

GROWING COLD: POSTWAR WOMEN WRITERS
AND THE NOVEL OF DEVELOPMENT,
1945-1960

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ABSTRACT

Growing Cold: Postwar American Women Writers and the Novel of Development, 1945-1960, examines how women writers developed, negotiated, and struggled with representing adolescent girl selfhood in the novel of development – also termed the Bildungsroman – during the early postwar era. By examining four women's Bildungsromans written between 1946-1960 – Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* (1947), Shirley Jackson's *Hangsaman* (1951), and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) – I show that postwar women writers were actively shaping the genre in a way that would fundamentally shift how adolescent girlhood would be represented in second wave feminist and contemporary female Bildungsromans. By 1960, adolescent girls in women's literature were far different from where they began in 1945: they were younger, more sexual, and more psychologically complex than the adolescent girl characters earlier in the 20th century. Yet these novels are also racially and sexually problematic, advancing white heteronormative identity at the expense of queer and racially othered characters. In this way, these writers suggest that postwar adolescent development is a process of "growing cold"; it is a process of loss, emptiness, and violence, leading to emotional and social isolation. This project therefore intervenes in postwar American literary studies and women's studies by raising awareness of the importance that postwar women writing played in the development of the contemporary Bildungsroman.

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CHAPTER 1

COLD FUTURES: REIMAGINING THE FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN IN THE POSTWAR ERA

“I discovered a strange thing, interviewing women of my own generation over the past ten years. When we were growing up, many of us could not see ourselves beyond the age of twenty-one. We had no image of our own future, of ourselves as women.” – Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*

“Seventeen years was a very long time to have been alive, if you took it into proportion by the thought that in seventeen years more – or as long as she had wasted being a child, and a small girl, silly and probably playing – she would be thirty-four, and old. Married, probably. Perhaps – and the thought was nauseating – senselessly afflicted with children of her own. Worn, and tired. She brought herself away from the disagreeably clinging thought by her usual method – imagining the sweet sharp sensation of being burned alive” –Shirley Jackson, *Hangsaman*

“And so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively – to insist that the future stop here.” – Lee Edelman, *No Future*

In 1963, Betty Friedan sounded an alarm regarding postwar adolescent girls: they were having a growth problem. Writing in *The Feminine Mystique* about her observations regarding teenage girls in the 1940s and 50s, she noted a startling pattern: teenage girls could not imagine themselves grown. “I don’t want to think of growing up,” one interviewee tells Friedan. “If I had children, I’d want them to stay the same age. If I had to watch them grow up, I’d see myself growing older, and I wouldn’t want to” (73). Recounting her own feeling of decision paralysis after graduating college, Friedan states, “I felt the future closing in – and I could not see myself in it at all” (68). Friedan used these observations to create her famous thesis: women were suffering from an inability to grow towards their full human potential due to the “feminine mystique.” For Friedan, then, postwar teenage girls’ growth stunt was directly associated with a stunting of the imagination –for teen girls to grow, they must be able to *imagine* their futures.

During the time of Friedan's interviews, Shirley Jackson – an author with no limit to her imagination – penned her own account of a teenager imagining her future. In her 1949 story, "The Intoxicated," an adult male partygoer stumbling around in the host's kitchen encounters a seventeen-year-old girl, Eileen. Described as "baggy and ill-formed," Eileen sits in the kitchen writing an assignment on the "future of the world." When the partygoer asks what she thinks of the future of the world, Eileen nonchalantly replies, "I don't think it's got much future...at least the way we've got it now" (Jackson 5). Eileen then goes on to imagine her version of the future, which seems terrifying indeed:

"I keep figuring how it will be." She spoke very softly, very clearly, to a point just past him on the wall. "Somehow I think of the churches as going first, before even the Empire State building. And then all the big apartment houses by the river, slipping down slowly into the water with the people inside, and the schools in the middle of Latin class maybe, while we're reading Caesar."...

He waited for a minute before he said, "I think it's a little silly for you to fill your mind with all this morbid trash. Buy yourself a movie magazine and settle down."

"I'll be able to get all the movie magazines I want," she said insistently. "The subways will crash through, you know, and the little magazine stands will all be squashed. You'll be able to pick up all the candy bars you want, and magazines, and lipsticks and artificial flowers from the five-and-ten, and dresses lying in the street from all the big stores. And fur coats."...

"I see," he said. "I go with the rest. I see."

"Things will be different afterward," she said. "Everything that makes the world like it is now will be gone. We'll have new rules and new ways of living. Maybe there'll be a law not to live in houses, so then no one can hide from anyone else, you see."

"Maybe there'll be a law to keep all seventeen-year-old girls in school learning sense," he said, standing up.

"There won't be any schools," she said flatly. "No one will learn anything. To keep from getting back where we are now."

"Well," he said, with a little laugh. "You make it sound very interesting. Sorry I won't be there to see it." (Jackson 6-7)

Eileen's calamitous vision – both hilarious and unnerving in its gleeful teenage morbidity – raises questions about the relationship between postwar women writers, adolescent girlhood, and narrative imaginings of the future. Unlike Friedan's teenage interview subjects, who could not conceive of a future with them in it, Eileen fantasizes about a future that erases everyone else, leaving her as the sole subject of her apocalyptic utopia. In her future, there are no laws, no school, and, perhaps most importantly, no domestic residences which can force her into marriage and motherhood, hiding her from the rest of the world. While her vision of course invokes larger Cold War fears of atomic holocaust, it also operates as a harsh rejoinder to the postwar concept of the child, in which the figure of the child represents the ultimate "hope" of a new age. Situated as a child by the adult partygoer, Eileen goes on to imagine a future where children break with the established order, having absolutely no regard for the past. In this way, then, Eileen's apocalyptic vision is also a queer vision; it operates as a site where law and language exist outside of prescribed discourse. It is a vision defined by loss, failure, and yet, ultimately, a need to articulate alternative possibilities to a life of domestic containment.

Jackson's "The Intoxicated" is by no means the only postwar story written by a woman writer to feature queer visions of adolescent girl futures. Instead, as this dissertation shows, these moments appear again and again in women's writing throughout the early postwar era, most prominently in the female Bildungsroman. Far from the popular media images of postwar adolescent girls engaging in school dances, telephone gab fests, and soda fountain double dates, the adolescent girl featured in the postwar female Bildungsroman is instead found committing acts of self-mutilation, fantasizing

about incest, and experiencing long blackout periods of memory loss. Over and over, she is situated as an outlaw, as someone guilty of a crime, and queer. Exactly how and why this figure appears in American women's writing at a time when public concerns about adolescent girlhood were on the rise is the question that drives this dissertation. What can this figure tell us about postwar women's writing, and how might it differ from what we think we know about postwar adolescent girlhood?

Growing Cold investigates how postwar women writers were creating new models of adolescent girlhood at a time when girls and women were facing pressures of domestic containment. In the early postwar era, where adolescent girls were apparently *incapable* of imagining themselves beyond age 21, and where, we are told, women writers were stunted, stymied, and blocked in their artistic imaginations, what then was happening with the female Bildungsroman? Could women writers make use of a genre so historically invested in growth, maturity, progress, and autonomy at a time when such concepts were, we are told, rendered inaccessible to them? By examining four women's Bildungsromans written between 1946-1960 – Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* (1947), Shirley Jackson's *Hangsaman* (1951), and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) – I show that not only were postwar women choosing to write Bildungsromans; they were actively shaping the genre in a way that would fundamentally shift how adolescent girlhood would be represented in second wave feminist and contemporary female Bildungsromans. By 1960, adolescent girls in women's literature were far different from where they began in 1945: they were younger, more sexual, and more psychologically complex than the adolescent

girl characters earlier in the 20th century. It is this model of adolescent girlhood that would later become *de rigueur* in the latter half of 20th century literature.

In this dissertation, I argue that the postwar female Bildungsroman offers a unique perspective on the adolescent girl not found in earlier novels of female development. The novels depart from 19th century models in three distinct ways. The first difference is the conflation of sexuality and youth. Unlike 19th century novels and early twentieth novels of development, these postwar female Bildungsromans have much younger female protagonists. *The Member of the Wedding*'s Frankie Addams is twelve, *The Mountain Lion*'s Mollie Fawcett ages from eight to twelve, and Scout Finch ages from six to nine. Even Natalie Waite, in Shirley Jackson's *Hangsaman*, the oldest protagonist of the ones I examine, never ages beyond seventeen. Although a few earlier women's novels have young female protagonists (Jo March is fifteen when *Little Women* starts, Antonia Shermada begins as a young girl in *My Antonia* and Anne Shirely of *Anne of Green Gables* is eleven), the young girl protagonist begins to take on a unique significance the postwar female Bildungsroman. Most significant is the development of a sexually charged interiority; unlike earlier novels that either ignore or deny the sexuality of girls, these girl figures are thrown in the grips of sexual desire, and experience great anxiety over it. The language of sexuality in these texts is subtle and nuanced. And yet it permeates the entire text, making it perhaps the most important theme in these works.

A second major distinction between the postwar female Bildungsroman and earlier female Bildungsromans that come before it is the absence of marriage. While many 19th and early 20th century novels complicate and problematize the marriage plot, the postwar female Bildungsroman ignores it altogether. One of the benefits of having

young protagonists for these writers is that the narrative never follows the youthful protagonist out of adolescence. In this way, growth and development in the postwar female Bildungsroman is not signified by marriage – or even aging – at all. Rather, growth and development is signified by the loss of access to queerness.

My definition of “queer” in this dissertation extends beyond same-sex desire; instead, I define queer very broadly. Following Kathryn Bond Stockton, I take the traditional linguistic definition of queer: “*adj.* 1) deviating from the expected or normal; strange; 2) odd or unconventional in behavior; eccentric; 3) arousing suspicion; 4) *slang.* Homosexual”; *n.* A homosexual” (qtd. in Stockton 245 n. 1). Stockton uses this definition playfully, and, like Derrida, examines the ways in which her texts undermine the word’s derogatory origins. The postwar women writers I examine sometimes use the word “queer” explicitly, but rarely do they use it as a definition of same-sex desire alone. Not only were these writers writing at a time of extreme homophobia, they were also writing at a time when women were denied access to their own sexuality. Yet these novels’ depictions of sexuality, artistic desire, and growth are strange – strange enough that a successful reading of these novels demands some kind of word to explain the strangeness. As Rachel Adams has pointed out about Carson McCullers, examining queerness in postwar women’s writing is *not* to suggest that they “anticipated the present revolutionary politics of queer theory,” but rather that “contemporary articulations of the queer offer an ideal vocabulary for understanding previously closeted aspects of [their] fiction” (Adams 554). This dissertation follows Adams’s lead, and uses the word “queer” to draw attention to moments in these texts that cannot quite be fully articulated or explained.

Although the Bildungsroman is a genre necessarily concerned with concepts of childhood, growth, and teleology, no study has yet put this genre in conversation with queer theory's interrogation of the child. Yet queer theory offers a powerful lens through which to read the postwar female Bildungsroman. Indeed, this dissertation argues that queerness is crucial to an understanding of these texts. I argue that postwar women writers developed a strategy which I call the plot of the "queer double" in order to reconcile competing authorial desires: the desire to ground the adolescent girl protagonist in the bleak realism of a future spent only as a wife and mother, and the desire to imagine an alternative, even utopic future unconstrained by normative sexual and racial codes. In each of these texts, the adolescent protagonist has a double protagonist in which she is positioned against. One character (sometimes the adolescent girl herself, but not always) is marked as queer – strange, unusual, uncanny, and often not confined easily by sexual labels or other societal rules. The protagonist, in contrast, is marked as on a path of "normal" development. In every case, the queer character dies in order to guarantee the protagonist's entry into heteronormative adulthood. As Jed Esty has noted, the queer figure is one that "holds a position outside dominant discourses of progress at the level of individual self-formation and of social reproduction" (23). The protagonist is frustrated, and at times frightened, by the queer double figure, and yet, in the end, is permanently haunted by his or her loss. Ultimately, it is the loss of the queer double that reluctantly propels the adolescent protagonist to accept a "cold future" of homogeneity and conformity. Marriage and motherhood, then, is held out as the *likely* future of these protagonists, but it is a future that remains just beyond the novel's horizon.

The queer double character has its roots in 19th century models of tomboyism. As Michelle Abate has shown, many 19th century and early 20th century texts feature a “tomboy/sissy” dyad, in which a “tomboy,” masculine girl is paired with an effeminate boy. Rather than offer a refuge where both characters can perform gender without judgment, the tomboy and sissy characters often police each other, regulating and deriding each other’s gender performance (Abate xvii). The result, for the tomboy at least, is successful entrance into heteronormative womanhood. The tomboy/sissy dyad, Abate astutely notes, also performs a eugenic purpose: “tomboyism was created in the mid-nineteenth century by white women for white women as a means to bolster and strengthen whiteness” (xxii).

The novels I examine in this dissertation certainly follow this trajectory (indeed, Abate uses *The Member of the Wedding* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* as examples of this dyad). Yet I re-frame the tomboy/sissy dyad as the “queer double” for two reasons. First, I show how postwar women writers use this dyad even when the girl protagonist does not explicitly display attributes of tomboyism. In *Hangsaman*, for instance, Natalie Waite reads as classically feminine and yet is paired with an obviously queer figure, Tony. Tony is not a “sissy” by any means; rather, she reads as “butch.” The feminine/butch dyad, then, emerges as another form of “queer doubleness” used in the postwar female Bildungsroman. Secondly, I want to more explicitly foreground queerness as a category of *temporal* difference in these texts. As Kathryn Bond Stockton has persuasively argued, the queer child “grows sideways,” a model that defies typical linear categories of progress and growth through perpetual delay. The queer child “grows,” then, only retroactively, through the specter of death, and through continual delay of its own

arriving (11). The queer doubles in the texts I examine act as temporal agents that delay the protagonist's growth and development. Only when the queer double is ejected from the text does the protagonist stand to cross over into adulthood.

One might object that these plots seemingly bear no difference from other postwar narratives that kill queer characters solely for the purpose of punishing them for deviancy. As scholars critical of the postwar era have pointed out, many postwar texts – especially those focused on lesbian women – feature queer characters that die or are rejected from society. These characters are marked as deviant, untrustworthy, and suspicious. Their deaths, then, symbolize the “rightful” return to order, as the “straight” protagonist corrects the error of her ways. Yet unlike most postwar narratives, the novels I examine do not celebrate the death of the queer character. Rather than being marked as evil, the queer double in the postwar female Bildungsroman instead signifies creative possibilities, alternative futures outside of marriage, and racially integrated spaces. Their loss does not represent the successful development of the adolescent girl protagonist. Instead, the loss of the queer figure in the text ensures the entrance of the adolescent girl into a vacant, colorless adulthood. The specter of the queer double, then, continues to hover over the adolescent girl protagonist, suggesting that the adolescent girl's journey into adulthood is not truly her own. Rather, her adulthood is merely a trace; in Derrida's terms, an “absent presence,” of her former childhood: “This trace relates no less to what is called the future than what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by the very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not; that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present” (Derrida 128).

Finally, I wish to address the most troubling aspect of the queer double phenomenon within the postwar female Bildungsroman: its eugenic effect. It is not a coincidence that the novels featured in this dissertation are only written by white women. Rather, the queer double operates to constitute the adolescent girl protagonist's whiteness alongside her heteronormativity. As Abate notes, the tomboy figure in the mid-nineteenth century was a racialized construct, meant to help ensure white racial supremacy (xii). Like their nineteenth-century predecessors, the novels in this dissertation perform this eugenic act. Yet this eugenic act is simultaneously fragmented and complicated by the black characters featured in these texts. The postwar female Bildungsroman, then, ultimately represents the fracturing of old nineteenth century models of white adolescent girl *Bildung*.

I use "Bildungsroman" loosely, acknowledging an uneasy history between women writers and an 18th century German genre meant to successfully reconcile a tension between the individual young man and society. The "coming of age" novel, or the "novel of development" could also be used to describe the novels I examine, and I occasionally refer to them as such. However, I ultimately classify these novels as female Bildungsromans in order to align this study with the rich tradition of feminist research surrounding 19th century and contemporary women's novels featuring adolescent girl protagonists. Works such as Elizabeth Abel's *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women*, and Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* have all successfully aligned women's novels featuring adolescent protagonists with larger conversations regarding Bakhtin, Dilthey, Hegel, and Moretti's definitions of the Bildungsroman. By

similarly placing my study within this context, I show how the postwar period marks a valuable moment in women writers' production of the Bildungsroman, a moment that – in both its triumphs and its limitations – has been overlooked by scholars and in desperate need of greater attention.

My study is grounded in feminist literary studies of the female Bildungsroman. In 1983, a collection of essays called *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* became the first anthology to study and classify the female Bildungsroman. Declaring the female Bildungsroman “the most salient form of literature for contemporary women writing about women” (6), the editors asserted an overall positive assessment of the genre: the female Bildungsroman, they claimed, is a genre that affirms the development from girl into woman, and affirms the possibility of growth into a fully-fledged human being.

Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Woman: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (1993) took a considerably more pessimistic approach, arguing that the novels of Burney, Bronte, Austen, and Eliot depart from the male Bildungsroman model of belief in a coherent self. Rather, she claims that the hallmarks of the female Bildungsroman are de-formation, disorientation, and loss of authority. In other words, the very act of developing into womanhood is a shedding of selfhood, an act that secures the protagonist in her role as second-class citizen. Growing into womanhood then, is grounded in loss.

If Fraiman declared that the female Bildungsroman is defined by loss, then Jed Esty reminded us that the Bildungsroman is defined by time. Referring to M.H. Bakhtin's definition of the Bildungsroman as “an image of a man growing in national-historic

time,” (qtd. in Esty 5), Esty suggests that the modernist era represents a moment where “the logic of development in the late Bildungsroman underwent substantial revision as the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference” (Esty 6). For Esty, the British modernist writers of the 20th century – including women writers Rhys, Woolf, and Bowen – used the trope of “frozen youth” in order to intervene in colonialist narratives of empire and progress.

Like Esty and Fraiman, I assert that the postwar female Bildungsroman proposes a model of anti-development, but one that is distinct from previous narrative models. Unlike British modernist Bildungsromans that Esty and Fraiman examine, which play with notions of stasis, paralysis, and extreme compressions of time, these novels *do* represent change over time. Rather than “frozen” youth, then, the postwar female Bildungsroman puts forth a “cold” future: one that is constituted on loss and emptiness. I use the word “cold” to denote both its figurative and political implications: the adolescent protagonist grows “coldly” in that s/he is emotionally stunted and hollow. Yet s/he also grows “coldly” in that s/he grows according to Cold War logics of domestic containment.¹ Through rejecting the queer double, the adolescent protagonists absorb a Cold War mindset that promotes strict divisions of gender and equates such divisions with patriotically contributing to the American “home front.” In the end, the adolescent protagonists have completely embraced Cold War ideologies of containment, leaving them little agency to resist national agendas of sexuality.

¹ For more on how Cold War international policies were reflected in societal attitudes towards women, see May’s groundbreaking historical study, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.

Ultimately, this dissertation calls attention to the need to consider the postwar female Bildungsroman in the larger history of the Bildungsroman. It argues that rather than being stunted in their imaginations, postwar women writers were instead imaginatively expanding and experimenting with generic forms, especially the Bildungsroman. What resulted from these new female Bildungsromans were adolescent girl figures that are radically different from their predecessors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet what also resulted were problems and limitations of adolescent girl development, problems that have yet to be resolved in the genre of the female Bildungsroman. This study, then, considers the postwar female Bildungsroman in the contexts of both its successes and failures, and asks how we can reconcile the obvious problems of the genre with the larger corpus of American women's writing.

The remainder of this chapter offers a historical and theoretical overview of adolescent girlhood and the Bildungsroman during the postwar era. Cultural studies has explored how economic, psychological, and social factors merged in interesting ways to produce a very different kind of adolescent girlhood than existed in the early 20th century, but has not considered the postwar female Bildungsroman in this analysis. Furthermore, postwar literary studies have asserted that postwar women writers were not engaged in any real meaningful work. I now turn to both of these studies in order to demonstrate why that might be and what has been lost as a result.

The 1940s: The American Teenage Girl Comes of Age

A December 11, 1944, article in *Life* magazine called “Teenage Girls: They Live a Wonderful World of Their Own” conveys the ascending importance of the teenage girl to the national economy: “American businessmen, many of whom have teen-age daughters, have only recently begun to realize that teen-agers make up a big and special market...Every afternoon after school lets out, music stores across the land bulge with girls listening to the singers and bandleaders they have made into national figures...No one has even tried to estimate the teenage contribution to the hamburger, coke and juke-box business” (91). Their consumption is viewed as not only a boost to the economy; instead, the appetite for products is so large it borders on gluttonous. In addition to music stores “bulging” with girls, teen girls themselves seem to have an insatiable appetite: “Malted and hamburgers after the Saturday movie are standard fare. Girls seem quite willing to sacrifice their figures for huge amounts of sweet food which they eat almost constantly” (95). The “sacrifice” of their figures, however, must not be too much, for they are a group that is to be cherished as a national treasure: “By their energy, originality and good looks they have brought public attention down from debutantes and college girls to themselves. Moving through the awkward age, the troubles of growing up, their welter of fads and taboos, they eventually become – in the judgment of almost every Western nation – the most attractive women in the world” (91). Later, in 1945, a *March of Time* newsreel devoted to examining the “new” phenomenon of teen girls would sum it up this way: “Of all the phenomena of wartime life in the United States, one of the most fascinating and mysterious, and one of the most completely irrelevant, has been the emergence of the teenage girl as an American institution in her own right” (qtd. in Nash

142). Thus, it is both the teenage girl's capacity to simultaneously consume and be commodified by a growing national market that afforded her a unique importance in the development of a wartime national identity.

With the rise of girlhood studies over the past twenty years, scholars have assessed how girlhood, as a socio-political construction, has changed historically throughout the tenure of the United States. Particular attention has been paid to the postwar era, as the end of World War II marked the defining moment in American history when adolescence became more than just a physical change between childhood and adulthood, but also a recognized group identity that had special cultural, economic, and political implications for the nation-state. Over the past decade, girlhood studies scholars such as Rachel Devlin, Ilana Nash, and Mary Celeste Kearney have produced groundbreaking analyses of postwar representations of girlhood in popular culture. By examining films, plays, radio shows, and psychological studies, these scholars have illuminated just how important adolescent girlhood was to the national psyche in the postwar era. Together they have shown that although popular representations of adolescent girlhood experienced shifts between 1945 and 1960, a consistent thread emerged whereby adolescent girls were represented as ideal, if not excessive, models of consumerism, budding sexual icons that needed to be properly regulated and controlled by the father, and destined towards marriage but not yet confined to the domestic sphere. Unsurprisingly, these representations were also overwhelmingly white and upper middle class. During and shortly after World War II, they were also often represented as making trivial, unimportant contributions towards the "war effort," often limited to showing their support via kissing booths and victory gardens. In part, their contribution to the war effort

was limited due to fears that adolescent “victory girls” and “patriotutes” would use their sexuality to comfort soldiers. Ultimately then, girlhood studies scholars have demonstrated that 1940s and 50s popular culture represented adolescent girlhood as alluring, modern, and “all-American,” yet always in danger of exceeding sexual and domestic boundaries. The adolescent girl’s body was thus viewed as desirable yet potentially unruly.

Adolescent girlhood as we know it today is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the early 20th century, “adolescence” was a new concept, as improvements in child labor law delayed children’s entrance into the workforce. These laws, along with increased attendance in high school in the late 19th century, led to the creation of a distinct age group category that had its own unique culture. During the economic depression, the collapse of the youth labor market forced adolescents to stay in school. By 1940, 7,123,009 students between the ages of 14 and 17 were in high school, more than 73 percent of the age group (Mirel 15). These factors contributed to an explosion of public awareness about the group called “adolescents.” The terms “bobby-soxer,” “teener,” or “teenager” could easily be used interchangeably when describing adolescent girls. As Kelly Schrum has shown, teenage girl culture can be traced back as early as the 1920s, with teenage girls emerging as the first identifiable teen group long before teenage boys. It was teenage girls, and not boys, that were first targeted by marketers as potential consumers, and it was largely their response to a shifting consumer culture that paved the way for the explosion of teen markets by the end of World War II. As Schrum points out, girls were active consumers of both products and the moral messages that accompanied them; they “controlled some of these interactions and were controlled by others” (21).

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, commercial industries in fashion, movies, and beauty products had begun to carve a niche catered exclusively to the adolescent girl.

Teenage boys in the early postwar period did not assume such importance to a postwar audience. Although there were films in the 1920s and 1930s that focused on male adolescence, by the end of World War II, the public seemed utterly bored with them. *Life* magazine did not show much interest in profiling teen boys as they did girls; when they did profile them in 1945, it was with the title “Teen-Age Boys: faced with war, they are just the same as they have always been” (91). Teen boys did not change over time, the article suggests; “the old skills are still admired – the ability to swim well, to memorize the names of football heroes, to have a quick wisecrack for the day’s every small event, to be popular” (91). Rachel Devlin claims that contrasting teenage girls with teenage boys “served to reinforce a sense of boyhood as fixed and timeless and girlhood as more mutable. Girls were an ever-changing barometer of the times, guiding and being guided by the engine of consumer trends” (90).

By 1944, teenage girls had made a stratospheric rise from marketing potential to full market explosion. With the September 1944 launch of *Seventeen* magazine, adolescent girls were projected not only as major consumers, but as the *primary* influence in the family for making household purchases. As Devlin notes, *Seventeen*’s “Teena,” a brand figure who represented a prototype of *Seventeen*’s readership, was above all, a “homebody” who helped her mother with family purchases: “The value of the teenage girl, according to *Seventeen*, was that she was more up-to-date than her mother – hence it behooved her to gently shepherd her mother through the process of staying modern” (Devlin 99-100). In this way, the teenage girl was positioned both within the home and

in the public market; she was both on the cutting edge of consumerism and safely confined within the domestic sphere. Her purchases are modern and new yet sanctioned – even welcomed – by her parents. Yet alongside this economic sanctioning of teenage girlhood came the notion that it might pose a threat. As a result, the idea of teenage girls as a potential threat to social order began to fuel comedic representations of them on film and in radio.

Despite these important studies of adolescent girlhood within postwar popular culture, no inquiry has yet been made as to how women writers were representing adolescent girlhood during this time period. In other words, there is a surprising disparity between cultural studies of postwar adolescent girlhood and studies of women writers' creative role in the production of such representations. Although girlhood studies scholars have considered how adolescent girlhood is portrayed in novels and stories written by men, including Lionel Trilling's short story "The Other Margaret," Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, Frederick Kohner's *Gidget*, F. Hugh Hubert's *Corliss Archer* series, and William Stryon's *Lie Down in Darkness*, little attention is given to postwar women writers' representation of adolescent girlhood, especially within the genre of the female Bildungsroman. Ilana Nash does devote considerable attention to Mildred Wirt and Harriet Adams's representations of Nancy Drew from the 1930s-50s, and both Devlin and Nash consider Sally Benson's 1939 popular work *Junior Miss* (although they spend most of their analyses on the subsequent 1941 Broadway production and 1943 movie, both of which were adapted from Benson's text by Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields). Devlin also makes cursory mention of *The Member of the Wedding* and Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place* when listing postwar literary representations of fathers and

adolescent daughters (in a footnote). Yet any real, sustained analysis of postwar women's writing about adolescent girlhood, especially the postwar female Bildungsroman, has been absent. This omission is partly understandable, as these studies have been particularly focused on more popular representations of postwar adolescent girlhood, with special attention paid to filmic representations. Yet I want to suggest that the reason for this neglect goes deeper than choice of medium. It stems from a systemic problem with how women writers in the postwar era have been represented in literary scholarship. In order to understand this systemic problem, we must return to Betty Friedan, and the postwar world of child psychology.

