The Spooky Vein: The Reparative Gothic-Modern in the Works of Richard A.W. Hughes

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THE SPOOKY VEIN: THE REPARATIVE GOTHIC-MODERN IN THE WORKS OF RICHARD A.W. HUGHES

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ABSTRACT

THE SPOOKY VEIN: THE REPARATIVE GOTHIC-MODERN IN THE WORKS OF RICHARD A.W. HUGHES

Corwin R. Baden
Old Dominion University, 2021
Director: Dr. Manuela Mourão

This dissertation explores the dual nature of Richard A.W. Hughes as a marginalized Gothicist and modernist. This duality facilitated the development of the author’s reparative vision for a 20th-century world traumatized by planetary war. The present study utilizes close readings—both surface and symptomatic—combined with archival research to assert that Hughes fashions this reparative imperative consistently across his corpus: in his short stories, poems, novels, stage plays, and screenplays. In his short stories, this vision includes an embrace of the Stranger, a shadowy Gothic figure whose possessions, power, difference, and familiarity lead the human subject from contestation, through representation, and toward identification with the Stranger. Hughes continues to probe the uncharted and taboo through his poems of death and putrefaction, often in the comic Gothic vein, by which humanity must confront its shared abjection. The confrontational nature of Hughes’s poems follows from his understanding, shaped by fellow poet Robert Graves, that humankind is a neurotic, communicative, and pattern-making “animal.” By means of memento mori, Hughes promotes a view of death that re-members a society torn apart by modernity’s multiple dismemberments. Finally, in Hughes’s novels and dramas, the author emphasizes the means for humanity to interface imaginatively with the Abject through a series of metempsychotic masks that bring gods and devils to life. First, Hughes’s two sea novels explore the postcolonial world, engaging the cultural Other through masks that highlight female abjection in the face of cataclysmic trauma. Furthermore, in Hughes’s two interbellum novels, the author brings six movie monsters to life as he explores human subjectivity scarred by personal, societal, and historical traumas.
Across Hughes's œuvre, including in his stage dramas and screenplays, the author leverages Gothic tropes, themes, and diegetical patterns as a form of shock therapy that demonstrates shared human abjection across genders as male subjects learn to crawl into the Cave of Abjection with all whom the male gaze has traditionally cast down into that space. This dissertation asserts that it is Hughes’s instinctive use of the Gothic within modernist literature that forms the crux of his reparative vision of truth, change, and forgiveness.
This work is dedicated to the unwavering faith of the passengers in my lifeboat, without whom I would have slipped beneath waves of work long, long ago. Thank you, my beloved Sarah, Ramsey, and Carmen.

I also dedicate this dissertation, with love, to Marian Baden, for her uncanny support of my unusual life-path.
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All images and quotations from unpublished Hughes correspondence and texts are courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
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CHAPTER 1
“THE SPOOKY VEIN”: THE GOTHIC-MODERN HUGHES

Richard Arthur Warren Hughes is an unrecognized modernist and a marginalized Gothicist. His critics consider his work “eclipsed”; his advocates consider it “neglected.” Through close reading of extant Hughes texts, archival research that probes the author’s wide-ranging body of work, and spectral analysis that juxtaposes simultaneously occurring discourses, the present study intends to situate Hughes as both a modernist and a Gothicist in order to demonstrate that the author’s use of Gothic tropes and his inspiration by Gothic concerns inform his treatments of modernity, especially the various conflicts and paradigm shifts of the 20th century. To further understand the ways that Hughes’s contributions contest the established modernist canon and trouble the modernist discourse with Gothic elements, it is necessary to examine Hughes’s role as a marginal practitioner of both the Gothic and modernism, as well as his role as a liminal bridge between the two aesthetic fields.

Hughes is the product of his times, yet his work also stands at a remove from the events and texts that shape the traditional Anglo-American modernist canon. Begun in 1900, Hughes’s life neatly delineates a period in which proposed progress—technological, psychological, social, and cultural—radically reimagined literature. Yet the period of Hughes’s life was also precisely a time marked by epistemological upheaval and dislocation. A Briton of Welsh descent, Hughes lived a relatively long and tranquil life, shaped by an early entry into the world of letters which inspired and facilitated his creative development as he interacted with towering literary figures who shaped the modernist discourse. This academic, social, and professional network launched him toward a life-long career of writing and publishing short stories, poetry, novels, stage plays, and screenplays. The quality of his work was recognized and lauded within the contemporary modernist circles of the 1930s, yet the perceived limits on the quantity of his work, combined

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with his generally low personal and professional profile, have sidelined him as a subject of sustained, subsequent, critical discourse.

Hughes’s work is a conjuncture of Gothic and modern concerns. Specifically, his leveraging of Gothic discourse is his means for expressing modernist angst, and his performative use of Gothic personae across his corpus troubles norms while highlighting the potential for abject agency. The Gothic as a discourse communicates personal, societal, cultural, and historical ruptures and disruptions that shift paradigms, especially as those paradigms seek to provide the self with socially constructed security or identity. The Gothic, then, is the language of the Self being cracked open, with all its concomitant paradigms called into question. It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate the specific ways that Hughes’s work exemplifies the Gothic discourse as a vital means for communicating the crises of modernity. Indeed, the Gothic is Hughes’s primary tool for decrypting and treating trauma in its many forms: the personal, the societal, the cultural, and the historical.

A consideration of Hughes’s work requires an expansion of definitions. The opening up of a definition of the Gothic to mean a broad, deep, multimodal discourse manifested across media and genres, rather than just a fleeting literary fashion or genre, provides a first point of entry for Hughes’s work. The expansion of a definition of modernism to encompass a diversity of responses to diverse modernities among a diversity of peoples, genders, and classes around the planet provides a second means for engagement. It is this simultaneous, non-hierarchical engagement which enables the two discourses of Gothic and modern to inform one another in the work of a liminal author such as Richard A.W. Hughes. Such engagement is critical not only for literary and cultural enlightenment: It is a means by which literary and cultural studies can foster the reparative reading of texts by following the turns that an underinvestigated, elided,
and gap-ridden archive always offers.\textsuperscript{4} A reparative reading seeks alternate explanations of the origins, intended purposes, cultural intersections, and therapeutic possibilities of literary works, essentially converting them—without foreclosing alternate opinions and pathways—into what Wai Chee Dimock calls "reparative narrative"[s] (595). This is not merely wishful thinking. It requires scholars to follow threads that have not been pursued, wherever they lead. A reparative reading of Hughes’s \textit{oeuvre}, with all it entails (considering reparative networks, probing possible common ground among cultures, and exploring specific exigencies that don’t fit neatly into existing narratives) will result in “ongoing contextualization” (588), contextualization that is “improvised, not planned” (588). This method addresses “untried options” that emerge specifically and directly from archival materials.

1.1 “The Spooky Vein”: Gothic Studies

Over the past forty years, the Gothic has seen radical re-evaluation and has come to signify a revolutionary trend in literature that has long sought to break the bourgeois hold on the cultural economy. Initially Gothic criticism was merely an outgrowth of conservative scholarship influenced first by historicism, then by formalism, and finally by structuralism and myth criticism (such as that of Northrop Frye). At nearly twenty-year intervals, under the critical eyes of Edith Birkhead (1921), Montague Summers (1938), and Devendra P. Varma (1957), the Gothic, as a diverse yet familial genre, has been seen as an expression of retrospective longing for an idyllic societal wholeness that had been fragmented over time, an expression which adopted the “familiar figures of old story” (Birkhead 13).

1.1.1 The Case for Opening the Gothic

Today, through the many lenses of cultural critique, several of them embracing and complementing the poststructuralist perspectives of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida,\textsuperscript{5} the

\textsuperscript{4} Wai Chee Dimock, in “Weak Network: Faulkner’s Transpacific Reparations” (2018), writes of the potential of such reparative reading.

\textsuperscript{5} Consider David Punter’s and Elisabeth Bronfen’s psychoanalytic interventions, based on the trauma research of Jean Laplanche, in “Gothic: Violence, Trauma and the Ethical” (2001); Punter’s work on the
Gothic is generally viewed as confrontational rather than nostalgic, an attack by middle-class writers on the Othered segments of society (the lower classes, the foreigner, the recusant Catholic, and the natural environment) while simultaneously the product of counter-attack and revolutionary critique against bourgeois society itself, and its anti-spiritual/anti-traditional rationalism in particular. One of the most prolific strands of Gothic scholarship since the late 19th century has been psychoanalytic critique. Beginning with Sigmund Freud’s “Das Unheimliche” (1919) and its literary explorations of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” (1816) and enhanced through various iterations of psychological theory since (such as that of Jean Laplanche), psychoanalytic critique has sought to emancipate literary study from positivistic versions of literary history, their theories of aesthetic influence, and their preoccupations with genealogical literary descent (see the historically-oriented work of Robert Miles discussed below). Instead, it has foregrounded Freud’s “family romance,” favoring an approach that engages texts across time and often apart from historical contexts.

The opening of the Gothic has continued with the advent of poststructuralism and postmodernism in the 1960s and 1970s. David Punter’s Literature of Terror (1980), along with Julia Kristeva’s Powers of Horror (1980) and Rosemary Jackson’s Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (1981), has taken the lead in examining the Gothic as a cultural force rather than merely as a historically bound, popular-but-inferior literary genre. In “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse” (1991), Robert Miles pays Punter his due, calling Punter’s seminal work “the first properly cultural study of the Gothic” (vii), and Miles lays out a vision of the Gothic as a discourse rather than merely a set of tropes or conventions that define a school, a period, or a genre.

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postcolonial Gothic in Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order (2000); William Hughes’s and Andrew Smith’s EcoGothic (2013) which examines the field through posthumanist and ecocritical lenses; and Fred Botting’s “Infinite Monstrosity: Justice, Terror, and Trauma in Frankenstein in Baghdad” (2019), which continues a conversation with current global terrorism that Richard Devetak previously termed the “Gothic scene of international relations” (2005).
Subsequently, from Punter’s work and that of Fred Botting has emerged a new hegemony of the Gothic. Building on his first volume of *The Literature of Terror* (1980), Punter has pushed Gothic criticism to address modern and contemporary concerns in his second volume (2014), focusing on a discourse of degeneration and xenophobic profiling (Linda Dryden in *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* [2003] has further engaged with this important iterative discourse). Botting, for his part, has sought to define the Gothic across its many forms, explaining it as “excess” and “transgression” (1) in the first edition of his *Gothic* (1996) and “a negative aesthetics” (1) in the revised second edition (2013). While expanding definitions and the canon in seemingly every imaginable direction, even including the current geopolitical monstrosities of “Trashhumanism” and the War on Terror, Punter’s and Botting’s work, along with that of Glennis Byron and William Hughes (long-time editor of *Gothic Studies*), has institutionally legitimated new boundaries for Gothic studies. Through their encyclopedic efforts to produce collections of keywords bound together in popular discourse as “the Gothic,” these scholars have succeeded in expanding the Gothic across borders of place and genre (see *The Gothic*, by Punter and Byron [2004] and *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, edited by Hughes, Punter, and Andrew Smith [2016]). Nevertheless, they have also participated in a new form of canonization.

In addition, Smith and Jeff Wallace (2001), John Paul Riquelme (2008), and Jerrold Hogle (2014) have all drawn attention to the popularly obvious, yet academically invisible notion of the Gothic across time, especially as it relates to modernist and contemporary expressions of this discourse. An extension of Raymond Williams’s and Stuart Hall’s efforts to direct cultural materialist studies across and throughout the wide breadth of human experience, efforts have been made academically to situate the Gothic in the modern and contemporary eras. Loosely articulated, these scholars have all highlighted the need for further, ongoing work within literature and popular culture alike.
Most recently, other scholars have crossed disciplinary boundaries to comment on the Gothic and its planetary influence on modernity. In particular, Robert Miles’s new historicist study, *Gothic Writing: 1750-1820* (1993), asserts origins of the Gothic that emerge almost edenically from a garden: the shift from the pleasure garden of the neoclassical era to the ruined, picturesque garden of the early Romantic period—a transition, as Miles describes it, from medieval and Enlightenment emblem-reading to Romantic/Gothic expression and emotional affect. Miles’s historical study informs Punter’s explorations, particularly his most recent assessment (in *Literature of Terror*, Volume 2 [2016]) of the “modern literary myths” that he sees as comprising a Gothic-modern canon during the 1890s, a canon that continues to profoundly influence culture today. Robert A. Douglas, for his part, has sought in his two-volume cultural history *That Line of Darkness* to extend Punter’s explication of this Gothic-modern canon across modern and contemporary life, beginning with *The Shadow of Dracula and the Great War* (2011) and continuing with *The Gothic from Lenin to bin Laden* (2013). In addition, Daniel Pick continues a long historical line of psychoanalytic critical moves while also exploring the effects of postcolonialism. His studies *Svengali’s Web* (2000) and *Faces of Degeneration* (2011) explore Gothically informed and psychoanalytically framed means for social and cultural power.

Finally, critics such as Diane Hoeveler (*Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* [1998]), Elisabeth Bronfen (*Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* [1992]), E.J. Clery (*The Rise of Supernatural Writing* [1995]), and Diana Wallace (“‘The Haunting Idea’: Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory” [2009]) have joined Rosemary Jackson and Julia Kristeva in presenting cultural critiques that emphasize the role and exploitation of women throughout the long history of the Gothic, resituating the experiences of the now archetypally distraught female protagonist (such as Emily in *The Castle of Otranto* [1764]) as expressions of gendered societies.
Evidence abounds that once-hegemonic views of the Gothic as generic and fixed are being replaced by Jackson’s newly dominant “subversions” and other authors’ “contestations” (see *Contesting the Gothic* [1999] edited by James Watt). Clearly, the prevailing view for the Gothic within contemporary cultural studies sees the always unsalted contestation of cultural critique as a rejuvenating—if troubling—force for all texts within a broader public and academic discourse.

As a product of this unbarring of the door of Gothic criticism, this opening of the field to embrace atypical and counter-hegemonic texts and practitioners, the present study asserts Richard A.W. Hughes’s place within Gothic studies—not as a comfortable resident but as a conflicted denizen who demands further study.

### 1.1.2 The Case against Opening the Gothic

Nevertheless, within some circles, including that of literary historians Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, the term “Gothic Criticism” is pejorative, delineating a reckless and neo-hegemonic attempt on the part of cultural critique to silence other, less overtly political forms of literary analysis, namely the historical and the geographical, by “disconnect[ing] the Gothic novel” from its historical contexts (Baldick and Mighall 270). In essence, Baldick and Mighall see a new, intractable hegemony in psychoanalytic critiques and cultural lenses which eschew any form of aesthetic evaluation, a new regime which disciplines the Gothic under the hegemonic gaze of a psychoanalytic and poststructuralist panopticon. Baldick and Mighall assert that this new order is critically inadequate.

In the minds of now-minority critics like Baldick and Mighall, the institutional opening of the Gothic mind is actually its undoing. Traditionally centrifugal critical forces have now become centripetal, and it is the historical persuasion which seeks to pull differently, toward exteriority. In direct rebuttal to Punter and his allies, Baldick and Mighall lament the loss of a language for critiquing quality: “To the Gothic writers, all is now forgiven, their vices transvalued into virtues”
They also lament the untethered nature of psychoanalytic and political critiques that ignore the specifics of text and context in attempts to remedy political or psychological traumas.

Baldick, whose earlier literary history (The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848-1932 [1983]) decries the “cult of raw experience” that dismisses theory (203), makes it clear here that he embraces the essence of cultural critique, yet he sees excess in its reliance on psychology and other ideologies at the expense of the history he deems more ideologically neutral, a not-so-subtle reassertion of textual authority. Punter, along with Bronfen, gives a critical nod to Baldick and Mighall in the authors’ own psychological critique of the Gothic in “Gothic: Violence, Trauma and the Ethical” in Botting’s The Gothic (2001). Furthermore, Punter’s 2012 edition of A New Companion to the Gothic (“thoroughly expanded and updated”) includes Baldick and Mighall’s piece as if to demonstrate the big tent that the Gothic should always seek to be. Baldick and Mighall’s critique of the persistent “cardinal error” of assimilating the Gothic with “romantic and pre-romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages” (271) seems to directly call out Robert Miles, whom Mighall has previously lauded as conducting a legitimately researched historical study of the Gothic.

Mighall, for his part (in A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction [1999]), opines against the pull toward psychological interiority that remains dominant in contemporary Gothic criticism. He describes this as a new type of hegemonic control:

[debate on this fiction is governed by a centripetal pull. This emphasis often inhibits other lines of enquiry. Broadly speaking, what it precludes or actively suppresses is an awareness of historical and “geographical” considerations. Discussions of just where and when a text is set are not prominent in this critical tradition, with critics sometimes explicitly rejecting such concerns. (xi)]

While approving of well-researched historical studies such as Miles’s, Baldick and Mighall are quick to point out what they perceive to be the error of Miles’s (and others’) a priori connections between the Gothic’s origins and Romanticism. In addition, Baldick and Mighall seem determined to reinstate literary merit as at least one measuring stick for a definition of the Gothic, or at least for what is worth studying under the auspices of its criticism. They assert that
“most critics who have scoffed at the Gothic have done so not in rearguard defense of some realist norm, but in a genuine attempt to discriminate between good romances and bad romances” (268). Even proponents of re-imagining our inherited views regarding literary-historical periods, such as Ted Underwood, hint that, when it comes to discourse about “periods,” too much emphasis has been placed on intuition and contextually peripheral concerns to explore or even buttress ideology. Underwood’s central argument is founded on what he perceives to be the actual, contextual reasons for the emergence of the Gothic as a paradoxical genre of historical decay and contemporary picturesque value: class distinctions and an upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. According to his conclusions, “[Ann] Radcliffe’s protagonists could acquire the connection to the past that distinguished the aristocracy while regretting the abuses of aristocratic power” (24). Underwood’s study of Radcliffe’s and Walter Scott’s novels remains largely historical and without apparent remediative aim. His foundation consists of historically sound methodologies, most effectively conducted using Franco Moretti’s mechanisms for distant reading by which digital researchers are empowered to conduct more accurate (and fewer merely intuitive) analyses.

Among more recent scholarship, Daniel Darvay in his study of Gothic-modern texts (Haunting Modernity and the Gothic Presence in British Modernist Literature [2016]) draws perhaps the clearest distinction of all between the predominant culture of cultural critique and his own Baldick/Mighall-influenced work: “I share [Baldick and Mighall’s] frustration with the extant body of ‘Gothic Criticism [that] has done little to define the nature of Gothic fiction except by the broadest kinds of negation’” (vi). It is evident that Baldick, Mighall, Underwood, and Darvay all seek to re-bind Gothic discourse to history, and the present study attempts to follow in their wake while also seeking to maintain the gains of cultural critique as tools for interrogating race, gender, class, psychology, and all potential perceived alterities. It will always be a precarious balancing act for cultural industries to practice sound scholarship, transparently evaluating texts through various lenses that include the conventions of effective and significant
communication and art; such imperfect practice is the very reason that literary history has such broad margins that contain so many works that have been misunderstood, misrepresented, or misevaluated at their genesis; during their publication, dissemination, and reception; or even long after those historical facts have come and gone.

1.1.3 Situating This Study within Gothic Studies

Above all, the present study of Richard A.W. Hughes’s creative production embraces an opening of definitions: It includes numerous diverse examples of Hughes’s cultural production and affirms their value as it demonstrates, through contextualized study, their potential to offer powerful insights gleaned from the inherent conflicts and traumas of modernity—as relevant today as ever before—that Hughes seeks to depict. First and foremost, the present study seeks to engage with cultural studies, exploring the nature of Welsh spiritualities and their impacts on local Gothic traditions while also dialoguing with scholarship on modernities and their impacts on traditional societies. Back to the pre-Romantics, these concerns have long been part of a discussion of the Gothic as it responds to societal change and disruption. Like Hughes’s work, the Gothic as a discourse responds to divided loyalties and is liminal by nature. Its terms and tropes have been used to address almost every sphere of human existence, elements which reappear in the most secularized of societies.

Far removed from Gothic ur-texts such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Hughes’s Gothic might be seen as divorced from the original subtexts that motivated the composition of Walpole’s and Radcliffe’s original Gothic works. Darvay makes it clear, though, that a simplistic view of the Gothic as emerging solely from an original anti-Catholic discourse has long occluded a more complex reality. Darvay makes it clear that Gothic fiction is not “by default anti-Catholic” (10), and that “[l]iterary rewritings from a Catholic perspective of the history of the English Reformation . . . are well within the orbit of the [Gothic] genre” (10). Further complicating this picture, Hughes’s Anglicanism itself is an amalgam of forms imported from other denominations of Protestantism,
ranging from the strict, double-predestinarian Calvinism presented in James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) to the mystical Swedenborgianism explored in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864).

In one sense, this study offers a counter-narrative for the association of anti-Catholic sentiments with early Gothic novels (see Hoeveler, “Anti-Catholicism and the Gothic Imaginary: The Historical and Literary Contexts” [2012] and Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* [1999]). This counter-narrative is one of forced distinctions born of perceived similarities. Protestantism is a complex tapestry of doctrine and form laid over existing spiritualities. Hughes, unlike others of his Lost Generation, was an atheist-turned-Anglican in peripheral Wales, informed as much by his specific, local geographies as by an overarching spiritual tradition, much as Charles Maturin and Le Fanu were informed by Ireland in its Catholic, Protestant, and pagan forms, and as Radcliffe was informed by her own Dissenter background. The present study asserts a subtext of spiritual competition that informs Gothic expression. Thus, the frequently noted Gothic abjection of Roman Catholicism in early Gothic novels was motivated by the authors’ proximity to, rather than radical difference from, that faith, considering the formal similarities of Lutheranism and high Anglicanism to actual Roman Catholic practice. Among Protestant writers, there was always an ongoing effort to establish a tradition that could stand alongside—and in opposition to—Roman Catholicism. Radcliffe approvingly notes in her “Journey Made in the Summer of 1794” that in Bacharach “the Elector Palatine . . . has attended to its prosperity by permitting the Calvinists and Lutherans to establish their forms of worship there, under equal privileges with the Roman Catholics.” Yet these forms were always doppelgängers of the original. For his part, the Anglican Hughes in his two Human Predicament novels—*The Fox in the Attic* (1961) and *The Wooden Shepherdess* (1973)—chooses a Roman-Catholic, Carmelite nun to represent his ultimate poetic and spiritual vision. While there is no question of denying anti-Catholicism in some initial, canonical Gothic novels, Hughes (echoing Hogg) models a different emphasis that recognizes dissent within the Protestant version of the
Gothic discourse and hints at a less-spiritual aspect that Miles terms “a screen for national concerns” (qtd. in Hoeveler 2).

Hughes’s biases, historically distant from the first officially Gothic texts, are nevertheless a vehicle for several veins of spirituality that intersect in the Welsh countryside. Hughes’s work takes its place uncomfortably within a contested Gothic: The Gothic pushes on and is pushed back by a multitude of perceived sociocultural alterities of race, gender, class, psychology, and physical ability/disability. Yet Baldick (and Mighall with him) are anxious to put asunder what others have joined, specifically a proposed common spirituality that unites Chartres cathedral with Gothic literature, an approach taken by scholars like Linda Beyer-Berenbaum (The Gothic Imagination [1982]). Baldick makes clear that criticism must not be guilty of the mis-conjunctions of intuition and must turn instead to the historical record as an ultimate referee. There is a danger, then, in conflating authors and even discourses across periods without sufficient cause, and this applies to Hughes’s works as well. The present study dips into this danger, knowing well the perils of generalization yet seeking after perceptible patterns.

Taken as a body, Hughes’s works are typically modernist. They involve contemporary, ethically conflicted scenarios, settings that project technological advance and political trial, and characters whose psychological and moral angst reflect the larger concerns of the modernist literature represented within the traditional Anglo-American modernist canon. Yet it is through the Gothic discourse that they conceptualize and problematize the consequences of modernity. This Gothic-discursive thread infuses Hughes’s prose and poetry with archetypal horrors and terrors— with the grotesque and the sublime—even as his dialogue and narrative voice speak to us in frank, commonplace terms. Neglected within scholarship, Hughes’s mixed textual voices speak in transperiodizing terms (see Eric Hayot, “Against Periodization; or, On Institutional

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6 It is possible that Hughes’s use of a Carmelite as a displaced protagonist is merely an example of the “doctrinal ventriloquism” that Mighall (Geography 12) asserts, yet Hughes’s attempts at utilizing a Roman Catholic perspective seem more related to historical authenticity and spiritual vision than to prevailing Gothic convention.
Time” [2011]) to the need for retrospective criticism which can reinvent what is suitable for critical review. Baldick makes the case for the role of latter-day, socially constructed criticism in the invention of literature, explaining that literary history shows that criticism does not “shadow” some primary literary progenitor in any such simple fashion. In the first place, the recurrent case of authors neglected in their own time but acclaimed decades or centuries later is only the most noticeable aspect of a reverse process by which criticism 'creates' what is accepted as Literature. (Social 5)

It is the intention of this study to present the possibility that such a reevaluation of Hughes’s work can be both a consequence of employing cultural criticism to explore the Gothic in his work and a catalyst for further study.

1.2 “The Spooky Vein”: Modernist Studies

Like the Gothic, the study of modernism has undergone a radical transformation over the past few decades. For Welsh theorist Raymond Williams, lecturing on “When Was Modernism?” in 1987, modernism had long become a retrospective discussion, replaced by “contemporary” when signification implied the “up to date.” For Williams, modernism was effectively “stranded” as a period “between, say, 1890 to 1940” (23). Williams makes it clear that “modernism” has become (and was always already) allied with capitalism. He points to a re-visioning process when he declares that “[i]f we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of post-modernism, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the [20th] century” (27). It is this process of searching that leads the present study to consider the works of Richard Hughes as representing just such an alternative tradition of modernism in the Gothic-modern.

1.2.1 The Case for Opening Modernism

The new modernist studies, by definition, embraces an overturning of traditional periodic and generic parameters to explore modernism using contemporary critical means. This has
been a radical attempt to break free from the self-perpetuating, “current-traditional,” rhetorical shackles of most of the 20th century by which the New Critics (themselves often both poets and critical influencers) fostered a discourse that directly induced the type of literary production seen as having value within that discursive paradigm. Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz explain that the new modernist studies, “born on or about 1999 with the invention of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) and its annual conferences” (737), seeks to expand definitions of modernism in “spatial, temporal, and vertical directions” (737). This, of course, is not unique to a new modernist studies. The authors, following the lead of modernist scholars such as Andreas Huyssen (After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism [1986]) explain that, with the transformation wrought across the humanities by cultural criticism, “all period-centered areas of scholarship have broadened in scope” (737). Along with Walkowitz and Mao, Susan Stanford Friedman (Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time [2015]) and Lawrence Rainey (Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture [1998]) have opened the modernist canon of scholarship to revision and reconsideration. Others have sought marginal modernisms, such as Chana Kronfeld in her work exploring Yiddish modernism (On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics [1996]) and Laura Wainwright on her work with the Welsh (New Territories in Modernism: Anglophone Welsh Writing, 1930-1949 [2018]). Furthermore, in a February 2019 article in Modernism/Modernity that responds to a growing trend, Gabriel Hankins echoes an entire cohort of scholars in embracing the digital humanities and distant reading as “weak theoretical” tools that distribute influence in a new constellation of modernist scholarship.

7 Within composition studies, the name “current-traditional” is a term assigned to the rhetoric of writing pedagogies that emerged in the wake of modernism and its institutional effects during the middle of the 20th century, a paradoxical term that indicates both an orientation toward the past and a recognition that such rhetoric has led to a paradigm that is very difficult to suprose in the present. For further elucidation of this concept, see Sharon Crowley, The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric (1990).
This study asserts Hughes’s place within just such a new modernism no longer bound by the accepted and notable networks or spheres of influence that have long determined jumping-off points for modernist discussions (who knew T.S. Eliot, who loved Ezra Pound, who was blasted by Wyndham Lewis), especially when introducing a “new” figure into this long-established canonical coterie. Nevertheless, it is also obligatory to demonstrate—without offering as prerequisite—many such relevant contacts and influences as they apply to Hughes’s own work to demonstrate precisely why he belongs in these conversations, if only to expose the faulty logic of name-dropping. Hughes, perhaps an unlikely addition to modernist discussions, fits imperfectly—and thus necessarily—within a new modernism that seeks to enlarge, expand, and embrace the new.

1.2.2 The Case against Opening Modernism

Yet even today some scholars (such as Fredric Jameson in *A Singular Modernity* [2002]) waver, anxious that such an unlimited opening of the discipline under the auspices of poststructural critique might cause the framework of modernism and its historical associations to lose their explanatory power. Others shrink from radically emancipatory methodologies, like distant reading, which they view as new forms of positivism, an empirical situating of modernism that reifies the New Critical disciplining of literature, a trend these critics feel is counter-productive to the aims of cultural studies.

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8 Kevin Jackson has written about the modernist *Constellation of Genius* (2013), explaining how a historically situated modernism changed the world in a remarkably short time. His exposition depends on what Michael Levenson (reviewing Jackson’s analysis in *The Atlantic*) considers the “myth of the miracle year” (“Why We’re Still Struggling to Make Sense of Modernism” [2013]). While Levenson has been a voice for change within modernism, calling for an understanding of modernism (*Modernism* [2011]) that incorporates global difference and attempts to shift paradigms, Jackson appears to double down on hegemonic views of an exceptional modernism locked into time and space. Approaching the cultural production of modernism from a different angle, Levenson sees that “[m]odernity remains haunted both by a search for novelty and by the recollection of precursors” (*Modernism* 2).

Furthermore, there are still other scholars who agree that modernism is a process that transcends periods and see postmodernist attempts to declare modernism dead (see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* [1979]) as misguided triumphalism, yet they also perceive the dangers in allowing modernism to attain re-ascendancy. These critical theorists view modernism as an ever-expanding cultural matrix gone awry, one that modern reason must work to contain. Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas, all associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, seek to foreshorten the potential abuses of modernism and to warn of modernity’s potential destructive outcomes, including societal fragmentation through mass-media fetishization, political manipulation, and genocidal holocaust. These foundational cultural critics seek to diagnose modernism to contain its outbreak as a culture industry. In 1944, Horkheimer and Adorno write that “[c]ulture today is infecting everything with sameness” (41). Consequently, historically anchored analyses are indispensable to legitimate their critique of the modernist (and postmodernist) movement (see Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* [1962] and “Modernity versus Postmodernity” [1981]); Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” [1944]).

Such a historical critical perspective is often at odds with poststructural critical viewpoints, such as deconstruction or Lacanian psychoanalysis, that question the relevance and reliability of history and look instead toward aspatial and atemporal rhythms, ironically also the original hallmarks of the New Critics’ ahistorical “objectivity.” While the Frankfurt School views modernism in open-ended terms chronologically, within the context of ongoing conflict, it resists

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10 Both Andreas Huyssen in “Introduction: Modernism after Postmodernity” (2006) and Jean-Michel Rabaté (“Philosophy” in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* [2006]) ironically invoke Lyotard’s view in promoting postmodernism as “claim[ing] that it anticipated or antedated the ‘modern’” (Rabaté 10). Thus, modernism returns.

11 Cleanth Brooks who, along with Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren, essentially created this critical school, explains in a 1979 essay called “The New Criticism” that the intention of the authors of the 20th century’s dominant critical perspective was “to test an idea—namely that authentic poems from various centuries possessed certain common elements” (594). As a pedagogical strategy, it was intended not to dislodge history and biography from consideration in critiquing literature but instead to dispel predominating remarks that were “vague, flowery, and emotive” (593). Clearly, too much credit (and too much blame) has been conveyed on Brooks and Warren, but the labels and pedagogies of the New Criticism have persisted.
the opening of modernist art to a contamination by popular culture. It also resists totalizing postmodern discourses and the persistent creep of literary criticism into the field of philosophy and science. It thereby asserts cultural and disciplinary boundaries for a study of aesthetic modernism, promoting what Huyssen sees as “the Great Divide” between high and low (or mass) culture.

For some literary and cultural scholars, a disjuncture with history is debilitating to a study of modernism and to literary and cultural studies as a whole. Among institutional figures, there are several key individuals who have straddled and curated paradigms of modernism (and all the rest of literary history) as keepers of 20th- and 21st-century canon creation and preservation. As editors of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, M.H. Abrams (a Romanticist), and subsequently Stephen Greenblatt (a noted New Historian and Shakespeare scholar), have pinpointed the unproductiveness of disconnecting literature and history and see the anthology as a necessary means for maintaining that connection. It must be mentioned as an academic fact that Richard A.W. Hughes has never been anthologized within the Norton compilation and most likely will never be. Greenblatt, like Abrams before him, is a guardian of culture, accepting a position he knows will be vehemently denounced long after he passes the torch to someone else.\(^{12}\)

Similarly, Frank Kermode, longtime editor of the *Fontana Modern Masters* series (see Stephen Spender’s *Eliot* [1986] as an example) and University College London/Cambridge University scholar, provides a firsthand account of the disciplining “muddle”\(^ {13}\) that results from institutional paradigm shifts, necessary or not. Describing academic life in the midst of the cultural-critical paradigm shift, Kermode identifies the institutional influence brought to bear to

\(^{12}\) In an interview with Ken Gewertz of the *Harvard Gazette* (2006), Greenblatt explains that “I love this literature, and I don’t want to sacrifice beauty for something that is only historically interesting. But I do think it’s important to include texts that are highly significant to understanding the literature of the period.”

\(^{13}\) Kermode remarks in one of his last lectures, regarding the philosophical and methodological transformations within the academy that “I imagine almost everybody in the business, a few fanatics apart, would admit to some degree of muddle. It is a function of time’s passage; it must follow from the changing demands of an institution” (“Pleasure, Change, and the Canon” 44).
elevate some subjects while discouraging others: “Under the newer metacritical dispensation there were now many interesting ways of banning such activities and substituting for them methods of description and analysis that might derive their force from linguistics, politics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, or what were claimed to be brand new, unillusioned, and exciting ways of writing history” (44). His evident skepticism about arbitrary disciplinary “openness” informs his critiques: “I have written about canons . . . with double vision and tried to take part in controversies of both kinds, the old one about dislodgement or insertion, the new one about the canon as an abuse of power” (44). Abuses of power, then, are certainly not limited to cultural reactionaries.

As Kermode’s remarks illustrate, any closure of modernism leads directly to controversies regarding established canons. Aided and abetted by university curricula, the modernist “New Critics presented literature itself, the embodiment of this extraordinary language, as a world apart from the world to which most of their students were destined to return. And there was no doubt that this world was a higher world, a finer one” (Guillory 247). Their motivation in creating a canon was to homogenize works of literature as “works of transcendent poetic language” (247). John Guillory, writing about the New Critics, explains that scholars under this umbrella “uprooted literature from the necessary ground of its existence, from history itself” (247). In a similar vein, some modernist scholars and historians today see the unlimited expansion of modernism through psychoanalytical, poststructural, or feminist critique as a similar (if well-intentioned) uprooting, severing Anglo-American modernism (as well as other modernisms) from its historical contexts. In their eyes, Mao’s, Walkowitz’s, and Friedman’s expansions of modernism—addressing any and every expression of human cultural development as a form of modernism, which in turn is responding to a version of modernity—ultimately waters down the term’s meaning, obstructing scholarly discourse.

Rainey, too, even as a new modernist radical, seems less inclined than others to accede to calls for some radically opened definitions of modernism. For example, he is all too willing to
spar with Friedman over her advocacy for H.D.’s place as integral to a reformulation of the period and its porous canon. Strikingly, the Modernist Studies Association—the new modernist society which currently partners with Modernism/modernity (the journal co-founded by Rainey)—still broadcasts a mission statement that defines its purview as “the later nineteenth-through the mid-twentieth century.” In other words, there are limits to modernism’s expansion even in the minds of the most radical new modernists, limits that are dictated, these scholars would say, by the actual conditions on the ground and not anachronistic ideological stances.

Additionally, there are cultural critics of other stripes who would promote a specific definition of modernism as a means for buttressing public discourse, including Irving Howe, E.D. Hirsch, Allan Bloom, and Harold Bloom. While Hirsch and the two Blooms are often dismissed (and have certainly been sidelined, fairly or not) as agents of conservatism, Howe, an avowed Marxist and socialist democrat, is perhaps the most forceful apologist, arguing on behalf of a relatively closed and closely guarded modernism:

The kind of literature called modern is almost always difficult: that is a sign of its modernity. To the established guardians of culture, the modern writer seems willfully inaccessible. He works with unfamiliar forms; he chooses subjects that disturb the audience and threaten its most cherished sentiments; he provokes traditionalist critics to such epithets as “unwholesome,” “coterie” and “decadent.” (Howe) 

Ironically, it is the counter-cultural aspects of modernism asserted here by Howe that have been most displaced by subsequent poststructuralist cries to abolish modernism or open its meaning ever further (see Friedman’s Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time).

14 Rainey, in Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture (1998), explains that Friedman’s attempts to identify H.D. with marginal modernisms, “while appealing to current moral concerns, is achieved largely through an abuse of literary terminology and history, an abuse that conflates a quintessentially aristocratic genre with the politics of egalitarianism implied by the rhetoric ‘marginality.’ It is a maneuver accomplished by an intellectual sleight of hand and a distortion of literary history” (257-8).

15 In “The Culture of Modernism” (1967), Howe promotes the exceptionalism of modernism, arguing that “[m]odernism need never come to an end, or at least we do not really know, as yet, how it can or will reach its end. The history of previous literary periods is relevant but probably not decisive here, since modernism, despite the precursors one can find in the past, is, I think, a novelty in the development of Western culture. What we do know, however, is that modernism can fall upon days of exhaustion, when it appears to be marking time and waiting for new avenues of release.” Yet in this endless revolution, he concedes that modernism may be giving way to the postmodern, an example of “new avenues of release.”
[2015] for both sides of this argument). It would be convenient for cultural critics to dismiss this dissent as yet another rearguard grab for institutional power, yet Friedman herself outlines critically valid debates that modernist scholars are having, even with themselves, regarding the boundaries of the modern. In presenting both sides of this institutionally significant controversy, Friedman offers a generous and even-handed defense of diverse perspectives on this issue. On the side of preservation of modernist discursive features, she cites historian Frederick Cooper's assertion that “the word modernity is now used to make so many different points that continued deployment of it may contribute more to confusion than to clarity” (324-5; qtd. In Friedman). Friedman continues by asserting that “[i]f used at all, the term modernism should focus primarily on the aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural rather than the historical conditions of modernity” (325). While this helps to clarify the reach of modernism for her readers, it does little to assuage the concerns scholars have for “terminological entropy” within the field of new modernist studies.

1.2.3 Situating This Study within Modernist Studies

To engage with other marginalized modernisms, the present study focuses on an author who has long been isolated from the modernist matrix that constructed him. On one hand, it is necessary to situate Hughes within modernist circles to demonstrate his relationship to and interdependence with those elements. On the other hand, Hughes, as a Gothic practitioner, must be seen as centrifugal to the period, fleeing with at least one mentor, W.B. Yeats, from the center that cannot hold and moving in directions determined to be unproductive or outdated by hegemonic modernist institutions, such as the period’s periodical press, publishing arms such as T.S. Eliot’s own Faber and Faber, and other multinational publishing houses. To accomplish a thorough treatment of Hughes’s modernist work, this study examines the author's texts as they function within modernism’s participation in cultural industries and economies (Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry” [1944]; Kevin Dettmar/Stephen Watt, Marketing Modernism: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading [1996]; Lawrence Rainey, Institutions of Modernism:
Literary Elites and Public Culture [1998]; Peter Brooker’s/Andrew Thacker’s study of the modernist periodical press, The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955, [2009]; and Todd Avery, Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922-1938 [2006], which highlights the British Broadcasting Company’s role in propagating official imperial modernist culture over the airwaves). In addressing both the cultural and the economic motivations of modernism, Hughes’s Gothic core emerges as a refrain that holds his diverse commercial outputs together.

Taking a cue from the interdisciplinarity prevalent in literary studies since at least the turn of the 21st century, the present study engages in methodologies that support symptomatic reading, yet it is also sympathetic to the concerns of surface reading, realizing that too much cultural production has, for too long, been overlooked because its surface meanings have been disregarded. Surface reading, as a methodological trend, explores outward textual features as significant. In terms of the present study, this implies that even incidental surface features that intersect with the Gothic, whether tropes or components of a narrative’s structure, are worthy of scholarly consideration. Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus explain that

[a]s scholars formed in the era of interdisciplinarity, we take for granted that the texts we read and interpret include canonical and noncanonical literary works. We also feel licensed to study objects other than literary ones, using paradigms drawn from anthropology, history, and political theory, which themselves borrowed from literary criticism an emphasis on close reading and interpretation after the linguistic turn of the 1970s. (1)

For the present study, it is the Gothic-inflectedness of Hughes’s work,16 potentially overlooked in symptomatic readings, which the present study asserts as of paramount importance within a modernist milieu that sometimes downplays the influence of its own precursors and its “low culture” counterparts in its rush to break free from the past and the unwashed masses. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Modern Gothic [1996]), among other Gothic-modern scholars, have noted the disputed common ground possessed by the Gothic and modernism. The liminal,

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16 Carol Margaret Davison in “Anglo-Caribbean Gothic” (2017) specifies Hughes’s A High Wind in Jamaica as “a Gothic-inflected loss-of-innocence story.”
overlapping field of the Gothic-modern is fertile for further work. Points of overlap between the Gothic and the modern include a “fascination with the everyday,” despite modernism’s reputation of ivory towers and elite audiences; an “attachment to a world . . . of longing, fear and nostalgia”; a “link with writing” [as a cultural, and even magical institution, “a certain kind of writing which entertains the absurd in order to raise questions about reality”]; and “an interest in the material here-and-now” (1-2). Smith and Sage add that the Gothic-modern is a “resistant strain,” “a distinctive aesthetic shorthand, a code of iteration, which tends to imply a critical relation between the present and the past” (1-2). These elements all represent the progress/disintegration dichotomy which this study expresses as a conjuncture of disjunctures, a paradox that informs the modernist discourse.

While the present study relies on scholarship typical of strong theories, such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction, it is incumbent on scholars within Gothic studies and new modernist studies to consider the ways that weak theory can help to address aporias and trowel in disciplinary lacunae. Weak theory includes approaches that distribute power, such as Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome theory, and Moretti’s distant reading, all useful in approaching the archive not to pinpoint items scholars have identified in advance but instead to allow the entire archive, including its gaps, an agency that it has thus far been denied.

Currently, only two new modernist scholars have seriously engaged with Hughes’s works as an element within the weak theory of planetary modernisms: Michael Titlestad ([2016]; with Simon van Schalkwyk [2017]) and Nicole Rizzuto (2018).17 The present study seeks to build on Titlestad’s thorough research within the diverse Hughes archive, including Hughes’s screenplays and unfinished manuscripts, and Rizzuto’s efforts to situate Hughes’s novels

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through surface reading and within a newly-constellated modernism, a Latourian network of
global phenomena, by “approaching modernism from the waters.” Yet Rizzuto’s caution
regarding the re-inscription of traditional modernist hegemonies leads her to explain that “[i]t is
not my aim to relabel and re-periodize” (Insurgent 15). Speaking of the danger of recasting
colonial literature within the new modernism, she explains that “[i]t is true that compelling
arguments have been made for a ‘weak theory’ of modernism that would enable a broadening of
critical approaches and promote attention to literary and cultural works that are not typically
included in this category. But I decline” (15). The same vigilance to recolonization by
traditional paradigms is applicable to a study of Richard A.W. Hughes since his work dovetails
with colonial and postcolonial concerns and resists classification. At the same time, scholars of
Hughes do well to also consider the power held by the “epistemologies of enmity” that Eve
Kosofsky Sedgwick subtly identifies with current research trends (127). The present study, while
seeking to acknowledge and redress, also attempts to avoid asymmetrical paranoia by allowing
texts to speak from unique historical and cultural contexts without the prejudgments of totalizing
discourses.

A 2018 special issue of Modernism/modernity treats the promise of weak theory for the
field of new modernist studies, and a similar desire to distribute power and resist echoing
traditionalist influence studies informs the present study of Hughes. Specifically, the present
study asserts, with modernist archivists J. Matthew Huculak (“What Is a Modernist Archive?”
[2018]) and Leif Sorensen (“A Weird Modernist Archive: Pulp Fiction, Pseudobiblia, H.P.
Lovecraft” [2010]) the unique promise of archival studies and a measured discussion of literary,
cultural, and historical spectrality as examples of weak theory that can extend scholarly
discussions and expand a definition of modernism to include and address—not to enthrone—
discarded authors like Richard A.W. Hughes. At the same time, the present exploration of the

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18 This rejection of a globalizing and ever-expanding modernism is also found in the work of scholars who
question the “scalability” of modernism (see Aarthi Vadde, “Scalability”).
archive responds to changing ways scholars now enter the archive, a time of transition that embodies what Margaret Konkol terms the "central tension between diffusion and enclosure, between the dream of a universal library—which paradoxically and simultaneously enacts a 'library without walls'—and that of a 'classical archive.'" Both senses of archival study are employed in the methodology of the present study and are a means for examining a broader tension.

Surface reading and weak theory, then, are perspectives that can help to open up a discussion of current work on Hughes within the academy.

1.3 The Lacunae within Hughes Scholarship

Little has been written about the cultural significance of Hughes’s texts, but nothing at all has been articulated regarding his use of the Gothic. The Gothic, as a discourse, is both contested and contesting. Without question, it is a discourse of violent conflict, whether among ideas or between revolutionary and reactionary political agents. If the Gothic is truly a discourse, it either serves by discursive means to perpetuate the status quo by rejecting a monstrous past, present, or future, or it seeks to undermine safe sensibilities to effect radical change that is itself considered monstrous by institutional forces, the powers-that-be. Hughes’s works can all be unpacked as vehicles and remedies for class, race, and gender conflict, particularly in light of planetary, postcolonial concerns. Since the Gothic has long been understood as a fertile means for expressing and addressing these concerns, it comes as no surprise that the Gothic in

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19 Konkol, in "Oppositions within the Modernist Archive" (2020), demonstrates that “[t]he archive, as a subset of the working library, offered modernists an antidote to the implicitly moral expectations of the universal library.” Hughes, as a modernist researcher, was driven to engage such an antidote at the British Museum Reading Room and his own papers, housed in a “brick-and-mortar” edifice at Indiana University’s Lilly Library, are similarly cordoned off from universal access. Yet they ironically provide a means for expanding the modernist narrative.

20 David Punter’s study Postcolonial Imaginings (2000) is only one of a long line of postcolonial critiques that employ elements of the Gothic. For an example, see Frantz Fanon’s invocation of the Gothic discourse in Wretched of the Earth (1961). See also Gerry Turcotte’s assertion in "Vampiric Decolonization: Fanon, ‘Terrorism’ and Mudrooroo’s Vampire Trilogy" (2005) regarding a colonial affinity for the Gothic, that “[i]t is certainly possible to argue that the generic qualities of the Gothic mode lend themselves to articulating the colonial experience inasmuch as each emerges out of a condition of
Hughes’s work is indicative of these same underlying pursuits and complexes. While he, as a poet, was self-consciously aware from the first that his work would be viewed as a means for getting at the mind of the author, his work has rarely, if ever, been viewed as a means for getting at the concerns of cultural criticism. The present study pursues those uncharted paths.

By drawing attention to the *oeuvre* and personal papers of Richard Hughes through archival research and close reading informed by cultural theory, the present study will demonstrate the ways in which the Gothic inflections of Hughes’s work interact with a paradoxical tendency within modernism to highlight progress while also emphasizing disintegration. In effect, this study (echoing Robert Miles) purports to be the “first properly cultural study of Hughes.”

By at least some scholarly accounts (Crowley [2008]; Titlestad [2019]), as well as those in the popular periodical press (Holroyd [2005]; Greer [2009], Kuitenbrouwer [2009]), Hughes’s work is lasting yet neglected. Yet it is imperative to emphasize once again that *neglect* is only a useful term of inquiry if cultural critiques are engaged to examine Hughes’s work in all its unvarnished incompleteness, indeterminacy, and inconsistency. Case in point: much of the biographical work on Hughes has been produced by a Hughes family friend, Richard Perceval Graves, nephew of modernist poet and novelist Robert Graves. The elder Graves, with Hughes, edited a groundbreaking anthology of early modernist verse at Oxford in 1921, with Hughes and other young Oxford poets being given “extended elbow room” to explore new post-war, pre-Wasteland poetic trends. In *Richard Hughes* (1994), R.P. Graves also makes extensive use of Hughes’s archived personal papers, housed at Indiana University’s Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana. Despite the tendency of this biographical work to “keep things in the family,” it is to the credit of Hughes’s family that they have opened every corner to scholars to make his archive more representative.

deracination and uncertainty, of the familiar transposed into unfamiliar space, and then forcibly 'naturalised’” (1).
Remarkably, for all of the acclaim Hughes’s work in its varied modes received during his lifetime, there are only three monographs that focus on his contributions to literary and cultural history, and only one of these studies emerged during the long, flat arc of Hughes’s 76-year life. The lack of critical engagement with Hughes’s work can be accounted for partly by the author’s own drawn-out process of composition (several academics and publishers waited breathlessly for Hughes’s next novel to complete their own work) and partly because of factors beyond his control. At least two studies, evidenced through numerous examples of correspondence between those scholars and Hughes, were proposed, then composed, and then suspended, almost inexplicably.  

Peter Thomas, whose numbered copies of a limited-edition monograph echo Hughes’s own early small-scale publishing efforts, penned the first study of Hughes (*Richard Hughes* [1973]) as a Freudian exploration (and devoted paean) of a fellow Welsh author whose work as a modernist could serve to raise the profile of Welsh literary studies. Thomas’s work, at least partly impacted by the illness of the scholar’s daughter, was a far cry from the study he initially projected and about which he periodically corresponded with the author. Later, Richard Poole (*Richard Hughes: Novelist* [1986]), another Welshman and the most prolific writer on Hughes’s works, wrote his study to elevate Hughes’s neglected work within an increasingly postmodern and modern-hostile milieu, making extensive use of the Lilly Library Hughes papers and building a historicized and biographical account of Hughes’s work. By applying Hughes’s own concept of the *eidolon* (the spectral “idea-image”) to organize and analyze the author’s poetry, plays, and novels, Poole allows Hughes to set the terms of study for his own works. Finally, as a challenge to previous work on Hughes, Paul Morgan (*The Art of Richard Hughes* [1993]) produced the first study of Hughes’s novels that combined reader-response criticism with semiotically oriented criticism.

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21 Donald R. Swanson is cited in “Wright State Authors Cited at Reception” for his forthcoming—yet never published—study for Twayne Publishers (most likely intended for their English Authors Series), and Peter Thomas, in his Letter to Richard Hughes (14 Nov. 1974), references on-going work on a larger, ultimately unpublished study he intended to finish sometime after this date.
structuralism (particularly referencing Umberto Eco’s *The Role of the Reader* [1984]) and extensive citation from Hughes’s correspondence in the Chatto and Windus archives at the University of Reading.

Nevertheless, while Hughes did have some avid academic fans, he has mainly been defined by academics who were less breathless and couldn’t afford to wait for further Hughes works to emerge, even posthumously. Most representative is the critic John Bayley, whose assessments of Hughes seem almost personal and stand in direct opposition to Hughes’s early and continuing popular and critical reception, yet which have clearly been influential. Indeed, Patrick Swinden’s *Unofficial Selves: Character in the Novel from Dickens to the Present Day* (1973) includes a chapter that treats the complexities and expertise of Hughes’s *Human Predicament* novels, the last critical assessment Hughes received during his own lifetime. Immediately following this chapter, Bayley is invoked in epigraph to state that “the greatest English literature is not about the Human Condition . . . [T]hose who write about the Human Condition take an attitude towards it” (203). This implicit condemnation by both Bayley and Swinden of Hughes’s audacity in “taking an attitude” shows how, by the 1970s, the tide had already turned against Hughes’s perceived over-reach, a critical view that persists today.

Two decades later, in reviewing Graves’s authorized biography of Hughes for the *London Review of Books*, Bayley is once again called on for his retrospective understanding of the author’s place in literary history and ultimately turns his contribution into a dismissal of Hughes’s entire body of work, concluding that “the old magic” of Hughes’s groundbreaking works is “rather eclipsed.” Bayley continues by administering a sort of postmodern extreme function even for Hughes’s most lauded work: “the casual expertise, the calculated shocks, the stylistic knowledgeability that now seemed rather less than convincing, all suggested a talent that could be perceived as historically and socially determined, rather than as ever fresh and new.”

Bayley’s evaluation stands as a latter-day reassessment and seems bent on flushing the system not only of outmoded literary works, but also of the perceived tepid life behind that work.
A final dismissive reference from Bayley ties Hughes’s fate to that of his later novels’ overblown protagonist: “Indeed [Hughes] strikes one as not being a born writer at all, any more than T.E. Lawrence was.”

Another critic, John Crowley (2005), carves a more nuanced (yet still contradictory) epitaph for Hughes and his work, an assessment that, while acknowledging Hughes’s achievements, still upends the author’s work as if looking under a clean rug for dirty answers: “It wasn’t drink, either, or a life too short; it wasn’t negligence, for [Hughes] worked nearly every day at the business of writing and being an active man of letters. It was a career laid out backward, with the heights first and the long subsequent journey mostly downward.” Such is the dismissal of Hughes’s (by then) outdated work, his unrealized potential, and his downward, conventional trajectory in the view of the dominant institutions of the culture industry. It is the intention of the present study to re-situate Hughes not as a literary icon but instead as a purveyor of culture and a significant player in the modernist culture industry that emerged from the printed word, continued on the radio, and permeated both the cinema and television as the 20th century progressed and established modernist discourse as hegemonic.

1.4 Cultural Studies

There is a critical urgency, then, for a study of Hughes’s work—as both Gothic and modern—from a cultural perspective. Historically, two of the greatest dangers within literary studies have been ossification and marginalization, and the intentional opening of discourses is, undoubtedly, the primary intention of cultural studies. Yet ossification often applies to both a traditional norm and to a new normal that has displaced a prior norm with its own revolutionary agendas. While cultural studies has, over the past several decades, overtaken rigid forms of literary studies with its attempts at non-hierarchical scholarship, the fact remains that cultural studies, as a new hegemony, is sometimes blinded by the profusion of new, eminently worthy data points. Choices must be made, and such critical endeavors can unintentionally distract
from historical concerns because of the nearly limitless potential that cultural critique has opened up.

1.4.1 The Case for Opening Cultural Studies

According to Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins in their contribution to *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (2000), “Though the content and direction of academic cultural studies are still very much open, its one uncontested principle has been respect for the lived experience of cultures in the plural, particular sense, which issues in a hospitable inclusiveness to ‘low’ or uncanonical objects, activities, genres, and styles that Culture in the singular, universal sense had tended to neglect” (434). It is just such disciplinary openness that the present study embraces.

In its short history, cultural studies has, reflecting the work of Raymond Williams, “counteract[ed] the abstraction of professional specialists by calling us back to the commonality of shared experience” (Graff and Robbins 419). Furthermore, the new cultural studies, infused with Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist critiques, has emphasized culture as a zone of ongoing “social conflicts and contradictions” in which every element must be unmasked and every ideology exposed (421). Nevertheless, as a new regime with control of institutional mechanisms, cultural studies has also become the new kingmaker, the discipline that decides what subjects are most representative of conflict and, therefore, most in demand as the objects of scholarly study.

It must be asserted again that the aim of the present study is not to canonize Hughes’s works or reinscribe the traditional institutional power associated with Anglo-American modernism or traditional literary study. The interrogation of personal, societal, cultural, and historical conflicts remains of paramount importance. Yet there is a need for the field to interrogate its own power. To do this, it must retrace its own steps, examining the margins of the present as well as the past. Sedgwick advocates a move away from a hermeneutics of suspicion and toward reparative reading. In this she signals a way forward in examining the
work of Richard A.W. Hughes as a means for a therapeutic epistemology of uncovering and repairing rather than the symptomatic reading practices of exposing and dismissing.

Turn of the 21st-century backlash against cultural studies, described by Graff and Robbins, makes it even more necessary for the discipline of cultural studies to shake off any impression that the field is silencing voices, especially voices priorly associated with mainstream literary and cultural trends that may appear passé or “eclipsed.” Graff and Robbins write that “[i]n our view, cultural studies can best find common ground with new social movements outside the university by creating a space of debate in which questions of cultural identity and political strategy are not defined in advance” (435). While this would open up ample room for cultural critique, it would also demonstrate that no object of study is beyond its purview, including its own power.

Advances in “weak theory” have re-directed some of the disciplinary momentum of cultural theory that is sometimes susceptible to predetermining the worthiness of objects of study. Marxism, feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism are strong lenses that filter as well as they find. Without question, these methodological lenses continue to revitalize the archive. Nevertheless, it is the assertion of the present study that marginalization anywhere is a threat to engagement everywhere. There is a danger of triumphalism, even within cultural studies: the view that the academy is finally able to banish past writers or movements as inherently racist, misogynist, or unredeemable. To complement the dominant lenses of cultural studies, the present study views the Gothic as a meeting point of both strong and weak theory, an opportunity to go beyond already accomplished works of mourning to examine Hughes’s texts as representative of dispersed power.

Three versions of such weak theory can be employed in the present study through interdisciplinary cooperation. The succeeding four chapters of this study will each leverage theories that emphasize the distributed nature of power as represented within Hughes’s body of work. By embracing the threat and potential of “The Stranger,” tracing rhizomatic association-
ghosts in Hughes’s poetry, and resituating the Abject’s power in Hughes’s novels, the author’s works can be seen to be in conversation with a changing, disrupted world and can also be shown as seeking (albeit incompletely) to salve societal wounds.

Works of mourning must always move toward the recuperation of individuals and societies, rather than the redrawing of periodic and generic boundaries. The periodic and generic discourses of the Gothic and the modern are merely the flawed vehicles for this engagement.

1.4.2 The Importance of Texts and Contexts

The reasons for choosing Hughes and his archives must finally be articulated. Richard A.W. Hughes, like many other members of his cultural cohort, seeks through the art of fiction to demonstrate “truth”: to reveal and deal with trauma insofar as such an open wound can ever close. While his truth will always be questioned and his endless quest for it endlessly contested, this study asserts that therapeutic goals necessarily proceed from the diagnoses of theory—otherwise Williams’s understanding of detrimental academic “distance” will certainly be confirmed. Hughes’s rehabilitation must not be seen as an attempt to artificially resuscitate the author’s reputation. Instead, rehabilitation or recuperation is an aim for the modern world, broadly defined as both the world in which Hughes lived and the one that continues today. While many of Hughes’s texts are typical of modernist experimentation and aesthetic engagement, his use of the Gothic is generally centrifugal to the modernist movement. By exploring the Gothic within Hughes’s modernist works, the present study can open Gothic studies and new modernist studies beyond current canons and definitions. It is also asserted that the Gothic in Hughes’s texts serves a therapeutic function, facilitating a broad, societal work of mourning, a reconsideration of traumas both personal and societal that continue into the present.

Practically speaking, it is in conducting archival research—both in digital and classic archives—that Hughes’s texts are opened. By seeking out and interrogating as many of Hughes’s texts as are extant, the present study has intended to establish the Gothic unity of his
vision across time and genres. While unity is always already pocked with anomalies, scholars can better understand the Gothic and modern discourses by viewing them as types of disunited unity. Modernist critic Marshall Berman in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (1983) writes that

> modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. (15)

Within the cultural and archival maelstrom represented only partially by the extant archive, a maelstrom which seeks to represent the conflicting modernities enthusiastically embraced by Friedman, Mao, and Walkowitz, there are both centrifugal and centripetal forces: While the latter hold fast to the centers of tradition, the former are perpetually pushing out of bounds and toward an uncertain future. Ultimately there is ample evidence that, culturally speaking, Richard Hughes broke free when the imperial center could not hold, and it is the object of this literary and cultural study to attempt to track his trajectory through the diverse material traces of the archive: his letters, his drawings, his photographs, his invitations, and his thank-you notes, along with drafts, both published and unpublished, of his short stories, poems, novels, and media plays.

This study conducts thorough, sustained research within the archive of Hughes’s personal papers and published texts to test the claim that Hughes’s work reveals a consistent use of the Gothic discourse as a therapeutic tool for himself and for his discourse community, his imagined readers. As a methodology, archival research seeks to bring back dead textual materiality by contextualizing it through a process of cultural critique and juxtaposition. Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969) explains that “[t]he positivity of a discourse . . . characterizes its unity throughout time, and well beyond individual oeuvres, books, and texts” (126). It is the goal of the present study to demonstrate that archival work reveals the discourse of the Gothic across the diversity of Hughes’s texts and contexts as a tool for personal, societal, cultural, and historical interventions.
1.4.3 Hughes and the Gothic Archive

This study asserts that, just as Hughes innocuously yet assertively introduced William Faulkner to the British colonial cultural imaginary (and the whole of Europe by extension), his own work must be reintroduced to and through a new modernist studies which is always already (in)formed by the radical re-formations of Gothic studies. The archive is, of course, a rhetorical instrument. In fact, Sorensen writes of uncanny archives in the works of H.P. Lovecraft that “[o]ne of the specters haunting these archives, which distance them from the official archive even as it speaks to the repressed truth of all archives, is that of the obsessive fan or collector” (506). Archival study should lead us to pursue all available evidence—all the while knowing that most of the archive can never be recovered—and not only to discover what we seek (which would only be a kind of re-covering). Archival scholars cannot simply choose samples that meet their predetermined cultural, political, or racial criteria. As Sorensen makes clear, sanitizing the modernist archive—even of overtly racist or generically peripheral Gothic authors like H.P Lovecraft—would be tantamount to unleashing the horrors of racial eugenics that Lovecraft himself seeks to inflict through his fiction.

As Sorensen makes abundantly clear, the archive is uncanny and of “crucial importance . . . in the modernist moment” (502); spectrality must hover over its business. Sorensen writes that “[t]hrough [an] image of an archive possessed of disturbing agency, Lovecraft’s work challenges the tendency of high modernist writers to present themselves as authorities who control the archive and its meanings” (502). Even Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1921), while seeming to liberate new authors to join and re-shape the canon, simultaneously (if subtly) appoints arbiters of modernist taste who will be able to rule on the appropriateness of such rearrangements. J. Matthew Huculak explains that “the archive always returns. It continues to offer a place of renewal, new directions, new fires, and new concealments.” It is this type of

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22 See M. Thomas Inge’s introduction to *Dixieland Express: Writers on William Faulkner and His Influence* (2016): “British novelist Richard Hughes was responsible for initiating his European reputation.”
revenance and resistance that have inspired both Gothic and modern accounts of powerful textuality.

In the end, the archive “comes alive . . . reaching forward in time to act on those who attempt to use it” (Sorensen 502). This archive is, as Sorensen notes, derived from desire. Thus, “the possibility that the organizer’s desire might have motivated the removal of items from or addition of materials to the archive” must always revise a purist vision of curatorial control (Sorensen 502). Marquette University’s *Glossary of the Gothic*, building on Hoeveler’s work, establishes a key parasitical relationship between the Gothic and the archive that certainly impacts modernism:

Gothic intertextuality can be seen as a vampiric form of drawing elements from other texts, of sucking key ideas and characteristics into its own narrative body to nourish and enrich itself. Intertextuality exists everywhere in all literary genres, but Gothic intertextuality stands apart from the usual usage as it both subverts and perverts the meanings and intentions of the original text, in a bid to overturn, question and invert its significance. ("Intertextuality")

The key here is the subversiveness of allusion, a particularly salient point when considering modernist fetishizing of allusive intertextuality. The archive is alive as it grows, but it is also alive as it consumes and overshadows. Far from being a mere instrument of scholarly concerns, it dictates and disciplines them. The archive, then, must be considered a powerful, rhizomatic, trans-temporal and trans-spatial expression of human power.

1.4.4 Hughes and the Modernist Archive

One key aspect of Hughes’s archive that must be examined for the first time is his interaction with the modernist periodical press. Within the little magazines or journals of the modernist period (as with the pulp magazines Sorensen treats) is a micro-archive in conversation with itself. This key material element, the sometimes-haphazard placement of texts alongside one another intentionally or not, becomes rhetorical, and the way that this new assemblage works together and at cross-purposes is the reason archival research within new
modernist studies is accelerating in the digital age. Whether within or among texts, intertextuality is a trait of any archive.

Sorensen also states that the archive is “a crucial component of both new modernist studies and modernist cultural production” (502). J. Matthew Huculak adds that online initiatives like MJP (Modernist Journals Project) and MAPP (Modernist Archives Publishing Project) “have all contributed to the ‘expansive’ forces enlarging the universe of material modernity.” At the same time, Huculak remarks on the irony of our expanding universe of ephemeral data, epitomized by paper yet accelerated in technological “planned obsolescence”: the acid necessary for the creation of pulp paper “still eats away at the fibres of pages in our archives,” and even the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine cannot bring back the 80% of scientific data lost because “no one knows where to look to find it” (qtd. in Huculak). The modernist archive is emblematic, then, of the creative disintegration that modernists echo in their literary production.

Consequently, it is clear that the archive has not been kind to Hughes. His early published work is readily available online. Yet the fact that his most notable work is now available for download on the Internet Archive, languishing in plain sight within the public domain, demonstrates that Hughes is absent even though he is present. Crowley, a Hughes critic who has fairly assessed Hughes’s *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929) and who speaks from the introduction of the most recent edition (from the Modern Library) of Hughes’s *In Hazard* (1938; Crowley, “Introduction” [2008]), is able to peg the faint injustice of Hughes’s current position as a specter haunting the archive:

> It might be just a little distressing for a writer in Elysium to look down and see himself in such company—amid the odd, the recovered, the *sui generis*, the special cases, the lesser aristocracy. That is, however, where Richard Hughes may best belong, and the farther we come from the time in which his four novels were written, the more comfortable he appears there. (“Little”)

Nevertheless, it is the liminality of this *sui generis* author, a cultural practitioner comfortable as a member of the “lesser aristocracy,” that shapes the purpose and plan of the present study.
It is a legitimate concern that, in trying to “rehabilitate” an author like Hughes, we are seeking to reinscribe a racially biased canon that has persevered to the present. Some would say, standing on the critical race theory of the past three decades, that it is unnecessary to disinter Hughes’s work, since it would only perpetuate past weaknesses of literary study. Yet this study asserts that the baggage with which Hughes was buried is just as critically important for literary historians and cultural scholars because of the hauntedness of his modernist discourse and spectral presences of his portrayed (and sometimes objectified) Others.

The postcolonial, planetary turn that has expanded new modernist inquiries beyond traditional texts and regional notions would mark Hughes as a poster child for empire, having written a definitive history of the British Admiralty and being descended from an 18th century sea captain who, “after once entertaining King George III at Portsmouth, had been created Sir Richard Hughes of East Bergholt” (R.P. Graves, Richard 2). But it is Hughes’s contestation of the imperial center—a center his family had long represented from the imperial periphery—which requires Hughes’s attendance within the academy.

Archives intentionally function across space and time—although this intentionality is greatly altered through the digital humanities and a broad digitization of documents. Archives—whether digital or classical—pull scholars from all corners of the earth to a Mecca, a Jerusalem, or a Rome of unique access. Yet Hughes’s archive in Bloomington, Indiana, is far from the epicenter of his influence. During his lifetime, Hughes was widely known as an international phenom, yet he identified as a Welsh author. There is no question but that Hughes had a clear cultural mission. He adopted Wales and was likewise adopted by the Welsh. In addition, his embrace of a cosmopolitan global community led to the crafting of a Richard Halliburton-like image: he was the author-as-world traveler before Hemingway was barely on the map, living as the first Caucasian “infidel” in Tangier’s Kasbah.23 The goal of this study, though, is not to claim

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23 Ford Madox Ford, who refers to young writers whom he patronizes as les Jeunes, includes Hughes with budding authors Hemingway and Elizabeth Madox Roberts. See Letters of Ford Madox Ford, 191.
Hughes as a culture-crossing pioneer or as a norm-transgressing thief. It is merely to situate Hughes as a product of his time and his own imperial, modern status: He was cosmopolitan because—technologically, socially, and financially—he could be.

Working in the archive is a methodology fraught with conflict. By bringing artifacts to the light of day, that critical light must always expose the flaws of institutional and personal discourses, especially those which have disciplined the archive and made of it an ideological weapon to rope off the culturally undesirable. For example, modernist archivist Sorensen explores H.P. Lovecraft’s Gothic-modern use of the archive as a means for disciplining the non-Caucasian contaminations of culture and society. Lovecraft’s obvious racism and pervasive nativism—echoes from the ongoing sentiments of Anglo-American society during the 1920s—color his horror and shape his fantasies.

Hughes’s work, while also occasionally reflecting prejudice and stereotype, functions differently. Of course, he can’t be claimed as a Jamaican, a Moroccan, a Croatian, a German, or even an American, despite his engagement with the diverse cultures of each of those locales. Yet his work is consistently patterned with efforts to understand the Other, as opposed to Joseph Conrad’s repeated view of the Other as essentially unknowable. For Hughes, the Other is just as vulnerable to bias and misperception as the Self is, and his attempts to fashion multivalent narratives with a variety of points of view reminds a reader of the Faulkner he single-handedly introduced to Europe through his recommendations to his own publisher, Chatto and Windus, in 1929. 24 His attempts to engage with and understand the Other (like Conrad before him) and to depict the Other (like Faulkner, his contemporary) must necessarily invite engagement from scholars.

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24 After reading Mosquitoes (1927) and The Sound and the Fury (1929) during his sojourn in the United States, Hughes took these books to Chatto and Windus and solicited their publication, a clear pattern in Hughes’s life by which he elevated the work of others without any demonstrable benefit to his own career. Of course, he did go on to write brief introductions for the first UK editions of Faulkner’s Soldier’s Pay (1926; “Preface” [1930]), Mosquitoes (“Introduction” [1964]) and The Sound and the Fury (“Introduction” [1931]).
It is productive here to further examine Sorensen’s study of H.P. Lovecraft’s archival fictions. Lovecraft’s descriptions of groups of people he defines racially are, sadly, unremarkable for the time, yet they serve as an entry point for understanding Hughes’s work. For Lovecraft, only “artificial sentiment” and extreme, racially charged depictions “could make any normal terrestrial Aryan care a hang about either Jupiter and Saturn’s rings on the one hand, or Chinamen and negroes on the other hand. Nothing means anything vitally to us except something which we can interpret in the light of conditions we know” (Lovecraft, qtd. in Sorensen 513). Lovecraft thus forecloses the possibility of ever knowing “The Stranger,” the racialized Other in our midst, a figure that repulses him, just as we can never know the diabolical other-dimensional forces at work in his fantasies. Yet the author simultaneously embraces the known which is fading. For Lovecraft, the archive is a bittersweet, spectral, cultural catalyst that continues to inspire backward-looking nativism and xenophobia even today:

[I]t is upon the ghost of something beloved and departed, rather than upon the thing itself, that we gaze. Our own country and history seem subtly dissolving away from us, and we clutch frantically at the straws and symbols through which our imaginations may momentarily recall and recapture a past which is really our own. (Lovecraft, qtd. in Sorensen 513)

For Lovecraft, Western civilization is haunted by “a vague sense that multicultural modernity is a sinister conspiracy hostile to the white Western tradition” (Sorensen 509) and “growing tides of immigration” (Sorensen 510).

In their power (as crypts and dungeons) and in their accessibility (as conjurations of the unseen or sequestered), archives are remarkably Gothic. At the same time, they are supremely modernist, just as periodization itself is an attempt to craft and brand order from chaos. Sorensen explains that “[o]ne reason why modernist studies benefits so greatly from the turn to archive is that so many major modernist texts construct themselves as archives by virtue of their citation of, allusion to, or direct invocation of texts running a broad gamut from contemporary to ancient, literary to scientific, erudite and elevated to banal and popular” (502). The “uncanny
temporalities” (Sorensen 503) of the archive enable us, in scholarly fashion, to commune with the dead. By such archival study, Sorensen has unearthed numerous examples of Lovecraft’s racial biases, elements of his worldview that directly impact his construction of mythic, supernatural fictions in which inscrutable, unknowable forces are infused with racist rhetoric.

As scholars confront any work of cultural production, they must be mindful of the cultural matrix that has left its traces on such artifacts. In studying the works of Richard A.W. Hughes, we must account for cultural biases that remain as traces every time a work is pulled from the archive and opened for close reading. The archive has functioned as a means for eliminating dissenting voices, marginalizing or eliding individuals in presenting artificially conceived wholes, and disciplining the texts and authors who do manage to remain. Archival work is inherently political work. Our goal is never absolution, but it can be said that we seek solutions, remedies which are beyond the power of any individual person or text to achieve but which might be approached and amended corporately and archivally.

