Rather Haunted Women: Figurations of Spectrality in Shirley Jackson's Writing

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(English Literature)

School of English, Communication and Philosophy
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November 2020

Contents

Acknowledgements

Innumerable people have contributed to this thesis, in ways both specific and extensive, intellectual and personal, and it would be impossible to acknowledge all of them here. To all those who have offered everything from an encouraging word to recommendations for, and conversations about, my work over the last five years, my sincerest thanks.

First and foremost, I have to thank my wonderful supervisor Dr Becky Munford. Her support and collaboration have made the PhD experience a genuine pleasure, whilst her expertise and always-excellent feedback have helped me to develop the project into a piece of work of which I am very proud indeed. She has taught me so much during my time at Cardiff, from my undergraduate days through to the completion of this thesis, and I owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

Thanks must also go to the academic and professional services staff in the School of English, Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff University, both present and past, for their encouragement and assistance throughout all stages of the thesis, and my time as a student more generally. I would like to give special thanks to Professor Neil Badmington, who acted as my primary supervisor for the first year of the programme, and enabled my work to get off to the best possible start. Also to Professor Anthony Mandal, for inviting me to become a member of the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, which has provided me with an invaluable core community of mutual support and intellectual stimulation within the School over the last few years. Finally to Dr Jennifer Whitney, who first introduced me to the work of Shirley Jackson on the 'Gothic and Gender' module during my Master's Degree in 2014, and whose brilliant teaching sent me down this route in the first place.

To my friends: Dr Mikey Goodman, Steph Frost, Caitlin Coxon, Katherine Mansfield, and Oliver Gregory. Their support and friendship created the best possible background for my work and life in Cardiff, during those occasional times when one or both weren't going quite according to plan, and the far more numerous times when they were. I feel immensely lucky to have them as ever-reliable fixtures in my life.

Finally, to my family: my brothers Matt and Gareth, my Grandma Joan, my stepfather Richard, and stepmother Anita, for all their motivation, kindness (and patience!) over both the last five years and in general (and not forgetting Bella and Seren, for all the feline therapy). Most especially of all, to Mum and Dad – for all the love and support, and everything you do for me. You'll never fully know how grateful I am.

Abstract

Shirley Jackson (1916-1965) is something of a contradiction. Both celebrated and marginalised, Jackson and her writing are imperfectly present, semi-obscured by the shadows which her most famous stories cast over their author. Texts such as *The Haunting of Hill House* have delimited the ways in which we think about Jackson's work as a whole, and especially in terms of her interest in ghosts and ghostliness. This thesis offers a corrective reading to this situation; a reading that contends there are more ghosts haunting the pages of Shirley Jackson's texts than one might imagine.

Situating this project alongside recent work on figurations of spectrality, I argue that a significant proportion of Jackson's texts represent their female protagonists as spectral figures. I focus on her novels *Hangsaman* (1951) and *The Bird's Nest* (1954), a selection of short stories from the collection *Just an Ordinary Day* (1996), as well as her two memoirs *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957), in addition to essays and sketches from *Let Me Tell You* (2016) that represent Jackson's life-writing. In these various and very different texts, women are characterised as ghostly figures who are subjected to different forms of de-realisation in response their experiences. I argue that in Jackson's writing, spectrality operates as a polysemous conceptual metaphor, with each instantiation working to recast Jackson's oeuvre as a series of 'ghost stories', a writer of unexpected spectres. This spectral tendency is a significant perspective that has been underemphasised in scholarship on Jackson.

I also demonstrate how tracing the unexpected presence of ghostly figurations in Jackson's writing works to enrich our collective understanding of spectrality as both a metaphorical and a critical methodology. I outline the scope and application of this interpretive approach – which I term *hauntography* – in the introduction, and use each chapter to develop a hauntographic reading of a specific form of figurative spectrality as it is represented in either an individual or series of texts.

Introduction – Raising Shirley: (Ghost)Writing the Jackson Renaissance

'What would it mean for a text to be a ghost?'[1]

'They are always there, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet.'[2]

In June 2018, an article appeared on the lifestyle website *Shondaland* entitled 'It's Time for a Shirley Jackson Renaissance'. Its author, Lindsey Romain, makes an impassioned plea for a resurgence of interest in both Jackson and her fiction, which she describes as 'Americana at its most horrific and nihilistic'.[3] Positioning her as a Gothic chronicler of women's experience of the world – especially those who are troubled, unappreciated, and facing some order of personal crisis – Romain's portrait of Jackson foregrounds her undoubted literary ability whilst acknowledging that wider public recognition of this talent currently languishes in the background. This complicated combination of appreciation and obscurity – of being celebrated by some and unknown to others – provides the foundation for Jackson's overdue reconsideration and integration into the mainstream cultural imagination. In short, now is the time for a Shirley Jackson renaissance.

Romain's article treads a well-worn route that runs throughout both popular and academic work on Jackson: the tendency to characterise her as a neglected writer whose underappreciation, in the years following her death in 1965, is in urgent need of correction. Lynette Carpenter was an early pioneer of this critical motif, writing in 1988 that, 'despite

[1] Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 12.
[2] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International,* trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 176.
[3] Lindsey Romain, 'It's Time for a Shirley Jackson Renaissance', *Shondaland* - available at https://www.shondaland.com/inspire/books/a21967823/shirley-jackson-renaissance/ [accessed 28/10/2020] (para. 3 of 7).

her remarkable achievement of both critical acclaim and popular success during her lifetime, [Jackson] has been virtually ignored by critics and written out of literary history since her death'.[4] This critical vanishing act practised against Jackson is similarly described by Darryl Hattenhauer in his 2003 work *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*, where he states that 'Jackson's reputation should be restored to the lofty position it occupied during her lifetime', an assessment which indicates the rather lowly level on which her status had rested hitherto.[5] Despite the clear desire of both Carpenter and Hattenhauer to stoke the embers of readerly appreciation for Jackson, and rekindle them into a blaze of rediscovered admiration, this project of recognition was still a work in progress by the time Ruth Franklin published *A Rather Haunted Life*, her comprehensive biography of Jackson, in 2016. Framing her study and subject through the idea of a 'secret history', Franklin uses part of her introduction to return to the vexed question of Jackson's reputation by explaining why successive cadres of literary critics have adopted a lazily dismissive attitude to her writing, observing that they 'have tended to underestimate Jackson's work' because of 'its central interest in women's lives' and the 'disreputable' or 'uncategorizable' nature of her oeuvre.[6]

As if to underline the dearth of progress in rehabilitating Jackson's name in the intervening period, Franklin's assessment strongly echoes Carpenter's 1988 essay, particularly her disparagement of the limited view of 'traditional male critics', who could not 'reconcile genre with gender' into a coherent assessment that encompassed her competing

[4] Lynette Carpenter, 'Domestic Comedy, Black Comedy, and Real Life: Shirley Jackson, A Woman Writer', in *Faith of a (Woman) Writer*, ed. by Alice Kessler-Harris and William McBrien (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 143-148 (p. 143).
[5] Darryl Hattenhauer, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 2.
[6] Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), p. 6.

literary styles and avenues of publication (principally, women's lifestyle magazines).[7] Franklin finds similar resonances in her own survey of the critical terrain, highlighting Jackson's focus on women, and the difficulties of genre classification, as the principal reasons behind the lacklustre interest in her work. In her review of *A Rather Haunted Life* in *The Washington Post*, Elaine Showalter brought this unpromising picture of Jackson full circle, suggesting that 'despite praise from writers including Stephen King and the support of Joyce Carol Oates […] Jackson is still underrated and excluded from the literary canon'.[8] Even when positioned as a formative influence on, and bracketed with, one of the best-selling writers of all time, Jackson's name does not stand out as boldly as it should.

Although by no means exhaustive, this survey of assessments from Carpenter through to Franklin and Showalter is evidence for what might be described as the 'not-quite' quality of Jackson's literary presence. Jackson is a writer of undeniable skill and insight (particularly in relation to the psychological and social experiences of women), but at the same time a figure whose writing has insufficient purchase on an American and anglophonic literary consciousness. The 'not-quite' niche in which Jackson resides represents a disconnection between the quality of her writing and the wider reading public at whom it is directed. Angela Hague understands the condition of Jackson's reputation precisely as an extension of the qualities of her writing: 'she produced a body of work that sketched the cultural landscape of her time in ways so subtle and covert that they have been effectively ignored'.[9]

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[7] Carpenter, p. 143. A clear exception to this absence of sustained critical interest in, and engagement with, Jackson's writing is the work of Bernice Murphy and the contributors to *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, which was published in 2005.

[8] Elaine Showalter, 'Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life', *Washington Post*, 22 September 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/shirley-jackson-a-rather-haunted-life/2016/09/15/4293b85e-5f2b-11e6-af8e-54aa2e849447_story.html> [accessed 28 October 2020] (para. 1 of 8).

[9] Angela Hague, '"A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times": Reassessing Shirley Jackson', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 26.2 (2005), 73-96 (p. 90).

For Hague, it is the nuance and lack of ostentation in the writing itself that keeps Jackson beneath the radar of both critical and public acknowledgement, as if to suggest her rightful position is a penumbral one: present but in an indeterminate fashion, imperfectly visible.[10]

Given the persistence of this characterisation of Jackson as a neglected or unappreciated writer who deserves better, it might seem Lindsey Romain's call for a renaissance is simply one further iteration on an unchanging theme. However, as Showalter acknowledges later on in her review of Franklin's biography, there is some evidence to suggest that this attitude of neglect surrounding Jackson 'is about to change'.[11] Beginning with both the publication of *A Rather Haunted Life* in 2016 and Penguin's reissuing of various texts in her corpus (in addition to the release of previously uncollected and unpublished material in the collection *Let Me Tell You* in the same year), there has been a steady and sustained increase in the attention paid to Jackson's work, more so than at any time since her death in the mid-1960s. Mike Flanagan's attic-to-basement renovation of *The Haunting of Hill House* for Netflix in 2018 became the third dramatisation of the 1959 novel, and featured a new character called Shirley to acknowledge Jackson's influence on the show's creator-director (albeit a gesture which made his decision to turn over authorship of the text that appears within the drama to her brother, Steven Crain, all the more puzzling and problematic). This series coincided with Stacie Passon's adaptation of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, and both of these preceded the release of *Shirley* in 2020, a liberal

[10] This view of Jackson as a neglected writer is not accepted by everyone. In his chapter on American women writers of the 1950s, Gordon Hutner identifies Jackson (along with Flannery O'Connor and Elizabeth Spencer) as one of the few women writers to have a 'stellar career' (p.501), using her as a point of comparison for those female authors who have been truly forgotten. Hutner's characterisation shows that the nature of Jackson's visibility is itself a site of contestation, and a useful, cautionary reminder not to overstate the extent of Jackson's eclipse. See Gordon Hutner, 'Modern Domestic Realism in America, 1950-1970', in *The Cambridge History of American Women's Literature*, ed. by Dale M. Bauer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 501-514.

[11] Showalter, para. 2 of 8.

dramatisation of Susan Scarf Merrell's 2014 novel of the same name, featuring Elisabeth Moss as a quasi-fictionalised version of Jackson at the end of the 1940s/beginning of the 1950s, around the time she was writing the first draft of *Hangsaman*.

The last few years have also seen the publication of new critical work on Jackson, such as Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger's 2016 edited collection *Shirley Jackson, Influences and Confluences*, as well as *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House,* edited by Melanie and Jill E. Anderson, which was published by Bloomsbury in June 2020. The surge of public interest in Jackson's work has been matched by a concomitant critical reappraisal; her profile has become sufficiently prominent even to warrant a special issue of the journal *Women's Studies* devoted to 'Rethinking' Jackson's writing and the critical material focussed on it, a reflection of the fact that the burgeoning interest in Jackson has produced an extensive body of work that can be 'rethought' in the first place.

All of this leads back to Romain's article and, specifically, the question of timing. What makes the contemporary moment one which can accommodate Jackson and her writing where previously this had not been the case? For Romain, the answer lies in Jackson's exploration of women's manifold experience of crisis, both in their own lives and in a broader social register. Pointing to the recurrence of such women in Jackson's best-known texts, Romain reads their representation as symptomatic of a wider political concern about the negation of women's voices and the accounts they give of their lives, particularly those which are centred around the experience of sexual violence. For Romain, it is Eleanor Vance, the protagonist of *The Haunting of Hill House*, who exemplifies this problematic dynamic most directly:

> [She] descends into what she feels is a targeted haunting, but what others deem to be mental disarray. It is the classic hysteria defense — used to extinguish feminine fire — and though that may feel like a dated morale, it is as prominent

> as ever. It is what silences women from speaking out about sexual violence, and what locks us in the barrens of emotional visibility. Jackson had her thumb on the pulse, some 60 years ago.[12]

Although Romain's evaluation of the text is not without interest, what is most striking about her reading is the fact she overlooks the significance of Eleanor's 'targeted haunting', focusing instead on her fellow characters' response to this experience: the ghostliness of the situation is ignored or underappreciated by Romain just as it is by the fellow inhabitants of Hill House. This is particularly revealing because, in assessing the perspicacity of Jackson's writing, Romain casts her as a ghostly presence herself, a prophesier of the continued silencing, or rendering-invisible, of women. Emerging out of the literary past to speak to our present preoccupations, the (re)materialisation of Jackson as a writer worthy of attention is predicated on her insight into women's attenuated visibility and limited political agency in post-war America – conditions which, Romain implies, have altered very little in the last six decades. It is important to note that the 'Jackson renaissance' as proposed here is marked by a ghostly, paradoxical logic: it affords greater visibility to a female writer on the very basis of her insight into the ways in which women are conceptualised as invisible. Jackson therefore exchanges one form of attenuated presence – by definition, a 'renaissance' presumes a hitherto limited visibility – for another, indicated by her own awareness of the ways in which women are subject to being unseen and unheard.[13]

The debate around Shirley Jackson's re-emergence as a significant writer of the twentieth century has to contend with her figuration as a ghostly presence. The association

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[12] Romain, para. 5 of 7.

[13] The idea of 'revival' or 'renewal' with which a renaissance is associated only makes sense on the basis that the phenomenon/object being revived exists in a previously attenuated or diminished form, one which is not immediately perceptible in its situational context. The 'renaissance' of Shirley Jackson (or any writer) should be understood less as a figurative 'rebirth' than a form of visual redirection, paying attention to a figure who has always been there but whom we have failed to register properly. The creative/recuperative labour is not Jackson's responsibility, but ours.

between writing and invisibility is an established one, as Joyce Carol Oates points out: 'Most novelists […] really do attempt to refine themselves out of existence by way of an immersion, a systematic and disciplined immersion, in language.'[14] What Oates describes here is a particular authorial strategy, a self-determined spectralisation in which the writer disappears into language but nevertheless remains 'visible' as the creator of the written text, which is subsequently foregrounded.[15] This process is not gender neutral, however: 'Though it is true that the writer is bodiless, and transformed by craft into invisibility, what of the (woman) writer? Does she occupy a significantly different space? What is the *objective*, as opposed to the *subjective*, state of her ontological existence?'.[16] The 'writer *who is also a woman*' is conceptualised as a parenthetical figure, her authorial status diminished or compromised by the haunting presence of the bracketed (woman) which precedes it (a phenomenon which is addressed in detail in chapter four of this thesis). The ghostliness of the female author therefore affects the way in which she is both perceived and received, which prompts Oates's questioning of her '*objective*' status – in other words, how she is seen and positioned by others. The disappearance of the (woman) writer is not reducible to the act of writing alone; her compromised visibility is a feature of social and cultural attitudes to women's voices and experiences, as Romain suggests in her article. The (woman) writer must contend with her ghostly situation, as must any attempt to bring women writers of the past back to life.

An analytical undertaking whose purpose is to draw attention to the invisibility or marginalisation of the woman writer invites the charge of being anachronistic or dated – a

[14] Joyce Carol Oates, 'The (Woman) Writer', in *Faith of a (Woman) Writer*, ed. by Alice Kessler-Harris and William McBrien (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 5-11 (p. 8).
[15] Oates points out that this strategy is only a temporary one, since the writer is liable to 'blatantly, and often vulgarly […] exhibit their visibility in a consumer-oriented culture'. Ibid.
[16] Ibid, p. 9.

hangover from the recuperative projects of gynocriticism or other second-wave feminist methodologies. However, as contemporary writers like Romain and Franklin emphasise in their work, Jackson's writing is worthy of (re)discovery because of the way it speaks beyond the historical confines of its inscription, to address contemporary anxieties that are centred on women's experience of/being in the world. These range from experiences of trauma and psychopathology, the liminality of adolescence, attenuated presence and limited personal autonomy, and the derealising consequences of domestic labour (all of which are explored in detail across the following chapters). To recognise Jackson and her writing as being in the middle of a renaissance therefore necessarily invites some consideration of her previous marginality, and given her positioning as a ghostly, reemergent presence, there is a certain appositeness to the related resurgence in this kind of critical recuperation.

As I show in this thesis, there is a dynamic fluctuation between visibility and invisibility which surrounds Jackson and her writing. Just as Oates describes, Jackson-the-writer resides as a rather diminished figure in the popular imagination, whereas her best-known story has transcended this imperceptibility to become one of the most conspicuous literary texts in America's cultural heritage - as Susan Lohafer points out, 'The Lottery' became '[a]rguably the most anthologised story in the twentieth-century American canon'.[17] The increasing prominence and recognition of Jackson's name, by contrast, has been a phenomenon much longer in the making. One of the factors which has complicated Jackson's literary legacy is the fact that her corpus has been – and, to some extent, remains – visible in parts only, which in turn affects the parameters of any possible renaissance. Romain's article mentions only three texts – 'The Lottery' (1948), *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have*

[17] Susan Lohafer, 'The Short Story', in *The Cambridge Companion to American Fiction After 1945*, ed. by John N. Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 68-84 (p. 69).

Always Lived in the Castle (1962), which are undoubtedly the best-known of Jackson's oeuvre. This is emblematic of the fact that whatever reputation Jackson has acquired in popular culture has been formulated through the awareness and knowledge of these texts predominantly, whilst the majority of her writing has received limited attention. Critical work on Jackson has been more comprehensive. Joan Wylie Hall's *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Darryl Hattenhauer's *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*, and *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, address a number of Jackson's stories, whilst Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger, in their introduction to *Shirley Jackson, Influences and Confluences*, state that one of their main aims is to introduce readers to Jackson's work beyond these three texts, situating the collection as 'a beginning to, and […] critical appeal for, what we hope will be a resurgence and expansion in Jackson scholarship'.[18] This demonstrates the increasing recognition and visibility afforded to Jackson in critical circles since Carpenter's rather gloomy assessment that Jackson 'has been virtually ignored by critics and written out of literary history since her death'.[19] At the same time, this recognition is still structured around a spectralised economy of visibility, operating between the pronounced conspicuousness and availability of some texts and the comparative obscurity of others.

This thesis takes as its focus Jackson's representation of spectral women and spectral femininity, and, following the plea from Anderson and Kröger, concentrates its attention on those texts which have remained less than fully visible in critical examinations of Jackson's work. I argue that spectrality in Jackson's writing is not confined to the ambiguous supernaturalism of *The Haunting of Hill House*; instead, it is a polysemous conceptual

[18] Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger, 'Introduction', in *Shirley Jackson: Influences and Confluences*, ed. by Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-7 (p. 7).
[19] Carpenter, p. 143.

metaphor, operating in a diverse range of circumstances as a configuration of female identity and femininity. The female protagonists of *Hangsaman* (1951), *The Bird's Nest* (1954) and a selection of her short stories are all conceptualised as ghostly figures, less-than visible yet not-quite invisible, never fully present in their surroundings, and yet not entirely absent from them either. Moreover, in the case of Jackson's life-writing – the collections *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957), as well as essays and domestic sketches in the posthumous collection *Let Me Tell You* (2016) – Jackson is herself conceived as a spectral presence, forced to negotiate the de-realising circumstances and experiences of being both a housewife and a writer. I will demonstrate how reading these texts and these characters – including Jackson's self-presentation in her autobiographical texts – through the analytical perspective afforded by spectrality draws our attention to phenomena and ways of being which have been unacknowledged in the majority of previous critical work. At the same time, the thesis considers the reciprocal side of this relationship; that is, it assesses the ways in which Jackson's texts enrich and expand our understanding of spectrality as a figurative practice and critical methodology. My contention is that, more than any other writer of the American post-war period, Jackson's work is particularly responsive to such a figurative spectral reading because she understands contemporary femininity as a haunted formulation of identity. Jackson's women are divided and multiplied, isolated and pluralised, present but missing, absent but intrusive. They inhabit a multitude of complex, often contradictory subject positions simultaneously; and it is through reading these complicated representations as spectral that preserves their complex contradictions, rather than simplifying them. The excessive multiplicity of the spectre, its existence across and between different conceptual categories, finds an unsettling but profound resonance with Jackson's female protagonists, so that to

understand these women's experiences (of themselves and their narrative worlds), it is necessary to address the ghostly component of their subjectivity.

The Ghost in the Text: Reading Spectrality

The ghost has long haunted the cultural imagination. Susan Owens points out that 'written accounts of human spirits appearing after death [go] as far back as the eighth century', whilst suggesting that 'our dealings with them stretch back much further still, far beyond the written record'.[20] Given 'their long-term residency in our imaginations', it is not surprising that the ghost has been a 'familiar' presence within literature, even if, as the quotation from Owens suggests, it also precedes/predates its representation in writing.[21] Whilst finding expression through the literary text, the ghost or spectre has always preserved an element of its alterity, remaining a character that is incongruous with the medium of its representation. It is precisely this sense of simultaneously operating within and outside a particular representation that enabled the seismic semantic and conceptual alteration that the ghost underwent in the 1990s. This moved it away from being conceptualised as simply a cultural 'figure', something to be *looked at*, to become instead a form of interpretation, a practice through which it became possible to *look at* or analyse a variety of phenomena, especially those which had no previous association with the supernatural or the Gothic.

This theoretical transition, known as the 'spectral turn' in the Humanities and Social Sciences, inaugurated a radical and innovative reconsideration of the relevance of the ghost,

[20] Susan Owens, *The Ghost: A Cultural History* (London: Tate, 2017), p. 9.
[21] Ibid.

spectrality and haunting to the practice and experience of everyday life.[22] As Esther Peeren suggests, '[t]aking up ghosts and haunting as analytical instruments has produced greater insight into the historical, social and cultural functions of phenomena', not only changing the way these features of spectrality were understood, but in turn allowing critics to interpret cultural practices and texts afresh, from a previously under-theorised perspective.[23] In this respect, the ghost has been reappropriated by an increasingly secularised culture and society to reflect its own preoccupations and concerns: '[G]hosts do "cultural work", but […] the work they perform changes according to the developing needs of the living.'[24] What is significant about this theoretical instantiation of the ghost is that it is open to, and indeed invites, interpretation, to understand the 'cultural work' it performs; in short, to look *with* it rather than simply *at* it. Jeffrey Weinstock perhaps overstates the degree to which the ghost aligns itself with the priorities of the living when he observes that the 'ghosts that we conjure speak to [our] timely, context-bound fears and desires – they can do nothing else'.[25] After all, if the ghost were only to speak to the present, it would fail to signify or speak as a ghost, given that the ability to haunt derives from its simultaneous involution of past, present, and future. However, this disruption of categorical boundaries is not necessarily an anti-analytical gesture; in fact, it is precisely the extent to which the ghost provides a radical overturning of clear, conventional categories that makes it worthwhile to look with it, to see our present moment and associated phenomena from a different

[22] For a succinct overview of the 'spectral turn', see María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'The Spectral Turn: Introduction', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 31-36.
[23] Esther Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 9.
[24] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'Introduction: The Spectral Turn', in *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, ed. by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 3-17 (p. 8).
[25] Ibid, p. 6.

perspective. As Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters summarise: 'ghosts not only serve to unsettle the living present, but also shape our attempts to understand it'.[26] The ghost opens up new ways to reconsider what we thought we knew, making it a particularly appropriate figure through which to (re)turn to Jackson and her writing, to question how she has been seen and propose alternative ways of reading her work.

Operating as both a literary figure and an analytical instrument, the ghost has become a ubiquitous concept in a variety of discourses, a phenomenon that 'continue[s] to enjoy a powerful currency in language and in thinking', and it is this insistent omnipresence that demands we accommodate it within our critical vocabulary.[27] Jacques Derrida famously observes in the exordium to *Specters of Marx* that ignoring or overlooking the persistence of the spectral is not an option: 'There is then *some spirit*. Spirits. And *one must* reckon with them. One cannot not have to, one must not not be able to reckon with them'.[28] Similarly, Avery Gordon conceptualises ghostliness as an anticipatory condition, awaiting some form of interaction or exchange with an interlocutor: '[T]he ghost is not just the return of the past or the dead. The ghostly matter is that always "waiting for you" and its motivations, desires, and interventions are remarkable only for being current'.[29] Whilst this is a more nuanced reading of the ghost than the one proposed by Weinstock, who sees it as embodying and subsequently reflecting *our* concerns back at us, Gordon nevertheless proposes a reciprocity between the ghost and the non-ghost as way to acknowledge its 'motivations, desires, and interventions'. Although still defined through its relationship with those to whom it appears,

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[26] Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters, *Feminism and Popular Culture: Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), p. 20.
[27] Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: A Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p. 3).
[28] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. xx.
[29] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 [1997]), p. 169.

Gordon's ghost is recognisable as a category of subjectivity, an entity capable of reciprocating the critical attention it receives. It is through this form of reckoning with the ghost – to be open to what it has to say – that it is possible to learn something from it.

The particular ambiguity of the ghost – the fact that its capacity for signification alters with each interaction – allows it to be theorised in different, although very precise, ways. For Kathleen Brogan, writing about cultural haunting and ethnicity, the ghost functions as a metaphor for particular forms of social encounters:

> The ghosts haunting contemporary American literature lead us to the heart of our nation's discourse about multiculturalism and ethnic identity. When summoned for closer examination, they reveal much about the dynamics of social and literary revisionism in response to cross-cultural encounters.[30]

In Brogan's terms, the ghost functions as a metaphor for the social exchanges between different American subjects, and the way these are represented in social and literary discourse. This is a dynamic between visibility and invisibility; these ghosts function at the centre, or 'heart', of American discourse, and yet are not immediately or fully perceptible. Spectrality is well-suited to describing this condition, which might otherwise collapse back into a simply binary opposition of visible and invisible, and thereby negate the force of Brogan's political and literary analysis.

María del Pilar Blanco, who also takes American subjects as her focus in *Ghost-Watching American Modernity*, understands the ghost and haunting in literary and cultural texts as forces which dramatise encounters between different arrangements of space and time. Thus, the ghostly subjects she adduces are 'representations not of occluded pasts, or buried secrets, but […] manifestations of an increasing awareness of *simultaneous*

[30] Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1998), p. 4.

landscapes and simultaneous others living within unseen, diverse spaces in the progressively complicated political and cultural networks of hemispheric modernisation'.[31] The ghost here is explicitly linked to perception; it reveals the contradictory condition of American modernity, that which is haunted by alternative configurations of space and subjectivity – the '*simultaneous landscapes and simultaneous others*' – for which it has failed to account. Blanco's spectral perspective furnishes a methodology for excavating and bringing these alternative configurations into view, to disclose new forms of knowledge and experience which demand recognition within the political and cultural networks which have characterised this 'hemispheric modernization'.

For Luke Thurston, the function of the ghost is different again. In his analysis of Victorian and Modernist writing, his formulation of the spectre, which he refers to as 'the literary ghost', is 'to be conceived of as an intrusive, illegible "guest" element at odds with a "host" structure of discursive legibility'.[32] What distinguishes this instantiation of the ghost is its illegibility. Where both Brogan and Blanco posit the ghost as a presence which draws attention to new forms of knowledge to be interpreted, Thurston's literary ghost is defined as a form of 'absolute otherness', which is 'ontologically inconsistent with […] the very structure of discursive signification'.[33] In other words, where both Brogan's and Blanco's ghosts might be conceptualised as bringing to light a previously occluded narrative which could or must be apprehended, Thurston's ghost is an inenarrable phenomenon, because it is fundamentally 'at odds' with the signifying structure which contains it (in this case, the literary text). It is 'a trace of ontological inconsistency', which means that there is no way to

[31] María del Pilar Blanco, *Ghost-Watching American Modernity: Haunting, Landscape and the Hemispheric Imagination* (New York: Fordham Press, 2012), p. 7.
[32] Luke Thurston, *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism: The Haunted Interval*, *Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 6.
[33] Ibid, pp. 3-4.

know this ghost *as* a ghost, since it is unknowable as a feature of narrative. The only form of recognition which is possible with this ghost is the one which only acknowledges it as a disruptive element; what is susceptible to analysis is the trace this disruption leaves throughout the literary text, and it is from this that Thurston constructs his reading of the ghost, or, rather, the ghost-effect.

The connections between these different configurations are limited, even contradictory. Brogan emphasises the interpersonal dimension of the spectral encounter, whereas Blanco's focus is the relationship between the ghost and its spatial and temporal situation; and both Brogan and Blanco would not conceptualise the ghost's unintelligibility to the same degree as Thurston. Yet each account demonstrates how the deployment of spectrality as an analytical perspective enables the ghost to speak to individual contexts in a manner which acknowledges their distinctive concerns and constituents. The ghost is a dynamic, adaptive metaphor, capable of addressing itself to innumerable circumstances, and not being the sole province of any one arrangement in particular. As Thurston's account points out, it is important not to assume the ghost speaks of or for a phenomenon definitively or finally, or that it can be always be understood in its entirety. To make the ghost fully intelligible amounts to a failure to deal with it as a ghost, which Colin Davis underlines in his response to Derrida's reading of the ghost in *Specters of Marx*, conceived as 'a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving'.[34] Whilst this does not mean that the ghost cannot be invoked as an explanatory or analytical presence, it suggests that the totality of the ghost's signification cannot be contained within

[34] Colin Davis, 'État Présent, Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms', *French Studies*, 59.3 (July 2005), 373-79 (p. 373).

existing conceptual frameworks: as befits its spectral condition, the ghost always operates in more than one place at the same time, and so any engagement with it – in either literal or metaphorical form – will be necessarily tentative and partial.

This recognition that reading with or through a spectral perspective is necessarily restricted (and restrictive) is a fundamental admission for any academic or critical intervention to make; as Peeren argues, '[j]ust as a narrator can tell specific parts of the story through the eyes of certain characters, a scholar can flesh out a concept by showing it through a particular vision or visions, which determine its shape and influence what can (and cannot) be seen of it'.[35] Analysing (with) the spectre therefore requires a more pronounced self-reflection on the focus of interpretation. There is always an excessive element to spectral signification which escapes analysis, and interpretation determines the parameters of the ghost's operational space and influence. Recalling Davis's assessment that it is the responsibility of the living (or non-ghostly) to preserve the ghost's otherness, it becomes clear that the ethics of figuration play a particularly important role in mediating these critical encounters, especially when those figures who are conceptualised as spectral – such as the protagonists of Jackson's various texts – are themselves 'living'. Characters such as Natalie Waite and Elizabeth Richmond are not simply or singularly ghostly: to frame them as such is the result of a particular critical approach that privileges some aspects of their characterisation over others, such as the nature of Natalie's relationship with her double, Tony, or the arrangement and (re)presentation of Elizabeth's multiple personalities. Therefore, whilst reading with the spectre is an important and insightful practice, it operates in very specific and localised ways, not as an overdetermined explanation of all aspects of

[35] Peeren, p. 25.

Jackson's protagonists that reduces them to ghosts alone. This thesis conjures its own particular spectres as a way of reimagining and re-engaging with Jackson's literary world.

From Margin to Centre? Women and/as Ghosts

Although Jackson's figuration of her characters as ghost(ly)-women derives much of its conceptual force from the socio-cultural situation of mid-twentieth-century suburban life, it is also an iteration of a long-standing association between spectrality and women's experience, both real and imagined. For Mary R. Beard, the spectral quality of women's situation is a reflection of their social and political subordination under the aegis of patriarchy, resulting in 'the image of woman throughout the long ages of the past as being always and everywhere subject to *male* man or as ghostly creature too shadowy to be even that real'.[36] 'Woman' is made an attenuated subject position through the hierarchal binary she forms with 'Man', since the Man/Woman opposition is subsequently mapped onto those of Presence/Absence and Centre/Margin. This figuration does not deny the material reality of women; indeed, they must have sufficient presence to signify as part of the binary in the first place. The difference is that where women *are* seen, they are not afforded control over the conditions or consequences of this appearance.

Ros Ballaster summarises this persistent dynamic as one of women being 'only ever seen and interpreted'.[37] Although Ballaster does not suggest that this is a universal practice, or an in-built feature of femininity, it has exerted a powerful figurative influence over

[36] Mary R. Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 77. This is a trope that can be traced back to earlier feminist literary criticism, such as the famous observations made by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

[37] Ros Ballaster, 'Wild Nights and Buried Letters: the Gothic "Unconscious" of Feminist Criticism', in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. by Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 58-71 (p. 63).

women's writing, including that of Jackson. Almost all of Jackson's protagonists express concern over their capacity to be noticed or listened to, such as Natalie's inability to speak to her family about her sexual assault and trauma in *Hangsaman*, and the complex dynamic between recognition and anonymity that animates her short story 'Nightmare' (1996). These experiences result from, and therefore reflect, a wider cultural anxiety surrounding women's social visibility and what should be done about it, which characterised both popular and political discourse in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.[38] The subsequent (re)codification of female gender roles as coextensive with the domestic sphere parallels the diminished visibility and presence of women within the most visible arrangements of public space. It is perhaps no accident that the feminist discourse which emerges out of this culture is deeply invested in the gothicised language of spectral conditioning, where 'one of the most powerful metaphors in feminist theory [has been] the idea of the woman as "dead" or "buried (alive)" within male power structures which render her "ghostly"'.[39] Diana Wallace's parenthetical '(alive)' is significant, because it maintains the possibility of reading ghostliness and haunting beyond the narrow confines of the dead returned to life. Instead, ghostliness becomes a condition by which women are made to live *in the first place*, rather than as a belated *return* to living after or beyond death.

The nature of operating at the margins – present, but not fully or immediately apprehensible – functions as a significant point of identification between women and the ghost, an association which has been reflected by writers of fiction, frequently and in detail. Julia Briggs argues that ghost stories are tasked with 'reintroducing what is perceived as

[38] William H Chaffe describes this dynamic in detail in *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*. See in particular the chapter 'The Debate on Woman's Place', pp. 174-193.
[39] Diana Wallace, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 26-41 (p. 26).

fearful, alien, excluded or dangerously marginal' back into focus, thereby attempting to re-centre those phenomena – people, but also secrets, traumas, and forms of knowledge – which are denied the unattenuated presence associated with being 'central' to, or at the centre of, various social and cultural formations.[40] Jennifer Uglow is equally explicit in her analysis of marginality as a feature of women's lives and, consequently, their writing: 'women bring to their writing the qualities of their particular experience, their history of living on the margins'.[41] Both Briggs and Uglow charge the ghost story with the capacity to make 'present' this communal experience (both historical and contemporary) of women inhabiting the liminal space of the margin. Functioning as a delineation between one category or arrangement and another – between what is included and what is excluded – a margin is simultaneously part of the categories it separates, but does not belong to either: it features as a phenomenon in its own right, but is, by definition, rarely perceived or treated as such. It is for this reason that the margin accommodates both women (as well as other liminal identities) and the ghost as its uneasy inhabitants, and why the ghost story is best-placed to describe the uncertain position of women as neither fully excluded nor included, both in fictional texts but in the wider social and political arenas as well. This is the point that Esther Peeren makes when she observes that 'certain marginalized groups of people are, for various reasons, perceived and/or perceive themselves as in some way ghostly, spectral, phantasmatic or spooky'.[42] Being identified as spectral or ghostly is not to be relegated to the margins, but rather draws attention to the pre-existing marginality of these individuals or groups: ghostly (self-)figuration is not the cause of marginalisation, but rather

[40] Julia Briggs, 'The Ghost Story', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 122-131 (p. 122).
[41] Jennifer Uglow, 'Introduction', in *The Virago Book of Ghost Stories: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Richard Dalby (London: Virago, 1990), pp. ix-xvi (p. ix).
[42] Peeren, p. 4.

the means of diagnosing (and thereby opposing) it.

However, such a diagnosis must take account of the individual circumstances and conditions of any spectral association, both between different groups of people, and, in the specific case of Jackson's fiction, between the experiences of individual characters across her different texts. Elizabeth Richmond's disordering multiplicity and Natalie Waite's traumatic (self-)division both invite a spectral interpretation, yet their respective figurations as ghost(ed) women represent and derive from distinct formations of subjectivity which resist a generalised categorisation. As Blanco and Peeren contend, it is only through recognising the particularity of any figurative spectralisation that it can function as a form of critical reimagining: 'Mobilizing spectrality to address dispossessing histories and imagine more inclusive futures […] can only be effective if the ghosts and haunting are subjected to a sustained effort of demarcation and specification.'[43] Recognising this specification is particularly important for reading 'ghost stories' by women because their spectres reflect and embody a political exigency. As Melissa Edmundson points out, 'even as women authors were more likely to be at peace with their fictional ghosts [than male writers], they also demanded more from them. Their ghosts exist not only to entertain but to make readers question the (natural) world around them'.[44] There is a clear need for asking specific questions about women's place in the world, and these questions are made possible through the particular, idiosyncratic conditions of an individual haunting or figuration of ghostliness. It is through addressing these questions that the ghost(ed) women who haunt Jackson's writing – those who exist on/in the margins – come to occupy the centre of critical

[43] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race: Introduction', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 309-316 (p. 313).
[44] Melissa Edmundson, 'Women Writers and Ghost Stories', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. by Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 69-77 (p. 70).

attention, a process made possible *by* the figurative ghost rather than in spite of it.

Metaphor and/as Methodology: Approaching *Hauntography*

The use of a spectral vernacular to define subjects and subjectivity is at the root of Peeren's 2014 work *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility*. As its title indicates, Peeren is concerned with the way non-spectral subjects are rendered ghostly by various discursive and representational strategies in cultural texts. Her focus is on groups who exist at society's margins – undocumented migrant workers, domestic servants, mediums, and missing people – and are thus afforded diminished visibility and limited agency. However, Peeren argues that the spectral metaphor is more comprehensive than this, and proposes a broad definition of spectrality from which any particular instance of metaphorisation derives its conceptual power:

> I argue for a broad notion of spectrality that enables it to encompass not only ghosts of the past (the way history haunts the present or childhood traumas the subject), but the possible and impossible hauntings of those living ghosts produced in and by the present. In addition, I elaborate a notion of *spectral agency* and point to the need for a re-focalization of the ghost, which has, in both popular culture and in scholarly considerations of spectrality, predominantly been looked at from the perspective of the haunted.[45]

This intervention is explicitly conceptualised in the terms of focalisation, moving the ghost away from a traversing of past-present to focus instead on the forms of its 'presence' with the present: attenuated visibility and its efficacy in being noticed. In this respect, Peeren draws very clearly on Derrida's critical re-formulation of the ghost in *Specters of Marx*. In defining spectrality as a mode of being in itself, Peeren responds to questions raised by Derrida in the process of defining what he terms '*hauntology*': '*What is* a ghost? What is the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective,

[45] Peeren, p. 9.

virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there *there*, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up?'.[46] Derrida's interest in this quotation is directed at the 'effectivity' of the spectre, both in the sense of it being 'an effect' but also 'effective', which is perhaps why he addresses the question of what the 'presence' of the spectre might be. This is a question Derrida returns to later in *Specters*, phrasing it more directly by asking: 'what is the *being-there* of a specter? What is the mode of presence of a specter?'.[47] Derrida clearly shares with Peeren a concern with the way the ghost operates in the present, those spatial and temporal circumstances through which it appears and interacts with the 'living', or non-spectral.

Peeren's innovation is to take this idea and reformulate it. Hauntology clearly informs her political reading of marginalised groups because it replaces 'the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive'.[48] However, in the Derridean reading, the ghost functions as some kind of mimetic figure or phenomenon, since the relationship between the spectre and the non-spectre is understood as one between 'the thing itself and its simulacrum'. In other words, the ghost is a belated effect, a copy devoid of substance, which signifies through its subordinated position relative to 'the thing itself'. Despite hauntology being a spectral reworking of ontology, and therefore preoccupied with the question of 'being', the ghost's ambiguous status seems to preclude the possibility of it being an actual subject.

This is where Peeren departs from the Derridean conception of the ghost. For her, it is not only possible for the ghost to be an 'I', a subject in its own right, but it is essential for any analysis of figurative or metaphorical spectrality to undertake the task of reorienting

[46] Derrida, p. 10.
[47] Ibid, p. 38.
[48] Davis, p. 373.

itself in relation to it: 'What I seek to achieve […] is a re-focalization that looks *with* rather than *at* the specter and recognizes that this specter is always also a self as I am always also an other'.[49] In the literary, cinematic and televisual texts Peeren analyses in *The Spectral Metaphor*, it is the 'living ghosts' who either focalise the narrative or focalise the analysis; they are the agents *with* or *through* whom the texts are read. Peeren explicitly defines this strategy against Derrida's, the central dynamic of which she summarises rather pointedly: 'the ghostly other is to be looked at in a new way, but *looked at* nevertheless'.[50] Part of the effort required in the act of re-focalisation can be attributed to the rarity of understanding the spectre as a legitimate subject position, in addition to 'the uncommonness of looking *with* the ghost'.[51] Yet it is essential to do so, since it is in the recognition of this ghostly subjectivity and perspective that the specificity of a particular invocation of the spectral metaphor can be discerned.

Another important element of this process is the recognition of who exactly is conceptualised as a living ghost, and on what basis this conceptualisation takes place. As Peeren and Blanco argue in one of their introductory chapters in *The Spectralities Reader*, it is not just individual subjects or characters which are configured as ghostly, but 'categories of subjectification like gender, sexuality, and race can themselves be conceived as spectral […] ghosts and haunting, even when used as conceptual metaphors, cannot be abstracted from specific formations of subjectivity'.[52] The question of what kind of ghost appears is not simply a consideration of individual identity and experience, but also address the ghostliness

[49] Peeren, p. 29.
[50] Ibid, p. 26.
[51] Ibid, p. 29.
[52] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race: Introduction', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 309-316 (p. 310).

of broader categories of subjectivity. In the case of Jackson's writing, this phenomenon is almost exclusively concentrated on white female characters, with the way in which different formulations of femininity are presented and/or perceived as ghostly being a central concern of many Jackson protagonists. This is especially true for those who experience some form of destabilising psychological or subjective fragmentation, such as Elizabeth's traumatic pluralisation in *The Bird's Nest*, and Jackson's own hyphenated identity as the housewife-writer whose experiences are chronicled in *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*.

Peeren and other feminist critics address the gendered experience of spectrality more directly than Derrida. In her explicitly feminist response to *Specters of Marx* and hauntology, Nancy J. Holland criticises the erasure of matrilinearity in Derrida's discussion of spectral inheritance: 'There must be a mother, but she appears even in Derrida's text under the form of the "dis-" and the "inter"'.[53] The mother figure is an accidental spectre, left out of – or dis-appeared from – Derrida's theorisation as an un(re)marked absence, falling outside or in the gaps between recognised categories of 'being'.[54] Holland extends this reading of femininity as less-than-invisible in her description of the daughter's position within a patrilineal transmission, a reading which also serves as a critique of the '*visor effect*', the term Derrida proposes for the ghost's act of looking: 'From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, [the ghost] looks at us even before we see *it* or even before we see period.'[55] Derrida suggests this provokes an uncanny awareness of being observed, of being 'under

[53] Nancy J. Holland, 'The Death of the Other/Father: A Feminist Reading of Derrida's Hauntology', *Hypatia*, 16.1 (Winter 2001), 64-71 (p. 66).
[54] This recalls Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous characterisation of *Specters of Marx* as a 'how-to-mourn-your-father book'. Spivak's critique of Derridean hauntology as manifested in *Specters of Marx*, and its tendency to universalise the assumed masculine condition of the spectre, has been a significant reference point for subsequent conceptualisations of spectrality and debates within spectrality studies. See Gayatri Spivak, 'Ghostwriting', *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995), 64-84 (p. 66).
[55] Derrida, p. 101.

surveillance by [the ghost]' before we are even aware of it as an apparitional presence.[56]

However, the uncanniness of this feeling depends on a fully present or material subject being observed by that which it cannot see, which makes this experience different for women, who are not granted a subject position that is unambiguously present or visible in the first place: 'But what if the ghostly apparition that looks at us sees not we ourselves, we daughters as we are, but only its own ghost, the spectral image of what it wants to see, desires to see, must see when it looks at a female form?'[57] Holland describes a complex ordering of women's invisibility here, with the ghost, already negotiating its own attenuated presence, being unable to discern the female form because it is *less*-than-invisible. She suggests that when the ghost turns its gaze upon 'woman' in a Derridean haunting, the *visor effect* breaks down because the ghost cannot recognise that upon which it looks as a subject. It is merely a reflection of itself, a ghost of the ghost. This demonstrates the extent to which reading with a spectral perspective can replicate conditions which render women as partial subjects in the first place; it is not a value-neutral process, and attention must be paid to how women's experience of ghostliness functions in very particular ways.

In the shadow of this erasure of ghosted women, it becomes essential to avoid replicating these conditions of omission and exclusion by developing a language or discursive strategy which is receptive to these ghost-women and allows them to speak, particularly in a figurative instantiation. The problematic of how to represent the ghost is an established one in spectrality studies. Terry Castle, whose work on the intersections of spectrality and queer representation remains hugely influential, ruminates on the evasive immateriality of the spectral, and the problems this poses for any would-be academic ghost-

[56] Ibid.
[57] Holland, p. 67.

wrangler: 'For weeks I struggled to find a way to begin, only to discover that the more I thought about "the apparitional," the more vaporous and elusive and impossible the subject became.'[58] Thurston points out that it is not simply a question of how to elucidate a concept which is more metaphysical than material, but how literary practice and technique are involved in this process:

> How, after all, could a supposedly *super*natural element be made to inhabit a literary form, that of consistent realist (or "naturalist") narrative, without which the very essence of the ghost – that is, its capacity to intrude on *our* world, to haunt the actual space of everyday reality – would disappear?[59]

Thurston (and, to a lesser extent, Castle) emphasises the disconnection between the ghost and the language or medium through which it manifests, whilst at the same time demonstrating how it is dependent upon its representation to be able to make its intrusion into the social realm in the first place. The supernaturalism of the hauntic and the realism of narrative exist in a tension which risks inhibiting 'the very essence of the ghost'. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on formulating a language or form of representation which is more accommodating to the non-realist elements which constitute the ghostly.

Warren Montag points to hauntology as furnishing this alternative terminology to describe the distinctiveness of spectrality: 'To speak of specters, the lexicon of ontology is insufficient. Ontology speaks only of what is present or what is absent; it cannot conceive of what is neither. Thus it is replaced by a "hauntology" adequate to the task of interrogating the spirit, that which is neither living nor dead.'[60] Montag's intervention is useful because it

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[58] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 4.
[59] Thurston, p. 164.
[60] Warren Montag, 'Spirits Armed and Unarmed: Derrida's *Specters of Marx*', in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. by Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), pp. 68-87 (p. 71).

draws attention back to the question of specificity. Ghostliness is not just one condition among many, which can be comprehended within an existing ontological or epistemological framework. Rather, new frameworks must be devised to meet the spectre on its own level – although Montag's choice of 'interrogation' is perhaps more imperative than receptive.[61]

However, hauntology as understood here is not necessarily as conducive to figurative instantiations of spectrality, because it suggests that its power resides in its overturning of the distinction between the living and the dead. On this reading, the ghost's primary figuration is as a once-dead figure who subsequently returns to haunt the opposition between 'alive' and 'dead' – as Montag phrases it, that which 'is neither living nor dead' but which 'persists beyond the end'.[62] The primacy afforded to the life-death axis is problematic for the figurative spectre, because these 'living ghosts', as the term suggests, cannot be understood as once-dead – they are not 'beyond the end', but are very much part of the present. This is the very feature which distinguishes them from the 'literal' ghosts of literary narrative, since these ghosts are 'produced in and by the present' rather than being the dead returned to (non)life.[63] Instead, they are 'materially present and open to exchange', with their ghostliness conditioned upon their 'lack of social visibility' and 'unobtrusiveness' – characteristics at which Jackson excels in the novels and short stories analysed in the following chapters.[64]

What the living ghost requires is a form of writing which displaces the focus on 'life' and 'death' as the constitutive elements of haunting, and the term I propose for this is

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[61] Peeren does note however that an interaction with the ghost that is *only* receptive can potentially become another way of abdicating responsibility towards it: 'Welcoming without making demands avoids dominating the foreigner [the ghost], but can also be a way of refusing to truly engage with him or her and thus of the inhospitable [sic]'. Some degree of critical (though not hostile) intervention is therefore a necessary part of dealing with the ghost. See Peeren, p. 19.
[62] Montag, p. 71.
[63] Peeren, p. 9.
[64] Ibid, p. 27 & p. 5.

hauntography. *Hauntography* as a term does have a history, albeit one that is neither extensive nor always particularly coherent. It has received fleeting mention in a number of critical pieces, leaving the explanation of its meaning and application underdeveloped.[65] The exception to this can be found in the work of Isabella van Elferen, who defines the term rather effectively as 'hauntology operating through mediation'.[66] For van Elferen, hauntology is best understood as a process of 'identifying the unrepresented behind presentation, the unsignified in signification', which emphasises the central importance of media to her definition – they function as 'the agents disclosing the hauntological abyss behind the symbolic order they transmit'.[67] Hauntography draws attention to the shadowy 'other' of signification, a presence which exists 'behind' the surface meaning as a Gothic disturbance, which is then disclosed (if not made entirely apprehensible) by the operations of hauntology. As with Sara Rich's use of the term, these insights provide a lot of detailed reference for the operations of hauntography, although neither Rich nor van Elferen focus primarily on *literary* representation.[68] Given the semantic flexibility of the term, and recalling Peeren's emphasis on specificity as the essential feature of the spectral metaphor's

[65] Robbie McLaughlan uses the term rather loosely to mean something like 'writing about ghosts', although he provides no clear explanatory context for the word. Sara Rich, in an online article entitled 'Shipwreck Hauntography: A Manifesto of the Uncanny', uses the term in an archeological or excavational sense, to describe the way conceptual oppositions become imbricated within the phenomenon of a shipwreck. Rich specifies that 'a *hauntograph* would address [the] tension in space (public and private, accessible and withdrawn) and the temporal tensions as we interpret the bygone yet enduring'. In this sense, hauntography is a way of preserving the shipwreck as an object which cannot be definitively 'located', since it both combines and exists outside the categories to which it belongs: it is neither simply a 'ship' nor a 'ruin' or 'non-ship', but something in-between. *Hauntography* allows Rich to deal with the phenomenon in situ, preserving its distinctive figuration and not forcing it into a category to which it does not belong for the sake of academic expediency, although the article lacks a particularly detailed exposition of hauntography as a critical methodology. See Robbie McLaughlan, *Re-imagining the 'Dark Continent' in Fin de Siècle Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 83; Sara Rich 'Shipwreck Hauntography: A Manifesto of the Uncanny', available at: https://shipwreckhauntography.wordpress.com/ [accessed 28 October 2020] (para. 5 of 6).

[66] Isabella van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 16.

[67] Ibid.

[68] van Elferen does focus on some Gothic fiction, particularly in the introduction, but her main focuses are music and film.

deployment, it is worth considering what a literary hauntography might look like.

How can spectrality be expressed as a part of the text, rather than simply being a feature within it? Instantiations of spectrality are not reducible to formations or figurations of character, and can be averred through the structural features of narrative – that is, through critical attendance to the written character. Spectral analysis must therefore concern itself with both the 'ghost story' – as a literary (sub)genre which contains literal or figurative apparitions and hauntings – and with the 'ghost-story', the practice by which writing itself is encoded or encrypted as a spectral expression. The attempt to develop a theorisation of spectral writing redeploys poststructuralist elaborations of textuality like those expressed by Roland Barthes in 'Theory of the Text', in which he charts the evolution of textual criticism:

> [W]hereas criticism […] hitherto unanimously placed the emphasis on the finished 'fabric' (the text being a 'veil' behind which the truth, the real message, in a word the 'meaning', had to be sought), the current theory of the text turns away from the text as veil and tries to perceive the fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone, like a spider that comes to dissolve itself into its own web.[69]

To adapt Barthes' original formulation slightly, any interpretation of the ghost(-)story cannot simply excavate the spectral figure, or spectralised character, from behind this surface veil, but must also perceive and trace it within the very fabric of the text. The image of the subject who is placed into the middle of this textu(r)al field to be 'undone' and to 'dissolve itself' is therefore a suggestive spectral metaphor which mediates these two definitions of 'character' – as both fictional subject and written letter.

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[69] Roland Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Boston and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 31-47 (p. 39).