Postwar Psychology, Betty Friedan, and the Female Bildungsroman

Child psychologists and popular social theorists shared society's anxiety about the teenage girl. Beginning in the late 1920s but exploding in the 1940s, child psychology, anthropology, and the social sciences at large were experiencing a sea-change in attitudes towards child development. The rise of the Culture and Personality School anthropologists, along with the neo-Freudians and ego psychologists, argued that one's cultural background and national identity – not only biology – had a direct impact on individual development. And, they agreed, American children were uniquely afflicted with *too much* freedom: the rise of industrialization and a growing middle class created conditions of seemingly infinite choice by which adolescents were pressured to self-actualize in ways that previous generations (and undeveloped nations) had not been required to do. For example, in her path-breaking study of adolescent girlhood, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1929), Margaret Mead fretted over the possibility that an

overabundance of choice threatened to paralyze American teen girls: “A society which is clamoring for choice...will give each new generation no peace until all have chosen or gone under, unable to bear the conditions of choice. The stress is in our civilization, not in the physical changes through which our children pass, but it is none the less real nor the less inevitable in twentieth-century America” (162). Similarly, Erik Erikson, in his groundbreaking study of child development, *Childhood and Society* (1950), claimed that “the patient of today suffers most under the problem of what he should believe in and who he should – or, indeed, might – be or become; while the patient of early psychoanalysis suffered most under inhibitions which prevented him from being what and who he thought he knew he was” (279). This assertion led him to famously conclude that “the study of identity, then, becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud’s time” (282). Erikson’s studies focused mostly on boys, and he struggled to write convincingly about girls (not until 1968 did he devote any sustained thought to girls, and his theory that girls had an “inner space” orientation while boys had an “outward space” was quickly swatted down by second-wave feminists like Kate Millet). Yet both Mead and Erikson agreed that the problem facing American adolescents were “future oriented”: it was what *awaited* an adolescent, and not what happened in childhood, that was the source of anxiety and paralysis.

By the time Freidan came along then, the idea that American adolescent girls were facing an “identity crisis” was well established. What was different about Friedan’s argument, however, was who was to blame. Rather than blame infinite futures filled with an overabundance of possible paths to take, Friedan instead faulted a postwar culture that perpetuated a predetermined, monolithic future of marriage and motherhood for girls.

Women's magazines, Freud, advertisements, and educational institutions all contributed to the "feminine mystique," a sort of mystifying lens through which all women's experiences were filtered and distorted. The feminine mystique, however, was more than ephemeral for Friedan; rather, it was a literal *growth inhibitor* that preyed upon adolescent girls' psyches:

Biologists have recently discovered a 'youth serum' which, if fed to young caterpillars in the larva state, will keep them from ever maturing into moths; they will live out their lives as caterpillars. The expectations of feminine fulfillment that are fed to women by magazines, television, movies, and books that popularize psychological half-truths, and by parents, teachers and counselors who accept the feminine mystique, operate as a kind of youth serum, keeping most women in the state of sexual larvae, preventing them from achieving the maturity of which they are capable. (77)

In this rather extraordinary passage, Friedan goes beyond suggesting that the problem of the feminine mystique is merely "in the air"; rather, she argues that it has real, material power. From Friedan's perspective, women living in the early postwar era could never fully become women; rather, they lived in a state of perpetual infantilization, trapped into a never-ending adolescence by the feminine mystique. To put it another way, the central problem with postwar womanhood was that there was no real distinction between the categories of "woman" and "child." For Friedan, postwar womanhood, by its very definition, is protracted adolescence. Adolescent girls, then, could not envision their futures beyond age 21 because there literally *was no future*: all that lay before them was endless repetition of a life already lived.

The Feminine Mystique is in many ways itself a Bildungsroman, a developmental tale that tracks women's growth from "a child, a doll, a decoration," to "full and free human being" (83; 84). The problem with the postwar era is double-fold: the feminine

mystique has stunted the growth of women both at the individual level of psychological maturity and at the macro-level of American history. The postwar pact with the feminine mystique, quite seriously, has impeded the plotline of American women's coming-of-age story.

Front and center on Friedan's list of "growth inhibitors" were women writers themselves; unlike the preceding generation of "New Woman" writers of the 1920s and 30s, Friedan argued, women writers in the 1940s and 50s propagated the myth of the feminine mystique. Shirley Jackson, especially, invoked Friedan's ire. Labeling her as one of the best of the "Housewife Writers," Friedan goes on to declare that writers like Jackson "deny the vision, and the satisfying hard work involved in their stories, poems, and plays. They deny the lives they lead, not as housewives, but as individuals" (52). Friedan's analysis, notably, does not include any coming-of-age novels written by these same women, including Jackson.

Literary critics have totally absorbed Friedan's narrative of women's development and postwar paralysis. Over and over again, postwar women writers have been catalogued as "stunted," "stymied," or "paralyzed." Consider this overview of postwar women writers by acclaimed feminist literary scholar, Elaine Showalter:

The low point for American women writers during the twentieth century was the 1950s, when Freudians preached in the medical and the popular press about the tragedy of American women, and when postwar domestic values urged them to return to their kitchens and nurseries...For talented girls growing up female in the 1940s and 1950s, such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, the lack of female role models was intensely discouraging. Their main ambition was to distinguish themselves from other women writers who had failed. (Showalter xiv)

Showalter's depiction perfectly encapsulates the master narrative literary scholars have ascribed to postwar women writers: the feminine mystique of the 1950s stifled "talented"

women writers' creativity, while "failed" women writers were left to placate the masses with banal housewife fiction.

Showalter is by no means the only scholar to suggest this narrative of a literary "low point." Time and time again, American literature scholars such as Morris Dickstein, Robert Seguin, Jerome Klinowitz and Marty Jezer have insisted that the early postwar era (1945-1960) was a "dark age" for *all* writers, let alone women. Broad surveys of the postwar period, including *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, *Cambridge History of American Literature*, *Columbia Literary History*, and *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Fiction* all tell a similar story: the postwar era was merely a holding pattern between the more exciting moments of 1920s modernism and 1960s postmodernism. In his essay on postwar literature in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, for example, Dickstein shrugs, underwhelmed, stating that the late 1940s was "hardly a stellar period in American fiction" (165). Seguin echoes Dickstein in *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, claiming that much like the "ceased production of the automobile during World War II," the literary novel "received less focused attention for a time."

The exception to the rule, for these critics, was the postwar Bildungsroman. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), and – of course – J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) are hailed as notable deviations from the novel's postwar dark age. Dickstein declares Holden Caulfield "the first literary protagonist of the new youth culture" (183). Richard Ohmann takes it a step even further, claiming "the adolescent rite of passage" as "*the* story of the postwar period," hailing *The Catcher and the Rye* and *Invisible Man* as evidence for his claim (214). In an interesting flip of Freidan's logic, Dickstein asserts that "'Maturity' was the

albatross of the postwar generation; Salinger...helped their readers see beyond it, to find the sensitive child, the thwarted adolescent in themselves” (*Cambridge History of American Literature* 185). In other words, for the male postwar writer, adolescence was not a state of paralysis, a stage that prevented maturity; rather, it was a device that liberated the adult male from the trappings of a conformist society. Charles Moleworth extends this analysis, reasoning that “An adolescent sensibility cloaked in an adult role allowed the postwar novelist a way to mediate the powerlessness of individuals in a mass, postindustrial society with the continuing belief in the power of the single, sensitive personality” (*Columbia Literary History* 1031).

The postwar female Bildungsroman rejects the model set out by the postwar male Bildungsroman. Rather than suggest childhood is associated with some kind of lost innocence, childhood is already implicated in the process of its undoing. By that I mean that it is the troubled anxiety of these girls’ childhoods that ultimately propels them towards a cold adulthood. Unlike the postwar male adolescent Bildungsroman, then, the postwar female Bildungsroman does not sentimentalize adolescence as a way of escaping powerlessness; rather, it engages adolescence in order to demonstrate the ways in which women’s futures are perilously limited.

Chapters

The first chapter, “Queering the Bobby-Soxer: *The Member of the Wedding* and the Rise of the Postwar Female Bildungsroman,” charts the emergence of the queer double figure in the 1946 novel *The Member of the Wedding* alongside the postwar rhetoric of “bobby-soxer” narratives. I argue that *The Member of the Wedding* marks the

first appearance of an adolescent girl figure constituted by the politics of the postwar era. In particular, Frankie's development is ensnared within the paradoxical postwar liberal logic of racial progress and heteronormativity – a logic often found in bobby-soxer narratives. McCullers, however, queers the bobby-soxer narrative by introducing six-year-old John Henry, a queer figure in the text who acts as Frankie's double. Although Frankie is frequently frustrated with John Henry, his presence, along with black housekeeper Berenice, briefly allows Frankie to enact queer visions of a future that blurs racial and sexual lines, and thus challenges postwar models of white adolescent girlhood. These fantasies are ultimately shattered, however, when John Henry dies from a catastrophic illness. *The Member of the Wedding*, then, establishes a new framework for representing adolescent girlhood: it offers a glimpse of alternative, more liberated possibilities, but ultimately denies its protagonist that life, instead offering her a “cold future” of vacant, mass-commodified adulthood, devoid of political and aesthetic pleasure.

The second chapter, “Cold Warriors and Growing Sideways: Queer Logics of Development in Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion*,” expands on the trope of the queer double in the postwar female Bildungsroman by examining how it intervenes in Cold War rhetorics of child development. Like *The Member of the Wedding*, Stafford's 1947 text features two children who “grow” alongside each other: eight-year-old Molly Fawcett and her ten-year-old brother Ralph. Unlike McCullers's novel, however, *The Mountain Lion* flips the script, positioning Molly herself as the queer figure who is sacrificed in the text in order to constitute Ralph's masculinity. Reading *The Mountain Lion* alongside Cold War rhetorics of the frontier and child development, I show how

Molly's "sideways growth" on a ranch in Colorado challenges Cold War child development models that position the frontier as the distinctive testing ground of American child. Rather than forging a "Cold Warrior" model of masculinity, the myth of the frontier ultimately wrecks Molly and Ralph, killing Molly and rendering Ralph into a figure defined by violence and loss. *The Mountain Lion*, then, more so than *The Member of the Wedding*, capitalizes on the device of the queer double in order to deny anything but a "cold future" to its protagonist. Yet the novel's deployment of queerness is not something to necessarily be celebrated. Conversely, *The Mountain Lion* demonstrates the limits of the postwar Bildungsroman's ability to use queerness to critique Cold War ideologies.

Chapter Three turns a corner on the discussion of the postwar female Bildungsroman by examining Shirley Jackson's 1951 novel *Hangsaman*. By 1951, fears of queer doubles had been completely caught up in the rhetoric of McCarthyism, particularly fears of "secret" lesbians. My analysis of *Hangsaman* demonstrates how Shirley Jackson both invokes and subverts the trope of the lesbian double in order to create a "queer aesthetic," an aesthetic which associates queer desire with creative artistry and alternatives to patriarchal modes of knowledge production. Unlike the first two novels, *Hangsaman* is the first to locate queer doubleness *within* the protagonist herself. That is to say that Natalie Waite and her queer double Tony are one and the same person. Tony, a psychological manifestation of Natalie's queer desire, allows Natalie to create alternative worlds and imagine a future that exists outside the discourse of her omnipresent and controlling father. Yet Tony's power is so overwhelming that it threatens to fracture Natalie's being. In the end, Natalie destroys Tony and submits to a

life of singularity, which ultimately ends any possibility of pursuing a future as a writer. Like the first two novels, then, Natalie is prescribed a “cold future,” and the reader is left imagining a future where Natalie proceeds to do exactly as her father wishes. Of all the novels I examine, *Hangsaman* pushes the logic of the queer double to its ultimate end, and in the process ushers in a new subgenre of the female Bildungsroman: the psychological breakdown novel.

Finally, I take a brief look at Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. By 1960, when *To Kill A Mockingbird* was published, much had changed in the public discourse surrounding adolescent girlhood. *To Kill A Mockingbird*, like the earlier novels I examine, deploys the trope of the queer double in order to launch its adolescent girl protagonist into maturity. However, its use of the queer double marks a departure from its earlier predecessors. Boo Radley, the ultimate queer double in American literature, is made to “come out”; it is his emergence into the public sphere, and Scout’s subsequent empathetic identification with him, that ultimately enables Scout to enter into maturity. Rather than a “cold future” then, Scout is permitted a future that ultimately does project a white liberal fantasy of an alternative America. The consequence, however, is a displacement of the queer double’s sacrificial status onto Tom Robinson. Rather than resolve the problem of the postwar female Bildungsroman, then, *To Kill A Mockingbird* merely relocates it, suggesting that contemporary narratives of white girl development remain invariably caught up with questions of race.

This analysis is far from comprehensive; on the contrary, it merely invites further study into the narrative strategies of postwar women writers. What I do think it offers, however, is the beginning of a conversation regarding women writers’ contribution to the

production of adolescent girlhood in American literature. As I hope to have demonstrated, postwar women writers' representations of adolescent girlhood are fascinatingly complex and disturbing portraits: much more deserving of literary critics' attention than they have previously received.

CHAPTER 2

QUEERING THE BOBBY-SOXER: *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING* AND THE RISE OF THE POSTWAR FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN

At the end of August 1945, a few weeks after the atomic blasts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Carson McCullers wearily appeared at her friend Elizabeth Ames's door late at night with the completed manuscript of her coming-of-age story, *The Member of the Wedding*. Ames stayed up the remainder of the night to read it, and declared it "perfect." McCullers's editors at Houghton Mifflin agreed, and with very few revisions, the Bildungsroman was published on March 19, 1946.² It had taken McCullers a full five years to write *The Member of the Wedding*, the entirety of World War II, but by the end of the process, she had created a new adolescent girl figure who would question mainstream models of adolescent girl development in the postwar era: twelve-year-old Frankie Addams.

During the five years that McCullers took to write *The Member of the Wedding*, much had changed about societal expectations and representations of adolescent girls in America. A new sub-cultural identity, the bobby-soxer, had emerged, provoking new anxieties surrounding gender-norms and expectations of adolescent girls' behavior. Coined in 1944, the term "bobby-soxer" emerged as an alternative to the earlier term "sub-deb," which tended to be reserved only to describe upper-class white adolescent girls who were soon to "debut" into society. Unlike the sub-deb, the bobby-soxer identity could cut across class (and at times, racial) lines, and was typically marked by girls' attire of denim, penny loafers, and, of course, bobby-sox. As Mary Celeste Kearney points out,

² For more information on the publication and drafting process of *The Member of the Wedding*, see Carr.

the bobby-soxer, with her more masculine attire, disposable income, and greater freedom also threatened domestic containment ideologies, where women were encouraged to return to the home and assert a more traditional model of femininity. She “represented a new form of young female subjectivity that subverted traditional ideologies of gender and generation while also blurring the boundaries between the private and public spheres so essential to the maintenance of the heterosexual patriarchal social order” (274). Thus, in order to neutralize the threat that the bobby-soxer posed, films, radio shows, and popular book series always regulated her through the controlling gaze of the father. By the late 1940s, popular representations of bobby-soxers had emerged into a full-blown genre, complete with its own narrative rules and conventions. The genre had many rules, but one thing was clear: by the end of the narrative, the gender-bending, rule-breaking bobby-soxer would be successfully transformed into a beautiful young woman, ready to assume the expected societal role of wife and mother.

It is within this climate of increased anxiety about bobby-soxers that Carson McCullers wrote *The Member of the Wedding*. Tracing the growth of twelve-year-old Frankie Addams over one Georgia summer, *The Member of the Wedding* tells the story of Frankie’s anxious, sexually fraught summer spent fantasizing about joining her brother and his fiancé in a tri-part matrimony. In the process, her black housekeeper Berenice Sadie Brown acts a kind but firm gender-regulating force, facilitating Frankie’s transformation from gender-queer Frankie into young “lady” Frances. By the end of the novel, Frankie has seemingly followed the trajectory of many of the bobby-soxer girls featured in films, moving from the more racially diverse city and into homogenous white suburbia. In this way, *The Member of the Wedding* seemingly mimics much of the bobby-

soxer genre found in the 1940s: it assures its audience that gender-queer adolescent girlhood is merely temporary -- a mild, even amusing, glitch that will quickly fade with proper surveillance.

If *The Member of the Wedding* told only this story it would hardly be noteworthy. What makes *The Member of the Wedding* significant, however, is its complication of the bobby-soxer narrative and the resulting new model of adolescent girl development in postwar American fiction. *The Member of the Wedding* accomplishes this act through the presence of two “queer double” figures, John Henry and Honey. Through these characters, McCullers presented a racially and sexually diverse perspective of adolescent development not found in other contemporaneous narratives of adolescent girlhood, including the bobby-soxer narrative. As Frankie’s six-year-old cousin, John Henry is most certainly marked as queer, and serves as Frankie’s foil on her quest towards white heteronormativity. Featured wearing women’s clothes, drawing surrealist pictures of human bodies, and dreaming of a world where everyone was “half boy and half girl” (96), John Henry offers a radical alternative to the vision of postwar America that Frankie is asked to absorb. Similarly, Honey, Berenice’s foster brother, embodies a radical form of black anger that cannot be wholly contained within “acceptable” limits of postwar blackness. These two characters are good, just, figures, and are wholly sympathetic. By the end of the novel, however, John Henry is dead, and Honey is in jail. It is John Henry’s death that acts as the catalyst for Frankie’s family to move to the suburbs, and her subsequent transition from Frankie to Frances. Yet even as she transitions to white womanhood effectively, the loss of John Henry and Honey haunts Frankie, lingering over

her and threatening to expose her performance of white heteronormativity as false. In the end, Frankie matures into Frances, but the cost of her growth is called into question.

It is this paradoxical narrative structure – the simultaneous advancement and undercutting of the adolescent girl’s trajectory into white heteronormative womanhood– that I argue is the defining feature of *The Member of the Wedding*, and the foundational model of subsequent postwar female Bildungsromans I examine in this dissertation. It is a confusing thread to untangle. On the one hand, *The Member of the Wedding* participates in the postwar rhetoric of the bobby-soxer genre, successfully substituting Frankie’s gender-bending performance for the more heteronormative performance of young woman Frances. On the other hand, the structure compels the reader to pay attention to the sacrifice required of such development, and to ask whether the cost of entry into a hegemonic model of womanhood is too high. What are we to make of this narrative structure, and how are we to understand Frankie’s development into womanhood in *The Member of the Wedding*?

The question has divided McCullers scholars. Feminist and queer scholars such as Rachel Adams, Sarah Gleeson-White, and Thadious Davis build on Bakhtin’s model of the carnivalesque, have claimed that the text is liberating and progressive. On the opposite end, other scholars have labeled it repressive and reactionary.³ Those who declare it liberating argue that the text provides spaces, however brief, that celebrate sexual difference and racial equality, while those who term it repressive argue that the ending cannot be ignored, because the most radically different characters in the text, queer John Henry and outlaw black man Honey, are dead or in jail, and androgynous

³ For scholarly readings that embrace a “liberating” reading of *The Member of the Wedding*, see White, Yeager, Adams, Davis, and Seymour. For “repressive” readings, see Westling, White, Byerman, Freeman, and Abate.

Frankie is now a fully feminized “Frances.”⁴ Rachel Adams, for instance, argues for a more progressive reading of *The Member of the Wedding*, claiming that McCullers “engages in a project of social criticism that, at its most penetrating, reveals the links between sexual intolerance and racial bigotry” (553). Michelle Abate argues to the contrary, asserting that “Rather than announcing the wartime erosion of gender, race and sexuality, [McCullers] ultimately reinscribes them. At the end of the novel, the young girl ceases to be a freak. In doing so, she demonstrates the historical reality that freakishness is not an innate identity but a performed one” (Abate).

This chapter addresses this critical divide by examining *The Member of the Wedding* within the context of the bobby-soxer genre and the larger rhetorical apparatus of postwar liberalism. Although *The Member of the Wedding* was published at the height of bobby-soxer narratives in American culture, it has never been scholastically considered within this context. Even readings that situate *The Member of the Wedding* within the broader socio-historical context of the postwar era are rare.⁵ Yet I argue that reading *The Member of the Wedding* within the context of popular postwar representations of adolescent girlhood reveal the ways in which McCullers offers a distinctly different narrative of adolescent girl development not found in other contemporaneous texts at the time. By drawing on similar tropes and themes used in popular bobby-soxer films and books, McCullers “queered” the bobby-soxer narrative, distorting it and filtering it through a dark lens. In doing so, she turns the light-hearted, comedic bobby-soxer narrative into a tragedy, moving the burden of adolescent self-development away from the girl herself to the sinister operating logic of a pervasive

⁵ Abate and Yeager’s readings are notable exceptions.

political ideology that molds adolescent girls into white heteronormative womanhood. Frankie's development is a "cold growth," one that is robbed of alternative political possibility and intersubjective connection. In this way, McCullers offered neither a progressive, liberating model of womanhood, nor a reactionary one. Rather, she offered a much more self-aware, fatalist, narrative of adolescent girlhood, one that is resigned to the larger social forces at work and skeptical of the possibility of resistance. The most radical characters, John Henry and Honey, are excluded from participating in a postwar society, as they cannot successfully perform ideal models of masculinity. And although Frankie and Berenice can internalize a liberal model of postwar femininity, they remain haunted by those who have been left behind. *The Member of the Wedding*, then, challenges its readers to question what has already been lost, and what may continue to be lost, in a society that molds adolescent girls into vacant, lifeless subjects.

The remainder of this chapter, then, focuses on the operating ideological forces at work within *The Member of The Wedding*. In order to show the ways in which McCullers queered the bobby-soxer narrative, I examine the generic conventions of contemporaneous bobby-soxer narratives. I show how closely aligned *The Member of the Wedding's* plot is with other bobby-soxer narratives, and yet departs from them in significant ways. First, *The Member of The Wedding* disrupts typical bobby-soxer juxtapositions of criminality and the adolescent body by aligning Frankie's "criminal" identity with other outsiders in her community – namely black and queer characters in the novel. By substituting the regulating, policing gaze of the father with the split gaze of Berenice, a one-eyed black housekeeper, *The Member of the Wedding* co-opts Frankie into white womanhood while simultaneously calling into question what gets lost as a

result. Secondly, I examine how *The Member of the Wedding* explores the limits of queer resistance to social forces through Frankie's interaction with John Henry and Honey. Rather than celebrating John Henry as a liberating model of queerness, *The Member of the Wedding* violently punishes his vision of queerness, casting doubt on whether any form of social resistance to postwar ideologies are possible.

Ultimately, I show that McCullers creates a new model of the female Bildungsroman, a narrative that critiqued the process of traditional postwar adolescent development while remaining limited in its ability to offer an alternative model of growth. It is this model that will define the female Bildungsroman for the next fifteen years, and will shape the representation of white adolescent girlhood for decades to come.

The Bobby-Soxer Genre in Film and Radio

By the time that *The Member of the Wedding* was published in 1946, the idea of a bobby-soxer as a potential threat to social order began to fuel comedic representations of the bobby-soxer on film and in radio. Her new importance as a consumer led to a flood of mass media products devoted to telling the story of the bobby-soxer. The 1941 Broadway production of *Junior Miss*, loosely based on Sally Benson's 1939 book of the same name, sparked a slew of radio, movies and book series featuring bobby-soxer protagonists. Some of the most popular radio series included the teen radio show *A Date With Judy* (1941-1950, with MGM's movie version appearing in 1948) and the *Corliss Archer* series (1943-1956, a series so popular it spawned books, two movies starring Shirley Temple, a television show, and a comic book series). As Ilana Nash shows, these bobby-soxers were "delightfully dangerous," in that they were "old enough for troubling sexuality, young enough for discipline" (164). On screen, the bobby-soxer is refreshingly

modern precisely because she is an excellent consumer; she is the best dressed in the family, constantly aware of new trends and items to purchase, and up-to-date on speaking the modern lingo. Yet as a figure described by Nash as “rendered without personhood,” the bobby-soxer in mass media projections was continually made to blame for the family’s larger problems, repeatedly accused of self-absorption, and constantly suspect in committing sexual transgressions (167). Because these transgressions and faults were always situated within comedy, however, movies and radio painted the bobby-soxer merely as the source of lighthearted exasperation, as opposed to causing any real trauma to the family unit.

As both Devlin and Nash have demonstrated, the most important relationship the bobby-soxer has is with an authoritative male figure, usually her father but not always. He functions to both acknowledge her budding sexuality and regulate it, admiring her as she comes down the stairs in a new dress, or as she puts on make-up for the first time, but quickly scolding her anytime she is perceived as exceeding the realm of his control. For example, in *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer* (1947), starring Shirley Temple, Cary Grant, and Mina Loy, Temple plays the charming bobby-soxer Susan. Susan falls desperately in love with Dick (Cary Grant), a free-thinking painter who is much older than her. Through a comic series of events arranged by Susan’s uncle, a psychologist by trade who is convinced that Susan’s feelings are a normal acting out of the Oedipus complex, it is decided that Dick will *pretend* to court Susan, until Susan realizes she is not in love with him. Susan, however, never recognizes that Dick is truly in love with her older sister Margaret (Mina Loy). Instead, it takes her uncle’s intervention and a comedic moment in the courtroom to convince Susan to quit her “foolish” antics. He threatens

seventeen-year-old Susan: “I should take you over my knee and give you the good spanking you deserve.”⁶ Devastated, Susan threatens to run away, but the overstuffed frilly suitcase signals to the audience this attempt will be futile. Ultimately, Susan succumbs to the chastising, apologizes to her sister and skips away with the happy thought of dating Jerry, a boy her age deemed a much more appropriate object of interest. Thus, the bobby-soxer’s danger of disrupting conventional sex/gender codes is neutralized by the literal invocation of male violence and law enforcement, and her acquiescence reaffirms the triumph of patriarchal rule.⁷

The Member of the Wedding participates in many of the narrative conventions of the bobby-soxer genre. Frankie’s summer involves a misperceived relationship with a much-older soldier, an obsession with her brother’s wedding, and a botched attempt to run away from home. As in so many of the bobby-soxer films, Frankie’s mother is dead, leaving her with only her father. Throughout the text, Frankie is repeatedly accused of self-absorption, “causing trouble,” and is depicted as potentially violent. Even more similar to Susan, Frankie’s run-away moment is halted through the intervention of law enforcement, as her father sends for the police to find her. By the end of the narrative, it appears that Frankie has successfully transformed into Frances, as she happily skips away from Berenice and follows her mixed group of friends, one of whom is suggested is a love interest. In this way, then, *The Member of the Wedding* seemingly invokes the theme

⁶ The image of an adult male spanking a teenage girl is prevalent in bobby-soxer films. Ilana Nash’s analysis of the film *Kiss and Tell* (1945) describes a movie poster featuring a buxom Shirley Temple sprawled across a grown man’s lap as he suggestively hits her with the flat side of a hairbrush. Furthermore, the practice of spanking teen-aged girls does not appear to be merely limited to filmic imagination. A 1945 *Chicago Daily Tribune* advice column features a letter by a teenage girl complaining that nearly two-thirds of her friends “suffer the indignity of being up-ended across an adult-knee and being smacked resoundingly with the back of the hairbrush.” The advice columnist admits that “spanking has become a fad among teen-agers’ parents,” and that is perhaps best done away with (“Problem of the Bobby-Sox Crowd”).

of “delightful danger” found so often in bobby-soxer narratives, neutralizing Frankie’s gender resistance into a quaint, passing fancy.