1.5 The Significance of Spectrality in Hughes

The uncanny nature of the modernist archive leads to a consideration of spectrality. Jacques Derrida’s treatment of specters, explored intimately in Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International (1994) and pursued continuously throughout the latter portion of Derrida’s career, forms the theoretical foundation for much subsequent literary and cultural criticism. Derrida’s sense of spectrality cannot easily be defined, which is precisely Derrida’s point, emphasizing the specter’s inability to be seen even as it sees. In Derrida’s own words, spectrality is the “concept without concept” (Wolfreys, “Spectrality,” The Encyclopedia of the Gothic 641), since definition is precisely what it flees from. Yet it is exactly this slipperiness that must be addressed in literary works that make claims of authorship and membership within a unique place and time.

Julian Wolfreys (Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny, and Literature [2001]), following Derridean principles, is much more explicit regarding the ways that spectrality
illuminates revenant discourses within literary texts and throughout literary archives. Wolfreys writes that “there is, there takes place, an arrival from somewhere else, made manifest as a figure of otherness disrupting orders and systems of representation, logic, and so forth, and which, in arriving, returning, or coming to pass, traverses and blurs any neat analytical distinction” (“Spectrality” 638). Wolfreys lays the methodological groundwork for the relatively new critical perspective this study intends to employ. By tracing the revenant remains within texts not typically seen as Gothic, spectrality discerns the heterotopic simultaneity that characterizes the museums and libraries that Foucault famously identifies (“Of Other Spaces” [1984]), storehouses (archives) that seek to enclose ever iterative and accumulating time. For Wolfreys, texts are always already ghost stories, iterative discourses that subtly revive Gothic elements even within comic literature. The Gothic is a catch-all for the tales—or their fragmented features—that haunt human souls. This is how authors are formed, and Hughes is an excellent example of the accumulated, creative sediments of the culture in which he developed and functioned as a writer.

Yet a different and, for some cultural scholars, more compelling form of spectrality infuses a study of Hughes’s works. While Derrida has gained most of the recognition for developing spectrality into a theoretical pathway, Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török (The Wolfman’s Magic Word [1986]), following Freud, must be recognized for their pioneering literary work on lingering traumas (an emphasis emerging from Freud’s “Wolf-Man” study) by which the body and psyche serve as palimpsests upon which experience continues to write, erase, and write again.

According to Colin Davis (“Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms” [2005]), the two strains of spectral analysis in literary and cultural studies—that of Derrida and that of Abraham and Török—are epistemologically at odds. While Derrida’s approach accentuates the uncertainties of hauntology, Abraham and Török seek a therapeutic, almost teleological closure and healing, an end-result viewed as inaccessible or unrealistic by the principles of deconstructionism.
Whereas Derrida explores the existential state of being watched by the unwatchable specter, Abraham and Török situate themselves as spectators, and perhaps as artificial arbiters, of the gaps left in us by other people’s secrets. The debate over these two strands of spectrality continues in the work of Nicholas Rand (Le Cryptage et la Vie des Œuvres [1989]), Esther Rashkin (Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative [1992]), and Jodey Castricano (Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida’s Ghost Writing [2003]). Nicholas Royle (The Uncanny [2003]), while linking Derrida’s understanding of the specter (which he has helped to translate into English) directly to the work of Abraham and Török, sides with Derrida by critiquing the work of Castricano and Rashkin as impossibly optimistic regarding a post-deconstruction determination of meaning. Nevertheless, the present study, following the lead of Abraham and Török, leans toward an implementation of spectrality as treatment, rather than as theory alone.

Avery Gordon (Ghostly Matters [1997]), echoed by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (“Spectropolitics: Ghosts of the Global Contemporary” [2013]), sees spectrality in even more practical therapeutic terms. For historians, spectrality is an institutional construct of rhetorical design and execution that often resists identification out of fealty to hegemonies. Derrida explains that “[h]egemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” (46). The repressed extra-hegemonic is always already in danger of breaking through, of splintering the already haunted hegemonic archive.

It is both liminality, the emergence of marginalized historical voices (Sharon Patricia Holland, “Introduction: Raising the Dead” [2000]), and laminality (Bianca del Villano, Ghostly Alterities [2007]) the sense that all of these voices are speaking at once, which animates a spectral analysis of culture, and specifically a reparative reading of history. In addition, sociologists like Janice Radway (“Foreword,” Ghostly Matters [1997]) remind us that
sociology must preoccupy itself with what has been lost . . . the lost is only apparently absent because the forced “disappearance” of aspects of the social continues to shadow all that remains. Because the past always haunts the present, sociology must imaginatively engage those apparitions, those ghosts that tie present subjects to past histories. (viii)

Within texts, archives, and societies, the theme of spectrality is forever recurring and revenant within the discourses of modernities that seek to elude that theme or leverage it to new effect. Gordon explains that “one of [Derrida’s] most pithy definitions of the spectral” is “‘the experience of the non-present, of the non-living present in the living present, of that which lives on.’ The dangling phrase, added as a supplement to the experience of the nonpresent in the living present, suggests that the nonpresent is the past: something that is over or past nonetheless lives on” (233). It is the temporality of spectrality that is troubled here: The conjuring of lost histories can point to possible alternate futures embedded within the present.

It is Gothic cultural scholar Roger Luckhurst (“The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the Spectral Turn” [2002]), though, who serves as a backstop for what otherwise might become an out-of-control spectral discourse. Along with Murray Leeder (Cinematic Ghosts: Haunting and Spectrality from Silent Cinema to the Digital Era [2015]), whose study of spectral media also cautions against an overuse of spectral metaphors as a game of scholarly punning gone wrong, Luckhurst aligns his own work with scholarship he views as “part of a counter-move to the spectralization of the Gothic that situates it rather more precisely as a grounded manifestation of communities in highly delimited locales subjected to cruel and unusual forms of political disempowerment” (100). It is this localized spectrality that resists colonization by any disciplinary field or hegemonic discourse and responds to the counterproductive tendency for the spectral, as an expression of the Gothic, to caricature itself.

Nevertheless moved to consider Gothic works through the lens of spectrality, Luckhurst is simultaneously motivated to make sure that discussions of spectrality are grounded in actual lived human experience. Sounding at times like Raymond Williams and at times like Avery Gordon as he explores his version of cultural studies, Luckhurst “aim[s] at breaking through this
meta-Gothic discourse” (100). Scholars of the spectral, then, must consider the necessity of a limited spectral discourse that recognizes the same dangers of terminological entropy that often plague an inclusive cultural studies as a whole.

1.6 The Structure of This Study

This introductory chapter has been an exploration of debates regarding the opening of Gothic studies and new modernist criticism to address relatively unconsidered authors like Richard A.W. Hughes. By identifying Hughes’s work with the Gothic-modern, a liminal zone, this chapter foregrounds a displacement of the Gothic onto modernist and contemporary literature and culture through discursive means. Specifically, it is the recognition and tracing of Richard Hughes’s use of Gothic discourse as a means for diagnosing and treating the traumas of modernity that is the scholarly pathway by which Hughes’s work can be extricated from counterproductive debates regarding his place within either a Gothic or a modernist canon. New modernist scholar Wai Chee Dimock, echoing and modifying the reparative reading of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (“Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You” [2003]) and the actor network theory of Bruno Latour, proposes a field that “[r]ather than giving the last word either to dominant institutions, or to individual texts as sovereign products of single authors . . . calls attention instead to a gathering penumbra, ancillary to but not without bearing on the existing corpus. This is a field elastic and amendable, a field of second look and second chance” (588). Hughes’s work is a part of this penumbra. As a node in a sprawling reparative network, Hughes interfaces with canonical and non-canonical texts and figures, drawing a second look not only toward his own contributions but also toward those of other forgotten voices.

It is critical to assert here that the reparative reading that is central to the present study is not limited to the critic. Authors, too, read reparatively—even if always inadequately. It is vitally important to the present study to see authors, characters, and readers all in network, all negotiating meanings through texts—and never really coming to consensus. While an author
might intend reparation for himself and others, as the present study asserts, it is always necessary, as Sedgwick and Dimock assert, for a cloud of readers to approach these texts. This cloud of witnesses bridges gaps, wrestles with critical aporia, and strives individually and communicatively toward what Dimock terms the “non-tragic sequel,” an alternate future determined by discerned alternate histories—ways that history might have turned out differently. Significantly, such reparative recentering lands on the Abject: the “cast-out” or “cast-down” elements of society, elements with which the Gothic is naturally and intimately concerned. While many scholars have focused on the Abject as a female figure,\(^{25}\) it is necessary to expand, analytically, this historical stigmatization to cast a spotlight on the shared abjection of all humanity: the real death and decay that haunts all human subjects.\(^{26}\)

While the present study is not intended to be strictly chronological, it is at least historically significant that Hughes’s work and the chapters of this study follow, almost precisely, the timelines of literary generic fashion roughly (and not prescriptively) fleshed out by Mary Ann Gillies and Aurelea Mahood in *Modernist Literature: An Introduction* (2007). Hughes’s development and literary networks during the decade of the 1910s pointed him toward Georgian poetry, particularly under the tutelage of Walter de la Mare (*Motley and Other Poems* [1918]) and Robert Graves (*Country Sentiment* [1920]), while during the same decade he was also experiencing the tail end of the “short story” decade of the 1900s as a friend and self-avowed disciple of A.E. Coppard (*Adam & Eve & Pinch Me* [1921]), an heir to his own mother’s publishing career, and at least an unintentional imitator of Thomas Burke (*Limehouse Nights* [1917]) and Walter de la Mare (*The Return* [1910]; *The Riddle and Other Stories* [1923]). From there he would enthusiastically embark on the decade of the novel, the 1920s. From the 1930s (as the advent of sound cinema and the golden age of film) onwards, Hughes is interacting over

\(^{25}\) Kristeva, Bronfen, Barbara Creed (*The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* [1993]), and Gilbert and Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic* [1984]) all place the female Abject at the center of their discussions.

\(^{26}\) The philosophical formulations of Deborah Caslav Covino in “Abject Criticism” (2000) will form the central tentpole for discussions of this new aesthetic of shared abjection.
multiple networks. While still publishing and re-publishing his earlier poems and prose (and meticulously and methodically writing his remaining novels), Hughes becomes entangled as a radio playwright and then a screenplay writer for a substantial portion of his mature adult life. While seeking to assert his voice as a novelist, he is also casting the “side-long glance at film” so disparaged by Horkheimer and Adorno (44), concurrently a part of multiple networks which together construct the culture industry of the late 20th century.

In line with these developments, chapter 2 of the present study explores Hughes’s early short fiction as expressions of the Gothic-modern: a “spooky vein” that infused his earliest works and that Hughes fashioned as a form of therapeutic engagement with his own demons and society’s. Through both interdisciplinary surface reading and symptomatic close reading, this chapter isolates the figure of “The Stranger,” guided by the early 20th-century work of social scientist Georg Simmel. While discerning what the present study terms the “Stranger paradigm” and its power across disciplines and throughout the Hughes archive, this chapter also highlights that archive as an emblem of the same conjuncture of disjunctures that informs the broader Anglo-American modernist discourse. The Hughes archive is a convocation of texts operating within a milieu that trumpets progress while nursing deep doubts, a discourse that celebrates wandering while simultaneously suspecting “The Stranger.” By negotiating with the possessions, power, difference, and familiarity of this figure, Hughes’s short stories as a body promote personal, societal, cultural, and historical reparation by a process of contestation, representation, and identification.

In further tracing this reparative trend across Hughes’s corpus, Chapter 3 conducts reparative close readings of Hughes’s early poems, along with surface readings that highlight Gothic features that have often been overlooked or dismissed. Hughes was, significantly, cautioned by his godfather to abandon his early Gothic tendencies, to “work the spooky vein” out of his writing (Graves 54). Despite this, Hughes never abandons those tendencies, instead exploring death and its consequences in his poetry, encouraged by an interpretive community
that amplified the therapeutic potential of Robert Graves’s “Ghost theory of poetry.” In particular, Hughes “re-members” death as he seeks to respond to the various forms of traumatic dismembering he experienced personally, dismemberments that he projects onto his imagined post-war, interbellum audience and seeks to remedy by forms analogous to medieval and Elizabethan *memento mori*: the *ars moriendi*, the Dance of Death, and meditations on death. It is primarily through a close exploration of the Hughes archive that Hughes’s emotional landscape can be seen to inform the Gothic-inflectedness of his works. Such study also demonstrates the ways Hughes’s early work, and particularly his verse, faces ongoing erasure from the archive.

Chapter 4, extending a study of Hughes’s reparative strategies, conducts both close readings and surface readings of Hughes’s two “sea” novels, guided by the theoretical concept of abjection first made accessible in Kristeva’s seminal *Powers of Horror* (1980). While Kristeva generally sees the debilitating effects of this trope, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic* [1979]) project the Abject’s potential power. 27 In pursuing a reparative vision, Hughes highlights first the female child, and later the adult woman, as subjects that are confined to what the present study terms a “Cave of Abjection.” By constructing these characters, along with their male counterparts, Hughes engages in what this study regards as the natural performativity of the Gothic. Always personally fascinated with personae that bestow power on the performer, Hughes is also aware that adopted identities, forms of cultural divination that will ultimately expose race-, class-, and gender-based frauds, are means for expressing and addressing humanity’s greatest traumas and crimes. This chapter holds each of Hughes’s novels under the blacklight of Gothic tropes and analysis while also emphasizing how the novels work to bring out modernism’s inherent Gothic tendencies. Hughes’s own inclinations toward Freudian interpretations of his own works inform the close readings of these novels, but

27 Gilbert and Gubar assert that “the womb-shaped cave is also the place of female power, the umbilicus mundi, one of the great antechambers of the mysteries of transformation. As herself a kind of cave, every woman might seem to have the cave’s metaphorical power of annihilation” (95).
it is feminist critiques of female abjection, such as Deborah Caslav Covino’s, that frame the
gender-inclusive “monsters” that Hughes seeks to construct.

Chapter 5, in treating the two “interbellum” Human Predicament volumes as further
iterations of Hughes’s Gothic tendencies, further demonstrates a tendency for males to seek to
overtake female agency, even in its abject forms. This chapter focuses specifically on six more
reparative personae—movie-monster “masks” that Hughes uses to identify and interpret
humanity and history. By seeking to “forget the future,” in writing about a history with which his
audience had at least some firsthand experience, Hughes self-consciously interacts with his
contemporary and historical source materials while also expanding on them to probe
psychological depths and historical resonances. All of Hughes’s novels, in some form or
another, are disaster stories. While his first two novels treated disasters at sea, his Human
Predicament novels trace the diachronically diabolical rise of Hitler—and the shared abjection of
the humanity that allowed this to happen through solipsistic or fatalistic failures.

The epilogue that concludes the present study explains that this shared abjection is
reflected in small and large ways across Hughes’s corpus as the Cave of Abjection. While
Hughes occasionally leverages literal caves as diegetic devices for stories, poems, novels, and
plays, his figurative use of the Cave encloses all human subjects in the human predicament,
encouraging the reparative embrace of the shared demise we cannot ignore. Yet it is Hughes’s
tools of reparative release (in his Gothic humor), reparative re-enactment (for ever-present and
forgotten traumas), and reparative rehearsal (for traumas to come) that provide a rationale for
the Gothic as a therapeutic tool. By learning the art of dying well, humanity accepts the
inevitable while striving for the potential good through truth, change, and forgiveness.

As Hughes asserts to his godfather near the outset of his literary career, he has no
intention of working the “spooky vein” out of his writing. In fact, it is that same spooky vein, so
unplaceable and implacable, which in changed times and in the face of sharpened cultural
critique proves to be the main justification for reconsidering the author’s work. There is no
question but that Hughes participated in the culture industry that Horkheimer and Adorno malign. In the end, Hughes sees the value of potboiler discourses—the idiom of the Gothic romance—not only as a means for “boiling the pot” and sustaining income, but also as a language in which he is able to communicate his artistic vision as a therapy, if not a remedy, for modern traumas.
CHAPTER 2

“DICE CAST BY GODS AND DEVILS”: HUGHES’S SHORT STORIES

The Gothically inflected short stories of Richard A.W. Hughes emerge within a modernist milieu that contradictorily celebrates unbridled progress while it also laments lingering or lost influences from the past. This chapter addresses the Gothic as a means that Hughes uses in his short works of fiction to come to terms with the myriad contradictions of modernity—contradictions that are both historical and ongoing and crises that are experienced as personal, societal, cultural, and historical traumas. Specifically, Hughes’s short stories address traumas that attach themselves to human alterities of race, class, gender, and bodily wholeness in the figure of the Gothic Stranger.

The Gothic discourse is the language of trauma, and authors over the centuries have found this discourse effective in communicating the historical outcomes and potential disasters of human conflict. Ultimately, the Gothic is a radical coming to terms with death and with the body deprived of some or all agency. In the introduction to her edited collection The Gothic and Death (2017), Carol Margaret Davison writes that corpses serve “as contested sites, figurative battlefields, for various ideas and debates, particularly those that involve religious ideologies and philosophies and their moral authority” (4). In particular, the Gothic activates tropes surrounding the Stranger that are alternately enervating and empowering. On one hand the Stranger is a figure of doom and a threatening presence that can disrupt cherished social norms. On the other hand, the Stranger’s ability to offer outsider information and reframe overly familiar conflicts can prove transformative. While the Stranger-figure has been well explored in Gothic studies,¹ a cross-disciplinary application of Georg Simmel’s “Stranger” paradigm to

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¹ Marquette University’s Glossary of the Gothic cites Regina Maria Roche’s Clermont (1798) and Ellen Price Wood’s “Mysterious Visitor” (1857) as early examples of the mysterious Gothic visitor. The Gothic Other: Racial and Social Constructions in the Literary Imagination, edited by Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Douglas L. Howard (2014), provides many examples of the Othered “Stranger figure” in Gothic literature.
Hughes’s literary works is novel to the present study and is critical for moving the scholarly conversation forward.

Richard Hughes’s short stories have rarely received critical attention. While Hughes only published one collection of short fiction, his stories appeared in the most influential magazines of the 1920s-1950s. Much can be learned from patterns that Hughes establishes across several stories through his depictions of Strangers. The paratextual contexts of his published stories provide additional insights into how editors saw Hughes’s work and how they anticipated readers might receive it. Even in his more naturalistic works, Hughes writes of a world displaced ("Lochinvárovič" [1926]), diseased ("The Diary of a Steerage Passenger" [1921]), and disabled ("Llwyd" [1920]). As his stories move toward the uncanny or Gothic, they are uniquely designed to engage with actual violence that has often been suppressed in the popular culture of the day.

The present study pushes a critical conversation about Hughes’s work past a discussion of one or two novels. By activating the Gothic Stranger as a reparative persona in his short stories, Hughes portrays a world of hauntings, bargains, and swindles, yet there is always a sense that the surprising turns of his stories have the potential to offer what Wai Chee Dimock terms a “non-tragic sequel” (594).\(^2\) While much has been achieved within Gothic studies—and cultural studies as a whole—through a hermeneutics of suspicion, Hughes models reparative readings of history in his fiction and prods critical readers to look beyond atrocity without overlooking any of its horrific, gory details. A reparative reading must never be naive.

Nevertheless, the present study asserts that, with time, distance, and perhaps a little luck, things can be different in the period vaguely situated after a horror withdraws. By examining Hughes’s uncanny tales as well as his supramundane ghost stories, it is possible to see the means Hughes subtly offers readers for reparation in the possessions, power, difference, and familiarity of the Stranger. By portraying the various potential interactions with the unknown or

\(^2\) Wai Chee Dimock’s championing of a weak theory of reparative reading in “Weak Network: Faulkner’s Transpacific Reparations” (2018) serves as a primary touchstone for the present study’s use of reparative—rather than only paranoid or suspicious—readings of Hughes’s Gothic texts.
the unfamiliar along a progressive continuum of contestation, representation, and identification, Hughes shows the need for all people to move forward in considering alterity of any kind as a means for enlightenment. In the discussions that follow, the present study intends to highlight the performative and reparative personae Hughes adopts, the “spooky vein” he explores, and the Stranger, a shadowy figure articulated by Georg Simmel (“The Stranger” [1908]), with whom Hughes negotiates in his uncanny tales and ghost stories as means toward narrative and performative therapy for himself, for his circle of relations, and for his globally situated readers.

2.1 Hughes’s Personae

An examination of Hughes’s biography reveals significant life events that shaped his formative years and led to his adoption of various Gothic personae, masks he attempts to wear as an author and as a practitioner of the Gothic. In one of the last autobiographical accounts Hughes published during his lifetime, he writes of the traumas that have lingered even after 75 years:

**Suffering,** There was a lot of death in my childhood. My only brother had died as a baby: my only sister had died before I was three, and by that time my father was already doomed. I cannot remember his voice, because by the time he came back from a “cure” in Germany his vocal chords [sic] had been cauterized and he could only whisper. When I was five, he died too. (“Eheu Fugaces”)

Nevertheless, apart from the traumas of Hughes’s early years, the author was generally insulated from much of the pain of his times. He shared a close relationship with his mother over the course of her long life. He had a broad network of friends who provided support even during his most difficult periods, such as when he served away from home during World War II. He always had a home to return to and always had friends waiting for his responses to their letters.

Through the help of private tutors arranged by Hughes’s godfather, Charles Johnson, Hughes attended the prestigious Charterhouse, moving on from there to Oxford. While numerous older friends enlisted or were commissioned during World War I (including his former tutor), Hughes remained in training and did not see deployment before the war ended. While the flu swept through military ranks and took the lives of soldiers all around him (threatening even
his close friend Charles Graves [R.P. Graves, Richard 30]), Hughes was spared. His education at Oxford provided him with tools and connections by which to establish a literary career as a poet, playwright, and critic: first with the Saturday Westminster Gazette, then with The Spectator, and finally with the little magazines of the modernist movement. His Easter and summer holidays (as well as the years immediately following his graduation from Oxford) provided him with opportunities to paddle down the Danube into the Balkans, travel steerage to America, embed himself in Muslim Morocco, and spend months writing in cafes on the Dalmatian island of Capodistria (Koper, Slovenia). Once his career was fully established, he married aristocratic artist Frances Bazley, raised five healthy children, served as a government clerk in the Admiralty during World War II where he earned an O.B.E. title, and took up the professorship of rhetoric at Grisham College, London. In his later life, he enjoyed sailing competitively, reading the lessons in his local parish church, and watching his grandchildren grow. One might even say he lived a charmed life.

Despite the bounty of these relatively untroubled years, there is ample evidence that a form of survivor's guilt shadowed him and informed his writing. The precariousness of the human predicament would be a lifelong theme for Hughes. Across several texts from this earliest period of Hughes’s writing career (“Storm” [1922], “Llwyd” [1920], The Demi-God’Nesta [c. 1920], and “Craig Ddrwg” [1921]), the author makes it clear that the spiritual and supernatural forces depicted within his version of the Gothic represent a cosmic dice game: a contestation of supernatural religious traditions by the natural, scientifically informed violence that frames the physical world and human behavior. The first text, an early poem that is included in his volume Gipsy-Night (1922), is called “Storm: to the Theme of Polyphemos” and may represent Hughes’s experiences at the mercy of the elements during long odysseys into the Welsh countryside or during his itinerant wanderings from London to Wales in the summer of 1920. It begins,

Mortal I stand upon the lifeless hills
That jut their cragged bones against the sky:
I crawl upon their naked ebony,
And toil across the scars of Titan ills
Dealt by the weaponry of gods and devils. (20)

While mostly a conventional poem, the imagery of “dealings” between gods and devils and the human place amid the contest is typical for Hughes. As is elsewhere the case, his protagonist tries to take the dice for himself. He is a masked actor in an “Aeschylean tragedy,” and with the closing of the storm, so “[w]ith final mutterings each actor goes” (22). Thus, in the middle of the poem’s Olympian impossibility is the protagonist’s desperate quest for human agency through performativity.

This same attempt at human agency amid cosmic capriciousness is central to a short story called “Craig Ddrwg,” published in The Apple of Beauty and Discord magazine in the first quarter of 1921. The entire narrative revolves around boulders on a Welsh hillside that are “dice cast by gods and devils contending for the young world” (34), dice over which the protagonist ultimately seizes control. Owen Lucky, obsessed with finding Welsh gold after discovering two small nuggets on Craig Ddrwg (the “evil hill”), sacrifices his budding relationship with a woman named Blowden to make his fortune.3 While he never finds any more wealth, he lives his life exerting what agency he has to displace the hill’s numerous boulders, no longer rolling them to find gold but for their own sake. Based on this textual evidence, for Hughes as a poet and storyteller at this stage, life is merely a capricious dice game between gods and devils. He has seen the dice cast as close friends have been killed in a foreign war, and cast again in the premature Armistice that has kept him from memorializing those friends or acquitting himself through the combat his entire generation has fetishized. He also recognizes that, for an artist, marriage is a maze of conflicted loyalties. In both “Storm” and “Craig Ddrwg” Hughes’s protagonists participate in this dice game: The speaker of “Storm”—climbing and venturing on

3 It is likely that the name “Blowden” was mis-transcribed by the editors of The Apple (as the name “Jasan” is mis-transcribed in Hughes’s “Jungle,” a story published in Colour). The name should probably be “Blodwen,” a common mythical name in Welsh that means “white flowers.” Such mis-transcriptions affirm the Strangeness of Welsh for the broader English-speaking public.
despite the violent tempest—survives, while Owen Lucky lives a long, isolated life in his hovel on the evil hill.

Identifying with the narrative protagonist of “Storm,” Hughes was apparently inclined to live his life as an Aeschylean actor with a set of masks to choose from for a variety of sociocultural roles. Hughes’s performative guises include—more or less chronologically—those of poet, critic, soldier, sailor, actor, playwright, Arab caliph, captain, government clerk, island writer, father, husband, lay reader, Professor, modernist, and Gothic storyteller. In none of these roles is he ever completely at home. While accomplished in so many contexts, he experiments with and exchanges personae throughout his career. Several drawings, done by his own hand or created specifically by others to capture one of these personae, help scholars understand how others see him and how he sees himself (See Figures 1-3). These attempts at performatively adopting personae reveal Hughes’s effort to engage with the Strange, to represent the Stranger, and to become the Stranger himself. Most importantly for the present study, his engagement with the Stranger is a form of reparative therapy instantiated in the Gothic and necessitated by modernity.

2.2 “The Spooky Vein”: Hughes’s Uncanny Tales

Hughes’s adoption of the Gothic as a primary mode, inflected to varying degrees across his corpus, is therapeutic and reparative in nature. In addition, readers of his work are prompted by Hughes to perform reparative readings of his texts that allow for the potential non-tragic sequel, an uncertain yet possible outcome of human engagement that allows the writer and reader to approach one another and the subject matter of the story without predetermined outcomes. The present study refers to Hughes’s work in this Gothic mode as the “spooky vein,” a phrase that emerges from his early correspondence and reveals that the author, while functioning within a modernist milieu, was actively articulating the Gothic.
Fig. 1. Richard A.W. Hughes, *Hadj Thami el Glaoui, Pasha of Marrakech, Lord of the Atlas, etc. etc.*, 1930, pen on paper, Lilly Library.
Fig. 2. Monja “Danny” Danischewsky, *Eminent Author Impersonating Captain Hornblower R.N.*, n.d., pen on paper, Lilly Library.
Fig. 3. Clough Williams-Ellis, R.H., 1932, pencil on paper, Lilly Library.
Hughes’s Gothic Stranger is therapeutic. To understand the author’s reparative intentions for this figure, the present study seeks to establish a loose rubric that is foregrounded against contemporary work in Gothic studies. Thus far the present study has relied mainly on 20th-century trajectories to frame Hughes’s Gothic tendencies, but Xavier Aldana Reyes, in “Gothic Affect” (2015), lays out three distinct 21st-century pathways that research in the Gothic has most recently followed. These pathways provide a means for scholarly recognition of the Gothic, a determination of its desired results, and an analysis of the concomitant reflexes it induces (or intends to induce).

First, many of the studies already cited would fall into what Reyes terms “aesthetic-thematic approaches,” studies that seek to recognize the Gothic and its cultural-critical implications. Proceeding along what Reyes calls “a materialist historicist vein,” this approach seeks to identify Gothic tropes and simultaneously explore Gothic texts for “their potential for social commentary.” The interrogation of texts with regard to race, class, gender, and sexuality thus reveals the causes and effects of power structures as Gothic texts instantiate them.

Second, a branch in which the present study intentionally enmeshes itself involves studies “on the cathartic purpose of the gothic” that run “[p]arallel to this aesthetic-thematic approach . . . These focus on the cultural need for the gothic and understand specific texts as negotiations or projections of social and political anxieties often repressed by subjects or by the nation in which they live. Unsurprisingly, these have often drawn on Trauma Studies or psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freud’s notion of the return of the repressed” (Reyes).

While the first branch of Gothic inquiry seeks to tell what the Gothic is (what it looks like in an already Gothically inflected world), the second branch seeks to explore what it does (how the Gothic is used to restore agency). In particular, this second branch, which Reyes terms the “cathartic-traumatic approach,” informs Hughes’s attempts to respond to trauma. In the Gothic,

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4 Reyes’s assessment of Gothic Affect is the leading contribution to *New Directions in 21st Century Gothic: The Gothic Compass* (2017) edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, and serves as a brief meta-analysis of the field’s work since 2000.
writes Stephen Bruhm, “we feel the ‘wound’ in our limbs or organs through a kind of sympathetic identification, one produced by the imagination” (*Gothic Bodies* 33). It is this sympathetic identification that leads a spectator of pain to also seek remedy—for themselves and others. Alexandra Warwick calls this the “*unheimlich* manoeuver . . . in which the position of the subject collapses from the illusion of coherent dominance into fragmentary dissolution” (“Lost” 82), and Avril Horner reminds readers that, despite a longing for closure and healing, “[g]aps and aporias characterize Gothic texts and trauma narratives, which are both also marked by repetition and return, fragmentation and split subjectivities” (36).

Finally, to complement these two pathways, Reyes proposes a third: a study of Gothic affect. Whereas the first methodology explores what the Gothic is and the second explores what it does, the third strand examines how the Gothic works. Reyes demonstrates that the Gothic, most commonly seen as “a ‘trans-medial, genre-defying, migrating and polluting phenomenon’” (Myrone, qtd. in Reyes), a discourse whose commonly assumed intention is to repel us, simultaneously acts to engage us. The Gothic’s intrusive activity in human lives replicates the intrusive content it is representing. While this intrusion takes place at the cognitive level as audience-participants access physical, emotional, and spiritual horrors in a text, on a stage, or within media environments, it is also achieved through affect: The Gothic induces emotions and precipitates physiological or somatic responses that connect audience-participants intimately with creator-participants (including authors, actors, and even fictional characters themselves), even though remote in space and time. The present study refers to this as Gothic performativity.

Gothic performativity inevitably takes different forms depending on the genre within which Hughes operates. Within his short stories, Hughes must rely on the potential effects his stories might have on a non-present audience. While demand for novels or collections of poetry can be generally measured and analyzed, the reception of short stories can only be glimpsed as

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5 Horner’s “Apocalypses Now” in *Trauma in Contemporary Literature* (2014) serves to wed trauma scholarship and Gothic studies in ways that are significant for Hughes’s work as both Gothic and modern.
an embedded component of larger publications. To some extent it is possible to see the mechanisms of Gothic affect in the materiality and paratextual counterparts editors have arranged within the context of that specific publication. Furthermore, according to Reyes’s model, it is important to seek beyond audience reactions and to try to understand the intended effects of an author as a means for understanding the mechanisms of Gothic affect. Even if a story written a century ago no longer produces certain effects, the intentions of an author can inform a study of Gothic affect.6

The short stories of Richard Hughes represent a proliferation of the Gothic that invokes violence and prods a reader to address it. In particular, Hughes treats the incompatible quest for progress in science and social control in the face of human fragility. Within the context of the after-effects of the Great War, this representation includes physical dismemberment. Specifically, Hughes’s early fiction highlights concerns about scientific and political overreach. In the September 29, 1921, issue of the American humor magazine Life (then merely a precursor for the more famous pictorial magazine which spanned the 20th century), Hughes published a short story entitled “The Vanishing Man.” One of his earliest (and perhaps rawest) efforts, it represents an emerging breakthrough for the author as only the second story he has published outside of the UK.7 Professionally, if not academically, he was experiencing great success and had already carved out a professional literary career for himself while at Oxford. This story, published in Life, aesthetically summons the spirit of H.G. Wells and highlights Hughes’s intense

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6 To this point, Hughes’s stories frequently invoke Gothic affect by explaining that a tale makes hair “prick[e] on to its ends with horror” (“Poor Man’s Inn” 99), makes “little hairs . . . prick with fright” (“Leaves” 163), or gives the audience “the jim-jams” (The Sitter-In 8). This authorial intention, while never equated with actual results, is necessary for consideration.

7 This burst of American publication is most likely the result of a very fruitful meeting with American editor and anthologist Edward J. O’Brien. It appears that O’Brien was prolific at launching the careers of short story writers, including Thomas Murtha. Like Hughes, Murtha’s career was launched by O’Brien: “A significant point in Murtha’s career came in 1929 when Edward J. O’Brien selected two of his stories . . . for inclusion on his ‘Roll of Honor’ in his book The Best Short Stories of 1929 and the Yearbook of the American Short Story” (Murtha 22).
personal interest in the scientific concept of the Fourth Dimension. It begins with a mad scientist discovering a new means for movement: He shouts “Eureka!” and disappears in the opening sentence (6). The narrator, his protégé-student, responds, “I was hardly prepared for this” (6). The Professor has sought after some shadowy Truth, and its discovery is disruptive.

It is not the well-worked trope of the mad scientist as Faustian Stranger that captures the imagination here. Instead, it is the weird, Gothically inflected carnage of the scientist’s experience, juxtaposed in this leisure-industry magazine below a line illustration of a socially elevated pair of lovers and their innocuously captioned banter, which gives a reader pause. The black-and-white lines of tuxedo and evening gown are surrounded by a crowd of plump, cupid-like cherubs perched within the image’s cascading border ribbon in imitation of the parallel train of the female figure’s gown. The effect is modern and carefree, somewhere between art nouveau and art deco, an aesthetic that seems to have run its course.

In short, the image seems an odd placeholder and is jarringly disturbed by the graphic language of Hughes’s story: “Now it is one thing for an agitated man to see a pair of boots on the hearth-rug, and to go to put them in a corner without really giving them a thought: but it is a very different matter to find a pair of feet in those boots, sharply severed at the ankle; with bone, flesh, veins, skin, and sock cut as clean and clear as in a sectional diagram” (6). The Professor (whose generic, Wellsian name indicates that he has something to teach, at least by example) has been disembodied, leaving only his feet. Nevertheless, as the narrator-student inspects the crime scene, the body begins to reconstitute itself:

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8 R.P. Graves writes of two instances when talk of the Fourth Dimension absorbs Hughes: “[I] conceived the rather eccentric idea of working out laws of perspective for the Fourth Dimension—how four-dimensional objects would look, that is to say, if represented by three-dimensional ‘drawings’; and I remember lying awake nearly the whole of one night in a state of ecstasy, while I tried to envisage the proper three-dimensional distortion for a four-dimensional object bounded by eight cubes, sixteen points, and thirty-two lines. Only the writing of poetry has ever given me the same sort of exhilaration” (Richard 19). Later, during his training for deployment (which never came), he writes of meeting another cadet trainee with whom he has “just been discussing the 4th Dimension” (Richard 30).

9 The trope had, by this time, moved far beyond Frankenstein (1818) and had already become a plaything of the film industry, first in The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) and later in Hughes friend James Whale’s films Frankenstein (1931) and The Invisible Man (1933).
They [the boots] were [now] complete to the knee: the veins were welling with blood, but none spurted out: and as I watched with fascinated eyes I saw the cut surface gradually rise like water in a lock. It was the most uncanny thing. I pressed my hand upon it, only to feel it lifted by a gentle, even pressure as the Professor’s femur extended itself: and I remember noticing that though my thumb had stoppered a brimming artery, not a drop of blood stained it. (6)

All this gruesome theater plays out asymmetrically and incongruously beneath the sleek angles of the couple dancing among angels or Cupid-spectators.10

There is a shocking emphasis here on the body as a site of conflict, both as the result of the juxtaposition of image and text and because of Hughes’s story itself. The legs perched above the text—those of the elegant couple and the naked, winged children—are visually severed by Hughes’s story halfway down the page. While Hughes clearly would have had no input regarding the layout of these pages, the visual tension is undeniable and, because of the prominent position of the story within this number (on pages 6 and 7), it would have been one of the first impressions conveyed to a reader of Life that week. Even for readers seeking a thrill, the image inevitably links those readers’ own spaces and times to the broken, dismembered, and displaced rhetorical situation which the page creates.

It is the incongruence of the story and its accompanying images that highlights Gothic affect in action. The Professor’s discovery, the undisclosed means to travel through the Fourth Dimension, leads the narrator-student to exclaim in libertine ecstasy, “This is power! Think of it! A step and you are invisible! No prison cells can hold you, for there is a side to you on which they are as open as a wedding-ring” (7).11 The bands of power, including the wedding-band that Hughes cites in his strange example, are thus rhetorically broken, an effect compounded by the oblivious couple pictured on the previous page. For the Professor and his student, these bands

10 The illustration is a far cry from the cover-work of John Held, Jr., with its “thin, angular girls with long legs, short skirts, and pouty lips” and closer to the work of Russell Paterson and Henry Raleigh, whose “narrative scenes of drama and romance were populated by tall, elegant figures that were the precursors of modern fashion illustration.” The signature of the illustration could not be determined, but it appears to be “Birch.” For more, see www.illustrationhistory.org/history/time-periods/the-decade-1920-1930.
11 This seems precisely an echo of Wells’s The Invisible Man (1897) and his infamous maniacal laughter, brought to the screen in 1933 by Hughes’s Universal Studios friend, James Whale.
are broken by the awful progress of reason and science. Then, just when readers believe all is well—progressing as science and civilization should—“Catastrophe” falls on them (7). The Professor explodes. His textual death emerges on this second page as a flesh-explosion of “splinters and dust” (7). A key phrase describing the scene, edited out of Hughes’s original but published in his collection *A Moment of Time* (1926), hits a reader like a slap: The Professor’s mortal dust has been “mixed almost to a mash with blood and brains” (118). Such a graphic, bodily catastrophe jolts readers back toward the Great War they had hoped to leave behind with the beginning of a new decade.¹²

This story represents a seminal moment when science, modernity, and the Gothic merge in a “Eureka!” instant by which Hughes does not allow his audience to forget the horrors of war.¹³ For many of his readers, well acquainted with the perceived Strangeness of dismemberment, this means for broaching the topic and presenting scientific forces by which severed members can re-appear, might be termed escapist fantasy. Yet the explosion at the story’s conclusion attaches itself to the “armchair where [the Professor’s body] was used to smoke and read and theorize” (7). Despite the Professor’s attempts at moving through another dimension, his body is now fixed in perpetual limbo, like the initial living boots that cannot move from their place on the Professor’s rug. The final objectification of the Professor’s literally smoking body, as lifeless in obscure memory as the armchair itself, is a reminder of how governments and military commands had forsaken the flesh and blood which had so recently fought on their behalf, theorizing in armchairs and sacrificing the lives of others. Hughes refrains from moralizing, but he refuses to let his readers lapse into complacency toward real violence.

¹² This is one of the very few stories Hughes left out of his *Richard Hughes: An Omnibus* (1931), a collection intended to capitalize on Hughes’s meteoric rise to transatlantic fame while also reacquainting readers with—and building a market for—the author’s previous work. Nevertheless, it represents the author’s fixation on the Fourth Dimension.

¹³ Hughes uses Archimedes as a symbol of trauma elsewhere, as the name for his fated ship in Hughes’s novel *In Hazard* (1938).
During the period that produced “The Vanishing Man,” Hughes was entering a phase of creative expression described by Leonard Woof as “a stage of rapid development” (Letter to Richard Hughes [4 Feb. 1921]). Hughes’s prodigious creative fermentation at this time was a direct product of his literary inheritance, his interaction with others traumatized by war and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, and the folklore and natural splendor of the Welsh landscape adopted by Hughes as a belated literary birthright.

Significantly, R.P. Graves, in his authorized biography Richard Hughes frames the period from the summer of 1919 to the summer of 1922 as a clear Gothic inflection point, a creative crossroads at which Hughes’s work begins to orient increasingly toward the macabre. This “Moment of Time” (the title of Hughes’s collected short stories) is significant for understanding Hughes’s lifelong progression as a writer of fantastic or Gothically inflected poetry, fiction, and dramas. This critical juncture is specifically emphasized within Hughes’s correspondence with Charles Johnson, Hughes’s godfather, as a point of personal and professional concern. While “breakfasting with the famous author” T.E. Lawrence (Letter to Charles Johnson [23 Nov. 1920]), as well as J.C. Squire, “‘[t]he distinguished author and literary editor’ of the New Statesman” during the war years and, since November 1919, the London Mercury (Graves 54, 59), Hughes received a letter from his godfather, Charles Johnson, who had long been his most consistent literary critic. The letter was stark, warning Hughes not only about the quality of his writing, but also about the toll that writing would take on his life and livelihood if he let it possess him completely. In particular, Johnson, “alarmed by the tenor of [Hughes’s Gothically inflected] work . . . felt that [Hughes] was showing some symptoms of a dangerously overheated imagination” (Graves 53). Johnson intimated that, much more than a

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14 See Elizabeth Outka’s Viral Modernism: The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature (2020) for a thorough explanation of the subtle, spectral after-effects of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic within modernist expressions of modernity.

15 In “Numen Inest,” Hughes’s review of Lawrence’s Seven Pillars of Wisdom (1935), Hughes—while realistically appraising Lawrence as a flawed but great individual—remembers that “as a boy, I found in contact with Lawrence the highest kind of numinous excitement that I am capable of feeling” (21).
professional crisis, Hughes’s persistent use of a “spooky vein” was a spiritual choice, and one that might lead him astray. Hughes responds offhandedly—yet also deferentially—to the man who has essentially raised him, explaining that he appreciates his Godfather’s criticism, but that there is nothing to worry about.

It is clear from this important exchange that Hughes’s writing and the spooky vein have become intertwined. In addressing his godfather’s concerns, Hughes feels the need to separately address the conflated form and substance to which Johnson objects, abandoning the former yet embracing the latter. “I quite agree that [the Gothic mode] is an inferior branch of art” (Letter to Charles Johnson [23 Nov. 1920]), writes Hughes in response, as if his first aim is to allay Johnson’s worry that he is drifting into dark, Gothically inflected materials. Nevertheless, Hughes lightheartedly dismisses Johnson’s plea for Hughes to stop writing in the “‘spooky’ vein” that has unsettled the older man: “I have no earthly intention of working the ‘spooky’ vein out: I very seldom write two things alike running.” While the second portion of Hughes’s statement implies that Johnson should rest easy since Hughes’s use of the Gothic mode is a “temporary mood,” it also makes clear that Hughes will continue the all-consuming writing career that has now overshadowed his academic promise, and there is also no firm indication that Hughes will swear off the mode in which he has been writing, a mode which is a part of his “head’s . . . ferment” and which has alarmed his godfather’s religious sensibilities (Letter to Charles Johnson [23 Nov. 1920]).

Within this same letter, Hughes demonstrates a sense of his emerging identity as a writer who must embrace this critical moment—yet who is also already fixated on his production as a time-sensitive crisis. Hughes abruptly seeks to change the subject, and his emphasis demonstrates how he sees himself: “I’m younger than most people at the same stage of development. That’s what I bank on, chiefly—the next two years.” In other words, Hughes has come to see himself as a kind of prodigy, one who is racing beyond his peers and can’t afford to
quit. He is also an artist racing to beat the clock. This self-identification as an artist whose output is outpacing his years may partly explain his fixation with other prodigies in his early fiction.\footnote{Hughes writes three early stories, “The Naked Head” (1918), “Martha” (c. 1920), and “Cornelius Katie” (1921), that involve an artistic crisis involving conflict with a prodigy. These texts all communicate the angst of a developing artist in competition with others, especially those who are younger or who have progressed further.}

Hughes, at Oxford, has moved beyond the literary advice of his family circle. Up to this point, it has been his mother and godfather who have guided him. Now, under the influence of Robert Graves, T.E. Lawrence, W.B Yeats, John Masefield, A.E. Coppard, and Walter de la Mare, Hughes is encouraged to continue mining the dark vein that has excited his imagination. Masefield, in particular, has much to say regarding the potential success of Hughes’s Gothic works. In a letter to his mother on November 7, 1921, Hughes copies Masefield’s letter into his own text so his mother can read for herself the praise from Britain’s future poet laureate. Masefield has read through several of Hughes’s early unpublished short stories and has approved. Hughes, while pleased with Masefield’s praise, is quick to qualify Masefield as “far too easily given up to enthusiasm” (Letter to Louisa Hughes [7 Nov. 1921]). Still, besides the author’s overall confidence in Hughes, Masefield as mentor indicates clearly that it is Hughes’s operationalizing of the Uncanny, his use of the Gothic, that sets him apart.

Thus, Hughes’s backhanded attempts at placating his godfather notwithstanding, he continues to work this same spooky vein throughout his career. His later novels reflect the displaced Gothic, removed from the traditional centers of folktales and campfire yarns outward into broader human interactions with varying experiences of peripheral modernity. This uncanny mode—the spooky vein—is a tool Hughes uses across his body of literary and cultural production as a means for therapeutic reparation in himself and in his audiences. Specifically, this chapter treats a collection of uncanny tales and ghost stories that mark the modernist Hughes’s work as Gothically inflected.
Within Hughes’s many Gothically inflected interactions among characters, at least one of the parties involved is invariably “the Stranger,” an Othered or Othering figure who emerges as an embodiment of moral turpitude, instability, or inscrutability. Particularly within the Gothic tradition, but also within broader literary history—from Enkidu and Tiresias to Mephistopheles and the Weird Sisters forward—the Stranger (or Strangers) functions in predictable ways. Within tales involving a visitor or a visited Other, the Stranger is typically allowed only a range of valid yet powerful agencies: 1) to offer forbidden or critical knowledge, 2) to make confession or provide absolution, 3) to pronounce judgment, or 4) to conduct a fateful bargain. Of course, the Stranger of numerous Gothic narratives is often also cast as an irredeemable villain. The manifold functions of the Gothic Stranger are complicated by intimations within many texts that “Stranger status” is actually the intended goal. For example, in Rider Haggard’s *She* (1886), the text implies that, once the threshold is crossed and a knowledge of the Stranger is possessed (in Haggard’s novel passing from the hermit, to Ayesha, and intended for Leo), the roles naturally reverse, with each initiate destined to become an empowered Stranger among Strangers.

The present chapter explores the various functions of the Stranger within Hughes’s works of short fiction: his conflicted engagement with the Stranger, his attempts to speak for the Stranger and, finally, his identification as the Stranger. This range of estranged expression plays out over the course of Hughes’s career. As a trope, a thematic element, and a shadowy diegetic structure behind numerous Gothic and Gothic-modern tales, the transaction with a dark and

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17 This moniker, while generally used by philosophers and sociologists, is specifically chosen here for its co-opting by Hughes as the title of one of his most significant and enduring stories (“The Stranger” [1926]), which was included in E.J. O’Brien’s *The Best British Short Stories of 1923* (1923), alongside Burke’s “Black Country,” Coppard’s “Alas, Poor Bollington!,” Lawrence’s “The Horse Dealer’s Daughter,” O’Flaherty’s “The Sniper,” Maugham’s “The Taipan,” and Mansfield’s “The Fly.” The volume is dedicated to Mansfield, who had died of tuberculosis that year.

18 Louisa Warren Hughes, writing as Warren Hughes in 1908, published a story called “The Stormy Petrel” alongside Haggard (“The Real King Solomon’s Mines”) and Jack London (“Trust”) in *Cassell’s Magazine*. It is clear that the potboiler style Louisa Hughes adopted to make an income as a single parent was a part of the literary cauldron Richard Hughes drank from at an early age. Horace A. Vachell, with whom Richard Hughes lived during his wartime service in Bath, also published in *Cassell’s* at that time.
efficacious Other—the forbidden, the unknown, and the powerfully different—figures prominently within most Gothically coded texts. Two of the inaugural Gothic texts use “stranger” as an officially sanctioned term: while Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) invokes “stranger” 38 times, Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) conjures the “stranger” a prolific 123 times. It can be said that the Gothic has effectively re-cast “the Stranger,” painting the word with sinister significance yet also—often unintentionally and ironically—holding open the opportunity for the Stranger to re-cast the entire story in her/his own image. This inversion re-defines estrangement to provide an opportunity for reflection, insight, and empowerment.19

It is almost a *sine qua non* for the Gothic that a bargain is struck and that terms are accepted.20 Within modern poetry and fiction, the Faustian bargain lingers without resolution or foreclosure. The archetypal “deal with the devil” begins under the guise of an assertion of agency and leads directly to the natural—or unnatural—consequences of unwarranted or unwise agency and that agency’s subsequent dissolution. There is often a domino effect, precipitated by the Gothic bargain, that results in prostrate submission to uncontrollable forces.

### 2.3 Simmel’s Stranger Paradigm

A study of Hughes’s Gothic-modern texts benefits from an interdisciplinary application of the “Stranger paradigm,” first proposed by philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel. With the rise of anti-Semitism across Europe, sociological theories of difference, contrasting with the

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19 Editions of the uncanny Stranger can be effortlessly identified in a greatest hits of Gothic romance: Giacomo in *Vathek* (1786); Matilda in *The Monk* (1796); Victor (to Walton) in *Frankenstein* (1818); Gil-Martin in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824); Faust in *Wagner the Wehr-wolf* (1857); Madame de la Rougierre in *Uncle Silas* (1864); Svengali in *Trilby* (1895); Renfield in *Dracula* (1895); Moreau, Montgomery, or Prendick himself in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896); and the Arab in *The Beetle* (1897). The lesser known *A Deal with the Devil* (1895) by Eden Phillpotts also uses the diabolical trope of “Old Nick” in dream-like form, the arrival of a man of manners named Nicholas who appears to a degenerate old man at his hundredth birthday to give him ten more years of young life in exchange for his soul.

20 As far as this trope goes, two instances merit mention. First, G.W.M. Reynolds’s *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf* picks up where his *Faust: A Romance of the Secret Tribunals* (1847) has left off, with John Faust returning to tempt Wagner to embrace a similar diabolical deal: he can rise from his deathbed if he agrees to be a werewolf. Second, Phillipotts’s *A Deal with the Devil* demonstrates the widespread use of the trope during Hughes’s formative years and within the Georgian poet community that influenced his early trajectory. Phillipotts twists the trope for humorous purposes, ignoring the moral import of its predecessors.
racially determinative degeneration theories of Nordau and Lombroso, began to form. Georg Simmel, an assimilated yet professionally marginalized Jewish scholar, introduces his version of “the Stranger” in his collection of essays called *Soziologie* (Sociology) (1908) and provides a new framework by which to consider and address the Stranger’s unique societal space. According to Simmel, the Stranger is “the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going” (402). This bestows on the Stranger a unique freedom that has not been widely explored at the time Simmel writes. Simmel’s paradigm provides a specific tool for understanding Hughes’s short stories as reparative readings of history, social conflict, and personal discovery. As a storyteller, Hughes cognitively, emotionally, and creatively navigates traumas that he has experienced—and that he has seen others experience—as he creates Gothic fiction that highlights what Simmel traces as the Stranger’s possessions, power, difference, and familiarity.

Simmel’s Stranger paradigm situates the Stranger as uniquely oriented toward the Familiar and possessing power and potential, just as two lovers in tandem are Strange to and yet possess power over one another. Simmel’s short essay breaks new ground and establishes certain tenets by which the Gothic Stranger can be reframed, approached, and engaged for rapprochement. Simmel uses economics (as he has in *The Power of Money* [Philosophie des Geldes (1900)]) to orient the Stranger with respect to the Familiar. While well positioned Strangeness can enhance the value of both a commodity and its agent, a person or thing that is too close to us (or too far) paradoxically lacks value.

First, the Stranger is a present possessor and purveyor of the Strange. While this may tread too closely to stereotype, typecasting the Stranger as peddler or trader, the essence of trade is the possession of something that the Familiar does not have. This is not, Simmel explains, the wanderer who comes and goes, but rather one who has already come to stay. Second, by function of this possessing, the Stranger has power: He brings in value from the outside that cannot be replicated domestically. In addition, this lack of binding association with
the group gives the Stranger a powerful objectivity as the group’s arbiter. Third, and perhaps most counterintuitively, the Stranger’s Strangeness increases as generalization takes place. In other words, once the Familiar circle comes to see inevitability in the common ground between itself and the Stranger, new Strangeness emerges as every deviation from local Familiarity is emphasized. Thus, despite possessing so much common ground, it is the differences (accents, foods, mannerisms, religions) that grow more prominent as the common ground is folded under assumption. Fourth, it is critical to see that the estrangements between and among people groups also happen in the microcosm, within the family and community, estranging even the neighbor, the colleague, and the lover. Such estrangement begins with similarity and is gradually transformed into Otherness. Simmel’s Stranger paradigm of possessions, power, difference, and familiarity is based on the philosopher’s own experience as a member of the Jewish diaspora who is assimilated into German culture and religion—yet is always seen as a Stranger. Of course, the story of insidious “Congenial Evil” (as in Washington Irving’s “The Devil and Tom Walker” [1824]), whereby the truly evil insinuates itself into a community under false or simply seductive auspices, is a persistent counter-narrative that ominously inflects the discourse of Strangeness.

This chapter asserts that the depictions and implications of the Gothic Stranger within Hughes’s short stories evolve over the course of his writing career, moving by negotiation from contestation, to representation, to identification. Furthermore, these depictions can be analyzed using Reyes’s methodological rubric for Gothic scholarship in terms of recognition, results, and reflexes. This rubric can move a discussion of the Stranger through the aesthetic domain toward discussions of affect and reparation. While Hughes’s depictions of the Stranger lead to a recognition of his stories as Gothic, the therapeutic results he intends are central to the present study. By re-telling the story of the Stranger through Gothically inflected cultural forms, human

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21 Simmel explains: “in the relationship to [the Stranger], distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near. For, to be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction” (402).
subjects are capable of addressing the traumatic exigencies of their own estrangements while also—consciously or not—highlighting the estrangements of all Others. Finally, it is the reflexes (emotional and physiological) triggered by estrangement—from nature, from Others, from traditional supramundane forces, and from the Self—that constitute the affective mechanics that reproduce estrangement performatively in the minds and bodies of audience-participants. For Hughes’s short stories (the subject of the present chapter), the audience-participants are his readers. Within this medium, Gothic performativity can only be addressed as authorial intention, story mechanics, and isolated documentation (critical reviews or interviews) of reader reception—as is also the case for Hughes’s poems (Chapter 3) and novels (Chapters 4 and 5). Ultimately, in Hughes’s plays, radio dramas, and screenplays, this Gothic performativity emerges as readily perceptible and reproducible through the more interactive on-stage, on-air, or on-screen performances of his dramas.

2.3.1 The Stranger’s Possessions

To begin with, Simmel indicates that the Stranger possesses—or mediates in the acquisition of—assets that cannot be accessed except through the Stranger’s agency. By highlighting this Strange agency, Hughes is working through traumas he has witnessed firsthand. Across several tales inspired by Welsh life and culture, Hughes makes it clear that the Welsh subject is perceived as a Celtic Stranger amid an Anglo-dominated society. Hughes’s own Strange Welsh status is instantiated even in warm correspondence from his contemporaries. Ford Madox Ford twice references a stereotypical view of the Welsh as the “small, dark, persistent race.” In reviewing Hughes’s first novel, Ford says that “[i]f you took Henry James’ What Maisie Knew and his Turn of the Screw, distilled them and added to this

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22 Volume 5 of Y Cymmrodor, the journal of the Society of Cymmrodorion, reprints an address by W. Boyd Dawkins (7 Jun. 1882) on “The Ancient Ethnology of Wales,” and emphasizes a trope that must have inspired Ford in his repeated racialized characterization: “One section of them, the small dark people, are still to be found living among us; but in these days of railroads, when the Welsh people have such a habit of going to America and coming to the great cities in this country, accumulating fame and reputation, and proving themselves to be cosmopolitan, the genuine stay-at-home Welshman is a very rare animal. Consequently, the small dark race in Wales is rapidly being ‘crossed out’” (221).
mixture that touch of elfin cruelty, the gift of the little, dark, persistent race that is the Welsh—you would have in your crucible some of the horror that there is in this story” (“Skull and Bones” 12). Later, in a letter to Hughes about his second novel, Ford writes, “The little dark persistent race might see better where you get it from but they couldn't admire more” (Letter to Richard Hughes [26 Nov. 1938]). Even as a fellow resident of the United Kingdom, Hughes remains, for Ford, under the mythical cloud of Welshness. Still, in spite of the mildly patronizing tone of this correspondence, Ford also highlights the unique cultural tradition possessed by Welsh writers and artists, miners and farmers—an innate sense of numinous horror for which Hughes is equipped and to which he knowingly gravitates.

Wales directly inspired Hughes’s pursuit of the spooky vein within his work. It was a means for connecting with his dead father, developing quirky yet realistic characters, understanding mythical figures, and tracing magical landscapes. First, despite his birth in Surrey’s Caterham Valley at a modest family estate called Dorincourt, Hughes made a conscious choice to identify with his deceased father’s family’s Welsh roots. While at Oxford under the Celtic influence of Graves and Yeats, he officially transplanted himself and took up permanent residence in Wales at an abandoned cottage called “Ysgol Fach” near the Graves family’s vacation home, “Plas Erinfa,” near Harlech.

Secondly, Hughes embraced—and was mostly embraced by—the people of Wales, and he spent his life celebrating their quirks and fantasies in his complex and memorable characters. In particular, Hughes’s Gothically inflected narratives bear the imprint of Welsh miners and backcountry villagers. The coal mining industry, which has long represented the lifeblood of the Welsh economy and a lifeline for numerous Welsh families, also continues to claim lives through its inherent danger. In identifying with Wales, Hughes was also identifying himself with lurking threats that are written in geographical and socioeconomic terms. Not only

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23 The Senghenydd Colliery Disaster (14 Oct. 1913) would have made a profound impression on the 13-year-old Hughes.
does he choose to dwell in abandoned homes (and write poetry and stories about living with Wales’s ghosts in these haunted spaces), but he persists in mining the Welsh hillside for creative material despite a certain futility in the endeavor: He knows that, to some extent, he will always be an outsider, and he understands that the Anglophone center will continue to see the Welsh world as incomprehensible and backwards.24

Because he understands predominating prejudices, Hughes navigates his ancestral Welshness cautiously, as a liminal mediator between the England of his upbringing and the Wales of his heritage.25 As his correspondence with his mother and his early poems and story drafts reveal,26 the deep-seated folk beliefs of the Welsh inscribe themselves onto Hughes’s life at an early stage as he seeks to put down personal and professional roots. In this sense, it is quite natural that Wales has “written” him. Nevertheless, in making the conscious decision to stay in Wales and embrace his Welsh ancestry while also serving the British Empire, he is implicated in a British Gothic culture that, while often merging with Celtic traditions, can also be seen as globally oppressive. Across a postcolonial world, imperialistic modernity continues to interface with traditions that stretch diachronically across all epochs and varieties of human social life. This imperial interfacing often seeks to divide and conquer, co-opting local tales for ethnic ghost stories while maintaining a patronizing posture that emphasizes “civilization” and

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24 Hughes, while working with Charles Frend and Leslie Norman on A Run for Your Money (1949), responds to the cinematic joke regarding the bucolic/backwards nature of Wales: “First, your idea of showing the decades passing over a changeless Hafod, where the only moment of excitement comes on the day Twm and Llew won first prize at the National: it’s good cinema, but it’s not good history! Things did happen during these years. Welsh miners went in their thousands to the first world war, and the casualties were exceptionally high: so I think Welshmen would resent it if we showed ’1914-1918 - no change.’ Then, what about the great strikes? What about the occasional pit disasters? What about the slump—the grinding years when the pit-wheels stopped, and the parents starved to keep the children rosy and well-dressed? . . . The Welsh are a touchy nation . . . They are about as sleepy as a box of dynamite” (Letter to Leslie Norman [10 Oct. 1948]).

25 In Glyn Jones’s The Dragon Has Two Tongues, the author writes, “I must confess myself a little uneasy. Is Richard Hughes really an Anglo-Welsh writer? A Welshman, certainly, and living most of his life in Wales; but this fine novelist’s best work, High Wind in Jamaica and In Hazard, is not concerned with his native land at all” (38).

26 As editor of the Carthusian at Charterhouse, Hughes uses the pseudonym “Idris,” effectively tying himself professionally and personally to Welsh history and mythology (R.P. Graves, Richard 17-18).
“scientific progress.” As a transplant, Hughes is simultaneously a representative of the imperial center and the colonial periphery, and this tension is always evident in his work.

Third, Hughes is clearly drawn to the suppressed ancient folklore and mythology ensconced within Wales’s language and geography. R.P. Graves relates an early adventure just before Hughes begins squatting at the small, abandoned schoolhouse, Ysgol Fach: “At once he set out again, running up the steep pathway known as the ‘Roman Steps’, in an attempt to find a still more sinister lake, the Llyn-y-Morwynion, where legend has it that Blodeuweddu’s maidens drowned themselves, trying to escape from Llew Llaw Gyffes” (Richard 36). Wales exudes ancient Strangeness, both to native residents and to visitors. Robert Mighall makes it clear that “[t]he ‘Gothic’ by definition is about history and geography” (Geography xiv). He explains that “the Gothic, at its emergence and in its development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, testifies to a concern with the historical past, and adopts a number of rhetorical and textual strategies to locate the past and represent its perceived iniquities, terrors, and survivals” (Geography xiv). By displacing the past, moderns hope to liberate themselves from barbarity. Conversely, the Gothic capitalizes on the revenant nature of that past, a potential that Hughes consistently exploits in his short stories.

Finally, it is the otherworldly physical landscape of Wales that Hughes sees as the most precious possession of the estranged Welsh. Whereas much has been made, within Gothic scholarship, of the invasion of the urban by the Gothic,27 it is still necessary to recognize the origins of those Gothic traditions as native to the wilderness—an antithesis to the urban and ironic counterpart to the pastoral mode inspired by bucolic life—and to see how that Gothic continues to attach itself to hinterlands and distant vistas within Hughes’s work. The Gothic, historically speaking, most often inhabits open, unwritten spaces: sprawling country woods,

27 See Punter’s discussions of Stevenson, Stoker, and Machen and their “apocalyptic view of London” in his revised second volume of Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic (2014); Dryden’s lengthy discussion of London’s labyrinths in The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles (2003); and Mighall’s focus on the urban Gothic in Dickens, Reynolds, and Stoker in A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction (1999).
unfathomable oceans, rocky crags, and impassable deserts. It is often the lone outpost (the castle, the country house, the monastery, the caravan) that serves as a liminal, conflicted site for interactions between a Strange, trespassing humanity and an Othered nature and indigeneity.  

In his life and work, Hughes celebrates the rich geographical resources of Wales, as well as the local tales these resources have inspired. In Hughes’s 1974 foreword to Peter Haining’s anthology of the Welsh fantastic called *The Magic Valley Travellers*, Hughes has finally become the resident expert on supramundane Welsh traditions, a spokesperson not only for a people but for a land that speaks across hundreds of generations yet still requires a cultural translator like Hughes:

> [I]n spite of the Chapels’ displeasure, the countrysides still teemed with most ancient supernatural presences. I don’t just mean human ghosts, though these also abounded... A farmer I knew, going out after dark to tend to a sick cow, spent the whole night in the byre: ‘I couldn’t go back to the house,’ (Ifan not being the sort rudely to jostle his way through such a gathering of his own ancestors). Nor do I mean mere fairies—though who else could have baked that wonderful cake which another Ardudwy farmer found on his kitchen table, one morning in 1917, just a few hours before his son turned up unexpectedly on leave from the front? No: more typically these apparitions took the form of hell-hounds and other spectral dogs. (“Foreword,” *Magic* 14)

Hughes emphasizes Wales’s landscapes in his broad vision of the Uncanny. In the same foreword he says, “There are many other such ‘numinous’ places, haunted by presences even more awful” (15). His daughter Penelope Minney still remembers her father relating to her the experience of “how he was scared almost out of his wits by a sudden feeling of an evil presence, when he was passing a stone circle up in the hills behind Harlech, one moonlight night. He panicked and ran, and was amazed afterwards that he had not broken his neck running in the darkness. And he had a Gothic love of ruins and decay” (Minney).  

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28 Walter de la Mare’s “All Hallows” (1926) is perhaps emblematic of this trend, establishing a remote, seaside cathedral as a conflicted outpost, supernaturally rebuilt by demonic forces as a part of modernity’s “awful progress” (see David Punter’s analysis in “Hungry Ghosts” (2001).

29 After first visiting Wales on Oxford’s Easter break with classmate Charles Graves in 1918, Hughes fell in love with Harlech, with the Graves house “Plas Erinfa,” and ultimately with his own little corner of turf at an abandoned “Little Schoolhouse,” “Ysgol Fach.” Ultimately, he would settle with his family at Castle
conflicted love of Wales’s landscapes—spaces that are both already possessed and always possessing—that led Hughes to situate so much of his fiction in its hills and marshes.

Gothic Strangeness, then, is a product of both a displacement in time and a displacement in space. In his analysis of the geographical dimension of the Gothic, Mighall explores two different geographical migrations of the Gothic. The first is an outward-bound discourse by which “adventurers” seek out the wilds. Of course, from the perspective of wilderness wanderers and indigenous peoples who face such encroachment, this “outward-bound” migration is for them an invasion by an “imperial Gothic” that typically seeks to colonize them, or at least strategically to substitute imperial chaos for indigenous social structures. Crossing both space and time, such Gothically inflected “Lost World” adventures disturb latent or wild forces against them. Mighall writes that “[t]he whole environment of the Plain of Kor in Haggard’s *She* (1886) is ‘primitive,’ it is the English travellers who are out of place and therefore anachronistic” (*Geography* 136). Furthermore, an inward-bound Gothic wildness moves in the other direction, from the wilderness into settled cities. One expression of this is the Romanichal Travellers (commonly called the Roma) who have made Wales and England their home for centuries. Unable to exclude the world’s “Wandering Tribes,” the imperial center attempts to fix them in place, “compensating for the fact that the wandering tribes of Britain refuse to be fixed geographically by stressing the distinct physical traits which marked them off from their more provident neighbours” (*Geography* 150). Furthermore, in accentuating the diverging features of the Welsh (e.g., smallness and darkness), imperially framed texts inscribe the Welsh as invaders, agitators, and Strangers within Britain’s own borders.

House in Laugharne in south Wales, and even later at a home called “Mor Edrin” in the north’s Talsarnau across Tremadog Bay from the city his friend Clough Williams-Ellis built, Portmeirion. He would settle his mother near him, at a sixteenth-century farmhouse called “Garreg Fawr” in Waunfawr, Caernarfonshire. Numerous other writers have also sought to articulate the Strange inspiration of Wales (see Peter Haining’s anthology *The Magic Valley Travellers* [1973]).
One such Stranger is Llwyd, the eponymous protagonist of Hughes’s first widely published story. On March 21, 1920, “Llwyd,” Hughes’s submission to a short story competition, appeared in the *Saturday Westminster Gazette*. “Llwyd” tells the tale of a stunted Stranger: one whose spiritual life is disciplined by powerful forces and institutions, including a father’s stern spiritual warnings. This brand of trauma, while permeating human society as far back as human records, has a close identification with modernity. A founding text of the Welsh Gothic, “Llwyd” introduces a Stranger described by Jane Aaron as a boy born with “a clouded brain” . . . intellectually awakened by the intense delight he takes in his visions of “ellyllon” (goblins), which seem to him to inhabit the wild landscape about his mountain home in north Wales. Eager to know more, knocking “with both hands on the doors of Knowledge, yelling for admittance,” he speaks of his visions to his father. But the father is a chapel-goer, and “the chapels do not hold with fairies.” Instead, he fills the boy’s mind with Terrors of hell, “until the fairies, fleeing before them, vanished,” and the boy regresses: “The thunderclouds from Sinai grew solid as rock . . . blocking him in from his imaginations with their eternal adamant. (96)

In the end, it appears that Llwyd’s father wins the battle of worldviews. Yet Hughes makes it abundantly clear through his narrative perspective which side of this battle he favors. It is reasonable to place Hughes in Llwyd’s shoes, as a spiritual pilgrim who is denied full admittance to hegemonic institutions while also facing limitations in engaging with traditional knowledge.

Llwyd is coded within this story by his differences and deficiencies. He is disabled, spiritually different, secretive, and unclean. He is Welsh. Nevertheless, by examining Llwyd’s unique possessions (the special wares his close-distance can procure), it is possible to find in him an example of reparation for colonized and degraded human subjects.

First, Llwyd’s Strangeness has given him—even if temporarily—a second sight. Lloyd inhabits a rich primeval existence, replete with a complex cosmogony and theological framework, and this existence—represented by the story’s “three-cornered cave” that stands in opposition to the institutional version of the Trinity (“Llwyd,” *A Moment of Time* 84)—is creative

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30 In a letter to Charles Frend while working on *A Run for Your Money* (1948), set in Wales, Hughes makes the unusual and telling statement that “so far as I am aware there has never been a Saint Llwyd (or Lloyd)” (13 Dec. 1948).
and restorative. Llwyd is portrayed as cognitively different and is seen by his family and the community as disabled. Nevertheless, Llwyd’s Strangeness in no way precludes him from joining an unseen society of Welsh deities in a Cave of Abjection. In fact, it is because of his difference that he sees this hidden world, the richness of which is clear to him, and his “clouded brain” seems a perfect match for the active mountain-seascape that surrounds him: “the clouds sailed quietly over like silent argosies, ballasted with thunder, sounding the plain with a long shadow, or anchored with a silver chain of rain; then the thin breeze would fill their mainsail and fore-topsail, and they would slide quietly on, breasting the crested hills” (“Llwyd,” A Moment of Time 78). His “clouded brain” can discern what his father’s cannot: a comforting community of supernatural beings that accepts the son, as opposed to the vengeful, legalistic God of the Calvinistic Chapel that excludes him. Lloyd’s spiritual vision has therapeutic and reparative potential in its ability to side-step power. The spiritually traumatized Strangers like Llwyd, who see and hear magic that conventional dogma cannot explain, possess an unmediated spiritual life and clarity that belies the cloudiness of their environment and their enshrouded perspective.

Second, Llwyd as Stranger possesses a special spiritual language (mirroring his numinous Welsh name) that subverts the discursive hegemony which labels his visions as heterodox. From the beginning, Llwyd is coded as “queer” (“Llwyd,” A Moment of Time 79, 80). His idiosyncrasies trouble the norms represented by his father as the household’s spiritual leader. While his parents go to Chapel, he prefers to “build queer things out of mud” (79). He is a Stranger without a voice who has “never asked a question aloud in his life” (81). Yet in the goblins’/fairies’ presence he begins to ask and receive answers. Unfortunately, he cannot cognitively process this special knowledge, a state that Hughes uses not to foreground Llwyd’s inadequacies but instead to highlight the ineffability of this knowledge, as well as Llwyd’s unfortunate, conditioned dependency on imperial institutions. When Llwyd turns to his grim
father, Evan,\textsuperscript{31} for help in untying the secrets of the “knotted” mountains (79), Llwyd is silenced by his father’s “sing-song sibilant” doctrine of judgment (83), as well as “the black thunderclouds of Sinai” that “grew solid as rock, crushing in with their weight the three-cornered cave in the hills” where Llwyd has experienced enlightenment (84). Most certainly, this imagery—as well as Llwyd’s obvious identification with the topography of Wales—reveals Hughes’s own affinity and affection for the land. Yet into the landscape is also written a drama that pits a new, hegemonic religious and ethical system against the traditional religious values that system has superseded. Llwyd acts out this drama performatively. After his visions, which are shadowed by “vague memories of beatings” (82), he grabs a shrieking chicken and then lets it go as if to performatively demonstrate the grip in which he himself continues to be futilely caught.

Third, Llwyd possesses powerful symbols of an alternative justice. Llwyd’s epistemological crisis is represented by a contrast of materialities. Llwyd’s home is dominated by brass objects (warming-pans, candlesticks, and jam-boilers), with a brass stand prominently serving as a perch for the family Bible. These brass objects—which Llwyd inexplicably hates—can be taken to represent authority, both political and ecclesiastical: “Brass he did not like, partly because it shone, partly because it was not pleasant to touch. He scowled whenever there was brass in the room” (79).

