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On Barley Hill; Method-Writing and Spectral Landscapes in the Supernatural Gothic Horror Novel

Volume I

A commentary submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at



By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the relationship between spectral landscapes and supernatural Gothic horror writing. The research is practice-led and focuses on *method-writing* as a way to translate landscape experience into creative writing, developing a *more-than-representational* approach to knowledge production. This research occurs through the making of the novel *On Barley Hill* and is set in context of contemporary supernatural Gothic horror writers. The aim of the research is to establish a better understanding of the use of creative writing in and about landscape, with a particular interest in using this literary genre to understand and express ecological threats over landscapes local to the writer.

The original contribution to knowledge is in the use of method-writing as an effective technique for knowledge production about landscape. The investigation into the efficacy of the supernatural Gothic horror genre to explore threatened landscapes and my choice to use genre to distance myself from an autobiographical account of being-in-the-landscape are both pieces of original research. The method-writing in this project resulted in the production of a dolls' house and my research into *dollshousing* to explore a previously unexamined space is also an original contribution to knowledge.

The methodology is primarily one of method-writing which, like method acting, is used to gather information through physical experience. This methodology involves play, rehearsal, skill development through craftwork and practical experience to find the story in the landscape.

The results of the research suggest that method-writing is an effective way in which to produce knowledge and understanding of landscape. However, although supernatural Gothic horror is a useful way to explore the spaces of human habitation, it is less effective at addressing concerns over the wider environment because of the inherent differences in our perception of ghosts and spectres. This is discussed in terms of current landscape theories and Derrida's work on *hauntology*. Method-writing within a local area leads to a tension between the requirements of truthful depiction and an objective distance from autobiography and this research has confirmed that the conscious inclusion of autobiographical details is an inevitable part of method-writing and also a fundamental ingredient of the contemporary Gothic. The tertiary enquiry into

the craft of making miniatures has established that the social space of dollshousing can be useful for the exploration of a particular set of circumstances hitherto relatively unexamined.

In conclusion, the experience of being-in-a-landscape with the attention required for the process of method-writing leads to creative writing which is effective in communicating and disseminating the value of that landscape.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and was granted by the University Ethics Committee on 1st March 2013 (Reference RE24-01-131664).

I declare that the word count of the Commentary element of this thesis is 34,625 words.

Name: Rowan Frances Wynne Bowman

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Date:

INTRODUCTION

On Barley Hill is a novel about haunted landscapes and people, and their encounters with spectres and the spectral. The supernatural Gothic horror genre reflects the turmoil of the characters' story arc and also my own ecological anxiety about pollution and its contribution to rapid environmental changes.

I live on Barley Hill and spent my childhood in the Derwent Valley on the border between Northumberland and County Durham. The spectre which hangs over the novel is the real-life threat of a large opencast development at Whittonstall to the east of Barley Hill. Although the plans have been temporarily withdrawn as demand for coal has fallen during the world recession, they have not been abandoned¹. Government support for UK coal production automatically overrules County Council objections whenever the need for coal is perceived. *On Barley Hill* is partly a writer's response to a local ecological threat.

During the course of writing I walked every day in the footsteps of the protagonists Jack and Emily. I generated a collection of artefacts and drawings and also photographs of the places in the story, some of which are included in the novel. I painted the studies in the sketch book which Emily used while she was growing up and also made the dolls' house Jack builds during the research for the novel. The process of construction is part of my methodology for finding the story.

On Barley Hill is a genre novel and largely adheres to the conventions of supernatural Gothic horror. Supernatural horror is an affective form of writing. The reader experiences a physical reaction to the emotions of fear and revulsion encountered by the

¹ C/10/00255/CCMEIA | Extraction of 2.2 million tonnes of coal and 500,000 tonnes of fireclay by surface mining methods including provision of coal haul road with restoration to a mixture of agriculture, woodland and nature conservation habitats, open water and an extended rights of way network | Hoods Close Surface Mine Newlands Stocksfield Northumberland. Public comments outlining the history of this proposal available to read at <publicaccess.northumberland.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=neighbourComments&keyVal=LC4YU6LW00400>

characters.² It requires a setting which is overtly mimetic so that there is a clear distinction between reality and that which is ‘manifestly unreal’.³ Each element of this genre is related to place and, within my own work specifically, landscape.

Landscape writing is not only a response to the connection between the human gloss and its material substrate, but to the fears for that landscape and also the sense of love, loss and belonging that tie us to the land and wrench painfully when we break away from places that we know. This is a thesis about belonging, that recognition of land-ship⁴ and the acknowledgement of the affection and responsibility for the landscape in which I live.

The project is concerned with my research methodology of method-writing within the landscapes of the story.

The method-writing I employ involves pretending to be the characters in the novel, physically playing out the scenes, usually in the specific story locations, occasionally in a substituted site. As the writer, I decide the location and choose who will be there and often have a clear idea of the initial starting point for the scene, but I don’t storyboard or plan either the actions or dialogue until I begin to play. The scenes frequently change and are modified through continual experimentation and then refined to a point at which I feel I can no longer add anything. The full text for each scene is created during this play phase. This text is almost a learnt play script which I transcribe later at my desk. This transcription may be edited and rewritten, but the body of the composition takes place where the story happens in the novel. It is a time consuming process and the locations are revisited until I am satisfied with the unwritten ‘text’. Sometimes chance incursions will change the direction of the scene entirely, for example the scene on pages 76 to 78 was originally rehearsed on a dark starry night and was intended to show Emily’s growing paranoia. I wrote down this scene, but it added little to the narrative, so I wished to replace it. The second night I visited the railway line it was foggy. I couldn’t safely walk far and as I/Emily turned back a car pulled into the car park (I knew it was Tim’s car before there was any logical way I could have come to that knowledge). I experienced Emily’s lurch of horror and crept back beneath

² Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.18.

³ H.P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (USA: Dover Ltd, 1973), p.34.

⁴ K. Olwig, ‘Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86.1 (1996), 630-53 (pp 631-33).

the tunnel. I rehearsed and embellished this event on subsequent visits until it felt finished. The final rehearsal contained the entire scene, much as it appears in the manuscript, essentially complete and ready to write down.

The novel addresses the efficacy of method-writing both for creating supernatural Gothic horror and in the production of knowledge about the experience of spectral landscapes. This practice-led research and analysis has led to two further enquiries: is supernatural Gothic horror an efficient way of harnessing creative writing to explore threatened landscapes, and is my choice to use genre simply a way of distancing myself from a personal autobiographical account of being in the landscape? The method-writing in this project resulted in the production of a dolls' house and this leads to a fourth research question: can *dollshousing* be used as a method to explore haunted spaces?

Synopsis

The novel begins with the death of Jack's wife, Claire. Jack meets Emily in the hospice where her grandmother is dying and is immediately attracted to her vulnerability. He offers her support, which she rejects from the outset. Jack's livelihood comes from making dolls' houses, so he decides to build a model of Emily's grandmother's house, initially as an excuse for further contact, but later hoping it is a way to control her.

Emily grew up with her grandparents, but left in her teens after they failed to believe her when she accused her cousin Tim of sexual assault. She has to return to her grandmother's house because she is the executor of her grandmother's will. Emily intends to use the money from the sale to start afresh somewhere away from her memories and to leave the garden nurseries to her foreman, Stuart. Tim, resentful of Emily being chosen to handle their grandmother's affairs, starts bullying her and fights with Stuart. Instead of feeling nostalgia for the house, Emily finds it threatening and has nightmares about it. The valuer from the auctioneers sees a ghost there, but Emily fails to recognise that it is herself as a child.

Meanwhile strange, preternatural events begin to unfold as Barley Hill reacts to the test drilling for the opencast. At first Jack only experiences hallucinations, merely shifting perceptions, but they become more and more violent and he begins to feel that he can harness the power in some way to help him achieve his aims. The disturbances

affect other residents; many are troubled by a continuous humming in their heads and an overwhelming fear. They take to the streets to demonstrate against the opencasting, singing in time to the humming and painting their faces with sugar skull designs.

There is a catastrophic landslide into the Derwent reservoir below Barley Hill. Several people are drowned downstream. The strange forces unleashed by the hillside take their toll on Jack's health. His visions intensify and he is haunted by his miserable past and by Claire. Finally he hears the protestors marching on his farmstead and he dies from a heart attack as his ghosts catch up with him.

As the demonstrations cause chaos on the streets, Emily finally meets her own ghost and the child's wretchedness makes her decide to try to bring Tim to justice. Desperate to resolve matters she rings her cousin to tell him that she will go to the police, but she is fobbed off at the police station because they are busy processing the crowds of protestors.

The humming song intensifies so that Emily is constantly aware of it. She joins a group of wandering sugar-skull protestors and she finds Jack's body when they set up camp in the farmyard at Barley Hill. Emily is overwhelmed and staggers outside. She is in shock and falls asleep where she collapses. Her uneasy dreams are partly realised, a protestor has painted her face and tries to make her stay, but Emily realises that the dolls' house has been left as a message, threatening the child-ghost. Emily takes Jack's car and drives back to her grandmother's house. There she is confronted by Jack's ghost, who is blatantly hostile now he is free of the constrictions of his body. They are interrupted by Tim. There is a fight, Tim is drunk and will not let her go. Emily kills him in self-defence and watches as the ghost-child fades away.

The novel ends with Emily returning to Barley Hill years later to be with the hillside.

Commentary Outline

This commentary explores the research questions and seeks to evaluate the knowledge production within my practice-led research.

The Methodology chapter discusses the use of method-writing through my own writing and that of some contemporary practitioners. Method-writing is used to develop the

story and generate new knowledge and clearly has the potential to be used as a technique by other writers. The chapter also argues that the specific generic requirement within supernatural gothic horror for a realistic background to the preternatural is particularly well met by this technique.

The approach of landscaping through method-writing as part of practice-led research is evaluated in conjunction with theories of space and place, using Non-Representational theory and Actor Network theory. The usefulness of play, rehearsal and performance is discussed in the light of contemporary theories on the importance of play. Landscaping in this way gathers information about space, generating knowledge about place and our relationship to it. The Methodology chapter seeks to understand the constraints and compromises inherent in finding truth and authenticity in landscape writing without removing the final textual product so far from the research that it ceases to be useful in terms of understanding that landscape.

This method-writing approach to examining space through landscaping is an original piece of research.

The Haunted Spaces chapter considers the importance of scale and genre. There are four elements to the generation of fear in *Barley Hill*: the unease of the *unheimlich* in the landscape; ghosts; fear in the spectral landscape; and the monster created from the spectre of opencasting. The process of turning these four elements into a supernatural Gothic horror story is discussed using examples from contemporary horror fiction such as Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), Andrew Hurley's *The Loney* (2014), James Herbert's *Haunted* (1988) and Shirley Jackson's *Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and horror films like *The Awakening* (2011), *Crimson Peak* (2015) and *Poltergeist* (1982). From this I go on to evaluate the usefulness of the genre of supernatural Gothic horror for the exploration of ecological issues and argue that large scale environmental problems can be better examined through other genres, such as science fiction. The Gothic elements of the plot are better suited to the examination of small spaces inhabited by haunted individuals. This dichotomy is further evident in the duality of the plot of *Barley Hill*, which required two protagonists in order to tell the full story encompassing both the hauntings and the monster conjured from ecological concern.

1 Supernatural Gothic Horror Fiction

On Barley Hill is written within the tradition of supernatural Gothic horror. The supernatural elements are easily understood: the ghosts are not possible and the monster is speculative at most (the earth hasn't reacted in such a manner before). The Gothic nature is bedded in the history of the genre, a gloomy house, a magnificent, powerful landscape and the themes of transgression and hidden pasts which blight the present. Emily is a Gothic heroine; she is trapped by property and preyed upon by a relative with both sexual and territorial interest in her.⁵ It departs from the classic model by allowing her to rescue herself and to develop the resolution to her problems without any romantic intervention. However, as the academic and Gothic fiction writer, Sarah Perry, writes 'true gothic lies not merely in tropes – though these are to be prized – but in an expression of transgression, madness or desire that makes the unnerved reader complicit in the tale'.⁶

The horror comes primarily from the interactions between Jack and the landscape. Tim's actions become more monstrous as the novel develops until he, too, is a source of horror. As discussed in the Haunted Spaces chapter, the ghosts' effects are less horrific because they are confusions of time, rather than a physical danger.⁷ Emily is rarely scared by them but they are intended to unsettle the reader with the uncanniness of their appearances signifying past horrors and 'intellectual uncertainty'.⁸

Horror is the most difficult of the three elements of supernatural Gothic horror to accomplish because it needs to be *affective*. Few other genres need to produce a physical effect in the reader, pornography excepted; love stories do not make the reader fall in love, crime stories and detective novels may make the reader wish they could have adventures, but they do not make the reader feel the same way as the central character. The Danish horror critic, Mathias Clasen, argues that horror writing is a product of evolution and that the writer uses stimuli which are irrelevant for modern

⁵ See Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.10; Fred Botting, 'In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), pp.3-15 (p.6).

⁶ Sarah Perry, 'The Loney by Andrew Michael Hurley Review – a Gothic Masterpiece', *The Guardian*, 28th August 2015, <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/28/the-loney-andrew-michael-hurley-review-gothic-novel>> [accessed 19th May 2016].

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.64-65.

⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), p.125.

urban lives but which still cause fear.⁹ Clasen builds a case for ‘local’ adaptation to basic tropes, but even a modern fear of debt is expressed via the monstrous supernatural because it relates to primitive material survival.¹⁰ If horror was solely a cultural construct or artefact it would change with the changing dangers facing us, but ‘horror varies within a very narrow range because there are only so many ways to effectively scare the human animal’.¹¹ H.P. Lovecraft also took this view and attributed the origin of horror to ‘the earliest folklore of all races’ so that ‘the horror-tale is as old as human thought and speech’.¹² The supernatural Gothic tale originates with Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764),¹³ but the horror element in this genre has a more primitive and ancient lineage.¹⁴

The Castle of Otranto was written amongst Walpole’s many works about the Gothic heritage of architecture and liberal political thinking.¹⁵ Walpole joined the Gothic and the supernatural in the public imagination not so much by this slight novel as by his influence in the popularity of the Gothic Revival Movement which meant that his volumes of writing on architecture were widely known. He explains that the Gothic design ‘infuse[s] superstition’,¹⁶ thus Walpole established a ‘new literary genealogy’.¹⁷ The story is centred on the love between mother and daughter and the destruction of their happiness by two powerful men in mid-life crisis who develop un-fatherly impulses towards their daughters’ friends. The setting is the progenitor of the classic Gothic tale, a crumbling ancient castle with a secret passage and access to a church sited in an Arcadian landscape. The supernatural element seems absurd compared to later writers, and the horror comes far more from the seemingly inescapable dastardly lusts than the clumsy assemblage of oversized armour that manifests itself whenever the plot

⁹ Mathias Clasen, ‘Monsters Evolve: A Biocultural Approach to Horror Stories’, *Review of General Psychology*, 16.2 (2012), pp.222-29 (p.223).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.226.

¹¹ Mathias F. Clasen, ‘The Horror, the Horror’, in *On Stories* <http://www.academia.edu/217296/The_Horror_The_Horror> pp112-19 [accessed 27th May 2016], (p. 113).

¹² Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.17.

¹³ See E.J. Clery, ‘The Genesis of “Gothic” Fiction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.21-40 (p.21).

¹⁴ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁶ Horace Walpole, from *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762), in *The Castle of Otranto* pp.105-113 (p.108).

¹⁷ Nick Groom, ‘Introduction’, *The Castle of Otranto*, Horace Walpole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ix-xxxviii (xx).

flags. However, some recognisable ingredients are there: the predatory older men and the dark tunnel through which Isabella flees contain primitive fears we can identify with, both 'threatening and impure'.¹⁸ The spectral armour and the ghost in Hippolyta's chambers are dangled next to 'loopholes' of logical explanation¹⁹ because they are at first witnessed only by superstitious servants and the guilt-ridden Manfred rather than reliable witnesses.

Introducing superstition and the supernatural into a novel's plot will always run the risk of becoming ridiculous. Fred Botting discusses Poe's anxiety to distance himself from the hysterical by using the 'darkly exotic' landscapes of his horrors to mirror 'extreme states of disturbed consciousness and imaginative excess'.²⁰ By doing this the emphasis falls on the psychotic and unreliable mind of the narrator, rather than the attempts of the author to make the traditional Gothic background credible. The ghost story 'Eleonora' begins with 'Men have called me mad, but the question is not settled...whether all that is profound, does not spring from disease of thought'.²¹ In 'Berenice' the narrator takes care to show his strange cloistered life and his anxieties over his own judgement, 'addicted body and soul to the most intense and painful meditation'.²² This explanation of neurosis is used almost as an excuse for the embryonic vampire story of bad blood, narcolepsy, necrophilia and practically incestuous female lust. The plot is as grotesque in its own way as *The Castle of Otranto*, but it stops short of being ridiculous because, despite the inevitable ancient crumbling family seat and unlikely presence of a beautiful young cousin he loves as a sister, Poe's protagonist gallops from moaning hypochondria to the fatal realisation that something is very wrong indeed with his young fiancée, so that when the narrator pulls Berenice's transmogrified teeth from her comatose body it makes the reader shudder with empathy for *him*.

Shirley Jackson made an art of neurotic characters.²³ All her protagonists' motives can be attributed to neuroses of various forms, best seen in *We Have Always*

¹⁸ Carroll, p. 28.

¹⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, 'Definition of the Fantastic', in *The Horror Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.14-19 (p.15).

²⁰ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), p.102.

²¹ Edgar Allan Poe, 'Eleonora', in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Leicester: Galley Press, 1987), pp.94-99 (p. 94).

²² Edgar Allan Poe, 'Berenice', in *Gothic Short Stories*, ed. by David Blair (London: Wordsworth Press, 2006), pp.52-59 (p.53).

²³ Carroll, pp.146-47.

Lived at the Castle (1962). The story concerns two young sisters struggling to live in their family home and begins six years after the elder, Constance, has been acquitted of poisoning several members of her family (murders she implicitly knows were committed by her younger sister, Merricat). The locals set out one night as vigilantes and set fire to the house, destroying the roof and upper portions. Constance almost succumbs to despair; however, the house gradually heals itself and becomes hospitable and benign towards its inhabitants. The subtlety of this novel reduces the supernatural to Merricat's own small acts of witchcraft and the transformative transgression which comes from the incursions of the villagers and a gold-digging cousin. The reader understands that Merricat pretends the unacceptable hasn't happened, but she does this so disarmingly that Jackson establishes a strong empathetic bond between protagonist and reader. In this genre the internal life of the protagonist has to be convincingly empathetic so that they can witness the fantastic to the reader without raising laughter or derision.²⁴ In *Barley Hill*, Emily, too, is trying to reconstruct a more pleasant set of memories, and her nervousness and isolation are intended to excuse her inability to deal with life in the common-sense everyday way that would negate most of the storyline.

The neurotic narrator in supernatural Gothic horror has become an essential witness to the preternatural. Whereas in the past such stories as *The Monk* (1796) relied on the reader accepting aristocratic sensibilities to excuse the irrationality of their action or inaction, the genre rapidly changed into one which requires a depth of psychological analysis that predates Freud and probably originates with Poe.²⁵ As Teresa Goddu puts it; 'the gothic's superficial, dark spectacles are transformed into the more meaningful symbolism of psychological and moral blackness, [...] depth rather than surface'.²⁶

Matthew Lewis's story of debauchery, ghosts and witchcraft in *The Monk* feels dated by the lack of psychological tension, although the thoughts of the participants are related in detail. It works far better than *Otranto*, not only because it is better written, but because Lewis delays the introduction of the supernatural until the mundane has been established. The first occasion is not until page 104, when Agnes first mentions 'The Bleeding Nun'. Even then, conscious of the potential for humour, Lewis makes Agnes mock the superstition, affirming that the characters are sensible and credible

²⁴ Todorov, pp.18-19.

²⁵ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.25.

²⁶ Teresa A. Goddu, 'Introduction to American Gothic', in *The Horror Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.265-270 (p.268).

witnesses. Conversely, in the forerunner of the genre, Walpole lands the oversized supernatural helmet on top of Manfred's son on the second page of the story.

The timing of the introduction of the supernatural is crucial in developing suspense.²⁷ The anticipation and expectation of the supernatural, instead of making a supernatural story ridiculous, make it worth reading.

Later writers have made their supernatural elements believable within the imaginary reality of the story by asserting the reality of the situation, 'connecting at a hundred points with the common objects of life'.²⁸ Walpole clearly understood this, although he failed to execute it; 'The scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle. The author seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts'.²⁹ This is a fiction, of course, written in the first introduction to the story when Walpole was pretending that *Otranto* was a genuinely ancient story he'd simply found and translated, but shows how carefully he had plotted the supernatural Gothic horror genre. *Barley Hill* follows in these same conventions, using observation and experience to give a mimetic background in which the supernatural can be more subtly introduced, a fiction of shadows rather than clanking chains.

Andrew Hurley's *The Loney* (2014) is an excellent example of the neurotic protagonist in a real landscape with a subtle accumulation of the supernatural and intrusions of horror. It's the story of an anxious man relating his teenage years with his brother, Hanny, who was born with learning difficulties. The eponymous Loney is a section of tidal reach in Morecambe Bay where the boys used to play. They return for an Easter retreat following the death of their parish priest, but encounter superstitious and threatening locals, magic spells and a weird family who have come to a tidal island to perform a magic ritual which involves sacrificing a new-born baby. The landscape itself acts as a neurotic character, declaring itself from the start like one of Poe's characters and shaping the action through its own insanity.

Dull and featureless it may have looked, but the Loney was a dangerous place. A wild and useless length of English coastline. A dead mouth of a bay that filled and emptied twice a day... the tides could come in quicker

²⁷ See Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.87; Todorov, p.17; Carroll, p.138.

²⁸ Henry James quoted in Botting, *Gothic*, p.115.

²⁹ Horace Walpole, Preface to the First Edition, in *Castle of Otranto*, p.7.

than a horse could run and every year a few people drowned...there was such an inevitability about the Loney's cruelty...³⁰

Likewise, *Barley Hill* is written as a character, veering only from the genre in that it becomes sentient and tries to control the actions of humans in a way more compatible with science fiction.

The evolution of the supernatural Gothic horror novel has been driven by the need to remove itself from the absurd, delving into psychology rather than sensibility. It distils the essence of the Gothic landscape into an instantly recognisable trope which can colour the small and intimate, the cosy, the mundane and urban with the same ghastly light or *gloomth*³¹ that was originally only found in the crumbly castles of the elite. It has become more human in scale, but as Botting suggests, 'fiction becomes distinctly, though ambivalently, ideological. Able to reproduce a set of dominant ideas about the relationship of individuals to their social and natural world'.³²

Mathias Clasen discusses the current literary thinking which 'regards fiction as a cultural technology with a primary function that is imaginative stimulation' and emphasises horror's ability to create 'emotional stimulation'.³³ He suggests that horror writing in books, films and interactive video gaming allows the exploration of society's contemporary fears providing 'cognitive machinery for danger management'.³⁴ I appreciate Clasen's work on staking a claim for horror across the humanities, but I am concerned that using terms like 'cultural technology' and 'function' imply a form of normalised activity for the greater good rather than admitting the unregulated and hugely variable canon of fictional works even in this narrow genre. Horror fiction of any type is undoubtedly of its time, heavily influenced by the writer's circumstances. The value of contemporary supernatural Gothic horror has not changed since Walpole's initial experiment; it is to make an individual feel uncertainty and fear and through this

³⁰ Andrew Michael Hurley, *The Loney* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2014), p.4.

³¹ Walpole coined this term to cover the atmosphere and aesthetic of the Gothic. See introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, xvii.

³² Botting, *Gothic*, p.30.

³³ Mathias Clasen, 'Terrifying Monsters, Malevolent Ghosts and Evolved Danger Management n Architecture, A Consilient Approach to Horror Fiction', in *Darwin's Bridge: Uniting the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. by Joseph Carroll, Dan P. McAdams and Edward O. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.183-194 (p.184).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.185.

to experience the fiction the novel presents more brightly, more acutely: to be affected by the story.