While contemporary scholars may not have yet connected McCullers’s text to the bobby-soxer genre, book reviewers in her time certainly did. According to *The Washington Post*, the book taps into the mind of the adolescent girl so well that it can explain the “current reasons for juvenile delinquency” (“The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers”). Many reviewers tried to neatly fit the narrative into the bobby-soxer narrative evoked by *Junior Miss*, expanding more traditional story of the transition from bobby-soxer to young woman. *The Washington Post* evokes the classic bobby-soxer narrative as it describes *The Member of the Wedding* as “a study of the painful mutation from crew haircut to hairdos, from calloused bare feet to high-heeled slippers, from shirt and shorts to evening gowns and lipstick” (“The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers”). Isa Kapp of *The New York Times* describes the transformation of Frankie into Frances as an “ugly duckling” who “squeezes free of a few layers” (Kapp). Edwina Dixon of *The Pittsburgh Courier* takes the bobby-soxer rhetoric to an absurd level, painting Frankie’s struggles as lighthearted and silly:

The heroine is a twelve year old girl whose glamorous summer outfit is worn frequently enough for you to get the idea it is her favorite: blue track shorts, BVD undervest, no shoes on her feet, and all topped off with a crew haircut! This summer she discovers through much travail of spirit and the general humiliation of such discovery that she belongs to nothing, to no real family, no clubs, no youthful group as do the other girls she know, and, horror of horrors, not to her brother’s wedding party! Through the pages of Carson McCullers’ “The Member of the Wedding,” one finds satisfactory entertainment, more than a few good belly laughs, and many pathetic incidents, every one ringing a bell in the hall of your memory; for you will see yourself over and over again in the bewilderment and gropings of this lonely little girl. (Dixon)

As Dixon's review shows, critics often brushed aside Frankie's struggles as trite. Yet even as these critics tried to force *The Member of the Wedding* to fit exactly into the bobby-soxer narrative, they could not help but admit that something was awry. Despite telling the story of "crew cuts to hairdos," *The Washington Post* claims that the novel is like an "opiate," offering "perversions of the essential truth" ("The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers"). No twelve-year-old, he scolds, is "as bisexual as ballet dancers and as morbid as Dostoevsky." Orville Prescott complains that the novel is "adroit but dreary," needlessly messing up a simple story of adolescence by making Frankie "grotesquely pitiful" (Prescott).

The reviewers' comments reveal that something about Frankie defied conventional representations of postwar adolescent girlhood. Yet they could not identify what, exactly, prevented *The Member of the Wedding* from adhering to generic expectations of the bobby-soxer narrative. The remainder of the chapter, then, will explore the similarities and differences that *The Member of the Wedding* shares with bobby-soxer narratives, and demonstrate how McCullers disrupted the bobby-soxer narrative and exposed the deep underlying problems with postwar models of adolescent girlhood.

Frankie's Criminality and Berenice's Racial Justice

Midway through the novel, in excited anticipation for her brother's wedding, Frankie (who by this point in the novel is referring to herself as "F. Jasmine") has purchased a dress on her own to wear and wants to surprise her six year old cousin John Henry and Berenice by trying it on for them. At first, the scene appears remarkably similar to Judy Graves's ball gown appearance in *Junior Miss*: Frankie gracefully descends down a staircase wearing the dress, and Berenice has her eyes closed with "her head bowed, as though she was in church" (89). As Frankie stands before them at the foot of the stairs, John Henry opens his eyes and exclaims, "Oh, how pretty!" (89). Yet the classic Americana scene of bobby-soxer-turned-to-young-woman is then immediately disrupted. The problem for Frankie is that she has purchased an oversized orange evening gown; both its garish color and its adult fit render it inappropriate for Frankie's twelve-year-old body. Berenice, who had told Frankie to purchase a pink day dress, quickly disapproves, and an argument ensues between them:

'But I don't see what you mean,' F. Jasmine complained. 'What is wrong?' Berenice folded her arms over her chest and said: 'Well, if you don't see it I can't explain it to you. Look there at your head, to begin with.' F. Jasmine looked at her head in the mirror. 'You had all your hair shaved off like a convict, and now you tie a silver ribbon around this head without any hair. It just looks peculiar.' 'Oh, but I'm washing my hair tonight and going to try to curl it,' F. Jasmine said. 'And look at them elbows,' Berenice continued. 'Here you got on this grown woman's evening dress. Orange satin. And that brown crust on your elbows. The two things just don't mix.' F. Jasmine hunched her shoulders and covered her rusty elbows with her hands. . . 'I think you're just not accustomed to seeing anybody dressed up,' F. Jasmine said. 'I'm not accustomed to human Christmas trees in August.' (89-90)

Berenice's claim that Frankie's hair is "shaved off like a convict" is not the first time the text links Frankie's body to criminality. Throughout the text, Frankie is

constantly policed, and she is repeatedly referred to as a “criminal” and an “outlaw.” She feels that she is constantly under surveillance and that any moment the “Law” could find her and “throw her in jail” (22). Frankie views her own body as dangerous and capable of destruction. Her physical state is in constant flux and feels in need of regulation; her body temperature is often noted as “feverish,” and Frankie fears that the rate of her growth spurt is uncontrollable and makes her a “freak.” Furthermore, Frankie’s fears of her own body, as well her fears of the “Law,” lead her to harbor “secrets”; she knows that she is in “secret trouble,” and is constantly concerned that others will discover the “secret sins” she has committed (3; 25). Like conventional bobby-soxer narratives, then, Frankie’s body is represented as deviant and in need of regulation. Yet unlike them, Frankie has internalized the fearful postwar rhetoric her body: she continually deploys the language of regulation, surveillance, and secrecy onto herself. Rather than view her changing body as engaged in a process of growth, she views it as a threat, and worries about how it positions her as an outsider. In this way, McCullers transforms the association of criminality and the adolescent girl body from a site of comedy to a site of psychological disturbance. As a result, McCullers positions Frankie as queer: Frankie occupies a non-normative space, and renders her thoughts and desires as suspect and “unjoined.”

Frankie’s concerns about her inherent criminality was consistent with 1940s concerns about female juvenile delinquency. In November 1946, The National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency gathered the FBI, the Department of Justice, and eleven other federal, state and private agencies in Washington D.C. to discuss rising crimes rates within younger populations. Among these concerns were the juvenile delinquency rates of teen girls. Although the ratio of male-to-female

delinquents was around 6:1 in the 1930s and early 1940s, by the end of the 1940s one out of every four delinquents was female (Devlin 53). Of the offenses girls were most charged with, shoplifting and sex offenses ranked highest. Thus, what adolescent girls were admired for most – their sexual allure and their economic potential – was also what society claimed needed to be regulated and policed.

Consistent with female juvenile delinquent statistics of the era, Frankie commits both shoplifting and sexual offenses. She “broke the law again, and then again” (25). The narrator catalogues Frankie’s offenses: she “took the pistol from her father’s bureau drawer and carried it all over town and shot up the cartridges in a vacant lot”; she “changed into a robber and stole a three-way knife from the Sears and Roebuck store” (25). Despite escaping the Sears and Roebuck store with the knife without incident, Frankie continues to be afraid that the police will catch her, and that she belongs in jail. She mentions jail frequently, and it occupies her thoughts throughout the narrative:

After she took the three-bladed knife from the Sears and Roebuck store, the jail had drawn the old Frankie – and sometimes on those late spring afternoons she would come to the street across from the jail, a place known as Jail-Widow’s Walk, and stare for a long time. Often some criminals would be hanging to the bars; it seemed to her that their eyes, like the long eyes of the Freaks at the fair, had called to her as though to say: We know you. (124)

For Frankie, the criminals’ eyes survey her and judge her just as much as the police themselves. Frankie’s recognition of herself as “bad,” and as outside the law, makes her feel afraid, and like the “world seemed somehow separate from herself” (24). Frankie identifies herself with those cast to the margins, and recognizes herself as belonging to this group.

Most disturbing to Frankie's psychological well-being is the "secret and unknown sin" she had committed with Barney MacKean earlier that year: "In the MacKeans' garage, with Barney MacKean, they committed a queer sin, and how bad it was she did not know. The sin made a shriveling sickness in her stomach, and she dreaded the eyes of everyone" (25-26). Like the criminals in the jail, Frankie fears people's "eyes" when they stare at her. Frankie's delinquency, then, is marked by fear, especially fear of men: "There was only the fear of Barney, her father, and the Law" (26).

Frankie's fear of her father relates directly to her delinquency. The narrator notes that Frankie hadn't always been "bad"; in fact her troubles had begun only after April, when her father declared that she was now "too big" to sleep in his bed, a ritual they had practiced since Frankie had been a child. One night as they were preparing for bed, her father looked at Frankie, saying, "Who is this great big long-legged twelve-year-old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old Papa" and subsequently sent her to sleep in her own room (24). Since that moment Frankie "began to have a grudge against her father" and notes that "they looked at each other in a slant-eyed way" (24). It was only then that "the troubles started" (25).

Frankie's perception of this act as a sign of rejection aligns *The Member of the Wedding* with contemporaneous bobby-soxer narratives. As Rachel Devlin has shown, the singular explanation offered by psychologists and sociologists for female delinquent behavior in the postwar era was lack of affectionate attention by her father. This explanation was tied directly to psychologists' attribution of the girl's misguided Oedipus complex. A girl's "acting out" or delinquent behavior was attributed by psychologists to her father's emotional distance, his lack of acknowledgement that she was becoming a

woman, or his overly strict insistence that she remain a “little girl.” To “correct” the girl’s actions, then, the father was gently encouraged to let his daughter wear lipstick, to give her money for pretty dresses, and to shower her with the affection that “only a father” could give. Such an explanation is offered by Susan’s uncle in *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*: he explains that Susan is attracted to Cary Grant as a result of misplaced affection for her father. To correct Susan’s behavior, the uncle encourages Dick to treat Susan as a mature woman. These plots demonstrate Devlin’s point: “The teenage girl in the postwar period in the United States was granted unprecedented sexual freedom, yet every aspect of her sexual self was viewed in terms that reflected the primacy, power, and inescapability of her first and lasting sexual relationship with her father” (73).

In a disruption of the bobby-soxer narrative, which would police the girl body through the surveillance of the father, *The Member of the Wedding* instead places Frankie under the watchful gaze of her black housemaid Berenice Sadie Brown.⁸ What results from a new black female gaze on the white adolescent girl body is not the relaxing of gender norms on Frankie – in fact they are tightened. Yet it is through this regulation of Frankie’s body that Berenice simultaneously invites Frankie to engage in a distinctly liberal postwar vision, one that allows for racial equality and justice. By encouraging Frankie to see herself as a “criminal” and a “freak,” Berenice encourages Frankie to identify with the disenfranchised African American community and envision a world where racial inequality would no longer exist. In this way, McCullers ensures Frankie’s successful entry into white womanhood, and yet simultaneously asks the reader to identify what kinds of political and affective alliances may have been lost as a result.

⁸ For fascinating, well researched accounts of the relationship between patriarchal surveillance and adolescent girls in American postwar culture, see Devlin and Nash.

Described as a middle-aged “broad-shouldered” black woman, the most distinguishing characteristic of Berenice is her glass eye, which is bright blue: “It stared out fixed and wild from her quiet, colored face, and why she had wanted a blue eye nobody human would ever know. Her right eye was dark and sad” (5). As a black woman with a blue glass eye, Berenice’s gaze is literally divided, and her influence over Frankie is equally held in tension. In envisioning a perfect world, she imagines a world free of racial injustices: “there would be no colored people and no white people to make the colored people feel cheap and sorry all through their lives” (96). She ties this vision to a world free from violence: “No war...no stiff corpses, hanging from the Europe trees and no Jews murdered anywhere...No war in the whole world, but peace in all countries everywhere” (97). Yet at the same time she is a tireless enforcer of gender standards, especially on Frankie. She encourages Frankie, “You ought to fix yourself up nice in your dresses. And speak sweetly and act sly” (83). Throughout the novel, Berenice reinscribes Frankie’s identity as a criminal. In addition to complaining that Frankie’s hair has been “shaved off like a convict,” when Frankie asks about changing her name, Berenice informs Frankie that it is “against the law” (17). At times, Berenice takes on the role of the “Law” herself. Chasing Frankie around the kitchen, the narrator notes Berenice tried to catch Frankie “by the collar, like the Law catches a no-good in the wrong” (78). Repeatedly, Berenice’s reference to the law is made in relation to gender standards. Insisting that Frankie cannot join her brother and his wife on their honeymoon, Berenice reminds Frankie of God’s “law” that Noah admitted animals on the ark “two by two” (78). Later, when engaged in a discussion of what a perfect world look like, Berenice claims that “the law of human sex was exactly right just as it was and could in no way be

improved” (97). Thus, Berenice is situated as a powerful regulating force for Frankie’s sexuality, and as someone who can potentially curtail Frankie’s delinquent behavior.

Yet just as Berenice polices Frankie’s gender performance, she constantly teaches Frankie about injustices done to the African American community. Although Frankie claims that she feels “caught,” Berenice reminds her that she is “caught worse than you is...because I am black” (119). Berenice tells Frankie that “they done drawn completely extra bounds around all colored people” (119). The “they” Berenice refers to is often the police, and Berenice warns and protects Frankie from engaging with the actual police. One day, when Frankie’s cat Charles goes missing (the cat also is curiously androgynous; Frankie notes that the cat will also respond to the name “Charlina”), Frankie decides to call the police in the hope that they might look for it. Berenice scolds her against this act: “I can’t see how it is such a wise idea to trifle around with the Law. No matter for what reason...You just now set there and spelled them out your name your house number. Where they can lay hold of you if ever they take the notion” (32). In this didactic moment, Berenice instructs Frankie to view the police not through the lens of white privilege, but through the eyes of the African American community, which views the police as always potentially a threat.

While Berenice teaches Frankie to empathize and identify with black oppression, she remains just on the side of “socially acceptable” blackness. Thus, although Berenice and Frankie fear being labeled as criminals and both long for a world of justice and connection, they can only speculate about being labeled “criminals” – they have yet to experience an actual moment of imprisonment. However, Frankie’s “criminal” identity is juxtaposed with Honey’s actual struggle with the police. Honey, Berenice’s cousin,

operates as a kind of “queer double” for Frankie, in that he reflects the actual social ramifications that occur to those relegated to the margins. As Frankie’s queer double, Honey expresses much of the same dissatisfaction that Frankie has, but is punished much more severely for his deviation from the social norm. Described as a “sick-loose person” who “God had not finished,” Honey’s anger at racial prejudice, and his shame at being unable to join the army, leads him to become addicted to drugs and alcohol (38; 128). Periodically he drops by to see Berenice and ask her for money to support his drug habit, and Berenice reluctantly complies, as Honey is the only family she has left. Frankie and Berenice both feel protective of Honey; Berenice notes that a “boy like him feel like he just can’t breathe no more. He feel like he got to break something or break himself” (120). She identifies his frustration as expressing much of the anger felt by the black community: “Sometimes it just about more than we can stand” (120). Yet despite Berenice’s identification with Honey’s pain, she also recognizes that Honey’s inability to regulate his anger, and his excessive “irrational” addiction habit situates him outside the boundaries of acceptable black masculinity; he cannot be an “appropriate” postwar black model citizen that is championed by the Civil Rights movement. As Ruth Feldstein notes, “It was potentially rebellious or bitter black men – the alter ego of the passive Sambo figure – who so worried whites and had done so for over a century...[Thus,] inherent to racial liberalism in [the early Cold War] period was the sense that the government needed to promote the development of black manhood” (78-79). In this way, Honey’s turn to drugs – an excess of bodily indulgence – renders him not only “unfit” for black citizenship, but also renders him as a threat to the national order. Thus, the postwar liberal ideology that drives the action of the novel leads Honey to his only logical end:

desperate for cocaine, Honey breaks into the pharmacy of the druggist who was selling it to him, and is caught by the police (161). By the end of the novel he is in jail. Unlike Berenice, then, who has been able to operate within the confines of a postwar liberal ideology, Honey exists outside of the paradigm, unable to regulate his emotional desires to fit the more moderate ideal of a tempered black masculinity. For this reason, he is marginalized and rendered unfit to join a postwar social order.

Honey's literal embodiment of the criminal directly corresponds to Frankie's perceived criminality. This move is crystallized in the climactic scene of the novel, when Frankie has decided to run away from home. Frankie runs away from home in the middle of the night, leaving a short farewell note to her father. Her flight is short lived, however. Her hasty packing awakens her cousin John Henry, and it is not long before her father has read the note and calls the police. While Frankie contemplates her next move at the Blue Moon Cafe, a police officer finds her and brings her home. The moment represents the end of Frankie's androgynous summer, and marks her entrance and acceptance of a postwar patriarchal order:

It was her father who had sicked the Law on her, and she would not be carried to jail. In a way she was sorry. It was better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see. The world was too far away, and there was no way any more that she could be included. (157)

In this moment, Frankie's encounter with law enforcement stands in direct opposition to Honey's. Although Honey is literally taken to jail, he claims, "For the first time, I am free." For Frankie, however, it is her perceived freedom – her "freedom" to live a scripted performance of white femininity under the domain of her father – that ultimately forecloses her from any true, human connection with others. Her recognition that it was

her father, and not Berenice, that “sicked the Law” on her, demonstrates that Frankie recognizes that Berenice, like herself, must operate under the same patriarchal rules, and that despite Berenice’s rigid gender enforcement, Berenice is as much of an ally that Frankie could ever hope to have. Ironically, it is by recognizing that the law will from now on *not* recognize her as a criminal that Frankie has her most desperate moment of empathetic identification. In the Blue Moon Café, a racially integrated space, Frankie desperately looks at a Portuguese man she had cheerily talked with earlier that week. She “narrowed and tensed her eyes to will him to look at her...but his glance passed by her in a casual way and there was in those eyes no feeling of connection” (158). She “turned to the others in the room, and it was the same with all of them and they were strangers” (158). Finally, Frankie has no choice but to turn her eyes to the “Law”: “He looked at her with eyes as china as a doll’s, and in them there was only the reflection of her own lost face” (158).

Thus, as Frankie transforms into Frances, and is more fully absorbed into both whiteness and traditional femininity, she becomes isolated from those she most wished to be close to. Berenice’s lessons on racial justice and inequality remain, but they will be hollow, and confined to ideology only, as she cannot truly engage with the marginalized populations with which she once identified. This loss becomes clear in the final scene of the novel. Frankie’s father has decided to move their family to the suburbs, and Berenice has decided it is time to quit her job and enter into a loveless, but economically stable, marriage with T.T., a wealthy black restaurant owner. Without Berenice’s presence, Frankie’s suburban world will be completely defined by whiteness. As the newly dubbed “Frances” and Berenice sit in the kitchen on their last day together, Frances’s vapid

personality is already on full display. Honey has been reduced to only a “hush” in Frances’s mind, and she is more concerned with talking about her friend Mary Littlejohn and their new interests in Michelangelo and Tennyson (both figures that represent male bodily perfection and empire) (159). Already her relationship with Mary is straining her relationship with Berenice; Frances patronizingly scolds Berenice that “There’s no use our discussing a certain party. You could not possibly ever understand her. It’s just not in you” (160).

Ultimately, because Frankie is absorbed into a postwar model of domestic containment, she is prevented from achieving any kind of feminist alliance with Berenice or fighting for racial equality. The dual “jailings” of Honey and Frankie both work within the same ideological operation of the novel in order to secure Frankie’s absorption into white femininity. Ironically, the paradox of postwar liberalism requires that Berenice herself initiate this co-optation. Through marking her body as criminal, Berenice leads Frankie to initially identify and connect with the marginalized, and yet by making it a crime to be androgynous, she forces her to accept traditional white femininity, ultimately foreclosing her from achieving any kind of real racial alliance. Thus, although both are headed for a more economically prosperous future, Berenice and Frankie leave the more integrated and feminist space of the early 1940s, and enter the postwar era separated, regulated, and contained, haunted by the memory of who they once were and what they once had.

John Henry and the Limits of Queer Resistance

Through drawing attention to the real effects of criminalizing those who exist on the margins, and having Frankie affectively identify with them, McCullers “queered” the postwar bobby-soxer narrative that aligned adolescent girls with criminal actions. Rather than telling a story that celebrates the expunging of queer “Frankie” for a more heteronormative “Frances,” *The Member of the Wedding* mourns the loss of Frankie, and asks whether acquiring white heteronormative womanhood at the expense of relinquishing the ability to identify with non-normative others is worth it.

Despite this social critique, McCullers does not offer a progressive reading as some queer and feminist theorists would like to believe. Rather than engage in the creative possibilities that identification with queer others could offer, McCullers instead remains skeptical of the possibilities of social change through identification, and instead offers a more fatalistic, resigned perspective. This is most clear through the figure of Frankie’s six-year-old cousin John Henry. If Honey acts as a queer double for Frankie in terms of expressing his dissatisfaction at being confined to the margins of society, John Henry acts as Frankie’s queer double in another way. John Henry represents the creative possibilities of existing outside postwar ideology, and suggests an alternative way of engaging with the world. Yet by the end of the novel, John Henry’s vision has been permanently foreclosed, and John Henry is dead. It is ultimately the closing off of John Henry’s vision of the world that propels Frankie into heteronormative white womanhood. In this way, McCullers rejects the idea that a queer vision of the world could ever be possible, and suggests that engaging in such alternative possibilities could have dangerous effects.

John Henry's alternative vision begins in the kitchen. The kitchen is the center of emotional identification in the novel, the place where Berenice, John Henry, and Frankie engage in deep conversation and "world making." Yet despite acting as a safe space for Frankie, the kitchen also exerts violence on her body. The kitchen – as the foremost space of domestic labor -- is a place that contains and distorts Frankie's body. Described as "like that of a room in the crazy-house," the kitchen makes Frankie feel "sick," "afraid," and constantly under surveillance (6). The narrator describes Frankie's feelings of being watched by the kitchen: "It was as though the four walls of the kitchen watched her, and the skillet hanging on the wall was a watching round black eye" (89). Just like Berenice polices Frankie, the kitchen itself is an extension of Berenice's surveillance. When Frankie is in the kitchen, she does not have access to her own bodily image; the mirror hanging over the sink makes her reflection look "warped and crooked" (4). Another scene describes Frankie's fear of the mirror: "Frankie went again to the kitchen mirror and stared at her own face...She stood before the mirror and she was afraid...According to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And what would be a lady who is over nine feet high? She would be a Freak" (19). In this way, then, the kitchen is a space that renders Frankie's body as unstable; she cannot reach homeostasis, nor can she access a clear image of herself that is not always in flux. Thus, the kitchen, as a space of domestic containment, is a space that violently destabilizes Frankie's body, as it threatens physical sickness, psychological institutionalization, and, most scarily to Frankie, freakishness.

Yet if the kitchen is a space of violent containment and distortion of Frankie's body, for her young six-year-old cousin John Henry it is a place where bodies can

creatively be arranged and celebrated. Described as a “little old woman dwarf” who repeatedly wears women’s clothes such as high heels and women’s hats throughout the story, John Henry is marked as queer. He both creates and celebrates non-normative bodies. When Frankie and John Henry discuss a past visit to a Freak Show, John Henry insists that the pinhead woman was “the cutest little girl I ever saw” (21). The kitchen is decorated with John Henry’s “queer child drawings” of “Christmas trees, airplanes, flowers,” and “freak soldiers” (9). The text frequently depicts John Henry in the act of creating off-kilter, non-normative bodies in the kitchen. When Berenice gives John Henry some extra dough, he sets to work making a “biscuit man.” His biscuit man emerges out of the oven “swollen,” with its “fingers running together” and the “walking stick looking like a tail” (10). Later, John Henry draws a picture of a “telephone man” that causes Frankie uneasiness. The telephone man “was drawn in side-view profile, yet this profile had two eyes – one eye just above the nose bridge and another drawn just below. And it was no hurried mistake; both eyes had careful lashes, pupils, and lids” (138). Thus, John Henry’s understanding of bodies is one that is fluid, surrealist, and unbound by social laws. Indeed, in direct opposition to Frankie, John Henry appears entirely uninhibited by any laws or regulations. His lack of concern about laws frustrates Frankie, and she reserves her greatest anger for him. When the three of them play a card game together, Frankie rages that John Henry isn’t playing the game correctly: “Frankie threw her cards down on the table. ‘See!’ she said to Berenice. ‘He don’t even follow the first beginning laws! He’s a child! It is hopeless! Hopeless! Hopeless!’” (16).

John Henry’s surrealist view of bodies extends to his view of the world. The narrator notes that he “did not think in global terms” (96). Unlike Berenice’s postwar

liberal world, John Henry's world is completely outside the domain of any political paradigm, and exists instead wholly in the realm of the aesthetic, as a "mixture of delicious and freak": "the sudden long arm that could stretch from here to California, chocolate dirt and rains of lemonade, the extra eye seeing a thousand miles, a hinged tail that could be let down as a kind of prop to sit on when you wished to rest, the candy flowers" (96). In John Henry's world, everyone would be "half boy and half girl" (98). Here, John Henry conflates body and land, animal and human, organic and inorganic. Although his world of course beckons to a "Candy Land" style version of a child's imagination, it also quite seriously evokes a Salvador Dali-esque landscape of hermaphrodite bodies and a world that is not bound by the laws of nation-states but is instead governed by affect and the psychological forces of a dream world.⁹ The "extra eye seeing a thousand miles," especially, evokes Dali, and suggests an alternative, disembodied gaze that sees the world without owning it, that effortlessly floats through time and space. Thus, John Henry's gaze is an aesthetic, artistic one, radically separated from a postwar liberal vision. It attempts to "see" and represent bodies outside of the mid-twentieth century's global framework and instead attempts to see bodies as pleasurable and fluid, incapable of being static and policed.

⁹ Salvador Dali was incredibly popular with postwar American audiences, and by 1945 he was living in California and working in Hollywood with top filmmakers. In 1945 he worked with Walt Disney to produce a short cartoon film, *Destino* (production was subsequently canceled, but the film was finally released in 2003 to great critical acclaim), and in 1946, he famously produced the Freudian dream sequence scenes for Hitchcock and Bergman's collaborative film *Spellbound*. Interestingly, in 1948, Dali announced that he was artistically "through" with Freud and was now turning his attention to what he deemed more important: the atomic bomb: "In period No. 2 Dali will be classic rather than romantic, and the technique will be increasingly solid and substantial since, leaving the Freudian dream world, he will enter the physical world of distant stars, atomic energy, and light-years" ("Dali Turns To Atom"). A year later, Dali was true to his word; his work, *Leda Atomica*, was painted in a classical style, and depicts the Greek myth of Leda and the swan adhering to Einstein's principles of physics, with all matter suspended and floating in air. Dali's work offers yet another example of a sexualized (and here, raped) female body being conflated with atomic energy.

Similar to Honey, then, John Henry stands as Frankie's queer double. Seemingly unbound by the laws of society, he is free to imagine the world outside of the political realm. Unlike Frankie, he is intimately comfortable in the domestic space of the kitchen and prefers tasks delegated to the "feminine" sphere. He does not feel the need or desire to engage in the more masculine activities of warfare to become a world citizen like Frankie does, because he does not think about the world in terms of "citizenship" or "membership" at all. Yet, like Honey, for this worldview, John Henry must pay the ultimate price. Because John Henry's queerness does not fit the prescribed postwar model of ideal citizenship, the logic of the novel can only lead to his death. Unlike Honey, however, who claims he finds freedom in death, John Henry suffers immensely from a painful death by meningitis: "John Henry had been screaming for three days and his eyeballs were walled up in a corner stuck and blind. He lay there finally with his head drawn back in a buckled way, and he had lost the strength to scream" (162). Thus, John Henry's "extra eye seeing a thousand miles" is permanently closed and blinded, guaranteeing that his queer vision of the world is completely shut out from the postwar era.

For Frankie, John Henry's death, like Honey's jailing, propels her towards accepting traditional femininity. In particular, John Henry's death frees up the domestic space of the kitchen, because his parents decide in their grief to move to the suburbs with Frankie and her father. Returning to the house on moving day, Frankie finds that "it was not the same kitchen of the summer that seemed so long ago. The pencil pictures had disappeared beneath a coat of calcimine, and new linoleum covered the splintery floor" (159). The prospect of moving to a new home excites Frankie, and she eagerly tells

Berenice that the new house has a “laundry room,” the newest room of domestic labor in the postwar suburban home (162). In this sense, the absence of John Henry’s has left Frankie’s world smaller, and thus has led her to accept that the domestic sphere is where she ultimately belongs.

Ironically, by embracing the domestic sphere, McCullers leads Frankie to accept a more feminized version of belonging to the world – that of the passive American tourist, who consumes Europe not with tanks and war planes, but by shopping and photography. Visiting the old house for the last time, she exclaims to Berenice that she and her friend Mary Littlejohn are going to “travel around the world together” (159). Frankie envisions a trip to Europe that involves passing through Luxembourg and studying the great poets and painters of Europe (159). Unlike her earlier vision of travel, which involved her “breaking all records,” and belonging to “so many clubs” she “couldn’t keep track of them,” Frankie now is content to be merely a member of her high school friend group.