In contrast to this brass is the smoothness of the round white stones that litter the riverbeds of north Wales. The Welsh highlands could easily be apprehended as a pastoral setting. Yet Hughes makes it clear that the monstrous resides on high as well as in depths below, in the countryside as well as in the city. This now-familiar Welsh mountain, “Craig Ddrwg,” is described in ambivalent terms, both as vibrant and as ominous. To travel writers Haskett Smith and Walter Parry in \textit{Climbing in Great Britain} (1895) it is “the ridge which

\textsuperscript{31} In his drafts of the story, including the version first published in the \textit{Saturday Westminster Gazette}, Hughes first identifies the father with great irreverence, calling him “Scraggy Evan.” His excision of this single word, which implies both “jagged” and “scrawny,” indicates a possible softening toward conventional religion before the story’s republication in \textit{A Moment of Time} (1926).
stretches away to the north. In winter this range is very fine, but as stern and desolate as it is possible to imagine anything. The writer has reason to remember that here, in January 1895, he experienced the most intense cold that he has met with in Great Britain” (98). Llwyd himself is one of the blessed (or cursed) denizens of this high country, and as such he is marked as monstrous. His home is “so high as the clouds: a few scattered farms, where nothing grew; where every one was born old; where children, monstrous through inbreeding, gaped with vague eyes and mouths at travellers; a land of Struldbrugs” (“Llwyd,” A Moment of Time 78). The “mazed” Llwyd does not go to school but instead learns the “grim and fierce” religion of his parents while also waking up “in tingling terror while the Trumpet of Annwn played thinly across the valley” (79). The narrator, seeing through Llwyd’s eyes, tells readers that

Maned was the first fairy who had grown into his brain. She slid quietly across the clear, diamond-like regions of his mind where the clouds had not yet rolled; she had no form, but was nevertheless very dear to him. So was Mogon. Mogon, too, had no form, but in nature he was part man, part shaggy, kindly dog. Of Derwyl he was half afraid; she was cold and fair, and in his queer, crazed way he always thought of her as something to do with smooth stones. She never came, like Maned or Mogon, to his call. (80)

Hughes, taking the perspective of this Stranger, articulates an essential knowledge that is being suppressed by the “eternal adamant” of imperial institutions (84). This knowledge is represented by the smooth stones Llwyd loves, the stones associated primarily with Derwyl and also with the “ghastly Sucking Stone” of the dead, witch-like woman whose presence-absence demands such stones as passing tribute (80). Derwyl’s fairness (most likely meaning her beauty, but also implying her role as a figure of judgment, a role which frightens Llwyd), presents the direct antithesis—yet also the odd counterpart—to the paradoxical “wicked old Saint” (80), an undefined figure whose ugliness repels and whose grave conjures an elusive justice that will be

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32 This figure will be analyzed further during Chapter 3 as the subject of Hughes’s poem “The Rolling Saint.”

33 This hints at the use Hughes potentially makes of the “White Goddess” archetype, the three-fold Welsh figure Robert Graves describes as both “crone” and “maiden.”
further explained in Chapter 3. Above all, the “Saint” is a practitioner of a spirituality that violates boundaries of “brass” institutions such as the Church of England or the non-conforming Chapels. These smooth, white stones, given to her as tribute of both her saintliness and her counter-institutional “wickedness,” represent Llwyd’s paradoxically subversive and righteous queerness, as well as his close association with indigenous, primal forces that stand in judgment of traumatizing institutions.

2.3.2 The Stranger’s Power

Regarding the sociological Stranger, Simmel indicates that the possession of unique assets can translate to unique power. In Welsh folklore, a desire for gold in a land rich with coal indicates an illusory quest. Hughes hints that, not only is Welsh gold fabulous, but it is also a symbol emphasizing a fool’s errand. The fabulous and foolish nature of such gold appears in Hughes’s divination story “The Devil-stick” (1926), a tale which strikes Masefield as “perhaps less limpidly clear than it should be,” but which Masefield also sees as “an extraordinarily good invention” and the seed for a series of tales (John Masefield, qtd. in Letter to Louisa Hughes [7 Nov. 1921]). In this story, the tramp-narrator is met by a picaresque Stranger, a tramp-swindler named Long Jonathan who is suspiciously flush with cash. As if magically conjured by the narrator’s memories of him, Long Jonathan arrives on the scene, having escaped from kidnappers, and tells the narrator of his success in gaining riches by means of a Devil-stick, a sentient wand he has stolen from an incapacitated Black Briton. According to Long Jonathan, the stick has proved a divining rod for cash, both at the racetrack and in foiling his kidnappers’ schemes. In reality, as the tramp-narrator’s newspaper-blanket eventually reveals in its

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34 Briefly, this “wicked Saint” is a female figure in both Hughes’s prose and poetry who, accosted by brigands, is grotesquely murdered and who lingers at Craig Ddrwg to haunt not only the perpetrators but all who have dispossessed her.
35 This trope of “fool’s gold” appears again in Hughes’s “Justice” (1951), the last short story Hughes published.
36 This is perhaps an allusion to R.L. Stevenson’s much more famous pirate, Long John Silver (Treasure Island [1883]). Hughes was a great admirer of Stevenson’s work, evidenced by his BBC broadcast in tribute to Stevenson’s centenary.
headlines, Long Jonathan is merely telling tall tales: He has actually stolen his money from a local bank.

The tall tale-teller Long Jonathan is eventually apprehended while claiming to “a whole barful of folk” that his newfound wealth comes from a Welsh goldmine—to Hughes’s audience a laughable improbability and telling sign of falsehood (“The Devil-stick” 203-4), considering Welsh gold’s legendary scarcity. It is this narrative mistake that gives the swindler away. The trickster-Stranger represented here and elsewhere in Hughes’s fiction is a sort of ironic penitent. Long Jonathan’s confession/admission to the narrator is manifested in humorous irony. When confronted with the newspaper’s accounts about the bank robbery, Long Jonathan “grinned his appreciation of my praise, and read it carefully” (203), as if he relishes the printed, immortalized version of his own illegal escapades. Nevertheless, even in Long Jonathan’s scalawag freedom, the scoundrel reveals himself as a serial Stranger: a figure we know will return. In fact, both the Stranger and his Strange stick have numinous, revenant power. Masefield predicts to Hughes that “[y]ou will probably write other tales around the Devil-stick before you have done with it. I conclude that the original stick is [Thor’s?] wand of war” (qtd. in Letter to Louisa Hughes [7 Nov. 1921]). For now, this version of the Stranger is stripped of his power at the end of the story, suffering the same basic fate as Llwyd: He is shackled and tucked away by convention and institutional power. Yet Hughes hints that, as with so many of his Strangers, Long Jonathan will eventually return, emerging from a revolving jailhouse door to tell more tall tales. For the Welsh Stranger, the possession of lore and storytelling prowess is powerful, even (and especially) when its efficacy is not understood by hegemonic forces.

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37 Hughes’s story “Justice” (1951) in The New Yorker is, in a sense, a belated follow-up to “The Devil-Stick.” In the later story, Hughes creates a Welsh “inside joke” that troubles conventions of justice and reveals a deep-seated distrust of imperial legal machinery while also self-consciously admitting Welsh foibles.
2.3.3 The Stranger’s Difference

Furthermore, Simmel indicates that the Stranger remains paradoxically both distant (indicating that what is close is also culturally, and perhaps racially, far away) and Strange (implying that what is distant is also physically near). For the purposes of the present chapter, the implications of distance and Strangeness are at the heart of the two-way migration of the Gothic. At the same time Hughes attempts to clothe himself in the persona of the Welsh storyteller by essentially emigrating to Wales, he also bears first-hand witness to a flow into Britain of racially Othered peoples. His first encounter would have come with an introduction to the Romanichal Travellers which had migrated into north Wales by the early seventeenth century. In addition, he is coming to understand that the Empire is gradually migrating to London. In July 1919, he first meets South-Asian Lascars and eats at a Chinese restaurant in the Limehouse district of London. All of these additional interactions with social, racial, and cultural Others inspire Hughes to seek outward-bound Gothic adventure in the world beyond Wales. He would successively seek out Orientalized experiences down the Danube, across the Balkans, and into the Kasbah of Tangier while the latter was a part of the European-administered Interzone.

Simmel explains that, while the Stranger understandably bears the marks of difference (language, customs), it is precisely because of a growing consciousness of broad similarities that the Stranger’s relatively few differences are foregrounded—and sometimes seen as threatening. The Stranger’s familiarity always provides a frame and filter for difference. For

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38 In a letter to Welsh novelist Alun Richard (15 July 1974), Hughes offers “Llwyd” and “Cornelius Katie,” a story of the Romanichal Travellers in Wales, for potential re-publication in The Penguin Book of Welsh Short Stories (1976) as “pioneer work” in Welsh literature. The stories were ultimately not included.

39 A lengthy letter from the young Hughes to his mother reveals an East-End adventure that would serve as the foundation for “Martha” (c. 1920), a tale Hughes wrote very early and clung to despite its initial reception by potential publishers. It tells of a mixed-race girl, an artist-prodigy, whose art emerges from a Strangeness embodied in her Chinese restaurant home and her partial Chinese ancestry. While the letter perpetuates racist tropes that the author inherited from popular Thomas Burke stories like “The Chink and the Child” (1917), Hughes anchors his expanding worldview in this experience. This meal in Limehouse becomes, to use the author’s own analogy, an “acorn” that, when planted, grows into an organic, changing, reparative vision of humanity (see Hughes’s Letter to Louisa Hughes [11 July 1919]).
Hughes, both types of Gothic migration motivate him. In Wales he has been witness to inward and outward movements. As he moves beyond Wales, he seeks out difference as an adventurer. Nevertheless, it is his realization of his own Strangeness—differences that cannot be covered with clothing or learned away with language—that inspires his return home.

One mark of the Gothic is its shifting attitudes and associations. This contradicts a purely aesthetic search for Gothic tropes (ghosts, vampires, etc.) and points to the necessarily inclusive nature of Gothic discourse. Mighall asserts that “[t]he Gothic cannot be an essence, for what is Gothicized constantly changes. This depends on how each culture chooses to represent itself, and where it locates progress and its necessary antithesis” (Geography 286). As a product of these shifting representations, the “Spooky Vein” of uncanniness naturally associates itself with and isolates the relative (rather than the essential) Stranger.

Hughes’s story “Leaves,” also published in A Moment of Time (1926), relates a brief tale of the assimilated—yet relatively distant—Stranger. Pedar Vasič, an expatriate protagonist-writer lodged in London, blends into the imperial center until his unique linguistic and political baggage psychologically fills and narratively exceeds his small garret. It is perhaps the best example of Hughes’s own self-conscious estrangement as a sociological, geographical, and physiological phenomenon. Hughes’s assimilated Stranger, displaced from his homeland, experiences this displacement through physical sensations that activate his imagination, and vice versa.

Vasič is both near and far, both strangely close and distantly foreign. This same combination is at the heart of what Freud terms “the Uncanny.” No matter how familiar Vasič seems or how closely he approaches, he will always be on the outside looking in. The narrative movement here is from far to near, an encroachment that leads to a defensively deployed “Strangeness” only when the similarity of the Stranger is widely understood by members of the Familiar community, and only when the “distant” Stranger moves too close to the Familiar. This defensive estrangement is true both for the community of the Familiar and for the Stranger.
himself, who perceives himself assimilating too quickly or too closely. In Simmel’s formulation of this concept, the philosopher was grappling with the ways assimilation and expatriation work together and against one another cyclically—to achieve a static estrangement.

Remembering Mighall’s reminders regarding the geography of the Gothic, it is clear that “Leaves” is a Gothic narrative firmly embedded in a specific chronotope. To be sure, it is a story of two laminated places and two laminated times that overlap spectrally to chilling effect. The story’s second paragraph begins, “I think it was in the year ‘97 that Pedar Vasič, the Montenegrin poet, whose terrible death at the hands of the party of King Nikita during the War shocked even those outrageous parts, first came to London” (160). In one movement, Hughes creates a narrative about a man who has already died a “terrible death” during the endless conflicts of the Balkans, yet in backtracking to the London of that man’s youth, Hughes brings him back to life. With the knowledge this “terrible death” provides, readers read every sentence of the story as indicative of the poet’s impending doom.

This poet is a Stranger from a strange land, Montenegro, which is well known to readers only for its “outrageous” nature. Like other remnants of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Montenegro was known as a slaughterhouse, and an émigré from that country would carry the traces of conflict in his own body. For Hughes’s contemporary readers, Balkan conflicts had not begun with Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s assassination and had not ended at Versailles. Hughes himself traveled to the troubled Triple Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in August 1922, and there is some evidence that he felt compelled to make such a dangerous journey in order to atone for his absence from World War I.40

40 An anecdote reveals Hughes’s close relationship with Robert Graves and the various conflicts operant at the time Hughes embarked down the Danube. After dreaming of a graveyard and a child that Hughes almost runs down with his motorcycle, Hughes goes to Graves for the poet’s lay-psychotherapy. Graves interprets Hughes’s dream as a displacement of Hughes’s own anxieties: “The graveyard and the child calling Mother are your relations with Mrs. Hughes and myself” (R.P. Graves, Richard 78). In the end Hughes, inspired by Graves’s analysis, gains separation from his mother and Graves and travels to eastern Europe with three adventurous friends.
In this story, Pedar Vasič is a marked man, and the story immediately identifies his ultimate fate: death by execution in his homeland. Yet within the story’s chronotope, the poet’s “two rooms in the bottom of a house in Chelsea” write him as an English Romantic, an embodiment of the blue plaques that today mark the one-time residences of Hilaire Belloc, George Eliot, Dante Rossetti, and Charles Swinburne. Yet the poet’s name, in and of itself, also codes him as Other. The narrator explains that “[h]e stopped to stare at the Cyrillic script before him, frowning. How very much easier it would be in bald French! But Vasič was a patriot” (“Leaves” 162). Inspired by his own experiences, the stories written by others before him, and his present circumstances as a resident alien, Vasič the poet seeks to write a story, a posture echoing Hughes as a poet who is also writing the story that creates Vasič.

A toggling between Familiarity and Strangeness in the figure of the Gothic Stranger echoes the broader core tenets of the uncanny. In performing this Strangeness, Hughes is projecting his own displacement: as a Welshman in England, as an English-born migrant settled in Wales, and as a sojourner abroad among those who see him as a Stranger. By performatively depicting a Stranger in a strange land, Hughes is addressing his own traumatic displacements as well as those of the many migrating people he has met.

It is the construction of “Leaves” as a Gothic narrative—and its self-consciousness regarding its own construct—that is most informative here for an exploration of Hughes’s Gothic as trauma therapy. The protagonist is aware of the power of his own writing, as well as the narrative dangers and therapeutic shortcomings of contrived “clap-trap” (162). Hearing the rustle of plane-tree leaves that “danced like mad” outside his window (161), an idea comes to Vasič: “What a wonderful ghastly story he could write about those leaves: about their driving someone insane!” (161). He “plays with the idea” (161), writes, then laughs: “It was too far-fetched. After all, what were they? Leaves. No one could ever really persuade himself they were anything terrible for long. It was absurd: fictitious, in the worst sense. What a pity it was, he reflected, that one had to be so far-fetched nowadays to produce an uncanny suggestion” (161). The poet’s
musings mirror Hughes’s own. He has already expressed to his godfather a perception that the Gothic is “an inferior branch of art” (Letter to Charles Johnson [23 Nov. 1920]). Yet for both Vasič and Hughes this seems more a prevarication than an admission: Both writers are clearly enthralled with the effects and the affect of Gothic narratives.

The laminated chronotopes (the Great War and 1897; London and Montenegro) are further overlapping in the protagonist’s role as a writer of his own story. The protagonist-writer continues this iterativity by climbing into his own story: Vasič “imagined himself to have committed some calculated and unnameable crime: perhaps a criminal might be hounded into a confession by [those leaves]” (161). And then: “He had a sudden revulsion of feeling against the whole artificial clap-trap of modern fiction” (162). Despite the far-fetched nature of this first possible narrative, Vasič imaginatively performs a crime as well as its confession. Considering the narrative foreshadowing that this Montenegrin poet will suffer a terrible death in his future, perhaps even during just such an interrogation, this protagonist-writer (like Hughes himself) is telling a traumatic story he has, most likely, witnessed or heard from witnesses.

The intrusion of those leaves on the protagonist-writer’s consciousness is an expression of uncanny Strangeness, and the familiarity of the leaves functions as a subtle Trojan Horse, entering the consciousness of the unsuspecting writer and reader as something “homely” and stirring there as something decidedly “unhomely.” While the leaves are obviously uncanny in their movement and sound, they represent the complex forces—familiar and foreign at the same time—that can isolate a Stranger living in a strange land. Hughes himself was well acquainted with this Strange isolation, writing the beginnings of his first novel in a cafe in Capodistria (present-day Koper).41

Furthermore, as Vasič, in London, writes a story “about two children: two children at night, with someone dead in the house . . . he was not sure who: perhaps their mother: perhaps

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41 A fascinating source, *Il Poeta Innamorato* by Pier Antonio Quarantotti Gambini (1984), tells of the author’s encounter with Richard Hughes while he was writing *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929) in a cafe.
father,” Hughes is most certainly recalling waking to the dead body of his own father in his own house, having forgotten—in the disorientation of sleep—his father’s death. Vasič continues, building the children’s story as the leaves take on a life of their own, continuing to rustle outside his rooms in Chelsea: “Then there would be a rustle of leaves in the street outside, and [the children’s] little hairs would prick with fright as they huddle together. It ceases, and presently they go on, turn the handle, and are in the strange bitter-smelling room” (163). In this room they meet Death, a white face on a white bed: “The tapers flicker, casting strange shadows on the face: but still they are not afraid. Then the leaves begin again: They rattle and leap outside, climb and “scrabble” with their five long finger-nails on the window-pane” (163). The leaves are fingers that should be dead but that remain animated. Delineated in this way, the leaves inspire—or are intended to inspire—both physiological and psychological terror.

Vasič stops, “absorbed” (163), until the story that has begun with his own physical environment and entered his own psyche washes back into his own physical circumstances: “Suddenly the window burst open: the gas-light flickered and dived: something black, huge, noiseless flew in, darted round the room. Vasič sprang up in terror . . . It dodged him uncannily and padded softly against his ears: the room seemed full of shadowy winged shapes: he fought at them with his hands: then lost his head and screamed aloud” (163-4). While the sound leads to hair standing on end, the associations lead to mental anguish and an audible release of that terror.

One explanation for Vasič’s extreme reaction might be his extreme social and physical isolation. It is not clear why he is in London, or why he will ultimately go home, but the

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42 Hughes writes of forgetting his father’s death: “In bed, in the dark, I woke up—and remembered; but surely it must have been a bad dream, for to that age things can still seem too bad to be true. I crept to my mother’s room for reassurance; but no, it wasn’t a dream, she told me. . . . When I refused to believe her she offered to take me to see his body; but I jibbed at that . . . And then . . . somehow I forgot! It was midmorning, and I suddenly wanted to ask Father something so scampered up to his room and flung open the door—to find the death-room darkened with drawn blinds, heavy with the scent of his favourite narcissus; and under the stiff folds of the sheet what looked like a not very skilful wax copy of my father” (“Eheu Fugaces”).

43 Hughes returns to this image of leaves as uncanny, clawing hands in “The Ghost” (1926).
undetermined circumstances (possibly the ethnic violence and revolutionary machinations of his war-torn homeland) that have brought him to London as an expatriate—and perhaps even as an exile—pursue him here, at least emotionally. For whatever reason, the “leaves” of a suppressed past fly, shockingly, into his own story-space, inspiring panic in the protagonist-writer.

Hughes leaves the ending of his story as merely a return to the stasis of its beginning. In the fashion of so much B-grade pulp fiction (e.g., “it was all a dream”), Hughes writes as a last sentence, “But, after all, it was only the leaves,” as if to liberate Vasič and the reader from the guilty grip (and responsibility) of the Uncanny. Yet there is evidence that this gimmick is not intended to dispel fear but rather to heighten it. Like “The Vanishing Man,” this tale is crafted ironically to confront a culture that disbelieves the violence Hughes knows is real. While rogue leaves may be waved away, real violence cannot. Hughes—along with the veterans of the Great War who have seen violence firsthand and even those who have noticed secondhand the modified faces and mutilated bodies that walk London’s streets—knows this truth. This story, then, provides several therapeutic means for the Stranger in/from a strange land to address trauma.

First, writing itself can be therapeutic. At the moment of this story’s composition, Hughes himself has been traumatized by his travels. Here and elsewhere, there are signs that narrativization is a means he uses to understand the violence he has witnessed. Second, the writer is potentially the agent of her/his own nightmare. Although s/he is reproducing the horror of experience in a potboiler narrative, s/he, as writer, is finally in control. Third, by acknowledging the reality of traumatizing forces that can enter our lives at any moment, the writer is able to naturalize the experience (in the sense of immigration, to bring what is foreign

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44 In three stories inspired by Hughes’s time in the Balkans (The Country They Forgot [c. 1924], “Laughing at Netta” (1926), and “Lochinvárović” (1926), there are obvious projections—mirroring those of Hemingway, Faulkner, or Ford—of the author’s need to write to dispel violent imagery and impressions. In “Netta,” Hughes writes through his narrator that “I was still suffering, by a sort of delayed action, from a good deal of the fear which, during the recent Balkan episode, the occasion had often warranted, but the rush of events had left no time for. I had nightmares; and if I was startled in my sleep, would be out of bed and in a defensive attitude long before I was awake” (230).
into the domestic sphere) without normalizing the violence (as self-evident, inevitable, and irreversible). Hughes’s formula for processing these traumas, then, seems to be to promote a balanced perspective as both the naturalized Other and the uncanny Stranger.

2.3.4 The Stranger’s Familiarity

Finally, a fourth Hughes story serves to elucidate the fourth tenet of Simmel’s Stranger paradigm, the Strangeness of familiarity. While the story of Peder Vasič moves from far to near, disturbing nearness with incoming or resident elements that appear alien, other stories emphasize a Strangeness that emerges from the most familiar relationships among lovers or members of the same family. This movement from near to far—an estrangement even for the most beloved—might be the most natural, yet also the most traumatic, human experience.

Parents—mostly unwittingly yet sometimes intentionally (while perhaps ignorantly)—create traumas for their own children.45 There is ample evidence that Hughes experienced “Familiar” or familial trauma as a child. R.P. Graves in Richard Hughes cites numerous examples that he interprets as Louisa Warren’s manipulative influence on her son’s life. Hughes, as a young man, also experienced the trauma of a broken engagement because of his fiancée’s family’s doubts about his socioeconomic status as a poet and playwright. By extension, Hughes’s fiction can be seen as an effort to manage trauma.

The shock of the Strange Familiar is at the heart of the uncanny. An illustrative Hughes story is “The Cart,” published in A Moment in Time (1926). It tells of a young girl named Ursula Wortley who is a Stranger in her own home, traumatized by a mother who treats Ursula as the plaything for the guests in the Wortleys’ parlor and the object of the mother’s derisive stories.

45 Hughes writes of his earliest fears: “[S]uppose I was sucked down the wastepipe of the bath, suppose one night my mother carelessly pulled up the plug before I had climbed safely out? Small children have almost no sense of relative size: it never entered my head that I was too large to be sucked through that small hole—down into that horrible gurgling whirlpool, choked with warm soapy water, dragged down struggling into the mysterious darkness of a wastepipe which led no one knew whither: can you imagine any more horrible ending to a young life? I loved lying in a bathtub till the last moment; but can you wonder I sprang out like a grasshopper the very instant that my mother reached for the plug?” (“Eheu Fugaces”)
Mrs. Wortley’s abuse of her child appears to be a function of the child’s closer relationship with her father, with whom Ursula is lumped by Mrs. Wortley as unconventional and “droll” (“The Cart” 130). Mr. Wortley’s absence for business leaves Ursula without a confidante, and the mother’s estrangement from her daughter is made complete during the mother’s real or imagined illness. The mother, stricken with a headache, claims that she is going to die and asks Ursula to remember her. Upon hearing this and seeing her mother faint and go lifeless, Ursula runs screaming from the house to find a doctor. She climbs dexterously into a passing cart and finds herself surrounded by bundles that she realizes are the carcasses of dead sheep. This is how the story abruptly ends.

Ursula’s own Strangeness thus activates a wide range of affects in the child: shame, anger, and terror, all indicative of trauma. Despite these traumatic resonances, there are three ways that a transformation from Familiarity into Strangeness activates Ursula’s agency by re-framing Strangeness as “the near made distant” rather than “the distant made near” (as in “Leaves”).

First, Mrs. Wortley’s objectification of Ursula’s Strangeness drives the daughter to subtle acts of rebellion. Mrs. Wortley’s “Rossetti-bush of auburn hair” matches the mother’s melodramatic disposition and “volatile moods” (131), “sick headaches” (131), and convulsive episodes—spells that only a bottle of “sal volatile” seems to remedy (132). In addition, Mrs. Wortley twists her daughter: first, by winding Ursula’s golden “ringlets round [Mrs. Wortley’s] own shapely white thumb” (127), then—when those ringlets subversively disappear as the child grows—with forced pigtails and by “twist[ing] recondite eccentricities out of a child’s remarks” (127-8). The mother seeks to discipline her Stranger-daughter at every turn. Finally, demonstrating that she is seeking to take control of her own body, Ursula refuses to appear when called on to “perform” for Mrs. Wortley’s friends, and “[w]hen Ursula found that no punishment followed her disobedience, she made a resolve that she would never do what her mother told her again” (131). Sadly, Ursula is clearly re-traumatized at the story’s end by her
mother’s pseudo-illness, which Ursula—like so many traumatized children—most likely blames on her own rebellion.

Second, Ursula begins to craft counter-narratives of her own that have the power to neutralize her mother’s words. Ursula’s estrangement from her mother is the direct result of her mother’s storytelling prowess. Mrs. Wortley is a socialite storyteller with the power to depict her daughter (to the “witty people” who crowd her drawing-room) as “funny” (127), “killing” (127), “quaint” (128), “extraordinary” (130), “droll” (130), and “strange” (131). As an extension of her mother’s power, the family’s cook, for her part, calls Ursula (colloquially and condescendingly) “a Cure” (128). Ursula is thus an object of ridicule, albeit subtle and cloaked in innocuous terms that would otherwise signify endearment. More seriously, Mrs. Wortley’s obsession with death and her off-handed remarks create an imaginary crisis in the daughter’s mind. When Mr. Wortley leaves for business abroad, Ursula (whom her mother has accused of having no feelings) weeps. In response, Mrs. Wortley insinuates that Ursula’s crying would make “any one . . . think your father was dead” (129). The power of the mother’s words manifests in the new reality they have spawned. Ursula, seeming to hear only the last of her mother’s words, declares her father “Dead!” (129). Mrs. Wortley laughs at this, demonstrating the extent of her increasing distance from her daughter’s emotions. Yet Ursula’s narrative continues in her own mind as she remembers a dead mole she and her father have seen in their garden. In her mind’s narrative, her father has died. Despite Mrs. Wortley’s chiding, Mr. Wortley has become the mole in Ursula’s mind. A second instance of Ursula’s transformation comes when she aids her mother during the latter’s “illness.” Ursula, on hearing her mother shouting for Nellie (the housemaid), attends her mother and sees Mrs. Wortley writhing on the bed:

She did not seem to see Ursula, and kicked with her legs. Ursula could see her legs kicking in the mirror over the bed too: they looked unspeakably funny.
“Mother . . . you do look funny!”

46 “Mrs. Wortley,” a name already pregnant with negative connotation, no doubt is directly inspired by Hughes’s Welsh landlord, the second wife of illustrator (and Graves’s father-in-law) William Nicholson, a woman whose marriage evicts Hughes from his beloved cottage, Ysgol Fach (R.P. Graves, Richard 68).
Mrs. Wortley took no notice of her, but still rolled about, panting. The child took a sort of delight in watching her physical degradation. (132)

This reversal of Familiar and Strange, both in the mirrored image and within Ursula’s mind, indicates that Ursula has taken over the role that her mother has, until now, commanded and lorded over her. The child has now become the storyteller, depicting the mother as “funny.” While this is not yet a healthy resolution, it hints at the child breaking free from unhealthy parental and societal bonds.

Finally, in an ultimate reversal that transforms the Familiar into the Strange, Ursula touches death. Twice during the story, Ursula is confronted with sensations of death: initially in the dead garden mole and later in the cart of dead sheep. Furthermore, just as she has associated her father with the dead mole from their recent walk together, she is eventually compelled to associate the dead sheep heading to market with the mother who claims, at that moment, to be dying. Just as a dead mole or dead sheep represent (especially to a child) the uncanny image of the living creature now dead, this reversal of Familiar and Strange within Ursula’s family represents traumatic upheaval. Her familiar father is no longer her father; her familiar mother is no longer her mother. While these reversals or transformations can be viewed as Ursula’s attempts at coping with traumatic events in her life, there are lasting consequences from the father’s absence and the mother’s insensitive storytelling. Frantically running to find a doctor to help her mother, Ursula imagines that she, like her parents, is being chased by Death in the form of a giant mole running at her shoulder.

In reparative terms, there are no assurances that Ursula will ever arrive at the doctor, and her journey alone in the cart is, in itself, fraught with danger. Moreover, there are ample hints that Ursula’s behavior—even as she seeks to help her mother—will once again be ridiculed as queer, quaint, and strange. Most of all, there is no sense that her mother’s abuse will abate or that her father will re-establish his presence in Ursula’s life. Nevertheless, the dramas that Ursula initiates in her tears and her flight have performative power. There is still the
possibility that Mrs. Wortley, perhaps with the help of her husband, might witness the consequences of their inadequate parenting skills after experiencing Ursula’s affective responses vicariously.

On one hand, this is a story of terrific power—both cruel and compassionate—that parents naturally have over their children. The girl’s fear of death and her loss of control mirror her mother’s own fears and powerlessness (signified by those reversed, mirrored, writhing legs on the bed). On the other hand, this is a tale of a child’s uncanny power, a theme that pervades Hughes’s stories and novels. In response to her mother’s ironic and irresponsible comment about her father’s death, Ursula begins “seeing a mole, where it had lain that day in the garden path . . . She knew it was not a mole at all, but her father” (129). It is possible that she reconstitutes her father as that mole as a means for comprehending his ongoing blindness to her pain and to the impact of his own absence. Through storytelling, Ursula’s own Strangeness is transferred to her father and mother, providing her with some sense of distance and perhaps agency—albeit still unhealthy—within her traumatizing environment. Hughes returns throughout his writing career to this theme of an estranged young girl becoming the Stranger by controlling narratives as a means for coping with trauma.

2.4 The Reparative Stranger in Hughes’s Ghost Stories

Having examined several of Hughes’s uncanny tales at close range, it is necessary now to step back to see the scope of Hughes’s more overtly Gothic production: his ghost stories. Many of these stories were ephemera, broadcast on the BBC a single time or written and deposited into his existing attic archive. Others saw several iterations of publication over many years. Several of them can be specifically dated (and geographically linked) to Hughes’s

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47 Hughes writes again: “Nothing a parent can do will protect his child from Fear—worse fear than he himself could face: for that child carries the whole jungle inside him. Indeed there is very little you can do for him: in the company of small children it is the grown-up who profits more than the child—and indeed how deeply do we all become dependent on the company of children! He gets the help he needs mostly from others of his own age, and from animals. It is the teenager, rather, who needs the love and sympathy of his elders: for how can you hope to help the little thing, who can carry the whole fearful jungle inside him and yet smile serenely?” ("Eheu Fugaces").
undergraduate years at Oxford, while living at 9, Longwall Street, “where his slanting sitting-room was full of drawings by Pamela Bianco” (R.P. Graves, Richard 72)—the child prodigy artist with whose career Hughes’s own production would become closely associated—and where his accommodations flanked the old city wall in picturesque conjunction.\footnote{Longwall Street was also the location where William Morris, modernizing doppelgänger of the medievalist Arts and Crafts Movement founder, established a showroom for Oxford’s emerging automobile industry. In Hughes’s novel The Wooden Shepherdess (1973), the narrator implicitly criticizes Coventry’s Morris branch during Britain’s General Strike of 1926: “it was only the Morris Works in Far Gosport Street (which employed no Union labour whatever) that managed to carry on; and in spite of the Union’s numerical weakness the other car and bicycle factories all had to close” (248).}

It is while enjoying “tea in Longwall Street” that Hughes’s guest, E.J. O’Brien,\footnote{A formal letter from O’Brien and his partner John Cournos (2 June 1923) asks for permission to print Hughes’s “The Stranger” in The Best British Short Stories (1923) and adds a handwritten personal note, showing the friendship between O’Brien and Hughes.} purchases three of Hughes’s stories and essentially launches Hughes’s literary career across the Atlantic. Nevertheless, apart from personal and professional success, the stories Hughes wrote before becoming a dramatist and novelist reveal the development of Hughes’s reparative vision. In the eight stories that follow, necessarily grouped in terms of their contestation of, representation of, or identification with the Stranger within Hughes’s works, the author demonstrates a deliberately Gothic and even supernaturally oriented bent that has been overlooked by scholars.

\section*{2.4.1 Contestation}

First, Hughes writes narratives that contest the Stranger’s legitimacy as a non-present presence that generally stirs up trouble. The following two stories both emphasize a flight from trauma. Both are indicative of a broader cultural narrative that seeks to suppress the un-British and un-Victorian exigencies that have been laid bare by the Great War, the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, and ongoing human displacement across Europe and within the diverse cultures of the British Isles, displacements that stretch to the conditional and illusory promises of “New-World” America. There is evidence that, in his own personal life, Hughes was sometimes guilty
of seeking to evade trauma,\(^{50}\) and his guilt must serve as one context for his creation of Gothic narratives. Yet Hughes also presents a guilty world that is alternately generous and heinous. In depicting personal, technological, and societal confrontation and guilt, Hughes sometimes shows his protagonist (and perhaps narrator) fleeing the scene of crime, violence, and sorrow. The legitimacy of societal and personal space for trauma, then, is contested in these two stories.

A prerequisite for contestation in Hughes’s stories is that the character must face isolation: s/he must be alone. The present study will refer to narratives that precipitate isolation, Hughes’s most common Gothic mode, as the “migrant Gothic.” Proceeding from the Romantic fashion of aimless or picturesque wilderness travel and, in urban settings, flânerie, this migrant Gothic mode links migration with madness. Hughes’s generation heartily embraced what was then known as “tramping,” but which this study terms “vagabondage” to express the tension between complete freedom in escape from societal norms and the bondage of isolation and difference. As will be seen in Chapter 3, much of Hughes’s early literary production, as well as the autobiographical impetus for his later novels, is closely intertwined with his own temporary “vagrancy.” The perceived pejorative terms “tramp,” “gipsy,” “vagabond,” “vagrant,” and even “beggar” were for Hughes signs of necessary separation and an embrace of agency.\(^{51}\)

In this “free” life of vagabondage, vulnerability to the elements, to other people, and to one’s own checkered past was nevertheless a prominent concern. It is likely that Hughes’s stories are derived from some of the tales he has heard from other isolated travelers. In particular, the Stranger (and vagabonds, while forming temporary and often emotional bonds,

\(^{50}\) Hughes extracted himself from social circles after his broken engagement with Nancy Stallibrass, he writes only peripherally of Pamela Bianco’s mental illness (R.P. Graves, Richard 145), and his travels coincide with the oppression of his mother’s loneliness and requests to see him.

\(^{51}\) Hughes’s Gipsy-Night (1922) chronicles this theme extensively, while his short stories (and the dramas into which they were converted) reveal an on-going dialogue with this displaced Stranger and her/his circumstances. Finally, his novels (The Country They Forgot [c. 1924] and The Human Predicament books, in particular—but also In Hazard (1938), where the Chinese wanderer is foregrounded) shine a spotlight on the exigency of displacement as integral to the modern experience.
remained Strangers to one another) of Hughes’s stories often ultimately reveals herself or himself as an angel, demon, or ghost in disguise, a lingering symptom of the complete psychosocial and spiritual rupture that vagabondage presented.52

One Hughes story, a tale written during Hughes’s Longwall days, is a migrant Gothic story called “A Night at a Cottage” (1926) that vividly depicts a voluntary tramp who witnesses involuntary suffering. It soon becomes apparent that elective vagabondage only highlights the myriad unavoidable displacements of a modern world on the move. Masefield’s letter to the young Hughes has already commended Hughes for the story’s art and called the story “complete” (John Masefield qtd. in Letter to Louisa Hughes [7 Nov. 1921]). A tale of vagabondage, this ghost story revolves around the “monster in our midst” trope. Before entering an abandoned cottage on a rainy night, a wanderer passes by “some ten or twenty cosy barns and sheds without finding one to my liking” (“Night” 205), demonstrating, to some extent, the freedom such a professional house-hunter enjoys, until s/he finally settles on one. The air of criminality is more pronounced here: “I drew an iron bar from the lining of my coat and forced the door” (205). In fact, the narrator’s dis-ease derives less from the migrant’s circumstances and more from his fear of being caught in his trespassing. He lights a fire in a rusty stove and is soon “boiling my tea over a bright, small fire” (206), having made a home for himself (while praying that the smoke won’t be seen against the black night). After dozing off, he is awakened by steps in the passage. Assuming that he faces immediate arrest for his criminal trespassing, “there was nothing to do but to sit up and face the music, and that would probably mean being haled back to Worcester gaol, which I had left two bare days before, and where, for various reasons, I had no anxiety to be seen again” (206). This familiarity—and even comfort—with incarceration reveals deep systemic flaws. While Hughes is not editorializing about this broken

52 A letter to Louisa Hughes from H.O. Taylor (25 May 1907) makes the following pertinent remark about a “dreary group of tramps” and the general waves of endless migration that colored the period: “We went through the churchyard, into the cool, passionless twilight of the quiet church with its double row of solemn grey pillars, & when we came out again, there was that poor band of human wreckage, waiting for the grim doors of the church to open & let them in.”
system of public welfare, implicit criticism is subtly present in the doss houses and jails he depicts, sites that effectively serve the same social function.

The uncanny creeps gently into this narrative. Since there are no other doors to the house, the assumption is that the footsteps belong to a resident of the cottage. This Stranger-host slowly makes his way toward the fire. He is dripping wet, indicating that he, too, is a wanderer, "a gentleman of the Road" (207), yet there is an uncanniness about his wetness: "wetter than I should have thought it possible for a man to get, even on such a rainy night" (206-7). These quickly intimate Strangers begin conversing, and the narrator remarks that it is strange that such a comfortable place isn't more of an attraction for tramps. The dripping Stranger, for his part, seems quite familiar with the place, especially as it has looked in the past.

Most tellingly, "[t]here were none of the rags and tins and broken food about that you find in a place where many beggars are used to stay" (207). There is something out of place in the fact that nothing is out of place. The host gives "a very troubled sigh before answering":

"Gho-asts . . . Him that lived here . . . he drowned himself, down to the mill-pond. All slimy . . . [b]ut there are some say he walks up and down this cottage, up and down, like when the small-pox had 'em, and they couldn't sleep but if they heard his feet going up and down by their do-ars. Drowned hisself down to the pond, he did: and now he Walks." (207-208)

The Stranger-host's ghost story is perceived as subtly threatening to the narrator-guest and his relatively carefree way of life. The latter replies, "[t]hat doesn't do for the like of us to get superstitious . . . It wouldn't do for us to get seeing ghosts, or many's the wet night we'd be lying in the roadway" (208). The narrator-guest follows this with: "It's the coppers, not spooks, make me sleep uneasy," revealing his unshakeable sense of having crossed boundaries of illicit social behavior. When the uncanny Stranger-host then sticks his hands directly into the fire—and leaves them there—the narrator-guest retreats in madness: "I caught up my two boots and ran crying out into the night" (209). As fellow wanderers, the two characters of this story are both displaced. Because of their similar circumstances, there is a sense of latent competition for resources. In addition, this gentle wrestling match is based on the perpetual sense on the part of
the wanderer that he is forever trespassing, forever wet, and forever in the darkness because of the elements. In this story Hughes’s narrator cannot tolerate the supernatural Stranger-host (ghost)’s presence once it is finally acknowledged: He flees from it as from the police he fears, seeing this specter as an uncanny instrument to remind him of the cruelties of life such as smallpox and deaths within one’s own family, cruelties he has chosen to avoid—evidenced in his earlier choosing from numerous potential barns and sheds. Meanwhile, the Stranger-host-ghost has no such luxury.

Despite this protagonist’s flight from the Stranger-host-ghost’s hospitality, Hughes’s narrators are increasingly drawn into a longer, more sustained engagement with the uncanny migrant: the unhomely Stranger who makes a home beyond the home. A second ghost story, *The Organ-Recital*, was written on or about 1921 at 9, Longwall Street, and again follows the progress of a vagabond who is “beating my way east across Surrey . . . and had travelled all night on a South-Eastern goods train from Guildford” (1). Yet despite the specificity of the story’s topography, there is an indication from the beginning that this Gothically informed narrative is attempting to speak the unspeakable: “There are certain things which happen, and which a tramp sees, which he will be well advised to say nothing whatever about” (1). In this case, the unspeakable is the discovery of a mangled body across the train tracks, a body whose “hands were knotted with cords” (1). This image haunts the narrator despite his attempts to avoid it, a fear which persists in his immediately adjacent encounter with “a little, long-haired man with a peaky face and cunning hands” (1). As the narrator explains, “There the story should really have ended, years ago” (2). This is indeed a Stranger narrative: the word “stranger” is used nine times in this story alone.

The second phase of the story materializes as the wanderer “is passing through a country village in a corner of Herefordshire” (2), when he learns from a handbill of a millionaire who periodically holds organ-recitals in his large music room: “I could hear the shuddering boom of the organ through the shrubberies . . . I looked in at the house, and saw it lighted up, and, in a
hard kind of way, inviting” (2). He enters this concert hall, open to the public, and sits by the
door. The millionaire, writes Hughes, “looked rather as Stevenson might have looked had he
lived another twenty years” (2), indicating with this allusive nod that Hughes knows the popular,
potboiler structures of Gothic romance (such as the narrative frame modeled in Stevenson’s
own “The Body-Snatcher” [1884]) within which he and his readers are operating as an
interpretive community.

Yet the center of attention for this music-hall scene is a little man, with pointy and
angular features, whose hands are working as if of their own volition. This is the organist, and
once he begins to play, there is a sense of destiny in the music that swells and fills the room: “It
was a dignified and a melancholy sound that kept ebbing and swelling and echoing and swelling
again to a vast thunderous paean . . . and suddenly rose again in a most extraordinary wail of
horror” (3). The music enthralls the audience, who seem to know that something uncanny is
unfolding. The organist writhes, as if in bondage, and the music begins to suggest the roar of a
train: “it almost seemed as if an engine whistled . . . and the roar grew every moment louder, till
it filled and shook the hall with a high cataclysmal scream, dying suddenly into silence . . . and
there [he] lay huddled: his wrists together as if they had been knotted with cords” (4).

Culturally and geographically speaking, this is a story of extremities which seem to
grapple with one another textually: a tramp’s destitution and a millionaire’s opulence; an open
country scene and an enclosed, even claustrophobic music hall; mechanical noise and organ
music; a loner and a crowd; hair and hands; the bird call and the train whistle; Surrey and
Herefordshire. The twin appearances of the little man framing this story, so reminiscent of
Nathaniel’s uncannily connected encounters with Coppelius and Coppola in E.T.A. Hoffman’s
“The Sandman” (1816), are seemingly unconnected and random yet always intertwined in the
viewer’s psyche with human vulnerability. Still, it is not the narrator’s terror at seeing this man
again, but the organist’s own terror in the throes of forces he cannot (any longer?) control, that
grips both the concert-hall audience and the readers of the story. The little man’s cunning
hands, then, are a remarkable reminder of the ultimate reach of death. Readers are never satisfied whether the little man is a) the unnaturally revenant body from the tracks, whose hands were also bound, b) the killer of that man who must now pay in poetic justice for his crime, or c) a coincidental representation of two unconnected deaths that are bound together only in the narrator’s mind. It is the indeterminacy of Hughes’s story that is a trademark of his whole body of work.

While these two ghost stories are united in adopting the Strange vagabond’s perspective, there is always someone who is “more Strange” than the narrator. There is always a figure with which the narrative voice wrestles for primacy. Such contestation with the Stranger is realized narratively both in The Organ-Recital’s explicit violence against the body, desecrated by the modern technology of the train that interrupts what otherwise appears an idyllic and youthful excursion, and in the implicit violence of the music, the power of the overwhelming public cultural sphere that seeks to swallow the narrator: first in its warmth, then in its music, and finally in its collective, unspoken memories.

No longer is the tramp capable of being merely an individual minding his own business. He must allow traumas to take hold and must allow himself to put down roots, even if that means reaching out to others on the road in migrant communion. It also means speaking the unspeakable by sharing trauma narratives even if “he is well advised to say nothing whatever” (1). These two stories both, in their own way, demonstrate a contest between isolation and community and a conflict that simultaneously inspires a flight from pain and an embrace of suffering. Despite attempts at flight (represented in “A Night at a Cottage”), Hughes’s narrator is confronted with the Stranger’s uncanny return in The Organ-Recital. There is no shaking him through space or time. Increasingly, then, the voluntary vagrant is drawn, willingly or not, into community and the consequences of human relationships. These are feelings that might have resonated with the privileged yet conflicted Oxford undergraduate who had been exposed to the war traumas of his fellow students and was trying to embrace his own traumas while pursuing a
professional calling that persistently demanded freedom from entanglements and responsibilities.

2.4.2 Representation

While some of Hughes's stories reveal a writer who is still "spooked" by the world's most invasive traumas and who flinches from the deep suffering that stirs up the writer's own latent pain, his other stories begin to embrace trauma as a means for a direct expression of that lingering loss. Within the grand scheme of creative and cultural negotiation with the Stranger, Hughes moves in fits and starts toward an acceptance of the Stranger, working past contestation and ultimately choosing cohabitation: His narrators learn to live with ghosts…and as ghosts, forever living within laminated realities and as interdependent denizens of a mortal Cave of Abjection. At this point he is capable of representing the Stranger (whether identified with the Welsh or within the broader conventions of the Anglo-American Gothic) as an equal partner. This enables him to parody what he has always seen as the excesses of the Gothic in order to disengage from stereotype while also beginning to utilize the Gothic as a language that can powerfully inform an exploration of human relationships. In thus "speaking" as the Stranger, he engages in forms of representation that share the joke, open cultural doors, and empower individuals—both the characters and audience of the tale—to shape their own story. In the following three short narratives, Hughes creates a meta-Gothic discourse that speaks to his own development as a writer and his versatility in using representations of Gothic discourse to present the potential for reparative intervention for real-life dramas.

The first story in this group demonstrates Hughes's ability to compartmentalize a desire to thrill by Gothic effects and to recognize that Victorian, Edwardian, and even Georgian forms of the Gothic had become passé. Andrew Smith writes that "the structure of the ghost story often appears less unsettling, as its conventionality and easy-going fireside ambience creates, at least in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a mood which is antithetical to grand metaphysical debate (Gothic 123), and David Punter notes the “shockingly bland tones of M.R.
James” (Literature I 68). “The Victorian Room—and James” (1921) acknowledges this fashionable slump while also indulging in it as a visceral means for children to tell stories that must be told. Appearing in the American humor magazine Life for their September 1, 1921 edition, this first-ever internationally published Hughes story is framed in the magazine layouts by advertisements for hygienic products: Mum deodorant and Resinol skin ointment for women, Ingram’s therapeutic shaving cream for men, and Pepsodent for all. Hughes’s copy seems to follow the lead of the surrounding text-heavy ads, almost as if his story itself has been written as one. From the tone of his story, it is clear that Hughes is in on the joke. The “James” isolated oddly in the title is the designated storyteller within this story, and he makes the most of the opportunity. He begins by mocking the tired tropes of the Gothic genre using a form of the phrase that Edward Bulwer-Lytton made famous: “‘The night is dark and gloomy,’ said James in a pompous voice; ‘let us be banal.’53  ‘That means,’ said Janet, ‘that you have a ghost story you want to tell us’” (30). This playful, childlike version of the Gothic register continues with James apparently creating a story on the fly, but eventually manipulating and inverting Gothic conventions and mastering his audience:

“I was staying with my old friend. . . Thingummy.54 ‘James,’ he said, ‘you won’t mind sleeping in a Haunted Room, will you?’ And I answered. . .”

“Yes, we all know what you answered,” Janet interrupted; “that of course you weren’t afraid, and didn’t believe in ghosts”

“There you are wrong,” said James. “I begged him, with tears, to put me in another room, and told him I was scared to death of them.” (30)55

This lighthearted scene, one Hughes himself could almost be transcribing from his own experience as storyteller to various children during this period, intends to shock and amuse by

53 Bulwer-Lytton’s phrase appears in Paul Clifford (1830).
54 This euphonious yet ridiculous name meaning “What’s-his-name” appears to be a well-known trope of Gothic romance, seen in The Thing in the Woods (1924) by Margery Williams (writing as Harper Williams), as if to create a shorthand stereotype for the Gothic gentleman.
55 This trope, perhaps made most famous by Walter Scott in his “The Tapestried Chamber” (1828), but also used by Bulwer-Lytton in his “The Haunted and the Haunters” (1859), is also used by Hughes’s own mother (under the pseudonym Warren Hughes) in a story called “The Ghosts at Lacy Park” in The Christian World, a widely distributed Victorian/Georgian religious periodical (see Patrick Scott, “Victorian Religious Periodicals”).
reversing expectations at every turn. He continues with just enough violence and gore to stimulate a modern, mostly female readership, always with a nod and a wink:

So I hung my little glass up and put my razor in the hot water, and prepared to shave... I had hardly set my hand to the razor to lift it out, when—happening to glance up—I saw, in the glass—on my bed—a jugulated corpse... I saw that that grinning, twisted mask of a face on the pillow was my own!... The Thing on the bed had me in a thrall: I could not scream; I could not let go of the razor... A diabolical force gripped me; slowly I felt my right hand being raised... Then my hand was drawn back over my shoulder, as if for a terrific slash; and I found myself praying to be allowed to do it quickly. (30-31)

He has his young audience in his own thrall, having playfully manipulated the techniques typical of the genre. And then, once they beg him to continue, he confesses, “The spectre gave one horrid grimace of disappointment and disappeared forever, while I sat down... and thanked Heaven for the safety-razor Janet gave me last Christmas” (31).56

While this is a light-hearted parody, intended merely for groans and laughs, it provides a glimpse at the ways Hughes is changing his representations of the uncanny Stranger, in this case an actual specter. By introducing a modern safety-razor that might as well be pictured in the same column, he inches closer toward a Gothic-modern representation that looks in the glass mirror, laughs at itself, and then surmises how sublime terror and grotesque horror function in a changed and skeptical era. In this he is freely identifying his present mode, and the Gothic discourse in general, as a kind of playful, professional partner, rather than as an inferior genre to be avoided.

A similar dynamic is operating in the ghost stories Hughes designs specifically for broadcasting on the BBC in the early 1950s. The Sitter-In, which aired on March 7, 1951, is steeped in raw Welsh culture, again always laced with humor, and is one of six stories Hughes pledged to write as a standing BBC order for his work. There is some evidence that Hughes had to be wary of censors and program personnel objecting to such material, particularly because of

56 Here Hughes appears to have written in the Christmas ghost story traditions perpetuated through Dickens and M.L. James. Susan Owens writes an engaging explanation of this tradition in The Ghost: A Cultural History (2017), which is featured at Christmas in a review by Lauren Collins in The New Yorker titled “Susan Owens Toasts the Ghosts of Christmases Past.” See also Jake Kerridge’s explanation in The Telegraph.
broadcast times and the desire to protect little ears. The story is simple enough, telling of “an old auntie who was scared of ghosts” (1). The narrator-nephew proceeds to explain how she hasn’t been keen on moving in with him since his house is said to be haunted and ironically “replete with every ancient convenience” (2). In a classic, comic reversal, he speaks of his aunt as “backward” because she doesn’t appreciate the house’s benefits: the stone floors that are easily washed, the stone walls that won’t catch fire, and the well water that is much quicker to draw than from any modern tap (despite its collection point above several overwritten graves). She and her dog, though, are on edge, wary of hauntings. One black night, the narrator is summoned for a search party to find a lost day-tripper. To keep his skittish aunt company, he convinces one Jack Pegleg (a disabled Stranger-storyteller) to “sit in” with her.

After many hours, the nephew returns to join Jack, now outside the house, both having completed their tasks (the ignorant hiker has been found asleep at a local inn). Jack then explains how he has passed the time with the narrator’s aunt. In good Welsh fashion, he has regaled her with one wicked horror tale after another:

I started off about your great-grandmother: how she hanged herself there, left alone like her on a night just like this one. Hanged herself in that great old wide chimney where you’re settin’, I told her; and how they say you see her heels kicking there sometimes . . . And then I told her about your uncle; went crazy and stood behind the door with an axe cutting down his family on the quiet as they came in, big and little, till your dad creeps round to the window at the back with the old gun and shoots him in the kidney. (7)

From this passage it is easy to discern that Hughes was certainly not squeamish about sharing in public (even over broadcast radio) the gory details of Gothic murder.

At precisely midnight, Jack has politely excused himself for having stayed so late. In other words, he has abandoned his post and has left the old woman behind “spinning around and peering . . . with the candle half dropping out of her hand” (8). While Hughes’s first draft seems to soften the ending, explaining that the old woman has merely fainted, the BBC version indicates that a) the aunt has hanged herself in terror or under a ghost’s influence, b) the silent “aunt” is actually a ghost, or c) she may have already died of fright. In Jack, we see another of
Hughes’s many capricious, one-legged characters. Hughes, like Jack, clearly relishes the squirming he hopes to induce and the “jim-jams” he can inspire, especially to a mass audience by means of the radio.

Finally, a story that dates again to Hughes’s time at Oxford on Longwall Street is a tale that appears in several iterations over the course of Hughes’s life, yet is only published within his *Omnibus* (1931). *Dinner for Six*, also called “Laughing at Netta” (and in one greatly abridged version, sent out to *The Forum* in 1931 while Hughes was staying in Connecticut with the Bianco family there,57 known simply as *For Six*), is a ghost story of perspective. While the title *Dinner for Six* implies a community, the alternate “Laughing at Netta” is a title which marks a young girl for ridicule and isolation. While this story is ultimately not a supernatural tale and, like Radcliffian romance, sees the curtain drawn back on the ghost in the machine, it is perhaps the most chilling tale Hughes writes during this period. It is also a launching pad for further explorations of societal quirks—particularly, the place of young women within a web of social graces and disturbing norms.

Netta, from the outset, is depicted as an awkward girl whom the narrator, himself a Stranger damaged by Balkan war horrors, comes to fancy. Orphaned and displaced, she spins an elaborate fantasy for herself in which she saves the Prince of Wales. It is significant that she is not imagining being rescued by a prince. Instead, she projects an agency of which she has been deprived. Like the heroines of so many Gothic romances, she is tortured by members of her adoptive, extended family: Her cousin and her aunt abuse her verbally and emotionally, and the lack of human warmth around her deepens her attachment to her horse.

Yet the “ghost story” that unfolds comes with all the trappings of Gothic atmosphere, the spooky vein once again emerging in self-parody. The shortest version of the story has changed Netta’s name and has reduced the heroine to match Hughes’s earlier Gothic depictions in “The Victorian Room”:

The night was dark and gloomy. The wind howled through the crumbling battlements of the old castle. Owls hooted. The immemorial elms groaned. All the length of the long corridors the carpets writhed in the draught like serpents. As she went to her bed in the lonely room in the East Wing, although she knew her host had thoughtfully allotted it to her as one of the least haunted in the whole mansion, Maria felt a frisson—I might almost call it a brivido—run up her spine. She was—unlike most heroines of stories like this—scared to death of ghosts: always had been, from earliest childhood. Now, she drew the tapestry curtains close across the casements to block out the sinister, watery eye of the moon. (For Six 1)

This last, unpublished version of Netta, whose new name (Maria) taps a far different set of cultural allusions than Hughes’s previous version, is, herself, caught in the net of her circumstances. Her stoop and “gawky grace” have more to do, it would seem, with emotional trauma than with physical maturation. Hughes has changed Netta’s/Maria’s age here from nineteen to seventeen, indicating that the girl must be allowed more time to grow into herself and negotiate her traumas.

This girl’s tale is part of a sad serial: She is constantly critiqued and overlooked by her keepers—who the narrator of Hughes’s published version says were “friends whom I did not, however, like very much” (“Laughing at Netta” 225). While Hughes’s short “Maria” version of this story leaves the heroine alone in her folly on the climactic dark and gloomy night in question, the narrator in the published version is Netta’s eyewitness in slightly voyeuristic fashion. While the gimmick of her story is classic Hughes—she is awakened by clanking chains in the passage, waits in horror, and watches a ghostly figure move around the bed. . . only to discover that the butler has walked in his sleep and has set places for six around her bed—it is the reception of Netta’s story (within the tale) that is jarring and predictive of Hughes’s future work. The family, waking in the morning to look in on Netta, sees the scene and begins a raucous and unusually cruel display of laughter. In their keeping, Netta will never be anything other than Strange.

Hughes’s ending feels like a Gothic nightmare and is similar to the treatment Hughes relates for another female protagonist, Martha, in a story discussed later in this study. Hughes’s gnomic narrators often do not tidy up his endings, and the traumas linger long beyond the last lines of his narratives. This feature causes those who hold the book to look for more, as if a
Hughes implies by this a necessarily inward vector for moral truth. In a letter requesting help and comment from Hughes for her master’s thesis at the University of Maine, Louise Barden writes,

> Several of your works concern the problem of what justice is. Should Lowrie have killed her brother? Should Mr. Williams have gone to heaven? Wasn’t it wrong for Alison to laugh at Netta’s fright? I asked myself these questions. I would like to know whether in writing your plays, stories, and novels you consciously deal with the problem of justice or whether this theme is an undercurrent which has found its way into the works I have mentioned and others accidentally. (Letter from Louise Barden [8 Sept. 1966])

Lucy McEntee, writing for Hughes (who is in the midst of trying to write his next novel), refers Barden to John Swanson, a scholar who is preparing a critical work on Hughes—one that was never published. Appropriately, even the question of Hughes’s intentions regarding justice must be left open-ended, as if the answer must lie with readers and not with authors.

This story—in its final form—inspires empathy for the Stranger’s traumas. Hughes has moved from the shock and awe of typical, traditional campfire “contestation” stories toward a modern probing of psychology in “representation.” In representing the Stranger here, Hughes is consciously mediating and taking a therapeutic stance, calling on readers to find Strangers of their own who have faced similar derision or worse.

### 2.4.3 Identification

To this point, Hughes’s hauntings have been experienced on the exterior, often by narrators who, able to tell their stories, must have experienced—and survived—their own violence. The vagabond encounters ghosts because he has no permanent dwelling, the young girl sees ghosts as a displaced orphan, and an aunt is subjected to ghost stories in a house she never wanted to enter. In the following stories, for the first time, the haunting truly comes home. The following three ghost stories involve a narrator who has moved beyond contestation and mere representation of the Stranger. In all three of the following instances, the narrative voice identifies with the Stranger. This deep identification is horrifying while also indicating a more complete—and thus healthier—identification with suffering and trauma.
A first example of this identification emerges gradually from *The Overcoat*, another traditional, Hughes ghost story (broadcast on July 17, 1951, as part of BBC television’s afternoon program). As such, it represents one of Hughes’s only television appearances, the spectacle of the author reading his own work. Its title (like that of “Netta”) shifted over time, and at one point it was also suggestively known to Hughes as *Passport to Broadmoor*, although he seems to have gone back to the original in his submission to his American agent.\(^{58}\) The broadcast version retains the title that associates it with Dostoevsky and Gogol and which, once again, highlights an uncanny object while also conserving words.

Hughes wrote an opening to the broadcast that indicates both an immediacy and the potential for transformation:

> Well, this story the announcer has just told you the title of—*The Overcoat*. As a matter of fact I’ve only just written it—the paint’s still wet, so to speak. It hasn’t even got a proper ending, for certain. I want you to look out for that, perhaps you’ll think of a better one for me. I’m going to read it instead of telling it because it’s a written sort of story. They’re very different, you know. I’m afraid you may find it a bit macabre for three o’clock in the afternoon, but you’ll have to put up with that. I’ve made it an “S” story. (Overcoat)

While it is unclear to what, exactly, an “S” story might refer (Suspense? Scary?), the word “Stranger” seems an apt if unintended match. In this story the narrator takes on the guise of the Strangest Other—the killer. Becoming the Stranger might, in certain cases, seem socially and emotionally counterproductive. Misanthropic Strangers are certainly the product of broader social and personal traumas, yet those individuals are still perpetrators and not merely victims. Nevertheless, an empathic transformation into an estranged murderer bestows perspective. Even here, vicariously becoming the Stranger indicates the crossing of thresholds and the restoring of agency even for—and perhaps especially for—the criminal.

Without question, this is a story of a domestic haunting that probes more personally than Hughes’s other short fiction. One of several “haunted house” narratives he created, along with “A Night at a Cottage,” *The Organ-Recital*, and “Laughing at Netta,” this story’s hauntedness is

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\(^{58}\) In a letter from Hughes’s agent Jean LeRoy at Pearn, Pollinger, and Higham, LeRoy uses both titles and asks for a revised version (8 Aug. 1951).
a direct invasion of domestic order. Considering its nature as a television broadcast, it is important to note the role that the media play in the story’s plot and in its delivery. It begins with ethics and ends in murder, and in between the protagonist visits the cinema. Discovering an item of “creepy” clothing that seems to move by itself, reappearing in odd locations around his rooms to the chagrin of both the narrator and his housekeeper (Mrs. Anson), the narrator is amazed (yet still somewhat unfazed) as it continues to reappear—even on his body—constricting him and his movement, and finally beginning to ooze blood from its sleeve so that he doesn’t dare check it at the cinema or take it off at all. In the end he tells listeners/viewers that “I must be imagining it, of course, but it seems to me to be getting tighter. All the way down. I can’t move my legs properly; and the chest—I can’t properly take a deep breath. But it’s the collar: that’s what seems to be getting tightest. It has been getting tighter—all the—time I’ve been speaking …” (Overcoat 8).

The BBC version, as promised, leaves the ending open. Nevertheless, in an unpublished version that Hughes sought to sell to a periodical, he adds an underlined ending (as if still debating its merit):

_The Home Office alienist sat back and watched his colleague, as the latter pushed away the last of the neatly written pages. “Typical,” he said. “Odd he should actually mention schizophrenia, though: very unusual.”_

“Coherent,” said the other, “and circumstantial in detail, but he doesn’t realize at all where he is—or what is cooking, if you’ll forgive the expression.”

“Apart from that last line.”

“Granted. But at any rate he clearly doesn’t admit to himself—well, to begin with, even that Mrs. Anson is dead …” (Overcoat 7-8)

While the original draft has left this an uncanny tale of a sentient object, the revision seeks a psychological explanation. Both types of Gothic narratives were in Hughes’s repertoire, and he seems very amenable to adapt his stories to meet the needs of the audience, even allowing its members to write their own endings for him.59

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59 This matches Hughes’s therapeutic vision for storytelling, demonstrated when he utilized interactive storytelling with evacuee children during World War II (see the “Foreword” to The Wonder-Dog [1977]).
In considering the essence of the tale, it is very important to account for the way the narrator treats Mrs. Anson, below him in rank and class, and how this might ultimately cast guilt on the “master.” When taken as a narrative of class struggle, rather than merely a study in psychology, the coat, coded as “foreign” and “queer” (*Overcoat 2*), achieves agency against the narrator’s will. It seeks to write its own story and to keep the narrator from shirking responsibility for his role in perpetuating society’s ills. Thus, it is a tale of social performativity: The coat is (re)creating a murder scene, just as the cinema does, and the narrator is unable to control this performance. He doesn’t want to “make a scene” by ripping off the coat in the restaurant or leaving it in the coat check where someone will see it. Instead, he can only succumb to its influence. It will be seen—on television—as taking possession of the narrator (the visible Hughes) and his words before a mass audience.

Finally, this is a tale of gender and power: Mrs. Anson is very much at the heart of the conflict created by the author’s on-going negotiations with this coat. The perception that she has gone “out of her senses” by moving the coat around the house indicates the extent to which he perceives that she exercises control over his life. Finding a blond hair in the coat, the housekeeper intimates that its wearer, if married, is carrying on an affair. Later, the narrator’s nameless companion (“a very respectable lady”) “took my arm to cross the road” (*Overcoat 7*). That same companion then notices the sticky fluid on his sleeve and leads him to discover his arm soaked in blood. At almost every turn, the female figures he has sought to control by giving orders (or through disciplining, narrative descriptions) ultimately control the progress of the tale. The threat of suffocation, then, may be a deep-seated fear of influence and of female control.

The influential coat is the Stranger here, and it will have its due in the end, re-establishing its agency despite its association with the foreign, the queer, the female, and the dead. It has consumed the narrator—and the author, who seems resigned to this new status quo, allowing himself to be clothed in the Stranger’s identity. He has thus been completely transformed into the murdering Stranger.
This healthier identification with the traumas represented in the unhealthy Stranger are even stronger in a tale that was widely published both in England and in the U.S. At the same time Hughes was negotiating new life for The Overcoat (despite its broadcast on the BBC and the prohibitions of some magazines against prior dissemination over the airwaves), Hughes was also responding to a serious offer to make a short, 30-minute film from his story “The Ghost” (1926), also called “The Ghost in Rope Street” for its U.S. publication in the October 1929 issue of Vanity Fair.

The jarring first line of Hughes’s “The Ghost in Rope Street” (“He killed me quite easily. . . “ [74]) helps us enter the spirit’s thoughts as she progresses down the street, recounting the violence that has liberated her from life. Millie follows the husband who has killed her, howling at him, amazed that he seems to see her and that mortals in windows above respond to her cries: “I would haunt him. All my life I had been afraid of ghosts: now I was one myself, I would get a bit of my own back” (“Ghost in Rope” 74). Nevertheless, she is still afraid of him, even in death: “Silly for me—a spirit—to be afeard of his solid flesh: but there you are, fear doesn’t act as you would expect, ever, and I gave back before him, then slipped aside to let him pass” (74). Her hate, gone in her experience of death, soon returns along with her fear. Yet there is a connection she feels with this man who has betrayed her with another.

Hughes then has his female persona conjure the leaves of the plane-trees—leaves so familiar to readers of Hughes’s short stories: “I made those dead leaves rise up on their thin edges, as if the wind was doing it. All along Pole Street they followed him, pattering on the roadway with their five dry fingers” (74). Yet her efforts to haunt John have no effect. Instead, she hears a voice telling her to “Leave him, Millie, before it is too late!” (74), and she decides to abandon her haunting in order to gain heaven. Yet she finds it “[s]trange, that I should be so real to all those people that they thought me still a living woman: but he—who had most reason to fear me, why, it seemed doubtful whether he even saw me” (74, 132).
Yet John continues down Rope Street and heads directly for the police station. It appears he has had a change of heart and will turn himself in for Millie’s murder. Millie, feeling deep regret, tries to convince John not to throw his life away, but as the police emerge from the station, hearing her cries, she realizes that she is alive and that the John she has killed with a hammer is dead. Poignantly, the policemen pity her, seeing that her mind has been compromised by the traumas she has experienced. . . and inflicted.

Readers here only know Millie’s truth, and even at the end there is a residual influence from her words, both spoken and unspoken: While she may be mere flesh and blood, she has conjured John’s ghost to redeem her own soul. The key for scholars of Hughes is to see that, once again, he has put on the persona of the Stranger, the “Ghost” of the story’s title. Displaced by an affair that is most certainly real, Millie has taken matters into her own hands. Readers, just like the law enforcement officers who take her into custody, feel her pain in spite of the violence of her crime. This is, perhaps, Hughes’s most striking transformation as he seeks to walk in a female murderer’s shoes. While the strength of his portrayal is blunted by the woman’s crumbling remorse at the story’s end, that, too, reveals Hughes’s perception that justice will most certainly follow trauma. In becoming the Stranger, readers (with the narrator) feel the Ghost’s pain and are drawn toward her inevitable fate.

Finally, one story from all of those Hughes crafted highlights the personal crises he felt he must address as an heir to numerous literary legacies (in Masefield, Yeats, T.E. Lawrence, D.H. Lawrence, Robert Graves, and A.E. Coppard—not to mention his own grandfather and mother). This last story strikes an informed reader as especially revealing of his authorial state of mind: always indebted to others yet seeking desperately for distance and autonomy. As Hughes has adopted more and more diverse perspectives for his Gothic tales, he has maintained a distance from the violence of the story’s narratives, sometimes with humor and other times by establishing his narrators as witnesses but not participants in the horrors they experience. In this final story, an unpublished, Longwall-Street story, Hughes identifies with the
Stranger not by means of a first-person narrator or gimmicks that preclude him from continuing his tale, but by the core issue which necessarily drives his literary and cultural production: the integrity of his own intellectual property.

“The Conjuror” (c. 1921) considers the conflicted nature of the artist and the “violent” crime so frequently committed by those taking credit for someone else’s work. Hughes began his career with professional input from every side: His mother, his godfather, and his mentors at Oxford all provided pieces that helped him fashion his own picture of himself. By the end of the Roaring Twenties, Hughes had made a name for himself and, just before the Crash of ‘29, which the Halloween issue of Vanity Fair uncannily portends with its ads for Bank of America and Marcus & Company jewelers flanking the conclusion of his “Ghost in Rope Street” story, he has been able to bask in the glow of rave reviews for his first novel, A High Wind in Jamaica (1929). Nevertheless, despite these accolades and his general openness to any and all inspiration, Hughes chafed at suggestions that his tales were derivative.

Hughes’s “The Conjuror,” most likely written at the beginning of his successful decade but never published, tells of the “Warrender Series of Experiments,” spiritualist endeavors that have left scholars scratching heads and vowing to expose Warrender’s secrets. Instead of playing along and letting others in his profession in on the art of his methods, Warrender, an avowed medium, refuses. He only credits supernatural forces. He explains that “he was not clever at all: that though he could draw a dead man’s soul out of his photograph he would find himself utterly unable to draw a rabbit out of a hat” (2). Even his rival, the famed conjuror-magician Du Maret—who never reveals the art behind his spectacle yet stands in an honorable

60 This spiritualist obsession mirrors the boom in such activities after World War I and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, a period during which many sought ways to contact dead loved ones. Most famous from this period is the work of Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini to debunk—or affirm—purported spiritualist activities (see Lyn Gardner’s “Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle: A Friendship Split by Spiritualism”). See also a parallel in the wake of the Covid Pandemic of 2019 (John Blake, “They Lost Their Loved Ones to Covid. Then They Heard from Them Again”).
vocation that marks him as a genius rather than a fiend—refuses to participate in Warrender's debunking. And yet, readers are reminded repeatedly that appearances are deceiving: While Warrender appears kindly and benign, he must be in league with the devil; while Du Maret has the sinister marks of evil on him and “looked the necromancer” (94), he is the toast of a dinner party in his honor for forty years of connoisseurship in “conjuring.” The proposer of Du Maret’s toast credits Du Maret and condemns charlatans (like Warrender) who

are unable to take an artist’s pride in a good trick well done: they refuse to accept the laurels that are their due, but defer the credit to some spirit or demon whom we must presume quite unable to appreciate it . . . we should more reasonably expect you, Mr. Du Maret . . . to claim to do by your natural cleverness what really was performed by demoniac aid. (5)

As Du Maret accepts these accolades, the speaker is suddenly cut off in mid-sentence while Du Maret himself, “white as lard, rose to his feet, crushing his port-glass between his fingers: shuddered out a half-sobbing groan, and staggered quickly out of the room” (5). Warrender is seen hissing at him from the doorway the one word “Impostor” (5), and neither the toaster nor Du Maret are ever seen again.

While resisting the biographical fallacy, scholars can read in this last story the shadows of correspondence between the actors in this professional drama and the author of the story himself. Hughes is quite clearly identifying with the Stranger here. Warrender, as a graduate of “one of the more obscure Oxford colleges” (1), can stand in for Hughes, but so can Du Maret. On one hand is the novice at the beginning of a decade of notoriety who has conjured without knowing how; on the other is the master at the end of a decade who is tempted to deny credit for the modeling and mentoring that he has consciously incorporated into his own life’s work.

For Hughes, the Stranger represents both curses and blessings. He freely acknowledged that all his stories were from life. They had been based on research. Even in his earliest interviews, he acknowledges that his most famous novel comes directly from a letter
written by pirate-survivor Jeanette Calder and shown to him by a family friend.\textsuperscript{61} Nevertheless, Hughes also sought to correct those who believed his story to be derivative of other novels.\textsuperscript{62} For example, he emphasized that his work was written before William Golding’s \textit{Lord of the Flies} (with which \textit{A High Wind in Jamaica} is often compared) and appeared implicitly to critique Golding’s work as he re-wrote Golding’s narrative as a screenplay.\textsuperscript{63} While Hughes freely acknowledged some debts, he was, understandably, not inclined to give away all claims to his intellectual property.\textsuperscript{64}

Both Warrender and Du Maret have made deals with the devil, yet only Warrender, the novice, acknowledges his debt. Thus, Du Maret refuses to police his counterpart out of fear that he himself will be revealed as a fraud. Like Warrender and Du Maret, Hughes—the young writer/conjuror of this story—is conflicted. He believes in the power of his craft, yet his debts (to his family, to other writers, and to the Stranger-driven experiences that have shaped him) haunt him and speak to him the word “imposter!”

