Writing the Double: Critical Explorations of an Uncanny Childhood

Shirley Stephenson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Humanities

March 2025

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This thesis is dedicated to Drew, for his love and support and for encouraging my interest in writing. Without him this PhD wouldn't have been possible. With enormous thanks to my talented supervisors Abi Curtis and Caleb Klaces for their advice, patience and honesty. Finally, I would like to thank all the team at York St John, past and present, for their help and support over the years.

Abstract

Novel: Stranger Like You

Stranger Like You is a novel about fraternal twins Lila and Noah Clearwater who are on the cusp of adolescence. When their estranged Uncle John returns home after ten years absence, the flamboyant and confident Noah is enamoured, whereas the emotionally detached Lila is hesitant. As Uncle John charms his way into Noah and her mother's life, Lila finds herself caught up in the shade of the Clearwater family history, as their behaviours, lies and secrets resurface. When she discovers the unspeakable childhood incident which affected the course of her father and uncle's lives, she worries for Noah's safety, although from whom she isn't certain.

The novel investigates inherited legacies and trauma, transgressions within families and how one event can change the course of a life.

Writing the Double: Critical Explorations of an Uncanny Childhood

Writing the Double is a critical exploration of the aesthetic elements which have influenced the creation of *Stranger Like You* and its focus is primarily the process undertaken. The critical research explores writing an uncanny repetitious double and incorporates analyses of fictional and cultural influences which relate to ideas of failed mourning, inherited trauma, representations of psychic crypts, phantasmic landscapes, and *nachträglichkeit.* As the novel is set in the 1980s, I look at May's ideas of encounter in order to incorporate some conscious insights into what has been unconsciously written in terms of era, topography, cultural influences and major events. I examine my creative process with a focus on Royle's ideas of telepathy as a 'reading-effect' and explore these in the form of 'writing-effect' and 'double-voicing.'

Contents

Abstract Page 4

Critical Analysis: Writing the Double

- Introduction Page 6
- Ch 1: The Uncanny Double: Temporal Anxieties Page 13
- Ch 2: Deferred-Action, Compartmentalisation and Structure Page 22
- Ch 3: The Inherited Double: Phantasmic Landscapes and Psychic Crypts Page 36
- Ch 4: The Double as Encounter Page 57
- Ch 5: Double Voicing: Finding the Character Page 83
- Ch 6: Final Thoughts Page 118

Works Cited Page 120

Novel: Stranger Like You (Redacted) Page 127

Introduction

I'm visiting a place for the first time, yet it feels familiar. Perhaps it's somewhere I came across long ago. There is a school where I can ask directions, only it's empty, despite being midweek. In a classroom, I run my hands over the graffiti etched into the desk and find a name I recognise, which makes me think it's my old school I attended years ago. Or perhaps a doppelganger. I try to find an exit, all the while remembering old friends, until it grows dark. No matter how far I walk, I remain in the same long corridor, the double-doors unreachable. I realise someone is following me, at a distance. I speed up and so do they. Instinctively I run, fearing they wish to harm me. But they run too, and we can't escape the corridor; we loop back around, until I'm running behind the stranger. I don't know who is chasing who. I bear this figure no ill-will so feel compelled to tap their shoulder. They turn. They're faceless. I wake up shocked, certain this shadowy other was me.

On waking I feel relief. But also confusion, a lingering unease, dread, even horror. Why was my double faceless? If it was me, why did I find it so strange? And if the place was so strange, why did it feel familiar?

This 'dream' explains some of the major themes in this thesis, which is centred around ideas of the 'uncanny double,' as both creative encounter and temporal repetition. At the start of my research, I didn't plan on writing the double, the double became manifest in what I was writing, it seemed to show itself by accident and appear time and time again, repetitively so. The double I found myself writing was not about doppelgangers but unsettling repetitions. Freud equates the uncanny to the 'repetition of the same thing', often occurring as an 'unintentional return' which he compares to the 'helplessness we experience in certain dream-states' (Freud, 2003, p.143-144). My own dream is a distorted repetition of someone else's experience; Freud (2001b) recalls 'the same feeling of helplessness' when lost in a small Italian town, and found himself returning to the same street, irrespective of which direction he took. Uncanny resemblances are one thing, but it is quite another to feel the environment itself defies logic, and despite its open borders you return unknowingly and unwillingly back to where you started as though the space itself is indeterminate. Freud (2003) never dedicated a sole work to the double but his essay on the uncanny is riven with doubles and

repetitions. He refers to 'doppelgangers', not as the figures we encounter in nineteenth century Romantic and Gothic literature, but as repetitions, shared thoughts, déjà-vu and shadowing. The closest he comes to describing a traditional doppelganger is in a footnote where he recounts seeing his own reflection and not recognising himself. Instead, he saw an 'elderly gentleman' (Freud, 2001b, p.248) and took such an instant dislike to his reflection that he saw himself as *other*. This alterity is the antithesis of Narcissus. Freud's double is not an alter-ego or a doppelganger, but self-recognition made possible through a process of projection and introjection that enables him to see himself as he appears to others. This thesis does not explore the traditional ideas of a doppelganger as a figure from nineteenth century Romantic and Gothic literature but the double as an 'unintended recurrence of the same situation' (Freud, 2001b, p.237).

My initial idea for the creative work was to explore the confusion and terror children feel when they can't comprehend an event, because they lack the adult emotions and experience to fully understand it. To write this terror effectively I wanted to tell the story from the point of view of the child. I was interested in writing sibling relationships and instinctively moved towards writing twins and their perceived uncanniness. Some key texts were important in elucidating whether there is any truth in the strange stories we are inclined to believe about twins. Segal (2017) states that twins' physical similarities may lead us to see them as a double, even though they are separate physical entities and should not be confused with a self-projected *other.* Societally we have a willingness to believe twin's strong unique bond and even telepathy; telepathy not as an extreme form of empathy but as extra-sensory perception (ESP) or a transmission of thoughts by means other than the senses. Freud (2003) defines telepathy as becoming the co-owner of another's knowledge, emotions and experience. According to Segal, twins are a convenient literary device in which to explore ideas of duality: rich and poor, good and evil and stories of death or loss of a twin have entered popular consciousness. I was interested in the latter and became aware I would be writing about the traumatic loss of one of my twins. However, I did not expect to write a domestic drama for this thesis, but in writing setting, while also simultaneously unpacking the etymological roots of the uncanny in *unheimlich* or 'unhomelike', it is easy to see where the domestic angle came

from. Freud's *unheimlich* is about the strange within the familiar, or perhaps the familiar as strange, and in Fisher's words is about 'the way the domestic world does not coincide with itself,' and the 'estrangement of many of the common notions about the family' (Fisher, 2016, p.10).In researching trauma I delved into the Freudian (1995, 2004, 2017) theory of *nachträglichkeit* and how memory can be later shaped in adulthood. I looked at novels where the protagonists witness a disturbing or traumatic event in childhood, often sexual in nature, although not always, with some contain fatal accidents, suicides and one a brutal murder. I introduced a further doubling with the introduction of an estranged uncle and an inherited trauma after reading Abraham & Torok's (1994) theories of mourning and melancholia, transgenerational phantoms and psychic crypts. As well as a traumatic incident, the novel became about uncomfortable resemblances, inherited pasts and how familial intersubjectivity impacts the present and the uncertainty that brings.

I realised in the writing of this thesis that a lot of my fiction already explores anxiety and often operates within an extended period of uncertainty. Freud's (2003) essay on the uncanny covers so many areas deemed to instil unease; from severed heads, blindness, déjà-vu, automatons, to doubling or shadowing, but '*repetition* and *doubling* [are] themselves an uncanny pair which double and repeat each other – [and] appear to be at the heart of every "uncanny" phenomena which Freud identifies' (Fisher, 2016, p.9). Although *Stranger Like You* is very different to any of my previous work, it contains familiar thematic patterns: the indeterminacy of the narrator, not necessarily in terms of form, but in their situation and circumstances, along with a raft of other repeating elements; my protagonists are often forced to revisit their pasts, travel to unfamiliar places, where what they believe to be true is found to be untrue or at least thrown into doubt. This is usually coupled with an antagonist who they believe dissembles, only to realise what they feared all along is themselves, with the lines between reality and imagination blurring. My previous work fits more traditional ideas about the uncanny, often containing spectral if not supernatural suggestion and certainly operates within Todorov's (1975) ideas around the fantastic. I don't intend to write my protagonists as intentionally duplicitous, but they operate in uncertain environments,

where who or what they are interacting with, is in doubt. The OED (1990) lists the second meaning of *duplicity* as the state of 'being double' (p.365).

Duplicity and anxiety run through a lot of my work, largely because apprehension is the emotion I want to instil in the reader. As *Stranger Like You* is free of supernatural suggestion, the fiction books I drew inspiration from in the writing of this thesis are not uncanny novels, but they have uncanny facets, because their protagonists have memories of a disturbing childhood incident they have never fully understood, which they revisit in adulthood. Often the authors present environments that are suffused with the character's state of mind, a mind which occupies multiple time periods and is never fully present. It is worth noting that Freud's analysis of Hoffman's *The Sandman* (2011), a work firmly grounded in the supernatural, the problems originate because the protagonist is unable to 'banish the memories associated with the mysterious and terrifying death of his beloved father' (Freud, 2001b, p.227). The characters in the novels I look at are suspended in limbo, a suffusion of 'time-present' and 'time-past' (Riley & Palmer, 1978, p.219), which leads to sometimes phantasmic presentations of their environments. Tonally the texts are imbued with some haunting qualities when portraying their character's state of minds and their environments are not firmly grounded in reality, but nor are they fully imaginary. I would also like to state that I drew slightly different things from the novels which follow but I will list them here for completeness: John Banville's *The Sea* (2005), Pat Barker's *Another World* (1998), Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007), Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (2017), L.P Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1997) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1998). Banville, Enright and Hartley's novels deal with childhood trauma in the protagonist's earlier years, whereas Barker, Garner and Roy's novels all contain elements of inherited mourning or experience. However, there are thematic overlaps, with Barker, Garner and Roy's novels also containing some elements of childhood trauma within them. All contain depictions of landscape that reflect the dreamlike states of mind of their protagonists. These primary novels influenced the ideas, themes and structure of my novel, although in arriving at the nuances of tone, landscape and character I have drawn on other novels and mention these when reflecting on my creative practice.

The purpose of the commentary is to elucidate the themes, ideas and the practice of the creation of *Stranger Like You.* I will briefly summarise here the chapters which explore the major themes in this work.

In Chapter One, I explore the idea of the uncanny as a temporal double in the form of repression and unintended recurrence of the same situation, specifically in reference to *nachträglichkeit* or deferred-action, and Abraham & Torok's (1994) theories of mourning and melancholia, transgenerational phantoms and psychic crypts. Ideas of the uncanny double helped in interpreting the fiction works that influenced my own but also in arriving at a structure for the novel and its primary ideas. I look at writing trauma as a feeling of apprehension, or psychological uncertainty and instilling a feeling of unanchored anxiety into the novel, rather than the traditional mainstays of 'frightening' (Freud, 2001b, p.210) as I reflect on my own process.

In Chapter Two I look at *nachträglichkeit* and writing grief following my narrator's loss of her twin and incorporate an analysis of some fiction works that have influenced my own in terms of character and structure. Where the traumatic event was placed had implications for structure, voice and memory, as I considered different ways of telling the story of an unsettling childhood incident. The novels I chose all contain depictions of traumatic scenes, retold in adulthood and the authors handle these retellings of a troubled childhood in slightly different ways. The novels I review are Enright's (2007) *The Gathering*, Banville's (2005) *The Sea* and Hartley's (1997) *The Go-Between* as presentations of trauma.

In Chapter Three I look at Abraham & Torok's (1994) theories of failed mourning, psychic crypts, inherited trauma and transgenerational phantoms. As the traumatic scene within *Stranger Like You* follows on from a previous generational trauma that the protagonist does not witness, I had questions about intersubjectivity and how the previous generations can exert an influence on the current. Abraham & Torok's phantom 'represents the interpersonal and transgenerational consequences of silence' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.168) and how the children can be 'the 'unwitting reception of someone else's secret' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.168). The fictional representations of inherited trauma I drew on and how these relate to landscape are Roy's (1998)

The God of Small Things, Barker's (1998) *Another World* and Garner's (2017) *The Owl Service*, but also Enright and Banville for their presentations of landscape as representations of the liminal[1] states of their characters.

In Chapter Four I focus on the double as encounter. As the novel is set in the 1980s, I will attempt to incorporate some elements of conscious insight into what has been unconsciously written in relation to era, topography, cultural influences and major events and how this affected the tone of the novel. I found Rollo May's (1975) theories of encounter, especially in separating the artist from their subject, pivotal in helping me reflect on my own practice in the creation of *Stranger Like You* and its relation to the research. I will also explore writing psychological uncertainty as a creative practice and authorial 'blueprints' within the work.