Jodey Castricano has previously addressed the spectral quality of writing in her overview of Derrida's theorisation of spectrality, and how this must necessarily be expressed as a textual feature:

> I propose the term *cryptomimesis* to describe a writing practice that, like certain Gothic conventions, generates its uncanny effects through the production of what Nicholas Rand might call a 'contradictory "topography of inside outside"' (*topique des fors*) (lxviii). Moreover, the term cryptomimesis draws attention to a writing predicated upon encryption: the play of revelation and concealment lodged within *parts* of individual words.[70]

In Castricano's terms, cryptomimesis encapsulates the spectral dimension of writing through its insistence on the non-locatability of spectral presence in a single configuration. Instead, it is a writing which is structured by the simultaneous and 'contradictory' presentation of both 'inside' and 'outside.' Reading this idea back against Barthes' theorisation, 'inside' and 'outside' might be said to map onto his depth and surface model of the text. Cryptomimesis announces itself as spectral precisely in its recognition of the inseparability between the inside and the outside, or surface and depth of writing or textuality. Castricano also stresses the element of encryption, a process which Christine Berthin describes as 'the major move of the Gothic,' which is predicated upon the spectral oscillation between 'revelation and concealment' – presence and/as absence – which inheres within the constituent 'individual words' of a text.[71]

However, as its name suggests, cryptomimesis derives its conceptual power from theorisations of spectrality which operate according to the logic of the return of the dead: 'By drawing upon such figures as the crypt, the phantom, and the living-dead,

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[70] Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 6.
[71] Christine Berthin, *Gothic Hauntings: Melancholy Crypts and Textual Ghosts* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 6.

cryptomimesis utilises and foregrounds the dynamics of haunting and mourning to produce an autobiographical deconstructive writing through the trope of "live burial."'[72] This trope is the configuration which makes cryptomimetic writing possible as the modality for spectral apparition – the literal return of the dead as the condition of writing or textuality. Cryptomimesis therefore depends upon a 'literal' reading of the spectre, conceiving of it as an iterative reanimation of the dead past or person in the present – 'the dead reappearing in some sort of perceptible form to the living'.[73] Although there are certainly reanimations of dead pasts/persons in Jackson's texts, this does not account for the full expression of haunting in her writing, which more precisely alternates between literal and figurative instantiations.

It is for this reason that 'hauntography' is the preferable term for conceptualising spectrality in Jackson's writing. Hauntography is a reformulation of both 'cryptomimesis' and another term which Castricano uses, 'cryptography,' which she describes as a concept that 'draws attention to the uncanny dimensions of a writing practice that takes place as a ghost or crypt-effect of haunting and mourning'.[74] The focus of hauntography is not on the crypt or 'live burial' as the paradigm of writing; rather, it addresses an inter-subjective spectral dynamic. It examines how the subject is haunted by different or competing (written) accounts of narrative identity, but also how language itself is a haunting presence. In other words, it codifies what Gordon argues is the ethical imperative to preserve the integrity of social experience which the spectre represents: '[W]hen ghosts appear to you, the dead or the disappeared or the lost or the invisible are demanding their due. They are

[72] Castricano, p. 8.
[73] Peeren, p. 3.
[74] Castricano, p. 8.

for better or worse, very much alive and present.'[75] Significantly, Gordon conceives of the spectral in terms of both a literal reanimation of the dead and as a metaphor for a variety of figurative social-personal experiences – 'the disappeared', 'the lost', and 'the invisible' – all of which, as I explore here, feature to varying degrees in Jackson's characterisation of post-war American femininity as well.[76]

Hauntography, then, is writing which preserves or (re)animates these figurative spectral positions through its own spectral character and inscription; it is 'a language for identifying hauntings and for writing with the ghosts any haunting inevitably throws up'.[77] It is both a writing practice and a theory of textuality which stresses the interdependence between the spectral and the scriptural – the evocation to write 'with' ghosts implies a necessary contiguity between identity and writing, much like the subject who is self-dissolved into the 'hyphos' or fabric of the text.[78] To read a text hauntographically is to establish the most conducive analytical environment for the ghost to speak, as well as to understand what their haunting signifies or discloses about their social situation. There is no pre-determination of the conditions of ghostly appearance, but an ability to adapt to the particular circumstances of each interaction with the spectre.

In this respect, an important inter-concept, both for this thesis and for hauntography more generally, is that of the 'naked ghost', formulated by María del Pilar Blanco in her reading of Gordon's landmark text *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological*

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[75] Gordon, p. 182.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid, p. 7.
[78] In this respect, hauntography shares some conceptual overlap with David Coughlan's work on 'Ghost writing', which he defines as 'the ways in which we write ourselves and others into the world, as ghosts'. The difference between these positions is that, as its name suggests, hauntography places greater emphasis on 'haunting', on how the ghost(ed) figure acts (or is made to act) in a particular text or context, rather than on just the figure of the ghost. See David Coughlan, *Ghost Writing in Contemporary American Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 10.

Imagination. Whilst Blanco holds Gordon's text in high regard, seeing it as 'one of the germinal texts published in the 1990s about the importance of reconsidering haunting as a worthy and diversified category of study', she also uses it to pose a provocative challenge to those invested in theorisations of spectrality.[79] She writes:

> To me, the question of the naked ghost, the one that lives underneath the garments of theory, hovers over Gordon's text, for what would Gordon's ghosts look like without the variegated layers of theories with which she has cloaked them. Does the ghost continue to be located in the site of its emergence or does it decamp to a theoretical sphere? Although it may seem impossible for an academic writer to completely forgo the use of any theoretical apparatus, it nevertheless seems a productive exercise to move in the opposite direction and strip our readings of any given set of preconceptions as a way of seeing the ghost afresh, bringing it back to the drama of its apparition.[80]

In many ways, the naked ghost is the figuration of spectral identity that hauntography seeks to uncover, deriving the basis for its involvement with the ghost from Peeren's concept of re-focalisation, the invitation to *look with* rather than simply *look at*. This does not mean that hauntography is an a-theoretical position, but it is not directed towards determining the shape or position of the spectre so much as considering the most effective way to meet the ghost on its own level, and to reflect on the conditions and circumstances through which we read literary ghostliness. It is through this approach that we can begin to understand the complexity of Jackson's ghost-written women.

This thesis is one response to these complexities, and one way of framing Shirley Jackson on the eve of her renascent re-materialisation within both popular culture and critical discourse. As Lorna Sage reminds us, '[t]here's no one way of placing the woman novelist – or even of displacing her'.[81] What I want to demonstrate in this thesis is that

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[79] Blanco, p. 20.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Lorna Sage, *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), pp. x-xi.

Sage's characterisation is particularly pertinent in Jackson's case, given the layered complexity of her female characters and their unsettling, derealising encounters with others and the wider world.

The first chapter looks at Jackson's second novel, *Hangsaman*, and the ghosting of its teenage protagonist Natalie Waite. I argue that the sexual assault she suffers towards the beginning of the text catalyses the incipient spectralisation she experiences as a female adolescent. This ghostliness is primarily registered as a form of self-haunting, her traumatised subjectivity splintering and instantiated in the figure of Tony, a projection of Natalie's developing dissociation. I propose that the most effective way to synthesise the disparate elements of the novel is to read them as aspects of a figurative ghost('s) story, an approach which, in bracketing Natalie's experience of adolescence and her traumatic breakdown, offers the most conceptually coherent reading and understanding of Jackson's characterisation.

In chapter two, the focus switches to *The Bird's Nest*, a text which is similarly centred on a fragmented, haunted young female protagonist. In the case of Elizabeth Richmond, her spectralisation is the apparitional effect of multiple personality disorder, and the tension between individual and plural configurations of identity that results from the involution of numerous personalities. Drawing on theoretical ideas about the palimpsest and palimpsestuousness, as well as critical work on gendered experiences/treatment of psychopathology, I argue that Elizabeth is subjected to a *selves*-haunting, a form of excessive subjectivity that her psychotherapist, Dr Wright, attempts to circumscribe through a combination of his medical and narrative author/ity. This reading of female psychopathology, as well as its putative 'treatment', as a form of haunting/being haunted reconceptualises our understanding of Jackson's characterisation of femininity as an

attenuated, derealised identity, one which reflects the uncertainty of women's position in the world and the (dis)possessive influence of those around them.

In chapter three I move from novels to short fiction, analysing eight of Jackson's stories that are based around what I term the idea of dis/placement – that is, the (unsuccessful) struggle to find a secure localisation (in time and/or place) that enables the women of these stories to signify as fully present individuals. The problem of dis/placement is instantiated in the figure of the 'missing' girl, a category which serves as the primary focus for my analysis, and the inspiration for which is derived from Jackson's story of the same name. As the chapter demonstrates, this is not a phenomenon confined to adolescents or young women, but affects women of a variety of ages, from the teenage Martha in the aforementioned 'The Missing Girl' to the geriatric Mallie in 'Dinner For a Gentleman', 'Family Magician' and 'The Very Strange House Next Door'. Drawing on spectral formulations of repetition and substitution, I argue that the missing women of these stories encapsulate the contradictory conditions of figurative spectrality, particularly as this relates to gendered proscriptions of femininity and domesticity. Throughout her corpus, Jackson practises a complex, multifaceted derealisation of women through their situations, and this variety is mostly clearly seen through a spectral reading of her short fiction.

Anxieties surrounding domestic work and emplacement are not confined solely to Jackson's fiction; they also permeate her memoirs and other examples of life-writing, which collectively comprise the focus of chapter four. Situating these texts alongside theoretical work on autobiography, I argue that it is neither possible nor desirable to privilege Jackson-the-writer by excising Jackson-the-housewife, the two formulations of her identity that have prevailed in the majority of the (albeit limited) critical work on these texts. Rather, the figure which Jackson presents to us is one in which these respective identities define each

other through their haunting arrangement. I demonstrate that Jackson emerges as a bracketed figure: the *(housewife)writer* replaces the previous *housewife-writer* formulation, with the subtle (but significant) change of emphasis such an alteration involves. To understand 'Shirley Jackson' requires the reader to accept the housewife's possession of the writer, the spectralised figure she presents to us.

The conclusion takes us back to the beginning by way of an ending, using Jackson's unfinished novel 'Come Along With Me' as a medium for understanding the scope and potential afterlife of her cultural resurgence. If the incomplete text makes clear the problems and limitations of an 'ending', I argue that we should embrace the 'openness' of Jackson's corpus as a way of both preserving the multivalency of her writing – which invites readers to return to it again and again – and maintaining Jackson's haunting intrusion on the literary-critical imagination. She is a writer demanding her due, and one we cannot afford to lose sight of again. The evanescence of individuality, of a secure sense of self, are evidence for what I read as the seam of figurative spectralisation that runs to the core of both her protagonists and her writing across these respective texts. The protean, disruptive condition of the ghostly opens up new ways of reading Jackson's fiction and self-representation, ones which move us beyond the boundaries of Hill House into a wider appreciation of a rather haunted writer and her surprisingly spectral stories.

The Ghost Within: Traumatic Spectrality and (Self-)Haunting in *Hangsaman*

> 'Suppose there is a person, somewhere very near me, right now, who is thinking about me and who watches me and knows everything I think about and who is just waiting for me to recognize.'[1]
>
> 'It is at the ghosts within that we shudder'.[2]

Writing to her parents in December 1950, Shirley Jackson offered a rather downbeat assessment of her forthcoming novel, her second, the final draft of which she had sent to Farrar, Strauss at the end of November: 'my novel is coming out in april and no one likes it[,] even me'.[3] The text in question had undergone some significant transmutations since first being mentioned to Jackson's literary agent Jim Bishop in a letter in August 1946. Its holding title, *Rites of Passage*, had been replaced by the visceral and suggestive *Hangsaman*, and the final version bore little resemblance to Jackson's initial description of it as 'a cheerful novel about a college girl', a summary which, Ruth Franklin notes, 'is hardly an accurate characterization of the finished book.'[4]

The transition from the quaint, almost innocuous ring of *Rites of Passage* – a title which conveys nothing particularly sinister or unsettling – to the perturbing, explicitly violent *Hangsaman* encapsulates the evolution of the novel in Jackson's imagination between the two letters of August 1946 and December 1950. Moving away from the *Bildungsroman* conventions implied by its initial title – charting the (occasionally disrupted) course from childhood to maturity – Jackson embraced a far darker vision of adolescent femininity, following a character whose encounters with the world leave her fractured,

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[1] Shirley Jackson, *Hangsaman* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 108. All further references are to this edition.
[2] Virginia Woolf, 'Gothic Romance', in *The Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, 6 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988), III, 304-7 (pp. 306-7).
[3] Quoted in Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), p. 300.
[4] Franklin, p. 211.

isolated and haunted. Drawing its new name from the traditional ballad 'The Maid Freed from the Gallows' and its blues-song retellings 'Gallows Pole' and 'Hangman Tree', *Hangsaman* can be read as Jackson staking a claim to the portraits of disturbed, dispossessed young women for which she would become famous. Natalie Waite, the novel's teenage protagonist, is the prototype for the likes of Elizabeth Richmond, Eleanor Vance, Merricat Blackwood, and countless others who populate Jackson's short fiction and life-writing – those ghostly women who are haunted by their experiences of, and engagement with, the world.

Hangsaman is the story of Natalie, a discontented seventeen-year-old growing up in an unspecified part of post-war America. Whilst awaiting her imminent departure for college, she is sexually assaulted by an acquaintance of her father during a cocktail party, which precipitates a traumatic mental breakdown, the permutations and stages of which are played out across the text. The novel spans roughly a three-month period, ranging from the final weeks of summer spent at her parents' house through to an excursion with a college 'friend' called Tony to a wood on the outskirts of the college town, which concludes the text. A number of readers and reviewers at the time of publication focussed on the extreme psychological states which Natalie exhibits. *Time* described the novel as 'a perfectly controlled, remarkably well-written account of a college girl's descent into schizophrenia', while Elliot Schryver from *Woman's Home Companion*, although declining a request to include an excerpt from the novel in the magazine, nevertheless noted in his correspondence that *Hangsaman* is 'a story that terrifies you because the madness is kept on the near side of the fence where you yourself dwell.'[5] Whilst terms such as

[5] Quoted in Franklin, pp. 300-301.

'schizophrenia' and 'madness' are used a little loosely in these commentaries, they demonstrate the extent to which the novel had developed away from Jackson's original intentions, moving to focus instead on Natalie's psychological disintegration resulting from her sexual assault. Natalie's aberrant psychological profile has become the keystone for the (limited) critical work on *Hangsaman*. Darryl Hattenhauer uses the opening paragraph of his chapter on the novel in *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* to highlight the fact that 'the narrative point of view features a sustained focalization through a delusional protagonist', which he cites as evidence of Jackson's congruence with the formal and thematic topoi of proto-postmodernism.[6]

This chapter offers a new reading of Jackson's novel, by arguing that it can be understood as a particular kind of ghost story. To read the text in this way does not diminish the importance of Natalie's traumatic experience, or the psychological and subjective dissolution which result from it; instead, it argues that these features share significant conceptual space with defining characteristics of spectrality, primarily a disordered temporality (the past and present collapsing into each other), and haunting – that dimension of the ghostly or spectral that is perceptible, the form by which the spectre makes itself known.[7] I suggest that alternative critical accounts, especially Hattenhauer's interest in Jackson's writing as an anticipation of postmodernism, omit a sufficiently detailed

[6] Darryl Hattenhauer, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 99. Hattenhauer goes to great lengths to frame Jackson's writing as proto-postmodernist in his book, positioning the Gothic as a co-expression on of its preoccupations with excess, fragmentation, and decentred or delusional narrative perspectives. I argue that there are limitations to this conflation, principally that such an approach either overlooks or undervalues many of the most interesting characterisations and features of *Hangsaman*, which I address within the chapter.

[7] The Oxford English Dictionary defines haunting as '[t]o visit frequently and habitually with manifestations of their influence and presence, usually of a molesting kind'. This association between 'ghostliness' and 'molestation' is particularly pertinent in *Hangsaman*, with its focus on the spectralising consequences of Natalie's sexual assault. Both function as a threat to the integrity (both bodily and psychologically) of those who are haunted. 'Haunt', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84641> [accessed 28 October 2020].

engagement with questions of gendered subjectivity and experience. My contention is that, through privileging and mobilising spectrality as an explanatory perspective, these aspects of the text assume primary importance in analysing Jackson's complex construction of feminine adolescence as a crisis of subjectivity. Jackson's female characters – especially adolescents such as Natalie – are figures of attenuation.[8] They are characterised by diminished visibility and imperfect presence, reflecting what Andrew Smith terms the 'historically specific mood [of pessimism]' that informs Jackson's representation of female subjectivity.[9] Yet it is important to recognise that these ghostly girls and women are the protagonists of these stories: *Hangsaman* is focalised from Natalie's perspective, and despite her compromised agency and presence, she is not a mere spectral object. If the novel is a ghost story, it is also a ghost's story, and it is as a spectral, haunting presence that Natalie is best understood.

To understand the text's construction and articulation of subjectivity, the practice of locating these instances or instantiations of the spectral requires a specific interpretive response, one that is alert to the particular contents and concerns of Jackson's text. Its ghostly traces must be read against the seemingly realist grain of the narrative, and its apparently linear trajectory must be exposed as being, in fact, contingent upon the iterative eruption of past events into the narrative 'present'. Although the novel is sustained by its complex, multi-operational engagement with spectrality, it clearly does not feature a 'literal'

[8] Jackson specialises in female characters who are diminished, marked as 'not-quite' presences in their own stories as a result of their ghostliness. This is true of other adolescents such as Martha Alexander in 'The Missing Girl', as well as (slightly) older women such as Elizabeth Richmond, and even (early-)middle-aged characters like Helen Smith in 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith'. The spectral condition of adolescence specifically is discussed in more detail later, both in this chapter and at other points throughout the thesis.
[9] Andrew Smith, 'Children of the Night: Shirley Jackson's Domestic Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 152-165 (p. 164).

ghost of the kind that populate the archetypal ghost story of the nineteenth century.[10] Rather, the spectre-in-the-text is an example of what María Del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren identify as 'figurative ghosts', which stand apart from the 'literal' spectres which comprise the supernatural element in traditional ghost stories.[11]

Whilst is it a usefully nuanced concept, the term 'figurative spectre' can also be taken as something of a misnomer, because it is an entity which is both spectral and non-spectral at the same time. The liminal status of the ghost as a figure which disrupts the binary logic of various oppositions (past/present, alive/dead, present/absent) is well-established: Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock describes ghosts as 'unstable interstitial figures that problematize dichotomous thinking', whilst Smith argues that '[t]he ghost […] remains irrational because it cannot be rationally understood', being instead a figure that 'contradict[s] the familiar distinctions that define our knowledge'.[12] At the same time, however, these accounts still assign a certain conceptual integrity and intelligibility to the spectral figure itself. Despite their instability, Weinstock argues that spectres are nevertheless sufficiently coherent to be able to 'participate in, reinforce, and exemplify various belief structures'.[13] Similarly, Smith points out that the ghost's irrational constitution makes it an appropriate model for 'the fragile, because liminal, sense of modern subjectivity'.[14] In other words, whilst the ghost

[10] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren describe the characteristics of the 'literal' ghost in their introduction to *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, pp. ix-xxiv (p. x).
[11] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Introduction', in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), pp. ix-xxiv (p. x).
[12] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'Introduction: The Spectral Turn', in *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, ed. by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 3-17 (p. 4); Andrew Smith, 'Hauntings', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 147-154 (p. 149); Catherine Belsey, 'Phantom Presences: Figurative Spectrality and the Postmodern Condition', *The Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 25 (2009), pp. 95-110 (p. 97).
[13] Weinstock, p. 8.
[14] Smith, 'Hauntings', p. 149.

may invite disruption into the surrounding order, its own ghostly status remains recognisable in the process. In its figurative state, the ghost finds itself alloyed with an identity that is not fundamentally spectral (it is not the reanimation of a once-dead figure, for instance), but is articulated instead through what might be termed a spectral-signification. In effect, spectrality both informs and performs the identity of the figurative, ghosted subject: it is part of that identity, but it is still a performance *of* something which is separate from it – those components which are not in and of themselves ghostly (such as gender, voice, narrative perspective), but which assume a spectral modality. This makes the ghost an indispensable metaphorical figure for both constructing and analysing the complex interrelations which define Natalie as a character, since even those features which are not in and of themselves spectral become part of the network of ghostly effects that are exhibited in the novel.

This mode of critical reading that traces ghostly elements in realist narratives constitutes a significant strand of work in contemporary spectrality studies. Julian Wolfreys evinces such a conception of the function and status of the figurative ghost in his account of the spectral narratives of Thomas Hardy, who, he claims, 'remains the writer of spectrality par excellence,' despite the fact that '[his] novels are notably free of "literal" ghosts'.[15] Wolfreys proceeds to set out the ways in which the figurative ghost assumes its apparitional power, thereby enabling a critical interrogation of a seemingly a-spectral narrative as a text which in fact 'remarks itself as being haunted'.[16] In his analysis of two Hardy novels, Wolfreys argues that:

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[15] Julian Wolfreys, 'Ghosts: Of Ourselves or, Drifting with Hardy, Heidegger, James, and Woolf', in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by María Del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 3-19 (p. 3, p. 8).
[16] Ibid, p. 8.

> The writing takes up the spectral trope, in order to assume its own haunting force and to pass beyond the merely constative or descriptive, objective act, to enter into a performative dimension, doing in words what it seeks to convey.[17]

Although the focus of his attention here is on writing, Wolfreys's analysis encapsulates the relationship between the spectral and non-spectral dualities which define the figurative ghost itself. The spectral attributes of a given character stand as the 'performative dimension' of identity, being that figuration by which the character is introduced in(to) the narrative. In this respect, it can be seen as a form of synecdoche, where the ghostly features come to stand as the totality of that identity.

This in turn reflects Blanco and Peeren's contention that 'non-figurative and figurative ghosts haunt each other, and should therefore be considered in tandem'.[18] Figurative spectrality extends the function and possible application of the ghost, turning it into something more than 'a [manifestation], in some form or other, of the returning dead', or as an actualisation of 'beings and images emanating from realms beyond what is considered the "real"'.[19] At the same time, the literal ghost provides a terminology for describing the application of figurative spectrality: compromised visibility and presence, disordered temporality, and the capacity for haunting which characterise the ghostly figure returned from the dead are similarly symptomatic of any figurative ghost or occasion of haunting. I argue that Natalie's ghostliness is therefore an involution of the literal and the figurative, and it is through reading *Hangsaman* and other texts by Jackson that it is possible to arrive at a more detailed theoretical understanding of figurative spectrality as a modality of subjectivity, especially for female adolescence (and femininity more generally) in mid-

[17] Ibid, p. 10.
[18] Blanco and Peeren, p. x.
[19] Ibid.

twentieth-century America.

The central contention of this chapter is that Natalie Waite can be conceptualised and read as a figurative ghost, and that this spectralisation is experienced in three principal ways: her relationship with her family and her experience of adolescence; the traumatic fracturing of her identity as a result of sexual violence; and her experience of self-haunting through the character of Tony. These three focal points pervade each other through a series of complex interactions within the narrative itself and can be mapped onto the three principal spaces of the novel: the family home, the college, and the woods. Just as Natalie's past resurfaces again and again in her 'present', these different spaces cycle back and forward into one another, frustrating her desire to break away and form something new for herself. As I argue in this chapter, these transmutable spaces are as significant as disordered temporality for understanding trauma and adolescence as spectral phenomena in *Hangsaman.* This also attests to the increasing importance of the spatial as a prominent theoretical concept in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a period during which 'the weakening of traditional historicity, alongside the decoupling of time and progress, has made possible the valorizing rereading of space'.[20] *Hangsaman* emerges against the backdrop of this renewed discursive interest in and focus on space, which is reflected in the tripartite arrangement of places that intensify Natalie's developing spectralisation.

Beginning with Natalie's breakfast-time apprehension of herself as a doubled figure, and ending with her exorcistic showdown with Tony in a sylvan hinterland, this chapter addresses adolescence and motherhood, division and (self-)haunting, and trees as an

[20] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 [2007]), p. 25.

apparitional and traumatic medium, all of which disinter the 'ghosts within' in which the novel is intensely interested. Ultimately, it considers how *Hangsaman* can be read from a spectrocritical perspective, but also how Jackson's writing invites a new consideration and understanding of spectrality as a theoretical and literary idiom that reconceptualises our understanding of topics ranging from representations of trauma to arrangements of temporality and spatiality in narrative texts.

A Ghost Before the Fact

What does it mean to speak of the origins of ghostliness? If, as Smith has suggested, the ghost is a manifestation that cannot be rationally understood, if it evades the semantic fixity of the categories used to describe it, then how can it rooted in a 'beginning'/'origin' or an 'ending', particularly when such terms replicate the linear chronology the ghost necessarily disrupts? This is the question Jacques Derrida poses in the opening pages of *Specters of Marx*. For Derrida, the question '*What* is a ghost?' is necessarily '[a] question of repetition: a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because *it begins by coming back*'.[21] As Derrida makes clear, the 'origin' of the ghost cannot be singular or simple, because its first appearance – what Peter Buse and Andrew Stott term the 'apparitional debut' – is always also its encore.[22] This is certainly the case with Natalie Waite.

Although there is an increased level of attention paid to Natalie's self-division after she is sexually assaulted by one of her father's male party guests towards the end of the novel's

[21] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: *The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 2006 [1993]), p. 10, p. 11.
[22] Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: A Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p. 11).

first section, this event should not be seen as a dividing line between Natalie's pre-/spectral iterations. From the beginning of her story, there are multiple suggestions of a spectral characterisation at play. Almost the first detail Jackson provides about Natalie is that she experiences herself from a doubled, or decentred, perspective: '[S]he had turned around suddenly one bright morning and seen from the corner of her eye a person called Natalie, existing, charted, inescapably located on a spot of ground […] she had lived completely by herself.'[23] This scene revolves around the deployment of a spectral multiplicity. There is a clear suggestion, even at this early point in the text, that Natalie adopts a position that is outside herself but also part *of* herself: she understands her identity as a constitution of alternative positions that are not part of, yet also not unrelated to, each other. In other words, when Natalie sees 'a person called Natalie' out of the corner of her eye, this figure should be understood as Natalie and not-Natalie simultaneously, whilst at the same time inviting the reader to question the integrity of this figure with whose perspective the reader is aligned. This multiplicity contradicts the later suggestion Natalie makes that 'she had lived completely by herself,' since, as the speaker, she has already attested to the doubleness that defines her.

Additionally, this awareness of a possible division within herself is indicated earlier in the passage in the description of her age: 'Natalie Waite, who was seventeen years old but who felt that she had been truly conscious only since she was about fifteen' (p. 3). Natalie's apprehension of her multiplicity is as much a matter of consciousness as it is of vision, both of which are mediated by her adolescent status, a detail given particular prominence at the beginning of the paragraph. There is a clear suggestion that her adolescence exacerbates

[23] Jackson, pp. 3-4.

Natalie's sense of being out of step with herself, incapable of maintaining a coherent sense of her own identity. Catherine Driscoll has argued that, whilst '[g]irls, young women, and feminine adolescents were highly visible in twentieth-century Western cultures', this social presencing of adolescence rested upon a recognition of these figures as 'a marker of immature and malleable identity'.[24] The teenage girl was therefore visible to the degree that she was also unformed, transitory, a work-in-progress who had yet to be appreciated – by others or herself – as a complete subject. This sense of the young woman being dissociated from herself because of her adolescence is compounded by the fact that, as Driscoll makes clear, adolescence has not been a positive or coherent identity position that can be embraced. It cannot be understood as 'a clear denotation of any age, body, behaviour, or identity, because it has always meant the process of developing a self […] rather than any definition of that self'.[25] To be an adolescent is to forgo surety about oneself in the present for the future payoff of adult integrity, anticipating a promissory coherent identity that is perfectly reflected in Natalie's surname: she is the girl who Wait(e)s to become a unified 'self'. I argue that in *Hangsaman* Jackson pushes this adolescent precarity to its limits by disrupting the linear progression towards secure adulthood through her exploration of Natalie's trauma.[26]

Although Natalie associates her teenage years with a developing self-consciousness, this can be read as part of the development towards the comparatively stable category of 'adulthood' rather than an admission to full or uncompromised agency in her 'present'. The

[24] Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 2.
[25] Ibid, p. 6.
[26] Even though Natalie finds herself reliving her trauma, this cycle of reanimation is not a suspension of meaning, but a form of meaning *in itself*, centred on the conditions of young womanhood which Jackson privileges in the novel.

paradoxical dynamic of being held in suspension whilst being in transition – of simultaneous stasis and movement – is one of the many contradictions which Natalie embodies. Moreover, as Driscoll points out, the emphasis on transition emphasises the disordered temporality associated with adolescence as a journeying towards womanhood: 'Feminine adolescence is always retrospectively defined, always retrospectively prior to the Woman it is used to explain.'[27] Adolescence is therefore both a relative and belated configuration of identity for young women, one which posits the apparitional figure of the woman Natalie is yet-to-be as the ghost at the breakfast table (at seventeen, the liminal dividing line between adolescent and adult is particularly amorphous and unstable). Blanco and Peeren have also drawn attention to the unreal quality of adolescence, describing it as 'a ghostly, liminal stage between childhood and adulthood'.[28] This is further emphasised by Pamela Thurschwell in the same collection, where she draws out the conceptual similarities between the ghost and the adolescent:

> Ghosts resemble adolescents in that they are defined by their liminality, caught between timeframes. If ghosts exist uneasily between the worlds of the living and the dead, then adolescents exist uneasily between childhood and maturity. For both adolescents and ghosts, one might argue, 'time is out of joint'.[29]

All of this underlines the inexorably spectral condition that Natalie exhibits as soon as she appears in the text, and it is through recognising her ghostly constitution, her suit of spectral guises, that Jackson's understanding of and interest in the destabilising experience of femininity can be seen most distinctly.

There is an additional spectral component to the functioning of character in this

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[27] Driscoll, p. 6.
[28] Blanco and Peeren, p. xxi.
[29] Pamela Thurschwell, 'The Ghost Worlds of Modern Adolescence', in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 239-250 (p. 240).

section of the text: the use of free indirect discourse. The disembodied voice of the narrator takes possession of Natalie's perspective, unifying with it as part of its fabulation. However, this identification is, by definition, not a complete one, so that Natalie is combined with a perspective from which she is also separate, and her ghostliness is compounded by this involution of narrative positions – although they do retain a fundamental distinction from one another.[30] An example of this narrational duality can be seen in the description of Natalie's movement in the garden after breakfast and the preoccupation with her self-division. In this setting, she seems to act with a greater sense of singularity and position:

> Natalie smiled secretly, moving her shoulders stiffly under her thin white shirt, agreeably conscious of herself going from the flat line of her shoulders all the way down to her feet far below, so that she was, leaning back with her shoulders against the solid intangible of the air, a thin thing, a graceful thing, a thing of steel and subtle padding. She breathed deeply, satisfied. (pp. 7-8)

The narrative perspective seems to be Natalie's at this point, indicated by the suggestion of her being 'agreeably conscious' of her position. However, this identification between subject and narrator is not apparent throughout the entirety of the quotation. There is an implied difference in perspective, indicated by the repetition of Natalie as a 'thing', clearly suggesting a diminished sense of self, and working against the apparent consolidation of her bodily identity which she traces from 'the flat line of her shoulders all the way down to her feet far below'.[31] Her description as a 'thing' suggests she has become the object of the narrative perspective, rather than being aligned with it.

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[30] In narratology, this is referred to as the 'dual-voice hypothesis', which Brian Hale defines as 'sentences of free indirect discourse and related phenomena [that] combine the voice of a character with that of the narrator, or superimpose one on the other'. See Hale, 'Dual-Voice Hypothesis', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 127.

[31] The female protagonist tracing the outlines of her physical presence is an image that appears frequently in Jackson's writing. Natalie's description here anticipates a similar moment in *The Haunting of Hill House* when Eleanor observes of herself: 'what a complete and separate thing I am, she thought, going from my red toes to

The articulation of subjectivity here draws upon spectral archetypes in its description: from the ethereality of her 'thin white shirt' through to the 'solid intangible of the air' against which she rests, as if she shared this quality of tactile 'invisibility'. The 'thin white shirt' draws attention to the 'thin body' it conceals, a sartorial doubling of Natalie's attenuated physicality, in which the clothing re-fashions her body as a site of multiplicity to match the polyvocality of the narrative. In her work on Gothic fashion(ing), Catherine Spooner underlines the extent to which the meaning and presence of the body is produced by the clothes which conceal it, so that 'when the body does appear, it is usually to be defined through what it is wearing'.[32] Clothes are neither a superficial nor secondary form of signification, but rather make the sartorial body 'plural in form and in a constant state of refashioning'.[33] The insubstantial white shirt works to etherealise Natalie's body so that both can signify the ghostliness of her narrative situation.

This description encapsulates the imperfect alliance between subject and narrator as seen within free indirect discourse: Natalie is present here, but only partially, a hybrid mixture of herself and not-herself which is made particularly apparent through the sartorial-spectral imagery which is used to delineate the provisionality of her position. The undecidable position(s) to which Natalie is subject in this early part of the text, both those between herself/her selves (the Natalie who sees and the Natalie who is seen), as well as her dis/connection with the narrator, can all be conceptualised in terms of the disruptive play of the spectral. Natalie is, in this moment, an undecidable composite of her-self and

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the top of my head, individually an I, possessed of attributes belonging only to me'. In both cases, this assertion of bodily presence as an expression of individuality is undermined by the context of its utterance, with Natalie's thought being haunted or ventriloquized by a consciousness other than her own, and Eleanor becoming increasingly incorporated with Hill House. See Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 83.

[32] Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 201.

[33] Ibid.

her-other, contained by a narrative perspective which she is both a part *of* and apart *from*. Far from it being the case that Natalie's identity gradually moves from non-spectral to spectral, in the opening movements of the text, it is established that her character is contingent upon ghostly procedures of doubling in perspective and fashion(ing). This duality gives an ironic inflection to the idea of Natalie being 'inescapably located on a spot of ground', since the positional unity of her character escapes or elides the singularity of its situation at the moment this statement is made.

The spectral quality of Natalie's identity can also be discerned in the way she locates herself in different configurations of time. Imaginatively escaping an argument between her parents before that evening's cocktail party, Natalie conjures a scenario in which she imagines the fate of her future self:

> Natalie […] transplanted herself to an archaeological expedition some thousand years from now, coming unexpectedly upon this kitchen and removing layers of earth carefully from around the teakettle […] Further excavations […] might yield the skull of Natalie […] At that time, of course, Natalie reflected with contentment, her life would be done. There would be no further fears for Natalie, no possibility of walking wrong when you were no more than a skull in a strange man's hands. (pp. 21-22)

Natalie witnesses and records the discovery of this future-past self from her standpoint in the narrative present. An unperceived haunting presence who observes the archaeologists who disinter her from the layers of earth, Natalie similarly excavates the stratifications of her own identity, although these layers are organised in time as well as in place. Although she has not moved anywhere in space – the archaeological site is identified as the family kitchen – Natalie throws open her identity to the contingency of past-present-future in a demonstration of how the spectral informs her character. This is a complex interrelationship, beginning in the present, projecting forwards into the future – one with

'no further fears', and no more wait(e)ing – and then working back into the past. However, what constitutes the past for the archaeologist (Natalie's death and interment) is still something in the future for the Natalie who imagines this in the narrative present: it is a past that is yet-to-come. These different configurations of time cannot be reconciled into a unity, yet they are all constitutive parts of Natalie's identity (at least in her imagination). Just as the ghost, both in its literal and figurative instantiations, cannot be forced into a single, stable semantic position because the attempt to do so is a denial of the disruptive temporality which it enacts, so Natalie exists in the narrative present, but only in part, and as one part of an interrelated series of moments. This is clear example of Wendy Brown's characterisation of the spectre as that which 'signals the unbidden imposition of parts of the past on the present, and the way in which the future is always already populated with certain possibilities derived from the past'.[34] The spectral is always out of time with itself, refusing to be held in place at any singular point. The repeated emphasis on Natalie's first name is the echo that sounds through these different orders and arrangements of historical time, such that 'Natalie' holds the past, present and future together in their ghostly involution, the constitutive spectre who belongs to many times and none simultaneously.

What Natalie does in time she does similarly in space – specifically, in liminal locations which provide her with a site for contemplating the (lack of) certainty with which she acts as a person. The temporality of the archaeological site gives way to the spatiality of an architectural feature, the doorway, which appears numerous times throughout Jackson's novel, with a particular recurrence in the first section:

[34] Wendy Brown, 'Specters and Angels at the End of History', in *Vocations of Political Theory*, ed. by Jason A. Frank and John Tamborino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 25-58 (p. 36).

> Natalie stood in the doorway between the hall and the living room, thinking, This is a party and I'm here already and I must remember that my name is Natalie. (p. 27)
>
> Natalie was pretending to be a young girl standing in the doorway of her own house next to her mother. If she tried to look as much as possible as though she were seventeen, innocent, protected by her parents, beloved, sheltered here in this house, then perhaps… (p. 30)

In both these quotations, there is a recurrent anxiety about the coherence of identity, with an element of uncertainty that is introduced by the liminal situation in which these meditations take place. The doorway forms a boundary between two spaces without belonging to either exclusively – in spectral terms, it is the space between spaces, constitutive of their character and shape without being in full alignment with them.

It is significant that the doorway is the space within which Natalie speculates about the viability of her identity. An initial concern about distinguishing herself through the individuality of her name, suspended on the threshold of the 'living' room, gives way to an extended sequence of pretence, in which Natalie draws attention to the performance she gives of trying to locate herself in the family home. As with her self-displacement at the opening of the text, Natalie imagines another version of herself whom she observes as a separate persona, apparitionally detached from her own perspective in order to conjure another one. In the second quotation, Natalie purposefully imagines herself as a young girl, associating childhood with a sense of security and certainty which is absent from her experience of adolescence. The performance she gives of herself is also a performance of spectrality, a doubling of the self in which she is both actress and spectator/spectre.

Driscoll points out that one of the functions of adolescence is that it is used to '[construct] both childhood and adulthood as relative stabilities'.[35] It is perhaps for this

[35] Driscoll, p. 6.

reason that Natalie imaginatively (re)constructs and introduces her own past into the present as a way of alleviating the anxieties she experiences – principally surrounding the sense of not-quite-belonging – that are left suspended by the hanging ellipsis in the second quotation. Her disruption of time, the enfolding of the past and the present (as well as the future) is a response to those occasions during which 'the poignant searching longings of adolescence overwhelmed her' (p. 23). Spectrality remains the primary register through which Natalie is articulated as a character, encompassing both temporal and spatial arrangements of identity which are in constant fluctuation. By using the dynamic between feminine adolescence and childhood, a space is created for the reader to consider the pressures to which different forms or stages of femininity are subject, a dynamic that is developed further through a comparison between Natalie and her mother.

Natalie does not enjoy an easy or warm relationship with her mother, and is forever uneasy in her presence. The first significant detail the reader learns about their relationship is Natalie's determination to avoid any prolonged interaction with her:

> Terror lest she be left alone with her mother made Natalie almost speechless; as her mother opened her mouth to speak (perhaps to say, 'Excuse me,' to Natalie; perhaps she was as much troubled by being left alone with Natalie) Natalie said quickly, 'Busy now,' and went with little dignity out of the French doors behind her chair and down the flat steps into the garden. (p. 7)

The heightened, almost theatrical register of Natalie's emotion is all the more striking because of its disproportionality. Her mother does not actually say anything, and it still sends Natalie speedily out of the house. Silence is both Natalie's preference and her greatest fear: she avoids being alone with her mother, of establishing some kind of dialogue with her, in order to preserve her own voice. Natalie sees her mother as detrimental to her agency, and the resulting matrophobic attitude she adopts characterises their relationship

for the rest of the novel.[36]

However, this matrophobic maternal-filial relationship is complex and often contradictory. Whilst Natalie's anxiety towards her mother is evident, the one space in which she suspends it is in the kitchen, 'the only place in the house that Mrs. Waite possessed utterly' (p. 16), and the site where the monotonous performance of her domestic responsibilities is most apparent. Her 'possession' of this space is not proprietorial but ghostly; her occupancy is permitted on the grounds that Mr Waite 'amusedly confessed himself "inadequate" in the kitchen' – since he does not consider it worth his time – and Mrs Waite is trapped, week after week, in the endless repetition of chores and housework. In other words, her version of 'wait(e)ing' is to 'wait upon' others rather than herself. Mr Waite's relinquishing of the kitchen, and Mrs Waite's ghostly possession of it, codes it as a space for women – as Natalie observes to her father, her mother '"makes the kitchen like a room with a sign saying 'Ladies' on the door"' (p. 10). This reinforces Doreen Massey's argument that 'spaces and places are not only in themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood'.[37] In other words, maintaining the kitchen as the only explicitly feminine space in the Waite household reinforces the connection between femininity and domesticity, with its gendered spatial parameters reflecting the limitations of motherhood-wifehood as a modality of female subjectivity.

Roberta Rubenstein understands this dialectical configuration of gender and space in

[36] Deborah D. Rogers argues that matrophobia '[means] more than fear of mothers' and encompasses a 'fear of becoming a mother as well as fear of identification with and separation from the maternal body and the motherline'. It is both a personal and collective/cultural phenomenon, where fear is invested in an individual who represents both a model of subjectivity and a potential threat to the coherence of the filial subject. See Rogers, *The Matrophobic Gothic and its Legacy: Sacrificing Mothers in the Novel and in Popular Culture* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), p. 1.

[37] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 179.

Jackson's fiction (particularly *The Haunting of Hill House*) as an explicitly spectral phenomenon, writing that:

> [T]he fusion of the ideas of mother and home […] may be understood as the materialized specter or structure of anxiety that haunts and even paralyzes the daughter as she struggles with her confusion concerning 'inside' and 'outside.' That dilemma is expressed through her ambivalent desires: on the one hand, to leave home to become an autonomous self and, on the other, to remain an unindividuated child within its protective – but also consuming – enclosure.[38]

What haunts the daughter is not simply the mother-as-ghost, but domesticated or maternalised femininity, which forms what Rubenstein terms a 'structure of anxiety' in that it is something which the daughter both rejects and embraces. The form of femininity represented and embodied by her mother should be the one of which Natalie is most afraid, yet instead she takes it to heart: 'although she would go to any length to avoid even the slightest conversation with her mother in the living room, she enjoyed and profited by the kitchen conversations more than even Mrs. Waite suspected' (p. 17). Despite her disinclination towards what her mother represents, Natalie finds in these exchanges not only pleasure, but a means by which to develop as an individual, to profit from maternal experience.

However, rather than being antithetical to her matrophobia, Natalie's investment in these kitchen conversations can be understood as part of it. Adrienne Rich argues that 'where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her, a dread that if one relaxes one's guard one will identify with her completely'.[39] As with Rubenstein, Rich identifies a contradiction at the heart of being a

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[38] Roberta Rubenstein, 'House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and the Female Gothic', in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, ed. by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2005), pp. 127-149 (p. 144).

[39] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), pp. 235-236.

daughter: the desire to be at one with the mother as a form of protection, and the fear of incorporation and non-individuation such a union represents. Rich goes on to suggest that matrophobia thus involves 'a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free'.[40] This splitting of the self describes Natalie's situation at the opening of the novel, a division within herself that is exacerbated both by her adolescence and the matrophobic feelings she has toward her mother, a figure who 'symbolizes the threat of engulfment, the swamping of the self by an overwhelming (m)other'.[41]

In Natalie's case, the 'deep underlying pull' she experiences is not simply to her mother and the maternal body, but also to the space she has carved out of the house as a space for women, one in which the two of them can be associated in 'some sort of mother-daughter relationship that might communicate womanly knowledge from one to the other, that might, by means of small female catchwords and feminine innuendos, separate, at least for a time, the family into women against men' (p. 16). Although a female language of catchwords and innuendoes would allow Natalie to escape the editorial attention of her father, for whom such a form of expression would hold no interest, she dismisses it because of the infantilising register used by her mother: 'One of the things Natalie most disliked about her mother was Mrs. Waite's invariable trick of putting serious statements into

[40] Ibid, p. 236.

[41] Dani Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 91. Anxieties centred on the consumptive/destructive mother feature in a broad range of Gothic cultural texts as well as feminist and psychoanalytic critical writing. For a discussion of these ideas in Gothic literature (including Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill* House), see Claire Kahane's 'The Gothic Mirror' in *The (M)Other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, ed. by Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 334-351. Barbara Creed writes extensively about different permutations of the monstrous, predatory mother in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York; Routledge, 1993). There is also a series of interesting essays devoted to matricide and feat of the mother in the collection *The Mother in Psychoanalysis and Beyond: Matricide and Maternal Subjectivity*, ed. by Rosalind Mayo and Christina Moutsou (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017).

language that Natalie classified as cute' (p. 20). The narrator makes clear that this cuteness is a defence mechanism on Mrs Waite's part, since she had been 'too long accustomed to seeing her most heartfelt emotions exposed, discussed, and ignored', so that the air of 'girlish whimsy' she adopts becomes a protective mediation between her feelings and her words. Natalie rejects this mediation (in the same manner as her father), enacting the desire, as Rich says, 'to be purged once and for all of [her] mother's bondage'. In escaping the confines of the house at the point her mother attempts to speak, in choosing the 'outside' of separation rather than the 'inside' of incorporation, Natalie enacts the self-division demanded by matrophobia, choosing to be haunted by her own divided self rather than forming a unity with her girlish mother.

Doorways are not the only spaces Natalie uses to reflect upon her identity, with the other main site that is employed in this way in the first section of the text being the garden. For Natalie, it has a special resonance and integral quality for her character: 'The garden belonged exclusively to Natalie; the rest of the family used it, of course, but only Natalie regarded it as a functioning part of her personality' (p. 22). After her spectral projection into the future ruins of the house, Natalie's entry into the garden provides a reassuring return to the present. At the same time, her progression through the garden reactivates previous performances or guises that Natalie adopted as part of her childhood playing, so that a movement out into the garden is paralleled with a movement back into her past: 'Mr. Waite had graciously permitted trees to grow unmolested, and when Natalie was younger […] she had delighted in playing pirate and cowboy and knight in armor among the trees' (p. 22). There is an additional, and very clear, suggestion here that Natalie's presence in the garden and her enjoyment of it are conditional upon the goodwill of her father, who 'graciously permitted' the trees to grow without human interference, and who takes pleasure in seeing

his daughter 'wandering morning-wise among the roses' (p. 7). Sites and spaces that are important to Natalie, both historically and in the present, are also those over which she can exercise no determination or control.[42] The trees at the borders of the garden are therefore constructed as a double image: they demarcate the accepted limits of outside space (being the edge of the garden), and at the same time break down the divide between Natalie's present and past selves. In contrast to the future archaeological excavation, this spectral displacement from the present does not announce itself as the terminal point of identity, but is rather an affirmation of its continuation, charting Natalie's development from childhood to adolescence.

However, there is a threatening spectral action within this scene, which is coded in the description of the trees, the medium through which Natalie reanimates her past. By using the word 'unmolested' – the same term used to describe Natalie's mother when in the kitchen – the text puts into play a spectral prolepsis, opening up and introducing its own narrative future into the present description. These trees are/will be the site of Natalie's sexual assault, an event which is momentarily traced here despite having yet to occur. Furthermore, this prolepsis is indicated negatively ('*un*molested'), so that this affirmation through negation gestures to a scenario that is both correct *and* incorrect, operating as a spectral foreshadowing of what is (not) going to happen.[43] Where Natalie exists in a ghostly relationship with past instances of her identity, the narrative operates with(in) its own

[42] Darryl Hattenhauer makes this argument in his chapter on *Hangsaman*, observing that 'the garden is a place chosen for her by her father', and that the garden does not represent Nature as an 'innocent refuge' for Natalie. See Hattenhauer, p. 114.

[43] This figuration of the unmolested trees clearly feeds back into the aforementioned connection between haunting and molestation referenced in the Oxford English Dictionary. For Natalie, haunting is a form of molestation-as-intrusion (principally in the form of the yet-to-emerge Tony, with whom she develops a decidedly fractious relationship) and sexual molestation, the traumatic event which catalyses her spectralisation.

future, so that the ghostly dynamic in this scene is a matter of both character and text. As Wolfreys argues, this is an important feature of the ghost's operation in literature. It is not simply the case that 'the text is haunted by its author, or simply the historical moment of its production. Rather, it is the text itself which haunts and which is haunted by the traces which come together in this structure we call textual'.[44] It is in this respect that *Hangsaman* can be understood as a ghost story in form as well as in content.

The image of the tree is another important spectral resonance throughout *Hangsaman* because of its re-emergence at various points in the novel to signal a haunting disturbance in the experience of Natalie's identity, the foremost event of which is the sexual assault she experiences towards the conclusion of the novel's first section. When Natalie is led away by an unnamed man at her father's cocktail party, it is the trees which indicate the dangerousness of her situation: 'Then they were into the little forest, and the trees were really dark and silent, and Natalie thought quickly, The danger is here, in *here*, just as they stepped inside and were lost in the darkness' (p. 42). Just as 'unmolested' proleptically indicated Natalie's immediate future, so the trees here signify the danger that is yet to come. What is striking about the assault is that it is marked as a peculiarly spectral event within the novel's structure. In one sense it occurs outside the written text, within a paragraph break between Natalie's realisation of her situation – 'is he going to touch me?' – and the following day – 'Natalie awoke the next morning to bright sun and clear air' (p. 43). At the same time, it is perhaps the defining event of the narrative, the catalyst for Natalie's dissociation that is ever-present as a traumatic resurgence in the later parts of the text. The assault is an absent-presence that determines the course of Natalie's disconnection from

[44] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, the Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. xiii.

herself, and is fundamental to any conception of how her identity functions, although it is not 'present' in a straightforward sense.

If it is inaccurate to attribute Natalie's spectralisation to her sexual assault alone, it is at least true that greater attention is given to the ways in which she becomes progressively spectral after it has happened. One such development is apparent in her use of language, which becomes increasingly repetitive in its deployment, particularly when she awakes the following morning:

> 'I will not think about it, it doesn't matter,' she told herself, and her mind repeated idiotically, It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, until, desperately, she said aloud, 'I don't remember, nothing happened, nothing that I remember happened.' (p. 43)

This linguistic revenance signals Natalie's familiarity with the ghostly quality of repetition, something which is indicated in David Appelbaum's succinct definition: 'Apparition is repetition of repetition, repetition's repetition.'[45] In these terms, every repeated act of repudiating the present-absent event reinforces Natalie's own spectralisation: she denies the spectrally coded event, but the form of this denial (repetition) is itself a return to/of the spectral. This is particularly clear in the repetition of 'matter', which, in addition to the sense in which Natalie uses it (that it is 'not important'), is also a pun on the idea of something being material and apprehensible, an extension of her experience of the (im)materiality of her body in the garden surrounded by the trees. Her denial of the event – the thing that does not matter/cannot be perceived – is undermined by its repetition, since it keeps being reanimated, a dynamic which is exacerbated further by the dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting that can be seen in her denial. Natalie presents herself with

[45] David Appelbaum, *Jacques Derrida's Ghost: A Conjuration* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 35.

two irreconcilable statements: '"I don't remember"' and '"nothing happened"', which are subsequently synthesised into another statement: '"nothing that I remember happened"'. Although she wishes to forget the assault, she is unable to do so because when she speaks she revives it, which she then links with the expression of its denial within the same sentence. The spectral trace of remembering inheres within the very act of trying *not* to remember, and this anxiety about the dissolution of the integrity or unity of a particular arrangement (of identity, location, language) is a *sine qua non* of the operations of spectrality in Jackson's text. It invites the reader to consider how the trauma that starts to present itself at this moment exacerbates Natalie's ghostliness, just at the point where she leaves home to begin a new life at college.

Sites of Trauma: Writing Doubles

The first section of *Hangsaman* comes to an end with Natalie wishing she could forget what has happened to her, and the second section opens, appropriately, with her transition to college, which is introduced with a history of the institution and a commentary from the narrator on the meaning of 'new' as it relates to academic instruction. However, where Natalie desires a break with the past, the opening sentence of this section demonstrates the difficulty of dividing the old from the new: 'Anything which begins new and fresh will become old and silly' (p. 47). The 'new' is problematic because it will always turn into the very thing from which it sets itself apart; just as remembrance inheres within forgetting, so too does the old always-already attend upon the new. The writing itself reinforces this assertion with a curious typographical design, which enacts a local congruity between form and content. The following lines appear at the start of the second section:

> …and novelty is allied to
> mutiny. Moreover, the mere process of learning is allied to
> mutiny. Moreover, the mere process of learning is so excruci-
> ating… (p. 47)

The content of these lines addresses the mutinous sway of the new (explicitly within the context of education), and the repetitive structure of the layout reiterates this point at the level of form. This circularity of expression can be read as an example of spectral-syntax, where the beginning of the new sentence is, momentarily, frustrated by the continuation of the old. The inaugural play of the second section is, therefore, to deny Natalie the chance to relocate herself in a 'new' environment, an acknowledgement which the narrative redoubles when describing her reaction: 'It was, for Natalie, precisely a new start […] it was, precisely, a new start' (p. 50). In these opening pages of the novel's second section, an economy of haunting and spectrality inheres, frustrating Natalie's movement away from the 'old' home to the 'new' college by undermining the semantic stability of these respective terms.