This last story’s place as part of the author’s very personal negotiations with the Gothic Stranger—beginning in contestation, continuing in representation, and culminating in identification—highlights the ambiguous, Faustian bargain that recurs across his writing.

Hughes accomplishes his uncanny identification with the Gothic Stranger not by intimating that

\textsuperscript{61} While Calder’s original letter is not in Hughes’s personal papers, see correspondence from Calder’s niece, Jeanette Calder Holland, relating information beyond Ms. Calder’s original letter (Letter to Richard Hughes [28 June 1938]).

\textsuperscript{62} An exchange of correspondence with Christina Duff Stewart, a scholar who seeks to make a connection between Hughes’s novel and another earlier work, is telling. Stewart writes, “Now, the correspondences between two chapters of [The Young Islanders] & your High Wind in Jamaica are too extraordinary to be ignored—and I am wondering if perhaps you read this book as a child?” (Letter to Richard Hughes [28 Sep. 1969]). Hughes politely but adamantly denies any correspondence once Duff has sent him a copy of the out-of-print text: “Just to get the record straight, it isn’t merely that I ‘don’t remember’ having read ‘The Islanders’: I am certain that I hadn’t read it, and indeed know it. Wouldn’t have attracted me as a boy. Again, I fail to see where you find the ‘startling resemblances’ in High Wind” (Letter to Duff Stewart [13 Apr. 1970]).

\textsuperscript{63} See Michael Titlestad’s explanations in “This Is Not the Way the World Ends: Richard Hughes’s Rejoinder to William Golding’s \textit{Lord of the Flies}” (2017).

\textsuperscript{64} Tellingly, Hughes likes to describe his work as the hatching of cuckoo’s eggs—material from the author is deposited in readers’ “nests” for them to hatch. Furthermore, it might be said that expressions of cultural production are “eggs” from elsewhere that an author is compelled—sometimes guiltily—to make his own (see Richard Poole’s “Introduction” [1982] 12-13).
a bargain has been *struck* with the Devil, for the author (speaking through the narrator) seems to indicate that every vocation is a kind of negotiation with power. Instead, Hughes emphasizes that the bargain has been fraudulently *concealed*. By acknowledging that all are Strangers, unknown by the masses yet intimately known by a few, Hughes plays with themes such as power, purpose, and influence. He treats these subjects as a means for therapeutic reparation and as a path forward toward a non-tragic sequel. While traumas are common to the human predicament, and while power is distributed unequally and unfairly, there is reparative potential in the acknowledgement of debts and the realization of human dependencies. Hughes’s writing will continue to pursue these negotiations with the Stranger in his poetry, his novels, his dramas, and his screenplays.
CHAPTER 3

“LONG-LEGGED GHOSTS”: HUGHES’S POETRY

The Gothic, with its constant reminders of human limitations and mortality, runs counter to the modern narrative of progress. Modernist poetry, such as Carl Sandburg’s “I Am the People, the Mob” (1916), Ezra Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly” (1920), and T.S. Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” (1925), celebrates newness and radical change (at least in its forms). Nevertheless, haunted by specters of the past, it also concedes the potential for modernity’s “accelerated grimace” to hollow out tradition, to elevate the aggregate while dangerously overshadowing the individual, and to fill the vacuum with violence. In his poetry, Richard Hughes crystalizes these different tendencies of the Gothic and modernism by embracing experimentation and novel expression while also clinging to a disappearing past. Counter-intuitively, Hughes leverages the death imagery of the Gothic to oppose modern nihilism with a new death poetics, an aesthetic of shared abjection. Like his short stories, Richard Hughes’s poetry utilizes the Gothic to orient a modern reader toward his conviction that the excesses of death are a means for therapeutic reparation. This reparation manifests itself within—yet is also subversive to—the traditions of the memento mori, medievally conceived reminders that the body must decay as the result of human sin. Hughes’s Gothic poetry writes against this mortal grain, asserting human agency over the forces of death and annihilation.

While Hughes’s short stories can be cited as precursors to his critically acclaimed and popularly successful novels, his poetry is generally discarded as inferior or irrelevant to the writer’s aesthetic vision and professional growth. Hughes’s poems require further scholarly attention as companion pieces to his fiction in his pursuit of a therapeutic aesthetic. Hughes writes of the joy that compelled him to construct brief, memorized verses and tales from his

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1 Pound, in “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,” disparages modernist consumerism (its “accelerated grimace”) even as he readily makes a radical shift from his traditional verse forms toward more experimental verse, presumably to remain relevant within the cultural economy (see Rainey’s discussions in Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture [1998]).
earliest years, speaking them for his mother to transcribe. It is this same aesthetic euphoria that Hughes shapes into defiantly reparative negotiation in his darkest works. Hughes understands that both the writer and the reader approach the communicative act of writing from a place of trauma. The reparative reader (in partnership or conflict with the reparative author) thus seeks therapeutic release and restoration by means of social negotiation.

Even though Hughes compiled only two books of poems, his pieces appeared in the day’s most respected journals, reviews, and little magazines. Specifically, what the present study terms his “Gothic-modern” poems touch on vagrancy, despair, and death, and they provide Hughes a means for refining and expanding his therapeutic literary vision beyond traditional myths or ghost stories. Specifically, Hughes utilizes the Gothic personae of the Pirate and the Gypsy to engage with five types of abject dismemberment. It is Hughes’s Gothic content which emerges repeatedly in spite of his status as a modernist writer. This Gothically inflected “spectrality effect,” a textual lamination by which a textual mode is present and not present at the same time, is posited by Julian Wolfreys, who reminds scholars “that the gothic is not out there, far afield, not in a foreign and exotic place but right here, with us and in us, ingested and inscribed, and actively haunts our shared identity” (Victorian Hauntings 50). While only a few of Hughes’s poems traffic specifically in the traditional Gothic mode, espousing Gothic content and telling ghost stories, a large majority of Hughes’s poetic production is obliquely Gothic, inflected by its tropes or expressing Gothic sensibilities in its portrayal of the natural world, of human character and relationships, and of life’s capricious exigencies that shape human society and

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2 In his retrospective “Eheu Fugaces,” Hughes writes: “When I felt too happy to bear it I used to hide in the laurel bushes, and puddle about there with words (as if they were mud pies) until I had put together some sort of piece of rhyme. Then I carried it carefully to my mother, trying hard not to forget it on the way. I said it over to her, and watched her write it down in a little notebook. Once this was done I was free to forget it.”

3 The term “spectrality effect” is associated with Derrida’s Specters of Marx (1994), but it is David Glover’s analysis of Marshall Berman’s haunted modernism that is key here (“The ‘Spectrality Effect’ in Early Modernism” in Gothic Modernisms), demonstrating that Hughes’s texts (with those of other modernists) are temporally laminated, continually haunted by the past even while passionately seeking progress in the present and for the future.
culture. Most importantly, the traumas that Hughes depicts are addressed in Gothic terms and express a therapeutic imperative. This chapter will thus explore the various ways Hughes’s poems reflect the spectrality of a “haunting” past overlapping a “haunted” present and the therapeutic intervention this overlapping requires.

By studying Hughes’s poems, it is possible to discern a consistent engagement with both the Gothic and the modern that parallels his work with fiction and drama. His theoretical interactions with other poets, his culturally significant contributions to little magazines, and his assertions of a place for life amid death frame the poetic vision that continues to influence his writing in other genres contemporaneously and throughout his life. The present chapter will outline reparative strategies for his poetry that include the following: the manipulation of “association-ghosts” (an array of connoted idea-images, or *eidola*, that cling culturally to linguistic units) to convey a multiplicity of meaning and experience, an acknowledgement of various dismemberments (legal, moral, social, cultural, and spiritual), and a process of remembering that honors loss while also pointing toward potential reclamation or enhancement of agency. Finally, in confronting death, Hughes emphasizes the body as a contested site over which cultural forces of life and death battle for supremacy. In particular, his poems focus on the female body’s unique struggle for agency within a misogynistic milieu.

3.1 A Ghost Theory of Poetry: An Interpretive Community

The emergence of Hughes’s poetics within a specific interpretive community can be pinpointed precisely to the *annus mirabilis*. In the June 1922 number of the American periodical *The Bookman*, Hughes joins the broad and rapidly fermenting theoretical conversation among neo-Georgians and the avant-garde, defending Graves’s poetry (against American critic Louis Untermeyer’s “splenetic attack in *The New Republic,*” an attack which would be followed by Eliot-disciple Conrad Aiken’s in November of that year) while also lauding his friend Graves’s latest work, *On English Poetry* (1922): “Of books now in the press one of the most obviously important will be Mr. Graves's rather revolutionary work on the psychology and psychological
Hughes’s technique of poetry” (438). Hughes terms Graves’s volume “a Book of Wisdom” and asserts that “there can be no doubt” regarding “its widespread effect” (438).

Hughes’s poetics is built on Graves’s “Ghost Theory of Poetry,” the assertion that verse is comprised of association-ghosts, connotations of sense and image that attach spectrally to words. Hughes’s iteration of this theory seeks to reconcile avant-garde and neo-Georgian versions of modernism. In an unposted, twelve-page letter to Amabel (Strachey) Williams-Ellis, the literary editor of *The Spectator* whom he has only just met, he terms his own version of Graves’s poetics an “Athanasian Creed” (referencing the expanded ecumenical Christian creed that is known for its particularity, repetition, and perceived verbosity). Tellingly, he explains to Williams-Ellis that his credo has been born of trauma: his chronic appendicitis. His aesthetic stance, then, is intimately connected to pain.

By most conventional accounts, Hughes failed as a poet. This chapter will nevertheless examine his poetry to outline its Gothic character and to examine its function as a vehicle for trauma therapy. In fact, his Gothically inflected poetry was incorporated enthusiastically into a culture industry of modernist little magazines that shaped high modernism at large and eventually established a global and institutional modernist hegemony. Nevertheless, his work

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4 Hughes’s rebuttal of Untermeyer’s critique (“Dirge for a Georgian,” 12 Oct. 1921) of Graves’s *Pier Glass* (1921) is followed by an unusually harsh review of *On English Poetry* by Conrad Aiken (“Sludgery,” 22 Nov. 1922), a clear paradigm shift in the wake of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) and a rush to issue a postmortem for Georgian poetry. Untermeyer’s later embrace of Hughes’s work and his efforts to chronicle Georgian poetry are notable considering this vigorous, early, transatlantic debate regarding the nature and state of modernist poetry.

5 Hughes explains that he has been reading H.L. Mencken’s commentary on poetic inspiration in Thomas Moul’s *Voices* and has concluded that pain produces literature. Hughes would ultimately require an appendectomy, but this painful, 12-hour episode produced his first one-act play, *The Sisters’ Tragedy* (1921), in addition to this manifesto. This became a more polished piece, “A Preface to his Poetry” (intended to introduce *Gipsy-Night* [1922] but only published posthumously in *Fiction as Truth* [1983]).

6 R.P. Graves, Hughes’s authorized biographer, states plainly amid his generally glowing assessment that “*Gipsy-Night and Other Poems* had been a critical and commercial disaster, with the only decent review in the *Spectator*, no more than 250 copies sold in England, and only 130 in America” (*Richard* 93).
(like that of other authors who left a faint mark in verse but succeeded elsewhere) is often overlooked as a mere steppingstone for more suitable genres.\(^7\)

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize a place for Hughes’s poems within the modernist-magazine publishing industry. Among the few dozen poems published during this early period of Hughes’s career (with each magazine choosing to print approximately 50-60 poems per year), his work represents a validating percentage of editorial selections, and his poems appear in these contexts alongside the contributions of the most prominent names of the time.\(^8\) Despite their nature as springboards toward other genres, Hughes’s poems—perhaps even more than his short stories—are revenants, republished in different places at different times, often revealing a spectral mobility and flexibility that haunts him long after he has moved on.\(^9\)

It is necessary, from the beginning, to address Hughes’s formation as a poet (and ultimately as a writer) in the critical year 1921, as he developed a theory of poetry that was, in part, derived from the little magazines he was consuming; the artistic influences of John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, and Robert Graves; and his processing of poetry volumes he had studied.

\(^7\) In their British Library compilation *British Poetry Magazines, 1914-2000* (2006), David Miller and Richard Price explain that “[p]erhaps because of the language-saturated qualities of poetry, and the dominance of poetry within little magazines, authors who begin their early careers with poems may go on to find a quite different literary form more suited to them. The playwright Harold Pinter and the novelist Ian Rankin, for example, each tried poetry before they had successes in the genre for which they would find Renown” (xii).


\(^9\) For example, long after Richard Hughes had gained fame and then experienced diminishing acclaim as a poet, his poems were being reproduced in far-flung periodicals and anthologies. Almost sixty years after its initial publication in his *Confessio Juvenis* (1926), Hughes’s short poem “When Shall I See Gold?” appeared, interestingly, in the fanzine *Fantasy and Terror* (1985). In spite of its lack of overt Gothic content, the poem clings to a lingering yet almost counterintuitive association between Hughes and the Gothic.
been reviewing for the *Westminster Gazette*. Most importantly at this seminal moment, he was influenced by (and conveyed influence on) both the poet Robert Graves and the poetry critic Amabel (Strachey) Williams-Ellis, daughter of the *Spectator*’s John St Loe Strachey (as well as cousin to Lytton Strachey of the Bloomsbury Group and James Strachey, translator of Freud) and editor of *The Spectator*’s poetry section. The comments Hughes makes to Williams-Ellis in his October 7, 1921, manifesto are significant enough, particularly regarding Robert Graves’s “ghost theory” of poetry eventually published in *On English Poetry* (1922), that Williams-Ellis includes similar theoretical discussions in her *Anatomy of Poetry* (1922), published at precisely the same moment. The mutual impact of the members of this interpretive community on one another’s work has not previously been explored by scholars.

Graves’s *On English Poetry*, a casual, writer-centered manual for understanding and composing poetry, treats a wide range of subjects, including the source for poetic inspiration (“Inspiration”), the poet’s burden of manipulating language that always already belongs to others (“Naughty Boy”), and the nature of poetry not as a science but as an act of faith (“Moving Mountains”). It is a decidedly impressionistic text, yet its unifying theme is that of Freudian psychoanalysis and the nature of poetry as sublimated conflict and subconsciously fermented dreams. These expansive strands are tied together in what both Richard Hughes and Amabel

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10 Richard Poole lists in his Hughes bibliography several volumes of poetry reviewed for the *Saturday Westminster Gazette* in 1920, including one by the Tramp Poet, W.H. Davies (244). Later, in 1923 (as Hughes is increasingly consumed with reviewing the work of other writers), Williams-Ellis writes him a light-hearted note: “Do you remember I said that I would teach you to review books without reading them?” (Letter to Richard Hughes [3 Jan. 1923]).

11 Hughes writes that, in considering the material of poetry, “[s]o comes R[obert] G[raves]’s ghost-theory of words. At first, when my sole occupation was ‘how to do it’ I was frightfully bucked with this. Next. I reacted, and by what I now think was a false analogy to the theory of cubism (of which I was just becoming aware) I thought that it could only be productive of sentimental literature. But now that I regard the material of sentiment as the same as the raw material of poetry (or possibly so) it comes back into importance. The number of ‘ghosts’ of associations, stimuli, which hang on the skirts of every word are legion: big ghosts, little ghosts, all kinds—it is they that are the material of poetry, in the sense that abstract colour and form are the material of the artist. A poet cannot afford to let any of the associations of a word pass quite out of his mind: they have all to come into the pattern; and it is here that the infinite complexity of poetry comes in” (Letter [unposted] to Amabel Williams-Ellis [7 Oct. 1921]).
Williams-Ellis call “the Ghost theory of words” (“A Preface” 23),12 Graves’s understanding that patterns and ghosts surround us and pervade the creation of poetry.13

Williams-Ellis’s contemporaneous manual for criticism (called The Anatomy of Poetry [1922]), emerges during a period when Hughes and Williams-Ellis (along with Graves) have been privately formulating the terms of this discourse. While Graves is certainly the catalyst, Hughes influences (and is influenced by) Williams-Ellis’s recapitulation of Graves’s ghost theory. In Williams-Ellis’s criticism, she defers immediately to Graves’s work, explaining that On English Poetry is “[t]he book to which the present volume owes so much” (215). Like Hughes, though, she is also eager to discipline the spirit of Graves’s work. First, while admitting her debt, she does not relinquish the institutional power of her position as poetry critic at the Spectator, stating almost as a disclaimer that “[t]here is only one piece of advice that I should give to the reader, and that is (contrary to the wise procedure with most poets) to read Mr. Graves’ theory before his practice” (215).

These three poet-critics form an interpretive community, fashioning a spectral theory of poetry that shapes their individual cultural production from this point forward. To express the lingering influences of such creative communities (and of the entire human community as a whole), Julian Wolfreys asserts that all writing—whether poetry or criticism—is “ghost writing.”14 In particular, scholarly writing is haunted by citation. Wolfreys reminds scholars that “[c]itation haunts criticism and, more generally, it haunts all reading and writing” (“Citation’s Haunt”).

12 While no discrete portion of Graves’s manual treats this theory at length, it is best explained in the following passage: “BOUND up with the business of controlling the association-ghosts which haunt in their millions every word of the English language, there is the great mesmeric art of giving mere fancy an illusion of solid substance. The chief way this is done, and nobody has ever done it better than Keats is constantly to make appeals to each of the different bodily senses, especially those more elementary ones of taste, touch, smell, until they have unconsciously built up a scene which is as real as anything can be” (On English 71)
13 See Hugh Haughton, “Graves and Ghosts,” in Gravesiana. Haughton traces both Graves’s “Ghost Theory” of poetry and the poet’s interest in haunting in general. Haughton mentions Graves’s belief in the hauntedness of modern poetry, whereby a reader is alone with haunted poetry, assailed by images and associations, without the poet as “protector.”
14 Wolfreys writes that “every text is haunted. There is no narrative, no story, which is not, in essence or in spirit, a ghost story” (“Spectrality” 639).
Wolfreys continues by explaining that, even for his own characteristic use of Derrida’s terminology, “[t]he effect of such ghosting or hovering takes place beyond these obvious locations, however; overflowing, even to the point of excess in what might be called style or imitation of style” (“Citation’s Haunt”). While it is always an oversimplification to attribute similarities in content, style, or terminology to “influence,” the haunting of intertextuality and the revenance of citation must be addressed since “[w]riting without citation is impossible” (“Citation’s Haunt”). An understanding of Hughes’s negotiations with the critical ghosts of Graves and Williams-Ellis helps to frame the emergence of his own poetic voice.

Hughes asserts his own poetic identity while acknowledging his debts to Graves (and to Williams-Ellis). While Graves adopted an inward view of poetry, evidenced by Williams-Ellis’s understanding that many readers of his poetry might need the poet’s own guidebook to help them along, Hughes was convinced that each human being, while clearly a “neurotic animal,” cannot be reduced to that. Hughes explains in the preface to *Gipsy-Night* (1922) that

> I do not wish to oppose [Graves’s] thesis, but only to suggest that though true, it is only a partial truth: and that to make it the sole criterion of poetry would be damning: that as well as being a neurotic animal, Man is a Communicative Animal, and a Pattern-making Animal: that poetry cannot be traced simply to a sort of automatic psycho-therapy, but that these and many other causes are co-responsible. (11)

Just as Hughes demonstrates in this quotation a progression from neurotic, to communicative, to pattern-making, his poetry provides a path forward that builds on Graves’s psychoanalytically based poetics. This progression is reparative in nature, equipping human subjects not for complete recovery but for the discovery of new pathways. This reparative sequence, contrary to Graves’s emphasis on self-discovery, is outward-directed. It is not merely a means for soothing one’s own soul, but also for providing others with similar therapeutic recourse. While the human Neurotic Animal, faced with a life of physical and spiritual disorders of motion and sense, tends toward solipsism, the human Communicative Animal, even in despair, must share with an audience. But the human Pattern-Making Animal, examining and contesting the recurring and
inexorable consequences of death, desires reparation, no matter how inadequate such repair might appear to the parties involved.

3.2 The Neurotic Animal: Aesthetic Dismembering

A study of Hughes’s poetry must acknowledge his acceptance of Graves’s emphasis on the human being as a neurotic animal. Nevertheless, while Graves has admittedly created verse to heal himself, Hughes is more concerned with therapeutic effects on an external, imagined audience, what Benedict Anderson has termed the “imagined community”\(^\text{15}\) and Wayne C. Booth the “implied reader.”\(^\text{16}\) While there is always an Other-inspired element to Hughes’s verse, there is, more importantly, an Other-directed element that drives each poem and that, the present study asserts, convinced him to switch genres in order to communicate directly with more readers at a crucial period in human history.

Like Graves’s verse, Hughes’s poetry can be viewed, along with his other literary and critical work, as trauma therapy. Hughes writes that “a psycho-therapeutist, in fact, might set up with the Oxford Book of English Verse as his sole dispensary” ("A Preface" 18). Understanding therapy as Hughes’s primary mission, scholars can explore his use of the Gothic as his primary means for addressing the Unconscious and speaking to societal neuroses. This study will explore his collected poems as efforts at “re-membering,” efforts that project a humanity individually and collectively engaging in a process of observation, engagement, suffering, introspection, and retrospection, while also carving out an affective space for reparative regret: a mourning place. His poems reflect the hauntedness of a transatlantic world in recovery: emerging from the Great War, economic hardship (particularly in the United Kingdom but also in the United States), the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, and mass migrations away from war-torn Europe and toward an increasingly isolated United States then descending into the Prohibition period and immigration quotas. Hughes imagines that he addresses a scarred reading public

that has, in one form or another, killed, suffered, and escaped from unkind nature. Most poignantly, it is an imagined audience in flux.

By June 1922, Hughes had become a chief poetry reviewer for the *Westminster Gazette* under editor and mentor Naomi Gwladys Royde-Smith. He had edited *Oxford Poetry* (1921) with Graves and Alan Porter, had finally been accepted by Edward Marsh and Harold Monro as one of the Georgian poets alongside D.H. Lawrence and Vita Sackville-West (*Georgian Poetry, 1920-1922*), had published two volumes of *Public School Verse*, and had secured a preface for the series from eventual British Poet Laureate John Masefield. Within this same historical moment, Hughes’s poem “Singing Furies” was published in fellow Oxford alumnus Scofield Thayer’s modernist “little magazine,” *The Dial*. A second poem, “Dirge,” was published in Harriet Monroe’s influential American monthly, *Poetry*, in its August 1921 number. Meanwhile, his correspondence regarding the state of British poetry appears in Monroe’s June 1921 issue and establishes Hughes as a budding authority within certain poetry circles. For the moment, Hughes has his finger on the pulse of British poetry. Yet according to Hughes, that pulse is very weak: “The quite unnatural interest in poetry, which the British public was stirred to by the emotional activity of the War, has given way now, broken down before another bad attack of the usual British lethargy in matters artistic” (172). Nevertheless, this would prove to be a rapidly receding tide before the great tidal wave of modernism.

Hughes would ultimately be caught in between these cultural movements. Exactly a year later, in John C. Farrar’s *The Bookman* (New York), Hughes’s poetry notes continue a slow-motion diagnosis of British malaise: “But I think the reason [for this malaise] goes deeper. The Britisher hates having his emotions tampered with; and after the hectic days of the late Great War he is only too glad to leave them quiet, without giving them the artificial stimulus of verse.

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17 In the introductory “Note” for *A Moment of Time*, Hughes acknowledges Royde-Smith, “who, when in command of the Saturday Westminster, was the first editor to print my stories. She has acted the part of god-mother to more young writers, probably, than any other contemporary editor; but that does not absolve me of the pleasant duty of recording my own particular gratitude” (vii).
Not only has he taken a dislike to Georgian poetry; he dislikes all poetry” (437). Hughes here, unlike the more inward-looking Graves, is reading his audience, both from concern for societal traumas and out of a distinct self-interest. Because of his ongoing interaction with American poetic developments, including the poetry of Vachel Lindsay, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, he is primed to shift his poetic gaze to consider more radical modernist trends. Yet he remains a liminal figure, caught in between two publishing paradigms. Effectively labelled a “Georgian,” a term that would come to signify aesthetic complacency and backwardness to the avant-garde, Hughes’s liminality also manifests in his genre-hopping career. Unable to make a living as an anthologized poet and unwilling to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to journalism (according to his raw Bookman notes), Hughes is prognosticating that his future may be rosier in pursuing other cultural avenues. This generic crisis ripples through his poetic works as human rootlessness.

This aesthetic homelessness corresponds to Graves’s conclusions that human beings are a “neurotic animal,” driven by unresolved conflicts that poets seek to work out for themselves by constructing waking dreams. Traditionally, neuroses have been associated with disorders affecting “those powers of the [nervous] system upon which sense and motion more especially depend” (Cullen 330). While certainly not clinical in any contemporary sense, this association clarifies the dislocation of the modern human subject who is deprived of intentional motion or sense. On one hand, human beings—driven by modernity—are brutally displaced, while in another sense they are dismembered and incapable of moving as before. In either case, modifications to motion and sense are the determining factors. Hughes, confronted with both actual and figurative displacements, writes poetry that demonstrates these neuroses as dismemberments. His human speakers and subjects are not just obstructed by the forces of

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18 Untermeyer writes that “where Davies’s innocence is natural and deep, the simplicity of most of the pastoral Georgians is predetermined and superficial. Much of the resulting poetry is inspired by the wish to avoid past memories rather than by a spontaneous affection for the present scene; much of it, indeed, seems a sort of spiritual convalescence” (Modern British Poetry: A Critical Anthology [1930] 17).
modernity: They are deprived of agency by these forces within a process of aesthetic dismembering.

Specifically, five types of dismembering—legal, moral, social, cultural, and spiritual—characterize the human predicament. Hughes, in his poetry, seeks to mediate these various dismemberments aesthetically by adopting personae and modifying his own “body” by means of other modified bodies. These personae reflect and project dismemberments while also compensating for them. Through the poetic process of reflection, projection, and compensation, Hughes carries out a regime of “re-membering,” a Gothically-informed recognition of traumas and differences that reparatively imagines a non-tragic sequel without devaluing or trivializing actual losses.

3.2.1 Legal and Moral Dismembering

At the heart of Hughes’s early poetry is a newfound poetics of transgression, both legal and moral. In this the poet was slightly ahead of his time. As Botting writes of the contemporary Gothic,

[M]onstrous others become sites of identification, sympathy, desire, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant monsters are rendered more human while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes. The reversal, with its residual Romantic identification with outcast and rebel, alongside its feeling for liberation and individual freedom, makes transgression a positive act. (“Aftergothic” 286)

Hughes’s poetics of transgression centers on two figures—the Pirate and the Gypsy—that embody an abject aesthetic that celebrates legal and moral dismemberment, which is defined here as the displacing of a legal (or legally binding) humanity, along with its presumably normative morality. Hughes’s extranormative struggle is best represented by two texts. One he published as a Charterhouse alumnus in The Carthusian, the review he had edited (and which was now edited by John Graves) at the preparatory school Hughes attended with Robert Graves and his brothers. The other text appeared in the Isis, Oxford’s literary magazine, which was then edited by Charles Graves. It is safe to assert that the Graves family and the rippling
circles of influence that emanated from them were Hughes’s first muses as a mature writer. These circles also profoundly influenced his spiritual battles.

The first transgressive text is a pirate poem. After Hughes’s unsuccessful quest to find a berth as a sailor during his trip to the Docklands of East London in the summer of 1919, he was inspired to create an imaginative berth of his own: as a pirate. “The Ballad of Benjamin Crocker,” published in the December 1920 issue of Charterhouse’s Carthusian, represents the fermentation of a pirate persona that would shape Hughes’s early career and which represents a spiritual and aesthetic battle that influences his entire corpus. The following year, in his Athanasian Creed, he cites this poem as an “exercise” in the use of eidola, the multifarious, evocative idea-images, haunted by association-ghosts, upon which Hughes believes poetry to be constructed.

Hughes’s poem is a negotiation between one Stranger figure (the Pirate) and another (the Witch). Narrated as a typical seafaring story, this ballad is structured as a quest narrative in search of treasure. The title figure, Benjamin Crocker, bears two names that carry association-ghosts of the promise of a beloved son from biblical lore and also a “maker of crocks” (a potter), a surname that also echoes the British expression “old crock” (something broken down). Crocker is a pirate captain who seeks illicit profit. He embarks for the Caribbean, lands with his crew in Brazil, trades for (or otherwise commandeers) numerous goods of value (the guaitil fruit, melons, and various other mystical items from unknown locales), and then heads on his own side-mission “to seek strange toys” to give his sweetheart, Joan (61).

It is then that he confronts his Stranger, a monstrous parody of Joan. This is the witch Gal-gar-ul, who “bask[s] in the heat,” eating “mummled strips of tough dried meat” (61). Her strange, languorous figure is immediately sexualized, as her land itself has been, as a target of both rape and plunder. She is written as female, Black, and monstrous: “In her small shadow

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19 In 1603, Crocker is making his fifth voyage to the Caribbean region that Hughes himself would imaginatively visit at least twice more in his career (and once literally).
the bright eyes shone, / Of a black beast hobbling and one leg gone” (61). In addition, the “mummled” (mummified? jerked?) meat seems to indicate a possible allusion to cannibalism, especially since Hughes refers to her people as the “carribs” (the twisted historical source of the former term), associations that seemingly justify the ensuing violence to her already mutilated person. Her monstrous yet pathetic figure—“[w]ithout wit or strength to run from Ben, / He snapped her bones like a dry quill pen” (61)—points to a monstrousness in Crocker himself as the merciless master of the present situation: He commits brutal murder, “burn[s] the place” as if to cover up his crime (62), and takes with him an assortment of surprisingly delicate and exotic treasures, including a “small green flute for his child to play” (62). Yet “a black beast hobbled after him / And he knew it not, being well in rum” (62). This black beast, whether the resurrected woman or a beast conjured by her (instead of being one-legged and with a paw to stand on, the figure is now “a black thing . . . upon three legs” [62]), confronts him aboard his own ship and kills him in revenge. While this flavor of fantastic melodrama is typical for sea chanteys or pirate tales of the period, Hughes’s poem also introduces the five types of dismembering that are intertwined with the recognitions, results, and reflexes of the Gothic: elements that lend themselves not only to aesthetic-thematic analysis but also to a study of the poem’s cathartic-traumatic and affective aspects.

First, Crocker represents both legal and moral dismemberments. Crocker has lived an unmoored life, both illicit and immoral. To be certain, the Pirate figure is a celebration of the unlawful and the extra-judicial. Unconcerned with the lives of the colonized carribs Crocker kicks and kills, the disabled “witch” he slays, or even the men who serve him under the threat of “thumbs [that] could strangle a whole ship’s crew” (61), Crocker is nevertheless tender-hearted regarding his own child and his distant, beloved Joan. In the end, his own crew treat him as he

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20 Shakespeare, in fashioning the name Caliban as a kind of anagram in *The Tempest* (1623), relies on Montaigne (“Of Cannibals” [c. 1580]), who had received his intelligence from early explorers and their interactions with “Caribs.” Thus, *Carib-cannibal-Caliban* forms a bizarre chain of distortion that persists today.
has treated his conquests, sending him (in their drunken glee) over the side of the ship “to Davy Jones, / Who now has charge of his gawky bones: / And they weighed him down with round, white stones / For fear that the spirit he had in his head / Should cause him to rise too soon from the dead” (62). While the agents of the poem trouble norms, this is not a tale of amoral debauchery. Instead, a clear morality pervades the song, whose chorus exalts the various communal merits of rum, and by ballad’s end there is a sense among Crocker’s pirate congregation that their captain has gotten the fate he deserves. Nevertheless, the pirate body collectively exhibits its unsettling, inverted morality throughout: Hughes’s poem is, in fact, a hymn to the Devil in numerous guises, among them the almost-affectionate folk moniker “Old Nick.”

As an extension of this dismembered moral state, the fertile Gothic imagery of this text inspires a deeper discussion. Reyes’s rubric for evaluating the Gothic (the aesthetic-thematic, the traumatic-cathartic, and the affective), particularly in modern texts that are not necessarily coded in traditionally Gothic terms, is again helpful here. The following discussion seeks to determine what the “Gothic” is, what it does, and how it works within the textualities of this early Hughes poem.

First, aesthetically and thematically, scholars can recognize obligatory tropes in “Crocker.” While a study of Gothic elements and motifs has long been at the center of Gothic studies, it is not necessarily central to a study of Hughes. While tropes and generic conventions are helpful as entry points, bringing some coherence to a field always on the verge of breaking apart in inclusivity, these tropes are, as Botting asserts, “being emptied of meaning” in a world which proliferates Gothic concerns. Punter, for his part, asks “whether there might

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21 In his A Deal with the Devil (1895), Eden Phillpotts (another writer associated with the Georgian poets) also refers to the Devil by this name.
22 See Edith Birkhead (1921), Devendra P. Varma (1923), and Montague Summers (1938) as a contemporaneous context for the Gothic in Hughes’s works.
23 Botting explains in “Aftergothic” that a “sense of cultural exhaustion haunts the present. An inhuman future is shrouded in old Gothic trappings emptied of any strong charge; past images and forms are worn

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be anything ‘that is not Gothic’” (qtd. in Reyes). Tropes, then, are breadcrumbs for investigation, but they do not necessarily—in and of themselves—represent the deepest Gothic concerns. The most obvious Gothic trope Hughes uses here is, of course, the Witch, but equally potent is the Pirate. While not always mentioned in connection to the Gothic, the recent two-decade success of Disney’s *The Pirates of the Caribbean* tentpole film franchise demonstrates that the figure of the Pirate is squarely integrated with the Gothic supernatural in its depictions of undead crews, visitations to the afterlife, and profoundly powerful cursed objects. The Pirate and the Gothic now fit hook in glove.

To begin with, Hughes’s pirates are Gothically inflected. True to form, Hughes’s pirates are drunken, bloodthirsty, and ruthless. Nevertheless, there is a sense that they are *immoral*, not *amoral*—a difference that denotes their clear values, which are just not traditionally moral ones. They know their own codes and understand when lines have been crossed. Their inverted morality is fueled by dark associations and direct invocations of the Devil himself. Still, Hughes sets up this inverted morality not as a condemnation of the pirates but as a vehicle for their liberation. The class conflicts boiling below the surface emerge in the pirates’ release after Crocker’s death.

Furthermore, Hughes’s witch is corrupt, disfigured, and beyond the boundaries of society, yet her “darkness” remains undefined and is wholly inscribed by her associations under the imperial gaze with non-Anglo paradigms. She is novel beyond even the “New World” and old beyond the ancient mysteries she collects around her: Crocker must advance beyond his initial interactions with the Othered carribs before reaching her. The resultant *tête-à-tête* between pirate and witch is surprisingly brief, but there is always a sense that the treasure Crocker usurps from her will visit upon him a lingering curse. The fineness of the objects, the import of which the captain “hardly understood” (62), marks the pirate’s failed attempts at cultural...
appropriation and codes Gal-gar-ul’s alterity as superior to Crocker’s “normality.” Because of the tension between the witch’s grotesqueness and her trove’s refinement, the reader understands that the trope of the treasure’s imperial curse is also active in the contested confines of her body.

In addition to these aesthetic and thematic recognitions, a cathartic-traumatic study can explore the results of the poem’s Gothic violence and traumatized haunting. Catharsis as a treatment for trauma appears, at first glance, transitory. For the violated carribs there appears no immediate recourse, yet Gal-gar-ul—the carribs’ matriarchal emblem—carries out vengeance on their behalf. For the crew, their sociopolitical liberation is tempered by a fear of Crocker’s spectral return. Freed from their tyrannical leader—first by the madness and magic of drink and the Dionysian dreaming it brings and then by Crocker’s ultimate undoing—the crew remains wary. The round, white stones they use to sink his body seem to offset the blackness not of Gal-gar-ul but of Crocker’s own heart. For the witch, her status as abject, female, and racially Other—a beastly outcast—persists even as she passes through death and vengeance. Upon the witch figure, traditionally a trope that conveys a disjuncture from sociocultural norms, is written a history of oppression and appropriation. This woman has lost her womanhood: She is disabled, and her simplest pleasures—of basking in sun and eating—are expropriated in this narrative. Nevertheless, this figure experiences a form of reparation through the restoration of her own agency. The flute she possesses conveys on her a deep counter-cultural power. She is, at least, a patron of music. While Crocker seeks to co-opt this aesthetic sensibility—perhaps to provide an antidote for his own monstrousness in his own child’s eyes or to reinforce his power among his crew—it is Gal-gar-ul (read in Hughes’s created moniker “Gal” and “rule”) who restores her own norms by executing beastly justice. Key, then, to the present study of
Hughes’s work is the recognition of what Alexandra Warwick terms the “unheimlich manoeuver,” operating here to explore traumas that linger, particularly in the female body.\(^{24}\)

Once the first two questions regarding *recognitions* (“What is Gothic here?”) and *results* (“What does the Gothic do here?”) are answered, it is possible to explore the *reflexes* involved in readers’ affective responses (“How does the Gothic do its work here?”). As in so much of Hughes’s work, the Gothic in “Crocker” is performative and participatory: It commands a reflexive, physical response (usually described by him as “jim-jams” [nervousness] or hair standing on end). One thinks of Mary Shelley’s words in her 1831 introduction to the revised *Frankenstein* text: “I busied myself to think of a story... One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart” (vii). The Gothic functions first through the mechanics of narrative structure, pacing, and incident. Second, it functions through language, by extension of metonymic association—ghosts that have emerged as indicative of a Gothic atmosphere and mood. Lastly, as Edgar Allan Poe demonstrates so efficiently in poems like “The Raven” (1845) and “The Bells” (1849), the Gothic inspires an audience’s response and possesses that audience through its animated combination of action, language, and sound. Reyes writes that “[p]erhaps because the physiological aspects of the gothic may be associated with the lower orders of entertainment, and therefore separated from higher theoretical and intellectual endeavours, there have been few attempts to explore what could be termed ‘gothic effects.’” Certainly, Hughes’s poem is one of “gothic effects,” even if those effects seem generic or gimmicky at a century’s remove (and even to Hughes just a year later).

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3.2.2 Social and Cultural Dismembering

In addition to his legal and moral amputation, Crocker is also dismembered socially (cut off from community) and culturally (cut off from communication). This dismembering is demonstrated in his inability to cognitively colonize the witch’s hoard, itself coded with human sensuality. In the draft of Hughes’s poetry manifesto—originally written only for the eyes of Williams-Ellis—the poet himself itemizes and annotates the Gothic effects of Gal-gar-ul’s possessions (while also apologizing for the crudeness of his own pirate poem\textsuperscript{25}) in terms of imagistic association-ghosts (\textit{eidola}):

[Benjamin Crocker] burnt the place, and took away
A scented idol of smooth hard wood (smell, touch, pressure)
A small green flute for his child to play (colour, sound)
And knotted strings, and a feather hood (ghosts of Prescott)\textsuperscript{26}
Things he hardly understood (intellect). (Letter [unposted] to Amabel Williams-Ellis [7 Oct. 1921])

Graves’s “association-ghosts” (\textit{On English} 71), then, are central to Hughes’s poetic vision, and they also cling to the textual possessions that linger in the Hughes archive. By extension, it is incumbent upon scholars to view Hughes’s poems as the author would see them, as assemblages of image-haunted objects.

Crocker’s social and cultural dismembering is expressed through just such a haunting. One “idea-image” in particular, oddly present at the end of “Benjamin Crocker,” embodies social and cultural excision. This image also lingers within several other Hughes texts, recurring in a way that resembles self-citation. The smooth, round, white stones which weigh down Crocker’s dead body serve as symbolic shorthand—both of his justified death and of the sailors’ fear that his ghost will return. In fact, the image of smooth, round, white stones is repeatedly invoked by

\textsuperscript{25} In the unposted manifesto Hughes sent to Williams-Ellis, Hughes writes, “Please don’t think that I am pretending that was poetry: it was only a very crude (and perfectly conscious) piece of practice in the ‘tricks of the trade!’” (Letter to Amabel Williams-Ellis [7 Oct. 1921]).

\textsuperscript{26} This reference to the “ghosts” of William H. Prescott’s \textit{A History of the Conquest of Mexico} (1843) and \textit{A History of the Conquest of Peru} (1847) indicates Hughes’s lifelong passion for history and exotic locales. Prescott’s work on Mexico references “feather-work” more than thirty times. Images of “exotic” Mesoamerica recur in Hughes’s work with Dick Watchett’s (\textit{In Hazard} [1938]) imagined adventures in Belize.
Hughes as a sign of judgment, demonstrating that the individual in question has been cut off from community. In Hughes’s “Llwyd” (1920), the “smooth, round objects” Llwyd loves to pass his fingers across are entangled in the story (A Moment of Time 79), and in Llwyd’s mind, with the fairy Derwyl: “[I]n his queer, crazed way he always thought of her as something to do with smooth stones” (80). The imagery collides textually with “the wicked old Saint of Craig Ddrwg and her ghastly Sucking Stone” (80). These two versions of the stone imagery recur in the poem “The Rolling Saint” (treated at length at the end of the present chapter) as the seeds for the story’s Gothic premise: “Under the crags of Teiriwch / Is a round pile of stones, / Large stones, small stones, / White as old bones” (Gipsy 49). These stones speak to the “Saint”[’s] separation from society and her murderers’ separation from decency, a separation that implicates a silent community at large that has failed her and must pay her smooth, round, white stones as cultural penance as they pass by her grave.

This same stone image appears in an unpublished short story Hughes worked on in more than one draft and whose handwritten title he lovingly stylized, “The Demi-God,” a tale about a young girl who is violently visited by a Welsh deity, Llywerion, son of the sky-god Llyr: “Nesta Griffith could have been little more than eighteen years old when the god found her walking on the Moch Fawr” (1). The scene described in Hughes’s most sophisticated engagement with Welsh mythology (most likely inspired by The Mabinogion) is eerily reminiscent of Craig Ddrwg, with its “jagged hills and glassy black streams, and of the hundreds of smooth round stones” and boulders cast “away like jagged playthings in [the god’s] petulance” (“The Demi-God” 1), yet the forbidding and uninhabitable home of Owen Lucky is here transformed into a man-made structure, ruined Castell Moch Fawr. The “naturally” distributed stones tossed by the gods, timeless and lasting, are here in direct contrast to the carefully laid stones of humans, ultimately brought to nothing.

In associating these recurring smooth, round, white stones with Welsh deities or other supernatural forces, Hughes is mindful that his work inevitably conjures different association-
ghosts for readers outside of Wales. On the other hand, with “Benjamin Crocker,” Hughes assumes an implied reader who is familiar with a body of myth, adventure fiction, performance poetry, and Gothic romance whose tropes and suggestions need little introduction. Specifically, a Georgian Oxford (and Charterhouse) audience would be poised to receive Hughes’s “Crocker” as an extension of the “Dead Man’s Chest” ballad inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson’s fragment in *Treasure Island*. When asked to deliver a BBC talk for the Stevenson Centenary in 1950, Hughes cites a complete version of the ballad that was circulating during his undergraduate years and that he hopes to get a copy of:

> I should have thought it was time that was printed in full. I can understand Stevenson not printing it when he wrote it: it would have been pretty strong meat for those days, but it must have circulated considerably in manuscript as I remember being shown a typed copy of it when I was at Oxford. It was rather a fine thing, as I remember it—the stanza form perhaps unusually elaborate for a ballad, but certainly effective. (Letter to Rupert Hart-Davis [11 Oct. 1950])

In reality, the ballad Hughes remembers is most likely a piece of fan fiction by poet Young E. Allison, who expanded Stevenson’s fragmentary chantey into a full-length telling in “Derelict.” The poem is indeed gruesome, shocking for its time, and it provides a clear precedent and ghostly presence for Hughes’s own work while reflecting a larger discourse of degeneration perpetuated by scientists Nordau and Lombroso. Ultimately, Hughes’s “Crocker” is essentially a third iteration of Stevenson’s fragmentary pirate ballad that captures

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27 Shortly after a much-publicized visit to Oxford by American, performance poet Vachel Lindsay (the Lindsay archive at Hiram College contains a letter from Robert Graves to “a friend,” dated October 19, 1920, and “describing Lindsay’s triumph”), Hughes imitated Lindsay, famous for his “chaunted poetry,” at least in the style of his verse, when he “treated” his fellows of the Brome (on October 27, 1920) with a Halloweenish oral performance of “Benjamin Crocker” (R.P. Graves 52).

28 Rupert Hart-Davis (Letter to Richard Hughes [3 Aug. 1948]), having already commissioned Hughes to write the introduction for his firm’s republication of *The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss* (1949), has provided Hughes with materials relevant to Hughes’s broadcast on Stevenson. He writes, “I am fascinated to hear of the longer text of the Treasure Island ballad” (Letter to Richard Hughes [11 Oct. 1950]). Hart-Davis later writes, “Your [Stevenson] broadcast was absolutely first-rate. Technically I should say you are one of the very best broadcasters there are and I enormously admired the art with which you distilled so much into so few minutes” (Letter to Richard Hughes [14 Nov. 1950]). For the ballad, see this post by “Lometa” at everything2.com/user/Lometa/writeups/Fifteen+Men+on+a+Dead+Man%2527s+Chest regarding the origins of the ballad Hughes is remembering here.

29 See Dryden’s tracing of the degeneration discourse current at this time (8-11).
his imagination at this time. Of course, Oxford undergraduates (as well as Carthusians) were rumrunners in training, convening clubs (like the infamous Oxford Hypocrites’ Club\textsuperscript{30}) surreptitiously at pubs if they could do so without being sent down.\textsuperscript{31} In the face of American Prohibition, it appears that that dry attitude only heightened the reputation of alcohol consumption as a mark of British superiority.

Considering Crocker’s social and cultural dismemberment, “The Ballad of Benjamin Crocker” can also be read as a protest poem. Its shifting chorus, printed in parentheses, implies a “call-and-response” interactive format which suited meetings of the Brome, a society Hughes had formed along with fellow student Hugh Lyon. The poem is a light-hearted drinking song that happens to be laced with serious allusions to crisis and conflict. No matter how heady the recitation, the poem lacks a satisfactory resolution. The audience is never allowed to feel sympathy for Crocker’s plight (considering all his abominations), nor is the audience encouraged to feel complete liberation with Crocker’s crew’s revels (considering the prospect of Crocker’s—or Gal-gar-ul’s—potential return). There remains the incompleteness of an inchoate revolution, a drunken dream that will be dispelled once the ship is adrift and the crew wakes from their bender to new horrors. Like both Crocker and the witch, the crew are now cut off from legitimacy, morally ambiguous in their semi-mutiny.

\textsuperscript{30} Hughes, according to R.P. Graves (\textit{Richard 73}), visits the Hypocrites’ Club to have some rum with friends John Graves and Raoul Loveday, a close adherent of Aleister Crowley who infamously died in Sicily at Crowley’s Thelema Abbey. Hughes’s knowledge of Raymond Greene’s plot to assassinate Crowley as revenge frames Hughes’s 1923 trip to Italy. See Raymond Greene’s \textit{Moments of Being} (1974) and Hughes’s Letter to Louisa Hughes (11 Apr. 1923).

\textsuperscript{31} In addition to the Hypocrites’ Club, Hughes participated enthusiastically in Oxford’s co-curricular societies as a member of the “New Elizabethans,” president of the Plantagenet Society (R.P. Graves, \textit{Richard 45}), and secretary of the Brome (R.P. Graves, \textit{Richard 47}). It is clear that these gatherings imbibed freely in both literary discussion and alcohol. In Hughes’s “The Sea” (1926), a story of drunken hallucination as a man imagines he is underwater and seeing mermaids, can be seen as a metaphor for artistic enlightenment—and an example of Hughes humor. R.P. Graves explains that, after Hughes and his fellow undergraduates were caught red-handed and red-faced holding their meeting at a forbidden pub, they succeeded in convincing W.B. Yeats to intercede with the administration on their behalf.
Fig. 4. Richard A.W. Hughes, *Benjamin Crocker*, 1919, woodcut, Lilly Library.
Thus, in addition to legal and moral dismemberment, both Crocker and the witch are socially and culturally dismembered. They are severed from their peers and are unable to authoritatively participate in the rites and representations of their own story. While Crocker may seem to be in command of this sea chantey, it is his death and his crew’s disposal of his body that is the tale’s climax. Losing control of representational power is at the heart of Hughes’s aesthetic crisis not only here but across his oeuvre as he appropriates tales from diverse cultures and tells them with conflicted authority.

3.2.3 Spiritual Dismembering

A final form of dismembering can be discerned within “Crocker”: a spiritual dismemberment that coincides with his very public and profane severing from traditional Christianity while at Oxford. Without question, the confluence of Stevenson’s and Lindsay’s influences on Hughes created “Crocker” and marked a radical turning point in Hughes’s spiritual life. Within Hughes’s personal papers, a paratextual, pirate artifact created by Hughes is remarkable evidence of his giftedness in visual art and serves as yet another instance that Hughes, like Vachel Lindsay in his self-illustrated and self-produced magazine The Village Magazine (1910, 1920, 1925), is equipped to fashion an effective, counter-cultural persona for himself, both linguistically and visually. A delicate construction (see Figure 4), perhaps intended for publication alongside his poem in the Carthusian or maybe conceived as a later companion piece, Hughes’s xylographic image is impressive and matches the materiality found in many of modernism’s little magazines. The caption, in Hughes’s own handwriting, reads, “Drawn, cut, and printed by R.H. Dec 1919,” and the image immortalizes the figure his poem calls “Bloody Ben.” It is an artwork which predates the published poem, as well as Lindsay’s visit to London, indicating that this pirate persona is more than a one-off event and has affected Hughes over a long period of time. Hughes’s remarkably careful portrait of Crocker shows a chiseled head, culminating in his jagged, arrowhead-shaped nose and scarred “with ivory, steel and lead” (“Ballad” 61), yet remaining somehow stoic. Hughes covers him in color from head to foot.
through the printing process: the red and white pattern of the pirate’s headscarf, another yellow scarf around his neck ironically parodying a noose, and a red cummerbund-sash debonairly wrapped around him at the waist. His shirt is white, his pants blue, and his skin is “tanned red,” as the poem later indicates (61). The artwork is refined and detailed yet also reveals what the poem occludes: that Benjamin Crocker, like Gal-gar-ul, is a mutilated, modified body. In fact, all four of his limbs are truncated. Three limbs appear to be cut off as the result of limitations in Hughes’s printing process, but Crocker’s right arm is clearly missing at the elbow, outlined faintly in black, a sign that he, as a Stranger with a red-bloodstained cutlass in his left hand, also suffers and lives an impaired life, much as Gal-gar-ul has.

This Gothic persona, a dismembered poet-pirate come to life in the first significant text of Hughes’s formative years, must be accounted for as a Hughes avatar. Behind the mask and under Crocker’s “knotted silk kerchief” (61), Hughes carves out his own Gothic space in which to (temporarily) become the black-hearted, multiply dismembered pirate. Both in the careful illustration and in the rollicking singing-poem, Hughes exhibits a youthful joie de vivre connected to his contemporaneous unmooring from the inherited moral and spiritual traditions of Victorian and Georgian society.

This whole-hearted embrace of Yeatsian or Joycean artistic license presages a second transgressive text, “a poem in which [the speaker] asked for pagan gods and devils to worship” (R.P. Graves, Richard 59). “The Heathen’s Song,” published by Charles Graves in Oxford’s Isis magazine in the summer term of 1921, stands in stark contrast to the devoutly religious man Hughes would become by the end of his life. It is an openly defiant diatribe against institutional Christianity. Here, then, as in “Storm,” Hughes’s speaker defies the traditional religion that his generation has grudgingly inherited:

For gods and devils give me these
And each shall have his due:
But shall I tumble on my knees
At name of bastard Jew?
Or bow, while wrinkled maids devour
Like kine with harmless cud
A God new-made of wheaten flour
With sweetened wine for blood? (qtd. in Poole, Richard 27-28)

This carefully carved-out moment, paired with Hughes’s full-fledged, xylographic identification
with Benjamin Crocker, is perhaps Hughes’s first major point of Gothic inflection, his moment of
Faustian bargain, making him a Stranger to himself and to everything he has previously known
and believed. Of course, Hughes recanted this published poem to save his place at Oxford
(R.P. Graves, Richard 59), but it is the position of the present study that he never recanted his
mission to explore the darkest and most hidden aspects of life. It is this spiritual dismembering
that shapes his lifelong ability to examine spiritual norms from the outside looking in.

Across his body of work, Hughes—without moralizing—depicts an abject Stranger who
is both actively and passively engaged; who influences and who is also influenced; and whose
agency is, at times, foreclosed by dismemberments and at other times enhanced by her/his
position. S/he is a denizen of a Cave of Abjection who is simply in the vanguard of human
dissolution. This is the inexorable Stranger who is incorporated, willingly or unwillingly, into the
various fabrics of human society. By forcing the incorporation of the Stranger, Hughes pushes
readers to draw their own conclusions regarding various moral systems (of children, of artists, of
pirates, of Nazis). Hughes evokes characters and scenarios that have no viable moral anchor
yet are drawn inexorably toward just such an unnamed mooring spot. Hughes’s poems are not
explicitly teleological and are not transparent in revealing grand designs for the universe, yet the
humanity of the poems as responses to genuine, historical, human suffering points to subtle
truths about the human condition and potential therapies for its traumas.

The Stranger in Hughes’s poetry takes many forms: the tramp, the Romani, the resident
alien, the pirate, the specter, and the child. Like the Stranger of his stories, this Stranger has
possessions and power: S/he brings new knowledge about the world and the Self and radically
transforms the Familiar. The Stranger also brings trauma, carried performatively within the body
and mind, even while seemingly offering a remedy for it. Furthermore, by continually troubling established boundaries between the “Familiar” (domestic, homely, intimate) sphere and the “Strange” sphere of the Other who approaches from outside, Hughes’s poetic texts invite the Other in, for better or worse. In his poetry, as in his prose, Hughes repeatedly initiates uncanny negotiations that are reparatively efficacious in three ways. First, through such negotiations—which are at the same time both spatial and emotional—a new, unstable normal is established. A traveler accosted by (or accosting) an uncanny Stranger is herself or himself irrevocably changed—perhaps even dismembered. Second, these dismemberments are not necessarily debilitative. Representations of the Gothic Stranger within Hughes’s poetry showcase the scarred, mutilated agency of both the initiator and the initiated. Third, transactions with such a Stranger are never just a one-or two-sided affair: they involve networks of negotiations—rhizomatic, subconscious, and surreptitious webs that reveal influence on the part of all parties involved.

In his poem “Gratitude” (1922/1926/1931), Hughes traces just such a fantastical network of negotiations initiated by a Stranger. Like the pirate, the Gypsy functions within Hughes’s poetry as an extranormative, non-present presence. “Gratitude” tells the cyclical story of Tammas Lee (the “Gypsy”), whose wanderer’s thirst is slaked by the gift of ale from townsman Jan Gurney. Lee then assumes the role of uncanny Stranger, presenting Gurney with his gratitude, which manifests as a kind of coin that passes as powerful currency from one negotiator to another. Within this economy of gratitude, imprudent negotiations pass the gratitude from Gurney to a ferryman he can’t pay (Charon), and from Charon to a young Farmer who has saved Charon’s daughter from drowning. Tellingly, this last transaction takes place only because the ferryman father has no gratitude of his own to offer. The passing of this gratitude always leaves or reveals a vacuum in the giver, exposing scars and deficiencies rather than goodwill to be shared with all. The gratitude continues to be paid forward, from the Farmer to a Squire, and from the Squire to an unknown Other, and so on. Strangely, while this passed
gratitude temporarily satisfies the creditors, it no longer satisfies the debtors. In the end, readers learn that it is Tammas Lee, the “Gypsy” with whom the gratitude has begun, who is communally dismembered, essentially losing his soul as the empty end of a chain of bargains he has initiated. The poem ends with this odd coda describing Lee’s demise:

But Tammas was no angel in disguise:  
He stole Squire’s chickens—often: he told lies,  
Robbed Charon’s garden, burnt young Farmer’s ricks  
And played the village many lousy tricks.

No children sniffled, and no dog cried,  
When full of oaths and smells, he died. (20)

In this case, the “Gypsy” Traveller is the Othered Stranger who initiates the magic of gratitude, and changes a chain of others in the process. Yet Lee is the one who is most affected by giving away his gratitude. Rather than a god or devil in disguise, Lee is a frail vessel who has poured out his most treasured possession for a gulp of ale. There is a sense—admittedly in playful, rustic tones—that the young Hughes is here recognizing the gravity of parting with his own spiritual traditions. Within his poetry and prose, the Gypsy-figure increasingly becomes Hughes’s vehicle for contemplating an eternal estrangement that passes ultimately through a smelly, desecrated death. Yet Hughes’s views on spiritual dismembering are far from unambiguous: his poem “The Song of the Consistent Reprobate” (1922) lightens the tone of a volume filled with contemplations on death:

I must leave my whisky-drinking,  
All the vain world’s jolly show:  
If my lady goes to heaven,  
Where my lady leads, I go! (34)

Hughes’s characteristic humor—a means for keeping Heaven and Hell at bay—is yet another therapeutic element he applies across his writing. These light-hearted simplifications represent a persona that the pub-poet puts on and off as needed. Still, such a comic guise only serves to accentuate the solemnity of serious scars beneath that mask.
Ultimately, Hughes’s views on dismembered legality, morality, culture, society, and spirituality flow together in his poetic fixation on the diverse group of people to whom Tammas generically and rhetorically belongs, a group whose daily life and culture have long been at the heart of Gothic expression. The Romanichal Travellers (an English subgroup of the Romani) are the subject of several Hughes poems and give the artistic impetus and title to Hughes’s first published book. “Gipsy-Night,” the title poem of this collection, was first published in the September 18, 1920, issue of The Spectator and was the first poem accepted by Williams-Ellis as a springboard for Hughes’s career. This is not merely a poem of observation: Hughes’s speaker—embracing legal, moral, social, cultural, and spiritual dismemberments—now participates in the Traveller community. There is evidence that Hughes has begun to insinuate himself into an actual group of Romanichal Travellers having, at least by the time of the poem’s publication, walked nearly two hundred miles from London to Wales while staying at abandoned cottages and learning to live as a migrant. In the process, Hughes has become increasingly aware that these fellow humans are often treated like animals, a denigration evident in Hughes’s depiction of Romanichal children playing at (and drinking from) a horse-trough. Nevertheless, even in “The Horse-Trough” (1920), the pain and isolation of these Travellers is thoroughly mixed with their joy. The first half of “Gipsy-Night” addresses the Travellers’ difficult, yet commonplace, conditions: “Martha and Johnnie, who have no money: / The small naked puppies who whimper against the bitches, / The small sopping children who creep to the ditches” (Gipsy 13). Yet this is not the image on which Hughes chooses to linger, and not out of squeamishness. These people have an exuberant, contagious dignity, and it comes alive as the downpour stops and there is room to move and the moon is high: “Then would you not go foot it with Sarah’s Girls / In and out the trees? / Or listen across the fire / To old Tinker-Johannie, and

Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) famously uses a “gypsy” community as a means for bringing Rochester and Jane together. Oddly, Rochester appropriates the persona of a gypsy fortune teller, a far-fetched plot device that echoes Vathek and Giaour’s encounters in Beckford’s earlier novel. The name “Giaour,” of course, is itself a mirror of xenophobia within a story that highlights Arab Strangeness: it is a slur in Arabic for “infidel,” a parody that demonstrates the danger posed by any Stranger.
Martha his Rawnee, / In jagged Wales, or in orchard Worcestershire?” (14). This dance, as indicated by the author in his first version, is dedicated not only to the Travellers, but also to the painter Pamela Bianco: This is a significant touchstone as we consider her young, prodigious influence on the Gothic-modern nature of Hughes’s many works in subsequent chapters.

In a rhetorical move by which Hughes’s speaker becomes a socially dismembered Traveller himself, Hughes writes poems that exude a maturing empathy born of lived and shared experience. “Tramp,” published first in the 1921 edition of Oxford Poetry, is titled like numerous nostalgic or bucolic poems of the period, yet its focal point defies neo-Georgian convention by depicting a migrant’s slow, lonely death: “When a brass sun staggers above the sky, / When feet cleave to boots, and the tongue’s dry . . . The noon feet stumble, and the head swims, Till out shines the sun, and the thought dims; / And death, for blood, runs in the weak limbs” (Gipsy 27). In this hallucinatory, sun-stroked state, the Traveller (now the speaker himself), is clearly struggling to survive. “No sight, no sound shows / How the struggle goes. / I sink at last faint in the wet gutter; / So many words to sing that the tongue cannot utter” (29).

While we cannot be sure of the speaker’s fate, Hughes is seeking not to evoke sympathy, but rather to express the depths of experience that such Travellers possess. In other poems such as “A Song of the Walking Road” (called simply “The Walking Road” by 1926), “Travel-Piece” (1926), and “Vagrancy” (1922/1926/1931), Hughes continues to explain that “[t]here are more shadows in this loamy cup / Than God could count” (“Vagrancy,” Gipsy 21). Hughes attempts to rewrite the “Gypsy” as he takes a “crime” and humanizes it. While raw and still immature in their cultural depictions, Hughes’s poems represent an awakening to social inequalities and ruling-class callousness. In resisting hegemonies of class, faith, race, gender, and age by “putting on” cultural costumes (as the tramp, the Arab, and the rumrunning-pirate), Hughes is allowing

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33 Herbert Read’s anthology of English poetry called This Way, Delight (1956) includes a representative sample from this neo-Georgian genre, including titles such as “Time, You Old Gipsy Man” (Ralph Hodgson), “The Gypsy” (Ezra Pound), and “The Wraggle Taggle Gipsies” (Unknown) to accompany Romantic lyrics like “Old Meg” (John Keats), whose first line is “Old Meg, she was a Gypsey.” Three of Hughes’s poems appear here, including “Winter” (1922).
himself to be moved. While perhaps merely a temporary, culturally appropriative means to escape responsibility and complicity (he is, after all, still the child of some privilege, considering his elite circles at Charterhouse and Oxford), Hughes has become a participant.

As a function of this new Gypsy persona, Hughes himself becomes a victim of the elements. “The Moor,” an unpublished poem sent to Louisa Hughes on a postcard on July 4, 1920, frames the speaker’s battle with the elements—and the darkness—as an epic struggle: “The white mists float like the hair of the drowned: / Like wolves’ is the howl of the wind / On the moor at night: & the only sound / Is the plover’s whistle, and the wind.” As in “Storm,” Hughes is gaining from experience exactly what it means to suffer without the comforts of a permanent home. Modern vagrancy, for Hughes, is a culmination of all dismemberments and is both the diagnosis and the cure for human beings as the Neurotic Animal.

3.3 The Communicative Animal: Re-Membering Death

In fashioning his poetry, Hughes considers human beings as neurotic, cut off from the flow of communal life and dismembered in the ways itemized above. Yet Hughes moves beyond a solipsistic Gravesian approach to human disconnection. By emphasizing human beings as “communicative,” Hughes is beginning to seek interpersonal, therapeutic reparation. It is vitally important to see that the therapeutic aspects of reparative reading apply equally to the critical reader and the creative writer. Both operate within a space of trauma. As traumatized subjects, both reader and writer benefit therapeutically from a communicative act, which creates a space of traumatic negotiation. Whereas Graves, in his trauma writing, sought mainly to probe his own psyche and address his own neuroses, Hughes reaches beyond the page. In this, his vicarious experience of trauma (through his peers who suffered in the war, his neighbors who suffered from the pandemic, and his mother who suffered the loss of the family that Hughes never really knew) leads naturally to the communicative sharing and addressing of trauma rather than the self-directed attempt to heal only oneself. This communicative reparation, grounded in the Gothic discourse, is an ethos that will permeate all the author’s literary production. Hughes's
Gothic negotiations with death and his intentional communications with his audience are here termed “re-membering,” a common pun used as a critical term by both Punter and Wolfreys to demonstrate a revenant re-configuration performed in and by the Gothic. Hughes uses words to communicate and to instantiate wholeness in the face of ongoing fragmentation. Just as Frankenstein’s (1818) composite, living-dead body has been stitched together with scars that can never disguise pain yet can function as a means for moving forward, the Gothic in Hughes’s modern poetry functions as a therapeutic means for addressing death: for “re-membering” death in ways that do not flinch from its disfigurements. Instead, his reconstitution of death as a composite body (through various forms of memento mori and an assemblage of diverse poems) serves to discipline mortality—to draw boundaries across which death cannot pass. In Hughes’s poetry, the poet asserts that, while death is an experience that cannot be contained, it cannot ultimately contain. In communication Hughes sees a certain regenerativity of the members that have been severed, a re-membering that points to the potential for a non-tragic sequel. This view sees life among the ruins, albeit a very changed and often less-than-satisfactory vitality.

3.3.1 Re-Membering Ruins: Ubi Sunt

As a stage in Hughes’s reparative process and with the lofty aim of poetic, human communication, Hughes confronts a ruined past and the potential of a ruined future, both mediated by a ruined present. In his poetic works published during the 1920s, Hughes has a marked tendency to portray death. Just four years removed from the shock of his tutor Hugh Ferguson’s death and reeling from the compounded survivor’s guilt of losing father and sister

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34 Punter in “Hungry Ghosts and Foreign Bodies” writes: “[W]hat would it mean to ‘re-member’ Poe? Would it, for example, mean to construct a new (foreign) body from the dismembered but sprouting corpse of the past? Would it mean to come to a new view of the occluded father, to put him back together again as recompense for some primal damage? Would it mean to allow the hallucinatory to flow back again, to return from exile, to foreshadow that ‘turn’ of modernism into the surreal so convincingly displayed in Ionesco’s proliferating worlds of endlessly de-individuated objects?” (15). Wolfreys, in his “Preface” to Victorian Gothic, states that Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) and Thomas de Quincey’s Confessions of an Opium Eater (1821) are both “exemplary texts which respond to the gothic in particular ways, taking apart the gothic corpse, dismembering and re-membering it” (xiii).
inexplicably in his own earliest years, Hughes begins to write poems such as “The Ruin,” published on June 11, 1921, in *The Spectator*. The poem bears a familiar *ubi sunt* melancholy: “Gone are the coloured princes, gone echo, gone laughter” (*Gipsy* 41). In striking relief are the poet’s expressions of loss, perhaps in imagining Hugh’s grave—alongside endless rows of others—in distant Ypres Commonwealth Cemetery.

In January of the same year, *The Spectator*’s monthly poem, composed by Captain J.H. Knight-Adely of the 9th Gloucesters, has conjured “The Ghosts of Bristol”:

> Ah! how the old ghosts nudge one another, grimly observant, hiding their pride In their kin, the dead of the Bristol Rifles come home to the city for which they died, Home from Italy, France, and Flanders, from the fields of death and of high renown, From the Somme, from Ypres, and the Asiago, to mount their guard over Bristol Town. (16)

Hughes’s “The Ruin,” then, can be read as a product of this same ongoing, public, post-war ethos of memorial, accounting, reconciliation, and mourning. For his part, Hughes’s speaker reflects on a marked absence of ghosts. First, the speaker asks, “Leave they no ghosts, no memories by the stairs? / No sheeted glimmer treading floorless ways? / No haunting melody of lovers’ airs, / Nor stealthy chill upon the noon of days?” (*Gipsy* 41). The speaker promptly answers his own question, “No: for the dead and senseless walls have long forgotten / What passionate hearts beneath the grass be rotten” (41). While this poem fits snugly within a poetic tradition of romantic yesteryear nostalgia, it disturbs memory with its negative spectrality: It is haunted by the lack of haunting.

Nevertheless, Hughes is not satisfied with the sound of haunted silence. Here, as elsewhere in his poetic works, Hughes seeks a dialogue with his readers about the meaning of ruin. Certainly, this is a poem that readers may respond to in different ways, evidenced by a

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35 A sort of portfolio letter—enfolding an account from Hugh Ferguson about his life and from J.S. Phillips about Hugh’s death—comes to the Hugheses in a letter from Gertrude Ferguson (24 June 1917).
36 Hugh Ferguson is listed as being buried at Ypres Town Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery and Extension (*Charterhouse Roll of Honour Memorial Archive*).
letter from Hugh John Evans (12 Nov. 1925) asking for the rights to translate Hughes’s play, *A Comedy of Good and Evil* (1924), into German. Evans expresses his admiration for “The Ruin,” the originality, beauty and power of which so arrested my attention that I resolved to write to its author merely to tell him of my pleasure, a pleasure largely contributed to by the fact that the poet, whose name I then saw for the first time, was a Welshman. “At last,” I said to myself, “we Welsh people are going to have a poet who will express to the English what Welsh genius means.” (Letter to Richard Hughes [12 Nov. 1925])

This celebration of poetic language for its own sake and the desires of nationalistic sentiments among long-colonized peoples find a sounding board in neo-Georgian poems like Hughes’s.

Yet others can read in “The Ruin” the rapid spread of an all-pervasive materialism that has dispelled the superstitions of the past and has exposed the naive, post-Versailles illusions for the future of a ruined Europe. Just as T.S. Eliot reminds readers in “The Hollow Men” (1925) that the greatest threat to civilization is not souls without bodies, but bodies without souls, Hughes presents the horrifying reality of ruins without their ghosts.

### 3.3.2 Re-Membering Waste Land

Another poem that expands death to apocalyptic proportions with the ultimate goal of therapy and repair in communicative, poetic acts is one of the latest of Hughes’s published poems, “Unicorn Mad.” Written sometime before February 2, 1925 (see C.H.C. Prentice’s letter from Chatto and Windus expressing hope to include the poem in a later volume of Hughes’s poetry and eventually publishing it both in *Confessio Juvenis* [1926] and in the *Omnibus* [1931]), this poem’s portrayal of a barren, desolate modernity is a remarkable shift in the scope, if not the tone, of Hughes’s verse and echoes something of the impact of Eliot’s “The Waste Land”

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37 Hughes’s poem is, possibly, a response poem itself, echoing yet re-interpreting some of the imagery from Walter de la Mare’s poem from *Peacock Pie* (1913), also titled “The Ruin.” Whereas in de la Mare’s earlier poem “[a]bout that ruin, cold and lone, / The cricket shrills from stone to stone; / And scattering o’er its darkened green, / Bands of fairies may be seen, / Clattering like grasshoppers, their feet / Dancing a thistledown dance round it” (189), Hughes’s ruin is barren of both supernatural and natural life: Only the rain “cools its small grey feet in the grasses” (37). Such a framing of posthuman nature (in both Hughes’s and de la Mare’s poems) is also reminiscent of a July 1918 poem in *Harper’s Magazine* by Sara Teasdale (who was closely associated with Vachel Lindsay and was most likely known to Hughes): “There Will Come Soft Rains,” a brief poem which haunts its readers with a post-war world indifferent to the humanity which has destroyed itself.
which Hughes read in the inaugural October 1922 issue of Eliot’s British *Criterion.* In “Unicorn Mad,” Hughes uses offset titles for the four sections of an uncharacteristically long poem (his later poetry is almost invariably longer than his earlier poetic works), much as Eliot’s groundbreaking poem has (“The Burial of the Dead,” “A Game of Chess,” “The Fire Sermon,” “Death by Water, “What the Thunder Said”). Hughes begins with a section titled “The Coming of the Ice Age,” which reveals a world in extreme crisis:

The mad witty gales
Run wildly up the hills,
Rocket up the dales . . .
—Alas, that in that green tilthe
Barren hail they sow!
Is it World’s End they bring,
That the roaring pine
And the fierce old thorn
Lie down with the celandine? (*Confessio* 77)

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38 Hughes’s archive shows that he ordered “two copies” of the first British edition of Eliot’s poem in book form from the Woolfs’ Hogarth Press on June 16, 1923, and received confirmation of his reservation from the Woolfs’ assistant Marjorie Joad (Letter to Richard Hughes [20 Jun 1923]), demonstrating Hughes’s desire to re-invest his own hard-earned literary capital to remain current and apparently to share Eliot with others. The Gothic-modern discourse that has infused Hughes’s early poems merges naturally here with Eliot’s version of that discourse in “The Waste Land” and “The Hollow Men” (1925). Eliot’s critical influence manifests its spread throughout this incipient stage of Hughes’s career, framing a major debate in the May 17, 1924, issue of *The Spectator* among Eliot, *Spectator* assistant literary editor (and close Hughes friend and collaborator) Alan Porter (793-4), and John Middleton Murry, editor of the *Adelphi Magazine* (a Hughes patron who had earlier published one of Hughes’s poems in *The Athenaeum*). Middleton Murry asserts here (against “Eliot [who] is a classicist” and anchored in Catholic conservatism) that “I have reached the conclusion that a resolute and thoroughgoing individualism offers the only way out of the spiritual discontents of the present time. It is no good appealing to a tradition which is not our own, when all sense of a tradition has been lost; it is no good pretending to invoke authority when there is no authority which men will recognize. The system of values on which the spiritual effort of the last century was based has collapsed utterly since the War: we are groping uneasily in a period of moral anarchy and intellectual triviality. The human soul cannot endure in that condition. It has to find a way out; it is compelled to feel its way towards values in which it does believe and principles to which it cannot be disloyal” (785). Although Hughes never published with Middleton Murry after *The Athenaeum*, he was clearly interested in— if not drawn to—the *Adelphi’s* spiritual stance and, in particular, to the work of D.H. Lawrence that Middleton Murry championed on behalf of the censored author in exile. While Hughes’s work never rises to the same levels of controversy as Lawrence’s, there is a clear affinity between Hughes and the *Adelphi’s* Lawrentian-Bloomsbury ethos that pulls him free of the *Spectator’s* neo-Georgian conservatism in which his career has been incubating.

