in American literature that she calls "the story of cultural haunting."

Examining Louis Erdrich's *Tracks*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuba*, Brogan argues that modern ghost stories offer a way for minority authors to come to terms with their lost cultural identities. At the heart of this process, she contends, is the experience of mourning as that form of memory determined by an awareness of a break with the past. While conscious of the cultural differences among these haunted tales of slavery, colonization, and immigration, the author demonstrates that they all function similarly: to re-create ethnic identity by imaginatively recovering a collective history that in many cases has been fragmented or erased. Her readings show how the specific histories and local meanings support the pan-ethnic genre she has defined.

The book suggests that modern stories of haunting reflect the increased emphasis on ethnic and racial differentiation in American society over the past thirty years. The ghosts found in contemporary American literature lead us to the heart of our nation's discourse about multiculturalism and ethnic identity.

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