In Chapter Four I examine my creative practice with some thoughts on Derrida's (1988) theories of telepathy and Royle's (1991) idea of telepathy as a 'reading-effect.' I consider telepathy as a 'writing-effect' in my explorations of character and the challenge of writing a first-person narrative from the point-of-view of a psychologically troubled teenage protagonist and the challenges this posed for me as an author. I reflect on Bennet & Royle's (2016) theories of 'double voicing' and the relation between author and character in arriving at a voice for my character.

My early research meant 'the double' as the primary subject of the thesis appeared to be evident, but the relationship between the critical and creative aspects has proved elusive, with many elements defying critical examination. Furthermore, the research is wide-ranging, with neither the uncanny nor the double clearly defined in academic writing. The uncanny by its nature is subjective, and definitions of the double are sprawling too, with Seitz (2019) exploring the political and sociological ramifications of the double, as well as its presence in literature. His research suggests that humans view the world as opposites, and this informs our ideas of the double. I'm conscious my aesthetic explorations resist strict academic definition and attempting to trace all the elements of the novel back to original research has proved difficult. I will say that most of the creative writing

[1] Merriam Webster defines *liminal* as a threshold, both as a transitional psychological state but also as a physical space that exists as a point of change or metaphorical threshold (Merriam Webster, 31st July 2025)

in this thesis was instinctive. Any writer's work relies on memory and during the creative process, any relationship or encounter is filtered or altered, but in the act of writing, the writer is likely reliving some part of themselves and arguably, any artistic output has a temporal revisiting. As the 1980s was a period I lived through, what I chose to revisit was somewhat influenced by my own personal experience.

I do want to state this thesis will focus only on the aesthetic elements that have influenced my process in the creation of this novel and its subject is primarily the process undertaken. It will be limited to an exploration of works which I have found to be an effective demonstration of writing an uncertain repetitious double from a creative perspective. All the research undertaken and presented here is in service of the creative output and the subjects explored are limited to the practice.

1. The Uncanny Double: Temporal Anxieties

Freud's (2001b) essay on *The Uncanny* originally published in 1919 is an ambulatory and sprawling study, where he explores the etymology of *unheimlich,* or 'unhomelike,' and posits both psychological and aesthetic theories behind the feeling. The essay is riddled with uncertainty and Haughton (2003) in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Uncanny* states that 'There's an uncertainty about the very form of the essay itself. As many critics have remarked it is a strange amalgam of different genres. It cannot quite make up its mind what it is – literary criticism, autobiographical anecdote, etymological enquiry, aesthetic essay, psychological study or fictional anthology' (Haughton in Freud, 2003, p.xliii-xliv).

Freud states the uncanny is not associated with 'intellectual uncertainty', because not everything unknown can be uncanny, rather the uncanny leads us back to what is 'old and long familiar' (Freud, 2001b, p.220). Furthermore, it is 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light' (Freud, 2001b, p.241) and for Freud the psychological reasons for the uncanny arise from infantile castration, compulsion to repeat or that which is repressed and reemerges. In his aesthetic study he identifies the uncanny drawing on 'manifest prohibitions of reality' (Freud, 2001b, p.240) when the writer does not make obvious whether 'he is taking [the reader] into the real world or into a purely fantastic one' (2001b, p.230). He makes the distinction between 'fairy tales', which he states are not uncanny, because the reader is aware the premise will be unrealistic, which contrasts with texts which 'promi[se] us everyday reality and then go[…] beyond it' (Freud, 2003, p.157). However, in his analysis, the psychological and aesthetic distinctions overlap and in attempting to find reasons for the aesthetic affect, he draws on content and subject matter, with numerous comparisons to surmounted superstitions, rather than considering the effect of framing, metaphor, structure and emotion which can also leave uncanny impressions. He grapples with establishing a unified theory of the uncanny because the composite parts are so wide-ranging, and in his attempt to discredit Jentsch's ideas of intellectual uncertainty, he creates problems for his own argument, especially when exploring his own repression theory.

Outside of his etymological analysis, he explores base or primordial fears, as 'that species of frightening' (2003, p.124). All his examples speak not only to our primitive superstitions but also to our primal fears. He writes about death or extinction and dismemberment or disfigurement in the form of severed heads and loss of vision. He describes physical doubling in the form of twins and automatons but also in shared knowledge or 'omnipotence of thoughts' (Freud, 2003, p.147), uncanny repetitions and 'unintentional return[s]' (Freud, 2003, p.149) which feed our fears of loss of autonomy. Apparitions act as manifestations of separation or abandonment. Less present is ego-death, although he does acknowledge that the uncanny pertains to something that should have remained hidden coming into the open which relates to repression (Freud, 2003, p.147-148). I've never written the particular 'species' of frightening which draws on death, dismemberment or disfigurement. Shoshana Felman (1977) explores an 'uncanny reading effect', with reference to Henry James (1991) and ETA Hoffman (2011) and she explains that the source of unease within these novels are also owed to their framing, narrative structure and use of metaphor, as well as their subject matter and thematic content (Felman, 1977, p.104). These elements are largely absent in Freud's analysis of Hoffman's work. He explores subject rather than the emotion or framing, although he briefly considers why 'Hoffman bring[s] the anxiety about eyes into such intimate connection with his father's death' and why the Sandman acts as 'the disturber of love' (Freud, 2001b, p.231) but decides that these elements are 'arbitrary and meaningless' when compared to his castration theory (p.231). Yet, Hoffman's (2011) Sandman's ability to separate Nathaniel from his loved ones, whether he is a product of Nathaniel's madness, or a supernatural presence, is irrelevant when we consider for Nathaniel, what is safe and certain, becomes uncertain. Without the supernatural suggestion Hoffman's novel is still uneasy: arguably the most disturbing incident is at the beginning of the novel where Coppelius and Nathaniel's father are trying to produce humans at the hearth, an event which Nathaniel escapes by running from the room, but which arguably forms an early traumatic memory.

Most contemporary readings agree that the uncanny is a 'feeling and concept, however spectral' (Royle, 2003, p.8). Despite Freud's aesthetic theory of the uncanny going beyond everyday

reality, Freud acknowledges that for most people the uncanny is too associated with the spectral, which can lead to 'gruesome' depictions (2001b, p.241). Definitions of the uncanny within the OED, Chambers and Webster's dictionary also tie it firmly 'to the supernatural' (Royle, 2003, p.10). Contemporary studies such as Coxon and Hirst (2021) solidify this association with the supernatural, and they classify the uncanny as a genre, acknowledging that in stretching its definition they are letting readers and contributors come to their own interpretations. Like Royle, I agree that the uncanny should not be 'simply synonymous with the supernatural' (Royle, 2003, p.10). Its etymological meaning is distilled into the familiar becoming unfamiliar, or vice-versa, but the term is usually used to describe works containing supernatural occurrences, and in defining the uncanny in terms of its supernatural leanings, most contemporary readings are also reducing it primarily to its content and subject matter. It is worth noting that Todorov's (1975) distinction between the 'uncanny' and 'marvellous' suggests that the uncanny occurs when the work finds a realist footing and when a rational explanation is found for the supernatural. In contrast the 'marvellous' embraces the supernatural. The point between the two, the period of the uncertainty, is the 'fantastic' (Todorov, 1975, p.41-43) and relies on 'ambiguity' and 'hesitation' (Todorov, 1975, p.18). He also states that realist explanations may arise from a conclusion that the 'fantastic' is a by-product of imagination (Todorov, 1975, p.36). As my novel is free of supernatural suggestion means it cannot occupy the same place as Todorov's (1975) fantastic. It does not concern itself with any resolve of the fantastical nor does it ever enter into 'fright' and the fear is objectless.

Nicholas Royle (2003) gives a wide-ranging and comprehensive account of the uncanny in the nineteenth century, including but not limited to: Marx's capital, Derrida's hauntology, Kristeva's abject, Freud's uncanny, Heidegger's anxiety, Cixous's ghosts and Todorov's fantastic. His introductory essay analyses the uncanny within the fields of psychological, literary, philosophical and political reflection, but with a primary focus on Freud's essay. I will not attempt to recount a comprehensive history of the uncanny, when a superior version exists, but focus only on the works that have transcended modern notions of the uncanny as having ties to the supernatural. As Jervis states, 'The uncanny is the zone of intersection between the known and the felt, and the familiar and

the strange – the place of "haunting", whether or not a ghost is involved' (Jervis in Collins & Jervis, 2008, p.44). I would like to highlight the following works from the canon: Heidegger (1967) highlighted that a person in a state of anxiety feels *unheimlich* and Derrida's (1994) sociological essay *Spectres of Marx* was subtitled 'Marx -*das Unheimliche*' (Royle, 2003, p.4). Derrida argues that as a nation we are haunted by our forebearers past and he presents this past as revenant, one which obscures our ideas of self in time and history, leaving our present unstable and unsettled.

Several modern works also tie the uncanny specifically to anxiety and trauma. Collins & Jervis (2008) argue that rationality and reflection are central modern cultural values, so any threats originating inside our unconscious become a troubling uncanny, reflective of anxious modern life, and our minds or even selves, are subject to doubles in the form of psychical splitting when subjected to modern neuroses. Jervis (2008) states that absences in memory, whether traumatic or not, lead us to the imaginary production of spectres and 'phantasmagoria' (Jervis in Jervis & Collins, 2008, p.36). Absent or corrupted memories in the form of trauma have an uncanny effect as the mind works to fill these voids. They compare the uncanny to the Gothic in terms of how both play across boundaries, whether internal / external or self / other often resulting in transgressive tendencies. Similarly, Botting (2014) draws a comparison between the negative aesthetics of the Gothic and Freud's uncanny when what is familiar and comfortable is 'threatened by the return of known but hidden fears' (Botting, 2014, p.8). According to Botting the Gothic also went through a period of deconstruction with the figures of spectres or absences interrupting the present, meaning typically gothic moods or metaphor were applied to other texts (2008, p.17). Luckhurst (2008) highlights how we are simultaneously drawn to but horrified by the prospect of the 'recovery of occluded traumatic memory', defining this as 'an uncanny experience' when the mind becomes aware of its own occlusions and he identifies that 'trauma psychology frequently resorts to loosely gothic or supernatural tropes to articulate post-traumatic effects' (Luckhurst in Collins & Jervis, 2008, p.130).

During the writing of this thesis my own thoughts were subject to change. Every reading was an exercise in ambiguation and like Freud I found myself reaching for etymological definitions. If I

reflect on my own process, whether I am writing what might be termed uncanny or not, or trauma, my work relies on uncertainty and in this novel, I've tried to carry the character, and therefore the reader, in a suspended state of apprehension, with the focus on the emotion, rather than the subject matter or the framing. It was clear from the outset that my novel occupies a young protagonist's anxious state as she revisits her traumatic childhood.

I usually begin a creative piece with a baseline emotion or feeling, usually one of unease, perhaps not dissimilar to 'dread' (Freud, 2003, p.123). While the OED (1990) definition of 'dread' (p.356) encompasses fear, it can mean relating to apprehension and the emotion is anticipatory. In exploring the etymological roots of the uncanny, the novel slipped into writing the double, then the double in its temporal guise. In writing a traumatic incident, inherited pasts and secrets and the impact of familial intersubjectivity, it explores the fears of a young narrator, who isn't clear about what she's scared of and it's easy to see why I instinctively incorporated seemingly gothic or fairytale elements and aspects which might be considered uncanny; such as dream sequences, fear of the dark and environments which have associations with the haunted or sinister, including several liminal spaces such as forests, beaches and abandoned structures in a state of decay and decline. Apprehension is akin to the kind that writers of horror or gothic fiction try to imbue in parts of their work. In contrast, if unease does exist on the page of this novel, it is rooted in the character's psychological uncertainty

It became apparent I wasn't writing fiction devoid of fear. Luckhurst states that 'post-traumatic experience is intrinsically spooky; finding cultural expression in ghostly visitations, prophetic dread, weird coincidence and telepathic transfer' (Luckhurst in Collins & Jervis, 2008, p.131). The narrator is retelling the story of the death of her twin, while also trying to understand the timing of her estranged uncle's return, all the while sensing his estrangement is owed to a terrible family secret. The latter means that the young narrator is not always clear about what she's scared of and uncertainty and anxiety exist, both in the retelling of her brother's death, but also in remembering the difficult relations owed to an undisclosed family secret, which conceals another family trauma. These secrets meant I wrote the question of what constitutes fear, as something the

character struggles with because she lacks the emotional maturity to pinpoint what she really fears, and her lack of clarity means she misdirects, because fundamentally her fears are tied to her still inexperienced understanding of the world; she has no insight into the adult relations playing out around her, so her fears are not ascribed to a definite source. The inherited trauma of another cannot be fully determined or easily reached. Similarly, Caruth states that the experience of trauma in the moment can never be 'fully known' (1996, p.6). For Royle, the uncanny 'involves feelings of uncertainty,' about 'who one is, what is being experienced […] one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world' (2003, p.1). I portrayed my narrator as not understanding throughout, least of all herself, and the story is conveyed from her limited point-of-view where she sees things simplistically and in opposition. She is wrestling the unknown because she is not privy to her family's history, she is living in the aftermath of some unspeakable event, and when the anxiety is objectless, we create our own monster, as a potential by-product of imagination. I found time on the page for the metaphorical rustling in the undergrowth, which is never shown to the reader. 'It's scarier if you can't see it' (King, 2006, p.132) is a statement that runs through the novel as I became interested in the idea of fear of the unseen. Freud also states that the frightening element of the uncanny is linked to 'something repressed which recurs' (2001b, p.241). My character struggles with a metaphysical fear of her own making, which is arrived at through subliminal and familial signals. Her uncertainty lies in not knowing what is behind closed doors.