39 Hughes explains to writer Nigel Nicolson that “I had read ‘The Waste Land’ in the *Criterion*, and when the Hogarth press published it had bought a copy. Then, I think it was my old friend Francesco Bianco who suggested that I should try on them a long short-story I had just written (called ‘Martha’ about life in the East End)” (Letter to Nigel Nicolson [18 Aug. 1975]).
In a second section called “All things die,” the frost follows the winds and hail in plague-like proportions:

Under her cold care
Eggs of cold are hatched there,
Till the lion stark
Beside the long-toed lark,
And the tiny curled mice
Shrivel like woodlice. (78)

Death has spread like poison, an evil more potent than that of the now-dead Upas tree (which was said to be poisonous on approach) (77), and has killed every living thing but two: the Unicorn and the “snow-winged wheeling Roc” who taunts with his natural freedom from earth (79).

This brutal mass extinction event, precipitated by wind, hail, and frost, intimates a second Noaic Deluge in a creeping, frozen progress. Here Hughes returns to the biblical and classical allusions which are more ready to hand for him than Eliot’s more obscure intertextual references to Shakespeare, Dante, Joyce, and Blake. In the midst of this freezing world emerges the immortal Unicorn, the creature who must be pitied because “he cannot now die” (78). He cannot

Bow his neck,
Close his eye,
Lay his lovely horn low,
Leave his body in the earth
Where the brown roots go! (78)

A last refuge for “[d]elicate monkeys” who cling to his mane before perishing—possibly alluding to the fragility of the human race—the unicorn with “icicled eye” and “glassy mane” is finally alone: “Where each shadowy soul goes / Who tells? Who knows?” (78). The unicorn is now completely disconnected from his fellow living things, disconnected even from the nurturing earth. “Now he sees his heart’s desire / Scorched more fiercely than by fire, / All the whole world

40 An itemization of Eliot’s spectral allusiveness can be found in Seamus Perry’s British Library article “Presences in the Waste Land” (2016).
dead, / All the noisy earth dead" (78).\(^{41}\) Ironically portrayed here not as the missing link, the animal "left off the ark" as C.S. Lewis has immortalized in his Punch ballad “The Sailing of the Ark” (1948), the Unicorn here is the last animal alive on earth.

While Hughes has not experienced war firsthand, he is one of those guilty few of his generation left behind by war and pandemic yet forced to reckon with the violence vicariously as his friends Golding, Graves, and T.E. Lawrence all progress as mentally and politically displaced war survivors. Hughes’s poem continues, reflecting on the Unicorn’s status among apocalyptic prophets and cursed wanderers:

> Now he’s Cassandra,
> Trumpeting aloud
> Calling aloud
> Things of fear
> With none to hear. (80)

In turn, the Unicorn poetically embodies the goddess Io (cursed mistress of Zeus) and the Wandering Jew (“Who creeps, hiding, / That no hill may see / No river guess to see / To curse his misery” [80]), envying even immortal Phoenix in his iterative immolation and driven to madness in his inability to pass three-headed Cerberus to enter death. This is one of Hughes’s most allusive poems. Finally, the last verse returns him to the familiar ghost-story/sea-chantey mode of his younger years:

> Only on a wild night
> When the winds run low
> For fear of the glaring stars
> That hunt them all the night through,
> You may hear his hooves go . . .
> You may hear the heartless chiming
> Of his ice-tongued mane
> Like a cold bell mocking
> Mocking, mocking human pain. (81)

The implied audience, then, must have emerged within the post-apocalyptic world of the Great War. It is significant that all the Unicorn’s grief flows ultimately and directly into humanity’s pain,

\(^{41}\) It is possible that this is a subtle allusion to Robert Frost’s “Fire and Ice,” published in the December number of Harper’s (1920). Frost writes, “Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice.”
yet here the mythic is “mock[ery]” (81)—and Hughes is asserting an underlying belief in the purpose of the apocalyptic Gothic: It must be therapeutic and not merely aesthetic. While the *eidola*-rich, tinkling ice chimes of the unicorn’s “glassy mane” are aesthetically pleasing in their own right (78), the grotesque beauty of the image is not enough. Hughes follows this beauty with the genuinely pathetic:

> Delicate monkeys nestled close  
> In his long and waving hair  
> Whimper in a mute despair,  
> Feel the ice about their toes. (78)

Even as the mad Unicorn laments his own undying state and the speaker entreats readers to pity him, it is the already-lost, the disappeared, and the dying that are most in need of therapeutic reparation. Such an image demands a response from the eternal cold of detached human readers. After all, the poem’s closing lines make it clear that the reader (with whom the speaker communicates directly as if over a campfire) still lives, called to hear the fantastic Unicorn in its lonely wanderings—and to respond appropriately to the human pain that its ice-bells mock.

One reading of this poem, speculative yet associative in ways the poet professed to value, could be that the speaker is Hughes’s vision of himself (the persona of barren wanderer having long been one of his favorites) as the last Georgian poet, wandering amid a modern world forever changed by the critical reception of Eliot’s “The Waste Land.” No matter what Hughes’s intention, Louis Untermeyer (one influential chronicler of modern American and British poetry, particularly with the academic press Harcourt Brace, and a critic with whom Hughes has earlier tangled), writes that he “should be greatly obliged if you would let me use ‘Unicorn Mad’” along with three other poems for his 1930 third edition of *Modern British Poetry* (Harcourt Brace). Untermeyer, who does not include any Hughes poems in his 1925 second edition has evidently re-evaluated Hughes’s poetic works—and perhaps the whole neo-Georgian movement—based on the success of Hughes’s novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929) (Letter to
Richard Hughes [6 Oct. 1929]), for which he has recently congratulated Hughes (Letter to Richard Hughes [3 Sept. 1929]). Perhaps indicative of the ongoing radical shifts that would eventually squeeze Hughes out of modern poetry anthologies altogether, Untermeyer’s later, combined American and British edition (1942) once again omits “Unicorn Mad,” yet Hughes’s perspective on apocalypse survives within his own published works. Hughes’s vision of apocalypse strikingly includes lingering life. This is not the barren Waste Land that Eliot imagines. It is a suspended vitality that, despite its darkest hour, sustains hope in the Unicorn’s trauma of living. For Hughes, as quickly as the climate has turned to crisis, it always retains the potential for turning back.

3.4 The Pattern-Making Animal: Reparative Memento Mori

Finally, from the preface of his first bound volume forward, Hughes’s poetry sets out to confirm that the human being is a “Pattern-making Animal.” It is this pattern-making that represents the essence of Hughes’s reparative vision. Hughes makes it clear that human subjects have an agency that transcends and supersedes the human frailties represented by lingering neuroses and broken communications. Hughes seeks to define humanity by its ability to bring together isolated instances to make patterns. Throughout the course of Hughes’s 50 published poems (32 in Gipsy-Night [1922], 15 added in Confessio Juvenis [1926], two later poems published in the Omnibus [1931] of all of Hughes’s early work, and one submitted only to his mother on a postcard), Hughes’s fixation on death manifests as no mere passing, morbid fancy. By continually re-assembling this modest body of poetic work as a patterned, (re)animated corpus, Hughes is “re-membering” death and calling on his audience to do the same. He seeks to re-shape death, re-composing it from various parts of various bodies that have accumulated in his memory to achieve catharsis for himself and for his readers. He does not, like Victor Frankenstein, seek to prolong life, nor does he seek to bring loved ones back from the grave. Instead, he simply seeks to wear the “death mask” to therapeutically rehearse a healthy passage through death for himself and for others: a means for dying well and “passing
Cerberus” when the time comes (“Unicorn Mad” 80). Hughes’s act of mourning is Janus-faced, a patterning that looks to the past and to the future at the same time. In emphasizing human beings as “pattern-making animals,” Hughes uses therapeutic literary tropes and techniques that can be classified under what have traditionally been called “memento mori.”

3.4.1 Ars Moriendi: “All the Noisy Earth Dead”

By tapping into association-ghosts from his extensive religious training, Hughes conjures old patterns regarding death and seeks to replace them with new, reparative ones. To categorize the various ways Hughes utilizes convention while also defying it, this discussion will leverage a system of classification for death poetics articulated by Henry E. Jacobs. Specifically, three traditions guide Hughes’s versions of the memento mori: the ars moriendi, the Dance of Death (danse macabre), and the meditation on death. All three types of expression emerge from the medieval Christian discourse surrounding death, yet they are transformed within the adaptive discourse of the Gothic-modern into a therapeutic means for understanding death, for rising above it, and for moving past it.

First, according to Jacobs, the ars moriendi “illustrates the temptation and ultimate salvation of the dying man” (97), having negotiated—in a geographic and temporal sense—the twists and turns of five specific devil-presented temptations. It also illustrates the meaning of “dying well.” Throughout five poems that rely heavily on bird imagery (which Hughes, immersed in institutional Christianity, knew could represent both life and death, both salvation and judgment) and that correspond loosely to the five temptations (spiritual pride, avarice, impatience, despair, and lack of faith) dangled before the dying man within the ars moriendi tradition, Hughes presents a fatal progress that implies judgment yet offers a glimmer of solace. Like the Elizabethan revenge tragedies Jacobs discusses, Hughes’s poems about death “intentionally pervert the discourse of the tradition and obliterate the encoded orthodox religious ideology” of that tradition by dwelling on death that has little recourse to natural or supernatural remedies (98).
While Hughes’s poems do not present any concrete version of the Faust narrative that the traditional *ars moriendi* implies, they generally involve a great “sin,” usually against nature, for which condemnation is prescribed. Nevertheless, while salvation in the conventional sense is lacking in the wide array of bird imagery Hughes presents, the central offender and the reader are provided with a chastening vision, like that offered to the haggard wedding-crasher of Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798), by which to understand the falling subject’s downward trajectory (without, in this case, providing any recognizable remedy for it).

“Glaucopis” (1922/1926/1931) is the tale of “John Fane Dingle,” one of several named protagonists in Hughes’s poems. In the closest Hughes allusion to Coleridge’s “Rime” (as well as to Greek mythological traditions surrounding Minerva), Dingle shoots an owl instead of a pigeon and is haunted forever by the ubiquitous, visionary return of “Owl-eyes” (*Gipsy* 31):

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John Fane Dingle
By Rumney Brook
Shot a crop-eared owl,
For pigeon mistook:

Caught her by the lax wing.
She, as she dies,
Thrills his warm soul through
With her deep eyes. (31)
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The misguided hunter here hints at the *ars moriendi*’s temptation of spiritual pride, a “nature lust,” yet generally falls within the classical rather than the biblical tradition. Dingle has trusted his own instincts and has directly assaulted the revered (yet spiritually ambiguous) animal, and is thus doomed to suffer a long, downward spiral. Accelerated by Hughes’s playful language and trademark use of eye-like colons, Dingle’s powerful gaze is now canceled by the owl’s own eyes gazing at him:

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42 Arthur H. Collins writes in his *Symbolism of Animals and Birds Represented in English Church Architecture* (1913), explains that the “eagle also carries the eaglets in its claws up to the sun. It rejects all those that cannot look at its brightness, but saves and rears the others. In like manner Christ bears souls that are fit for the vision of God, into His very presence” (134).

43 Daniel Esparza asserts that the owl has multiple meanings within orthodox Christian tradition. It can be Christlike in its spiritual solitude, yet its nocturnal nature simultaneously marks it as satanic (aletheia.org/2019/11/13/the-multiple-meanings-of-owls-in-christian-art/).
Corpse-eyes are eerie:
Tiger-eyes fierce:
John Fane Dingle found
Owl-eyes worse.

Owl-eyes on night-clouds,
Constant as Fate:
Owl-eyes in baby's face:
On dish and plate:

Owl-eyes, without sound. (31)

In the end, Dingle dies “of no complaint,” indicating an inexplicable passing. Yet this can also be read as final empathy: Dingle (like the Mariner before him) appears to accept his fate, welcoming death: “Pale of hue / John died of no complaint, / With owl-eyes too” (31). In one sense, at least, he has learned the art of “dying well”: He empathizes, and ultimately merges, with the creature he has killed.

The second of Hughes’s “bird poems” involves “A Man” (1922) (renamed—to shift the emphasis—as "The Broken Wing" in Confessio Juvenis [1926]) and tells a similar tale of misguided action, yet the temptation here seems to be that of avarice: The poem’s central protagonist is “in love with grass” (Gipsy 59), yet his love is both obsessive and possessive. The repressed, sexualized language of his relationship with nature is immediately the poem’s primitive driving force: “Thrill of wing in briar-bushes / Wildly at his heart pushes / Like the first, faint hint / A lover is let see” (59). Then, without additional warning, the internalized voice of “the man” seems to whisper through the poem his italicized regret: “Why did he break that small wing?” (59). This voice is all he has to guide him through his spiritual descent. Nature, for its part, colludes in unhelpful condemnation. The poem concludes:

The sun looks hollowly:
Mocking ’s where the water goes;
The breeze bitter in his nose:
Mocking eyes wide burning
—Lost, lost is he! (59)

Again, it is the gaze of nature that is finally and fatally turned on the former nature-tamer, Man, mocking his smothering love. Of course, the poem can be read in light of the personal, maternal
smothering the poet himself experienced and chafed at, or as a relational smothering of which Hughes himself has been guilty.

Third, “The Bird’s-Nester” (1922/1926/1931) addresses the temptation of impatience, yet its speaker again sides with the transgressor. Increasingly, Hughes’s speakers (like the protagonists of revenge tragedies) edge closer toward sanctioned rebellion against predetermined cosmic laws. This poem is clear allegory, signaled by the subtitle “A Memorial” that champions “A Young Man Expelled from His University for a Daring Neologism.” While not precisely autobiographical (Hughes faced near expulsion from Oxford for his own unholy poem), this light-hearted look at the powerfully unkind Critic frames Hughes’s own perception of the uphill ascent of the Olympian young as they seek to steal treasures from the culture industry’s elders: “Critic, that hoary Gull, in air / Whistles, whistles shrilly: / Climbing Youth, beware / Murder and mockery!” (Gipsy 67). Seeking “Eggs of Truth” (67), the Youth climbs the cliffs and faces the gory, Gothic onslaught of culture’s guardians who simultaneously attach and bide their time, waiting for the Youth to slip: “Bats on his thin skull, / Claws at his steady eyes” (67) while “Claws clutch his hair, / Beaks prick his eyes” (67). Then, with an ominous “whew!” (68), an expression usually connoting salvation expresses the Youth’s demise, whose descent is now completely untethered from conventions of capitalization and punctuation: “Down he is rocketing falling twisting” (68). Hughes’s omission of commas here (adding one back in the later edition of the poem) hints at structural shifts to his poetry that echo experimentation by William Carlos Williams and E.E. Cummings. Still, Hughes’s Bird-Critic isn’t done:

Gull’s peering eye hath spotted
Something the sea has rotted.
Secretly to the feast
Dives big gull, less, and least . . .
Age shall pick out his eyes,
Taste them with critick zest,
—Age knows the Best!
—Age shall build his lair
Out of his hair:
Gulp his small splintered bones
To his gizzard, for stones:
Feed on his words. (68-9)

Thus, the critic ruthlessly savages the textual body of the aspiring writer. Nevertheless, the Youth is able to succeed in a final act of subversion: “The jest / Feathers old Critic's nest” (69). Impatience, then, has compelled the climber upwards and doomed him. Promethean in his struggle and fate, he nevertheless succeeds in leaving behind something of himself, a Trojan Horse “feather” that will force Tradition to reckon with him after he is gone.

Next in this mortal sin sequence is Hughes’s “Cottager Is Given the Bird” (1921)/”The Bird” (1926), a poem that hints at the temptation of despair that plagues the outsider, which Hughes sees himself rapidly becoming. Just as Hughes’s speaker has championed the Youth, the speaker here defies his own fate. Interpreted as autobiographical by R.P. Graves and as a response to Hughes’s loss of Ysgol Fach when the new owner saw no point in keeping him on, the speaker here once again presents an inexorable bird that has penetrated the speaker’s own sacred domestic sphere and has invited all the forces of nature to collude in “web[bing him] out” of the cottage that he has lovingly—if obsessively—moulded into a home (Gipsy 58). The implied, profane humor in the first version of the poem’s title shifts to concrete imagery as the poem is recast simply as “The Bird” by 1926. Most importantly, the speaker describes this cottage in Gothic terms: “Door, Window, Rafter, Chimney, / Grow silent, die: / All are dead: all moulder: / Sole banished mourner I. / See how the Past rustles / Stirring to life again . . . / Three whole years left I lockt / Behind that window-pane” (58). In this acceptance of death (in this case the death of his domestic dreams), the speaker is able to navigate the temptation of despair by mourning the past yet seeing how memory, even when haunted, gives life to the dead present.

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44 R.P. Graves in Richard Hughes writes that William Nicholson (Nancy’s father and a close friend of the Bianco family, a friendship that led to his illustration of Margery (Bianco) Williams’s Velveteen Rabbit [1922]) remarried (after losing his first wife to the influenza pandemic in 1918) Edie Stuart-Wortley, Hughes’s landlord. Afterwards, the new couple gave up their lease on the property that included Hughes’s Ysgol Fach, and the actual owner of the property subsequently asked Hughes to leave. This was a blow to the poet, whose adopted Welsh identity was closely tied to the cottage he had restored himself (68).
Finally, “Judy” (1922/1926/1931) addresses the last of the five temptations—a loss of faith—as Hughes imagines a black horse amidst a typical English or Welsh landscape: “Sand hot to haunches: / Sun beating eyes down, / Yet they peer under lashes / At the hill's crown.” (Gipsy 42), with Judy’s eyes seemingly popping out in that final printed colon (a Hughes trademark both in poetry and in fiction). It is possible that Hughes is here empathizing with the animal’s burdens and toil, and that the author is beginning to see the world as the migrant sees it—at a slant. In reviewing Hughes’s first collection of poetry, Amabel Williams-Ellis notes this poem as “a typical example of the telegraphese style” of the Graves-Rickword-Hughes school. But she considers it a mistake to simply read this as “a piece of equine psychology; that the poet is trying to tell us what it feels like to be inside the black mare’s hide” (“Mr. Hughes’s” 695). Instead, she asserts (and perhaps with her inside information—Hughes changes the title for the poem’s 1931 publication to “Landscape with Horse”) “that [Hughes] was merely painting a cubist landscape, and called it after the mare for no better reason than because she was the only living creature introduced” (“Mr. Hughes’s” 695). No matter what Hughes’s intention, this poem demonstrates that his gaze has shifted, and the image (and rhythm) that comes into focus during the poem’s last lines is eerily reminiscent of those in Vachel Lindsay’s “Congo” (1914): “Birds clatter numberless: / In the muffled wood / Big feet move slowly: / Mean no good” (43). It is not unreasonable to imagine some evil fate befalling Judy under the talons of this clatter of birds. Significantly—and perhaps in rebuttal to Williams-Ellis’s reading—Hughes modified the first two lines in his second collection to “Sand hot to my haunches, / The sun beats my eyes down—” (Confessio 26; my italics). Death clatters over the head of this animal-speaker, whose feet move slowly under the barrage of hot sand and sun. The last line “[m]ean[s] no good” and offers no respite for a creature in distress. Green pastures beckon, but the birds are poised to block the way. In examining the art of dying well, Hughes provides a means for examining himself and his own ambitions. He also provides himself and others a means for living that distances death as more than fate. It is a life-long process that adds urgency to agency. In
choosing to resist the patterns posed by destructive temptations, human beings can seek the pattern of a fuller life.

### 3.4.2 The Dance of Death:Naming Our Dead

A second classification of *memento mori* used by Jacobs is far less confrontational and much more in line with Hughes’s trademark humor. The “Dance of Death” (97) (a parade of images in which a spritely, “grinning skeleton” dances forward with all members of society—both the high and the low—into the afterlife [97]) punctuates several of Hughes’s poems. Death, experienced in apocalyptic terms during the Black Death of 1347, becomes the capricious “Great Leveler as Great Reveler.” For Hughes, the Dance of Death is embodied in the Romanichal Travellers, the “gipsy” people with whom he engages throughout his early work. Haunted by images of “Martha,” a Romani girl in whose eyes the speaker sees “the world’s pain” in an eponymous poem (“Martha,” *Gipsy* 14), Hughes composes a series of poems in which names add humanity to what otherwise would be simple, aesthetic propositions. These are poems which playfully dangle the hope of joining in the cathartic “Gipsy Dance.”

In naming poems for characters who are dead or dying, Hughes is implicitly acknowledging the epitaphic influence of Edwin Arlington Robinson’s “Richard Cory” (1897) and “Miniver Cheevy” (1910), Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), and Vachel Lindsay’s “General William Booth Enters into Heaven” (1913), a register that poetry-gatekeeper Thomas Moult has modestly praised and Eliot has generally disdained. On November 14, 1920, Hughes writes a poem on a postcard to his mother called “Jonathan Barlow.” It begins: “Jonathan Barlow loved wet skies / And golden leaves on a rollick wind. . . / Now clouds drip damp on his staring eyes, / And the storm his roystering dirge hath dimmed” (Letter to Louisa Hughes [14 Nov. 1920]). From the poem’s opening we again see Hughes’s fascination with eyes, especially as they are connected with the second sight of death.

The eventual published poem (retilted “Epitaph” [1922], increasing its identification with *Spoon River*) is pervaded by Gothic imagery. It is a vision of a world in which all fall down, and
in which nature levels, swallows, and revels in the disintegration of proud humanity. Instead of “staring eyes,” Barlow now possesses “crumbling eyes” (30). The rabbits Barlow has loved now “burrow, and crop their meal; / Their fore-paws scatter him up in sand” (30), while the old bracken of which he has been fond “pushes / Affectionate roots between his bones: / He runs in the sap of the young spring bushes” (30). Nevertheless, his beloved Connie doesn’t acknowledge her “Golden-Johnnie / And his tap tap tap at her window-pane” (30). The last description of Jonathan Barlow is a significant improvement over his original ending (“wild sad ghost at her windowpane”) and leaves more of the interpretive process to the reader while emphasizing the performative, auditory qualities Lindsay has impressed upon Hughes. The poem’s revenant specter, returning dutifully to his beloved’s porch, has its clear revenant progenitor in the poem “The Ghost” by Walter de la Mare. This latter poem, published in Motley, and Other Poems in 1918, consists of a ghostly conversation through a cottage’s front door. The specter unsuccessfully returns: “‘Who knocks?’ ‘I, who was beautiful, / Beyond all dreams to restore, / I, from the roots of the dark thorn am hither, / And knock on the door’ (19). In the end, the door is opened to the ghost, but a reunion of lovers is impossible, and “[n]ought but vast sorrow was there” (20). Hughes’s “Epitaph” is only one of three poems discarded for his successive, cumulative collections of poetry, likely because of its fairly derivative (and commonplace within the day’s literary culture) construction and in spite of its improvement through the drafting process. Yet it reveals Hughes’s early and ongoing vision: that death is a simple matter of biological decomposition—even if haunted—and that this disintegration, while ultimately consuming relationships, leads to new ones within an ongoing ecosystem. The macabrely amusing Dance of Death here, while striking some readers as cruel, is an admission that provides a reality check for those who romanticize or deny death and defer their relationships.

A second poem, “Isaac Ball,” appears in all three of Hughes’s cumulative poetry volumes. It is a cynical tale of an elderly man on his last legs: “Painting pictures / Worth nothing
at all / In a dark cellar / Sits Isaac Ball” (Gipsy 35). The only poem in Gipsy-Night (1922) that
retains a Spoon River-like nameplate, “Isaac Ball” is the story of a long and wasted yet strangely
enviable life. While Ball is not dead, he is living in a cellar telling “tall tales” to “long-legged
ghosts” (36). His state seems precarious and to be pitied:

Some still visit him;
Pretend to buy
His unpainted pictures
The Lord knows why.
His grey beard is woolly,
Eyes brown and wild:
Sticky things in his pocket
For anybody’s child. (36)

This last image is a favorite for Hughes, having described the Rev. John Williams in his short
story “The Stranger” (1923) as having “sticky sweet things ready in his pocket” (58), a clear sign
of that man’s indolent complacency and here coloring Isaac Ball’s character in similar flesh
tones. “Someday he’ll win fame, / So Isaac boasts, / Lecturing half the night / To long-legged
ghosts” (36). Nevertheless, Hughes’s characteristic puckishness leads him to conclude that
“Isaac was young once: / At sixty-five / Still seduces more girls / Than any man alive” (36).
There is whimsy here, the spritely dance of the long-legged skeleton. Hughes’s ghosts, in
general, are hardly the “long-legedy beasties” who “go bump in the night” made famous by the
old Scottish prayer.45 The distorted bodies of the “long-legged ghosts” Ball addresses are
actually sexualized images of all the female figures Isaac Ball has persuaded with the
momentum of his personality. They, like Ball, are dancing skeletons, unafraid of what the grave
holds and defying it as long as they can.

In a more starkly naturalistic vein, “Winter” (1922/1926/1931) is reminiscent of “Unicorn
Mad,” with its apocalyptic cold colored by a touch of Hughes’s trademark humor in the second
stanza:

Snow wind-whipt to ice

45 The Scottish prayer is actually itself a parody of the Book of Common Prayer. See Ray Girvan, Things
That Go Bump in the Night (2014).
Under a hard sun:
Stream-runnels curdled hoar
Crackle, cannot run.

Robin stark dead on twig,
Song stiffened in it:
Fluffed feathers may not warm
Bone-thin linnet. (Gipsy 44)

Still, the human element that Hughes inserts here adds a lingering pathos, a haunting yet hopeful note within a painful nightmare:

Mad-tired on the road
Old Kelly goes;
Through crookt fingers snuffs the air
Knife-cold in his nose.

Hunger-weak, snow-dazzled,
Old Thomas Kelly
Thrusts his bit hands, for warmth
Twixt waistcoat and belly. (44)

There is something to be said, then, for human warmth in the face of existential cold. Old Thomas Kelly has survived to this point, and there is some faint hope that he can survive this exposed “Winter” moment as well, hardened by resolve. Nevertheless, his place, without the proper clothing, points to his status as a homeless wanderer at the mercy of the elements. His death marker, if any is erected, will likely be left blank.

Finally, Hughes’s “The Jumping-Bean” (1922/1926/1931) is a truly light-hearted take on life and death. A curious (and oddly off-putting) subtitle in parentheses signals this to be a different type of meditation: “(A curious bean, with a small maggot in it, who comes to life and tumbles his dwelling at the stimulus of warmth)” (Gipsy 54). The playful jig which inspires the poet (and which vicariously inspires readers through the poem) is contagious:

Dance, small grey thing
Sleek in the warm sun:
Roll around, to this, to that,
Rare wormy fun!

Hot sun applauds thee:
Warm fingers press
To wake the small life within
Thy rotund dress. (54)

The diction of playful youth pipes the tune for this dirge-ditty, and Hughes’s inspiration from Lindsay’s chanted poetry is again manifest. While the dance leads to death, there is always the sense that the Great Leveler inspires movement and life even as it sets limits. The eventual version of this poem in *Confessio Juvenis* modifies the subtitle to “A Memorial, for Another” (45), imitating and perhaps mocking human solemnity (or perhaps revealing Hughes’s inspiration from an actual death that Hughes distances here with caricature). The poem concerns a feature of Hughes’s everyday cottage life: the daily potential for death. In its ridiculous display that pokes fun at death itself, the maggot serves here as the poet’s emblem, reminding him and readers of the complacency that can come from creative confinement:

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Alack! Have years in cupboard,
In chill and dark,
Stifled thy discontent?
Snufft thy spark?

Liest thou stark, stiff,
There in thy bed?
Weep then a dirge for him:
Poor Bean’s dead! (Gipsy 54-5)
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There is a sense, here, that this is not merely a brief lyric observing a mundane maggot’s death dance. Rather, it signifies the tension between a poet’s limitations and the speaker’s desire to dance in the face of death and dissolution.

In each of these examples of the *danse macabre*, Hughes demonstrates a desire to dance playfully with death rather than to accept a pre-determined fate. Isaac Ball keeps painting, the vagrant keeps moving, and the bean-maggot keeps jumping. All the while, there is life-giving humor to lift the burden of solitude and suffering.

3.4.3 Meditation on Death: “I Don’t Like ‘Hole’”

Furthermore, while Hughes’s reflections on death can be politically or socially confrontational or humorous, they can also cross over into deeply spiritual crises. From the Dance of Death, Hughes moves to more contemplative, and more morbid, fascinations that
nevertheless reflect agonies his verse has brushed aside to this point. These direct-to-death poems are more performative than Hughes’s others. They reveal attempts on the part of the poet to put on the “death mask,” and they compel actions of the reader. They cross a line: Hughes’s speakers are now actually seeking to know what the experience of death feels like. In these acts of re-membering death, Hughes takes tangible, bodily images of death-in-life and wraps the speaker in them, creating a claustrophobic, confrontational, and tomb-like reality. Truly, this is the Cave of Abjection, the shared state of all humanity. The last of Jacobs’s categories for the memento mori is the “Meditation on Death,” what Jacobs calls “the meditation on the instant of death, the putrefaction of the body after death, or the death’s head” (97), and two of Hughes’s poems exemplify a deep commitment toward mortal introspection in Gothically graphic terms. According to the memento mori tradition, bodily putrefaction is a consequence of sin. Furthermore, the means for identification, repulsion, and expiation of that sin is a “fixation on the inevitability and horrors of death” (96). Hughes, at this stage of his spiritual ferment, contests this narrative with contemplations of self-murder as a remedy for life’s pain. “Dirge” represents one of the earliest Hughes poems submitted to The Spectator, and a letter from Amabel Williams-Ellis (whom Hughes had not yet met) explains why this poem has initially been rejected on June 25, 1920. The editor (Williams-Ellis) writes diplomatically and solicitously,

May I take the liberty of telling you the points I don’t like about it? The first is in conception. The general idea I like exceedingly, but [you?] give the impression that suicide is the invariable end. The once or twice I think the phraseology lets you down. For example, I don’t like “hole” in the last stanza but one, nor do I like “daft” as you use it. I do hope you will go on sending me poems as your work interests me. (Letter to Hughes [25 June 1920])

Counseling Hughes on both content (to strengthen rather than weaken Hughes’s poem on suicide) and craft (Hughes’s word choices are still characteristically Germanic, echoing the flippant tone of the jumping bean’s “snuft spark” [Gipsy 54]), Williams-Ellis suggests changes that might improve the poem for publication. Hughes, an excellent study of those he respects, does make slight changes, but he retains the “hole” (echoing the Germanic word for Hell, Hölle)
that Williams-Ellis has disliked. In the end, with this poem, Hughes makes perhaps his biggest splash to date. In January 1921, he writes his mother that Harriet Monroe’s “‘Poetry,’ (USA) have taken ‘Dirge’ & are giving me 30 [shillings] for it: not bad. Athenaeum [also?] gave £1 for the ‘horse-trough.’ ‘Poetry' wants full details of my literary career for its Literary Notes: I had to write & explain that as yet I hadn’t got such a thing” (Letter to Louisa Hughes [26 Jan. 1921]). In the August 1921 issue of Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry*, Hughes (like Vachel Lindsay before him) would become one of Monroe’s discoveries, and his poem would appear alongside Amy Lowell’s haiku, preceding Wallace Stevens’s selections in *Poetry*’s September issue, and ahead of poems by William Carlos Williams and Robert Frost in January 1922. Not only has Hughes made a name now for himself, but his apparently commissioned poetry notes for *Poetry*’s June 1921 number make a point of singling out for praise many in his own immediate circle.46 Surprisingly, “Dirge” is also one of only three poems left out of Hughes’s later collections, as if, at that later date, he has moved past its message.

Most importantly, “Dirge” represents Hughes’s most brazen example of opposition to the orthodox narratives and notions of *memento mori*. His speaker figuratively demonstrates a shattered Heaven: “The sky is a broken lid, a litter of smashed yellow pieces” (*Gipsy* 37). Yet this is not a Heaven shattered without reason and with no doctrine to replace it. The speaker explains that his replacement vision is that of the poor, the weary, and the brokenhearted who can still find solace in simple pleasures, rather than in a distant image of peace in the afterlife:

To those under smoke-blackened tiles, and cavernous echoing arches,  
In tortuous hid courts, where the roar never ceases  
Of deep cobbled streets wherein dray upon dray ever marches, . . .  
To those under mouldering roofs, where life to an hour is crowded,  
Life, to a span of the floor, to an inch of the light,  
And night is all feverous-hot, a time to be bawded and rowdied,  
Day is a time of grinding, that looks for rest to the night. (37)

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46 Hughes’s friend Louis Golding would publish a poem in *Poetry*’s next issue, July 1921, and a contribution from Hughes’s lifelong correspondence partner Iris Barry would follow in September 1922. This demonstrates Hughes’s tight literary community: poets who published broadly yet often published together or in close textual proximity to one another.
While Hughes has lived a comfortable and well-provisioned life, he begins to see the world through different, impoverished eyes. It is this re-membering—or re-ordering—of death, resulting in a composite reconfiguration, that demonstrates Hughes’s therapeutic use for Gothic discourse. As in “Gipsy-Night,” Hughes re-frames the night (signifying death) as “a time to be bawded / and rowdied” (37), a solace for those who live daily in the shadows.

Hardly a moralizing poem, Hughes even-handedly exhorts: “Those who would live, do it quickly, with quick tears, sudden laughter, / Quick oaths terse blasphemous thoughts about God the Creator” (37). There is a “blasphemous” empathy here, a closer pass than Hughes has ever made at understanding others’ suffering directly. The speaker’s solution is simple: “Those who would die, do it quickly, with noose from the rafter, / Or the black shadowy eddies of Thames, the hurry-hater” (37). By this gesture, Hughes turns memento mori comfort on its death’s head: “Life is the Master, the keen and grim destroyer of beauty: / Death is a quiet and deep reliever, where soul upon soul / And wizened and thwarted body on body are loosed from their duty / Of living, and sink in a bottomless, edgeless impalpable hole” (38).

Death, here, becomes the end in itself, no longer a gateway to a better life, while “Life is . . . a destroyer” (38), the “Master” which must be thrown off by enslaved humanity in an act of the will (38). And yet there is an unsettling ambiguity in the poem’s last lines, reminiscent of Hamlet envisioning “what dreams may come”: “Dead, they can see far above them, as if from the depth of a pit, / Black on the glare small figures that twist and are shrivelled in it” (38). In this inversion of a traditional vision from the “pit,” the dead view the living who are suffering—“black,” “twist[ing],” and “shrivelled” (38). Davison writes that “the complex warning/reminder that we will all die . . . litters the Gothic landscape” (2), and Hughes here co-opts this wholly Gothic rhetoric as a reconciliation with death.

Another poem, published later as “Felo de se” in the March 18, 1922, edition of The Spectator (and re-published three more times in Hughes’s compiled poetry), is another work negotiated with Williams-Ellis. She writes Hughes on February 24, 1922, saying “[n]ow on
reflection I like the second version much the best and have taken it. The only thing that I am not quite sure about are your deliberate cacophonies in the last two verses: ‘Never, never were I free!’ and the arrangement of the two final lines:—’... Thou silly worm, gnaw not / Yet thine intricate cocoon’” (Letter to Richard Hughes [24 Feb. 1922]).

Although Hughes and the rest of modern secular humanity have smashed Heaven, a distinctly Gothic dis-ease troubles Hughes’s assertion of Death as a comforter. In this second Hughes poem of “suicide” (the title’s literal translation), the speaker must confront the materialistically remote possibility of the traditional suicide’s fate as wandering spirit or tormented soul: “If I were stone dead and buried under, / Is there a part of me would still wander, / Shiver, mourn, and cry Alack, / With no body to its back?” Here again is the meditation on death so familiar from Hamlet. Putrefaction in many forms (“When brain grew mealy, turned to dust . . . Immortal Soul grow imbecile . . . would the Mind still a quester be, / Frame deeper mysteries, not find them out / And wander in a larger Doubt?” (Gipsy 61). Death, then, may not be the “Silencer” that the speaker hopes for, and the traditional understanding of the suicide as eternally lost proves a deterrent to the speaker:

    Though veins when emptied a few hours
    Of this hot blood, might suckle flowers:
    From Spiritual flames that scorch me
    Never, never were I free!

    Then back, Death! Till I call thee
    Hast come too soon! (62)

And yet “Death” seems to have a chiding last word to the main speaker, the italicized response:

“... Thou silly worm, gnaw not / Yet thine intricate cocoon” (62). Once again, man as maggot faces inscrutable death in an inconclusive showdown. Carol Davison writes that

the advent of secular modernity, the putative triumph of Reason, and the unsettling of religious certainties during the Enlightenment about the existence of God, the soul, and the afterlife, constituted a type of cultural trauma that alienated us from an earlier familiarity with death while giving rise to greater anxieties and uncertainties about mortality, loss, and remembrance. (2)
Hughes, in this last example of his death-saturated poetry, has no answers, only more “quest[ing]” to do (Gipsy 61). Nevertheless, the efforts on the part of the speakers of these two poems to directly confront death serve as a pattern for others to follow.

3.5 Haunting Herstories: Necropoetics/Necropolitics

In particular, Hughes often patterns, or re-members, Gothic death depictions as they relate to female bodies. Critics have seen in this representational pattern evidence of Hughes’s own psychosexual dispositions. Of his many friendships with young girls during this period, R.P. Graves notes that Hughes “possibly sought them out quite subconsciously not only as a replacement for his dead sister, but also to expiate some of the guilt he had always felt about surviving her” (Richard 68). On the other hand, John Bayley implicates Hughes in a sexualization of the female child subject, writing that “[a] reader can usually tell. . . when a novelist is secretly a little excited by something in his subject; and there seems no doubt that Hughes’s lifelong interest in children was at least partially sexual” (“Make Mine”). There is no evidence that Hughes expressed or exhibited such motivations, and Bayley’s suggestion seems unnecessarily salacious. Nevertheless, Hughes himself would have admitted that psychosexual interpretations of his depictions of young girls and women were inevitable. Despite this, he implores the critical reader to consider his work at a remove from his own psychological make-up. Hughes writes as a disclaimer in his preface to Gipsy-Night that “I should be sorry that [my poems] should be read with no other purpose than indecently to detect my neuroses” (“Preface” to Gipsy-Night 11). While Hughes would likely have agreed with Bayley’s understanding of the psychosexual underpinnings of creative work as an expression of the hermeneutics of suspicion, the present study instead seeks to understand Hughes’s use of Gothic images of violence against women as a means for therapeutic engagement: as an example of reparative

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47 Critic John Bayley’s wife, writer Iris Murdoch, clearly disagreed with her husband, openly praising Hughes’s work. She writes, “I have been meaning for a long time to write to you to say how very much I enjoy and admire your books—and to express my hopes of seeing the successor to The Fox in the Attic. . . Thank you very much indeed for the pleasure and inspiration which your work has given. You are a marvellous writer. I am so grateful” (Letter to Richard Hughes).
reading that highlights abject agency. This view is supported by the overwhelming evidence in his work that he seeks to identify both with the child and with women as subjects that have traditionally been marginalized and oppressed within human culture yet who retain the potential for agency.

From the medieval period forward, a specific Gothic discourse involving symbolic significations of death permeates European literature. Jacobs explains that depictions of death originally emerged, sometimes in very graphic forms (“[t]he severed hand, the skull beneath the skin, the blood-soaked handkerchief, and other such gruesome relics of human carnage” [96]) in order to “bring us to the contemplation of our own sins, detach us from the world, and move us beyond death to thoughts of God and redemption. Thus the memento mori should re-present social and religious ideology that directs the contemplative individual” (97-8). Yet the Elizabethan stage, which served as a strong influence on Hughes’s work through his associations with Oxford’s New Elizabethans and his appreciation of the work of John Skelton, subverted those traditions, as has been documented above.

Davison echoes Jacobs in asserting that “[r]ecognition of the prevalence of what I have elsewhere called the Gothic’s necropoetics—comprised of death-focused symbols and tropes such as spectrality and the concept of memento mori—in combination with its necropolitics, which featured intergenerational power dynamics between the (un)dead and the living, further substantiates Walmsley’s claim while rendering more understandable the historical emergence of the Gothic” (1-2). Hughes partakes in both the memento mori’s necropoetics and necropolitics as he seeks to come to terms with the death that surrounds him yet from which he has been uncannily spared. Having emerged from a context of death that has taken his father, brother, and sister—and which has killed friends and only narrowly spared others—Hughes has escaped, physically unscathed yet psychologically and spiritually scarred.
3.5.1 Spilling Blood

A first type of female agency in the face of death—"spilling blood"—is indicative of Hughes’s lifelong commitment to the women (and girls) in his life who had experienced trauma. To begin with, “The Horse-Trough” was an early Hughes poem purchased for 30 shillings by London’s Athenaeum, an august literary magazine which had seen better days and which was undergoing a merger with The Nation. Nevertheless, The Athenaeum, under the editorship of John Middleton Murry (who had previously edited Rhythm and The Blue Review and would go on to edit the Adelphi) at this transitional time, had begun to publish writers such as T.S. Eliot and the prominent figures of the Bloomsbury Group (Murry was married to Katherine Mansfield until her death). Hughes’s poem captures a moment of sheer joy in which children are gathered around a horse-trough/manger, splashing and dunking, while the youngest girl of the child-crowd intentionally stalks a nearby horsefly.48 Then, almost without warning, Hughes diverges from the escapist pastoral: With a last line of “Richard Cory” proportions,49 he signals the youngest female child’s fly-murder: “And then she does” (Gipsy 15).

Initial reader responses might be connected to the understandably negative connotations of the fly itself or the innocence in the child and the delightful images of children’s water-play, but this last line displaces at least a modicum of that innocence. This is death at the hand of the female child—writ very small. Taken by New York’s The Bookman in June 1922 (18 months after its first publication in The Athenaeum),50 and juxtaposed with Hughes’s correspondence on the state of English poetry in the same issue, this brief poem represents

48 Its imagery generally follows Untermeyer’s assessment of the new Georgian cohort: “English literature suffered not only from individual losses but from general shock. This shock affected the writers of every school and diverted where it did not arrest the current of contemporary verse . . . Wishing to escape the intricate urban civilization which had scarred Europe with ruins, many of the poets turned hopefully to the traditional curlew-calling, plover-haunted English countryside. The machine is a dead thing spreading death, they cried; only the soil creates” (Modern British [1930] 16-17).
49 Edwin Arlington Robinson writes as the last lines of his poem about the wealthy and seemingly contented “Richard Cory” (1897): “Then he went home, all alone, and put a bullet in his head.”
50 The Athenaeum’s version spread Hughes’s poem over two pages, disconnecting its final line from the poem. The Bookman’s version amends this textual disruption.
Hughes’s clear entry into an international, modernist poetry scene. His deliberate juxtaposition of the “clean” image of young children and the filthy “bobble, bobble, bobble” of the horse trough’s water (Gipsy 15), pairing innocence and death—even if only the “murder” of a fly—signals playfully ripe conflicts.

According to Graves’s On English Poetry, published that same summer, “no striking detail and no juxtaposition of apparently irrelevant themes which it contains can be denied at any rate a personal significance—a cypher that can usually be decoded from another context” (33). Most significantly, here is Hughes’s use of the “girl,” a female subject who is intimately engaged in the processes of death. The necropoetics of the Gothic discourse—and its utilization by Hughes as a therapeutic voice during this scarred interwar limbo—whispers throughout his poetry and across his entire corpus. Specifically, three images of the death-written female body in three poems convey the inevitability—as well as the ironic, corrupting beauty—of death. These images involve the Levitical admonition that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11, KJV), the body as a candle, and the crushing of bones.

For the female subject, blood has long presented an extremely practical and inevitably cultural source of signification. A woman’s menstrual flow signifies—especially to the latecomer, male initiate—both life and death. The horror of recurring, persistent blood flow has been passed down as taboo literary allusion. On the other hand, menstrual flow is also a sign of female fecundity: of a woman’s life-giving capacities. In Hughes’s poem “Aenigma,” first published in the September 3, 1921, number of The Spectator and then retained in all subsequent collections, the speaker relates a hypnotizing vision of a beautiful woman who is combing her hair while bleeding to death. Introduced as a dream vision, and similar to many “haunted” ballads such as Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci” (1819), “Aenigma” shows the paradox of a woman whose blood flows from an unknown cause and without apparent pain (“in

51 See Molly in Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), Stephen King’s Carrie (1973), and Angela Carter’s “Wolf Alice” (1979) as key Gothic examples of this trope, one which Hughes masters in High Wind’s Emily.
her perfect eye / No terror lurked; nor pity / That she should so die” [Gipsy 62]). Disembodied in some unknown act of violence, she somehow, at least for now, maintains agency over her own affect by resisting both terror and pity.

Hughes’s vision-woman also retains agency over her body, and even over her own death. Significantly, her surroundings are as laden with association-ghosts as Gal-gar-ul’s trove. The speaker, initially objectifying the vision-woman as a “thing” (62), itemizes the dream’s images: “A flawless tall mirror, / Glass dim and green” (62), a woman’s “tall dim figure” (62), “eyes water-pale” (62), the woman’s “long hair” (62), “And the crimson blood ran in the fine gold there” (62). Green, red, and gold sparkle as the woman embodies some sort of Gothic treasure. While the blood that progressively flows through the woman’s hair might be assumed to be a sign of her weakness, it is ultimately a reminder of her agency. Not only is she controlling her response to the blood’s flow, but she also seems to regulate the flow itself, perpetuating its living stream in the calm combing of her own hair. The “dying, dying, dying” observed by the presumably male gaze of the speaker appears inevitable, yet it never transpires. The woman lives at the end of the poem just as she has at the beginning.

Hughes’s speaker (and the implicated reader) is an interloper, pruriently observing a slow-motion death, unable or perhaps unwilling to provide help or comfort. Nevertheless, Hughes reveals in this woman a subject who possesses a powerful agency even in the face of her unrelenting demise.

3.5.2 Burning Bodies

A second form of female agency can be termed the “burning body.” “The Image” (appearing in the January 1921 issue of The Spectator, picked up for the February 5, 1921, issue of Littell’s derivative American magazine The Living Age,52 and included across Hughes’s three collections), is the only Hughes poem that has been set to music, the fruit of a protracted

52 The poem’s printing in Littell’s The Living Age (5 Feb. 1921) makes Hughes’s poem the last word of the issue—both definitive and perhaps overlooked.
deal negotiated between Hughes (who expects perhaps too much for the use of his intellectual property in a new form) and William B. Wordsworth, a descendant of the Romantic poet. In it the female body is written (and ultimately sung) as a snuffed candle. The title’s “image” is of an objectified, embalmed, dead woman—a waxen, human candle that is now spent: “Snuffed are the tapers, and bitterly hang on the flowerless air: / See: and this is the Image of her they will lay in the tomb; / Clear, and waxen, and cooled in the mass of her hair” (Confessio 35). This “viewing” of the female body, partnered with the “[s]nuffed” tapers that accompany it, represents the objectification of female death under the gaze of the male Hughes (and Wordsworth). Consequently, the embalming process itself is presented as artistic creation, and the absence of both “Artist” and “Sitter” leaves spectral residues: “feel lightly, finger, for finger / In love: then see how like is the Image, but lifelessly fashioned / And sightless, calm, unloving. Who is the Artist? Linger / And ponder whither has flitted his sitter impassioned” (35). While the observers must be passionless (35), the Sitter is “impassioned” (35). Despite the snuffing of this human candle, its spark lives on elsewhere. The spirit of the Sitter has simply “flitted” (35).

Hughes’s use of an “Artist” (perhaps indicating again the residues of Hughes’s conflicted spirituality) hints at an unknown ultimate Creator. Yet even in their absences, both Artist and Sitter remain active, if critically incapable of love. Davison writes that “in stark contrast to and in defiance of the grotesque realities of the putrefying corpse, which generated our deep-seated anxiety and fear of our own death and the loss of our individuality, we created a new, beautiful, more spectralised Other who remained incorruptible and individually identifiable in his/her post-mortem state” (3). While male morticians and observers seek to shape feminine death in their own image, the “sitter” of this poem—the spirit of the deceased herself—resists. It is an impassioned agency that Hughes reveals here as a non-tragic sequel by which humanity, in confronting death, has an uncanny power to strike out on its own.

3.5.3 Rolling Bones

To demonstrate a third type of mortal female agency, a third poem reintroduces a familiar Craig Ddrwg fixture: the “wicked Saint,” here known as “The Rolling Saint” (1922/1926/1931). A triptych panel (when aligned with both “Craig Ddrwg” and “Llwyd”), this poem finally provides the backstory of a much maligned woman and re-frames her abjection in starkly sympathetic terms. The poem is shaded, like “Benjamin Crocker,” as a sort of sea chantey,

Where clouds sail past like argosies
Breasting the crested hills
With mainsail and foretopsail
That the thin breeze fills;
With ballast of round thunder,
And anchored with the rain
With a long shadow sounding
The deep, far plain: (Gipsy 49)

Also, it once again (as in “Llwyd,” “Craig Ddrwg,” and “The Demi-god”/”Nesta”) conjures the cosmic dice game: “Where rocks are broken playthings / By petulant gods hurled, / And Heaven sits a-straddle / The roof-ridge of the World” (49). But more than this, the Rolling Saint is a re-casting of Gal-gar-ul, complete with her “muml[ing]” (mumbling) (50), as the essence of human suffering and suspicion. Here are the hackneyed, Georgian “plovers and rock-conies” of which Untermeyer warns (50), yet the poem continues:

For in the Cave of Teiriwch
That scarce holds a sheep,
Where plovers and rock-conies
And wild things sleep,
A woman lived for ninety years
On bilberries and moss
And lizards and small creeping things,
And carved herself a cross: (50)

Hughes’s trademark colons here are again eyes, like “Glaucopis”’s owl-eyes, looking at the unseeable horror, the abomination to come, the crucifixion she herself has prefigured by “carv[ing] herself a cross” (50):

But wild hill robbers
Found the ancient saint
And dragged her to the sunlight,
Making no complaint.
Too old was she for weeping,
Too shrivelled and too dry:
She crouched and mumle-mumled
And mumled to the sky. (50)

Coded again as the witch (her “mumle” a spectral, onomatopoeic echo of Gal-gar-ul’s devouring of “mummled flesh” and the “bobble, bobble” of “The Horse-Trough”), this female victim is the picture of merciless, violent assault. In traffic-stopping terms, Hughes projects an image that makes readers turn away; he imagines the unimaginable.\textsuperscript{54}

The poem’s speaker, seeking to ameliorate the abomination, justifies the poem’s impending violence in simple, spiritual, gender-biased terms: “No breath had she for wailing, / Her cheeks were paper-thin: / She was, for all her holiness, / As ugly as sin” (50). This narrative of female objectification (her holiness as well as her ugliness), seeks to grind up this female body for cultural consumption.

The robbers, their own actual sin far uglier than this female figure is perceived to be, proceed directly toward merciless murder, packing the living woman in a barrel, “all but her bobbing head” (50), and rolling her down the evil hills. The robbers do bury her, “just broken bits of bone / And rags and skin” (51), but their crude attempt at quieting the wrath of her potential ghost fails. She vengefully returns as an Adjudicating Stranger, a revenant visiting grief on humanity if they neglect to pay the stone toll. The violent abjection of a female figure is an ongoing Hughes feature in his verse, his fiction, and his dramatic works, and such depictions are instructive for understanding the psychology and historically violent circumstances of 20th-century culture. While this disturbing tendency may be partly a reflection of a broader culture of

\textsuperscript{54} Punter writes in his first edition of \textit{The Literature of Terror} (1980) that the “Gothic can be seen as a way of imagining the unimaginable, whether it be the distant depths of history or the even more distant soundings of the unconscious. The Gothic is a distorting lens, a magnifying lens; but the shapes which we see through it have nonetheless a reality which cannot be apprehended in any other way” \textit{(Literature I 111).}
violence against women, it is also a pathway for Gothic therapy within the specific texts of Hughes’s work, and a dramatic articulation of an already-naturalized evil.

This violent Gothic episode demonstrates a pattern for Hughes of offering cold objectivity in the face of violence: In amoral equivalence, an “innocent” girl kills a fly without flinching, John Bas-Thornton falls to his death in *A High Wind in Jamaica*, and Margaret Fernandez (in that same narrative) is tossed into the open ocean. Hughes’s use of the Gothic thus extends well beyond his short stories and poetry into his novels and dramas. Specifically, association-ghosts of real violence haunt these chilling, graphic images. Many early readers decried Hughes’s literary violence, seeing it as an incitement to similar violence without moral authority or anchor, yet these same readers were arguably (and perhaps willfully) ignoring the truths of their own violent era.

This recurring, amorally-depicted violence is a sign here of Hughes’s self-citation. Yet the audience that Wolfreys wittily terms “the incited reader, lacking insight and in a hurry to find the citation, which is nowhere present as such” (“Citation’s Haunt”), is at a loss to link this Rolling Saint with Craig Ddrwg (the “evil hill”) and the “witch” of Llwyd. The pattern instantiated in these three texts was likely lost on Hughes’s first audiences. The abused figure of the Rolling Saint who ultimately manifests as a vengeful witch is most likely the folk-product of walks (perhaps with the Graves family) amidst the strewn boulders and smooth, round, white stones of northern Wales. Yet the violence against the female form would have been familiar to Hughes, whose voyage as a steerage passenger with hopeful immigrants to the United States (many of them women destined to enter the sex trade) opened his eyes to their experiences. In “The

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55 According to R.P. Graves, “[Hughes] aroused the particular anger of the headmistress of a girls’ school in Bath, who described A High Wind in Jamaica as ‘a disgusting travesty’ of child life, and found such things as the children’s silent acceptance of John’s sudden disappearance, and Emily’s killing of the Dutch captain, quite ‘unthinkable’” (*Richard* 188).

56 Hughes writes, “This morning . . . we were all officially bathed and searched for lice; it took most of the day. Our bodies were carefully examined with a strong light, and our heads supposed to be scrubbed with soft-soap and paraffin. Meanwhile, the men who did it told us terrible tales of the horrors of Ellis Island. Ellis Island had become the bogey of this boat. Everywhere you would hear it discussed; and we were
Rolling Saint,” Hughes foreshadows the violence against women in his novels, yet here (as in the novels) he refrains from moralizing, instead letting the real experiences of women speak for themselves.

It is only through close reading of individual texts and a distant reading that seeks patterns across a broader corpus that Hughes’s philosophical drift can be inferred. Hughes’s self-citation is spectral, as is the intertextual citation by which he engages texts outside his own oeuvre. Wolfreys continues, “What is allusion if not a form of citation that because of its indirection already announces its condition of being traced or returning to its audience another text?” (“Citation’s Haunt”). In addition to its textual allusiveness, “The Rolling Saint” obliquely references the numerous “Rolling Saints” Hughes knew well from his own life: women whose creative, professional, social, and personal growth was predetermined, diverted, neglected, undermined, or crushed by the male-dominated literary wastes in which those women were forced to wander. Hughes hints in “The Rolling Saint” and elsewhere that, for all who tread on soil made sacred by female suffering, a toll is demanded. All who are implicated in the male gaze must offer the smooth, round, white stones of atonement. Hughes, then, sees himself as complicit in this gaze and seeks to offer reparative representations across his oeuvre. Hardly compensation, this toll merely represents an understanding that violence, particularly historical and ongoing violence against women, must be addressed. In this, the female form, as broken as it might appear here, regains something of wholeness and retains its power. As in Hughes’s

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57 Carol Glyn, a prodigy novelist that Richard and Frances came to see as an adopted member of their family (and who also provided significant literary advice to Hughes), entered a convent at age 22 and died at the age of 33 (See “Caroline Mary Glyn” at Find a Grave.). Other giant female figures who helped to shape Hughes’s literary life (yet whose own literary lives were, to some extent, frustrated by social norms) include Naomi G. Royde-Smith, Louisa Hughes, Amabel Williams-Ellis, Nancy Nicholson, Jenny Nicholson, Margery Bianco, Nancy Stallibrass, Pamela Bianco, Gwenol Satow, Iris Barry, Polly Hope, Caroline Glyn, Frances Hughes, and his daughter Penelope Minney.
poetry, this reparative response characterizes the novels and dramas that are discussed in the succeeding chapters.

While ample evidence of misogyny, racism, and classism hover spectrally over and behind all the cultural production of this age, even that of poets who seek to overturn marginalizing paradigms, Dimock’s Sedgwickian strategy of reparative readings tries to “make amends” by seeking—or simply allowing the possibility for—a non-tragic sequel (587), a strategy that resonates within Hughes’s poetic works as they re-member death and negotiate their way along the spooky vein toward something that might be termed, honestly yet optimistically, an awful progress.
CHAPTER 4

“GOTHIC ARCHES IN A METAL CRYPT”: HUGHES’S SEA NOVELS

The following chapter explores Richard Hughes’s first two novels as another instantiation of the broad Gothic-modern discourse by which the author utilizes specific patterns of female abjection to articulate trauma, to empathize with the alien and the monster, and to therapeutically interface with the demonized, demoralized, discarded, and displaced while also coming to terms with individuals stigmatized by society as deformed or deranged.

Among all of Hughes’s literary and cultural texts, his novels have been studied most vigorously. Nevertheless, this vigor is relative: Only a handful of scholars have actually conducted studies of his work.\(^1\) Partly because of Hughes’s relatively limited novelistic production, but also because of a scholarly slant toward previously undiscovered authors rather than rediscovered authors previously heralded who are now out of vogue, Hughes’s work has received less critical attention. Furthermore, it is necessary to recognize in Hughes’s work a range of expression that changes over the decades while retaining its Gothic inflectedness as a means for therapeutic cultural work.

Hughes’s novels serve to extend his therapeutic Gothic-modern vision by contextualizing the figure of the Gothic Stranger within a sociocultural frame of always-imminent mortality (what Hughes terms “the Human Predicament”) and emphasizing this figure’s ambiguous abjection. While there are threatening and apparently irredeemable monsters that society seeks to set aside to achieve social and historical reparation, it is most often the Abject themselves who reflect the need for reparation in their own traumatized, Othered status. Hughes’s novels consistently present Gothically abject individuals and provide therapeutically performative means for empathizing and identifying with those who have been cast down or cast away.

\(^1\) See Peter Thomas (*Richard Hughes* [1973]), Richard Poole (*Richard Hughes: Novelist* [1986]), and Paul Morgan (*The Art of Richard Hughes* [1993]).
As a modern novelist, Hughes sought to highlight experiences and perspectives that were beyond the boundaries of his own life. It is evident that Hughes’s novelistic career was first motivated by his early links to Robert Graves (I, Claudius [1934]) and their shared love for history and myth. Eventually, though, Hughes’s novels of history, myth, and upheaval—both personal and political—were embraced by a creative community that included other modern novelists such as Arthur Koestler (Darkness at Noon [1940]), Thornton Wilder (The Ides of March [1948]), Iris Murdoch (Under the Net [1954]), and Graham Greene (The Heart of the Matter [1948]), whose own novels touch on the same themes of modern angst and political and personal flux. While Hughes was in conversation with all of these writers, he found his own modernist niche. Buoyed by his immediate recognition and ongoing reputation, Hughes maintained a high profile as a literary novelist across four decades, despite the slightness of his novelistic production. Like other modern novelists, Hughes sought to respond to physical and psychological trauma with stylistic innovation. Yet his bold portrayals of children, women, and the Chinese during this period situate him within a narrow vanguard of writers who sought to understand trauma from marginalized perspectives. While Hughes’s works stop short of promoting revolutionary politics or radical social change, his consistent attempts—albeit as a privileged, white, British male—to elevate the traumas of the marginalized are noteworthy. As a novelist, Hughes wrote against the grain, adopting performative masks as a means for working his way toward an understanding of social and historical truth.

Specifically, Hughes adopts a metensomatotic array of metempsychotic monster personae (denoting here, following A.V. Seaton, a variety of culturally sanctioned masks which a single traveler might adopt to “reincarnate” multiple figures—many of them abject females—

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2 All of these authors, along with Ford, Graves, and Hughes himself, prominently populate the Modern Library’s 100 Best Novels list (see modernlibrary.com).

3 For Hughes’s interactions with these noted modernist novelists, consider the following: Regarding Arthur Koestler, see Richard Hughes, Letter to Arthur Koestler (29 Aug. 1946); regarding Thorton Wilder, see Helen McAfee, Letter to Richard Hughes (3 Sep. 1929); regarding Iris Murdoch, see Iris Murdoch, Letter to Richard Hughes, (Feb. 1973); regarding Graham Greene, see Graham Greene, Letter to Richard Hughes (22 Aug. 1967).
that have power to range beyond the wearer’s own experience), enabling his characters, his readers, and the author himself to perform abjection in order to address it therapeutically. Hughes does this by adopting abjection in its contemptible, wretched, and self-abasing forms through monster masks that he utilizes within his novels as means for precipitating diegetic conflict and performing trauma for therapeutic ends.

4.1 Three Cast-Aways: Performing the Abject Other

To understand Hughes’s use of abject figures, it is first necessary to trace the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of abjection. Julia Kristeva (Powers of Horror [1980]) has suggested and Elizabeth Bronfen (“Abjection” [2016]) has amplified the theoretical framework of abjection to explore systemic misogyny and racism within society, as well as personal and psychological trauma within individuals. Specifically, Kristeva’s seminal theoretical work situates the Abject (the “cast-away”) as a negotiation involving two specific vectors: mobility and agency. While the term abjection implies the illicit and the reprehensible, an outward movement beyond society’s sanctioned boundaries, there is also an ironic magnetism in the Abject that draws society toward it even as it seeks the Abject’s expulsion.

In turn, Bronfen considers the broad implications of abjection as a complex term that writes demonization while also disturbing demonizing institutions. She unpacks abjection in three distinct moves: the contemptible, the wretched, and the self-abasing. While the first two of these categories denote a status, the third connotes a type of misguided agency and points to a fourth type of abject: the reparative.

The first category of abject is the sense traditionally associated with horror: the ethically monstrous, the morally contemptible, the degraded, the improper, and the unclean (as in “abject liar” or “abject villain”). Kristeva makes it clear that this status is morally-drawn, explaining that the contemptible abject involves “[w]hat[ever] does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior. . . .” (4). This
contemptible abjection, according to Kristeva, is not merely a case of unintended trespass. This form is a duplicitous crossing of corrupt motives with legitimate means, or legitimate motives with corrupt means:

He who denies morality is not abject; there can be grandeur in amorality and even in crime that flaunts its disrespect for the law—rebellious, liberating, and suicidal crime. Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you. . . (4)

It can be inferred from Kristeva’s distinction that the amoral outlaw who flouts imperial power is distinguished from the immoral politician who wins public approval while committing private treason. Kristeva continues by associating the Abject with vampirical power, an uncanny influence that magnetically attracts the “subject,” whose obsession with the Abject produces “sublime alienation” as the subject becomes “fascinated victim”: “Hence a jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant. One thus understands why so many victims of the Abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones” (9). For the Abject, then, its vampirism—making others as repugnant as itself—is its true power. There is an inherent insidiousness to this form of abjection, a power typically attached to Dracula and other vampirical agencies within Gothic studies. This abject, then, is a victimizer rather than a victim.

Apart from this contemptible or treacherous version of abjection is a second type, the wretched abject (as in “abject terror,” “abject poverty,” or “abject slavery”), a socially drawn abjection by which the Other is deemed monstrous by society because of race, class, gender, or ability. Most importantly (and most clearly recognizable here) is the victimization of the Abject by the abjector (the champion of “normalcy”). The monstrousness of society’s arbitrary norms is projected on that which is unjustly excluded. In particular, Bronfen and Kristeva make it clear that this abjection is often predicated on the perceived “uncontrollability of feminine reproduction” (Bronfen, “Abjection” 1). This second form of abjection, like the first, is a status.
While the contemptible denotes uncontrollable abjection that a person does, the wretched denotes what is done to a person. The wretched abject is essentially “abject victim status.”

On the other hand, a third type of abjection moves away from the static and connotes agency. Bronfen’s final category of abjection is the self-abasing or submissive abject (as in “abject humiliation,” “abject apology,” or “abject shame”). While some stigma attaches to this last sense, there is also a latent agency (albeit sometimes self-flagellatory, bound by addiction, or even masochistic) which shapes such a figure’s destiny. Furthermore, the third category (self-abasing abject) is generally a function of one or both of the first two categories (the contemptible abject and the wretched abject). In other words, the self-abasing abject makes a choice to remain defined as contemptible or wretched, but makes no attempt to overturn the monstrousness of the abjector. In this case, the subject thus submits to abjection as a means for restoring subjectivity but achieves only a compromised state of recurring and complicit trauma. Nevertheless, by abasing oneself, the subject is able to assume, to a small degree, the power of the oppressor. Yet this mimicry can remain unsatisfactory without the promise of restoration.

Finally, the Gothic can also be seen as offering a fourth, reparative version of the Abject that lies both beyond and within Bronfen’s brief taxonomy. This fourth, oblique sense of abjection is at the center of contemporary Gothic studies. By imaginatively assuming abject status in its most potent and threatening forms, victims can potentially restore their own subject status. The victim as outcast monster becomes the agent, repairing a history of marginalization and powerlessness for the out-group as the haunted becomes the haunting. This type of

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4 Barbara Creed follows Kristeva in a conservative, Freudian view of the Abject yet acknowledges that “[a]lthough the subject must exclude the abject, it must, nevertheless, be tolerated, for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life” (69). Clarissa Pinkola Estés, leveraging Jung, understands that the “wild woman” has long been suppressed by a male “Bluebeard” who has sought to marginalize those powers. Estés thus presses female abjection (the wild side) toward female agency: “When women reassert their relationship with the wildish nature they are gifted with a permanent and internal watcher, a knower, a visionary, an oracle, an inspiratrice, an intuitive, a maker, a creator, an inventor, and a listener who guide, suggest, and urge vibrant life in the inner and outer worlds. When women are with the Wild Woman, the fact of that relationship glows through them” (8).
reversal, implied by some studies of abjection,⁵ is performed in Shelley’s *Frankenstein* narrative, and is even hinted at in *Beowulf*’s Grendel.⁶ Performativity (performing the monster) allows a subject to re-assert reparative power: the power of abject victims over the abjection that has previously dominated them.⁷ This process of Gothic “ownership” of abjection is perhaps best coded in the narrative of the historical Rabbi Loew of Prague, a holy man who legendarily conjured the monstrous Golem to protect his people from blood libel and annihilation.⁸ While such an embrace of the Gothic for therapeutic ends sounds suspiciously like trading trauma for trauma, abject Gothic narratives typically reveal agency for the Abject within trauma. This reparative epiphany opens a path forward. In the same way, performative therapy engages with the Abject, taking up both its marginalized status and its potential power in order to understand, empathize, and potentially restore an appropriate locus of control over trauma.⁹ It is critical to see how the Gothic—as an outgrowth of the societies and institutions that wield it—writes abjection as monstrous, masking human differences and frailties that threaten the boundaries of identity; yet this monstrous spotlight can be reversed to bring societal injustice and its resulting traumas under scrutiny.

Hughes explores all three of Bronfen’s categories of abjection in search of this fourth, the reparation act. Bronfen hints at this fourth category in analyzing the abject allure of the

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⁷ A non-Gothic example that is relevant here is Huckleberry Finn’s moral dilemma: to become contemptibly abject by returning the runaway slave Jim to his owners, or to help the Abject and thus become reparatively abject himself. Huck says, “All right then, I’ll go to hell” . . . It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming” (Twain 272).

⁸ Alice Hoffman has updated the story of the Golem in *The World That We Knew* (2019) to further emphasize female, reparative abjection: “She would do whatever she must to save those she loved, whether it was right or wrong, permitted or forbidden” (3).

⁹ Of performative therapy, Doug Ronning writes, “In enacting the Differentiation stage of Levine-Keini and Laub’s model, I often have clients create masks of their monsters, as masks offer a great way to express the grotesque, bestial, and base aspects of the human experience (Smith, 1984). Once created, the masks provide a meaningful projective device for interacting with the monster.”
Gothic as a whole: “In performing the unnameable that makes up the ground and vanishing point of all symbolic language, aesthetic texts allow us to have our cake of horror and eat it. By virtue of the affective force of the aesthetic text we can identify with an experience of abjection, yet we do so by proxy” (“Abjection” 3). Bronfen calls this “perform[ing] an impossible catharsis” that is always kept under control through a cycle of sublimation (3). While this catharsis remains always incomplete and must never become complacent, it specifically signals that, beyond trauma, there lies the potential for a non-tragic sequel involving the three fluid, imperfect, and sometimes even re-traumatizing elements: truth, change, and forgiveness. Thus, even as Hughes suggests traditional tropes and categories of horror, his novels probe under and behind monstrous abjection in search of the potential for possible, performative reparation.

4.2 Duppy Discourses: Metensomatotic Personae

Using what Bronfen calls the “breakdown of identity boundaries” (3), monster masks can be appropriated as a means for renegotiating the monster, or at least for returning the monster to its proper place, by becoming a monster.

From the outset, it is necessary to explain that “performance” is here used to outline episodes of empathic identification. Within fiction, there are necessarily three layers of performance to consider. First, a character in a novel can perform. A bystanding character can also perform in imitation of that performance. Second, the author performs through the creation of those characters. Such performances can be means for the author to vicariously engage with experiences beyond herself, or they can self-reflectively re-enact some part of the author’s own life. Finally, readers perform—at least imaginatively—in partnership with writers and characters. Performativity, then, is not—in this sense—pejorative. Performance enables understanding.¹⁰

¹⁰ While performativity has accrued a mass of negative connotations in a 21st-century, social-media culture and is often seen as “fake mourning,” the tradition of communal, professional mourning is an ancient and on-going practice. According to one Chinese spokesperson for this practice, “‘We need a proper mourner because young people don’t know how to cry anymore’” (Lim). Performed mourning is thus seen as therapeutic in cultures around the world, both ancient and modern.
For the purposes of this study, reparation—attempts at repairing the consequences of trauma—is closely linked to performance. Characters in creative works perform various personae in order to process traumas. By extension, the writer and readers of such performances are also performing, vicariously adopting personae to process real-life trauma. In this sense, writers themselves are putting on masks as they direct their characters to put on masks, while readers co-author these performances in their interpretation of those masks. These masks are both buffers and tools. For example, in performances that activate the experiences of other races or genders, an author or a character attempts to empathize. This empathic interfacing is, of course, always imperfect and incomplete, and it is often fatally flawed. Nevertheless, such performances can be reparative by creating a space within which individuals are able to connect with others across great divides.

By associating a trauma with a monster and by “putting it on,” a writer can facilitate the unmasking and therapeutic divesting of trauma in him- or herself, in the characters s/he writes, and in the audience who partners with the writer in textual negotiation. The present study asserts that Hughes, in the Gothic-inflectedness of his modernist writing, is engaging in this type of performative therapy by putting on various monster guises as a part of his creative-reparative project. The cultural work Hughes does through his authorial “performance” is tainted by the evils of the period he purports to depict, as well as the ongoing racism and sexism of his own generation. His re-composition of historically accurate narratives involves a grappling with racist and sexist language, discriminatory institutions, and lazy creative and cultural reckonings—including his own. While there is much to argue in favor of suppressing these destructive cultural elements to avoid re-inscribing such documented evils (hence, communities of color that seek to ban *Huckleberry Finn* [1884] and *To Kill a Mockingbird* [1960]), Hughes would assert that the historical moment is always re-experienced imperfectly, monstrously, and necessarily

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11 See Jocelyn Chadwick’s discussion of commonly banned books in “BANNED: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.”
without a historian’s hindsight. In the process of wearing monster masks that have been historically co-opted by hegemonic racist, classist, and sexist forces, the power of those masks can be redistributed, albeit in what Bronfen terms “fragil[e] . . . recuperation” (“Abjection” 3).