It is the facility to explore the relationship between the material and the non-material through writing supernatural Gothic horror which is discussed in this commentary.

2 *Spectral Landscapes*

The term *landscape theory* represents the study of the points of contact between ourselves and ‘out there’.³⁵ The interface is illusory, a bridge rather than a boundary, a distinction between self and place which does not manifest itself when one is not consciously examining it.³⁶ Bridging this liminal space within a piece of writing gives a more accurate representation of real-world experience. The Haunted Places chapter discusses the use of landscape theories to develop a better understanding of place and haunting and to enhance the real-ness of the landscapes within the novel. Stephen Daniels and Hayden Lorimer explain that storytelling (rather than analysis) is ‘theoretically powerful’, providing a ‘precise cognitive instrument’ to investigate the complicated layers of a landscape,³⁷ so that by exploring the landscape for the needs of a story, the writer is simultaneously relating a sophisticated narrative of landscape experience.

Ingold agrees that ‘the landscape tells – or rather is – a story’.³⁸ In writing *On Barley Hill* I wished to tell its story. Dealing with this story through supernatural horror seemed appropriate because landscape itself is haunted by memories³⁹ to the extent that cultural geographers refer to ‘spectral geographies’.⁴⁰ My interests lie in the connection between landscape and story and between physical research and writing practice. I become part of the landscape through physical presence and I experience the haunted

³⁵ Tim Ingold, ‘The Temporality of the Landscape’, in *Interpretive Archaeology, a Reader*, ed. by J. Thomas (London: Continuum, 2000), pp.510-530 (p.512).

³⁶ Nigel Thrift & John-David Dewsbury, ‘Dead Geographies – and How to Make Them Live’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol 18, (2000) 411-432 <DOI: 10.1068/d1804ed> [accessed 12th April 2013] (p.415).

³⁷ Stephen Daniels and Hayden Lorimer, ‘Until the End of Days; Narrating Landscape and Environment’, *Cultural Geographies*, 19.3 (2012) <DOI: 10.1177/1474474011432520> [accessed 6th June 2013] (p.3).

³⁸ Ingold, p.511.

³⁹ Michael Mayerfeld Bell, ‘The Ghosts of Place’, *Theory and Society*, 26.6 (1997), 813-836 (p.815).

⁴⁰ David Matless, ‘A Geography of Ghosts: The Spectral Landscapes of Mary Butts’, *Cultural Geographies*, 15.3 (2008), 335-357 (pp.336-38).

nature of the landscape, using this to develop the story. The representation of the landscape emerges through the research and telling of the story.⁴¹

The Methodology chapter examines the ways in which cultural geographical and sociological theories can be applied to analyse and improve my writing practice. Literary geographers likewise use theory to discuss writing, but this project has gone on to examine the potential for employing landscape writing as a tool to give a better understanding of place, so that creative writing can be used to understand geographical issues.

Creative writers are practice-led researchers and therefore use their work to explore their subject matter, and it seems logical that my own interest in ecological issues will be encountered through story. John Wiley considers that writers have developed ‘new haunted ways of writing’ in response to change, and that the term *spectral geography* owes its origin to creative writing.⁴² Certainly the experience of haunting is more easily accommodated in fiction than in conventional geographical research because it is possible for the investigator to ‘become attentive instead to truths folded into the fabric of the world itself’.⁴³ As this project has progressed the matter of paying attention⁴⁴ has become essential to both my practice and the way in which I have chosen to address landscape theory.

3 Method-Writing and Autobiography

My use of *method-writing* is central to this project. The Methodology chapter discusses the process with which I assemble material for the novel through play, rehearsal and performance at the locations of the various scenes. A large part of my research is *landscaping*, a practice often referred to as an act of being in the landscape.⁴⁵ I would extend the definition of the term to include paying attention to the place around me, so

⁴¹ Ingold, p.520.

⁴² John Wylie, ‘The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald’, *Cultural Geographies*, 14.2 (2007), 171-88 (p.172).

⁴³ John-David Dewsbury, ‘Witnessing Space: “Knowledge without Contemplation”’, *Environment and Planning A* 35.11 (2003), 1907-1932 (p.1908).

⁴⁴ See Robert Macfarlane, ‘Series: Common ground: Only Connect’, *The Guardian*, 26th March 2005 <www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/mar/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview33> [accessed 9th October 2011].

⁴⁵ See John Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007) p. 166; Hayden Lorimer, ‘Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being “More-than-representational”’, *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (2005) 83-94 (p.85).

that *landscaping* may well seem to be doing nothing, yet hiking deep in thought across the same landscape would not be fully landscaping. This exposure to ambient experience represents an emotional investment in a ‘sense of belonging’⁴⁶ and is part of the intangible landscape the writer is attempting to reconstruct. Method-writing allows me to come closer to a truthful account of the fiction because it involves *being* in the landscape with the ephemeral and fleeting moments which are not recreated when writing at a desk. My surroundings as I play are those which the character would experience. A large part of this rehearsed performance is physical rather than verbal so that often ephemeral or fleeting occurrences from my surroundings influence my actions and are incorporated into my rehearsals.

Using performance rather than a written account is one of the ways cultural geography seeks to come closer to understanding space. Responsive performance incorporates the ‘immediacy of the now’ because it is essentially situational.⁴⁷ Nigel Thrift coined the term *non-representational* in 1996-7 as a response to the development of theories of practice in the mid-1980s. These theories concerned ‘everyday practices and how they provide, especially through embodiment, alternate modes of being in the world which afford a continually evolving symbolic resource...to touch the invisible in the visible’.⁴⁸ Performance is a stage in my writing process, rather than the final product, but the theory of non-representation is a useful way to understand the potential advantages of method-writing. To some extent I recreate the lives of protagonists during play and experience what they would experience. Non-representational theory attempts to ‘provide a non-interventionist account of the world’ which gives ‘insights’ into how the world is. It is concerned with the relationship between mundane things, the network which forms space.⁴⁹ This term allows geographers, anthropologists and sociologists to explore landscape in ways which recognise that it exists in a ‘processual’ state of continual change which cannot fully expressed through representational means alone.⁵⁰ Wiley explains that non-representation does not mean not-represented, but implies an active performative role on the part of the researcher

⁴⁶ Dewsbury, p.1910.

⁴⁷ Nigel Thrift, ‘Performance and...’, *Environment and Planning A* 35.11 (2003), 2019-2024 (p.220-2021).

⁴⁸ Nigel Thrift, ‘The Still Point: Resistance, Expressive Embodiment and Dance’, in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. by S. Pile and M. Keith (London: Routledge, 1997), 124-151 (p.125).

⁴⁹ Thrift, ‘The Still Point’ p.126; Lorimer, pp.83-84.

⁵⁰ Wylie, *Landscape*, p.164.

which corresponds directly to the practice-led research I undertake as part of my writing practice.

Non-representational theory is concerned with the ‘practicalities of subjectification’ rather than the subject itself; it is ‘about practices, mundane, everyday practices that shape the conduct of human being towards others and themselves in particular sites’.⁵¹ As a writer non-representation is a difficult end-point. In the Methodology chapter I will address this problem and assess the effectiveness of the writing given the compromises which have to be acknowledged by the re-presentation of my performance in the form of writing down what happened. What does a writer have to do to capture the ‘more-than-representational’?⁵²

I experienced the characters’ lives while pretending, playing at living the scenes in the story. This comes close to autobiography at times, as discussed in the Haunted Spaces chapter. I don’t intend to write about my own life, but because I share it with my characters there is inevitably a mixture of my own previous existence with their present being. All fiction writers may do this, but it is a particular problem with non-representation as I attempt to encompass *everything* I experience. I choose not to write about my life but because I use method-writing I inevitably gather up crumbs of information along with all the other ephemera in the details of the characters’ lives. I cannot separate what I bring from what the characters would bring and there is a degree of editing afterwards when writing down the performance. However, *method acting* also uses the technique of substitution and in that discipline it is considered to be a strength. The actor builds up a repertoire of experience and then transfers the emotions engendered through *affective memory* and applies them to a given circumstance on stage.⁵³ The school of method acting has been established far longer than method-writing. It explains that the performer should not forget that he is ‘*playing himself*’ because without that self-knowledge the actor would lose control; ‘this would approach insanity and all reality and verisimilitude would vanish’.⁵⁴

My performance is in private. It is only for myself and I think I come closer to the edge of losing myself through play than an actor is able to do in a more public

⁵¹ Thrift, ‘The Still Point’, p.127.

⁵² Lorimer, p.83.

⁵³ Edward Dwight Easty, *On Method Acting* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), pp.43-44.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.45.

theatre. It would be foolish not to acknowledge the extent to which the novels I write involve life-writing in some degree. I am part of my protagonists' lives and although I have always found play an escape from the mundane, it is often an exchange, or substitution, of one quotidian existence for another slightly more adventurous one.

Catherine Nash sees performance as a 'depoliticised phenomenological sense of unconscious embodiment';⁵⁵ the 'denotative meaning'⁵⁶ which comes closer to how things are than the representation which relies on words. The closer to actual experience a writer comes, the more useful the fiction will be in assessing the impact of the environment upon human experience. Method-writing contains aspects of rehearsal and performance which are clearly compatible with geographical research. Additionally, supernatural horror requires close attention to detail to create the fictive reality, and the process of method-writing within this genre therefore is particularly appropriate for the investigation of space.

My characters see ghosts because I do, and fear the dark because it frightens me. Deeper, darker truths surface during the production of the novel and like many other horror novelists, I become more frightened as the story evolves. In this way, even the choice of supernatural horror genre is partly autobiographical.

Hilary Mantel discusses a similar writing experience in the commentary to *Beyond Black*. For her, writing involves living with 'layers of voices, and other realities' so that 'this quite frightening idea' of an extant supernatural world becomes a situation in which the writer is repeatedly 'going down ...into the realm where the demons are'.⁵⁷ Like Mantel, I am aware of the risk of sounding mad; madness is 'only a little side step to the left of imagination',⁵⁸ and the darkness of imagination used in supernatural Gothic horror is perniciously adherent to the writer, so much so that some feel the need to disassociate their experience from their creation. It becomes almost a matter of shame. Edith Warton claimed not to believe in ghosts, despite admitting she

⁵⁵ Catherine Nash, 'Performativity in Practice: Some Recent Work in Cultural Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24 (2000) 653-664 (p.655).

⁵⁶ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.147.

⁵⁷ Hilary Mantel, 'Interview, A Kind of Alchemy; Sarah O'Reilly talks to Hilary Mantel', *Beyond Black* (Appendix)(London: Forth Estate, 2010), pp.6-9.

⁵⁸ Alice Thompson, *Burnt Island* (Norfolk: Salt Publishing, 2013), p.91.

was frightened of them.⁵⁹ Horror writers are not only inclined to the genre by nature, but are likely to feed their personal neuroses into the fabric of the horror they write, thus Mary Butts was convinced that MR James had ‘some experience, apart from his immense scholarship’ and, unlike James, she was prepared to admit to such experiences.⁶⁰ Carolina Ramos discusses the cultural substance of the persistence of ghosts and other supernatural elements in Galicia, where her scepticism comes into direct conflict with her native culture which leads her to ‘consider them as a matter of fact and simply part of my cultural heritage’.⁶¹ The conscious choice to accept both scepticism and such beliefs and embrace both within the course of the writing process is, I would argue, a prerequisite for a writer of supernatural Gothic fiction.

Barley Hill is a mixture of written performance and disguised and edited autobiography. Part of any creative writing research is rewriting; the knowledge that is generated through intensive periods of poring over the words already written. In these moments of self-absorption the Gothic nature of the protagonists begins to surface. I experience an almost constant anxiety not to leave too much of myself in the text and such monitoring exposes my own innermost knowledge, a very Gothic presence because, as Steven Bruhm asserts; the ‘interior life’, together with a subjective history that ‘fragments the past’ have always been ‘major theme[s] of the Gothic’.⁶² The archaeologist Gabriel Moshenska considers that this is the reason for M. R. James’s ‘deliberate and knowing self-portraits’ of ‘antiquarian protagonists and their obscure interests’, as ‘James himself considered archaeology to be a transgressive practice’, and thereby doubled the Gothic affectiveness of the story by adding direct transgression to the intensely introspective life of the solitary scholar.⁶³ The interests of the affective supernatural Gothic horror novel seem to require a degree of autobiography.

During the course of this research I have questioned my assumption that the supernatural should be written as genre fiction and also my choice to use fiction rather

⁵⁹ David Stuart Davies, ‘Introduction’, *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton* (Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2009), viii.

⁶⁰ Mary Butts discussed in Matless, ‘Geography of Ghosts’, p.341.

⁶¹ Carolina Ramos, ‘The Animated Forest: Reflections on Galician Cultural Phenomenon’, in *Deviant Deviance; The Irrality of Reality in the Cultural Imaginary*, ed. by Christina Santos C. and Adriana Spahr (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp.93-104 (p.93).

⁶² Steven Bruhm, ‘The Contemporary Gothic; Why We Need it’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.259-76 (pp.262, 274).

⁶³ Gabriel Moshenska, ‘M.R. James and the archaeological uncanny’, *Antiquity*, 86 (2012), 1192-1201 (p.1198).

than autobiography when researching and writing about personal experience of landscape and place. The nature of the genre of supernatural Gothic horror lends itself to internalisation and the discussion of my decision to write in this genre in combination with the intensely personal process of play, rehearsal and performance leads to a discussion of the degree to which autobiography is inevitable.

Many authors successfully write about haunting and ghosts without writing genre fiction, for example WG Sebald's *The Emigrants* (1992) and John Banville's *Eclipse* (2000). Genre is not necessarily prescribed for writing about the experience of haunting. I consider in this commentary that fictionalisation and genrefication is not merely a method of distancing myself from fear and interpretation as writers have before, but a substantially useful way of discussing the experience of haunted and spectral landscapes.⁶⁴

4 Haunted Houses

My methodology usually involves doing what the characters do as I play. In my first novel, *Checkmate*, I learnt to climb scaffolding and to use lime mortar. While developing the plot I worked as the protagonist worked, pointing stonework on an old building. In *Barley Hill* I was aware of the time constraints on the research and chose occupations for the protagonists for which I was already fairly adept. Emily runs a nursery gardens and Jack makes dolls' houses.

In the Methodology chapter I discuss the way in which *dollshousing* contributed to the development of the story and in the Haunted Spaces chapter I evaluate the output of this research alongside the use of dolls' houses by other horror writers and film makers. The research suggests that there is a distinctive psychology involved in the interaction between *model maker* and *model user*. Through interviewing the miniaturist Nicole Scott and attending doll's house conventions and fairs I am aware that the profile of model users is predominantly that of middle-aged affluent women, while makers seem to be a broad spectrum of skilled craftspeople tailoring their output to their customers' demographic. The users have a strong tendency to attribute almost omniscient status to the craftsperson, imbuing them with an imaginary

⁶⁴ Clive Bloom, 'Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2000), pp.155-66 (p.157).

ability to know what the user wants. Within the safe space of the dolls' housing world, those who play with dolls' houses readily cede power into the nominally benign care of the makers.

I have experienced both sides of this relationship. As a researcher I recognise the usefulness of model-making as a tool for clarifying and visualising a space. Such miniatures are a key feature in Terry Farrell's national review of architecture and the built environment in which he states that local government should provide 'Place Spaces', as they do in Japan, where the public can understand their environment through engagement with 'a physical or virtual model, produced by local technical colleges or universities, [which] should be funded jointly by the public and private sector, not owned exclusively by one or the other'.⁶⁵ This ideology stems from the belief that to live properly in a place one needs to understand it and that models are an ideal way of learning about a space, being a far more accessible representation than a two-dimensional map.⁶⁶ Interestingly, the review emphasises the production and ownership of the model, recognising the transfer of power and trust from the user to the maker of the model.

Ordinarily I would consider myself to be a user of dolls' houses (I make them to play with) and I now fit the demographic model. I do not wish to feel that I fall into the category of a delusional person voluntarily withdrawing into a marginal space to experience safety, yet I, too, find myself gabbling with gratitude when a favourite model-maker sells me a desirable object for my small, manageable escapist world.

This project only allowed a brief exploration of the psychology of dolls' housing and the spaces marginalised people find to indulge in creativity. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the activity. However, even this elementary exploration of dollshousing clearly suggests that the activity is an effective way to explore a small area of social space.

⁶⁵ Terry Farrell, *The Farrell Review*, commissioned as a national review of architecture and the built environment (2013) <<http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/explore/education-outreach-skills/1B.1>> [accessed 18th March 2016].

⁶⁶ Conversation with Terry Farrell, 16th March, 2016.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the research methods used in writing *On Barley Hill*. I live in the landscape of Barley Hill in Northumberland and the story moves between this hill and the Derwent valley where I lived as a child. The project is practice-led; the main form of research is writing and the needs of the writing dictate the direction of all other research.

On Barley Hill is a supernatural Gothic horror novel and in this genre the writer seeks to affect the reader so that they experience ‘worst-case scenarios in decoupled mode’ within an atmosphere designed to transmit ‘dread and impending danger’.⁶⁷ The reader converts the text into real emotions of fear and revulsion.⁶⁸ To achieve this in the novel it has been necessary to research beyond the writing.

My methodology involves learning about the story by play-acting and rehearsal and then translating this experience through imagination into the written word. Often this physical activity results in non-verbal experience and because of the supernatural subject matter I want to preserve as much of this as possible in the final text. The challenge therefore is to present the writing in a way which can be successfully de-textualized by the reader, decoded and restored to frighten to reader in the same way the writer has been scared.⁶⁹ Adults do not often play imaginary games in front of each other and admitting to the shame of my time consuming method-writing methodology has been embarrassing, but it is the only way I know to make stories.

For *Barley Hill* my experiential research divides into two forms, field-research, or *landscaping*, in the various locations of the novel, and *dollshousing*. The techniques employed rely heavily on play and method-writing.⁷⁰ This research is ongoing alongside the process of writing-research, although the way in which I gather information and process it into knowledge means that a large part of the physical research, both

⁶⁷ Clasen, ‘Terrifying Monsters’, pp.184, 185.

⁶⁸ Carroll, pp.26-27.

⁶⁹ See Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.54; Carroll, p.8.

⁷⁰ See Robert Macfarlane.

information-gathering and knowledge-producing, has already been undertaken before any writing takes place.

The horror I found within the landscape was influenced by Derrida's work on ghosts and hauntology and by theories on Non-Representation prevalent in cultural studies in the areas of geography and sociology. Non-representational theory is concerned with the 'practicalities of subjectification' rather than the subject itself and Thrift defines it as an *act* of non-representation rather than the application of a theory to a subject.⁷¹

The difficulty for writers who seek to witness real landscapes 'that exist, *after* nature' is to disseminate sufficient detail without losing the reader's confidence in the existence of an entertaining story.⁷² In essence the skill lies in telling a story that is both meaningful overall and faithful to the 'truth' that is being examined.

The writer's approach to witnessing landscape through the story is consistent with Lacan's view that 'the phantasmatic constructions comprising the Imaginary are highly durable and can have effects on the Real'⁷³ so that the writer may understand the Real, 'that which always lies behind', better through imaginative exploration than through either direct exposure (which is difficult to process), or through symbolism (which requires decryption).⁷⁴ In fiction, getting close to the experience of which 'the human world comprises'⁷⁵ is an act of imagination which relies on the writer telling everything which is pertinent 'to capture the transformations of human identity in an endlessly playful and self-transforming literary text'.⁷⁶

The need to make a supernatural Gothic horror story entertaining does not mean that it cannot also present a Lacanian truthfulness which allows the writer to disseminate knowledge about the landscape; however, this knowledge is interpreted through imagination.

My information gathering and knowledge production happens through play which allows me to be the characters for a time. Different characters require different strategies to get to know them. The interior life and development of Jack's character

⁷¹ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.127.

⁷² Daniels and Lorimer, pp.4-5.

⁷³ Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), pp.99.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.101-103.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.

was established through the physical construction of the dolls' house in the story. The daily experience of working in my kitchen garden provided a base for understanding Emily's working life and allowed some performative rehearsal of her activity within the plot. This was supplemented by site visits to Beveridge's Nurseries in Ebchester, County Durham, Emily's home in the story.

These activities are not primarily data-gathering exercises. They are methods of providing both experience and engagement with the material world the characters inhabit. To a certain extent I both observe and become Jack and Emily as they (I) work within their environments. I know what they know of their world and I am free to imagine their lives rather than superimposing my own experiences onto an imagined context. In effect it removes one layer of distinction between author and character. The physical activity also creates space and time in which the plot can develop and be rehearsed.

This chapter analyses the use of these activities as research methods and places these methods within the context of existing theories.

The Significance of Material Experience

Method-writing requires the writer to become completely immersed in the material experience of their characters. In this section I will argue that this methodology is an effective tool and discuss the distinction between the writer *being* in a place and being inspired by place.

The methodology used in research for this project is in the form of *in situ* rehearsal of the story. The poet Jack Grapes describes this as research which 'does not deal with traditional approaches to writing [but] like method acting focuses on truth and organic process. Method Writing deals with the inner voice and how it can be used to create'.⁷⁷ In my own writing this developed as a natural progression from imaginary games and I

⁷⁷ Jack Grapes, *Writing from the Deep Voice: A Method Writing Workshop: "The Craft of the Invisible Form"* <http://jackgrapes.com/grapes_approach.php> [accessed 23rd January 2016].

was not aware of any similarities or differences in my way of working from other writers until I began to analyse my practice at an academic level.

The construction of the story begins with a continuation of these imaginary games. I play at being Emily and as her voice is in the first person the final translation from play to writing is relatively simple. Jack's character development is more complicated because his voice is narrated in the third person. I play at being him when I walk in his shoes in the landscape of Barley Hill and when I make the models he is making in the story, but I also play at watching him, not as an externalised version of himself, but as a third party, an observer or voyeur. It is this observation of the imaginary, but internally explored, character which is eventually written down.

Robert Macfarlane explains that Henry Williamson undertook a similar form of landscape research for *Tarka the Otter* (1927), spending weeks crawling in ditches and living wild for days at a time to better understand the creature's story.⁷⁸ More recently, Thomas W. Hodgkinson launched his first novel, *Memoirs of a Stalker* (2016), explaining that he wrote it mostly lying in a cupboard to immerse himself in the character's life.⁷⁹ I discussed this with him by email and his methods differ from Henry Williamson's and my own.⁸⁰ Hodgkinson was consciously outside the story when he chose to record his feelings on his phone. He was closeted in his cupboard as a writer, watching his wife who was aware of his presence there, rather than as his protagonist who hides in his ex-girlfriend's house for several weeks. The cupboard was not used as a place to research and develop the story through direct experience of stalking but became instead an inspirational writing location. This is not unusual. Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra found in 2010 that their study group of creative writers were 'moved by the affective qualities of a landscape, sound, place, conversation, troubled relationship or emotion, [and] sought to make it real for themselves and others in text'.⁸¹ This initially relates to my own methodology. However, none of the writers went on to spend significant amounts of time within the landscape beyond an initial visit. They used a specific location as a starting point from which the imagination could take over.

⁷⁸ See Macfarlane.

⁷⁹ Steven McIntosh, 'Could 'Method Writing' be the Future for Novelists?' BBC Radio Four, *Today*, 23rd January 2016 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-35379361>> [accessed 30th January 2016].

⁸⁰ Email conversation with Thomas Hodgkinson, between 30th January 2016 - 22nd February 2016.

⁸¹ Catherine Brace, and Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Recovering Inspiration in the Spaces of Creative Writing' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35.3 (2010) <DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2010.00390.x> [accessed 4th October 2011], 399–413 (p.402).

The location is an integral part of the research for *On Barley Hill* and involves long term fieldwork, often in the same time frame as the story itself, rehearsed over several weeks.

