During the nineteenth century, cross-dressing in Swedish suspense literature was utilised to create mysteries and secrets. The purpose was to produce suspense, and the uncovering of the cross-dressing secret was often an important element of the plot. However, as a result of new connections between cross-dressing, homosexuality, perversion and mental illness made by sexology at the turn of the twentieth century, cross-dressing in suspense fiction took on new meanings. In contemporary Swedish literature, these motifs no longer create much of a mystery. Virginia Woolf made a seminal contribution to feminist literary history and provided the discipline with some of its most memorable quotations.

In the last decade, literary and cultural historians’ scrutiny of relations with those who have gone before – their own dead and those of their subjects – has taken a ghostly turn. Literary history has become haunted. As Helen Sword comments in the epilogue to her Ghostwriting Modernism, ‘hauntology’ of various kinds has become a ‘crowded bandwagon’. Among critics of literary modernism, in particular, the trope of haunting has been much used to think about the period’s relation with the past, and modernists’ own obsessions with ‘the world unseen’ are increasingly being regarded, not as rather embarrassing marginalia, but as central to their aesthetic, formal and political concerns. Modernist writing could well be defined as that which attempts selfconsciously to redefine its relation with those who have gone before, to rattle the bones of literary history until they are rearranged. The trope of haunting goes further in allowing us to see modernism as both an exorcism of the past, and an uneasy possession by the past.

What soon made Piper, Coombe-Tennant, Fleming, and the Verralls’ cumulative writings, or “scripts,” extraordinary to investigators was that ideas, images, and symbols seemed to span them, interweaving the women’s individual productions with one another.[3] Hence arose the case of the cross-correspondences, which eventually comprised more than 3,000 scripts, generated over the course of more than three decades.