In A.V. Seaton’s “Tourism as Metempsychosis and Metensomatosis: the Personae of Eternal Recurrence,” the author introduces a framework for analysis that serves as an analogical means for understanding Hughes’s use of monster masks in his writing (which is a direct outgrowth of their touristic use in his life). Seaton introduces several key critical terms that are helpful in assessing Hughes’s aesthetic efforts. First, Seaton explains that travelers performatively re-create (or reincarnate) various personages as they engage in the crossing of boundaries. These personages have already paved the way for tourists, sparing travelers “the existential uncertainties of ‘the stranger’” (138). The same can be said for Hughes as a writer who was also an iterative traveler, following in others’ footsteps. These conjured identities are said to be “metempsychotic” personae that have been interpellated by various cultural discourses: for example, the Victorian adventurer, the soldier, or the pirate. Furthermore, Seaton asserts that travelers (and this study would, by analogy, include writers—as armchair flâneurs who wander textually) adopt more than one persona, shifting guises as the situation demands. In this respect the conjured identities are like multiple spirits of the dead who are channeled through a single living medium. As a result, a single traveler (or a single author) is provided with a metensomatosic (many in one body) array of personae, a legion of masks that can be appropriated by any one traveler.

12 A series of letters demonstrates changing sociolinguistic norms that Hughes cautions may be a creep toward anachronism. Schofield and Sims (through permissions editor Susan Daniell) solicits revisions from Chatto and Windus for school-publication extracts of High Wind, changing “nigger boy” to “boy” (Letter to Richard Hughes [10 Oct. 1967]). Bruce Hunter at David Higham conveys Macmillan’s requests for the following changes: “The bouncing rain seemed to cover the ground with white smoke, a sort of sea in which the blacks [to ‘negroes’] wallowed like porpoises. One nigger [delete] boy began to roll away” (Letter to Richard Hughes [23 July 1968]). Hughes, more than willing to expunge racist language, nevertheless replies to a similar request from Pergamon Press with the following quandary regarding racist terminology: “I take it to be Editorial Policy that ‘Negro’ and ‘Black’ are dirty words—though this raises difficulties in the context. But to see ‘West Indians’ instead seems to me too much of an anachronism: why not compromise as ‘Jamaicans’?” (Letter to Margaret Wright [21 May 1968]).
The Gothic—as it emerges from cultural histories and corresponding institutions—interpellates a wide range of counter-cultural personae, yet scholars of the Gothic understand these monster masks to be always already ambiguous. These culturally inscribed and authorized masks are Gothic, abject personae that Hughes adopts and manipulates for his modernist works, vicariously performing the horrors of history in fiction as a means for therapeutic release and reckoning. The present study will further isolate the personae below as “Duppy discourses.” While the term *Duppy* indicates a culturally specific, Afro-Caribbean haunting, all of the following personae can be folded into the Duppy ontology, functioning within Hughes’s modern novels as ghostly masks. These masks are mostly intangible and transitory—the spectrally “non-present presence” (Wolfreys, *Hauntings* 140)—while producing associations at least at the subconscious level. As such they are a mix: Some are consciously symbolic or allusive while others are largely left to a spectral penumbra surrounding characters and situations, admittedly more suggestive than allusive.

For each of Hughes’s novels that are treated below, a brief synopsis of the plot launches a discussion of the several monster masks most appropriate for discussions of that novel. It must be asserted that Hughes uses the masks in this chapter intentionally, and not merely as incidental allusions or subconscious association-ghosts. By examining the abjection, performance, and reparation initiated by such a cultural invocation, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that Hughes’s main priority is to pinpoint the Abject in order to perform that monster, thereby engaging in reparatively therapeutic, creative (and rhetorical) work.

**4.2.1 Monster Masks: *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929)**

Hughes’s first published novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929), brought him near-instant and near-universal acclaim. While the book did not approach the best-seller list during its earliest American debut (published in the U.S. as *The Innocent Voyage*), it was repeatedly
heralded by the *New York Times* as a “book to watch,” was soon published in England (as *High Wind in Jamaica*) to a critical and popular clamor, and has never gone out of print. Its doppelgänger-like, transatlantic textual history is, perhaps, yet another reason it may have resisted (and been resisted by) canonizing institutions. Both of its titles point to seven children caught in a web of consequences caused by a Jamaican hurricane. At the same time, these children—Emily Thornton, John Thornton, and Margaret Fernandez in particular—are snagged in the tangled matrix of the imperial (racial, social, and cultural) conflicts that have spawned them. Their *Coral Island* (1857)-like life as carefree colonial appendages in Jamaica is always shadowed by original imperial sin as they perform the master by co-opting a swimming hole from local Black Jamaicans, building matchbox traps to catch lizards without their tails falling off (and later letting them rot in their bedrooms), taming fairies, torturing birds with traps, and establishing their moral superiority over a black elder named “Lame-Foot Sam” who, unlike them, is forced to dig “maggots out of his own toes” (*High* 12). Grotesque bodily details such as this code the Jamaican Other here as abject. Not only is Sam physically different from the children in feature and skin tone, he is maggot-infested.

In the aftermath of a devastating hurricane, the children are sent by the schooner *Clorinda* to England for their safety. Their ship is subsequently overtaken by pirates and, when left with the pirates after the *Clorinda* captain’s cowardly flight, they proceed to assert their

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14 One of the most glowing early accounts for Hughes’s novel, then released as *The Innocent Voyage* (1929), appears in the *New Yorker’s* April 20, 1929, issue. The reviewer (S.M.), who seems wearied by the exploits of Martin Johnson (related in the contemporaneously published *Lion: African Adventure with the King of Beasts*) states that “we have found a magical book. It’s called ‘The Innocent Voyage’ and it was written by Richard Hughes, the author of several plays praised by G.[eorge] B.[ernard] S.[haw]. This is his first novel, and if you don’t go a little bit crazy after reading it, there must be something the matter with you” (117).
15 R.P. Graves writes that “[w]hen Hughes was writing *A High Wind in Jamaica* . . . one of the best-loved children’s classics was R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*. This rousing adventure story, first published in 1857, carried the message that a group of children cast away on a deserted atoll in the south seas would prove to be naturally good, decent and self-reliant” (178). It is seen as a precursor and antithesis both for *High Wind* and for William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. 
influence on the pirate Captain Jonsen, his first mate Otto, and the destiny of the unnamed pirate schooner as it careers unpredictably toward the pirates' demise at the children's hands.

4.2.1.1 The Duppy

The first of two metempsychotic monster masks that Hughes utilizes within the first of his Gothic-modern sea novels is that of the Duppy. This is a mask that Hughes appropriates, and its ambiguous abjection proves pivotal for his therapeutic vision. Hughes writes this, his most significant Gothic narrative, without having traveled to Jamaica. Despite his prolific wanderings, he functions here as an armchair traveler—which Merlin Coverley explains is a displaced flâneur for whom “the cities that he inhabits are shown to be increasingly hostile . . . and he is ultimately evicted from the street and forced to seek a new environment elsewhere” (65).

Hughes's portrayals of an exotic distant land and its supernatural heritage are haunted by postcolonial uncertainties and racial anxieties. Coached by his mother, a Jamaican resident during her formative childhood, Hughes writes vague and portentous ruin on the postcolonial, island landscape in the novel's opening lines:

One of the fruits of Emancipation in the West Indian islands is the number of the ruins, either attached to the houses that remain or within a stone’s throw of them: ruined slaves’ quarters, ruined sugar-grinding houses, ruined boiling houses; often ruined mansions that were too expensive to maintain. Earthquake, fire, rain, and deadlier vegetation, did their work quickly. (High 3)

This atmosphere of ruin sets the novelistic stage for the use—by Hughes, by his characters, and vicariously by readers—of a monster mask with potential as a means for abject therapy.

4.2.1.1 Abjection

Hughes thus introduces a lesser-known Gothic figure—the Duppy—who is coded as wretched: the geographically, racially, and socioeconomically abject. This is the ghost of Jamaica itself. Yet the Duppy mask exemplifies both wretched and reparative abjection.

Throughout the novel the Abject manifests in all its forms: the contemptible (in pirates who draw children to themselves, piper-like), the wretched (in children and women who embody attraction and horror in their proliferating power), and the self-abasing (in the self-preserving Emily who,
seeing herself written as a monster by the Victorian codes of her society, gains the confidence of the pirate captain and promptly betrays him to those same Victorian codes, a self-fulfillment of the monster mask she wears.

In addition, Hughes uses the Duppy to perform reparative abjection, extending power in reverse along cultural-historical ley lines that stretch beyond the Caribbean and into the heart of the empire that has colonized it. The Duppy is a reparative Abject. While the Duppy’s death-oppressions disproportionately impact the Black Jamaicans of Hughes’s fictional world and most vividly the liminal “maroon” community named “Liberty Hill . . . Black Man’s Town” (*High* 15), its influence seeps into the White settlers’ appropriative compounds:

> [T]his figure, so central to the Jamaican and Caribbean imaginary, occupies a liminal and disturbed space in the region’s literature, a fluid interspace between the material and the immaterial worlds where the fraught relationship between history and historiography is played out. In other words, although a duppy, according to African Caribbean belief, is the spirit of someone who has died, whose time has passed, it remains an active (often characterized as malevolent and mischievous) and forceful actor in the present. (Ward 217)

According to Hughes’s displaced and appropriated imaginary,

> Only one of the negroes at Ferndale had ever actually seen a duppy: but that was quite enough. They cannot be mistaken for living people, because their heads are turned backwards on their shoulders, and they carry a chain: moreover one must never call them duppies to their faces, as it gives them power. The poor man forgot, and called out “Duppy!” when he saw it. He got terrible rheumatics. (*High* 11-12)

The key elements of this Duppy portrayal, then, are the backward gaze, the clanking chain, and the performative power it assumes when named, a power that consumes—and is sometimes transferred to—the namer.

### 4.2.1.1.2 Performance

It is the performative nature of the Duppy that facilitates the extent of its reach, spreading as a type of contagion. Like the “inner harpy” Conscience that Emily has sought to repress since her sudden awakening to the power of her own ego (*High* 157), the Duppy haunts

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Emily once she crosses the Abject’s threshold by murdering a helpless and hapless Dutch captain. She has thus turned into a monster herself:

[S]he could remember the creepy things [Sam] had told her about duppies. How [the children] used to tease the negroes about the supposed duppy at the bathing-hole, the duppy of the drowned man! It gave one an enormous sense of power, that—not to believe in duppies.

But she found herself taking much less pleasure in duppies now than she used.

She even caught herself wondering what the Dutchman’s duppy would look like, all bloody, with its head turned backwards on its shoulders and clanking a chain... it was a momentary flash, the way the banished image of Tabby had come back to her. (High 185)

The Duppy’s discourse, then, has a double-edged power over both the colonized and the colonizer. While it terrorizes the colonized, perhaps as a reminder of forfeited power, it also grips the colonizer as a type of Golem-avenger.

4.2.1.1.3 Reparation

Thus, the liminal children of this novel serve as a gateway for colonial retribution. Emily, specifically, has performed within the colonizer’s Cave of Abjection—normally intended for Black subalterns. First, she is forced to sequester in Ferndale’s cellar (shared during the hurricane with the estate’s terrified Black servants) (High 37-38). Then, she is transported as human cargo, stowed below decks by the pirates and approached suggestively by Captain Jonsen, whose intended sexual assault is deterred only by Emily’s “estrangement” and her vicious bite on his thumb (High 164). In these pits, Emily has performed “the Powerless,” coming to understand the latent, abject, potential power that such human subjects possess. Now, as Emily (emblem of the colonizer) names the Duppy, even in her self-conscious ruminations, it gains power in her mind. While this is figuratively the power of the dead captain over her, it is also transformed into a power that Emily has over the institutions that have sought to write her as a compliant, tamed, feminine monster-child. As a representative of the colonizer, Emily has the imagined power to oscillate between fantasy realms, fleeing the Jamaican (and nautical) domains, where Duppies with reversed heads clamor for justice, and escaping to the British imperial courtroom where the colonizer plays at justice. In this oscillation her own head spins,
Duppy-like: “For a moment her head reeled: in another she was far from Jamaica, far from the schooner, far from duppies, on a golden throne in the remotest East” (High 185). Emily’s reeling head, oscillating from Jamaica to what must be the other end of the British realm in the Far East, scans an empire on which the sun never sets, and she places herself precariously on its throne. Yet as she enters the waking courtroom back in the British “West,” she is again confronted with faces that turn toward her: the “old and very beautiful face” of the sleeping clerk (High 273), the faces of many wigged men—one “drawing funny faces: but his own was grave” (High 274), and the face of a judge in a benign wizardly disguise. Finally Emily is also confronted by “the terrible look on Jonsen’s face as his eye met hers” (High 276), reminding her of the tortured face of her hurricane-murdered cat Tabby that haunts her dreams. These faces are the displaced Duppy’s, too, and their gaze is both retributive and reparative, reminding Emily—and the colonizer she represents—of the frail humanity behind and beneath powerful institutions.

There is a final, poignant instance in the novel by which the power of the Duppy mask displays a brand of reparative power. During the denouement of the novel’s pirate trial, at the pirates’ execution site, the Duppy is performed as a type of memento mori by the Black cook, who says, ominously and inclusively, “We have all come here to die . . . That (pointing to the gallows) ‘was not built for nothing. We shall certainly end our lives in this place: nothing can now save us . . . I would rather die now, innocent, than in a few years perhaps guilty of some great sin’” (High 278). Here the co-opted Duppy, wrongfully appropriated from the Afro-Caribbean subject by the European colonizer’s children, returns and has been restored to the colonized as the black-coded Conscience that Emily (and the colonizer responsible for her existence) has long avoided looking square in the face. Soon the turning heads on the gallows (like Captain Jonsen’s after he severs his own throat), able to see both forwards and backwards, will ironically image forth potential justice for all and not just for the privileged or for a handful of the “fortunate” abject. These turned heads are able to see secret sins.
While the story of colonization is—and must be—an inexpungeable trauma narrative, reparation is possible in the donning of this monstrous mask, the persona of the Duppy. Hughes’s narrative itself, a co-opted colonial text that incorporates eyewitness and British-Museum sources, must somehow be culturally and socially re-appropriated by the colonized. This text, begun by Hughes’s mother (who had appropriated its critical elements from Jamaica’s earlier inhabitants—whose own bodies, or those of their ancestors, had been co-opted from Africa) must itself be restored to its rightful owners. Hughes’s mother Louisa, the child of colonizing agents in Jamaica, stored up treasured memories and letters. Together these letters tell part of *High Wind*’s tale of an anticipated earthquake, a drowned mango-thief, and a beloved, swimming cat named Tabby who can’t be found when a family move becomes necessary. All these images have been expropriated by Louisa from her brother Walter, who himself took them from the colonized. These elements are then passed down to Hughes as the colonizer’s spoils. In his novel, then, Hughes has the opportunity to return those spoils to their rightful owners in recognizing and naming the Duppy.

The history of colonization is written in the Duppy’s monstrous body. The Duppy’s backwards-turned head represents the complete upheaval that colonization has brought, yet it also embodies the potential for a non-tragic sequel based on an honest accounting of past sins and a true valuation of inherited experiences. By the extreme hindsight and reclaimed history provided by the violence done to its body, the Duppy is always looking backward toward the violence of the past. While the colonized find it difficult to fashion a life from colonial rubble, the Duppy’s revenant existence highlights a hope for their persistent agency.

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17 Walter Warren, Hughes’s uncle, was the author’s lifelong correspondence partner. As a child, Walter had written his playwright father in Chicago, and the letters preserved in Hughes’s archive include the following note: “I have a lot of news to tell you but most of it is bad. First a boy was drowned in the bathing hole his name was John. Mr. Leod and all Lewes and some of Chester came up to see him and Dr. Gillard came up and had a post mortem and found that he had eaten [sic] a lot of unripe mangoes which he stole from this property so he went into the water on a full stomach and went to the bottom because he could not swim” (Letter to Ernest Warren [6 July 1878]). Warren also wrote intensely to his nephew from India later in life regarding Indian Partition and the Cold War. Most likely his global perspective (tinged by imperial angst) provided Hughes a vital resource in exploring the traumas of postcolonial conflict.
There is no guarantee of justice in reparative readings. Even at the end of the story, Emily remains a colonizing collector and curator of traumas. She has gathered an earthquake, a hurricane, and a crocodile as her own. Nevertheless, while she is able to bury the fear that others might discover her abjection, it is her obsessive solipsism—her desire to keep her collected, colonial experiences to herself and for herself—that is ultimately untenable. To her mother at their reunion, she blurts, “I slept with an alligator!” (250). Then, on the last page of the novel, she finally enters a parody of a contemplative community, her “new school at Blackheath” (279). While her presence there among eerily similar peers is inauspiciously framed as a collective distraction for the individual Conscience that ails her, there is still a sense that she might finally begin to understand who she really is in the mirror of others like herself. Thus, in his careful use of the Duppy’s Gothic discourse, Hughes’s novel functions as the contaminated moral conscience of imperfectly administered justice. Nevertheless, its performative and reparative abjection points—both backwards and forwards—toward a non-tragic sequel.

4.2.1.2 The Dutchman

A second mask from this novel further asserts both a lingering call for retribution and potential reparation. The contemptible abjection of the pirate is slightly displaced to include the non-pirate rebel mariner, the proud Dutchman, who flies forever toward both life and death in abject unfulfillment.

Emily’s vision of the Dutchman’s Duppy can be logically extended to Hughes’s donning of this Flying Dutchman mask. This mask is the persona of a pirated captain, a robber who is robbed of both life and death. The archetypal eternal returner, “Captain Vanderdecken”—in the first written version of the story by John Holliston in Blackwood’s Magazine (1821) and in the dramatic version it inspired shortly afterwards by Edward Fitzball (1825)—is a Gothic invader. He is “a Dutch captain defying the devil; an act almost as bold as sailing up the Medway and bearding our fleet” (Fitzball 7), as the invading Dutch had done in 1667. In a more general sense, the Dutchman is a ghastly bogey who has sailed undetected into the English cultural
imaginary. The Dutchman has thus come to represent the proud, defiant, repetitive mariner who eternally returns. He refuses to die, yet he can never live. Hughes’s references to the Dutchman in this pirate tale are far more oblique than those of the overt Duppy. This subtlety serves to make the Dutchman’s spectral presence in this novel even more disconcerting.\(^{18}\)

4.2.1.2.1 Abjection

Within Hughes’s novel, four textual sightings of the proverbial Flying Dutchman—highlighting contemptible, wretched, and self-abasing abjection—accentuate the novel’s theme of transgresional repetition and despair, which is the Dutchman’s *modus operandi*. The first reference is innocuous and ironic: the Dutchman as hyperbole. As the idle sailors aboard the idyllic merchant ship *Clorinda* (which initially carries the displaced children to England) play doctor, administering alcoholic anesthesia and seeking to amputate their mascot monkey’s infected tail, the frenzied beast escapes and drunkenly swings from the rigging as sailors playfully pursue until “[p]oor little Jacko missed his hold at last; fell plump on the deck and broke his neck. That was the end of him . . . But the visitors were already on board. The mate and crew had been so intent on what they were doing that the Flying Dutchman himself might have laid alongside, for all they cared” (*High Wind* 71). Such a passing, playful reference would hardly qualify as a significant metempsychotic moment for Hughes without its ripple effects within this parodic passage and elsewhere throughout the novel as the moment that changes everything. It is this ghostly reference to “the Flying Dutchman” that labels the pirates themselves as ghosts from another era. The pirates’ existence is, within Hughes’s chronotope, a profound anachronism. Intentionally advancing the date of the novel to the 1860s from its historical origins in the account of the pirated *Zephyr* in 1822,\(^{19}\) Hughes isolates the pirate Jonsen and his

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\(^{18}\) Ironically, the Dutchman would have been the most tangible monster of all for Hughes, considering the noteworthy sighting of the *Dutchman* by King George V himself as a princely cadet aboard the *H.M.S. Bacchante* on July 11, 1881: the ultimate Georgian documentary evidence (see Natasha Sheldon, “The Truth Behind the Legends of the Flying Dutchman” [2018]).

\(^{19}\) Hughes relates the following genealogy for *High Wind*: “[W]hen I was a young man, just down from Oxford, a friend of the family happened to show me—just as a matter of passing interest—a few sheets of
crew (as well as the _Clorinda_’s romantically caricatured Captain Marpole) as temporally and spatially out of joint. They are castaways in every sense of the word.

A second Dutchman iteration in this novel, a referenced, unholy “holy man,” crosses established norms and becomes both a victim and an agent of destiny, much like Vanderdecken. The romantic vision of the famed “Pirate Parson,” John Audain, is a version of the Dutchman’s mask that is leveraged to justify Hughes’s pirates in their pursuits. Speaking generically, the pirate seeks legitimacy, sympathy, and even holy sanction for his pirate “crusade” against official imperial entanglements. Yet Hughes’s pirates’ association with Audain’s audacity—and apostasy—mark Jonsen and his crew as cursed, unclean Abjects. Otto, Jonsen’s first mate and one of many maritime, Welsh avatars for Hughes, begins “to tell the story of the famous Rector of Roseau: one of the finest pathetic preachers of his age, according to contemporaries, whose appearance was fine, gentle, and venerable, and who supplemented his stipend by owning a small privateer” (High 125). Most importantly, Otto fashions this story as a subversive narrative in defiance of Jonsen, who (having hurt his mate’s sensibilities) repeatedly calls in vain throughout Otto’s tale-telling for Otto to relieve him at the wheel. As the mate tells his tale, he appropriates murky, moral high ground by out-pirating the pirate, his captain.

Yet Otto’s attempts at subverting his own Dutchman fate are undermined by the same repeated failures that mark the original Dutchman’s tale. By seeking holy sanction for piracy, he only reveals the futility of training children in pirate ethics. They cannot accept that a pastor could also be a pirate. Despite the children’s indignation at the moral incongruity of a preacher paper she kept in the bottom of a drawer. The pencil-writing on them was faint and tremulous and spidery, but the letters were elegantly formed; it was the hand of a very old lady, of Queen Victoria’s own generation. It recorded an incident from the writer’s own childhood, and incident was a singular one. In the year 1822 (she wrote) she was one of a party of children from Jamaica being shipped home to England in the brig ‘Zephyr’ when the brig was captured by pirates just off the coast of Cuba” (“Introduction to A High Wind” 39).

A broadcast by poet Ethel M. Hewitt on 20 July 1927 over the BBC called _Mr. Audain—Parson and Pirate; sometime Rector of Roseau, Dominica, West Indies_ may have provided the grist for this impromptu allusion. Further information about this historical figure can be found at _Charmouth Pirate Parson’s Talk_.

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20 A broadcast by poet Ethel M. Hewitt on 20 July 1927 over the BBC called _Mr. Audain—Parson and Pirate; sometime Rector of Roseau, Dominica, West Indies_ may have provided the grist for this impromptu allusion. Further information about this historical figure can be found at _Charmouth Pirate Parson’s Talk_.

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who is also pirate, Otto insists, “He was a most respectable person . . . and a wonderful pathetic preacher!” (High 128). At this moment, the Captain makes overtures of contrition toward Otto, and the two are reconciled, as if the Pirate Parson himself has discursively officiated at their drunken peace-making. After a night of broaching the rum-cask, the pirates’ “peace” becomes, for the child survivors of a massive hurricane, “one of the unpleasantest days the children had spent in their lives” [High 129], and immediately, the next morning, possible pirate-prey is again sighted. This is the day that the children are fully implicated by the pirate mask they have long worn in their play. In the end, the pirates’ chase is futile. After steering toward the sighted vessel by compass through the night, they find “the brig was vanished. The sea was as bare as an egg” (High 132). Like the Dutchman’s own legendary ghost vessel, their quarry disappears.

This episode is a continuation of the pirates’ abjection. In blurring their identities through this drunken, nighttime, wild-ghost-chase, with first mate and captain blurring together as parson and pirate have within Otto’s tale, Hughes troubles identity and signals a liminal power that can be tapped in reparative agency. With this agency the compliant pastor can gain worldly glory, and Otto can ascend to a place as Jonsen’s equal. While Hughes’s earlier pirate persona, “Benjamin Crocker,” represents the libertine latitude Hughes sought in his youth, Audain functions as Otto’s (and perhaps Hughes’s) respectable avatar for later life: the sacred married to the profane, the mask of the ambiguous rebel that may or may not bring ruin to its wearer. Like the Dutch captain of legend who has “sold his soul” by challenging the Devil, the Pirate Parson subverts distinctions between right and wrong. Furthermore, in manipulating this Pirate Parson avatar, Otto self-righteously condemns the unnatural collusion between “Steam and the Church” which has obliterated the marginalized, yet traditional, discourse of liberal, pirate alterity. The righteous pirates, worshipping at the altar of the wind, justify their cause in the name of a sailor’s Luddism. Like Crocker’s crew, High Wind’s pirates have their own extra-hegemonic morality. Within a Christian culture that seeks always to sanctify the profane, the Pirate Parson and those who seek to follow his example succeed in profaning the sacred. In
addition, the historical Pirate-Parson monster appropriates a maternal power that has been denied him as a priest (although Anglican and nominally married). A liminal figure who has ostensibly succumbed not only to pride but to greed (or at least to political passion), the priest holds two offices simultaneously: He is a spiritual father and he is a pirate mother, an Abject who threatens the paternal order within the maternal rocking of the egg-like sea.

**4.2.1.2.2 Performance**

The performativity of the Dutchman legend is exemplified by all sailors who, Dutchman-like, abandon life (including wife and children) in pursuit of repeated, death-defying goals. For Captain Jonsen (and, by extension, for Hughes the author), the wearing of the Dutchman’s mask means flouting boundaries of law, fate, and death. For example, Jonsen’s hubristic harboring of children, a crime that almost certainly signals death for the pirates, is an assertion of abject agency for these sailors who have cut themselves off from the maternal fertility of human society. Unable to serve as actual nurturing fathers, these pirates co-opt children that represent the maternal power of proliferation.

In a third textual instantiation of the Dutchman mask, Jonsen is written as the doomed Dutchman when his fate finally seems to be closing in on him. Already a non-Anglo, Danish-German rebel, he ultimately steers his ship (with its Gothically coded “castles” and its forehold—a true Cave of Abjection—filled with rats, flying cockroaches, and Animus-like children) toward a final showdown with destiny. He spies a British man-of-war. When he sees “that single threatening finger, pointing upwards” (*High* 206)—the perceived pursuing mast of an official vessel—he begins to fashion the equivalent of his own last will and testament, passing on his power by begging Emily to support his cover story: “[I]f bad, cruel men came and wanted to kill me and take you away, what would you do?” (*High* 206). Then, as darkness closes “down with its sudden curtain on that minatory finger” (*High* 209), Jonsen begins his vigil. Although, like their earlier ghostly quarry, the man-of-war is gone by morning (the gnomic narrator sharing with readers that “its royals had sunk below the horizon less than an hour after [Jonsen] had first
sighted it” [High 215]), its fingering of him has sealed his fate. Ironically, it is his subsequent desire to make a clean breast that does him in. He is determined to deliver the children safely to the next passing vessel. Nevertheless, whereas the Clorinda’s captain Marpole has been implicated in imperial and personal lies about his charges’ (the children’s) fate, Jonsen is the legitimately wronged pirate, convicted not for his own crimes but for those of a young girl—and for trying to come clean.

The fourth textual instantiation of the cursed Flying Dutchman—whose name and person are an odd synecdoche of the ship and crew cursed along with him, like an extension of his own monstrous body—is High Wind’s actual Dutchman, Captain Vandervoort, along with his circus vessel. This last example of the Dutchman once again highlights the performative nature of the Abject. According to the Vestigial Raconteur, the ghostly, gnomic narrator Hughes typically uses to guide his audience, “The other children had played quite an important part in the capture” of Vandervoort’s ship (High 170), having lured the Dutch vessel by their innocent presence, fully cognizant and complicit in their roles. Emily, for her part, remains confined to the captain’s cabin (a co-opted Cave of Abjection complete with obscene “cave drawings” on its walls) after an inauspicious injury that has literally fallen from the sky. Judgment has come to Emily in the form of a marline-spike playfully yet accidentally dropped on her by her moralizing sister Rachel (High 170), whose potential maternal power (she has been playing mother with the potent spike as her makeshift dolly) is here translated into literal threat to Emily and subsequently to all aboard the pirate ship.

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21 This “Damascus Road” moment includes Jonsen changing (as the Apostle Paul changes from Saul) into the Lizzie Green of Bristol (High 216), appropriating the guise of a legitimate vessel, papers and all.
22 John Crowley, one of the only scholars currently writing on Hughes, has used this term to describe Hughes’s narrative habits: “[Hughes’s novels] all employ a first-person narrator who both is and is not the author, is in the book and outside it; he is not anything like Conrad’s Marlowe, nor is he like the self-admitted meddling narrator that Thackeray employs. You could call him the Vestigial Raconteur, a voice that connects the making of novels to (one of) its roots in the telling of anecdotes” (“Little”).
23 See Michael Titlestad’s discussion of this adoption of carnival personae (“This Is Not the Way the World Ends: Richard Hughes’s Rejoinder to William Golding’s Lord of the Flies” [2017]).
Thus, the Dutchman’s ship falls into Jonsen’s hands as the result of performance. Vandervoort’s *Thelma*, a disabled Dutch steamer carrying circus animals, is sighted by the pirates during choppy, disconcerting weather. The distracted Dutchman, taken in by the pirate performativity of the children who “cheered lustily” from the deck (*High* 170), “never thought of suspecting this presumable offer of assistance” (170). This pirate performance on the part of the indoctrinated children mirrors an earlier “carnivalesque affair”: the pirates’ wearing of the female persona to successfully secure the *Clorinda* (Titlestad 35). Both children and adults, then, are shown as “putting on” deceptive persona.

While Jonsen has worn the Dutchman mask to this point—by defying his obvious fate and falling in love with the children fateful in his care—it is this actual Dutch captain who takes up the Abject guise of the fated sailor most convincingly. In heroic yet hubristic defiance, the Dutch captain resists the pirates’ playacting. He is bound and removed from his own circus ship to Jonsen’s quarters, where his spectral presence—bound and gagged yet ominous to Emily in his frantic determination—exacerbates the fevered pitch of the ship by “reek[ing] of some particular nauseous brand of cigars that made her head swim” (*High* 170). The pirates themselves enhance their own performativity, loudly pretending to whip sailors below decks in order to squeeze news of hidden specie out of the captured sailors who remain above deck. For his part, Vandervoort and his men recognize Jonsen’s crew as pirate pretenders and “simply laug[h] at the pirates’ bogey-bogey business, guessing they drew the line at murder in cold blood, sober” (*High* 171). To further the carnivalesque atmosphere, the pirates seek to pit Vandervoort’s circus tiger and lion against one another in a grotesque show, but both animals, seasick and unpredictable, simply accentuate the pirates’ own anachronistic peril as a limited circus act themselves.

### 4.2.1.2.3 Reparation

As with all monster masks, the assumption of the Flying Dutchman’s guise is both fateful and potentially reparative. Vandervoort’s hubris, like Jonsen’s, leads him to underestimate the
danger of the situation. As the bound Vandervoort spies “a knife which some idiot had dropped in a corner of the cabin floor” and squirms toward it (High 170), hoping the distressed Emily will assist him, Emily cracks. “There is something much more frightening about a man who is tied up than a man who is not tied up,” notes the narrator, and “[t]he feeling of not being able to get out of the bunk and escape added the true nightmare panic” (High 170). Finally, as if to add the finishing touch to a truly monstrous Dutchman persona, the narrator adds, inviting the audience to lean in closer yet also providing a disclaimer for the squeamish to avert their eyes, “Remember that he had no neck, and the cigar-reek” (High 173). Such a depiction also further abjects Vandervoort, making Emily’s action somehow more palatable. Yet the slow, painful murder scene that follows is a product of the suggestions, memories, circumstances, and fever-induced visions that Emily has boiled together in her psyche-stretching solitude. Vandervoort is the ultimate Flying Dutchman who must be vanquished. His depicted death implicates both Emily, who stabs him repeatedly with a kitchen knife, and the pirate-impregnated Margaret, who is the scapegoated witness of the scene. Both are marked by imitative stigmata that highlight their female status yet also provide them agency as memento mori:

The Dutchman, bleeding rapidly, blinded with his own blood, lay still and groaned. Emily, her own wound reopened, and overcome with pain and terror, fainted. The knife, flung wildly, missed its aim and clattered down the steps again onto the cabin floor: and the first witness of the scene was Margaret, who presently peered down from the deck above, her dulled eyes standing out from her small, skull-like face. (High 175)

Margaret, in particular, is doomed. Yet she is also capable of asserting abject agency in her skull-like face. While the pirates ultimately seek to cast her away from the ship, she returns to them, signaling with her presence that they are the real monsters.

Finally, it is Vandervoort’s final words that Hughes uses to connect these isolated pirates, sailors, and captains to another, more-essential world that they have voluntarily abandoned: “But, Gentlemen, I have a wife and children!” (High 177). While this is a statement intended to inspire mercy from non-present male powers (since Emily is alone, with Margaret nearby), it points to the real abject power: the women and children of this story. Thus, for
Hughes in this novel, the persona of the haunted, hubristic, male-coded captain is, perhaps, less liberating than it is, like the Duppy, a function of conscience and a caution against hubris, both personal and imperial. Yet it is also a reminder to the bound Abject that power emanates from the women and the children—the signifiers of “monstrous” reproduction who will continue and reproduce beyond the boundaries of this story and its violence.

4.2.2 Monster Masks: In Hazard (1938)

Like the pirate justice of Hughes’s first published novel, the author’s encore In Hazard (1938) was slow in coming, and to some his second novel represented merely a variation on his first novel’s theme. Novelist Graham Greene, Hughes’s reviewer in the July 8, 1938, issue of The Spectator, titles his assessment “High Wind in the Caribbean” to effect a kind of literary déjà vu for the now apparently “typecast” author. Nevertheless, while Hughes’s leveraging of the Gothic sea-story discourse connects the two texts, the new novel is even more explicit in utilizing a Gothic-modern mode to navigate traumas and to initiate textual therapy.

Hughes’s second novel relates the odyssey of the single-screw turbine steamer Archimedes sailing down the eastern seaboard of the U.S. on its way toward the Panama Canal. This vessel is immediately coded in Gothic terms, with its engine room described as having “gothic arches in a metal crypt (or the walls of a room in a dream)” (Hazard 6). Like his first novel, this story is based on an actual historical event, the account of the distressed S.S. Phemius, a story which had been handed off to him in 1932 (and its research and development encouraged by Amabel Williams-Ellis).²⁴ Whereas High Wind was the story of steam’s ascendancy, In Hazard is the tale of nature’s supremacy. Hughes seems eager to demonstrate that sailing in the modern fashion—“blown about the world as an untethered balloon, with little sense of direction and no will to resist the forces of nature that cause the movement” (Kalliney

²⁴ The New York Times archive shows reporting on the Phemius from 7-11 November 1932. A 9 Nov. 1932 headline reads: “Report Missing Ship Safe in Caribbean.” The story had been passed to Masefield (as Poet Laureate), but Masefield had declined to pursue it. Amabel Williams-Ellis then writes to Hughes, “[W]ould you like to have it?” (Letter to Richard Hughes [15 Mar. 1933]).
1)—is, at bottom, a Gothic horror even as it inspires the modern traveler and reader to embark on Halliburtonesque quests for marvels.25

The ship’s itinerary, with an ultimate destination in the Far East, reads like a modern inversion of the Silk Road and is a reminder of the West’s ascendancy on the ruins of recently dismantled Chinese imperial history: after taking on old newspaper in New York (which the Chinese would use to build makeshift houses) and passing through Philadelphia, the Archimedes, powered by the intense labor and endurance of Chinese “firemen,” picks up cheap tobacco in Norfolk, Virginia (for cheap Chinese cigarettes), another significant image of imperial decline. The tobacco, along with the newspaper, is placed “in the ‘tween-decks’” (Hazard 11), demonstrating their interstitial and intercultural influence. Norfolk serves as a key proving ground and staging area for this journey into the Unconscious: it is here that bacchanalia—always hiding in plain sight within Prohibition America—engage all members of the crew, even encroaching on the sacred heart of the ship during its last night in port as Captain Edwardes himself gives a party with “dancing to a gramophone” (Hazard 15). Tempted by the great leveler alcohol, all (with the exception of an abstaining teetotaler, guest officer and devout Christian, Mr. Rabb) partake. Echoing Hughes's own adventures in Virginia’s hinterlands, the Norfolk parties provide apprentice Dick Watchett with a vision that will sustain him through his journey’s most tumultuous phases.

Under the watchful (and watch-inducing) gaze of Thomas, Chief Officer Buxton’s pet lemur (who has a habit of prying open sailors’ sleeping eyes), the ship sets out the following afternoon, “passing down the Elizabeth River into Hampton Roads” and aiming for the Caribbean (Hazard 18). Euphoria and fine weather overtake the crew, signified with dancing,

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25 Richard Halliburton, like Martin and Osa Johnson, sought adventure during the 1920s and 1930s as a function of aviation’s rise and a testing of limits inspired by the carnage of the Great War and the subsequent economic expansion of the Roaring Twenties. In the 1930s, such explorers represented newsreel antitheses to the economic carnage of the Great Depression. After publishing several books of adventures, including the Book of Marvels (for commentary see Stephen Greenblatt’s introduction to Marvelous Possessions [1991]), Halliburton perished with his Chinese junk Sea Dragon in a 1937 typhoon while crossing from Hong Kong to the GGIE in San Francisco.
twin dolphins on their bow. After four days they reach San Salvador (significant as a point of entry into a New World), and from there they bear directly west toward Cuba. As the ship navigates the windward passage between Cuba and Haiti, the weather begins to change, and much of the journey must take place in darkness. The last tiny island of Navassa represents their point of no return as they cross toward Colón, Panama. “Ahead of them lay a short passage across the empty Caribbean Sea” that should take them no more than two days (23).

The unseasonal violence of the storm which promptly strikes them is true to history in all its unparalleled horror, but it is the violence within human minds, much of it brought about by sleep deprivation and extreme stress, that sets Hughes’s narratives apart from other disaster stories (such as Bulwer-Lytton’s The Last Days of Pompeii [1834], a book Hughes eagerly consumed as a child), along with his understated yet pregnant and seemingly allegorical imagery: “at nine o’clock on the November morning of 1929, the strength of the wind was found to be still increasing; so it was plain that something quite unusual was happening” (Hazard 31). Right in the wake of the greatest economic downturn the world has ever known, the Archimedes must navigate a hurricane of epic proportions.

What follows is a series of increasingly futile attempts at staving off nature: The hatches are blown off, causing the hold to fill with sea water and saturating the paper and tobacco products they have stowed; the funnel (which has been secured for a hundred tons of stress) blows off; the boilers fail as water fills the hold and the extinguished oil fires cannot be re-lit; and the auxiliary “donkey boiler,” lit with the hope of providing power for the modern behemoth’s navigation systems, explodes into flames and almost engulfs the ship. Heroic efforts and cowardly dereliction of duty spread like opposing agents throughout the crew. Mr. Rabb

26 R.P. Graves mentions this book while noting that, over one Christmas holiday, the young Hughes “devoured more than forty books, plays, and long poems” (Richard 12), including this book and Coleridge’s Christabel, both signaling a latent fascination with the macabre.
27 It is a curious coincidence that Hughes gained trans-Atlantic notoriety just days before this date with his public defense (in British newspapers) of Paul Robeson after the scholar-athlete-actor-activist was denied admission to a British restaurant because of his race (see “Novelist Hits London for Racial Incident”). This stance must have posed a significant risk for the newly celebrated, young author.
(overtaken by abject fear) and many Chinese sailors (overtaken by abject seasickness and a healthy dose of prejudice toward them) are unable to function (Hazard 48), while Dick Watchett and Captain Edwardes model uncanny—even otherworldly—bravery and stamina. In the meantime, Chief Engineer Ramsay MacDonald (whose resemblance and blood relationship to the former Prime Minister marks him as the nation’s uncanny doppelgänger) must pace the engine room (and wander in his own mind) without any means for making power.

To make matters worse, the storm has sucked the Archimedes up into its violence rather than merely passing over it, and the respite of the storm’s eye is only a reminder that they are caught near its hopeless, returning vortex. Days later, even after the storm finally passes, the flooded holds continue to threaten all life on the ship until finally, the donkey-boiler is lit with a makeshift funnel, the pumps are re-started, and electric communications with the outside world can call an American salvage ship to their rescue. The exhausted crew begin to let their defenses down, breaking out into ranting and sobs, and MacDonald, “turned his back on the hated sea: climbed onto the rail and sat there, like a boy” (Hazard 207), just to rest a minute, but after five days and nights without sleep, his body simply falls into the water of its own accord and he is gone.

While every other sailor aboard Hughes’s fictionalized Archimedes miraculously survives an ungodly hurricane, the imagery of sea, bird, and ship’s belly mix to tell a Gothic narrative of modernity that implicates the social and political climate of the times. In particular, Greene’s review cites an instance at the eye of the storm to highlight Hughes’s storycraft:

The whole ruin of the deck and upper-structures was covered with living things. Living,

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28 Hughes has commented repeatedly on the presumed prescience of his narrative, published on the eve of Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler in the Munich Agreement of 1938. In response to a symbolism survey sent him by 16-year old Bruce McAllister’s question “Do readers ever infer that there is symbolism in your writing where you had not intended it to be?” Hughes responds, “Frequently. Sometimes they may be right . . . A good example is the recent suggestion by critics that my novel IN HAZARD, published in 1938, was a symbolic forecast of what was to happen to Britain in the coming Second World War (even including the American salvage ship!?” (Letter to Bruce McAllister [1964]). McCallister’s survey is documented in Sarah Funke Butler’s “Document: The Symbolism Survey” (2011).
but not moving. Birds, and even butterflies and big flying grasshoppers. The tormented black sky was one incessant flicker of lightning, and from every mast-head and derrick-point streamed a bright discharge, like electric hair... As you gripped a hand-rail to steady yourself they never moved; you had to brush them off: when they just fell. (qtd. in Greene, "High" 68)

Once again, it is ruin that signals Hughes's trademark use of the Gothic. Hughes continues,

The decks were covered in a black and sticky oil, that had belched out of the funnel. Birds were stuck in it, like flies on a flypaper. The officers were barefoot, and as they walked they kept stepping on live birds—they could not help it. I don't want to dwell on this, but I must tell you what things were like, and be done with it. You would feel the delicate skeleton scrunch under your feet: but you could not help it, and the gummed feathers hardly even fluttered. (Hazard 95)

The abject birds are here depicted as having fragilely-fecund power—"massed as if for migration" (Hazard 95)—that always threatens to overwhelm.

4.2.2.1 The White Goddess

Continuing the study of female and colonial abjection that began in High Wind, Hughes adopts two more monster masks for his second published novel. Each of these masks is a metempsychosis of a goddess figure. Intentionally juxtaposed by the author, these two goddesses perform two versions of abjection as extensions of two contrapuntal males. While the Archimedes is decidedly a male-dominated engine, the vessel's traditional feminization and the pervasive, associated imagery of sea-mother and womb turn Archimedes into a kind of ocean-going Medea,29 destined to murder her own children. In the midst of its trauma, the narrator explains of the ship that "[a]s she rolled, the fire crept up the iron walls; was sloshed up them, like water, and over the raised door-sill. And more oil was still running out of the nipples" (Hazard 92). In this novel, then, Hughes depicts female power as horror by exploring its ability

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29 An extensive passage in Hughes's The Wooden Shepherdess (1973) tells of Medea-centered trauma. Augustine’s thespian-minded Aunt Berenice plays Medea and forces young Augustine and her sister to perform as her murdered children. This memory’s re-telling, rendering Augustine poignantly vulnerable, initiates his romantic embrace with Janis. Yet Augustine’s apparent attempt at unwanted sexual intercourse represents revenant trauma. Hughes conflates violence and sexuality on numerous occasions, making Medea a central Gothic image for personal and familial dysfunction and sexual awakening (see Shepherdess 67-74).
to create, destroy, nurture, and save. By these depictions, the work projects the female Abject as a reparative and salvific—if scapegoated—figure.

4.2.2.1.1 Abjection

The first of two metempsychotic monster masks that Hughes applies to this novel is that of an alternately contemptible, wretched, and self-abasing Abject figure: the triple-natured White Goddess. To understand Hughes’s choice of this three-faced persona, some consideration of his close personal and theoretical relationship to Graves is once again helpful. In the Hughes archive, there is specific evidence of ongoing discussions between Graves and Hughes regarding Welsh mythology and the Mabinogion. Even assuming this correspondence is merely a time-specific discussion inspired by the 1948 publication of Graves’s The White Goddess (an assumption which must consciously disregard the influence Graves and his family would have had over the young Hughes as his tutors in Welsh culture beginning at least by 1919), Hughes later writes the Human Predicament novels (composed from 1945 to 1976) with Graves’s mythical manifesto—and the resulting critical noise surrounding it—in the background.

According to Graves in his 1948 text, the White Goddess is multifaceted:

Arianrhod is one more aspect of Caridwen, or Cerridwen [henceforth Ceridwen in the present study], the White Goddess of Life-in-Death and Death-in-Life; and to be in the Castle of Arianrhod is to be in a royal purgatory awaiting resurrection. For in primitive European belief it was only kings, chieftains and poets, or magicians, who were privileged to be reborn. Countless other less distinguished souls wandered disconsolately in the icy grounds of the Castle, as yet uncheered by the Christian hope of universal resurrection. (White 92)

Hughes writes to Graves the following summer regarding Arianrhod and the birth of her two children: the sea-deity Dylan and his brother, the much more significant hero Lleu Llaw Gyffes. Graves sees the two sons as forms of the same deity, but Hughes sees Dylan’s birth as a strange afterthought and most likely a conflation of differing legends:

[T]he birth of Dylan is an irrelevant blemish, from the point of view of pure story-telling. Read it again [sic] with that aspect in mind: Gwydion does his magic [sic] to test whether Arianrod [sic] is a virgin or not (“a”, not “the”, of course); thereon not one but two children are miraculously born. Yet the babes are not called twins, their paths never again cross,
and the two births are described in entirely different terms. (Letter to Robert Graves [23 July 1950])

Deeply versed in the intricacies of Lady Charlotte Guest’s translation of the medieval Mabinogion (1838) texts (as well as Greco-Roman and Hebrew figures), Graves has developed a syncretistic aesthetics around what he terms the “White Goddess,” triune moon goddesses that represent birth, beauty/life, and death. Using Welsh mythology as his primary foundation, he identifies Arianrhod as representing birth and initiation; Blodeuwedd, the flower wife of Lleu Llew Gyffes, as figuring beauty, love, and wisdom—as well as treachery—in the owl; and Ceridwen (mother of the prodigy-bard Taliesin), who takes animal form as the corpse-eating white sow—embodying death and the grave, as well as inspiration—and serves as a unifying figure for the three.

Thus, according to Graves, these three manifestations of the White Goddess can be said to represent, in part, three types of female abjection: Arianrhod the self-abasing mother, Blodeuwedd the contemptible maiden, and Ceridwen the wretched crone. Despite their abjection, all three possess archetypal agency. Most importantly, the identity of each manifestation is fluid, ranging from lover to mother to destroyer, with age or appearance never a truly defining factor.

4.2.2.1.2 Performance

After writing The White Goddess, Graves was widely opposed for his appropriative performance (heavily influenced by Laura Riding) of the White Goddess. Riding herself sought to discredit the text as a warped act of plagiarism. Facing criticism from historians and scholars who saw his awkwardly matriarchal, nominally feminist, and flawed framework as

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30 Graves’s work also benefited greatly from the new translation of The Mabinogion by Gwyn Jones (an acquaintance of Hughes’s and founder of The Welsh Review (see Letter to Richard Hughes [16 Nov. 1938])) and Thomas Jones (1948) through Golden Cockerel Press just before his own book was published. Graves and Hughes, with a deep, shared interest in Welsh mythology, would understandably be responding to this new development in their correspondence.

31 “Where once I reigned, now a whorish abomination has sprung to life, a Frankenstein pieced together from the shards of my life and thoughts” (qtd. in R.P. Graves, “Robert Graves and the White Goddess: An Introduction” 24).
amateurish and admitting his own lack of expertise in certain historical aspects of his own study, Graves nevertheless claims the White Goddess myth as his birthright: "my profession is poetry, and I agree with the Welsh minstrels that the poet's first enrichment is a knowledge and understanding of myths" (*White* 18).

It is this same non-professional yet poetic claim to myth, two decades earlier, that leads Hughes to adopt the mask of the White Goddess here and elsewhere in his fiction. While *In Hazard* obviously predates Graves’s published volume, it is asserted here that the two writers’ earlier discussions of Welsh mythology would have directly influenced Hughes’s writing in the 1920s and 1930s, evidenced by stories such as “The Demi-God,” with its overt manipulation of specific Welsh mythological references. In the abject White Goddess persona, Hughes shifts, both consciously and unconsciously, toward a putting on of the feminine. As with the other personae already cited (the Stranger, the Pirate, the Gypsy, the Duppy, and the Dutchman), this goddess-mask might be viewed as an ill-founded appropriation rather than an advocacy of female and feminist perspectives. Yet there is a documentable effort across Hughes’s *oeuvre* to take up female abjection as a means for therapeutic release and catharsis.

The present study focuses on the potency of Gothically inflected material within a modern literary context as a means for pointing toward the repairing of trauma. While this study’s methodology is not precisely feminist, the premises of reparation require attempts at the liberation of marginalized people through textual processes—whether or not they are intended by the author. Within this chapter on the female Abject, it is appropriate to utilize feminist strategies to highlight female agency within Hughes’s novels. By using a feminist lens (a critical

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32 Hughes would later describe Mitzi—his later novels’ central, visionary, goddess-like character—as having a "cold, serious white face, with its very large grey thoughtful eyes. The carefully-brushed straight fair hair reaching nearly to her waist, tied back in a bunch with a big black bow behind her neck. The long straight skirt with its shiny black belt, the white blouse with its high starched collar" (Fox 116). It is possible to assert Mitzi’s mysticism as the culmination of Hughes’s version of Graves’s White Goddess.

33 From “The Ghost in Rope Street” (1929), to *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929), to the later Human Predicament novels (1961 and 1973), Hughes assumes the voice of a female speaker as a means for demonstrating intense, female, spiritual and emotional growth; unique female insights; and potential or actual female agency.
vantage that would have been well beyond Hughes’s experience and perhaps beyond his grasp, cordoned and conditioned as he was by the gendered, social norms by which he had lived), it is possible to see both the male’s attempted grasping for possession of the female while also highlighting the power and authority wielded by that same female character. An appropriate starting point, then, is Graves’s own proto-feminist text, which projects a feminism filtered through the male gaze itself. The feminist readings within this study, then, rely heavily on the mythical archetypes Graves introduces.

To some degree, Hughes uses In Hazard as an opportunity to put the White Goddess archetype into action. By thus “performing” the White Goddess (as an author adopting personae) and by writing his characters to rely on such performances, Hughes points to a reparative significance in the abject horror that the White Goddess at times presents to male human culture in her attractive annihilation. As an extension of the male gaze, Hughes depicts the White Goddess in abject self-abasement: She is simultaneously intoxicated and intoxicating. In her abjection, she is also a manifestation of the mythical Arianrhod, who submitted to male investigations of her virginity and presently gave birth to two, non-twin, doppelgänger demigods. Here in this novel, perhaps more than at any moment in Hughes’s oeuvre, it is the performance of the Abject that presents itself as the key for reparation. Two parallel male figures, one English and one Chinese, perform their duties using these female monster masks as a means for survival.

Hughes writes the first of In Hazard’s two parallel, male sailor-figures—Dick Watchett—as a young Norfolk apprentice who has participated in the Norfolk, Virginia, parties that have proved a visionary experience, initiating the journey of the Archimedes. During the ship’s last night at Norfolk, Virginia, during which Watchett has established a doubled identity for the people of his native Norfolk (the American Norfolk’s English twin), the apprentice has been swept up in a bootleg, bacchanalian procession that takes him to a Colonial house filled with elaborate yet musty Victorian furniture. Here he dances and drinks Prohibition moonshine: corn-
whiskey that “arrived in glass jars, each holding a gallon: so there was plenty” (Hazard 14).

There is some evidence that Watchett’s experience here, to some extent, reflects the author’s own while staying near Bellevue, Virginia, during the 1920s.

Pivotal to Hughes’s story, a young girl named Sukie enters the novel during this Norfolk party. After Dick’s Dionysian enablers have “danced his legs off” (Hazard 12), Dick succeeds in “fighting off” a rival suitor—“one older man, an ex-soldier” (Hazard 13)—for Sukie’s attentions. This rival wears “a gilt and ormolu leg with his evening clothes, for he held that the merely serviceable artificial limb which he wore with his day-clothes was wrong with a tuxedo” (Hazard 13). Sukie at first leans on Dick—“nestling against him like a bird” (Hazard 14)—for comfort. She then establishes her own stature by sharing with Dick the wry Southern secret of her family’s aristocratic blood, which “send[s] any flea which bit them raving mad” (Hazard 13).

Sukie also advertises to Dick her cat, who eats cheese and whose “baited breath” hilariously captures mice with ease. Whether nestling bird, maddened flea, or tempted mouse, Dick—or perhaps Sukie—is offered here by the storyteller as unwitting prey. Mythically coded by this animal imagery throughout her appearance, Sukie ultimately goes into a mystic trance (Hazard 14): “Her eyes, wider than ever, did not seem to see anybody, even [Dick]. She wrenched at her shoulder-straps and a string or two, and in a moment every stitch of clothing she had was gone off her. For a few seconds she stood there, her body stark naked. Dick had never seen anything like it before. Then she fell unconscious to the floor” (Hazard 15). It is this brief performance that will replay in Dick’s mind throughout Hughes’s novel and will prove to be his salvation.

The moment Sukie enters the novel’s nighttime, pre-embarkation, party scene, she is unknowingly “performing” (or channeling) the White Goddess. Hughes, perhaps just as unknowingly, uses Sukie’s fleeting image to perform a female role that is beyond his own experience. Several elements of Sukie’s appearance point to the evocation of a tripartite White-
Goddess figure Hughes has previously activated within his short story “The Demi-God.” First, Sukie’s “wide innocent eyes” can be associated with Blodeuwen (Hazard 13), whose emblem is the shunned owl—a reminder that her innocent eyes belie a certain treachery, or at least danger. In addition, her seeming acquiescence to manipulations by men suggests the test of Arianrhod who, in the Mabinogion, self-abasingly offers herself to the male gaze.\(^{35}\) Within Sukie’s character is also a hint of Ceridwen (the third White Goddess figure), who appears ambiguously as both the fertile mother and the old crone. While the “wen” of Ceridwen’s name signifies white, fair, and pure, the goddess’s actions signify deep—and generally dark—experience. While Watchett adores Sukie’s young, “fair” form (Hazard 13) (she is described as a young maiden “still at High School” [Hazard 13]), he is oblivious to her potential “Ceridwen” identity as the “hag” Death. This side of the White Goddess is manifested in Sukie’s sudden collapse and Dick’s subsequent (figurative) “burial” of her body. As the last female face Watchett will see before sailing into the storm, Sukie mythically suggests both life and death; in Sukie lies the prospect of a transformation that requires annihilation.

Admittedly, there is no overt mention of the White Goddess within Hughes’s text, and Hughes’s novel predates Graves’s published work. Nevertheless, Graves’s Welsh goddess-figure is subtly invoked—merely by a repeated emphasis on Sukie’s whiteness. Sukie’s fetishized white skin (like that of the original Graves/Riding White Goddess) inevitably sets her apart from the non-white world she haunts—and is haunted by.\(^{36}\) She is a ghostly antithesis to the Black world her aristocratic ancestors have traumatized, the Virginia plantation which appears to be her home. Despite her naive appearance, she represents power—albeit male-tainted power. In her white presence and her lingering significance for Dick Watchett, she is “performing” the White Goddess. By means of corn whiskey, she is transformed into a figure

\(^{35}\) It is an Arianrhod-figure (Nesta Griffith) who, after innocently ascending into the mountains of northern Wales, is sexually assaulted by a Welsh deity in Hughes’s earlier story, “The Demi-God.”

that exceeds the boundaries of her own sixteen years of experience. In this transformation her body is both objectified and mythicized: “Dick set down his own drink suddenly, a wilder intoxication thumping in his ribs. She had been lovely in her clothes, but she was far more lovely like this, fallen in a posture as supple as a pool; all that white skin . . . “ (Haz 15). Dick treats this fallen, liquified figure with holy awe and only touches her abstracted form to wrap her up and make her comfortable. He then leaves the party with his constructed image of Sukie’s “honor” (and his own) still presumably intact. Already, Sukie is less a human figure and more a spectral vision to Watchett, her young initiate.

The imagery used in Hughes’s description here echoes Graves’s introductory poem regarding his White Goddess. Graves writes that adherents to the White Goddess continue “[s]eeking her out at the volcano’s head, . . . / Whose broad high brow was white as any leper’s, / Whose eyes were blue, with rowan-berry lips, / With hair curled honey-coloured to white hips” (“In Dedication” 2). Like Graves’s male-constructed White Goddess, Sukie’s whiteness is a sign of her abjection: both arresting and diseased “as any leper’s” (Haz 6). Furthermore, according to Graves, the White Goddess is a figure found “in the volcano’s head” (“In Dedication” 2), a siren who alternately cautions against and beckons the male figure toward tumultuous contexts. Sukie functions as just such an ambiguous muse within Watchett’s imagination.

This mythic script, then, is the product of Graves’s (and Hughes’s) male mediation. It is also symptomatic of a twisted “male spiritual quest” that necessarily invokes the female. Inevitably, the male is unable to function without the spiritual energy and stamina that a female presence provides—yet he is never willing or able to acknowledge his debt to her. In writing Dick and Sukie, Hughes further mediates the White Goddess myth. Sukie’s ecstatic, intoxicated stance, followed by her sudden and deep sleep, signal that—for the writer and for Dick—her presence is suggestive of deep spiritual energy and contemplation. This will be confirmed later when, amid the worst tempest on record, Dick turns to his remembered vision of Sukie’s body
rather than to the God he cannot seem to contact in the heat and fear of the moment. Sukie’s
drunken performance—her enraptured presentation of herself—is transcendental rather than
sexual in the eyes of the watching Watchett. To him she is a holy vision, and his objectifying
care with her unconscious form demonstrates the power she immediately exerts over him.

Taking a cue from this script, Dick tries to perform his own version of Sukie’s persona:
first by visually consuming the image of her body, and then by reproducing that image—
projecting her—within his own dreams. In imitative performance, Dick reproduces Sukie’s
intoxication to support his own ongoing ecstasy. After the plantation episode has apparently run
its course, Dick (as if to compartmentalize this spiritual and personal vision and return to his
professional life) wraps Sukie gently in the hearth-rug and makes her comfortable on the sofa.
Yet his body involuntarily imitates Sukie’s rapture. Dick returns, “shaking, to his ship” (Hazard
15), his body continuing to perform in imitation of the body he has witnessed, a vision that will
sustain him through the impending hurricane. While Dick feels he is channeling Sukie, it
becomes clear that Sukie is in control.

4.2.2.1.3 Reparation

Nevertheless, Dick’s own “White Goddess” performance—his imitation and carrying
forward of Sukie as a vision-figure—is reparative, practically speaking, because it saves him. It
is Sukie’s spectral presence that enables Dick to continue at his vital and salvific duties.
Furthermore, her presence demonstrates that, despite society’s strong historical propensity to
force women along certain courses, the female figures of this novel break their bonds and
assume power as goddess-figures that save the men. As In Hazard unfolds, it is Sukie—or at
least a vision of Sukie—who saves Dick.

A reparative reading of Hughes’s novel reveals his emphasis on a mythic transformation
that emerges from a lasting interface with female power, a passage through death, and a
distinctly spiritual solace that solitude and confinement can produce. First, despite Dick’s effort
to banish Sukie, to tuck her neatly away, and to occlude the power of her nakedness, Sukie
displays her abject potency by inducing his shaking and finally, by entering his dreams, both as he sleeps and as he wakes. Thus, Dick involuntarily carries Sukie with him—or perhaps she carries him—into the heart of the impending catastrophe. It is his vicarious wearing of the White Goddess mask through his adoration of Sukie that initiates the extreme transformations he will undergo. Hughes writes that

[.] or hours [Dick] lay awake, quite unable even to dim the vivid picture in his inward eye of Sukie's drunken innocence. But at last he fell asleep, her lovely face and her naked body flickering in his dreams. And then presently he was awakened by feeling his heavy lids lifted by thin little fingers, and found himself staring, through the texture of his dream, into large, anxious, luminous eyes, only an inch from his own; eyes that were not Sukie's... It was Thomas. (Hazard 15)

Representing birth, life, and death, the triple-natured White Goddess primes her supplicants for any contingency. She is an ever-present companion. Furthermore, she is known to offer transformation to those who fix their eyes on her. Sukie, then, is playing this role. In particular, by her “drunken innocence” and her conflation here with Thomas the lemur-cat, she brings self-knowledge by prying open Dick’s inward eyes to his role in an epic—even cosmic—drama.

In Hazard, then, is a voyage of transformation. Just as the White Goddess is known for her various transformations (including her three-fold identity accorded by Graves’s reckoning), she is also the instrument of change in others. Furthermore, Sukie’s reparative performance of the White Goddess in Dick’s mind depends on the animal imagery that is used to describe her. Sukie’s white skin and wide eyes present animal motifs of the goddess that Hughes would likely have discussed with Graves at length. Ceridwen, in particular, possesses two white cats that accompany her at the mixing of a potion by which she seeks to change her ugly son’s dullness into wisdom.37 Thus, the cat imagery that Hughes uses in connection to Sukie further accentuates her possible identification with the Welsh goddess-trio. Hughes’s reparative

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37 In the Mabinogion’s tale, it is Gwion Bach—a male usurper—who steals the drops of wisdom Ceridwen has prepared. Gwion flees from Ceridwen through various transformational iterations, but he is eventually eaten by her. Then, as if intimating the male’s revenge, Gwion is reborn as Taliesin, the Welsh bard. Thus the male retains the power to tell the tale. For references to Ceridwen’s association with cats, see Graves, White 235.
intentions in using the White-Goddess figure can thus be seen through several instances of animal imagery that emerge from the *Mabinogion*'s telling of the White Goddess’s triple incarnation, all of them signifying transformation. Animal transformations are central to White Goddess stories: Arianrhod is transformed by giving birth to a son who becomes a fish. Blodeuweedd is transformed first from flowers into a woman, and then into an owl after her betrayal of her husband. Ceridwen is a symbol of transformation as she changes into a greyhound, otter, and hen—visiting vengeance on others in these forms. As the White Goddess projected within Dick’s mind, Sukie is signaling Watchett’s own profound transformation.

The novel’s transformations are a function of the mythical atmosphere that Hughes gives to his performative re-telling of a historical narrative, an aesthetic tendency similar to that found in the novels of other modernists. Furthermore, because of the mythic cues Hughes presents, a reparative reading that follows these traces is appropriate. In precise geographical terms, the ship departs Norfolk, Virginia—powered by the magic of modern, steam-generated electricity and bound for the Caribbean, the Panama Canal, and the Far East beyond. Mythically speaking, the vessel passes through three “gates”: threading the small islands of the Bahamas, splitting Cuba and Haiti by the Windward Passage, and aiming for the canal at Colón. During this critical stage of their voyage, physical sight is impossible, but the crew members rely on the almost magical instruments and modern movements of their steamship. Framed in these terms, *In Hazard*, like other modernist texts, is a voyage of myth even as it seeks to assert the developments of modern science.

The vessel’s name immediately invokes both the history of “eureka” and the need for a legendary lever to move the world. Archimedes’s path is Hughes’s shorthand for a voyage of

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38 *Magic Mountain* (1924) and *Ulysses* (1922) are just the most notable in this regard. The works of H.D., D.H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf are known to focus on mythological parallels (see Nanette Morris, *Modernist Myth* [2008]). Additionally, Eugene O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) is a modernist drama that follows a mythological script.

39 Conrad’s “The Secret-Share” (1910), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and *Typhoon* (1902) (for example) all possess these same qualities, situating modern technology within a mythic landscape.
discovery. Furthermore, the ship’s bulk and baggage make its movement formidable. The narrator explains, “That is a massive engine: yet its powerful forces, shifting with exactitude the heavy rudder, can be switched on or off by the delicate wrist of a Chinese quartermaster on the bridge, lightly twiddling the wheel” (Hazard 8). This modern magic, mediated by the cultural Other, merely accentuates the inexplicable vulnerability and impotence of the vessel when its rudder proves useless against the superhuman forces of nature.

Further evoking a mythic atmosphere, the gnomic narrator-instructor describes the ship’s engine-room in organic terms that allude to the Norse axis mundi [world-tree], Yggdrasil:

Think of a tree. The roots of a tree spread in a most complicated manner through the ground, extracting all kinds of necessary things. This nourishment passes, unified, up the plain column of its trunk, and bursts out in the air into a countless multitude of leaves. So all the varying forces, the stresses and resistances, proceeding from that welter of machinery, are unified into the simple rotation of this horizontal column: are conducted calmly along its length into the sea: and there burgeon suddenly into the white and glass-green foliage of the swirls, the tumbling currents, the enormously powerful jostling of crowded water which is a ship’s wake. (Hazard 7)

Hughes then applies this same imagery—in an even more rhizomatic form—to human behavior: “The powerful innate forces in us, the few prime movers common to us all, are essentially plastic and chameleonlyke. The shape and colour which they come to present at the mind’s surface bear little seeming relation to the root . . . The form in which it emerges into behaviour is (speaking broadly) a matter of cultural environment” (Hazard 152). From the narrator’s addressing of this theme, it can be concluded that the machinery of Hughes’s fictional universe is reparatively oriented. It does not emphasize a dominant race or persuasion. Instead, this mythical machinery’s roots connect people across times and cultures. Human behavior “flowers” differently in different contexts (Hazard 151), but the relations among people are fundamentally networked.

Finally, a third mythic dimension of Hughes’s story is the microcosmic—and eschatological—structure of the ship itself. In describing the engine-room and its subterranean vaults (expanses that separate engineers from deckhands), the narrator paints the denizens
below decks as part of pandemonium. The narrator explains that, “unlike most large architectural spaces (except perhaps Hell), you enter it through a small door at the top” (Hazard 5). In particular, when describing Chief Engineer MacDonald’s domain, the narrator explains that “[h]e had under him seven engineer officers, their tartarean occupation indicated by a shred of purple against the gold on their sleeves” (Hazard 9). Such descriptions and characterizations echo Conrad’s “avant garde sublime,”\(^\text{40}\) the distinct acknowledgement that modernity is no match for grander cosmic designs.

Thus coded as a voyage into myth, the course set by the Archimedes is also a voyage of death. Hughes makes the shockingly fatal boundaries of the story clear (as he has in High Wind) through depictions of and allusions to various members of the animal kingdom. These animals have distinct connections to the body of myth with which Hughes was most familiar. Specifically, within Welsh/Celtic myth, Ceridwen had two white cats that served her but which have also come to represent her. Expanding on such associations, Graves writes:

> Why the cat, pig, and wolf were considered particularly sacred to the Moon-goddess is not hard to discover. Wolves howl to the moon and feed on corpse-flesh, their eyes shine in the dark, and they haunt wooded mountains. Cats’ eyes similarly shine in the dark, they feed on mice (symbol of pestilence), mate openly and walk inaudibly, they are prolific but eat their own young, and their colours vary, like the moon, between white, reddish and black. Pigs also vary between white, reddish and black, feed on corpse-flesh, are prolific but eat their own young, and their tusks are crescent-shaped. (\textit{White} 235)

Thus, the monstrous traces in Hughes’s novel of the Ceridwen-branch of Graves’s White Goddess (feeding on corpse-flesh and eating one’s own young) include Hughes’s repeated references to cats—and those cats’ close association with death. Most significantly, Thomas the lemur-cat’s conflation in Dick Watchett’s mind with Sukie is a weirdly appropriate association.

Sukie’s (and Thomas’s) large eyes also evoke the White Goddess’s Blodeuwedd-branch: the

\(^{40}\) Jana M. Giles asserts that Conrad, in Typhoon, employs the Romantic sublime as a modernist engine. To Giles, it “propels its ethico-political argument not through argumentation but novelistic craft” (165). It can be asserted that Hughes, re-treading Conrad’s footsteps, uses mythic storytelling (anchored squarely in modern technological terms) for the same end.
treacherous, banished, nocturnal owl-goddess. This death imagery is not prescriptive or overly portentous. After all, the relatively happy ending has been assured by the history behind the narrative. Yet the traumas of the storm linger in its aftermath. All on board the Archimedes (and even those aboard the salvage ship that comes to her aid) are forever changed. They have been forced to measure the depths of their own souls.

Throughout the novel, there is a distinct impingement of the mythical on the modern, an encroachment that fuels full-blown conflict. Again, myth is here expressed in terms of animal imagery. When the storm begins, it moves in deadly, catlike fashion, but magical modern technology is considered the ultimate solution: “The days of Conrad’s ‘Typhoon’ are passed: the days when hurricanes pounced on shipping as unexpectedly as a cat on mice. For one thing, the mice know more than they used to know of the cat’s anatomy, of the rules which govern its motion—and in addition to that, the cat has been belled” (Hazard 26). Yet this belled cat’s motion is more powerful than the “mice” can calculate. The storm stops its magical instruments and invades the ship itself, trapping Watchett in his quarters and leading to some of the novel’s most significant soul-searching.

Hughes demonstrates through the sailors’ pressurized experiences, as he has in High Wind and will later in his Human Predicament novels, that solitude and confinement are vehicles for spiritual reparation and hold the potential for recovery. Dick’s various episodes of enclosure serve to highlight the general solitude of the entire vessel on the sea and the claustrophobic circumstances of its crew. Furthermore, by performatively entering the Cave of Abjection that humanity has long designed for abject Others, Watchett is intimately in communication with Sukie’s “White-Goddess” power.

First, cloistered in his claustrophobic cabin by the suction of the storm’s winds, Dick begins a more spiritual leg of his voyage: “Dick’s door remained jammed. He was shut in a little

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41 In High Wind, Hughes also makes use of the white sow, which is violently thrown overboard, to foreshadow Margaret Fernandez’s fate and the Dutch captain’s immediate demise.
iron cube, tilted up on one of its edges, and jerking about like a rook’s nest in a gale” (Hazard 43). Dick has now become the caged bird, leaning for shelter on an unseen spiritual force. This forced confinement is “like being inside some joke-machine in an Amusement Park, worked by the Devil” (Hazard 44). It is the solitude such confinement produces that triggers Dick’s White Goddess vision: “At first . . . he tried to think about God: but God slipped about, and cheated him. There was only one thing brilliant enough to hold his mental eye, during that time of strain: Sukie’s body. He could hold that all right, he found. It was something brightly-lit and solid, among shadows” (Hazard 75). When Dick is finally freed from his quarters, he relocates to another spiritual site. He is next seen in a kind of abject Christian communion with the devout (but completely useless) officer Mr. Rabb. Rabb is terrified and has gone almost catatonic. From Dick’s perspective, Rabb abdicates his natural role as Father Confessor: He has been worshipped as a mentor officer, but now—in his profound fear—he refuses to assist others, even with Thomas the lemur in his face, furiously trying to pry his eyes open. All around him, Dick sees only a spiritual void during his time of greatest distress.

Later, at the height of the storm, Dick is again trapped “as neat as a mouse in a mousetrap” (Hazard 104), this time in the latrine as he tries to calm the storm with oil. Meanwhile, “[h]uge spires of water would dash at the ship, like maddened cathedrals: then the oil spread over them: they rounded, sank, passed away as harmless as a woman’s bosom” (Hazard 104). In this charged imagery, Hughes once again signals the associations between the female figure as archetypal site of peace; the holy, “magical” oil (Hazard 104); and the confining cathedral which forces human creatures to confront their mortality and ultimate source of spiritual succor. Again, Dick is bewildered. His male superiors have failed to provide him with spiritual support, and he is now more isolated from them than ever before.

To fill this spiritual vacuum, Dick’s Sukie comes to life in conjured performance. To be clear, this is not Sukie herself: It is a mediated version of her. Her hallucinated form appears as the sleep-deprived Watchett is pouring oil on the water to calm the surrounding waves and save
the ship. His post “on watch” in the aft latrine provides some wry significance to his own surname. Oddly, and realistically, Hughes’s description focuses on Dick’s frustrated attempts at swallowing. His tongue is swollen from extreme thirst. Of course, there is no drinking water available, and he is unable to leave his post until his task is complete. In the middle of this mini-crisis, Sukie suddenly appears. Dick then speaks to her image in hallucinatory monologue, as if to instruct her in the intimate mechanics of his lolling tongue:

“You see,” he said to Sukie, “You have to be very careful. Once [the tongue] gets a chance really to stick to the skin it will rip it off. Very gently, back and fore—that frees it, and I can put it back in my mouth.”