Brace and Johns-Putra discuss creativity as coming from within the subject, whereas method-writing requires the subject to break down the perceived barriers between self and object. In these circumstances the landscape is seen not as a backdrop, the ‘actual, stable or pre-given presence’ but as the ‘constituent parts of an incessant... movement-process’ it may be ‘witnessed... as creative and imaginative acts of ‘storytelling’’.⁸² John Wylie considers the barriers between ourselves and our environment illusory, a packaging of senses we define as self which are contiguous with the environmental stimuli those senses detect. Yvonne Leffler refers to this state as the ‘gothic atopos’ in her work on Scandinavian horror, ‘a mental state where no boundaries exist between self and environment... memories and present experiences’.⁸³ In everyday language I lose myself in the landscape during the field research. I was made aware of this when being Jack at the Hopper Monument on Greymare Hill;

Now the wind has blown him empty. His head no longer aches and his vision is so clear there seems no difference between inside and out, a continuation of Jack. What he is within is projected outside because he sees, and knows what he sees.⁸⁴

Brace and Johns-Putra’s participants blurred ‘the distinction between inner and outer’ but this was through ‘memoryscapes’ and took place after the landscape experience rather than *in situ*.⁸⁵ That differs significantly from this methodology where information gathering and knowledge production both occur in a place specific to the story. The participants in the study worked in this way because ‘we’re afraid of losing track of where the game ends and where reality begins’.⁸⁶ The horror genre especially requires the writer and the reader to experience the imaginary logic of the story as reality, and although I am conscious of where the game ends, I am also aware that I am writing

⁸² Wylie, *Landscape*, pp.212-213.

⁸³ Yvonne Leffler, ‘The Gothic Topography in Scandinavian Horror Fiction’, in *The Domination of Fear*, ed. by Mikko Canini (New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp.43-52 (p.47).

⁸⁴ *On Barley Hill*, p.161.

⁸⁵ Brace and Johns-Putra, p.407.

⁸⁶ Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* (2011) <http://www.Reality-Broken-Games-Better-change/dp/0099540282/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1404289416&sr=1-1&keywords=jane+mcgonigal> [accessed 2nd February 2016].

down a transmogrified reality which was real only at the time. I find play an endlessly enjoyable process and the fearful inhibitions referred to are possibly due to differing personalities, in the same way that not everyone enjoys being frightened. Additionally, there is the suggestion that it takes a paranoid imagination⁸⁷ (as necessary for the horror writer as for surreal creativity) to experience ‘a “better”— or at least more “perceptive” reality—“beyond” reality as it is normally understood’.⁸⁸ Simone do Vale characterises this paranoia as a belief in ‘an Other of the Other’; that beyond the social convention which acknowledges an Other to help define itself, there is a hidden agenda, a secret (worse) *unnatural* Other.⁸⁹ By choosing to experience (imaginary) reality from *beyond*, horror writers (and therefore the reader of horror) deliberately transgress into the degenerate state of surreal paranoia, indulging in a morbid curiosity about the impossible.⁹⁰

The combination of real experience with imagination is effective in training actors to perform in character. Method-acting begins with an exploration of the senses and a development of ‘sense memory’⁹¹ which corresponds very closely to the immersive effects of play. In the Stanislavsky Technique imagination is called at will and used in combination with ‘personalization’ (the understanding through experience of a character’s life)⁹² and ‘substitution’ (the transformation of one thing into another in the actor’s mind).⁹³ For method-acting the use of experience in combination is therefore necessary, ‘a greater amount of truth is rendered to his [character] than would be if the imagination were left to function alone with only a false premise to guide it’.⁹⁴

Correspondingly, I use method-writing to get closer to the truth within a fiction.

Method acting has its critics. Lawrence Olivier famously confronted Dustin Hoffman on the set of *Marathon Man* in 1976, ‘My dear boy, why don’t you try acting?’⁹⁵ Similarly, the writer and academic, Sarah Churchwell, criticises the use of

⁸⁷ See also Bowie, pp.39-40 who suggests that paranoia is part of the creative process, Dali’s ‘genius in direct contact with the cosmic soul’.

⁸⁸ Martin Murray, *Jacques Lacan: A critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), p.63.

⁸⁹ Simone Do Vale, ‘Trash Mob: Zombie Walk and the Positivity of Monsters in Western Popular Culture’, in *The Domination of Fear*, ed. by Mikko Canini (New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp.191-203 (p.197).

⁹⁰ Carroll, pp.186, 209.

⁹¹ Easty, pp.24-25.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.125-125.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.124, pp.127-132.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁹⁵ Interview by Steven McIntosh, as before.

method-writing as a term because ‘Writing is always an immersive, imaginative experience’⁹⁶. In this glib rebuttal, Churchwell fails to acknowledge the place of play as the ‘core of creativity and innovation’⁹⁷ and the potential resource it presents as ‘the source of clear, unbroken play-consciousness of the small child within’,⁹⁸ incorporating the ‘metalearning’ that comes with free play improvisation.⁹⁹

Nigel Thrift defines play as ‘a process of performative experiment’,¹⁰⁰ capable of repetition, which is consistent with this methodology and underlines the demanding nature of the research. In writing *On Barley Hill*, I have found method-writing to be a valid and rigorous research method that achieves results, which, for me, would not have been obtainable by other means. I suggest that for the horror writer the obligation to create a mimetic setting and an empathetic relationship between page and reader is well served by method-writing.

My initial research methods produce an extensive mimesis of Jack and Emily’s lives and allow me direct personal experience of the fictitious reality I wish to represent. Rosemary Jackson suggests that forming a fictive reality is genre-specific and that mimesis is itself an element of ‘fantastic narratives’.¹⁰¹ Mimesis allows the writer to ‘assert that what they are telling is real... [then] they break that assumption of realism by introducing what... is manifestly unreal’¹⁰² as ‘unreality [becomes] a vivid, living presence’.¹⁰³ Establishing realism has become part of the convention of writing within the supernatural horror genre.¹⁰⁴ As Paul Armstrong puts it, ‘the imaginary mediates between the fictive and the real and animates their interaction’.¹⁰⁵ For example, when Jack begins to build the staircase in the dolls’ house, I worked as Jack and imagined watching him work. The details feel accurate and seem real because I am describing a working process which really happened and superimposing Jack’s motives on this:

⁹⁶ Sarah Churchwell, interview with Steven McIntosh.

⁹⁷ Stuart Brown, *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul* (New York: Avery, 2010), p.5.

⁹⁸ Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play; Improvisation in Life and Art*, (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 1990), p.48.

⁹⁹ Nachmanovitch, p.9.

¹⁰⁰ Thrift, ‘The Still Point’, p.147.

¹⁰¹ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy, the literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.34.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.80.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.100-101.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Armstrong, ‘The Politics of Play: The Social Implications of Iser’s Aesthetic Theory’, *New Literary History* 31 (2000), 211-223 (p.213).

The staircase will be one of the last components to be fitted. It has to be assembled in short straight flights and he can see no other way to configure the layout of the stairs but by physically fitting them together. He stands the bottom section of stairs in what will be the hallway. He marks the exact position of the drawing room wall with a sharp pencil and then positions the stair section and holds it in place with tape. Jack carefully extracts his hand without knocking anything. He straightens up in his seat and eases his shoulders. His watch says twenty past three. Jack lowers his head again and places the second flight of stairs up to the first floor. The piece fits, balancing perfectly against the landing floor. Jack withdraws his hand and sits very still for a moment. Then he places the short steps up to the quarter landing on the first floor... he reaches out and touches the place where Emily stood. His breathing becomes noisy, he can smell the house, the real house, not the MDF and sawdust and turps and varnish. Phlegm catches at the back of Jack's throat. He clears it with a noise like a cat retching on hairballs. He wipes his mouth on the back of his hand. She's in there, he can feel it. He has trapped something of her here in the model, or perhaps made a connection with the real house so that he will know when she is there. Whatever this is, this desire to connect, he sees his will in the carcass of the model sitting on the bench before him.¹⁰⁶

I worked on this piece so intently that when I was ready to mark the position of the staircase the researcher who needed to take a photograph for the novel *wasn't there* to step in. Being Jack and watching him was so horribly, fascinatingly *real* that by the time I took a break I/Jack had fixed the staircase in place.



Figure 1 The dolls' house staircase.

¹⁰⁶ On *Barley Hill*, p.68.

Implementing 'Let's Pretend'

The element of play-acting has always been part of my research. This section will describe how it is undertaken and evaluate the importance of play to this form of creative writing.

Method acting and the development of 'sense memory' correspond very closely to the immersive effects of free-play. It is fun to 'be' someone else, doing something else, to act out the story in my head. This pleasure 'resists all analysis, all logical interpretation'.¹⁰⁷ This does not negate its value for creating experience; undertaking research which is enjoyable does not make it poor research, no matter how unfair this may seem.

China Miéville discusses that the facility to pretend as an adult is not a universal experience:

One gets asked, if you're into the sort of thing I'm into, how did you get into it, and my response is always: how did *you* get out of it? You look at a class of six-year-olds, they're all reading about witches and aliens and spaceships and magic spells.¹⁰⁸

I remember growing up with friends as they ceased to be able to generate the feeling of 'reality' in imaginary games. One by one they stopped playing until I was left to play on my own. Most painfully, I found my own daughter crying when she realized that 'let's pretend' games weren't real for her anymore. The consensus is that when we grow up we put away childish things.¹⁰⁹ It seems to be something that happens naturally, but not for everyone, and there is a stigma attached to those adults who indulge in play.¹¹⁰

Thrift identifies the importance of play but suggests that the value of play is not widely recognised as a potential academic tool because 'the notion of play has been emptied of all content'.¹¹¹ Gaming may be widely acceptable, it is considered 'normal', and the

¹⁰⁷ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 1992), p.3.

¹⁰⁸ China Miéville, quoted by Justine Jordan, interview; 'A life in writing: China Miéville' *The Guardian (online)*, Saturday 14th May 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/14/china-mieville-life-writing-genre> [accessed 2nd November 2011].

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:11.

¹¹⁰ See Huizinga, p.5; Freud, p.26; Brown, p.6; Nachmanovitch, p.117.

¹¹¹ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.145.

game designer and author, Jane McGonigal, suggests it can be healthy,¹¹² but these are formal games, distinct from free-play;¹¹³ the solitary imaginative game is still stigmatised.

I disagree with Thrift's definition of play when he suggests that play is gratuitous and 'serves no useful purpose'.¹¹⁴ In fact it is part of the recognised process of development which 'enables not just adult creativity but perhaps adult language and representation more broadly'.¹¹⁵ Thrift's definition also ignores the seriousness of play to the participants in the moment of that activity.¹¹⁶ Thrift discusses play from the perspective of an observing researcher rather than as a participant, whereas part of my research is participation in play.

The word 'play' encompasses a wide range of different activities. The play involved in method-writing is without rules or other players and does not require the intervention of any other imagination. It is an intensely personal activity. This make-believe or free-play is as fragile as it is ephemeral and 'irreducible'; it either evades analysis or disintegrates with over-analysis.¹¹⁷ The space free-play occupies in the consciousness is shaped by too many variables to allow a simple definition, and taking it apart to see how it works reveals elements so intangible that they may not even exist on their own. Free-play is infinitely mutable and exists in the present as an action.

Although words can be used to describe play, the act of play 'cannot be written or spoken'¹¹⁸ and play is, therefore, a non-representational response. Thrift concentrates on play as performance in this article.¹¹⁹ I would suggest that *let's pretend* is a form of performative practice, a rehearsal traditionally seen as a rehearsal for life, but which serves equally well as a rehearsal for expressing the world, whether through academic research, bearing witness or creative practice. Huizinga's belief that play is purposeful but without *necessarily* any obvious purpose is paradoxical but suggests that free-play is experimental.¹²⁰ The founder for the National Institute for Play in the US, Stuart Brown,

¹¹² Jane McGonigal, *SuperBetter, A Revolutionary Approach to Getting Stronger, Happier, Braver and More Resilient* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2015), p5.

¹¹³ Nachmanovitch, p.43.

¹¹⁴ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.145.

¹¹⁵ Juliene Van Loon, 'The Play of Research: What Creative Writing Has To Teach the Academy', *Text Journal*, 18.1 (2014) <www.textjournal.com.au/april14/vanloon.htm> [accessed 31st May 2014].

¹¹⁶ Huizinga, pp.5-6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹¹⁸ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.149.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.124-151.

¹²⁰ Huizinga, p.4.

argues that play in this form is instrumental in both learning and creativity especially for those ‘people who [have] to move to think’.¹²¹

For me as a writer free-play can be productive in unexpected ways. I abandon far more material than I ever use and this is because of experimentation, the ‘*felix culpa*’, or ‘fortunate fall’, which springs from being open to false starts.¹²² All pretending is undertaken with purpose but I don’t know where I am going with it at the time. The results are independent of conscious direction. If I did direct the play more I may as well sit at my desk and use imagination alone for the story development as I would have ceased to allow serendipitous environmental incursions into the plot. I play without knowing the outcome. Experimentation and rehearsal are inherent characteristics of this form of imaginative play which begins with the acknowledgement that I am about to pretend.

The ‘faculty of repetition’ is ‘one of the most essential qualities of play’¹²³ and this rehearsal is a ‘rigorous entity’ consistent with academic research.¹²⁴ When used for the purposes of research, play has cross disciplinary potential to harness both experience and expression, so the use of play does not limit the research.¹²⁵ The same games are repeated endlessly until they are finished or ‘played out’.¹²⁶ In my own research this is the point at which I stop rehearsing and am ready to write. The non-representational process of experiencing being someone else has been worked out. I do not play at the act of typing up the things I have learnt, adapted, rehearsed and defined during the performance.

It is useful here to formulate a definition for the distinct meanings and implications of *play* and *performance* within my research.

1 Play

For Stuart Brown, play is ‘a very primal activity’ arising from ‘ancient biological structures that existed before our consciousness or our ability to speak’.¹²⁷ I prefer

¹²¹ Brown, p.13.

¹²² Nachmanovitch, p.92.

¹²³ Huizinga, p.10.

¹²⁴ Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory, Space | Politics | Affect* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.12.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.11.

¹²⁶ Huizinga, p.9.

¹²⁷ Brown, p.15.

Nachmanovitch's more exuberant definition; play is 'galumphing', that 'seemingly useless elaboration and ornamentation of activity' that all animals enjoy.¹²⁸

Roger Caillois is critical of Huizinga's assertion that there is an 'affinity between play and the secret or mysterious' because, he argues, 'play is nearly always spectacular and ostentatious...and somehow *expends*', so that all the mystery is lost.¹²⁹ While Caillois argues that Huizinga's concentration on free play makes the definition so narrow that it excludes too much of the activity we call *generally* call play, he acknowledges the difference between play with rules and this make-believe with its 'special awareness of a second reality, or a free unreality, as against real life'.¹³⁰ He labels this free-play 'mimicry'. The idea that free play creates a second reality helps to explain why I find it so useful for story creation. However, I reject Caillois' play-category of mimicry because it assumes that no new knowledge is created during such play, and that it is simply the reconstruction of the illusion of something which already exists. Mimesis is an important factor in 'let's pretend', but such mimicry is simply the starting point and play itself branches out from this genesis in unpredictable directions. My concern over Caillois' concept of free-play (mimicry) is also his insistence of the notional presence of an audience, and that the performance of this play is governed by a single consideration; 'the rule of the game is unique: It consists of the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell'.¹³¹ Caillois has confused play-as-a-performance with play-as-a-rehearsal. The free play I use to generate knowledge is a series of rehearsals. It only becomes a performance when I come to the end of the play phase of my research. This will be discussed further in the next section. No audience is ever present, or needed for this play to be effective. Moreover, I observe from my experience as a child, a parent and a teacher in primary schools, that most children at this imaginative play positively discourage any form of audience. Imaginative play is generally a private activity limited to the participants.

Play is the main method I use to research. It could also be termed acting, but this has connotations which could confuse it with actor-network theory; there are other actors within the landscape. Macfarlane's term *method-writing* conveys the acting

¹²⁸ Nachmanovitch, p.44.

¹²⁹ Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (USA: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p.4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.22-23.

within the process and acknowledges that this element has a final outcome beyond playing the part of the character.

Play gives articulation beyond words to complex ideas and relationships. “Let’s pretend” allows an exploration beyond the visible as the ‘body-subject is able to work to create non-denotative meaning’.¹³² This freedom from reality and convention allows the characters to be influenced by non-normalising factors beyond the ‘transforming hegemonic social conditions’,¹³³ with the possibility that the character ceases to be a construct extrapolated solely from the author’s own personal experience before the character existed; the character takes on a life of its own through being allowed to accrue experiences during play. This freedom allows the unreal to be contemplated with the same significance as the material and human, and is clearly useful for writers of the supernatural.

Although Thrift suggests that play is not confined to childhood,¹³⁴ he does not distinguish between the instinctive predetermined need for play in the child and the way in which (most) adults choose to play.¹³⁵ It would be interesting to empirically study the extent to which we really choose to play, or if it is an instinctive and essential part of our adult psyche as Julienne van Loon suggests.

Armstrong discusses the various manifestations of play in terms of both ‘an aesthetic’ and an ‘anthropological phenomenon’¹³⁶ and Marina Warner states that playing includes a wide range of activities:

mimicry and laughter, illusion and display, performance, masquerade, ritual, and ceremony, alongside a myriad dolls and toys ... games, sports and races, tumbling and juggling, guising and miming, flirting – even gambling,¹³⁷

Warner does, however, emphasise the possibility of solitary free play as she makes a case for adding reading as a play activity and compares the total absorption in a book with the immersion that occurs during ‘let’s pretend’.

¹³² Thrift, ‘The Still Point’, p.147.

¹³³ Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519-531 (p.525).

¹³⁴ Thrift, *Non-Representational*, p.7.

¹³⁵ Huizinga, p.6.

¹³⁶ Armstrong, p.215.

¹³⁷ Marina Warner, ‘Out of an Old Toy Chest’, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 43.2 (2009), 3-18 (p.13).

The distinction between *free play* and the play found in games is important. Huizinga defines play as freedom, as time spent beyond ‘seriousness’.¹³⁸ Here he is talking about the pretend, the imaginatively constructed world, the sort of play that makes onlookers say, ‘he’s off in his own little world’. This distinction between *free play* and *playing games* is frequently not made clear in the literature. Freud’s play is centred around games between a child and an adult, as cited by van Loon. The discussion draws parallels between this and her own experience of her toddler’s play and goes on to validate the principles of play both Huizinga and Thrift have established. Callois’s definition and labelling of free-play as mimicry are not consistent with either Huizinga’s, or my own, and imply an activity that requires more than one solitary participant.

Games, as opposed to free-play, are formalised by continual negotiation between players and importantly contain two players. Even computer games are an anachronistic communication between the author of the storyline and the player. They do not fully demonstrate the ‘extraordinary plasticity’ that the human imagination is capable of.¹³⁹ The only form of playing used within this research is free play, usually a solitary pursuit based in the imagination and without a pre-defined ending.

The only point at which my play was not solitary was on the photo shoot for the sugar skull illustrations. This was initially simply an exercise to generate the images that would augment the text.

The teenager gazed at him, still mumbling the wordless anthem. His eye sockets were painted a deep blue surrounded by a circle of pink petals, his face was whitened and a wide skeletal mouth was drawn in a smile that wasn’t reflected in his eyes. His lips were whitened, too, and teeth drawn on them.¹⁴⁰

My assistants were a group of art students and a friend who describes himself as an inventor. They were all open to my explanation of the project. I had not expected them to act, simply to be photographed, but as soon as their faces were painted they were transformed, as with an actor, into other personae. The masks had a transformative

¹³⁸ Huizinga, p.8.

¹³⁹ Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.297.

¹⁴⁰ *On Barley Hill*, p.146.

effect, as though giving permission to pretend. This was especially noticeable with the older member of the group.



Figure 2 Photographs of the Sugar-Skull Volunteers.

I observed information that I could have guessed and the behavioural details I obtained were not revelatory. However, the discovery that they could access the facility to pretend so easily once provided with the right circumstances was interesting and suggests that this childish facility is dormant rather than extinct in adults. Their behaviour was consistent with Oscar Wilde’s observations on the transformative effects of masks.¹⁴¹

Huizinga summarises that ‘the formal characteristic of play [exists] quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly.’¹⁴² I seek to experience a non-verbal insight, to experience transmutation into something other than myself in situations beyond the possible. The

¹⁴¹ Oscar Wilde: ‘Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth’ Quoted in Susan Harris Smith, *Masks in Modern Drama* (USA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 157.

¹⁴² Huizinga, p.13.

internalised ideas are allowed to develop freely and without direction beyond the choice of initial stimulus or location needed for the story. This play is intended to improve the quality of the textual practice, but it also gives authority to my account of the supernatural. This is different to most writing-as-research because, immersed in let's-pretend within a landscape, I become very scared at times. The horror is real within the game. I am threatened and behave accordingly without forethought. I know how my character reacts in those circumstances; I imagine the event, not the reaction. Without play I would have to imagine both the event and the reaction. I may have only been pretending, but within that pretence a temporary reality was generated in which I could escape the rules of normal existence and briefly experience a different life.

2 Performance

Performance has been proposed as a suitable endpoint of research within cultural geography,¹⁴³ and its importance as a method of dissemination of physical research for non-representational theory will be discussed in this section.

If I were engaged in the performing arts my practice would be the performance. Performance can allow precision. Its elasticity allows a vocabulary to develop around the space and affect which is being explored (as methodology) or witnessed (in practice). Dewsbury suggests that 'sense is thus in many ways what is left unsaid'¹⁴⁴ and performance has a vocabulary beyond words. Many forms of performance are non-verbal and therefore have the potential to retain more non-representational elements of landscape experience. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

My performance occurs at the point when I understand that the play/research is complete and no further rehearsal is necessary. This understanding that the play has reached an end is an inherent quality of play itself.¹⁴⁵

Performance in this methodology differs from that of non-representational theory in that it does not involve the dissemination of ideas and it is not the final point

¹⁴³ Elizabeth Richardson, 'Using Performance in Human Geography', *Kaleidoscope; The Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Journal of Durham University's Institute of Advanced Study*, 5.1 (2013) <<https://community.dur.ac.uk/kaleidoscope/index.php/kaleidoscope/>> [accessed 23rd January 2016] 124-133. (p.124).

¹⁴⁴ Dewsbury, p.1926.

¹⁴⁵ Huizinga, p.9; Armstrong, pp.217-218.

of the research. The endpoint of the creative process is not actualized for me as a writer until I write down the final draft of the story. My performance is a phase in this process and is conducted alone in private because the material is not in its final form.

Understanding when the play phase is complete and ready for performance is largely intuitive and difficult to externalise. The closest expression of this part of the process is that I become tired of playing with that scene. The constraints of writing to deadlines have proved interesting as I have at times imposed a restriction on the length of the playing process and have found the resulting textual outcome disappointing and markedly inferior to text constructed without time limits. This difference has been detected by my supervisor without prompting which suggests that continuing to the threshold of boredom is an important part of the methodology.

Public performance taps into an existing understanding of the structure of the ‘frames that surround and locate us’.¹⁴⁶ This assumes that the practitioner (researcher) and the audience have an existing shared vocabulary of representation, the ‘theatrical machinery that lies hidden from the spectator’ and it operates within this framework, to create a synthesis of the representational and non-representational.¹⁴⁷ It uses ‘dramatic effects ...vital to our understanding of ...daily business’¹⁴⁸ to bridge the gap between ‘thinking and materiality’.¹⁴⁹

The theory is consistent with the mimetic writing desirable for fantasy or supernatural writing, a credible framework within which the impossible exists in some form. The methodology of discovery through rehearsal allows transitory and situational events and discoveries to influence the outcome. I question Thrift’s bridging of ‘thinking’ and ‘materiality’, however, because conscious thought may be verbal in nature, and when we require precision we are more likely to translate a performance into a precise (and therefore concise) verbal description. Thrift advocates performance because he assumes a consistent direct transmission of feelings into actions. As non-representational theory seeks to be precise, to more accurately present the world the way it is, there has to be some acknowledgement that we think about it and thereby often verbalise things in a way that reduces the power of the research even as we undertake it.