There are other, more particular points of connection between home and college for Natalie, one of which is the reintroduction of the doorway as a site of significant self-reflection. Her perspective once again aligned with that of the narrator, Natalie surveys her room for the first time, and 'her' thoughts turn in the direction of what the space affords her:

> For the first time, standing in this doorway of the precise room on the day she first saw college, Natalie knew a certain pride of ownership. This was, after all, the only room she had ever known where she would be, privately, working out her own salvation. (p. 51)

There is a marked contrast between this moment of self-reflection and those previous to it. Whereas at home the liminality of the doorway mirrored and reinforced her awareness of her precarious identity, here it secures Natalie's perspective (through her sense of ownership) as the basis for her salvation: having never had ownership over anything before, not even her own writing, she embraces the opportunity afforded by this privacy to identify with a space which is hers. However, this same site for salvation is also conceptualised as a carceral space, an arrangement that limits Natalie's capacity for ownership: '[T]he dark-brown woodwork and the smallness of the room made it seem cell-like and dismal' (p. 50). This confinement intensifies Natalie's isolation, 'her own private, untouched, room' becoming a space to which she returns 'alone and with a realization of aloneness' (p. 63). Where she desires salvation, she must make do with incarceration, and a developing awareness of an active disinterest in her well-being:

> Inside her room was expectant and without interest in her, as though her final decision upon one door was a matter of small concern to the room itself, and she might as well have walked into limbo, or into a well of fire, for all the room cared. (p. 97)

Where Natalie repudiated the threat of incorporation with her mother at home, here she finds herself immured in a place onto which she projects her own anxieties around being 'alone', a place which expects her whilst simultaneously being completely indifferent to her presence (a feeling which, in reality, is Natalie's own lack of interest in herself). Her desire to be private as well as her fear of being alone are synthesised in the room's metaphorical association with limbo, an immaterial place of suspension and wait(e)ing, so that Natalie can only be located in space that is characterised by its liminality and coded as spectral. The spectral condition of Natalie's subjectivity invariably catches up with her: the new never

stays new for long.

The idea of identity being delineated within particular spaces is also apparent in other imagery Natalie uses to describe her new experiences, which re-orientates her within an implicitly spectral situation, such as the following description she makes of life in college:

> 'It was thus possible to live […] in an odd, random fashion, in this world. As one who wakens to find his city destroyed and himself *alone in the ruins*, Natalie found herself a rude shelter, food, and comfort, by a system almost scavenging.' (p. 56, my emphasis)

The metaphorical ruination of her surroundings operates through a spectral logic similar to that of the imaginary archaeological dig Natalie imagines in the novel's opening section. There is an important contiguity between the present and the past in the use of ruins as a metaphor for habitation. Ruins are the architectural ghosts of the built environment, an extant fragment of the past which simultaneously exists both in and as its own present. Just as with the Waite family kitchen in the distant future, the ghostliness of ruins depends upon their continuation in the same space but variation across different points of time. The ruin is an inherently spectral artefact, belonging to neither the past nor the present, but an involution of the two.[46] Indeed, Daryl Martin characterises them as 'ambiguous artefacts in the contemporary period acting as a *memento mori*', and that such landscapes should be approached 'in the manner of a palimpsest', which functions as a both a metaphor and model that 'helps to keep us alert to the lessons of the past for the present'.[47] To only think

[46] Ruins are also a ubiquitous image in Gothic fiction, which underlines the association at play in this description between Natalie's increasing spectralisation and the imagery she creates to make sense of this temporal discontinuity. For a survey of the relationship between ruins and the Gothic, including 'ruin-mania in Gothic fiction', see Maria Vara's essay 'Amongst the Ruins of a European Gothic Phantasmagoria in Athens', in *Ruins in the Literary and Cultural Imagination*, ed. by Efterpi Mitsi, Anna Despotopoulou, Stamatina Dimakopoulou and Emmanouil Aretoulakis (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 27. Kindle ebook.

[47] Daryl Martin, 'Translating Space: The Politics of Ruins, the Remote and Peripheral Places', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38.3 (May 2014), 1102-1119 (pp. 1103-1104).

about the ruin in either its past or present position renders it an object deprived of meaning; it only makes sense as a spectral imbrication of multiple arrangements of time.[48]

Significantly, this image appears within the context of Natalie's desire to break with the past, to enact a definitive separation between it and the present as the means of saving her identity. However, the disruption of the ghost is felt most keenly in those spaces which supposedly afford some degree of familiarity and stability, as Wolfreys suggests: 'haunting is nothing other than the destabilization of the domestic scene, as that place where we apparently confirm our identity, our sense of being, where we feel most at home with ourselves.'[49] Not only does the spectral character of the metaphor suggest this separation is impossible, but it also demonstrates the degree to which Natalie's lexicon, her means of describing herself and her surroundings, is invariably bound up with spectrality. In attempting to secure herself within the environment of the college, to settle down into a routine which resembles a normal life, she uses an image which reminds the reader of the intrusion of the past into the present, thereby unsettling the capacity of the college to function as the space in which she might find her salvation.

This (unintentional) tendency to mobilise spectrality as a means of describing her physical or geographical situation (as well as her experience of adolescence) is both distinct from yet related to the traumatic experience of her sexual assault. The degree to which Natalie cannot get beyond her own ghostliness is particularly apparent in the reanimations of her assault that appear throughout the novel, and which stands as its preeminent spectral feature. The first time the memory of the attack intrudes into Natalie's perception

[48] This does not mean that the 'place' or 'site' of these multiple temporalities does not also change; it clearly does, since ruins are first and foremost marked by a state of physical incompleteness. The difference is that there is no simultaneity of opposing physical locations occurring in the same space in the manner that different temporalities coincide in a single location.
[49] Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*, p. 5.

(aside from the morning after it happens) is during a conversation with a girl called Rosalind on the subject of sexual impropriety, an exchange which disinters a half-suppressed association in Natalie's consciousness: 'Far off, in the untouched, lonely places of her mind, an echo came: It isn't true, it didn't happen…' (p. 70). In this same conversation, Rosalind tells Natalie that the other girls in their boarding house refer to her as 'spooky': '"That's what they call you, Spooky, I heard them." (p. 69). The capitalisation of the word suggests this spookiness is an essential characteristic, a quality by which others recognise and know her, or even that it functions as her soubriquet, implying she appears to others as a supernatural figure, which is emphasised by the connection Rosalind makes between sexual transgression and ghostliness.[50] Whether being termed 'spooky' is what prompts Natalie's recollection or not, the re-emergence of the traumatic event is linguistic in nature – her own words return from her memory to haunt her as an iteration of the phrases she used to process the event the morning after it happened. This echo, which issues from within Natalie herself, sees both the trace of the event *and* her past return to disrupt her experience in the present.

This unbidden return of the assault into her consciousness is fundamental to the idea of trauma, which shares a considerable degree of conceptual overlap with the operations of spectrality. In explaining its precepts, the psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche emphasises the interaction of the past and the present in the activation of a traumatic instance:

> [T]rauma consists of two moments […] First, there is the implantation of something coming from outside. And this experience, or the memory of it, must be reinvested in a second moment, and then it becomes traumatic. It is not the first act which is traumatic, it is the internal reviviscence of this memory that

[50] In addition to the obvious association with the supernatural, in the North American vernacular 'spooky' is also used to describe a person who is both frightening/unsettling to others *and* themselves.

> becomes traumatic.[51]

In order for trauma to emerge and be recognised, there must be a productive interplay between the different points of its constitution, just as the spectre emerges from both the past and the present without being the exclusive property of either. Moreover, as Anne Whitehead makes clear, the traumatised subject has no ability to control either the form or force of the experience:

> Insufficiently grasped at the time of its occurrence, trauma does not lie in the possession of the individual, to be recounted at will, but rather acts as a haunting or possessive influence which not only insistently but intrusively returns but is, moreover, experienced for the first time only in its belated repetition.[52]

Whitehead's striking imagery conceptualises trauma as a determinative force, almost a form of agency or consciousness, which, in haunting them from within their own psyche, undermines the notion of the subject as individual. This establishes a host/guest framework of possession, in which trauma's repeated irruptions can be read as 'an intrusive, illegible "guest" element at odds with a "host" structure' – which, in this case, is Natalie.[53] As theorised by Luke Thurston, this guest/host dynamic is not entirely perfect for describing trauma's relationship with the afflicted subject, since this interconnection does not map on to the logic of 'outside'/'inside', or 'external'/'internal' that the guest/host binary implies. Trauma takes possession from *within*, as a guest element that is also already part of its host. Nevertheless, it is a useful analogy for describing how trauma functions as a possessive, or haunting, phenomenon.

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[51] Cathy Caruth and Jean Laplanche, 'An Interview with Jean Laplanche', *Postmodern Culture*, 11.2 (January 2001) <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/27730> [accessed 28 October 2020].
[52] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 5.
[53] Luke Thurston, *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism: The Haunting Interval* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 3.

Illegibility, or resistance to representation, is critical to the operations of trauma. Dori Laub understands it as a negative event, something which takes place 'outside the parameters of "normal" reality': it 'has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after', and 'this absence of categories that define it lends it a quality of "otherness" […] that puts it outside the range of […] comprehension, of recounting and of mastery'.[54] This perhaps explains why Natalie's traumatic experience is made apparent through negation and denial: 'It isn't true, it didn't happen' (p. 70).'To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event', but it is also to be haunted by the split in one's subjectivity, the individual that one was prior to the activation of trauma in its 'second moment' as described by Laplanche.[55] The unbidden return of the assault and its re-investment in the conversation mark Natalie as the doubled subject of trauma, trapped within 'a ghostly relationship with the past that results in hauntedness.'[56] The doubleness of this position emerges from the fact that Natalie is haunted by both the traumatic resurgence of the event and the reappearance of her own ghostly language from the morning after the assault. Just as trauma is bi-locational and multitemporal, Natalie's ghostliness is poly-positional: it mediates her active relationship with her own past, but it also affects her engagement with the present, both in terms of her subjectivity, and her experience (and construction) of her surroundings. This multi-positioning is indicative of Jackson's broader conception of female adolescence as difficult to locate as a secure (basis for) engagement with the world. Just as Derrida questions what is meant by the '*being*-

[54] Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-74 (p. 69).
[55] Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-12 (pp. 4-5).
[56] Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo, 'Trauma and Literary Representation: An Introduction', in *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation*, ed. by Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-16 (p. 3).

there' of the spectre, and what its 'mode of presence' entails, in both *Hangsaman* and other texts, Jackson invites her readers to consider what defines the *being-(t)here* of adolescence as a modality of subjectivity, one that exists in multiple configurations without truly belonging to them.[57] One that does not possess these spaces or times, but is rather always possessed *by* them.

The focus on language is particularly significant, since an understanding of the subject of trauma as haunted necessarily problematises the unity or authority of this traumatised 'I' as a speaking character – an anxiety which Natalie has already experienced in the matrophobic relationship with her mother, and the 'terror' she experiences at the idea of being left alone with her. As with the involution of narrative perspectives involved in free indirect discourse (a form of polyvocality that Jackson pushes even further in *The Bird's Nest*), the plurality of the traumatised subject involves a confusion between different voices, a phenomenon which takes place during the meeting between Natalie and her English professor Arthur Langdon in his office, in which Natalie is described as 'hear[ing] the back of her mind gibbering obscenities' (p. 101). An excellent example of the nuance of Jackson's writing, the phrasing here clearly implies a distinction between the Natalie who is listening and the Natalie who vocalises these obscenities (within her head). Both the Natalie who hears and the Natalie who 'speaks' are part of the same physical body, but are distinct entities as well. This singular-yet-plural configuration of subjectivity is made intelligible when understood as an extrusion of spectrality: a figure of 'embodied' multiplicities (different arrangements of time, materiality and immateriality, visibility and invisibility), the ghost is both plural and singular, a counterintuitive configuration which elucidates the

[57] Derrida, p. 38.

fragmentary condition of contemporary subjectivity, especially the traumatic adolescent femininity shared by so many of Jackson's leading protagonists. Understanding Natalie as a living ghost maintains the complex characterisation of Jackson's writing whilst also helping to describe and represent the enervating, derealising conditions of existence experienced by American women (real and imagined) in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the period that saw a recrudescence of conservative ideologies centred on sex and gender, encapsulated in the idea of the 'woman's sphere'.

Rochelle Gatlin summarises this regressive view of women's place as one which 'consigned women to activities less powerful and important than those of men', relying on the redeployment of the figures of 'the "true woman" of the nineteenth century and the "truly feminine woman" of the twentieth', conceptualisations of femininity that were 'supposed to limit [women] to those activities and functions men defined as appropriate'.[58] These discursive figurations of feminine behaviour reduced women to passive spectators in their own lives, 'taught […] to accept their "sphere"' as a natural expression of their essential biology and disguising its reality as a political and social circumscription imposed from without. Writing against this cultural backdrop in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jackson channels her critique of this 'ghosting' of women in their own lives into the figure of Natalie, whose violent treatment at the hands of an unnamed man (an instantiation of predatory, destructive masculinity) causes her very identity to break apart, to divide into ghostly iterations of herself. This haunting response to forceful imposition is a powerful metaphor for Jackson's understanding of a society that is hostile to the women whose lives it determines.

[58] Rochelle Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987) p. 8.

A further dimension to Natalie's multi-faceted spectrality concerns her relationship with writing, and specifically the 'secret journal' (p. 71) into which she records her thoughts with an immediacy that momentarily transcends the distancing mediation of the third-person narrator. Her first entry in this journal appears after her conversation with Rosalind, functioning as a direct response to the ghostly revisitation of the past. Rather than another possible site of salvation, as she desired of her college bedroom, the journal catalogues the radical division between the different selves which comprise Natalie's identity. The entry is addressed to 'Dearest dearest darling most important dearest darling Natalie', who is explicitly figured as a different Natalie to the one who writes the words: 'this is me talking, your own priceless own Natalie' (p. 71). The coherence of identity is undermined by this difference-within-the-same, a spectrological extension of the multiplicity she experiences at the beginning of the text – the other 'Natalie' she sees out of the corner of her eye – although the affection these words express could indicate a desire to collapse the distinction between them, to be unified as one 'Natalie' in an act of intense desire (even if this is necessarily temporary).

In the space of the 22-line journal entry, the pronoun 'you' appears nineteen separate times, so that this separation between Natalie's different personae becomes part of the text's narrative or syntactic structure rather than existing solely at a conceptual level. Other words, particularly 'never', are also repeated multiple times, often within the same sub-clause: 'and if you can be patient and wait and never never never never despair' (p. 72). Just as Natalie herself exists in a repetitive form – a contiguity of spectral guises – language itself is endlessly repeated in order to signify, but this repetition merely signals the lack of meaning in any given utterance; the Natalie addressed as 'you' is endlessly deferred across these repetitions, present throughout the passage, but unlocatable in a particular instance.

Christine Berthin is alert to this ghostly quality of signification in her observation that '[h]aunting is perceptible only in and as the gaps of language when communication ceases to function'.[59] In Natalie's case, there is a particularly spectral circularity to how this haunting comes into play. Her awareness of these multiple spectral selves is what drives her to intensify her use of language, forcing it into semantically unstable groupings of repeated words in an attempt to overcome their lack of meaning. However, this repetition frustrates the communicative function of the writing by drawing attention precisely to the fluctuation of meaning between presence and absence, and this breakdown in the capacity of language to signify effectively is what opens the gaps from which haunting, in Berthin's account, emerges. Language suddenly becomes noticeable, tripping up the reader as they become aware of its presence; yet that increased attention coincides with an awareness that meaning is not-quite present in these individual words. Meaning disappears, is discovered to be absent, precisely at the point where language – whilst always present – assumes a more material quality. This materialisation can also be seen in the way that Natalie attempts to understand her trauma, a process that is marked by the entrance of Tony into the narrative as an animation of Natalie's division, and a figure who (eventually) prompts her to address the spectral splitting of the self.

The Ghost of an Ending; or, Why Exorcisms Don't Work

Natalie's awareness of the spectralising effects of her trauma become increasingly complex after the introduction of a new character in the final third of the novel, first described in a letter from Natalie to her father as 'that girl Tony Something' who makes for 'a very strange

[59] Christine Berthin, *Gothic Hauntings: Melancholy Crypts and Textual Ghosts* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 17.

character' (p. 138). From this passing reference, Tony goes from being a figure who literally appears out of the darkness to one who gravitates into the very centre of the story, becoming a focal point for Natalie's confrontation with her spectral dislocation. Trees feature prominently in Natalie and Tony's first proper meeting, a moonlit encounter in the college grounds after Natalie has escaped a suggestively ritualistic practical joke in her boarding house. Finding herself 'to be under the trees with everything dark around her' (p. 143), Natalie experiences 'a sudden horrible shock' at the approach of a figure that turns out to be Tony, whose seemingly innocuous inquiry – "Is there something wrong?" – announces her proper arrival in the narrative. Since the first words she speaks with her own voice concern the idea of something being 'wrong', her presence is, from the outset, defined in terms of disruption, of a sense that things are not as they should be. The trees, serving as the stage for this encounter, are mentioned twice in the space of six lines, and associated with both safety and danger in much the same way that they are as the backdrop for Natalie's assault, where they are bracketed with memories of both childhood play and, later, violent male sexuality. At college, they offer a space of refuge outside the boarding house, where Natalie had been trapped 'in acute fear' (p. 142), but then become the source of an alternative fear, since they initially conceal the figure of Tony, who has to announce herself to Natalie in order to dispel her horrified uncertainty. The unsettling capacity of these trees is similar to those which encircled and framed her assault in that they enclose and separate her from others. This is part of an important dynamic between isolation from others and division from herself that Natalie experiences throughout the novel, which is mediated principally through the tree, as both a physical (living) object and as part of the iconography of her spectral trauma. In this respect, it becomes the focus of Natalie's

traumatic experience, the medium through which she relives her past again and again.[60]

The traumatic associations the tree holds for Natalie become more complex with the introduction of Tony and her increasingly prominent presence in the text.[61] Natalie's second encounter with her takes place in the aftermath of a party hosted by Arthur Langdon and his wife Elizabeth, a former student of his who is barely older than Natalie (and another female character who is trapped within/by her life and the inertia of being a faculty-wife, an echo of Jackson's own experience of this lifestyle that she dissects in her life-writing). Whilst sitting on their porch, Natalie considers the relationship between the guests at the party, and the trivial concerns they have been voicing, compared to the disinterestedness of the world outside:

> [T]he same trees were outside, living in the ground without curiosity about the insides of houses, and growing toward death as surely as Natalie Waite. When one tree demonstrated that it was not rooted and perhaps not completely indifferent by disengaging itself from the others and coming toward Natalie where she sat on the porch step, she was not surprised […]. The girl Tony had not been invited within, Natalie knew wisely, and thought, She doesn't care whether she sits on the steps of people who don't invite her or whether she stands around with trees. (p. 148)

Natalie's otherwise innocent misidentification of Tony in this moment marks the beginning of a reorientation in the way she conceptualises and addresses the traumatic split in her

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[60] The image of the tree as a focus of personal or collective/social anxiety was particularly prominent in late-Victorian Gothic writing. Cheryl Blake Price argues that over the course of the nineteenth century, 'fictional plants underwent a narrative evolution', so that by the *fin de siècle*, writers of Gothic fiction had transformed them from 'passive poisoners into active carnivores'. Whilst the trees which populate Jackson's novel are not of the flesh-eating variety, they threaten Natalie with a different kind of consumption. As the medium for her traumatic episodes, they facilitate her possession by trauma, attacking the integrity of her sense of self rather than destroying the body. In this respect, *Hangsaman* shares some overlap with the eco-Gothic tradition, and reading the novel in this way underlines the degree to which the trees play a determinative role in Natalie's spectral condition. See Price, 'Vegetable Monsters: Man-Eating Trees in Fin-De-Siècle Fiction', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 41 (2013), 311-327 (p. 311).

[61] Hattenhauer also understands that 'Natalie associates trees with her sexual assault', although he does not elaborate upon this connection, underemphasising their significance as the primary medium for Natalie's cycle of trauma. See Hattenhauer, p. 106.

character, with its origins in the assault at the family party. There, the trees themselves were drawn into a (negative) proleptic association with the assault, as suggested by Natalie's use of the word 'unmolested' to describe them. In this scene, by contrast, the tree becomes co-extensive with Tony's body, whom Natalie continues to describe in arboreal terms even when it becomes apparent that she is not what Natalie had assumed her to be: 'disengaging itself from the others and coming toward [her]'. In other words, the traumatic association the tree possesses for Natalie now finds an alternative configuration in Tony, an embodied form capable of speech with whom Natalie can interact. The question of talking and address actually forms the opening lines of their exchange:

> 'I don't want to talk.'
> 'All right.'
> It was almost companionable, and Natalie without intention moved over on the narrow step to leave room. 'It's so cool out here,' she said.
> 'Then you do want to talk?' said the girl Tony. (p. 148)

Natalie is reluctant to address this figure who is so clearly associated with the tree, the medium which (re)enacts the traumatic split in her subjectivity, and is drawn into doing so almost unconsciously, establishing a connection with this girl who represents and embodies Natalie's strange, spectral self-dissociation. This strangeness is not simply the result of Tony's (inter)connection with the trees as a marker of trauma, but is announced in her very name. Despite being described as 'the girl Tony', the androgyny of the name defies clear categorisation, so that it stands for a certain slippage between the known and unknown dimensions of identity, a quality of non-position or uncertain identification which further aligns Tony and Natalie with expressions of spectral subjectivity.

Rubenstein describes Tony as Natalie's 'braver, more self-sufficient alter ago', underlining the extent to which she exists as an iteration of Natalie herself whilst also

problematising this reading of Tony as 'self-sufficient'.[62] Although Tony is distinct from Natalie, there is also no easy way to disaggregate the two. As with the scene in Langdon's office, where Natalie imagines someone other than herself muttering obscenities in her head, this is a division without a separation: Tony is not self-sufficient, because that term implies a form of independence or individuality that Tony cannot possess by definition, being a materialisation of Natalie's traumatic fragmentation. What she *does* possess is Natalie, although it is more accurately described as a co-possession, seeing as Tony is herself (an iteration of) Natalie. What Jackson demonstrates here is that trauma always involves a degree of self-haunting. If the traumatic past 'takes shape as a ghost that can possess' its victim, then it necessarily haunts from *within*, becoming a part of the subject whom it possesses.[63] Therefore, whilst Natalie calls the haunting presence 'Tony', she is ultimately haunted by herself in everything but name.

From their encounter on the Langdons' porch, Natalie accepts Tony more and more into her presence, and they spend a considerable portion of the final section of the novel in one another's company, culminating in an early-morning escape from college into the local town. At one point, during a visit to the drugstore, there is the first explicit description of interchangeability between the two girls, suggesting an intensification of the destabilising experience of trauma. This closeness, both emotionally and physically, plays with the individuality of identity:

> They sat together at the counter, looking at each other and at themselves in the mirror facing them. Natalie, on the right (the one on the right was Natalie?) looked very thin and fragile in the black sweater; Tony, (on the left?) seemed dark and saturnine in blue. (p. 186)

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[62] Rubenstein, p. 131.

[63] Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1998), p. 7.

Here, the perspective of the narrator aligns with that of the reader in order to dramatise the uncertainty of position: neither spectator knows for sure which girl occupies which position.[64] Moreover, the girls themselves are part of the ambiguity, since the text suggests they are unable to distinguish between their own reflections. This uncertainty is particularly significant for Natalie, because it indicates an inability to leave behind the traumatic portion of her past. The haunting effect of this traumatic association is given bodily expression, allowing it to assume a more tangible form, but at the same time this demonstrates the inextricable spectrality of Natalie's situation because this bodily form is her own: her body becomes a marker of the self-dissociation she experiences. The impact of the assault therefore appears both to attain a greater 'presence' for Natalie whilst at the same time becoming stranger and more disconnected, a dynamic which underlines Jackson's broader conception of female identity as contradictory. The more Natalie begins to understand (however dimly) about herself and her condition, the more it becomes clear that this 'self' is not really hers, but rather a co-possession of the ghost within.

The desire for a separation from the past which constantly returns and replays itself through a haunting cycle of iteration is implied in a comment Natalie makes in advance of the bus journey she takes with Tony to Paradise Park (a significant name in itself, connoting an Edenic space and the transgressive potential invited by the tree of

[64] The use of the sweater as a signifier of doubling or uncertainty is a trope that often appears in Jackson's fiction. In 'The Missing Girl', Martha's absence is partly indicated by the red sweater she leaves behind, but which the narrator suggests belongs to another girl in the camp, which compounds the tenuousness of Martha's one-time presence. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, another red sweater prompts a crisis of identity in Eleanor when she sees Theodora wearing it because Eleanor uses her possession over it to distinguish herself explicitly from Theo. Its exchange between the women unravels Eleanor's certainty about who she is, as well as the precarity of the body that is produced through its clothes. Jackson uses the sweater as a suggestively spectral article to exacerbate the confusion between people, especially those who are already figured as doubles of one another.

knowledge, as well as reviving the earlier associations between Natalie and the garden). 'All her efforts to become separate, all of Tony's efforts, had brought Natalie to this bus' (p. 200). The context of this observation indicates a desired removal from the imposition and presence of other people. However, the secondary meaning which underwrites this statement draws attention specifically to Natalie's desire to separate herself from the ghostly, traumatic trace of her past self, aided by Tony, who is cited as part of this wish for differentiation.

There is a clear expectation of finality or culmination which overhangs the bus journey and its terminus, a carnival site just beyond the borders of the town which is closed for the season. This is the setting for Natalie's ultimate confrontation with the spectral divide in her subjectivity, the attempt to know herself again, and the space is appropriately constituted for such a purpose. Natalie characterises the lugubrious surroundings in terms of temporality when she observes that '"We're terribly out of season"' (p. 205). Aside from its literal meaning, this phrase invokes the disruptive temporality of the spectre, serving as a Jacksonian inflection on the epithet Derrida cites in *Specters of Marx*: 'The time is out of joint.'[65] Natalie's observation exposes the spectral, anachronistic formation of time at this moment in the text. The temporalities which she experiences are 'out of joint' because her traumatic re-experience continually disturbs the clear chronological distinction between past and present. In her spectralised condition, she can only ever be 'out of season', since the spectre ensures that time is always out of step with itself. This out-of-season amusement park therefore resonates with the disjointed characteristics of Natalie's identity, so that the

[65] Derrida, p. 1.

spectral signifies particularly strongly at this site.

This manmade, (temporarily) non-functional site displays some of the characteristics associated with the 'atopia', or 'non-place'. Siobhan Carroll argues that 'atopia' 'denotes a space antithetical to habitable place', which, although they exist as natural phenomena, can also be 'manmade environments that pose less tangible dangers to human identity'.[66] Seeing as this environment functions as a metonym for the wooded enclosure in which she is sexually assaulted, this arrangement of space can be understood as atopic for Natalie because of the intensified resurgence of traumatic feeling it provokes in her. As a place within which its inhabitant cannot be securely located or made present, it is also charged with a spectral or haunting resonance that corresponds with the self-doubling Natalie experiences with greater frequency and intensity as the narrative progresses. Jackson maps Natalie's ghostliness onto the environment which encloses her, so as to underline the dominance of her trauma over her subjectivity and the way she experiences the world.

There is, then, a spatialisation of Natalie's subjectivity, moving it beyond the limits of her body to become imbricated with the landscape — a spilling-over of the excessive signification of her trauma to encompass the subsequent encounter with Tony. Natalie and her ghostliness now affect the meaning and significance of the environment through which she passes, an inversion of the previously spectralising capacity of her surroundings to reanimate her trauma from *within*. Jackson projects Natalie's aberrant psychological condition onto her milieu to emphasise the subjective experience of that trauma. In doing so, she makes visible what Margarita Georgieva

[66] Siobhan Carroll, 'Atopia/Non Place', in *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 159-167 (p. 159).

terms the 'gothic ruin within […] characters themselves', as opposed to situating Natalie within a landscape that is unchanging.[67] The novel makes the reader participate in Natalie's break with reality as a way to critique the derealising effects of placeless adolescence and traumatic experience on the (non)development and (in)security of young women in the world, by making both of these extensions *of* that world.

The precise location of their confrontation is quickly disclosed, much to Natalie's disquiet: '"Are you going in *here*? Into the trees?"' (p. 209). The tree once more returns to signal the reanimation of Natalie's traumatic past, and, specifically, its concordance with Tony's presence, a convergence the narrative makes pointedly clear. Following her along the path into the darkness of the trees, Natalie misidentifies her partner in a doubling of their previous encounter: '"Tony?" Natalie said again more urgently, realizing suddenly, concretely and acutely, that […] the figure she had mistaken for Tony was only another tree' (p. 210). Like their meeting on the Langdons' porch, Natalie confuses Tony and the tree, albeit it the other way round: where before the 'tree' turned out to be Tony, here 'Tony' turns out to be a tree. It is also within this section that Natalie makes an overt reference to the spectral as a means of describing her environment:

> Why, probably no one ever before got frightened in this clump of four trees and certainly no one ever before couldn't be more than fifty feet from the road and if it were daylight it would be terribly funny, and even a little bit silly, like children playing ghost. (p. 211)

Natalie uses spectrality here as a kind of ludic distraction, a fantasy which might allow her to escape her threatening situation. She presents the ghost as a remnant of childhood,

[67] Margarita Georgieva, *The Gothic Child* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 161.

something that should be left behind as a slightly silly signifier of the child she might once have been. Yet this invocation and attempted dismissal of the 'ghost' is belied by the fact that this scene is indebted to iteration; principally, it refers back to Natalie's description of playing among the trees as a child at the family home, the same clump of trees which served as the locus for her eventual assault. In attempting to dispel her fear by rejecting the idea of the ghost as childish, Natalie instead reminds the reader of the traumatic pull that her past has on her.

Daryl Hattenhauer captures something of this process of spectral return in his observation that 'Natalie's ostensible escape from the dormitory into nature with Tony turns out to be a regression back along the chain of surrogates to her childhood home.'[68] However, what is absent from Hattenhauer's account is an acknowledgement of the degree to which this surrogate retracing is an explicitly spectral process, indebted as it is not only to a backwards re-visitation to the family home, but of a return of that past into Natalie's experience of the present. Even Natalie's attempt to dismiss the spectral as childish is indebted to the iterative logic of the spectre. In attempting to describe her situation in rational terms, Natalie exposes the degree to which her subjectivity and experience are contingent upon the operations of spectrality, as well as the extent to which she is seemingly inarticulable outside its operation.

However, Natalie's awareness of the spectral influence on her subjectivity is not one of acceptance but resistance. The ending of *Hangsaman* focusses on Natalie's attempt to exorcise the spectral split in her subjectivity, a process centred on her encounter with Tony in the woods surrounding Paradise Park. As has been made clear, Tony functions as the

[68] Hattenhauer, p. 115.

literalisation of Natalie's response to her trauma, a split in her identity which is given physical form. Kathleen Brogan suggests that this kind of figuration of trauma as an apparitional form is a well-defined element in narratives of (cultural) haunting: 'The past that resists integration into the present because it is incomprehensible or too horrific takes shape as a ghost that can possess.'[69] Even if Tony does not literally emerge from Natalie's traumatic experience, that is the figuration she assumes within the narrative, and the form through which she appears as a possessive force.

As indicated by their setting, trees are once again essential to framing this confrontation. Natalie's initial questioning – '"Are you going in *here*? Into the trees?"' – is followed by going after Tony into the enclosure, where the trees are described as 'waiting in the darkness ahead, quietly expectant' (p. 209). These trees are expectant because they are an extension or projection of Natalie's trauma, and so are already a part of the way she experiences herself. They are objects of recrudescence, collapsing the distinction between the past and the future (since 'expectant' suggests an event or arrival which has not yet happened) – Natalie's past and immediate future are part of the same operation connecting her with her traumatic experience; they are wait(e)ing for her. This inexorably spectral set-up is reflected in Natalie's ethereal presence, so that her 'feet went without sound on the path' (p. 209), as if the trees directly diminish her physical presence as an expression of the divided self she projects around her.

Tony makes a further connection between the trees and Natalie's trauma when she links the latter's venture into the enclosure with the idea of returning home: '"You can remember it all if you try, and all you have to do is […] say 'I am here, I am where I belong, I

[69] Brogan, p. 7.

have come home'"' (p. 210). The invitation to 'remember' in this context suggests a return to the site of Natalie's assault at her childhood home, in an enclosure nearly identical to the one in which she now stands. Once again, the act of remembrance introduces a spectral element into the situation: the doubling of setting is an iteration of the past in the present. The symbolic significance of the trees mediates this spectral disturbance, and these same trees frame Natalie's resistance to and exorcism of Tony as a haunting presence.

The first indication of Natalie's defiance comes when she resists Tony's invitation to '[k]eep thinking of it as a game' (p. 214). What exactly the 'it' refers to is unclear, although Tony's attempt to orchestrate a seduction suggests that she is reproducing the conditions of the original assault, so that Natalie finds herself in a re-enactment of the Laplanchian 'first moment' of her trauma – 'the implementation of something coming from outside'.[70] She refuses to be complicit or to yield to Tony's consumptive desire: '"I will *not*," said Natalie, and ripped herself away. She *wants* me, Natalie thought with incredulity, and said again, aloud, "I will *not*"' (p. 214). The implied violence of Natalie ripping herself away from Tony is similarly a repudiation of the division in herself which the latter 'embodies'. Although the seduction is rejected, Natalie uses her own spectral configuration, repetition, to achieve this separation; just as the semantic strength of 'ripped' suggests a sudden, almost violent assertion of agency, so the emphatic resonance of '"I will *not*"' denotes an emerging desire to make the difference between Natalie and Tony definitive, as the former confronts, and seeks to reconstitute, the split in her subjectivity.

This imperative for separation reaches its climax in the following paragraph, when Natalie engages in her own version of an exorcism:

[70] Caruth and Laplanche <http://abc.cardiff.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/docview/1426738272?accountid=9883>.

> There was a short, an absolute, silence, the trees suddenly alert, listening […] She [Natalie] hesitated, half-moving, waiting for the hand or branch to pull her rudely down again […] and then she said, 'Going?' as though it were a casual thing. Tony looked at her once, and then away at the trees again, and did not speak. Everything's waiting for me, Natalie thought; she half-moved again, and was still […] Tony did not stir, and Natalie took a step toward the path. 'Tony?' Natalie said. 'Going?'
> 'No.' (p. 214)

This is a complex interaction between the two girls, operating around the central dynamic of dissociation. Natalie's imploration – 'Going?' – seems to be a continuation of her wish for removal as seen in her violent ripping away from Tony in the previous paragraph. However, its configuration as a question momentarily suspends the separation, since it invites the possibility of refusal, which Tony subsequently makes. Natalie's actions are also marked by uncertainty and hesitation, indicated by her half-movements and stillness, as if she is incapable of achieving the distance for which she struggled vehemently in the preceding paragraph. The other presence in this scene is that of the trees, anthropomorphised as eavesdropping strangers on the margins of this encounter – once again described as waiting, ready to intervene and restrain Natalie at any point. Tony turns to face them when she is confronted with Natalie's question, since it is the trees which provide Tony with her spectral influence as an embodiment of Natalie's traumatic experience. Although she is resistant initially to this separation, Tony then proceeds to disappear from the text: '[Natalie] thought theatrically, I will never see Tony any more; she is gone, and knew that, theatrical or not, it was true. She had defeated her own enemy, and she would never be required to fight again' (p. 215). Natalie identifies Tony definitively as her enemy, and she exorcises the spectral manifestation of her divided, traumatic self in an arena which replicates the site of her original traumatic encounter by using language to insist upon their difference. The key indication that Natalie has been released from the spectral pull of the

trauma is that, as she leaves the clearing, the trees are described as 'drawing back from her as she moved' (p. 215). Natalie has not only defeated her 'enemy', but she has broken the associative link between the tree and her trauma, meaning that they no longer have any resonance with her character, and so draw back from her as she passes.

Out on the road again, Natalie is offered a lift back to town by a middle-aged couple, who observe no fewer than three times during the short journey that Natalie is 'alone' (pp. 215-216); having left Tony behind, she projects a sense of individuality that she has not possessed at any point in the text, even prior to her sexual assault. This confidence is given full expression in the final line of the novel, wherein Natalie privately asserts the agency which had previously been curtailed: 'As she had never been before, she was now alone, and grown-up, and powerful, and not at all afraid' (p. 218). Yet beneath this statement of autonomous individuality, there is a suggestion of another haunting presence which disrupts the claim, one that Darryl Hattenhauer makes clear in his analysis of this concluding sentence: 'The narrator's last utterance […] only seems to be infallible; the other voice undermining it is that this statement is another of the narrator's merges with the character's delusions.'[71] Aside from her possibly delusionary frame of mind, this suggests that Natalie's claim to a powerful new identity which is distinctly separate and 'alone' is not made in her own voice, but is the product of herself and the third-person narration through which she is articulated. It is a reminder that Tony is not the only figuration which exposes the spectral dimension of Natalie's subjectivity. The narrative itself is a haunted and haunting medium, which frames Natalie as haunted or doubled figure from her first appearance, and which survives the exorcism that is practised against Tony. The haunting of

[71] Hattenhauer, p. 112.

Natalie Waite has always been a plural operation, not confined to a single activity or configuration, but built into the structure of the novel as the inescapable condition of this young female protagonist. *Hangsaman* is a ghost story.

Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston point out that narratives of haunting are structured around a triadic imperative to 'summon, banish, and sustain ghosts.'[72] 'Sustain' is a significant term, since it points to the continuation of the ghost for an extended – potentially infinite – period of time, maintaining this capacity to carry on even after it has been forcibly dispelled. Just as the beginning of the text demonstrated the fallacy of conceptualising Natalie's identity in terms of the pre/spectral, the ending is a repudiation of the idea of the spectre being exorcised effectively, or of the possibility of a post/spectral subjectivity: for there to be a 'post-' implies some kind of 'end', a teleological condition to which the ghost does not adhere. Moreover, if trauma replicates the logic of spectrality, if it is prone to irrupt out of the past again and again, then Natalie is by no means guaranteed a 'post'-traumatic unified sense of self. Marjorie Garber phrases this problematic succinctly in her observation that '[i]t is the nature of the ghost to be gone, so that they can return', a logic that similarly informs the continuation of Natalie's figurative spectrality.[73] If *Hangsaman* is indeed a ghost story, and the ghost may leave only to return, then this suggests that the possibility of a final, unified identity for Natalie as a ghosted woman is illusory. Although her trauma is a catalysing process for her spectralisation, Natalie's ghostliness reflects a more troubling reality: that women's place in the world is compromised, conditioned by an attenuation of agency and autonomy that is instantiated in individual women whilst also remaining a ubiquitous presence that haunts the

[72] Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston, 'Introduction', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. by Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1-15 (p. 1).
[73] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 174.

conceptualisation of femininity as an identity. In her third novel, *The Bird's Nest*, Jackson reconfigures this spectral problematic by focusing on psychopathological representations of femininity – specifically relating to multiple personality/dissociative identity disorder – and related anxieties surrounding the pluralised woman, the many-in-one subject who exists as an involution of ghostly selves.

Multiple Personality and/as Spectral Textuality: *The Bird's Nest*

> 'Elizabeth, Elspeth, Betsy, and Bess, | They all went together to seek a bird's nest. | They found a bird's nest with five eggs in, | They all took one and left four in.'[1]

> 'Most men are at least two people . . . so it is quite appropriate that women, who are twice as complicated as men, should be allowed a four-part disharmony'.[2]

If the ambiguous 'ending' of *Hangsaman* suggests that Natalie Waite can find no final deliverance from her spectralised subjectivity because of her unrelentingly haunted condition, Jackson wasted little time in setting the scene for another ghostly (re)emergence. For many of the themes which preoccupied her in *Hangsaman* are similarly instantiated in *The Bird's Nest*, which appeared three years later in 1954. The protagonist of *The Bird's Nest*, Elizabeth Richmond, is twenty-three, slightly older than Natalie Waite in *Hangsaman*, but younger than Eleanor Vance in *The Haunting of Hill House*.[3] Elizabeth has lived with her Aunt Morgen since the death of her mother four years previously (when Elizabeth would have been eighteen or nineteen, an age where, as suggested previously, adolescence begins to blur uneasily with adulthood), and works as an acquisitions secretary in the local museum. At an early point in the text, she begins to experience a series of psychological disturbances during which she acts and speaks unconsciously, and of which she has no recollection. The escalation of these events leads Elizabeth to consult a psychotherapist called Doctor Wright, and the narrative gradually discloses that she suffers from some form of split or dissociative personality disorder, with four identities emerging from this

[1] 'Elizabeth, Elspeth, Betsy, and Bess', in *The Big Book of Nursery Rhymes* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2012), p. 214.
[2] 'Sterling North Reviews the Books', *New York World Telegram*, June 22 1954, quoted in Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), p. 352.
[3] Shirley Jackson, *The Bird's Nest* (London and New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 2014), p. 3. All further references are to this edition.

subjective fissure: Elizabeth, Beth, Betsy, and Bess. It is this sequence of names from which the novel takes its title, derived from a nineteenth-century English nursery rhyme, which the third of the personalities to emerge – Betsy – is the first to voice: '"Elizabeth, Beth, Betsy, and Bess, they all went together to find a bird's nest . . ." (p. 60). She leaves the remainder of the rhyme suggestively unspoken, leaving the implication hanging in the air, which is appropriate given that it is these lines which indicate the clear spectral resonance of the title: 'They found a bird's nest with five eggs in, | They all took one, and left four in.'[4] The rhyme suggests that these derivatives of 'Elizabeth', rather than designating different identities, are only iterations of the self-same. Identity is simultaneously singular and multiple.

The Bird's Nest engages with a theorisation of spectrality as a form of psychopathology, which is both an iteration and development of the spectralising effects of trauma that were conceptualised in *Hangsaman*. However, where the focus in Jackson's previous novel was on the debilitating and de-realising capacity of the experience of trauma itself, the narrative of *The Bird's Nest* demonstrates how the medical contexts within which female patients are placed work to spectralise them. This is especially true once these clinical constructions of wayward feminine behaviour began to shift away from the preoccupation with hysteria – that 'area of mental life that [had been] medicalized for the first time in the late nineteenth century' – to focus instead on 'a new clinical form' in the post-war period: schizophrenia.[5]

Reconfigurations of the female malady in terms of schizophrenic expression coincide

[4] In the original rhyme, 'Elspeth' appears as the second derivation of Elizabeth, as opposed to 'Beth'. This alteration appears to be Jackson's own, and lends a suitably iterative quality to her appropriation.
[5] Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 98; Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 203.

with the writing and publication of *The Bird's Nest* in 1953/54, a novel that Brigit Young characterises as 'certainly one of the first works to provoke the national fascination with dissociative identity disorder', especially for the way in which it dissects women's experience of psychological disequilibrium.[6] Jackson's text is a significant demonstration that interest in psychological (and, specifically, personality) disorders was not confined to medical practice, but was acculturated to such an extent that, as Elaine Showalter argues, '[s]ome feminist critics have maintained that schizophrenia is the perfect literary metaphor for the female condition', since its symptoms of 'passivity, depersonalization, disembodiment, and fragmentation have parallels in the social situation of women.'[7] This medical-metaphorical encoding of schizophrenic femininity had particular cultural resonance as part of a wider historical context. As Marta Caminero-Santangelo notes:

> In the midst of the 1950s recasting of femininity, the image of the madwoman took a startling new form in American popular culture: the female multiple personality. Between 1954 and 1957 this disorder was the subject of fiction, film, and a nonfiction case study; in all of them the 'patient' was a woman.[8]

These two redefinitions of feminine behaviour, in medicine and mass culture, come together in *The Bird's Nest*, which examines what Caminero-Santangelo terms 'an excessive profusion of femininity' as an instantiation of spectral multiplicity.[9]

Given the sensitivities associated with this kind of reading, it is important not to conflate schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder (which is now known as

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[6] Brigit Young, 'The Empty Vessel: A Dissection of the Worth of Madness and its Cure in Shirley Jackson's *The Bird's Nest*', *Modern Language Studies*, 46.2 (Winter 2017), 38-51 (p. 39).
[7] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 213.
[8] Marta Caminero-Santangelo, 'Multiple Personality and the Postmodern Subject: Theorizing Agency', in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, ed. by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Co, 2005), pp. 52-80 (p. 52).
[9] Ibid, p. 64.

dissociative identity disorder) as two forms of the same ailment. Ian Hacking is at pains to point this out, noting that:

> Schizophrenia is often called split personality, so we reason that multiple personality = split personality = schizophrenia. Not so. […] The idea behind the name schizophrenia was that a person's thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions are split off from each other [… None of this] is true of multiple personality.[10]

The neurological characteristics of schizophrenia manifest as a specific kind of separation between the subject's thoughts and (re)actions, rather than being instantiated as different personalities. The rather imprecise categorisation of schizophrenia as a metaphor for a range of feminine ailments should, therefore, be cautioned against, since many of these are now better understood as symptoms of identity dissociation and multiple personality disorders, a distinction that should be borne in mind when reading and analysing both fictional and non-fictional representations of female psychopathology.[11]

The notion of an excessive feminine plurality marks an important conceptual shift and point of comparison between this text and *Hangsaman.* In the earlier novel, the uncanny doubling of Natalie and Tony, which could be described as a proliferation of femininity, should actually be conceived as a form of division, since Tony emerges as the manifestation – the literal embodiment – of Natalie's traumatic experience. Their dynamic is a form of doubling in which the self is attenuated rather than pluralised, and Tony's 'disappearance'

[10] Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 9.

[11] The non-specific use of 'schizophrenia' and 'schizophrenic' as terms of reference may also reflect the fact that, as Kieran McNally points out, '[f]or the twentieth century, there was no such thing as a definitive definition of schizophrenia. The concept resisted synopsis and synthesis'. The absence of a precise clinical formulation of its characteristics made it a polyvalent reference for critical and narrative representations, which, as with the difference between schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder, should be acknowledged in contemporary contextualisations of these terms. See McNally, *A Critical History of Schizophrenia* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 10.

at the end of the novel can be characterised as a self-exorcism. The multiple personalities of Elizabeth Richmond are not conceptualised in quite the same way. In her/their case, no single personality is a double or reflection of another, or of some original model, but rather are marked by an *inter*personal difference that is in tension with an *intra*personal embodiment (since they all share and manipulate the same physical space). These alternative representations of femininity are defined by an arithmetical organisation of identity, encompassing division and multiplicity. Yet both novels also point to the fact that their respective protagonists are haunted by themselves/their-selves, and more specifically by psychopathological phenomena – trauma, dissociative identity disorder – whose metaphorisation as apparitional figures compromise the integrity of female subjectivity. Their bodies remain intact and singular, but the identities they harbour are anything other.

This disparity between body and identity is significant in the way that it problematises a foundational ontological and epistemological axiom which sees body and subjectivity as inextricably connected:

> Much attention is […] paid to the material body, which is one of the most privileged sites for the production of reality claims because of the presumption that one is one's body, that identity is expressed through the body. Thus definitions of experience and authenticity frequently presume a coherence between subjectivity and the material body.[12]

This correlation is important because it serves as a guarantee of the authenticity of individual experience, one that is also necessarily bound up with ideas of normality: '[S]ome standards of normality are necessary for the generation of stable and continuous

[12] Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol, 'Introduction: Is There a "Real" Crisis?', in *Haunting Violations: Feminist Criticism and the Crisis of the 'Real'*, ed. by Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 1-12 (p. 7).

experience; in this sense, normality is something we desire and require'.[13] If the body is the means by which subjectivity both expresses itself and experiences its surroundings, not only must the body be recognisably 'normal', but one must remain in alignment with the other. The 'excessive profusion of femininity' that characterises *The Bird's Nest* can be read and understood as Jackson's disruptive reconfiguration of this relationship. The novel uses the psychopathology of dissociative identity disorder to demonstrate how 'one' is not the same as 'one's body'; indeed, that one is not 'one' in the sense of 'individual' at all in Jackson's world. It is a misalignment between the individuality of the body and the multiple personalities it houses that marks Elizabeth as an 'abnormal' figuration of femininity. She is 'more than one' in the same way that the spectre is *le plus d'un* for Derrida: both exceed the ontological categories put in place to describe them.[14] I suggest that, in order to describe the psychopathological modality of Elizabeth's plural selves and their interrelationship accurately, one must read her hauntologically rather than ontologically, thereby 'replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent'.[15]

Lillian Feder reminds us that '[m]adness has been a continuous theme in Western literature from its beginnings to the present time', so it is not surprising that the culturalisation of specific female psychological maladies should find a particular resonance with literary forms as a means of expression.[16] Shoshana Felman explores this configuration in her paradigmatic study of the permutations of literature and psychopathology:

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[13] Julia Jansen and Maren Wehrle, 'The Normal Body: Female Bodies in Changing Contexts of Normalization and Optimization', in *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, ed. by Clara Fischer and Luna Dolezal (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 37-56 (p. 40).
[14] Derrida, p. xx.
[15] Colin Davis, 'État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms', *French Studies*, 59.3 (July 2005), 373-379 (p. 373).
[16] Lillian Feder, *Madness in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 3.

> Society has built the walls of mental institutions to keep apart the inside and the outside of a culture, to separate between reason and unreason and to keep apart the other against whose apertness society asserts its sameness and redefines itself as sane. But every literary text, I argue, continues to communicate with madness – with what has been excluded, decreed abnormal, unacceptable, or senseless – by dramatizing a dynamically renewed, revitalized relation between sense and nonsense, between reason and unreason, between the readable and the unreadable.[17]

Where in society the division between madness and its antitheses is expressed architecturally in the 'walls of mental institutions', the literary text – what Felman terms *la chose littéraire* [the literary thing] – instead interrogates the stability of this division in the first place, since its focus is on the 'dynamically renewed, revitalized relation' between these categories.[18] The reconciliation of these differences within – or even *as* – the literary text is what makes literature a privileged cultural interlocutor with madness, and this relationship can be understood as a spectral accommodation of semantic oppositions: neither reason nor madness, the unreadable or the readable, but rather the inseparability of the two. Therefore, it is not just the opening-out of madness from the asylum and into culture that is significant; it is the fact that the literary text is the particular site of this instantiation or rehousing of madness, which makes literature an essential focus for any interpretation of the spectralising effects of psychopathological practice.

Although the undifferentiated category of 'literature' is afforded fundamental importance in Felman's account, the social and cultural conditions of writing – and particularly women's writing – in 1940s and 1950s America is also central to understanding the significance of the spectral modality of subjectivity in *The Bird's Nest*. As part of her

[17] Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Martha Noel Evans and Shoshana Felman (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 5.
[18] Ibid.

chronicling of women's literary history, Showalter encapsulates the masculinist imperatives of post-war American literary culture:

> The great projects of American literary history, undertaken after the wars when nationalist feeling ran high, envisioned American literature as the expression of a virile national ethos. After World War II, the editors of the *Literary History of the United States* (1948) continued to see their task as the creation of 'a single unified story' about the literary embodiment of 'the American way of life.' They identified the essentially American characteristics as democracy, mobility, progress and independence. Great American literature, then, should be sought in works that embodied these themes. It is hardly surprising that the fifty-four men and one woman editor of the *LHUS* found very few women writers to include among the best.[19]

At the centre of American literary life, unity and integrity became essential countersignatures to the chaotic uncertainties of wartime, and this transvaluation was unmistakably seen as an expression of male creative potency – as Showalter points out, women writers were largely characterised by their absence from the record of American literary history. The American woman writer of the 1940s and 50s was therefore imbued with a spectral quality of non-contemporaneity with the post-war 'present', despite the fact that female authors – not least Shirley Jackson – were at this very moment beginning to attract a great deal of attention for their writing.[20] It is against this backdrop of spectralised female authorship and the valorisation of the 'single unified story' that *The Bird's Nest* emerges, with its focus on feminine multiplicity and narrative plurality – a story which rejects the overarching themes of 'democracy' and 'independence' in favour of disruptive,

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[19] Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 16.

[20] What turned out to be Jackson's most famous short story, 'The Lottery', was published by *The New Yorker* in 1948, the same year as the *Literary History of the United States*. The nationwide discussion and outrage that followed this story's appearance marked the beginning of Jackson's impression on certain corners of American literary consciousness, perhaps precisely because of the extent to which it violated the quasi-sacred ideals of real American literature specified by the editors of *LHUS*. Jackson would never have been so banal as to write anything that uncritically celebrated pre-digested ideas of 'democracy' or 'progress'; indeed, much of her work can be characterised as wilfully transgressing these standards, especially when women are at the centre of the transgression.

uncontrollable psychopathology. Jackson's text can almost be defined in opposition to the highly visible projects and narratives of post-war American literature, which charges her own narrative with an additional spectral resonance as a text that is undeniably in and of its historical moment, yet also rendered culturally indistinct by it.

The language employed by Showalter in a text like *The Female Malady* – 'depersonalization,' 'disembodiment,' 'fragmentation' – is similarly charged with a powerful ghostly resonance, with its focus on the derealisation and self-separation that modulates definitions of spectrality. The embodiment of delimiting medical authority in the text is present in the form of Doctor Wright, Elizabeth's psychotherapist. An old-fashioned practitioner – 'Not one of your namby-pamby modern doctors' (p. 31) – and an unreconstructed misogynist, Wright uses Elizabeth as a clinical case study for a psychological vivisection, attempting to remove those constitutive personalities which he considers indecorous or unfeminine, and valorising Elizabeth as raw material which he can reconstitute according to the requirements of his own fantasies. Moreover, his 'treatment' of Elizabeth and her co-personalities is realised as much through narrative as it is medicine, since Wright positions himself as both a doctor and a writer. Jackson playfully deconstructs these two homonymic dimensions of his character – the one who must 'right' the psychopathological wrongs of his patient, and the figure who has to 'write' about doing so – to show how medical contexts and narrative practice (his 'writing' about 'righting'), the twin impulses of Doctor Wright's author/ity, spectralise their object of scrutiny.