But Sukie did not answer: though surely she ought to have been interested. She was looking past him, and humming a tune. She did not care. So with an effort he shifted her out of his way; shifted her up about four feet, and a bit to the left. There was nothing for her to sit on up there: but all the same there she was, sitting in just the same position as before. Presently she did have somewhere to sit, however, for he saw she was now in the mouth of a ferny cave. So with a spasm of pleasure he picked up his oil-drum and stepped through her, into the cave, pouring oil as he went (so as to be able to find his way back, he told himself). (Hazard 111-12)

This vision-Sukie possesses several key mythic qualities that appeal to Watchett as an alternative spiritual inspiration. First, she is looking past Watchett’s troubles. Second, she is humming, presumably, a tune that soothes or entrances. Finally, she is sitting in the mouth of a ferny cave that certainly promises enlightenment. Perched in this way, she represents both a guardian and a guide as Watchett crosses into the vision-cave. To reinforce these powerful mythical qualities, Hughes returns repeatedly to traditional White Goddess animal imagery in conveying Dick’s vision’s reparative import. Suddenly, in the middle of Watchett’s vision, Sukie hops, cat-like, “away on her unnaturally elongated feet, nervously folding and unfolding her ears” (Hazard 112). This final detail is perhaps Hughes’s most obvious reference to the transformational White Goddess.

Finally, by stepping “through her, into the cave” (112), Watchett mythically crosses another threshold, with the female Abject as his gateway. He performatively enters the Cave of Abjection within which Sukie’s oracular power is made manifest. As a result of his own performance, the vision-Sukie sustains him. She keeps him from succumbing to the elements
around him. Thus, the young Virginia girl is transformed—within Watchett’s psyche—into the inscrutable White Goddess through Dick’s performative re-enactment. In turn, Sukie’s transformation from mortal into goddess possesses Dick and transforms him from a green apprentice into a capable sailor who weathers a death voyage.

Despite her saving power in Dick’s immediate circumstances, Dick views her as a revenant in his mind who must be exorcised if he is to return to his all-male community. Still, resisting his attempts to secure Sukie’s image and batten it down within the safer corners of his mind, her beautifully monstrous form (abjectly prepared for burial—mummy-like—by Dick in Norfolk) seemingly returns from the dead. Initially, once the storm begins, Dick has tried to extricate himself from Sukie’s influence:

Instantly it was a great pleasure to Dick that Sukie was not there. Wind was better than women. A ship-load of men, none of them—at any rate for the respite of the storm—in love with anyone: all purely bent on the impending battle with the air. That was best.

The thought of Sukie brought the taste of corn-whiskey into his mind; and his mind repelled it with vigour. He felt a sudden conviction that he would never again touch alcohol: it was revolting stuff. Not so much as a glass of beer. Nor smoke . . . a loathing of girls, drink, tobacco; and all wrought by the wind. (Hazard 35)

Nevertheless, Sukie repeatedly overflows these prescribed, homosocial boundaries. Her re-emergence ultimately enables Dick to survive the storm and do his duty. Because he is able to converse with this goddess and to perform her in his mind, he is also able to perform the near-superhuman physical feat of pouring sacerdotal oil on the waves for endless hours in order to calm them.

This performative pattern is a cycle of shock, awe, and abjection. As quickly as Dick has put on (by embracing with his mind) Sukie’s White-Goddess “monster mask,” he just as quickly attempts to remove it. He tries to banish thoughts of Sukie once the storm has passed. By casting off Sukie’s image, Watchett once again seeks to effect an “appropriate” abjection of the female form within his psyche.

Yet this attempt at asserting independence from Sukie’s memory is overwhelmed by the arrival of another saving female presence: the American salvage boat Patricia, commanded by
one Captain Abraham. Even Captain Edwardes (whose rage at being boarded by these Americans vicariously spills over to Dick) rebels against Patricia's offered succor. Hughes intends this as an almost bestial response by the male crew, who fear that their ship—having merged with their own egos and bodies during their plight—will now be usurped. Yet it is the abject Patricia (coded as American, Jewish [in light of its commanding officer], and female) that ultimately saves the vessel and its male adherents.

This pattern of the ironically reparative, returning presence of the abject Other continues into the aftermath of the days-long hurricane. Although Dick has sought to banish Sukie’s image (most likely because it signifies his own vulnerability and impotence), he now fixates on the Chinese sailor he has violently knocked unconscious and arrested as a scapegoat for the storm’s fury. It is evident that Dick’s fixation is his means for dealing with post-traumatic stress, which he and the other apprentices have just exhibited by spontaneously bursting into tears during their first post-trauma meal.

In this last attempt at banishing Sukie, Dick is overtaken by a new, male-dominated fantasy that seeks to excise the female altogether. As Dick spends the rest of the voyage recuperating in the spiritual solitude of his cabin, he discovers the once-banished image of Sukie returning to him again—this time in the form of the male Ao Ling: “Like most white young men, he had not really looked on the Chinese as human until he had touched one . . . Why should he have found the feel of Ao Ling, as he carried him to the hospital, so curiously reminiscent of the feel of Sukie, as he carried her to the sofa?” (Hazard 209). In an elaborate fantasy that further illustrates Dick’s persistent attempts to abject the Other to whom he is attracted, Dick imagines himself as Ao Ling’s savior. As Captain Abraham describes the vessel's new destination (Belize) in terms of “palms and oleanders, with the mountains dim and hazy in the distance, and the sea dotted with little cays and islands” (Hazard 215), Dick—whose conscience is now plagued by the part he has played in Ao Ling’s capture and likely execution in China—imagines his own heroic role on this new mythic stage:
That was an idea... suppose he was to let the Chinaman loose, when they reached Belize? The man would not have a very good chance... but he might get away. At the least he would have a run for his money. At the thought of stealing to the cell quietly in the night, and letting the man go, a feeling of pleasurable warmth suffused Dick’s body: the thoughts of Ao Ling’s unspoken gratitude. Of meeting him, perhaps years later, in some desperate fracas in Central China, when all seemed lost: of Ao Ling recognising him, and saving his life in turn (for a Chinaman never forgets). (Hazard 215-16)

Dick Watchett’s mind now conjures hackneyed, racially determined, B-movie tropes as a last-ditch effort to re-assert himself as the hero of his own story. Despite this attempted subterfuge against his own psyche, it is Sukie and Ao Ling who have saved him by their projected images, and Dick knows it.

It is the Abjunct’s power—and specifically the feminine (or feminized) Abjunct’s agency—that underwrites the salvation of Archimedes. Watchett seeks to restore his own imaginary agency by setting aside the monstrous forms that pervade his tale, whether the American Sukie, the Othered people of Belize (“the emaciated negroes with their tom-toms” [Hazard 216-17]), or the “Chinese bandit” Ao Ling (Hazard 224). Yet all of these possess an abject agency that Watchett continues to crave through the novel’s last pages, in spite of his desire to be rid of them all.

4.2.2.2 T’ien Fei (Mazu)

Finally, Hughes provides further potential for reparation by shifting the novel’s narrative perspective from Dick Watchett to the Chinese fireman named Ao Ling and performatively taking up a second abject goddess-persona during the second half of the story. This second female persona corresponds to the cultural imaginary that informs Ao, whose psychological journey parallels that of his Norfolk counterpart. While Graham Greene declares Hughes’s focus on this second character surnamed Ao to be “a mistake” (“High” 68), Watchett’s antipodal double is significant for Hughes’s reparative, Gothic-modern aesthetics.

42 The Chinese material was cut for a dramatized BBC broadcast of In Hazard. See R. Rowland Hughes: “Ao Ling omitted because (a) his story is so big in actual fact and in its significance that it would have burst the frame of the radio story. (b) the Chinese episodes would have had to be done in Chinese to be really effective” (Letter to Richard Hughes, 24 Sep. 1940).
4.2.2.2.1 Abjection

Having already explored the self-deprecating abjection of intoxication in the White Goddess, Hughes here explores a self-deprecating abjection that is a function of filial piety within a Confucian society, as well as the wretched abjection of postcolonial subjects who grasp power in spite of their subaltern status. Ao Ling abjects himself to Captain Edwardes, just as he has lowered himself before an abusive father and before Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, his successive, adopted party-fathers. In the same way, T’ien Fei (the historical, clairvoyant Lin Moniang, who is now worshipped as a goddess by the Chinese sailors) has become an avatar first for her endangered brother-sailors and then for her parents, who recall her spirit to her body before she can finish her saving act. Despite this self-deprecation, T’ien Fei possesses power that neither brothers nor parents can control once she has ascended to the Chinese pantheon.

The goddess Mazu (In Hazard refers to her by the less common name T’ien Fei, or Tin Hau in Cantonese, meaning “Princess of Heaven”) is the patron deity of fisherman and sea travelers. Her worship is centered in Fujian (Fukien) Province and on the neighboring island of Formosa/Taiwan, whose Matsu archipelago is named for her and whose Lukang has been a center for her worship for more than three centuries, at least since the Qing credited her divine help in securing the island from breakaway Ming factions there. As a result, Mazu is inextricably linked both with the sea and with conflict. In introducing the spiritual milieu of the novel’s Chinese sailors, Hughes writes that Mazu

was once a little girl, precocious and devout, and subject to fits. She was born in the island of Mei-chow, in Fukien [Fujian], in A.D. 742. At five years old she could recite the prayers of Kuan-yin-pu-sa, and at eleven could perform the dance called Ngan-chieh-lo-shen. In one of her trances, her spirit went to the aid of her four brothers, who were caught by a storm in small boats, far from home. They actually saw their sister walking towards them on the water: but then she vanished. For at that moment her parents, growing anxious, had recalled her spirit to her body, with gongs. They had recalled her too soon, she told them: her brothers were in danger, and only three of them had she had time to save (the fourth, in very fact, never came home). (Hazard 146-47)
It is this second abject goddess—subject to clairvoyant “fits” that pre-date Jeanne d’Arc’s—that Hughes and Ao Ling creatively appropriate, putting on her mask as a means for abject reparation.

Hughes’s building of this Gothically inflected narrative around abject Chinese characters signals his intentions for reparation. His Chinese characters—most of them nameless—are narratively isolated in unflattering terms. Their dehumanization, juxtaposed with Ao Ling’s rich backstory and deep spiritual transformation in the novel’s second half, demonstrates Hughes’s desire to reveal their truth, an inclusive stance that developed gradually yet steadily over the course of his life. Hardly portrayed as competent by the initial metaphors Hughes chooses for them (abjected as they are in the eyes of the Western crew members), the Chinese are initially described as “black thing[s]” (*Hazard* 63), “cold monkey[s]” (39), “half-dead fish” (73), “blind puppies” (82), and “bleating” sheep (48). Yet from this dehumanized mass, Ao Ling emerges as one of the novel’s central narrative perspectives. Most significantly, Hughes demonstrates with profound irony the truth beneath the Western world’s dehumanizing labels. Ao Ling, Hughes’s narrator reveals, is far more of a warrior than any of the white men who have sought to hijack his narrative. Ao Ling is ultimately scapegoated for attempted “mutiny,” a plotline that Hughes’s narrator exposes as pure fantasy, a misunderstanding born of the white officers’ negligible language skills and the deep racism politely promulgated by two “hell-bound” engineers. Nevertheless, Ao Ling’s final dream “re-telling” of the traumas of the hurricane from his own perspective—a vision that comes to him in his own, enclosed Cave of Abjection—reparatively liberates him and his abject people to exercise their abject power.

Unlike Conrad, whose *Typhoon* (1902) is widely cited by scholars and reviewers as *In Hazard*’s precursor and inspiration and which Hughes himself invokes in passing, Hughes gives his Chinese characters an almost limitless abject power. They serve as quartermaster (an individual given the symbolic role of steering the mostly mechanized ship), firemen (who literally make the modern equipment function), and an army of humanity (who, with their latent threat of
mutiny, imitates the army of birds that have landed on the ship’s deck). Throughout the novel, Hughes presents the Chinese as full mythic and spiritual partners in the ship’s odyssey. While the Chinese helmsman is literally steering the vessel, becoming the storm’s first victim and its auguring sign, the Chinese Ao Ling is an agent of reparative therapy, addressing his own trauma (and that of others) by taking the helm of the story.

4.2.2.2 Performance

By his cultural, racial, and gendered performances of the Chinese characters here, Hughes—as an author echoing most of the orientalizing scholarly resources of his time—is on precarious footing, and it appears that he knows it. He co-opts Mazu, inscribing even her birth with the Roman-Christian chronotopic stamp “A.D.” Nevertheless, Hughes’s purpose clearly lies not in reproducing hegemonic imperialism but rather in projecting reparative parallelism. He describes his Chinese sailor P’ing Tiao, born 1457 years after his goddess (Mazu), as struggling “with damp gunpowder to call her aid” while “[h]is friend, Ao Ling, who had no such beliefs, watched him from the door of the centre-castle with bitter contempt” (Hazard 147). Considering the Communist Ao Ling’s orthodox atheism, Mazu is dangled as a potentially powerful, liminal figure caught somewhere between the traditional and the modern, mirroring the spiritual ambiguity of the modern West.

Graham Greene, in his Spectator review, is uncomfortable with Hughes’s cross-cultural performance of P’ing Tiao and Ao Ling, as well as the Mazu mask they are all negotiating. Most likely, Greene’s reluctance to accept the mechanics of Ao’s story (while he certainly sympathizes with the Chinese man’s revolutionary politics) betrays a general Western resistance to the culture and politics of China as representing unnecessary narrative

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43 Hughes, following Thomas Burke’s Limehouse Nights (1917), has a long history of seeking to understand and engage with the Chinese subject. In “Martha” (c. 1920), his story of an abused, half-Chinese art prodigy, Hughes hints at this later elevation of the Chinese as a central subject for historical and fictional study.
distractions. While Hughes carefully explains Ao’s revolutionary origins in the midst of Mao’s Communist Jinggangshan resistance, his original Western readers would still have been in the middle of their Anglicized assimilation of Pearl Buck’s (1931) and Irving Thalberg’s (1937) versions of *The Good Earth*, as well as the newsreel recaps of Nanjing’s massacre in 1937. Such an audience would have had little patience for portrayals of the Chinese that ventured beyond (or contradicted) these popular conceptions. Nevertheless, here—and throughout the novel—Hughes displays an uncanny prescience that augurs a very different postcolonial future during the coming months, years, and decades—both for the West and for China.

Hughes’s engagement with Chinese myth runs much deeper than geopolitical prophecy. Despite being a revolutionary, Ao Ling is unjustly accused of mutiny and brutally attacked as he—speaking in the Chinese that is so abjectly incomprehensible to the British officers—tells an innocently humorous story to match that of another gregarious sailor, the “mission boy” Henry Tung. Misinterpreted, he is assaulted (at Edwardes’s command) by Dick Watchett—Ao Ling’s Norfolk doppelgänger—and arrested after falling unconscious. His fate is to survive the storm yet be turned over to Kuomintang (Nationalist) government officials for execution, despite (or expressly because of) the fact that he has been a Chinese government soldier before being persuaded by Kuomintang abuses to join the Communist cause.

Most important here is Ao’s subconscious crossover in retelling the entire narrative of the hurricane from the perspective of the abject Chinese sailors, a perspective which has been

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44 It is notable that Greene would write his *The Quiet American* (1955) with some of the very same intentions and effects, demonstrating the marginalization of Asian entities and histories under the Western gaze.

45 Thalberg’s sudden death from pneumonia contracted over Labor Day weekend 1936 (memorialized in the opening credits of *The Good Earth* as well as in Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon* [1941]), was the most important factor in derailing Hughes’s novel in cinematic form. Thalberg, Hollywood’s “Boy Wonder,” had been greenlighting Hughes’s work for the screen, and his death would delay that for thirty years (see John Krimsky’s Letter to Richard Hughes [23 Sep. 1936]). The cinematic production of *High Wind* in the 1930s would likely have sustained the author financially and confirmed or even expanded the reach of his work, especially during his dormant war years.

46 Hughes unflatteringly portrays strongman Chiang Kai-shek as the prototypical fascist (second in chronology, Hughes reminds readers, only to Mussolini) and sympathizes with Communist entanglements that have been eclipsed by the Second United Front.
occluded to this point. Not only does Ao have his own Communist mythology, but he has also (involuntarily) embraced P’ing Tiao’s savior, Mazu/T’ien Fei, as is demonstrated below. Thus, Ao’s own goddess-vision overlaps with Watchett’s. As Hughes has intimated in syncretistic—and appropriative—fashion, “any Chinese Grace Darling was liable to become identified with T’ien Fei” (*Hazard* 147), a reference to the famed English lighthouse-savior who parallels Mazu’s heroism and provides a cultural entry point for Hughes’s audience.

4.2.2.2.3 Reparation

A reparative reading seeks to find textual ground in which to re-plant. While the hermeneutics of suspicion are necessary tools for plowing and uprooting, a reparative lens seeks to examine texts for traces of potential non-tragic sequels. Racial abjection remains a prevalent poison among modernist texts that were seen in their day to be appropriately (or overly) inclusive. By putting on the Chinese mask of both Ao Ling and the Mazu he projects in his dreams, Hughes imperfectly ventures into uncharted territory. His depictions remain stilted in places. Even after consulting a Chinese scholar about the book, he stubbornly retains the names and images he feels work best with his inherited historical material.47 Yet there is no denying that he intends, reparatively, to re-write history. He also intends to move beyond Conrad’s text toward a more complete narrative truth.

In Ao Ling’s dream, readers find reparative strategies for truth, change, and forgiveness that serve as benchmarks for Hughes’s entire corpus. Most significantly, readers can conclude that Hughes seeks to equip Ao Ling with abject, narrative power. Once the storm has passed and only his assailant, Dick Watchett, gives the prisoner another thought, Ao Ling sleeps soundly while the rest of the sailors are still wracked by the horrors of their experience. He

47 A Chinese scholar (name illegible) that Hughes consults about the Chinese material in the novel replies with the following suggestion about Ao Ling: “To No 1. Regarding the name Ao-ling—of course in China everybody has three names as for instance the Chinese ambassador in London Quo-Tai-Chi—Old man Li-Hung-Chang of the famous Li family so in your case you are perfectly correct if Ling is the family name it ought to be placed first. I would suggest that you [alter? abort?] Ao. I do not consider it very suitable” (Letter to Richard Hughes [24 Jan. 1938]).
bears no apparent ill-will toward his jailers. Furthermore, Ao Ling has, willingly or not, adopted the Mazu mask for himself as a means for reparative work. The narrator explains that, after falling asleep, Ao Ling

was surprised to find a Fukienese girl on the cot beside him. He raised himself on one elbow, to embrace her; but the fine hair on her face and hands warned him that she was but a fox in human shape. Moreover, he saw to his horror that she was in labour: the pains came on her at that moment. Deeply embarrassed, he would have left the cot; but he found that he could not rise. So he rolled over, turned his face away from her. Then a voice said “Look!” The room was filled with a red light, and a peculiar smell: and a ball of white flesh was rolling on the floor like a wheel. Ao Ling leant over the side of the cot (for the fox-girl had now vanished) with his knife in his hand; and as it passed he slashed it open. A small manikin emerged, surrounded in a halo of red light. (Hazard 226)

The central figure is clearly the Mazu that Hughes has previously described (and that Ao Ling does not believe in), now come to life and abjectly giving birth—which Ao Ling is simultaneously compelled to turn away from and watch. But Mazu here is also conflated with the Huli Jing, the “fox-girl” of Asian myth. According to studies of Asian myth, “[w]hen a fox is fifty years old, it can transform into a woman; when a hundred years old, it becomes a beautiful female” (de Groot 586). Fatima Wu’s The Gothic World of Foxes, Ghosts, Demons and Monsters explains that “a fox always turns into a beautiful woman if it decides to be female. The female fox is able to bewitch man and make him lose his senses. On top of this, the fox knows what is happening around her even of things a thousand miles away” (133). It is this fox-girl (Huli Jing) imagery that Hughes uses as an expression of abject female power, conflating her image with the traditional form of Mazu as a means for empowering Ao Ling. Thus, the lifeguard goddess is transformed into a powerful mother.

One might pause here to question whether Hughes has done his research, or whether he has simply muddled Chinese mythology for an audience that won’t know the difference. On the contrary, Ao Ling’s dream is a remarkable performance of liminal fusion, a conflation of mythologies and mythological figures within a dream narrative that operatically incorporates both the long traditions of Chinese culture and the intense traumas of the present. According to
these operatic tendencies, Ao's vision also grows musical and increasingly surreal, in imitation of Chinese myth, or even Chinese (Beijing) opera:

In the deep silence something was singing: and Ao Ling turned his head just in time to see a black-bearded porpoise, dangling on a fishing-line, singing like mad. Then the line tautened, whizzing it up into the sky.

Ao Ling looked up, and saw above him an immense figure riding on a black unicorn: a figure with a green face and fluffy crimson hair, and a cyclops-eye from which flashed a pure white beam. He held in his hand a fishing-rod: and on the line the father-porpoise still dangled, still singing (Hazard 226).

The porpoise (perhaps the baiji, goddess of the Yangzi—a symbol of prosperity and also a girl transformed in Chinese myth and thus rescued from her incestuous father by a storm), the unicorn (a mythical and beneficent qilin), and several dragons logically populate Ao Ling's tempest dream. The immense figure is Lei Zhenzi, god of thunder.48

On one hand, Ao Ling's visions are replete with this type of obvious traditional Chinese imagery. The fox-girl from whom the entire episode is born is a prominent feature not only of Chinese mythology but of the other cultures across East and Southeast Asia with which it shares many common roots. Explosions of red and gold (auspicious colors that infuse Chinese holidays), the qilin (Chinese unicorn), and the mythical dragon—so different from its Western counterpart—are all in line with Chinese narratology and symbolism.

Most importantly for Hughes's novel (and most pertinent to the present discussion), it is Mazu—the “Fukienese girl”—who serves as the origin of the entire dream sequence. She is the dream mother. Furthermore, it is possibly her voice that commands the Chinese sailor to “[l]ook!” (Hazard 226), inviting a spectacle that further cements Ao Ling as the only sailor not in denial of the events that have taken place. After scoffing at P'ing Tiao's feeble efforts to call to her for help, Ao Ling is now free to invoke the repressed Mazu in his own dreams.

On the other hand, Hughes (and perhaps Ao Ling, subtly influenced by the culture of the ship and its captain) blends Chinese myth with Mabinogion narrative. In his attempt at

48 For additional information about the distributed Chinese pantheon, see “Chinese Gods and Goddesses.”
performing Mazu’s modified story (as mediated by the atheist Ao Ling), Hughes understandably infuses this dream with his own Welsh mythology.

First, the “manikin” to which the fox-girl/Mazu has given life through the miraculously birthed, rolling “ball” of flesh marks this dream vision as Hughes’s own Welsh-inflected performance. Within Welsh mythology, the story of Dylan’s birth (as already alluded to) is something of a mystery. Arianrhod, undergoing Gwydion the magician’s misogynistic “test” of her virginity, drops (births?) the blond-headed Dylan, who “gave a loud cry. At this cry, [Arianrhod] made for the door and, as she did so, she dropped something else, quite small” (Thomas and Crossley-Holland 71). This “something else” dramatically grows to become the great Welsh hero Lleu Llaw Gyffes.

Second, the tiny manikin’s identity is not that of a Chinese revolutionary, a nationalist bogey, or Ao Ling’s tyrannical father. Instead, “[i]t was Captain Edwardes in a pair of silk trousers, from which flashed dazzling rays of gold light. He strutted up and down, growing bigger all the time” (Hazard 226). Edwardes, we have learned, is Welsh, and as such he functions (like Otto in High Wind before him) as a loose avatar for the author. The mythological traditions of poetry and song are deeply ingrained in Welsh culture, which has an affinity for the sea. Both Taliesin (in his first form as Gwion Bach and before his rebirth as the son of Ceridwen) and Dylan, heroes from the Mabinogion, enter the sea in re-birth, both of them metamorphosing into a fish. Dylan ultimately becomes a sea deity himself, while Taliesin grows to become the Welsh Master-Singer.

Thus, into the middle of Ao Ling’s Chinese dream, Hughes drops a Welsh sea captain. As an extension of Edwardes’s paternal and imperial power, Ao Ling’s dream performance—bearing these mysterious traces from the Mabinogion—indicates an intentional blending (at least on Hughes’s part) rather than a muddling. In Ao Ling’s tangled vision, we see the rhizomatic roots connecting humanity of which Hughes has spoken. It is this connectedness that points to reparative steps that might emerge from the powerful hurricane’s winds.
Nevertheless, Ao Ling’s image of Edwardes, while clearly honoring the captain’s power (which has overcome the storm and placed Ao Ling under arrest), hints that the dreamer—or perhaps the Chinese people—will not go quietly kowtowing into the night. Within Ao’s vision, the reborn mini-Edwardes that emerges from the fox-girl’s ball-baby quickly takes on heroic stature, as well as Chinese cultural traits:

Captain Edwardes by now had grown a beard like the porpoise’s. But he drew a dart from his belt and flung it at the figure on the unicorn. It snatched the yelling demon from the tree, and yelling also vanished in the clouds.

A great mouth rose out of the water, as wide and as deep as a well, against which the waves could be heard splashing. Captain Edwardes drew another dart from his waist and flung it at the mouth: and with a blasty breath that drove the ship sideways through the water it too vanished. (Hazard 227)

This passage’s vast array of culturally significant dream imagery is kaleidoscopic, and it serves to accentuate the fun-house hauntedness of Hughes’s entire narrative. In beating the storm, Edwardes has—in Ao Ling’s eyes—defeated every force from Chinese lore. Yet the source of Edwardes’s power is Mazu, and the slashing open of her birth “vehicle” by Ao Ling (essentially at her command) is a signal of narrative liberation. Thus, Edwardes’s balls of fire are derived from the ball from which he is born.

In one sense, this re-telling is Ao Ling’s means for making peace with his destiny. As if performing a Beijing opera, Ao Ling has re-told the story of the storm from his own marginalized perspective, framing Edwardes as a demi-god and crediting his captain’s decisive leadership, even in his own arrest. Ao Ling thus appears completely unconcerned that he has been saved from the storm just so he can be executed as a traitor in his homeland.

Yet there is another side to this re-telling. Ao Ling’s bizarre writing of Edwardes into his own vision hints at Hughes’s own self-consciousness in writing his Chinese characters. The author appears to recognize himself as a representative of the colonizer. After all, it is Edwardes, the Welsh captain (and not the mass of Chinese firemen who have faithfully fueled the ship’s progress and who are in the most danger) who appropriates the power to tame the cat-like “dragon” of the sea:
Then one dragon, in a fine armour of golden-glowing scales, flung itself onto the ship, and crawled up the sloping deck. As it moved the deck was depressed with its weight, like a tent-roof when a cat walks upon it. Its forehead projected over its blazing eyes: its ears were small and thick: its tongue was long, and its teeth were sharp.

But Captain Edwardes drew from his trousers thousands of balls of fire, which flew from his hands and struck it, so that it lay cowering down. (Hazard 227-28)

Thus far in the novel, in deference to Confucian order, Ao Ling has abjected himself to this Western captain, just as he has already abjected himself to his father, to Generalissimo Chiang, and to Comrade Mao. Of course, such self-deprecation is not without honor in a Confucian society. Yet Hughes’s Western tale (and Conrad’s) is overwritten by Ao Ling, pointing to the potential reparation of historical, colonial injustices. Cast away by Western sailors, Ao Ling (or at least Ao Ling’s subconscious) nevertheless retains the power of re-writing the narrative with his own colors, motifs, and emphases.

Poignantly and reparatively, Ao’s (and Hughes’s) vision doesn’t end with this operatic Western victory. After all, there is a distinct sadism in the way that the triumphant Edwardes (or at least the institutions he represents) has handled Ao’s case. This injustice is projected in Ao Ling’s dream Edwardes and his “cruel” treatment of powerful and generally auspicious Chinese “monsters.” It must be stressed that, within the Chinese imaginary, these are generally benevolent beings. The narrator of the dream explains,

Then Captain Edwardes straddled over it, cruelly tearing off its scales one by one, so that it cried in agony, shrinking all the time smaller and smaller, and at last weeping with the hopeless, shuddering sobs of a despairing child.

The voice was [Ao Ling’s] own infantile voice, weeping to him out of the far years of the past. (228)

Hughes’s depiction of Edwardes’s sadism conveys an imperial guilt.

Thus, a price must be paid for this implicit and explicit disregard for nature and the myths that seek to represent it. This price is paid by the novel’s only death, that of a Westerner. It is the seemingly-random, post-hurricane demise of the sleep-deprived MacDonald (always standing in for his cousin, the Prime Minister) as he turns his back on the ocean and slips into the sea, that provides a dose of poetic justice. MacDonald’s fearful racism is finally flushed
away. Thus, the novel ends in an inversion of the way it has begun: Instead of the authoritative approach of Chief Engineer Ramsay MacDonald, symbol of modernity and British imperial sense and might, the novel ends with irrelevant bells that toll his watery retreat.

This anticlimax of the novel emerges as another sign of Hughes’s reparative intentions. There is a price to pay for the pain of centuries and the miracle of the ship’s survival. In the end, this reparation can only be achieved as both the male Ao Ling (who has defamed the gods of his own people) and the male British engineer, unequal partners in the crimes of history, presumably perish. Yet the female—the abjected Sukie and Mazu—endures. In spite of cultural attempts to cloister, close off, or apotheosize these female figures in a Cave of Abjection, the attraction remains, opening the door of feminine power and reproductive potency. Thus, Hughes demonstrates in these two sea novels his tendency to use Gothic-modern exigencies—so closely identified with the sea and its power—to dramatize female abjection and reparation.

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49 Bronfen makes it clear that expulsion isn’t the only option for the abject. She writes that “the repressed figure of maternal authority returns either as an embodiment of the Holy Mary’s sublime femininity or as a monstrous body of procreation, out to devour us and transform us into the site for further grotesque breeding” (1).
CHAPTER 5

“CRYING ‘DRACULA’”: HUGHES’S INTERBELLUM NOVELS

Periodizations of modernism generally reduce the 20th century’s world wars to soft bookends, leveraging World War I (the Great War) as a rough beginning for high, literary modernism and World War II as a transition to the postmodernism that supposedly supplanted it. Yet Susan Stanford Friedman has actively challenged these arbitrary boundaries, asserting that the process of “[r]e-vision is the act of looking again, of defamiliarizing the familiar archive by looking anew through a different lens, asking new questions of ‘high modernism’” (76), a process necessarily redefined by what Dimock calls “deep time” (Through 3), the threading of modernism into all of human time and all of human time into modernism. Thus, Hughes’s two published “interbellum” novels—written decades after World War II as retrospective reckonings with the conflicts that have traditionally informed the Western world’s definitions of modernism—are critical for understanding a period that is being resituated and stretched. As a movement “between wars,” modernism aligns with Hughes’s life. His interbellum travels in search of conflicts to assuage his survivor’s guilt, his homeland-caretaker status in the Office of the Admiralty, and his shepherding of evacuees in the countryside speak to his need—and the world’s need—to continue to address the traumas of war even (and especially) at a vantage of increasing remove. As a writer out of joint with the times and slow to embrace postmodern thought, he projects into his novels an image of the spectral male: tethered to the imperial center yet atypically stretching that tether into the Welsh hinterlands and beyond. Later in life he was resigned to his status as a “has-been,” male novelist, yet his male protagonists actively pursue a vital vision of the enlightened, self-healing feminine in order to avoid repeating the carnage of male aggressors. Thus, while his male Abjects seek to usurp female power, they are ultimately eclipsed by female sacrifice and strength. Because of this they point toward a non-tragic sequel built on a shepherding partnership between the abject female and the abject male who finally comes to terms with his counterpart.
While still lacking attention from critics, Hughes’s two interbellum novels have been studied roughly as much as *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929). Nevertheless, while *High Wind* has drawn some attention from cultural critics,1 *The Fox in the Attic* (1961) and *The Wooden Shepherdess* (1973) have not. In these two later novels, which primarily explore conflicts related to the interwar period, Hughes’s male protagonist begs comparison with the writer himself. While seeking to avoid falling into the trap of biographical fallacy, this study nevertheless moves to contextualize Hughes’s aesthetic vision by appropriately historicizing works that parallel his own life in obvious ways. Such a study necessarily draws heavily from Hughes’s own correspondence and the biographical record compiled from his personal papers and interviews with family members and friends.

In these novels Hughes continues to leverage a metensomatotic array of metempsychotic monster personae, masks that—in this case—roughly correspond to cinematic representations of six abject, male figures. This pattern of representation can be isolated only at some distance, by examining his novelistic work as a whole. From this critical vantage, Hughes’s pattern of cinematic representation, whether intended by the author or not, is subtly present across these novels, perhaps as a natural expression of the booming cinematic culture of the period Hughes represents, as well as a reflection of the author’s own experiences as a screenwriter for Ealing Studios during the late 1940s and early 1950s. While movie monsters are only mentioned by Hughes in passing, the imagery of the cinematic experience is often superimposed over Hughes’s novelistic texts. Thus Dracula, the Werewolf, Svengali, the Invisible Man, and Frankenstein all make an appearance within these novels. Furthermore, since his novels are set in the 1920s and 1930s, certain movie monsters would have been familiar to Hughes but would have been out of place for the settings of his novels. Thus,

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1 See Nicole Rizzuto, “Global Modernism at Sea: Maritime Labor and Surface Reading in Richard Hughes’s *In Hazard*” (2018), Michael Titlestad, “This Is Not the Way the World Ends: Richard Hughes’s Rejoinder to William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*” (2017), and Michael Titlestad and Simon van Schalkwyk, “‘I have been in an earthquake’: Epistemic Upheaval in Richard Hughes’ *A High Wind in Jamaica*” (2017).
wherever these cinematic representations would be anachronistic, Hughes is still able to draw logically from those monsters’ print precursors. As always, his goal is therapeutic reparation: In most cases he projects these abject, male monsters as a means for the marginalized to experience the agency which historical, hegemonic forces have taken from them. Nevertheless, a sixth figure—the literary and cinematic Zombie—remains for Hughes both a means for abject agency and a threat of further hegemonic domination that the world must confront, a figure that assumes mass agency in admonitory and premonitory terms.

5.1 Monster Masks: *The Fox in the Attic* (1961)

Hughes’s first interbellum novel is much more refined than his earlier work, and his extra-generic ambitions for it are everywhere evident. In place of the rapid-fire, break-neck pace of his earlier romances, *The Fox in the Attic* (1961)—the first of Hughes’s intended Human Predicament trilogy or tetralogy—slows to a plodding, contemplative march across soggy marshes. Yet the romantic coincidences and twists of fate so characteristic of potboilers haunt this more serious narrative as revenant (and sometimes parodic) elements—spectral traces he seeks to de-emphasize yet which resist exorcism. The conventions of Dickensian discourse persist: the marshes, the murders, the knitting *tricoteuses*, the castles, the torn and reconstituted composite bodies, and the pervasive and abject malignity, always interlaced with brief, lighter—even comic—episodes that defy traditional Gothic norms yet mark Hughes’s novels as ironically self-aware and Gothic-modern. Fox opens with a dead girl, drowned on the wetlands under the purview of Newton-Llantony, the southwestern-Wales estate of its similarly hyphenated young master, Augustine Penry-Herbert. After briefly returning for the fraught inquest, at which he is repeatedly grilled regarding his unauthorized moving of the drowned girl’s body (by Augustine’s account in order to avoid its impending consumption by rats),

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2 Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik’s study of “Comic Gothic” (2012) explains that “[p]erhaps in the academy we have overlooked the comic in the Gothic—or too quickly pathologized it as the hysterical laughter of comic relief—in our desire to present Gothic texts as suitable cases for academic treatment” (323). Hughes (like Dickens before him—see Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings* [2001]) makes ample use of this jovial Gothic as a function of Welsh folk culture and modernist irony.
Augustine flees the inquest’s “open verdict” and its aspersions to travel in Europe and visit distant von Kessen cousins Franz and Mitzi in Munich at the Gothic castle Schloss Lorienburg, situated near Munich on a bend in the Danube during Germany’s most intense period of hyper-inflation and economic distress.

The story continues with an epic structure, balancing domestic scenes at the German castle and at Augustine’s sister’s home in England, Mellton Chase. These English and German episodes are juxtaposed with one another and also with scenes of Hitler’s rapid rise. For example, Nellie (the mother of the dead girl on the marsh and the sister of Mellton servant Mrs. Winter) is invited to live at the estate’s Gothic, hilltop hermitage so that her tubercular husband can live out his final days with her and their new baby, Sylvanus. Meanwhile, in Germany, Mitzi’s deteriorating eyesight is completely taken from her. In addition, readers gradually become aware that Franz is hiding a dangerous German revolutionary, Wolff Scheidemann, in an upper story of the castle. This Wolff, forever colored by the sadistic Freikorps massacres of his post-Great War, guerrilla life in the Baltic region, is also violently—and secretly—in love with Mitzi.

Augustine, too, has fallen deeply in love with Mitzi, seeing her as a vulnerable white-goddess type he can shape to his own ends. Insulated in the castle from the actual events of Hitler’s Putsch, Augustine and his von Kessen relatives nevertheless participate in the drama at a distance. Mitzi’s progressive blindness demands action, and her condition is a reminder of the fragile, German social fabric that is soon to be ripped open. Yet the eye of this storm is Mitzi’s supernatural fortitude in her spiritual faith. Devoutly, she has prepared for God to remove her thorn in the flesh, but just as devoutly she has submitted to his will. When, alone in the house, she hears noises in the rooms above her, she climbs toward them out of overwhelming

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3 Wolff is the son of a fictional German, colonial governor of South West Africa, but he is also (potentially) a fictional distant relative of the actual Philipp Scheidemann, much maligned minister of the fledgling Weimar republic at the end of the war. Wolff’s younger brother Lothar also plays a part of Hitler’s Putsch and is a focal point of Hughes’s narrative voice.
compassion to help one who seems in dire need. In her complete blindness, she enters the Cave of Abjection, the attic alcove where Wolff (who has seen her with Augustine and vows vengeance by bringing them both to a gruesome end) has been hidden. After great distress that she can't locate the subject in pain, Franz enters behind her and guides her away, having discovered that his friend Wolff, in a frenzied state (parallel to Hitler's own eventual fate at the novel's end), has hanged himself from the rafters. Mitzi, now on a mission, volunteers to enter a Carmelite convent in nearby (fictional) Kammstadt. Augustine, hearing the news of Mitzi's enclosure secondhand from the family's youngest children, flees Germany, his fantasy derailed.

Juxtaposed with this Gothically inflected, domestic drama is Hitler's own, which is recreated by Hughes according to all available eyewitness accounts. Marching with Putsch participants to Munich's Odeonsplatz, Hughes’s Hitler has already prepared his getaway vehicle. As soldiers emerge from the Feldherrnhalle, and as shots kill or injure several of Hitler's comrades (including Hermann Göring), Hitler is wrenched to the ground, breaking his collarbone and dislocating his shoulder, yet he manages to flee the scene, making his way to Uffing and sequestering himself in the house of his friends, the Hanfstaengls.4 Hiding in the family’s attic and awaiting his inevitable capture, Hitler’s mind is fully open to the reader in its fully unhinged state. In the midst of internal rantings toward Jews and hallucinations of women who have tempted him to move beyond his own ego, he hears a voice:

Midnight, and still no Bechstein car had come; but so far, neither had the police.
Suddenly Hitler started out of a half-doze, for a calm Sibyline "voice" was ringing in his ears. It had only spoken six words and those as if the whole thing was ancient history, over and done with. But what it had said was, "In the end he shot himself."
It was only a dream, of course. (Fox 262-63)

In this vulnerable moment before his rise to power—after the failed Putsch and before his incarceration at Landsberg Prison—Hughes provides a brief but powerful glimpse of Hitler as

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4 Putzi Hanfstaengl was a close friend of Hitler. It is from Egon Hanfstaengl (two years old at the time of the Putsch), in 1959, that Hughes gained access to the crown jewel of his research career: a journal containing a firsthand account of the events surrounding Hitler’s Putsch (see Hughes’s Letter to Wolfgang Foges [27 May 1959]). The Hanfstaengls were a notable publishing family steeped in the fine art, music, and poetry of Hughes’s own youth and intimately connected to Hughes’s own emergence as a poet.
contemptibly abject, and inevitably doomed. He is a monster who seeks to envelop Europe in
his egomania. With powerful hindsight, readers (who may have been able temporarily to
suspend memories of Hitler’s history in experiencing Hughes’s version as a fictional character to
this point) are, in this instance, likely unable to separate the injured, hallucinating, and
demented Hitler from the eventual horrors he will inflict upon the world. Hughes’s narrator thus
presents Hitler’s crisis and subsequent solitude as an antithesis to Mitzi’s: “In Mitzi—as could
perhaps happen to you or me—with the shock of her crisis the central ‘I’ had become dislodged:
it had dwindled to a cloudlet no bigger than a man’s hand beneath the whole zenith of God. But
in this suffering man always and unalterably his ‘I’ must blacken the whole vault from pole to
pole” (Fox 267). Hitler, while humanized to some degree in Hughes’s work, remains a
malevolent force. Yet it is Mitzi—whom Hughes projects to his publisher as an eventual leader
of passive, spiritual resistance to Nazism within his novels’ overarching story—who will
ultimately prevail. Furthermore, Hughes implicates readers—humanity’s “you or me”—in a grand
story of reparation that looks toward ultimate victory, even victory through weakness and
suffering.

Hughes intends his series of novels (of which he completed only two) as a necessary
process of reparation. By the author’s own admission, he writes not for pleasure but out of
compulsion in “a race between the publisher and the undertaker.” It is the extended, epic
nature of these novels that gives Hughes time and space to work over his own traumas, his
characters’ numerous conflicts, and his society’s systemic structural weaknesses and blind
spots. In particular, Fox’s initiating event speaks to Hughes’s own fragile childhood. The infant
Sylvanus, whose sister’s dead body has initiated Hughes’s long history, becomes the object of
spectacularly misguided attempts at reparation: His dying father Gwilym believes that

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5 Hughes’s *The New York Times* obituary, crafted by Morris Kaplan on April 30, 1976, (“Richard Hughes Is Dead at 76; Wrote ‘High Wind in Jamaica’”) cements Hughes’s humility and sense of humor, when reflecting on the involuntary and sometimes painful nature of his own productive pace, as distinguishing elements of his legacy.
[Syl] must be taught from the first to love and revere the sister he had never known—that little angel God had lent them for awhile, who now from heaven was loving him and watching him grow. They must teach Sylvanus to try to live always worthy of that angelic love: never to do anything or even think anything it would pain those innocent eyes to see. Bit by bit the boy must be brought to realise that always from heaven his Sister was watching him. (Fox 276)

This is Hughes’s own trauma. His sister, Gracie, died before Hughes turned two years old, and his sorrow and guilt even at this young age are apparent in his contemporaneous comments about her.\(^6\) While Rachel’s death and Syl’s birth represent Hughes’s self-identified place in the cosmic drama of this period, the adult Augustine reflects a Hughes who rebels against the ongoing trauma that such cosmic framing has cost him. In effect, Gwilym passes his infirmities to his infant son, a contagion of guilt that must be assuaged by more efficacious techniques of reparation: truth, change, and forgiveness.

5.1.1 Dracula

Within Hughes’s Human Predicament novels (of which Fox is the first), the author makes subtle use of several male monster masks that serve as therapeutic personae for characters, for readers, and for the writer himself. These male-coded masks are brief associations that provide entry points into trauma. In choosing these masks, Hughes’s Gothic-modern mentality is informed not only by traditional mythology but also by the popular, cinematic culture that blossomed during the 1920s and 1930s depicted in his novels, a culture which had exploded by the time these later, interbellum novels finally came to print in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, he consciously and explicitly anchors his Gothic-modern discourse in the monsters of the silver screen.

Fox’s rich texture, where history mixes freely with fiction in Capote-esque fashion,\(^7\) enables Hughes to leverage four universal movie monsters here which, before they moved to

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\(^6\) Hughes is quoted by his mother as remarking that “I always ask God to make Gracie again & let her come back” (Letter to Charlotte Warren [6 Dec. 1903]).

\(^7\) Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1965) is, along with John Hersey’s account of *Hiroshima* (1946), considered by some to be the prototypical nonfiction novel, combining creative reconstruction and
Universal Studios in the 1930s, already belonged to the increasingly global cultural imaginary of the 1920s that Hughes lived through and that he seeks to depict, whether in war-weary Europe or the war-wary, isolationist United States. Hughes is able to justify his invocation of these figures and their appropriation as metempsychotic masks for his fiction because they have also been formative as literary personae since the nineteenth century. Yet it is their cinematic, panoptic gaze that Hughes subtly highlights and subverts here. These monsters are watching from the darkness. They are uncannily perceived by their audience, yet they are also seeing without necessarily being seen, operationalizing Derrida’s “visor effect” through modern media.\(^8\)

Most importantly, because of his depictions of the German people and in his persistent delving into the German psyche, Hughes was accused of “Crying ‘Dracula’” by performing a hyperbolic and Gothically overblown impression of the pre-war German intrigues that historically led to Hitler’s rise. Hughes’s portrayals of castles, crucifixes, and a citizenry in thrall to a mesmeric corporal made the novel unpalatable to a post-war German public eager to dissociate itself from the Nazi legacy. For some critics, Hughes was humanizing a monster. For others he was demonizing the people who followed him. Hughes’s quest for fictional truth was, for many German readers, re-traumatizing. Nevertheless, Hughes considers truth as essential to the reparative project.

5.1.1.1 Abjection

The first abject, male monster mask that Hughes activates in this novel, then, is that of the archetypal vampire, Dracula. Hughes uses Dracula imagery to collapse boundaries between male and female, as well as between in-group and out-group. William Hughes (“Fictional Vampires in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” [2012]), has much to say regarding the abjection of vampires, here casting gender as secondary to the nature of vampirical power.

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\(^8\) Derrida references Hamlet’s ghost as having a visor to his armor which shields the spectator-ghost from being fully discerned. In fact, Hamlet’s father actually wears his visor up, allowing Marcellus and Barnard to recognize the Ghost as the King (See Specters of Marx 6-7).
(which nevertheless is often correlated by males with threatening-yet-coveted feminine fecundity):

The vampire occupies what is superficially a conventional male or female body and yet may with equal ease prey both outside and within the family, and upon either or both genders, thus complicating conventional patterns of desire. In its sexualized quest for blood, therefore, the vampire is capable of disrupting what have been culturally perceived as discrete patterns of sexual behavior. (199)

This troubling of borders extends beyond gender into other types of perceived alterity. Robert Douglas, in the introduction to his extensive study of the impact of these monsters on modern popular culture, writes that

I began with what I thought would be a short chapter on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* that would serve as a touchstone for fin-de-siècle England. As I investigated the period, I discovered that *Dracula* and other Gothic novels revealed the class, race, and sexual conundrums in ways that naturalistic novels often did or could not... [V]ampiric blood-sucking is a trope for bloodlines or racial purity, the impulse to purify and the eugenics movement. Its variant, psychic vampirism is emblematic of individuals susceptible to the power of others both in personal relations and in the larger community. (*That I* vi-vii)

Dracula, and all vampires by extension, are known not only for what they draw out, but also for what they put in. As figures of abjection, they are feared less for their destructive powers than for their progenitive or regenerative capabilities. Bronfen explains that “[o]n the thematic level, Gothic texts celebrate symptoms of abjection in their depiction of vampires, which undo the border between life and death, as well as their interest in the double, who troubles the notion of cohesive self” (“Abjection” 3). Not only does the Dracula figure represent regeneration, but his ability to blur the lines between male and female (manipulating avatars like Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker) and to appropriate the threat of female fecundity makes him, in a demonic sense, legion. In similar fashion, the Dracula discourse seeps into everything it touches. Dracula’s greatest threat is his increase: He is not merely a ghost or monster who kills singularly; he turns others into extensions of himself, and he spawns other vampires. His abject fecundity, like the mother’s, is at all times a threat to those who wish to contain it.

As an avatar for the German people, Dracula can be associated with both the contemptible and the self-abasing abject. By prostrating themselves before a dangerousfigure
who promises purity through virulent contamination, the German public—as depicted by Hughes—abjects itself by seeking inoculation against what they perceive as even greater racial and moral danger.

5.1.1.2 Performance

Hughes puts on this monster mask—by directing his characters to adopt it—as one of his most significant performances of the Gothic abject. By “crying Dracula,” Hughes Gothically re-enacts trauma in order to make sense of it. The contagion of Dracula and the degeneration this figure represents—whether in itself or in its pursuit of the degenerate—is particularly significant for Hughes’s decades-long study of the functioning of Hitler within the German cultural imaginary. His depictions of Schloss Lorienburg, the castle modeled after the actual Schloss Neuburg an der Kammel, home of Frances Hughes’s cousin in Germany (with whom the Hugheses stayed as the novel was being crafted), are indicative of a decadent Germany. Readers’ entry into Schloss Lorienburg with Augustine is designed to impress according to a Gothic script, with its decrepit beerhouse shanty and skittles-alley, its permanently knitting “lynx-eyed” tricoteuse as porter (Fox 137), its neatly stacked dung and clanking, cattle head-chains and its “imps of Satan” (138), Walther’s twin boys, bicycling along “the narrow unprotected catwalk of the battlemented wall (138); nevertheless, all of this Gothic imagery is offset and

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9 Hitler tapped into the degenerate discourse through his “Entartete Kunst” exhibitions, yet the English imaginary could simultaneously paint the German as the degenerative force, a charge not dissimilar to the one post-war Germans made against Hughes’s depictions of Hitler (see “Explore ‘Entartete Kunst’”).

10 Hughes reviewed (and championed in the face of some contemporary opposition) J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Fellowship of the Ring (1954) at precisely the time Hughes was beginning to write The Fox in the Attic (“Lord of the Rings,” Spectator, October 1954). His naming of this castle could be a tribute to Tolkien’s art, while his entreaty to critics that “we should be well advised to remember that what we have before us now is the first volume only of a larger work only arbitrarily divided at the point where it leaves off, and be willing to suspend judgement of this ‘curious and inexplicable object’ (to quote Mr. Muir for the last time) until we have seen the whole” is uncannily prescient of his own publishing progress and could have actually persuaded Hughes that piecemeal publication could, in the long run, be successful.

11 In his essay on “Fear and In Hazard,” Hughes uses this exact image to demonstrate that fear can act “as a tonic” to make people “more efficient, not less” (43). A female child “had just learnt to bicycle, and was annoyed with herself because she could not ride straight along the garden path without tumbling into the flowerbeds. So she took her machine down to the big, main-road bridge over the river, and bicycled along the top of the stone parapet: and the fear of falling to her death actually kept her straight!” (Fiction 43).
almost exorcised by “a life-size crucifix, skilfully carved and realistically painted; and this crucifix looked as if it was brand new—its newness astonished Augustine more than anything else he had seen here yet” (137).¹² Fox is a tale of corruption, yet it is not clear whether the decaying castle is corrupting the Cross, or vice versa.

Dryden writes that “[d]egeneracy was linked to decadence, and the ‘disease’ was perceived to cross social boundaries, offering a threat to the nation as a whole. This in turn led to fears that the ‘condition’ of degeneracy could be hereditary, and hence the entire human race could be heading toward extinction” (10). The Dracula figure’s liminality functions precisely in its potential as a symbol on both sides. It is telling that Dracula can be culturally co-opted as both a champion and symbol of aristocratic or Aryan purification and as the bogey of degenerate Eastern Europe seeping over the ramparts of a pure West.

5.1.1.3 Reparation

Yet Hughes appears to diversify the image of Dracula even further as a means for drilling down to reparative possibilities. His goal is not to scapegoat a people or to re-traumatize a monster’s victims. Instead, he seeks truth, change, and forgiveness. In exploring this monster, Hughes uses misdirection to free the story from potential, political power-plays. He codes Dracula within the German psyche as a multi-pronged force: To British and American readers, Dracula is the insidiously mesmeric and parasitic spreading of the anti-Semitic Hitler’s influence. To the Nazis, Dracula is a kind of bulwark against the perceived “Jewish threat.” On the other hand, Hughes also projects Dracula, through the perspective of avowed atheist Augustine, as the vampiric influence of the Christian church over Mitzi, in essence a patriarchal entity that is stealing her female fecundity by imprisoning her in its convent. His revulsion to this force is both emotional and physical:

¹² R.P. Graves writes, “Many of the incidental details of their arrival at Schloss Neuburg made a vivid impression upon Diccon: including the ‘newly-painted life-size baroque crucifix a few yards from the castle gateway’” (Richard 364).
At first his legs felt nerveless. He had hardly got outside when they wanted him to stop, and for a while he leaned over the broken palings of the old skittle-alley opposite the great Crucifix, contemplating with downcast eyes three dots sunk blackly just below the surface of the snow under the overhanging linden. Three tiny shrunken bats they were, that had frozen to death hanging in the twigs above and dropped there.

. . . That ever Mitzi should shrivel to a nun! In a mind's-eye flash he saw Mitzi lying white in the unending darkness of her night with tell-tale toothmarks on her throat. . . Augustine wouldn't look up at it but turning with eyes still lowered shuddered at the very shadow on the snow of that (to him) grisly vampire-figure clamped too insecurely to its rood above him; and hurried off long-legged like someone at nightfall with twenty miles to go. (Fox 342-43)

Hughes’s reframing of Dracula here as a malevolent Christian force that attracts and shrinks its victims—essentially equating Christ with a vampire and Mitzi with bats—stands Stoker’s depictions of an antichrist Dracula on their head. Despite Augustine’s revulsion and flight (as a long-legged “ghost”) when confronted with Christ’s possessive power, Hughes ultimately demonstrates his two vampires as potent forces: the one for evil and the other for good. For Hughes, the Nazis are degenerate vampires, while Christ (represented by Mitzi and her healing community) is a reparative one.

Hughes’s portrayal of the degenerative Dracula-figure as anti-Semitic rather than Semitic is a logical reversal (and perhaps a projection of his own countrymen’s guilt), especially as it relates to Hughes’s own rejection of imperial adventurer, explorer, and translator Richard Burton as a potential metempsychotic persona. Douglas explains that

For Stoker, Burton cut a formidable, ultra-masculine figure . . . Burton could have been a model for Dracula with “his canine teeth” and his willingness to “arrogate to himself the power of life and death with a casual imperiousness.”

Burton regaled the younger man with his prowess in moving about largely undetected in forbidden areas in Asia and Africa that included an anecdote revealing his insouciance about murdering an Arab boy in Mecca because the lad recognized him as a foreigner. (That I 58)

Hughes, despite his logical associations with Burton as an African adventurer and transgressor of cultural boundaries, rejects Burton as a face he wants to emulate. Burton was “virulently anti-Semitic” (That I 58), and he “characterized the Jews as a ‘parasitic race’” (That I 59). When given the opportunity by Dick de la Mare at Faber and Faber to write a biography of Burton, Hughes waffled, resisted putting on the “Burton mask,” and eventually let the potentially
noteworthy and lucrative project die.\textsuperscript{13} While certainly not a full-throated rejection of Burton's anti-Semitism, it is an example of Hughes working to find reparative strategies that bypass the traditional vampiric rhetoric of the past.

For Hughes, then, his portrayals of Hitler (and the German people who passionately embrace him) ultimately re-code the degenerate Dracula as a new enemy of a broader and perhaps more inclusive humanity. Yet there is always the “danger” of being “out-vampired.” In framing the Othered vampire as the malevolent force, one’s own susceptibility to malevolence is deceptively concealed. Hughes’s version of German General Erich Ludendorff demonstrates this paradox. Ludendorff’s own obsession with the Kabbalah ironically marks him as one of the very “devils [who were] consciously tormenting [the Germans]: Jews, Communists, Capitalists, Catholics, Cabbalists” (Fox 120), devils whom Hitler is destined to destroy. Even as the general seeks to dissociate himself from the Jews, he himself ludicrously performs Kabbalistic calculations, succumbing to the power of another “vampiric” faith:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
  \item But of course! \textit{Fifteen was the same total 1-9-1-4 added up to!}—Fifteen! \textit{Ten and Five:} applied to the alphabet these digits gave the letters ‘J’ and ‘E’—the first two letters in JEhovah. . . yes, and in Jesus too! Thus both years were auspicious years for both Germany’s joint enemies—the JEws and the JEsuits!
  \item 1914. . . the ‘JEhovah-JEses’ year when the noose of International Jewry-cum-Papistry had first closed so tight that Germany had been forced to strike back—in vain. Now, 1923. . . No wonder we’ve failed! (Fox 226)
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

As might be assumed, such portrayals prompted a swift backlash against Hughes’s books by the German people it purported to describe. Nevertheless, the evidence above demonstrates that “Crying ‘Dracula’” was actually a means by which Hughes could elevate the spiritual potential of the German people to repent of their heinous acts. Hughes installs Mitzi within this vampiric network as an antidote and a means for humble reparation: for truth, for change, and for forgiveness.

\textsuperscript{13} Letter from Hughes to Dick de la Mare at Faber and Faber (16 Dec. 1933) about Hughes’s negotiations. While money seems the main sticking point, there are clearly other unsaid factors that keep Hughes from committing to the project (for details see R.P. Graves, \textit{Richard 221-28}, 265).
5.1.2 The Werewolf

A second movie-monster mask rises up in Fox. Barbara Creed explains that a were-creature in literature, culture, and society represents the “collapse of the boundaries between human and animal” (70). Hughes’s portrayal of Schloss Lorienburg, with its odd entrances, its animalian mixture of clean and unclean, and its final descent through the castle’s main entrance beneath a Gothic arch, seems fitted to raw Draculan power. But the book’s title hints at the significance of the animal in hiding, while the chained or hidden inner beast lends itself to other Gothic-modern, metempsychotic (and cinematic) masks, including that of the Werewolf.

5.1.2.1 Abjection

The Fox in the Attic tells the story of three abject males: Augustine Penry-Herbert, Wolff Scheidemann, and Adolf Hitler. In these three male figures, Hughes explores the bestial abject in solipsistic confinement: a contemptible—yet pathetic—abject figure who is powerless to control the course of his own monstrosity and loath to repair the traumas that have become necessary for his existence. While out of sight for most of the story, the figure of the human-wolf hybrid (Werewolf) remains relevant throughout. While Augustine’s abjection is less violent than that of Wolff and Hitler, all three are lone wolves who instinctively prey upon all, including those they claim to love.

Of course, Hitler’s bestial nature is the most urgent, fueled by mythology and yet enabled by reality. While the anti-Semitic Richard Wagner’s operas hold an obvious place in the shaping of Hitler’s progress (and serve as touchstones within Hughes’s diegesis), it is actually a different Wagner, from Wagner the Wehr-Wolf by W.M. Reynolds, that may provide a subtle inspiration for Hughes’s understanding of Hitler and Wolff. Coded as German, Reynolds’s werewolf-protagonist, Fernand Wagner, is an agent of political disruption. Tempted by the Faustian bargain, he has sold his soul to gain political power. Thus, Wagner’s abjection is voluntary. It derives from his own choices, even if desire compels him. The same can be said of Hitler and Wolff, although their unstable mental health points them down a necessary path of
abjection. While Augustine’s abjection is a wretchedness born of circumstances and self-abasement, Wolff and Hitler have settled into an inevitable course by which they will mercilessly devour others who they themselves label abject and unclean.

5.1.2.2 Performance

Hughes’s book contains no literal werewolf. Yet it is interesting to note that one of Hughes’s most admired acquaintances,14 Margery Williams (author of *The Velveteen Rabbit* [1922]) and mother of prodigy artist Pamela Bianco), writing pseudonymously as Harper Williams, published a werewolf novel called *The Thing in the Woods* in 1914 and republished it in 1924, precisely as Hughes was spending a great deal of time with the family.15 Williams’s book was so admired by H.P. Lovecraft that he wrote a poem in its honor.16 There can be little doubt that Hughes read her novel and digested it as a part of his burgeoning metensomatosis inventory.

Hughes’s performance of the werewolf is subtle, but his inclusion of a hidden, seemingly nocturnal character in Schloss Lorienburg’s attic is significant. The von Kessen family’s pet, named Reinecke Fuchs ("Reynard the Fox" to English readers of Chaucer), functions as a psychologically and mythically charged animal familiar in this novel, just as Tabby and Thomas have before him in Hughes’s sea novels. At precisely the moment Augustine meets Mitzi and reminds himself not to stare at her beauty, his gaze turns instead to the fox familiarly embedded in the von Kessens’ cozy sitting room (an association that also conjures the Huli Jing). Yet the family’s open embrace of the animal only hints at the hidden “fox” in the family’s own attic: a

14 Hughes’s dedication of “The Singing Furies” (1922) to M.B. has never been explained by Hughes scholars. Contemporary accounts in Hughes’s letters would conclude that this is a reference to Margery Bianco, to whom he refers in letters as “M.B.” (see Letter to Louisa Hughes [27 Aug. 1920]).
15 Williams-Bianco’s book is reviewed in the 29 November 1924 issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature* while Hughes’s own *A Rabbit and a Leg* (a collection of his plays) is reviewed in the 3 January 1925 issue (p. 435), alongside advertisements for Williams-Bianco’s novel (p. 433). This is evidence of the synchronicity of their literary efforts. Hughes’s influential review of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* appears in the 16 May 1925 number, demonstrating Hughes’s networking with other modernist texts.
psychopathic killer named Wolff. One of Hughes’s most Gothically coded scenes includes this free-ranging fox, connecting the animal with its much more bestial human counterpart:

In the darkness of the unvisited attics the bats flitted endlessly . . . [Wolff] was having one of his 'red' dreams, when everywhere there was always blood. Tonight he was dreaming that his legs were paralysed and he was dragging himself on his elbows across a heap of bodies, and from their open bellies the living entrails writhed towards him. . .

Wolff woke, half-swallowing a scream. His lips were dry and his mouth tasted of blood from a bleeding gum (he had pulled his own tooth himself, the day before). His body was wet and for a moment he thought that was blood too . . . he deliberately recalled to the surface of his mind that day four years ago when his troop was storming the signal-box on the Riga railway and he stumbled in the hidden wire and fell into Heinrich’s body that was burst and steaming and the wire had held him there, in that motherly warmth, while round him the bullets splashed in the waterlogged meadow like rain. (Fox 231)

Wolff, the abject half-man (here described at precisely his sixteenth birthday, just as Emily has been introduced on her tenth in *High Wind*), lurks in his bat-defiled muniment room (a Gothic archive) and behind the entire narrative, never speaking a line until 300 pages have passed. Yet this attic scene only emphasizes Augustine’s own role in the novel’s horrors. Earlier in the novel Augustine has spent a haunted, guilty night in his own attic bedroom:

MIDNIGHT, back now at Newton Llantony. . . As the clouds broke and the bright moon at last came out, the single point of light to which distance diminished the lamps of all roystering Flemton paled. . . It shone on the new gilt frame of the life-size khaki portrait above the fireplace: glinted on the word ‘Ypres’, and the date and the name, inscribed on brass.

It glinted on the painted highlights in the dead young man’s eyes. It shone on the small shapeless dark shape in the middle of the big sofa opposite, the outstretched arms. Glinted on the little slits of eyeball between the half-open lids. Augustine, in his white attic bedroom under the roof, woke with the moon staring straight in his eyes.

Round him the house was silent. In all its hundred rooms he knew there was no living being that night but him.

Downstairs a door banged without reason. His scalp pricked momentarily, and the yawn he was beginning went off at half-cock. (Fox 40)

Because of the dead girl’s body that lies on the sofa (so similar to Sukie’s form from *In Hazard* and the dead body in the house of “Leaves”) and because of Augustine’s inability to live up to the painted image of Newton-Llantony’s previous master (his doppelgänger cousin who has been buried at Ypres), Augustine flees to Germany as a suspected murderer—or at least a
suspected meddler. His shame is masked by his change of scene and by the series of personae he seeks to adopt (adventurer, lover, artist). But it is the mesmerizing qualities of this bright moon, studied intently by Augustine in his youth and in the passage above (an obsession that will ultimately connect Augustine—through his beloved niece—to Hitler himself at the absolute end of Hughes’s written work) which implicate and isolate the abject Augustine even as he seeks to insulate himself from evil.

5.1.2.3 Reparation

In his main character, Hughes has clear intentions for transformation (signaled through Augustine’s name, which subtly codes Augustine as both a hedonist and an African-Berber abject in spite of his clear Anglo-Welsh ancestry). Augustine’s abjection is apparent almost from the first pages of the book. He is considered an outcast by the people of Flemton, the village just beyond his estate. His uncles before him never married and his own parents are dead. Augustine is the young, lone wolf that communities naturally suspect. It is also necessary to see Augustine as a stand-in both for Hughes and for the British and American people (his readers) as complicit partners in Hitler’s rise. There are no “innocents abroad” here—only co-conspirators. The moon is the werewolf’s instigating charm, yet across Hughes’s series of novels its barrenness condemns both Augustine’s solipsistic and isolationist worldview and Hitler’s maniacal and genocidal vision for humanity.

5.1.3 Svengali

Two additional movie-monster masks emerge in a single scene of Fox and are iterations of one another, yet they are distinct enough for the narrator to consider them as two sides of a coin, each one illuminating an aspect of the voyeurs who seek to possess Mitzi—first with their eyes and ultimately with love (Augustine) or violence (Wolff). First, Hughes uses the

17 St. Augustine of Hippo (generally understood as having Romanized Berber ancestry) notoriously spent his first decades in hedonistic and libertine sexual excess, only changing with his conversion to Roman Catholicism, epitomized in his famous quotation, “Give me chastity and continency, only not yet” (Confessions, 8:7.17).
literary/cinematic figure of Svengali to express a positive power of control. Ruth Bienstock Anolik explains that

[like Frankenstein’s monster and like Dracula, the figure of Svengali—another darkly demonic human monster who threatens to overwhelm his hapless victim—expands his power by escaping the boundaries of the text that confines him, stalking his way into the popular imagination. Indeed, Svengali, even more than his fellow monstrous creatures, is so much more famous than his text of origin, so detached from the text that engenders him, that his origin . . . is not commonly known. (163)

5.1.3.1 Abjection

Svengali is the ultimate usurper, co-opting the female body for his own gain. He is contemptibly abject, and he compels others to abject themselves. Like Anolik, Douglas emphasizes Svengali’s Semitic identity as the primary origins of his perceived monstrosity:

In 1894 George Du Maurier, published *Trilby*, about a tone-deaf, vivacious Irish ingenue who becomes the greatest diva of her age under the sinister control of the Jewish impresario-hypnotist, Svengali. Besides being characterized as a freeloading reprobate, who shamelessly lives off others, the physical portrait, (accompanied by Du Maurier’s unsettling illustrations) of the alien, gimlet-eyed conductor is clearly anti-Semitic . . . His unhygienic body is also conveyed through an oily pointed beard that is compared to ‘a sticky, haunting, long, lean, uncanny, black spider-cat.” His vanity, belligerence, and his uncanny ability to commandeer the mind of this chosen victim through post-hypnotic suggestion mark him as a parasitic figure.

Svengali’s mesmeric ministrations to the impressionable Trilby through his piercing gaze are the attribute that Gentiles in the novel (and the public) regard as his most disturbing quality. (*That I* 90-1)

Hughes’s single reference to this figure, while seemingly isolated, is actually a culmination and focal point for Augustine’s (and Wolff’s) contemptibly abject monomania toward blind Mitzi, the wretched abject.

5.1.3.2 Performance

Like the John Barrymore he wouldn’t have witnessed yet (in 1923) and the George du Maurier (from 1894) he could have read,¹⁸ Augustine puts on Svengali’s guise.¹⁹ Augustine, a

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¹⁸ It is important to note both Hughes’s care to avoid anachronism but his simultaneous acknowledgement of the cinematic culture that has influenced the British cultural imaginary (even in *High Wind*—see Crowley’s discussion in "Little Criminals" [2005]). While Hughes’s movie monsters emerge after Augustine’s experiences, they still function in cultural hindsight at the moment the novels are composed.
man who trusts the power of his eyes and would sooner lose any other sense, is able to bring
the blind Mitzi under his control with his gaze:

Augustine was trying to will Mitzi into the right path through the snow; and they must
have looked unequivocally a pair of lovers as the two of them plunged together into
snowdrifts and out again as if neither of them had eyes at all for the outside world; for
what else could prompt so wildly erratic a course but the mutual blindness of love? But
so intoxicated was Augustine now with his role of Zvengali-cum-Invisible-Man [sic], he
had quite forgotten that the only eyes to which he was really invisible were Mitzi’s. (Fox
255)

Yet he, with Wolff, remains—like the Palamon in Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Knight’s Tale” (c.
1400) to whom Hughes alludes—locked away from her Cave of Abjection in his own, first by
language, then by Mitzi’s blindness to his feelings for her, then by her physical blindness, and
finally by the door of her bedroom chamber itself.

Like Svengali, Augustine is the incompetent or incomplete artist (enthralled by visual
beauty but unable to consistently create it himself), the corruptor of the female soul (hell-bent on
convincing Mitzi of God’s non-existence and ultimately doubly guilty because of his absence
from the Hitler-mesmerized Polly who has long depended on her uncle and seeks a male figure
to replace him), and an anti-priest responsible for unholy baptism. Svengali tells Trilby, “the cold
water shall trickle, trickle, trickle all the way down your beautiful white body to your beautiful
white feet until they turn green…. And people of all sorts, strangers, will stare at you through the
big plate-glass window” (du Maurier, Trilby: A Novel 128). Just as they have with du Maurier’s
monster, eyes play an important role in Hughes’s aesthetic life. They will also serve his
reparative vision.

19 Barrymore, from Beverly Hills, sends Hughes one of the most incisive letters in admiration of Hughes’s
High Wind. Barrymore writes, “I have this instant finished your amazing contribution to lasting Literature
“A High Wind in Jamaica” and feel impelled to write you about it . . . It is more terrifying than “The Turn of
the Screw” and more discerning than [Booth Tarkington’s] ‘Penrod’--and almost if not quite the only thing I
have ever read that reveals the Labyrinthian and potential monstrousness of a child’s mind before it
inhibits itself with a cognizance of the constabulary!!” (Letter to Richard Hughes). Hughes sought to quote
from this in promotional materials.

20 Wolff (and Augustine by extension) is compared to Chaucer’s Palamon (in “The Knight’s Tale”), who
pines in a tower, unable to be with the woman he loves (see Fox 283). This confined passion is a
recurring image across Hughes’s novels.
5.1.3.3 Reparation

All of this voyeuristic gazing is orchestrated by Hughes as a consummate voyeur-author writing for similarly voyeuristic readers. Without moralizing and with reparative aims, Hughes demonstrates the panoptic reach of social scrutiny. Augustine, of course, has begun the novel under a cloud of suspicion, responsible in some way for Rachel's death by drowning on the Marsh. In taking up the Svengali mask, Hughes is painting Augustine—and all of Western civilization by extension—with all of the racial and moral cultural registers that cling to this drowned or drowning abject figure who likewise causes others to drown. Such drowning is destructive, but it can also be reparative and regenerative. After all, it is Rachel's drowning that foreshadows the next novel's baptisms and eventually Mitzi's entrance into a healing spiritual life that can project her as a reparative figure for her world. The world looks at her voyeuristically, yet she, in her blindness, is able to look inwards and beyond—reparatively. R.P. Graves, summarizing Hughes's views, writes that the “Christian mystic, looking inwards, finds himself looking out upon landscapes of infinite width” (Richard 409). In a letter to agent Richard Gregson, Hughes reveals his overarching plans for Mitzi, stating that

as the years pass . . . she develops alongside the devotional powers of a Teresa of Avila . . . Teresa’s practical capacities in handling the affairs of her convent and Order. Thus in the latter days the “Blind Abbess” becomes a symbolic and pretty important figure in the anti-Nazi world . . . Her passive resistance to the regime is rocklike, and she only survives concentration-camps because in the last resort Hitler dare not crown her a martyr; but she exasperates sympathisers (including ultimately the American forces) by a refusal equally rocklike ever to lift a finger against it actively. (qtd. in Poole 234)

Thus, despite the Svengali-Augustine’s attempts to control her, she is ultimately the peaceful, conquering force.

5.1.4 The Invisible Man

The flip-side movie-monster mask (Hughes’s fourth of this novel), a counterpart to Svengali, is the cinematically coded Invisible Man. In an important sense, the Invisible Man that Hughes invokes in the same breath as Svengali is also differentiated from the mesmeric musician. While Svengali’s power as puppet master has limits, the Invisible Man can see
without being seen. His narrative course moves beyond any form of control, toward
disintegration, and finally into the reconciling feminine that sees him in spite of himself.