¹⁴⁶ Thrift, ‘Performance and...’, p.2020.

¹⁴⁷ Dewsbury, pp.1910-1911.

¹⁴⁸ Thrift, ‘Performance and...’, p.2020.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2019.

The value of free-play, rehearsals and refinement into a subsequent performance, is that the practitioner is often caught up in the moment to the point that conscious thought is held at bay in the way that disbelief is suspended in an audience wrapped up in a theatrical production. Performance in this way is used to provide ‘a reservoir of knowledge’.¹⁵⁰ Therefore ‘through its potential to be simultaneously in and beyond the “real”, performance [provides] both an empirical and theoretical space for approaching’ an understanding of lived experience.¹⁵¹ This store of experience can be drawn on to make new connections rather than simply echoing the past through representation.

My practice existed before Thrift coined the term non-representational and I wrote for years before I was aware of the theory, but understanding the theory directly affects my practice because I am aware that I am trying to represent the essentially unrepresentable. The research for *Barley Hill* is experiential and material. I pay attention to ephemeral happenings so indeterminate that they cannot be textually represented. This research cannot be recorded in words, so instead it becomes incorporated into the fabric of the play-acting and the rehearsals act like a snowball, gathering up crystals of ephemera and packing them into something more solid, less easily sublimated. It is easy to understand this in terms of non-representational theory. The performance, the final rehearsal when the game is over, is an outcome and a reasonable end. I have converted a vast quantity of information and assimilated it into a manageable package which can be presented as a performance for my own satisfaction in total accord with non-representational theory. If the theory had been around before I started writing then I might have used performance art as my practice instead of fiction. Instead the performance is simply a stage rather than an endpoint and is completely internalised.

This research methodology suits the supernatural horror genre because of the frequently indeterminate nature of horror and the necessity of discovering the non-existent and then translating this into words that convey a sense of the essence of the unknowable.¹⁵² Much of the body of this thesis is about reconciling the fantastical knowledge generated with the real world so that the final story reads as an authentic account.

¹⁵⁰ Thrift, ‘Performance and...’ p.2022.

¹⁵¹ Richardson, p.125.

¹⁵² Rosemary Jackson, p.23; James Kneale, ‘From Beyond: H.P. Lovecraft and the Place of Horror’, *Cultural Geographies*, 13(2006), 106-126 (pp.106-107).

Traditionally a writer writes what they know. Non-representational theory proposes that we know far more about the present than is put on the page and accepting and incorporating performativity may help make the final practice a truer reflection of this. What play can do, however, is to remove some of the more superficial learnt mannerisms that are particular to personal circumstances and allow a writer to start again, to see the world from a more 'childish' or innocent perspective.

In my methodology of play, rehearsal and performance I can affect the influences upon my experiences. The location for the rehearsal is dictated by the needs of the story and my personal preference for somewhere close and private that I can haunt in peace. The performativity, the norms, which influence me will influence the text but are moderated through play and exaggerated or curbed by imagination and, as discussed, form part of the interior life essential to the Gothic. The genre-specific requirement for my presence in a specific spectral landscape, both physically and consciously aware of the nature of that landscape, necessarily tends to skew all encounters towards the perception of unsettling or frightening finds.

The geographer Catherine Nash suggests, like Thrift, that geography provides a way of thinking, of paying 'attention to the material and symbolic' and by combining this with a 'new theoretical vocabulary of performance' turning from 'text and representations, to performance and practices'.¹⁵³ The use of non-representational theory demonstrates a 'commitment to avoiding *a priori* reasoning'.¹⁵⁴ I am aware at the stage of writing that some of the elements I know about the characters and what they experience cannot have come from my own previous knowledge, but this is subjective, and I am as prone to self-delusion as any other writer. Nevertheless I sincerely believe that my experience is extended outside my own life when I play.

Nash is cautious of the wholesale adoption of performance as the final outcome of research because it risks losing some valuable traditions. She cites Matless's work on Morris Dancing¹⁵⁵ and the way in which acute observation allows a representation which does not depend on 'theoretical vocabulary'. Precursive and discursive materials are irrelevant because Matless uses words appropriately. As Nash explains this is not as

¹⁵³ Catherine Nash, 'Performativity in Practice: Some Recent Work in Cultural Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 24.4 (2000), 653-664 (p.654).

¹⁵⁴ Kneale, p.107.

¹⁵⁵ See David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998).

ambitious as using non-representation theory, but it is effective.¹⁵⁶ There is the risk that non-representational theory ‘does not seem to allow room for considering visual and textual forms of representation as practices themselves’.¹⁵⁷ Hayden Lorimer makes a strong case for *non-representational* being changed to *more-than-representational* because the use of the word ‘non’ ignores the usefulness of representation.¹⁵⁸

Nash concludes that the [exclusive] use of ‘abstract accounts of body-practices’ will not enhance understanding and has limitations as a form of communication. She advocates a combination of ‘theoretical insights of theories of performativity with detailed attention to the [...] cultural geographies of “everyday practices”’,¹⁵⁹ and therefore not losing the cultural inheritance of competent representation yet allowing performance to operate alongside it.

As a writer, my practice ends in words and the non-representational cannot be the end-point. I do not intend to try to write the lived moment, but for the lived moment to shape the final text when it is presented, becoming ‘a means of staging that gives appearance to something that by nature is intangible’.¹⁶⁰

Dollshousing and Gardening

In *Barley Hill* the horror from the landscape is echoed in the claustrophobic world the dolls’ house maker enters as he works, hiding away to escape the fear the landscape is exerting upon him while he broods about Emily. To experience this properly I replicated the model Jack builds of Emily’s grandmother’s house and rehearsed this part of the story as it is built. I pretended to be Jack and watched Jack too, as he/I made the model.

I found it useful to build some houses commercially at the start of this project as it allowed me to test ideas for the storyline. Building a facsimile of the exact house in the story is more than mimesis, however. It gives me the opportunity to experience the

¹⁵⁶ Nash, p.661.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.662.

¹⁵⁸ Lorimer, p.83., see also Wylie, ‘Sebald’, p164.

¹⁵⁹ Nash, p.662.

¹⁶⁰ Iser, p.296.

creepy and uncanny that is inherent within the ‘repertoire of the familiar’.¹⁶¹ For example, Jack fondles the sofa where Emily sat, an act I did without pre-cognition in the unfocused un-self-conscious existence of pretend. I was being Jack and he sometimes surprised me. This made me feel uncomfortable in the way Emily would feel because he is plainly fantasising about being there while Emily slept, so it was incorporated in the story: ‘Jack reaches into the model with his index finger and strokes the fabric of the miniature sofa, denting the cushions where Emily might have sat.’¹⁶²

The model affects two characters, both Jack and Emily, and needs to fulfil two functions. For Jack it is a fascinating, curiosity-laden refuge to give him space to fantasise. It also quickly becomes a tool to manipulate Emily. For Emily the model is a signifier of her lack of self-determination as another person attempts to control and frighten her. Please see fig. 3.



Figure 3. Jack's model of the old vicarage.

During the rehearsals I have also come to understand Jack better, to become Jack, through his work. Tim Ingold addresses the differences between the imaginative architect and the ‘messy practices’ of the builder.¹⁶³ In effect he suggests that the designer (architect) makes a figurative house, while the builder creates both a figurative

¹⁶¹ Iser, discussed in Stephen Arata, ‘The Occidental Tourist’, in *The Horror Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.161-171 (p.168).

¹⁶² *On Barley Hill*, p101.

¹⁶³ Tim Ingold, *Making, Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.59.

and a real house because he understands the architect's design *and* makes the house. Having much experience of builders I would question the implied superiority of the builder to the designer. However, Ingold's point is essentially that the person who physically executes a design has 'anticipatory foresight' because he/she is practised at his occupation and understands it at a more fundamental level than the architect.¹⁶⁴ This argument is entirely compatible with non-representational theory and the importance of embodied performance. I have not simply dictated that Jack builds a model, but have experienced it and through this activity will have achieved a greater understanding not only of the model but more importantly, of Jack. I have come to 'know for myself' in the way that learning from making creates knowledge.¹⁶⁵ Ingold explains that the term *embodiment* which is used frequently in Thrift and Nash's arguments is questionable in this context because the learning process and activity is organic, in a way more organic and messy than any performance, and this fluidity renders the term 'not experientially apposite'.¹⁶⁶ I am Jack through his actions and only through his actions. I may understand, in retrospect, what I have discovered and be able to materially transcribe it, but the creation of this knowledge exists only in the action of making.

Emily's grandmother's house is based on my last house, a large, creaky Victorian ex-vicarage with a chequered history and a lot of strange features created as the purpose of some of the rooms changed over the years. It had an enormous boiler which roared as it sent lukewarm water around the house in two-inch pipes. In the wind the chimneys made strange moaning sounds and the doors opened and closed on their own. Many local people had memories of the place and the sometimes eccentric previous inhabitants. A lot of them had been nervous of going past it in the dark when they were children. We also had a stalker obsessed with the place. She used to come and stand in the gardens and kept telling me her dreams about it and offering very small amounts of money so she could buy it. In short it seemed the ideal candidate for a haunted house that contained bad memories for the protagonist.

When I/Jack started to make the model of the house, however, it quickly became apparent that I could not conjure the feelings of unease about it that I had hoped for. I knew it as a family home, a little chilly in the winter, but with big rooms for the children to play in, full of noise and the smells of polish and cooking.

¹⁶⁴ Ingold, *Making*, p.70.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹⁶⁶ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone quoted in Ingold, *Making*, p.94.

I could write about Emily's grandmother's house in the conventional way and manufacture a plot through imagination alone. I have chosen not to do this because, as already mentioned, it is quite obvious in my manuscript when I change from my usual method-writing techniques to using imagination on its own.

I did clearly remember a house from my childhood which conjured the exact feelings of unease I wanted to engender for the character development of the client so I built a model of a small, old-fashioned shop in Rowlands Gill. Please see fig. 4. Recreating the interior made me feel uncomfortable and gave me bad dreams for days. These experiences of disquiet closely resembled the feelings I wished my character to experience. The model was then available to revisit and play with at appropriate times in the development of the story. This need to find a personal equivalent within one's own memory closely resembles the use of 'affective memory' in method-acting which allows the 'creation of genuine emotion'.¹⁶⁷



Figure 4. Model of Thompson's shop.

The reason for going to such trouble to synthesise experiences from my characters' lives is so that I can play with the situation to understand events. The experiences are real and

¹⁶⁷ Easty, p.44.

include all that is present in real life, the ephemeral and trivial; the unrepresentable which comprises the majority of our existence. I am not intending to write in symbols or metaphor; they are not appropriate for the supernatural horror genre. I need mimesis for the story to work, and that entails finding the truth about the space in which the story happens. This is compatible with Lacan's concept of truth that acts as a balance against the unconscious assumptions we make and the 'impossible' reality we will never understand because we see everything through a human perspective. Bowie suggests that the truth-seeking enterprise which turns us into writers is a joyful process through which we can reach 'delirious summits'.¹⁶⁸

One of the many problems inherent in presenting the non-representational is that the more 'immutable' and 'mobile' the recording becomes the more likely it is to affect the object of the research,¹⁶⁹ textual presentation being the definitive example of this potential ubiquity and permanence. I accept that representation can compromise the research to some degree because the researcher is experiencing at the same time as knowing they have ultimately to record that experience. This risks negating the benefits of the close, non-representational research into lived experience, which has been criticised partly because of this problem.¹⁷⁰ However, the benefit of imaginative free-play is precisely the lack of conscious intervention in the activity. Certainly in the case of method-writing I am aware as I begin that very little of my initial play will ever be recorded so I do not regard it at that moment as research, and have never been conscious of the restrictions of representing the endeavour textually.

The integrity of my project would be lost if I allowed the text to take a selective approach to the research findings. This awareness has led to the decision that I will include field-research findings without avoiding those that do not seem to fit before I have begun to translate the play-acting and performance into writing. For example, experience shows that I do not cut MDF accurately. This looks bad: my protagonist is a professional. However, I have made several doll's houses as a preliminary exercise to the main research, some of which were for customers, so I have been a professional. I

¹⁶⁸ Bowie, pp.118-120.

¹⁶⁹ Thrift, 'The Still Point' p.131.

¹⁷⁰ See Tim Cresswell, 'Landscape and the Obliteration of Practice', in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. by Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (London: Sage, 2003), pp.269-281 (p.279); Lorimer, pp.85-95.

experienced the *state of being* of the dolls' house maker. I have made a 'commitment to the values and practices of creativity' because this form of non-representational research requires 'embodiment and mimesis in particular'.¹⁷¹ I can admit or omit my shortcomings, but to pretend that I do not have this flaw when experiencing this part of Jack's life would negate the research. I could make it all up, but then I would never have discovered that my protagonist makes his living from rescuing customers' failed projects and making up kits for people who lack the confidence to do it for themselves, nor could I consider my methodology to be serious, rigorous research if I used it inconsistently.

Initially I imagined Jack to be a high-end crafts person (because that would be glamorous), but found through research that this was not practical. I would have to make up why he works in a remote area of Northern England when his customer-base would almost certainly be in London. Other characters would also need to have some special form of occupation to allow them to afford his services. From discussing prices with fellow hobbyists it is plain that even a modest profit makes professionally constructed dolls' houses unaffordable to a lot of ordinary people. Fabricating an initial detail will lead to more and more invention in a snowball effect. This runs the risk of becoming cumbersome and unlikely, it requires a lot of exposition and, most importantly, it also requires guesswork as well as imagination. I do not start to create text until quite late in the writing process which prevents the text having a great effect on the non-representational research. The original proposal for the dolls' house maker therefore simply did not feature in the research as soon as the reality of his occupation became apparent through experiencing this part of his life. The details give veracity to the written passages.

Jack passes her the invoice. Claire laughed at him once when she saw him presenting his bill, but the formal bow takes away the sense of the customer doing him a favour, removes the sense of patronage. The woman giggles again. Her hand shakes as she bends to write the cheque out on the corner of the workbench. It's a lot of money for someone living in a little terraced house. She tears the paper carefully and passes it to him. It's a lot of money for a toy for anyone, but Jack knows these models mean more than that.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Thrift and Dewsbury, p.414.

¹⁷² *On Barley Hill*, p.41.

All the craft workers I know are female and so I assumed Jack was a woman at first. The change in gender happened while I was playing. Nothing seemed to work for a long time. It was only when I changed the 'client' to a woman that her role of troubled, haunted protagonist began to work. I had always envisaged a male/female dynamic in the story so the dolls' house maker became Jack. He was instantly creepy. This was not foreseen and had not been part of the story, it just happened during the pretend. Emily wasn't a client anymore, she was a bystander dragged unwillingly into Jack's world as he began to stalk her. Now the dolls' house has the equivalent of a character arc; it is an upsetting imposition on Emily initially and goes on to allow her to see the past more clearly and to anticipate Jack's next move. These decisions also took the plot closer to the traditional Gothic novel, incorporating a frightened, particularly vulnerable, young female protagonist in a spooky old house.

I do not think that this transitional plotting process would have been so fluid with any other method of writing. Every time the non-viable plot lines were performed I knew I lacked conviction. None of these versions would have even made it to the keyboard had it not been for the requirements of the PhD to demonstrate that I was working. They were abandoned easily and without seeping into the final story because they were replaced by new experiences.

The model of Emily's Grandmother's house gives me the opportunity to experience the model-maker's thoughts and feelings as it is built in the story, and to understand first-hand the relationship between a craft-worker and the model they bring to life. This is consistent with Thrift's 'ethic of *craftsmanship* as a means of composition and channelling'.¹⁷³ It takes work and discipline to find the potential within an activity that can lead to understanding.

As with much research, this also has led in an unexpected direction. However, both the protagonists have completely different feelings towards the dolls' house in the story, and it is therefore not surprising that I need different houses to experience their emotions. Jack builds and explores the model of my last house (the old vicarage), and Emily finds fear and foreboding in the other model which is substituted in the final text.

The principle of non-representation behind the methodology used for this research allows for experience to be built into the fabric of the story without being

¹⁷³ Thrift, *Non-Representational*, p.15.

explicit. The dolls' house maker's income is not directly explained, but is plain from the text. By using this field research I have avoided the mistake of giving him a job which requires convoluted justification and the text is more believable because of this. Justifying any part of the plot in the supernatural horror genre is not appropriate as atmosphere is crucial¹⁷⁴ and exposition must be kept to minimum,¹⁷⁵ so that 'just enough is suggested, and just little enough is told'.¹⁷⁶

Landscaping

Nigel Thrift is concerned that traditional representation through written accounts of events and observations does not capture our experience of being, that we need to better present in some way the vast, ephemeral, often unconscious state of existence which does not define the self as separate from the environment.¹⁷⁷ His research is part of the cultural transition from landscape as topography to landscape as 'experience'.¹⁷⁸ My research is concerned with landscaping, however this is not only the experience of a geographical area examined as a social space, but as 'place', an activity unique to a particular locality with which I have a personal connection.¹⁷⁹

While landscaping, I perform quotidian acts to provide a matrix within which the plot develops. I participate in the characters' everyday experiences through play, rather than simply observing or remembering similar events. This creates the space to introduce the imaginary and connect it to the ephemeral experience of being another (invented) person. Thrift says that the inclusion of the ephemeral and transitory experience of being prevents the 'centred human subject establishing an exact dominion over all'.¹⁸⁰ This does not go as far as Hodder's discussion of the 'mutualism and symbiosis between humans, plants and the environment',¹⁸¹ which seeks to show how

¹⁷⁴ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.16.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.29, 31.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.42.

¹⁷⁷ Thrift, 'The still Point', p.125.

¹⁷⁸ Cresswell, p.271.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.269.

¹⁸⁰ Thrift, *Non-Representational*, p.111.

¹⁸¹ Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (London: Wiley and Blackwell, 2012), p.89.

modern the concept of separating ourselves from the environment is. My methodology allows character development in relation to the environment in a way that mimics real human experience at a non-self-conscious (but not necessarily non-performative) level. This taking part is make-believe, playing at *being* someone else, but it is more than imagination because of the physical performance of tasks and the exposure to environmental stimulation. When I do this I am being the character at the same time as the writer. This relates to Wolfgang Iser's view of the process of fictionalisation as it crosses 'the boundaries both of what it organises (external reality) and of what it converts into a gestalt (the diffuseness of the imaginary)'.¹⁸² I have not found this process a crossing, more of an extension, an adding on. I become more than I am when I play. Play is therefore, as Armstrong suggests, 'a particularly pervasive, useful, and revealing manifestation of doubling [oneself]'.¹⁸³ The doubling, or duality of being more than one person is the basis of most 'let's pretend' and is not only the multiple personalities of character development, but also the doubling of the real world and the new version of this reality which is recreated alongside it in the production of fiction.

The play I engage in is a bridge rather than a boundary between myself and someone else, between perceived reality and invented fiction. This altered sense of reality also removes the need to distinguish between my presence and space. During this make-believe 'I' am lost in the present moment. The practice of being someone else, of method-writing, therefore enhances the researcher's ability to experience the affectiveness of landscape, when it becomes, as Wiley proposes, 'a charged background of affective capacities and tensions acting as a catalyst for corporeal practice and performance' that is 'not simply reducible' to conscious perception.¹⁸⁴ For example, when researching Emily's walk in the fog and darkness along the Derwent Walk I had to understand my physical position in terms of my own memory, quite literally 'where does the path go next?' Emily shares my memories because we grew up in the same place, but when I had to use these recollections what actually came was a sudden revelation that the old railway line is an imposed structure that 'flew through the woods and fields on embankments'.¹⁸⁵ This otherness had not occurred to me before; it was as if I was truly seeing it through another person's eyes.

¹⁸² Iser, p.4.

¹⁸³ Armstrong, p.215.

¹⁸⁴ Wylie, *Landscape*, p.214.

¹⁸⁵ *On Barley Hill*, pp.75-76.

The separation of experience from selfhood is used by Jean Piaget to show the development of children through the period of egocentric understanding to the rational thought process associated with adulthood which ‘eliminates phenomenalism in favour of a rational sense of reality’.¹⁸⁶ Re-joining the experienced with the perceived reality through this form of imaginative play is making use of a developmental stage which we all pass through. This trick of employing method-writing as research is to maintain the adult’s ability to sift and refine while remembering the things that are found during this different level of consciousness.

Dewsbury’s paper on witnessing space provides another aspect to the understanding of the mechanics of non-representational theory. In it he suggests that the practitioner witnesses as well as experiences. This implies responsibility as the writer takes into account the needs of the reader. It also demonstrates that creative writing has a potential social importance through conveying ephemera which ought to be understood and therefore introduces an ethical dimension to creative writing. At a superficial level this witnessing could be related to the way in which a genre writer tells a story specifically tailored to the audience, but Dewsbury is talking about truth,¹⁸⁷ albeit in the context of social space rather than Hodder’s more recent landscape theories. Producing a truthful account implies responsibility and an output which can be used, for example, to help formulate social policy.

Dewsbury acknowledges the difficulties inherent in the task of witnessing and taking the ‘courage to present rather than represent’.¹⁸⁸ Presenting or witnessing the world requires ‘thought freed from the closure of representational subjectivity’ so that the investigator can ‘become attentive’ to the truth.¹⁸⁹ This is entirely consistent with the creative writer’s requirement to *show* rather than *tell* but also puts an obligation on the writer to show it properly. Dewsbury brings forward the concept of ‘emotional geographies’ and the importance of the politics of witnessing. He suggests that fully

¹⁸⁶ Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child. Third Edition* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), p.276.

¹⁸⁷ Dewsbury, p.1908.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1914.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1915.

participating in humanity requires a space of ‘emotions, desires, and faith’ and that writers facilitate this exploration.¹⁹⁰

This would suggest that fiction is well placed to present ‘us with a perspective on the material world’, giving an ‘expressive space’¹⁹¹ to mention the passing, the immaterial which composes the largest part of our ‘lived experience’.¹⁹² This harnesses the affectiveness and accessibility of the written word and uses it to enhance a geographical and social perspective. However, in practice, there is little real interaction between geography and literature despite this potential to lead to a better understanding of ‘space, place and creative writing, and its mobilities and materialities’.¹⁹³

Literature is frequently analysed in terms of geography and landscape theories, and this collaboration leads to new ideas and understanding, for example Wylie’s work on Sebald and spectral geography and Kneale’s paper on H.P Lovecraft’s writing on space, indeterminacy and the *beyond*, a discussion of textual representation of the unrepresentable. These works outline the use authors make of the non-representable part of experience, but do not relate the creative practice back to geographical practice. The theories are applied to creative practice in a one-way flow of ideas from cultural geography. From the perspective of this research project, it seems logical that work done on the spectral threats hanging over the landscape from a creative perspective would be useful to enhance a geographical understanding of a geographical issue. It would allow the inclusion of the point of view of ‘voices’, both animate and inanimate, that would otherwise go unheard.

Lorimer is critical of using practical skills and performance as geographical research, citing Cresswell’s criticism that the allotment movement has become ‘a rarified realm of art and gardens’.¹⁹⁴ These ‘acts of landscaping’ are almost identical in nature to those performative acts which I use as research for storytelling to ‘make sense of the ecologies of place’.¹⁹⁵ Lorimer discusses this form of attention to the mundane, epitomised by David Crouch’s meditation on the small happenings of caravanning and

¹⁹⁰ Dewsbury p.1924.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.1921.

¹⁹² Ibid., p.1922.

¹⁹³ Brace and Johns-Putra, p.400.

¹⁹⁴ Cresswell, p279.

¹⁹⁵ Lorimer, p.85.

allotment holding,¹⁹⁶ in light of the criticism that ‘non-representational theory should care more about mattering more’. He goes on to point out that ‘cultural geographers... [are] culpably uninterested’ in the true horror which exists in the world.¹⁹⁷ Since this article was written geographers have moved into the realms of horror and horror literature, and the nature of spectral geography will be examined in the next chapter. However Lorimer’s argument remains, and it is fair.

