

MMES
MADRID MASTERS IN ENGLISH STUDIES
UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID

GOTHIC BOURNES

**THE STORY OF A. B.
(1727)
by Daniel Defoe**

TRANSCRIPTION BY
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**EDITING GOTHIC TEXTS
SEVENTH SERIES, 2020
Nº 2**

AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
History *and* Reality
OF
A P P A R I T I O N S.
B E I N G

*An Account of what they are, and what
they are not; whence they come,
and whence they come not.*

A S A L S O

*How we may distinguish between the
Apparitions of Good and Evil Spirits, and
how we ought to Behave to them.*

W I T H

*A great Variety of Surprizing and Diverting
Examples, never Publish'd before.*

*By Death transported to th' Eternal Shore,
Souls so remov'd revisit us no more:
Engross'd with Toys of a Superior Kind,
They leave the trifling Thoughts of Life behind.*

LONDON, Printed: And Sold by **J. ROBERTS**

in *Warwick-Lane*. MDCC XXVII.

Source text: <https://archive.org/details/essayonhistoryre00defo>, pp. 166-170.

(Cf. a later version:

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=LBpbAAAaAAJ&pg=PA300&lpg=PA299&focus=viewport&dq=%252+2in+that+place,+lies+the+grand+deed%22#v=onepage&q&f=false>)

[166] CHAP. IX.

More Relations of particular Facts, proving the Reality of Apparitions; with some just Observations on the Difference between the good and evil Spirits, from the Errand or Business they come about.

I MAKE no Remarks upon any of these Stories; the present Business is to bring Examples of such Things, to prove the Reality of Apparitions in general: As to who, or what it is, that in such cases may appear, and why, and upon what Occasions; that we shall speak of hereafter.

I SHALL bring one Example now within my own Knowledge, and in which I had some Con[167]cern; not but that other Accounts may be as authentick as this, tho' I cannot so positively vouch them at second or third Hand. When I offer those to you, therefore, I tell you honestly that I have such and such Relations from good Hands, or I have such a Story by me in Manuscript, and I leave you to make such use of them as you please.

THIS Caution of mine, however, ought not to lessen the Credit of any of the Relations here publish'd; for why may not the Account given by another Hand be as true as this which I give you from my own Knowledge; and why must an Author, in such cases as these, be made answerable for the Particulars of every History, or be bound to leave it out, which would be the Reader's Loss, not his own.

HOWEVER the following I can vouch from my own Knowledge. *A.B.* was a Merchant in *London*, and as he drove a considerable Trade beyond-sea, he establish'd a Factor, or as the Language of Trade calls it a HOUSE, at a certain Port in the *English Colonies* in *America*, and sent over his Servants or Apprentices thither, as is usual for Merchants to do.

ONE of his said Apprentices being fitted out, and ready to Embark, his Cargo being actually on board the Ship, and the Ship fallen down the River as far as *Gravesend*; his Master was getting his Letters and Invoyses, and other Dispatches, ready for him, he being to go down the River the same Evening.

THE Hurry which thus dispatching him put his Master into, occasion'd, that when he was call'd to Dinner at the usual Hour, he did not take the young Gentleman with him as usual, but told him he must be content to stay in the Counting-house 'till he came to relieve him.

[168] ACCORDINGLY Dinner being over, he goes down to send him up to Dinner. And when he came to the Counting-house Door, there sat his Man with the Book-keeper also, writing as he left him.

IT happen'd just that Moment, some occasion extraordinary oblig'd him to step back again, and go up Stairs to the Dining-Room, from whence he came; and intending not to stay, he did not speak to the young Man, but left him in the Counting-house, and went immediately up Stairs.

IT was not possible that he, or any one else, except such as could walk invisible, could go by, or pass him unseen: Good Manners would have hinder'd the young Man from thrusting by his Master upon the Stairs, if he had been going up; but he is positive he did not, and cou'd not pass, without being seen.

BUT when he came to the top of the Stairs there sat the young Man at Dinner with the other Servants; the Room they din'd in being a little Parlour, which open'd just against the Stairs, so that he saw him all the way of the upper Part of the Stair-case, and could not be deceived.

THE Master did not speak to him, which he was very sorry for afterwards; but the Surprize made him pass by the Room, and go into the Dining-Room, which was to the right Hand of it, but he sent one immediately to look, and he was there really at Dinner; so that what he (the Master) saw below in the Counting-house, must be the Apparition, as it certainly was.

BUT this was not all: The young Gentleman embark'd as above, and arriv'd safe with all his Effects in *America*, tho' he never liv'd to return. However, I cannot say his Apparition in the manner as related could have the least Relation to his being sick, and dying abroad, which was not 'till three [169] Years afterwards. But what follow'd was of another kind.

THIS young Man had an elder Brother, who liv'd in *London*; he was a fine Gentleman, and a Scholar, and was at that time studying Physick. He was also a stout brave Gentleman, and in particular understood a Sword, that is to say how to use a Sword, as well as most Gentlemen in *England*.

HE had an accidental Rencounter with a Gentleman in the Street, in that short Street which goes out of *Fleet-street* into *Salisbury-Court*; and being so compleat a Master of his Weapon, he wounded his Antagonist, and drove him into a Tavern in the Street, from whence came out two Men more upon him with their Swords, but both of them found the Gentleman so much an Over-match for them, that they left him as fast as the first; whereupon a fourth came out, not with a Sword, but a Fire-Fork taken hastily up out of the Tavern Kitchen, and running at this Gentleman with it, knock'd him down, and broke his Skull, of which Wound he afterwards died.

WHILE this was done in *London*, his Brother, as far off as *Boston* in *New-England*, writing to his Master the Merchant, (and who gives this Account of it) after other Business, writ this Postscript.

SIR, I beg you will be pleas'd in your Return to this to let me have some Account, as much as conveniently may be, of how my Brother does, and what Condition he is in; which you will excuse my Importunity for, when you read the following Account, (viz.)

THE 20th of—— last, about six a Clock in the Morning, lying in my Bed, and broad awake, my Brother, or an Apparition of my Brother, came to the Bed's Feet, and open'd

the Curtain, looking full in my Face, but did not speak. I was very much frighted, but [170] however I so far recover'd as to say to him, Brother, what is the matter with you?

'HE had a Napkin-Cap on his Head, which was very bloody, he look'd very pale and 'ghastly, and said, I am basely murther'd by ----- naming the Person, but I shall 'have Justice done me; and then disappear'd.

Now this Letter was so dated, that it was impossible any Account could be sent of the Disaster, that could reach thither in that time; for it was not dated above fourteen Days after the Fact was committed in *London*; and that it was Genuine I am well assur'd, because I saw the Letter within an Hour after it was receiv'd in *London*, read it my self, and knew the young Man's Hand, and the young Man also perfectly well, as I did his Brother that was kill'd also, very intimately.

THE young Man was sober, religious and sensible, not given to Whimsie, or light-headed Fancies, not vapourish or distemper'd, not apt to see double, or to dream waking, as many of our Apparition-making People are; he was besides that a Scholar, and very serious: the first I mention as a Protection to him from foolish Imagination, and the last from Falshood; and I am satisfy'd, the Reader may depend upon both the Stories, I mean as to the Truth of them.