This chapter examines some of the most significant instantiations of this idea, such as the phantom-writing that results from Doctor Wright's hypnotic treatment, and the fight 'between' Elizabeth and Betsy in the New York hotel room, to exemplify how Jackson represents spectrality as a feature of both narrative perspective and structure. Just as

Elizabeth's body plays host to a multitude of personalities, so too is the novel marked by its polyvocality, making it a narrative that is simultaneously singular and plural. In this respect, it becomes possible to read *The Bird's Nest* as a 'ghosts-story': a story that describes the ghosting of identity/ies whose form replicates the pluralised-singularity of the ghost as a figuration of subjectivity. To describe this arrangement, I engage with the work of Sarah Dillon and the concept of the palimpsest and palimpsestuous reading to address the complex interrelationship between the same-but-different personalities which populate Elizabeth's character. I argue that the palimpsest is a key hauntographic term, an organisation of oppositions – singular/plural, surface/depth, past/present/future – that are consolidated into a workable figuration. The palimpsest holds seemingly contradictory conditions or phenomena together, just as the ghost collapses distinctions surrounding different temporalities, as well as degrees of in/visibility and presence-absence. The idea of palimpsestuousness is imbued with ghostly properties, and therefore enables a holistic reading and interpretation of the spectral mediation between personalities. Described by Dillon as 'a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation,' palimpsestuousness acknowledges and safeguards the integrity of the intermixed constituents whilst simultaneously recognising 'their essential contamination and interdependence'.[21] The palimpsest furnishes a figurative textual model for preserving the spectral coherence of Elizabeth's multiplicity, since it distinguishes between the different personalities whilst comprehending them as elements of the same configuration. This allows for a more complex interpretation of spectralised subjectivity, and acts as a counter-signature to the aggressive diagnostic and authorial tactics of Doctor Wright.

[21] Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), pp. 2-3.

Using the palimpsest as an interpretive model also requires the reader to undertake what Dillon terms 'inventive palimpsest detective reading'.[22] Rather than simply understanding close reading as a deductive practice which disinters preformed meanings, palimpsestuous reading involves a degree of creativity in its appraisal of the narrative and its contents:

> Palimpsest detective reading is an act of invention that comprises a process of discovery – uncovering and revealing a text that is there prior to the act of invention – and an act of creation or original contrivance – the ingenious production of a new text.[23]

In other words, to read palimpsestuously involves oscillating between the present and the absent of narrative texts, to use what is there to reveal or conjure what is hidden or yet-to-be-established. At the same time, it questions the temporal dynamic between 'text' and 'self' (or, in the case of *The Bird's Nest*, 'selves'). The 'present' necessarily becomes a pluralised phenomenon, since each of the personalities experience their own 'present' simultaneously, but cannot do so in the same space – the 'surface' identity/textual position.[24] This profusion of presents constitutes a particular form of haunting, what Mark Fisher terms 'an encounter with broken time'.[25] Although the personalities 'emerge' at different points across the narrative, they are present prior to their (re)presentation, in much the same way that the ghost's paradoxical temporality means its first appearance is always a belated repetition.[26] Haunting provides a conceptual framework for Dillon's

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[22] Ibid, p. 68.
[23] Ibid, pp. 67-68.
[24] Darryl Hattenhauer summarises the troubled relationship between multiple personality and the present by observing that '[a]n individual with a multiple personality can continue to live in the present even while out of touch with much of the present', although he does not read this as suggesting an explicitly spectral form of dis/location. See Hattenhauer, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 125.
[25] Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66.1 (Fall 2002), 16-24 (p. 19).
[26] See Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: A Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p. 11).

inventive reading, introducing a spectral dimension as a means of explicating the involution that characterises any palimpsestic arrangement and signalling Jackson's interest in maintaining the particularity of each personality whilst recognising that they form a dissociated structure in which the constitutive elements exist in uneasy tension with one another.

This approach foregrounds the way in which spectrality is not always a configuration waiting to be excavated, fully formed, from its text-crypt. Rather, it responds to the heuristic presence of the reader, allowing connections to be made which are not explicitly present in what Barbara Johnson terms the 'pheno-text', 'the surface phenomenon of a text present before us'.[27] *The Bird's Nest* comprises a number of these constructions – Dillon's term of choice is 'clues' – which invite a creative-interpretive response to fully comprehend them as central elements of the text's conceptualisation of spectrality.[28] Palimpsestuous reading can, then, be alternatively conceived as an interpretive practice which is cognisant of the disruptive logic of the spectre, and, as such, focuses on reading the spectre *into* the text rather than *out of* it.

Medical Multiplicity and the Psychopathological Spectre

My analysis of the opening of *Hangsaman* demonstrated how identity can already be subject to the destabilising power of the spectral, and Jackson deploys this idea again at the beginning of *The Bird's Nest*, from the very opening sentence: 'Although the museum was well known to be a seat of enormous learning, its foundations had begun to sag.' (p. 1). This suggested instability of structure is revealing in its focus on the incipient disintegration of

[27] Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 74.
[28] Dillon, p. 66.

'foundations', the arrangement without which edification (be it of buildings or identity) is impossible. The subsequent slant in the building produced by this subsidence allows the employees to make 'wry little jokes about disintegration' (p. 2), and it is this talk of failing integrity that immediately precedes Elizabeth's first appearance. The location is also particularly significant given that museums function as spectral spaces, where the historical past is reanimated through objects and artefacts, but in which the reanimation is always framed by the practices of preservation and curation of these artefacts in (and for) the present.[29]

The narrator announces Elizabeth's introduction by contemplating her comparative relationship with the architecture of the museum: 'It is not proven that Elizabeth's personal equilibrium was set off balance by the slant of the office floor, nor could it be proven that it was Elizabeth who pushed the building off its foundations, but it is undeniable that they began to slip at about the same time' (p. 2). Although framed by a disclaimer about the obvious lack of a proven connection between the two events, the narrative clearly invites the reader to consider Elizabeth and the museum as reflecting the same disequilibrium at their constitutive centres.[30] Not only does this comparison position Elizabeth as being haunted by her surroundings, but it turns her into a haunting presence herself – she is a reflection of the building as much as the building is a reflection of her, and this is the inaugural spectral association of the text. This *personalised* relationship between Elizabeth

[29] As seen in the previous chapter, *Hangsaman* offers a clear example of how ruins, as a specific representation or trace of the 'past', are used to elucidate present-day concerns and conditions, when they are invoked to describe the logic of Natalie's traumatic reanimation, and the impossibility of defining the present as distinct from what precedes it.

[30] The (dis)unity of body and building is one of Jackson's favourite tropes and draws upon a long history of this association. Anthony Vidler has argued that '[t]he body, its balance, standards of proportion, symmetry and functioning […] was the foundation myth of building'. See in particular his chapter 'Architecture Dismembered', in *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 69-84 (p. 71).

and the building can also be seen as anticipating contemporary theorisations of museum curation, in which the museum works to consolidate the identities of those who interact with it. Silke Arnold-de Simine suggests that '[i]nstead of predominantly housing collections, [museums] have become places of recollection, not so much driven by objects but by narratives and performances'.[31] However, Elizabeth's relationship with the museum's configurative spaces is one of reverse-consolidation, since it intensifies the aberrant psychology she increasingly exhibits throughout the novel.

There are other spectral traces of her identity which appear in these opening pages as well, many of which are developed more fully later in the text. One of the details given about Elizabeth's place within the office on the third floor is that 'it was the section of the museum closest, as it were, to the surface' (p. 2). The image of Elizabeth operating near 'the surface' of the building is a metaphorical encapsulation of the relationship Elizabeth has with the other constitutive personalities which emerge as the text progresses. The association between Elizabeth and 'the surface', both of whose foundations are disintegrating, can be seen as a proleptic challenge to the integrity of her identity that the self-emergent personalities enact: a glimpse of the future in the present. Additionally, in this early scene Elizabeth is defined in *negative* terms, by those things which she lacks, and which are separate from herself:

> Elizabeth Richmond was twenty-three years old. She had no friends, no parents, no associates, and no plans beyond that of enduring the necessary interval before her departure with as little pain as possible. Since the death of her mother four years before, Elizabeth had spoken intimately to no person. (pp. 3-4)

[31] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 2.

Elizabeth is a narrative presence who is defined by her absences, and who thinks of her life as being merely an 'interval' between two periods of non-existence, a holding-pattern in which being alive is a suspension. The lack of (and perhaps longing for) intimate conversation, a connection with another person, is a further anticipation of her pluralisation, albeit an ironic one. Elizabeth is intensely intimate with the different personalities (as inhabitants of the same mind and body), but this condition also makes it impossible for any two personalities to communicate effectively (or affectionately) with each other.

This isolation is compounded by her use of language, a breakdown which the narrative attributes to the absence of the mother-figure. This conception of herself as being not-quite-alive and her inability to use language is synthesised at a moment when the narrator discourses on the idea of names and naming:

> She was not even interesting enough to distinguish with a nickname; where the living, engrossed daily with the fragments and soiled trivia of the disagreeable past, or the vacancies of space, kept a precarious hold on individuality and identity, Elizabeth remained nameless; she was called Elizabeth or Miss Richmond because that was the name she had given when she came, and perhaps if she had fallen down the hole in the building she might have been missed because the museum tag reading Miss Elizabeth Richmond, anonymous gift, value undetermined, was left without a corresponding object. (p. 4)

There are a number of interrelated strands to the spectralisation of Elizabeth in this paragraph. For one thing, she is explicitly positioned in opposition to 'the living', who are able to maintain a hold on 'individuality and identity', albeit a 'precarious' one, perhaps because their arrangement of the 'fragments of the past' provides them with a means of

securing their identity in the present.[32] By comparison, she is conceptualised as a spectral presence in the museum because she cannot be numbered amongst 'the living', and yet she is clearly not among 'the dead' either. She is positioned as the interstice between these states, in much the same way that she conceives of her life as an 'interval', a falling-between different arrangements of space and time. Yet the reason she is denied inclusion amongst the living is that she is 'nameless'; a curious statement, given that it is written as 'Elizabeth was nameless', and also because the text makes clear that her name is the only attribute by which she might be identified. She is only known through her name, yet the text simultaneously suggests that she does not have one, and, therefore, cannot be known or identified. The image of Elizabeth being marked as missing or absent because of her name tag offers a suggestive reading of the way in which the act of naming abets this spectralisation. The name tag, when not attached to Elizabeth, becomes a synecdoche for the entirety of her subjectivity – shorn of its 'living' and breathing referent, it stands as her substitute, which does not require her presence in order to signify. As Christine Berthin succinctly summarises, '"I" am only a subject in language,' meaning that the 'I' of Elizabeth can exist and operate apart from her.[33] This slippage of the name and its function as a marker of identity indicates the profusion of spectralising forces with which Elizabeth has to contend at the earliest stages of the text, similar to those experienced by Natalie in the opening pages of *Hangsaman*.

A further riff on the spectral aspect of naming is the use of Elizabeth's initials as a

[32] Even though they are working with soiled trivia (objects that literally bear the mark of the past from being buried in the ground), this handling of the archaeological past in the present does not render 'the living' as ghostly to the same degree as Elizabeth, despite the fact that none of these people are ever referred to by name. This underlines the extent to which Elizabeth's figurative spectralisation is the product of multiple arrangements and cannot be reduced to disordered temporality alone.

[33] Christine Berthin, *Gothic Hauntings: Melancholy Crypts and Textual Ghosts* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 31.

means of securing her position within the museum: 'the letters signed "per er" and the endless listings of exhibits vouched for by E. Richmond were the outstanding traces of her presence' (p. 4). Although these 'traces' are what secure her position (both professionally and spatially), this initialising amplifies the spectral erasure that inheres within naming. It is not simply her name which substitutes for Elizabeth's actual presence; it is fragments of her name, sometimes a mixture of name and initials, or just the latter/letter. The constitutive letters of her name can be erased, and yet they still signify her position(s) more forcibly than her actual presence. The text reinforces this spectral quality of naming by playing with the different meanings of 'presence'. Whereas the word primarily refers to '[t]he fact or condition of being present', it can also be defined as something intangible or ethereal, a 'person or thing that exists or is present in a place but is not seen, esp. a divine, spiritual, or incorporeal being or influence felt or perceived to be present.'[34] To be 'present', therefore, implies both presence but also a peculiar form of absence, as something that is not directly experienced but only 'felt' or 'perceived'. 'Presence' bears within itself a semantic opposition, making it an aporetic term that is exploited in this consideration of Elizabeth's (im)material position. There is even a spectral resonance in the incomplete repetition or iterative arrangement of the phrase 'per er', in which Elizabeth's initials are merely the constitutive letters of another, different word, which is itself iterated as the opening letters of '*pre*sence'. These spectral characteristics are threaded through the opening pages of the text and complicate the question of the origins of Elizabeth's spectral subjectivity. For while there is no doubt that the spectral disturbances of her character grow in magnitude as the text progresses, and particularly once Doctor Wright is introduced, the spectralisation of

[34] 'Presence', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <www.oed.com/view/Entry/150669> [accessed 28 October 2020].

Elizabeth is in effect long before their first encounter.

Doctor Victor Wright is one of the central narrators of *The Bird's Nest*. Out of the six sections which constitute the text, he is the only character who narrates more than one, giving him a degree of control over the appearance and ordering of narrative events that is unmatched by any other person(ality). As Elizabeth's psychotherapist, he exemplifies the model of masculine medical authority that Shoshana Felman conceptualises, whereby men 'appear not only as the possessors, but also as the dispensers, of reason, which they can at will mete out to – or take away from – others', a fact that is reinforced by his first name – a clear reference to the brilliant but imprudent protagonist of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).[35] Wright is conscious of this capacity, and variously exploits his position of both therapeutic and narrative control over Elizabeth, which is one of the principal causes of her spectralisation. Wright's privileged position is indicated by the fact that he speaks in his own voice. In the opening section, Elizabeth is focalised through a third-person perspective and free indirect discourse, which mediates the presentation of her experience and consciousness to the reader. Doctor Wright is not constrained by the same limitations, and opens his account by providing the reader with an important claim about his character and the truthfulness of his clinical practice: 'I believe I am an honest man' (p. 31). It is significant that this is the opening gambit which Wright makes, since the text subsequently uses the word 'honest' to demonstrate the extent to which he is both an unreliable practitioner and narrator. 'Honest' appears five times across the opening page of the Doctor's account, and the opening sentence is repeated word-for-word in the succeeding line, compelling the reader to accept him as a man of his word(s). Where 'presence' is always balanced between

[35] Shoshana Felman, 'Woman and Madness: The Critical Phallacy', *Diacritics*, 5 (1975), 2-10 (p. 7).

its oppositional meanings, in this case the repeated use of 'honest' attenuates its primary meaning to such an extent that it becomes charged with its opposite. The claim to honesty actually comes to suggest a fundamental *dis*honesty in the way Wright presents himself. This repetition, which frames his presence in the text, indicates how there is an element of excessive signification at work in Doctor Wright's medical and narrative account, which distorts the presentation of events and descriptions of characters as they appear in his writing. This linguistic excess not only encapsulates the pressure Doctor Wright brings to bear on Elizabeth, but indicates how Wright himself is invested in spectral practices of repetition and semantic disruption.

After his early encounters with Elizabeth, Wright diagnoses her with a multiple personality disorder (although he does not provide a more specific denomination), and, to do so, he 'turn[s] to a medical authority' (p. 57) to help secure the diagnosis. The text in question, Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality*, advances the concept of a '*disintegrated* personality' (p. 57), through which, '[b]y a breaking up of the original personality at different moments along different lines of cleavage, there may be formed several different secondary personalities which may take turns with one another' (p. 58).[36] In other words, the emergent personalities that constitute 'Elizabeth Richmond' are structured or positioned in a spectral relationship with 'one' another – the self comes to be haunted by its iterations which are distinct *from* the 'original' personality and yet manifest

[36] Prince's 1906 text was one of the earliest medical publications to popularise the term 'dissociation', advancing the view that multiple personalities were the result of a traumatic incident in the subject's past and that their attempt to process or respond to this event initialised the breaking-open of the subject's psyche into distinct personalities. One of Prince's most famous patients, known as Miss Beauchamp, is a clear reference for Jackson's characterisation of Elizabeth, and Prince's clinical methods – particularly hypnotherapy – are favoured and practised by Doctor Wright. For a succinct history of the Beauchamp case study, as well as further details about Prince's work, see Ruth Lee's chapter 'The Real Miss Beauchamp: An Early Case of Traumatic Dissociation' in her book *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 41-82.

within the same person. Darryl Hattenhauer defines this aggregation as 'the self as a heteroglossia of introjected others,' a definition which neatly imbricates the dimensions of selfhood and literary production.[37] Doctor Wright's narrative is itself heteroglossic, being a patchwork of his own written voice and the quotation from Prince, and he suggestively introduces this excerpt by presenting the rigour of medical practice as holding out hope for 'a cure more certain (and more permanent) than mere exorcism' (p. 57). Although Wright tacitly rejects any suggestion of supernaturalism relating to Elizabeth's psychological disturbance, the terminology associated with 'disintegrated personality' also comprises the lexicon of spectrality. Marta Caminero-Santangelo suggests that 'many of the adjectives used to describe current [postmodern] conceptions of subjectivity make equal sense in a discussion of multiple personality: "fragmented," "multiple," "shifting," "decentered".'[38] Although there is certainly a symbiosis between postmodernism and fragmented selfhood, a reading of the novel which is open to instantiations of the spectral provides an elaboration of subjectivity-under-pressure that is distinct from that offered by postmodern philosophy whilst still retaining a focus on fragmentation and multiplicity.

Once Doctor Wright has pronounced his verdict on Elizabeth's psychological state, he divides the personalities according to the degree to which they embody different stereotypes of feminine behaviour, a mode of classification that uses clinical terminology as a cover for his own preferences. R1/Elizabeth is described as 'nervous,' 'modest,' 'self-contained,' and 'reserved to the point of oral paralysis' (p. 58). R2/Beth is 'the happy girl who smiled and answered truly,' who is also 'pretty and relaxed,' and 'amiable and charming' (p. 58). And R3/Betsy, Doctor's Wright's least favourite of the personalities is

[37] Hattenhauer, p. 110.
[38] Caminero-Santangelo, p. 54.

'wanton,' 'insolent,' and 'coarse and noisy' (p. 58), and whom Doctor Wright unambiguously refers to as 'the hateful, the enemy' (p. 57).

There is a twofold dynamic of spectralisation that Wright employs in describing the personalities in these terms. He privileges R2/Beth as the exemplary model of feminine propriety who should be the sole personality to outlast his treatment and become Elizabeth Richmond's default setting; in quick succession, Wright speaks of his desire to 'bring back Miss R. as R2' (p. 57), and his belief that 'R2 was, it was assumed, the character Miss R. might have been' (p. 58). This decision to empower Beth as the superior personality is not motivated by his psychotherapeutic expertise, but through his preference for those personalities which embody acceptable feminine behaviour. As Janet Beizer would say, Elizabeth's body is 'ventriloquized', turned into a medium for another's voice and preference rather than possessing one of her own choosing.[39] The patient's agency is determined by the physician, overwritten by Wright's author/ity as both practitioner and narrator.

Later in the text, once the final personality, R4/Bess, has made her appearance, Wright discloses the reason for his attraction towards Beth:

> Without enthusiasm I added R4 to my notes, and hoped she was the last; each of Miss R.'s varying selves, I thought, proved more disagreeable than the last – always, of course, excepting Beth, who, although weak and almost helpless, was at least possessed of a kind of winsomeness, and engaging in her very helplessness. (p. 142)

Beth is the ideal personality because she is perceived as being weak, helpless, winsome, and passive; she is the personality who neither challenges Doctor Wright's authority, like Betsy –

[39] Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 11. Beizer's work provides some important context for understanding the wider spectralising effects of medical discourse for women in modernity.

who frequently refers to him as 'Doctor Wrong' (p. 60) – nor possesses any unattractive qualities, like 'the numb, the stupid, the inarticulate' Elizabeth (p. 143). For Doctor Wright, the personality which should predominate is the one who is the least self-assured, whose characteristics make her insubstantial and almost invisible. As Caminero-Santangelo notes:

> In response to the dangerous specter of feminine multiplicity […] Wright ultimately wishes, whatever his theoretical claims to the contrary, not to reintegrate the personalities into a single (but necessarily shifting and contradictory) self, but to sever them more violently, salvaging one and doing away with the others […] Under the guise of psychiatric therapy, Wright takes an active hand in the re-creation of a model of femininity that will stand for the natural, normative state.[40]

Doctor Wright's idea of 'curing' his patient is, in effect, to kill the majority of her constitutive personalities and re-inscribe the one which remains within an explicitly patriarchal ideology, one which had recrudesced in the post-war period to emphasise the values of passivity and helplessness as 'the natural, normative state' of femininity. As Wright imagines (and practises) it, this process is described in terms of a violent severance of the female body. His approach, which sees death as the necessary basis for (Eliza)Beth's survival, is an overt instance of Wright using his medical authority to spectralise his experimental subject, a tendency which is amplified through the proliferation of metaphors of (usually violent) power and control that permeate his account. These range from 'the most penetrating investigation' as a means of disclosing answers which 'lay deeply hidden in Miss R. herself' (p. 54), through to Wright describing his therapeutic process as 'my next attack upon Miss R.' (p. 183). Another boast –'I subdued her easily' (p. 77) – is used to suggest the effortless power Wright has over Miss R.'s mind, whilst his desire to 'rip her in half' (p. 230) towards the end of the text is an indication of the harm which he is capable of inflicting on his

[40] Caminero-Santangelo, p. 67.

patient. This figurative dismemberment that Wright enacts again and again draws attention to the division of the personality as if they were divisions of/in the body, as well as emphasising how the relationship between these configurations is a spectral one. Elizabeth Richmond is both singular and multiple at the same time, comprising one body and a profusion of personae, with Doctor Wright's figurative violence finding a literal correspondence in 'doing away with' Miss R.'s competing personalities.

Jackson's novel demonstrates the analytical capacity of spectrality to explore and unpack the derealising effects of medical discourse on female subjectivity, and especially on those women suffering from psychopathological disorders. In this respect, Jackson anticipates the work of theorists such as Beizer and Showalter in her examination of the medico-discursive conditions that pathologise and proscribe unconventional femininity. Jackson's nuance is to describe these effects with a spectral register, using the figurative potential of spectrality to dramatise the consequences of this two-pronged prohibition against forms of women's behaviour, in addition to underlining the change in understandings of psychopathology in the middle decades of the twentieth century.[41] Moreover, just as a spectral reading of *The Bird's Nest* provides a complex insight into these issues, the way Jackson represents her characters and their experiences allows us to develop the conceptual and critical possibilities of using spectrality as a metaphorical figuration of identity, especially in those areas which, at first glance, have little or nothing to do with the supernatural as either a metaphor or reality.

[41] Jackson's novel can thus be read as a contemporary iteration of the Female Gothic novel, which frequently addresses what Horner and Zlosnik refer to as 'the pathologisation of women who fail to conform to traditional expectations'. See Horner and Zlosnik, 'Introduction', in *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 1-11 (p. 1).

(Ghost-)Writing Multiple Personality

Although it is clear that Doctor Wright's primary authority is derived from his medical and therapeutic practice, these are not the only areas in which he professes expertise. Throughout the sections of the text which he narrates, Wright frequently draws attention to his status as a writer (a preoccupation Jackson indicates through his homonymic surname). Indeed, one of the earliest statements Wright makes in the novel is his belief that 'a good writer is much the same as a good doctor' (p. 32), and this interest in the creative/destructive power of writing and authorship is a central configuration for understanding the articulation and function of spectrality in *The Bird's Nest*. He believes his writing, much like his medical practice, is free of 'fads or foibles', and based instead on 'trying to make our sensible best of the material we get' (p. 32). In reality, both are used as expressions of control and correction, assuring the reader that 'the extraordinary case of Miss. R was taken and solved and lies transcribed here for all the world to read, by an honest man' (p. 31). Wright uses his writing to centre himself as the heroic rescuer of Elizabeth Richmond, a self-portrait that it would be generous to describe as insincere, as the reader soon comes to learn.

The ways in which writing announces itself as indebted to the logic of the spectre appears in a variety of ways in the novel. The derivative names of Miss R's constitutive personalities are a particularly significant example because they demonstrate how differences are actually uncanny iterations of the self-same. This is the logic which drives the nursery rhyme from which the title is drawn, whereby the four named characters separately select a bird's egg only to discover it is the same one because they are all one and the same. Doctor Wright attempts to elide the slipperiness of language by using an algebraic system to determine the personalities' distinctness from one another whilst they are within his care:

> It has long been my habit […] to distinguish between the personality awake and the personality in hypnotic trance by the use of numerical symbols; thus, Miss R., awake and as I originally saw her, was automatically R1, although use of the prime number did not necessarily mean that I regarded R1 as Miss R. well, or healthy, or fundamental; R1 was Miss R. the first, in my mind and in my notes. (p. 43)

The numerical system Wright uses for his case study supposedly allows him to counteract the possible confusion associated with the iterative or derivative nature of language, since an individual word can always summon other words from which it is both distinct and inextricably related. For instance, 'Elizabeth' is both a name in its own right, but it can also exist in derivative form as 'Beth', 'Betsy' and 'Bess': it is a word that is simultaneously single and double, just like the young woman to whom it is attached. Not only is Wright able to distinguish between Elizabeth and Beth by inscribing them as R1 and R2 (using initials in a similar way to the 'per er' written on Elizabeth's letter at the museum), but this interpersonal difference is reinforced by the different states of consciousness that require such distinctions: the conscious and the hypnotised patient(s), so favoured by Morton Prince. Wright even takes care to state that R1's primacy does not equate with any kind of foundational identity – she is simply inscribed as such because she was 'first', in both his 'mind' and 'notes.' However, there is a strange tension which overhangs Wright's assertion. Despite his claims to the contrary, R1 is afforded particular significance in his account. She is described in terms of originality, a term which ties her to conceptions of origin and emergence, to the effect that, despite Wright's protests, his writing positions R1/Elizabeth as the foundational personality whose presence in his office brings into play his medical and narrative containment – practices which turn him into an author/ity. Moreover, this primacy afforded by negation is done 'automatically,' suggesting that her inscription as R1 is a reflection of her fundamental importance for his heteroglossic narrative-case study.

Wright uses his numerical system to differentiate between the distinct personalities of Miss R., but this merely reduplicates the iterative element of their shared identity. Each figure is introduced with an 'R' for Richmond, a reminder that naming in Jackson's text functions through either derivation or repetition – there is no foundation for absolute separation between these constitutive identities as they are inscribed in Wright's writing. Again, the doctor acknowledges this association between the personalities, intentionally or otherwise, when he speaks of R1 as 'Miss R. the first,' a description which only makes sense if Miss R. is part of a numerical sequence – the idea of a 'first' necessarily invokes the (absent) presence of a 'second,' third' or 'fourth,' in a potentially interminable repetition. All attempts to distinguish between the respective constituents of Miss R. reinforce this distinction as illusory, demonstrating how identity is haunted by that from which it tries to separate itself or be separated.

This awareness of a fragmented subjectivity that is still functional (although in a manner in which it is imperfectly present to itself) is how Esther Peeren characterises hauntology, which, she argues, 'indicates a Being that is never unambiguously or wholly present and that has a heterogeneous and therefore unlocatable point of origin'.[42] The hauntologised subject is still recognised as such, but its dislocation and dissociation (from both itself and its surroundings) are the means by which that recognition is possible. Elizabeth Richmond is an othered-self, a heterogeneous arrangement of identities which are bound together in an uneasy structure of iteration, a same-but-different involution that creates what Peeren terms 'a figure of radical alterity'.[43] Although Peeren uses 'radical' as a means of ensuring the non-spectral subject responds to the spectre hospitably,

[42] Esther Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 11.
[43] Ibid.

'welcom[ing] without imposing conditions' (p. 11), 'radical alterity' can be read another way in the context of *The Bird's Nest*. Drawing on its etymological association with 'roots' and 'rootedness', Elizabeth's radical alterity functions as a strange(r)ness rooted in the self, where the 'self' is not merely an 'other' to non-hauntological characters, but an 'other' to herself/selves. The recognition that her pluralised identity escapes Doctor Wright's attempts to break it into its constituent personalities can be readily understood when read as a spectral phenomenon: the disorder and transgression associated with the ghost, its incommensurability with discrete or secure categories, save Elizabeth from being re-formed by Doctor Wright (at least at this stage of the text).[44]

The attempt to enforce a characteristic distinction between the personalities is further problematised by the role of imitation and mimicry.[45] Towards the conclusion of Wright's first narrated section, he is summoned to Aunt Morgen's house to attend Miss Richmond. Believing Beth to be the dominant personality at the moment of his arrival, he commands her not 'to do any of a hundred things which would ordinarily not occur to you' (p. 78). These instructions are part of Wright's attempt to control the plural expressions of feminine behaviour embodied by Miss R.'s multiple personalities, and his language reflects this: Beth/R2 is not to do 'any of a hundred things' which she might desire, such as 'to consume

[44] This is what Brigit Young means when she says that '[w]hile madness itself is of questionable value to her characters, Jackson depicts psychiatric […] measures taken to erase madness entirely and to replace it with something more palatable to the norms of conventional society as destructive […] madness, in all its glory and its pain, entwines with one's identity, and care must be taken not to sever that connection irreparably'. The attempt to 'cure' psychopathology becomes another way of regulating feminine behaviour, to deny women the right to signify anything unconventional or transgressive. See Young, p. 40.

[45] Mimicry is a significant concept within feminist theory, particularly in relation to psychoanalysis. Luce Irigaray, for instance, has argued that mimicry 'make[s] "visible," by an act of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language'. This making-visible of the feminine within discourse has a clear resonance with the figure and function of the spectre as that which calls attention to a specific arrangement or situation through its in/visibility, as well as through its iterative condition. See Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 76.

quantities of sweet things' (pp. 77-78) or 'to misbehave before your friends' (p. 77). As part of his desire to strengthen Beth as the preferred personality to supervene the others, Wright makes clear that the only form of acceptable behaviour from Beth is that which she has done before, since the desire to do something new is interpreted as a malign symptom of her psychopathology – she is condemned to a spectral repetition of past behaviours and experiences as her present and future.

However, outside the authoritative spaces of his office and encountering his patient in a domestic setting, Wright is unable to enforce such control because he cannot contain his patient in the same way:

> 'Dear Beth,' and I pressed her hand.
> She opened her eyes, grinning. 'I bet you never dreamed I could do Beth so well,' Betsy said. (p. 78)

'Beth' turns out not to be 'Beth', but 'Betsy'. The word 'Beth' functions here as a kind of performance or conscious imitation by Betsy to undermine the doctor's authority as both competent practitioner and reliable narrator. The naming system he puts in place to understand and engage with his patient(s) is ineffective because it only makes sense of Miss R. by dividing her plurality into its singular constituents. What this mimicry exposes is how the written name – as it appears in both Wright's writing and the text more generally – does not designate a stable, autonomous identity, but bears within itself the trace of the other personalities. The word 'Beth', simply as an arrangement of letters, is not a reliable means of distinguishing between 'Beth' and 'Betsy' in this scene, and this undermines the assurance that any name safeguards the integrity of an individual. It is not the case that Miss R.'s personalities 'present themselves' one after the other – the appearance of one is structured by the simultaneous imbrication of all. These other presences need not actually

manifest or speak, but are always an absent-presence which haunts any inscription of a name.

The spectral quality of writing is, then, constantly intruding into the narrative to disrupt its order and undermine the possibility or desire for discrete subjectivity. In the immediate aftermath of Betsy's imitation of Beth, the narrative becomes hers and the third section is focalised through her perspective. The chapter opens with her plans to escape to New York in order to track down her mother, whom she believes to be alive and lost in the city. This moving-away from Doctor Wright's office and Aunt Morgen's house is a geographical expression of Betsy's desire for productive distance between herself and others (or at least those who wish to constrain her, since her journey is one towards her mother, or at least a space she associates with her), and her language reflects the optimistic expectation of her success: 'Everything was going to be very very very good' (p. 81). However, the spectral intrudes at the earliest possible moment in her account to problematise her break with the past – the three-time appearance of 'very' defers her journey into the new by repeating and prolonging itself. The repetition of a single word at the beginning of a narrative account recalls Doctor Wright's use of 'honest', and the suggestion that its multiplicity throughout his opening paragraph implied a fundamental dishonesty that he attempted to supress through language. A similar negative quality is put into play here, since this opening sentence is repeated word-for-word as the closing sentence of Betsy's introduction. It is an introduction which is already an iteration of the past-text, from which it is impossible to break away.

Jackson makes explicit how language undermines the attempt to consolidate identity because words do not belong to the subject who uses them, a notion which is firmly established in the early sections of Betsy's narrative:

> She had a book in her suitcase, a large dictionary for use in case she needed help in talking or writing or spelling; in any case, since she intended eventually to dispose of all her possessions, the book, which was large and solidly printed, might be a source of money sometime if she needed it, but she must remember to cross out Lizzie's name on the first page. (p. 82)

Betsy has brought the dictionary to navigate the complexity of using language in the real world, allowing her to select and use the most appropriate words and verbal formulations, since speaking as Betsy is an unfamiliar action. She has to copy the request for a bus ticket from the woman in the queue before her (p. 82), another instance of language repeating itself. However, although she is tentative about her first foray into the world, Betsy seems to be granted a more assured presence in the text through this ability to use language for her own ends, and she is made more tangible through a correlative relationship with the size and solidity of the dictionary (both of which are specified). She delights at the thought of writing two postcards to Aunt Morgen and Doctor Wright, 'telling them that they had driven her away' (p. 83), using her writing to dramatise and reinforce her separation from them.

At the same time though, Betsy seems to work against her newfound assurance by suggesting that the dictionary 'might be a source of money sometime if she needed it' (p. 82), which emphasises the precarious state of her newfound, dollar-dependent presence in the world. Moreover, the dictionary is not actually hers: she is at best a part-owner, since it has Elizabeth's name written on the front page. The dictionary is a collection of words which do not belong to her, and which will leave her behind once it is exchanged. Where presence and autonomy seem to be promised by language, the hauntographic traces of writing undermine this fixity by showing how language leaves the subject behind, moving out and away from her like the very postcards she writes and sends.

Ashok Kara understands all language as haunted by those who can no longer speak or

write (that is, those who have died), suggesting that language 'is the speech of ghosts, a memorial of/for the dead in the body of the living. Language is the unsayable murmuring of ghosts'.[46] Betsy, herself a haunting presence in the involution of personalities, is therefore haunted by language's ghostly history; the words and writing which initially promised to consolidate her fledgling autonomy bearing within them the trace of previous usage by others. This 'condition of repetition' is what makes language 'always already the site where the dead speak', such that for Betsy (or any of the personalities) to write or speak is to make herself dependent on the spectrality of language.[47]

The dictionary emblematises the precariousness of Betsy's position as a subject *of* and *in* language, since any consolidation it offers is only temporary or transitory. It assumes a central significance in the later parts of her narrative account as well, as an object tied to the expression of a coherent subjectivity. Having been unsuccessful in locating her mother, Betsy returns to her hotel room and discovers that her suitcase has been searched and the contents purposefully damaged:

> The big dictionary she had brought with her, so that she might check spelling and various usable words, was lying just inside the suitcase, its binding torn off, its pages pulled out and crumpled, its millions of good, practical, helpful words hopelessly destroyed.
>
> 'Lizzie,' Betsy said aloud, backing off, 'but Lizzie wouldn't ever have done anything to her own *book*, not to her own good book –'
>
> Suddenly, madly, she took up the book, and rising and turning, threw it as hard as she could at the mirror. 'There,' she said out loud, through the crash, 'that'll show you I'm *still* worse than you, who*ever* you are!' (p. 114)

The destruction of the dictionary is explicitly tied to an instability of identity because it alerts Betsy to the presence of a new personality, one whose presence she is unable to detect and

[46] Ashok Kara, *The Ghosts of Justice: Heidegger, Derrida and the Fate of Deconstruction* (Lincoln, NE: iUniversity Press, 2001), p. 43.
[47] Ibid.

whose influence she cannot repudiate. The attack this 'new' personality makes upon Betsy is not physical but is directed at her means of using language precisely and correctly, and takes place in a space that is marked as both transitional and a site of multiple, ever-changing inhabitants – a hotel room. Moreover, the dictionary is tantalisingly placed 'just inside the suitcase', an object engineered for the user's mobility, as if the new personality is reminding Betsy of her evanescent position.

The ruination of these 'good, practical, helpful words' is an attempt to abjure Betsy's capacity to express her identity anew; in effect, to repeat the old rather than to formulate the new. An attack on language – or the material embodiment of language – is therefore an attack on subjectivity, since the fictional character is an entity structured by words. This destabilisation of subjectivity is reduplicated by Betsy when she uses the remnants of the dictionary to destroy the mirror in the bedroom, although it is not directed at herself so much as it is the absent-present personality who damaged the book in the first place. Importantly, she destroys an object which is designed to reflect an image of the subject back at herself, which is telling because where Betsy is concerned, this (non)reflected 'self' is not singular but an incorporated difference.

In other words, Betsy does not want to look at herself because it might not be *her* self which is reflected, a conceptualisation of the mirror's function that is shared by Gregor Campbell and Gordon E. Slethaug:

> The image of the mirror […] illustrates how human beings recognize and even create themselves through the images of others, who are, in their own turn, reflections of yet again still others. The mirror, then, is not something in which viewers see an approximately accurate image of self; rather, it figures the way in

which we finally have to recognise otherness and our differences from others.[48] Betsy's destruction of the mirror can be read as a symbolic attempt to deny the formative influence or presence of 'others' in the consolidation of her identity, since the mirror's surface is a nexus of identities from which the viewing subject must learn to differentiate itself. As Rosemary Jackson points out, mirrors and mirror images are a recurrent theme in 'women's supernatural fiction of the twentieth century' because they are a means of 'expressing women's relation to unacknowledged, unconscious aspects of themselves and their interrelation with others'.[49] Betsy's denial of these ulterior influences and reflections means that she cannot distinguish her-*self* from her-*other*, and so undermines the basis of her symbolic consolidation.[50] Although she destroys the mirror in order to demonstrate her superiority and difference from the unknown spectral presence (who emerges later on as Bess), the act of doing so merely reinforces Betsy's inter-subjective contiguity and undifferentiated identity as a constituent of multiple personality.

This state of anxiety in encountering one's mirror(ed) image is made explicit by Kaya Silverman, for whom this (self-)reflective apparatus enfolds the viewer into a haunting arrangement of both time and identity:

> [B]ecause the subject's identity will continue to be propped upon external images, its battle-to-the-death with its own mirror image is only the first instalment in a life-long war between itself and everything else. This rivalry makes similarity even harder to tolerate than alterity, since the more an external

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[48] Gregor Campbell and Gordon E. Slethaug, 'Mirror Stage', in *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, ed. by Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 593-595 (p. 593).

[49] Rosemary Jackson, 'Introduction', in *What Did Miss Darrington See? An Anthology of Feminist Supernatural Fiction*, ed. by Jessica Amanda Salmonson (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1989), pp. xv-xxxv (p. xxvi).

[50] For Jacques Lacan, the process of self-identification in the mirror-stage is the pre-requisite for language acquisition and the formation of the 'I', which lends Betsy's destruction of the mirror with the dictionary a particularly ironic significance. See Lacan, 'The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the I', *New Left Review*, 51 (September/October 1968), 63-77.

> object resembles the subject, the more it undercuts the latter's claim to be unique and autonomous.[51]

The subject's reflected interaction involves the self in the past (the infant seeing themselves for the first time) as well as the self in the future (playing out the 'life-long battle' to its natural conclusion). To see oneself reflected is therefore a polytemporal experience, with the mirror acting as a 'portal[] to a ghostly experience of place, time, memory, and self' in which the subject is both the same but different.[52] This dynamic is made all the more complex in Betsy's case, because she already embodies an undecidable arrangement of similarity and alterity through her multiple personality disorder. If any of the personalities were to look in the mirror, they will have seen/see/will see the same 'person' starring back at them as the other three, making this act less of a *self*-haunting than a *selves*-haunting. There are no visible signs of difference because what divergences exist between the personalities are not physical. The mirror gives the lie to Betsy's belief in her autonomy since it shows only the shared body of the four identities. Her individuality cannot be sustained over the distance between herself and her reflection, and so it collapses. In this case, Betsy's ghostliness does not derive from a terrifying encounter with an 'other', but from an image of the self that cannot be recognised as such.

The destruction of the mirror leads back to the dictionary, which is configured as a linguistic and textual image that mediates representations of subjectivity, and therefore provides an opportunity for a metatextual reflection on the integrity of the wider narrative of *The Bird's Nest*. The disintegration of the material form of words exemplifies the complexities which supervene attempts to inscribe the interrelationship between Miss R.'s personalities. The other important image associated with this process are the letters which

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[51] Kaya Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 1.
[52] Graham Fraser, 'The Ghost in the Mirror: Self-Haunting in *Good Morning, Midnight*', *Modern Language Review*, 113.3 (July 2018), 481-505 (p. 483).

the personalities exchange between themselves and Doctor Wright as a practical joke or game orchestrated by Betsy. There are five letters in total: one each from Beth, Bess and Doctor Wright, and two from Betsy (pp. 169-170). The network of exchange of these documents is complex, especially because of the degree of misidentification and imitation involved in their authoring. The first of the two letters written by Betsy appears in her 'own' hand and is addressed primarily to Bess, although it also invokes Doctor Wright as a possible reader: '"i will write what i please you cant hurt me i will tell him about what you did"' (p. 169). Although Betsy says she will write what she pleases, she gives no detail about what the event she alludes to might be, suggesting that her capacity to use language to divulge information is limited, a suggestion enhanced by the childlike, ungrammatical form of her writing.

However, her other letter is written as an imitation of Doctor Wright, which states his intention to stop his treatments immediately. This practical joke is directed primarily towards Elizabeth and Beth, the two personalities most susceptible to this rejection. Indeed, it is this letter to which Beth writes her pained response, imagining the reader to be Doctor Wright when it is actually Betsy – although Doctor Wright is *also* a reader, who then imaginatively reconstructs the conditions of Betsy's writing: 'Then, with what malicious gigglings I could only imagine, I thought that Betsy had with loving care composed the pseudo-letter from me in which I so blithely gave up Miss R.'s case' (p. 170). The identities of the different personalities, and between writers and readers, become fundamentally blurred at this moment in the text. Just as Miss R. is structured by plurality, so is Doctor Wright – as writer and reader, as himself and as Betsy's imitation – and, by extension, his narrative.

The polyvocality of Wright's account reflects the status and character of his patient(s)

– the different voices of Elizabeth R. appear in the text as both a consequence and substantiation of her plurality. At the same time, this multiplicity is bracketed and incorporated into Wright's own position as the authorial figure who mediates the expressions, both spoken and written, of the different personalities. Just as Wright uses his medical authority to spectralise Miss R., so he seeks to control her similarly through his narrative authority. Wright uses a literary allusion to describe his relationship with this totality of personalities:

> I saw myself, if the analogy be not too extreme, much like a Frankenstein with all the materials for a monster ready at hand, and when I slept, it was with dreams of myself patching and tacking together, trying most hideously to chip away the evil from Betsy and leave what little was good, while the other three stood by mockingly, waiting their turns. (p. 143)

Wright combines his roles of medical practitioner and writer as a Frankensteinian author/ity, reassembling the old – to return his patient back to her 'normal' state – and creating something new – an entity which is (re)made and instantiated as a test subject or case history in his narrative.[53] This intertextual reference dramatises the dynamic of production and control which Wright practises against Miss R., a practice which amounts to an attempt at containing the disruptive profusion of femininity. Following Frankenstein's lead, Wright desires to turn the plural into the singular, to divest Miss Richmond of her multiple personalities which Caminero-Santangelo suggests 'can be understood as a demand for the recognition of subjectivity'.[54]

At the same time, there are moments in Wright's narrative where, despite a concerted effort, he is not fully in control of writing or, by extension, the subject(s) about whom he

[53] Caminero-Santangelo posits an equally significant and suggestive literary model for Wright when she observes that 'even in this image of the creation of a monster, Wright is more a Pygmalion than a Frankenstein, fantasizing an object of desire sculpted from his own hands'. See Caminero-Santangelo, p. 66.
[54] Ibid, p. 58.

writes. Although his authoritative account seeks to regulate Elizabeth and her co-selves, this regulation is predicated on his ability to disaggregate the different personalities, desiring the promotion of one – Beth – at the expense of the 'others'. Yet, at significant moments in the text, it is precisely through the practice of writing that this separation between the selves is shown to be unstable. This is because it rests on the assumption that the personalities cannot operate coextensively, but in a succeeding arrangement, demonstrated most clearly in the numerical ordering of R1, R2, R3 and R4 that Wright assigns to the respective personalities. By contrast, a clear illustration of the poly-authorial nature of writing in the text occurs during one of his sessions when Bess, the fourth iteration, is present.

The scene is marked by Wright's inability to get Bess to accede to his authority by making her leave: 'I attempted again and again to drive her away, and she only stayed on like an unwelcome guest' (p. 159). Once again, Wright attempts to use repetition to secure his position, instructing her 'again and again' in what she should do; the difference here is that he is met with 'blank stares' and 'foolish answers'.[55] The repetition of the demand spectralises Bess, who is described as a quasi-ghostly figure waiting to be exorcised or 'drive[n…] away', albeit unsuccessfully. This immobile presence, unresponsive to his linguistic displays of authority, provides a clear instance when Wright does not have ultimate mastery over his patient(s); in some small, suggestive ways they refuse his desire to drive them away, be it from his office or from the involuted arrangement of personalities through which they act.

However, Wright does attempt to fragment this involution through the terms in which he describes them. His language refuses the complexity of the interconnection between the

[55] The phrase 'again and again' also appears three times in the space of six lines on p. 159, literalising the repetition of the actions it describes, as well as Wright's failure to get Bess to comply with his instructions.

respective personalities by employing terms of fraction and division: 'I tried to explain to her that she was *no more than one-quarter of an individual*, that there were three others who shared her life and her person, and each must be granted a share in the consciousness of Miss R' (p. 159, my emphasis). Although he recognises that Bess has a place within this arrangement, he suggests this is conditional only to the extent to which she is not a complete subject. In his oxymoronic expression, she is *only* 'one-quarter of an individual', a division within something which is, by definition, 'indivisible.'[56] In attempting to attenuate Bess's subjectivity through fractional imagery, Wright serves to desubstantialise this figure precisely because she opposes him and his attempts at control. Wright affords her a degree of presence, but only a partial one – Bess is ghost-written into the narrative, and Wright is able to impose this limitation on her subjectivity directly through his privileged position as writer-narrator of the scene as it is presented to the reader.

This is not the only instance of ghost-writing in the passage. Just when Doctor Wright tells Bess that he cannot continue their session, Wright notices that she has picked up a pencil which is resting by her hand and has started to write, a fact of which Bess is unaware at first:

> [N]ow, indeed, her hand was writing […] she caught my glance and looked also down at her hand; 'I have done this before,' she whispered, gazing in horror at her writing hand, 'my hand is moving by itself.' She seemed horrified and filled with loathing for her own hand, and yet fascinated, for she made no attempt to lift her hand from the page, but leaned forward to see what was written. A ghostly kind of conversation then commenced, with Bess, speaking in a kind of muted sick voice, communicating with her own right hand. (p. 160)

[56] 'Individual', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94633?redirectedFrom=individual> [accessed 28 October 2020].

The most striking detail about this passage is the revelation that Bess is not the one writing. Her understanding is that the hand is moving by itself, as if it were some spectral presence producing automatic writing. Bess's horror at the sight of her hand results from the fact that she recognises it as hers and not-hers simultaneously. Yet there is an even more pronounced spectral event unfolding here – a ghostly interlocution between two of the co-personalities. For the spectral presence turns out to be Betsy, manipulating Bess's hand as the medium for her writing. Betsy is absent – she is not the surface personality at this point – and yet she is also fully present through the words she writes. At the same time, Bess (and her hand in particular) are present within this scene – the word 'hand' is repeated seven times in the space of ten lines, drawing attention to the particularly corporeal quality of this presence; and yet she is absent from, or misaligned with, the words which are marked on the paper by the hand which is (not) her own.

Although the uncanny corporeality of Bess's hand is the focus for her presence in the text, there is a sense in which this physicality actually makes her even more of a spectralised 'presence' than a corporeal one. As Judith Butler elaborates:

> But where are the hands that write the text itself, and is it not the case that they never actually show themselves as we read the marks that they leave? Can the text ever furnish a certain sense of the hands that write the text, or does the writing eclipse the hands that make it possible, such that the marks on the page erase the bodily origins from which they apparently emerge, to emerge as tattered and ontologically suspended remains? Is this not the predicament of all writing in relation to its bodily origins? There is no writing without the body, but no body fully appears along with the writing that it produces.[57]

What Butler draws attention to here is the evanescence of the body as part of the machinery of writing. Writing, although made possible by the hand(s), eclipses and erases

[57] Judith Butler, 'How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?', *Qui Parle*, 11.1 (Fall/Winter 1997), 1-20 (p. 11).

their presence, leaving it 'ontologically suspended' between presence and absence – in other words, *haunt*ologically suspended. This is not to deny that Bess is not 'present' in this scene at all, but it does clearly indicate how spectrality functions as a modality for expressing her subjectivity, as well as reflecting the anxieties each of the personalities has about not being able to 'show themselves' as one amongst many; even more so, in fact, since they cannot mark the body in the same way that a hand is able to mark a page through the pencil it holds. If the hand, as a synecdoche for the body, 'is reflexively spectralized in the course of the writing it performs,' then Bess and Betsy together perform their own act of ghost-writing or self-spectralisation as an instantiation of the ghostly interrelationship which defines their involution.[58]

Hauntology is clearly more than a form of temporal disruption, 'dissolving the separation between now and then'.[59] As Fisher quite rightly says, it 'concerns a crisis of space as well as time', particularly as it applies to the shared bodily space of Elizabeth Richmond: single body, several identities.[60] Yet, in literary terms, hauntology represents an additional form of crisis – a crisis of author/ity. In the literary text – in this literary text – hauntology encapsulates the productive erasure of writing on the fictional body. Writing is the only means by which characters can be made 'knowable', yet what Betsy and Bess's ghost-writing demonstrates is that writing does not consolidate the 'presence' of these characters except in the sense of rendering them intangible or ethereal, a 'presence' without a presence. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida observes that '[t]o haunt does not mean to

[58] Ibid, p. 17.
[59] Katy Shaw, *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 2.
[60] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), p. 20.

be present'.[61] As the dual sense of 'presence' demonstrates, this is not correct. Hauntology is the modality of presence precisely because 'presence' is haunted by itself. It invites disruption and uncertainty into any claim made on the 'here' and/or 'now'. This is what makes *The Bird's Nest* the (unexpected) ghost story that is presented to us.

The Palimpsesting of Elizabeth Richmond

An additional theorisation of textuality is worth considering in terms of how the personalities and their inter-/intra-personal dynamic is characterised. If (ghost-)writing demonstrates the degree to which the 'scriptural' mediates the dynamic between the 'subject' and the 'spectral', then palimpsestuous reading can be said to provide a conceptual schema for describing the relationship between texts or entities which are both *a part of* and *apart from* an 'individual' unit. Following the writing of Thomas De Quincey, Sarah Dillon uses the term 'involuted' to make sense of this inter-/intra-textual dynamic, so that the palimpsest can be understood as 'an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other.'[62] The palimpsest collapses the distinction between the singular and the plural when describing the presence and arrangement of its texts. Although composed of 'individual' entities, when these are each admitted to the palimpsest's structure, they are opened out/up to an interweaving of surfaces and significations, of different spaces and different times or histories.

In her work on conceptualisations of the palimpsest, Dillon draws particular attention

[61] Derrida, p. 161.
[62] Dillon, p. 4.

to the spectral association between the palimpsest's texts, primarily in terms of their disjointed temporalities:

> The 'present' of the palimpsest is only constituted in and by the 'presence' of texts from the 'past', as well as remaining open to further inscription by texts of the 'future'. The presence of texts from the past, present (and possibly the future) in the palimpsest does not elide temporality but evidences the spectrality of any 'present' moment which always already contains within it 'past', 'present' and 'future' moments.[63]

The surface-text is therefore conditioned by the texts it super-inscribes. These over-written texts are not destroyed by this stratification because they erupt into and inhabit it, albeit incompletely. The 'meaning' of the palimpsest is not reducible to the most recent layer of text but is instead located in the involution of the spectral traces of the palimpsestic strata, distinct diachronically if not spatially. Therefore, the spectral quality of the palimpsest can be discerned in the play of absence-presence between these different instances of writing. Although the texts of the palimpsest are legible – either in part or in whole – they are not straightforwardly 'present' to a potential reader because their very appearance is predicated on their part-erasure. Paradoxically, it is this act of superimposition which provides them with their capacity for signification, both on their own but more importantly as part of an alternative, integrated semantic structure.

It is this configuration which encapsulates why the palimpsest is useful for understanding the spectral modality of Elizabeth Richmond's subjectivity. She is constituted as the involution of different personalities, which are laid out in time and yet periodically interrupt each other through intermittent emergence. Even when one of the personalities predominates at a given moment, this does not amount to a takeover of the whole

[63] Ibid, p. 37.

arrangement because the other personalities are always ready to break through and disrupt each others' capacity for independent action. One such moment occurs during Betsy's escape to New York. Whilst on the bus, and distracted by a conversation with a fellow passenger, Elizabeth momentarily becomes the surface personality while Betsy, 'caught completely off guard, struggled and tried to catch control again'.[64] Even in her eponymous chapter of the text, Betsy's name is no guarantee of her secure position as the central character because she cannot dissociate herself from those over whom she desires to predominate. In other words, she is not the central character but the superficial one, and the surface she occupies is not a position of power which organises the arrangement from the top down, but is produced by the involution of all components in its palimpsestic structure.