Thus, affective identification with queer others has both operated paradoxically on Frankie’s body in order to compel her to embrace an ideal model of postwar citizenship. Not only has she assumed a more traditional model of femininity; she has also internalized an ideology that secures her domestic containment. Yet despite this commitment, Frankie cannot totally escape the memory of John Henry. Bizarrely, it is through an image of department store consumption that John Henry returns to Frankie in “nightmare dreams”; he came “like an escaped child dummy from the window of a department store, the wax legs moving stiffly only at joints, and the wax face wizened and faintly painted, coming at her until terror snatched her awake” (162). As Frankie

moves forward to the economic prosperity of the postwar era, then, she remains haunted by the queer world visions of John Henry that were so violently cut short.

Conclusion

Six years after the publication of her novel *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers adapted her novel into an award winning play. In the 1952 play version, McCullers makes a seemingly insignificant change in the final scene. Frankie meets Mary Littlejohn “at the lipstick counter in Woolworth’s,” whereas in the novel she meets Mary Littlejohn at a raffle. When looked at more closely, however, this change reveals Carson McCullers’s evolution on her view of what counts as tragic in the development of adolescent girlhood. In her first novel, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, published in 1940, the tragedy of young fourteen-year-old Mick Kelly also occurs at a Woolworth’s: she is doomed by economic depression to work in a Woolworth’s to support her family, instead of pursuing her dreams of becoming a musician. As McCullers wrote herself in an early character outline of Mick Kelly: “At the beginning she is a crude child on the threshold of a period of quick awakening and development. Her energy and the possibilities before her are without limits...Her tragedy does not come in any way from herself – she is robbed of her freedom and energy by an unprincipled and wasteful society” (“Mortgaged Heart” 147). Frankie’s story is no less tragic. Yet whereas economic factors are what doom Mick, however, Frankie is stripped of selfhood by postwar expectations and representations of adolescent girlhood. Frankie is robbed of her freedom not by working for Woolworth’s, but by consuming a postwar model of heteronormative girlhood. It is her ability to consume girlhood, to purchase it as a product, which erases Frankie’s

subjectivity and her sense of connection with the world around her. In many ways, this is McCullers's ultimate subversion of the bobby-soxer narrative. Rather than emerging into womanhood by performing heteronormative beauty, Frankie instead has lost access to any kind of meaningful connection with others. As a result, McCullers believed the postwar bobby-soxer narrative of adolescent girlhood to be even more sinister than earlier 1930s models of adolescence. Mick is reduced to her value as a worker, while Frankie is reduced to the value of her beauty. More than Mick, Frankie has lost her entire sense of self-worth.

In the end, I have demonstrated that *The Member of the Wedding* should ultimately be read as a tragic text. McCullers exposes that the rise of postwar models of adolescent girl heteronormative development comes at a great cost: it requires the destruction of the most radical figures in society: both the radical black anger of Honey and the queerness of John Henry are silenced at the end of the narrative through brutal, violent deaths. It is these figures, the "freaks," which construct the constitutive outside of the postwar era. Frankie is ultimately stripped of personhood, becoming the vacant, mass commodified American teenage girl that the nation depends upon to forget the atrocities of World War II. Berenice is ultimately made complicit in the ideological workings of a postwar ideology and is left alone in a loveless marriage. Thus, as both Berenice and Frankie barrel towards a postwar future, they remain haunted by the queer possibilities of an alternative social order, and carry with them the melancholic echo of a silenced history.

The tragic, paradoxical model of adolescent growth that McCullers created in *The Member of the Wedding* thus paved the way for a new kind of female Bildungsroman.

Rather than creating a linear trajectory of growth from girl into woman, *The Member of the Wedding* suggests that an erosion of moral selfhood occurs at the expense of growth into heteronormative womanhood. Frankie's "cold" growth, then, is a kind of anti-development: it exposes the emptiness of a selfhood that grows bereft of empathetic identification.

While *The Member of the Wedding* leaves Frankie stripped of selfhood, McCullers still creates a character who is relatable and sympathetic. What happens, though, when a woman writer creates a queer girl character who deflects any kind of sympathetic reading? The next chapter explores Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion*, a problematic and difficult novel that tests the limits of a progressive reading of queerness in the postwar era. Moving away from the domestic space of the kitchen to the wide open space of the Colorado ranch, Jean Stafford takes the queer double model in the postwar female Bildungsroman to a new, troubling, level.

CHAPTER 3

POSTWAR MASCULINITY AND GROWING SIDEWAYS: QUEER LOGICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN *THE MOUNTAIN LION*

The postwar women writers in this dissertation underscore the loss of a queer double as the prelude to their adolescent girl protagonist's domestic containment. Queer doubles who disrupt the domestic space of the kitchen, women's dormitory, or front yard are ejected from these coming-of-age narratives in order to launch the white adolescent girl protagonist into a "cold," predetermined future of postwar housewifery. As I have just shown with *The Member of the Wedding*, John Henry and Honey's queer deaths catalyze Frankie's entry into a vacant, mass commodified, white womanhood: Frankie grows, but "coldly," foreclosed from any kind of alternative community. It is for this reason that I argue these female Bildungsromans are powerful political critiques of postwar ideology: they compel their readers to grapple with just how violent a process domestic containment can be, and consider what bodies are erased as a result.

This chapter, however, moves away from the domestic space of the home to an entirely different space: the wide open expanses of the Colorado Rockies. In the process, it considers how a young girl's "sideways" queer development troubles the imagined space of the frontier, and examines the implications such a disruption has for constructions of masculinity, particularly postwar models of masculinity based on social theories of the frontier. A dual coming-of-age story about brother and sister Ralph and Molly Fawcett, Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* (1947) traces the growth of the pair over five years, split between their time in California with their mother and sisters, and their summers spent with their uncle on a Colorado ranch. At the heart of *The Mountain*

Lion's tragedy is Molly Fawcett's accidental death at the hands of her brother Ralph. In a climactic moment that represents the title of the novel, Ralph mistakenly shoots and kills Molly while hunting a mountain lion. While McCullers focused on Frankie's development into womanhood by eliminating her queer counterpart John Henry, Stafford flipped the script, positioning Molly Fawcett herself as the queer figure who facilitates Ralph's growth. In this way, *The Mountain Lion* is a text even more committed to queer loss than *The Member of the Wedding*, in that it makes the death of the queer figure the central drama of the plot, and even more explicitly links the ejection of queerness to the production of heteronormative adulthood.

Despite the central role queerness plays in the text, *The Mountain Lion* has never been studied as a novel about queerness, nor as a novel engaged with questions pertaining to the postwar era. Stafford has largely been categorized as a western writer, and scholarly readings of *The Mountain Lion* (what few there are) have examined how Stafford exploded generic conventions of the classic western formula. Cathryn Halverson, for example, argues in *Playing House in the American West* (2013) that before her shocking death, Molly finds an alternative domesticity in the western frontier, and therefore invites the reader to re-imagine the western landscape outside the myth of "manifest destiny" (205).

Similarly, Susan Rosowski considers *The Mountain Lion* as "one of the most radical explorations of gender, creativity, and the significance of the West in American literature" (158). Rosowski particularly demonstrated how Stafford intricately exposed the mechanics by which masculinity is constructed through violent suppression of women's voices and the myth of the frontier. Yet despite these important analyses that

make a powerful case for Stafford's work to be considered in a feminist context, these readings don't go as far as they could in contextualizing this coming-of-age narrative in two important ways.

First, despite cataloguing Molly's extraordinary non-normative development, no critic has acknowledged her queer performance of girlhood. Instead, Molly's non-normative growth has largely been explained as a metaphorical act – a symbolic representation of how women's development is stunted by the masculine myth of the frontier, rather than a serious representation of queer desire. Yet I emphatically argue that Molly should most certainly be read as a queer figure. In particular, I claim that Molly undergoes what Kathryn Bond Stockton has termed "sideways growth," a model of childhood development that is always already queer and defies ideas of linear progress; it is this queer model of development which ultimately destabilizes the novel's Cold War fantasy of American white frontier masculinity. Rather than celebrate Molly's "sideways growth," however, Stafford critiques it, and raises questions about the limits of queerness as a model of social disruption.

Secondly, previous scholarship falls into the trap of dehistoricizing Stafford's west, of assuming that the west Stafford writes about is the same static myth of the nineteenth century frontier, largely unconnected with the early postwar era in which she was writing. As I will show, one cannot fully account for *The Mountain Lion* without considering how it is deeply entrenched in postwar fantasies of masculinity and power. Stafford uses the setting of the west in order to critique a particular *type* of masculinity: a postwar model of frontier manhood. The postwar model of frontier manhood conflates an intellectually elite personality with the rugged manhood of the cowboy. His masculinity

is normalized and invisible, and as such is the ideal postwar man to defeat communism. Rather than following this model, Stafford illustrates the dangers of a masculinity forged in fantasies of violence and conquest. Ultimately, then, a careful examination of how postwar social theorists and psychologists understood the relationship between the frontier and child development will better explain how Molly's queer identity disrupts Ralph's frontier development. This chapter, therefore, puts queerness, the frontier, and masculinity in conversation with one another, and examines how *The Mountain Lion* undermines postwar constructions of heteronormative development. Ultimately, I show that Stafford's novel not only disrupts the American western genre; it also disrupts postwar ideological conceptions of adolescent development. In the process, it questions whether Molly's "sideways growth" is in any way a liberating model of growth worth celebrating. Less so than McCullers, Stafford did not believe in utopian possibilities that can emerge when a broader spectrum of sexual difference are brought into the fold. For this reason, *The Mountain Lion* is worthy of much greater critical attention than it has received. It is undoubtedly one of the most compelling and disturbing American coming-of-age novels written in the twentieth century.

Molly's Sideways Growth

From the outset, Molly is a problematic character. Ugly and filled with self-loathing, Molly hates her body, takes comfort in self-mutilation, and nurses jealous feelings of prettier girls, including her pretty older sisters, Leah and Rachel. Over the four years in which the novel takes place, Molly completely fails at growing up, never achieving any kind of emotional satisfaction or maturity. To an extent, her death at the hands of her brother feels like a mercy killing: by the end of the novel, her sadness

permeates the narrative, and it feels as if death might be the more preferable ending to Molly's plot. Why is this so, and what is Stafford doing with Molly's character?

Some scholars have noted the undeniable biographical similarities that Stafford shared with Molly. Like Molly, Stafford had an older brother, Dick, whom she was very close to in childhood. Dick Stafford tragically died in a senseless car accident after returning home from World War II. As a result of Dick's death, Stafford suffered from major bouts of depression and disturbed body images, including anorexia, alcoholism, and self-mutilation. Writing to her then-estranged husband, Robert Lowell, in 1945 about her book, Stafford admitted that "Gradually I became Molly. I was so much Molly that I had to write her book" (qtd. in Goodman). Considering the similarities, then, it is interesting that it is not Ralph who is killed, but Molly. As Goodman notes, the novel's violent end to Molly suggests that perhaps Stafford had wished she had died rather than Dick (Goodman).

Expanding this line of inquiry, I argue that Molly's death reflects not only Stafford's struggle with self-love but also the relationship between queer failure and reproductive futurism. As Lee Edelman, Heather Love, and Kathryn Bond Stockton have discussed, American literature has long associated queerness with loss, failure, and death.¹⁰ Edelman's fiery polemic *No Future* (2004) demonstrated how queer identity is intimately tied to the concept of "reproductive futurism" – an inherently politically conservative ideology that perpetuates the cult of the child in order to preserve sameness, repetition, and, paradoxically, the reiteration of the past (60). Because same-sex relationships have historically been viewed as defying the procreative "purpose" of marriage, Edelman argues, queerness has been bound up with the death drive, and thus

¹⁰ For a comprehensive review of this trend, see Love.

has been disinherited from the “promise of futurity” (27). Rather than claim the right to a future, however, Edelman proposes that queerness should *embrace* the structural negativity of the death drive, channeling the power of negativity into the destruction of the symbolic “child.” The result, Edelman claims, is a disruption of the social order. Embracing Edelman’s ethos but rejecting his radical turn to the complete destruction of the child, Stockton instead offers her concept of “growing sideways,” which she defines in contrast to a vertical development of “growing up.” Instead, “growing sideways” is a horizontal process of continual deferment and delay that refuses the adult/child binary. For Stockton, childhood is always already sideways, and necessarily queer. Her model of growth “suggests that the width of a person’s experience or ideas, their motives or their motions, may pertain at any age, bringing ‘adults’ and ‘children’ into lateral contact of surprising sorts” (11). It is therefore growth that often occurs retroactively, through the specter of death, and through continual delay of its own arriving, “something that locates energy, pleasure, vitality, and (e)motion in the back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive...moving suspensions and shadows of growth” (13). She posits that the “child who by reigning cultural definitions can’t ‘grow up’ grows to the side of cultural ideals” (13). Stockton sees this “ghostly gay child” as historically produced and bound by the limits of a society yet to come to grips with the idea of queer children. Despite the historical situatedness of this figure, however, Stockton sees “sideways growth” as ultimately productive, creating strange temporalities, strange metaphors, and uncanny relationships that would otherwise be incapable of existing in a linear model of growth.

Considering Stockton's argument alongside *The Mountain Lion*, I argue that Stafford's novel, written over fifty years earlier, calls into question whether the model of sideways growth can in any real way be productive for the adolescent girl protagonist. In other words, while Molly's sideways growth creates a new space for alternative possibilities, which conceivably disrupts heteronormative postwar models of child development, she also suffers the consequences of committing such radical acts. In particular, Molly's sideways growth results in three horizontal connections that lead to her downfall. The first way Molly grows sideways is through her creative growth as an artist: over the four years during the course of the novel, Molly considerably matures in her artistry as a writer, horticulturalist, and photographer. As a result, Molly's artwork creates an alternative representation of the western landscape, queering the West's relationship to normative postwar models of development that value violence and the suppression of a domestic sphere. Yet it is also her artistry that kills her: her desire to take a photo of a mountain lion positions her directly in Ralph's line of fire. Secondly, her sideways growth results in strange relationships that would otherwise be considered taboo: she insists that she is the daughter of Magdalene, the black housekeeper, and that she and her brother Ralph are to be married. These strange relationships may traverse social and racial boundaries, queering nuclear models of marriage, reproduction, and inheritance, but they also pose extreme problems in the novel's representation of race and sexuality. Finally, Molly's sideways growth results in an adamant rejection of her body's physical growth. She rejects puberty altogether and fears sexuality. Molly's denial of her body results in a queered temporality, which denies reproductive futurism and therefore leaves her in a perpetual state of delay. Her constant wish to deny her body disallows her

from experiencing any kind of pleasure, and as a result stunts her emotional growth.

Molly is ultimately doomed to fail, and her failure is a spectacular one. Considered from this perspective, *The Mountain Lion* is a tragic Bildungsroman that questions whether the cost of queer, sideways growth might be too high.

From the very beginning of the novel, Ralph and Molly are presented as doubles. Not only do they share similar interests, such as playing in “the Wash,” a gorge outside their California home, sharing a love for *The American Boy* magazine, and telling jokes, but they also have the exact same physical features and illnesses:

Ralph was ten and Molly eight when they had scarlet fever. It left them with some sort of glandular disorder, which was not malignant, but which kept them half-poisoned most of the time and caused them, frequently, to have such bad nosebleeds that they had to be sent home from school...Since their illness, moreover, they had been thin, pallid, and runny-nosed. From some obscure ancestor they had inherited bad, uneven teeth and nearsighted eyes so that they had to wear braces and spectacles. Their skin and hair and eyes were dark and the truth of it was they always looked a little dirty. They were small for their age but they had large bones, and it was predicted with pity that they would shoot up suddenly in that dreadful ungainly way so many children do, going through several years of coltishness, painful to behold. (28)

From the outset, Molly and Ralph are situated as “half-poisoned” by a “glandular disorder,” foreshadowing problematic development. Their inheritance is ruled barely legitimate and traceable only to “some obscure ancestor”; they display undesirable physical characteristics that are “dirty” and “dark,” and they are marked as physically weak, characterized by their “braces and spectacles.” Initially, then, Ralph and Molly are on identical tracks of non-normative development, and are, in a way, genderless – there is no difference in Ralph and Molly’s physical development. They are positioned as outsiders, weak, and barely capable of claiming a birthright to a white elite American lineage. Ralph’s ugliness, and similarity to his sister, leads him to look like “sissy,”

whereas Molly's appearance renders her a tomboy (128). Thus, Jean Stafford originally sets up Molly and Ralph as "tomboy/sissy" pair that characterized novels of the nineteenth century.

Three years after their first visit to Colorado, however, when Molly and Ralph are in the throes of puberty, it becomes clear that Molly's trajectory of growth is becoming very different from Ralph's. Ralph is beginning to grow out of his "sissy" persona, while Molly becomes more and more strange:

He was filling out now; he had lost his pallor and his eyes, quite strong, were clear. He would have taken pleasure in his appearance if it were not for Molly with her ugly face and her lankiness and the slouching, round-shouldered gait which she had developed and which caused her enemies to call her "the crab." There was something wrong with her and while he still loved her, he wished oftener and oftener that she did not exist. (128)

Molly's development then, described as like a "crab," is literally assigned a sideways motion. Molly's mother notes that time does not seem to affect how Molly looked: "time did not soften her...although she had shot up and was taller than any of her schoolmates, [she] looked just the same as she had done when she was eight" (123). Molly's bodily development does not follow typical notions of linear growth, and in the process, she queers the very concept of time, unsettling those around her, including herself.

Molly's attitude towards her body and its development verges on paranoia. Molly adamantly rejects sexual knowledge and her own physical body. When Ralph witnesses the birth of a calf and tells Molly what he has learned, Molly, age eight, sticks "her fingers in her ears and screamed at him, 'You're a liar! You're a dirty liar!'" (128). This may be a normal response for an eight-year-old, but Molly's fear of sexuality only accelerates as she gets older. At age thirteen, Molly refuses to take a bath unclothed. She instead wears a maroon bathing suit, waiting until the bath is completely full before

stepping inside. The narrator notes Molly's fear that "a slender snake might come right through the faucet" (175). The sexual imagery of the snake penetrating Molly's body is unmistakable here, and the thought of snakes "writhing" about causes Molly to "shiver all over" (175). While she bathes in the tub, she takes pleasure in the idea that she does not have to be conscious of her body; in fact, she aims not to be conscious of it at all: "she was never conscious of it as a *body* and had never spoken this word aloud and almost died when one of her sisters would jokingly say, 'Don't touch my body'; Molly thought of herself as a long wooden box with a mind inside" (177). Molly's fear of bodily development and of sexuality creates a strange temporality. Her preference for perpetual delay puts on her outside the traditional path of motherhood and reproduction, and positions her sideways to typical postwar models of female development.

Indeed, Molly's hatred and refusal of her own body illustrates the degree to which Molly fears a future confined by motherhood and reproduction. While Ralph is fascinated by a cow's process of birth, Molly understands that such a process could befall her own body and prevent her from achieving her singular desire, to be a writer. Unlike Ralph, who begins to learn the carnal and cruel mastery of animal bodies by butchering and shooting, Molly attempts to reimagine the landscape of the west and its cruel truths of sexual labor and violence by choosing to develop a relationship with the land based on nurturance of garden plants, scientific observation of local insects, and through writing fiction.

Early in the novel, Molly asks Ralph to listen to a poem she had written, entitled “Gravel”:

Gravel, gravel on the ground,
Lying there so safe and sound,
Why is it you look so dead?
Is it because you have no head? (31)¹¹

The poem is certainly queer. Similar to John Henry’s surrealist “telephone man” drawing with two eyes on the same side of his face, Molly’s gravel is queer in its uncanny representation of reality, and, in particular, the landscape. The poem is an apostrophe, and Molly anthropomorphizes the addressee, bringing about an uneasy relationship between the speaker and the gravel. Ralph is disturbed by the anthropomorphic act, and dismisses its logic: “It doesn’t make sense. Gravel doesn’t have a head” (31). Molly insists this is precisely the point: “That’s what I said. ‘Is it because you have no *head*?’” (31). From Ralph’s perspective, the gravel, an inorganic object, could not be dead, because it was never alive in the first place. But Molly’s logic is that the gravel’s simulation of death stems from lack – its lack of a head *causes* it to look dead. In this way, the gravel, for Molly, is a queer object, bound up as a symbolic representation of the death drive; it is a “persistent negation that offers assurance of nothing at all: neither identity, nor survival, nor any promise of a future” (Edelman 48). It is an object worthy of both fascination and fear.

Molly’s poem – and the significance of the gravel – represents Molly’s entire trajectory as an artist. Like the gravel, Molly is queer because she is bound up with the death drive and an inevitable thrust towards failure and lack. Yet it is also Molly’s “queer eye” which allows her to reconstitute the western landscape through her art, forming a

¹¹ The poem, although attributed to Molly, was actually written by Stafford herself as a child (Goodman).

representation of the Colorado Rockies that disrupts traditional models of the frontier. Whereas Ralph climbs the mountains in order to hunt, Molly instead finds the mountains an “ideal place for her study” (206). Rather than packing typical camping or hiking supplies, Molly packs “three notebooks with glossy blue covers...a pocket dictionary; pencils and a pocket knife to sharpen them wife; a safety-match box full of paper clips and one of rubber bands; and, though she had no use for is, several sheets of carbon paper” (206). Through her interest in writing, Molly forms a different relationship with the western landscape that is not forged through violence but is instead forged through artistic creation. As Halverson and Rosowski note, the glade becomes a space of Molly’s textual production (Halverson 204), a western version of Woolf’s “room of one’s own” (Rosowski 147).

Yet Molly’s poetry, short stories, and photography are in no way domesticated; rather, they queer the western landscape. Through her stories’ emphasis on masochism, “freaks,” and odd perspectives of landscape, Molly presents a “sideways” look at the west. Molly’s photography distorts the traditional representation of the landscape: “in her pictures the sky took up more space than anything else and trees and buildings tended to be diagonal” (209). Her short story, “The Mystery of the Portland Vase,” features Lord Gainsborough, a man “who had wasted away that all that was left of him was one tooth” and a close friend, “Launfal Hottentot, who was all gone but the lobe of his right ear” (207). In her telling of Aesop’s fable “The Snake and the File,” a snake bloodies himself against a file believing that he is damaging the file and not himself (74). In each artistic representation, Molly distorts the bodies of her subjects, pushing them outside the center of the frame. This move results in a representation of the west where the viewer/reader

cannot completely gaze upon its subjects, and therefore cannot own them. They are fragmented, constantly in the process of being undone, and destabilized. Molly's art, then, queers the western landscape, and offers an alternative representation of subjectivity.

However, there is one subject of her art that Molly does wish to capture in full frame – Goldilocks, the titular mountain lion that brings about Ralph and Molly's downfall. Like Ralph, Goldilocks is also the object of Molly's desire. While Ralph and his Uncle Claude aims to kill the mountain lion, Molly wishes to capture it in a different way – by taking a picture of it with her Brownie camera. Molly's fear of the mountain lion is two-fold; not only is she aware of its ability to kill her by her claws and hunting prowess, but she also understands that it is the ideal of beauty that the mountain lion represents – female power– which is so deadly to Molly. Molly “imagined its claws, its teeth, the way it would hiss” (211). She “wished that she had yellow hair like the lion's,” but seeing the lion had made her feel “unsafe” (212). Molly's awareness of her own non-normative body leads her to compare herself to the “golden cat”: “she thought again of the golden cat and her fear left; in its place there came a soft, inexplicable sadness. On the way down, her arm had once brushed against her brother's and remembering this, she felt weak” (212). Once back home, she admits her sadness: “She was full of wishes. She wished that she had yellow hair like Leah's and Rachel's and the lion's. She wished she could go to London and become a famous writer. She wished she did not have to wear glasses; she wished she were only four feet five” (212). She “reached for her diary and her pencil and to the list of unforgiveables she added her own name. She burst into tears

and cried until she was hungry, and all the time she cried she watched herself in the mirror, getting uglier and uglier, until she looked like an Airedale” (217).

Rather than relinquish her dream of obtaining an ideal model of feminine beauty, Molly instead seeks out the mountain lion once more, just to have an image of it. In this way, she, like Ralph, also aims to shoot the mountain lion – but with her camera, not a gun. Through her photography, Molly believes she can possess the West, and through it, possess ideal feminine beauty and power. It is an imperial move on Molly’s part, and one that brings about her downfall. Ultimately, Molly’s attempt at western conquest – her desire to capture the mountain lion’s beauty and power and make it hers – fails, resulting in her death. Ralph’s quest for manhood, and Molly’s quest for female artistic power, spectacularly collide, as Ralph’s desire to shoot the mountain lion leads to him accidentally shooting Molly. It is Molly’s death that marks the ultimate queer reconstitution of the western landscape. In this moment, Molly transforms into the poetic figure of the gravel – an object of lack, with no head. Ralph finds Molly with “a wound like a burst fruit in her forehead,” her body like “burnt out wood” (229). Passing from subject to object, Molly, like the gravel, brings Ralph a sense of “neither a past nor a future to his life” (230). In this way, Molly’s dead body, lying adjacent to Goldilocks, disrupts the narrative of frontier development, suggesting that “normative” growth can only occur through the violent expulsion of queer desire.

And yet Molly’s power *is* in her death – she has forever queered Ralph’s claim to ownership of the west. Prior to her death, she refuses her family history of wealth and property ownership by suggesting she is the daughter of the black housekeeper, Magdalene. By queering her family tree and blood relations, Molly literally turns the

model of the American nuclear family sideways. This becomes most clear in a scene where Molly fantasizes that she is the daughter of Magdalene and wonders if Magdalene is married to the Skalawag in the Wash: “Molly got the idea that she looked like Magdalene and for some time thought that she was probably her daughter” (100). Magdalene, like the Skalawag, is subject to racist characterization, as her character is abstracted into Molly’s fantasies and fears of sexuality:

Molly was so frightened when the old woman took her hand in her skinny black one with its pink palm like a monkey’s that she wanted to go home at once. Magdalene seemed hundreds of years old, so old that had she lived another century or two, she would not look any different. Her skin was not yellowish to show that she had white blood; it was rather as if it had faded to a bluish gray. Her lips were purple and they had so many lines that they looked like narrow grosgrain ribbons; her brown eyes were as mean and watchful as a chipmunk’s, and the scraggly fuzz on her little head looked like dirty snow. She was not in the least kind; she was always smoldering with an inward rage or a vile amusement over something sexual or something unfortunate, and she spoke chiefly in obscene or blasphemous expletives. But she was wonderfully wise. She knew when it was going to rain and when someone was going to get sick and when a cow was going to get through a fence. Her wisdom was something antediluvian and cosmic and the almanac she went by dated back a million years before the fall of man. She was, Molly thought, the wife of the Skalawag at the Wash. (98)

This stunningly racist depiction of Magdalene is one example of why, perhaps, *The Mountain Lion* has remained in and out of print while *The Member of the Wedding* has seen continued acclaim throughout the twenty-first century. Unlike Berenice, Magdalene is not a three-dimensional character with full personhood: she is largely an abstraction of the mammy figure so popular in the 1940s, stuck in “antediluvian,” “cosmic” time, and primitive. What is interesting, however, is that Molly constantly links herself to blackness and darkness, and lays claim to this dark inheritance. Thinking back to her birth, Molly remembers “riding an elephant and the more she looked at her, the more certain she

became that Magdalene had been the driver” (100). Magdalene, more than anyone else, seems to acknowledge Molly for who she is – an outsider, someone who does not and will never assimilate into white heteronormative society. It is fitting, then, that Magdalene has the last word in the novel. As Claude carries Molly, now dead, back to the ranch, Magdalene bears witness to the scene: “Lord Jesus. The pore little old piece of white trash” (231). As “white trash,” Molly’s disinheritance from the landscape is complete, and any initial claim to a birthright is immediately erased. Furthermore, as “white trash,” Molly is positioned “sideways” to whiteness. In this way, Molly’s death queers race, the landscape, and adolescent development in a way that registers loss and trauma for all involved. Her death suggests that desire for a white woman’s alternative mode of existence that lay outside the model of reproductive futurism is ultimately impossible in fantasy of frontier development. And yet, her death has exploded the fantasy itself, leaving everyone in her wake in ruins.