Novelists are under no obligation to witness or to put forward a moral viewpoint. My research is irrelevant to everything but the story. For that it is essential and my only commitment is to the story. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, discovering a fictive truth can be entirely compatible with witnessing. If I claim to be writing as a witness, or suggest that my creative writing can be used as a means of exploring an aspect of landscape, then I do have to make sure that I am writing what I understand as the truth. When I address my fears about opencasting I deal with a political subject and I am trying to give a voice for the un-represented in the face of a threatening spectre.

Part of my landscaping is presented in the text by photographs. The images are not directly referred to in the text, but have been included because I felt that they expressed something beyond the text. The geographer Denis Cosgrove discusses the importance of the relationship between vision and understanding. To say ‘I see’ implies cognition as well as receiving a visual stimulus; to visualise is to intellectually plan something which cannot yet be seen. In geography, he argues, we use ‘the exercise of sight or vision as a principal means of associating that space with human concerns’¹⁹⁸ and it seems logical to include images in the text when I am trying to convey the landscape meaningfully to the reader.

It would be disingenuous to pretend that part of the inclusion of these photographs is not also to give an atmosphere of verisimilitude to the story; if the place is real, then the story borrows an air of fidelity or truth from the visual understanding the reader gains from the image. This is especially obvious with the inclusion of photographs of the dolls’ house and the reservoir in flood in *Barley Hill*.

¹⁹⁶ See David Crouch, ‘Spacing, Performing, and Becoming: Tangles in the Mundane’, *Environment and Planning A* 35.11 (2003), 1945-196 (pp.1951-1954).

¹⁹⁷ Lorimer, p.90.

¹⁹⁸ Cosgrove, Denis, ‘Landscape and the European Sense of Sight – Eyeing Nature’, in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. by Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (London: Sage, 2003), pp.249-268 (p.149).

The photographs in W.G. Sebald's work clearly fall into this category, for example when he borrows an image to put a face to one of his characters in *The Emigrants* (1992). The text alongside the photograph reads “As you can see, I am on the left with Theo, and on the right, sitting beside Uncle, is his sister Balbina”.¹⁹⁹



Figure 5 Photograph used by Sebald to corroborate text

Ransom Riggs uses pictures in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2011) to corroborate the fantastical text about a children's home on a Welsh island that looks after weirdly gifted children in a parallel dimension, protecting them from their persecutors, the hollows. There is no reason why an author cannot also be a photographer or curate found images to make the text carry more meaning to the reader.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Winfried Georg Sebald, *The Emigrants*, (London: Vintage, 2002), p.101.

²⁰⁰ See Sam Sacks, 'Bring Back the Illustrated Book', *The New Yorker*, 22nd February, 2013 <<http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/bring-back-the-illustrated-book>> [accessed 9th June 2015].

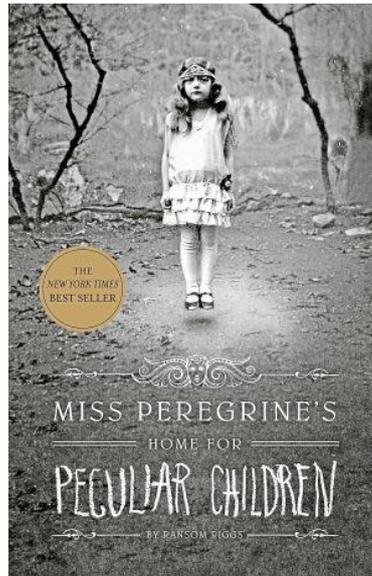


Figure 6 Cover showing one of the photographs Riggs collected

The sociologist Jerry Coulter asserts that ‘it is assumed [...] the reader understands that these images are strategically placed to stimulate the imagination and that they are not actual photographic representations of characters or events described in the text’,²⁰¹ but I think this is incorrect. I may know that Sebald and Riggs collected strangers’ photographs, but at the time of reading the story I still scan the photograph to see the face of the fictional narrator because ‘seeing is believing’ and I want to believe.

In addition to using photographs as verification, the inclusion of images such as the incongruous Hopper monument avoids convoluted explanation.²⁰² It would be impossible to render the monument faithfully using only words. Historical records of such buildings would be incomplete without photographs or drawings; they form part of our understanding of place. The photographs in Michelle Paver’s *Dark Matter* often convey the utter inhospitality of the landscape simply and concisely: we see what the author sees, although of course this visual understanding is selective, so we see precisely what the author *intends* us to see. When this is done well the images are so appropriate and well integrated into the text that the reader is barely aware of them. I had forgotten about the photographs in *Dark Matter*, but I had retained the images in my memory as though I had imagined them.

²⁰¹ Gerry Coulter, ‘The Novelist of Memory and the Catastrophe of Images: Sebald’s *The Emigrants* and the Thought of Jean Baudrillard’, *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, 5.2 (2008) <http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-5_2/v5-2-sebald.html> [accessed 6th June 2015].

²⁰² *On Barley Hill*, p.162.



Figure 7 Dark Matter, p87, photograph Jackie Freshfield, 1988

The research which takes place in the landscape is not simply information gathering as it is when I am gardening. Landscaping allows an intimate knowledge and understanding which did not exist at the beginning of the research. Dewsbury writes about ‘things that do not exist within representation’s eye, in spaces whose life is not apparent’, but are discovered through communicating ‘a position...rooted in experience’²⁰³ in all its forms and ‘understanding the nature of your attention as you are engaged within a practice’.²⁰⁴ Landscaping is more than paying attention; it is a process that evolves through the *practice* of paying attention within a landscape.

In Summary

My research involves acts of being and concerns itself with the materiality of the landscape and quotidian lives of the protagonists. I use this form of research because of its inherent qualities of veracity and playful exploration. Being in the landscape can expose fears, especially when playing at finding horror, and during my landscape research I am frequently scared. The emotional state of playing a game may ameliorate the bias of subconscious performativity, although a degree of depersonalised

²⁰³ Dewsbury, p.1923.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1918.

performativity itself is a necessary inclusion for the mimesis of real life. The examination of the interior life is an important component of the Gothic. The research of experience during play is collected through repetition and rehearsal. The time taken during the performance of the characters' occupations allows space for dialogue development and rehearsal. It also presents an opportunity to manipulate found details into fictitious elements which have the potential to convey unease and the uncanny.

When I take what I've learnt through rehearsal and turn it into text all the non-verbal, transient, indeterminate experiences have to be left out. However they have an impact on the text because the remaining framework of rehearsed dialogue and emotions leaves a negative space where the ephemeral, non-representable things were. These negative spaces exist textually because they shaped the text around them when nothing was fixed or verbalized during the rehearsal period of the research. Method-writing is a rigorous and effective way of exposing the writer to the marginal and is particularly useful within the supernatural horror genre because it permits the inclusion of the unknowable through the spaces around which the final text is formed.

This is the closest I can get, then: The non-representable is represented through the shape of its absence in the text.

HAUNTED PLACES

Introduction

This chapter examines the meaning of the term ‘spectral geography’ and the ways in which landscapes and houses are considered to be haunted. In the light of current cross-disciplinary theories of non-representation and actor networks, I will evaluate the potential of using supernatural horror writing within cultural geography to give a better understanding of a given landscape through the uncanny, spectral and ghostly, and the effectiveness of creative writing as a way of recording geographical issues. Julian Wolfreys states that through Derrida spectrality has become a current issue, a way of understanding the world.²⁰⁵ The convergence in understanding of the nature of haunting within and between the disciplines of cultural geography, sociology, anthropology and literature will be discussed alongside Derrida’s *hauntology*. I will consider these ideas with reference to contemporary supernatural Gothic horror novels and, in particular, to the distinctions between *spectre* and *spectral* which have played a part in shaping *On Barley Hill*.

Ghost Writing

On Barley Hill contains ghosts and spectres. The landscapes themselves are haunted, a spectral geography containing the *unheimlich* or uncanny. This section will discuss the ways in which the spectral, ghosts and spectres have been used in supernatural horror novels and films. It will also examine the problems inherent in choosing to include the specific spectre of opencasting and in the light of this evaluate the usefulness of supernatural horror in examining such real-world problems.

²⁰⁵ Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (London: Palgrave, 2002), ix.

In *Barley Hill* there are four elements to the supernatural dimensions of the plot: the monster generated by the real threat of the spectre of opencasting; my projected imagining of located ghosts; the frightening qualities of the haunted landscape; and the uncanny encountered in the environment, a backdrop of unease.

I suggest that understanding the separation between these four elements gives a framework, a consistency to the difficult, ephemeral and supernatural aspects of the story. Delineating the forms of unease and horror prevents the supernatural from being subsumed into the logic of the fictional reality and maintains its weirdness. As with Lacan's distinctions between the symbolic, imaginary and real, there is a division between a fictive reality and the *imaginary* where the story 'dissolves into otherness by becoming [its] counterpart',²⁰⁶ and turns into a fairy tale rather than a supernatural horror novel. The logic of the ghostly and the spectral must be separate from the 'rational, monological world' because without this separation 'otherness cannot be known or represented' and the story will cease to be affective for the reader.²⁰⁷ The hauntings in horror stories occur therefore as intrusions into a fictive reality which is generated through close, mimetic research into the real world in which the fiction is set.

1 The Ghosts

The ghosts of supernatural Gothic horror are preternatural entities which represent the manifestation of the subconscious. In this section I will discuss the ways in which ghosts are used in *Barley Hill* and other horror stories and the distinctions between spectres and ghosts.

Rosemary Jackson explains that ghosts are usually associated with fearful experience because they 'disrupt the crucial defining line which separates "real" life from the "unreality" of death'.²⁰⁸ In supernatural horror stories ghosts may range from silent signifiers to active participants, threatening entities and monsters. Ghosts are different from spectres because spectres are a reality, the 'concrete... essence' of a material presence which, Malcolm Bowie asserts, can be both mental or an external, physical

²⁰⁶ Bowie, p.92.

²⁰⁷ Rosemary Jackson, p.173.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.69.

‘coming-into-being’.²⁰⁹ In *Barley Hill* the ghosts are not monsters but revenants that can do no physical harm. This corresponds with Derrida’s *hauntology*; that ghosts, unlike spectres, are imagined, an ephemeral and anachronistic ‘non-present present’.²¹⁰ The spectre in *Barley Hill* is the real, substantial threat of opencasting and the monster it generates presents a real danger within the fiction that corresponds to the potential danger in the real world from the environmental impact of this spectre. Conversely, ghosts are supernatural entities distinct from any ‘supernatural and paradoxical phenominality’;²¹¹ they are not monstrous in their unadulterated form, but are essentially human.²¹² Ghosts engender fear from the ambiguous significance of the anachronistic presence of something that cannot be there.

The difference between ghosts and spectres has become obvious to me while writing *Barley Hill*. The ghosts were no less human than the characters, and no less ‘real’ for me within play. However their imagined presence was continually disturbing because of the disorientating jolt when time is *out of joint*, as when Emily finds the shattered pane of glass unbroken in the bedroom.²¹³ Within fiction ghosts are so human they frequently talk to other characters; Scrooge asks Marley’s ghost, ‘Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?’²¹⁴ and it tells him. Similarly, in *Barley Hill* Emily talks to the ghosts, whereas the spectre has no voice and the monster that it creates uses inhuman, unintelligible noises that drive Jack out of his mind.

The ghosts in the plot, Jack’s wife Claire and the ghost of a younger Emily, are attached to Jack and Emily. If Jack and Emily were real people then these ghosts could be considered to be generated by them. The ghosts have very little agency in themselves, although Jack finds the visitations by Claire and her cat frightening because

²⁰⁹ Bowie, p.95.

²¹⁰ Derrida, p.5.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

²¹² This interpretation of ghosts is unsurprisingly Eurocentric. Derrida’s *hauntology* was written in the context of Derrida’s fears over the spread of Marxism across Europe and I write from my own English background with an interest specifically in the North East of England: my ghosts evolve from British culture. Esther Pereen points out that literary analysis tends to view ghosts from a western mindset, and that ghosts are not regarded as so separate from the everyday in other cultures. However, these valid concerns, which seek to balance cultural analysis and make it more universal, are outside the remit of this study (Esther Pereen, ‘Everyday Ghosts and the Ghostly Everyday in Amos Tutuola, Ben Okri and Achille Mbembe’, in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by Maria del Pilar Blanco M. and Esther Pereen (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.106-117 (p.109).

²¹³ *On Barley Hill*, p.182.

²¹⁴ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1993), p.26.

he feels guilty and assumes they are therefore vengeful. Emily and the child haunt each other, but neither affects nor helps the other beyond Emily mistaking the child's actions for Tim's, for example when she finds the mud pie in the oven or sees her dolls' tea set laid out in her former bedroom. These ghosts are located in specific places and are clearly not monster-ghosts. I needed this distinction from the spectre, the real horror that I originally intended to write about.

Derrida's ghosts do not have an active role to play, unlike the ghosts in supernatural stories such as *Barley Hill*. However, the *idea* of a ghost is consistent with both fiction and Derrida's thesis. He uses the example of Hamlet's father to explain this; the presence of the actual ghost is part of the fiction, but it coincidentally embodies Hamlet's fears and suspicions and therefore the ideas it represents are the fabric of the philosophy of the play. For Derrida the 'real' ghost exists as these ideas. He proposes that ghosts shape us through the anticipation of the revenant, waiting for something which is not of our present but still affects us.²¹⁵ When Derrida speaks of ghosts it is in the way we haunt the landscape. Derrida's understanding of ghosts (something in which a 'traditional scholar does not believe')²¹⁶ is that they exist only as an externalisation of our thoughts.

Pilar Blanco and Pereen propose that both non-figurative ghosts 'emanating from realms beyond what is considered the "real"',²¹⁷ and figurative ghosts, including Marx's specters, are subject to fictionalisation. They argue that Derrida 'forgets about the specificity of ghosts' which is experienced in 'specific moments, and specific locations'.²¹⁸ This specificity described by del Pilar Blanco and Pereen implies that these emotions become manifest as ghosts. Derrida does not commit to acknowledging ghostly manifestation outside the realm of fiction, yet the wide occurrence of ghosts in fiction only works because so many people in times of emotional stress or fear *see* ghosts²¹⁹ or experience the 'invisible dust, still singing, still dancing' that indicates a non-present presence.²²⁰ A sufficiently large proportion of the population experience these often disturbing hallucinations first or second hand for them to become an

²¹⁵ Derrida, p.2.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.12.

²¹⁷ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Pereen (Eds.), 'Introduction', *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (London: Continuum, 2010), .x.

²¹⁸ Ibid., xi.

²¹⁹ Richard Bentall, *Madness Explained, Psychosis and Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp.358-359.

²²⁰ Thrift, *Non-Representational*, p.110.

accessible device for the supernatural horror writer. There is also a persistent belief in the existence of ghosts at a gnostic level, as the playwright and academic Carolina Ramos observes, ‘either [as] a matter of fact or “a just in case” situation’, or because we simply don’t know ‘what happens when we die’, so that science and technology cannot dispel fully the thought that a ghost *might* really be there.’²²¹

Hilary Mantel suggests that this is not just a matter of employing a mechanism, but that the writer is haunted by the imaginary; ‘Social convention allows the medium and writer to talk to the dead, and our occupations are seen as respectable forms of economic activity,’ and describes the writer’s practice as ‘going down every day and every night into the realm where the demons are’.²²² This response is in the context of *Beyond Black*, her most overtly supernatural novel, and it outlines one of the reasons so many ghost stories are written about psychic investigators; the protagonists find what the horror writer is looking for.

Getting the reader to ‘see’ the ghost became a preoccupation while I was writing my first book, *Checkmate*. The reader is presented with a person and later told they couldn’t have been there. John Banville does this in *Eclipse*, the story of an unemployed actor coming to terms with the fallout of his decisions to leave his life behind and his failure to start again. We see the vague girl and child that haunt his old family home and assume, like Alexander, that they are perhaps his imagination, but the revelation that they were the ‘real’ ghosts of his daughter and her unborn child leaves both Alexander and the reader shocked because, even in retrospect, the discovery of the anachronistic presence of another human is filled with fear. To a less fearful degree (possibly because they are canine and have less ability to communicate, so leaving their mute watchfulness less extraordinary) the little dogs in Edith Wharton’s ‘Kerfol’ are revealed as ghosts. We accompany the narrator as he goes house-hunting in Brittany and follows a friend’s suggestion to visit Kerfol because it sounds romantic. He is troubled by the presence of the five sad little dogs as he explores the picturesque ruins, we are as unsettled as he is when his hostess asks him, “Did you *really* see a lot of dogs? There isn’t one at Kerfol’”.²²³

²²¹ Ramos, pp. 96, 98.

²²² Hilary Mantel, Appendix, pp. 8-9.

²²³ Edith Wharton, ‘Kerfol’, *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2009), pp.68-88 (p.74).

David Matless cites Mary Butts's account of encountering 'real' ghosts, preternatural entities which are definitely located.²²⁴ These encounters blur the distinction between figurative and non-figurative because Butts claims she has encountered something that cannot be and treats it as though it *is*. Of course this confusion, deliberate or unconscious, is precisely the form in which horror writers (including Butts herself) use ghosts; 'There is no head and no tail to this story, except it happened' (1932)²²⁵ is a writer's signpost for the entrance to the reality within fiction.

Similarly, in the *Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *The Unfolding* (2015), the video tape 'evidence' signals the audience to accept this as reality. *House of Leaves* uses the evidence of notebooks and films in much the same way. It is an account of the disintegrating life of Johnny Truant told through the rambling footnotes to his reading of Zampanò's notebook. Zampanò was a blind film critic and Johnny finds his notebook on the floor next to a set of deep gouge marks after the critic has disappeared. The notebook is an account of a documentary about a haunted house made by a filmmaker, Will Navidson, just after he bought it. The house produces sentient corridors and stairs that defy conventional spatial logic and contain a monster, the Grawl, which kills some of the people who explore the corridors. In the metafictional confusion we are told by the blind film critic that to fake this documentary would have cost millions of dollars:

Strangely then, the best argument for fact is the absolute unaffordability of fiction. Thus it would appear that the ghost haunting *The Navidson Record*, continually bashing against the door, is none other than the recurrent threat of its own reality.²²⁶

The Navidson's house *must* be haunted because they know the film footage of *The Five and a Half Minute Hallway* is real.

Danielewski writes several layers of witnesses for this film in which Navidson disappears into a corridor that exists only on the inside of his house: we are told about it through Johnny Truant's reading of Zampanò's account of other people's discussion of a film shot by Will Navidson.

²²⁴ Matless, 'Geography of Ghosts', p.346.

²²⁵ Mary Butts, 'Brightness Falls', in *Mary Butts, The Complete Stories* (New York: MacPherson and Company, 2014), pp.146-158 (p.146).

²²⁶ Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves*, (London: Doubleday, 2001), p.149.

Kneale suggests that witnessing in this way is ‘central to the plot’ in horror stories.²²⁷ It brings the sense of immediacy and reality to the story in the same way that ‘anomalous events’ are ‘framed through...antithetical explanatory frameworks’ to lend them a convincing pseudo-scientific ‘reality’.²²⁸ Moreover the establishment of this immediacy and reality allows the writer to appropriate the dangerous reality of the spectre in order to make the uncanniness of a ghost story horrific.

In *Barley Hill* I have not used such a blatant documentary-style approach as in *House of Leaves*, however, the photographs I use are in some respects my ‘found footage’. They are the proof that the story is real because some fragment is *seen* to be so, and, as discussed in the methodology chapter, the photos corroborate the fiction. Likewise in *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* (2011), Riggs explains that ‘the photographs came first’, both inspiring the horror story and later illustrating it in ‘a fun, strange, organic writing process’ which makes use of the found images to verify the fiction.²²⁹ The use of such devices to ‘prove’ aspects of a story works well in supernatural horror fiction because of the predetermined requirement for mimesis in the genre. The author can create a fictional reality or borrow a truthful reality and experiment with it until it provides the right degree of uncertainty about the boundaries between fact and fiction, the horror lying in the ‘rationalistic insufficiency’ where logic runs out in the face of the preternatural.²³⁰ Mimesis is not enough to make the story work; just like the Grawl in *House of Leaves*, the ghosts in *Barley Hill* must manifest as something real, as tangible as Emily’s ghost is in her Grandmother’s house, because without borrowing the characteristic of reality from a spectre the ghosts cannot affect the characters in the story.

The first real ghostly (not spectral) happenings in *Barley Hill* are not sign-posted as supernatural in the text, but left as clues. Initially the estate agent experiences something ‘off-stage’ which the narrator, Emily, is unaware of;

²²⁷ Kneale, p.112.

²²⁸ Deborah Dixon, ‘A Benevolent and Sceptical Enquiry: Exploring ‘Fortean Geographies’ with the Mothman’, *Cultural Geographies*, 14 (2007), 189-210 (p.191).

²²⁹ Ransom Riggs, *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* (USA: Quirk Books, 2011) p.358.

²³⁰ Jack Morgan, *The Biology of Horror, Gothic Literature and Film* (USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), p.202.

I heard a door slam and his footsteps coming back again, echoing down the empty passageway. He hadn't had time to do the attic rooms as well, but he was coming back downstairs anyway.²³¹

Shortly afterwards Emily sees her child-ghost without recognising it,

For a moment it was as if I was looking at two images, the little girl I had been used to seeing in this glass and the young woman, a stranger to both me and my old reflection, now disconcertingly superimposed, Pepper's Ghost. I shivered and there was only me in the mirror, tired and drawn.²³²

The reader has insufficient information to understand at this stage what Emily sees. The drip-feed of information is a device commonly used in horror stories resulting in 'cumulative horror' in the reader's mind.²³³

This leaving of things as unexplained occurs sometimes because the mechanism is genuinely unknown or unknowable when writing about things outside the natural world.²³⁴ It is very close in nature to the indeterminacy of science fiction, but the causes are ghosts, not monsters, and there is a human level of understanding; they were either like us once or have been directly generated by us, despite their supernatural attributes and the impossibility of their existence outside the text. Both the protagonist and the reader experience 'uncertainty and hesitation' by not having enough information to decide if the events will come to have a rational explanation or not.²³⁵ In *House of Leaves* we invest much time on the description of the film *Five and a half Minute Hallway* (which we are told cannot be found), that somehow the later chink of rational explanation is more chilling because it implies such a depth of psychosis in the part-time narrator, Johnny Truant. He, too, has his own horrific hallway down which he lost his mother when he was a child.²³⁶ The 'details of those five and a half minutes' return and the uncertainty over both the reality of Zampanò's story and Truant's own resurfacing memories make the reader, like the central character, psychologically

²³¹ *On Barley Hill*, p.13.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.15.

²³³ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.102.

²³⁴ Carroll, p.182.

²³⁵ Todorov, p.17.

²³⁶ Danielewski, p.517.

predisposed to feel fear. This measured information-drip requires some restraint when writing as the author knows what is happening but must withhold it from the reader.²³⁷

Clive Bloom suggests that the ghost story is the most conservative form of horror, ‘closely restricted in its range of emotions...and technical conventions’.²³⁸ Far from being responsible for putting *time out of joint*, ghosts are a still point around which the human characters experience an *asynchronicity*, merely ‘erratic monuments... that signify a disturbing incident that happened in the past’.²³⁹ In many ways ghosts are the easiest supernatural entities to write about in a Gothic horror novel, but they are also the most difficult to make genuinely horrific. They must either throw the protagonist into such distress that the reader empathises, or they must in themselves go beyond the white sheet and become monstrous, as in Dan Simmons’ *Drood* (2009). Simmons leaves plenty of doubt about the veracity of the narration: the account may well be madness on the part of the narrator, a fictionalised Wilkie Collins, and the ghosts simply generated from his deranged mind, but we sympathise (it’s difficult to empathise here) and the haunting is very disturbing at times.