The involuted personalities of Elizabeth Richmond therefore invite a palimpsestuous reading as an interpretive practice 'which seeks to trace the interwoven relations between the layers that constitute the fabric of the text […] palimpsestuous reading does not reduce the text to a single layer but takes all of the a text's layers into account.'[65] This approach repudiates the isolation of individual personalities as unitary, since to do so would amount to un-weaving the very medium of Elizabeth's presence in the narrative. Just as the collective texts of the palimpsest cannot be disaggregated without destroying the structure, so Elizabeth's derivatives cannot be separated from one another without taking apart the psychological imbrication which defines 'Elizabeth Richmond' as a literary character. It is this recognition that her presence in the text is the product of multiple generative loci that aligns Elizabeth with the operations of spectrality. The spectre is not simply generated in the

[64] Jackson, p. 86.
[65] Dillon, pp. 47-48.

past, but in both the past and the present. Similarly, the spectral figure must be *both* present and absent in order to preserve its hauntological position. These arrangements of neither-nor are the axes around which the spectre operates, its generative loci, and this similar configuration of the palimpsest introduces a clear spectral expression in the function and understanding of subjectivity in Jackson's text.

The Bird's Nest clearly presents the collected Elizabeth Richmond as a palimpsest of personalities. While the surface identity(/text) interchanges throughout, this outward persona always bears within it the traces of those it subsumes. It is very difficult to conceive of Elizabeth Richmond outside the figuration of the palimpsest, since the involuted relationship so clearly replicates its constitution. Elizabeth becomes what Dillon would term an 'alloseme' of the palimpsest, its 'same'.[66] This term refers to phenomena which are distinct from the palimpsest, and which are not necessarily textual – Dillon cites 'the crypt' and 'twilight' as examples – but which cannot be fully understood without reference to the figurative schema of the palimpsest: 'their unity is irreducible with respect to [the palimpsest] and only in fact unthinkable out of it'.[67]

The narrative consistently demonstrates that Elizabeth Richmond is 'unthinkable' outside the palimpsestic involution of her different selves, and reading the text in this way provides some significant insight into the formation and presentation of her character, as well as other modes of reading involuted perspectives, such as instances of free indirect discourse, where the difference between 'character' and 'narrator' cannot be resolved without altering the mode of narration itself. This dynamic is developed particularly strikingly in a central episode of the text: the fight between Elizabeth and Betsy in the New

[66] Ibid, p. 43.
[67] Ibid.

York hotel room. Betsy has been exploring the city looking for her mother, whom she believes to be alive, but has ultimately proved unsuccessful.[68] Back in the hotel room, Elizabeth re-emerges, determined to leave before Betsy takes over again. She is unable to do so, and a confrontation ensues:

> Betsy found her and with a furious shout snatched at her hand and bit it until she dropped the key and Betsy grabbed for it as it fell […] wildly, she [Elizabeth] got a hand in Betsy's hair and pulled, and dragged her back away from the key, and it lay there on the floor while both of them, panting, stood back and waited for one another like two cats circling. Then, with unbelievable speed, Betsy went for the key again, the tips of her fingers just touching it, and she put her foot down hard on Betsy's hand and held it there. (p. 128)

There is a clear suggestion in this passage of a physical distance and difference between the two characters: Elizabeth is described as dragging Betsy away from the key by her hair, and the image of them standing apart from each other 'like two cats circling' clearly implies there is a clear distinction to be made between their two forms. However, these personalities do not exist as different embodiments but as different psychological entities, and so the suggestion of a physical difference or separation is illusory. The palimpsestic involution of different selves within the same body makes it difficult to imagine a confrontation between them, so the narrative has to instantiate or summon a form of spectral embodiment to represent it.

This is not simply a case of one body being doubled to produce a belated reflection. Neither personality can lay claim to the 'original' body because the nature of their palimpsestuous relationship disrupts the neat temporality of such distinctions. Although

[68] While walking in New York, Betsy is described as looking eagerly at 'things which would, unmolested, tend to be permanent'. 'Unmolested' is an important word here, because it echoes the description of the environment which surrounds Natalie Waite in *Hangsaman*. The haunting quality of language in *The Bird's Nest* is not predicated on the repetition of words *within* the text, but through intertextual references to Jackson's other novels. See Jackson, p. 109.

Elizabeth is the first personality to appear in the narrative, she cannot be simply 'original' because she is part of a spectral arrangement in which the emergence of personalities is irregular rather than ordered. In other words, because the body cannot be rightly said to belong to any one of the personalities over the other, the very idea of the body becomes spectral. During this encounter in the hotel room, it belongs to both Elizabeth and Betsy at the same time; yet, for that reason, it also does not belong to either of them exclusively. The body becomes figured as the skin or fabric of the palimpsest, with the warring personalities written onto and incorporated within it – the vellum that enables its constitutive parts to exist in arrangement with one another – and functioning as the medium through which these components signify their presence. And whereas each successive text belongs to the palimpsest and is contiguous with its structure, the palimpsest, by its very nature, cannot be equated with any of its constituent parts alone.

At the same time that the body becomes part of the spectral economy of the narrative, it becomes increasingly visible throughout the remainder of the fight:

> Nothing could pain Betsy, she knew; no kind of hurt could register on that black mind, and so she could only try to overpower Betsy physically, and force her down […] she put her hand almost gently around Betsy's throat and tightened her fingers as slowly and surely as she could […] Betsy screamed, and gasped, and then ripped at her hand with sharp, cutting nails, and kicked out, and screamed again, sinking […] She felt Betsy's nails rake the side of her face, and then Betsy called out 'Mother!' and was vanquished. (p. 128)

Elizabeth explicitly states her desire to subdue Betsy through her body as opposed to her 'black mind' precisely because the former is capable of being marked by physical violence. Hands once again play a significant role in registering the uncanny experience of two personalities competing for control of the body, in an altogether more brutal fashion than Bess's experience of the automatic writing in Doctor Wright's office. The language of this

passage makes repeated use of the imagery of surface and depth. The body's skin is cut and torn by sharp nails, anatomical writing instruments signifying one personality's dominance over the other. Skin is very much configured in this exchange as a writing surface, with images of 'ripping' and 'cutting' suggesting a metaphorical association with paper, as if it were the material palimpsest page, with Betsy determined either to mark her presence more lastingly or else to damage and impair its means of signifying any presence at all, a form of violence directed as much at the self as at the other.

Within the transitory space of the hotel room and its detritus, the practices of conventional reading and writing are no longer effective. The desk is covered with 'broken pens and spilled ink' (p. 126), an unambiguous metaphor for the breakdown in communication. Additionally, a note that Betsy (or one of the other personalities) left on the desk proves to be illegible: ' [It] turned into meaningless markings when [Elizabeth] brought it close enough to read' (p. 127). The only markings which signify here are those made upon the shared body of Elizabeth Richmond by this palimpsest of personalities, who write themselves onto the body's surface through cutting and tearing it, a new set of 'meaningless marks' which nonetheless attest to their presence.[69] Elizabeth determines her victory through Betsy's literal submission, being forced down and sinking, no longer the surface-text personality. The fact that Betsy exclaims 'Mother!' at this moment of defeat is also interesting because it encapsulates the experience of dissociation as well as the wish to be fully present. The (absent) mother is, in many ways, the focal point for Betsy's journey to New York, and is thus imaginatively connected with her attempt at self-definition. Yet at the same time the mother serves as a strange mirror-image of Betsy's co-combatant, since they

[69] This is an inversion, or reversal, of the ventriloquised bodies documented by Beizer, the dermographic subjects whose skin bears the physical markings of the psychoanalyst rather than their own (self-)expressions.

share the name 'Elizabeth'. 'Mother' is therefore a figuration of both presence and absence, a spectral figure superintending both the attempt to consolidate identity and the failure to do so definitively.[70] Even though this submission of Betsy is also a form of self-directed violence for Elizabeth, because of their shared embodiment, it becomes a necessary act so that the body-text can be allowed to signify, and what it signifies is a dynamic of feminine multiplicity, one which Doctor Wright believes he must cure (that is, destroy), a decision he makes clear in the subsequent sections of the novel.

Jackson uses the idea of the spectralised body to make sense of a confrontation 'between' the different selves that populate it, but those same personalities are then threatened with the idea of erasure in the aftermath of their fight, when Elizabeth is in hospital. If the body were able to signify its plurality through markings on the surface – a body-text that can be read – this signification is subsequently denied or at least diminished by the hospital doctor and nurse:

> 'Mustn't chatter,' said the nurse, holding up a playful finger.
> 'We've got a pretty sore throat there, haven't we? But we're not going to think about it at all; we're going to have a nice wash-up and then Doctor will be here and give it a look-see. And we're not going to talk and we're not going to get excited and mostly we're not going to think about what happened, because after all it was pretty horrid, wasn't it?' (p. 129)

Elizabeth's fight with Betsy for self-expression is here negated. Not only is she told multiple times not to speak, but she is also forbidden to think or react to her situation emotionally. In addition, as if to fully divest Elizabeth of a potentially nascent individuality, the nurse only refers to her as 'we,' unknowingly reminding Elizabeth of her palimpsestuous embodiment.

[70] It would be possible to write an entire chapter section on the (non)presence of the mother figure and her determinative role in Elizabeth's spectralisation. My analysis concentrates on how this spectral characterisation is represented and described, rather than being focussed on its causes or 'origins', so I have not elaborated on it in detail here.

The threat of the full-voiced female personality is restated by her examining doctor when he says to Elizabeth: '"I don't want you to talk any more than you have to"' (p. 129). The injunction against using language more than is absolutely necessary is presented as a medical necessity, yet its effect is still the same – to deny Elizabeth the chance of signifying independently, of being the author of her own identity. That production is made the responsibility of those figures of medical authority, echoing the injunctions of Doctor Wright from earlier in the text, which is appropriate given that he makes a return at the very end of the chapter.

Elizabeth is made to be silent so that she can be authored and then erased by others. The opening sentence of Doctor Wright's second chapter, which immediately follows Elizabeth's stay in the hospital, demonstrates precisely the manner in which Elizabeth Richmond's presence is not self-determined:

> Since I do not anticipate making the history of Elizabeth R. into my life's work – although I can conceive of lives spent on less – I do not think it necessary to enter into as much professional detail in what I now see as my second, and concluding, stage of her treatment at my hands. (p. 131)

The narrative makes clear that Doctor Wright is perhaps the most influential figure in determining the permissible boundaries of Elizabeth Richmond's subjectivity – for instance, he is the only character given two chapters, both of which he narrates in his own voice. Moreover, this influence is a destructive one: he admits to omitting details and information in this section because Elizabeth no longer represents as promising a prospect for his medical and authorial legacy as she once did. Wright's narrative, along with the assessment of the hospital practitioners, effectively effaces Elizabeth as an agent by denying her capacity for speaking in her own voice. This denial of the psychopathological patient and her voice relates closely to institutional practices enacted against the hysterical woman, as

Beizer summarises: '[T]he potential scandal of the speaking body is neutralized by virtue of its production by an external agent'.[71] Elizabeth's rebellion against the parasitic involution of personalities is undermined, because she is encysted within a palimpsestuous structure which denies the prospect of separation. When an attempt is made at marking her distinctiveness, the haunting presence of medical authority is reanimated to deny this expression, and so return her to the delimiting figuration of the palimpsest.

However, as the narrative reaches its climax, an inversion occurs, and this involuted structure begins to disaggregate, facilitated by the interventions of Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen. Once again, the form of this supposedly curative action uses the language and figuration of physical violence and submission. When Betsy takes control of Bess's right hand at the moment of dissolution, Wright and Morgen each seize one side of the body as a means of subduing Betsy's emergence: '"We're going to rip her in half," Morgen said, gasping, and the doctor answered grimly, "I wish we could."' (p. 230). This threat to tear Elizabeth apart is the logical culmination of the threats Doctor Wright makes throughout the text, and it instigates what effectively amounts to an exorcism of the palimpsestic arrangement of the personalities, with himself and Aunt Morgen arbitrating over which ones will be ejected:

> '*Please*, Morgen.' Betsy's voice rose entreatingly. 'I never did anything to *you*, Morgen, and I don't think I'll get any more chances . . . Morgen, *please* let go.'
> 'No,' said Morgen. She looked beyond Betsy to the doctor, who had his arms tight around Betsy, imprisoning her other arm, and he shook his head violently.
> 'Morgen,' Betsy said quietly, 'I'll get rid of her [Bess] for you. She'll be gone, and never come back. Because I don't think I'm coming back any more, either.'
> 'Goodbye,' said Morgen, setting her teeth.
> 'Morgen,' said Betsy despairingly, and fled. (p. 231)

[71] Beizer, p. 26.

The poses of both Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen intensify the force of their banishment of Betsy. Doctor Wright's hold is described as 'imprisoning', amplifying his authoritative hold over Elizabeth's body and mind(s), the latter of which are themselves already 'imprisoned' in the shared space of the body. So pronounced is this power that he can command Aunt Morgen without even talking – his 'violent' head shake to nullify Betsy's entreaty to remain is sufficient for his will to be accepted. This is in marked contrast to the injunction against speaking which Elizabeth receives in the New York hospital, where her silence is symptomatic of her attenuated authority. The difference here is that Aunt Morgen commands an equal share of the responsibility, and it is her 'Goodbye' which precipitates Betsy's removal from the narrative.

Even though this moment represents the disaggregation of the involuted arrangement of personalities, Betsy demonstrates how they nevertheless remain bound to each other. In getting rid of Bess, she is aware that she will remove herself from the scene, despite her appeal to Morgen to let her stay, because their palimpsestuous imbrication means they cannot be separated. In exorcising one personality, the palimpsest structure disintegrates, and all of the personalities are unravelled, disappearing from the narrative. Betsy describes this removal in terms of 'not coming back', a significant formulation that gestures towards the spectral dynamic of haunting which defines the arrangement and emergence of the personalities. The movement towards the end of the text – and of 'Miss Richmond' – is both an unthreading of the palimpsest, and an exorcism of the spectral fragmentation of Elizabeth's subjectivity.

It is suggestive that the figure who emerges from this disappearance, appearing in the final chapter, is nameless. Her identity is not tied to or delimited by an appellation, in the manner the derivatives of Elizabeth defined the respective personalities. However, this

freedom does not prevent her from being defined and configured by others, just as Elizabeth experienced. Without the means to introduce herself, she is described in the opening sentences of the chapter as 'Doctor Wright's patient' and 'Aunt Morgen's niece' (p. 233), with the latter two increasingly figured as pseudo-parents to a child who is only just acquiring language skills. It soon becomes apparent in this section that this 'new' figure cannot escape the haunting influence of the personalities which came before her, particularly because, as part of her acculturation into her new world, Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen encourage her to engage with a remembered consciousness which is not her own:

> Gropingly, holding firmly to Doctor Wright's hand, keeping her eyes upon Aunt Morgen, wandering and bewildered and faltering, she had been brought slowly to remembrance; much of what she recalled now was sharply distinct, present in her mind as it would have been if it had really happened to her. (p. 233)

There is a spectral reanimation and transmission of the forgotten past which comes to haunt this new character, a personal knowledge which effectively possesses her as if she were just one more palimpsested text/figure, with fragments of the other texts/personalities registering their presence on her memory. Jackson's use of 'remembrance' is particularly telling in this respect, since it suggests both an act of commemoration for those no longer here, whilst at the same time reviving their memories and experiences in a 'new' form. Even after her multiple identities have been dissipated, Doctor Wright still imposes on his patient a schema for subjectivity, a pressure which is reinforced physically through their enfolded hands. Extending the earlier image of himself as a Frankensteinian creator, Wright sets out his agenda to Aunt Morgen in unambiguous terms:

> '[*O*]*ur* responsibility is, clearly, to people this vacant landscape – fill this empty vessel, I think I said before – and, with our own deep emotional reserves, enable the child to rebuild […] She will owe to us her opinions, her discriminations, her reflections; we are able, as few others have ever been, to re-create, entire, a human being, in the most proper and reasonable mold, to select what is finest and most elevating from our own experience and bestow!' (p. 249)

The primary development of the Frankenstein analogy is that the raw material to furnish the creation comes from both himself and Aunt Morgen – not from the (dead/alive) person but from the personality. Wright uses images of empty containment such as the 'vacant landscape' and unfilled 'mold' (p. 249) to demonstrate his prowess for 'self' production as an author/ity. He not only figuratively constrains this new girl, he constitutes her as well. This is the additional element of spectral transmission and possession at the end of the narrative, in which the unnamed successor to Elizabeth becomes an iteration of Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen. In place of the involuted palimpsest of Elizabeth's derivative personalities, the 'new' girl is similarly structured by successive influences and histories which are not hers, but which nevertheless come to define her. Wright and Morgen extend this iteration to the point of trying to name the girl after themselves:

> 'If you're taking on a new name, how about Morgen this time?'
> 'Victoria?' suggested the doctor.
> 'Morgen Victoria,' Morgen amended generously.
> 'Victoria Morgen,' said the doctor. (p. 256)

Whereas the derivative personalities of Elizabeth Richmond could distinguish themselves through reference to their names (even if they were facets of the same personality), this relatively simple self-definition appears to be unavailable to this character, who has every aspect of her identity defined by others. However, just as Betsy attempts to repudiate Doctor Wright's medical authority by re-naming him 'Doctor Wrong', the girl gently refuses this imposition, responding simply: '"I know who I am"' (p. 256). She elides the problematic

association that names and naming have had for her past self/selves by refusing this marker of identity, being content instead with the degree of self-knowledge she possesses. She attempts to move beyond the spectral quality of this nominal iteration which restricted her forebears.

However, whilst this refusal of a name might be read as a form of resistance against the determining influence of others, it poses its own set of uncertainties for securing her identity. As the opening of the chapter suggests, such knowledge of herself which she possesses does not correspond to her own experiences, but those of Elizabeth Richmond's different personalities. Although it is 'present in her mind' and 'sharply distinct' in its details, they are nothing but a spectral trace of emotion and experience of the shared mind from which she has emerged. Just as the four personalities were distinct from each other, they emerged from the same psychosocial space, and carried the palimpsestuous trace of one another within themselves. This is the same with the new personality who has emerged in the aftermath of their disappearance – she is distinct from these past iterations and yet is still partly defined by them. Therefore, the claim to know herself is undermined by the fact that the 'I' who speaks is not individual, since what this 'I' knows is not itself but its other, an instantiation of the derealised subject Virginia Woolf evokes in *A Room of One's Own*: '"I" is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being.'[72] If the new girl who emerges out of the exorcised remnants of Elizabeth Richmond can be said to have a being, it is not her own, so that she comes to be haunted by her very lack of agency or subjectivity, the only thing she believes herself to possess.

Just like *Hangsaman*, *The Bird's Nest* is a working example of how non-spectral

[72] Virginia Woolf, 'A Room of Ones's Own', in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-149 (p. 5).

objects, processes, and conditions replicate characteristics that are associated with spectrality. In the case of the latter novel, this relates primarily to Jackson's representation of Elizabeth's dissociative identity disorder and the way it materialises across the narrative, making it an experience in which the reader is invited to participate. Jackson wrote *The Bird's Nest* at a point when there was no medical recognition of the specificity of dissociative identity as part of the spectrum of personality disorders. Indeed, it was not until the 1980s that it gained widespread acceptance as a legitimate psychological condition, at which point it entered public discourse as a term with some degree of currency (even if misapplications and misunderstandings of in popular culture were frequent).

As I have illustrated here, more than describing it as a psychological affliction, Jackson recognised its metaphorical potency to critique the circumscription of 'undesirable' forms of femininity demanded by an atavistic post-war society. Moreover, it is through the language and figurative capacity of spectrality that Jackson makes these complex conditions and discursive proscriptions comprehensible, articulating how a pluralised formation of identity could be diminished and conceived of as unacceptable by the avatars of medical and patriarchal author/ity (in this case, Doctor Wright).

The palimpsest and palimpsestuous reading collectively provide a model for describing the involuted structure of dissociated personalities. Jackson's innovation is to charge this arrangement with a particular spectral resonance. As I have demonstrated, the manner in which the personalities co-exist as many selves in one body is most effectively understood as a haunting one: each personality is imperfectly present (to other people as well as each other), but still make this attenuated presence register on those around them, through processes such as Betsy and Elizabeth's self-directed violence, and Betsy's manual possession of Bess and the resulting ghost-writing. A hauntographic reading of *The Bird's*

Nest repurposes the palimpsest as a figuration of subjectivity, one that informs literary characterisation in addition to being a historical and theoretical object. Spectral reading disinters a lot of textual detail, but it also provides a conceptually coherent framework for understanding that detail, and responding to it in new, sometimes unexpected ways.

Dis/Placing the Spectre: 'Missing' Women in Jackson's Short Fiction

'There are dozens and dozens of lonely girls
who cannot make the world see them'.[1]

'The truly missing need to be lost not only to those left behind,
but also to themselves'.[2]

If the experiences of *Hangsaman*'s Natalie Waite and *The Bird's Nest*'s Elizabeth Richmond could be distilled into a single maxim, 'women have a horrible time' would be an uncontroversial (if rather truistic) contender. It has long been a hallmark of Jackson scholarship to point out the parlous conditions in which her female protagonists find themselves, be it a consequence of their own actions, or – far more frequently – the ineluctable and atavistic social pressures with which they must contend. These conditions engender questions around women's proper 'place', and reflect anxieties of transgression and/or entrapment that such a delimitation generates.[3] This dynamic can be seen in the earliest work on Jackson as well as the most recent. In her 1993 study of Jackson's then-published short fiction, Joan Wylie Hall observes how her stories deal with characters who 'become enmeshed in extraordinary situations that either free them or, more often, trap them'.[4] These women – 'typically in their twenties and thirties' – are just one example of the various types of female protagonists in Jackson's oeuvre (along with 'the unmarried urban

[1] Elisabeth Moss as Shirley Jackson in *Shirley*, dir. by Josephine Decker (Neon, 2020).
[2] Esther Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 145.
[3] As previously suggested, these social pressures were particularly intense in the aftermath of the Second World War, which had represented a period of comparative economic and social freedom that few American woman had hitherto experienced. The return to a pre-war sense of 'normality' therefore mandated the return of women to the home, caught in the swell of what Elaine Tyler May terms 'a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for women and men'. This tension in women's experience of the home as a site of both definition and delimitation is explored in a number of Jackson's short stories, as will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Elaine Tyler May*, Homeward Bound: American Families in The Cold War Era*, 4th edn (New York: Basic Books, 2017 [1988]), Kindle ebook.
[4] Joan Wylie Hall, *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993), p. xii.

woman' and 'the country housewife'), all of whom are 'subject to anxiety and crisis' in one form or another.[5] Similarly, Melanie R. Anderson suggests in her introduction to *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity* that a characteristic feature of Jackson's writing is 'her penchant for linking the position of women in 1950s America to gothic themes of the uncanny and entrapment'.[6] These two assessments, published twenty-seven years apart, underline the degree to which Jackson deals with femininity-in-crisis: through her fiction, the gendered experience of everyday life is transformed into a gothic drama which stages the threat of women's entrapment and diminished presence within their own lives, to the point where the viability of their autonomy and agency begins to break down.

In one of the earliest analyses of Jackson's fiction, John G. Parks employs a particularly striking image to describe this threat to femininity. In concluding his (rather terse) guide to her short stories, Parks observes of Jackson that '[s]he brings many of her characters […] to the edge of the abyss: some fall, some cling desperately to the edge, and only a few find their way to safety'.[7] The abyss is an apposite metaphor for the conditions of women's experience for the way in which it describes an intensity of absence. Principally used to mean 'any unfathomable cavity or void space', in its figurative association it references 'a condition from which recovery is impossible or unlikely'.[8] As applied to Jackson's writing, therefore, the abyss represents the terminal limit of identity, a consuming non-space that shadows each of Jackson's female protagonists. At the same time, it describes the end-point of femininity-in-crisis, the breakdown of women's ability to be autonomous or free-acting,

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[5] Ibid, p. xii, p. xiii.
[6] Melanie R. Anderson, 'Introduction', in *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House*, ed. by Jill E. Anderson and Melanie R. Anderson (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 1-6 (p. 2).
[7] John G. Parks, 'The Possibility of Evil: A Key to Shirley Jackson's Fiction', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 15.3 (Summer 1978), 320-323 (p. 323).
[8] 'Abyss', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www-oed-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/view/Entry/860?rskey=9i3jN&result=1&isAdvanced=false> [accessed 28 October 2020]

disappearing into a void of perpetual inaction. Since, in Parks's formulation, every Jackson character is situated in relation to the abyss (even those scarce few who escape it), the threat of disappearance into this void of gendered subjectivity underpins Jackson's representation of femininity in her short fiction, and it is this dynamic that I unpack in this chapter.

The previous chapters have demonstrated how conceptualisations of spectrality point to both the division and multiplicity of femininity – in relation to *Hangsaman* and *The Bird's Nest* respectively – as an attenuation of individual identity. Natalie and Elizabeth are haunted by configurations which see the self as other, either as a figure apart from themselves (as with Natalie and Tony), or as simply *a* part of an aggregation of selves. As I argue in this chapter, in Jackson's short stories, the divided or pluralised woman gives way to the displaced or missing one – disappearing or disappeared – as a recurrent figuration of identity. Although in some ways a complementary configuration to the spectral femininities seen in the two novels, the focus on missing women (and the different permutations of this term) marks an important reorientation away from divisions and profusions of femininity towards its narrative erasure. This is the attenuation of identity taken to its logical extreme, a pronounced inscription of the inescapably hauntological character of femininity as it is presented in Jackson's writing.

Missing women are, so to speak, everywhere in Jackson's texts. Indeed, it can be argued that they constitute the most significant category of female characters in her short fiction because they are the victims of a process which affects all of the women who populate these stories. In her influential early study of Jackson's short fiction, Hall argues that the female characters depicted in these texts 'struggle to declare their selfhood'

because there are always 'obstacles to attaining a secure sense of identity.'[9] Although Hall does not explicitly invoke the idea of women who are missing here, her description of these characters who are denied a clear expression of identity suggests a situation in which women are never quite 'present' in their stories; in this struggle for finding and securing a clear sense of self, they are only part successful. As a result, women in Jackson's stories can be said to 'embody a post-war sensibility of dislocation and loss.'[10] Ironically, therefore, the 'missing women' of these selected stories are the most visible (dis)embodiments of a wider cultural displacement of femininity, a configuration which haunts the domestic and urban milieux from which these women disappear.

As the selection of short stories which are analysed in this chapter demonstrates, 'missing' is a polyvalent term. Although there are characters who physically disappear, there are equally significant configurations of metaphorical disappearance or erasure at work in these texts. There are two principal strategies which precipitate this spectral displacement: substitution and repetition. A number of Jackson's stories address the phenomenon of substitution, wherein one identity is swapped or exchanged for another, or, sometimes, for no alternative at all. This figuration of substitution operates around the spectral dynamic of presence-absence, and so my analysis draws upon Esther Peeren's conceptualisation of missing persons as 'living ghosts' in *The Spectral Metaphor*. Whilst a missing person might be assumed to be simply 'absent' (since this is the very condition which invites attention), Peeren argues instead that 'the elusive fate of the missing, even when their death is virtually certain, works to preserve and extend their lives in the minds of those left behind […] While they cannot be seen, they remain present; those looking for them know that they, or their

[9] Hall, p. xiii.
[10] Ibid, p. xiv.

remains, must be somewhere.'[11] Peeren is careful to note the differences between more substantial forms of apparitionality – such as the spirits conjured by a medium – and the ghostliness of the missing: this latter group are not attended by a 'surplus of signification', but rather 'mark a lack of meaning and knowledge'.[12] Although substitution and disappearance are not perfect synonyms, both participate in the operations of displacement or dis-location, particularly with regards to the consequent conditions of expressing agency. As Peeren notes:

> The association between missing persons and victimhood indicates the degree to which the missing are deprived of agency. Their vanishing is seen as something that happens or is done to them and, after disappearing, they can no longer speak for themselves but have to be spoken for and imagined by others.[13]

Passivity becomes the hallmark of the missing person, and this is a recurring element in Jackson's short stories. In 'The Good Wife', a jealous and paranoid husband incarcerates his wife within her bedroom whilst he writes letters which appropriate her voice and 'character'. In 'The Missing Girl', the disappearance of a teenager from a summer camp is resolved when the adults responsible for her safety collude to deny her existence in the first place – she cannot be 'missing', because there is no 'she' to miss. The forced erasure of these characters is both perpetrated on the expectation of a lack of agency from these women, and in so doing, brings into existence that same passivity.

However, there is another spectral strategy involved in configuring the missing person,

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[11] Peeren, p. 144.

[12] Ibid.

This dynamic between a 'profusion' and 'lack' of signification also maps onto the different modalities of spectral subjectivity between Jackson's novels and short stories, particularly the feminine multiplicity of *The Bird's Nest*. Part of the apparatus which defines Elizabeth Richmond as spectral is that her plurality exceeds the reader's capacity to understand her as an individual, whereas it is the inability to signify sufficiently which constitutes the spectral 'lack' of the various female characters in the short stories.

[13] Peeren, p. 145.

which Peeren terms '*self-spectralization* – a deliberate, pre-emptive auto-ghosting'.[14] This practice does assume or expect some expression of agency, one which chooses the desubstantialising effacement associated with spectrality in order to make the self disappear. Jackson might be said to anticipate this theorisation in her story 'Nightmare', in which a secretary chooses to become an elusive advertising figure known as 'Miss X', to whom she bears a striking – and more than coincidental – resemblance. However, Jackson demonstrates that this expression of agency is meaningless, since she becomes 'missing' long before her decision to substitute herself. Underpinning these various instantiations of substitution is the twin logic of being 'written(-)out'. In having these characters 'written out' – that is, made to appear in writing – they are also written-out of their own narratives, made to disappear. In other words, the gesture which makes these women 'present' as characters is the same gesture that enacts their narrative erasure. Jackson's condition of writing women is to de/realise them in the same inscription.

The literary theorist and critic J. Hillis Miller opens his 1982 book *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* with an acknowledgement of 'the contribution to meaning of the various forms of recurrence in novels'.[15] Although Hillis Miller notes that '[a]ny novel is a complex tissue of repetitions and of repetitions within repetitions', he is careful to distinguish between two particular modes.[16] The first, which (borrowing from Deleuze) he terms 'Platonic', is a form in which there exists an archetypal model or entity – a thing to be repeated – of which all other examples are copies. This form of repetition is marked by a 'genuine participative similarity' between the repeated elements, and it is this similarity which serves as the guarantee of truth between that which is copied and the copies

[14] Ibid, p. 148.
[15] J. Hills Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 1.
[16] Ibid, p. 2.

themselves.[17] The second variety of repetition – the 'Nietzschean mode' – is very different.[18] In this form, similarity is seen as the product of a fundamental disparity. It is a mode based on difference, where each element is intrinsically different to every other thing. Although similarity is still the conceptual foundation for repetition here, what matters is not the truthfulness or exactness of the imitation, but that this form of recurrence is founded on 'opaquely similar' similarities between the repeated elements, a relationship which can be summarised as: 'It seems that X repeats Y, but in fact it does not, or at least not in the firmly anchored way of the first sort of repetition'.[19] Hillis Miller suggests that 'there is something ghostly about the effects of this second kind of repetition', and it is this formulation which provides the theoretical framework for interpreting how reiteration or recurrence is linked to the spectral elision of women.[20]

There is no clearly defined foundation for the comparison between repeated elements; they are only similar to the extent to which they are different. Therefore, the ghostly logic of repetition, rather than guaranteeing the truthfulness of the original which is reiterated – since these similarities are only ever 'opaque' – demonstrates how this original becomes 'lost' in the act of repetition. For example, in 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith', the eponymous character is clearly defined as separate from her husband's first wife throughout the narrative, yet it is precisely this difference which imperils her, since her 'difference' from the first wife is what marks her out as his next victim. Not only is her own identity erased by these similarities-with-a-difference – she is not even the first 'Mrs Smith' – but her differences from the first wife, the supposed markers of her individuality, similarly

[17] Ibid, p. 6.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

threaten her with enforced disappearance, as the ending of the text very strongly suggests. This formulation of repetition is approached from a variety of perspectives across these short stories, and, together with substitution, serves as the principal framework for understanding the 'presence' of missing women as a spectral modality of subjectivity in Jackson's writing, whilst underlining the multivalency of spectral characterisation across her work. First divided, then pluralised, and now displaced. This dis/placement is not uniform, affecting characters to different degrees depending on their situation. However, each of the stories I analyse in this chapter evince a shared preoccupation with women's experience of being in the world, and the tension between this and the conditions that attenuate their presence and render them spectral within their particular environments. This is what defines the dynamic of dis/placement, and why it is a significant component in a hauntographic reading of Jackson's short stories.

Aberrant Adolescence: 'The Missing Girl'

Appearing in the December 1957 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 'The Missing Girl' offers the most literal instantiation of the vanished or erased woman in Jackson's short fiction. Martha Alexander disappears from Phillips Education Camp for Girls Twelve to Sixteen, having told her roommate Betsy, in a rather cryptic manner, that she has 'something to do'.[21] When she fails to return after three days, Betsy informs the Camp Mother – Old Jane – about her disappearance, whereupon the police are called in and a series of searches begin. Although she is Martha's roommate, Betsy knows almost nothing definitive about her, from her camp year – '"Woodsprite, I *think*"' (p. 375) – to the activities

[21] Shirley Jackson, 'The Missing Girl', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 373-385 (p. 373). All further references are to this edition.

in which she was involved – '"Dramatics? I think she went to Dramatics"' (p. 377). Betsy's relationship with Martha is marked by uncertainty and a lack of knowledge, two of the qualities which Peeren argues are generated by, and come to define, the figure of the missing person.[22]

However, Martha's disappearance is not the *cause* of this lack of knowledge, because it is only after her absence that it is discovered how little people know about her. This suggests that even before her disappearance, Martha is not a fully 'present' character to those around her. She does not disappear from a place in which she is a fully visible or perceptible presence, but from one in which she is already quasi-absent in terms of what people know about her. Betsy illustrates this particularly pointedly when she tries to recollect any useful details she can give to the chief of police:

> Betsy thought again, remembering as well as she could the sleeping figure in the other bed, the soiled laundry on the floor, the open suitcase, the tin boxes of cookies, the towels, the face cloths, the soap, the pencils . . . 'She had her own clock,' Betsy volunteered. (p. 377)

Despite her best efforts at remembering Martha, Betsy can only summon memories of her possessions, the material objects which attest to her one-time presence rather than any details about Martha or *her* materiality. What is significant about Betsy's attempted recollection is her fixation on the clock as an object she associates particularly with her missing roommate. Although it is a marker of Martha's presence that persists after her disappearance, the clock also serves to remind the reader of the amount of time she has been missing. It attests to her position between the 'here' and the 'not-here', between the visible and the invisible dimensions of being present and absent, and so, more than

[22] Peeren, p. 144.

anything, the clock associates Martha with a dis-location which, in combination with her adolescence, is inexorably spectral.

Martha has moved outside the normal flow of time; she is not present within the present but has become desynchronised, a condition that Derrida famously terms the '*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*'.[23] It is this quality of being out-of-time with herself that marks Martha as spectral, through her (imperfect) absence, since it is 'ghosts [that] invoke and perform this non-contemporaneity; they persist as an untimely time that destabilizes the order of things'.[24] Martha's compromised absence/imperfect presence destabilises time as well as the clear distinction between 'presence' and 'absence', but it also draws attention to the way in which 'the present' is always in a state of 'untimeliness', since it is 'never constituted by being "in" the moment but rather being *undone* by the moment […] never "now" but always "now" and "not now," or "now" and "other"'.[25] Martha is rendered ghostly by her disappearance, but this ghostliness in turn exposes the spectral (dis)arrangement of the present she leaves behind.

Martha's literal disappearance is further compounded by the partial or ineffective attempts at recording her presence in both writing and memory. When the search of her room yields no useful discoveries, an attempt is made to establish the pastimes in which she participated:

> A careful checkup of Recreational Activity lists showed that while she was listed for dramatics and nature study and swimming, her attendance at any of them was dubious; most of the counselors kept slipshod attendance records, and none of them could remember whether any such girl could have come on any given day. (p. 378)

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[23] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning*, *and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. xix.
[24] Patricia M. Keller, *Ghostly Landscapes: Film, Photography, and the Aesthetics of Haunting in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 5.
[25] Ibid.

Even in those places where Martha's name does appear, where an attempt is made to establish her past-presence, this merely demonstrates the problem of locating her. Her 'dubious' attendance at any of these activities does not suggest that she does *not* attend the sessions, but rather that her doing so cannot be established definitively. Just as Martha is suspended between presence and absence by the material traces she leaves behind, the records which should establish her appearance unambiguously instead (dis)locate her between 'here' and 'not-here'. This administrative incompleteness is strangely reflected in the attitude the counselors have towards their adolescent charges: '"one girl is much like another, at *this* age. Their unformed minds, their unformed bodies, their little mistakes"' (p. 379). The girls themselves are viewed as only partial, as subjects-in-formation rather than fixed, unchanging identities. There is an implied association between this incomplete registration and these fledgling identities, as if these girls – and Martha in particularly – are susceptible to disappearing because they are not fully 'present' as adult women.

As Deborah Martin argues, the female adolescent is 'an uncanny figure *par excellence*, on the border of personhood in more ways than one. As both female and child, she twice challenges categorisation as a "proper" subject, embodying anxieties about categorization and posing a double threat to the power relations of patriarchy'.[26] Martha's adolescent liminality makes her pre-disposed to the same semantic slipperiness as the spectre, belonging to multiple categories without ever inhabiting any one in particular, in much the same way as Natalie Waite is presented in *Hangsaman*. Jackson replicates the female adolescent's doubled-experience of un/belonging (and the problem of categorisation) in the way the adults, the invigilators of patriarchal standards of femininity, do (or, perhaps,

[26] Deborah Martin, 'Feminine Adolescence as Uncanny: Masculinity, Haunting and Self-Estrangement', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 49.2 (February 2013), 135-144 (p. 138).

choose) not to keep track of Martha in their records, and, moreover, use this as the basis for 'solving' the categorical difficulty she represents, just as Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen attempt to resolve the problem of Elizabeth's disruptive pluralisation unilaterally, without any recourse to the interests of their patient.

To the problem of her physical disappearance, the adults propose an administrative solution. Rather than continue the search, the authority figures – particularly Old Jane and Martha's uncle – conspire to erase Martha out of existence completely by suggesting that she was not, and never has been, 'present', and so cannot have disappeared at all. They literalise the conceptual non-position between presence and absence through which she has been defined during her time at the camp – to their minds, this denies the very possibility of her being missing, since there is no figure which pre-exists the act of disappearance. In other words, the only response that denies her disappearance is an even more thorough erasure, one which writes her out of existence:

> Old Jane nodded and shuffled the papers in her hand. 'I have all the records here,' she said. 'Although a girl named Martha Alexander applied for admission to the Phillips Educational Camp for Girls Twelve to Sixteen, her application was put into the file marked "possibly undesirable" and there is no record of her ever having come to the camp. Although her name has been entered upon various class lists, she is not noted as having participated personally in any activity.' (p. 384)

Peeren has noted the degree to which the missing person is dependent upon those who are left behind to formulate or put into effect the conditions through which they can remain 'present' after their disappearance: 'most missing persons […] are incapable of engineering their own recognition; they, or rather, the void left by their unexplained removal, can be conjured only by others, on their terms'.[27] What she does not account for in this

[27] Ibid, p. 146.

theorisation is the desire for non-conjuration which might motivate those who are left behind. Those in a position to decide whether the missing girl will be recognised propose instead a kind of double disappearance: a literal one overlain with an administrative erasure from records which establish her prior existence, however tentatively. Jackson's story demonstrates the multivalence of apparitionality: it does not just involve the dimensions of (im)material presence, but of social and interpersonal relationships – the way in which the ghost(ed) figure is apprehended or directed by non-spectral characters. This exemplifies what Keller means when she observes that 'haunting […] is always a form of social mediation'.[28] Despite its ability to disrupt order and convention, the 'ghostliness' of the ghost is not solely within its ability to control; as Peeren notes in *The Spectral Metaphor*, 'the ghost is a metaphor certain people (are made to) live *as*' – it is not a condition of their choosing.[29]

The quality of being 'possibly undesirable' is particularly significant in explicating the possible motivation for Martha's full-erasure. The uncle reveals that he has been sent a letter from her mother (which the reader does not get to read in full), whose contents he summarises for those present:

> 'What I *mean*,' he said, looking around again, 'she has three girls and a boy, my sister […] The oldest girl, that's Helen, she's married and out in San Francisco, so that's *her*. And – I'll show you my sister's letter – the second girl, that's Jane, well, *she's* married and *she* lives in Texas somewhere, has a little boy about two years old. And then the third girl – well, *that's* Mabel, and she's right at home with her mother, around the house and whatnot. Well – you see what I mean?' (pp. 383-384)

Martha's uncle equivocates as to what exactly he means, but there are two principal ways to read his suggestion. The first is that the mother denies that Martha is her daughter at all

[28] Keller, p .7.
[29] Peeren, p .6.

– she has 'three girls and a boy', all of whom are accounted for within some form of domestic arrangement. The more nuanced reading suggests that Martha is rendered invisible, un-locatable within the family due to the conceptually problematic nature of her adolescence – what Deborah Martin terms 'the constitutive strangeness of this life-stage'.[30] The three daughters mentioned in the letter are all explicitly defined through their domestic status – the eldest are both married, with families of their own, with the remaining one 'right at home with her mother, around the house and whatnot.' In other words, they represent a fixed version of femininity which is easily locatable, both conceptually and physically. As an adolescent girl, Martha's position outside some conception of 'home' makes her, as Old Jane says, 'undesirable'.

She is, then, a doubly liminal figure in her figuration as a missing teenage girl, the not-quite child/not-quite adult whose absence is indicated by the persistence of objects and items which indicate her presence. The double-disappearance which is enforced upon Martha is a response to the categoric disruption she represents as a young girl outside the home who is not married, or might never be married. Indeed, she might be 'undesirable' because she does not wish to define herself in relation to any kind of matrimonial-domestic arrangement, a flagrant rejection of feminine propriety that Lily Robert-Foley wryly parodies when she asks 'what is more terrifying: a spinster or a ghost?'[31] If Martha is incommensurate with categories of domestic containment, and as such embodies a conceptual challenge to an associated configuration of femininity, her spectral erasure becomes the least 'terrifying' possibility to those charged with restoring 'normality'. As Diane Long Hoeveler observes about Jackson's story, its significance can be found 'in the

[30] Martin, p. 135.
[31] Lily Robert-Foley, 'Haunted Readings of Female Gothic Short Stories', *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*, 7.2 (October 2017), 177-192 (p. 179).

way a young life is thrown away, discarded, snuffed out with absolutely no consequences at all'.[32] To (be made to) disappear is more acceptable than being permitted to enact any kind of social disruption.

The logic of substitution is two-fold in 'The Missing Girl'. Martha's problematic conceptual position is translated into a revoking of any notion of 'presence', thereby turning her, essentially, into a ghost whose uncertain position between life and death remains unresolved throughout the text and at its end. Although a body is found a little over a year after the disappearance, there is only the suggestion that it 'might have been Martha Alexander's' (p. 384). This uncertainty maintains the possibility of a future return, thereby perpetuating her spectral subjectivity.[33] At the same time, the story makes clear that Martha is in some sense synecdochical, an 'embodiment' of adolescent femininity in general, and a focus for the vulnerabilities of this position to being spectralised. One of the principal reasons so little is known about Martha as an individual is that she cannot be easily distinguished from many of the other girls in the camp, particularly in terms of her appearance: 'It was not possible to get a picture of the girl; the picture on her camp application blank was so blurred that it resembled a hundred other girls in the camp' (p. 380). Martha's unclear identity is rendered photographically in her blurred features, but, perhaps counterintuitively, this establishes a connection with the 'hundred other girls in the camp' to whom she bears a resemblance. This same association is made by the swimming counsellor, who asks police chief Hook '"did you ever look at fifty girls all in white bathing

[32] Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Life Lessons in Shirley Jackson's Late Fiction: Ethics, Cosmology, Eschatology', in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, edited by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 267-280, (p. 269).

[33] The narrative both sustains and is founded upon the ghostly possibilities of Martha making a ghostly return, but this is complicated by the fact that she may not be recognised or accepted in the process, given the degree and nature of her erasure. Under such circumstances, any possible reappearance would be decidedly Derridean, a '[r]epetition *and* first time' in which 'the spirit comes by *coming back* [revenant]'. See Derrida, p. 10.

caps?"' (p. 379), the suggestion being that it is impossible to differentiate between those who look so similar. In the de-individuation associated with her spectrality, Martha functions as a representation for a broader conception of adolescent femininity, underlining the fact that the circumstances of her spectral erasure are by no means restricted to her. Martin Scofield argues that this encompassing of the personal/private with a wider social significance is particularly suited to short fiction because the short story 'is perhaps the exemplary form for the perception of crisis, crux, turning point; and as such it has proved ideal for recording decisive moments, intimately private but often with broad social resonances'.[34] In the account of one adolescent girl's disappearance, Jackson uses these conventions of the short story to dramatise, and take to their logical extremes, social and cultural attitudes towards certain forms of femininity – adolescent, transitory, disruptive – which are not confined to a domestic setting, a theme which she also explores in 'Nightmare'.

'X' and the City: 'Nightmare'

Where 'The Missing Girl' uses the conceptually disruptive force of spectrality to interrogate social responses to adolescence, 'Nightmare' takes as its focus the attenuation of individuality which women experience in urban spaces. Toni Morgan (the second androgynous 'Tony' to appear in Jackson's fiction) works as a secretary in an unspecified corporation, and the narrative sees her being tasked to deliver a package across town for her boss, Mr Lang. As opposed to Martha and her sisters in 'The Missing Girl', Toni's professional identity affords her some freedom from the domestic sphere – her occupation

[34] Martin Scofield, *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 238.

seemingly allows her to move outside the home without conjuring the same anxieties about the propriety of her situation.[35] However, as William Chafe has argued, the distinction between the private/domestic and public/professional worlds is not as oppositional as might be supposed: 'If a woman worked in a secretarial position, she was described as nurturant and "wifely" in the way she took care of her boss'.[36] Reviewing the position of the woman-worker in social and cultural discourses of the post-/war years, Chafe points out that women's visibility and presence within the workplace had to be rationalised and approved according to a predetermined metaphorical schema, in which professional femininity was overlain with domestic attributes and characteristics. In other words, the working woman of this period was a figure suspended between 'the home' and 'the office' as sites of identity-production, and became part of a discursive formation which both raised and perpetuated anxieties about women outside the home.[37] Toni's mobility is therefore 'permissible' because she carries the haunting trace of these domestic expectations into her secretarial work, in addition to the material package she is charged with delivering – her freedom of movement is literally weighed down by this symbol of her male employer, a symbol whose double meaning as 'slang for sexual parts' leads Hoeveler to read this task as a form of punishment and humiliation that is enacted against Toni 'for seeking employment

[35] Toni is also older than Martha, closer to the age of the latter's sisters, albeit without their maternal commitments. However, Hoeveler argues that the story 'is written from a dependent and frightened child's point of view, a child who is powerless to do anything other than obey commands and follow orders she does not understand'. This tension between her actual age and the child-like register of her narrative perspective suggests that Toni is more of an unsettled presence in her story than might initially be guessed, subject to a haunting reversion to immaturity as she moves throughout the city. This tendency to infantilise subjects who are haunted can be seen throughout Jackson's corpus, and finds its clearest expression in the characterisation of Eleanor in *The Haunting of Hill House*. See Hoeveler, p.270.

[36] William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 124.

[37] While this was by no means the only opinion being voiced, Chafe argues that, nevertheless, '[f]or some Americans at least, women working represented a threat to the cohesion and sanity of social life'. p. 134.

outside of the home'.[38] Whilst her venturing into the city might be read as an escape from this configuration, it is nonetheless significant that her license for doing so is not self-derived; although it is during her time out on the streets that the most explicit spectral components of the narrative are realised, Toni begins the narrative as an already-haunted figure.

As her trip across town begins, Toni asks a newspaper vendor for directions – in doing so, her attention is drawn to a poster on the inside of the newspaper stand:

> 'Find Miss X,' the poster said in screaming red letters, 'Find Miss X. Find Miss X. Find Miss X.' The words were repeated over and over, each line smaller and in a different color; the bottom line was barely visible.[39]

This advertisement seemingly demands to be read – the bright-red letters 'screaming' at observers – and yet also makes it difficult to do so, with the increasingly diminutive font ending with a 'barely visible' last line. Initially, Toni's interest appears to be minimal, but this changes once a sound truck appears, offering advice for how passers-by might spot the mysterious figure: '"Miss X" is walking the streets of the city, completely alone. She is wearing a blue hat with a red feather, blue gloves, and dark blue shoes."' (p. 46). These clothes are identical to the ones Toni is wearing, and which are described extensively in the opening paragraph of the story (p. 42). Toni's response is to try and alter her appearance, by removing some items – 'she slid off her blue gloves and rolled them up and put them in her pocketbook' (p. 48) – modifying others – '[s]he buttoned her coat to hide the blue suit' (p. 48) – or else substituting them for new ones – '"Put my old hat in a box and I'll wear this one"' (p. 51). However, these attempts at instantiating her difference from 'Miss X' are unsuccessful, because the advertisement acknowledges the changes: '"Miss X has changed

[38] Hoeveler, p. 271.
[39] Shirley Jackson, 'Nightmare', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 42-58 (p. 44). All further references are to this edition.

her clothes now, but she is still walking alone through the streets of the city, find Miss X! Miss X is now wearing a gray and red hat, and is carrying *two* packages; don't forget, *two* packages"' (p. 52). All of this suggests an adaptive form of doubling, with 'Miss X' being figured as Toni's sartorial double, an unperceived or secret 'other' who nonetheless haunts Toni as a (self-)fashioned spectre for whom she could be substituted. As discussed briefly in chapter one, Catherine Spooner argues that clothing has a particularly significant association with spectrality. It attests to the immanence of the body within both the culture of everyday life and critical/discursive accounts, because 'the body in Western culture is inarticulable except through clothes'.[40] At the same time, this 'fabric-ation' of the subject can lead to the 'erasure or effacement of the body beneath' the clothing, since the clothes which signify the body's 'presence' can be taken off or exchanged, or else the signification of the clothes themselves can overwrite the subject's own meaning – as Spooner puts it, 'the body is perpetually collapsing under its sartorial freight'.[41] Although 'Miss X' appears to exemplify this idea of bodily erasure through clothing – she has no 'form' other than what she wears – their shared sartorial situation invites a reading of Toni as an increasingly spectral figure as well.

Toni's haunting is inexorably linked to her walking around the city; the further she moves away from the office, the more pronounced the resemblance between herself and Miss X becomes. It is perhaps no accident that it is within this urban landscape that Toni's individuality is put under pressure in this manner. Critics such as Janet Wolff have pointed out that the history of women walking in the city has been structured around a spectral conception of in/visibility. In the nineteenth century, women in public spaces were marked

[40] Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 3.
[41] Ibid, p. 6.

as being all-too-visible: 'The privilege of passing unnoticed in the city […] was not accorded to women, whose presence on the streets would certainly be noticed.'[42] Conversely, the modern city works to etherealise the experiences of women who move within and through it: 'The lives of women in the modern city – in private as well as in public […] are thus, as [Avery] Gordon puts it, "barely visible, or seemingly not there [p.8]."'[43] Toni's negotiation of these streets is not a politically neutral act, but is overlain, palimpsestically, with these competing historical configurations of in/visible women operating in public spaces; the conceptual weight of these configurations threatens to desubstantialise her subjectivity, which is why her increasing identification with the spectral 'Miss X' occurs out in the open spaces of the city. Indeed, the problems of in/visibility are brought into tension with each other in the letter 'X'. X can be read as an entity in and of itself – a mark or 'character' in a text, for instance – as well as indicating the presence of something that is hidden, secret, or even invisible – such as the archetypal use of X in 'X marks the spot', wherein X represents an entity which is simultaneously visible and invisible. At the same time, the 'X' of 'Miss X' is a negative formulation of identity – Miss X has no visible character behind the character, meaning that 'she' can resemble, or even become, anyone else. 'Miss X' is a non-name, or a name without a referent – the 'invisibility of a visible X', to quote Derrida – and her simultaneous visible-invisibility is what comes to define Toni's experience of her situation.[44]

[42] Janet Wolff, 'Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the Flâneur)', in *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 18-31 (p. 19).
[43] Ibid, p. 27. For further work on women's transitory experience of the city (and the regulation of gendered movement in the urban environment more generally), see Deborah L. Rogers, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (2000). In contrast, Elizabeth Wilson offers a more positive assessment of the city as a site of potential political and personal liberation in *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (1991).
[44] Derrida, p. 7.

At the end of the text, Toni can no longer escape the inevitable end-point of her increasing identification with Miss X, and so she capitulates:

> [S]he heard a footstep, and looked up to see a man in a blue suit coming toward her.
> 'Are you Miss X?' the man in the blue suit asked her.
> Miss Morgan opened her mouth, and then said, 'Yes,' tiredly. (p. 57)

Although this is the first time that someone has actually asked Toni whether she is this mysterious figure, her response indicates her assimilation with, or substitution by, Miss X. Toni is haunted by this feminised letter to such an extent that it ends up consuming her own name and identity, in a manner similar to the way in which the insistent 'R' of Rebecca de Winter overwhelms the nameless narrator in Daphne du Maurier's eponymous novel. In her reading of *Rebecca*, Dorothy Dodge Robbins argues that '[s]o impactful is the letter R on the narrator's psyche, it essentially consumes her own name'.[45] The 'consonant's powerful synecdochial forces' are evident in Jackson's story as well, particularly in terms of the apparitional quality of the presence 'behind' the respective consonants.[46] However, where Robbins reads the relationship as one of consumption in du Maurier's novel, in Jackson's story a more accurate description would be a self-same substitution: Toni is substituted by a figure who is both her and not-her, effected through a process which is best understood as spectral.