I found Freud's distinction between fear, fright and anxiety useful in distinguishing these states in relation to danger. He states:

> '"Fright", "fear" and "anxiety" are improperly used as synonymous expressions; they are in fact capable of clear distinction in their relation to danger. "Anxiety" describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. "Fear" requires a definite object of which to be afraid. "Fright", however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasises the factor of surprise' (Freud, 2015, p.6-7).

I describe these distinctions in my novel, in layman terms, when an adolescent character describes these emotional states in order to explain the protagonist's 'objectless' anxiety. Not that her anxiety is always unknown, on occasion it can be attributed to a definite source, such as

Chernobyl or her estranged uncle, but her story occupies the residual baseline of unease without becoming fright. Trauma straddles the line between reality and imagination, and is something which dictated tone, but also story. My character's heightened anxiety leaves her open to liminal suggestion, without suggesting to the reader that these facets are ascribed to the supernatural. Although the novel has no place in the fantastic, but it employs uncanny facets, or perhaps 'uncanny impressions' (Freud, 201b, p.226). Tonally there are elements which lend themselves to the uncanny or the gothic; childhood fears of the dark still feature and earlier drafts contained heavier use of these. As one author explains; 'I once heard that it's not that we're afraid of being alone in the dark. Not exactly. What we are actually afraid of is that we are NOT alone in the dark' (Elizabeth, 2022, p.6). Elizabeth (2022) states that if our senses are dampened, our imagination is left to contemplate what's there with us in the dark, and assuming the absence of any real monsters, all you are left with are your own thoughts and fears, in a place of isolation, with all the time to think about your hopes, regrets, concerns about the past and anxiety about an unknown future. I wanted to instil the sense of claustrophobia that night brings. Rose (2017) asks 'what happens when you switch the flashlight off. What happens when you stray beyond those cast-iron conventions and wander off into the darkness? You might find something even scarier. You might find something that's not scary at all.' It's during the night that the twins have their private conversations and when a stranger visits their home. In early drafts this anxiety about the nighttime guest manifests as bad dreams and an ambiguous childlike imagining of the monster under the bed. If it hadn't been for Freud's acknowledgement that the dark is when children are most likely to express fear (Freud, 2003, p.153), I doubt it would have been in the novel. The novel's environment also has a Gothic overtone, with an isolated and abandoned house, where the past is revisited following a disturbance in the domestic sphere and becomes the place of the traumatic scene.

With an unintended recurrence, such as a traumatic memory or an inherited trauma, the uncanny emerges in the aftermath, as the disturbing or unsettling incident is remembered or newly discovered. It breaks down boundaries of temporal space and autonomy, as the original event permeates the present, instilling feelings of helplessness. For Royle 'the uncanny disturbs any

straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside. The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality' (Royle, 2003, p.2). I wanted to present Lila as a witness but also an unwilling participant in her family's history. In revisiting her past, she recalls experiencing an inherited trauma the same time as she witnesses her own trauma, disrupting her sense of time. Her identification with her estranged uncle makes her both confidante and aide and disturbs her ideas of self.

I wrote my protagonist as haunted years after her brother's death, struggling with her decisions, and while this novel draws on Freud (2001b); it is fundamentally about what is inside, where the unfamiliar, yet somehow uncannily familiar, enters the family home, but it also slightly contradicts it. I would argue the family home can be equally as unsettling as the outside. While *Stranger Like You* is about unintended recurrences it is less about alterity and more about unwelcome similarities. My repetitious double is about the 'person [who] may identify himself with another' (Freud, 2003, p.142). At the end of the novel, another character poses the question to the protagonist of how she knows what she knows. She identifies vicariously with her uncle, as the charismatic individual she wishes to be, unaware that her uncle also had feelings of inadequacy when compared to his own twin who died in childhood. The family conceal and shut off the death of John's twin in a 'psychic tomb', leaving Lila haunted by the 'burial of an unspeakable fact' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.172). Lila's uncle is her parent object but also the instigator of the family history coming to light on his return, just as the phantom 'comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations' (Abraham & Tork, 1994, p.130). Throughout the novel Lila carries an itch, a hunch, a feeling, which doesn't defy logic, because her apprehensive state leaves her open to subliminal signals. The OED and Collins English Dictionary defines 'apprehensive' as deriving from the Latin '*apprehendere'* meaning to seize or grasp and relates to knowledge or understanding (p.52, p.67). It became clear I was writing uncertainty, or an anxiety where the object remains too unreachable to become fear or fright. In revisiting trauma, Lila is trying to understand in adulthood what she couldn't as a child, and she is interpreting both the terror of witnessing her own twins'

death, and the historic events she hasn't been privy to, meaning she struggles to be present in herself and remains haunted by historic revenants. She is neither wholly in the present or the past, leaving her psychically split. In order to tell the story effectively, I looked at both *nachträglichkeit* and transgenerational phantoms, to explore both childhood trauma and inherited trauma, both of which are uncanny reutrns whereby temporal linearity becomes corrupted.

2. Deferred-Action, Compartmentalisation and Structure

Fisher (2014, p.143) states that, 'You don't have to believe in the supernatural to recognise that the family is a haunted structure, an Overlook hotel full of presentiments and uncanny repetitions, something that speaks ahead of us, instead of us.' The novels in this thesis concern a haunting, and some contain degraded memories, which still exert a hold over the character's lives. It felt fitting to tell Lila's story in first-person and in a way that feels almost present. The occlusions in the narrative are not owed solely to a disorder of memory, but Lila seeing the chain of events through a glass darkly. She has unresolved endings. The reader will never know what happened between Finn and Noah, as Lila was not privy to that conversation. Lila will never know her family history in its entirety, or how much of an influence it was on the chain of events as they unfolded. She leaves the novel without being able to illuminate her troubled family history or her brother's problematic friendships.

After deciding that Noah would die, I looked into the Freudian (2004) theory of *nachtraglichkeit,* whereby repressed or difficult memories are assigned the traumatic significance rather than the original event. It is worth noting that the exact meaning of *nachtraglichkeit* has been interpretated in various ways and Freud did not dedicate a single work to the theory, but it features in his studies of infantile sexuality (2017), Studies in Hysteria (2004) and Wolf Man (1995). Following Lacan's translation of *nachtraglichkeit* into French, as 'apres-coup', it is sometimes referred to in English as 'deferred action' or 'afterwardness.' The repressed, traumatic memories are worked through during therapy and historic events are newly translated. In other words, the past is depicted from the understanding of the present, with patients shaping their own narrative.

In her introduction to the Penguin edition of Freud's (2004) *Studies of Hysteria,* Bowlby describes this therapy as 'past, present and future interfer[ing] with one another and reconnecting' (Bowlby, 2004, p. vii), and trauma is brought to its conclusion, or *status nascendi,* through a process she describes as a rebirth followed by sudden death. Bowlby gives the traumatic memories a supernatural tinge, which she defines as a sort of haunting whereby 'the image vanishes, like a rescued spirit being laid to rest' (Bowlby in Freud, 2004, p.282).

In writing a restatement of Lila's past, my first draft contained a psychologist who Lila tells her story to. The character was cut to streamline the narrative but there were other reasons it didn't work. My mother was a child psychologist and my schoolfriends found her profession both equal parts fascinating and terrifying. Most believed my mother was in possession of something akin to an ESP which enabled her to read their minds. I wondered whether so many of the gothic sensationalist novels of the Victorian era, such as Collins (2008), and their portrayals of asylums, has provided us with interminable suspicions of modern psychoanalysis and a deep-rooted fear of the potential removal of our own autonomy. I have drawn on Freud in the writing of this novel. Needless to say, his studies in creativity and aesthetic effects are more palatable than his psychoanalytic studies, and although I have drawn on deferred action and melancholia and mourning in the writing of this novel, these theories sit behind the narrative rather than being directly presented. My research became part of the character formation, but many pages were discarded because they leant too far towards concepts and the psychoanalytic. The primary benefit of having a psychologist as a character within the text was to offer an alternative view of Lila as more empathetic than she believes, but also to emphasise that the twins' inseparability is Lila romanticising their childhood. But I couldn't help writing her as being intimidated by her psychologist and fearful of any dialogue, which wasn't conducive to abreaction, and it only served to accentuate Lila's uncertainty.

Even without a psychologist, I still wanted to write the disorientation of revisiting a terrible event, with the fluidity of memory as a haunting. I was interested in writing deferred-effect as a modern day haunting rather than as a means of therapy for the character. Difficult or traumatic experiences revisited later had structural implications for how I would write the story, with time and voice potentially moving between past and present. Riley & Palmer (1978) state that depicting a historic traumatic event the structure is implicitly tied to the character; it is the character's past we revisit, their future we are uncertain about, all the while witnessing how it affects their present. I was conscious the question of *what happened?* would hang over the novel (Fisher, 2016, p.99). I looked at three novels containing traumatic childhood experiences, which all showed that while the

past impinges on the present, there are also questions for how the protagonists may fare in the future, so the narrative is affected by anticipation. The works were helpful not only in terms of guiding the structure of my own novel, but also in their characterisation, with all telling a child's experience through an adult voice and lens.

Banville's (2005) protagonist Max Morden sees his childhood friends, twins Chloe and Myles swept out to sea. Enright's (2007) protagonist Veronica Hegarty witnesses the sexual abuse of her recently deceased brother Liam in childhood. Hartley's (1997) protagonist, Leo Colston, experiences a disturbing event he is made to feel culpable for and this precipitates his complete mental breakdown. All of the novels explore how past events shape the narrator's lives, with their revisitation narrated from adulthood in the form of first-person, allowing the protagonists a retrospective position with which to view their own childhood. Caruth states that trauma exists 'solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event' (Caruth, 1995, p.4-5).

In my own novel I had a question of where the traumatic event should be placed structurally. Most of the authors imply or state at the outset that something terrible has happened in their history, which causes their narrators to be altered in some way.

Hartley's (1997) Leo Colston has never been married and is now in his sixties. On going through some old papers, he finds a box of his childhood possessions which contain a diary for the year 1900, the year he turned thirteen. Leo doesn't want to touch it and for reasons he cannot fathom he distrusts the diary. We learn that Leo prides himself on his memory, yet he has repressed memories of the year 1900, while having a strong emotional response to the diary. Despite claiming not to remember, he blames the events recorded within the diary for how things have turned out for him and we quickly leave Leo's present to enter his past, which is the main narrative during the summer of 1900, the year of the traumatic event. The prologue or opening chapter tells us very little and leaves us on a huge note of uncertainty, but we are left with no questions about the direction the narrative will head as Leo states: 'I *was* facing it, the scene, the people and the experience'

(Hartley, 1997, p.18). Banville's Max Morden declares at the beginning of his narrative with some foreboding, that he will never swim in the sea again and the past, present and future are brought together when he says, 'Someone has just walked over my grave. Someone' (Banville, 2005, p.4). Enright's protagonist Veronica Hegarty declares from the outset that, 'I would like to write down what happened in my grandmother's house the summer I was eight or nine, but I am not sure if it really did happen. I need to bear witness to an uncertain event. I feel it roaring inside me – this thing that may not have taken place. I don't even know what name to put on it' (Enright, 2007, p.1). She follows this by stating, 'I do not know the truth, or I do not know how to tell the truth. All I have are stories, night thoughts, the sudden convictions that uncertainty spawns' (Enright, 2007, p.2). She is outwardly confessional, she will tell her story and write it down, no matter how inaccurate. All the novels start with the present, a snapshot of where the narrators are now, with the past and present often colliding. Their childhood becomes the subject of their gaze, as though the events they now bear witness to are almost experienced by someone else. In an adult novel with a childhood narrator, the children are often the subject, as the reader knows what they don't yet have the maturity to understand, and this is not dissimilar.