5.1.4.1 Abjection

While Mitzi can be construed as nothing but beautifully good, she epitomizes the
wretched abject. Her blindness and her family’s pride abject her. Yet in choosing to enter the
convent, she reparatively takes charge of her own abjection. Meanwhile, her romantic pursuers
(both unknown to her) fit a Gothic double bill as contemptibly abject monsters. Although
Augustine, living in 1923, can only know Wells’s 1897 edition of The Invisible Man, Hughes’s
readers would be quite familiar with James Whale’s sound-enhanced cinematic iteration, and
particularly with the Invisible Man’s uncanny voice. Isabella van Elferen writes that

[s]ometimes diegetic and nondiegetic levels of film sound seem to collide or clash.
These instances, in which film and viewers’ realities gradually overlap, provide
opportunities for cinematic ghosts to crawl out of the screen and nestle in the spectator’s
personal environment. The Invisible Man (James Whale, 1933) is an early example: the
main character in this film is not visible, but his voice can be heard, even if he is strictly
speaking ‘appearing on screen’. The visual hollowing out of a main character in a
medium whose origins lay in visual spectacle has an extremely uncanny effect,
especially when the void does have a clearly perceptible voice. (41)

It is this uncanny voice and demonic laugh, speaking as if within readers’ own heads, that
Hughes hangs on a seemingly off-hand reference within his text. The Invisible Man’s solipsistic
erasure conveys great power, yet there can be no doubt that such an empty figure is incapable
of fulfillment. Augustine’s love for Mitzi, like Wolff’s, is never natural and never wholesome. It is
a possessive obsession. Both Augustine and Wolff—like the Church Augustine condemns—are
Abjects seeking to appropriate Mitzi’s feminine fecundity. They want her body and seek to fill it
with their own tormented souls. Their repulsive yet powerful abjection seeks to turn Mitzi into a
vessel to be filled. Their contemptible, self-serving attachment treats Mitzi like the animated
glasses and loose bandages that make a hollow man visible to a cinematic audience, but which
can be cast off at will. Their “love” for Mitzi covers their own abject emptiness.
5.1.4.2 Performance

Performing the Invisible Man involves more than just disappearing. Claude Rains, starring as the fated, disembodied voice in James Whale’s masterpiece, ultimately becomes the watched man on screen, reversing Svengali’s mesmeric gaze as Whale (with the movie-goers who make his materiality possible) wills him to materialize in the film’s final scene. Augustine, like the tragically misguided Dr. Jack Griffin who has bleached his own blood, is (despite his aspirations to the contrary) the ultimate “watched watcher.”

Furthermore, Augustine (as has been intimated above)—as Invisible Man—is invisible only to Mitzi’s eyes, a status that dispels his supernatural aura: “Thus it was now Augustine’s turn to be watched unwitting—from the dormer so mysteriously unboarded—by the truly Invisible Man (that existence in the attics nobody knew about except Franz)” (Fox 255). In contrast to Augustine, Wolff is truly unknown and has ironic power as the sequestered voyeur. This cloak of invisibility translates into grave danger for both Augustine and Mitzi once their apparent closeness drives Wolff to madness and bloody thoughts of scripted, cruel—even ritualistic—murder. Yet the violent watcher Wolff suffers self-strangulation by his own rope, driven to it by his own insane hallucinations.

5.1.4.3 Reparation

Once again, Hughes leverages this innocuous moniker to establish his reparative intentions for a misguided—and potentially dangerous—love triangle. In adopting this Invisible-Man mask for Augustine and for Wolff, Hughes shows them as conjoined in their obsession, yet he also demonstrates the self-made features of abjection. While possessing the power of boundless presence and ironically mistaken for the God that Mitzi feels as Augustine walks silently beside her, the voyeur Augustine is ultimately a prisoner to his own powerful eyes, seeing what should not be seen (and unable to forget the images that can’t be unseen). In addition, Wolff’s sounds of self-destruction in the attic eventually give him away, drawing the blind, compassionate Mitzi to him while also embroiling her in the filth of his wretched psyche.
Of course, it is not Augustine’s fate to repair Mitzi’s life or Germany’s fate. His physical flight at the novel’s end—replete with imagery of suspension and confusion—21—and Mitzi’s entry into her convent sets them both on a new, reparative course, pointing toward solutions where none seem possible.

5.2 Monster Masks: The Wooden Shepherdess (1973)

Hughes’s final published novel was again twelve years in coming, and it signals a radical shift as Hughes—emboldened by the era’s changing mores—writes truth in ways he has previously felt unable to. This novel continues Augustine’s itinerant story while also building Hitler into a juggernaut. A second installment of The Human Predicament, the story begins precisely where the first leaves off, yet because of Hughes’s publishing lapse, it is necessary for him to re-establish pivotal events and characters from the first novel in order for 1973 readers to follow his 1961 narrative needs. In this novel Augustine continues his flight from responsibility, conflict, and unrequited love. After a trying and unplanned sea voyage to the United States, Augustine has secured a cabin in the Connecticut woods. During this time, he and a young girl named Ree become close companions. Augustine gradually comes to understand Ree’s growing sexual fixation with him. Simultaneously, and at least somewhat aware of the taboos surrounding Ree’s youth, he fends off her childish advances while pursuing his own sexual awakening, also unsuccessfully.

Ree’s innocence belies her upbringing: She is a member of a counter-cultural, circus-like Pack of variously aged and educated youths who throw “tin-roof parties” and mix promiscuously. Sadie, the only real local of the group and one of the oldest members, has been through law school and is also the worldly niece of an incest-minded uncle. Janie is from Scotland. Russell, 21 In running from the news that Mitzi is lost to him, Augustine enters the maze-like German countryside. First he enters a cottage with its walls “covered with horns . . . Those hundreds of antlers and horns . . . Almost wherever the horns left room on the walls there was a carved crucifix or a carved cuckoo-clock” (Fox 281). Then he sees the Danube “frozen solid in heaps. It was wild, yet utterly still. Huge blocks of ice had jostled each other and climbed on top of each other like elephants rutting and then got frozen in towering lumps . . . like a jig-saw puzzle glued in a heap helter-skelter so that now it could never be solved” (Fox 285).
Ree’s cousin, is a contortionist poet-politico—wise beyond his years. The more nondescript (and younger) Bella and Tony round out the group. A series of Prohibition-era adventures culminates in a mad car-chase, with Augustine aiming for roads the Pack has explored the previous day around a nearby lake. At the last minute, he intends to drive across the narrow dam, but Sadie, knowing the dangers of local features better than Augustine, grabs the wheel and steers the car into the water, where they are thrown free. Augustine, with Sadie and others from his Pack, then crosses into Canada, plagued by memories of his shoddy treatment of the young Ree. Finally, in the night, Sadie comes to his bed in his attic room through the door he has been unable to shut, but his lack of kindness toward her as they sleep together stems from the festering of Augustine’s guilt—for the Ree he has rejected, for the Sadie he has never desired, and for the Self he feels he has now thrown away with his own fetishized virginity.

Advents and Christmases frame the second half of the novel, which provides the wide-angle history of Hitler. The Munich authorities, certain that Hitler no longer poses a threat (considering the demise of his party in the Reichstag), “heaved a sigh of relief and turned him loose just before Christmas” (Wooden, Harper 167). The advent of Hitler, then, serves as the jumping off point for the second portion of the novel. But on Boxing Day, everything changes as Augustine’s sister Mary is thrown from her horse and breaks her neck, paralyzing her from the waist down. The novel concludes with Hitler’s apotheosis. At the instigation of Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Göring, heads of military organizations that seek to supplant Ernst Röhm’s SA, Hitler plans his final purge, the Night of the Long Knives. In dramatic fashion, he calls SA Gruppenführers together and has them killed or imprisoned to be executed later, while he ambushes the ailing Röhm in his hotel room at Weissee, ultimately having him shot in his prison cell.

Beaded together in this novel are three trauma-filled avuncular-niece relationships: the molesting repairman-"uncle" and Sadie, Augustine and Polly, and Hitler and Geli. Most poignant—and relevant for this chapter’s thesis—is Hughes’s explanation of Hitler’s sexual
relationship with his niece: “This sexy young niece was blood of his blood, so could perhaps in his solipsist mind be envisaged as merely a female organ budding on ‘him’—as forming with him a single hermaphrodite ‘Hitler,’ a two-sexed entity able to couple within itself like the garden snail” (Wooden 320). In all three of these uncle-niece situations there are awkward and ominous dynamics.

Along with these three is the less dysfunctional relationship between Uncle Otto and Mitzi. Among those against whom Hitler retaliates during the Night of the Long Knives is his former colonel from the Great War, Otto von Kessen, who is beaten to death with his own prosthetic leg. Yet this final pathetic scene is paired with Otto’s niece’s transition into the Carmelite order and the convent’s reparatively abject separateness. Mitzi’s blindness, only an emblem now of her spiritual shift, ironically keeps her in motion, her physical inertness translated to moving, mystic inertia. After hours alone in her freezing fortress, she finally lies down to sleep, yet it is in that moment that she is “bounced out of bed by a clapper that went off outside like a ton of knights in armour falling downstairs. It was half-past five, and her first Carmelite day had begun” (Wooden, Harper 139). In a significant presaging of what is to come (or perhaps what Hughes had in mind for his final volume), the naïve and abjectly cloistered “damsel” needs no army of knights to rescue her in this castle—her natural defenses have voluntarily fallen and she arises, in spite of her blindness, in new agency.

5.2.1 Frankenstein

A fifth abject, movie-monster mask emerges subtly from Hughes’s last novel. There is a direct relationship between Hughes’s use of Frankenstein imagery and his friend James Whale’s cinematic production in 1931. At the same time, Shepherdess emerged in the midst of the international horror over the Watergate scandal. Of course, by 1973, the Frankenstein figure had become indelibly imprinted on anglophone culture and spoke in code to the political context in which it was received. On March 29, President Nixon brought the last American troops home from Vietnam. On April 6, John Dean began cooperating with U.S. federal prosecutors. On April
4, Hughes celebrated the publication of *The Wooden Shepherdess* (1973) with his friends at the artist Teddy Wolfe’s house. Scavenged from history and ripped from the headlines, this last published novel was, in every sense, a composite creation. Not only was Hughes’s construction of the multi-part Human Predicament narrative a process of stitching together sometimes asymmetrical and conflicting accounts, but the publication of his masterpiece would be a process of starts and stops, a rending of the whole fabric in order to publish and distribute it in piecemeal fashion rather than in its entirety.

### 5.2.1.1 Abjection

Considering the contexts of its inspiration, creation, and reception, *The Wooden Shepherdess* is a novel of global abjection. Elizabeth Janeway, who wrote one of the novel’s few enthusiastically favorable reviews for the *New York Times*, appears to understand its import within the Watergate world. After receiving a letter of appreciation from the author for her insights, she responds, “Not only does your work mean a great deal to me, but its grasp on the nature & workings of power is terribly pertinent to the American situation today” (Letter to Richard Hughes [1 Oct. 1973]). Her review also highlights what it means “to feel the uneasiness that haunts wanderers in alien worlds, unsure of the meaning of gestures or the workings of causality itself” (“Sequel”). Even her review’s subtitle (“A Novel Full of Children and Hitler”) points to a much broader perspective that includes all of Hughes’s previous work and notes the discordant clash of its recurring themes.\(^{22}\)

The opening scene of Hughes’s novel presents a child (Ree) in an idyllic, waterside scene. She is awkwardly intimate with an older male stranger whose head bears a jagged scar:

> “What a mean scar! How come?” the girl asked curiously, feeling the back of his head none-too-gently with her fingers.

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\(^{22}\) Hughes was intimately involved in the designs of his novels’ dust jackets. While he didn’t create the original British jacket for *Shepherdess*, it captures his juxtaposition of a young girl in an idyllic scene, flanked by a leering Hitler face encoded artistically into the liminal woods behind her. Yet Hitler’s face is also confronted in those shadowy woods by Mitzi’s piercing profile. The cover thus captures Hughes’s interlaced stories (see *Wooden Shepherdess*, Chatto & Windus [1973]).
You couldn’t quite call her a child—but certainly not a grown-up.... Like him, she was stretched on the rock chin-on-knuckles: wide blue eyes gazed out of sunburn and freckles straight into his, so close he could feel her breath on his cheek. You couldn’t quite call her a child ... and he stirred on the hard stone, withdrawing a little—but then settled back on the same spot exactly, for anywhere else was too hot to touch. (Wooden, Harper 3)

Perhaps only subconsciously, this imagery evokes an archetypal moment in James Whale’s Frankenstein (1931), a critical scene when the film’s creature truly becomes the monster: a pregnant juncture at which the ugly-yet-innocent creature interacts with a beatific young girl (named Maria) beside a bucolic lake. The creature is delighted by the flowers Maria gives him, and he imitates her by tossing them into the water. He then sees that he has exhausted his supply: He picks her up, cradles her lovingly as she resists, and throws her gently into the lake, where she drowns. From this point forward Frankenstein is truly a cinematic term of terror, a threat to innocence.

5.2.1.2 Performance

As with the other personae Hughes takes up, the Frankenstein mask is therapeutically infused for him personally and for the post-Vietnam, Watergate-era social imaginary to which he speaks. Hughes’s most compelling reference to the therapeutic power of performance comes as an ironic remark about the need for Americans to let off steam after only belatedly engaging in the Great War. Augustine’s main intellectual sounding-board among the Pack, Russell, surmises that Prohibition was merely the natural result of not having enough war to fight: “If Russell was right, thought Augustine, the pundits would call this whole Prohibition behaviour-pattern ‘Play Therapy’” (Wooden, Harper 77). Hughes’s metempsychotic performances, then, are play therapy in search of reparation.

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23 A nearly contemporary example of a Frankenstein iteration within popular culture that reproduces this cinematic moment comes in the made-for-television movie The Incredible Hulk (1977), in which the Frankenstein-coded Bill Bixby, after his monstrous transformation, approaches a girl at lakeside. As she flees, she falls into the lake and is only saved by the branch that this Hulk manages to throw her.

24 In another contemporary reference, Hughes speaks of his children’s stories to evacuees as “Play-Therapy” in the introduction her wrote—just days before his death—to the collection of those stories.
In playing Frankenstein, the prototypical Gothic monster, Augustine, too, is a scarred creature—his initial agency subordinated to another’s and his origins clouded in suspicion. While he cannot claim innocence, since he is susceptible to the same moral frailties as any human, his traumas (written clearly in his flesh) have shaped him. Hughes constructs this last novel without knowing he would never complete another. As social and sexual mores have shifted, his representations of his own experiences—never wholly autobiographical, but certainly inflected by his own traumas—are more personally charged. Through R.P. Graves’s lengthy biography *Richard Hughes*, it is clear that, to some degree, Augustine’s “monstered” status and subsequent failures are Hughes’s projection of himself. Augustine’s life is play therapy for Hughes, and the lakeside scene and close relationship with Ree cited above reflect Hughes’s real-life friendship with Pamela Bianco, her intense romantic feelings for him, his necessary realignment of that relationship, and her subsequent, prolonged mental illness. Frankenstein’s abjection and the close identification and intimate connection it demands, is explained by Susan Hitchcock in *Frankenstein: A Cultural History* (2015):

This is our monster. This is the monster we know so well, the monster we have taken into our hearts and lives, the monster that makes us tremble and cheer, the monster we fear, we seek, and we have become. This is the monster made by man. This is the monster called by his creator’s name, if named at all. This is the monster known as Frankenstein. (4)

There can be little doubt that Hughes is projecting himself as a monster in recognition of his own guilt, only gradually assuaged over the intervening fifty years. This performance is not an exercise in atonement. Instead, it is a real attempt to demonstrate reparative strategies that include self-forgiveness.

Apart from the scars that signal Frankenstein’s traumas (those done to him and by him), Frankenstein is the original composite man. In cinematic depictions he is the prototypical cyborg with trademark electrodes. Furthermore, Frankenstein is a combination of multiple human
called *The Wonder-Dog* (1977). He was contemplating the meaning of narrative therapy for others even in the midst of his own struggle with leukemia.
beings while also being a combination—in the cultural imaginary—of the media that have been used to represent him. Throughout *The Wooden Shepherdess* (a title which hints at a part-human, part-non-human assemblage), juxtapositions of composite bodies, partly assembled machines, and an unnatural, broken marriage between the traditional and the modern abound and perform Frankenstein’s hybridity. In flashback, readers are reminded of a female child merged unnaturally with a man (the death image from Fox’s inauspicious opening, when Augustine carries the drowned Rachel over his shoulder), while alongside the small, disused, Connecticut church (the “wooden shepherdess” of the novel’s title), “half buried in trees sits an ancient and gaunt Tin Lizzie (a T-model Ford) without any engine” (*Wooden*, Harper 34). These images recall Augustine’s own brokenness to mind for an audience that has been removed from him by more than five decades diegetically and a decade practically.

Yet it is the novel’s composite human being, part human and part machine—a body brought back to life—that hints at Hughes’s further utilization of the Frankenstein persona. Uncle Otto von Kessen (who has lost a leg in the Great War) returns in this novel with a dangerous infection in his mutilated leg: bone fragments from his hip have been dislodged and must be removed. The scene of his treatment is disconcerting to all: His fevered mind is in peril of disclosing closely held secrets about Germany’s secret arms build-up and surreptitious military training—both in violation of Versailles. Franz (Otto’s nephew, Mitzi’s brother, and Augustine’s nationalist cousin) is also coded as a scarred Frankenstein figure: “The surgeon looked at the angry young fellow in silence: nor was it easy to tell what the Great Man was thinking because of his hooded eyes and a face criss-crossed with duelling scars. But then he went on to explain . . .” (*Wooden*, Harper 148). Here, it seems, creating Frankenstein is a real solution for a practical problem:

25 “When at last . . . Augustine did lift the morsel off his shoulder, he found that it had stiffened. This had ceased to be ‘child’ at all: it was total cadaver now. It had taken into its soft contours the exact mould of the shoulder over which it had been doubled and it had set like that—into a matrix of him. If (which God forbid) he had put it on again it would have fitted” (*Fox* 18). This gory detail is emblematic of Hughes’s vision of “putting on” the Other in order to experience—and repair—trauma vicariously.
Weeping tears of rage, Franz hurried back to the patient's room. There he found an electric cable already plugged into the wall and pink rubber tubes running under the bedclothes. Then they switched the contraption on; and the normal hospital smell of carbolic and ether was drowned in the smell of electric sparks. But surely the coil must be wrongly adjusted to make such a clatter? The noise was frightful, preventing you hearing one single sentence the patient uttered…. (Wooden, Harper 148)

Hooked up to this machine, Otto's leaky conscience is drowned out by mechanical noise. Yet this half-man's composite nature will eventually be his undoing.

Hughes has designed Otto's Frankenstein mask with care. After receiving expert feedback on his choice of treatment for the already-composite Otto, Hughes, who spends significant moments contemplating Otto's bodily modification (his grotesqueness in a claustrophobic tower with an oversized typewriter, the uncanny lingering sensations of Otto's phantom appendage, and his ultimate death as he is beaten with his own prosthetic), clearly sees the combination of Otto's modified body and the electric sparks of his treatment as appropriately coupled—all signifiers of Gothic-modern monstrousness, an uncomfortable hybridity of traditional (organic) and modern (machine).

In addition, there is much evidence elsewhere of Hughes's grappling with modified bodies. The nameplate image Hughes created for himself (apparently in partnership with Nancy Nicholson) at the front of his “private” steerage-passenger diary portrays Hughes with a pirate

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26 In a letter to orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Le Vay, Hughes remarks that “the best thing seemed to be to prepare some sort of cokshy draft of the episode I wanted help on, and send it to you as something to shoot down—for I'm sure it is full of howlers. On the medical side it is based on my own recollections of an army hospital in 1918 . . . So far as I remember, the ozone treatment (I had it myself) was not particularly noisy: which is why I hint the machine had been deliberately monkeyed with” (Letter to David Le Vay [8 June 1967]). Le Vay replies, “You've hit off the treatment of the period very well, as far as I can judge, and you are wise to concentrate on the stump and not the artificial limb as the latter would be impossible to check accurately now” (Letter to Richard Hughes [14 June 1967]). A follow-up (24 July 1967) from Le Vay to Hughes notes Hughes's quest for “technical accuracy.”

27 A letter from Nancy Nicholson (the wife of Robert Graves) explains her reason for returning a check as payment for what presumably is this bookplate: "I am not under any circumstances called Graves (the law of can't help) & no I can't cash it" (Letter to Richard Hughes [25 Feb. 1920]).
Fig. 5. Nancy Nicholson, *Richard Hughes*, c. 1919-1920, bookplate, ink on paper, Lilly Library.
body modified by a pegleg (see Figure 5). In addition, Hughes has already emphasized Augustine’s ambivalent and abject attraction to Mitzi’s blindness in these terms:

Augustine this morning—though he would not admit it—was really in two minds about Mitzi. His heart might be warmed by the generous fires of love but the pit of his stomach had its sinking moments, its moments of chill. He loved Mitzi and Mitzi only and would love Mitzi for ever—and even more so for her blindness! Yet, to be coupled till death did them part with a blind girl was a bit like. . . like entering a three-legged race with a partner who has only one leg. (Fox 241-42)

There is a pattern for Hughes, across his wide body of work, for highlighting mutilated bodies and for identifying personally with such bodily modification. It is by this mutilated abjection that he therapeutically performs the Other.

5.2.1.3 Reparation

It is helpful, then, to consider Hughes’s motivations in using this Gothic trope as a part of his regime for reparation. Hughes’s most surprising use of the modified body in Shepherdess appears after Mary’s riding accident, the moment she begins to leave her body behind and take on a new nature as a composite woman. Pushed in a wheelchair after losing the use of her legs, she found herself suddenly out in the open air loosed on the outside world like a newborn babe from the womb, while everything kept on changing aspect and shifting—while statues and even trees walked across the distant scene, then totally vanished from sight. Firmly she told herself it was she who was moving while they stayed still; but even so this bodiless bodily motion beyond control of her will had made her so deathly afraid that at last she couldn’t control her panic. (Wooden, Harper 218)

Without any clear analog for this event in Hughes’s own life, this catastrophe is more than mere projection of his own traumas. Instead, it is a contemplation of female abjection in perhaps its most heart-rending form: This is the broken mother. Ultimately, Mary accepts the chair as a part of her own body and makes rapid improvement. Hers is a figure that counters the futility of Captain Jonsen of High Wind, who can only be hanged grotesquely in a chair after his failed attempt at suicide. Most poignantly, it is Mary’s inability to “turn her head in its padded iron collar” that hints at the Frankenstein form (Wooden, Harper 218).
Nevertheless, this is not where the story ends. Mary is already a mother, but it would seem that she has now lost the ability to raise her two daughters and can surely not have another child—except that she “miraculously” becomes pregnant. From Mary’s broken body (violated by her M.P. husband Gilbert in her sleep) comes new life, a son and heir to Mellton Chase. While this could obviously and rightly be taken as an additional trauma, Mary is excited at this new chapter of her life, mainly because she believes it shows that Gilbert still desires her—a reparative possibility that clearly remains to be seen, considering Gilbert’s sexual vacillations. Furthermore, after adjusting to her newly composite body and taking again to the outdoors, Mary responds to her disability with an atypical ecstasy—an ecstasy that she realizes will eventually fade yet which holds out an unexpected hope:

[O]nce she had thus far broken her old corporeal bounds soon even these lawns and bushes—these gardens, as far as the eye could see. . . . In short, it wasn’t so many months since ‘every inch from the crown of Mary’s head to the tips of Mary’s toes’ had been Mary’s limits, but now every inch from the crown of Mary’s head to the tips of Mary’s trees rejoiced at being alive. (Wooden, Harper 219)

Birth, re-birth, and particularly the holy birth that Christmas represents within Western culture, is an ironic refrain throughout this novel. For example, although it is August in Connecticut, Augustine “tr[eads] on the gas and start[s] a Christmas carol” during his high-speed chase with the police (Wooden, Harper 94). Within the broader cultural imaginary, Christmas simultaneously signifies inward reflection and festive release. Of course, Mary’s miraculous birth of a son is about as close as Hughes comes to tipping his hand.

Just as miraculous births such as that of a “Christus Kind” can radically shift a narrative (Wooden, Harper 141), so can the birth of an abomination, which Frankenstein’s monster often signifies. In order to come to terms with the simple efficiency involved in atrocity (the realization of which is also an important step toward reparation), Hughes documents the “birth” of Hitler’s absolute power in a pivotal, historical episode. To ensure the topographical accuracy of this seismic event, Hughes writes to Peter Strausfeld, the Cologne-born, expressionist, woodcut-
movie poster artist. Hughes encloses his fictional draft of a fateful June 29, 1934, meeting uniting Hitler, Hermann Göring, and Joseph Goebbels at Bad Godesberg in order to launch the Night of the Long Knives. A young S.A. conscript named Sigismund (whose name is later changed to Ernst) is viewing Hitler’s conference there as if viewing a cinematic scene on the rain-glazed glass, yet it is a “dumbshow” movie without subtitles, a projection that only allows Sigi to glimpse the Führer’s face. “The gaze of a man bewitched: vague, shifty, glassy, settling nowhere and seeing nothing” (encl. in Letter to Richard Hughes [20 Mar. 1971] 4).

Hughes further constructs the ironic June scene that follows with Christmas in mind. Sigi finally lies down to sleep in his bunk on the eve of Hitler’s massacre of Sigi’s S.A. comrades: “Somewhere a baby was crying. ‘Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!’ thought Sigi. All good Germans could slumber in safety, now they were under the spread of their Führer’s wings: protected from Frenchmen, Marxists and Jews and everything else which goes bump in the night…” (encl. in Letter to Richard Hughes [20 Mar. 1971] 7). This Bad Godesberg scene of Hitler’s fateful Macbeth-like deal with the devil has thus become a ghost story of the new Germany, with its “dark living figures inside, as faint and as insubstantial as ghosts” (Wooden, Harper 349). On one hand is the ghoulish, flesh-devouring Führer, and on the other are the ghosts of the political rivals and the Jews he seeks to demonize and utterly destroy. Hughes titles this last movement of his last novel “Stille Nacht,” as if to memorialize the portentousness of all miraculous births, whether for good or for evil. Reparation, too, is always a forked path and its promises are often performed with forked tongues.

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28 An explanation of Strausfeld’s background and expertise can be found under “Peter Strausfeld” at the University of Brighton website. Not only is Strausfeld familiar with German topography, but he is an expert in the period’s cinematographic culture, which Hughes consistently seeks to leverage.

29 Strausfeld helps Hughes adjust this to “an old silent movie” (Wooden, Harper 350), since German sound movies have always been dubbed rather than subtitled.

30 For his final published version, Hughes changes the Stormtrooper’s name from Sigi to the more serious “Ernst” (it’s literal meaning in German is “serious”) and colors in even more potent religious imagery, sharpening his Gothic tone for an English-speaking audience familiar with the traditional Scottish prayer: “‘From ghosties and ghoulies’ (as we would say), ‘and everything else which goes bump in the night’” (Wooden, Harper 354). The original, often-quoted Scottish prayer can be found at D.L. Ashliman’s “Things That Go Bump in the Night.”
5.2.2 The Zombie

The last of the metensomatotic personae that Hughes uses in his novels is one that brings his work full circle. While the zombie figure is kin to the Duppy and also has its origins in the cultural imaginary of the Afro-Caribbean world, Hughes's association of the zombie figure with Augustine's obsessive love for Mitzi in Germany, a mania juxtaposed in Shepherdess with Polly's obsessive love for Hitler, marks Hughes's attunement to a zombie-culture that has defined the movements of his lifetime. During Hughes's production of this last novel, the Zombie had again emerged during the Vietnam conflict and in the aftermath of popular-culture depictions like George Romero's The Night of the Living Dead (1968).

5.2.2.1 Abjection

Franz Fanon, above all, has popularized the nature of the zombie-Abject in his The Wretched of the Earth (1961). Asserting postcolonial agency for the colonized, he writes: "Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers . . . The supernatural, magical powers reveal themselves as essentially personal; the settler's powers are infinitely shrunken, stamped with their alien origin. We no longer really need to fight against them since what counts is the frightening enemy created by myths" (56). At the same time, Fanon seems to acknowledge that his fellow Africans have allowed European settlers to appropriate the zombie form, lulling or frightening the colonized into submission. For Hughes, the German people, too (and the British and Americans who have actively or passively enabled them), are contemptibly abject in their complicit acquiescence to Hitler's power. Clearly contemptible yet also wretched and self-abasing, this comprehensive abjection is a focal point of Hughes's planned Human Predicament series. Had he been capable of writing faster, Hughes would have stretched the saga of Augustine into a third and perhaps even a fourth novel. From the twelve chapters Hughes completed of an additional volume, it is clear that Hughes intended to build on Shepherdess's eerie evocations of zombie abjection.
First, Hughes uses the zombie as shorthand for the German people. After an exchange with Augustine regarding the building of a new German army, his cousin Franz declares, with unintended irony, that Uncle Otto—who has been involved in extra-Versailles military planning—“forgets that unless a nation has a living soul to dwell in the Army as its body, even an Army is nothing! In present-day Germany an ‘Army’ would be a mere soulless zombie . . .” (Fox 174). In particular, Roger Luckhurst explains the cultural affinities between zombism and Nazism:

The zombie Nazi conflates two unqualified mass evils. It stays away from the ‘living dead’ of their starved and tortured victims, but evokes them by inversion, switching victims for perpetrators. Viewers are morally freed twice over to enjoy the spectacle of (re-)killing. Nazis, after all, come in masses too. Totalitarianism, in Hannah Arendt’s view, was a phenomenon of the masses rather than a specific class fraction, and German fascism answered a longing for ‘self-abandonment into the mass’. Zombification becomes a post-war metaphor for this willed abandonment of the will under the Mesmeric gaze of a Führer who commands the Volk to ever more exorbitant acts of violence. (116)

The zombie, then, is a cautionary figure within Hughes’s work. It possesses agency, but only as it is connected rhizomatically to a mass. While the mass (such as that of the General Strikers of 1926) must not be underappreciated or disregarded, it is also capable of unthinkable mass-trauma.

Secondly, Hughes uses the zombie figure ironically—as shorthand for the all-consuming power of love (or infatuation). Augustine himself instantly becomes just such a soulless body when he hears news of Mitzi’s entry into a life of solitude. He, in imitation of his mistaken conception of her as a body over which the Church—or he himself—might pull the strings, is “a walking zombie, with no mind for things to make any impression on” (Fox 341). Here Hughes recognizes that zombism forecloses agency. Yet Mitzi’s “zombism” is differentiated here from the Nazis’ nationalistic manipulation. Mitzi is a zombie only in Augustine’s eyes. In fact, she is a golem under her own control, a voluntary member of a contemplative community that is designed to counteract the general zombism within German society. Her self-denial in temporary solitude is a marked contrast to Augustine’s solipsism. He believes he is free of entanglements but becomes a zombie when Mitzi is “taken from him.” In contrast, Mitzi—
previously imprisoned in her blindness—now finds liberation and reparation through the constant, close companionship of her spiritual community.

Finally, along with the power of the zombie in the mass, Hughes holds out this figure as an emblem of the post-Cartesian world. Within Hughes’s last work on the Human Predicament narrative, a fragment published as a sort of prosthetic for a second edition of *The Wooden Shepherdess* and a coda for the Hughes’s plans as a whole, the zombie figure emerges as a radical shift for the Polly who has been Augustine’s focus from the beginning of *Fox*. Already, in *Shepherdess*, Hughes has shown readers her transformation into the ultimate Tourist-Pilgrim: She has essentially become like Augustine in her wanderings and her obsessions, seeking to meet Hitler and visit his fetishized “Holy Places” at the cost of her own finishing-school education in Switzerland. Subsequently, her uncle and his friend Jeremy try to make sense of this transformation in Polly and her school-friend Janey (who has also been briefly introduced as a doppelgänger child, reflecting Polly, in *Fox’s* opening pages):

“I don’t quite get it,” said Jeremy: “What makes you feel like that about him? You aren’t German yourself.”

Helplessly Janey turned an imploring look on Polly. “You can’t be in Germany twenty minutes without,” said Polly abruptly: “You’ll see for yourself.”

“You ‘Chameleon Law’ again!” said Jeremy *sotto voce*.

“You ought to see Polly’s room,” said Augustine accusingly: “Portraits of Hitler all over the walls.”

But Polly was quite unabashed. “One photo is signed!” she exclaimed in triumph. (*Wooden [2000] 311*).

Polly, from *Fox’s* opening pages, has been depicted as an innocent child. By the third novel, Hughes has turned her into a zombie. In bringing Nazism home, Hughes is demonstrating that Germany’s identity is not the heart of the problem. As a female who is eager to offer her sexual and reproductive agency to the Führer, Polly emphasizes Hitler’s abjection (and attraction) as her own abjection grows.

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31 See Margarita Georgieva’s *The Gothic Child* (2011) for deeper analysis of the way portrayals of the evil child have developed over the past three centuries.
5.2.2.2 Performance

Performing the zombie takes numerous forms across the Human Predicament novels: Hughes wears this mask not to celebrate zombie power but to help others recognize it. Just as the S.A.’s Röhm has become the unwitting stooge of the Hitler he thought he could control, Polly has become Hitler’s pawn (echoing her earlier fawning over Augustine). Throughout Shepherdess Hughes paints poignant examples of mass zombification among a culturally-relieved and energized German people who believe they have found their true collective identity in this one man.\(^{32}\) In turn, Polly has also become the idol of her younger siblings, little doubles of her who climb onto her bed in the morning just as she, as a toddler, has climbed onto Augustine’s. The zombie effect is spreading, virus-like. Hughes, perhaps influenced by Romero here, is single-minded in his identification of the zombie as a malign mass-influence that threatens humanity. This helps to explain his choice to set aside all other novel-writing for his thirty-year composition of Hitler’s story.

Hughes’s narrative structure frames the thralldom of contemporary zombies in religious terms. The last scene of Hughes’s final, unpublished chapters (revealing Polly’s deeply fanatical fervor) is intentionally parallel to Shepherdess’s final scene (revealing Mitzi’s deeply devotional peace). Furthermore, just as Augustine has locked his gaze on the moon and its barren ridges in Fox, Polly sees the moon in Hughes’s coda chapters as a sign of Hitler’s apotheosis and her own growing significance in his light. Mitzi, parallel to Polly, is able to resist such bedazzlement in Shepherdess’s original last scene precisely because of her visionary blindness. While Mitzi, alone in her chamber (once again within the Cave of Abjection), has contemplated God’s looking into the darkness of the soul, Polly (in the final passage Hughes wrote for The Human Predicament) looks solely toward the moon for meaning within a moral vacuum:

The light was so bright that her eyes were beginning to water. She wiped it away with her hand because now she felt sure she could read in that very light the answers to all

\(^{32}\) With their “lightning war,” the Nazis demonstrated their nature as archetypal “zoombies” (to co-opt Botting’s neologism), departing from the lumbering, lurching undead of early zombie fiction and movies.
those ultimate questions she’d tried to read in the face of Hitler. The answers which no philosopher—not since the Dawn of Time—has been able to put into words, she could read them all now in the face of the moon: what the Universe meant, and why Polly existed. . . . Even if (like other sages) she couldn’t yet quite put the Answers she brimmed with in words, that could wait till tomorrow: already tonight she was greater and wiser than anyone else in the World! (Wooden [2000] 418)

The swelling of this illusion of greatness, so reminiscent of Emily’s swelling ego in High Wind as she contemplates whether or not she is actually God, is a fitting finale for an always unfinished novel, and the always incomplete body of Hughes’s work. Polly and Mitzi can both be seen as self-abasing abjects. Yet it is in their differences that the hope for a non-tragic sequel can be discerned.

5.2.2.3 Reparation

Despite Hughes’s intentions as a writer of reparation, his novels were misunderstood—and often mischaracterized—within the German press. The German people were eager to display a “cheerful,” clean break with the poisonous ideologies of the past. Yet their efforts to project a different face to the world were often accompanied by counterproductive German protests regarding unfairly monstrous depictions, and Hughes’s representation of the abject Hitler in particular. In a letter dated December 15, 1963, Hughes thanks German critic Helene Henze for her review of Fox:

Frankly, I know of no other critique in any language which shows a fuller grasp of the book and of its underlying intentions so well as its faults . . . and it is even more remarkable still that you were able to be so just to it, in spite of your involvement with much of its subject-matter, instead of crying “Dracula” with Herr Enzensberger33 and the rest.

A novelist—even a historical novelist—has to set himself to eschew entirely the historian’s hindsight: he has to write about events and people as he thinks they

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33 The controversy over Hughes’s depictions spilled over to deliberations for the prestigious Prix Formentor for 1962, when Hughes’s novel was on the shortlist. Hughes’s main German critic, Hans Enzensberger (who had himself been a part of the Hitler Youth yet claimed that his associations were superficial) opposed Hughes’s characterizations of the German people. Bayley, exposing his own subtle and persistent opposition to Hughes’s work, appears sympathetic to the views of that German delegation (who actually threatened to walk out if Hughes’s novel was selected). Furthermore, Bayley’s characterization (see “Make Mine”) that “most of the Continental jurors” shared this view is not supported by Hughes’s own understanding of the situation, based on his information from other witnesses on the panel. Furthermore, Enzensberger had the power to block Hughes’s book in Germany (see Green’s letters to Hughes on 2 Jan. 1961 and 6 Jan. 1961 regarding negotiations with German publisher Suhrkamp, Enzensberger’s firm, demonstrating Enzensberger’s ability to block publication).
appeared at that time: he has to attempt to re-live a particular moment in the way it was lived at that time, when the future was wholly unknown and unguessed. But this “forgetting the future” is hard enough for the writer, and I quite see that for the German reader where Hitler is concerned it must still be impossible, even nearly twenty years after his death. (Letter to Helene Henze [15 Dec. 1963])

Hughes, in “forgetting the future” as a writer of historical novels, is by no means under the illusion that readers will or that they should. He assumes that all readers of the Human Predicament novels will—and should—be haunted by what they remember of the zombie: of human complicity with evil, including the complicity that has transpired in the decades since Hitler’s rise and fall. The faces of Auschwitz and Dachau are forever floating above, behind, or superimposed over the scenes of the Human Predicament novels, crafted during the realignments and reinventions of the Cold War. Abjection, for Hughes, is the demonization and evil that have already entered in (not something that can be kept out), while reparation is merely the understanding that the future can be—but will not inevitably be—different.

Like Gilbert’s disturbing impregnation of his wife without her knowledge, trauma is a violation that has already happened often without our knowing it, it is sometimes inexplicable, and it is quickly incorporated into society’s narratives as if moving on will erase it. Reparative readings must remind us that truth, change, and forgiveness are not inexorable, while physical entropy and the passage of memory-killing time are. While these reparative readings of Hughes’s novels hold out hope for the non-tragic sequel, they also seek to pay homage and perform life-affirming vigilance to traumas that must not be erased.

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34 Hughes, in ghostwriting the screenplay for The Divided Heart (1954), is finally able to grapple with Auschwitz to some extent, but it is surmised that he intended to address the Holocaust head-on in later installments of The Human Predicament. The research he conducted (the books he ordered from various libraries) testifies to his intense focus on the subject.
CHAPTER 6: EPILOGUE

“A RECESS OF THE CAVE”—AESTHETIC OF ABJECTION

“Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did.” (Sedgwick 146)

“It is the task of the enlightened not only to ascend to learning and to see the good but to be willing to descend again to those prisoners and to share their troubles and their honors, whether they are worth having or not. And this they must do, even with the prospect of death.” (Plato, paraphrased for Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and performed by Orson Welles)

“For in the Cave of Teiriwch / That scarce holds a sheep, / Where plovers and rock-conies / And wild / things sleep, / A woman lived for ninety years / On bilberries and moss / And lizards and small creeping things, / And carved herself a cross.”

Richard Hughes, “The Rolling Saint”

This study has sought to demonstrate that the short fiction, poems, novels, and plays of Richard Hughes consistently frame the Stranger-Abject to address therapeutically the social, emotional, and historical traumas that haunt modernity and to trouble hegemonic norms. In particular, Hughes’s Gothic-modern contributions together constitute an unrecognized contrapuntal voice within the modernist literary milieu, a voice that seeks historical reparation. Hughes’s desire for reparation—in his promotion of “fiction as truth”—emerges distinctly from his representations of trauma. While Derrida would assert that a quest for truth is, by nature, quixotic (occluding the always already corrupted means and intentions of truth-seeking individuals and institutions), Hughes exhibits a faith that the truth-seeking process itself is therapeutic. Whereas Derrida only diagnoses the spectral hauntedness of a human society that seeks to move beyond history, Hughes provides specific means for individuals and the society they comprise to address specific injuries: by embracing the Stranger in his short fiction, remembering death in his poetry, and performing the Abject in his novels. Hughes’s representations are inspired by his own personal trauma, yet their intended effect is to inspire affective responses in readers, prompting them to experience trauma vicariously as a means for
therapeutic and reparative redress. In particular, Hughes returns repeatedly to the abject female form—sometimes a child and other times an elderly woman—that is cast away into a Cave of Abjection. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that Hughes recognizes that relegating these female forms to that Cave is merely reinscribing historical failures. To move beyond this vicious cycle, he also portrays women and men together—co-equally abjected—in circumstances that trigger the mechanisms both of horror and of healing.

6.1 The Cave of Abjection: Agency, Limitation, Aesthetics

Deborah Caslav Covino, in “Abject Criticism” (2000), emphasizes the human partnership that dwells always already in the Cave of Abjection. While Covino affirms the female potency that men have long cast off or sought to mediate, she also emphasizes a gender-inclusive, shared trauma. She acknowledges female suffering and persecution while also “prompt[ing] men to accept their relationship to an abject body, and to the abject bodies of others, to crawl into the cave of abjection with their mortal sisters.” Somewhat in tension with proposed versions of a new feminist aesthetic (Patricia Yaeger’s “sublime maternal power” and Mary Russo’s “grotesque prodigiosity”), Covino suggests instead a new abject aesthetic that emphasizes the shared fate of the human body, whether male or female. Borrowing Russo’s associations between the female body and the earth, Covino calls the expelled state a “cave of abjection,” but according to Covino’s new aesthetic, male and female must be fellow Cave-dwellers. Covino thus demonstrates “how it may be possible to legitimize as an interpretive option the body as natural wasteland” and asserts that “[o]nly then can we reside in the cave of abjection as subjects fully aware of the limitation that may bind us together.” This limitation—central to literature in general and treated in Hughes’s stories, poems, novels, stage plays and radio dramas—is the inexorable putrefaction of the human body in the tomb, full stop.

Ever mindful of this limitation, Richard Hughes offers an analogous assessment of Cave-life, highlighting the Cave as a liminal and transformational space where corporate humanity—of all gendered identities—must confront the dead body, as well as the death of
social ideals. For Hughes, the Cave (or another similarly enclosed space) is a place of transgression and stands as a vital site of horror and trauma—but also one of transformation and reparation. While the Cave is not always a literal recess in stone, it provides a simulated burial. As we have seen, for the children in *High Wind*, the Cave is first the abject space beneath Ferndale, a shared confinement with their Black servants during a violent hurricane, but it morphs into the hold of the pirate ship and, for Emily, the captain’s cabin where she commits foul murder. For *In Hazard*’s Dick Watchett and Ao Ling, it is their imprisonment aboard a sinking ship. For *Fox*’s and *Shepherdess*’s Mitzi, it is a darkened convent cell for her darkened eyes. The Cave in every instance, whether on sea or land, is a site for cast-offs that emblematizes the mortal fate of every human body. In these examples from Hughes’s novels, the author continues to project an aesthetic that forms in his short stories as an embrace of the Stranger in his Cave and in his poems as a re-membering of death in the tomb.

In one sense, Hughes’s view of the Cave leans more toward folklore than toward philosophy. Plato, in his well-known “Allegory of the Cave,” asserts that real life lies beyond a proverbial pit that is populated with chained humanity, the darkened world that willfully excludes itself from “truer” realities, instead choosing mere shadows cast by firelight on the wall of their existential prison. For their part, scholars of the feminist Gothic have noted the preponderance of cave imagery within Gothic storytelling as a means by which women are abjected and buried alive in a Cave of society’s own making.¹ But where Plato asserts that the Cave is illusion, scholars of the feminist Gothic, and particularly those whose scholarly discourse is shaped by

¹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) states, “a cave is—as Freud pointed out—a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred. To this shrine the initiate comes to hear the voices of darkness, the wisdom of inwardness” (93). For other scholarly discussions see Barbara Creed’s *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) and Andrew Mangham’s “Buried Alive: The Gothic Awakening of Taphephobia” (2010). Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783), Rider Haggard’s *She* (1886), and Edgar Allan Poe’s “Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) are prominent examples across the Gothic genre of a female trapped in a living tomb. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864), Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), and Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye* (1988) also center on the experiences of space-bound females, although in a redefined Cave-space. Finally, Hannah Crafts’s nineteenth-century *Bondwoman’s Narrative* (finally published in 2002) extends this “encavement” into the African-American Gothic. This trend is echoed in the contemporary film *Antebellum* (2020).
discussions of the Abject, assert that it is society that has created a fantasy by abjecting the stuff of their nightmares into a cordoned-off realm, a very real Cave of trauma and suffering in which society seeks to sequester abjected elements such as the fecund female, the mutilated body, and the racial Other. While Plato tags the Cave as “illusion,” the outcast and downcast inhabitants of the Cave understand their Cave of Abjection as the truth: the reality they unavoidably share with the corporate humanity that has desperately sought to expel them. By using the Cave-space across his diverse texts, Hughes acknowledges the marginalized while also expressing the tensions that exist between those residing inside and those who pretend to remain outside that space. In pointing toward reparation, then, Hughes’s narratives nudge people closer together, inviting male hold-outs to “crawl into the cave of abjection with their mortal sisters,” as well as the mortal brothers they have long failed to embrace.

6.2 Hughes’s Niche: The Gothic-Modern

Why, then, would Hughes choose to linger in this Cave of Abjection? Covino, along with the feminist scholars of the Abject she cites and to whom she responds, considers this Cave as more than just inevitable. There is a human need for the Cave. In particular, there is a need for those outside the Cave to enter that space virtually. While the Cave has come to embody the hegemonic and misogynistic evils of society and the social purges of history, a deep aesthetic consideration of this space also provides potential release, healing re-enactment, and necessary rehearsal. Despite the commonly held stigma of the Cave as a static space, Covino’s new aesthetic of the Cave of Abjection is one of action, of discovery, and of recovery.

6.2.1 The Gothic Cave

Understanding the Cave of Abjection as both a part of the literal topography of some
Gothic texts and a metaphor of the human “abnormal,” writers of the Gothic can suggest

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3 Covino’s thesis echoes the work of her precursors, including Gilbert and Gubar, in reinventing the Cave-space as transformational.
depravity and despair merely by the simple evocation of a Cave-space. To Hughes, both an explorer of actual Welsh caves and an inveterate teller of ghost stories, the Cave—or another similarly claustrophobic space—might easily be leveraged to embody both mythic and psychoanalytic concerns that linger within the modern, while also crafting a compelling narrative. Hughes, in seeking to find and convey truth through fiction, is tapping into the therapeutic spooky vein. As Steven Bruhm (2002), Alexandra Warwick (2007), Avril Horner (2014), and Andrew Mangham (2010) have all intimated, modern human beings need the Gothic. Warwick explains, “I would argue that contemporary cultural Gothic is a staging of the desire for trauma, the desire to be haunted, because we do not feel complete without it” (“Feeling”). The Gothic Cave remains in place for modernity to rediscover and perhaps to therapeutically repurpose for changing times.

6.2.2 The Modern Cave

At the same time, this Gothic experience of the Cave contradicts the liberation narrative of modernity—and occasionally of modernism. Generally speaking, the story modernity tells itself about itself is one of skyscrapers—not bomb shelters. In response, literary and aesthetic

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4 Perhaps the first Gothic novel fixating on the Cave-space is an anonymously published (and very derivative) novel called The Cavern of Death (1794). When a meteor lights up a cave mouth, an adventurer hopes to “explore the mystery” inside only to eventually find there the repressed traces of Hell. This narrative is a complementary Gothic bookend for Lovecraft’s “The Tomb” (1922), a similar story of a powerful Cave (vault) of Abjection near a mansion/manor house.

5 Hughes’s unpublished narrative, “Demi-God,” posits the Cave as a site of sexual assault and a young girl’s unsought threshold joining the mythic and the modern.

6 Warwick continues: “It is a paradoxical reversion of that which is arguably at the core of eighteenth-century Gothic, the anxiety of fragmentation that threatens the fantasy of the integrated Enlightenment subject. In the contemporary experience the anxiety is not of fragmentation, but of wholeness, the sense that subjectivity is in fact not complete unless it has been in some way damaged” (“Feeling”).

7 Pound’s imperative to “Make it new!” is thus opposed by Forster’s Marabar Caves in A Passage to India (1924), a site which embodies this archetypal and psychoanalytic conflict by driving a young woman from perceived claustrophobic danger into real trauma for herself and others. In her quest to flee the Cave, she triggers a chain of events that ripple outwards, undermining modernity’s liberation narrative.

8 While Cormac McCarthy’s The Road (2006) is an obvious contemporary example here, with its unforgettable cellar of abject cannibalistic carnage, milder precursors can be found even in a story called “Changeling” by Amabel Williams-Ellis, about a scientist’s timeshift through intrauterine reincarnation: “I ought to have borne it, ought to have been brave . . . But there were excuses. This was a repeat performance: as a little girl I had been in the London blitz. Also I was pregnant, and thirdly I had been
modernisms contradict and subvert this narrative of progress, engendering ghost (hi)stories.

Even modernism, subtly in collusion with a false narrative of eternal progress, is continually troubled by its darker twin, the Gothic-modern. Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace speak of the Gothic and modernism as necessarily in conversation with one another. Their *Gothic Modernisms* joins Mao and Walkowitz in expanding the canonical scope of both the Gothic and modernism, joining the scholarly conversation as to whether a study of the Gothic should be oriented toward historicity or psychology. Hughes’s work, then, embodies both elements, seeing Gothic responses as reactions to environmental and historical trauma while also understanding the psychologically troubled, internal landscapes that such traumatic histories inspire in modern minds. David Punter in “Hungry Ghosts and Foreign Bodies” explains this revenant Gothic discourse within modernism: “For European modernism, haunting and haunted by a site of war, the question of rebirth, of the progress of the ‘new,’ would seem always to be accompanied, as by a ‘dark, secret collaborator,’ by the scene of death” (13). Without question, a century of cataclysmic, planetary wars simply refused to allow modernity’s narrative to progress unchecked and unchallenged.

While some novel-writing modernists eventually moved on from world war, Hughes felt compelled to revisit planetary conflict even with the last chapter he wrote. Marina MacKay’s studies of the modernist reactions of T.S. Eliot, Evelyn Waugh, and Henry Green to the Second World War might easily have included Hughes’s own. Almost inexplicably, the modernist who

told—casually—as they dug me out of the crumbled lab.—that a tank had got my husband” (103). Hughes thought this story the best she had written (Letter to Harold Raymond [5 Oct. 1946]).

9 While intimately associated with 20th-century mass trauma, Hemingway and Faulkner both ultimately turned away from planetary conflicts toward more local concerns while Hughes turned back into deep archival research to understand the rise of Hitler and its planetary import for the Cold War-world. Hemingway’s last novel treats *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Faulkner’s *The Reivers* (1962)—which Hughes lauds in his own introduction to Faulkner’s posthumously re-released *Mosquitoes*—departs from the war-theme of Faulkner’s earlier *A Fable* (1954). For his part, Hughes sustains his quest for fictional truth regarding the 20th century’s wars into the 1970s.

10 See Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* and Joseph Elkanah Rosenberg “Henry Green’s Late Modernism.” Like Green’s *Party Going* (1939), Hughes’s *In Hazard* (1938) leverages mythical imagery he might have borrowed from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* or T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (especially the “Death by Water” section).
treated the war most directly to conjure its demons most clearly remains wedged within his interbellum interstice. In fact, the final novel of the trilogy that was intended as his war epic never progressed past 1934 because of Hughes’s death in 1976. Like both Graham Greene and Henry Green, Hughes’s body of work remains somewhat unplaceable, straddling diverse genres and constructing history-troubling narratives.\(^{11}\) While other authors’ novels have sought solutions for real-world problems in politics (including Greene, as well as Hughes’s close friend John Strachey, who narrowly escaped Oswald Mosley’s oscillations between budding communism and outright fascism), Hughes’s works seek to instantiate the deceptively simple aesthetic he reveals in his Blashfield Address, presented in 1969 to the American Academy of Arts and Letters: that solipsistic modernity craves the therapeutic remedies of fiction as communicative truth.

6.3 A Cave Story: “Poor Man’s Inn”

This study has systematically outlined numerous poems, tales, and narrative threads that attest to Hughes’s work’s sustained alignment with the Gothic-modern discourse. It is significant, though, that Hughes gravitates toward a use of the Cave as a narrative prop, always aware of the psychoanalytic depth that such narrative trappings betray and project. One of Hughes’s most successful early stories, “Poor Man’s Inn” (1925), offers a particularly direct example of Hughes’s use of the Cave. The narrator of the story notes that, “[s]cattered up and down the main English roads there are certain caves, barns, empty cottages, and other places of shelter that all tramps know of” (Moment 85). While Hughes uses a natural, literal cave within “Inn’s” original short-story text, his use of the trope extends in numerous revenant iterations across his oeuvre as a barn, an attic, an abandoned cottage, and the mobile “Cave” of a family of Romanichal Travellers\(^ {12}\) (a “van” that closely simulates a cave with its rounded walls). The

\(^{11}\) See Leo Mellor’s “Early Graham Greene” for a second model of a difficult-to-place modernist whose career and ties to Hughes spanned multiple wars, including the Vietnam conflict.

\(^{12}\) See Hughes’s Cave iterations in the Box-Room of “The Chest” (1926), the attic in Fox (1961), the cottage in “A Night at a Cottage” (1926), and the untidy van in “Cornelius Katie” (1926).
Cave from Hughes’s “Poor Man’s Inn” is eventually transformed into an abandoned cottage for a later stage version Hughes adapted called *The Man Born to Be Hanged* (1923). This transformation signals Hughes’s lifelong determination to explore all Caves—or recesses—that society has designed as pits for human abjection. “Inn” opens with two tramps entering a quarry “recess” (a cave) to escape inclement weather. The one-legged, large-bodied circus-performer named “Bill” who follows the narrator into this cave immediately recognizes another drunken sleeper already residing in the cave as a man he has previously swindled. Two additional newcomers then enter the quickly-crowding cave—a withdrawn woman and a small mustachioed man named Spencer. Bill then offhandedly confesses to his fellow Cave-mates that he has abandoned his injured wife Nell in an Oxford hospital after their fight over his philandering ways. At that very moment, the female stranger throws off her hood and reveals herself as Nell, shoots Bill with her concealed revolver, unexpectedly mourns him, then flees. Once the coast is clear, Bill rises from the dead, having feigned his own demise to escape his fate once again. Then, as he makes his way toward the entrance, he discovers Nell dead by the knife in her own hand and realizes that her abjection has now fully become his own lasting fate. In trying to escape the Human Predicament, Bill has sealed his own fate and that of his female counterpart. In the end it is their shared sequestering within the Cave that marks them both as “forever-Abjects.”

Through this “Cave” story—and its many spectral returns across Hughes’s body of work—the author asserts reparative strategies for navigating the Cave-space. In Hughes’s pursuit of non-tragic sequels, he points to truth, change, and forgiveness. Inevitably, the Cave is a space for collective strategizing. It certainly can be, as Plato asserts, a place of temporary illusions, but it also represents revelations that are potentially lasting. In other words, Hughes indirectly asserts that, by entering the Cave, a newcomer learns far more than one who seeks to leave the Cave for a better life. Moreover, this space is a repository for both the social Abject and the solipsistic self-Abject, for both female and for male. Finally, it is within this Cave that art
is born as females and males strategize together the non-tragic sequel as they scribble on the walls. Like High Wind's Captain Jonsen, who can only manage to obsessively draw the female form when alone in the Cave of his cabin, Bill and Nell represent modern Cave-dwellers. When together, even in the abject poverty of their itinerant Oxford life, they can eke out a living. But once they break that abject bond, their individually devised scribblings prove abjectly ruinous.

6.4 “Certain Caves”: Abjection across Hughes

The Cave is not a "one-off" emblem for Hughes. While his early poem “The Ballad of Benjamin Crocker” memorializes the horror of colonial aggression, “The Rolling Saint” subtly canonizes the suffering of the non-Conformist spiritual practitioner. The “Rolling Saint” dwells in the claustrophobia-inducing “Cave of Teiriwch,” highlighted in this epilogue’s epigraph, and perishes pathetically in a rolling barrel. Her abject suffering—and ultimate power—echoes “Crocker’s” Gal-gar-ul, a witch who, although not specifically relegated to a closed Cave-space, lives in death as an abject, dark attraction on the outskirts of the Carrib society she symbolizes: a narratively privileged pariah. Ultimately, just as Crocker has invaded her Cave-space, she invades and permeates his.

Furthermore, in his stories “The Cart,” “Llwyd,” “Martha,” and “Cornelius Katie,” Hughes marks the child—and often the female child—as a resident of the Cave of Abjection. Additionally, the sinner in “A Night in a Cottage” corresponds to Hughes’s haunted house-dwellers in The Sitter-In (1951) and I Promised to Broadcast (1948). All these Abjects are

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13 Hughes’s analysis of paleolithic “Cave Drawings” (1937) compares the repeated and random art of early humans to drawings on modern lavatory walls that fixate on both the female and male physical form as a displaced form of “hunting-lust.” Describing the proto-artist of the Cave, Hughes asserts that “[e]ach curving line of the quarry’s shape titillated his hunting-lust as he traced it” (Letter to Karin Stephen [28 Nov. 1937]). Hughes’s connection to Bloomsbury member Karin Stephen and his vigorous explorations here of psychoanalytic thought correlate positively with his modernist, symbolic expressions of the Cave in general.

14 As of 2021, Stephen Bruhm is presently completing a book on the topic of the “Gothic Child,” a trope which Henry James certainly gets credit for initiating but which Hughes should be acknowledged in advancing. In his 2006 article “Nightmare on Sesame Street: Or, the Self-Possessed Child,” Bruhm writes, “These days, when you leave the theatre after a fright-movie, you can’t go home again—not because you’ve lost your innocence, as the adage suggests, but because you’re afraid that your child will kill you.”
spectral men who have brutally murdered their entire families or feel somehow responsible for familial deaths.

In addition, his stage plays should be mentioned here, however briefly, because they maintain the spirit of his first Gothic-inspired, Grand-Guignol trauma-drama,15 *The Sisters’ Tragedy* (1922). Hughes’s first play, championed by key players in Britain’s literary scene, entombs four grown children in a Welsh hovel because of the brother’s profound disabilities. In trying to liberate her brother and extricate the family by euthanizing him, the youngest sister—and her whole family with her—are damned to dwell forever in their modern Cave of Abjection. Hughes’s only full-length play, *A Comedy of Good and Evil* (1924), is a stage-retelling of his story “The Stranger” (1923). By far Hughes’s most Gothic, supernatural, and spiritually confrontational narrative, *Comedy* drops a demon-child on the doorstep of a humble Welsh minister and his one-legged wife, Minnie. Their sequestered life is paralleled by the town’s living “miracle,” a woman named “Resurrection Jones” who has nearly been buried alive but who has been discovered in her coffin before that burial. By taking in the demon, the couple potentially damn themselves, but Hughes flips the narrative, demonstrating the reparative nature of love, simplicity, and humor. It is Minnie’s dancing demon-leg, supernaturally bestowed by the Stranger-child, that steals the show and points to a non-tragic sequel.

Finally, while generally considered separate from his other work, Hughes’s screenplays—drafted mainly for Ealing Studios during the late 1940s and through the 1950s—should also be mentioned in this context: They, too, foreground the Cave. In the comedy *A Run for Your Money* (1949), Welsh miners, heard whistling yet visually buried alive, are portrayed as canaries in their own coal mine hundreds of feet below the surface as the film opens. In the courtroom drama *The Divided Heart* (1954), a Slovenian woman is portrayed as living a

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“zombie-like existence,” deprived by the Nazis of her child and forced to battle a German mother in court for custody. Finally, the most Hughesian Cave-space of his oeuvre appears in an aborted treatment (called Story [1958]) for a planned Horizon Pictures production of William Golding’s Lord of the Flies. Significantly, Hughes demonstrates male and female children together in their desert-island abjection: A Pacific war-site’s abandoned cave filled with skeletons, guns, tattered uniforms, and bats looms large as Hughes’s visual and thematic focal point.

6.5 “Let’s Pretend the Roof Has Fallen in!”: Performing the Cave

Hughes continues to privilege such enclosed, abject spaces in performative BBC broadcasts, such as his underwater, salvage-oriented ghost story, Open the Door! (1936), and his above-ground, salvation-oriented ghost story, I Promised to Broadcast (1948). Once again, performativity here refers to the acting out of others’ traumas, and especially the performative force created as performed trauma inspires others to “feel together” with other human beings in true empathy. Beyond the occasional emergence of solitary Cave-denizens, Hughes’s most striking Cave stories involve the male and female buried alive together in a microcosmic pit. In order to understand the power of Hughes’s most obviously performative texts, it is necessary to acknowledge that performativity and therapy go hand in hand. Within the field of psychotherapy, a burgeoning, critical branch (see editor Thomas Teo’s Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology

16 As in so many of his texts, Hughes redefines “encavement” to include aqueous spaces, as Nicole Rizzuto notes in “Global Modernism at Sea: Maritime Labor and Surface Reading in Richard Hughes’s In Hazard.” She asserts that this non-canonical tendency to “centralize the aqueous world” caused his “neglected novels” to become “forgotten writings” of modernism, and Hughes one of its “obscure writers.” 17 This distinguishes the present study’s use of “performativity” from a more specific cultural sense that guides Judith Butler in her discussions of gender and sexuality, and especially from the pejorative sense of feigned affectation. Performativity here is seen as vital language that inspires action.

18 In an unpublished Hughes novel called The Country They Forgot (c. 1923), this pattern of male/female co-abjection re-emerges with a princess and an adventurer trapped in a flooding well. This novel, written five years before High Wind, remains a “ghost novel” within his oeuvre. It has never been mentioned—either by Hughes himself or by scholars of his work—outside of a single letter from Michael Joseph at Curtis Brown Ltd. Joseph explains that “Mr. Christian has told you, I think, that I went to see him about “THE COUNTRY THEY FORGOT”. As a result of that interview Mr. Christian intimated his willingness to publish this book provided that Nisbet & Co. could have an option on the next two novels you write—which is a reasonable provision, which indicates their interest in your future work” (Letter to Richard Hughes [27 Oct. 1924]).
[2014]) leverages performativity as a means for therapeutic intervention, providing opportunities for subjects to act out their worst fears and experiences as a means for healing. As psychoanalytical scholar Lois Holzman explains, “people are performers and the world a series of ‘stages’ upon which we create the millions of scripted and improvised scenes of our lives” (1).

Considered generally, performativity is language that inspires—even demands—action.19 Analogous to the mechanics of identity formation through social negotiation, dramatic texts engage in a unique process of creation by immediately making things happen on stage and in the minds and bodies of the audience. Such dramatic performativity functions interactively with an immediate audience who experiences the affective mechanics of the stage drama together in real time.

With the advancing mass media of the 1920s, radio dramas were poised to engage with a mass audience. Hughes, as the writer of the world’s first radio play, understood the power of real-time, broadcast performativity to advance his reparative, Gothic-modern vision. On the wireless, Hughes was free to inspire a mass audience to “feel together” through the unique affordances of what he termed the “listening play”—a drama designed for darkness. In A Comedy of Danger20 (which became known colloquially as Danger, or simply “the Mine Play”), Hughes instinctively calls his audience into the Cave of Abjection: He performatively coaxes them into a coal mine and to the brink of death. Even in this experiment, Hughes embraces Gothic performativity, play-acting that vicariously processes disaster. Performed by wireless on Tuesday, January 15, 1924, a little more than one year after the BBC came on the air for the first time in November 1922, the Mine Play’s measurable effects were immediate (inspiring hundreds of letters from listeners) and lasting (inaugurating the performative engagement we take for granted through the interactive media of the 21st century).

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19 W.B. Worthen writes that “this is the interface of the ‘performative,’ the terrain between language and its enactment suggestively explored by J. L. Austin in How to Do Things with Words and more broadly remapped in cultural terms by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, among others” (3).

20 By 15 Jan. 1974 (the 50th anniversary of its broadcast), the BBC had already adopted this colloquial moniker for Hughes’s first “listening play.”
Danger tells the story of Mary and Jack, two generic young tourist-lovers, who unexpectedly find themselves in the absolute darkness of a Welsh coal mine. They have apparently been part of a tour group but have separated themselves from the others in their desire for romantic privacy. The moment the lights go out, Jack and Mary both begin to perform “danger.” As they discuss their predicament, another member of their touring party, an elderly man named Bax, wanders blindly onto the unseen stage, critiquing the Welsh and their mismanagement of the mine. The brief tale thus becomes a story of three in a Cave.

6.5.1 Therapeutic Truth: Release, Re-enactment, and Rehearsal

Most significantly for the purposes of this study and this epilogue, these three denizens of the dark have very different ways of trying to navigate the darkness of their Cave, alternately tapping into therapeutic release, re-enactment, and rehearsal. The young couple’s first instinct is to entertain themselves in lighthearted banter, seeing their circumstances as a sort of festive release, a means to enhance their adventure. Such amusement-park thrills provide them with manageable traumas. Mary, in particular, seeks morbidly to imagine the public receiving news of her own death, and she inspires Jack to play along, perhaps as a means for acquiring copy for his own potboiler-writing dreams.

The Gothic discourse achieves a second therapeutic function: re-enactment. Having survived the twin holocausts of the Great War and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, the audience Hughes initially imagined for his stories corresponded with the actual returned soldiers and collaterally damaged society members who struggled to welcome them home. Rehearsal of traumas was inevitable, but in some cases it was indispensable. The fear of being buried

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21 This term is usually associated with C.L. Barber’s groundbreaking study, Shakespeare’s Festive Comedies (1959). Barber proposes Shakespeare’s comedies as a continuation of folk traditions by which English society could experience both festive release and a clarification of society’s values. Alternately, this perspective on “horror amusements” is critiqued by Joseph Grixti (1987) and Franco Moretti (1982), who see danger in the cultural embrace of horror for entertainment.

22 Helen Brooks, based on her “archival digs,” links the 1915 success of Grand Guignol theater to a need for therapeutic re-enactment and rehearsal on the part of London’s war-weary audience in the dramas’ “devilish violence and realism” and “artificial horrors” in spite of the critics’ and censors’ derogation and indignation.
alive has long represented the existential crisis at the heart of literature, a crisis particularly embedded within the Gothic tradition. The claustrophobic darkness is mediated here—and exacerbated—by Mary’s move toward “performative” fear: “Let’s pretend it’s a real disaster, and we’re cooped up here for ever and will never be able to get out . . . I love thrills!—Let’s pretend the roof has fallen in, and they can’t get at us” (148). When reminded of the unreality of her fantasy, Mary responds, “Of course, silly! You don’t think it would be fun if it was a real disaster, do you? But the lights going out might have meant a disaster—and think how thrilling it’s going to be to talk about afterwards!” (148). Bax responds with equal cheek, “You can’t have your funeral and watch it, young lady” (149). In fact, this is precisely what the audience, along with Jack and Mary, have the opportunity to accomplish through the play’s Gothic-modern performativity. For Hughes, this was an audience well acquainted with stories of cave-in and collapse from the war and its fragile trenches. Thus, it served as a displaced re-enactment of horrors experienced firsthand or vicariously.

Still, this extended dialogue in the darkness is more than a mere re-enactment of past traumas: It is also a rehearsal for future burials and gives a thoughtful nod to the art of dying well. At the precise moment that Mary’s own playacting would require a sound effect, an explosion in the mine and the sudden rushing of water indicate that their situation is truly dire. As they try to find some way out, they gradually realize the truth: The mine will quickly fill with water, and there is no way for rescuers to hear them so far below ground. From this point

23 Sophocles’s cursed Antigone, Dr. Manette’s “return to life” at the beginning of Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities, the mine sabotage of Emile Zola’s Germinal, and Meursault’s new cell (“In this one, lying on my back, I can see the sky, and there is nothing else to see” [136]) in Camus’s The Stranger come to mind here.

24 Specifically, Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), John Galt’s “The Buried Alive” (1821), and Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Premature Burial” (1844) and “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846) leverage this trope. For more discussion, see Andrew Mangham’s “The Gothic Death-Like Awakening of Taphephobia” (2021). Mangham points toward the therapeutic rehearsal, explaining that “[t]he idea of being buried alive emerged as a ghastly emblem of knowing—truly knowing—what it was to be beleaguered, victimised, and terrified.
forward, this text, like so many others that Hughes produces, concerns itself with communal problem-solving.  

6.5.2 Therapeutic Change: Life as a Hole

Furthermore, the fundamental change that this trauma inspires shapes the bulk of this brief, one-act play. Their conversation shifts from panicked debate about who will suffer worse from death to a resigned acceptance of their fate as they take inspiration from trapped Welsh miners who sing hymns in a nearby blocked section of the mine. Even more striking, it is Bax who, having advocated for a dignified end, is suddenly converted to maniacal pleading while the younger couple, who have sought so desperately to live, are now ready to die. At the last possible moment, rescuers open a hole and begin to pull them up. Bax, once again transformed, calmly makes sure that Jack and Mary are lifted to safety before him. When Jack calls down to Bax, ready to haul him out, the older man is gone.

With the story’s dramatic translation from romance into reality by that single explosion, a heated and panicked altercation instantiates the cathartic and therapeutic dimensions of the Gothic. As a direct result of this Cave-in trauma—life as a “Hole”—the subjects (and particularly the listening audience) engage in therapeutic interventions related not only to this specific occurrence but to their lives as a whole. This process begins with a deep questioning of the meaning of Youth and Age and Death, along with a contemplation of religion and spiritual life, as the three Cave-dwellers face down their own imminent demise. Jack’s giddy excitement at embarking on his own impending death-journey offsets his own inclination toward despair and Bax’s emerging panic: “Mary, do you know I’m beginning to feel as excited about it as a child going to the seaside for the first time. Aren’t you?” (153). Yet it is Bax’s own generous, peaceful acceptance of his own permanent residency in the Cave that punctuates the narrative.

__25__ Nicole Rizzuto comes close to encapsulating Hughes’s entire oeuvre by asserting that _In Hazard_ challenges the Cartesian system as “a solipsistic retreat from action and the objective world into subjective thought” (“Global”).
6.5.3 Therapeutic Forgiveness: Beyond the Cave

This study has systematically demonstrated that it is through Gothically inflected texts that Hughes seeks to understand, interpret, and navigate traumas. Like the spectral narrator of *I Promised to Broadcast*, who happens on a guilty ghost who has killed his own family, Hughes knows he is tiptoeing through—and meddling with—traumas that are not always his own. The boldness of his corpus lies not in its radical experimentation (although he did experiment radically) or in its profound philosophical treatises (although his simple principles have stood the test of time), but in its traumatic storytelling. Hughes tells simple stories about broken people in order to recognize truth, to initiate change, and to highlight potential forgiveness.

“Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” instituted by postcolonial governments have sometimes (unintentionally?) commandeered the agency of the Abject, as if any institution can make amends for the traumas of society’s individuals. In fact, the term “reconciliation” assumes an attitude of action on both sides, which must somehow perform peace by shaking hands and moving forward. Yet it is actual forgiveness—dangling precariously between individual human confession and the high cliffs of absolution—that is the culmination of a genuinely reparative process. It lives in the hands and hearts of the violated alone, and it can certainly not be coerced. Hughes designs characters who forgive those who don’t want forgiveness and who find meaning by letting go of bitterness. Forgiveness, then, takes shape as the humble, lurking, spectral companion of double-barreled Truth and Change. It gives purpose to the reparative imperative that calls all writers and readers to seek the best of the texts they share while always acknowledging the worst.

For a last word on Hughes’s strategies for therapeutic reparation across his *oeuvre*, this study appropriately returns to Robert Graves as a circular beginning and ending point. Graves’s

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26 Examples such as recent investigations into the Tulsa Race Massacre (see Josh Dulaney) and indigenous children discovered in a Canadian mass grave (see Paula Newton) remind us that truth is almost always painful and cannot always lead to reconciliation.

27 From the pirates at the gallows, to Rachel’s grieving mother, to blind Mitzi in her convent cell, Hughes forces us to consider our own “unjust” enclosures.
poem “Recalling War” (c. 1938), notes the therapeutic possibilities of time, speculating about a non-tragic sequel twenty years after the Great War: “The blinded man sees with his ears and hands / As much or more than once with both his eyes.” This compensatory materiality is a starting point, and it is certainly present in Hughes’s work. Yet Hughes’s repeated return to instances of artificial limbs points to a deeper hurt: a spiritual traumatization that is crying out for repair as well. And in fact, the author’s unsought role as “spiritual repairman” to a generation of readers emerges from letters he received over the decades. One correspondent in particular (named Margaret) notes that “[e]ver since I first read the Comedy of Good and Evil, years ago, I have felt that you were the one person qualified to act as Father Confessor to anyone with a soul like mine” (Letter to Richard Hughes [7 Nov. 1939]). Thus, even within a lighthearted take on human frailty, Hughes’s working of the spooky vein strikes a nerve.

Hughes, both spectator to and atypical participant in the 20th century’s pageant of death, responded to a modernist milieu as a counter-cultural voice that continues to speak beyond the Cave, beyond the grave, and perhaps even beyond the influence of Graves.
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