Edelman and Stockton might claim here that in disrupting the social order, Molly’s death is the ultimate embrace of queer negativity. But what, exactly, has been gained at the end? Stafford’s utterly unsympathetic portrayal of Molly leaves us feeling very little about her death, except perhaps relief. Rather than celebrate Molly as a revolutionary figure, then, Stafford asks her readers to question how heteronormative standards of girlhood and womanhood corrupt Molly’s psyche and ultimately make her “ugly.” Because of her fractured psyche, any ability for Molly to successfully grow sideways in a generative way was doomed from the start. *The Mountain Lion* thus brilliantly explores the tragic consequences that come about from hegemonic gender norms.

Ralph's Fantasies of Frontier Masculinity

If Molly's death asks us to consider the consequences of a girl's non-normative growth, Ralph's development compels a reconsideration of postwar models of masculine development. A fundamental piece of postwar mythos was the American frontier, and postwar intellectual elites eagerly considered it. Indeed, to say the entire early postwar American public was caught up in the concept of the frontier is not an exaggeration. As Stanley Corkin has shown, the western was never more popular than in the postwar 1940s and 50s (2). From 1947-1950, Western films accounted for 30% of major Hollywood studio productions, more than any other time in American film history (Corkin 2). And the western was not limited to film: television and radio shows like *The Lone Ranger*, *Howdy Doody*, and *Frontier Town* dominated the airwaves. In particular, these early postwar cultural productions perpetuated an image of "the old west" as the forging ground for American identity, rooted in rugged individualism and violence. While such assertions had of course been made earlier by men such as Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt, the postwar American public filtered these beliefs through the lens of nostalgia, and used them to fortify a belief that the Western frontier unified American identity across centuries. As a result, the myth of the American frontier carried a uniquely strong cultural resonance in the early postwar unseen before and since this period.

Postwar psychologists in particular were invested in exploring the concept of the frontier to explain what was distinctly "American" about child development. Erik Erikson's groundbreaking work on childhood and adolescent development, *Childhood and Society* (1950), synthesized the nineteenth century "frontier thesis" about American

identity and made it front and center to what constituted a distinctly “American” growth trajectory from child to adult. In his assessment of what made American national identity so different from German and Russian identity, Erikson claimed that it was a frontier ethos, filtered through a puritan work ethic, which led the typical adolescent male to embrace an identity that valued “decency in human relations, skills in technical details, and knowledge of facts” (323). In the industrialized world, the American man’s once innate desire to conquer the continent had now led to a desire to conquer the machine. This was a problem for Erikson. Rather than foster values of independence and rugged thinking, the era of automatic industrialization encouraged conformity, producing a type of man who was weak willed and prone to communistic thinking. As a result, Erikson vigorously argued for an American manhood that was active, decisive, and rational, grounded in a frontier ethos.

Erikson was not the only intellectual to mourn the loss of the frontier for American development. Betty Friedan, for her part, claimed the frontier as the *ur*-site of women’s equality. Noting in *The Feminine Mystique* that women first gained the right to vote in Wyoming, Friedan explains,

Feminism also went west with the wagon trains, where the frontier made women almost equal from the beginning....The material details of life, the daily burden of cooking and cleaning, of taking care of the physical needs of husband and children-these did indeed define a woman's world a century ago when Americans were pioneers, and the American frontier lay in conquering the land. But the women who went west with the wagon trains also shared the pioneering purpose. Now the American frontiers are of the mind and the spirit...Why should woman accept this picture of a half-life, instead of a share in the whole of human destiny? Why should woman try to make housework "something more," instead of moving on the frontiers of their own time, as American woman moved beside their husbands on the old frontiers? (66-67)

Friedan was right that the West allowed for more women's equality. But it also represented more than that. For both Erikson and Friedan, the frontier was a leveling ground – a place that, through violence and scarcity, created tough women, tough men, and laid the foundation for a distinctly American character. Without a new frontier to pioneer, then, postwar America risked losing its identity in a sea of suburban domesticity (for Friedan) and automated industrialization (for Erikson).

All of these postwar shifts in attitude toward the West were not merely a product of a changing American cultural imagination; World War II had vastly changed the economic and demographic character of the western states. Nuclear and other military weapons testing in New Mexico and Nevada cemented the perception of the West as an inherently violent landscape, and further ensured the West's longstanding entanglement with the federal government. Furthermore, technological developments such as window air conditioning units, an increase in automobile ownership, and advancements in engineering regarding water conservation made the West more accessible and inhabitable than ever. From 1940 to 1950, California saw a staggering 53% increase in population – due, in large part, to the influx of black, Hispanic, and Asian families seeking manufacturing, defense industry, and service jobs in Los Angeles and greater southern California. From the end of World War II to 1960, for example, over five million African Americans migrated from the Jim Crow South to California (Pastor 36).¹² The western states, then, quite literally, represented unprecedented national growth.

The Mountain Lion, however, casts a suspicious eye on growth. Throughout the entire narrative, growth is a problem, brought about only by violence and loss. Although

¹² There are many excellent scholarly investigations of the postwar American west, including a rising increase in black, Hispanic, and Asian cultural histories of the west. For more information on the changing demographics of the American west since World War II, see Fernlund, Katz, Kun and Palido, and Starr.

the novel is set in Jean Stafford's western childhood of the late 1920s, *The Mountain Lion* reflects all the postwar handwringing over a changing American west. Nowhere is that more clear than in the character of Ralph Fawcett. Through his formative experiences on his uncle's Colorado ranch, Ralph, on the surface at least, seemingly follows the postwar ego psychology model of linear development from boyhood innocence into the heterosexual maturity of manhood. His experiences in Colorado instill Ralph with a distinctively violent masculinity that will, in theory, balance his future experiences as a refined east coast Ivy leaguer, thus setting the stage for Ralph to take on a democratic form of masculinity championed by Erikson. Yet Ralph's growth into manhood is repeatedly compromised and delayed by Molly's queer, sideways development, just as Molly's queer development is, in part, a function of Ralph's attempt to adhere to the frontier myth of manhood. As a result, Ralph's development is a "cold" one: the end of the novel suggests that Ralph may as well go onto achieve a successful heteronormative adulthood, but Molly's death leaves him in a state of suspension, his future hollowed out.

Stafford sets up Ralph's assumption of a postwar model of manhood through several uses of the double: first, the doubled relationship between Ralph and Molly, second, the doubled relationship between California and Colorado, and finally, his doubled model of manhood, between the feminized East Coast merchant Grandfather Bonney and his hyper-masculine ranch hand uncle Claude Kenyon. In each of these moments of doubleness, Ralph rejects what he believes to be the more feminized of the pair – his path into adulthood is one of constantly uncoupling himself from a feminized other and pursuing a frontier style of manhood. Yet his quest for frontier manhood also sets him up for failure: he cannot achieve the hyper-masculine model of masculinity

exuded by Uncle Claude. It is this process of failure (he cannot become like Uncle Claude) and loss (his detachment from Molly) that ultimately sets him up for a “cold” growth. Ralph, in the end, seems poised to adopt Erikson’s model of masculinity that restrains desire, chooses intelligence over physical violence, and exudes rationality over emotion. And yet it is a masculinity that will be psychologically haunted by the death of his sister.

Ralph and Molly’s early childhood is tinged with sexual overtures to each other, particularly Molly to Ralph. They “stuff the boxes in each other’s room at school” on Valentine’s Day; when Molly cries she looks to “be embraced by [Ralph] and breathe in his acrid smell of leather braces and serge and to feel, shuddering, the touch of his warty hands on her face” (12). Yet despite their early childhood that is sexually charged towards each other, Ralph begins to feel annoyed, distrustful, and separate from Molly. This feeling is tied directly to Ralph’s maturing sexual desires, which, at first, are merely nebulous and scattered; he feels an “unusual feeling...almost as if he were clutching his broad mold-colored geography book to his chest” (32). Ralph’s awareness of Molly as a girl marks his attempt to separate himself from her: “It was natural for her to want to be a boy (who *wouldn’t!*) but he knew for a fact she couldn’t be” (30). He becomes annoyed when “she would repeat exactly what he had said immediately afterward” and “told his dreams, pretending that they were her own” (6). Thus, Ralph’s original desire for separation sets up the two competing logics of development for the remainder of the plot; it is a separation that Molly will consistently resist, positioning her for a sideways growth, and one that leads Ralph to seek a model of frontier masculinity.

Ralph's search for a rugged masculinity becomes all the more urgent due to his relationship and upbringing by his mother, Rose Fawcett. Due to the death of their father, Bruce Fawcett, Ralph and Molly are raised by their mother alone, and as a result Ralph sees himself as weak and unprepared for manhood. Rose is an unlikeable character due to her "sissy" treatment of Ralph and her overt favoritism to her two more beautiful daughters, Leah and Rachel (79). Originally raised on the East coast and in the urban upper-classes of gilded age St. Louis, the now widowed Mrs. Fawcett has a deep distrust of the dangers of the western landscape, including California, where the Fawcett children live most of the year, and an even greater distrust of Colorado, where Molly and Ralph spend their summers with Uncle Claude Kenyon. For years, Mrs. Fawcett prevents Ralph and Molly from visiting Colorado, because she claims that "with all those horses and cows there, [there is] just danger everywhere" (41). When Mrs. Fawcett was a teenager, her beloved gentlemanly father from the east coast died unexpectedly. As a result, her mother married a rancher named Kenyon in Colorado, forcing the family to move. Rose was then set with the task of raising newborn Uncle Claude when her mother died in childbirth. Not until age twenty-nine did Bruce Fawcett marry her and take her to California, where she was given a more conventional life of marriage and motherhood. Mrs. Fawcett, then, associates Colorado with two kinds of death – both the physical death of her mother and the social death of her youth. Rather than preparing Ralph to acquire a "frontier" like attitude of manhood, she adamantly shields him from it, and forbids him from acting independently, such as climbing trees, riding bicycles, or building things (79). It is this overcorrection on Mrs. Fawcett's part that sets Ralph up for a hyper-

admiration of Uncle Claude, and an insistent determination to prove a frontier model of manhood.

Critics of *The Mountain Lion* did not hesitate to rail against Molly and Ralph's mother. Orville Prescott lambasted Molly and Ralph's mother as a "chattering snob who made a fetish of a false refinement and phony culture" ("Book of the Times" 19). Similarly, Edward Laycock derided the mother's "phony gentility," and *The Washington Post* sneered that she was "'genteel' without gentility...a snob with a father fixation" ("Books to Read" 15; "The Mountain Lion by Jean Stafford" 10). For these critics, Rose Fawcett is a villain not because she is cruel or vicious; instead, she is despised because she takes on the postwar era's most reviled role of the "phony," with an eye towards the feminine lifestyle of the upper-class East Coast urbanite. Like Holden Caulfield's phony, Rose values "effeminate" bourgeoisie aesthetics rather than the more "authentic" values of the violent American frontier.

It is this divide – California as fake and effeminate, Colorado as authentically masculine – that dominates the novel's representation of space. The narrator explicitly describes Ralph and Molly's life as a "double one," split between school years in California with their mother and summers at the Bar K ranch in Colorado with their uncle (115). The narrator genders the land: Ralph and Molly's lives are like "children of divorced parents who spend a season of each year with their father and the bulk of it with their mother" (115). From the very beginning of the novel, Stafford positions California's multiracial identity as part of its effeminacy. The first scene opens with Ralph and Molly walking home from school, excitedly anticipating their grandfather's visit. As they walk down the road, they encounter Japanese, Mexican, and German otherness: they see

“unusual birds that they thought must have flown up from the South Seas or westward from Japan,” walk by a Mexican migrant worker in an orange grove who they do not reply to because “he was a Mexican,” and pass the house of Mr. Vogleman, a “fat German who wore a white coverall and who had once been stoned by a group of second-graders when they learned what the Huns had done to the Belgians” (5-6).

California’s racial amalgamation and domesticated landscape, then, render it as overly feminized and sexually sterile to Ralph and Molly. Rose Fawcett’s friend, Miss Runyon, a “follower of Dr. Kellogg,” fears sexuality and bodily desires, and eats “neither meats nor spices,” and serves “hamburgers which were really made of Grape Nuts agglutinated with imitation calves’-foot jelly” (9). The Fawcetts’ neighbors, Reverend Follansbee and his wife, give the children “tokens of piety, small New Testaments, packets of Bible scenes, and books of a moral flavor” (28). Reverend Follansbee is described as “an unpleasant-looking man” with a “typical Yankee face” that is “thin and malign” (58). To Ralph and Molly, everything in California is sickly, thin, devoid of bodily pleasure, and trivially feminized. They passionately believe their grandfather Kenyon’s claim that California “offered a man no challenge,” and therefore long to go to Colorado, which they define as “the west”: “They thought of Grandpa’s ranch in the Panhandle and Ralph, sighing, would say, ‘Golly *Moses*, I’d like to go out West.’ For they believed Grandpa Kenyon when he told them that California was not the West but a separate thing like Florida and Washington D.C.” (8).

The one exception to their perception of California is the “Wash”: a dry, cracked arroyo hollowed out by a flood. Ralph and Molly’s grandfather believes that the Wash is the one place in California that “truly is a place” (7). The Wash is presented as

foreboding, dark, and “other,” through the feared presence of a “coal-black Skalawag” who occupies the space and keeps watch over the gems that lay at the bottom. Ralph and Molly fear the black Skalawag, and believe that he “could smell blood, no matter far away he was” (7). As a result of the Skalawag, Ralph and Molly believe that “all mystery and evil came from the Wash” (7). Ralph and Molly associate blackness with evil and otherness, abstracting it into a signifier of western danger. Yet the Skalawag goes beyond representing otherness – he is also representative of sexual desire, something in and of itself seen as dangerous and evil by Molly. Years later, Ralph confesses a sexual fantasy to Molly while they are passing through a dark train tunnel, a moment that horrifies Molly. Ralph later explains the moment by claiming that “something, some dark creature like the Skalawag, had cast a spell over him and he had been powerless to break from it” (187). The Wash, then, represents a problematic sexual desire in Ralph and Molly’s childhood, and foreshadows the troubling landscape of sexuality and racial otherness that awaits them in Colorado.

Despite Rose’s reservations about sending Ralph and Molly away to Colorado for the summer, she is eventually convinced after the death of grandfather Kenyon, who dies when visiting the Fawcett family in California. Uncle Claude Kenyon comes to bury his father’s body, and Molly and Ralph become so insistent on visiting Colorado that Rose eventually acquiesces. Described as “massive,” “bullish,” having an “animal heaviness” with a color scheme of a “rooster,” Uncle Claude is set up as a hyper-masculine figure, and Ralph immediately idealizes him (59). Ralph’s idealization of Claude borders on sexual attraction – Ralph “shudder[s]” and “twitche[s] like a cat’s tail” when Claude looks at him, fantasizes about being with him all the time, and is tantalized by the thought

of Claude having sex with prostitutes: “deeply and secretly Ralph suspected that [Claude] was going to a particular street whose nature he would not allow himself to imagine...bad as he knew it all to be, it sometimes gave him a warm feeling like cocoa on a cold night” (119). Molly, on the other hand, is much more skeptical of Claude and immediately becomes suspicious of him.

The arrival of Ralph and Molly’s first summer together in Colorado at the age of eleven and nine further signals the pair’s separation of their physical development and their close bond, with Ralph becoming increasingly attached to Uncle Claude. Arriving in Colorado by train, Ralph and Molly discover, much to their surprise, that the landscape is much more intimidating than they had imagined, and rather than inspiring wonder in them, evokes fear and suspicion: the landscape is described as “frightening,” “oppressively confining,” and “evil” (95). Although the shared fear might have brought Ralph and Molly closer together, it further separates them. Throughout the four years over which the novel takes place, Ralph and Molly remained close friends in California, but “at the ranch, they all but ignored one another” (115). Colorado is immediately situated as hyper-masculine, brutish, and violent. Unlike the “pineapple upside-down cake, potato salad, and temperance punch” that Ralph and Molly consume in domesticated California, the food on Uncle Claude’s Colorado ranch is “strange,” leaving Ralph and Molly to eat “with distrust” (15; 85). The dining room is filled with men who work on the ranch, and they eat “quickly and efficiently” (84). They eat “buckskin and string beans cooked until they were almost brown,” and drink milk that has “globules of cream” that float on top (85). Ralph, then, initially feels intimidated the idea of Colorado, and fears the violent landscape. Yet he believes that Colorado is more authentic than

California: Ralph notes that “this was the first dining room he had ever seen in which there was not a still life of fruits or fish or a rare roast of beef” (84).

In order to overcome his fear, Ralph spends more and more time on the ranch with his uncle, and Ralph’s infatuation with Claude grows stronger. Ralph continually feels both fearful and desirous of Claude, and is terrified of annoying or boring him. One day, when Ralph falls off a horse, Claude seems frustrated. Ralph notices Claude’s frustration and “the annoyance in Uncle Claude’s voice wounded him” (108). As a consequence of attempting to please Claude, Ralph begins to despise all merchants, and decides that there are two type of men: “Kenyon Men,” who “like Uncle Claude, knew the habits of animals...and who, with age, became neither fat and bald like Grandfather Bonney” (114), and “Bonney merchants,” which included every man he has ever known, with the exception of the men of the Bar K (114). Ralph feels caught between two models of manhood – between the specter of the deceased Grandfather Bonney, an East Coast merchant and Rose’s father, and his ranch hand uncle Claude Kenyon. Grandfather Bonney is revered by Rose Fawcett, but Ralph views him as weak and impotent: “he saw the plump hands as indolent and useless and believed that in a handclasp they would be flaccid” (114). The main difference between Bonney Merchants and the men of the Bar K, as Ralph sees it, is “their attitude toward horses, and, vice versa, the attitude of horses towards them” (114). Ralph wishes for an “operation you could have to drain off the Bonney blood” and then have a “transfusion from Uncle Claude” (120).

In order to impress Claude, Ralph assumes attributes of hyper-masculinity that Claude demands of him. He learns to ride horseback, takes on the chores of the ranch, and absorbs the rough language and jokes of the ranch hands. To an extent, Ralph’s

desire to emulate Uncle Claude has a positive effect: Ralph begins to “fill out,” loses his “pallor,” and grows taller (128). Upon his return to California the first summer, Mrs. Fawcett notes that her son was beginning to “look like a human being” (123). Most importantly, life on the ranch with all those “horses and cows” that Mrs. Fawcett fears brings about Ralph’s sexual knowledge and increased desire. Ralph’s witness of a birth of a calf fills him with “wonder” and marks him as sexually aware (119). Thus, Ralph’s experience in the west, working alongside his uncle butchering cows, riding horses, and learning to shoot, initially seem to provide him a traditional narrative of sexual maturity and development.

However, despite Ralph’s seemingly linear development into manhood, the narrative gives clues that all is not well. At the prodding of Uncle Claude, Ralph stops wearing his glasses. The process causes him to have “hammering headaches” and to “writhe miserably” on the floor, vomiting (117). Eventually, he gets the hang of it, and the narrator notes that Ralph “was able to see *almost* as well as he had done with his glasses” (117, emphasis mine). The word “almost,” though, is key, and indicates Ralph’s inability to ultimately adopt the hyper-masculine persona demanded of him. The symbol of the glasses foreshadows a deeper truth – that while Ralph may be adjusting himself to match the masculine values of the western landscape, he may not be aware of the sacrifice that such changes will demand of him.

It is Ralph’s faulty eyesight that ultimately sets up tragic irony at the end of the novel. Through Ralph’s four summers at the ranch, both Claude and Ralph have been determined to shoot an elusive mountain lion. Claude has deemed the mountain lion “Goldilocks” due to her beautiful golden coat, which makes her “blond as a movie star”

(170). Claude has deemed Goldilocks off-limits to any other man on the ranch, with the exception of Ralph, and that they are only to hunt together. Ralph, however, decides that he will kill the mountain lion on his own. For Ralph, killing the mountain lion represents the achievement of full frontier manhood brought about through violence and conquest – what Richard Slotkin has called “regeneration through violence” (2). The metaphor is explicit: the mountain lion’s blond fur, lean body, and elusive nature make the animal the ideal symbol of female desire. Ralph and Claude’s commitment to hunting the mountain lion, then, seemingly sets up the classic western “showdown”: a battle for Ralph to once and for all prove his frontier masculinity and win the girl (killing her in the process).

Stafford, however, brilliantly and tragically disrupts this fantasy of frontier masculinity. In the months following Ralph’s “tunnel moment,” where he asks Molly to tell him all the dirty words she knows, Ralph feels his childhood coming to a close, and that Molly had “spoiled everything” (226). One day in early October, right before they are to head back to California, Ralph goes up to the mountains. It is at this moment he hears a rustle in the bushes, and is confronted with Goldilocks appearing beside him, happily eating a jackrabbit. Ralph knows this is his opportunity and fires his gun. Yet as soon as Ralph fires the climactic shot, the iconic moment of masculine conquest is immediately scrambled. In a scene eerily resembling a Kennedy conspiracy theory, it turns out that there is a second shooter: unbeknownst to Ralph, Claude had also been stalking the mountain lion, and fired a shot the same time as Ralph. Goldilocks is dead, seemingly leaving the question of who actually killed her in question. Claude seems generous: “No man alive can judge which one of us got her. I reckon we’ll have to call it a corporation” (229). But Ralph knows that “it was not in the place where Ralph had

aimed” (228). This moment of Claude’s triumph and Ralph’s failure descends into true horror, though, when they hear a “sound in the chokecherry bushes beyond them, opposite where Ralph had stood to shoot. It was a sound that could only come from a human throat” (229). Molly lay there in the bushes, fatally wounded. As Claude inspects Molly, her “glasses lay in fragments on her cheeks and the frame, torn from one ear, stuck up at a raffish angle” (229). Molly’s glasses crystallize the tragic irony of the moment: due to Ralph’s desire to separate himself from Molly and achieve a model of frontier masculinity, he stopped wearing his own glasses, resulting in his poor aim and his failure to kill the mountain lion. Ralph’s “hunt for manhood” then, seemed tragically and inevitably flawed from the start. Stafford compels the reader to consider the price required to achieve such an idealized model of violent masculinity.

Like the other queer doubles I examine in this dissertation, then, Molly is killed and ejected from the narrative, excluded from developing into adulthood. For Ralph, Molly’s death allows him a complete separation from his own queer childhood, and sets the stage for him to enter into white heteronormative masculinity. Yet, like Frankie, Ralph’s development into adulthood is now a “cold” one. As he stares over the body of Molly, Ralph notes a stoppage of time, and feels “neither a past nor a future to his life” (230). The novel ends with Ralph sitting beside his dead sister in the back seat of the car as they race back to the ranch. Ralph looks “straight ahead, watching the road being devoured by the car like an endless red noodle” (231). While the reader is not granted any more insight into Ralph’s future, it can be surmised that he does go on, although irrecoverably changed. Molly’s death has set Ralph up to adopt the persona of heteronormative masculinity, even as Stafford critiques the frontier model of

development upon which it is based. Set to return home to his genteel family in California, and likely never to return to the Colorado ranch again (at least, for sure, not ever in the same capacity as he once did), Ralph has adopted both the gentility of east coast mannerisms and the western frontier ruggedness desired in the model of postwar frontier masculinity. Yet Ralph's growth into a postwar model of heteronormative masculinity is successful only to the extent that it necessitates queer failure. Ralph enters adulthood foreclosed from alternative possibilities, and faces a life of emotional and political stuntedness.

Conclusion

Rather than bring about growth, identity, and adulthood, then, *The Mountain Lion* suggests that the myth of the American frontier and masculinity can only bring about pain, stunted development, and psychological fragmentation. Because Molly and Ralph both cannot fit the ideal models of heteronormative femininity and masculinity ascribed to them, the landscape violently punishes them. Stafford asserts that the erasure of alternative models of girlhood and womanhood, outside the boundaries of reproduction and motherhood, can not only cause the physical death of girlhood, but also brings about the psychological wounding of men. As the nation welcomed back physically wounded soldiers from World War II, and also would soon see another war in Korea, Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* is a cautionary tale about the hazards of believing in the positive reinforcement of a violent landscape. The belief that hunting, butchering, and conquering bodies will result in a fully integrated ego, Stafford suggests, is a dangerous myth, and one that will result in the next generation's destruction. Through Molly's art,

Stafford queers American futurity, and in the process poses an alternative to fantasies of manifest destiny.

So far this dissertation has examined the very real horrors of death that await queer figures in Cold War women's coming-of-age novels. These two novels, *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Mountain Lion*, were published at the dawn of the Cold War, in 1946 and 1947, respectively. The next chapter, however, takes the horror of queerness both forward and inward, examining the psychological horror of an adolescent girl protagonist facing the prospect of her own queer sexual desire at the height of McCarthyism, in 1951. It's the type of horror that only Shirley Jackson can write. As I will show, the queer double becomes an even destabilizing and important literary device in Cold War women writers' coming-of-age novels when the doubled character's "realness" falls under suspicion.

CHAPTER 4

ENEMIES WITHIN: THE QUEER ALTER-EGO AND THE FAILURE OF THE FEMALE ARTIST IN SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *HANGSAMAN*

So far I have demonstrated how both Carson McCullers and Jean Stafford sacrifice “queer doubles” in their texts in order to launch their adolescent protagonists into maturity. John Henry, Honey, and Molly Fawcett’s deaths resulted in Frankie and Ralph leaving their queer childhoods behind and resigning themselves to postwar conventions of white heteronormative adulthood. As we have seen, though, both authors hold that such maturation comes at a great cost: each protagonist loses access to a community rooted in alternative ways of being. Thus, these early postwar female Bildungsromans suggest that adolescent development is a process of growing “cold”: reaching white adulthood paradoxically signifies not progress but instead political and affective stuntedness. The death of McCullers and Stafford’s queer doubles, then, signals both the loss of childhood *and* the loss of alternative political possibilities.

While these 1940s novels deploy queer doubles to evoke new imaginative possibilities, Shirley Jackson’s 1951 Bildungsroman *Hangsaman* takes the concept of a queer double in a different direction. Whereas McCullers and Stafford depended on nineteenth century models of the tomboy/sissy pair in their queer doubles, Jackson offered a different model of the queer double: the feminine/butch dyad. *Hangsaman* follows seventeen-year-old Natalie Waite, a feminine, timid student at an all girls’ college who establishes a lesbian relationship with her psychological butch double Tony, a product of her own increasingly fracturing mind. A victim of sexual assault and an emotionally controlling father, Natalie experiences a psychological breakdown over her

artistic desires, and, in an enigmatic, suspenseful scene in the woods marking the climax of the novel, abandons Tony, ultimately accepting a more conventional, heteronormative identity. In the process, Natalie also relinquishes the idea that she could ever become a writer, and appears headed, like her mother, for a life of domestic containment. By the end of the novel, it appears clear that Natalie's lesbian involvements and artistic endeavors have faded, and a more stable, static Natalie has set in. Tony, then, like John Henry and Molly, is Natalie's queer counterpart and signifies alternative political action. Yet unlike other early postwar women writers' queer doubles, Jackson's Tony is deeply problematic. At the heart of the problem lies the question of Tony's "realness": her exact relationship to Natalie remains perpetually ambiguous and has been the subject of scholarly debate. Is Tony Natalie's psychological alter-ego, meant to be understood merely as a fragment of Natalie's broken, potentially schizophrenic, mind, or is she a living, breathing character, seen and acknowledged by other characters in the story? Complicating matters further, Tony's malevolent intent and suspicious actions towards Natalie make her seem like the characterization of the "predatory lesbian" figure found so often in postwar college novels. As Natalie's queer double who threatens to fracture her identity completely, Tony is quite literally treated by Natalie, in Joseph McCarthy's terms, as an "enemy within": throughout the text, she is described as an "enemy," "antagonist," "spy," and, most damnably, "the traitor to traitors" (213). Much like the federal government's purge of gays and lesbians, then, much of *Hangsaman's* plot appears centered around enacting its own Lavender Scare, expunging queer desire from Natalie's selfhood.¹³

¹³ For more information on The Lavender Scare, see Canaday, Corber, and Shibusawa.