Although only Hartley (1997) contains a definitive prologue, Banville (2005) and Enright (2007) have discrete first chapters where their current day is almost separate from the remainder of the novel. Prologues can produce a disorientating and uncanny effect. Felman writes about the use of a prologue as a framing device, in which she states, '[t]he actual story of the *Turn of the Screw* (that of the governess and the ghosts) is preceded by a prologue which is both posterior and exterior to it, which places it *as* a story, as a speech event, in the context of the "reality" in which the story comes to be told. With respect to the story's *content,* then, the prologue constitutes a sort of *frame*, whose function is to situate the *story's origin'* (Felman, 192, p.119-120). Henry James's protagonist does not have a place in the main story, but James adds an omniscient author to address the reader directly to include them in the story. As Felman states, '[t]he existence of the story is thus assured only through the constitution of a *narrative chain*, in which the narrators relay the story from one to the other. The story's origin is therefore not assigned to any one voice which would assume

responsibility for the tale, but to the deferred action of a sort of *echoing effect,* produced – "after the fact" – by voices which themselves re-produce previous voices' (Felman, 1982, p.121). Deferred action, when revisited in the form of therapy is a revisiting or retelling of a story and I liked the idea of Lila's story being split across distinct time periods which wouldn't necessarily cohere. I envisaged revisiting her past as difficult and clumsy, so much so that her past becomes a further echo, because she is the sole author of her narrative. As her traumatic incident happens at thirteen, there is a question of the accuracy of memory given the passage of time and whether they are the same voice, or person, at all. Certainly, the stories that unfold in Banville (2005) and Enright's (2007) work are not always the self-assured voices of an adult despite being relayed from the present. Felman (1982) describes the framing of the prologue as a form of its own self-repetition. It is in essence a repetition of a story, a *reproduction*, and complicated if its origin is forgotten.

Hartley (1997) had the biggest influence on my novel structurally. He splits his narrative into two distinct time periods, which Riley and Palmer (1978) distinguish as 'time-past' and 'time-present', with a prologue and epilogue forming time-present, with the time-past narrative handled in a linear fashion towards the traumatic incident. The juxtaposition of the discrete time periods results in a 'structural patterning, [where] past and present penetrate one another so that the boy's innocence and promise of life stand side-by-side with the man's death in life. For the older Leo there is no real present, or perhaps more precisely, the past is his only present' (Riley & Palmer, 1978, p.219-220).

In terms of voice, Hartley (1997) relays Leo Colston's past as though it is current, and the story predominantly occupies the summer he turns thirteen. We have to doubt his ability to remember because over fifty years have passed. As the past is relayed in such detail, it is Young Leo we are closest to and psychologically the details are 'putting the impressions and impulses of his […thirteenth] year into words which he would never have found at that time. If we fail to notice this, it may easily become comic and incredible that a child […] should be capable of such judgements and learned notions' (Freud, 1995, p.415). He is superimposing his present onto his past and reinterpreting it. As a reader this makes for an effective use of an unreliable narrator, not that we

have cause to question Leo's version of events, but we are placed directly into the immediate childhood experience he claims not to remember and in relaying his story in such minute detail signifies that Colston has never really left that year behind. This, along with his use of a prologue and epilogue felt like an appropriate framing for my novel.

In contrast, Banville and Enright narrative pasts continually interrupts their present. Fragmented memories enter their daily lives abruptly, and the principles of linear time and traditional narrations with beginning, middle and ends are put under stress, as old events interfere with their present as traumatic blips. Veronica declares that she is 'in the horrors' (Enright, 2007, p.133) and furthermore, 'Here it comes – the four o'clock wake up call. It creeps into me and I wake to the slow, slick, screaming heebie-jeebies' (Enright, 2007, p.133). The narrators constantly remind us we are reliving their old memories or perhaps their own fictions. Veronica recounting large parts of family history that she cannot have witnessed, events before she was born, containing details of 'Ada and Nugent in the Belvedere, endlessly, over and over again', as if she was there (Enright, 2007, p.38). Nugent is her grandmother's friend and the man who abused her brother. Given that the Hegarty family talk so little, it is fair to assume that the events Veronica relays are not necessarily stories passed down through the family, but entirely fictionalised events. Banville (2005) writes Morden in freefall, as though the character cannot maintain distance to the event but nor can he access it, so plagued is he by his impossible return. We are continually jolted into the present by inconsequential events and Max's musings, 'Plimsoll. Now, there is a word one does not hear any more, or rarely, very rarely. The Colonel is off to the lavatory again' (Banville, 2005, p.11). As a reader, on occasion, I found it impossible to know which time period I was sitting in, which is an intentional portrayal of the character's trauma. As Morden states, 'The truth is, it has all begun to run together, past and possible future and impossible present' (Banville, 2005, p.96). Banville often switches tenses mid-passage or mid-sentence, as his past corrupts his present, so consumed is Morden in the memory: 'They played a game, Chloe and Myles and Mrs Grace, the children lobbing a ball to each other over their mother's head and she running and leaping to catch it, mostly in vain. When she runs her skirt billows behind her and I cannot take my eyes off the tight black bulge at the

upside-down apex of her lap' (Banville, 2005, p.31-33). The adult voice grounds us firmly in the present and stops an immersion in the past, producing a less 'echoing' effect, because it is not an attempted reproduction of the voice used at the time.

While all the characters are plagued by a lack of understanding, it is a current event that instigates their return to the past. Leo Colston's discovery of his diary from that year is a spur to action to adequately understand the events which still confound him. This simple discovery is enough for him to become the omniscient narrator of the story of the summer he turns thirteen. Max Morden's memories of the death of his childhood friends is triggered by the more recent death of his wife from cancer. We do not gain any insight into how old Max is, only that he is retired. He feels guilt at the loss of his wife and vexed by his difficult relationship with his daughter. The recent suicide of Veronica Heggarty's brother leads her to believe it was a result of his earlier abuse. 'The seeds of my brother's death were sown many years ago.' (Enright, 2007, p.13)

The young protagonist's memories of their childhoods are unlikely to be accurate, especially when revisited years later, but the authors write the characters as having a strong emotional response to the memory and an 'impression' (Freud, 2003, p.8) of what happened. When Veronica revisits the traumatic event she does so through her eight-year-old lens, which is to say Enright uses metaphorical language to draw the reader into the *impression* that Veronica had at the time.

> 'What struck me was the strangeness of what I saw, when I opened the door. It was as if Mr Nugent's penis, which was sticking straight out of his flies, had grown strangely, and flowered at the tip to produce the large and unwieldy shape of a boy, that boy being my brother Liam, who, I finally saw, was not an extension of the man's member, set down mysteriously on the ground in front of him, but a shocked (of course he was shocked, I had opened the door) boy of nine, and the member not even that, but the boy's bare forearm, that made a bridge of flesh between himself and Mr Nugent' (Enright, 2007, p.143-144)

For Veronica, she is aware that she needs to 'deal in facts. It is time to put an end to the shifting stories and waking dreams. It is time to call an end to romance and just say what happened in Ada's house, the year that I was eight, and Liam was barely nine' (Enright, 2007, p.142) but in her very use of language and her visual impression of Liam and Nugent as one entity, we know she is unable to deal only with facts and '…even though I know it is *true* that this happened, I do not know if I have a

true picture in my mind's eye – the peculiar growth at the end of Mr Nugent's penis, the bridge of flesh between the man and boy' (Enright, p.144).

Similarly, Max Morden becomes removed from the scene, and writes the event with the rhythmic repetition of the twins being pulled *out, and out*. Max warns us he is at a distance: 'All that followed I see in miniature, in a sort of cameo, or one of those rounded views, looked on from above, at the off-centre of which the old painters would depict the moment of a drama in such tiny detail as hardly to be noticed amidst the blue and gold expanses of sea and sky' (Banville, 2005, p.243) Following an argument with their governess, of which Max can't hear, the twins sit on the shore, with Myles putting a comforting arm around Chloe and laying his head against hers, with 'their backs turned to the world' (Banville, 2005, p.244)

> 'Then they calmly stood up and waded into the sea, the water smooth as oil hardly breaking around them, and leaned forward in unison and swam out slowly, their two heads bobbing on the whitish swell, out, and out. We watched them, Rose and I, she clutching her gathered-up things against her, and I just standing. I do not know what I was thinking, I do not remember thinking anything' (Banville, 2005, p.244)

It is the immediate aftermath that Max Morden remembers more clearly, a 'large red-faced man with close-clipped grey hair' who comes to the rescue, who 'wore a yellow shirt and khaki trousers and two-tone shoes and was brandishing a golf club. […] the glove he wore on his right hand, the hand that held the gold stick; it was light brown, fingerless, and the back of it was punched with holes' (Banville, 2005, p.245). This inconsequential detail contrasts with the haziness of Ruth's gathered-up things and the word that Chloe muttered 'harshly under her breath' (Banville, 2005, p.242) or Chloe and Rose 'shrieking in each other's face' (Banville, 2005, p.243). He does not wish to, or cannot recount all the details of the memory of the event itself, yet carries the strongest emotional response, free of the superfluous details which follow.

Leo Colston's narrative of his traumatic incident is dealt with in a very short paragraph, when he and Mrs Maudsley find Marion and Ted 'together on the ground, the Virgin and the Water-Carrier, two bodies moving like one. I think I was more mystified than horrified; it was Mrs Maudsley's repeated screams that frightened me, and a shadow on the wall that opened and closed like an umbrella' (Hartley, 1997, p.244). The shadow suggests he looks immediately away. Ted's

death is summed up in a floating paragraph at the end of the chapter when Leo finds that 'Ted Burgess had gone home and shot himself.' (Hartley, 1997, p.244). For Leo the trauma lies in the unbearable anticipation of what is to come. Mrs Maudlsey assigns guilt, by declaring to all the guests that Leo knows exactly where Marian is and demands he take her there and when he tries to lead her elsewhere, she declares: '"No you shall come,"' (Hartley, 1997, p.244) and seizes his hand despite Leo's sobbing. Like Banville's (2005) narrator, he remembers more fully the events immediately beforehand and running through the rain, he focusses on his beloved new bicycle which morphs into something terrifying and animalistic. What had been a positive thing in his life is changed through the dread of anticipation.

> 'As we passed through the hall my eyes caught sight of the green bicycle, and in an instant it was photographed on my mind. It was propped against the newel-post of the staircase, and somehow reminded me of a little mountain sheep with curly horns, its head lowering in apology or defence. The handlebars, turned towards me, were dwarfed by the great height of the saddle which, pulled out to its fullest extent for Marian to ride, disclosed a shining tube of steel six inches long. The vision remained with me, imparting a distressing sense of something misshapen and misused, as I ran through the rain at Mrs Maudsley's side' (Hartley, 1997, p.243)

We are left to wonder how much Leo's adult self has imposed on his childhood memory or whether he understood more during his fateful summer than he thinks.

The level of detail recounted before or after the traumatic incidents is similar to the innocuous details that Freud suggests trauma victims claim to remember, in contrast to the memory of the trauma itself and was likely a conscious decision by the authors. It fits with Freud's writing on trauma whereby 'these experiences are either completely absent from the patient's memory […] or only present in highly summarised form' (Freud, 2004, p.12) The patient doesn't want to remember it or is unable to because it is 'inadmissible to consciousness' (Freud, 2004, p.226). The authors write the emotional response with the oneiric quality of a memory-trace as their protagonists do not have the answers as to whether what they saw was accurate.

While the authors offer some resolutions, rarely are all the protagonist's questions answered. However, towards the end the reader is left with an idea of what has made the protagonists so troubled. What is far less certain is how their narrators will fare in the future. It is unclear whether they will continue to be plagued by their painful childhood experiences although

we are left under no illusion with Leo Colston's neat epilogue: 'When I put down my pen I meant to put away my memories with it. They had had days, weeks, months to settle, but in the end they didn't […] I didn't recover my memory of what happened at Brandham […]I didn't remember it and I didn't want to. The doctor said it would be good to unburden myself, and my mother tried to make me, but I wouldn't have told her if I could' (Hartley, 1997, p.245) Finding his diary initiates Leo's decision to revisit Marion, who is more forthcoming with the adult Leo about the events. While Leo is offered some resolution from this, Hartley portrays Leo as a single, unmarried man, mired in the past, unable to leave behind the events of his thirteenth year, and the very fact he agrees to take a letter to Marion on his revisit suggests he is still willing to act as a go-between.

Max Morden does not hear the argument the twins have with Rose, which appears to precipitate Chloe and Myles's death. This leads Max to feel guilty about what he told Chloe about Rose and her mother. At the novel's close, Max does not elect to ask Rose, now Miss Vavasour, the questions he needs answers to: 'I would like to ask her if she blames herself for Chloe's death […] Chloe who went down first, with Myles following after, to try to save her – and if she is convinced their drowning together like that was entirely an accident, or something else' (Banville, 2005, p.261) We can only speculate why Max doesn't ask, as he believes Miss Vavasour would give him the answers. Banville gives Max a dream-like ending without optimism. Throughout the novel, his wife Anna's death and the twins' fate sit in uneasy juxtaposition. In encountering a second trauma, the first is made all the sharper and at times conflated. After losing Anna, he is compelled to return to Cedars after he dreams he is walking on a country road and '[t]here was something the matter with my foot, the left one, I must have injured it, but long ago, for it was not painful, though at every step I had to throw it out awkwardly in a sort of half-circle, and this hindered me […]The journey did not end, I arrived nowhere, and nothing happened' (Banville, 2005, p.25) It suggests he will not escape his past, and will return again and again, in circles to Chloe's death. However, Max's conclusion tonally lifts, with a memory of childhood swimming when an unseen presence in the sea deposits him safely back onto the shore. Although he claims he will never swim again, at the end he is metaphorically wading into the sea: 'Anna died before dawn. To tell the truth, I was not there when

it happened. I had walked out on to the steps of the nursing home to breathe deep the black and lustrous air of morning. And in that moment, so calm and drear, I recalled another moment, long ago, in the sea that summer at Ballyless. I had gone swimming alone […] A nurse came out to fetch me, and I turned and followed her inside, and it was as if I were walking into the sea' (Banville, 2005, p.263-4) We get a sense that for Max, his *status nascendi,* is not followed by sudden death and will not disappear 'like a rescued spirit being laid to rest' (Bowlby in Freud, 2004, p.282) but he will ponder the passing of Chloe and Anna again. In contrast to Leo, Max does not talk to anyone, missing an opportunity with Miss Vavasour. This somewhat bleak outcome was something I drew on in my own work. Lila feels bound by and unable to talk about what happened to her brother.