The story ends with Toni's disappearance from her former life, fully assuming the identity of 'Miss X' to travel to different cities, waiting for someone to recognise her, as they failed to do in New York. Yet the very fact that no one notices her similarity to 'Miss X' while she walks through the streets suggests that Toni is already 'missing' before this moment of

[45] Dorothy Dodge Robbins, 'R is for Rebecca: A Consonant and Consummate Haunting', *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, 64.2 (May 2016), 69-77 (p. 70).
[46] Ibid, p. 77.

elective substitution. As Wolff suggests about the current condition of urban femininity, Toni does not really seem to 'be there' in an unambiguous state of 'presence' because, despite the manifold instructions to identify and interact with the Miss X she so resembles, the only person to do so, the man in the blue suit, is part of the advertising campaign himself. Although this degree of collective disregard might be seen as purposeful – they actively choose *not* to notice her – the more mundane yet unsettling reality is that Toni is insufficiently present to register on the consciousness of her passers-by. As with 'The Missing Girl', Jackson uses the story of one woman's experience of dissociation to foreground the derealisation of a form of femininity that operates outside the home. In this respect, Toni exemplifies – if not embodies – Julian Wolfreys' argument that '[t]o be haunted is the on-going process of coming to terms with one's being […] the sense of being haunted […] is, in turn, a recognition of the abyssal nature, the groundless ground of being'.[47] In coming to terms with the uncanny sensation of being/becoming Miss X, Toni announces herself as a spectralised figure, whose always-already invisibility is only revealed through this act of haunting. If identity is 'not something "given," but is bestowed in acts of social recognition', then the failure of Toni's passers-by to recognise her and the configuration of femininity which she practises, can be read as a refusal to allow her a coherent, unified identity – instead, she can only accept the 'groundless ground' of her (non)being.[48] Jackson's story is a cautionary tale for mobile, urban/working women that freedom from the immediate constraints of domesticity is no utopian scheme of personal autonomy, but is marked by its own dangers and forms of de-presencing. Ghosts can haunt street corners as effectively as they do suburban neighbourhoods.

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[47] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, the Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 18.
[48] Peter Berger, quoted in Chafe, p. 182.

The Living/Live-In Spectre: 'The Good Wife'

In both 'The Missing Girl' and 'Nightmare', the spectralisation of femininity is tied to women's negotiation of spaces outside the home. This is not to suggest that Jackson regards the house as a safe or stable locus for the consolidation of feminine identity, though. If Martha Alexander and Toni Morgan are conceptually erased and disappear in response to their transgressive mobility outside the house, 'The Good Wife' presents the home itself as a site of entrapment and enforced submission which gradually attenuates female individuality. Andrew Hock Soon Ng points out that the house/family home is frequently depicted as a site of the Gothic 'unspeakable', and that characters in such texts frequently fall victim to 'an excessive experience of derealization and immateriality' that the domestic interior engenders.[49] This Gothic tableau forms the backdrop for the action of 'The Good Wife'. More specifically, Chaffe argues that the post-war years were 'a period of testing, a time of transition, in which women themselves and the society at large sought to determine whether women still had a prescribed sphere, and if so, what its boundaries were'.[50] Jackson's literary intervention into this on-going cultural arraignment on women's place(s) not only reinforces this prescribed sphere as a domestic one (an association of which she is decidedly critical), but also that the definitions of femininity are frequently male-voiced and male-focalised. Whatever else she may be, the 'Good Wife' of the title is not 'Good' by her own choice.

The 'good wife' in question is Helen Benjamin, who has recently married her husband James, from whose perspective the story is focalised. Suspecting an on-going

[49] Andrew Hock Soon Ng, *Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives: The House as Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 1, p. 10.
[50] Chaffe, p. 154. It is not known exactly when Jackson wrote 'The Good Wife', but it is not unreasonable to assume it was during the late 1940s/early 1950s.

communication and possible assignation with a man named Ferguson, Mr Benjamin has confined his wife to her bedroom until she confesses to the nature of her indiscretion. Although the conception of femininity present in this narrative equates women's place with the domestic sphere (albeit as a negative synthesis), the story also demonstrates the extent to which the house, and particularly the marital home, is a negotiation between male possession and female habitation. Robert-Foley points out that '[t]he house, which is both female mind and body, lives in ambiguous real estate: it is both the "woman's sphere", yet the man's property'.[51] The husband's proprietorial prerogative over the domestic setting allows him to both define and confine the acceptable limits of women's behaviour and experience. If, as subjects, 'we are haunted by the inescapable recognition that the place to which we turn and return for the familiar comforts of home, the dwelling, are, equally, those which can estrange, dehumanize', then it becomes possible to see Helen Benjamin's domestic, and textual, position as one under-erasure, turning her into a living, or live-in, spectral presence.[52]

When Mr Benjamin visits his wife in her room, his description indicates the degree to which she is in the process of becoming this spectral figure:

> [O]nce he had looked at her, even without intending to, he found it not difficult; she was always the same, these mornings now, and it came as more of a shock to him daily to realize that although, throughout the rest of the house, she existed as a presence made up half of recollection, half of intention, here in her room she was the same as always, and not influential at all.[53]

[51] Robert-Foley, p. 183.
[52] Julian Wolfreys, *Haunted Selves, Haunting Places in English Literature and Culture, 1800-Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 32.
[53] Shirley Jackson, 'The Good Wife', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 150-157 (p. 152). All further references are to this edition.

Although Mr Benjamin has no desire even to look at his wife, he finds it easy to do so because she has become an immutable figure, who is 'always the same'. Helen Benjamin appears to exist in a phantasmatic state, outside the normal flow of time, where she might or might not be perceived or acknowledged by her husband. This temporal disruption extends beyond her bedroom to the rest of the house, where she exists as a half-recollected presence, a term which indicates her material absence at the same time that she is physically confined. Helen's semi-existence in the rest of the house is not within her control, since it depends upon the recollections in the minds of others, namely her husband and the maid Genevieve, whose description as having 'incurious eyes' (p. 152) as well as being incapable of refusing Mr Benjamin's instructions (p. 156), present her as lacking either the agency or the inclination to provide Helen with the means to make her presence more tangible.[54] Following Peeren's conceptualisation, Mrs Benjamin can be identified as a 'missing figure'. Her 'spectral li[fe]' is marked 'not by difference, potentiality and becoming, but by sameness and preservation', despite the fact that she is not physically missing in the manner of Martha and Toni.[55]

At the same time, Jackson's text reconfigures another of Peeren's formulations. Instead of Helen's spectral condition deriving from the fact she 'cannot be seen' and yet 'remain[s] present', her position might best be defined as one wherein she *can* be seen, yet remains absent. She is a figure defined by her lack of influence, owing to the absence of both economic power and social visibility in comparison with her husband. The boundaries of her existence are both physical – the walls of her bedroom – and conceptual, a patriarchal construction which, in consolidating an acceptable version of femininity – being

[54] Genevieve is another example of those characters (such as the counsellors in 'The Missing Girl') surrounding a 'missing' woman who, through their (in)action, are complicit in her spectralisation.
[55] Peeren, p. 144.

a 'good' wife – derealises, or at the very least attenuates, her (and other women's) position and identity. In her work on the intersections between Gothic figurations and feminist literary theory, Diana Wallace argues that this dynamic of physical delimitation and control is central to understanding Female Gothic fiction: 'The "house" […] is not just the domestic space, but is itself a metaphor for the legal institut[ion] of marriage […] which erases the female name', which is emphasised in Helen's case by having an unambiguously male surname (in comparison with characters such as the androgynously playful Toni/Tony in 'Nightmare' and *The Bird's Nest*).[56] Living as a 'present' missing person in a house with which she is socially and culturally identified as a woman, and yet which is not hers, constitutes the spectral erasure of Helen's identity in this story.

Spectral femininity in 'The Good Wife' is inextricably bound up with anxieties around language – and, particularly, writing – as a means by which female characters can find themselves marginalised and even written-out of existence. Not only is Helen denied access to standard writing implements like 'pencil and paper' (p. 154), but the narrator implies that Mr Benjamin has also confiscated her lipstick, lest she 'found it possible to scrawl with [it] upon a handkerchief' (p. 154). Helen's ability to express herself in writing is bound up with markers of her femininity, both of which are negated by her husband's ability to prevent her communicating with the world outside the home, not to mention communicating her femininity (to her potential admirer or anyone else). Moreover, this inability to fashion herself in writing – be it with pencil or lipstick – diminishes Helen's capacity to articulate a strong or 'influential' agency for herself:

> [S]he was not capable anymore of expressions such as 'I am kept prisoner by my husband, help me' or 'Save an unfortunate woman unjustly confined' or 'Get the

[56] Diana Wallace, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 26-41 (p. 29).

> police' or even 'Help' […] He did not for a minute believe that she was crafty enough to be planning an escape, or to use this apparent resigned state of mind to deceive him into thinking she had accepted his authority. (p. 155)

Her confinement within the domestic sphere directly affects Helen's self-configuration; she internalises the material boundaries of her confinement and reconfigures them as the practices of an enforced self-regulation. Benjamin's imprisonment of his wife is psychological as well as physical, erasing her ability to articulate a desire for freedom or self-preservation. The house becomes a correctional facility in which Mr Benjamin can invigilate and re-condition the errant form of femininity he believes his wife to embody.[57] The marital home is therefore a site for the regulation of gender formations, which, as Alexis Shotwell observes about Jackson's fiction in general, are 'multiply and complexly co-emergent among selves, people, and houses'.[58] This co-emergence is particularly apparent in 'The Good Wife', since Mr Benjamin is able to imprison his wife through an implicit appeal to what Shotwell terms 'a social polity that emphasizes "proper womanliness"': Helen must be house-bound until she embodies and enacts the 'good wife' model of femininity the social polity and her husband expect.[59]

At the same time, an oversimplification of the relationship between 'house' and 'femininity' should be resisted, because such a configuration overdetermines the house as the principal (or even sole) malevolent entity that circumscribes women's place, a tendency that Bart Verschaffel takes care to question:

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[57] It is never established definitively whether Helen is corresponding with another man, or, if she is, what she says/writes. The resultant ambiguity leaves the exact nature of her supposed transgression indistinct or phantasmatic, which in turn emphasises the insidious nature of her imprisonment and treatment at the hands of her husband. The basis on which his programme of derealisation rests might prove to be as insubstantial as the presence of his wife.

[58] Alexis Shotwell, '"No proper feeling for her house": The Relational Formation of White Womanliness in Shirley Jackson's Fiction', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 32.1 (Spring 2013), 119-141 (p. 138).

[59] Ibid, p. 119.

> Does the house dominate femininity? Is woman put in her place there? Linking femininity and domesticity or house can only come down to a simplification and limitation when one presupposes that the house is simple, and that domesticity is simple – that it is nothing more than 'place' and 'centre'.[60]

As Jackson is at pains to demonstrate, in the case of 'The Good Wife' it is not the house that dominates Helen: it is her husband and his concerted attempts at re/forming her. James Benjamin makes visible the normally intangible forces of male power as they are deployed within the home, and, in ghosting Helen as a particular kind of absent-presence, Jackson uses her de-realisation as a means of substantiating those very forces which render her spectral.

Jackson pushes this patriarchal manipulation of women to a further extreme by having Mr Benjamin appropriate his wife's voice and hand – her language and her writing – to maintain the illusion of her freedom to the outside world, and thereby extend her domestic imprisonment indefinitely. This also represents the story's most overt example of spectral substitution. At the end of the text, Mr Benjamin writes two letters, one to Helen's mother (whose own letter arrives that morning), and one which the reader presumes is intended for Mr Ferguson. Significantly, Benjamin does not write these letters in his own voice or style, but imitates that of his wife: '"Dearest Mommy," he wrote, "my mean old finger is still too painful to write with – James says he thinks I must have sprained it, but I think he is just tired of taking dictation from me – as if he had ever done anything else"' (p. 156). Although presenting himself as the mere transcriber of his wife's speech, Benjamin actually fashions an alternative version of Helen to use in the manner of a ventriloquist puppet – she 'speaks', but they are his words (an iteration on the theme of ventriloquism that informs Jackson's

[60] Bart Verschaffel, 'The Meanings of Domesticity', *Journal of Architecture*, 7.3 (2002), 287-296 (p. 288).

characterisation of Doctor Wright and his 'treatment' of Elizabeth in *The Bird's Nest*). This process involves a twin-effect: giving voice to an entity which does not exist by ventriloquising it through the body, speech and style of his absent-present wife.[61] For the letter to Ferguson, Benjamin swaps 'the sheet of [Helen's] monogrammed notepaper' for some 'cheap notepaper' and substitutes his own fountain pen for another one 'filled with brown ink', as well as switching from his right to his left hand. This change of writing apparatus indicates a concomitant change in the style of his substitution: '"My dearest, I have finally thought of a way to get around the jealous old fool'" (p. 157). Benjamin no longer obtrudes as the mediator of his wife's speech, but stands in as his wife *himself*, thereby completing the logic of spectral substitution he enacts against her. Helen is occluded from the narrative in this exchange of 'letters' – both epistolary (her 'non-voice' is fabricated and substitutes her real voice) – and alphabetical (Mr Benjamin becomes Mr(s) Benjamin, capable of assuming his wife's language to speak in 'her' voice and write in 'her' hand).[62] The intricacy of this performance of substitution that is also a form of spectralisation attests to Jackson's skill in using the compact form of the short story to explore the ghostliness of women's experiences, with a degree of sophistication equal to that seen in her novels.

This form of spectrality as a form of expropriation is articulated most cogently by Wolfreys: 'The self is expropriated from itself, from within itself, the home becomes unhomely, a place of displacement and loss […] when at home, in his or her home […]

[61] As discussed in the previous chapter, Janet Beizer's work is particularly illuminating here. She writes that 'the speaking body is neutralized by virtue of its production by an external agent', which perfectly describes Mr Benjamin's neutralisation of his wife as a figure of agency. See Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 26.
[62] In the course of spectralising his wife, he almost comes to be possessed *by* her (or, at least, his own construction/appropriation of her). He enacts a kind of self-possession – since his 'wife' is also himself – that underlines the complex (and strange) permutations of spectral identity that operate in Jackson's story.

this is when the subject discovers his own having-become-expropriated'.[63] The home is a particularly important component in this realisation of self-dislocation because of its association with the uncanny; as a space of familiarity and presumed safety, it is the site where the affective disruption of the unfamiliar is most perceptible. The 'disappearance' of Helen Benjamin is all the more unsettling because it happens in a place which has been discursively granted as one *of* or *for* women. Whereas Martha Alexander and Toni Morgan are erased because of their transgressive mobility beyond the domestic (onto which their adolescent liminality is then mapped), Helen Benjamin's spectralisation results in her figurative disappearance *within* the domestic. This threatening configuration of the (marital) home stands as Jackson's coded warning about the dangers for women's self-definition in relation to the domestic – as Daniel Miller points out, '[t]here are many conflicts between the agency expressed by individuals […] that make the private more a turbulent sea of constant negotiation rather than simply some haven for the self'.[64] These stories both extrapolate and refine this insight. For young women, there is no configuration of space which is a 'safe haven for the self', and they are continually haunted by the metaphorical or conceptual threat of erasure, and, occasionally, a literal disappearance.

This dynamic of in/security even comes back to Jackson's writing. She creates and sustains these missing women in her stories, but, as 'The Good Wife' demonstrates, writing is no guarantee of a secure presence. Their (enforced) disappearance turns them into ghostly figures who are capable of haunting – which Keller characterises as a 'phenomenon by which an unsettled, asymmetrical relation

[63] Wolfreys, *Haunted Selves, Haunting Places*, pp. 3-4.
[64] Daniel Miller, 'Behind Closed Doors', in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. by Daniel Miller (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), pp. 1-22 (p. 4).

manifests itself and becomes known'.[65] In other words, haunting is the mechanism which makes a disequilibrium – such as the uneven power relations between a young girl and adults, or between husband and wife – apprehensible, so that something might be done about it. However, as Jackson's story demonstrates, haunting as a process of rendering-visible an asymmetry of power is only effective when someone is there to acknowledge and bear witness to it. In the case of 'The Good Wife', Helen Benjamin's spectralisation is not an elective decision intended to draw attention to her situation, but is rather the consequence of her domestic entrapment, unable to communicate in her own words whilst being simulated in the writing of her husband. The conditions of ghostly appearance and signification are not within her control, just as they are not within Martha's or Toni's. Whether it is administrative records, the insistence of an alphabetical character, or a malicious spouse's paper and pencil, writing that is performed by hands other than those of these missing women works to make them absent from their own lives.

The spectral logic of substitution is evident through its association with (literal or figurative) disappearance – in order for substitution to work, one element must be removed in order to be re-presented by that which takes its place. The role of repetition in the spectralisation of femininity is not so direct or immediately perceptible as substitution, yet it is a significant component in Jackson's characterisation of women who are not fully 'present' within their own lives. In practice, this is explicitly tied to a recognition that conventional configurations of gender that were (re)asserted in the post-war period – such as domestic efficiency,

[65] Keller, p. 7.

marital submissiveness, and limited personal and economic autonomy – provided a very limited basis for articulating identity. Invariably, these configurations were situational, with the woman centred as homemaker and care-giver. The difference in Jackson's fiction is that this is very much a reciprocal figuration: women are as much 'made' or defined by their homes as they are 'home-makers'. Repetition as a narrative feature is a central part of Jackson's interrogation of this dynamic, and it can be understood in two interrelated forms: the repeated appearance of the same character across different stories, and two different versions of the same story. Together with the forms of substitution seen in the previous stories, these instantiations of repetition showcase the variety of spectral modes that Jackson deploys within her short fiction, exemplifying what Bernice Murphy identifies as '[o]ne of the most significant preoccupations of Jackson's literary fiction', that being 'her recurrent dramatization of specifically female anxieties about the limited roles women were forced into during the [1950s]'.[66] This is Jackson at her most nuanced, dexterously abrading the veneer of domestic(ated) life to reveal the enervating (and occasionally lethal) reality for white, middle-class women; in other words, for women exactly like Jackson.

Atavistic Apparitions: The 'Mallie' Stories

The nearest thing that Jackson wrote to what might be considered a 'sequence' of short stories (although there is no evidence that they should be read as such) is known as the

[66] Bernice M. Murphy, 'Hideous Doughnuts and Haunted Housewives: Gothic Undercurrents in Shirley Jackson's Domestic Humour', in *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Anne Stevens (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 229-250 (p. 242).

'Mallie' stories.[67] Mallie, in the guise of an old woman (albeit one who purports to have the power to make herself young at will), is a mysterious figure who appears to women in need of help with household tasks, whether that involves preparing a meal to impress an obnoxious male work colleague (as in 'Dinner for a Gentleman'), or assuming the responsibilities of a full-time domestic worker (as she does in both 'Family Magician' and 'The Very Strange House Next Door'). These are tasks for which Mallie appears to have a (super)natural gift, as Jerry, the young (and, unusually for Jackson's fiction, male) narrator of 'Family Magician' relays:

> Somehow Mallie did everything so fast that it seemed as though she could straighten a room just by standing in the doorway and looking around hard. She used to get the dishes done so fast, Dottie and I never had time to get in and help her. I used to ask her how she did it […] but Mallie only laughed at me and said, 'Magic.'[68]

Whilst the precise nature and scope of Mallie's abilities are never defined beyond this rather catch-all term, in many respects her character has a particularly spectral resonance. In both 'Dinner for a Gentleman' and 'Family Magician', for instance, Mallie's first appearance is decidedly apparitional:

> Right then a voice spoke up from in back of me:
> 'Dimity Baxter!' it said.
> Well, I jumped, and I dropped my packages, and I turned around, and there was this little old lady standing there smiling at me.[69]
>
> 'Where did she come from?' I asked. 'I just walked in at lunchtime and there she was.'
> 'That's about the way she came,' Mother said. 'I was waxing the living room

[67] Shotwell groups the texts together under the heading of 'The Mallie Stories' in her article on Jackson (p. 131).
[68] Shirley Jackson, 'Family Magician', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 258-271 (p. 264). All further references are to this edition.
[69] Shirley Jackson, 'Dinner for a Gentleman', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 59-72 (pp. 60-61). All further references are to this edition.

> floor this morning and I turned around and saw Mallie standing there in the doorway watching me.'[70]

In both these extracts, Mallie appears to simply materialise at will into the centre of these respective domestic spaces, unaffected by the physical and social barriers of the closed door. Indeed, the fact that she observes Mrs Livingston from the doorway – which, as discussed in chapter one, can be conceived as a liminal or ghostly space – amplifies this sense that her appearance has an association with the spectral, as does the explicit reference to her 'watching', which recalls the etymological link between the spectre and 'sight' or 'seeing'.[71]

In addition, Mallie embodies a spectral dis-temporality: as well as operating in the present, she is a figure who comes back from both the past and the future. She introduces herself to Dimity Baxter in 'Dinner for a Gentleman' by saying: '"Guess you could call me an old friend of your mother's"' (p. 61), whilst in 'Family Magician', she tells Mrs Livingstone '"you'd be surprised what's coming along for you"' (p. 268). In other words, she has previously assisted Dimity's mother (presumably in a similar capacity to that which she offers Dimity), and has some access to Mrs Livingston's future, which she is able to relay to her in the present. The implication is that Mallie can transcend linear chronology, emerging in different times and spaces as a desynchronised figure in the same manner as she does

[70] Jackson, 'Family Magician', p. 263.

[71] Many critics point to the etymological roots of 'spectre' [*specere*, 'to see, look'] as a way of reading its significance as a productive theoretical and metaphorical figuration: in signalling something that is 'looked at', the spectre demands attention, both popularly and critically. For discussions on the etymology of 'spectre', see Rebecca Munford, 'Spectral Femininity', in *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, p. 120, and Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor*, pp. 4-5. Dani Cavallaro also defines the spectre in terms of 'vision', although she notes that it simultaneously problematises the idea of 'looking' through its imbrication of 'the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen'. See Dani Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 75.

across and within the different stories.[72] The repetition of Mallie across these different stories therefore highlights the degree to which hers is a spectral condition of being, appearing across different moments in narrative space and time, with a degree of freedom not afforded to a fully material or corporeal presence. This is a different kind of dis/placement to that seen in a story such as 'The Missing Girl', where Martha's adolescence and extra-domestic situation deny her any secure place or arrangement of time. For the geriatric Mallie, time(s) can be negotiated with ease. She moves back and forth between past, present, and future, comfortable in multiple timelines, yet also never belonging to any one in particular: she does not hang around in any one place for long, and disappears as readily as she materialises. This underlines Jackson's belief that no organisation of either space – private or public – nor time – past, future, or present – is really hospitable to women, young or old, 'normal' or magical.

What is most striking about Mallie's appearance across these different texts is her codification of gender configurations in relation to domestic work. As Simone de Beauvoir asserts so strikingly in *The Second Sex*, domestic labour marks the apotheosis of debilitating (and gendered) repetition: 'Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition […] The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present'.[73] Trapped in an untimely time of the perpetual

[72] Ten years separate the publication of 'Family Magician' (1949) and 'The Very Strange House Next Door' (1959). 'Dinner for a Gentleman' was previously unpublished prior to its appearance in the first edition of *Just an Ordinary Day* in 1998. As Laurence Jackson Hyman and Sarah Hyman Dewitt point out in their editors' introduction to the collection, '[w]hile we could place them in a general time frame, none of the new stories we discovered had dates on them or any indication of when they were first written. Rather than be inaccurate we have left the stories in Part One undated'. Mallie's first narrative appearance is, rather appropriately, impossible to determine within the chronology of Jackson's fiction. Her 'first' or 'original' appearance may equally be a re-appearance, a dynamic which emphasises the *already-spectral* dimension of Mallie's characterisation. See Laurence Jackson Hyman and Sarah Hyman DeWitt, 'Introduction', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. vii-x (p. viii).

[73] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997 [1949]), p. 470.

present, the domestic worker becomes trapped by the demands of ghostly labour, that which demands and exacts everything in order to produce nothing. In all three stories, Mallie ostensibly aims to reduce the impact of such Sisyphean drudgery on those to whom she appears.

In 'Dinner for a Gentleman', this involves cooking a meal and completing the housework in an impossibly short amount of time, and using her magic to turn a piggy bank into pork chops. Similarly, in 'Family Magician' and 'The Very Strange House Next Door', Mallie turns everyday objects – acorns, a blue jay's feather, gravel, curtains – into delicious food, beautiful dresses, and impressive décor, and, most importantly, provides an escape for the women who would otherwise be trapped within the house. As Jerry notes in 'Family Magician', the summer when Mallie appears is also the point at which 'Mother was working herself nearly crazy trying to make the house and everything go smoothly for us kids' (p. 258). Whilst Mallie's appearance is certainly welcomed by the women and families for whom she employs her magical abilities, this dependency plays to Jackson's satirical edge in that it suggests only those possessed of a *super*natural capability for chores can ever dream of keeping a house in order.

However, despite the seemingly emancipatory potential she introduces for the women in these stories, Mallie's presence and actions are ambivalent in terms of how they redefine women's roles – both present and future – within the domestic arena. In 'Dinner for a Gentleman', as she prepares to leave, Mallie gives Dimity a 'new cookbook', which fascinates her when she looks through it:

> The cookbook was patterned in blue and white checks, and had 'Dimity Baxter' written across the front in gold letters. Inside, on the flyleaf, it said 'To Dimity from Mallie'. And it had positively the strangest table of contents I had ever seen. It started with 'Dinner for Mr Arthur Clyde Brookson,' a name I had never heard before […] Another item caught my eye. It read: 'Luncheon for mother-in-

> law and two friends.' I blinked, and giggled. Another listing was 'Dinner to be served to daughter's young man,' and still another was 'Family dinner, to serve fifteen.' Also, 'Dinner for husband's employer, and wife.' That one made me laugh out loud. (pp. 71-72)

The cookbook is an ineluctably spectral object, detailing the significant meals Dimity has yet to cook, for people she has yet to meet, or who, in some cases, have yet to be born. Whilst this foreshadowing is primarily designed to free Dimity from concern or anxiety over being domestically proficient, the price of her doing so is for her future life to be defined and (re-) presented entirely in terms of being a housewife. Her current position as a woman employed outside the home – '"I've got a job I like"' (p. 60) – fades away, replaced by one in which her value is (or will be) determined by culinary aptitude and successfully mothering a large family. Mallie, whom Dimity describes as being someone who 'sort of belonged in a kitchen' (p. 62), is an echoic representation of traditional gender roles which come into tension with the modern, career-focussed femininity of the intra- and post-war years. Dimity explicitly references this tension when she observes that 'my mother and her friends just simply don't *look* right in a business girl's apartment' (p. 61). In presenting – or, perhaps, determining – Dimity's future through her unconventional cookbook, Mallie ensures she is re-inscribed into the most conventional of domestic arrangements, suggesting that her future life is impossible to imagine outside past or present understandings of women's place. 'Dinner for a Gentleman' exemplifies Murphy's observation that Jackson was aware, 'even before Friedan, that the "happy house wife heroine" was a comforting, but controlling myth'.[74] Whilst seeming to free Dimity from domestic drudgery in her present moment, Mallie actually redeploys and reinforces its boundaries through the spectral iteration of past gender configurations in the future: she

[74] Murphy, p. 250.

ensures Dimity will become the proficient house-bound ghost she fails to be in the present, and proposes it as a form of emancipation. Despite her endearing, grandmotherly appearance, Mallie is, perhaps, one of the most sinister of all Jackson's creations because of her anachronistic and atavistic desire to curtail any expression of femininity that is not associated with domesticity.

A similar dynamic can be discerned in Mallie's repeated appearance in 'Family Magician', which is also concerned with the relationship between domestic labour and family. However, where in 'Dinner for a Gentleman' this was limited to Dimity herself at different points in time (the present and the future), in 'Family Magician' there is a generational element as well: specifically, the inculcation of the daughter, Dottie, into an understanding of her position as a future housewife. Mallie's magical skills are explicitly gendered: '"Can't use magic on boys, anyway," she said. "Just wears away on their tough hides"' (p. 269), emphasising the extent to which this domestic knowledge is only meant to be repeated between women, which is precisely what Mallie does when Dottie expresses her desire to be like her:

> Mallie laughed. 'Tell you what I'll do, honey. I'll teach you how to make a pie. That's all the magic *you'll* ever need.' […] And after that Mallie taught Dottie a lot of other things – and she told Dottie over and over again, 'That's all the magic *you'll* ever need.' (p. 265)

Here, repetition is an essential part of Mallie's instructional transmission of her magical knowledge. Every time she is taught something new, Mallie reminds her that this is 'all the magic *you'll* ever need'. The intonation given to '*you'll*' is a persistent reminder to Dottie that all she needs in order to be a successful woman is proficiency as a homemaker, an attitude that is never questioned, let alone repudiated. The continued repetition of this message serves to pre-determine Dottie's position in the world, to make it inconceivable

outside the repetition of domestic labour, just as it did with Dimity. The use of repetition here is not incidental: rather, it becomes the very form of Mallie's attempt to determine Dottie's future through the present. As Robert Rogers points out, 'repetition *is* meaning. Repetition is always meaningful […] Considered as signification, repetition is always informational because it is non-random. Repetition is always re-presentation and re-presentation is always representation'.[75] The non-random element of repetition is especially significant in this sequence of stories because it demonstrates the extent to which Mallie's spectral dis/placement is a reinforcement or recycling of the image of the domesticated woman in both the past, the present and the future. Mallie's re-presentation across these stories becomes part of Jackson's representational strategy of analysing through her fiction the haunting persistence of atavistic and circumscribed forms of femininity.

As a spectral figure, Mallie is able to transgress physical boundaries and chronological figurations of time, and yet the ends to which her incredible domestic abilities are put are remarkably conservative. Her magic does not liberate women from domestic constraints, it simply makes them better able to manage their oppressive force. This conservatism is redeployed in 'The Very Strange House Next Door', in the person of Addie Spinner. As with Adela Strangeworth in 'The Possibility of Evil' (with whom she has more in common than repeated initials), Addie Spinner believes that people should act in a certain – and strictly gendered – way. For wives (who are the only women who are classified in the story), these responsibilities are made explicitly clear:

> Folks should […] spend their days doing good deeds and housework. A wife ought to cook dinner for her husband […] and she ought to run over next door sometimes with a home-baked cake to pass the time of day and keep up with the news. And most of all a wife ought to go to the store herself, where she can

[75] Robert Rogers, 'Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition', *Poetics Today*, 8.3/4 (1987), 579-590 (p. 584).

meet her neighbors, and not just send the maid.[76]

Addie Spinner promulgates a view of femininity as conventionally domestic, an attitude which is at odds with that of Mr and Mrs West, the young couple for whom Mallie works. At the climax of the story, when the women of the town band together to confront what they regard as wayward behaviour, Miss Spinner is unequivocal on the matter: '"certain people in this town aren't going to put up with your fancy ways much longer, and you would be well advised […] to pack up your furniture and your curtains and your maid and cat, and get out of our town before we put you out"' (p. 415). The only thing Mallie's magical abilities cannot deal with are the doctrinaire beliefs of Miss Spinner, whose adherence to 'proper' feminine conduct surpasses the conservative ideology practised and preached by the magical housekeeper.

Mallie's domestic capabilities, as seen in both 'Dinner for a Gentleman' and 'Family Magician', could hardly be described as radical – in many ways they replicate the fundamental values held by Miss Spinner and the town. Yet they are still regarded as unorthodox in terms of the effect they have on the young couple, and particularly Mrs West. Jackson's excavation of this small-town mindset is not confined to exploring hostility towards outsiders, but is also an exploration of how deeply ingrained conventional accounts of acceptable gender behaviour are within the individual and collective psyche. Mallie is dangerous to the extent that her abilities are recognisably domestic, yet also radical: she represents a repetition with a difference – disrupting the eternal, always-the-same nature of Sisyphean labour – that cannot be accommodated within the rigid classifications that define women's position. Mallie's conservatism is therefore rendered shadowy, less immediately

[76] Shirley Jackson, 'The Very Strange House Next Door', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 403-417 (p. 411). All further references are to this edition.

perceptible, when set against the much greater cultural conservatism of established gender configurations.[77]

The Mallie stories, in their complex examination of the spectralising effects of domestic work for women, demonstrate Jackson's ability to reformulate social and political issues through her use of figurative spectrality. As Darryl Hattenhauer argues, 'she uses the supernatural in her fiction to depict the interpellation of unstable subjects into the dominant culture's myths and ideologies – particularly about class and gender'.[78] Although Hattenhauer's sense of Jackson's supernaturalism is more literal than figurative here, this process is still readily discernible in these stories. Mallie's repeated appearances, affecting different characters at different points in time, demonstrates exactly how the integrity of feminine identity is undermined through its fraught and delimiting association with domestic spaces and behavioural expectations, which are anything other than a positive alternative to the placelessness experienced by adolescent and young-woman characters like Martha and Toni.

The (Not-Yet-)Dead Wives Club: 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith, Versions I and II'

In their introduction to *Just an Ordinary Day*, Laurence Jackson Hyman and Sarah Hyman DeWitt reflect on their mother's writing and editing practices as a housewife-writer, and the difficulties these sometimes presented for her: 'we discovered that some stories tried to get

[77] Shotwell identifies a significant element in this fictional gendered response to domestic work, which is the extent to which it is racially coded. In assessing this sequence of stories, Shotwell summarises that '[t]he fictional Mallie stands in for the white desire for a life without work, a desire typically filled in reality by devalued Black labor'. This gendered configuration of domestic labour, whilst delimitative for the white women who populate Jackson's stories, is doubly so for black women, who are absented altogether from Jackson's rumination on women's place. See Shotwell, p. 132.
[78] Hattenhauer, p. 10.

themselves written over and over throughout Jackson's life'.[79] The particular story to which they refer here, with its many attempts to write itself through Jackson, is 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith', which appears twice in the collection – 'the only instance […] in which we have chosen to include two versions of the same story'.[80] This repeat appearance of the story is significant in its own right, but the two versions – both separately and collectively – address a broad range of repetitions beyond its title, all of which engender the spectralisation of the central character: Helen Bertram/Mrs Smith.

There are two foundational forms of repetition which relate to this twice-told story: the formal repetition (the fact that there are two stories with the same title, sequentially ordered), and thematic repetition (narrative or plot details that are repeated within and between the two versions). However, it is necessary, following J. Hillis Miller's categorisations in *Fiction and Repetition*, to define exactly what is meant by 'repetition' as it relates to the stories. The points of comparison between the two texts are composed of what Hillis Miller terms 'opaquely similar' similarities: that is, their similarity is situated against a fundamental 'background disparity' (or '*disparité du fond*', to quote Hillis Miller).[81] Rogers alternatively defines this form as 'repetition with a difference'.[82] This differentiated repetition 'is not sameness. It is a similarity within a field of difference', and, as such, represents a different kind of repetition to that seen in the Mallie stories.[83] Across the three stories in which she appears, Mallie appears as a fixed point of similarity in different settings, but in 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith', Helen Bertram – although ostensibly the same character – differs considerably between the two texts, despite inhabiting the same

[79] Hyman and DeWitt, p. ix.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Hillis Miller, p. 8, p. 6.
[82] Rogers, p. 580.
[83] Ibid, p. 584.

space in each. As Hyman and DeWitt suggest, 'they are the same story, told years apart and from almost opposing view points'.[84] The 'repetition with a difference' that encompasses these two sets of stories might best be summarised as 'same character, different story' and 'same story, different character(s)'.

In this respect, the twice-told story of Mrs Smith reflects Miller's definition of 'Nietzschean' – or 'ghostly' – repetition: 'one thing is experienced as repeating something which is quite different from it and which it strangely resembles,' and it is against this theoretical backdrop that the different similarities/similar differences between these two stories can be most readily understood.[85] In the first version of 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith', repetition initially seems to facilitate the creation and sustainment of a new identity for the new Mrs Smith, previously known as Helen Bertram: 'I'm a new person, she thought happily; after thirty-eight years I've turned into a new person. Mrs Charles Smith'.[86] Her repeated assertion of being a 'new person' is supplemented by the repeated reference to her as 'Mrs Smith' in the opening of the story (at one point, 'Mrs Smith' appears five times in the space of nine lines), as if this repeated articulation enacts or performs afresh the differentiation from her old self.

Yet this form of repetition as a means of self-definition also necessitates the repetition of her husband's name – her claim to 'Smith' is new and not her own – and the precariousness of this position is exacerbated further as the text progresses. The Smiths' downstairs neighbour, Mrs Armstrong, reveals to Helen that her new husband is widely suspected of being a serial wife-killer: 'Mrs Armstrong picked up the clipping and looked at

[84] Hyman and DeWitt, p. ix.
[85] Hillis Miller, p. 8.
[86] Shirley Jackson, 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith (Version I)', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 88-99 (p. 90). All further references are to this edition.

it again. “Six wives,” she said. “Drowned them in the bathtub and they found them buried in the cellar. Six”’ (p. 95). The revelation, shocking in itself, also throws Helen’s individuality into crisis, for her ‘new’ identity as Mrs Charles Smith is not ‘new’, but a repeated title, shared by at least six former women, as though Jackson were writing an iteration of the Bluebeard tale, set in the post-war American suburbs.[87] Helen’s position is a sequential one, the latest in a series of women who, although different, are defined by the commonality of their married name (in just the same way that the second Mrs de Winter in du Maurier’s *Rebecca* is haunted by the traces of her (sur)namesake. ‘Mrs Smith’ is not a marker of difference between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ versions of Helen, but is instead a spectral designation, a ghostly title that maintains some trace of the presence of these dead wives, past iterations of the role in which Helen now finds herself. She can derive no security from being alive in the here and now, because her place in this sequence of murdered women underlines the transitory nature of her present. Her fate is inevitable, drawing the future (her death) out of the past (the deaths of his previous wives). The spectral arrangement of time spells her doom.

Other forms of repetition further underscore the threat to Helen’s sense of individuality, as well as her life. When challenged by Mrs Armstrong about her husband’s suspicious behaviour, specifically a life insurance policy he has secured, Helen finds herself simply echoing his words as opposed to speaking in her own voice: ‘“It’s the least we could do for one another,” Mrs Smith said, *repeating what Mr Smith had told her*, “to make sure

[87] In many ways, both versions of this story can be read as Jackson’s variation on the Bluebeard motif, a paradigmatic element of domestic Gothic narratives. However, the representation of Helen as the wife departs significantly from other contemporary depictions of the character, who has become, according to Maria Tatar, ‘something of a heroine, a woman whose problem-solving skills and psychological finesse make her a shrewd detective capable of rescuing herself’. What makes Jackson’s tale so memorable is the fact that Helen makes no attempt at all to rescue herself, but instead consciously submits to the terrifying inevitability of her position. See Tatar, *Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 3-4.

that if anything happened to one of us, the other would be provided for"' (p. 96, my emphasis). Additionally, throughout the text, certain words and phrases are constantly repeated, all of which relate in some way to Helen's dangerous situation: '"poor, poor dear"' (pp. 93-94); 'cellar' (which appears four times in the space of four lines on p. 94, and twice more on p. 95); 'scream' (p. 97); and the (slightly modified) phrase '"Drowned them in the bathtub and they found them buried in the cellar"' and '"He drowns them in the bathtub and then buries-"' (p. 95).[88] In particular, the repetition of 'cellar' and the description of how Mr Smith murders his wives proleptically indicate the fate that awaits Helen, as it has done and will do for all those women who share her name. In other words, Helen is spectralised in advance of her death (which remains suspended by the open-endedness of the narrative), sequentially integrated into a genealogy of dead women from which she cannot extricate herself, as the last line of the story, spoken by her husband, indicates: '"I can get started on the cellar first thing tomorrow morning"' (p. 99). Repetition is both the form of Helen's desire for a new existence – '"I'm a new person"' – and the same process that demonstrates the futility of this aspiration: to be the 'new' Mrs Smith is only to be placed in a lineage of other Mrs Smiths, once new and, now, nothing.

The version of Helen in the second iteration of the story is similarly indebted to the action and effects of repetition, albeit in a different way. Whereas in Version I, Helen's identity is explicitly threatened once she becomes a reiteration of 'Mrs Smith', in Version II, Helen has *always* been defined through some configuration or pattern of repetition, a process which is shown to originate with her father:

[88] This tendency for characters to repeat/iterate their own words is one of Jackson's stylistic hallmarks, and can be seen in characters as different from each other as Mrs Dudley in *The Haunting of Hill House*, Doctor Wright in *The Bird's Nest*, and Angela Motorman in 'Come Along With Me'.

> Mrs Smith, who had then been Helen Bertram, had been able to spend long days working in the garden, or mending her father's socks, or baking the nut cake she had learned from her mother and pausing only occasionally to wonder what was going to happen to her in her life.
>
> It had been clear to her after her father's death that this patterned existence was no longer meaningful, and had been a product of her father's life rather than hers. So that when Mr Smith has said to her, 'I don't suppose you'd ever consider marrying a fellow like me?' Helen Bertram had nodded, seeing then the repeated design which made the complete pattern.[89]

Helen has always been suspended in a non-space of subjectivity, inhabiting a 'patterned existence' over which she has no creative control, and endlessly repeating a series of domestic tasks that leave her little time to contemplate the course of her own life. However, even the death of her father does not afford her the chance to escape and establish a self-determined identity (as she hoped it might in Version I), since Mr Smith represents a 'repeated design' without which Helen cannot make sense of her self. As the narrator indicates at the start of the story, 'it was a relief to know that there was someone now again to decide for her, and that her life, inevitable as it had been before was now clear as well' (pp. 102-103). Helen is incapable of conceptualising herself beyond an androcentric pattern of existence, finding relief in the prospect that her new husband can make decisions on her behalf so that she does not have to act on or determine her own subjectivity. Repetition is a, if not *the*, constitutive element of Helen's identity, and it causes her to become a ghostly double of everyone with whom she interacts, since this is the only way she is guaranteed some degree of participation in the repeated design of her life.

During her conversation with Mrs Jones (the previous 'Mrs Armstrong' seen in Version I), Helen considers the extent to which they resemble one another:

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[89] Shirley Jackson, 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith (Version II)', in *Just an Ordinary Day* (London: Penguin, 2017), pp. 100-111 (p. 109). All further references are to this edition.

> Here we are, Helen Smith was thinking, two women of the singular type woman […] differing in no essential respect from the other […] differing, actually in no essential, although we would both deny indignantly that we were the same person, seeking the same destiny. (p. 105)

Helen recognises the tension inherent in the idea of repetition here, of there being a person who is both an individual and a reiteration at the same time – two women who differ in 'no essential respect' and yet are also 'the singular type woman'. Yet the fact remains that Helen conceives of herself and Mrs Jones as being in some sense inseparable, the 'same person, seeking the same destiny'. Her quasi-fatalistic tone, and the repetitive patterning in her speech, reiterate the degree to which Helen still thinks in patterns, ones which require her to define herself in relation to, or even through the person of, those around her.

This is particularly noticeable in the way in which she copies or repeats elements of her husband's life. This includes his attitude towards money – 'Mrs Smith's instinctive tactful respect for her husband's methods led her to fall in with him silently in his routine of economy' (p. 103) – and even the clothes they wear for their wedding: 'She had worn her best dark blue dress to be married in, and Mr Smith had worn a dark blue suit so that they looked unnervingly alike when they went down the street together' (p. 109). There is a clear determinative identification between herself and Mr Smith – because he is the person who will 'decide for her', Helen diminishes her own personality to become his shadow, with fatal results. For it is her inability to find meaning outside of repetition that causes her to believe that she cannot escape her murder; as she says to Mrs Jones, '"It's not our choice"' (p. 108), in response to the latter's remark that 'a knife would be better' than being murdered in the bath, as Mr Smith has done to his previous wives. Helen's use of 'our' demonstrates that even here, in this moment where she understands the absolute danger of her situation, she cannot help but see herself as a non-individual, driven by a destructive repetition-

compulsion that situates her as part of Mr Smith's dead-wives sequence. She even initiates the process, which the end of the story then leaves suspended:

> Why does it take so long, why *does* it take so long? Mrs Smith thought […] Why does it take so long? She thought again, and turned and said to her husband, 'Well?'
> 'I suppose so,' Mr Smith said, and got up wearily from the couch. (p. 111)

The burden of carrying out his own cycle of repeated behaviour has become almost boring for Mr Smith, who has to rise 'wearily' from the couch to kill yet another wife. There is a certain horrifying appropriateness in the fact that Helen repeats her question three times as she moves to bring her patterned existence to its logical end, translating her figurative non-existence into a literal death.

Taken together, the Mallie stories and two versions of 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith' demonstrate, through different forms of repetition, Jackson's investment in spectral figurations of subjectivity as a response to the repressive and delimitative positions afforded to women in post-war American society. As Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue, the Gothic is a productive site for formulating and confronting these kinds of female anxieties: '[p]ossession, confinement and loss of identity are all shadows which haunt the home for women, particularly those who inhabit – or fear inhabiting – the roles of housewife and mother'.[90] Yet what distinguishes this selection of Jackson's short stories is that her female protagonists often do not explicitly voice these fears about their confinement or delimitation of their identities. The women to whom Mallie appears, and then inculcates, do not question the necessary delimitation of their present and future selves as domesticated housewives – indeed, both Dimity and Dottie embrace it fully. The potential danger of the

[90] Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, 'Introduction', in *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 1-11 (p. 5).

role of (house)wife is also not always acknowledged – the different versions of Helen Bertram/Mrs Charles Smith either reject the suggestion outright, or else embrace the threat as the logical (if also terminal) extension of their patterned existence.

In this respect, Jackson's spectral women can be best understood as 'social figure[s], not simply the dead returned to haunt, but a manifestation of cultural death: a form of death which is not physical or biological, but in which the cohesion and value of the subject is lost'.[91] In Jackson's short fiction, this figurative or cultural death is explicitly tied to the position of women's constructive-destructive relationship with the domestic: the expectations that are placed upon them and their (in)ability to live up to these requirements. Jackson uses the narrow focus of the short story form to delineate the realities of women's experience in the mid-twentieth century, which were centred disproportionately on (or in relation to) the home. In this respect, the spectralised characters who haunt the houses, apartments, streets and even summer camps of these stories are very much reflective of the period of their inscription. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock points out that 'the ghost, while often giving shape to widely shared anxieties about mortality and meaning, nevertheless is always an expression of the anxieties and desires of its place and time'.[92] Jackson uses the conventions of the short story – such as its capacity to illuminate an idea of experience with a lightning flash of intensity – to critique the domestication of femininity, demonstrating how it desubstantialises or even erases women's lives through its pervasive and repetitive presence in the post-war settings of sub/urban America. These are all ideas that Jackson fully understands and experiences, and

[91] Maria Beville, 'Postmodern Ghost Stories', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. by Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 445-453 (p. 449).
[92] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'The American Ghost Story', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. by Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 206-214 (p. 214).

which she examines in relation to her own situation in her life-writing and autobiographical texts, the focus of the next (and final) chapter.

What's Haunting Shirley Jackson? The Spectral Condition of Life-Writing

'"I" is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being.'[1]

'I am going to stick to ghosts and bridge games and haunted houses, where I belong.'[2]

'I am tired of writing dainty little biographical things that pretend I am a trim little housewife in a Mother Hubbard stirring up appetizing messes over a wood stove', proclaims the protagonist of Shirley Jackson's 'The Real Me'. This presentation almost mythologises the housewife as some kind of well-behaved domestic character lifted from the pages of a fairy tale, one who is hardly in the story – a twentieth-century iteration of Little Red Riding Hood's mother. Determined to revise this sanitised portrait, she proceeds to describe her true situation:

> I live in a dank old place with a ghost that stomps around in the attic room we've never gone into (I *think* it's walled up), and the first thing I did when we moved in was to make charms in black crayon on all the door sills and window ledges to keep out demons, and was successful in the main. There are mushrooms growing in the cellar, and a number of marble mantels that have an unexplained habit of falling down onto the heads of the neighbors' children.[3]

This scene, in which a housewife gives voice not only to her deep-seated frustration with domestic(ated) femininity, but also her Gothic appetites for magic and mayhem, would not be out of place in any number of Jackson's texts. After all, it features an assortment of thematic and narrative elements with which her writing is associated: a house as a site of haunting; the way domestic work and responsibilities determine, and thereby constrain, the

[1] Virginia Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 3-149 (p. 5).
[2] Shirley Jackson, 'The Play's the Thing', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. 233-239 (p. 239).
[3] Shirley Jackson, 'The Real Me', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), p. 357.

role of women; and the riven or divided subject, caught between the self as a performance and an alternative, suppressed 'I' that struggles to articulate itself – a dynamic which Elaine Showalter understands as structured around the interplay of 'faces' and 'smiling public masks'.[4]

Yet 'The Real Me' is not fiction; it is a domestic sketch from the 'Humor and Family' section of the collection *Let Me Tell You*, published some 50 years after Jackson's death by Random House in 2015 and by Penguin in 2016. Featuring some previously unpublished and uncollected short fiction, as well as some of her earliest stories, the collection is perhaps most valuable for bringing together a selection of Jackson's personal writing, from domestic sketches, essays and reviews, through to 'Lectures About the Craft of Writing'. And it is this autobiographical guise that Jackson assumes in 'The Real Me'. Despite the clear genetic links with the protagonists of novels like *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* and *The Bird's Nest*, the self who speaks in this sketch is a lot closer to Jackson's own voice and experience, and addresses the reader as such.

In microcosmic form, this scene of autobiographical protestation from Jackson distils an essential feature which can be found across nearly all of her life-writing – the sense that her subjectivity is pluralised, stratified into identities which are both constitutive of her 'self', and yet pull in opposing directions: the 'trim little housewife' who is tucked away in the kitchen, and the sinister, witch-like writer who scrawls spells around the house and deposits clocks onto the heads of passing children. This is to say that Jackson's self-experience is a haunted one, with haunting finding its way into her life-writing and conditioning the terms on which the written and writing 'I' of these texts can speak. This

[4] Elaine Showalter, *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx* (London: Virago, 2009), p. 405.

particular spectralisation of identity can be organised into two formulations that are brought together in Jackson's self-presentation. The way being a (house)wife and performing housework overdetermine the 'self' in her autobiographical work, not just to the extent that her identity is defined through a limited set of social and cultural terms, but, in addition, de-substantialising 'life' and 'writing' as important components in this form of literary expression. Jackson-as-writer is therefore rendered spectral, a belated, half-hidden identity eclipsed by the definitively material conditions of being a (house)wife.

Although it would be inaccurate to say that Jackson's status as a writer is completely absent from her life-writing, this chapter demonstrates that there is a concomitant process at work in these narratives in which writing becomes a dissociative practice, one that problematises the notion of a stable, singular subject position of the writer as an author/ity. In other words, Jackson, as creative source of her autobiographical writing, is etherealised by that same writing because it demonstrates she is not an 'individual' in the sense of being undivided. What haunts the 'I' at the centre of these texts is the spectralisation of the subject who is synecdochally represented by it: as Woolf would say, 'I' comes to stand for that which has no real presence or being. Instead, it becomes an absent-present, invisible-visible locus of Jackson's experience and agency, thus making the act of self-narration a process of writing-out, an erasure or rendering-insubstantial of the 'I' who writes in the first place.

At the same time, there are glimpses in Jackson's life-writing of what might be thought of as a written resistance to this evanescence of subjectivity; that is, when writing, and Jackson's status as a writer, counteract the spectralising effects of her role as a housewife. However, even in these moments, authorial figuration is only possible to the extent that it is defined as the opposite of Jackson-the-housewife, thereby reinserting her back into a

structure of self-division. What is haunting Shirley Jackson is Shirley Jackson, in different spectral guises. The author's note at the beginning of *Let Me Tell You* quotes an article from *The New York Times Book Review*, which says of Jackson that she 'knew better than any writer since Hawthorne the value of haunted things'.[5] This is because, through the process of self-construction that she undertakes in her autobiographical writing, Jackson presents herself as a haunted entity. As she says in 'The Play's the Thing', she 'belong[s]' with 'ghosts' and 'haunted houses', and these spectral presences are not only to be found walled-up in an unused attic, but also standing at the kitchen sink, hovering at the fringes of a college cocktail party, and generally supervening the innumerable sites and interactions that constitute her daily life.

Whilst some of her work has been celebrated (principally 'The Lottery', *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*), Jackson's positioning as a writer is far from uncomplicated. She has long been recognised as what might be termed a hyphenated author: the housewife-writer, by turns an occultist purveyor of the supernatural, and an amusingly flustered wife and mother, wrestling with the jobs and responsibilities which fell to her alone. Ruth Franklin's biographical portrait of Jackson frames its subject as a woman forced to negotiate the incessant demands on her time, space and energy:

> She was a talented, determined, ambitious writer in an era when it was still unusual for a woman to have both a family and a profession. She was a mother of four who tried to keep up the appearance of running a conventional American household […] Like the housewives who felt a 'strange stirring' of dissatisfaction as they went about their chores, Jackson, too, fought to carve out a creative life amid a bustling family.[6]

[5] 'Shirley Jackson', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. ix-xi (p. xi).
[6] Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), pp. 2-3.

Franklin's language here captures something of the pressure placed upon Jackson's personal and professional lives. Despite her clear talent and determination, what space there was for her to be a writer had to be 'carved out' of the established and unyielding presence of her family life; and although domestic tasks and responsibilities consume so much of her time and energy, the suggestion that she 'tried to keep up' the outward show of normality implies only a degree of success in doing so. Franklin's biography (and particularly the introduction) presents Jackson as a pluralised subject: a brilliant writer, undoubtedly, but one who was never quite able to shake off the image of wearing a Mother Hubbard and making 'appetizing messes over a wood stove', the version of herself she so wishes to disown in 'The Real Me'.