Julian Wolfreys acknowledges the distinction between the ghostly and the spectral.²⁴⁰ He emphasises the place of haunting, the way in which ghosts are anchored in the landscape. The ghosts he discusses in Thomas Hardy’s work are definitely ghosts, not spectres. They have messages, but can do no real harm. The damage the characters in the stories suffer as a result of bearing witness to a ghost is done to themselves by themselves. Unlike Derrida’s specters this form of haunting can be avoided, presumably by quitting the area, a recurrent theme in Hardy’s stories. This lack of imminent threat and danger removes stories from Gothic horror and Wolfreys suggests that the literature of Henry James marks a shift to ‘the interiorization or incorporation of the ghostly and spectral’.²⁴¹ He discusses the haunted act of writing, the confusion when the past is

²³⁷ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.42.

²³⁸ Bloom, p.155.

²³⁹ Arno Meteling, ‘Genius Loci; Memory, Media and the Neo-Gothic in Georg Klein and Elfriede Jelinek’, in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Perea (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.187-199 (p.187).

²⁴⁰ Julian Wolfreys, ‘Ghosts: Of Ourselves or, Drifting with Hardy, Heidegger, James, and Woolf’, in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by Maria Pilar del Blanco and Esther Perea (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.3-18 (p.5).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

brought into the present through both writing and reading,²⁴² suggesting that this in itself is intrinsically unsettling, and that reading causes us to be haunted.²⁴³

Wolfreys' examples are unsettling stories of ghosts that again present no true threat. The ghosts encountered are not typical of those in supernatural Gothic horror. Wolfreys uses Derrida's definition of a ghost to support his arguments and from this deduces that a ghost can only be a fiction, gaining its relevance only through memory and simply signifies a time to change, whereas it is the uncertainty of what the ghost *really signifies* which causes the element of fear in the reader.²⁴⁴

The 'spectral trope' which Wolfreys discusses is two-dimensional, a picture representing that which is hard to represent, for example Hardy's use of landscape to show character as in 'Jude's openness to the phenomenological impression of place'.²⁴⁵ However, Wolfreys makes no allowance for Hardy's deep-rooted nostalgia for a world disappearing beneath the spectre of industrialisation. Hardy's writing makes geographically specific, political points. Christchurch is not neutral, and its haunting of Jude is therefore definitely as a spectre rather than a ghost: we know it will not end well for Jude. 'I love the place'²⁴⁶ Jude says of Christchurch, suffering from unrequited emotion for the city. The story is as much about the affective nature of the *special* place itself, its *halo*,²⁴⁷ as it is about the effect Jude allows it to have on him. It is an uncanny landscape as well as a spectral one.

He saw what a curious and cunning glamour the neighbourhood of the place had exercised over him. To get there and to live there, to move among the churches and halls and become imbued with the *genius loci*...as the spot shaped its charms to him from its halo on the horizon.²⁴⁸

The located-ness of ghosts (unlike monsters) further reduces their scariness, and the writer seeking to introduce horror has to give a reasonable explanation for the characters staying. The needs of a ghost hunt cannot be justification alone when there is the real danger necessary for affective horror writing. In Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill*

²⁴² Wolfreys, 'Ghosts', p.4; Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*, p.140.

²⁴³ Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*, pp.142-144.

²⁴⁴ Wolfreys, 'Ghosts', p.6.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁴⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994), p.381.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.138.

House (1959) a psychic investigator assembles a team of three individuals selected because they have been associated in the papers with unexplained psychical events. Eleanor is fragile and timid and the invitation is the first exciting thing that has happened to her since her prolonged caring duties for her mother. She tries to use the situation to start again, to be young and carefree and to pretend to be someone she is not. The reader suspects that the others, too, are pretending, but they are neither as sensitive nor vulnerable as Eleanor. We are warned by the housekeeper that it is a bad place, but the doctor continues despite the mounting evidence that Eleanor is being made ill by it. Jackson creates reasons each time why the investigators do not leave, turning a potential hazard into a way of ramping up the tension: 'We have only one defense, and that is running away. At least it can't follow us, can it?'²⁴⁹ By the time Eleanor is sent away it is too late, the house has possessed her 'She could even hear, with her new awareness of the house, the dust drifting gently in the attics, the wood ageing...' ²⁵⁰ 'But I *won't* go, she thought, and laughed aloud to herself ... Hill House belongs to *me*'.²⁵¹ Similarly, Emily returns to her grandmother's house despite her intention to get away; 'Maybe, I thought, I had better not come back here again. One more visit tomorrow with the auctioneer and then a clean break. No more house, no more family.'²⁵² Of course the plot requires her to have convincing reasons to return in order to expose her to danger.

The ghosts and the monster which drive the plot of *Barley Hill* are figments of my imagination. However, the spectre which threatens the area in which I live has affected me more as the novel was written. Close, prolonged experience of this threatened landscape has made me value it more, as close-reading enables a better understanding of a text. The monster which represents the spectre is anchored in reality, both through the spectral nature of Barley Hill and because of the reality of the spectre of future opencasting. As in science fiction, its actions are a metaphor for the hazards associated with continued extraction and use of fossil fuels as well as the destruction of a 'special' place.

²⁴⁹ Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p.124.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.223.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.245.

²⁵² *On Barley Hill*, p.53.

2 *The Spectre*

I used Derrida's definitions to find a monster for *On Barley Hill*. The opencast is the spectre hanging over the area. Derrida defines the term *specter* as a revenant, something that belongs equally to the future as well as the past.²⁵³ A spectre is real, if abstract, and present because of its quality of revenance. It is a dangerous entity, a real-world problem, such as the threat of environmental degradation and exploitation from the opencasting in *Barley Hill*.

From the real spectre of opencasting, the future-history, I projected an imagined monster. The land itself rises in revolt, bucking and splitting and releasing a sickness which makes the inhabitants behave differently in an effort to free itself of the threat to its own wellbeing. Jack is aware of the power and danger this monster embodies, but because he is already a clearly damaged person he offers himself as a willing conduit, imagining he gains power while the monster grows in strength until he finally realises how uncontrollable it is.

A hush has fallen, the wind has stilled. Jack realises he is holding his breath, he can feel his pulse in his throat and blood throbbing round his damaged ear. Then it starts, a report of thunder which makes the ground shudder beneath him and the pain in his ear irrelevant. It cannot be thunder. There is not a cloud in the sky, not even an autumnal haze. The noise is there, beneath them, too loud and immediate not have been accompanied by lightning... the whole hillside begins to slide. Jack cannot take in what he is seeing, the trees and turf move with the soil as if they are on a conveyer belt, down, down into the reservoir.²⁵⁴

The monster is only seen through its effect because it is beyond comprehension. Even as the author I can only look at it sideways, it isn't part of my bestiary and 'neither magic nor science' can define it.²⁵⁵ I know it exists in the fiction because the spectre is real. The monster is imagined for the story by considering what effect this spectre could have and the monster I met when playing was indescribable. The monster's action is consistent with the 'point of the horror genre...which is, putatively in principle, unknown and unknowable'.²⁵⁶ However, my monster's motivation is derived from a spectre, a real threat to expose real-life problems, and as such my monster bears a

²⁵³ Derrida, p.45.

²⁵⁴ *On Barley Hill*, p.103.

²⁵⁵ Kneale, p.110.

²⁵⁶ Carroll, p.127.

similarity to the American haunted house trope²⁵⁷ that considers ways of negotiating safety by appeasing a threat from ‘the wild spaces just beyond town’.²⁵⁸ These new fictions often explore a ‘what if’ that is more akin to science fiction than supernatural horror, for example the retaliation for the desecration of a cemetery for profit in Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* (1988) and the film *Poltergeist* (1982). In *House of Leaves*, the monstrous shifting hallways and hellish subterranean labyrinth are clearly not supernatural extensions of the subconscious generated by the Navidsons. We are told on several occasions that house is frequently sold (it’s not personal), and that there was historical evidence for the spiral stairway existing prior to the Jamestown Colonisation of Virginia, when it is stumbled upon by starving colonists wandering through woods, ‘23 Janiiuere, 1610: Staires! We have found Staires!’²⁵⁹ Christine Wilson suggests that the hallways are generated by the spectre of man’s imposition on the natural world and represent the wilderness in direct conflict with man’s requirement to own and dominate it.²⁶⁰ The monster in this labyrinth, however, is compatible with horror fiction: there can be no rationalisation of the Grawl.

In *Barley Hill*, too, the monster is never described, defined or explained, but the affected (infected) victims understand something of the monster’s motive;

Dawn glanced at him, she looked close to tears.
 ‘We have to stop them,’ she hissed. ‘Can’t you feel it? The whole place, underneath, it’s going right through me. Like the ground’s groaning at me.’²⁶¹

My actions during research, play and rehearsal, are human-centric. However, while working on the plot for *Barley Hill*, the inclusion of the spectre allowed me to experience through play a monster not definable in human terms. The monster is never seen and is visually unimaginable: its agency (the effects it has upon other actors) is all that remains in the final writing. This relates to Lovecraft’s view of cosmic horror in science fiction, ‘the fundamental premise that human laws and interests and emotions

²⁵⁷ See Christine Wilson, ‘Haunted Habitability; Wilderness and American haunted House Narratives’, in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by Maria Pilar del Blanco and Esther Perea (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.200-12.

²⁵⁸ Mark Kaplan, *The Science of Monsters: Why Monsters Came to be and What Makes Them Terrifying* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2013), p9.

²⁵⁹ Danielewiski, p.414.

²⁶⁰ Wilson, pp.202, 210.

²⁶¹ *On Barley Hill*, p.136.

have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large'.²⁶² This withdrawal from the human perspective is difficult to put into text. It is the *beyond* which James Kneale writes about, and like Kneale's subject, Lovecraft, in order for this inhuman form of horror to work I need to present a 'highly realistic description' within which the fantastic creates an 'irruption of something impossible'.²⁶³ This interruption is felt by its effects, the '*unnameable*',²⁶⁴ because it is textually indescribable, and 'horrible beyond consideration'.²⁶⁵

Elsewhere in the plot, beyond the monstrous response of the landscape, I wanted to be faithful to the qualities of non-representation. Moreover, my treatment of the monster's agency required a level of genre-related 'indeterminism'²⁶⁶ to be continued throughout the rest of the story simply for balance, a consistency of style, so that the depiction of ghosts is deliberately confusing and jumbled, as when Emily slips backwards and forwards in time with the ghosts from different phases in her childhood appear and evaporate without explanation but following the internal logic of the plot.

Halfway down she was there again. She swung out at me, screaming as we nearly collided. I shrieked. She pulled back into the shadows of the doorway to Grandpa's study, taller, adolescent. I could remember this dream, the terrifying painted skeleton dancing down the stairs, refusing to listen.²⁶⁷

The necessity for consistency required all the various landscapes to be treated with the same level of observation as I applied to Barley Hill itself. I found the need for a sort of personal deep-mapping of the landscape: the '*interweaving* of many disparate, tensioned strands of experience, genres of writing, knowledge positions and narrative perspectives so as to produce a richer, more resonant patterning of meaning'.²⁶⁸ It was through this process that I came to understand what upset me so much when the wind turbines were

²⁶² H.P. Lovecraft, *H P Lovecraft Letters from New York*, ed. by S T Joshi and David E Shultz (New York: Night Shade Books, 2005), p.150.

²⁶³ Kneale, p.111.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.110.

²⁶⁵ H.P. Lovecraft, 'From Beyond', in *The Necronomicon, the Best Weird Tales of H.P. Lovecraft*, (London: Gollancz, 2008), pp.387-392 (p.387).

²⁶⁶ Kneale, pp.111-12.

²⁶⁷ *On Barley Hill*, p.212.

²⁶⁸ Iain Biggs, *Deep Mapping as an 'Essaying' of Place*, an Illustrated talk given at the *Writing* seminar at the Bartlett School of Architecture, Friday 9th July, 2010 <<http://www.iainbiggs.co.uk/text-deep-mapping-as-an-essaying-of-place/>> [accessed 9th January 2016].

erected on Greymare Hill, disrupting the internal mapping I had built since childhood by imposing a visual proof that I/Emily had been wrong all that time:

They stitched the landscape together, linking places I had never consciously placed in spatial proximity, but had always known, mapping areas too familiar to map, robbing me of my understanding and replacing it with facts.²⁶⁹



Figure 8 The Wind Turbines at Greymare Hill.



Figure 9 The Wind Turbines looking from Whittonstall across The Derwent Valley to Ebchester.

²⁶⁹ *On Barley Hill*, p.147.

3 *The Unheimlich*

In this section I will outline the ways in which the *unheimlich* differs from the horrific and discuss the way in which this influences the nature of the text within supernatural Gothic horror. I will also discuss the extension of Freud's work on the *unheimlich* into other aspects of creating supernatural horror, using *doppelgängers* and the effects of scale on landscape exploration with reference to dollshousing, and the uncanniness inherent in the doubling of miniaturisation.

In *Barley Hill* it is the *unheimlich* nature of the nursery gardens that makes Emily nervous, rather than the haunting memory of Grandad George. The *unheimlich* is distinct from *atmosphere*,²⁷⁰ which is merely a picturesque background. For example, I use weather as part of the landscape, the late mists, the dripping foliage, in much the same way as Susan Hill uses the weather around the invented Eel Marsh House to create a gloomy atmosphere;

...a thick, damp sea-mist had come rolling over the marshes and enveloped everything...It was a mist like a damp, clinging cobwebby thing, fine...salty light and pale and moving in front of my eyes all the time.²⁷¹

The wind continued to howl across the marshes and batter at the house but that was, after all, a natural sound and one that I could recognize and tolerate, for it could not hurt me in any way.²⁷²

I suggest that the *unheimlich* experience of landscape occurs when these natural phenomena resonate with a personal meaning. For example, the description of the eponymous Loney in Hurley's Gothic tale of witchcraft in darkest Cumbria begins with the assertion of real danger;

... it was impossible to truly know the Loney, it changed with each influx and retreat of water and the neap tides would reveal the skeletons of this who thought they had read the place well enough to escape its insidious currents... No one with any knowledge of the place ever went near the water. No one apart from us and Billy Trapper that is.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Leffler, p.40.

²⁷¹ Susan Hill, *The Woman in Black, A Ghost Story* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983), p.92.

²⁷² Hill, p.168.

²⁷³ Hurley, p.5.

It is the personal association which bothers the narrator as he remembers his childhood visits there. Memory is distorted through experience and morbid imagination:

I remembered the single, twisted hawthorn tree overhanging the road, like the sole survivor of a shipwreck that had staggered inland, torn and cowed by the sea. I remembered the way the wind rasped through the reeds and shuddered across the black water.²⁷⁴

The *unheimlich* background of Catholicism also plays its part in shaping the way the landscapes are translated, as in the gloomy garden of Moorings where the family stayed on their Easter retreat and performed the stations of the cross, ‘and so it went on, until we had circled Moorings and Jesus was dead’.²⁷⁵

The whole place is *unheimlich*, from the sucking tides to the stuffed animals left by Mooring’s last owner, and functions as the base-camp of uneasiness before the true horror begins. Such landscapes become ‘the desired, remembered and somatic spaces of the imagination and the senses’.²⁷⁶ The feeling of uncanniness is a common sensation. Anyone could have felt what the narrator feels, a predisposition to being uneasy. It is a point in the story to feel empathy with the protagonist, and more importantly, to emphasise that what comes later is supernatural rather than simply the quotidian experience of the *unheimlich*.

Freud proposes that the *unheimlich* causes unease rather than terror, and creates queasiness rather than horror, a separate feeling, distinguishable within ‘the field of the frightening’.²⁷⁷ He considers that, although susceptibility differs greatly, none of us are immune to the uncanny.²⁷⁸ Moreover he suggests that landscapes are intrinsically uncanny; in an unfamiliar landscape ‘something should be frightening precisely because it is unknown and unfamiliar’ and we feel the need to reassure ourselves that it contains nothing to threaten us.²⁷⁹ Yet even in a familiar place experience inclines us to assume the landscape will contain hidden meaning and the homeliness of a familiar place is intrinsically unsettling because it contains the fear of exposure as well as self-

²⁷⁴ Hurley, p.80.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.112.

²⁷⁶ Cosgrove, p.249.

²⁷⁷ Freud, p.123.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.124.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.125.

revelation.²⁸⁰ These Freudian elements of repression and unbidden memories will represent a large proportion of our experience within a known landscape and make us uneasy even when the ‘sense of the uncanny is intellectually uncertain’.²⁸¹ Wylie suggests that it is the intellectual and often subconscious confusion created in experiencing landscape and encountering ‘presence, place, the present and the past’ which is disturbing.²⁸² Both ideas lead to the notion that we are predisposed to find landscape unsettling.

Traditional Freudian interpretation would suggest those who don’t find a landscape uncanny are hiding from their own repressed memories, and without empirical evidence, it is hard to contradict this, although I prefer Lovecraft’s simpler assertion that some people feel the uncanny,²⁸³ and therefore logically, many don’t. The subjective experience of a landscape will differ between individuals and Freud’s argument that there is some cosmic quality of repression present in any environment is unsupported.²⁸⁴

Hélène Cixous describes Freud’s essay on the uncanny as ‘a peculiarly disquieting method to track down the concept’, being in itself a sort of creeping revelation of the insubstantial and indeterminate, full of the author’s own subjectivity.²⁸⁵ Cixous’s criticism is not only the circuitous route of Freud’s argument, but that Freud has separated the *unheimlich* from ‘fright, fear and anguish’, defining what it isn’t as a way to define what it is, but skilfully leaving us with a convincing sense of otherness. She suggests that this vagueness is so alluring that the idea of the *unheimlich* often remains unchallenged.²⁸⁶

Theories of the *unheimlich* need to be applied with caution in creative writing. It is easy to assume that any landscape can contain this uneasiness, but that is evidently not so; we are not continually uneasy in our surroundings. I suggest that, apart from occasions when a plot requires repression to be exposed, it is more practical to work

²⁸⁰ Freud, pp.132-134.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.125.

²⁸² Wylie, ‘Sebald’, p.172.

²⁸³ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.106.

²⁸⁴ Hélène Cixous in ‘Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud’s *Das Unheimliche* (The “Uncanny”) by Sigmund Freud, James Strachey, Hélène Cixous and Robert Denomé, *New Literary History*, 7.3, Thinking in the Arts, Sciences, and Literature (USA: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 525-548+619-645 (p.529).

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.525.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.528-9.

with the assumption that a landscape does not automatically have an *unheimlich* influence on the characters because this gives a closer representation of actual experience and allows for the experience of landscape which does not horrify, but soothes and gives peace.

The uneasiness of the uncanny is a very different experience to that of fear. Horror within a landscape is also based on real emotions, as with the *unheimlich*, but the character is more often aware of the cause: concrete fear, memory of actual experience, shock discovery of upsetting things and the disposition of a nervous person. Malcolm Bowie suggests that we ‘encounter with the real’ through trauma,²⁸⁷ and horror writing, with its reliance on traumatising the protagonist, makes use of this. The horror feels realistic, and is affective, even when it is logically ridiculous. Writing about horror acknowledges the physical existence not simply of repression but real danger in a specific place. It also embraces the folk-history of a given landscape, the wilderness, with an all-too-permeable boundary into our civilised world.²⁸⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, the setting for my story determines a great deal of the experiences encountered when method-writing. Some places are *unheimlich* for me, like the railway line in the Derwent Valley, the scene of brooding Sunday tea-time walks, the memories of futile tussles with ponies, broken bones, and the perils of spending so many hours alone. I am not able to leave behind my childhood despite the decades spent there since. I draw on these *unheimlich* feelings to create the back story of Emily’s life in the valley, something separate to my own, but running parallel in places so that I can understand her. However, useful as this is, as a writer I am more comfortable putting a safe distance between memory and play. Apart from anything else, it is more fun; I play to be more than I am. Rather than relying on the *unheimlich* in *Barley Hill*, the unease in the landscape is more frequently based on direct present-day experience through method-writing. This often involves emotions of nervousness and fear separate from previous experience; horror rather than uncanniness. For example, Emily’s encounter with strangers in the darkened carpark on Barley Hill belongs to horror writing rather than the *unheimlich*. The potential danger was slight, but real, and it scared me when I met a silent vigil late one evening, eight or nine youths standing by the water’s edge. Emily’s illogical flight is directly based on my own

²⁸⁷ Bowie, p.102.

²⁸⁸ See Pereen, pp.108-111; Wilson, p.201; Leffler, p.44.

adventure, the fear further increased by some startled creature crashing through the brash alongside the fishermen's path:

Suddenly the danger transferred itself into the night, from flesh and blood to the horror of malignant darkness sneaking up behind me. Too late I recognised my paranoia, choosing the dark path over the slight chance that strangers would mean me harm. The choice was based on risk aversion rather than common sense and now I was too frightened to make a rational decision.²⁸⁹

With the true indeterminacy of a horror story, I never did find out why so many people were standing in silence in the dark by the waterside that night.

Because of the genre in which I write, this study concentrates on the landscape which engenders unease or horror through its objective characteristics. Landscape writing (as distinct from pastoral writing²⁹⁰) does not need to be sinister despite Wylie's assertion that the picturesque is embedded within a gloom of nostalgia.²⁹¹ The language used around the experience of landscape is often simply that of enjoyment. The quotidian experience of pleasure in the 'natural' countryside could be just that, quietude without disquiet. If the viewer is part of the landscape by the act of viewing it, and if they find only pleasure and neither fear nor prescient connection, then can that landscape be called haunted? Landscape, the physical features of the environment in which we find ourselves, is not inherently *unheimlich*.

The emotion of disquiet engendered by the uncanny in a specific landscape setting clearly serves a useful purpose in horror writing, allowing the writer to stimulate empathetic unease within the reader at an early stage in the plot. This unease within the plot, as within life, makes us nervous and predisposes us to a heightened reaction to the horror to come. The reader has an active role, 'implicit in the text'.²⁹² The landscape in which the plot is set therefore needs to have some haunted quality in order to alert the reader that they should feel unease as Poe's narrator confirms when relating the approach to the House of Usher (1839); 'there *are* combinations of very simple natural

²⁸⁹ On *Barley Hill*, p.119.

²⁹⁰ Harriet Tarlo, in *The Ground Aslant: An anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry*, ed. by Harriet Tarlo (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011), pp.11-12.

²⁹¹ Wylie, *Landscape*, pp.33-34.

²⁹² Todorov, p.18.

objects which have the power of thus affecting us,'²⁹³. Kaplan, too, suggests that there is a widely held belief that some places are 'hot spots for spectral activity', perhaps caused by the physical effects of 'environmental conditions' in a 'specific location' as in horror films such as *Poltergeist* and *Ghostbusters* (1984).²⁹⁴ Dartmoor has an usually large number of such places and the folk stories associated with them suggest they have historically been viewed this way, too. Conan Doyle researched 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' (1901) on Dartmoor and used Fox Tor Mire as the basis for Grimpen Mire. The independent film, *The Unfolding* (2015) uses the sinister outline of Hound Tor in the mistaken belief on the part of the director, Eugene McGing, that this was the place Conan Doyle selected for the Holme's vantage point. However the location succeeds as well as Bellever Tor, and the many other Tors on the moor, in making the visitor feel heightened emotions of unease: "Yes, it's rather an uncanny place altogether," Stapleton affirms to Watson as he tries to establish the idea of the reality of the Hound in the investigator's mind.²⁹⁵

Interestingly, in *House of Leaves*, the descriptors *unheimlich* and uncanny are used on a dozen occasions, but the hallways are neither of these things. Instead they are overtly supernatural: the hallways defy natural explanation and yet exist within the fiction and pose a real danger to the explorers. It's not clear in the text if this misunderstanding belongs to the author Zampanò, the editor Johnny Truant or the real-life author, or for what reason Danielewski seeks to de-ghostify his creation.

Horror stories do not need a traditional vast and magnificent Gothic-aesthetic landscape, but can function for the reader in any location so long as the writer can make it convincingly uncanny, for example the landscape of Los Angeles in Todd Grimson's vampire novel, *Stainless* (1996):

The light and sign-filled vacancy, palm trees and stoplights, automobiles everywhere, the horizontal, broken geometries of this city – David's senses are acute, he tastes the chemicals in the smoky, ancient air, he sees

²⁹³ Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Leicester: Galley Press, 1987), pp.242-259 (p.243).