At the end of Enright's (2007) novel, Veronica's conclusion is only beginning. She states: 'I know what I have to do – even though it is too late for the truth, I will tell the truth. I will get hold of Ernst and tell him what happened to Liam in Broadstone' (Enright, 2007, p.259) She is conquering her fear of flying, '…you are so high, in those things, and there is such a long way to fall. Then again, I have been falling for months. I have been falling into my own life, for months. And I am about to hit it now' (Enright, 2007, p.261)

Both Max and Veronica are still working through their stories and establishing what happened, with Enright ending her story on a more uplifting note. Either way the reader witnesses the text as a modern-day haunting exactly because, 'the story's origin is lost, […] buried in an unrecoverable, distant past: it is also because that origin cannot be situated at a *fixed point*, but only as a movement, […]and therefore infinitely – self-reproducing, self-reflecting self-reflections' (Felman, 1982, p.129-132.) It's what isn't disclosed, or understood, that dictates their present and future.

All three novels have very different protagonists to mine. Although most of the narrators are portrayed as having a degree of guilt or shame, it isn't as a result of their direct actions. I decided to do something different with Lila. I wrote the novel without certainty as to who was liable for Noah's death. I knew Noah would die, but not how. Knowing what I'm writing from the outset is not something I've ever managed. The writing becomes uninspired and stiff, and I struggle to write.

Towards completion of a first draft, I know or have enough of an interpretation in order to rewrite. I liked the idea of Lila as the manipulator, the real problem in the twin's relationship, even though the parental spotlight is on the misbehaving Noah. I did not rule out that Lila could be wholly culpable for her twins' demise and my narrator's duplicity did not lend itself to a straightforward 'trauma' narrative, albeit young Leo feels implicated merely because he acts as a go-between. Lila is duplicitous, not only in what she can or cannot remember, but also in terms of what she chooses to present. I led the reader into different avenues of indeterminacy, such as Lila's self-perception and her need for control and I wanted a shift from a general awareness that not all is well in the twin's relationship towards something more fractured, and further exacerbated by appearance of a long-lost uncle. I wrote Lila hesitant to reveal the chain of events, because of a combination of guilt and her jaded self-perception. I was aware the latter could cause the reader to call Lila's whole dialogue into doubt. On rereading the first draft I hadn't realised how much of an undertow of Lila's guilt runs through the novel.

I knew it wasn't an impossibility that Lila could be traumatised even if I wrote her responsible for her twin's death. Even with my lack of knowledge of psychoanalysis, it appeared there was something dissociative about the state of *nachtraglichkeit,* or any repression of problematic memories. Bowlby's metaphor of a spirit laid to rest reminded me of *Julius Caeser*, Act 2 Scene 1:

> 'Between the acting of a dreadful thing […]
> like a phantasma or a hideous dream' (Shakespeare, 2024).

Studies of violent offenders shows that perpetrators can enter a dream-like or 'dissociated' state during their offences and this state of *compartmentalisation* makes it difficult to recall events immediately afterwards and 'it becomes easier to think, "It wasn't me," or "It didn't happen"' (Adshead, 2021, p.45). This 'internal split screen' acts as a defence mechanism, which is sometimes known as 'doubling' (Adshead, 2021, p.39) In other words, 'The good-self acts as a double for the cruel alternative self, which is usually hidden, as in the ancient idea of the good person and their evil doppelganger. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a classic literary example of this'

(Adshead, 2021, p.39). Freud calls this intentional repression or inhibition of conscious thought, a '*condition seconde',* or a second consciousness (Freud, 2004, p.230). Adshead concludes that this kind of denial and repression is a familiar human impulse, arising from our keenness to present ourselves as good people. From a clinical standpoint, no practicing psychologist would compare *nachtraglichkeit* to compartmentalisation. The latter hides or makes invisible terrible behaviour. From an authorial perspective, and in layman's terms, I thought of the splitting of the self, not as a desperate attempt to return to inaccessible childhood events, but as a 'time-present' experience of two parallel lives never cohering. In contrast, I thought of *nachtraglichkeit* as 'time-past' continually entering the present, with an unease which affects the future, as though chronological time doesn't exist. I only mention compartmentalisation here, because Adshead's analysis refutes the preconceived ideas surrounding violent offenders; they are not always without guilt and remorse. On writing Lila, even if I wasn't sure how culpable I would make her, she could still be presented as repressing memories and having associated feelings of guilt and remorse. I planned to relay Lila's time-past as though she has broken away from time-present, and whether she was guilty or not, wouldn't make access to those events any easier.

Lila is the one who narrates and we are reading her version of events. She becomes the subject of her own gaze and almost a character in the story she has written. I wrote Lila wrong-footed by everything that she doesn't know, not only in terms of family history but also her immaturity when considering the adult lives around her and a misunderstanding of what happened. All of the novels mentioned here contain protagonists that become both spectator and critic of these extracts from their history, which can be disordered, chaotic and messy, and the reader participates in their childhood return. I wanted Lila's return to be a sort of double consciousness, whereby the reader is fully transported to another place and time, whether imagined or past, in an immersive way and the detailed and potentially inaccurate past serving the purpose to show her past, present and future coming together, all couched in anticipation of Lila's involvement.

3. The Inherited Double: Phantasmic Landscapes and Psychic Crypts

The fiction works I discuss in this thesis all feature the death of relatives, or friends, or in the case of Hartley's (1997) Leo Colston, an acquaintance who left a strong impression on him when he was a child. The death of a loved one gives the novels an atmosphere of haunting, of grief yet to be resolved, often with a more recent traumatic event igniting the original trauma. Some of the novels turn to liminal suggestion as a way of demonstrating the unresolved grief or the inner turmoil of their characters. Even Hartley's (1997) realist novel strays into the supernatural when he presents Leo's reflections of his childhood self as having some sort of psychic ability and the opening pages are suffused with a question of whether his story may have a spectral tinge. Enright's (2007) Veronica Heggarty is mourning the recent loss of her brother and Banville's (2005) Max Morden the loss of this wife, both of whom are experiencing a melancholia of grieving for a childhood event they have not been able to fully understand.

Freud (1995) explains that mourning happens when there is a specific love object to attach the grief to, whereas melancholia happens when the grief cannot be ascribed to a specific object or easily understood and therefore, unlike mourning, sits within the unconscious. The protagonists lack of understanding of these childhood events affects their adulthood and both Enright and Banville create environments which are melancholic and liminal. While they lack any supernatural suggestion, the protagonist's residual childhood confusion acts as spectre, which never wholly returns but remains within the character's view. Enright (2007) makes use of spectral imagery, employing skeletons and her protagonist, Veronica states that hers is a 'crime of the flesh, but the flesh is long fallen away and I am not sure what hurt may linger in the bones' (Enright, 2007, p.1). She describes Veronica's brother, Liam, as loving the bones of dead animals, and opens with the narrator collecting cuttlefish on a beach, surmising that these bones are 'clean,' presumably free of the sins of the flesh, and her opening pages are drawn under a 'slow, turbulent sky' (Enright, 2007, p.1). Banville's opening also takes place on a beach where the 'rusted hulk [of a] freighter' has run aground and the sea itself, 'bulging like a blister, lead-blue and malignantly agleam' (2005, p.3).

Banville borders on slightly uncanny or surreal with 'the waters in the bay had swelled and swelled, rising to unheard-of-heights' (Banville, 2005, p.3).

Both protagonists have experienced recent losses and the authors open their novels in liminal spaces, not just to evoke the unsettled and apprehensive state of their protagonists, but potentially to present their protagonists as being in a transitional point, whereby they are about to cross their thresholds and address the changes needed, to lift them from their melancholic limbo into a state of mourning.

At the end of Enright's novel, Veronica is literally lifted from land into air, to take a return flight home and her parting words to the reader take place in the midst of Gatwick airport, an environment which she gleans is filled with so many destinations and possibilities. While Banville's novel ends with the sea, which is a constant motif throughout the novel, his ending tonally contrasts to his opening pages, when the protagonist remembers the sea in childhood when it was unthreatening, 'perfectly transparent' but nonetheless an unseen force below causes a swell that 'seemed to come up from the deeps, as if something vast down there had stirred itself,' depositing him back onto the shore and setting him on his feet 'as if nothing had happened' (Banville, 2005, p.264). On conclusion Banville (2005) draws the unknown as a positive, optimistic force. Neither novel feature a clear narrative closure, with a definitive message that their protagonists have completed their failed mourning, but both works lift emotionally.

Initially my novel opened with the twins finding a chick's skull in a riverbed, a decision made prior to reading Enright (2007) or Banville (2005). I wanted to suggest an ambiguity around Lila's guilt or culpability of Noah's death and one of the primary causes of a chick leaving the nest is sibicide, due to competition for food. I also wanted a transitional place with the proximity of water, and to open the novel outside, but later moved this to a domestic setting. Sleeplessness and the dark feature through the novel and the dark occupies an equally liminal place, where we are not quite sleeping and not quite awake. In Lila's sleepless early hours, I wanted the fragmentated and hallucinatory aspect of a dream. This possibly didn't need to be compounded by a representation of a dream within a dream and the narrator not realising she is asleep, but I wanted to bring into

question her version of events and to let the reader know they would read a story within a story. Furthermore, I hoped the matryoshka doll would be suggestive of inherited and uncanny repetitions. I wanted to portray those absent in a spectral way, with Noah in a place beyond hearing range but still speaking to the protagonist, and her dream positions her uncle far closer than he ever came in real life, an indicator of their alignment within the family. The framing of the narrative, which is a different time period, also lent itself to a structure within.

As the authors are writing representations of grief, whether unresolved or not, the imagery and landscape of the novels occasionally errs towards the eerie, with occasional presentations of the imagined deceased. When Veronica travels to the airport car park in the rain, she states 'I can feel Liam laughing at me. Or I feel his absence laughing at me. Because, somewhere, over there to the side – the place you can't quite see – he is completely there, and not there at all' (Enright, 2007, p.29). Later Veronica articulates this as, 'I am in the horrors' and she describes these as, 'Here it comes – the four o'clock wake-up call. It creeps into me and I wake to the slow, sick, screaming heebie-jeebies. What are they?' (Enright, 2007, p.133). Unlike Johan Borg, Veronica's horrors are less easily glimpsed. In Banville's novel, while Max isn't portrayed as haunted, he still occupies a liminal threshold, declaring his return to Cedars was prompted by a dream, and in the dream there was something wrong with his left foot, which meant his journey was not only uncomfortable but literally circular, signifying his return to the events of the past. Morden knows there is 'no promise of homecoming. That was all there was in the dream. The journey did not end, I arrived nowhere, and nothing happened' (Banville, 2005, p.25).

After Noah's death, I have Lila see fragmentary images of him within her dream and the mirror in the epilogue. While Enright (2007) and Banville (2005) do not write overtly ghostly images of the recently deceased, their protagonist's loss alludes to apparitions or glimpses of what once existed, becoming out of reach and at risk of being forgotten, and the authors demonstrate their grief by imbuing their texts with a melancholic undertone, which is both uneasy and apprehensive. I will talk more about Banville and Enright's depiction of character in Chapter Four and how deferred action or *nachträglichkeit*, involves revisiting the original traumatic event. A

revisiting is filtered through fractured memories and constitutes a restatement or rewriting of what has been repressed, so already we are in a dream-like and oneiric place, where our protagonists are wandering, holding onto disordered memories they believe to be true, which lends itself to the spectral and uncanny. The character has the challenge of the unknown, which makes for slippery and uncertain environments. Freud states that the uncanny is about the helplessness of dream-states, and concerns 'something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light' (2003, p.148). For Royle, the uncanny also 'disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and outside. The uncanny has to do with the strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality' (2003, p.2). While Enright (2007) and Banville (2005) draw on sometimes supernatural metaphor and setting, their novels have no place within modern definitions of the uncanny.

My novel also broaches themes of intersubjectivity, empathy and generational inheritance, as the protagonist, whose empathy is low, struggles to understand her father's awkwardness around her uncle and she is forced to reimagine a family history she is absent from. I found Abraham & Torok's writings on mourning and melancholia particularly inspiring, especially the concept of 'the "phantom" [as] a formation in the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject's own repression but because on account of a *direct empathy with the unconscious or the rejected psychic matter of a parental object*' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.181). The idea of the transgenerational phantom extends from the idea of the formation of a psychic 'crypt' buried within the child which holds unspeakable histories or shameful secrets which haven't been addressed. The image of a crypt as existing within a person is haunting in itself, given it's a place where ordinarily the dead are left to rest, but this crypt also subverts the order of time, albeit its effect lessens over subsequent generations. A crypt within another, is nested, contained and fundamentally inescapable if it remains unspeakable, and Abraham & Torok describe it using spectral metaphor, semantically akin to Derrida's (1994) hauntology, which also portrays the past as revenant.