Yet I suggest that a closer inquiry of Natalie and Tony reveals a much more complex relationship to queerness than simple homophobia. This chapter argues that Shirley Jackson not only casts Tony as Natalie's butch queer double; she creates Tony as the embodiment of queer desire *within* Natalie herself. As Natalie's queer alter-ego, Tony represents everything that Natalie is not – she is unapologetically assertive, violent, and unafraid to destroy or create. Natalie invokes Tony as a psychological release, temporarily escaping from a world dominated by a controlling father and gaining her access to a deeper part of herself, where artistic and sexual desires collide. Tony gives Natalie a glimpse into an alternative way of being – a way of being an *artist*, in control of what she creates and destroys – that Natalie alone cannot access. Thus, while *Hangsaman* in many ways reinforces an early postwar model of adolescent female development established by McCullers and Stafford, what makes Jackson's novel unique is the way in which it both deploys and subverts the early postwar trope of the predatory lesbian in order to perform its own act of narrative deception: the text is simultaneously a failed *kunsterroman* masked as a successful *Bildungsroman*. This narratological masking is interesting because it allows Jackson to sustain generic and rhetorical conventions of the “predatory lesbian” college novel while also linking female pleasure to artistic creation. Jackson therefore went beyond McCullers and Stafford in her representation of queerness. By linking queer desire to a distinct kind of artistic agency, she suggested that her adolescent girl protagonist might have something to gain *artistically* by acknowledging queer desire within herself. This move sets Jackson apart from other postwar women writers, and marks the beginning of a shift in the female *Bildungsroman* at mid-century.

Yet Jackson does not go as far as she might. Instead, like other postwar female Bildungsromans examined here, she stops short of proposing a celebratory queer revolution. Natalie's strategy is unsustainable; by the end, confronted with the horror of queer desire within her, Natalie destroys Tony, and resigns to living a life of domestic containment. Like Frankie and Mollie, Natalie's access to alternative political and aesthetic possibilities remains just out of reach, unable to be fully realized. Jackson, then, questions whether "woman" and "artist" are categories that are compatible, and asks her readers to contemplate what social forces keep the two at bay.

My investigation of queer desire in *Hangsaman* comes about as scholars have renewed their interest in Shirley Jackson's work and her treatment of queerness. Ironically, analyses of queerness in Jackson's work have increased, while those of queerness in *Hangsaman* have become rare.¹⁴ Studies of the "queer gothic" have promoted *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) as a paragon of postwar queer desire, and have focused on Theo's lesbianism and relationship with Eleanor.¹⁵ Similarly, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1963) has been hailed as a novel about subversive female power between sisters Merricat and Constance.¹⁶ Despite Jackson's remarkable tendency in her work to rely on doubled female characters, then, and despite her later novels' more explicit and foregrounded queerness, it is surprising that few scholars have seriously considered queer desire in *Hangsaman*.¹⁷ This lack might be due to the understandable

¹⁴ For an exception, see Haines. For an excellent reading of *Hangsaman* that invokes the concept of queer desire in *Hangsaman* without actually naming it as such, see Bonikowski. Additional readings of *Hangsaman* that do not address queerness but are nevertheless fruitful include Hattenhauer and Hague.

¹⁵ For examples of reading queerness in *The Haunting of Hill House*, see Blackford, Haggerty, Hague, Murphy, and Ribgy.

¹⁶ For examples of queerness in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, see Carpenter, Haines, Hall, and Wallace.

efforts of scholars to distance themselves from a model of critique that equates lesbianism in *Hangsaman* with perversion, madness, and death. Yet I want to return to reading queer desire within *Hangsaman* for two reasons. Most crucially, I argue that one cannot sufficiently understand the heart of Natalie's development into womanhood, her *Bildung*, without accounting for her queer double Tony. On the contrary, queer desire, artistic creation, and communal knowledge production are deeply linked in *Hangsaman*. Queer desire does not serve merely a sexual function for Natalie – it is not merely synonymous with sexual desire. Instead, queer desire in *Hangsaman* is a portal for an alternative way of knowing and responding to the world that lies outside of postwar patriarchal institutions of knowledge. In particular, *Hangsaman* situates the women's college at the heart of this patriarchal control. Ostensibly a space of female power and a place where Natalie could learn how to advance herself artistically, she finds instead an institution entirely controlled by men. Natalie's queer double Tony disrupts this institution, and allows queer desire to emerge.

Secondly, reading Natalie's eventual rejection of Tony as a rejection of her own queer desire demonstrates her inability to escape the power of a postwar domestic containment ideology. Her containment does not, like her mother's, take place in the space of the nuclear home, at least not yet. Instead, *Hangsaman* suggests that what precedes Natalie's domestic containment is her intellectual and artistic containment, the foreclosing of her creative power and the foreclosing of alternative futures. Natalie's *Bildung*, ostensibly a 1950s "success story," is built upon an ideology that promotes isolating women and separating them from one another. Queer desire, then, while powerful and disruptive, is fleeting, and ultimately succumbs to patriarchal strong-arm

tactics of surveillance, paranoia, and betrayal. Thus, Natalie's final recognition, that "one is one and all alone and evermore will be so," far from being a happy ending, is instead a tragic realization, founded on the loss of her artistic abilities and her access to a community rooted in queer desire (37). She does not lose an outside lover – she loses the doubled notion of herself – and in the process loses access to her creative potential. In this way, Jackson challenged postwar ego psychologists such as Erik Erikson and Erich Fromm who promoted the idea of a "democratic," unified ego. Jackson instead proposes a model of selfhood that *requires* multiplicity. A unified ego, for Natalie, is the beginning of her entrance into a totalized sameness, and thus the end of her artistic journey.

This reading of *Hangsaman* is not immediately accessible through the text alone. Instead, I rely on a lot of paratextual sources to tell this story. The remainder of the chapter, then, will combine archival material from the Shirley Jackson archives, early drafts of *Hangsaman*, early 1950s reviews, and histories of lesbianism during the postwar era in order to demonstrate how Jackson grappled with queer desire in *Hangsaman*. As I will show, Jackson was well aware of queer desire in *Hangsaman*, and was also frightened by the implications of it. In particular, she feared how queer desire might serve as the source of her *own* artistic power. It is Jackson's own ambivalence that makes *Hangsaman* a difficult novel to read critically, and yet, perhaps, also makes it the most fascinating.

Jackson's Queer 1950s

Hangsaman was published at a time when postwar attitudes toward doubleness had accelerated from fear and suspicion to outright panic. Although fear of “homosexual infiltration” within the federal government had existed in the late 1940s, by 1950, anti-gay rhetoric that once existed at the level of internal policy documents had exploded into the public sphere. Joseph McCarthy’s infamous Wheeling Speech on February 9, 1950, not only launched the wide scale panic against communism; it also signaled the increasing conflation of homosexuality and communism. In this speech, McCarthy’s communist traitor was not a scruffy left-wing union worker but was instead an elite, “pompous” State Department worker in “striped pants” and a “phony British accent,” making male effeminacy a major driver of American “impotency” in its battle against Soviet Russia (U.S. Senate, State Department Loyalty Investigation Committee on Foreign Relations).

But gay men were not the only suspects in McCarthy’s America. By the 1950s, homosexuality, particularly lesbianism, was explicitly linked to the concept of the double, and became a vessel for anxieties over communist “infiltration” and “phoniness.” As Robert Corber and Margaret Canaday have shown, lesbianism emerged as more than just an individual “problem”; it became a matter of national security. Of particular concern was the perceived fluidity of female sexuality and the suspicion of housewife friendships behind closed suburban doors: according to Corber, “the homophobic discourse of female homosexuality that circulated in American society during the Cold War era...fostered lesbian panic by claiming that the lesbian posed an ‘invisible’ threat to the nation because she could pass as ‘normal’” (4). Government officials, psychologists and other experts

believed this assumed invisibility allowed lesbians to mask their “true” identities. Unlike gay men, one Ft. McClellan military psychiatrist noted, lesbians could engage in homosexuality anywhere, from the “bus station pick up...to a close emotional relationship extending over a period of years with no more than...casual physical contact” (qtd. in Canaday 185). Several years later, Jess Stearn’s best-selling book, *The Grapevine: A Report on the Secret World of the Lesbian* (1965), would capitalize on this rhetoric of secret double identities, claiming that lesbians’ “double identity” was their greatest source of power: lesbians had “an almost radar-like communication with each other, and seemed able to spot, not only other lesbians on site, but potential lesbians as well” (qtd. in Corber 2). Lesbians’ very identities were wrapped up in the mythos of the spy, the clandestine, and the shadowed. Like the communist spy, they were believed to be able to mask their identities and hide in plain sight, threatening national security: “like the communist, the lesbian allegedly threatened the American way of life” (Corber 4).

The cultural fear of lesbianism was symptomatic of a Cold War society that treated any ability to “mask” one’s identity, to hide one’s true self, with great hostility. In 1956, psychologists Edward Strecker and Vincent Lathbury, firmly rooted in the popular scholarship of mother-blame ignited by Philip Wylie, declared lesbianism to be nothing less than “biological and psychological treason” and a “social threat,” and decried “loose talk” from those who would cry “lesbian” at women who merely “had a strong, overhand tennis serve” (158-159). Instead, the watch for “real” lesbians required “caution” and “skillful treatment” (159). Thus, for an early postwar public, women’s sexuality, viewed as shifting, multiple, and invisible, symbolized a deep threat.

Initial reviews of *Hangsaman* replicated these anxieties about the “predatory” lesbian double. Early critics, newspaper reviewers, and scholars identified lesbianism as the “unnatural” or “perverse” event in the text that Natalie must move beyond in order to achieve a successful entrance into adulthood. Mary McGory’s 1951 review of the book in *The Washington Star* claimed that Natalie “goes to college...makes friends with a drunken faculty wife and falls into the clutches of the campus lesbian” (*SJP* Box 31). *Publisher’s Weekly* noted, “The girl’s only companion is her college roommate, who turns out to be a predatory lesbian” (*SJP* Box 31). Most early reviews read Natalie’s rejection of Tony as a crucial moment in Natalie’s successful development and a sign that she would mature into a promising young woman. *The New York Times*, for instance, titled its review “Adventure into Reality,” and claimed that Natalie moves from “sexual aberrations” and “unholy attachment” to find “her own sure footing” (Morris 208). *The Washington Post* echoed the *New York Times* with its title, “Jackson Psychological Novel Restores a Girl to Reality,” and euphemistically mused on Natalie’s “preoccupations” that almost prevent her from achieving “a sense of being grown up” (L.G. B7). Ultimately, then, early reviews read Natalie’s abandonment of Tony as a sign of a healthy integrated, singular, non-split personality; they read the ending of *Hangsaman* as happy, signifying a successful transition to adulthood.

Early reviews of *Hangsaman* also linked Natalie’s “double” identity to madness. When Tony wasn’t being read as a lesbian that threatened to keep Natalie from obtaining integration into a unified selfhood, she was read as the schizophrenic hallucination of a mentally disturbed teenage girl. The same week that *The Washington Star* tagged Tony as the “campus lesbian” (*SJP* Box 31), *Time* pinned Tony as the “alter ego” of a “young girl

sinking into schizophrenia” (“Psychological Chiller”). Even Jackson’s closest friends were confused about the critical reaction to Tony: “I saw a review in *Time* of a novel by you which has this title,” wrote Jackson’s close friend Howard Nemerov, “but is it about ‘skitosphrenia’ [sic] – I didn’t know you had written two books at once?” (*SJP* Box 31). Another writer and friend, Jay Williams, raves about the book, but then muses, “Glad, too, you got such good reviews in the *Times* and *Trib*, although I was a little puzzled by the *Trib*’s saying that Tony was purely imaginative – is this my own coarse perception? That she is the image of the devil I don’t doubt, but I got no sense that she wasn’t real – in any case, imaginary devils are thin ones at best” (*SJP* Box 31).

The idea that Tony was identified either as a product of schizophrenia or of predatory lesbianism in the early postwar is not particularly surprising – scholars like Corber and Canaday have shown how madness and lesbianism were intimately linked in postwar thought. What is surprising, however, is that contemporary scholars have largely perpetuated the schizophrenic reading of Tony, with the question of queer desire falling out of scholarship entirely. The rise of the “schizophrenic” reading in academic criticism can be traced back to Lenemaja Friedman’s 1975 book on Jackson, which ruthlessly rejected John Lyons’s 1962 interpretation of Tony as a campus lesbian. Friedman claimed that reading Tony as lesbian is impossible because Tony is a schizophrenic hallucination: “The only reasonable explanation for Natalie’s violent emotions seems to be that she is displaying symptoms of the mental disorder that becomes a severe one within a short time” (91). Her reading of Tony as a hallucination stems from the abrupt shift in tone from the realism in first section to psychological horror in the third section of the novel, the sudden appearance of Tony in the third section, the lack of

acknowledgement of Tony by other characters in the text, and the similar physical characteristics of Tony and Natalie. Today Friedman's argument has largely won out, and, with very few exceptions, few have questioned the idea that *Hangsaman* should be read as a psychological novel of a girl falling into schizophrenia.

Indeed, investigations of queer desire in Shirley Jackson's fiction, as well as her life, like most elements surrounding Jackson, have a strange history. Following Friedman, 1970s and 1980s critics pursued lesbianism in Jackson's life only to the extent of "proving" that Jackson's work was in no way concerned with its erotic and creative possibilities. Judy Oppenheimer's landmark biography of Jackson, *Private Demons* (1988), describes Jackson's intense college relationship at the University of Rochester with French exchange student Jeanne Marie Bedel to insist that Jackson not only was not a lesbian, but had no knowledge of lesbianism as a concept:

The intense friendship between the two girls, both of them 'intellectuals,' ...gave rise to a certain amount of talk on campus. Shirley, always sensitive, was aware there were others who thought the relationship strange, possibly even (they whispered) "unnatural"... As far as being a lesbian, despite Shirley's sharp intelligence, it is highly unlikely that at age eighteen – and an unworldly eighteen at that, despite all the reading – she even knew precisely what the word meant. (40)

Oppenheimer later expands her dismissal of Jackson's interest in female desire and power by claiming that not only was Jackson no lesbian, she also "was no feminist": "Her vision was personal, not political, and she would have strenuously resisted any effort to view her work in that way, even if she had survived into an era in which the personal had become political" (164).

Perpetuating Friedman's and Oppenheimer's outdated reading of *Hangsaman* and Jackson's other fiction has had terrible consequences for Jackson's place in feminist

criticism. First, it continues to propel mid-century assumptions that queer desire can only be read as a manifestation of mental illness. To suggest that Natalie “overcomes” a severe mental illness such as paranoid schizophrenia merely by confronting her own sexual desire in the woods does serious disservice to our field’s understanding of mental illness and literature. Furthermore, regardless of Jackson’s own sexual history, dismissing elements of queer desire in Jackson’s fiction has relegated her to the margins of the feminist literary canon, leaving Jackson in the position of “red-headed stepchild” to the more “progressive” 1970s women writers.

This chapter, then, offers something of a corrective to Jacksonian criticism. Bringing *Hangsaman* in line with more contemporary queer readings of *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, I argue that reading queer desire in *Hangsaman* demonstrates the powerful price that Natalie must pay in order to enter into postwar womanhood. As a result, my reading places Jackson’s text in the tradition of more radical feminist coming-of-age narratives. In doing so, I do not wish to retroactively claim Jackson as some kind of protofeminist anticipating the coming of second wave feminism -- that would do tremendous disservice to Jackson’s work. Rather, I want to suggest that *Hangsaman* explores the limits of queer possibilities. By exploring the failure of Natalie’s artistic endeavors, Jackson calls attention to the ways in which postwar women were often cut off from their own voices.

Jackson and The Problem of Queer Desire

In order to demonstrate this effect, I want to first turn to a dramatic moment in the history of *Hangsaman*'s critical reception: Jeanette Howard Foster's 1957 reading of *Hangsaman* and Shirley Jackson's response to Foster. Easily the most provocative early reading of *Hangsaman*, Jeanette Howard Foster not only identifies Tony with lesbianism, which she terms as "sex variance," but also collapses queer desire under the rubric of schizophrenia. Foster's reading is found in her encyclopedic work *Sex Variant Women in Literature*, a text that would later be hailed as a foundational text in the history of gay and lesbian literary criticism, and reprinted by the legendary Naiad Press. Locating *Hangsaman* within a tradition of lesbian writing, Foster argues that the novel is about a schizophrenic breakdown *caused* by Natalie's guilty lesbian desire:

Easily the eeriest of all references to variance is Shirley Jackson's in her remarkable study of late adolescence, *Hangsaman* (1951)...In a "progressive" college, quite unsupervised, she [Natalie] becomes more and more solitary and withdrawn until her sudden friendship with an ideally sympathetic girl companion. This alter ego, whose allure she finally recognizes as physical and fights off, proves actually to be only the other half of her own split personality. In other words, the drama in *Hangsaman* is that of an abnormally sensitive girl's narrow escape from schizophrenia. (332)

Although remaining entrenched in the worldview that associated sexual variance with madness, Foster is the first critic to locate queer desire not as an outside force preying upon Natalie, but within Natalie herself. For Foster, Natalie is not, as she was for so many other early critics, an innocent straight girl lured by a predatory lesbian but is instead the very source of lesbian desire in the text. Although Foster's claim that Natalie resolves her psychological fragmentation by "fighting off" her lesbian self places the

reading back into the traditional postwar framework, her suggestion that lesbian desire emerges from within Natalie herself is groundbreaking.

Foster's reading unnerved Jackson. Nearly ten years after the publication of *Hangsaman*, and already in the beginning stages of drafting *We Have Already Lived in the Castle*, around 1960, Jackson struggled with Foster's reading, in what would become one of the most important documented insights into her creative process.¹⁸ This piece of Jackson's writing, first published by Judy Oppenheimer in her 1988 biography, has now become an object of scholarly controversy -- both in terms of its intended recipient and for how we might read *Hangsaman*.

One night, Shirley Jackson anxiously crafted what appears to be a "letter," unsent, recipient unknown, regarding Foster's reading of *Hangsaman*.¹⁹ She had just received a copy of the book from her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman. Upon reading the book, Jackson was shocked to find herself listed as one of the authors entertaining themes of sexual variance. Upon reading further, she notes, "I of course looked up my references and found that they were to *Hangsaman* as an 'eerie' novel about lesbians. Well, now, I happen to know what *Hangsaman* is about. I wrote it. And dammit it is about what I say it is about and not some dirty old lady at Oxford...There has got to be a point where I dig in my heels (shut up, you Freud lover) and decide who is going to be the master me or the word" (*SJP* Box 14 Folder 3). Later in the letter she writes,

¹⁸ Special thanks to Ruth Franklin who in a generous demonstration of collaboration, helped me locate this letter.

¹⁹ Judy Oppenheimer claimed that Jackson was writing this piece as a letter to Howard Nemerov, a poet and friend of Jackson's who often offered valuable insight on her work. Oppenheimer's reasoning came from reading the first line as "how, can you help me," with "how" being short for Howard. Yet in our correspondence, new biographer Ruth Franklin revealed how in examining the typography, the first word is not "how" but "*now*," casting doubt on Jackson's intent for this letter to go to Nemerov. I agree with Franklin, and believe that the writing may not even be a letter at all, but simply a personal free writing exchange.

I am writing about ambivalence but it is an ambivalence of the spirit, or the mind, not the sex. My poor devils have enough to contend with without being sex deviates along with being moral and romantic deviates...I did want that sense of illicit excitement; I would be wrong if I said that it did not fascinate me. But not that. (Look who minces words.) There it is not a he or a she but the demon in the mind, and that demon finds guilts where it can and uses them and runs mad with laughing when it triumphs; it is the demon which is fear and we are afraid of words. We are afraid of being someone else and doing the things someone else wants us to do and of being taken and used by someone else, some other guilt-ridden conscience that lives on and on in our minds, something we build ourselves and never recognize. But this is fear, not a named sin. Then it is fear itself, fear of self, that I am writing about, fear and guilt and their destruction of identity, and any means at hand will do to express them; why am I so afraid? I know, but there is of course a point beyond which one simply does not write it down. Frankness is bad fiction and damned bad taste. So here I am. I am frightened by a word. I am frightened by a word because it tells me I am frightened. But I have always loved (and there is the opposition: love) to use fear, to take it and comprehend and make it work and consolidate a situation where I was afraid and take it whole and work from there. (*SJP* Box 14 Folder 3)

These sections of Jackson's remarkable letter have been widely cited among Jackson scholars, both as evidence for her gothic motivations in writing, and, more questionably, as "proof" that Jackson was neither herself a lesbian, nor writing about lesbian desire.²⁰

What Oppenheimer omitted from her account, however, and what has not yet been discussed by critics, is an earlier section, where Jackson more deeply describes her strategies of writing *Hangsaman*. First, she compares Tony with Luke, a character from her later novel *The Haunting of Hill House*:

The girl Tony in *Hangsaman* is the first imperfect Luke and she ought to have been a boy but I would have had a good deal of trouble introducing a boy as Natalie's other self in a girl's college. She was a boy for a while in early drafts but of course when I stop to think about that it doesn't really disprove the dirty old lady does it? (*SJP* Box 14, Folder 3)

²⁰ Colin Haines's *Frightened by A Word: Shirley Jackson and Lesbian Gothic* (2007) is a notable exception; however, Haines also only cites Judy Oppenheimer for the letter and does not seem to have had access to the original source in the Library of Congress; as a result this titular line becomes a misreading of both Foster and Jackson.

She then compares this technique to Gale (whom she misspells as “Dale”) Wilhem’s writing technique in *We Too Are Drifting*:

I keep wondering is this a secret preoccupation so secret that I keep writing about it because I don’t dare face it which is silly. The things about myself I don’t dare face are much much worse than that. But it has got my [sic] very edgy. I even went back and read a book which had a terrific impact on me long ago (and which I would not advise anyone to read because it is clearly an awful book and I remember liking it originally in my innocence because it was about San Francisco where I was born) which is Dale [sic] Wilhelm’s *We Too Are Drifting* which I bet you a nickel you can’t get in any library because it got slapped around as dirty and which is a sad lost little book. It is about the tragic star-crossed love affair between a sweet girl named Victoria and an enchanting, completely convincing female artist named Jan, and I thought then as I think now that the reason the whole thing is so convincing is because the author (who had *her* dreams, too) wrote it correctly and then went through and changed *he* to *she* throughout. Jan is a sweet boy and any girl would love her. But there wouldn’t have been any book there if she had been called he. We own the book because it made kind of a sensation when it was published and a lot of people talked about it in hushed tones. (SJP Box 14 Folder 3)

Considering the multitude of newspaper reviews in the early 1950s clearly labeling Tony as a lesbian, Jackson’s outrage at Foster seems both confusing and disingenuous. Not only was Jackson aware of the newspaper reviews characterizing Tony as a lesbian, she actively scrapbooked them. Adding even more doubt to Jackson’s supposed outrage is her own early draft notes. Written in 1950, Jackson’s early drafts of *Hangsaman* explicitly reveal Tony to be a lesbian. In one note beside a description of Tony, she writes, “BUILD UP AS ROMANCE” (SJP Box 45, Folder 7). Later, in a summary of the plot, Jackson notes that Natalie “leaves Tony, barely escaping a lesbian seduction” (SJP Box 45, Folder 7).²¹ This particular backlash against Foster, then, seems

²¹ There is some dispute as to whether the note about Natalie “barely escaping a lesbian seduction” is written by Jackson or by her editor/husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman. In our correspondence, biographer Ruth Franklin also speculated that it could be advertising copy written by her publisher.

uncharacteristically alarmed. Jackson, an undisputed “master” of her words in her fiction, here finds words as slippery as they come: “Jan is a sweet *boy* and anyone would love *her*.” Originally Jackson claims that *Sex Variant Women in Literature* “is of value in expressing one kind of opinion as opposed to the dainty Victorian view of the Brontes, and perhaps closer to the truth,” and then dismisses it five lines later, saying, “The book is clearly trash.” *We Too Are Drifting*, also, is simultaneously a “clearly awful book” and a “sad lost little book.” She corrects Stanley calling her a “sex deviant,” instead insisting on the more value-added term “variant,” but then later makes the same elision herself, saying that her characters “have enough to contend with without being sex deviates along with being moral and romantic deviates.” How, exactly, Jackson delineates “sex” deviates and “romantic” deviates remains unclear. If she is claiming that her characters in fact *are* “romantic deviates,” what is that supposed to mean?

I propose that this crazy ambivalence that exists in Jackson’s letter – the gap between mind and body, deviance and variance, romantic association and sexual association, evil desires and artistic creation – is rooted in Jackson’s understanding of queer desire. Her rush to dismiss Foster’s assertion, despite tacitly admitting that the text supports such a reading, certainly stems from her desire for creative control, but also manifests from an urge to show that queer desire in her work is not oriented toward sexual desire alone but instead is something more, that which cannot be named. If the “problem with no name” is, for Betty Friedan, the feminine mystique, then Jackson here suggests that the “not a he or she but a demon in the mind” is the feminine mystique’s specter, its absent presence, queer desire. For Jackson, queer desire is not merely a

Regardless of who wrote the note, however, it is clear that before *Hangsaman* went to press, Shirley Jackson was aware of and sanctioned Tony’s identity as a lesbian.

“problem with no name,” but *the unnameable*, that not to be spoken of, quite literally, the devil: “here is a word for you; the devil is of course not that devil, but the personal one, the area of my private delight and public embarrassment, the one who sits dreaming, the bad bad one whom I never contemplate without that kind of secret tender oh-god-if-anyone-knew feeling; in a word, the bad one” (*SJP* Box 14 Folder 3). The “bad one” is the “not that,” the abject. In *Hangsaman*, queer desire is not merely non-normative sexual desire: instead, it is a deeper desire for self-articulation, a desire to expand the mind, the spirit, the self, outside the boundaries of postwar institutions of power. Jackson’s claim, then, that she is “frightened by a word” illustrates her own fear that queer desire might be at the heart of her artistic endeavor. She suggests as much when she insists that Foster has now ruined her draft of *We Have Already Lived in the Castle*:

but now you see here I come with Castle, and these two devoted women who live together and kill the husband of one of them. Well? I can say over and over that it is the Charles Bravo Murder in 1821 but who will care? I mean, why choose that plot in the first place? I have been wandering around for three or four days wondering if I ought to throw out the book or start analysis or give in and enjoy it. My most basic beliefs in writing are that the identity is all-important and the word is all-powerful; I want my Jenny in Castle to absolutely secure in her home and her place in the world, so much so that can dispose of her husband without concern because he is a wanderer and so has no identity, but when Jenny’s identity depends entirely upon her thoroughly romantic association with Constance, then I am tagged again. Jenny wants to see the world, with always one foot on base at home, Constance never wants to leave home. They are again two halves of the same person, and must I then suspect that? Together they are one identity, safe and eventually hidden; do they hide because they are somehow unnatural? Am I never to be sure of my characters? If the alliance between Jenny and Constance is unholy then my book is unholy and I am writing something terrible, in my own terms, because my own identity is gone and the word is only something that means something else. (*SJP* Box 14 Folder 3)

This surprising revelation about *We Have Already Lived in the Castle* – that the book was originally not about sisters Merricat and Constance but instead romantic *lovers* Jenny and

Constance – illustrates the extent to which Jackson feared the power of queer desire in her own writing. It also illustrates how much literary critics themselves feared it. Oppenheimer went out of her way to erase queer desire in Jackson’s work; in her “comprehensive” biography, she deleted this section entirely and never discussed the original plot of *We Have Already Lived in the Castle*.