Although this tension between conventional standards of femininity and a more emancipatory position for women is a recurrent concern of many of her novels and short stories, it is most explicitly thematised in Jackson's life-writing. The hyphenation of these two dimensions of 'Shirley Jackson' has, in many ways, been a contributing factor in making her a visible-invisible presence within the American literary tradition. As Lynette Carpenter has pointed out, critical accounts of Jackson and her writing (mostly but not exclusively propounded by men) have consciously disregarded her as a writer unworthy of serious consideration:

> Traditional male critics could not, in the end, reconcile genre with gender in Jackson's case: unable to understand how a serious writer of gothic fiction could also be, to all outward appearances, a typical housewife, much less how she could publish housewife humour in *Good Housekeeping*, they dismissed her.[7]

[7] Lynette Carpenter, 'Domestic Comedy, Black Comedy, and Real Life: Shirley Jackson, a Woman Writer', in *Faith of a (Woman) Writer*, ed. by Alice Kessler-Harris and William McBrien (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 143-148 (p. 143).

Jackson's status as a 'writer' is therefore compromised by the improper or trivial material that constitutes her life writing. These critical accounts explicitly position domesticity and housekeeping, areas which are associated almost exclusively with women, as incompatible with the seriousness of writing, a characterisation that Jackson shares with an innumerable sequence of women writers, who collectively constitute a genealogy of diminished authorship. This insistence on the separation of the professional and private lives does not reflect the material reality of Jackson's writing practice because, as Franklin makes clear, her writing emerged out of the domestic detritus of everyday life:

> Like many creative thinkers, Jackson thrived amid chaos, and her files mimic her overstuffed desk: pencil sketches and watercolor paintings; meticulously kept diet logs and appointment calendars […] multiple drafts of novels and stories; scattered dream notes and diary entries […] even Christmas and grocery lists.[8]

The image Franklin presents here is one where writing and the realities of housework occupy the same physical as well as conceptual space: although a chaotic environment, it is nevertheless one that is undeniably productive. Therefore, whilst Jackson investigates and problematises the tension between housework and authorship *within* her writing, the critical myopia that freely dismisses the totality of her work – because she happens to be a housewife and reflects on her domestic reality in her life writing – is condescending bordering on chauvinistic in its attitude towards the conditions and realities of literary production.[9]

Although Jackson's image as an important writer has been rehabilitated in more

[8] Ruth Franklin, 'Foreword', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. xiii-xxi (p. xiv).

[9] Lenemaja Friedman, author of the first biography of Jackson, described the pieces she wrote for women's magazines as 'casual and delightfully whimsical'. Whilst the critics that Carpenter and others reference as disparaging Jackson's life-writing are almost always men, this attitude can be discerned in a more nuanced form in statements such as this from Friedman. Although it is not pointedly critical, it does reinforce this idea that Jackson's autobiographical writing is not to be considered part of her 'serious' literary corpus. See Lenemaja Friedman, *Shirley Jackson*, Twayne's United States Authors Series (Boston: Twayne, 1975), p. 37.

recent scholarship, there is still a tendency to regard her autobiographical works as contributing little to her positive reputation. Darryl Hattenhauer is particularly dismissive, observing that '[h]er writing that is most available often does not show her to advantage, for example, her two collections of domestic narratives, *Raising Demons* and *Life Among the Savages*, both of which Jackson wrote for the mass market'.[10] Hattenhauer imagines an inverse relationship between the popularity and quality of these autobiographical narratives, as if Jackson were compromising her authorial integrity through having too broad an appeal, an issue that is unrelated to the perceived quality of the writing itself. Roz Kavaney also implies that these texts do not show Jackson at her best, albeit in a different way. In her entry on Jackson in *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*, Kavaney writes that '*Among the Savages* [sic]' and *Raising Demons* were 'written with her literary critic husband Stanley Hyman'.[11] In this account, Jackson cannot even be considered the primary author of her own texts, and is demoted to being merely a co-author with her husband, despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest this is the case.[12]

Jackson's life-writing, more so than any other part of her oeuvre, has been disparaged and dismissed and, as a result, has remained the least examined and understood of all her texts. However, scholars such as Bernice Murphy have been central to the rehabilitation of Jackson's autobiographical and domestic writing. Murphy argues that, rather than being

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[10] Darryl Hattenhauer, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 8.

[11] Roz Kavaney, 'Shirley Jackson', in *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*, ed. by Lorna Sage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 345.

[12] There is no doubt that Hyman frequently provided Jackson with comments on her writing – as Franklin points out, '[t]hroughout their marriage, he gave her detailed pages of notes on all of her novels and many of her stories'. However, this is far more of an editorial input than an authorial one, and Franklin does not mention anything about creative collaboration between Hyman and Jackson in writing *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*, and I have been unable to find any evidence from elsewhere to suggest this is the case. This does not explain why Kavaney singles out these texts in particular as evidence of co-authorship, and can therefore be attributed as an error on her part (along with the incomplete title of *Life Among the Savages* and listing Jackson's date of birth as 1919 instead of 1916). See Franklin, p. 96.

casual or 'delightfully whimsical', these texts are centrally engaged with many of the same themes that animate her fictional/'serious' works:

> The domestic fiction of the 1950s does have a significance far beyond that which is immediately apparent, not least because it increased women's awareness of their status in society. It also indicted the failure of the American social system rather than that of the women who were trapped within it. This trend is exacerbated in Jackson's work by the extent to which the themes, preoccupations and even language of her Gothic fiction is replicated in her domestic sagas. It is an appropriation that ultimately seems to suggest that even the most apparently cosy evocation of conventional family life is but a hair's breadth away from the desperation and anxiety of her fictional texts.[13]

Where Hattenhauer criticised the popular appeal of Jackson's domestic humour, Murphy reads it as a vital process of political awakening for the women who read it, a project hardly to be considered trivial in either intention or effect.[14] Moreover, Murphy points out that Jackson is herself alert to the dark side of the domestic and the effect it has on women at large, but also for herself as a writer: 'Jackson was all too aware of the problem the figure of the writer/housewife presented, and or [sic] the fact that she lived in a society that was quite often unwilling to accept that a married mother could also have a successful, creative career outside the home.'[15] Again, the tension between the figures of '(house)wife' and 'writer' comes to the surface of Jackson's self-conceptualisation, and the texts that this chapter examines demonstrate that Jackson does not simply record or document her experiences in a depersonalised register – she consistently responds to the conditions which

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[13] Bernice M. Murphy, 'Hideous Doughnuts and Haunted Housewives: Gothic Undercurrents in Shirley Jackson's Domestic Humour', in *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Anne Stevens (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 229-250 (p. 249).

[14] Jackson's description of balancing the occasionally overwhelming demands – both physical and psychological – that housewifery placed on white, middle-class women clearly anticipates the political exigencies and concerns of second-wave feminist writing, particularly that of Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997 [1963]).

[15] Bernice M. Murphy, 'Introduction: "*Do You Know Who I Am?"* Reconsidering Shirley Jackson', in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, ed. by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 1-21 (p. 16).

define her identity. As Murphy says, 'Shirley Jackson was never just an "ordinary" housewife and mother: the importance of so much of her writing lies in the fact that she suggested so strongly that it was doubtful whether such a creature really existed at all'.[16] Seeing as the 1950s witnessed 'the emergence of a consciousness of this modern identity of the housewife', it is perhaps not surprising that Jackson responds to this phenomenon in her life writing, and address the inexorably spectral effects that it produces.[17]

What's So Spectral About Life-Writing?

This chapter takes as its focus three texts: *Life Among the Savages* (1953), *Raising Demons* (1957), and selected writings from *Let Me Tell You* (2016). These represent a significant proportion of Jackson's life-writing and autobiographical texts, ranging from domestic sketches to essays and lectures. However, before addressing these texts, it is worth considering the appropriate terminology for defining this strand of Jackson's writing, since in many ways it cannot be neatly contained within a single term (as is the case with so much of her work).

In their introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography*, Maria DiBattista and Emily Wittman argue that the semantic openness of the term 'autobiography' is what has made it both attractive and problematic as a conceptual category:

> [T]he very capaciousness that made the genre hospitable to many diverse critical agendas also made it difficult to define. Scholars were immediately confronted with the challenge of making sense of an unruly genre that resists most attempts to unify it.[18]

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[16] Ibid, p .3.
[17] Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd, *Sentenced to Everyday Life: Feminism and the Housewife* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), p. 27.
[18] Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography*, ed. by Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1-20 (pp. 1-2).

In other words, 'autobiography' does not, by itself, necessarily represent a clear category of writing about the self; instead, a sense of the semantic parameters becomes more coherent when considering its difference from similar yet distinct terms. Laura Marcus draws a useful distinction between autobiography and memoir, in which the former is seen as 'the evocation of a life as a totality', whilst memoirs 'offer only an anecdotal description of people and events'.[19] Here, one of the distinguishing features is the expanse of life which is represented in the two forms: autobiography must account for the near-totality of an individual life, whilst memoir is more limited in the events it recalls. The selective self-narration of memoir is perhaps a more accurate term for describing Jackson's writing, since both *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons* each cover only a few years, and in the case of the pieces in *Let Me Tell You*, this period can be as short as a single day.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also understand memoir primarily in terms of the scope of its remembering, since the recollections informing memoir 'often bracketed one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span'.[20] However, another element that is crucial to the formulation of memoir for Smith and Watson is a certain introspection on the part of the writer, who understands her/himself as a writer before anything else – as they put it, this form of writing is 'characterized by density of language and self-reflexivity about the writing process, yoking the author's standing as a professional writer with the work's status as an aesthetic object'.[21] This complicates the picture in terms of defining Jackson's 'autobiographical' work because, whilst some of the essays and lectures in *Let Me Tell You* do address her standing as an author, an explicit in-text portrait

[19] Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 3.
[20] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 3
[21] Ibid, p. 4.

of herself as a writer is almost entirely absent from the longer texts. As this chapter demonstrates, Jackson does not present herself as a writer first and foremost – in many ways, the authorial 'I' is a belated instantiation of her subjectivity, and one that is in tension with other forms of the self.

The question of appropriate terminology is one that Smith and Watson cogently address in their introduction to *Reading Autobiography*, providing a clear conceptual framework within which to locate any writing that might be thought of as autobiographical in nature. For them, the adjective '*autobiographical*' designates 'self-referential writing', although this association is made in a context which understands '*autobiography*' as a 'retrospective life narrative' that accounts for a period of time longer than that addressed by memoir.[22] Smith and Watson also address '*life writing*' as 'a general term for writing that takes a life, one's own or another's, as its subject', and which can be 'biographical, novelistic, historical or explicitly self-referential' in nature, and '*life narrative*', which serves as 'a general term for acts of self-presentation of all kinds and in diverse media that take the producer's life as their subject'.[23] The inclusivity of 'life-writing' and 'life narrative' are an attractive alternative to the specificities that can attend these other terms, although given that Jackson's work is literary, the abstraction of 'life narrative' is perhaps unnecessarily broad when applied to her texts.

This chapter therefore uses 'life-writing' to describe the texts it examines because the term is more inclusive of different literary forms, such as the essays and lectures included in *Let Me Tell You.* These are texts in which Jackson takes herself and her life as subjects, but does not do so through the explicitly memorial or recollective structure of either memoir or

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

autobiography. However, following Smith and Watson, the chapter also makes use of the adjectival form 'autobiographical' where it is appropriate, since its designation as 'self-referential writing' is sufficiently broad so as not to be misleading (and because no adjectival version of life writing is extant). An additional advantage to using the term 'life writing' is, as Marlene Kadar points out, its association with an explicitly feminist theorisation of women's self-writing: 'The most broadened version of the term "life writing" […] is the one often celebrated by feminist literary critics concerned with the proliferation, authorization, and recuperation of autobiographical writing'.[24] Using the term 'life writing' is, then, a crucial reminder of the politics of women's authorial self-representation, and the need to establish it as an essential category of women's writing, an exigency that is particularly significant when considering those writers such as Jackson who problematise the very question of how to present their own authorial presence.

Just as spectres cannot be contained by the binarism of clear conceptual categories – present/absent, past/present, visible/invisible – or be kept shut away behind locked attic doors, so they are not limited to the pages of fiction alone. 'Clearly', Julian Wolfreys says, 'ghosts cannot be contained or explained by one particular genre or medium, such as gothic narratives. They exceed any single narrative modality, genre or textual manifestation. It is this which makes them ghostly and announces the power of haunting.'[25] Spectrality is therefore available as a modality of subjectivity to the protagonists of real life rather than just the 'gothic narratives' of prose and poetry. Although Wolfreys risks hyperbole when he states that 'the spectral is at the heart of any narrative of the modern', its ubiquity goes

[24] Marlene Kadar, 'Coming to Terms: Life Writing – from Genre to Critical Practice', in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. by Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 3-16, (p. 5).
[25] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, the Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 1.

some way to explaining its recurrence in the imagery and terminology in theorisations of life-writing and autobiography.[26] Sometimes this evocation is deliberate, whilst in others its presence may be unintentional – an accidental haunting of the autobiographical lexicon. In all of its applications though, its usage demonstrates the degree to which spectrality has established a conceptual and theoretical paradigm for analysing the constitution of the writing and written 'I'.

As Marcus points out, life-writing has often been both a site and a means of excluding women's literary efforts from the traditions of 'great' writing:

> Autobiography was a central case for feminist criticisms in the 1980s, exposing processes of exclusion and marginalisation in the construction of literary canons […] generic definitions served to exclude all forms of 'life-writing' such as diaries, letters, and journals, often adopted by women and those outside mainstream literary culture.[27]

The history of autobiography has not always been a place for the secure consolidation of women's personal and professional identities, but, as Marcus's use of this imagery of exclusion and outsideness suggests, life-writing has been relegated purposefully to the margins of definition. Extant but also not quite present as a category of writing, it is a body of work that haunts patriarchal cultural and critical practice. Not admitted to full presence within autobiographical traditions, these texts and their female subjects are instead kept on the side-lines, at a distance, 'embodying' what Andrew Smith refers to as 'the fragile, because *liminal*, sense of modern subjectivity' that the spectre represents.[28]

Hermione Lee also understands the broader history of women's life-writing practices

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[26] Ibid, p. 3.
[27] Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses*, p. 1.
[28] Andrew Smith, 'Hauntings', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 147-154 (p. 149). My emphasis.

in terms of a spectral non-presence, what she terms 'modest invisibility'.[29] However, for her, it has been necessary to exorcise this haunting component as part of giving substantial – and live – presence to these ghostly narratives of women, wherein the task of criticism was 'disinterring obscure lives and of claiming new status and significance for women's stories'.[30] The term 'disinterring' is part of the Gothic economy of expressions which (re)animate discussions of women's life-writing, situating these texts in relation to concerns around the viability of 'presence' and 'visibility' in a historical context which has tended to problematise these positions for female autobiographical subjects. Hélène Cixous characterises the play of absence-presence as a formal feature of life writing (indeed, of all writing) when she observes that '[a]ll biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another'.[31] There is a two-in-one logic at play in this statement: all (life-writing) narratives are singular yet plural, with the story that is overwritten by the one which tells it in its place (like the surface text of a palimpsest) becoming spectral – it is still there, still being told, but is not visible or (at least immediately) apprehensible.

Perhaps most explicitly of all, Linda Anderson voices her concern over a pattern in theorisations of life-writing which sees non-presence as *the* position/fate of women's autobiographical voices, a 'fear of women again being consigned to an "unrecoverable absence"'.[32] This might best be thought of as the terminal stage of spectrality, whereby the subject has been so thoroughly de-substantialised that it becomes impossible for her ever to be re-animated as an agential or authorial presence. Marina Warner similarly conceptualises the female autobiographical subject as spectral in her observation that:

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[29] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 127.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Hélène Cixous, 'Albums and Legends', in *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, ed. by Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 177-206 (p. 177).
[32] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011 [2001]), p. 83.

> [A]utobiography – the wide range of what Dutch historians call 'Ego-documents' – fashions and re-fashions the self, in dialogue with imagined interlocutors, even if those imagined receivers are one's own future selves. The subjective 'I', the literary first person, has become a troubling ghost, there and not there, imagined or actual.[33]

The autobiographical self is always multiple because it is constantly re/fashioned through interactions with absent-presences (readers or different iterations of the self), who do not even have to be real. The 'I' is therefore necessarily plural, haunted by itself at different times and in different guises, a condition that encapsulates the inexorably spectral quality of life-writing.

This ghostly element of the self-written 'I' as plural and fragmented has been widely discussed and theorised. Laura Marcus speaks of the fact that readers and practitioners of life-writing are too invested in the idea of an undivided persona – what she describes as 'an excessive emphasis on the need for unity within the autobiographical work' – since, following Warner, this subject is never an individual (undivided), but a composite of selves sheltering under the 'I' who writes. Marcus states this explicitly later on in *Auto/biographical Discourses*, pointing out that autobiography became recognised as a distinct form of writing in response to specific anxieties surrounding the integrity of subjectivity: 'the naming of "autobiography" at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century [arose] in the context of a post-Enlightenment anxiety over the nature of "the subject"'.[34] Whether autobiography is an attempt to secure this instability or merely a reflection of it is a matter of interpretation, but Marcus's point is that the unitary autobiographical self has only even been imaginary, and this uncertainty over the self has in turn resulted in 'the fundamental problem of the instability […] of

[33] Marcus, p. 5.
[34] Ibid, p. 180.

autobiography as a genre'.[35]

Smith and Watson also address the form of autobiography as unstable, arguing that '[t]he multifacetedness inherent in autobiographical writing produces a polyphonic site of indeterminacy rather than a single, stable truth' – in other words, the very fact that the 'I' who writes is multiple – defined by different iterations of itself across different periods of time and (possibly) different texts – means that the reader does not have access to a monolithic conception of the autobiographical self.[36] It is not just one voice in different guises, but a series of different voices, all working against the stabilisation of both the subject and the form of life-writing. Estelle Jelinek understands this plurality and fragmentation as largely commensurate with women's practice of self-representation, seeing it as a purposeful aesthetic/authorial decision:

> In contrast to the self-confident, one-dimensional self-image that men usually project, women often depict a multi-dimensional, fragmented self-image colored by a sense of inadequacy and alienation, of being outsides or 'other'; they feel the need for authentication, to prove their self-worth.[37]

Jelinek's argument is predicated on what she conceptualises as the differential dimensionality of gendered representation. Although she argues that the self-image men present in life-writing is one-dimensional (therefore lacking a certain depth of expression), this is counteracted by the self-sufficiency of their representation – there is no need to look to sources beyond or outside as a means of securing it. In other words, Jelinek suggests that there is no sense of them being an 'other' because they are defined as one whole/single dimension (though it should be said that this approach fails to account for how other

[35] Ibid, p. 7.
[36] Smith and Watson, p. 16.
[37] Estelle Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1986), p. 14.

identity categories – such as sexuality or race – might affect this consolidation). In contrast, the self-image of women does not have the same privilege for articulation, being inescapably haunted by a preestablished sense of inadequacy and inauthenticity that expresses itself through the fragmentation of their self-representation.[38] This idea recalls Rosemary Jackson's assertion that 'supernatural' is a term used to describe writing that is concerned with 'selves becoming doubled into mirror images and reflections, split into multiple projections'.[39] Both women's life-writing and ghost stories make use of the figuration of their protagonists (both fictional and autobiographical) as fragmentary as a means of demonstrating the different kinds of pressure that attend any presentation of female subjectivity.

As this chapter demonstrates, Jackson's life-writing reflects the problems of presence and plurality identified in theorisations of autobiographical writing, and does so with her particular twist. Unquestionably, she is disturbed or unsettled by the demands of housework, and of being a (house)wife and mother. In one of the sketches in *Let Me Tell You*, Jackson begins by observing that 'Mothers are harried creatures, haunted by all sorts of terrors: rusty nails, the rising cost of sneakers, rain on Class Picnic Day'.[40] This form of apparitional, domestic 'horror' is rooted in the need to fulfil her responsibilities as a mother, with the haunting element reflecting the fear of failing to do so (whether that capacity is within her gift or not). At the same time, what her autobiographical works demonstrate is

[38] This fragmentary self-articulation could equally describe other identity categories – such as queer and trans subjectivities – that are rarely, if ever, granted unitary or coherent positions, be they political, social, or artistic. Their presence is therefore marked by a doubled-ness or plurality, even in understandings and expressions of the self. There is by no means a simple or stable opposition between 'male' and 'female' as the only forms of autobiographical writing.

[39] Rosemary Jackson, 'Introduction', in *What Did Miss Darrington See?: An Anthology of Feminist Supernatural Fiction*, ed. by Jessica Amanda Salmonson (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1989), pp. xv-xxxv (p. xvi).

[40] Shirley Jackson, 'Mother, Honestly!', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp.333-336 (p. 333).

that writing itself comes to be figured as a source of spectral uncertainty, since it does not allow her to separate the housewife from the author. Against the haunting return of the 'trim little housewife', the figure she is so keen to distance herself from in 'The Real Me', her writing instead only underlines the extent to which she is separate from herself. Both of Jackson's loci of identity – what Lenemaja Friedman refers to as her 'Two Careers: Marriage and Writing' – work in different ways to turn her into a spectral presence, one who haunts herself, or her-selves, rather than an old room in the attic.[41]

The Ghost in the Home: Haunted Housewives

'Like virtually all humour writing, [*Life Among the*] *Savages* straddles the line between fiction and fact; it is autobiographical but not necessarily true'.[42] This is how Franklin characterises Jackson's first full-length work of life-writing, *Life Among the Savages*, published by Farrar, Straus and Young in 1953. Franklin presents the text as a curious hybrid: it is a reflection of the author's life, but one in which Jackson carefully positions the mirror in which the reader glimpses her. This manipulation of autobiography – the extent to which it is an unmodulated 'true' reflection of its subject – argues for Jackson's ability to select and embellish details of these texts; and one of the themes that is detailed most particularly across *Life Among the Savages*, *Raising Demons*, and the assortment of texts from *Let Me Tell You*, is the enervating and destructive effects of housework, and the related consequences of being positioned as a (house)wife.

It is not surprising that this is a recurrent focus in these texts. Not only are they written in the period which saw 'the emergence of a consciousness of this modern identity of the

[41] Friedman, p. 26.
[42] Franklin, p. 306.

housewife' that Johnson and Lloyd described, but, as Smith and Watson point out, the house is an essential point of reference for the process of self-presentation in a lot of life-writing.[43] They stress the 'centrality to the scene of narration of such domestic spaces as the writing desk […] the intimate space of the bedroom or bath, the sociality of the dining room table, of gendered spaces such as the kitchen'.[44] It is significant that Smith and Watson define the kitchen as an explicitly gendered space. Whilst it is true that it provides Jackson with a particularly vivid site for self-reflection (as seen in a text explored later in the chapter), Jackson's experience of the family house as a site structured around gendered expectations of work and labour is not isolated to particular rooms. Rather, these expectations are a hauntological element which mediates her interaction with the house in its entirety, since the demands of housework and of being a housewife follow her around incessantly, a ghost that cannot be exorcised. Recalling Michel de Certeau's claim that 'haunted spaces are the only ones people can live in', Hattenhauer suggests that '[f]or Jackson, the supernatural […] isn't a foray into her private demons. Rather, it is a metaphor for reality'.[45] Although Hattenhauer is primarily referring to Jackson's psychological ailments in his assessment, in many ways this is a distinction without a difference. As her life-writing demonstrates, reality for Jackson is a negotiation of those private domestic spaces which trouble her understanding of self, and it is precisely this dynamic which makes her house-bound identity a haunted one.[46]

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[43] Johnson and Lloyd, p. 27.
[44] Smith and Watson, p. 43.
[45] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendell (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1988 [1984]), p. 108; Hattenhauer, p. 10.
[46] Dara Downey has written about representations of problematic domestic space in Jackson's fiction, arguing that 'the trend of her work overall is towards an attempt to solve the problem of enclosed domestic space, to negotiate its tendency to vacillate between functioning as a refuge or a prison'. Significantly, she understands and reads these spaces as actively threatening to Jackson's protagonists, because they '[interpolate] women into the confinement and exploitation of rigidly domestic roles'. Although Downey focuses primarily on Jackson's fiction, this dynamic undoubtedly affects the uneasy autobiographical 'I' of her life-writing as well.

One of the earliest instances of self-presentation in *Life Among the Savages* pictures Jackson as a figure in a compromised position within her own life:

> This is the way of life my husband and I have fallen into, inadvertently, as though we had fallen into a well and decided that since there was no way out we might as well stay there and set up a chair and a desk and a light of some kind […] I cannot think of a preferable way of life, except one without children and without books, goings on soundlessly in an apartment hotel where they do the cleaning for you and send up your meals and all you have to do is lie on a couch and – as I say, I cannot think of a preferable way of life, but then I have had to make a good many compromises, all told.[47]

Jackson's language here emphasises the relative lack of control in her own life – finding herself trapped in a space which she has 'fallen into' and from which there is 'no way out', consigned to furnishing her existence with domestic trappings. What is also interesting is the element of wish fulfilment she expresses, imagining that the only alternative to her current arrangement is one which removes the children, the books and the housework – elements which represent the constitutive dimensions of her personality, and which are constantly demanding their own particular form of attention. Whilst this can be read as a desire for a form of luxurious autonomy, this sedentary subjectivity – peculiarly deprived of books – is a rather anaemic identity for an intelligence as lively and stimulated as Jackson's. What this scene demonstrates is that the polarities of identity which Jackson imagines for herself are either an entrapped, even entombed, housewife (with the image of falling into the well implying some form of subterranean burial), or as a 'negative' figure, one who is defined by what she is 'without' rather than what she has. The repeated phrase 'I cannot think of a preferable way of life' recalls the narrator's first description of Doctor Wright in

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See Dara Downey, 'Not a Refuge Yet: Shirley Jackson's Domestic Hauntings', in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 290-302 (pp. 290-292).

[47] Shirley Jackson, *Life Among the Savages* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 1-2. All further references are to this edition.

The Bird's Nest, whose incessant identification as an 'honest' man signals the very opposite. It is as if Jackson attempts to make herself accept the happy reality of her situation, without that necessarily being the case. In both instances, these self-figurations are decidedly spectral: a woman buried alive in her own life, or an inactive participant within it, a passive figure who does not do (let alone create) anything.

Whilst Jackson's self-presentation at the opening of the text is marked by an uncertain expression of agency, the new house into which the family moves is figured as a domineering and even menacing presence that seeks to control its inhabitants, an impression that is made upon Jackson the first time she and her husband are shown around by Mr Fielding:

> [Mr Fielding] looked away quickly, as though avoiding an accusing glance from the house.
> 'Good house,' he added.
> 'It looks so . . .' I hesitated. 'Imposing,' I said finally.
> 'Imposing,' Mr Fielding agreed. (p. 13)

The house is conceived as a Hill House-like live organism, one which resents Mr Fielding's attempts to lease it to Shirley and Stanley, and makes its presence felt in both the landscape and the minds of its would-be inhabitants. This sense is amplified once the family members take up residence and attempt to shape the house to their own design, a process at which they are less than proficient: 'After a few vain attempts at imposing our own angular order on things with a consequent out-of-jointness and shrieking disharmony that set our teeth on edge, we gave in to the old furniture and let things settle where they would' (pp. 18-19). The family's reciprocal imposition on the house is unsuccessful, owing perhaps to its stronger sense of emplacement. What results from this is a domestic environment defined by an out-of-jointness and sense of 'shrieking disharmony', qualities that are inherently

spectral in their refusal of regularity and logic, the 'angular order' Jackson wishes to introduce. This disjointedness that Jackson describes is neither exclusively temporal (as in the Shakespearean-Derridean formulation of time being 'out of joint') nor spatial, but rather an imbrication of the two. It is a juxtaposition of different times (the past and present) that is represented spatially (specifically, the way Jackson and her family find themselves living at an awkward angle to/within the house). Jackson's description here is a reminder that spectrality is both a diachronic and synchronic phenomenon. It is a form of temporal disruption whose effects may be apprehended through the (re)ordering of space – in this case, the social/familial space of the home. The house insists on maintaining its ghostly possession over both the inanimate body of the building and the living bodies of the family, who are subsequently positioned within a house over which they have no possession.

In Daniel Miller's analysis of the home as a social space, this dynamic is brought to life with an unapologetically ghostly metaphor:

> In moving in and maintaining a home we have constantly to contend with the pre-given decorative and other ordering schemes of the house. Although we may seek to overthrow these, more often we develop a kind of negotiated compromise between that which is expressed by the house and that which we seek to express through the medium of the house. As such the house comes to occupy us as we come to occupy it, and […] what we may not be able to fully possess comes to some degree to possess us.[48]

Inhabitation is therefore a two-way process, and any subject has to come to terms with itself as being both owner-of and owned-by the house in which it resides. Domestic space is not simply a pre-fabricated arrangement through which an individual passes, but is, rather, an organisation and structure of space which is contiguous with its residents. Therefore, to live in – and be haunted by – a house is always to stage a spectral encounter with a

[48] Daniel Miller, 'Behind Closed Doors', in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. by Daniel Miller (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), pp. 1-22 (pp. 10-11).

reflection of oneself in some partial or attenuated form.

In an early draft of *Life Among the Savages*, Jackson had intended to heighten the haunted house element of the narrative by introducing an apparitional figure. Franklin details this decision in her chapter on *Savages* in *A Rather Haunted Life*:

> An early draft went further, with an episode in which Jackson is visited by a ghostly former resident of the house they have just moved into. But in the final version she toned this down, choosing instead to suggest a homier mode of the uncanny.[49]

It is significant that Jackson ultimately dispensed with this literal personification in favour of emphasising the house as the locus of haunting, because it functions, metonymically, as the site of women's experience, labour and agency, especially in the post-war period, when '[m]ore than at any time since the Victorian era, the American woman became a domestic being'.[50] In the final draft of the text, what haunts Jackson more than the apparition of a once-living person is her own entrapment within the domestic structure, and the various modes and expectations of feminine behaviour and labour within it. So deeply does Jackson feel this haunting presence from the house that in another of her autobiographical texts she describes her unconscious impulse to escape:

> When we came to occupy our present house, we were not at first accepted . . . the old house had grave reservations about us and would allow us to feel only provisionally at home. Twice, the first week we were there, I awoke with nightmares of the old house shaking over me, malevolent and cruel, and after that, during our first few months, I frequently found myself out between the pillars, as if running away.[51]

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[49] Franklin, pp. 305-306.
[50] Lois W. Berner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*, 2nd edn (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984 [1974]), p. 240.
[51] Shirley Jackson, 'Good Old House', in *Let Me Tell You* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. 223-232 (p. 223).

In addition to reemphasising the house's uncanny liveliness, Jackson's admission of nightmares morphing into an attempted midnight flight is central for understanding the pressure she experiences, the product of an irresolvable tension between her own subjectivity and the entombing pull of the house. This tension is represented by the fact that, as Jackson recollects, she always wakes up between the pillars just outside the front door – the liminal space which constitutes the border between the inside and outside of the property. She can never quite escape the house because, in part, she *is* the house, a part of a network of 'complex shifting emotional […] and social relationships […] the co-existence of different types of bodies and encounters' which define the 'home as a site of haunting'.[52]

Jackson's material experience of the house is expressed most directly through housework – and the attendant status of being a (house)wife – which often makes excessive demands on her energy and time at moments when her attention should be elsewhere. Jackson illustrates this particularly strikingly when recounting the birth of the couple's third child, Sally:

> At seven-thirty I called my doctor and we chatted agreeably for a few minutes, and I said I would just give the children their breakfast and wash up the dishes and then run over to the hospital, and he said that would be just fine and he'd plan to meet me later, then; the unspoken conviction between us was that I ought to be back in the fields before sundown.[53]

Although unmistakably humorous in tone, Jackson's self-presentation here frames the social and cultural expectations of the wife and mother as intensely restrictive. She cannot

[52] Caron Lipman, *Co-habiting with Ghosts: Knowledge, Experience, Belief and the Domestic Uncanny* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 1.

[53] Jackson, *Life Among the Savages*, p. 62. This haunting impression of a property on the mind of its inhabitant would find its most famous expression in *The Haunting of Hill House* and specifically Eleanor Vance, whose similar experiences of a 'malevolent and cruel' house lead to a (fatally) unsuccessful attempt to leave a place of which she understands herself as a part. One of the most famous ghost stories of the twentieth century draws on Jackson's own sublimated fears of what such places represent for their female residents.

imagine going to the hospital without ensuring the children are fed and the chores are completed, in a manner reminiscent of Tessie Hutchinson arriving late to the lottery (in Jackson's infamous story) because she dare not be so negligent as to leave her dishes unwashed in the sink: if ritual murder cannot be allowed to interfere with the housewife's daily routine, Jackson's excuse of imminent childbirth does not stand a chance.[54] Moreover, the 'unspoken conviction' between Jackson and her doctor – unvoiced, perhaps, because it scarcely needs saying – that she 'ought to be back in the fields by sundown' is equally revealing of this attitude. Likened to a domesticated working animal, Jackson's position is one of ceaseless labour without any talking-back or exemption. Even at moments such as these where Jackson demonstrates her prowess for ironic self-characterisation, what haunts her is the possibility of being rendered voiceless or depersonalised by both domestic labour and the social expectation which valorises it above anything else. This is a form of self-haunting in which the spectral presence is a diminished version of the self she might become, a ghostly effect of the regulation of femininity *in extremis*.

So predominant in Jackson's life is the necessity of housework that it becomes the determining factor, the baseline, by which every other action is evaluated. In *Raising Demons*, the sequel to *Life Among the Savages*, Jackson contemplates what she might achieve with her 'free' time once the family's youngest child, Barry, starts nursery:

> I began to think with an uneasy sensation which I finally identified as pure stage fright of the mornings next spring, when Barry would begin nursery school and I would be all alone in the house. I made tentative plans for garden work, and thought that with all the free time I was going to have I might get some reading done. I could even take courses at the college if I wanted to […] I could reorganize the linen closet and finally get the ragged towels down at the bottoms of the piles, instead of right on top where they always came out for company. I asked my husband what I should do […] and he said that by that time the floors would need another coat of varnish. I said indignantly that I was

[54] Shirley Jackson, 'The Lottery', in *The Lottery and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 291-302 (p. 295).

> certainly not going to stay home varnishing the floors all by myself while he was off teaching in a nice cool college, and he said why didn't I get some practice cooking? I said I got all the practice cooking I needed, thank you, and went off and mooned over the red and tan jacket Laurie [the eldest child] wore when he first went off to nursery school.[55]

Initially, the very idea of having time away from all her children instils a mild panic in Jackson, a sensation which, in being described as a form of stage fright, positions her identity as (house)wife and mother as a performance – albeit one which now finds itself without an audience. When presented with an opportunity to go off-script, to abnegate (momentarily) the responsibilities of motherhood, Jackson's response is to freeze, to give way to the 'uneasy sensation' emerging out of this disruption to the regular staging of her domestic role. On top of this uncertainty, Jackson is pulled in different directions as to how this time might best be used. Her own desire for leisure (reading) and intellectual application (returning to college) are positioned against activities – ranging from garden work to reordering the linen closet – which not only retain Jackson in the domestic sphere, but aim to improve her efficiency within it. Her husband is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the avatar of this second attitude, materialising into the scene in order to maintain the separation between his space – the 'nice cool college' – and the domestic arena occupied by his wife. Jackson's resistance is muted, with her retiring to reflect upon an item of clothing, the jacket Laurie wore on his own first day at nursery, which mediates between the past and the present. Faced with the imminent reality of being alone in the house and required to direct her attention towards housework even more concertedly, Jackson imaginatively reanimates the past as a site of refuge – a place in which there is seemingly less scrutiny over her domestic efficacy (although the item that engenders this recollection still keeps her

[55] Shirley Jackson, *Raising Demons* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015), pp. 113-114. All further references are to this edition.

tied to domestic responsibilities of washing, mending and caring for her children's clothes, numerous descriptions of which are present throughout her life-writing).

Hyman's countering manoeuvre is to define the passage of time explicitly in relation to housework. Where, for Jackson, time can be understood as cycling-in on itself, establishing a contiguity between past and present which is mediated by the jumper, for Hyman, past and present are stratified, layered like coats of varnish on the wooden floor. The 'present' layer is the one that matters, and the haunting arrangement of time is forward- rather than backward-looking: the ghosts of floor varnishings yet to come that constitute Jackson's immediate future. Stanley's intervention not only prevents Jackson from summoning the past into the present as a strategy for delaying further domestication, but it makes the measurement of time *itself* a domestic feature. Although Jackson's spectral interleaving of past and present is itself problematic – since it reinforces the never-changing condition of being a (house)wife, between the 'then' and 'now' of the text – Hyman's alternative configuration extends and re-energises the performative character of Jackson-as-housewife which so overwhelms her subjectivity. In either configuration, therefore, Jackson's domestic responsibilities always find a way to come back and haunt her. Alexis Shotwell points out that one of the reasons why housework is characterised as an eternal, Sisyphean undertaking is that it is 'understood not in terms of its outcome – cleanliness – but in terms of the labor properly expended in its execution'.[56] The housewife or domestic worker's expenditure of energy and labour is not a solution to the problem of incessant housework, therefore, but rather perpetuates and extends its own conditions. Domestic work is what one does, but it is also what always remains to be done, a disordering of time which

[56] Alexis Shotwell, '"No proper feeling for her house": The Relational Formation of White Womanliness in Shirley Jackson's Fiction', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 32.1 (Spring 2013), 119-141 (p. 131).

envelops Jackson-as-housewife. The housework-to-be-done is figured as the spectre-yet-to-come, serving to put time out of joint and preventing Jackson from securing a stable sense of herself in either past, future, or present.

It is the recurrence of domesticity's demands placed upon the labour and agency of women which invites a spectropoetic reading of Jackson's self-presentation. In her essay on feminist readings of traditional ghost stories, Diana Wallace points out that '[t]he figure of the ghost has proven a rich and provocative way of symbolizing women's feeling that their identity, both past and present, has been repeatedly, and often violently, denied and repressed'.[57] Although the circumscription of identity is frequently addressed in Jackson's texts – either openly or at an ironic distance – a slight modification of Wallace's analysis as a perspective through which to read Jackson and her writing is necessary here. As pointed out by Franklin, in the final draft of *Life Among the Savages* Jackson consciously displaces the haunting locus from an apparitional figure to the house itself, in both its material and cultural configurations. Therefore, to speak of spectrality being instantiated by 'the *figure* of the ghost', at least at this point in the text, would be a mistake. The particular instantiation of spectrality Jackson presents across her life-writing is as a figuration of femininity which also reveals the ways in which this femininity is discursively invigilated and regulated. As Rebecca Munford argues, in certain texts and contexts, 'the power of spectrality lies foremost in its expository and analytical possibilities, its ability to "explore" and "illuminate" the category of femininity by making visible its instabilities and contingencies'.[58] In Jackson's case, her scriptural self-fashioning is a response to the haunting conditions of housework

[57] Diana Wallace, 'The Ghost Story and Feminism', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. by Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 427-435 (p. 434).
[58] Rebecca Munford, 'Spectral Femininity', in *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosknik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 120-134 (p. 132).

and of performing the roles of 'housewife' and 'mother'. In doing so, she makes visible the regulatory network of social and cultural expectations – embodied and ventriloquised by her husband and others – which gives form to Jackson's presence by attenuating her ability to operate outside or against the equation of femininity with domesticity. Michael J. Daple Jr. suggests that '[f]or Jackson, domesticity is a form of power; inasmuch as domestic spaces are powerful, they are also traps'.[59] Her comparative powerlessness is an inversion of the power of domesticity as a form of definition, delimitation and containment.

It is this movement away from the ghost as a literal figure, returned either to correct some historical injustice or as an ethereal embodiment of an unspoken secret, that aligns Jackson's writing with what Nick Freeman terms a 'modern' conception of haunting:

> By the twentieth century, haunting no longer had to involve spirits […] Modern haunting was not simply guilt or remorse for past things done or undone, but was instead an amalgam of the stresses and strains of life in a world increasingly governed by industrial, technological and economic imperatives.[60]

Although Freeman's account here is useful, it overlooks those imperatives that specifically affected women, particularly in the post-war period in the United States: principally, a revivified patriarchal interest in determining their social and political place, as well as behaviour. As Jackson's writings demonstrate, spectrality is not a gender-blind or gender-neutral modality – it is experienced in different ways by the different subjects of its haunting effects.

One strategy by which Jackson attempts to escape the totalising pull of domestic work is to claim she is not very good at it. She delivers this self-assessment quite openly in

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[59] Michael J. Dalpe Jr., '"You Didn't Look Like You Belonged in This House": Shirley Jackson's Fragile Domesticities', in *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House*, ed. by Jill E. Anderson and Melanie R. Anderson (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 43-58 (p. 44).
[60] Nick Freeman, 'Haunted Houses', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, pp.328-337 (p. 334).

Savages, writing that 'I have never in my life made any pretence at being an efficient housekeeper: I can make a fair gingerbread and I know a thing or two about onion soup, but beyond the most rudimentary sweepings and dustings I am not capable' (p. 94). Similarly, the opening of her domestic sketch 'Here I am, Washing Dishes Again', sees Jackson confessing that:

> If I were any sort of proper housewife at all I'd start my dishwashing at a specific hour in the morning, duly aproned, trim and competent, instead of heaping the dishpan high while my neighbors and no doubt the rest of the world are off on some blissful pursuit – frying doughnuts, perhaps, or flying kites with their children.[61]

In these instances, Jackson is not denying the reality or superabundance of housework, but is trying to resist the petrification of this work into the settled identity of an efficient housewife. If it is impossible to escape the haunting condition of the housewife, Jackson at least attempts to live with this ghost in an attempt to ward off its inclination to possess her completely. Those women who have been 'possessed' by this particular spectre – who have become the embodiment of efficient housework – and characterised by Jackson as quasi-grotesque figures. One example is the 'gentlewoman of about two hundred years' who responds to one of Jackson's advertisements for domestic help:

> 'Washing dishes,' she said. 'Now, washing dishes I can't stop. If I don't watch myself-' she cackled delightedly '-I just go on washing dishes over and over and over and over again, all day long. All day *long*, now,' and she cackled again.[62]

This Gothicised creature, ancient and cackling, would not be out of place in a Grimms' fairy tale, and yet, as Jackson suggests, in reality she is to be found much closer to (if not actually *in*) one's home, just as the magical geriatric Mallie is liable to materialise suddenly in the

[61] Shirley Jackson, 'Here I Am, Washing Dishes Again', in *Let Me Tell You*, pp. 317-322 (p. 317).
[62] Jackson, *Savages*, pp. 95-96.

homes of 'inefficient' women. Although this is another example of Jackson's humorous capacity for characterisation, the portrait is inflected with a degree of fear that this same fate – an endless cycle of domestic drudgery in which she comes to delight – haunts all housewives, herself included. It is perhaps unsurprising that Jackson decides not to give her the job.

Jackson is herself aware of the ghostliness of efficient housekeeping: 'Around the house, my head deep in a pillowcase or the oven, my eyes focussed on that *supernatural neatness* which the housewife sees somehow shadowing her familiar furniture'.[63] As Jackson imagines it here, 'neatness' in the home – the logical end-point of domestic proficiency – is an inherently spectral practice, an (absent-)present standard which 'shadows' both the furniture and the labouring housewife. Although it is ambiguous from Jackson's phrasing whether having her 'head deep in a pillowcase or the oven' is a form of acceptance or resistance (either doing the housework or hiding from it), her awareness of these supernatural standards of cleanliness momentarily make clear the spectral economy of housekeeping for women. As Avery Gordon suggests, the use of the supernatural as a critical perspective illustrates the effectiveness of the ghost as a metaphor for disclosing hidden arrangements: '[Ghosts are] one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us'.[64] In other words, Jackson uses the conceptual force of spectrality to make her readers (especially white, middle-class women) aware of the supernatural – that is, unattainable – standard of domestic efficiency to which they are held. In this single sentence Jackson condenses one of the most pressing social and political issues facing the housewife in 1950s

[63] Ibid, p. 175. My emphasis.
[64] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 8.

America: the question of whether these women can maintain a secure sense of self against the incessant and even impossible demands of their domestic situation and labour.

This is not to suggest that all of Jackson's life-writing is unrelentingly grim-faced. Indeed, as Murphy has argued, the general picture that Jackson paints of life with her family is a 'happy and loving' one.[65] Similarly, Jessamyn Neuhaus points out that a significant tranche of female readers who wrote fan mail to Jackson identified with the 'self-deprecating descriptions of mild domestic chaos' which were 'always tempered by truly loving interactions between the author and her children'.[66] At the same time though, as Murphy emphasises, 'this does not negate the fact that there are several occasions where definite hints of the darker side of family life and its effect upon women surface' (p. 249). Although this is undeniably true, 'hints' is perhaps understating Jackson's presentation of the perniciousness of housewifery. What is at stake throughout these texts, in both their comic and Gothic registers, is the question of the extent to which femininity can be separated from domesticity for the housewife – that is, whether the house-bound woman can ever really be in control of her identity.

This fear of an identity simultaneously defining oneself without one being in control of it finds its most cogent realisation in Jackson's discussion of the phenomenon of being a 'faculty wife' in *Raising Demons*:

> My husband by then [Barry starting nursery] had been teaching for several months, and I was slowly becoming aware of a wholly new element in the usual uneasy tenor of our days; I was a faculty wife. A faculty wife is a person who is married to a faculty. She has frequently read at least one good book lately, she has one 'nice' black dress to wear to student parties, and she is always just the teeniest bit in the way, particularly in a girl's college such as the one where my

[65] Murphy, 'Gothic Undercurrents in Shirley Jackson's Domestic Humour', p. 249.
[66] Jessamyn Neuhaus, '"Is It Ridiculous for me to Say I Want to Write?": Domestic Humor and Redefining the 1950s Housewife Writer in Fan Mail to Shirley Jackson', *Journal of Women's History*, 21.2 (Summer 2009), 115-137 (p. 116).

> husband taught. She is presumed to have pressing and wholly absorbing interests at home, to which, when out, she is always anxious to return and, when at home, reluctant to leave. It is considered probable that ten years or so ago she had a face and a personality of her own, but if she has it still, she is expected to keep it decently to herself […] Her little pastimes, conducted in a respectably anonymous and furtive manner, are presumed to include activities such as knitting, hemming dish towels, and perhaps sketching wild flowers or doing water colors of her children. (pp. 146-147)

This passage perfectly exemplifies Barbara Johnson's righteous complaint that '[b]eing positioned as a woman is not something that is entirely voluntary'.[67] The 'faculty wife' is clearly a performance, a scripted character with certain preformed tastes and behaviours – even the costume of a '"nice" black dress' is specified. It is a configuration projected onto Jackson over which she has no say: a persona entirely separate from her own experience and agency, and yet also the role by which she comes to be recognisable.

The condition of being a faculty wife is the suppression of any traces of individuality: her 'face and personality' are permissible only if they belong to a 'faculty wife' rather than a woman, and if any semblance of individuality does remain, it cannot be part of the public performance, but confined backstage in the privacy of her isolation. However, this performance also spills over from the public into the private, since the 'little pastimes' Jackson is presumed to do in the confines of her home require her to be anonymous and furtive: her status as a faculty wife is all she is allowed to be, all that is presumed or allowed of her, and yet it is a negative identity, one which renders her nameless and secretive both at home and beyond. Although being a 'faculty wife' does enable her to temporarily leave the physical confines of the domestic behind her, its associations are still carried with her through 'wife', and her mobility is restricted to events associated with her husband.

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[67] Barbara Johnson, 'Introduction', in *A World of Difference* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 1-7 (p. 2).

Moreover, the family house is still very much seen as *the* locus of the faculty wife: it is imagined as the place she is always eager to get back to and anxious to leave, the site where she literally passes the time in her furtive and anonymous manner. Domesticity is the ghost Jackson just cannot exorcise. Outside the house, she is always 'the teeniest bit in the way' because this space is not meant for her: it is for the men, and those adolescent women who have yet to find themselves 'slowly hardening into a faculty wife' (147). The faculty wife is both totalising and neutralising: it imagines or presumes a life for women regardless of their preferences, and in doing so, spectralises their own experiences, which remain present but invisible behind the performance. The woman is relegated to a passive position, yet given just enough presence for her to be in the way – a pretext for reaffirming her place in the home, to which she will inevitably return.

As an extension of the housewife persona, the faculty-wife represents the particular lack of agency experienced by women in the post-war United States. William Chaffe argues that in this period, with men jostling for power against a backdrop of economic transition, women had been left 'without a valued purpose […] Events had passed her by, and she became a peripheral observer rather than a central participant in life' (178).[68] Significant in Chafe's account, aside from its suggestion of a widespread female passivity, is his characterisation of the marginalised woman as an observer or spectator rather than a participant. The idea of the woman 'looking' at events recalls the etymological links between the spectre as an apparitional or haunting figure and as a scopic one.[69] The spectre

[68] William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 178.

[69] Munford underlines this connection in her chapter on spectral femininity in *Women and the Gothic*: 'Etymologically related as much to the sphere of vision as to the realm of phantoms, the "spectre" (from the Latin *specere*, meaning "to look, see") signifies both that which is looked at and the act of looking'. See Munford, p. 120.

is not simply the apparitional figure most readily perceivable to those whom it haunts; it, too, is invested in the act of looking, of bearing witness to events over which it has little or no material influence. In other words, what defines Jackson's investment in figurative spectrality as a modality of subjectivity is not just its reference to presence/absence, or the haunting revenance of domesticity for women. It is the fact that Jackson is an observer, the all-seeing 'I'/Eye at the centre of her life-writing. Recalling Marina Warner's assertion that the autobiographical I becomes a 'troubling ghost', these texts are Jackson's real-life ghost stories, the record of her past acts of looking that are recollected and written in the present.[70]

The prospect of identity slipping out of one's control is the dominant concern of 'Here I Am, Washing Dishes Again', a domestic sketch which strikes Jackson's characteristic balance between levity of tone and seriousness of theme. The opening finds Jackson contemplating her feelings towards her cutlery and crockery as she stands at the kitchen sink:

> I love the[se] things, I own them, they are so essential a part of me that I like to be near them, and when I am away from home, next to the children the thing I miss most is the sight of my own dear sink. When I wash dishes, I stare into the dishpan and at my own hands, which are the only alien things in the dishwater, the only things that don't rattle. (p. 317)

Dishwashing becomes an opportunity for Jackson to reflect on her own subjectivity because it throws into relief the fluid parameters which define the housewife as an identity. The dinnerware is conceived as both an essential part of her and something from which she is irrevocably separated. The dynamic between contiguity and alienation is fundamentally spectral in the way it holds the opposing sides of this binary together in an undecidable

[70] Marina Warner, 'Open Questions: An Introduction', in Lorna Sage, *Moments of Truth* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), pp. xi-xx (p. xvi).

conjunction, and it is precisely this insolubility of the impossible subject position it produces that marks the housewife as a spectral formulation of subjectivity.[71] Jackson's awareness of this irresolvable-yet-productive tension is fully displayed in this sketch, reflecting Anthony Kerby's contention that the urge for self-narration is in part motivated by an experience of tension or distress, a recognition that '[m]uch of our own narrating can be usefully seen as driven by some […] conflict, tension, or crisis in our lives'.[72] To some extent, Jackson's writing reduces the exigency of this spectralisation because the fact that it is written in present-tense makes it impossible for her to be experiencing the situation at the same time. Even so, the reprieve is only temporary, since housework is structured around its ceaseless recurrence in the life of the housewife: Jackson may be writing in the present, but, as is now clear, this present is haunted by the ghosts of housework past and housework yet-to-come.

Colin Davis understands the contemporary condition of spectrality as one of conquest, a colonisation of the subject. He writes: 'The ghosts are now inside our heads rather than roaming the outside world, and human subjectivity has been infiltrated by alien, irrational, spectral presences'.[73] The 'Jackson-as-housewife' of these texts internalises the derealising effects of housework by imagining herself as emptied-out, a one-dimensional figure whose existence is practical rather than experiential: 'Sometimes, wandering as I do around my kitchen, I feel […] the urge to flatten myself against the wall and, until I am taken down for

[71] Jackson's perception of the alien quality of her hands seen through the dishwater is strikingly similar to Judith Butler's conceptualization of the dissociation between 'hand' and 'self' that is elaborated in 'How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?', where she questions 'how it is that my hands and my body became something other than me, or at least appeared to be other than me, such that the question could ever be posed whether or not they belong to me?'. The principal mechanism for this dissolution of the connection between body and self, which Butler codifies as an explicitly spectral process, is writing, which the chapter addresses in its second half. See Judith Butler, 'How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?', *Qui Parle*, 11.1 (Fall/Winter 1997), 1-20 (p. 8).

[72] Anthony Paul Kerby, *Narrative and the Self* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 63.

[73] Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 7.

some practical purpose, lie there quiet, stilled, at rest'.[74] Jackson's subjectivity is possessed and animated by the spectral condition of housework to such a degree that she imaginatively positions herself as a domestic implement: when not in use, she is consigned to a living-death, silent and at peace hanging against the kitchen wall. This self-depletion is both a nightmarish consequence and reflection of domestic proficiency: it transforms the housewife into an inanimate instrument by desubstantialising her subjectivity at the same time that it gives her form and purpose. Jackson's writing demonstrates how spectrality is neither the cause nor origin of this kind of categorical disturbance but is rather the modality that draws attention to it. The middle-class housewife of 1950s America is a necessarily haunted figure because her very identity is predicated on her non-extricability from her surroundings: 'housewife' only signifies through its placement in relation to the house and her associated responsibilities. It is spectrality as both a literary and critical practice that, in fact, draws attention to the problematic (non)position of the housewife, rather than being the cause of it.