As well as the concept of deferred action or *nachträglichkeit,* I also started to look at novels which contained nested stories, or inherited family trauma or shameful secrets. Roy (1998), Garner

(2017) and Barker's (1998) novels are all stories of hidden family histories, often associated with shame. Like Hartley, Enright and Banville, these novels also contain deaths of family members.

In Garner's (2017) novel two generations are involved in an old myth, a retelling of the *Mabinogion*, which seemingly controls their actions and behaviour, like the phantom who 'comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts' (Abraham & Torok, 1995, p.130). Whether Garner's (2017) first generation believe the myth affects subsequent generations is left relatively ambiguous and it takes Alison's inheritance of her father's house in a remote Welsh Valley and her fraught interactions with the housekeeper to trigger any suggestion that the housekeeper fears a reenactment is beginning. Alison has lost both her Uncle Bertram and her father, albeit these deaths are mentioned almost in passing. There is little evidence of identification with a parental object, but Alison, Roger and Gwynn all inhabit their predecessor's actions. Alison's liminality is not owed to grief or melancholia, but the land itself, with overt references to supernatural forces.

In Barker's (1998) novel, Geordie is a war veteran, entering his final days in a hospice, where he remembers his brother being shot in the trenches and Geordie becomes convinced he was responsible for accidentally shooting him. Geordie's final days are spent remembering his time with his brother in the trenches and his nightmarish memories affect Nick, his grandson and Miranda, his great-granddaughter. Geordie doesn't share his suspicions with Nick, because Nick is struggling to hold together his blended family, especially when he fears their new family home is host to the ghost of a Victorian girl accused of killing her brother. The grandfather's trauma affects Nick, as does the bloody history of the house, which coincides with Nick's stepson becoming aggressive towards his baby brother and arguably this is the identification with the parental object. Coupled with this, his daughter, Miranda, has recently witnessed her mother being sectioned and feels she cannot talk to her father or his new family about this, which leads to her bouts of nocturnal and liminal wanderings.

With Roy's (1998) novel, it is difficult to place where the inherited shame resides. Baby Kochamma is the indirect source of the twins' trauma, because she engineers for Velutha, an

untouchable, to take the blame for Sophie-Mol's death, to save her own reputation and the family name. She is still alive and well in the house in Ayemenem, inheriting everything by 'outliving everybody else' (Roy, 1998, p.28). The twins witness Velutha's murder, which eventually leads to their geographic dispersion, after they attempt an escape from home with their English cousin, Sophie Mol, who drowns during their escape. It leads to the twins' separation and four years later, their mother, Ammu dies, meaning they are never reunited and they remain unaware of their mother's affair with Velutha, which indirectly led to his death. Most of the characters have led frustrated and secretive lives with varying degrees of bitterness: Mammachi was beaten by her husband; Pappachi, an Imperial Entomologist, fails to have his moth named after him; Chako is divorced; Ammu is also divorced and starts a relationship with Velutha and Baby Kochamma remains single following her unrequited love for Father Mulligan. Rahel's return to Ayemenem is triggered by Estha, her twin brother's return. She leaves her life in America to reunite with him following a separation of twenty-four years, since seven-years of age. Estha has become a ghost, not speaking or seeming to recognise anyone and Baby Kochamma is 'delighted that Estha had not spoken to Rahel, that he had looked at her and walked straight past. Into the rain. As he did with everyone else' (Roy, 1998, p.20). This glee is met with silence that sits 'between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious' (Roy, 1998, p.21). Rahel's liminality is found in the grief of her stolen childhood, spent away from Ammu and Estha, and Ammu's words that she might 'love her less' have never been forgotten (Roy, 1998, p.112). Where Rahel does identify with her parent, is in her decision of breaking the 'love laws' about 'who should be loved. And how. And how much' (Roy, 1998, p.328).

The novels vary in their realism, but much like Enright (2007) and Banville (2005), the authors rely on eerie imagery. Roy's (1998) novel is the most realistic and doesn't draw on any overt supernatural suggestion, albeit the voice frequently slips into close third-person point-of-view of a younger Rahel, who is playful and imaginative. Rahel's rich interior landscape and her depiction of events deploys elements of fantasy and imagination and the containment of her trauma leads to a state where a 'whole world of unconscious fantasy is created' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.130).

Barker's (1998) novel sits in the middle with some supernatural imagery used to depict the family's increasing stress. Garner's novel has overt supernatural portrayals of the environment, where the Welsh Valley is instrumental in reigniting the triangular relationship of successive generations.

For Fisher, the feeling of eerie is tied to 'certain kinds of physical spaces and landscapes' (Fisher, 2016, p.61). Similar to Todorov's (1975) fantastic, he defines the eerie as pertaining to the unknown and 'when knowledge is achieved, the eerie disappears' (Fisher, 2016, p.62). Further to this, the eerie relies on the '*failure of presence* [and] pertains to ruins or to other abandoned structures' (Fisher, 2016, p.62). The exterior landscape of all three novels, contains abandoned structures, primarily industrial, and tracts of water.

Barker (1998) creates a boarded-up armaments factory on the river, next to streets running in 'parallel lines […] like a row of piglets suckling a dead sow' (1998, p.11). When Miranda sees their new house which has been empty for some time, Barker addresses the house's appearance as a 'big, ugly, late Victorian, the turrets at either side surmounted by faintly ludicrous towers' (Barker, 1998, p.12) as having Miranda state the house is like 'Wuthering Heights' (Barker, 1998, p.13). Similarly, I had the character address the frozen and atemporal nature of Locke House by having the narrator compare her grandmother to Miss Havisham.

In Garner's (2017) novel, Alison's secretive nocturnal excursions, to construct her owls, lead her to 'an old hen hut on wheels', with chicken wire nailed over the windows, which sits 'rotting in the marsh' (Garner, 2017, p.83). The coop provides a place of perfect isolation for Alison, within an already isolated environment, which is so claustrophobic the local superstitions even get the better of level-headed Roger, who asks Gwynn if their house is haunted.

Roy (1998) creates the 'History House' (p.53) which is a place that resides on the other side of the river to the family home. The History House has 'lain empty for years' because the house is secluded within 'the middle of an abandoned rubber estate' (Roy, 1998, p.52-53). This is the place the twins hide when they run away. Chacko tells the twins that history is 'like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside' (Roy, 1998, p.52). Chacko explains to the twins that 'we can't go in […] because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the

windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering' (Roy, 1998,p.53).

All the novels are set in insular places, possibly to emphasise the claustrophobic circumstances the dysfunctional families find themselves in and to direct the reader's attention inwards towards present tensions, which will inevitably lead to unearthing the unspeakable past histories. It is not only their homes and houses that are sources of failed mourning, but also the villages, towns and valleys they occupy, which are physically restrictive leaving the reader with the unsettling notion that there is no means of escape. I wrote a small village whereby the Clearwater history is not easily escaped.

Roy's (1998) novel is set in Ayemenem, a place where 'boundaries blur' (Roy, 1998, p.1) during the monsoon, when roads flood, and in its aftermath, tenacious foliage crawls over flooded roads and climbs electric poles. On Rahel's return, the now dilapidated and decaying house appears empty, but as it turns out, Baby Kochamma, the source of their childhood troubles, is 'still alive' (Roy, 1998, p.2). Barker's (1998) fictional Summerfield is an ex-industrial site which once held many jobs, but now has a 'boarded-up armaments factory' and the deprivation and squalor means Nick, the protagonist drives through 'Floorboards in the middle of the road, broken glass, burnt-out cars, charred houses with huge holes in the wall as if they've been hit by artillery shells. Beirut on Tyne, the locals call it' (Barker, 1998, p.11). While the description in Garner's (2017) novel is sparse, we still get a sense of rurality and isolation of place, because Roger is alone when swimming in the river, with the only other passerby a resident of the house. In contrast to Roy (1998) and Barker (1998), who portray their environment as cut-off by the elements or debris, Garner's (2017) novel finds a firm footing in Todorov's (1975) marvellous and the spectral and invisible forces which prevent anyone involved in the *Mabinogion* circle from leaving the valley, manifests in the elements, where severe and sudden changes in the weather cause telephone poles to block roads and fierce winds make the mountains impassable. Gwynn's attempted escape is as circular as Banville's (2005) Max Morden's dream.

While all three novels contain aspects of transgenerational haunting or trauma, there are also plenty of current challenges within the families. All three novels contain 'blended' families, a departure from traditional families who grow up together and know one another intimately. All extended family members are brought together by divorce. The newly formed families are not necessarily close and are in a state of flux prior to the instigating events. Their discomfort and isolation is heightened by their already fractured nature, which serves as a source of dread from within, as well as outside. Whether intentional from the authors or not, the departure from typical depictions of a traditional family, also suggests that the unresolved, or what hasn't been addressed, will become more problematic under pressure, as family members are already in fraught domestic environments with sometimes misbehaving children. As a reader we suspect their emotional dysfunction will build to a point where the home becomes fragile, and possibly even unsafe.

The novels also portray women as the main care givers, who are often undergoing a level of inner turmoil, with either absent or removed fathers operating on the periphery. While the women are not necessarily the source of the psychic crypt, it is worth noting because it is the women who are initially presented as mostly open to liminal suggestion, and are presented as resentful of their increasingly difficult circumstances, isolated and unable to talk, with a feeling of being trapped. The presentations of the liminal are often aligned with the women's distraught interior states and the children through perception of those maternal states.

Roy's (1998) Ammu returns to her home in Ayemenem because her husband, the twins' father, turns out to be an abusive alcoholic and when she starts an affair with Velutha, an untouchable, the matriarchs of the family, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, lock her in her room to prevent her seeing Velutha, leading her to refer to the twins as 'millstones' around her neck and she shouts at the twins through her bedroom door, 'Why can't you just go away and leave me alone?' (Roy, 1998, p.253). This leads to the twins running away with Sophie Mol who accidentally drowns, which is the first chronological tragedy of the novel, and we witness most of the story through Rahel's childlike imagining of her world.

While Garner's (2017) novel has primarily a male cast of characters, the novel's myth centres around a young woman, Alison, who becomes the object of their gaze. Alison's mother is strangely absent and has no dialogue in the book, and is only referred to when objecting to her friendship with Gwynn. Instead, the housekeeper Nancy, who is the single mother of Gwynn, is undergoing a reliving of her own trauma. Nancy had an affair with Alison's Uncle Bertram, who was the owner of the house. The absence of Gwynn's father, or his identity, is never revealed, and although Halfbacon believes he is Gwynn's father, it is not implausible it could have been Bertram. Nancy tries desperately to dissolve the triangle and stop the supernatural recurrence, and her behaviour is presented as controlling, unreasonable, even extreme, while Halfbacon colludes to let the repetition play out. At the end of the novel, it is Nancy, who finds herself in a room filling with feathers which causes her to attack Roger in a state of frenzied fear.

Although Barker (1998) focusses on the male inheritance of trauma, explicitly stating, 'Geordie was attempting to graft his memories on to Nick […] in spite of Nick's resistance, he's come close to succeeding' (Barker, 1998, p.74), Geordie's illness means that Nick is tied up at the nursing home visiting his grandfather in his final days, while Fran, Nick's wife, is at home in the Fanshawe house breastfeeding and struggling with the additional childcare owed to the sudden amalgamation of their blended family. Miranda, the stepdaughter is uprooted, while simultaneously mourning her mother who has been sectioned, as well as worrying about her grandfather's final days and all the while she is sleeping in the bedroom where the Fanshawe daughter was accused of murdering her sibling. It is Miranda who is awake at night, feeling the terror of the house's history, and her nightly excursions are not quite lucid.

I had a backstory for my fictional mother as someone who is struggling with her own mental health and carries the weight of the dislike of the Clearwaters in their small village. Their father's employment comprises of shifts and erratic hours, leaving much of the twins' development issues to their mother. She is unable to cope with her children's more unique aspects and worries about the opinions of others. My novel is also filled with families with absent parents, with the mothers often bearing the responsibility. Reena takes care of Walt and Zoe, with their father entirely absent

from the page, but they exist as a contrast to the Clearwaters, with a much healthier and balanced openness in their family dynamic. Finn's mother has left, something his father never recovers from, and his father often works away, leaving Finn to stay with the Clearwaters, where he isn't treated as a stepbrother, but a guest and I wanted this detachment and parental absence to manifest as a single-minded need to succeed. I don't have my narrator witness the conversation Kieran has with Noah and Zoe about his estrangement from his own son, she catches only the end of it but his son's absence leads him to forge a familial alliance with Bryn and the twins' grandmother.