The remainder of this chapter, then, returns to reading queer desire in *Hangsaman*, and examines the way that Tony emerges as the embodiment of queer desire that challenges Natalie’s world. I will show that as Natalie’s queer alter-ego, Tony is neither a schizophrenic hallucination nor a simple version of the postwar “lesbian predator.” Rather, the appearance of Tony represents the emergence of Natalie’s creative power. In this way, Natalie’s doubled self is not a “split,” schizophrenic one; instead, it is inter-discursive, proposing a model of selfhood that is not totalized and flattened, but instead multiple. Natalie’s ultimate rejection of Tony, then, is a tragic act of foreclosure; by abandoning Tony, she loses access to her own desires and artistic abilities.

Enemy Outsider: Policing Natalie’s Queer Desire

From the beginning of the novel, Natalie’s artistic and sexual identities are deeply intertwined, with Natalie’s artistic development caught up in McCarthyian process of surveillance, inquisition, and control. Throughout the novel, Natalie’s artistic maturation is foregrounded as already in the process of failure, due to her inability to achieve a creative aesthetic that lay outside patriarchal authority. In particular, Natalie is policed by her father, Arnold Waite, her surrogate father/professor. In each scene, the text situates Natalie’s act of writing not as a space of creative generation but as a space of

sexual violence and death. What *Hangsaman* suggests, then, is that Natalie's creative acts – and therefore her identity as whole -- are always already infiltrated by an “outside” enemy, a force that she must overcome if she is to achieve any kind of artistic agency.

When the novel begins, Natalie is already involved in a doubled relationship –not with Tony, but with her father, Arnold Waite. In a letter written to Natalie, Arnold warns, “Remember, too, that without you I could not exist: there cannot be a father without a daughter. You have thus a double responsibility, for my existence and your own. If you abandon me, you lose yourself” (117-118). Natalie's “double responsibility” for her father applies to both her sense of self, and more importantly, to her development as a writer. From the outset, Arnold, a writer, published literary critic, and editor, is positioned as an omniscient presence who fully control's Natalie's creative output and future career ambitions. The very first voice in the novel, outside of the limited third-person narrator, is not Natalie's, but Arnold's. Wryly described as “man of his word,” Arnold is emphatically set-up as the *logos* of Natalie's world (3). Gathered in the kitchen for breakfast, the family sits silently as Arnold laments to his wife about the weather. Mordantly rebuffing his wife for asserting that God might control the weather, Arnold states, ““God... ‘I am God’” (5). Arnold might be joking, but the narrative implication of Arnold as author-God is serious. Positioned at the breakfast table, the narrator states that sunlight touches his hair “with an air at once angelic and indifferent – indifferent because, like himself, it found belief not an essential factor to its continued existence” (3).

When Arnold invites Natalie into his study after breakfast, it is to act as exclusive editor and critic of her writing. Reading her “private” notebooks in their daily morning

meetings, Arnold corrects Natalie's grammar, chides her writing style, and questions her artistic choices. Indeed, Arnold not only judges Natalie's writing, he stipulates the subject matter of her writing: himself. Tasking Natalie with an "assignment" to write a character sketch of him, Arnold anticipates every writing act she makes, and asserts that he understands her motives better than she does: "I gave you this on purpose to try you out, and you did exactly as I expected" (12). No matter what Natalie does, Arnold anticipates and welcomes it: "It has been *my* plan, Natalie, all of it, and when you approach despair remember that even your despair is part of my plan" (118). Under Arnold as logos, Natalie's existence is completely predetermined, leaving her no room for an alternative future. Thus, Natalie's first doubled relationship in the text is not a demonstration of creative multiplicity; instead, it is actually a fracturing, a "bad" doubling, where she is completely excluded from her own desires.

Arnold's omniscient presence totalizes not only Natalie's writing voice, but her sexual desires as well. As Darryl Hattenhauer has noted, the Oedipal father-daughter eroticism between Natalie and Arnold in these scenes is unmistakable (103). Before Natalie enters the study, she engages in "combing her hair so that it fell carelessly along her shoulders, putting on the secret little locket she always wore"; likewise, Arnold is found "looking at himself in the mirror and smoking his first cigarette of the day" (9). When not in the study, Natalie frequents the rose garden, which contains roses "suitable for giving to any number of lovers"; and the narrator notes that it "pleased her father to see her wandering morning-wise among the roses" (7). Arnold continually talks in a sexually suggestive way to Natalie: "Daughter mine...has anyone yet corrupted you?" (33). Later, in college, Natalie and Arnold write each other letters. Arnold writes one

addressed to “his dear captive princess,” promising to rescue her, to which Natalie replies, “It was not you, then, caroling lustily under my window these three nights past?” (136-137). Arnold therefore exerts total control of Natalie, in both mind and body.

Arnold’s desire for complete control of Natalie comes to a head in another letter. In a drunken letter written hastily to Natalie at college, Arnold resorts to paranoid McCarthyist rhetoric of spying, enemies, and lies in order to reify total control over Natalie. Warning Natalie against “false friends,” “enemies” and “liars,” Arnold writes: “Let me then, warn you direfully against false friends. And against those for whose friendship toward who you can find no material motive. And against all fawners, all liars, all noddors...Natalie, your enemies will always come from the same place your friends do” (117-118). Arnold’s claim that Natalie’s “enemies will always come from the same place your friends do” echoes McCarthy’s Wheeling speech, a belief that suggests that internal threats are more frightening than external ones. Yet by Arnold’s logic, rooting out “liars” and “false friends” will not bring Natalie to any sort of truth or authenticity. Instead, according to Arnold, Natalie’s “authentic self” is fragmented: she is merely one part of a father/daughter dyad. Arnold’s assertion that her responsibility is a “double” one, then, reiterates his belief that the ideal female subject is one who is necessarily split, fractured between her own desires and the desires of the father.

Natalie is not the only female subject whose selfhood is fractured by Arnold: his wife, Charity, has also been suffocated by Arnold’s sexual and intellectual surveillance. The narrator notes Arnold’s control over her in all realms of the house except the kitchen, where “Mrs. Waite, one day a week, was allowed a length of time unmolested except in the company of her daughter... even her bedroom was not her own” (16). The domestic

space of the kitchen, which Natalie notes is “like a room with a sign saying ‘Ladies’ on the door,” is the only room in the house where Charity can communicate any knowledge to Natalie without Arnold’s interference: “she made her conversation in the kitchen into a sort of weekly chant, a news bulletin wherein all that Mrs. Waite had thought or wanted to say or felt or surmised during the week was aired and considered, in combination with Mrs. Waite’s refrain of reminiscence and complaint” (16).²² The use of the words “chant” and “refrain” here emphasizes the repetitive and secretive nature of Charity’s communication to Natalie. She longs to “persuade Natalie of her womanhood with words, having no other weapon at her disposal” (45). Charity urgently desires to educate Natalie about the dangers of her father: “All these years your father has been trying to get rid of me. Not rid of *me* – he doesn’t care if I hang around the house, cooking and saying, ‘Yes, sir,’ when he opens his fat mouth. All he wants is no one to think they can be the same as he is, or equal to him, or something. And you watch out – the minute you start getting too big, he’ll be after you too” (36).

Constantly under surveillance, Charity is a paranoid subject, and like Arnold, also uses the words “lies,” and “tricks” in her communication with Natalie: “First they tell you lies,” she tells Natalie, “and they make you believe them” (35); “you find out that you’re tricked, just like everyone else, just like *everyone*, and instead of being different and powerful and giving the orders, you’ve been tricked just like everyone else and then you begin to know what happens to everyone and how they all get tricked” (35). Who counts as the abstract “they” in Charity’s remark remains unclear. Convinced her identity has already been irrecoverably compromised, Charity feels her sole task is to protect her

²² Charity is constantly referred to by the narrator as only “Mrs. Waite.” In fact, her first name is given only once, when Charity suspects her Puritan name was why Arnold chose to marry her (17).

daughter from “them”: “I know what it’s like Natalie, and I’ll always protect you from them, the bad ones. Don’t you ever worry, little Natalie, your mother will always help you” (36). Natalie, although occasionally alert to her mother’s warnings and observant of her mother’s situation, is conflicted about her mother and often unable to respect her mother’s language: “One of the things which Natalie most disliked about her mother was Mrs. Waite’s invariable trick of putting serious statements into language that Natalie classified as cute” (20). Women subjects in the Waite household, then, are marginalized, infantilized, and split subjects, constantly seeking alternative, underground modes of communication outside Arnold’s surveillance, yet unable to establish any kind of solidarity to mount an effective campaign of resistance.

Charity’s idea of the “bad ones,” devil-like figures that can appear either external to Natalie or within her, recalls Jackson’s letter, and foreshadows the arrival of Tony. As I have shown, Jackson’s definition of the “bad one” is linked with “private delight,” provoking a “secret tender” sensation. The “bad one,” Natalie’s queer double, then, signals an economy of sexual pleasure and creation, where the predatory tactic of surveillance is substituted for an erotics of voyeurism, and state methods of inflicting pain are exchanged for private fantasies of sadism and masochism.

The “bad one” is overtly linked to “private delight” and erotic artistic creation when Natalie engages in fantasies of murdering someone – perhaps her father – in her father’s study. In one of their weekly meetings, Natalie sits in Arnold’s study while he reads over her work:

Natalie looked around the study; the corpse would be over there, of course, between the bookcase with the books on demonology and the window, which had heavy drapes that could be pulled to hide any nefarious work. She would be found at the desk, not five feet away from the corpse, leaning one hand on the corner to support herself, her face white and distorted with screaming. She would be unable to account for the blood on her hands, on the front of her dress, on her shoes, the blood soaking through the carpet at her feet, the blood under hand on the desk, leaving a smeared mark on the papers there. (12)

Natalie's bizarre fantasy that she sees a corpse in her father's study -- a corpse which she is responsible for having murdered -- explicitly links Natalie's desire to write to the material signifier of death, the corpse. As Kristeva has theorized in *Powers of Horror*, the corpse is the ultimate exemplification of the abject, that which breaks down the distinction between subject and object so crucial for identity formation (4). The corpse provokes horror, indicated by Natalie's "face white and distorted with screaming," because seeing it brings her face to face with her own desire to escape her father's control. Yet the fact that Natalie is having fantasies of murdering her father illustrates how the horror of the act also indicates pleasure. The "heavy drapes" that hide the "nefarious work" from the other acceptable books in the study suggest that Natalie's artistic desires reside in shadowy places, outside the realm of her father's sanctioned letters. In this way, Natalie's desire to murder her father is intricately connected to her desire to access an alternative kind of artistic agency, outside the surveillance of her father.

Natalie's guilt from fantasizing about murdering her father is so strong, Arnold's presence so enormous in her life, that her psyche has begun policing her own thoughts, quite literally, through the voice of an imaginary police detective interrogating her for the murder. In an interrogation style resembling the HUAC investigations, the imaginary

police detective questions Natalie in key spaces early in the novel before she leaves for college – in the kitchen with her mother, in the study with her father, in the garden when she is by herself, and finally at her father’s party. Making both false promises and threats to Natalie – “You may rely on me not using this information against you”; “The housekeeper testified under *oath*, under *oath*, mind you”; “You will not escape this” – the detective wears down Natalie’s ability to discern her involvement in the murder (19; 9; 37). Increasingly, the imaginary police detective questions her identity altogether:

“And your name?” said the detective. “My name is –” Natalie hesitated in her silent talk. She was about to change her name, was she not? But her hesitation had told against her; the detective was laughing. “Yes?” he prompted sardonically. “Your name is?” (29)

Ultimately, Natalie has internalized the rhetoric of surveillance so much that she has no access to her own identity outside of the one prescribed to her by her father.

Yet Natalie’s queer desires still emerge, despite her father’s control and her resulting guilt. Jackson uses the space of the garden as the place where Natalie’s queer desires come into being. If the kitchen is the exclusive domain of Charity, the garden “belonged exclusively to Natalie,” and Natalie regards it as a “functioning part of her personality” (22). Just like Arnold cannot survey the kitchen, neither can he survey the garden, as Natalie is “adequately hidden from the windows of the house” (23). During childhood, the garden is associated with heteronormative modes of chivalry and conquest – and yet it is a bit ambiguous as to which part Natalie is playing. The narrator notes that Natalie had “delighted in playing pirate and cowboy and knight and armor among the trees” below the garden, but now “for some reason only remotely connected to knights and armor,” she found herself more entranced by the area above the trees where she could see the mountains (22). After she discusses her writing with her father in the study,

Natalie heads to the garden and masturbates to a homoerotically charged fantasy of artistic creation. Lying on her back in the garden, Natalie stares at the sun until she forces “tears into her eyes,” and, “shocked by her own capacity for creation,” becomes overwhelmed with desire, uttering “Let me take, let me create” (23). The resulting masturbatory fantasy, reminiscent of Janie Crawford’s pear tree moment in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is overwhelmingly laden with homoerotic symbolism:

Natalie, lying with her cheek on her arm, felt herself running, lighter than anything she had ever known, running with great soft steps across the world. Her feet brushed the ground – she could feel it, she could feel it – her hair fell soundlessly behind, her long legs arched, and the breath came cold in her throat. The first to awaken, the first to come, misty into the world, moving through an *unpeopled country* without a footstep, going up the mountains, touching the still-wet grass with her hands. The mountains, *full-bosomed and rich*, extended themselves to her in a surge of emotion, turning silently as she came, receiving her, and Natalie, her mouth against the grass and her eyes tearful from looking into the sun, took the mountains to herself and whispered, “Sister, sister.” “Sister, sister,” she said, and the mountains stirred, and answered. (24, emphasis mine)

While Hattenhauer has drawn attention to how the way Jackson feminizes the landscape in this scene (114), there is far more to this scene than that. Rather, the scene signifies the emergence of Natalie’s queer desire, a desire that allows her to access artistic agency outside of her father’s control. Outside of Arnold’s surveillance, Natalie becomes “author-goddess” of her own personal Eden, creating herself into an “unpeopled country.” Natalie’s Eden is, most notably, without an Adam, and is instead founded on an economy of erotic sisterhood, with mountains “full-bosomed and rich.” Thus, Natalie’s fantasy becomes a moment where she experiences a moment of queer *jouissance*, a brief moment of bliss where she comes into contact with her sexual and creative self in its complete form.

Natalie's Edenic moment of queer *jouissance*, however, is ultimately destroyed that evening at her father's literary party, when Arnold's old colleague sexually assaults her out in the woods just beyond the garden. The sexually laden conversation leading up to the assault is couched in the language of Natalie's identity as a writer: "Your father tells me...that you're quite the little writer," the assailant quips, attempting to make her sound "more like a frightened girl not yet in college" (39). Attempting to protect herself, Natalie defensively retorts: "I suppose you want to write too?" (39). The conversation takes place in the garden, and Natalie compares this moment to the pleasurable moment in the garden only hours earlier: "She felt the grass under her feet the soft brush of bushes against her hair, and his fingers on her arm. It was no longer afternoon" (41). What provokes the attacker the most is Natalie's claim of self-efficacy: "I was thinking about myself...about how wonderful I am" (40). Natalie's claim of self-worth, made in an anxious, defensive attempt to escape, is ultimately what leads him to drag her to the woods, and makes him more firmly resolved to attack her: "Do you realize that you just made a perfectly outrageous statement?" (42). As he begins to forcefully drag her back to the woods, the garden reverts back to a heteronormative space of male conquest, and Natalie notes that these trees were where she "had once encountered knights in armor" (42). She begins to question herself: "her mind was wandering over the hundreds of words she had heard and spoken that day; it was not possible, she thought, annoyed to sort out any one statement from that confusion and answer it; he was asking too much....What have I done?" (42). Natalie's sexual inexperience only leads her to realize too late that she is being set up for an attack: "Oh my dear God sweet Christ, Natalie thought, so sickened she nearly said it aloud, is he going to touch me?" (43).

The moment of Natalie's assault marks both a narrative and psychological rupture.²³ The scene ends at Natalie's horrified realization that she is going to be touched and begins the next morning in Natalie's bedroom, offering the reader the final glimpse of Natalie's summer before college and closing out the first section of the novel. Psychologically, the assault fuels the acceleration of Natalie's "bad" doubling, a doubling that threatens to fracture her entirely from herself. The morning after her sexual attack, Natalie awakens in deep horror and fear and turns to ritual and chant used by her mother Charity to soothe herself: "Nothing happened, she chanted, 'nothing happened, nothing happened, nothing happened, nothing happened, nothing happened'" (43). Unable to reconcile who she was only a day before with who she is now, Natalie looks in the mirror "at her bruised face and her pitiful, erring body," and disconnects from herself: "her old sweater and skirt seemed strange, the costume for some extraordinary Natalie part, which had lain for weeks in a stockroom, waiting for the chosen actress to put them on" (44). If, in the garden, Natalie's moment of *jouissance* allowed her to enter "an unpeopled country without a footstep," her face now showed "the map of a country passed through by only one traveler and charted with a single destructive route" (45). Natalie's sexual assault, then, has reduced her to a colonized subject, completely under the control of men. She has no space where she can access her own desires.

By the time Natalie leaves for college, then, she is a broken, split subject whose sexual and artistic identity has been co-opted by her father. Unable to access even her own fantasies without surveillance by a male authority, Natalie's psychological development is broken in a way that is preparing her for full submission to a domestic

²³ Indeed, the narrative break from this scene is so abrupt that a confused fan wrote Jackson to inform her that "she skipped a line"; would she please be so kind to describe what exactly happened? [SJP Box 31]

containment society. All access to female pleasure, desire, or an alternative poetics is fundamentally denied. Ultimately, Natalie's home life and brutal assault suggests that postwar society is one where female artistic creativity cannot flourish, or even exist at all.

Enemy Within: Natalie's Encounter with her Queer Alter-Ego

Soon after the sexual assault, Natalie heads to a small liberal arts college, which strongly resembles Bennington College. Ostensibly a "woman's space" that should encourage Natalie's sexual and intellectual development, the college instead actively suppresses queer desire and secures Natalie's domestic containment. Natalie's sexual attack colors her entire freshmen college experience, and the symbol of the event – the sinister nature of dark wooded areas – appears repeatedly in her encounters with people on campus. Yet it is also within the woods that Natalie comes face to face with the embodied figure of abject, her queer double, Tony. Easily the most complicated figure in the novel, Tony is the fully realized manifestation of Natalie's creative power, representing an alternative form of pleasure and control. Like Natalie's father, Tony is domineering, even, at times, snide towards Natalie. She has little concern for the rules of the school, and it becomes questionable as to whether she even really attends the school. It is through Tony that Natalie's fears turn away from her father's ability to control her and towards a fear of herself – she fears an "enemy within" that is powerful and uncontrollable. While Natalie is afraid of Tony, it is ultimately a "good doubling": when Natalie is with Tony, she is powerful and capable of accessing creative thoughts more than she ever could.

Hangsaman vividly paints a picture of a New England women's college campus in the midst of postwar changes, and situates unease about queer desire at the heart of the college's shift to a more conservative mood. As scholars such as Babette Faehmel, Helen Horowitz, Deborah Olsen, and Susan Wells have shown, the postwar era represented a sea change in women's representation in higher education. This flooding of women into higher education posed a "crisis" moment for the women's college. Administrations in the postwar era actively combated fears that, unlike co-ed public universities, their campuses as harboring grounds for lesbianism. They tamped down this reputation by making very deliberate decisions in hiring, changing their course structures, and even altering their dorm room architecture. Immediately after the war, the percentage of women professors at Wellesley dropped from 90 to 75 percent, and by the late 1950s, Smith's male faculty topped 51 percent (Faehmel 54). In response to the President's 1947 Commission on Higher Education's recommendation to provide "knowledge and attitudes basic to satisfying family life," women's colleges such as Mills and Vassar adjusted their curriculum to include home economics, or "euthenics" courses (others, such as Smith and Wellesley, actively resisted this trend, despite a vigorous debate) (Olsen 429). Finally, the restructuring of dormitories to accommodate single rooms, rather than the traditional suites, also allowed administrations to police their students' bedroom activities and avoid accusations that they were creating spaces of "deviancy" (Horowitz 314). As a result, women's colleges in the early postwar era sought to promote themselves not merely as single-sex spaces that cultivated an intimate intellectual community of women; instead, they made a concentrated effort to brand the

“women’s college” as a space that actively produced heteronormative power structures that enabled women’s domestic containment.²⁴

Unlike Mt. Holyoke and Wellesley, Bennington, the college where Shirley Jackson and her husband Stanley Edgar Hyman resided, had been founded and run by men since its inception. But while Bennington had gained a reputation for its progressive, anything-goes campus environment, the arrival of its new president Frederick Burkhardt in 1947 brought about a few modifications to daily life for the “Bennington girl.” According to a 1952 article published in the *Harvard Crimson* titled “Bennington: Every Girl For Herself,” the percentage of students who had left the college for purposes of getting married had risen from seventeen percent to thirty-three percent. Single dorm rooms, as opposed to strictly double rooms, were a new option, and a 6:30pm curfew had been imposed (although, the article mentions, that this curfew was still extremely lax compared to other schools – a girl could sign out until 7:00am the next morning, for instance). Thus, Jackson and Hyman lived in a Bennington environment that prided itself on its progressivism while making specific efforts to disavow the erotic potential of an all-woman space.

Natalie’s college matches the description of Bennington in this postwar era. In particular, by the time Natalie arrives, the college has made great strides to downplay itself as a place where women can actually learn, and instead is devoted to marketing itself as a place that offers “experiences.”

²⁴ Responding to a climate suspicious of women’s education, women’s colleges, especially the Seven Sister schools such as Smith, Wellesley, and Mount Holyoke, began massive funding and public relations campaigns designed to downplay their reputation gained in the 1920s and 30s of institutions that produced the “New Woman” – a woman increasingly educated in the sciences and seeking careers. By 1948, when Mount Holyoke launched its *Mt. Holyoke – Everyone’s College* campaign, the “New Woman” was out – and the “modern girl” was in. The “modern girl,” according to this promotional literature, was a girl who desired an education in both academics *and* family (Horowitz 316).

Opening this section of the novel with the claim that “the mere process of learning is allied to mutiny,” Jackson’s most incisive and biting writing is on display in her descriptions of the college: “The college to which Arnold Waite, after much discussion, had decided to send his only daughter was one of those intensely distressing organizations which had been formed on precisely the same lofty and advanced principles as hoarier seats of learning, but which applied them with slight differences in detail; education, the youthful founders of the college had told them blandly, was more a matter of attitude than of learning” (47). The narrator goes on to describe the structural shifts towards more conservative, heteronormative policies that had taken place at the college since its beginnings in the 1930s. Although originally founded on a naively liberal, progressive model of education (the townspeople, the narrator notes, “felt strongly that the college community was Communistic”), the administration had come to believe that “certain compromises with conservatism were desirable” (49). The narrator acerbically remarks that instead of once “being allowed to dance as they please, students were now required to dance in patterns” (49). Demonstrating a tighter rein on women’s sexual and intellectual freedom, the administration eliminated “men from the student body and women from the faculty,” debated whether to include a “marriage course” and “resident psychoanalyst,” and had required a “house resident” in each living center (49). The college president was a “clean-shaven” man who “played golf and who made speeches to the Women’s Clubs in a mildly humorous vein” (50). The college’s shift towards a promotion of domestic containment is furthermore reflected in the difference between the early alumnae, who “were almost without exception divorced and haggard women of the world,” and the current classes of graduates who “came back comfortably to reunions

with their small children” (50). Thus, while Natalie’s college is both “modern” and “authentic,” it is also “supposed to be, and had to be, a strictly budget-balanced proposition, a factory in which the intake must necessarily match the out-go” (50). Under the exclusive surveillance and tutelage of a male faculty and administration, and a curriculum fostered towards marriage, Natalie’s sexual and artistic development remains firmly within a heteronormative, patriarchal structure – just as her father Arnold intended.

Yet although Natalie’s college campus is, by design, a surveillance apparatus that regulates and controls female sexuality, gaps and fissures occur, allowing repressed queer desires to emerge. The dormitory, in particular, recalls Natalie’s garden. By the time Thanksgiving approaches, the dormitory increasingly becomes a lawless, strange space. Each scene described in the dormitory becomes more heavily laden with sexual references and allusions, and yet any queer sexual act itself is continually deferred and denied in the narration. One day while Natalie studies, another girl named Rosalind urges Natalie to follow her to a fellow student’s dorm room, claiming that they will “see something” (97). Rosalind bursts into the room, but then finds no one there. “They’ve gone... You should have seen them,” Rosalind utters, disappointed (98). Nighttime, especially, reveals each girl’s individual dorm room (single rooms, by design) to be a permeable space where constant intrusion occurs (there are notably no locks on these doors). Reports of petty theft take place, beginning with the sexually suggestive claim that a girl was spotted “coming out of [another’s] room with a blouse in her hand” (114). Later, an angora sweater, cigarettes, and a slip go missing. A habitual sleepwalker roams the hall and enters sleeping girls’ rooms unexpectedly, peering over their beds and then waking each girl with a sudden slap (114).

It is within this queer space that Natalie comes face-to-face with Tony. Tony's appearance in the novel is completely incongruous – Natalie's interactions with Tony are fleeting; equally, Tony's interaction with other people on campus is ambiguous. The first mention of Tony occurs in one of Natalie's letters to her father. Natalie notes that there is a "very strange character...always off by herself somewhere" (138). When she asks other students about her, they merely identify her as "that girl Tony Something" (138). Natalie desires to meet Tony, but is also unclear as to why Natalie is so invested. Yet she has her chance to meet her the very next night, after a bizarre homoerotic dream sequence that leave Natalie trembling in fear.

Natalie is "awoken" in the middle of the night –whether she is actually awake remains uncertain – by a dark "figure" beside her bed who is "unidentifiable" (139). Natalie's thoughts immediately go to apocalypse – she thinks not only of her own demise but the demise of the entire world: "The time is upon us, this is the occasion I have been living until, when crisis and danger and terror are upon us all, and we are awakened in fear and run for safety; who has been thoughtful enough to remember me in the general flight? Fire, she wondered, and, War?" (139). Queer sexuality permeates the sequence – the woman figure is naked, and urges Natalie to follow her and look for a "little girl" who always wants to "sleep in my bed" (140). The figure ultimately leads Natalie to an unknown dorm room with a "rumpled" bed; the little girl is nowhere to be found, but instead the stolen dorm items – the angora sweater, cigarettes, and slip pour out of the dresser. The scene frightens Natalie so much that she runs in fear out of the dormitory and onto the lawn, "primitively over the wet grass," which recalls her masturbatory moment in the garden (143). It is here, standing "under the trees with everything dark

around her, hearing “wailing” back in the dormitory, that she encounters Tony for the first time (143).

At first glance, Tony fits the mold of the “predatory lesbian.” Popular campus novels and films featured the “predatory lesbian,” a shadowy figure who seduced innocent, unwitting college girls into a relationship. Such relationships would take place in same-sex dorms, or in a sorority house. Like so many narratives of gay and lesbian relationships in postwar films and texts, the campus lesbian relationship rarely ended well. Instead, suicide, psychological breakdowns, and betrayal would highlight the inevitable tragedy -- and the presumed impossibility -- that awaited a lesbian relationship.

With Tony’s erratic and clandestine behavior, and Natalie’s ultimate rejection of her, *Hangsaman* seemingly follows this plot line to the letter. It is not long before Tony and Natalie’s relationship becomes sexual. Tony encompasses the entirety of Natalie’s desires – hedonistic pleasure, sexual power, and the carnivalesque. Unlike Natalie’s dorm, which is eighteenth century classic architecture, Tony’s dormitory is “rococo...its hallway was colorful and filigreed with gold” (176). The rococo architecture signifies the sexual licentiousness and privileging of bodily pleasure characterized by the seventeenth century French libertine. After Thanksgiving break, Natalie seemingly spends all of her time in Tony’s dorm room, where they practice Tarot, fantasize about violently torturing the other girls in the dorm, and read sadomasochistic erotica. In particular, Tony reads sections of the famous Victorian sadomasochistic erotic novel, *The Way of a Man with a Maid*, out loud to Natalie while lying together in bed. The scene Tony reads aloud features Fanny, the maid, tied up and bound in sexual submission to her mistress, Alice, suggesting that Tony and Natalie’s relationship is also one about sexual power and

submission (180). The next morning, Tony and Natalie “bathe each other” and “comb each other’s hair,” enjoying “the feeling of being together without fear” (181). Tony’s isolation of Natalie away from the other students, and her sexual power and control over her, position Tony as a predatory lesbian figure.