²⁹⁴ Kaplan, p.133.

²⁹⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Hound of The Baskervilles', in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Illustrated Novels* (London: Chancellor Press, 1987), pp.201-352 (p.264).

a tiny shard of broken glass catch the orangey black artificial light two blocks away.²⁹⁶

This is landscape written through the perception of fear, not the obvious fear of strangers in strange places, but the fear from a potential danger as Grimson taps into tiny things that flag up wariness in the reader. Likewise, Jack Morgan identifies the ‘sinister loci’ of the ‘building’s unenhanced innards’ in *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) which picks at the fearful within the mundane setting in the grim, stylised urban confusion of a boiler room, dreamt into exaggeration, but still recognisably what it is, a functional space. The cinematography transforms this functional space into a sinister locus, a metaphor for Freddy Krueger’s own ‘vile body’ by selecting those elements that will revolt us, the dirty bandaging lagging the pipes, the steam, the darkness and the wheezing.²⁹⁷ Daniels and Lorimer suggest this type of ‘dross-scape’ aesthetic is a recent response to ecological destruction, and is a creative writer’s way of witnessing environments which ‘have passed over a threshold’.²⁹⁸

Often horror stories return to a more recognisably Gothic setting. The theme recurs because of ‘the genre’s notorious spatialization of fear’²⁹⁹ and a concern for real estate, especially when it involves moving to a large deserted country estate. Morgan suggests that it is this transition from an ordinary life into the position of tenant of such places that leads directly to the Gothic trope, the transition becoming a state of transgression and therefore rendered sinister, epitomised in ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ (1892),³⁰⁰ where the unfortunate narrator begins by revelling in her good fortune, but is wary from the start: ‘It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer... still there is something queer about it’.³⁰¹

In contemporary supernatural horror the effect of moving to a Gothic country pile is still prevalent, for example James Herbert’s David Ash trilogy (1988-2012). The role of the psychic investigator does not require the protagonists to own the property, but they are always aware of its prestigious volume. In *The Haunting of Hill House* the house is

²⁹⁶ Todd Grimson, *Stainless* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), p.162.

²⁹⁷ Morgan, pp.198-9.

²⁹⁸ Daniels and Lorimer, pp.4-5.

²⁹⁹ Morgan, p.179.

³⁰⁰ See Morgan, pp.180-91.

³⁰¹ Charlotte Perkins Stetson, ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’, in *Gothic Short Stories*, ed. by David Blair (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), pp.141-55 (p.141).

described as ‘vile’ and ‘diseased’,³⁰² yet all the team transgress by enjoying the trappings of the country house. In *Barley Hill* Emily’s return to her Grandmother’s spooky house after the old woman dies is a trespass which sets in motion the subsequent hauntings.

Some exterior landscapes, too, lend themselves more obviously than others as settings for horror, for example the Gothic aesthetic of the icy magnificence of Spitsbergen in *Dark Matter* (2010), which echoes the last sighting of Frankenstein’s monster. Yvonne Leffler has traced the increasing use of wilderness landscape as a Gothic setting in contemporary Scandinavian horror in a ‘complex relationship between landscape and character, space and focalisation, external environment and internal mental state, present time and the forgotten past’.³⁰³ I would suggest that the apparently inherent understanding of what makes a Gothic landscape is largely a question of scale and distance and the cultural tastes we develop. Clearly if the writer sets a story outside an unconventionally uncanny setting it is necessary to provide cues to the reader that the space is intended to function on this level.

3.1 Aspects of the Unheimlich in Barley Hill: Doppelgänger

Barley Hill is constructed through duality. I wanted to write about opencasting and the special (uncanny) landscape in which I now live and I also wanted to write about a haunted house and being haunted by the past. In doing so I found myself continually linking the valley in which I grew up with the hillside on which I now live, drawing parallels and comparisons between the two. In struggling to understand the differences between the uncanny and the spectral, and between ghosts and spectres, I have found myself writing two stories which touch each other when the protagonists’ paths cross within the landscape.

The locations I have chosen exhibit their own inherent duality, being both spectral and uncanny landscapes and containing both ghosts and a monster. Encompassing this within one cohesive story has been challenging and this doubling has resulted in there being two protagonists. Neither Jack nor Emily has a dominant plot function and it is the landscape that throws them together. Jack is both protagonist and

³⁰² Shirley Jackson, *Hill House*, p.33.

³⁰³ Leffler, p.46.

antagonist depending on whether he is interacting with the landscape or with Emily. Jack and Tim are both potential threats to Emily. Tim's menace is shared between himself and the ghost of himself as a teenager. Emily's grandmother's house has its *doppelgänger* in the miniature which Jack creates.

The intrinsically unsettling nature of the *doppelgänger* is a recurring theme in horror, epitomised in classics like *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890). It is still in use, for example in David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988) with the nasty twin/evil twin psychopathic gynaecologists, and Nicholas Royle's short story 'The Dummy' (2008) in which a hit and run driver is watched by his victim as he messes up his life with plans to abduct and murder his children. The role of the *doppelgänger* as a traditional harbinger of death is central to the plot of Alice Thompson's *Burnt Island* (2013), in which a novelist is persuaded to stay on the eponymous island to write his next book, but finds the population replaced by hideous sea monsters which disguise themselves as doubles. As the protagonist's disturbing visions degenerate into paranoid terror, it is not clear if he is hallucinating or witnessing, until the epilogue suggests at least part of his story must have happened to him. Among the many ghosts in *Drood*, Wilkie Collins suffers from the return of his jealous and murderous childhood 'friend'; 'the Other Wilkie seemed to have grown harsher and more aggressive during our absence from one another'.³⁰⁴ Towards the end of *The Haunting of Hill House*, the other characters begin to relate to Eleanor in a way that implies the reader is not being told all that she has done, and she realises part of her is being taken over, 'I hate seeing myself dissolve and slip and separate so that I am living in one half...'³⁰⁵ In all these stories one part is 'normal', the other a distorted reflection of the original that becomes an 'object of terror' because it represents the inescapable 'disturbance of the ego' which is out of control,³⁰⁶ and therefore disturbs the reader. Having a double is not sufficient on its own to be affective in a horror story. In *House of Leaves* the twins Will and Tom do not exhibit this distorted reflection, no matter how hard the plot tries to throw this factor into the story. They are simply twins whose lives have taken different but normal paths, and are one of the least disturbing elements of the novel.

³⁰⁴ Dan Simmons, *Drood* (London: Quercus, 2009), p.397.

³⁰⁵ Shirley Jackson, *Hill House*, p.160.

³⁰⁶ Freud, p.143.

Further aspects of doubling have inevitably followed from the initial shared role of protagonist in *Barley Hill*. Jack and Emily's genders are relevant because of the plot strand of sexual predation. The opposing genders also touch on the archaeological view of *domus/agrios*³⁰⁷, the feminine space of the house and the masculine space of outside, the domestic and landscape settings, and both Jack and Tim's transgressions into Emily's domain relate to the gendered nature of their threat. This was not an intentional outcome, but is a recurring theme in cultural representations of sexual predation, from Dracula gaining access to Mina's room (1897) and Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). The home in Gothic literature shifts from 'a place of security and concord' to 'a place of danger and imprisonment'³⁰⁸ and the Gothic novel itself can be seen as the exposure of violence done to women (or disempowered men) within a domestic setting by men in a position of power over them.³⁰⁹

In films this exploration of gendered predation and powerlessness and victimisation within one's own home (in particular a man gaining entrance to a building to prey on the females within) is prominently represented by the sorority house slasher movies, which unlike most slasher and stalker films, have a decidedly sexual motivation.³¹⁰ The earliest example is *Black Christmas* (1974) and the fashion continued throughout the eighties with the *Sorority House Massacre* films (1986-2000). *Fatal Attraction* (1987) is an unusual example of reversed gender roles with a female antagonist gaining access to the male protagonist's home. All feature an uncanny, preternatural power in the assailant, an ability to get in, no matter what, making escape or defence difficult until the dénouement.

Mary Butts' critical writing pre-dates Hodder's and Russell's work on female/male space, but she sums up the concept in her creative work 'With or Without Buttons' (1938) with the atmospheric description of a house and garden in Kent just before the sisters conjure up a murderous ghost;

We went home through the orchard in the starlight and sat downstairs in the midsummer night between lit candles, inviting in all that composed it, night hunting cries and scents of things that grow and ripen, cooled in the

³⁰⁷ See Nerissa Russell, *Social Zooarchaeology: Humans and Animals in Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) in a discussion of Ian Hodder's work on domestication.

³⁰⁸ Kate Ferguson Ellis, 'Introduction', *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (USA: University of Illinois, 1989), x.

³⁰⁹ Ferguson Ellis, p.3.

³¹⁰ Gelder, p.274.

star-flow. A world visible, but not in terms of colour. With every door and every window open, the old house was no more than a frame, a set of screens to display night, midsummer, perfume, the threaded stillness, the stars strung together, their spears glancing, penetrating an earth breathing silently, a female power asleep.³¹¹

In this way Butts annexes all the surrounding night into the domesticated and feminine. This female power is far from benign. The sisters' malicious inability to let their sceptical neighbour be brings Butt's notion of the naturalness of women into direct conflict with the stubborn 'pseudo-rationalisations' of their stereotypical neighbour Trenchard³¹² which almost results in his death.

The duality in the final draft of *Barley Hill* can be examined in the context of other twinning in horror stories although I never set out to use it as a device to increase the horror in the plot. Integrating the two plot strands has been the biggest challenge in writing this story. At times the spectre and science almost overwhelmed the ghost story and I had to work hard to prevent Emily's story disappearing beneath the immediacy of a real-life threat. Although the *doppelgänger* is a recognised horror trope, few works of fiction deal with both spectres and ghosts with distinct plot functions, as in *Barley Hill*. The clearest example is the film *The Unfolding*, where the duality questions what happens to the human personality beyond life both on a metaphorical and practical level. Against a background of imminent nuclear war a postgraduate researcher sets out to investigate a haunted house on Dartmoor. The tensions from the spectre of nuclear annihilation set off a chain of paranormal events in the house, and the investigator and his friends and colleagues struggle to accept the evident existence of ghosts alongside the seemingly equally incredible terror of the Bomb. The writer clearly intended to explore both the possible horrific spectre of nuclear war and the close, human scale properties of the impossible disembodied personality continuing after death. As a result the film is mixture of genres, switching between science fiction and supernatural Gothic horror, because otherwise it could not encompass the ideas in the story.

In the end I found Emily's story easier to trace through the dolls' house because I could access the small space of the model every day in my workroom and in doing this

³¹¹ Mary Butts, 'With or Without Buttons', in *Mary Butts, The Complete Stories*, (New York: MacPherson and Company, 2014), pp.332-345, (p.333).

³¹² Matless, 'Geography of Ghosts', p332.

became very much aware of the *unheimlich* nature of such playthings. The director Nick Murphy discusses the use of a dolls' house in the plot of *The Awakening* (2011), and explains, 'dolls' houses freak me out, [I] always find them a bit weird and I can't work out why'.³¹³ Clearly the weirdness of models can be unsettling even if not used in the plot of a horror novel or film and this phenomenon will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 The Uncanniness of Miniaturisation

The plot of *Barley Hill* plays with scale in much the same way the screen play of *The Awakening* does. In this section I will look at the way in which a miniaturised landscape has been used to introduce uncanniness into plots and discuss the degree to which dollshousing can be regarded as a medium for examining the *significant lacunae* of the marginal.

Both cultural geography and sociology can be regarded as the study of networks. Sometimes the connections in the network are ephemeral but their marginalisation in itself makes them significant – they become '*significant lacunae*' and non-representation theory seeks to include them, both to find out how and why they still affect the system under study in their absence and to understand why they are liminal in the first place.³¹⁴ The lacunae are in essence either a gap in our understanding or the inability to express the nature of this gap, but *acknowledging* it in itself is important because without this we forget, or choose to ignore, that the marginal and excluded exist.

The expression of the marginal is a political ideal, but is compatible with the way in which fiction often works, for example when a writer looks at ordinary people caught up in historical events as an approach to understanding what really happened rather than reiterating history's headlines. The '*significant lacunae*' in these networks are directly comparable with those in my writing as discussed in the Methodology Chapter, the gaps which cannot be filled because they are essentially unrepresentable through text, but must shape the text in the way that *otherness* shapes the experience of

³¹³ Director Nick Murphy discussion in film 'extras' on DVD version of *The Awakening*, 2011.

³¹⁴ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.138.

reality. Fiction and fictive reality ought to include them in some way if they are to represent the state of things more accurately. As Nigel Thrift asserts, space is a 'continual encounter' and 'geography therefore becomes crucial as a means of thinking through [the research]'.³¹⁵ This is a geographical response. Within *Barley Hill* this continual encounter is directed and complicated by the needs of the plot.

In many ways the dolls' house in *Barley Hill* is itself a landscape. It is a specific area which is 'precisely and inherently a set of tensions',³¹⁶ a theatre for part of the action of the story. It is also a Gothic landscape because it is a boundary for Jack; he crosses into the space in his mind and this spectral experience is the threshold of his delusion that he can control Emily through the model.

The model contains no threatening spectre, but it is haunted by Jack, and he wants Emily to haunt it too. It possesses the ability to frighten and fascinate Emily through the uncanny nature of playthings and the doubling of the real house by its diminutive *doppelgänger*.³¹⁷ Like Christchurch in *Jude the Obscure* it is an active entity, and cannot be regarded solely as an object. As Actor Network Theory suggests, it has agency and becomes a haunted territory within the story in the same way that spectral landscapes are formed through the people who haunt them. Its unnerving effect upon Emily is very similar to effect of the model in the minds of Nashe and Pozzi in *The Music of Chance*. Two gamblers wash up in a remote backwater and are invited to play cards by a couple of wealthy strangers who keep a room-sized model of their ideal city. The gamblers cannot help but attribute meaning and determination to Stone's model as though it was self-determining rather than a tool used by its psychopathic creators. Perhaps Flower and Stone deliberately plant this notion in their heads, but also the very scale of the project itself is so unhinged that it impresses and unsettles their victims. 'Willie's city is more than just a toy,' Flower said, 'it's an artistic vision of mankind'.³¹⁸ Their fear enhances the model's effects, with the unnerving blank space left bare for the wall Nashe and Pozzi are sentenced to build. The amputated figures of Flower and Stone are especially troubling.

³¹⁵ Thrift, 'The Still Point', p.138, 133.

³¹⁶ Wiley, *Landscape*, p.2.

³¹⁷ Freud, p.141; Warner, p.4.

³¹⁸ Paul Auster, *The Music of Chance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.72.

‘It’s a piece of wood, isn’t it? A stupid little piece of wood. Isn’t that right, Jack?’
‘If you say so.’
‘And yet you believe this little scrap of wood is stronger than we are, don’t you? You think it’s so strong, in fact, that it made us lose all our money.’³¹⁹

Auster never suggests that the model itself is supernatural, but relies on the inherent uncanniness within the plot. It is enough that the characters believe it and that belief then makes the miniature an actor within the story.

Dollshousing has its own distinct character within the uncanny world of the toy maker. In *The Miniaturist*, Jessie Burton makes use of the uncanniness and implicit power of the world made miniature, for example when the protagonist, Petronella, unwraps the unmasked-for models of the two dogs; ‘Nella turns them over, her blood slows to an uncomfortable thump. On one of the dog’s bellies is a small black spot, in exactly the same place as Dhana’s’. The miniature does not simply represent the original: as with ‘The City of the World’ in some impossible way it *is* the original, so Petronella tries to comfort herself; ‘she says to herself, ‘Who says they’re the same whippets curled up by Cornelia’s stove?’’³²⁰

The power in Burton’s story is held by the *creator* of the model, knowing what to make to stimulate the memory or draw out anxieties into the open. Although Jack’s dolls’ house exists outside the text it is primarily a part of the fiction of the story. Its material state is due to my writing method rather than the plot. My own haunting of it is only present in the text through the characters that I have generated.

Calliois considers that model-making is a particular form of play. He relates it to the factory worker making;

complete scale models of the machines in the fabrication of which he is fated to cooperate by always repeating the same movement, an operation demanding no skill or intelligence on his part.³²¹

The subject of the model is a source of frustration, a symbol of servitude or wasted talent, and the model-making itself allows expression of this. The model becomes separate from the source, so the model maker ‘not only avenges himself upon reality,

³¹⁹ Auster, p.127.

³²⁰ Jessie Burton, *The Miniaturist* (London: Picador, 2014), p.79,

³²¹ Calliois, p.32.

but [does so] in a positive and creative way'. Caillois clearly implies that the model itself is a thing in its own right, something that its creator is proud of and that it is also a statement about the original. This is at odds with Caillois's earlier assertion that free-play is merely mimicry because, although the model is a representation, it is also new and springs from the originality and the skill of the maker rather than the circumstance of his dissatisfaction. The maker becomes the 'worker-turned-artisan'. Caillois seeks to explain this by concluding that 'the hobby is a response to one of the highest functions of the play instinct',³²² and is presumably therefore an extension beyond mimicry.

Professional miniaturist Nicole Scott describes the effect of her creations during interview as, 'the sheer excitement for them of finding that someone else understands exactly what they needed to fit into their world'.³²³ Her customers almost always interpret the coincidence of their choosing something appropriate from a selection of products as her intuitive grasp of their needs and 'frequently express relief' at being able to admit their intense, compulsive desire to make a perfect world, assuming prior to the purchase 'that their enthusiasm is unique' and isolated, something intensely personal that no-one else can understand or access. Around 95 per cent of her customers are women, old enough to afford the space and money to indulge their interests. The objects themselves are made with this knowledge in mind, copies of children's books, tables covered in retro clutter, room sets which have the intrinsic property of nostalgia. The customer willingly participates in the illusion of telepathic understanding, imbuing the intentionally designed objects with enough power to make rational adults invent connections which override common sense, as witnessed by the volume of correspondence Nicole receives after the transaction is complete. 'These people would take my advice on anything if I offered it, based on a model I have sold them,' she says awkwardly, and admits she finds this rewarding.

This power transfer from the customer, through the object of desire to the creator, is the basis of Jack's persistent optimism that he can bring Emily to the miniature and hold power over her through it. As with a spectral landscape the miniature has agency; it directly affects the other actors so that its function within the story is spectral, a haunted and affective space.

³²² Caillois, p.32.

³²³ Interview with Nicole Scott of "Petite Uniques", 18th August 2014.

The relationship between the drudgery that Caillois refers to and the dolls' house is obvious in Nicole's customer demographic of (mainly) housewives. These women are not directly 'avenging [themselves] upon reality',³²⁴ because they are not making the models; it is not that assertive. Instead they require the model-maker to (as it were) speak up for them. The current widespread fashion in the dolls' house industry is for filling miniature room sets with sex-toys, bondage gear and tiny facsimiles of E.L. James's literary output. Although it is impossible to make assumptions about this trend without proper investigation, it is conceivable that this fashion is a symptom of the need to express unhappiness at feeling social pressure to openly discuss and explore sadomasochism, rather than a trivial expression of a woman embracing her sexuality. These dungeon room sets would therefore represent a protest against lifestyle in much the same way that a miniature steam engine would for Callios' talented factory worker. Please see fig. 10.



Figure 10 The "Bondage Pack" from 'Dinky Delights' by Louise Miller.

Dollshousing is not about having power over a small domain but about creating a space where it is safe to cede power. As such the act of dollshousing can be considered a useful tool to explore what isn't there, that which is missing but which would be needed to make (mostly) women feel safe and through this to understand better a given social space.

³²⁴ Calliois, p.32.

4 Spectral Landscapes

Spectrality is the way in which we experience a haunting landscape, an intellectual recognition of something *other*. In this section I will discuss the differences between the uncanny and the spectral and examine the different effects these phenomena have upon us as we experience them in a landscape, and extend the discussion of spectral landscapes into haunted houses.

For John Wiley ‘the spectral above all confounds settled orders of past and present’.³²⁵ He takes this idea initially from Derrida’s writing on the spectral which is most easily recognised when time becomes *out of joint*. As when Hamlet sees his father’s ghost, who cannot be there but is, we too see by remembering things which have passed but still affect us in the present.³²⁶ Wiley suggests that this is upsetting because our world is organised into consecutive presents; one thing happens after another.

Looking down on the Derwent Reservoir from Barley Hill I see the drowned valley in my mind and simultaneously see the reservoir in front of me, representing Lovecraft’s ‘hidden and fathomless worlds’.³²⁷ Hodder cites the understanding of ‘things’ or ‘tings’, a Norse term for a meeting or parley to decide matters which was sited at places of particular meaning, ‘making connections to the past, linking everyday life with politics, and the divine’.³²⁸ These ideas are so diffuse as to be seemingly superficial and obvious, but Hodder emphasises this ancient use of landscape differs from the way modern landscape has been, until very recently, considered a social space, rather than having its own identity beyond the anthropological. Hodder does not interpret this as a disturbing, *unheimlich*, experience, rather something to be desired, a connection to the material nature of the landscape, so that a specific landscape is not only experienced as a purely social space, but also as a material presence.

The past is always incorporated in our encounters with the present so that we are unable to really live entirely in the present, suggesting that in this way all landscapes are spectral. As John Wiley puts it, we experience a constant *spectral* ‘unhinging [of the] present’.³²⁹ Landscapes in which we have experienced previous painful encounters

³²⁵ Wiley, ‘Sebald’, p.177.

³²⁶ Derrida, p.201.

³²⁷ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.14.

³²⁸ Hodder, p.42.

³²⁹ Wiley, *Landscape*, p.173.

upset us because they cause us emotional pain. We have little control over which memories come to mind in a given situation and this helplessness is upsetting as well. The revisited spectral landscape may therefore disturbingly compound the *unheimlich* concealed in the familiar/unfamiliar.

We cannot easily separate the awareness of our surroundings from the thoughts which relate in some way to the landscape. Derrida's *hauntology* takes this a step further. We are haunted so we bring revenants along with us, so we haunt; the 'dimension of performative interpretation [is] an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets'.³³⁰ We cannot experience landscape without haunting it because we are there; our presence is part of the landscape. Spectrality, the quality of the spectral within a landscape, is a universal human experience. Bell agrees with this, suggesting that ghosts, the manifestation of the spectral, are a 'ubiquitous aspect of the phenomenology of place'³³¹ so that places are 'often imbued with spirits and personified sentiments' because of the way we involve memory in experiential learning.³³²

Language is closely related to memory³³³ and we create a 'palimpsest' of 'retrospective memories' about a landscape.³³⁴ When landscapes 'embody memories' they become (non-figuratively) 'haunted'³³⁵ with that 'felt *presence*, an anima, *geist*, or genius' which is a subconscious echo of our thoughts and memories.³³⁶ Re-telling these personal experiences about a landscape creates a story. Sometimes these tales are collected and become folklore. That landscape then becomes uncanny or special to those who remember the accumulated folklore, an added dimension to the social space. Again, this does not necessarily imply that the material landscape itself has some intrinsic spectrality or hauntedness, but that we have created this quality around it, and like a map it is only a representation of our understanding.

Landscape is not universally uncanny, but a spectral landscape is the combination of a particular quality within the *selected* landscape and the disposition of

³³⁰ Derrida, p.63.

³³¹ Bell, p.813.

³³² *Ibid.*, p.816.

³³³ See Bentall, pp.195-197.

³³⁴ Cornelius Holtorf, and Howard M.R. Williams, 'Landscapes and Memories', in *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*, ed. by Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.235-254, (p.237).

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.235.

³³⁶ Bell, p.815.

the viewer, a ‘particular geoaesthetic of the spectral’.³³⁷ For supernatural horror, a genre so often dependent upon setting,³³⁸ the choice of landscape, the place in which the supernatural horror writer finds the story, has to work for the writer.