Within the novels the family's insularity is not just owed to place, but also to class. All the authors draw attention to it and there is a suggestion that perhaps class, especially when its decline or ascendancy is noted, is something the characters find shameful and isolating.

Barker's (1998) family home sits in sharp contrast to the council estate called Summerfield. Their house sits on a hill, with 'houses on either side increasing in prosperity with every mile that separates them from the estate' (Barker, 1998, p.11-12). Their own home is built for armaments manufacturers and merchants, but the geographic divide is not wide and Nick's stepson, Gareth, runs into trouble when encountering a group of girls from the Summerfield estate, who retaliate to Gareth's bullying with swift and clannish retribution. This happens during the early hours, with no witnesses and Summerfield is described as, 'The streets are deserted. Too early for the kids: they come out later, streaming across the waste land, past the burnt-out cars, past the charred houses, to the recce or the chippie or the wall outside the pub. There's glass on the road, shiny like a river' (Barker, 1998, p.171-172). Class is less marked in Barker's (1998) novel, but Geordie, who is a couple of generations away from his middle-class teacher grandson Nick, speaks with a strong Newcastle dialect. Nick is continually conscious of how different he sounds to people living in the Summerfield estate.

On Roy's (1998) Rahel's return, we get a sense of her family becoming gradually poorer. The house walls are now 'streaked with moss, had grown soft, and bulged a little with dampness that seeped up from the ground' and the garden is 'wild, overgrown' (Roy, 1998, p.1). Estha walks, 'past the new, freshly baked, iced, Gulf-money houses built by nurses, masons, wire-benders and bank

clerks […] past the resentful older houses tinged green with envy, cowering in their private driveways among their private rubber trees' (Roy, 1998, p.13) Every day Estha sees the school his grandfather built for untouchable children, now closed. Although the caste system has been abolished, when the novel takes place, it is still very much in force behaviourally and is responsible for Velutha's treatment at the end of the novel. In Rahel's childhood, the family is considered upper-class because of their education and business: Chacko was a Rhodes scholar, Papacchi was employed as an Imperial Entomologist and Mammachi created and owned the once successful business *Paradise Pickles and Preserves*. As they drive in their Plymouth car to the cinema, through crowds of communist factory workers, we get a sense of their relative prosperity in Ayemenem through their fear of retribution or violence at the hands of the communist workers. Their own attitudes and idea of where they are in the social hierarchy play a large part of their insularity and we get a sense that this will change. Roy continually draws attention to the contrasting class voices, particularly with the communist workers adopting a stilted English, with one suggesting to Baby Kochamma she should 'Ask your daddy to buy you an air condition' (Roy, 1998, p.79-80). The family appear to be proud of their English ties and are keen the twins speak mostly English.

In Garner's (2017) novel the house in which the story is set belongs to Alison, a young woman whose family is not from Wales, who declares she won't 'take orders from her own cook' (Garner, 2017, p.24). Gwynn's mother, Nancy, doesn't allow him to speak Welsh and a large part of this is tied to her own experiences and hardship. She tells Gwynn, 'You know I won't have you speaking Welsh. I've not struggled all these years in Aber to have you talk like a labourer. I could have stayed in the valley if I'd wanted that' (Garner, 1997, p.15). Gwynn's own insecurity about his station relative to Roger and Alison leads him to take elocution lessons and his insecurity isn't misguided; Roger refers to Gwynn as 'not one of us, and he never will be. He's a yob. An intelligent yob. That's all there is to it' (Garner, 2017, p.153). Garner gives both Roger and Alison grammatically correct pronunciation in the novel, to emphasise their Englishness, and this contrasts to Gwynn's voice in which Garner structures the character's phrasing to emphasise his localness. We can hear this in the opening pages, when Gwynn says: 'You want a basin? You going to throw up, are you?'

(Garner, 2017, p.1). His speech pattern omits the question at the beginning of his sentences, giving him a quintessentially Welsh style of speech with the stress on the end of sentences. Neither Roger, Alison, or their parents speak Welsh and nor do they mix with anyone in the village.

I have already discussed the implications of class and societal disharmony in my own novel, given it is set during the 1980s, and it seemed impossible to write the 1980s as a period which didn't foster division. The family's declining relative position in the novel is something the middle-class Mr Somers is aware of. There is a sense of the families in these novels as not having a wider community to belong to and often mistrustful of their environments.

Further to class representations, all three novels deal with multigenerational trauma, grief and recent bereavements. Like Banville (2005) and Enright's (2007) narrators, some of their protagonists are susceptible to viewing the world in a liminal way and the haunting images of abandoned and decaying structures emphasise the passage of time, which sits in contrast to the protagonists being anchored by their history, or that of their parent's. The landscape is often characterised with dreamlike imagery of dilapidation, isolation and sometimes sprawling decay and decline, with an emphasis on what is no longer there. Often this decline is tied intrinsically to the character's journey, so for Rahel, she notices her family home in Ayemenem, has 'laid siege' to 'filth' which 'clotted every crevice and clung to the windowpanes. Midges whizzed in teapots. Dead insects lay in empty vases' (Roy, 1998, p.88). As a place it is far less imposing than in her youth and she has returned with a purpose in mind, her adult self now able to reflect on the cruelties committed by her family, which contrasts with Baby Kochamma's growing nonchalance to her circumstances.

In Roy's (1998) novel Ayemenem, Paradise Pickles and Preserves, or the family home suffuse virtually every opening chapter of Roy's novel, which always begin with place, whether past or present, to instil a journey through time. Roy also focusses on objects and artefacts left by the previous occupants. In Pappachi's study, an entomologist of social standing in Ayemenem, his study still houses the mounted butterflies and moths which have 'disintegrated into small heaps of iridescent dust that powdered the bottom of their display cases, leaving the pins that impaled them naked. Cruel. The room was rank with fungus and disuse' (Roy, 1998, p.155). But the adult Rahel is

only in his study to access her childhood hiding place, behind books now riddled with silverfish, to unearth Baby Kochamma's rosary beads which she stole, but she finds some exercise books her mother hid there, unknown to Rahel. This prompts Rahel to remember the last time her mother came to see her, loaded with presents, after time spent away working. Her mother, 'with the last of her meagre salary […] bought her daughter small presents […] they were presents for a seven-year-old; Rahel was nearly eleven. It was as though Ammu believed that if she refused to acknowledge the passage of time, if she willed it to stand still in the lives of her twins it would. As though sheer willpower was enough to suspend her children's childhoods until she could afford to have them living with her' (Roy, 1998, p.159). These found exercise books belonging to the twins emphasises the liminality of Rahel's return, her motivation for being there, which is her stolen childhood, spent apart from Estha and Ammu. She is never wholly in the present, as Roy's novel continually leaps into the past and Roy indicates from the beginning that the younger Rahel won't move forward; her childhood wristwatch has the hands painted on. The younger Rahel longs for a watch where she can change time 'whenever she want[s] to' (Roy, 1998, p.37). Of course in adulthood she can obtain one, but it does not prevent her being drawn back to her traumatic past.

Rahel is alone in this empty study, when Estha appears unexpectedly, only to disappear again when Rahel tries to speak to him, leaving an 'Estha-shaped hole in the Universe' (Roy, 1998, p.156). This signifies how she has spent her life since they parted. Roy's novel contains many other fantastical reimagining of the dead or what is no longer there, whether it is the dead Sophie-Mol 'turning cartwheels' in her coffin (Roy, 1998, p.6), Estha's 'silent octopus' which squirts ink on his past (Roy, 1998, p. 12), or Pappachi's moth, the first of the family's many disappointments, which 'haunted every house he ever lived in. It tormented him and his children and his children's children' (Roy, 1998, p.49). Pappachi's moth firmly places itself around Rahel's heart when Ammu informs her that her cruel words mean people will 'love her less' (Roy, 1998, p.112).

Barker's (1998) Miranda spends her first night in her new house remembering 'her last sight of Mum, standing at the end of a long corridor in the hospital, hugging herself' (Barker, 1998, p.23). It is also Miranda who is sleeping in the Fanshawe girl's bedroom and Miranda who sees the first

ghost just outside the house, which may be one of the girls from the Summerfield estate who is chasing her stepbrother, Gareth, although Barker leaves this ambiguous. The ghostly image of a pale woman is repeated. Miranda's last sight of her mother was also lighted by bright sunshine, as was the image of the girl at the window. Nick is also failing in his grieving and he finds himself literally hallucinating his trauma when a girl emerges on his nighttime journey from the hospice, when his headlights 'seem to create the road he drives along' and 'from a gap between the trees […] a pale face turned towards him […] features shadowless, whited out by the glare' (Barker, 1998, p.87). Through their sleep deprivation and heightened emotional state both Nick and Miranda are seeing apparitions and manifestations of their inherited trauma by literally hallucinating.

In Garner's (2017) novel supernatural events abound, but there are also more subtle liminal presentations of what isn't there. Garner relies on sound: the whooshing of an arrow and the sound of Uncle Bertram's motorbike. The actual apparitions are never seen other than through Roger's photographs or as reflections on water. Again, surfaces or photographic depictions are liminal spaces when capturing what isn't there as we question the veracity of what we see.

Whether the author's work is spectral or realistic, these liminal dwelling places, where the deceased loved one is glimpsed, occupy a space between awake and dreaming, or as Nick states the apparitions are a sort of 'hypnagogic hallucination' (Barker, 1998, p.89).

It is not only apparitions that infuse otherwise realist novels with a haunting dreaminess. Unexpected objects reemerge, signifying that the character's environment will be interrupted in a state of heightened transition. Garner (2017) and Barker's (1998) novels both have paintings in their family homes, the former revealed by crumbling pebbledash, the latter through wallpaper being stripped, and the sudden presence of what is a strange and disturbing object, forces the characters to look within, which signifies the threshold they are about to cross in embarking on a process of discovery.

When Nick's family scrape the wallpaper from the wall, they unearth a lewd painting of the Fanshawe family, which Nick is convinced is painted by the Fanshawe son, albeit this could be projection because of his own strained relationship with his stepson, Gareth. Nick isn't the only

family member who thinks the 'portrait's an exercise in hate' (Barker, 1998, p.40). Nick's family survey the Victorian portrait in silence and Barker writes, 'The living stand and gaze at the dead. Probably the same thought occurs to all of them, but it's Miranda, her voice edging up into hysteria, who finally says what they're all thinking. "It's us"' (Barker, 1998, p.41). The past has emerged and as Alison states: '"Yesterday", "today", "tomorrow" – they don't mean anything. I feel they're here at the same time: waiting' (Garner, 2017, p.87).

Stranger Like You: Landscape

In my own novel, I wrote a family isolated and under stress, with unresolved tensions from different time periods being brought together. Bachelard states that not only do forests give the impression of immensity, but they provide a 'limitless world' of 'before-me, before-us' which lends itself to a temporal inheritance (Bachelard, 2014, p.206). The timelessness, insularity and immenseness of the environment was something I wanted to recreate in my own work. I also wanted the juxtaposition of declining industry within a semi-rural landscape and I pictured a small village on the edge of a forest. I had in mind some of the rural locations that exist around Cropton and Dalby, albeit those villages are much smaller than the one portrayed in my novel and are free of heavy industry. In writing about a village on the edge of a forest, I wasn't aiming for fairytale or gothic elements, and many of the liminal elements were instinctive. While the forest could have been tonally eerie, I wrote Lila comfortably familiar within her environment. The scenes of violence in the novel, including the climactic death, take part in the daylight, in the summer period, outside of the forest and in an abandoned structure. Uninhabited places and buildings are where Roy and Barker's violence takes place. As the reader views the forest through Lila, who is on the cusp of adolescence, her own unsettling transformation through puberty and her sexual curiosity gives the environment its fairytale facets, so much so, I wrote her stating it appears this way. Like the beach, the forest is likely a composite of wooded areas I have spent time in, but I wanted to write the protagonist as almost resistant to her emerging sexuality, and for these misgivings to give the text an uncomfortable air. I was unable to leave behind the aesthetic Romantic era depictions of labyrinthine darkness and the

'Romantic ideal of embracing darker emotions towards the landscape' (Scovell, 2017, p.37). Our cultural and childhood preconceptions of forests usually exist as a part of a larger cautionary story, where we might encounter wolves clothed as humans and I was conscious in giving the reader an awareness of the protagonist's age, slightness and vulnerability, that the environment alone may give them reason to pause. Further to this, like Roy's (1998) twins, she lacks the awe of her uncultivated surroundings as something bigger and more dangerous than she, and the forest is large enough, dense enough and remote enough that visibility is poor and no one will hear her, will likely prompt a question for the reader of what will happen, within it, however at home the character is in the wilderness, or however distorted or dreamlike I made it. I didn't look directly to *The Company of Wolves* (1984) as an influence, but I did revisit the film, along with the television adaptation of *The Owl Service* (1969) and both portrayed their young female protagonists exhibiting a controlled, and unsettling, awareness of their sexuality. Unlike Carter's (1996) stories on which the film is based, the dream sequence at the beginning of *A Company of Wolves* (1984) leads us directly into the character's inner dreamscape of what appears to be a charming fairytale location. However, the character's inner landscape plays host to an array of sinister elements she does not always fear or reject; she's without apprehension, albeit the audience feel it keenly. Similarly, *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (1970) is a fantastical presentation of a young woman's stream of consciousness. Unlike *Company of Wolves* (1984) it does not present the protagonist falling asleep, so the viewer assumes they inhabit her waking reality and the viewer cannot know what is real or imagined. As imaginary environments neither are distinct from character, and while their inner landscapes are visually beautiful, they carry an underlying anxious portent. Arguably realistic landscapes are never fully divided from character, or the human, as 'Nature exists on the page because of its relationship to humans' (Bennett & Royle, 2016, p.165) but I wanted to present Lila's environment made stranger because she is retrospectively telling her story in an imaginative blur and earlier drafts had a more fantastical feel. As Botting states, if trauma leaves the mind blank, 'the individual is able to move from a position of passive victim to someone who has, at least imaginatively, taken an active role in producing and expelling the disturbance' (Botting, 2014, p.8).