Yet although Tony is powerful and dominates Natalie, she is also the source of Natalie’s creative power. This becomes most apparent when Natalie and Tony take a trip into town. It is at this point of the novel that the reliability of the narration breaks down, and fantasy and reality become increasingly unstable. The town, described by the narrator as “square, respectable, carefully designed without criminal or foreign elements,” is the essence of McCarthy’s American dream town, designed to “to keep its loyal inhabitants from becoming restless, or uncharitable, or content” (184). A movie poster featuring a vampire is described as “precisely the type of machine to take over the world – heartless, villainous, unimaginative” (192). For Tony, it is this lack of imagination that leads people to become totalized in their identities. Sitting on a public bus with Natalie, scanning the people, Tony notes, “They have to give themselves away...they’ve got to make sure you know them or else there’s no point to them at all” (201). Natalie also interprets the people on the bus as “automatons”: “They had all earned their deaths, Natalie thought, by a job well done – the woman in the seat ahead who had never needed a face, had perhaps been given for her part only the back of a head and a dark cloth cat collar” (201). Natalie and Tony feel threatened by the bus riders, under surveillance: “there was no object to their riding the bus now, these people, beyond the pure formality of spying” (203). Echoing Arnold’s warning about false friends, Tony calls the bus riders “enemies”: “The trouble is...that you’ve got this world, you see? And you’ve got

enemies in it, and they're enemies because they're smarter. So you invent someone smart enough to destroy your enemies, you invent them so smart you've got a new enemy" (203). Natalie retorts that "I don't think they've estimated us correctly...they seem to think we're weaker than we really are. I personally feel that I have talents for resistance they don't even suspect" (203).

Like the bus riders, whose identities are so empty and totalized that they don't even need a face, Natalie and Tony's identities become increasingly indistinguishable from another. They reach the end of the bus line at "Paradise Park," an amusement park shut down for the season in a wooded area. The reliability of the narration falters: "Natalie, on the right (the one on the right *was* Natalie?) looked very thin and fragile in the black sweater, Tony (on the left?) seemed dark and saturnine in blue" (186). As they walk through the dark, rainy woods towards the amusement park, Tony and Natalie play a creative game, reinterpreting the landscape through the doubled meaning of Tarot cards. Seeing an automated toy of a man on a trapeze in a toyshop, Tony claims that she has spotted the card of the "hanged man": "Life in death. Joy of constructive death" (193). Every Tarot card has a reversed, double meaning, as Tony points out. As Tony leads Natalie further through the woods, Natalie becomes increasingly frightened, and reality and fantasy blur together. Natalie privately notes to herself that the area seemed "for lovers for whom the Roller Skating Rink was not private enough" (208). Tony's creative energies are on full display, as she imagines their capabilities in world with no limits: "All I need...is a desire so strong that the world, all of the world, has got to bend itself...so that there is nothing above me and nothing below me and nothing in all time except me and what I want" (208). Tony appropriates Natalie's earlier fantasy in the

garden, except she includes herself in it as well: “we might be lying on a curved green hill with our heads in the grass and nothing overhead but clouds” (208). Tony imagines a world where they have “no bodies and with our eyes half-shut” (208-209). It is a place where they can “rule the world...watch and end eternity with a gesture of our finger” (209).

Tony’s imaginative vision, where she and Natalie can exist in a hedonistic society with absolute power, is sexual: “All you have to do is lie back against a comforting hand and close your heavy eyes and say, ‘I am here, I am where I belong, I have come home.’ Just as we’ve always been doing it, just as it’s the natural and quiet and exciting ways of doing things” (210). Tony soon takes on the language of the sexual aggressor: “I’m almost ready,’ she repeated reassuringly. ‘It won’t take long. What are you afraid of?’” (213). Natalie, traumatized by her earlier sexual assault, is terrified of Tony, and associates her with the “enemy within” about which her father had warned her:

She had done what she was told, then, Natalie thought; she has brought me here with friendship and without force, she has followed her instructions to the letter and will probably be commended. Is she sorry? Does she regret it even for a minute, does a sudden fleeting picture come to her, of the two of us together when it was just the beginning? Could she forget the methods she had to use, the small jokes and the little intimacies – or is she wholly a traitor, using any means to achieve the traitorous end, not sparing any thought for the tremendous person, real emotions that were so undefined in her orders (“Get her here”) and yet so inclusive, so desirable, and so secret; will she be required to state in her report that means she used? (213)

The McCarthyist rhetoric of Communist paranoia is on full display in this passage – Natalie explicitly links queer sexuality to Communist infiltration, and fears that she has been deceived by Tony’s seduction. She wants to ask Tony, “Have there been others? Are you experienced? Am I the first?” (213). Natalie, traumatized by her sexual assault in the

woods, cannot come to terms with her own sexual desire and creative power that Tony represents.

This recognition – of Natalie’s own failure to embrace a creative power that Tony represents– is even more apparent in an earlier draft that Shirley Jackson wrote of this scene. She explicitly links Tony to creative power:

She wondered, and looked secretly at Tony; we are here together, she thought further, and we are the only warm things here. What is it we are trying to do, what are we trying to make, to create, build invent? We should not be wasted, what shall we do? This is a moment of great and supreme clarity, she told herself solemnly, feeling within her the urgent incoherent passion which, almost greater than anything that might contain it, stirred and lost itself for lack of a channel to direct it; when I find a way, she thought, oh please god let me make something. Suddenly she was horribly frightened, as at a revelation too great for her to perceive, deadly to recognize, and she stood up abruptly. “Tony,” she said, “Tony, help me. I’m frightened.” (SJP, Box 45 Folder 7).

Natalie’s cry to “let me make something” again recalls her moment of queer *jouissance* in the garden, where she longs to bring her creative power into being. In the woods with Tony, however, she cannot bring her vision into fruition; instead, she is confronted instead with the experience of horror “at a revelation too great for her to perceive, deadly to recognize.” The horror here is the knowledge of her own sexual desire. This realization comes to a head when Tony seems to try and make the sexual seduction complete: “With Tony’s hands on her face, on her back, holding her, Natalie shuddered. *One is one and all alone and evermore will be so.* ‘I will *not*,’ said Natalie, and ripped herself away” (214). Unlike her sexual assailant at her father’s party, Tony lets Natalie go, and seems to vanish as soon as Natalie rejects her.

For most postwar narratives of lesbian predators, this moment should be a moment of triumph – Natalie has rejected a lesbian seduction, and instead acknowledged

her own individuality. Yet Natalie does not feel triumph in her integration. Rather, she feels loss, and despair: “She had defeated her own enemy, she thought, and she would never be required to fight again, and she put her feet down tiredly in the mud and thought, What did I do wrong?” (215). Rather than feel whole, without Tony, she feels lack: “I have been found wanting, Natalie thought; I have made myself unacceptable and am not worthy... ‘Tony, come on back with me,’ but there was no answer” (214-215). Ultimately, Natalie’s abandonment of Tony results in the loss of access to her creative powers and a queer, doubled aesthetic. As a singular totality, Natalie is confronted with despair and her own loneliness.

Natalie’s realization of loss is so great that she attempts suicide. Leaving Tony in the woods, Natalie resolves to jump to her death, thinking of her mother: “Why shouldn’t I --? She thought with irresistible logic and leaned over father, and even farther; she put one shoe against the stone to urge herself higher and thought with glory, Mother won’t care if I scuff it now; it will be lost before it wears out” (217). Rather than jump, though, she decides to live with loneliness. As she walks by others on the bridge, she feels completely unseen by them: “As she passed, she looked into their faces, and they were laughing or talking or walking quietly along, and none of them did more than slide a look past Natalie who was walking quietly along without interest” (218). The feeling, we are told by the narrator, is liberating; the novel concludes: “As she had never been before, she was now alone, and grown-up, and powerful, and not at all afraid” (218). An earlier draft spells this out even more clearly: “I am very emotional, she thought respectfully, I am afraid of death but I am more afraid of my uncontrollable self. Smiling happily, she

hugged herself as she walked, going, spent, to her safe little room with the delicious thought that she was not dead” (*SJP* Box 45 Folder 7).

Natalie’s realization might be considered a happy ending: Natalie has claimed a measure of autonomy, and has “grown-up.” Yet Shirley Jackson’s draft notes suggest that this entrance into adulthood – signified by the realization of her own mortality – comes at the price of creative power. In her notes summarizing the novel, Jackson writes, “The condition of [Natalie’s] new life is the sudden and abrupt realization that she is mortal and very likely not a great creative artist” (*SJP* Box 45, Folder 7). Thus, in rejecting Tony, Natalie has rejected the creative part of herself.

Natalie’s *Bildung*, then, is predicated on the failure of queer desire; Natalie’s failure to develop as an artist comes about due to her inability to hold onto Tony and the queer creative power that she offered. Natalie’s development into selfhood is therefore an erasure of her artistic self. In this way, *Hangsamán* is an anti-*Kunstslerroman*; Jackson suggests that an alternative, queer kind of artistry is impossible in the postwar era. Natalie chooses life, but an empty one. Her growth into womanhood is cold and bleak, offering little solace in the road that lies ahead.

Conclusion

Jackson’s use of the feminine/butch dyad in many ways signals the end of the “queer double” in the postwar female Bildungsroman. By situating Natalie *herself* as the site of queer desire in her text, even through the device of an alter-ego, Jackson has set the stage for a new kind of adolescent girl subjectivity, a subjectivity that links the female sexual desire to creative power. It would be this kind of subjectivity that 1960s women

writers like Sylvia Plath would rely on to articulate the psychological interiority of their own female protagonists.

Ultimately, *Hangsaman*, like *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Mountain Lion*, reveals how the process of developing from girlhood to womanhood is a violent experience, one that involves loss and the rejection of a queer double. Natalie, although grown, and ostensibly “not afraid,” has lost access to the creative part of herself, and cannot access pleasure through her own body. Beyond McCullers and Stafford, however Jackson showed how queer doubleness is intimately linked to women’s creative production. Without Tony, Natalie’s singular future is a vision already foretold, of death by domestic containment.

Natalie’s death by domestic containment, and the limits of the queer double, is perhaps illustrated best in one curious scene early in the novel. Before Natalie heads off to college, she helps her mother with the dishes in the kitchen. Bored with the tedium of domestic labor, Natalie contemplates how relieving it might feel for her own life to be over, and what an anthropological expedition team might think should they chance upon her body in her mother’s kitchen “some thousands of years from now”:

Further excavations – perhaps three or four days later, and after serious quarrels between the junior and senior members of the expedition, one force maintaining that it would be more sensible to move on; this was an infertile spot for discovery and besides the air was bad – might yield the skull of Natalie, and one, holding her precious head in his hands, turning it over and examining it intimately, might remark, “Look, here, at these teeth; they knew *something* of dentistry, at any rate – see, here’s one filled, with gold, it appears. Had they any knowledge of gold, do you remember? Male, I should say, from the frontal development.” At that time, of course, Natalie reflected with contentment, her life would be done. There would be no further fears for Natalie, no possibility of walking wrong when you were no more than a skull in a strange man’s hands. “And see,” another voice called from the end of the kitchen, “see, here, these very strange

objects – ornaments, *I'd* judge. And look here, at these two skeletons here – see, look *here*, they had *children*. (22)

This darkly comic scene of the post-apocalypse presents Natalie's vision of domestic containment as death. The anthropologists, excavating bodies thousands of years in the future, do not stem from an intellectually advanced society; on the contrary, their evaluation of Natalie and the domestic space of the kitchen is a complete misreading. Thousands of years into the future, gendered assumptions about female intelligence and cranial mass remains, and Natalie's identity, even her anatomical identity, is erased. Yet confusion over doubleness remains. The anthropologists quizzically remark that "they had children." Who is the "they" in this claim, and who are the two skeletons? While one might guess Natalie's parents, we cannot be entirely sure. The fact that "they" had children only serves as a reminder that the kitchen is a scene of death, and that the children here had no future. The unreferability of the double skeletons hang over the archeological dig, and over the plot of *Hangsaman* itself. Evidence of queer doubleness, it seems, remains, even after all attempts to destroy it.

CHAPTER 5

RACE, QUEERNESS, AND THE PROBLEMATIC LEGACY OF POSTWAR

FEMALE BILDUNG

A dissertation, I have found much to my chagrin, is frustratingly limited in its scope and aim. There are many other novels that would have provided rich material for assessing the state of the postwar female Bildungsroman. These novels include Josephine Johnson's *Wildwood* (1946), Theodore Koeg's *Meg, the Secret Life of an Awakening Girl* (1950), Jessamyn West's *The Witch Diggers* (1951) and *Cress Delahanty* (1953), Pamela Moore's *Chocolates for Breakfast* (1956), and Nora Johnson's *The World of Henry Orient* (1958). All of these novels challenge traditional perceptions of postwar women's writing, and offer dark psychological portraits of adolescent girlhood on the verge of loss.

Another omission is the subsequent rise of the "young adult" novel during this time period, and the rich ways that women were writing adolescent girlhood for a juvenile audience. While this dissertation focuses only on those Bildungsromans originally written for an adult audience, there is much to be gained from expanding the scope of this inquiry by including women's young adult novels. Novels deserving greater consideration include Ruth Peabody Harnden's *I, A Stranger* (1950), Madeline L'Engle's *The Small Rain* (1945) and *Camilla* (1951), and Elizabeth George Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* (1958).

Beyond that, however, the most regrettable limitation of this dissertation is its exclusive focus on white women writers. What makes this particularly troublesome for me is that originally this project began as an inquiry into how postwar women writers of color were representing girlhood. What I found, however, surprised me. Until the

publication of *Brown Girl Brownstones* in 1959 by Paule Marshall, very few women writers of color – in fact none that I could find – made use of the Bildungsroman genre to tell stories of adolescent girlhood during the years of 1945-1960. Rather, the memoir often tended to be the genre of choice for many women writers of color: Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1948), Jade Snow Wong's 5th *Chinese Daughter* (1950), and Cleofas Jaramillo's *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955) all paint intricate portraits of Chinese American, Japanese American and Nuevomexican girlhood in their respective autobiographies. Earlier, Louise Abeita's autobiographical work *I am a Pueblo Indian Girl*, published in 1939 under the sponsorship of the National Gallery of the American Indian, was considered the first effort by the Pueblo community to document their traditions in English. Clearly, girlhood was an important concept to women writers of color in thinking through issues of American identity, family, and citizenship. Yet it was "real," and not fictive representations of girlhood, which concerned this set of writers.

Around the same time, African American women writers Dorothy West, Ann Petry, and Gwendolyn Brooks were writing searing social realist accounts of black womanhood in *The Living is Easy* (1948), *The Street* (1948), and *Maud Martha* (1953). Of these three, Gwendolyn Brooks's masterpiece *Maud Martha* (1953) could be considered (and has been considered, by other scholars) a Bildungsroman, as it traces the trajectory of a woman from girlhood to womanhood. However, the overwhelming majority of the novel takes place while Martha is a married adult, not a child or adolescent. In fact, only one or two fleeting vignettes make up Brooks' entire representation of girlhood in *Maud Martha*. This gap in the representation of girlhood is especially interesting to think about when one considers how much of Brooks's

contemporaneous poetry often addressed the topic of girlhood. Likewise, Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) is rooted in the social realist tradition, in ways that the novels I examine here are clearly not. Since the 1970s, women writers of color have revolutionized the Bildungsroman, from Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), to Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*, to NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2014). What this suggests to me is that, to a wide range of postwar women writers, there is indeed something problematic and limiting with the Bildungsroman. The story of the postwar female Bildungsroman, then, is necessarily tied to the production of whiteness in unexpected and complicated ways. How women writers of color respond to this model of adolescent development deserves much greater sustained focus than this dissertation can offer; I hope to soon be at the forefront of this inquiry in the near future.

The problems of whiteness and the postwar female Bildungsroman have never been more clearly on display than with the recent debate over the publication of Harper Lee's 1958 manuscript, *Go Set A Watchman*, and its "troubling" implications for how we are now to read *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Since its publication in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been elevated to canonical status, and it remains *the* signature representation of tomboy girlhood in American literature today. The "shocking reveal" that Atticus Finch is racist in *Go Set a Watchman*, and the critics' distaste of young Scout Finch as adult Jean Louise, have much to suggest about the problematic legacies of the postwar female Bildungsroman. The problem with the production of white adolescent girlhood in the postwar female Bildungsroman is that it sacrifices raced and queer figures in order to underwrite the adolescent girl figure's white heteronormativity. Unlike the

earlier postwar novels, however, which compel the reader to consider the deep loss of connection to others as constituting *the price* of white womanhood, *To Kill A Mockingbird* instead equates empathy for social others as the *gateway into* “good” white womanhood. In other words, *To Kill a Mockingbird* seeks to validate a *kind* of model of white womanhood, a liberal one, which tacitly accepts the absence of queer and raced subjectivity in exchange for white sentiment. For this reason, I want to end my dissertation by briefly examining how *To Kill a Mockingbird* deploys queerness to constitute Scout Finch’s development into adulthood. When considered in light of the other Bildungsromans examined in this dissertation, Harper Lee’s novel emerges as the ultimate – and perhaps inevitable – manifestation of white postwar adolescent Bildung. More than any other earlier postwar female Bildungsroman, *To Kill A Mockingbird* masterfully crystalizes the myth of white liberal girlhood that would set the standard of white girl Bildung for the remainder of the 20th century. It is worth exploring how this came to be.

To Kill A Mockingbird: A Brief Inquiry

When considering *To Kill A Mockingbird* alongside the earlier postwar female Bildungsromans I examined in this dissertation, it becomes clear that many of the same narrative tropes of queerness are deployed. Much like *The Member of the Wedding*, the plot revolves around the relationship between a young girl, Scout Finch, her queer double Dill Harris (a figure who bears so much similarity to John Henry that McCullers accused Lee of stealing), and the racial turmoil threatening to destabilize a small southern town. Like *The Member of the Wedding*, Scout Finch’s maternal figure is substituted with her black housekeeper, Calpurnia. Unlike McCullers’s novel, however, *To Kill a*

Mockingbird foregrounds the relationship between father and daughter: Atticus Finch is the central moral authority of the text, whereas Frankie Addams's father is so marginalized his presence barely registers in the novel.

With the increase of patriarchal authority in *To Kill A Mockingbird* comes the diminishment of women's voices in the text. While Berenice was the formative moral figure in Frankie's life, Calpurnia's presence serves to merely affirm Atticus's ethical "correctness" on race. Much like the fractured conversation between Charity and Natalie in *Hangsaman*, then, conversation between women in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is marginalized and under constant surveillance by men. Mayella Ewell, the poor, rural white nineteen-year-old woman who falsely accuses Tom Robinson of rape, only speaks when on trial, and only when under direct questioning by Atticus and the male prosecutor. Similarly, Aunt Alexandra, Atticus's sister who comes to live with the Finch family late in the novel, acts as a counterpoint to Atticus's worldview: she represents the conventional southern women's perspective (which we are to understand as wrong), and only serves as a figure for Scout to mock. Bizarrely, although the plot is ostensibly about a young girl's growth and development, and although Scout is the primary narrator of the text, *To Kill A Mockingbird* is remarkably anti-woman. Womanhood is reduced to the figure of "the lady," a figure worthy of only derision. This becomes most clear when Scout discusses her preference for the friendship of men:

There was no doubt about it, I must soon enter this world, where on its surface fragrant ladies rocked slowly, fanned gently, and drank cool water...Ladies seemed to live in faint horror of men, seemed unwilling to approve wholeheartedly of them. But I liked them. There was something about them, no matter how much they cussed and drank and gambled and chewed; no matter how undelectable they were, there was something about them that I instinctively like...they weren't – (Lee 313)

Scout's inability to complete her thought, marked by the ellipses and dash, indicates the absence of language surrounding the concept of the lady. Unlike earlier postwar female Bildungsromans, which expose patriarchal authority as harmful to their protagonists' development, *To Kill A Mockingbird* celebrates patriarchal authority, and suggests that the best way to grow up successfully is to listen to one's father and dismiss the model of the "lady." The "lady" in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is false sentiment: emotion and frivolity channeled only towards the self. It is this false sentiment, above all else, which makes the figure of the "lady" so morally reprehensible in the text.

If the "lady" figure represents false sentiment in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, queerness acts as the ultimate embodiment of sincere sentiment. Scholars have previously considered queerness in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and have read Boo Radley's reclusiveness as the symbol of gay closetedness. Most of these analyses celebrate Lee's depiction of queerness, particularly the depiction of Dill Harris's fascination with making Boo "come out." Gary Richards claims that *To Kill a Mockingbird* effects a "destabilization of heterosexuality and normative gender that seems far more radical" than other southern texts published earlier (119). Similarly, Kristen Proehl asserts that *To Kill A Mockingbird*, among other novels featuring tomboy girls, present a "subversive, hopeful model of social change, as they suggest the potential for marginalized figures to forge alliances with one another and across differences in race, gender, class, and sexuality" (130). Holly Blackford cautions against this type of thinking, however, and conversely argues that *To Kill a Mockingbird* "embodies a more complicated, sinister subtext of condemning gays to a life in the closet. *Mockingbird* opens up Dill's inner issues only to abandon him in the end" (208). As this dissertation has shown, the

abandonment or sacrifice of queer characters is a necessary plot element in the postwar female Bildungsroman. The fact that Dill disappears from the narrative at the end is not reason enough to assert that *To Kill A Mockingbird* promotes the queer closet. Yet what is telling, however, is what gained and lost by Dill's disappearance from the narrative.

Unlike the earlier postwar female Bildungsromans, which figure the death of the queer double as loss, Dill's absence dissolves into sentiment. It is this sentiment that enables Scout's emergence into adult reasoning, and allows for a gaining of empathetic wisdom.

In the final few days in which the novel takes place, Dill heads back to Meridian Mississippi, and Scout is left alone with her family. With the absence of Dill, however, comes the "outing" of Boo Radley: on the way home from a school play, Scout and Jem are attacked by Bob Ewell. Boo defends the children and kills Ewell in the process.

Afterwards, when Scout meets Boo for the first time, her childhood fear of him vanishes, and is immediately replaced with totalized empathy: Boo's face "blurred with my sudden tears" (362). After leading Boo over to Jem's bedside and allowing him to touch his hair, she escorts him back home. Scout's crossing the street to stand on Boo Radley's front porch represents her symbolic crossing over into adulthood. This crossing is signified by her ultimate appropriation of empathetic vision. Imagining the past four years from Boo's perspective, she recognizes the love that Boo has had for her and Jem, and in turn loves him too. Scout notes that after standing on Boo's front porch she suddenly "felt very old": "I thought Jem and I would get grown but there wasn't much else left for us to learn" (374).

Unlike the earlier postwar female Bildungsromans, queerness in *To Kill A Mockingbird* ultimately figures as presence rather than loss. Boo "comes out." Rather

than be killed by meningitis, or a brother's accidental hunt, it is Boo who kills, signifying agency and power. Yet this outing is immediately displaced by sentiment. Boo is there to be an emotional puddle for Scout to absorb, and thereby become an adult. If the false sentiment of the "lady" acts as a growth inhibitor to Scout, then Boo's queer sentiment is a steroid, catapulting Scout immediately into adulthood. The problem, then, is that queerness is erased in the text as soon as it reveals itself. It is not the loss of Boo that constitutes Scout's entrance into white womanhood; it is the full appropriation of him. Boo, as subject, disappears, and Jean Louise Finch comes into frame.

Although queer subjects dissolve into queer sentiment in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they cannot be erased entirely. In the last scene of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the specter of Dill remains. Atticus sits at Jem's beside, and pulls a children's gothic ghost story, *The Gray Ghost*, off the shelf. The book was not originally Jem's; it was Dill's, lost in a bet when Jem touched the front door of the Radley house. The scene is a curious one. Scout, having escorted Boo Radley back home, gathers into Atticus's arms, and begs him to read it to her. Originally Atticus protests, claiming that Scout has had enough scares for the day. Scout argues that she wasn't scared, and besides, "Nothin's real scary except in books" (375). From Scout's sleepy narration, we get a fragmented tale: a Confederate soldier, mistaken identity, and a presumed villain who, upon further inquiry, is in fact a hero: "An' they chased him 'n' could never catch him 'cause they didn't know what he looked like, an' Atticus, when they finally saw him, why he hadn't done any of those things...Atticus, he was real nice..." (376). Atticus tucks Scout in bed, and murmurs, "Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them" (376).

The scene presumably stands to affirm Atticus's moral goodness: that despite the attempted murder of his children earlier that night, his faith in the underlying goodness of humanity remains. Boo is, of course, the gray ghost, having been relegated to ghost status earlier in the novel: speaking of Boo's treatment by his father, Atticus notes, "there were other ways of making people into ghosts" (14). Yet the scene doesn't quite ring true. Boo Radley's coming out is far from "nice;" he stabs Bob Ewell to death with a kitchen knife. At every turn in the plot, Atticus's faith in humanity is proven wrong: his faith in Tom Robinson's ability to wait for an appeal is crushed by Tom's death, and his dismissal of Bob Ewell's evil intentions leads to Jem's violent injury and Scout's near death. Even his faith in the justice system is proven fallible: at the end of the novel, the characters decide that the best form of justice is to "let the dead bury the dead," and to never reveal the circumstances that resulted in Bob Ewell's death (369). What are we to make of an ending that so seamlessly tucks in its narrative to a peaceful sleep after such violence and failed justice has occurred?

Blackford has suggested that *The Gray Ghost* represents the gothic operations that underpin the narrative, a way to introduce alternative, "shadow" narratives that make up the master narrative (6). I would take this step a further, and suggest that *The Grey Ghost* represents the remnants of queerness that cannot be fully absorbed by sentiment. Although Scout moments ago had declared herself "old," she regresses back into a childlike state in this scene: falling asleep while her father reads, mumbling, and allowing herself to be put to bed. As Dill's favorite children's book, then, *The Grey Ghost* pulls backwards; it stalls forward progress, and suggests that myth triumphs over logic. Rather than progressive social change, then, what we are left with at the end of *To Kill a*

Mockingbird is a children's myth: a liberal fantasy of justice that erases othered subjects in exchange for empathetic identification.

By the 1960s, the adolescent girl figure had secured her place in American literature, and a new wave of Bildungsromans would build upon the model put forth by their early postwar predecessors. Works like *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Sula* (1973) would take the queer double model in far different directions, challenging how queer doubles operate to constitute girls of color. Yet the legacy of *To Kill A Mockingbird* and white girlhood still problematically remains: Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009) are contemporary examples that put forth a model of white girlhood constituted by absorption of racial and queer sentiment. As much as the postwar female Bildungsroman crushed old nineteenth century models of girl development, then, it created new problems, creating and perpetuating a liberal model of white girlhood based on the appropriation of queer otherness.

Dill Harris's *Gray Ghost*, John Henry's nightmarish manifestation as an "escaped child dummy," Mollie Fawcett's coffin, and Natalie's double child skeletons: these are the remnants of the "ghostly gay child" that haunt the edges of the postwar female Bildungsroman. The story of postwar white adolescent girlhood, it seems, is not a story of growth, development, and looking to the future. On the contrary, it is a ghost story, filled with ghosts that call our attention to erased futures: ghosts of color, of queerness, of the poor. As these postwar female Bildungsromans put forth, white womanhood can only be constituted by erasure, the future only made possible by the past that is continually

with us. Like the ghosts within it, the postwar female Bildungsroman also haunts; it lurks along the margins of American literature and feminist theory, quietly undoing the more pleasant narratives of 1970s women's liberation and today's "girl power." We may not be able to understand everything that the women writers of the postwar era tell us. But it is time that we began to listen.

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