The overdetermination of Jackson's subjectivity as a housewife underpins what is perhaps the most infamous – and certainly the most well-known – episode in all of her life-writing. Upon arriving at the hospital whilst in labour with Sally, Jackson is taken through a series of questions by a receptionist that probe into much more than her current condition:

> 'Name?' the desk clerk said to me politely, her pencil poised.
> 'Name,' I said vaguely. I remembered and told her.
> 'Age?' she asked. 'Sex? Occupation?'
> 'Writer,' I said.
> 'Housewife,' she said.
> 'Writer,' I said.
> 'I'll just put down housewife,' she said.[75]

[74] Jackson, 'Here I Am, Washing Dishes Again', p. 321.
[75] Jackson, *Savages*, pp. 67-68.

This incident has become a ubiquitous scene in a lot of critical assessment of Jackson because it so neatly encapsulates the tension between the respective dimensions of her profile. As Murphy says:

> [Jackson] refuses to limit her self-definition to the proscribed role of wife and mother […] however, she must first unexpectedly prove herself to the hospital receptionist, who […] is unable to accept that the narrator [Jackson] has an existence beyond that of wife and mother.[76]

This demonstrates just how culturally rooted the identity of 'housewife' had become in the 1940s through to the 1950s, to the extent that even a woman who might be expected to demonstrate a degree of sympathy and solidarity with Jackson against the erasure of identity in the home actually facilitates the over-writing of her professional status. Jackson-the-writer cannot compete with the ubiquitous image of the housewife as the default, if not only, identity for white, middle-class married women: the pencil is mightier than her protestation.

In her work on the Gothic register of Jackson's life-writing, Murphy proposes an alternative way of reading Jackson's self-presentation in her family stories which restores Jackson-the-writer as *the* agential identity by suggesting that it is a 'calculated pose' to present herself as the 'defensive housewife' instead of the 'best-selling author'.[77] In other words, although Jackson details the etherealising effects being a housewife has on her individuality, what matters is that it is Jackson's creative choice to present herself in this way.[78] Moreover, even at those points in these texts where Jackson's identity seems to be

[76] Murphy, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Shirley Jackson', p. 16.
[77] Murphy, 'Gothic Undercurrents in Shirley Jackson's Domestic Humour', p. 245.
[78] Murphy suggests an economic motivation for this, arguing that '[i]f the true complexity of Jackson's status as a working, independently creative force in her own right and a housewife had been emphasized to her readers it would surely have punctured the sense of solidarity her work inspired in the ordinary middle-class housewife […] and therefore have rendered her work less commercially successful'. Ibid, pp. 245-246.

fully attenuated or erased, the power dynamic still resides with Jackson because she is the one holding the (figurative) pen:

> [T]he last laugh will ultimately be on the Jackson/writer figure, who triumphs in the end because she recounts these exchanges in print, thereby asserting her own authorial status and power even as the words of the story themselves suggest she has been defeated.[79]

This statement is an effective rejoinder to theorists such as Barbara Caine, who, ventriloquising Linda Wagner-Martin, argues that stereotypical views of women, 'which assumed that their entire lives could be explained and encompassed in the notion of them as wives or mothers, had to be relinquished in order for women's life stories to be told from their own perspectives'.[80] As Jackson's texts show, her role as both a wife and mother is not antithetical to her being able to narrate from her own perspective, because her life as a wife and mother is precisely what she chooses to narrate. However, whilst Murphy is undoubtedly correct that Jackson has the last laugh in presenting these instances to her readers through writing, there are a number of moments throughout these texts where writing itself is shown to be a dissociative practice, one wherein Jackson loses sight of herself. This problematises the conception that Jackson can be recovered through writing; in many ways, writing proves to be that which unsettles Jackson's identity the most.

(Ghost)Writing the Apparitional Author

Although it might be assumed that writing is a comparatively secure activity for Jackson (being both a practice over which she exerts creative control and because it has traditionally been defined against her delimitation as a housewife), the reality is that it proves to be far

[79] Murphy, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Shirley Jackson', p. 17.
[80] Barbara Caine, *Biography and History,* Theory and History Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 88-89.

more ambiguous. In some instances, this sense of anxiety is commensurate with the critical uprooting of the autobiographical subject from established ontological foundations, as proposed by critics such as Michael Sprinker, who argues that '[n]o autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of a writing where concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text'.[81] In Sprinker's account, as in others with a bent towards poststructuralist and deconstructionist thought, the writer's impulse for self-narration also marks their quasi-spectral dissolution into the text being written, so that the very condition of life-writing can be understood as, paradoxically, one of productive derealisation. Autobiography marks its subject as a phantom presence from the outset because such writing is contingent on the self being rendered immaterial as the basis for its textual materialisation. Laura Marcus proposes a similar argument when she says that 'the true autobiographer is in some way driven by an inner compulsion to write of the self, and that the autobiographical act must involve a degree of difficulty and struggle, both in "grasping" the self and in communicating it'.[82] The urge for self-inscription comes into tension with a compromised ability to do so (since it is necessarily a difficult process), and this tension can be 'resolved' by reading the subject as spectral, a figure who is made both visible and invisible by the narrative strategies which make life-writing possible.

At the same time, issues which are specific to Jackson's life and writing have problematised her authorial status as well. Lenemaja Friedman's biography of Jackson, published in the mid-1970s, was an early (and influential) framing exercise, one which defined its subject as a woman of 'Two Careers: Marriage and Writing'.[83] Friedman not only

[81] Michael Sprinker, 'Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 321-342 (p. 342).
[82] Marcus, pp. 3-4.
[83] Friedman, p. 26.

brackets writing *and* marriage (with its associated domestic responsibilities) as professional practices, but also evaluates the success of Jackson's earliest fiction in relation to the matrimonial potential it bestows on her. She writes:

> Her first story, 'Janice', appeared in the February, 1938, issue of *Threshold*, a magazine sponsored by the creative writing class of the late poet A. E. Johnson. The story supposedly attracted the attention of Stanley Edgar Hyman, a fellow classmate who later became her husband'.[84]

Friedman's examination of the origins of Jackson's writing career as a mere backdrop for her eventual marriage to Hyman can certainly be conceived as being on the crass side of clumsy. However, behind the prioritisation given to Hyman's response to the story rather than the story itself, Friedman executes a particularly interesting legerdemain. At this point in the narrative of Jackson's life (which has hitherto unfolded in normal, linear fashion), Friedman momentarily collapses the future (in the form of her marriage to Hyman) into Jackson's chronological 'present', the moment when her first story is published; and this spectral-temporal disturbance is performed so that Friedman can retroactively define its significance in terms of Jackson's future of married domestic bliss, rather than as the inauguration of Jackson-the-writer as a legitimate identity position. Friedman's writing turns spectral here in the way she uses the 'future' as an imposition on the 'present' (understood in the biographical unfolding of time from birth to death) as well as on the past (Jackson had been dead for nearly ten years when the biography was published, so the unfolding of these events in the 'present' of Friedman's writing are also historical); and she does this in a manner which attenuates the significance of Jackson's writing in favour of her status as a (house)wife, the identity position from which Jackson is never quite able to escape.

[84] Ibid, p. 21.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that there are no occasions in which writing provides Jackson with a degree of security in her life and work, or at least facilitates her resistance to the deadening effects of housework. For instance, in one of her reflective essays, 'Memory and Delusion', Jackson invests the writing process with the power of preserving her own sanity and sense of self:

> The very nicest thing about being a writer is that you can afford to indulge yourself endlessly with oddness, and nobody can really do anything about it, as long as you keep writing and kind of using it up […] All you have to do – and watch this carefully, please – is keep writing. As long as you write it away regularly, nothing can really hurt you.[85]

This is an unequivocal statement from Jackson: writing gives form and expression to the oddness she experiences as a writer, which has a transgressive potential to it, since the suggestion is that some might look to regulate or restrain what she commits to the page.[86]

In other texts, the writer's pen becomes a significant (if understated) article for pushing back against the controlling mythology of the perfect housewife. Jackson describes an episode in *Raising Demons* in which an old friend of her husband – Sylvia – invites herself to stay with the family for a few days, which prompts Stanley to eulogise Sylvia's domestic prowess. Jackson's response is pointedly directed at her husband, admitting that she 'carefully put my leaking fountain pen down on my husband's notes' (p. 221). There is a fascinating power dynamic at work in this image. The pen metonymically asserts Jackson's authorial presence as a pre-emptive response to the ghostly *arrivant* figure of Sylvia (the perfect housewife who is yet to appear). However, Jackson does not direct her displeasure at the spectral Sylvia but rather at her husband, using her leaky (uncontainable) pen to leave

[85] Shirley Jackson, 'Memory and Delusion: A Lecture', in *Let Me Tell You*, pp. 375-381 (p. 375).
[86] However, even statements like these are shadowed by her admission that the world of her writing is a 'delusional' one, 'full or fairies and ghosts'. The supernatural is a powerfully recurrent constituent in all parts of Jackson's writing process.

a very material mark of author/ity on his class notes, themselves a representation of his professional life. Jackson uses the pen to spill over from the domestic to the authorial, to position her professional status alongside that of her husband and to haunt him with the inky insistence of her presence. This is reminiscent of Rebecca's letters in du Maurier's eponymous novel: the insistent 'R', bloated with ink, which signifies the immaterial-material persistence of the character long after her death, a haunting 'character' that, as seen in the previous chapter, Jackson similarly uses in 'Nightmare', with the insistent 'Miss X' that Toni is unable to escape.[87]

However, where Rebecca's haunting potential is attached to distinct characters and words, it is significant that Jackson's is not – her insistent resistance is not formed into writing so much as an amorphous blemish, making its presence visible but not permitting Jackson to actually say or write anything. Therefore, in the same gesture, Jackson both secures and undermines her authorial status, and this undecidability shadows many of the representations of writing in her autobiographical texts and essays.

Jackson understands her writing as a process that has changed over time, as has her experience of it, a transition which she describes through its effects on her body:

> Writing [used] to be a delicious private thing, done in my own room with the door locked, in constant terror of the maternal knock and the summons to bed; now that I am so luckily grown up and independent, there is no one to knock on the door and save me from my excruciating labors.[88]

[87] Dorothy Dodge Robbins writes about the haunting effect of Rebecca's 'R' on the psyche of her nameless successor, describing how the 'omnipresent and weighty R of Rebecca' overwrites the narrator's 'absent and consequently weightless name'. Writing is figured explicitly as the means by which Rebecca persists as a spectral presence, in turn de-substantializing the presence and influence of her replacement. See Dorothy Dodge Robbins, 'R is for Rebecca: A Consonant and Consummate Haunting', *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, 64.2 (May 2016), 69-77 (p. 70).

[88] Shirley Jackson, 'Autobiographical Musing', in *Let Me Tell You*, pp. 191-192 (p. 191).

Where initially writing is charged with a secretive, almost erotic, aura, at this later point in her life pleasure has been exchanged for pain, the sensual imagery replaced with that of physical exertion and exhaustion. Jackson's attitude to writing reflects the change in her personal and domestic experiences: as she petrifies into the identity of a housewife, writing comes to be figured as another form of labour, an association it shares with childbirth but also, significantly, housework, as Jackson describes it across her life-writing. So pronounced is the influence of housework on Jackson's subjectivity that it even conditions her attitude to writing and her identity as an author, the supposedly distinct and oppositional dimension of her personality to that of the housewife.

In addition to this spectral interconnection between housewife and writer that supervenes Jackson's various self-presentations, it is also necessary to reflect on her admission that sections of her narrative are recollected and inscribed through a disordered perspective. Overwhelmed by the pressures of taking the family for a short holiday in New York, Jackson's experience of the trip, in the version she records, is framed by confusion and uncertainty:

> We were really on the train, with our children, our suitcases, and Dikidiki [Barry's stuffed toy]; we were going to New York. That was, I believe, my last clear, co-ordinated thought. From that moment until I came back through our own front door again, four days later, nothing happened in any kind of reasonable or logical order; nothing made sense.[89]

Ironically, what Jackson remembers most clearly about the trip is her unclear experience and perception of it. Although she suggests that this disorder is specific to this particular trip, her admission opens up a wider sense of uncertainty in the texts about the cogency of her self-presentation(s), and how the reader should respond. Jeffrey Weinstock points out

[89] Jackson, *Raising Demons*, p. 239.

that any narrative perspective functions by suppressing others from which it differs: '[T]here are multiple perspectives on any given event and one perspective assumes prominence only at the expense of other, competing interpretations'.[90] Similarly, Virginia Sherman has argued that life-writing (particularly memoir) 'allows a piecemeal construction of the past' which, in so doing, demonstrates that 'on a psychological level, the narrator's memory and, more so, pen are selective'.[91] In other words, the process of fashioning the subject in autobiography always invites the reader to consider what is absent as much as what is present, and to read the self against the grain of its presentation. Jackson's admission of disordered recollection renders this process temporarily visible, and foregrounds the autobiographical subject as a narrative construction whose presence is made possible by making itself visible and manifest at the expense of alternative options.

This example from Jackson's life-writing shows how an understanding of spectrality as an imbrication of conceptual opposites facilitates a more nuanced interpretive praxis. A narrative perspective, an identity, or a memory cannot be defined simply by their apprehensible elements; instead, as with the inherent difficulty of autobiographical self-articulation, these categories are a complex admixture of their visible features and those features which they exclude, wilfully suppress, or forget. When Jackson confesses that her recollection of the trip to New York is written through her disordered (and therefore, perhaps, unreliable) perspective, she demonstrates how any act of self-presentation in autobiography – which is always indebted to recollection – elevates memory at the expense

[90] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'Introduction: The Spectral Turn', in *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, ed. by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 3-17 (p. 5).
[91] Virginia Allen-Terry Sherman, 'Homemade Tales of Homespun Lives: The Shared Search for Identity in Culinary Memoirs', in *Women's Life Writing and the Practice of Reading: She Reads to Write Herself*, ed. by Valérie Baisnée-Keay, Corinne Bigot, Nicoleta Alexoae-Zagni, and Claire Bazin, *Palgrave Studies in Life Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 271-287 (p. 275).

of (an often wilful) forgetting. This is despite the fact that the memory from which life-writing derives is always selective, structured by the visible-invisible, present-absent, now-then imbrications that a spectropoetic reading preserves.

The profusion of names seen across these texts becomes another focal point for the (in)stability of identity, just as it is in Jackson's fiction (particularly the involuted, derivative arrangement of Elizabeth, Beth, Betsy and Bess in *The Bird's Nest*). Jannie, Jackson's eldest daughter, is particularly playful in this respect: by the time she is nearly five, when 'the question of her name became desperately important', she had 'curated a collection of fifteen interchangeable first names, not counting those used by her parents and siblings'.[92] Jackson also explicitly, if briefly, addresses the binomial distinction between her different selves:

> Since there is enough confusion in our house anyway, no one worries excessively about anyone else's name […] I myself use two names, a maiden name professionally and a married name, and my husband, who is addressed in all variants of father from Pappy to Da, now answers to almost anything. (p. 112)

Jackson is very careful about how she styles herself. Whereas her husband can afford to be called – and to answer to – anything, for Jackson, names matter. Her statement can be read as an attempt to preserve the distinction between the authorial and housewife/mother hemispheres of her subjectivity, so that 'Shirley Jackson' stands for the author, purposefully sidestepping the patriarchal sanctions of domestic work and responsibility, whilst her married name can bear the weight of these sanctions without impinging on her author/ity.

However, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue, this distinction is not entirely

[92] Jackson, *Savages*, p. 111.

within the gift of Jackson, since any woman's maiden name carries within it the ghosts of (dead) male relatives, which enjoins the female descendent in its spectral patrilinearity:

> For women in our culture, a proper name is at best problematic […] even as it inscribes her into the discourse of society by designating her role as her father's daughter, her patronymic effaces her matrilineage and thus erases her own position in the discourse of the future. Her 'proper' name, therefore, is always in a way *im*proper because it is not, in the French sense, *propre*, her own, either to have or to give. With what letters, then, can a woman of letters preserve herself?[93]

In Gilbert and Gubar's terms, Jackson's maiden and married names are both haunted by the transcription of the dominant male appellation – respectively, the husband's and the father's. The attempt to make 'Shirley Jackson' a signature of separation, a figuration that opposes the deadening performance of being a (house)wife, actually re-inscribes her as a phantasmatic embodiment of the history of women's (involuntary) indebtedness to patriarchal designation. This is because any expression of agency that is rooted in the individuality of the woman's name is only possible on the condition that it reanimates an exclusively male history, since there is no such phenomenon as the 'matrilineal name' which can be invoked in its place. This process is at work at the level of the individual letters that distinguish 'Jackson' from 'Hyman' – Shirley can possess these letters and characters, but only in a manner similar to that of a ghost occupying a haunted house: its presence may be felt, and it may even be able to communicate this presence explicitly to other inhabitants, but it is always out-of-joint with its surroundings, unable to fully materialise and assert a determinative control over that which it possesses. This patrilinearity is heightened even further by the overdetermination of these names: Hy-*man* and Jack-*son*, men and male

[93] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 'Ceremonies of the Alphabet: Female Grandmatologies and the Female Authorgraph', in *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Domna C. Stanton (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), pp. 21-48 (p. 24).

familial relationships inscribed into both of Shirley's surnames, the patronym that haunts Jackson's representation as a woman writer. The 'I' which stands in for Jackson-the-writer is therefore a spectral one, haunted not only by the alternative 'I' of the housewife, but also by the patrilinearity of her own name. Writing becomes an apparitional process any time the woman writer puts pen to paper, and autobiographical texts in particular turn into a variety of ghost story, one in which the spectre is also the storyteller.

Shirley Neuman has argued that life-writing – particularly autobiography – is in essence a 'negative' genre, one which operates by making the narrating subject disappear from/into their writing:

> [Autobiography's] dislocations and displacements of the narrating 'I' or of the authorial signature, which question the notion of a unified self and assert the impossibility of its representation in literature, create a 'negative space' that calls attention to the kind of subject and the kind of referentiality we know as autobiographical by noting their absence.[94]

The autobiographical subject calls attention to itself through its inenarrable condition because life-writing demonstrates particularly clearly how language holds the self at a dissociative length: the 'I' of a printed text can only appear in writing, but the 'I' of the narrative and the 'I' of the author are not the same, so that the 'real' self becomes a negative or absent figure in this same writing. This is the distinction Smith and Watson make between the 'I' who 'lives or lived in the world' and the 'I' that 'we gain access to in an autobiographical narrative', which is not the same.[95] Both of these inhabit the same

[94] Shirley Neuman, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences', in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. by Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 213-230 (p. 213).
[95] Smith and Watson, p. 72.

conceptual space as Paul de Man's theorisation of autobiography, as summarised by Linda Anderson:

> The author reads himself [sic] in the text, but what he is seeing in this self-reflexive or specular moment is a figure or a face called into being by the substitutive trope of prosopopoeia, literally, the giving of face, or personification […] Autobiographies thus produce fictions or figures in place of the self-knowledge they seek. What an author of an autobiography does is to try to endow his inscription within the text with all the attributes of a face in order to mask or conceal his own fictionalization or displacement by writing.[96]

Anderson points to de Man's fundamental distinction between the narrating-'I' and the narrated-'I', which are positioned in a symbiotic relationship of derealisation-substantialisation. In a suitably Gothic register, life-writing comes to be figured as a self-consuming mirror, in which the figure reflected within it (the author's narrated-'I') derives substance from devouring the 'I' that it mirrors in the first place. Writing enacts the ghostly effacement of the subject holding the pen, so that *they* appear as the spectral reflection of the 'I' the reader gains access to through the text, rather than the other way round.

Jackson's autobiographical/personal texts contain a number of moments when, through writing, she conceives of herself as dissociated in this way – what Robert Folkenflik refers to as 'the moment in the autobiography in which the subject perceives himself, or less frequently herself, as another self'.[97] In *Raising Demons*, Jackson recollects an incident in which she receives a birthday card but is unable to decipher the handwriting, leaving her perplexed as to why she has received it when her own birthday is months away. In the end it is revealed that the card is the one Jackson posted to her Aunt Lydia, and, by writing her own name on the envelope, accidentally sends it to herself: 'I stood there looking at the

[96] Anderson, p. 12.
[97] Robert Folkenflik, 'The Self as Other', in *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*, ed. by Robert Folkenflik (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 215-234 (p. 215).

card and wondering at the way my handwriting had deteriorated since college' (p. 99). This story derives much of its impact from the fact that Jackson does not recognise her own writing when it unexpectedly returns to her, and for its deterioration across time: just as her handwriting has changed, so has Jackson, and so the inability to recognise her own hand is therefore a moment in which she fails to recognise herself, a confusion that is exacerbated by the disjointedness of time between these different iterations of her writing 'self'. This one-body, two-selves spectacle is mediated by writing, illustrating Butler's conceptualisation of the dynamic between (self)writing and subjectivity: 'The hand is reflexively spectralised in the course of the writing it performs. It undoes its reality precisely at the moment in which it acts or, rather, becomes undone precisely by the traces of the act of writing it performs'.[98] The author is not only disconnected from their writing, but is rendered invisible by it – the 'I' is therefore suspended between the material trace of writing and the ethereality of the body-which-writes, and this mediation operates as a spectral maintenance of these reconciled oppositions.

Jackson also addresses this disconnected relationship in 'Private Showing', which sees her reflecting on the 1957 screen adaptation of *The Bird's Nest* as a means of acknowledging a wider authorial anxiety about her texts and their words becoming unfamiliar to her as the writer:

> I have never, in all the years that I have been writing, heard my own words read or spoken aloud, except by myself, unwillingly, and under pressure. *That* translation is too much for me; I cannot imagine how these words will sound; on the yellow page they *look* as though they will sound all right, and since they are going to be read, I trust, in silence, it seems to me most important that they look as though they will sound all right. I once heard a tape of myself reading one of my own stories and it sounded silly. The voice, of course, was not mine, and the

[98] Butler, pp. 17-18.

> words had been subtly changed; they were not on yellow paper at all, they were *strange* on that infernal tape.[99]

Jackson makes a striking observation here about the comparative lack of control she has over her language when it is spoken rather than written, even when spoken in her own voice. Yet her most significant statement is the way that she once again conceptualises language as dissociative, as an activity which exhibits her self-alienation. As with Aunt Lydia's birthday card, where she failed to recognise her own handwriting, in this episode Jackson does not recognise her voice and words as her own, even insisting that the words have been changed in their transmogrification from print to speech. The uncanniness of hearing her voice talking back at her, making her own text strange and unfamiliar, emphasises the degree to which Jackson is dispossessed of an uncompromised authorial identity because she cannot locate a clear sense of herself in language, the writer's raw material.

This dynamic is modified in 'A Garland of Garlands', which addresses the phenomenon of book-reviewing as a battleground of competing identities and voices. Jackson imagines a scenario in which a husband gets his wife to read the book for him and then discuss it with her so that he can write the review without actually doing the work. Jackson concludes the scenario in an unerringly ironic tone: 'And then the wife has to sit across the dinner table from her husband and say: "It's all so *true*, what you said in the review. I wish I had the brains to review books"'.[100] Although it would be possible to argue that the ironic undermining of this situation is its own form of resistance and critique, when read within the broader context of Jackson's uncertain authorship in her life-writing, it becomes more

[99] Shirley Jackson, 'Private Showing', in *Let Me Tell You*, pp. 219-222 (p. 220).
[100] Shirley Jackson, 'A Garland of Garlands', in *Let Me Tell You*, pp. 193-198 (p. 195).

ambiguous in the effects it produces. The image suggested by this appropriation is one of the spectral effacement of the woman's personhood: her words remain, but they are disconnected from her through the ventriloquist work ethic of the husband. In other words, the wife functions as a kind of ghostwriter for the husband, with her writing being unquestionably visible, but her authorial presence and signature necessarily remaining invisible – as Catherine Belsey puts it, 'a ghostwriter […] is at once present in and absent from the finished work'.[101]

Across these examples from Jackson's autobiographical texts, 'writing' is presented as a multifaceted, complex mediation between author and language. Jackson perceives it (and her corollary position as an author) as both a form of resistance to the attenuating conditions of housework (and housewifery), and as a fundamentally alienating practice, one which illuminates the irrevocable precarity of the autobiographical subject, which can never be at one with itself. However, as this chapter demonstrates, Jackson's autobiographical self-presentation is first and foremost a haunted one: the housewife always shadows the writer, just as the writer gives form to the housewife. To disaggregate these identities would not be to solve the problem of 'Shirley Jackson', turning her into the emancipatory figure Betty Friedan so clearly wished her to be – and criticised her failure in falling short – in *The Feminist Mystique*.[102] Rather, such a radical separation would unravel the fabric of Jackson's autobiographical selfhood, in much the same way as the breaking-down of the palimpsest into its constituent texts ultimately destroys it as an artefact. Whilst this might present the nuanced reader of her life-writing with a politically unpalatable proposition, Jackson's

[101] Catherine Belsey, 'Phantom Presences: Figurative Spectrality and the Postmodern Condition', *The Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 25 (2009), 95-110 (p. 105).
[102] Friedan criticises Jackson along with Jean Kerr and Phyliss McGinley for denying "the satisfying hard work involved in their stories, poems and plays. They deny the lives they lead, not as housewives, but as individuals". See Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 57.

negotiation of these respective iterations of identity can be understood as a cautionary diagnosis of both women's experience and the discursive circumscription of femininity in mid-twentieth-century suburban America. As a new form of consciousness available for/enforced on married women, the housewife fundamentally pluralised and fragmented woman's self-image, since any other identity position (professional or personal) had to sit alongside the expectations and responsibilities of housework. As Jackson's writing underlines, this domestic figuration is a ubiquitous presence in the daily routine of most women; the only element which alters is the degree of visibility it assumes in different situations.

This does not mean that it is impossible to determine the scope and influence of Jackson's authorship and authorial persona in her life-writing; as Murphy suggests, the very fact that we can read these texts shows that Jackson maintained some degree of agential presence as a writer.[103] Alissa Burger also understands Jackson as 'balancing her roles as author and homemaker', seeing her as a woman who 'refused to be limited to a single, defining focus'.[104] Whilst Burger is correct in pointing to the impossibility of containing her within a single focus, the idea of Jackson balancing her different identities is an overly positive assessment. To make a small but significant alteration to the formulation of authorial identity defined by Gérard Genette in his famous reading of Proust – 'Marcel becomes a writer' – in Jackson's case, this might be best rendered as 'Shirley becomes a (housewife)writer', or even 'Shirley becomes a (ghost)writer'.[105] Not only do these terms

[103] Murphy, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Shirley Jackson', p. 17.
[104] Alissa Burger, 'Casting a Literary Spell: The Domestic Witchcraft of Shirley Jackson', in *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House*, ed. by Jill E. Anderson and Melanie R. Anderson (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 97-112 (p. 99).
[105] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 30.

encompass the ghostly confluence of selves, but they emphasise the degree to which writing and authorship are not straightforwardly positive categories for Jackson. This also represents a reconfiguration of the hyphenated portrait of Jackson as a 'housewife-writer'. To hyphenate two terms brings them into balance with each other: both meanings are visible and present simultaneously, held in a suspension of equal determinative value. In contrast, the bracketed or parenthetical figuration '(housewife)writer' points to the ghostly arrangement of these respective identities. Even if Jackson-the-writer is the privileged form in these texts, she is always shadowed by her alternative guise as homemaker and domestic labourer, ghosting the very writing through which she attempts to consolidate her authorial 'self'. The position of a woman writing under these conditions is a bracketed one, and to remove these parentheses, to exorcise the housewife's possession of the writer, would be purposefully to lose sight of Shirley Jackson as the spectral subject she presents to us.

Conclusion – An End Which is (K)Not One: Shirley Jackson, a Rather Haunting Writer

'[T]o make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.'[1]

Angela Motorman is a free woman. Her husband is dead, buried without fuss or lamentation, whilst she is ready to start afresh in a new city, no longer bound by the demands of small-town neighbourly pleasantries, or disingenuous admiration for her husband's mediocre talents as a painter. Shorn of her old name and identity, she packs away the detritus of her married existence and disappears, ghost-like, from the life she has led up to this point:

> So that was how I started out. I'd thought about it for a long time of course […] and everything went the way I used to figure it would. I sold the house, I auctioned off the furniture, I put all the paintings and boxes in the barn, I erased my old name and took my initials off everything and I got on the train and left.[2]

So begins 'Come Along With Me', the text that would have been Shirley Jackson's seventh novel, and the one on which she was working at the time of her death in August 1965 at the age of forty-eight. The novel was 'a late and very welcome literary child for Jackson', a project onto which she could direct her rekindled energy and creative spark after the debilitations of agoraphobia and alcohol dependency that she suffered during the writing of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*.[3] It also marked a 'significant point of evolution' in her fiction, embracing an ebullient tone that is much closer to the autobiographical register of

[1] T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), Kindle ebook.
[2] Shirley Jackson, 'Come Along With Me', in *Come Along With Me: Classic Short Stories and an Unfinished Novel*, ed. by Stanley Edgar Hyman (New York and London: Penguin, 2013), pp. 3-32 (pp. 4-5). All further references are to this edition.
[3] Laura Miller, 'Foreword', in *Come Along With Me: Classic Short Stories and an Unfinished Novel*, ed. by Stanley Edgar Hyman (New York and London: Penguin, 2013), pp. ix-xii (p. ix). For a full account of Jackson's physical and psychological decline in the early 1960s, see Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), pp. 428-456.

Life Among the Savages and *Raising Demons* than either her novels or short stories. This change in style extends to her protagonist, the unencumbered Ms Motorman, a widowed woman of forty-four in both 'age and size' (p. 3). The newly self-christened Angela (a name she adopts after hearing it inside her own head) looks to have escaped the traumatic adolescence and early-womanhood of so many other Jackson protagonists, be it the psychological fragmentation of Natalie Waite or fractured personalities of Elizabeth Richmond, the disappearing/disappeared young women of 'The Missing Girl', 'Nightmare' and 'The Good Wife', and especially the death-by-marriage suggested in the different versions of 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith'. Even if similar traumatic experiences are in Angela's past (and no mention of them is made in the extant sections of the unfinished text), she seems to have defied the authorial odds as one of the very few happy women in a Shirley Jackson story. Like Jackson's real-world experience, Angela's life appears to be moving in a promising and productive direction, just at the point when it is brought to a premature end.

In this respect, 'Come Along With Me' can be thought of as both a beginning and an ending: a text about starting over that also marks the end-point of Jackson's prodigious literary career. It is 'a happy book . . . [in] a new style', as recorded by Jackson in her final diary, a work that is 'markedly different from anything she had previously written'.[4] Yet if it is also an ending, it is an uneasy one. It is an incomplete work, sketching episodes in the life of a women who 'dabble[s] in the supernatural' (p. 11), and is told by her landlady that '"anything you raise by way of spirits you have to put back yourself"' (p. 14). Like the supernatural figures Mrs Faun imagines Angela to be summoning in the front parlour, 'Come

[4] Franklin, p. 491.

Along With Me' is a text with unfinished business: it is a quasi-novel, published as a discrete set of chapters or sections that constitute it as a named work, but it is also fragmentary and episodic, lacking the integrity of a completed literary text. It has a lot more to say which is – and will remain – unsaid.

For this reason, there is something rather fitting about the fact that Jackson's unfinished final novel should centre around a character who is sympathetic to supernatural phenomena. The apertness of an incomplete text finds its conceptual counterimage in the non-fixity of the spectre, which is also defined by its lack of a simple ending (or beginning), owing to the logic of iteration and return through which it operates. This is at the root of Derrida's observation that the ghost is incommensurable with categories of finality, such as death or narrative ending, because it is always capable of reappearing: ' a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and come-back'.[5] The spectral is an ouroboric modality in that its end is also its beginning, a circular process of return that is simultaneously futural (something 'to come' in the future) and historic (something that has 'come-back' from the past). As a metaphor, the ghost (im)materialises this paradoxical circularity of ending and/as beginning, of the ending as a means of returning to the beginning. In the context of reading 'Come Along With Me' as the uneasy 'ending' of Jackson's corpus, it affords me an opportunity to cycle back on Jackson's ghostly representations discussed throughout the thesis as a way of unpacking the nature and direction of her putative renaissance. To adapt Eliot's lines, the ending is where we start from.

As I suggested in the introduction, current discourse on Jackson invariably describes her as being in a process of rebirth or re-emergence that brings with it a heightened

[5] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994 [1993]), p. 99.

visibility across different social and political contexts. Hayley Phelan exemplifies this trend in her article for the *LA Review of Books*, in which she explains Jackson's return as a consequence of the current moment of 'deep political divisiveness, characterized by fear, and a nagging mistrust of institutions'.[6] Phelan recognises resonances of this macro-political crisis within Jackson's writing, which she reads as excavating 'the incipient horror that lurks in everyday American life'.[7] In other words, she invokes Jackson as an apparitional response to contemporary anxieties, a figure of the past who nevertheless can (be made to) make sense of the present, doing so in a manner that reflects Jeffrey Weinstock's pronouncement that 'the ghosts we conjure speak to […] timely, context-bound fears and desires'.[8] Jackson's writing is once again significant because it is able to transcend its own historical moment to disclose some not-fully-understood truth about our own. In Phelan's case, these truths centre on the dangers of complacency or failure to recognise political iniquity, which she understands as symptomatic of a myopic culture that places greater value on a desultory attachment to tradition than it does on forms of solidarity, a message that she reads out of 'The Lottery' in particular.[9]

Phelan is aware of the Gothic timbre of her resurrection, observing that 'Shirley Jackson has risen again' to practise a consummate 'literary haunting' with 'impeccable

[6] Hayley Phelan, 'Shirley Jackson, Trump, and the Evil of Complacency', *LA Review of Books* – available at https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/shirley-jackson-trump-and-the-evil-of-complacency/ [accessed 12/09/2020] (para. 3 of 11).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 6.
[9] Phelan's article can also be understood as part of a critical tradition of mapping the cultural landscape through women's writing, as summarised by Nina Baym: '[T]he study of American women's writing turns our attention to the questions of what a culture is, and how writing may represent it'. In suggesting Jackson's apposite perspective on contemporary(/anachronistic) issues, Phelan redeploys her fiction as both an object of study in its own right and as a critical lens for refocussing present-day readers on their own milieu, thereby underlining Jackson's renewed significance, and capacity for (continual) re-emergence. See Nina Baym, 'Rewriting the Scribbling Woman', *Legacy*, 2 (Fall 1985), 3-12 (p. 11).

timing'.[10] The spectral metaphor of the now-returned writer that Phelan deploys in her article can be used more broadly to think about the condition of Jackson's re-emergence as a form of literary haunting, and how her corpus is necessarily open-ended – or what Marianna Torgovnick terms 'anti-closural'.[11] As with the literal open-ended text – the unfinished 'Come Along With Me' – this state of incompleteness should be construed as productive, serving as both a prompt for readers to (re)engage with Jackson's other publications, as well as an ongoing critical assessment of Jackson that recognises her as a significant American writer whose work merits sustained and careful analysis. This approach conceptualises Jackson in a similar manner to that proposed by Eric Savoy in his essay 'Between *as if* and *is*: On Shirley Jackson', in which he argues that '[f]or common readers and academics alike […] "Shirley Jackson" has failed to cohere into a consistent textual matrix that the critical industry can grind through its conceptual, cultural, and analytical apparatus'.[12] Savoy's assessment should not be taken as a disincentive to engage with Jackson and her work; on the contrary, his characterisation of an elusive, even mysterious, authorial-textual phenomenon makes for an alluring critical prospect. It simply acknowledges the degree to which Jackson and her writing have never (been) presented as unitary, evading both the critical delineation and celebration afforded to other mid-century writers (Savoy in particular focuses on the divergence in the posthumous reputations of Jackson and Carson McCullers). Instead, just like the ghost she is imagined to be, Jackson disrupts coherent categorisation in both her fiction and life-writing: the (housewife)writer who refuses to settle into any single interpretive niche. Whilst this multiplicity might pose a difficulty for those wishing to pin Jackson down in any definitive position, it is as this unruly,

[10] Phelan, para. 1 & 2).
[11] Marianna Torgovnick, *Closure in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 6.
[12] Eric Savoy, 'Between *as if* and *is*: On Shirley Jackson', *Women's Studies*, 46.8 (2017), 827-844 (p. 828).

haunting presence in the American literary tradition that makes her, in all senses, a timeless writer.

The critical commitment to openness outlined above does not mean that Jackson's texts do not have 'endings' in the accepted sense of a narrative culmination, although it is significant that one of the similarities shared by the respective stories analysed in the preceding chapters is the degree to which their endings are all marked as being aberrant, ambiguous, or in some sense unresolved. In both *Hangsaman* and *The Bird's Nest*, for example, the newfound unity and integrity of Natalie (having supposedly exorcised Tony from her consciousness) and the unnamed successor to Elizabeth Richmond (after Doctor Wright and Aunt Morgen's personality purge) is called into question by the spectral configuration that has defined their characterisation. If the (Derridean) ghost always remains to come-back, Natalie's claim in the final paragraph to be 'alone' as 'she had never been before' will almost certainly turn out to be nothing more than an ephemeral respite from the manifestation of her trauma.[13] In the case of the nameless successor to Miss(es) Richmond, the final pages prompt the reader to return to the beginning of the novel, where Elizabeth is presented (initially) as an individual personality, the surface identity that is most immediately perceptible. Just as this illusory individuality is dispelled as the narrative progresses, the ending to Jackson's text – with this new-fangled female protagonist's asserting '"I know who I am"' – invites the reader to probe the self-certainty of this statement, since many of the 'I's who speak in *The Bird's Nest* do so from a pluralised, involuted perspective.[14] 'I know who I am' carries within it the possibility of its own refutation. This new woman may actually be 'cured' of her multiple personality disorder,

[13] Shirley Jackson, *Hangsaman* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 218.
[14] Shirley Jackson, *The Bird's Nest* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 256.

and therefore be permitted an (uncharacteristic) happy ending for a Jackson protagonist. However, it is just as likely (if not more so) that no such correction has occurred, and that this new personality (if indeed that is what she is, given Betsy's capacities for invention and imitation) is simply the outward sheen that disguises an already fragmented psychology, waiting to be displaced by another 'I' who might speak in its place. Both girls' claims of/to certainty are undermined by the undecidability of their respective textual endings, with neither character capable of asserting mastery over the conditions of their spectral constitution – those same conditions that problematise the idea of a neat or final narrative resolution.

This pattern of narrative irresolution is by no means confined to Jackson's novels; it can be seen across her short stories and autobiographical representations as well. This includes the uncertainty surrounding Martha Alexander in 'The Missing Girl' - whether the dead body is or is not her, and, if the latter, whether she will be found or not. It also applies in the case of the newly christened "Miss X"/the former Toni Morgan in 'Nightmare' and Helen Benjamin in 'The Good Wife'. These women close out their respective stories on the promise of further precariousness - "Miss X" in a life that is not her own, and the live-in spectral figure of Mrs Benjamin, who is left at the mercy of her husband, writing her out of existence with this pen. Elsewhere, such as in both versions of 'The Honeymoon of Mrs Smith', the reader is purposefully left with the disquieting sense of doubt as to whether the eponymous protagonist will meet the grisly end she is promised because Jackson refuses to forego ambiguity, situating her murder as an event beyond the boundaries of the story (hence, also, the reader's knowledge), and maintaining the ghostly possibility of Mrs Smith being simultaneously 'dead' and 'alive' (to whatever extent these terms have any meaningful reference in fiction). In the Mallie stories, the openness of the narrative is as

much a matter of the structure and sequence of the stories themselves as it is their content (although Mallie is clearly the locus for a variety of spectral/fantastical effects that cannot be considered realistic). Is there a chronology to these stories? Is one the 'beginning' and another the 'ending'? What do these terms mean when Mallie herself is conceptualised as an anachronistic figure, a woman who does not appear to belong to any clear arrangement of time? These questions trouble the reader's relationship to these stories and the figure of Mallie, the only character in Jackson's fiction to recur across multiple different narratives. Finally, in Jackson's life-writing – where the anxiety over endings is admittedly less conspicuous – there is still an associated dynamic of disturbance and interruption present within these texts (the way her life and work are in constant tension with one another) that keeps this representation of Jackson open to different, and perhaps unexpected, forms of critical interrogation, such as the phenomenon of the '(housewife)writer' analysed in the final chapter.

The frequency of troubled conclusions in Jackson's writing demonstrates the need for a differentiation between different orders of finality – specifically, the difference between 'ending' and 'closure' as descriptions of narrative resolution. 'Ending' as a term 'straightforwardly designates the last definable unit of work – section, scene, chapter, page, paragraph, sentence'; 'closure', in contrast, adumbrates a concept that is more ambiguous.[15] One particularly influential approach to the question of narrative resolution is that of J. Hillis Miller in his essay 'The Problem of Ending in Narrative'. Opening with the

[15] Torgovnick, p. 6. Although the subsequent paragraphs focus primarily on J. Hillis Miller's reading of the ending as a 'knot', his approach is one of many. For instance, Torgovnick suggests that the question of 'appropriate' conclusions is not a matter of where a text literally stops, but is rather one concerning 'the honesty and appropriateness of the ending's relationship to beginning and middle, not the degree of finality achieved by the ending'. For Torgovnick, effective closure consolidates the text and inscribes it within/as a coherent chronology, one in which the beginning and middle of a fictional narrative find their resolution in the ending, and this patterning supersedes the degree of finality as a criterion for successful completion.

assertion that the 'notion of ending in narrative is inherently "undecidable"', Hillis Miller's understanding and definition of 'closure' foregrounds an integration of the narrative's features into a perfect unity, a 'neat folding of elaborative narrative materials in a single resolution leaving every story line tucked in'.[16] Where Torgovnick stresses the inter-relationship of the ending of a text with its beginning and middle as the basis for successful narrative resolution, Hillis Miller suggests that closure is necessarily located in the ending as the site where 'elaborate narrative materials' are consolidated/'tucked in' as the mark of a text's completion. However, the 'problem' that Hillis Miller identifies in the title of his essay concerns the tension between this closure and the 'inherently "undecidable"' nature of narrative ending as it appears within particular literary texts. He writes:

> The aporia of ending arises from the fact that it is impossible ever to tell whether a given narrative is complete. If the ending is thought of as a tying up in a careful knot, this knot could always be untied again by the narrator or by further events, disentangled or explicated again. If the ending is thought of as an unravelling, a straightening of threads, this act clearly leaves not one loose thread but a multitude, side by side, all capable of being knotted once more.[17]

As Miller describes it, the 'completed' text exists only as a theoretical ideal; regardless of how the ending is envisioned – as either a 'tying' or a 'disentangling' of narrative threads – it remains the case that it can be reopened and subsequently reconstituted, according to the different desires or imperatives on the part of the one who reorders it. This returning figure, be it the writer-narrator (as Miller seems to imply) or (for the purpose of my argument) the critic-reader, can be thought of as a ghostly visitant, refusing to let the text lie by returning to disrupt its putative ending. This form of (re)reading – of reading as returning – that sees the critic-reader figured as apparitional is particularly suited to a writer such as Jackson,

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[16] J. Hillis Miller, 'The Problem of Ending in Narrative', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33.1, Special Issue: Narrative Endings (June 1978), 3-7 (p. 3, p. 5).
[17] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

given that both she and her female protagonists are marked as ghostly presences. The basis for this critical (re)encounter is made possible by figurations of spectrality as a mode of interpretation, which has defined the methodological approach of the thesis.

What Miller proposes therefore is a text which does (k)not end. It is both an ending and a non-ending, a contradictory dynamic that can be conceptualised through the '(k)not', a term that encompasses the ending as it is/might be – the 'knot' – and the openness of the ending that can be reordered – in other words, that which is 'not' complete or finished. Whether the end is knotted, unknotted, or reknotted, the result is always a (k)not-ending; an ending that can be upended, made to start again, or left to endlessly defer itself. This term appositely describes the endings of the Jackson texts analysed in this thesis, all of which sketch possible narrative futures or contingencies that forestall the possibility of an absolute resolution to the stories. Yet it can also be taken to describe Jackson's body of work as a whole. 'Come Along With Me' is an 'ending' in the sense that it was the final text on which Jackson was working and which is credited to her, but because it is unfinished, it does not bring Jackson's oeuvre to a definitive conclusion. It is a particularly clear example of the (k)not ending because it simultaneously ties together the different strands of Jackson's writing career whilst remaining incomplete, incapable of being concluded, yet nonetheless recognised as part of her oeuvre.[18] It could be argued that the fact of its publication works to stabilise this openness/incompleteness to some extent – as Frank Kermode points out, a book (as a material object and not simply a 'text') 'imposes limit; if it

[18] Jackson's husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, collated and edited the first edition of *Come Along With Me*, which included the draft of the novel's first sections in addition to three lectures and sixteen stories (including 'The Lottery') for publication by Viking Press in 1968. The collection was subsequently published by Penguin Books in 1995 and reissued in 2013 as part of Penguin's wider reprinting of Jackson's work that began in 2009.

did not do so there could be no endings or indeed beginnings'.[19] Even so, it is significant that the open-endedness represented by 'Come Along With Me' is recognised and incorporated directly into Jackson's literary output and identity, something that would not be possible had it remained with her papers held by the Library of Congress, known to only a few Jackson scholars with access to this store of archival material.[20]

To insist on the 'openness' or 'incompleteness' of Jackson's writing is not to suggest that it is somehow chaotic or incoherent; it is nothing of the kind. Rather, it is a recognition that this entity known as 'Shirley Jackson' has been, and continues to remain, a writer of complex multiplicities: the (housewife)writer, centring the experience of women in her writing at the same time as derealising them, who herself was celebrated during her lifetime, went on to be largely forgotten, and is now in the midst of a renaissance. In all of these positions there is a decidedly spectral element at play, and what I have done in this thesis is trace the ghostly condition of subjectivity as it is instantiated across the writings of this remarkable author: the forms it takes and the functions it performs across her fiction and autobiographical work. In addition, I have used Jackson as a case study to illustrate how reading a text hauntographically encourages a more detailed understanding of non-literal figurations of spectrality as a critical methodology.

In the introduction, I proposed *hauntography* as a term for this kind of ghost-reading, an adaptive critical approach that responds to the particular conditions and circumstances

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[19] Frank Kermode, 'Endings , Continued', in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, Irvine Studies in the Humanities, ed. by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 71-94 (p. 84).

[20] As suggested above, it was Hyman's efforts in organising and editing the posthumous collection that enabled the novel to be published at all. This determination can be attributed to Hyman's efforts to secure Jackson's reputation in the aftermath of her death in 1965, as detailed by Franklin (pp.497-498). Hyman has had a significant role in shaping Jackson's legacy, ranging from writing a fulsome introduction to 'The Possibility of Evil' in the *Saturday Evening Post* in December 1965, through to the publishing of both *Come Along With Me* in 1968 and *The Magic of Shirley Jackson* in 1966, the latter of which contained *The Bird's Nest*, *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons* in their entirety, as well as a small selection of short stories.

of a spectral event or characterisation. Hauntography describes Natalie's experience of trauma, the involuted arrangement of Elizabeth's multiple personalities, the women who become absent-presences in the short stories, and the haunting figurations of identity – 'housewife' and 'writer' – which shadow Jackson's autobiographical (self-)presentation. In all these examples, a hauntographic reading materialises and defines the spectral element at work within the narrative. In her introduction to *Come Along With Me*, Laura Miller offers a perceptive reading of Jackson's texts as ghost stories when she observes that '[t]he hauntings in her fiction aren't often recognisable as such until the end, and only after you think about it a bit.'[21] This is a succinct encapsulation of the aim of a hauntographic reading: it exposes the inconspicuous ghostliness that permeates a narrative, one in which the reader might not expect to encounter such a phenomenon. Jackson's output of such tales is prodigious, and they are almost always tied to representations of female precarity and insecurity, either in response to some immediate physical threat, or a more conceptual anxiety about their sense of individuality, identity or autonomy. Not only does a hauntographic understanding of these characterisations open up a different critical route into Jackson studies – particularly one that examines Jackson's relationship with ghostliness beyond *The Haunting of Hill House* – but it exemplifies the variety and complexity of analytical applications of figurative spectrality as a critical mode to texts that might not otherwise be thought about in this way. It illustrates how trauma can be instantiated as a form of self-haunting in addition to an iterative return of the past to define the present, or the manner in which dissociative identities exist in a ghostly involution with each other. It reveals how the author of perhaps the most famous haunted house story of the twentieth

[21] Miller, p. xi.

century was plagued, not by literal phantoms, but by a spectral bracketing of her constitutive selves – a ghost story writer whose own story was itself inexorably ghostly. Tracing the hidden presence of these ghosted women across Jackson's oeuvre, and pushing back against the somewhat limited conceptualisation of Jacksonian ghostliness, has been the aim and ambition of this thesis.

Although the ghostly subject is defined by its attenuated presence and visibility, the act of haunting also indicates something that (should) matter, re/appearing at the edges of our thinking to demand recognition, and, once established, something of which it is not easy to be relieved. Terry Castle emphasises this in *The Apparitional Lesbian*, wherein she remarks upon the counter-intuitive presence of the lesbian as a consequence of her spectralisation: 'To become an apparition was also to become endlessly capable of "appearing." And once there, the specter, like a living being, was not so easily gotten rid of. It demanded a response.'[22] Esther Peeren makes a similar point two decades later in *The Spectral Metaphor*, a text which owes a considerable conceptual debt to Castle's work. Peeren notes that whilst the spectral metaphor can function as a dispossessing configuration, the ghost's capacity for haunting also endows it with some degree of recognition: ultimately, 'despite being ephemeral, something is *there* that matters and has to be taken into account'.[23] This potency that haunting possesses is not limited to individuals or ghostly persons, but can also be seen in the resurgence of political and social forces that were either presumed or pronounced to be moribund, as Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters explain in their work on 'ghost feminism': 'While [the] rhetoric of spectrality

[22] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 63.
[23] Esther Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 10.

might intimate the dilution of feminism's political potency, it also implies persistence, a refusal to go away […] the ability to haunt could be a heartening indication of feminism's transcendent political fortitude'.[24] There is, then, a clear critical precedent for reading haunting as a kind of restorative or regenerative condition, a state that can draw our collective attention (back) to an issue, idea, or individual that has been hitherto registered imperfectly or intermittently.

This partly accounts for the frequency of spectral imagery in current discourse on Jackson's re-emergence, from Phelan's invocation of a literary haunting that emerges against a backdrop of extreme American politics, through to the subtitle of Franklin's biography, which positions Jackson as a 'rather haunted woman'. Other works have also addressed the issue of Jackson's afterlife and posthumous presence, notably Susan Scarf Merrell's fictionalised biographical novel *Shirley*. The text is focalised through Ruth, a young woman whose husband has been hired to teach alongside Jackson's husband at Bennington College. The pair move in with Hyman and Jackson, and the novel follows the two couples over the course of several months from late 1964 through early 1965, as well as a period roughly ten years later, when both Jackson and Hyman have been dead for a number of years. In one of the sections set in this later period, Ruth ruminates on Jackson's posthumous reputation, employing a striking image as a means of explaining it both to herself and the reader: 'At some point, in some day of some week of some year, the particulars eventually determined by the fact of the occurrence, each of us is dead and gone. Time fills in our afterimage, puddle water swirling over a thrown pebble.'[25] Ruth identifies Jackson with the metaphorical submerged pebble to comment on the dissipation

[24] Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters, *Feminism and Popular Culture: Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), p. 21.
[25] Susan Scarf Merrell, *Shirley* (New York: Plume, 2015), p. 74.

of her one-time impressive literary stature, which is now reduced to mere ripples evanescing as they divaricate across the surface of the puddle. Merrell clearly recognised the need to recover Jackson's name and legacy from their murky submergence, and her novel is an attempt at such a reclamation; published in 2014, it anticipated the resurgence of critical and commercial interest in Jackson's writing, the high points of which have been the publication of Franklin's biography in 2016, as well as major television and film adaptations *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* respectively in 2018.

It seems clear, therefore, that Jackson's haunting presence is being felt particularly strongly at the moment – for reasons both political and cultural – and she now occupies a position from which she is unlikely to be dislodged in the immediate future. If she was a rather haunted woman in her own lifetime, in our current moment she has become a rather haunting writer, a situation for which she is well-suited and one from which she (or, rather, her reputation) benefits enormously. As Patricia Keller points out, haunting is not an abnegation of power or influence because it demands recognition from the haunted, and thereby prompts them to new, and different, forms of action:

> [T]o be haunted is a concern not only of how we come into contact with something formerly lost that returns to us, but also of how we *choose* to carry it and perhaps even how we choose to embrace it.[26]

In determining how to respond to that which haunts them, those who are haunted must work to shape and direct the present (and future) reception of this apparitional figure, working in concert to secure the conditions for an effective (and on-going) engagement. In this moment of heightened visibility for Jackson, when her haunting registers more strongly

[26] Patricia M. Keller, *Ghostly Landscapes: Film, Photography, and the Aesthetics of Haunting in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 8.

than at any other time since her death, we should not mistake or mischaracterise this re-emergence as a return to unconditional presence; to do so would be to miss the point of a haunting, and to diminish the efficacy of the ghost's disruptive, insistent power. Rather, this haunted moment should serve as a recognition of the work to be done in projecting and imagining a future for both Jackson and critical studies of her work. It is very much a beginning, not an ending, from which we start, and Jackson's ghost is one that we cannot afford to give up.

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