Barley Hill and the Derwent valley are haunted places, truly spectral landscapes. In the novel they contain, through me, the memories and knowledge of the protagonists and are perceived by the reader through this veil of experience. Landscape-writing requires the creation of intimate knowledge about the landscape and this is represented textually as the veil through which the reader sees the story unfold. The Gothic landscape in a horror novel is haunted therefore by the spectral presence of the writer’s autobiography, or at least that portion of life writing from which the writer finds the story.

Barley Hill and the upper Derwent Valley can be considered ‘special’ landscapes. The popularity of the location is evident in the numbers of visitors all year round. ‘Special places’ tend to have a picturesque aesthetic appeal and are appreciated for their ‘amenity’ value.³³⁹ They form a ‘pleasurescape’³⁴⁰ which is often deemed of such value by society that they are officially given public access or reserved for leisure activities and protected from exploitation by law. This quality is part of the material landscape, rather than something personal to the individual viewer.³⁴¹ The spectral nature of the landscape overlays the picturesque in a manner that can be piquantly pleasurable simply for its ephemeral fragility, such as the evidence of grassed-over foundations, or gooseberries growing where there was once a homestead, lost centuries ago, giving the onlooker a little shiver at the passage of other lives.

The Derwent Reservoir covers unreachable history, the geological formation of the land pokes through recent agriculture and industrialisation with the scarp face of Ruffside. The exploitation of the minerals in the drift geology and the use of the hydrology for power have left layers of history belonging to it, so that it is a place of unease irrespective of individual human attention.³⁴² The scars of conflicting interests and human activity make it an interesting place to visit, a human space. This spectrality

³³⁷ Matless, ‘Geography of Ghosts’, p.339.

³³⁸ Lovecraft, *Supernatural*, p.87; Carroll, pp.34-35.

³³⁹ Cosgrove, p.251.

³⁴⁰ Cresswell, p.269.

³⁴¹ Matless, ‘Geography of Ghosts’, p.343.

³⁴² Kneale, p.107.

is materially present in the landscape and is quite literally signposted by information boards. Barley Hill and the Derwent valley have accrued millennia of human interventions, unsettling historical knowledge with no immediate personal significance to the observer but which acts as a perceived physical link to unreachable pasts. Areas such as this are valued because they retain the evidence of the past, and it has not been completely obliterated by more recent human activity such as industrial-scale arable farming or house-building.

Barley Hill is a place of watchfulness, a liminal place between two valleys, an open space under a wide, ever-shifting skyscape. The valley, too, is a borderland where the industrial lies beneath modernity and the rising tide of the city flows right up to the remnants of ancient woodland.

4.1 Haunted Houses as Spectral Landscapes

The recurring theme of crossing over boundaries in horror is also present in homes, where the wilderness ‘out there’ forms a spectral landscape *inside* the haunted house.³⁴³ For example, the Navidson House in *House of Leaves*; ‘the images Navidson shoots capture the otherness inherent in that place’.³⁴⁴ In *The Haunting of Hill House* the notion of shelter is turned inside out: ‘Around them the house steadied and located them, above them the hills slept watchfully ... and the centre of consciousness was somehow in the small space where they stood.’³⁴⁵ Later, Dr Montague leads them ‘through the uncharted wastes of Hill House’.³⁴⁶ In effect such houses are wilderness landscapes, made so because they are unmapped, or unmappable, spaces where one will become lost. I suggest that the spectral landscape of a haunted house is encountered in the same way as an outdoor landscape. In *Barley Hill* the most obviously spectral element is Emily’s grandmother’s house.

In much the same way that we haunt a landscape by being there, because we bring our ghosts with us, we make these haunted houses into liminal spaces by bringing

³⁴³ Ingold, ‘Temporality of Landscape’, p.512.

³⁴⁴ Danielewski, p.64.

³⁴⁵ Shirley Jackson, *Hill House*, p.58.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.64.

our concepts of civilisation and wilderness there, and in crossing over into the haunted space we recreate the threshold implicit in horror narratives.³⁴⁷

Emily's return to the *unheimlich* atmosphere of her Grandmother's house, and Jack's trespass there, turn the house into a spectral landscape, a boundary between the past and present and an obstacle between Emily and her future. In turn the dolls' house has become another spectral landscape, a liminal space of fear and hope depending on who is playing with it.

For Christine Wilson, the house as a landscape, a territory, makes sense.³⁴⁸ She discusses the increasing popularity of the American haunted house narrative alongside ecocriticism.

Haunted houses like the house on Ash Tree Lane in *House of Leaves* and Gramarye in James Herbert's *The Magic Cottage* (1986) allow access to a local 'wilderness'. The stories involve an exploration of cures and attempts to make peace with angry spirits that are often recognisable manifestations of ecological concerns. The house on Ash Tree Lane is built in an area of former wilderness that was magical, special because of its opening into the 'hallways', Gramarye is similarly built on a source of magical power. Both houses are well-known for their special-ness by locals and the estate agents act as gate-keepers, channelling the unwitting strangers into a place of danger.

Such houses may contain ghosts, but they also have their own power, and they are intrinsically threatening. Always the house is built where it shouldn't have been, a lesson in the 'ethics of creating habitability in wilderness spaces'.³⁴⁹ Wilson points out the flaw in this medium as eco-criticism; although the use of a house allows the reader to be able to identify with the householder, the desired effect of making the reader experience wilderness and appreciate its qualities, and therefore wish to protect it, is undermined. 'Environmental reform necessitates place attachment',³⁵⁰ but here the householder is a victim and the house/wilderness is the antagonist, with the risk that the human response is to further tame the wilderness and withdraw even further from nature and any notion of responsibility towards it. The resolution of these fictional sites of

³⁴⁷ Kneale, p.113.

³⁴⁸ Wilson, pp.200-10.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.204.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.206.

conflicting interests is flawed because in such stories ‘space always wins’ and it is the humans who retreat, whereas in reality, the wilderness is inevitably obliterated.³⁵¹

The eco-critical haunted house stories are metaphoric or allegorical and therefore inconsistent with supernatural horror, and closer in nature to science fiction, an exploration of ‘what if?’ This new genre is distinct from the traditional haunted house, an expression of the marginalised members of a community,³⁵² for example the murdered wives in *Crimson Peak* (2015) who seek to warn Edith of her husband and his sisters’ murderous intent. The idea of justice also plays throughout the traditional trope of the haunted house; spirits remain to right a wrong, but they are ghosts and are distinct from the formless horror of the spectres in wilderness tales. In these new wilderness narratives the transgressive, Gothic element comes from the initial infringement of the house builder, whereas in traditional haunted house plots the transgression is perpetrated by the protagonist and his/her associates.

The issue of land ownership and belonging is prevalent in both forms of haunted house³⁵³ and this draws upon the issue of dominion versus stewardship. This is evident in *The Magic Cottage*: the previous owner of Gramarye looked after it and comes back to keep an eye on it after her death. The locals who belong in the area are protective of the secret. The new owners, Midge and Mike, struggle to understand its special significance, however, the house only turns nasty when the neighbouring cult tries to wrongfully exploit its magic. In fiction at least, the story implies, stewardship is the safer way to manage the boundaries where humans and nature meet. It’s a trite lesson, but fiction has been influential in changing behaviour in the past, for example *The Water-Babies* (1863) which raised questions in parliament about the use of children as chimney sweeps and helped change the laws for child labour with the Act for the Regulation of Chimney Sweepers (1864).³⁵⁴ Fostering an attitude of benign stewardship may be a valid approach to tackle the increasing dissociation between ourselves and the

³⁵¹ Wilson, p.204.

³⁵² Anne Elizabeth Yentsch, ‘Legends, Houses, Families and Myths: Relationships Between Material Culture and American Ideology’, in *Documentary Archaeology in the New World*, ed. by Mary. C. Beaudry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.5-19, (p.6).

³⁵³ Wilson, pp.209-10; Morgan, p.180.

³⁵⁴ See Andrzej Diniejko, ‘Charles Kingsley’s Commitment to Social Reform’, *The Victorian Web*, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/kingsley/diniejko.html>> [accessed 16th April 2016].

natural environment we are destroying. Just as the ghosts who haunt Scrooge persuade the reader to Dickens' ideology in *A Christmas Carol* (1843), then modern spectral fiction can perhaps give the reader an opportunity to experience nature beyond the narrow confines of modern life. The attention the horror writer pays to setting may therefore be a useful way to explore environmental issues.

In *Barley Hill*, the vast open landscape works in the same way as the modern version of the eco-centric haunted house because I want to address ecological concerns. The haunted space of the old vicarage and its double, the dolls' house, are old-fashioned haunted houses as well as spectral landscapes. No-one, least of all Emily, would want to *live* in her grandmother's house. The house that has become a spectral landscape loses its inhabitability. Conversely, the sympathy of the reader is intended to lie with Barley Hill. Its response to the spectre is reasonable, a series of fearful lurches and an attempt to change the behaviour of the humans that are complicit in its exploitation.

Emily escapes the haunted domestic spaces, but Barley Hill wins, and the monster succeeds in thwarting the spectre of the opencasting. I did not consciously place the monster (the symptom of ecological concern) outdoors, but part of the aesthetic appeal of traditional landscapes is their majesty; it is somehow to be expected that nature in this form will bite back, whereas we are hurt when our shelter turns on us.

4.2 Spectral Landscapes and the Supernatural Gothic Horror Novel

Geographical understanding has influenced much of the writing in *Barley Hill*. Method-writing provides a way of paying attention to landscape that is consistent with recent developments in cultural geography.

Supernatural Gothic horror writing has three elements.

The *supernatural* is closely linked with the way in which spectral landscapes are expressed. The term *Gothic* implies transgression or border crossing, a familiar theme in the discussion of landscape. The consideration of liminal borders and boundaries, figurative or non-figurative, is an implicitly transgressive act. In bridging or crossing

these boundaries creative writing becomes itself a form of transgression,³⁵⁵ and therefore has an affinity with Gothic writing. *Horror writing* has a more complex relationship with geographical theories. Geographical knowledge is clearly helpful when writing about landscape. It provides the means to access understanding and record detail which is essential for the mimesis required in affective horror writing. However there are some problems in using the genre in to understand landscape reciprocally because in order to cause the perception of danger and therefore the sensation of fear, the writer needs requires the monstrous, not merely the haunted. This section seeks to evaluate the practicality and effectiveness of using creative writing to discuss geographically useful ideas.

The narrative in historical studies has long been understood. History is not what happens, but what is written down³⁵⁶, and this filtering of facts, far from being regarded as degraded information is ‘superior to the annals form’ distilling that which is important enough to be remembered.³⁵⁷ In geography, the debate about the appropriate form of investigation into space and landscape is ongoing. Hayden Lorimer’s criticism of current trends in cultural geography is that small-scale close observation results in the lack of the bigger picture,³⁵⁸ that narrative element which retells events in a way by ‘revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events *all along*’,³⁵⁹ and that geography has reverted to annals rather than history. Observation should gather and distil more than the superficial. The potential of narration in understanding landscape is to express ‘reality’ in a way which can be understood through a ‘realistic consciousness’.³⁶⁰ Meanwhile Angharad Saunders argues, ‘literary geographers [...] embrace spatial theory to the same degree they do literary theory’.³⁶¹ To tell about the world is to narrate it as a story therefore, Dewsbury proposes, a story writer can present a landscape which will be closer to the truth than conventional research.³⁶² A story can

³⁵⁵ See Ellen Redling, ‘Gothic Limits/Gothic Limited’, in *Gothic Transgressions: Extension and Commercialization of a Cultural Mode*, ed. by Ellen Redling and Christian Schneider (*Kultur: Forschung Und Wissenschaft*): Lit Verlag, 2015), pp.1-17 (p.1); Botting, *Gothic*, pp.6-9.

³⁵⁶ Yentsch, p.5.

³⁵⁷ Hayden White, ‘The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality’, *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), 5-27 (p.20-23).

³⁵⁸ Lorimer, p.85.

³⁵⁹ White, p.23, (author’s italics).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.27.

³⁶¹ Angharad Saunders, ‘Interpretations on an Interior’, *Literary Geographies*, 1.1 (2015), 1-21 (p.4).

³⁶² Dewsbury, p.1908.

go beyond being merely realistically recognisable because narrative is capable of conveying the manifold complexities of landscape experience to show ‘the ways in which actual locations and fictional settings are mutually constitutive’.³⁶³

Bruno Latour rejects the sociological view ‘stuck in the mythical belief of another world behind the real world’, that of social space, the ‘lived world’ as being the world we really inhabit rather than the physical landscape that surrounds us.³⁶⁴ For Latour ‘objects too have Agency’³⁶⁵ and Actor Network Theory requires the study of both objects and actors without assumptions. Ian Hodder suggests that *entanglements* (the way in which objects require our interaction) are invisible to us unless they become *entrapments*, objects which force us to do something, and that over time we therefore come to ignore that vast amount of things around us.³⁶⁶

The understanding of entanglement and entrapment is implicit in supernatural Gothic horror, concerned as it is with the material nature of property. Emily’s story centres around this issue of the emotional attachment to things and her entanglement inevitably (given the genre) turns more and more to entrapment so that Emily is forced to confront both her Grandmother’s house and the model. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor, too, is trapped by the house she has become involved with. The entrapment is characterised by ‘women who just can’t seem to get out of the house’,³⁶⁷ that physical and mental lack of determination which testifies to the underlying understanding of the psychology of subordinate behaviour within the genre.

The Gothic nature of these plotlines allows the writer to explore both the materiality of a haunted space, and to address the human response to the geographically imperative issues involved in ownership, landship, belonging, dominion and stewardship, a recognition that ‘man and environment are indivisible’³⁶⁸ without reducing the experience to anthropological ‘space’.

In Non-Representation Theory responses can be non-verbal, more instant and intuitive, for example through free-dance or, in the case of my research for *Barley Hill*, free-play. The instant one takes time to think about the experience it is no longer an

³⁶³ Sheila Hones, *Literary Geographies, Narrative Space in Let The Great World Spin* (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.36.

³⁶⁴ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social, An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.67.

³⁶⁵ Latour, p.63.

³⁶⁶ Hodder, pp.103-05.

³⁶⁷ DeLamotte, p.10.

³⁶⁸ Eric Ashby, *Reconciling Man with the Environment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p5.

objective pinpoint in the history of that landscape. It becomes an interpretation and intervention rather than awareness; a ‘post-hoc rumination’.³⁶⁹

Method-writing, as discussed in the Methodology chapter, is consistent with both Non-Representational Theory and Actor Network Theory. The study of spectral landscapes through narrative is a method of coming closer to the truth at the time of the exploration, not a snapshot intervention, but at least a sketch with a sincere attempt at verisimilitude. Textual presentation must acknowledge the ‘difference...between representation and practice’³⁷⁰ and allow the unknown and the unknowable, the chance, the fleeting and uncertain, to influence it.

All response to landscape in this way will be compromised. However, telling the story gives a space to remember and revisit and while there is no exact translation from experience to the written word, method-writing is a valid way to capture the moment, even if only because it allows the writer to express its shortcomings. A totally un-human textual response, if it were possible, would be incomprehensible as we decode text through human experience. As a writer, practice inevitably ends in words and even this genre of indetermination will fail to go beyond this limitation.

The logically inflexible nature of a generic form of literature can restrict its usefulness in some aspects of landscape research. I found that much of the investigation of the spectre related more to science fiction than supernatural gothic horror. This has significance for my research because it begins to explain why ghost stories may be rendered less effective at revealing spectres within a landscape.

As Wylie points out, the coining of the term ‘spectral landscape’ owes its origin to critical analysis of literature. It is the recognition that we cannot help but interpret landscape, we are not passive observers.³⁷¹ There is a clear difference between the spectral and the spectre. The former is a haunted quality, the latter is a specific, real threat which is often global and rarely local. Derrida’s *hauntology* is concerned with the political nature of the things which haunt us, both ghosts and spectres, the non-figurative and the figurative.³⁷² This ontological confusion is part of the skill set of writing ghost stories, but it conflates the definition of spectre and ghost in exactly the

³⁶⁹ Thrift, *Non-Representation*, p.58.

³⁷⁰ Thrift and Dewsbury, p.416.

³⁷¹ Wylie, *Landscape*, p.92.

³⁷² Derrida, p.63.

way Derrida feared and any dilution of the understanding of the threats, the spectres, hanging over us needs to be considered carefully. It's not relevant to the writer unless they wish to make a political point, but it becomes important if a piece of creative writing is used to rigorously investigate an ecological concept.

The spectre, that figurative entity of which we should be wary, is diluted when it is used to create an effective ghost, because a (non-figurative, non-effective) ghost is merely a manifestation of the experience of haunting with which we are all familiar to some degree. We know the everyday ghost cannot harm us really, therefore if the spectre is indistinguishable from the ghost it, too, loses its power to harm. Supernatural Gothic horror writing is well placed to provide a useful interpretation of spectral landscapes by understanding the mechanics of the genre and by leaving unsaid those aspects which can be supplied by the reader. However, the expression of geographically important potential spectres through supernatural ghost stories risks weakening the exploration and transmission of the perceived threat through story.

In Summary

This chapter has been concerned with the lexicon that has formed around haunted landscapes and hauntology and the way in which creative writing can exploit this to create affective writing. It has also looked towards the use of affective writing to express geographically important issues about human relationships with the landscapes we haunt.

The term 'haunted' is imprecise and ambiguous. We can haunt a landscape through our memories and our presence and make it spectral. In the context of a haunted place it can also name a specific set of social circumstances which demonstrate exclusion and a translation of this exclusion into something supernatural. This is not unique to landscapes, however our inability not to haunt must be acknowledged in order to understand our environment better. Thrift's assertion that 'social scientists are there to hear the world and make sure that it can speak back'³⁷³ is a reminder of the potential importance of examining the quality of spectrality through any means available to us.

³⁷³ Thrift, *Non-Representational*, p.18.

Creative writing already explores landscapes and space and the ways in which humans experience them. Dewsbury proposes that through story a writer can present a landscape which will be closer to the truth than conventional research.³⁷⁴ In this chapter I have tried to show this by explaining how the unrepresentable can appear within text through the use of cues that the reader can understand. I have also considered that spectral landscapes are found in tiny spaces as well as on a grand scale, spaces where only the imagination can be fully immersed rather than the whole body and that dollshousing can be used as a method of accessing knowledge about social space.

A story can include a stimulus that makes the reader experience and understand that which is not explicit in the text, yet it is not possible to fully encompass the ‘thusness’ of being, in fact Dewsbury suggests that part of the reason representation falls short of defining the fleeting ephemeral state of being is because ‘we expect too much from it’.³⁷⁵ Writing about the quotidian human experience of hauntology in the form of supernatural horror can access this experience and make use of it by what the writer chooses not to say. The use of a specific genre takes the reader to a place where they understand the rules, a space where the supernatural can be admitted. The human experience of landscape is both of a place which is intrinsically uncanny and a space which is haunted and which we haunt. I suggest that, when writing about the experience of landscape, supernatural horror writing gets closer than other genres because it can draw more from the reader’s own experience and needs to say less in the text so that the writing becomes ‘more-than-representational’.³⁷⁶ Environmental threats, however, are not as successfully portrayed by this genre because the central concept is about an issue rather than its location. Method writing may access the unspoken voices of the non-human actors affected by the threat, and explore the projected results of the threat in ways which may be more effective than non-creative, direct research, but the threat is not located uniquely to those local circumstances in the way in which a haunted house contains its ghosts. The threat is alien rather than endemic to the landscape and is more easily dealt with through the medium of science fiction.

³⁷⁴ Dewsbury, p.1908.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1920.

³⁷⁶ Lorimer, p.83.

CONCLUSION

I began this project assuming that my genre would be ideal for producing geographical insights into landscape. However, as discussed in the Haunted Places chapter, it is by no means perfect. Daniels and Lorimer suggest that storytelling can investigate ecological concerns by ‘articulating anxieties about irreversible local change’,³⁷⁷ but that is not to say all genres are equally good at this (nor do they define how local ‘local’ is). Horror writing in science fiction can transmit ecological issues effectively through monsters which are a metaphor for the impending potential disaster or further environmental degradation.³⁷⁸ The landscape in science fiction is not necessarily real because it is the environmental issue that concerns the story, rather than the physical environment.

Supernatural Gothic horror is particularly effective for investigating personal emotions towards a specific extant landscape. It requires the close attention essential to create a mimetic Gothic backdrop to the story and from this the imaginary supernatural emerges. The reader experiences the transference of fearful experience from the writer who has in turn experienced this directly by being in that landscape.³⁷⁹ During the writing of *Barley Hill* I found that I had to turn away from the horror of dangerous transgressions, the supernatural and personal emotions which I usually employ in storytelling, and write the monstrous response to the opencasting as a hybrid genre, which resembles science fiction more closely than supernatural Gothic horror. In wanting to write about the opencasting, the issue of mining became the feature I needed to explore, rather than the land which was to be opencast. In the end I have had to accept that the Gothic story of the landscape is not the most appropriate way to explore large environmental issues, such as the spectre of opencasting. The consideration of supernatural Gothic horror as a means to examine haunted landscapes and the relationship between my primary methodology, life-writing and the supernatural Gothic are original pieces of research.

³⁷⁷ Daniels and Lorimer, p.4.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.5.

³⁷⁹ Clasen, ‘Terrifying Monsters’, p.184.

This practice-led project has been about finding the story in the landscape and telling it in the most effective way. Landscape writing and supernatural horror share a need for mimesis, the factual representation of what is actually in the environment. Textual representation may not be the most effective way to communicate the natural environment because much experience of being-in-the-landscape is too fleeting or ephemeral to be recorded in this manner. However, by recognising the spectral nature of landscape experience and by paying close attention through immersive practises such as method-writing, the unrepresentable can be acknowledged within the text by their effect upon the other actors in the landscape.

My interest in environmental protection and my local environment led me to locate the novel where I live. Through writing the novel I have found that supernatural Gothic horror is an effective medium for discussion of close quarters, human habitation and the near environs, but that tackling the spectre of opencasting, the large-scale environmental threat in my area, required writing which was closer in nature to science fiction. The investigation and dissemination of supernatural haunting of landscape and buildings and the haunting of the environment as social space are compatible with the supernatural Gothic horror genre. The need to give wider environmental problems a voice may be better served by other forms of writing. However, the need for close attention and experiential investigation of both haunted and threatened landscape is served well by the process of method-writing.

Method-writing requires the writer to be on location, to experience the same environment as the characters and to live (for a time) as the characters do. It is an act of immersion and exposure to the lives of the characters beyond the life of the writer, but combines an element of introspective autobiography which lends itself particularly well to the Gothic genre. Method-writing is not about the location of the writing process, it concerns instead the placement of the writer in the material landscape during the process of information gathering and assimilation. The recognition of the importance of free-play to method-writing is a subject which would benefit from further research as the discussion of play in this project has been necessarily limited to its relevance to the construction of *On Barley Hill*.

Method-writing is a way of generating knowledge that would not otherwise be represented and presenting it in a textual form through the effects it has upon the characters and story and in the *lacunae* it leaves in the text. In this way the writer can give a more truthful representation of human experience of the spectral landscapes we encounter and from this there is an opportunity to better understand the environment and our place in it. The evaluation of the technique of method-writing in this project represents an original contribution to knowledge.

Additionally, this project deals with the space of dolls' houses, a hitherto little investigated subject. The discussions of the relationship of power between model-maker and consumer, and the imaginative play within the hobby of dollshousing, are an original contribution to knowledge. The dolls' house is not a model representing an idealised world, but a space within which the user can temporarily channel resentment of domesticity in a creative and safe way, by passing the responsibility of their creation to the model-maker. This has not been considered before as means of examining this social space and is an original contribution to knowledge.

This project began as an investigation into the efficacy of supernatural Gothic horror as a means to investigate landscape. I was unaware that method-writing was the underlying factor in my own practice which lent my writing to the exploration of landscape until I began to analyse the way in which I researched and applied it to my practice. Throughout the process of research I have come to understand the importance of practical field research to writers of this genre, and the need for all writers to play in the places we write about.

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