Throughout the novel, nature and nurture is a continual strand. Whenever I wrote Lila describing Wiley, I was describing Lila, and this parallel allows her to absolve herself of any responsibility when she states things could have been different for the dog, with a better home. At the novel's opening she is controlling and dominant, and through redrafting, the environment became more realistic, less dreamlike and what remains on the page is a bullish hubris in her attitude towards her surroundings, whereby she is host to her environment, not the other way around. She doesn't find the forest, in which others become lost, as inhospitable, nor does she find the farm or the mine ruinous. I have her refer to the forest as hers and portray her crashing through ferns and feeling the thrill of birds deserting the trees, believing her intimate knowledge of the environment to be an advantage. Towards the end of the novel, Lila's relationship with her environment is viewed the same way she views herself, which is to say dichotomous and complicated. She embraces her environment, but contemplates razing her beloved forest to the ground while her brother is within it, which originated from wanting to show Lila's destructive attitude towards her perceived loss of self at her twin's increased autonomy. Botting highlights ties between the gothic and transgression and that 'telling a gothic heroine bot to do something is often enough to make her wish to do it' (Botting, 2008, p.9). I wrote a protagonist who was uncomfortable around people, so she spends time in her remote surroundings. It takes heavy snowfall to render her environment momentarily unfamiliar and the potential ecological disaster of Chernobyl for her to feel even a twinge of unease. I wasn't drawn to any gendered assumptions of nature nor does my protagonist dislike the industrial infringement and like Roy's (1998) Rahel, she accepts its decay and spoil, is even drawn to it, and is oblivious to its threat.

Although the novel has a realist setting, the landscape does combine contrasting elements that might be described as distorted. At the edge of the forest, I envisioned the skeletal remains of a closed mine, emblematic of an already bygone era, yet still relatively recent and not yet overcome by the elements. The mine and the Clearwater ancestral home provides a boundary to the tenacious foliage and I describe this barrier as Lila believing the grounds of Locke House are poisoned, and the earth as resenting being harvested, in order to address the structural problem of the subsidence

in her grandmother's old house. The mine and the scrapyard's expansion to form the *traffic jam* are intended to be a sign of neglect, and their illegality a sign of financial desperation symbolising civic failure, but both are drawn in a fantastical way. I wanted them to appear as barriers or thresholds and a warning not to venture further. The mine is one of the few temporal signifiers in the novel, which provides a sense of industrial decline and desolation. Much like Barker's (1998) summerhouse estate, it felt like a type of post-capitalist gothic, given that modern definitions of gothic are 'slippery, or perhaps more appropriately, foggy. More often than not it is used interchangeably with "atmospheric" or "haunting" or some other equally vague adjective […]' (Kroger & Anderson, 2019, p.222) but broadly speaking it is 'fiction that deals with themes of isolation, vulnerability, family strife, and the bubbling up of secrets is undoubtedly gothic, whether the story takes place on the moors, or in a country farmhouse or in a city' (Kroger & Anderson, 2019, p.222). Similar to Barker (1998), Garner (2017) and Roy's (1998) novels, the environment is extremely contained within my novel, reflected only through a protagonist who barely leaves the village, as though she might get caught in a mist, travelling into an environment I hadn't written yet.

As an intergenerational story, told through a young protagonist's point-of-view, the landscape acts as a temporal void, in which the narrator will experience her environment exactly as her father and uncle did. I foreshadow the previous family history in the beginning of the novel, both in the prologue and first chapter when the twins wade into the sea. Two siblings are potentially about to replicate a previous accident and only moments before I have Lila state that the swirling tracts of sea water appear as though something is fighting to get out from under the surface. It is unlikely any reader will remember this at the end of the novel but it felt like an important disclosure. I was conscious that the rurality gave a sense of timelessness and stillness, where little has changed over generations. I wanted to portray the characters as frozen in time, mired in the past with their behaviour repeating through the eras and wanted the old house to be seen as a crypt that speaks of 'our past and present and who we are, our shrines and quirks and hopes and sorrows, our attempts to prove that we exist and are more or less okay' (Lamott, 2020, p.108-109). Owed to the subsidence, the mantelpiece clock in the old house has crashed to the floor, an indicator that nothing has moved

forward, as the older generation dwell in passivity. The Clearwater home is soon to be a pile of rubble, yet the twins are drawn to this abandoned and dilapidated house, suggestive of their eagerness to revisit the past and an indicator it will soon enter their present. In writing a house with structural problems I wanted to suggest that the foundations on which they stand are about to move and break as their family history reemerges. A 'time-present' Lila, eight years after the loss of her brother, remembers entering the house in what feels like 'time-present' but is the past, and the place itself remains host to the distant-past, still holding the objects and traces of family strain. It is also a place their uncle reoccupies after it has been condemned and the rest of the family abandons it. The twins' father warns them against entering it. Yet it's a place their uncle appears comfortable and through this I wanted to indicate his history is less problematic for him. My narrator is at a point in time where she is remembering her own historic viewpoint, but also one relating a secondary and inherited history that she was not part of and I hoped this doubling would give the impression of time's fluidity and inherited experience, which would further fuel the character's phantasmic landscape, especially when she imagines her own father's version of events playing out.

Although M.R James's fiction explores sparsely populated places, for Scovell the source of James's tension is spatial, unearthing objects that have been tainted by the past and arising from a 'hidden, almost sentient room derived from something nasty under the floorboards' (Scovell, 2017, p.51). It is something Barker (1998) and Garner (2017) utilise in their newly unearthed paintings. In my own novel, photographs and artefacts remain at the abandoned house but the first 'clue' I give the reader about the death in the family is actually a family photograph within her home that the protagonist is familiar with, but the arrival of her uncle forces her to reconsider it and her perception of the photograph changes over the course of the novel as she finds out more about her family history. Objects, photographs, diaries and letters of forgotten people, skewed accounts of history are not unusual in traditional gothic novels, which utilise houses as crypts or vessels which contain the objects which will corrupt the present.

I am not trying to compare my own work to early-Gothic, only that instinctively in trying to write about a buried history, the abandoned family home became tinged with a temporal ambiguity.

I didn't aim for phantasmic or eerie topography but I'm conscious in the act of writing a young narrative voice the landscape, particularly in very early drafts, had an almost hallucinatory aesthetic. I allowed space in the story for the character to explore the environment, to allow the readers to pause and question what will happen within it. Although writing the landscape and era was an aesthetic choice it was also functional; I had to address the question of their uncle's twin death and drowning seemed one of the more plausible. I didn't know exactly how Noah would die when writing and hopefully the portentous aspects of the landscape, as well as the industrial presence instils an apprehension. Enright (2007), Banville (2005), and Roy (1998) all write deaths or suicides by drowning. Water is unpredictable and often deceptive; anyone who has stood alongside *the Strid* in Bolton and watched its near sedentary waters may look curiously at the danger signs. I named the family 'Clearwater' in contrast to their family history being obscured and muddied. I ultimately knew the environment would likely become antagonist and hoped the eeriness of isolation a temporally ambiguous environment would make the reader uneasy about Lila's idyll.

4. The Double as Encounter

In this chapter I will look at the process behind the creative practice and attempt to incorporate some conscious insight into what has been unconsciously written in terms of tone, landscape, character and era. I will pay particular attention to how writing a novel set in the 1980s influenced the mood of the novel and will touch on writing psychological uncertainty and instilling apprehension or unease in terms of my own creative process. I am conscious that the distinction between tone, emotion, feeling and affect is ill-defined and the terms are often used interchangeably (Bennett & Royle, 2016, p.90). I have already stated the uncanny is sprawling and a frequently used term applied to stories with a supernatural underpinning. However, I will focus on the temporal uncanny as an 'unanchored anxiety' or 'psychological uncertainty.' This chapter will be limited to an exploration of the cultural influences and aesthetic elements that have shaped my process and research in the creation of the novel.

On Encounter

I stated in the introduction that my fiction tends to occupy a liminal place, bordering on the suggestion of the 'marvellous', where events could be ascribed to supernatural happenings, until rational explanations are found, putting the story back into a plausible reality, a reality which Todorov (1975) terms 'uncanny.' Occupying this ambiguous liminal-ground means uncertainty takes precedence in my work and any project usually begins with a feeling or an emotion, usually one of unease or apprehension. There may be a semblance of an idea or concept but this is distilled into themes, places or characters, through writing into a sensation of uncertainty. Writing psychological uncertainty usually leads to writing characters with apprehensive emotional states, often with the suggestion their environment could become slippery or unsafe, whether or not there is the suggestion of the supernatural, or the prospect of an object-related danger. There is rarely an actual monster in my work, which pertains to a specific 'species of frightening' (Freud, 2003, p.124), only the suggestion of one. In writing uncertainty, I'm aware that tonally my work often has an air of dread, discomfort, or melancholia, which isn't always ascribed to my narrator. My protagonists

experience a flux of changing emotions and experiences through their journey, which is not without humour or levity but the overarching anxiety permeating the pages is owed to my authorial blueprint, on which my protagonist's story or narrative is drawn. The uncertainty is often layered into the imagery and the environment, with my chosen setting often paramount in aiding a sense of unease. Place, landscape and environment usually comes first. Characters follow and plot is woven around the characters reactions and experiences. While themes and ideas appear at an early stage, I aim to present them in a minimalist and ambiguous way. Twins were a major theme initially but by the novels close it was no longer a novel about the twins parting of ways. From the outset I settled on the era of 1986-87 and I knew from initial research I would focus on the fear of the outside coming into the home, as an exploration of the etymological roots of the uncanny, or 'unhomelike,' and I looked at depictions of the home as an extension of the womb. The result was a novel about domestic disharmony, and although this disharmony remains, when I began the novel, the estranged uncle did not exist. It began with a much broader idea about writing twins and a childhood narrative, but also an interest in a wider exploration of fear, and how this might work outside of the elements deployed in typical horror fiction. As an aside, King notes the parallels between the home as symbolic womb and some horror fiction which usually plays on a fear of what is 'outside' the safe place and shifts it to fear of what is 'inside' (King, 2006, p.95). Exploration of fear and its effects has been a longer-term interest for me and I've often wondered whether my interests are ultimately in horror, although I would define my fiction as walking the borders of horror, perhaps nibbling at its fringes. My interests have always tended towards what might be termed 'psychologically uncertain' or before embarking on this thesis.

I have already stated Anne Radcliffe (1826) makes a distinction between horror and terror. Both terror and horror occupy a place of suspense that prompts anxiety or fear in the reader, but ultimately their paths and conclusions differ, and according to Freud (2015), they differ in relation to danger and whether there is an object that the emotion can be ascribed to. Despite the similarity in their initial emotional promise, terror and horror diverge. There is an expectation in a horror novel or film that we will see the 'monster' with an aim to shock, repulse, disgust or scare and usually

there is little narrative ambiguity, with a clearly defined monster or villain who is often characterised as evil, alien or paranormal. Thematically fears such as death, abnormalities or abjectness are fully explored and often sensationalised. Terror, which may apply to some crime and typical suspense novels, still operates within the same emotional spectrum, but sometimes without a clear villain and the fear and anxiety is more expansive and does not invite readers to experience brutal violence or fantastical body horror. With no obvious monster, they operate within a narratively ambiguous space, with morally complex characters, obscured environments and shifting realisations, which can result in a tone which is closer to mournful or melancholic, as the sensations of anxiety and uncertainty are extended. As *Stranger Like You* explores the loss of a twin, it is easy to see how I arrived at explorations of trauma and inherited experience or psychic crypts. Even prior to this novel, my own work often lacks a solid and climactic conclusion, usually with little character change, so it can also lack optimism. King states nothing is as frightening as what is behind a closed door and 'you can scare people with the unknown for a long, long time' and to 'open the door, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is to destroy the unified, dreamlike effect of the best horror' (King, 2012, p.133-136). Recent novels by Toon (2020), Johnson (2020), Walter (2019), Maclean (2021) and Reid (2017) emotionally skim the borders of horror, albeit the latter was later classified as a horror novel. All occupy a more ambiguous narrative space and the latter three offer no solid conclusions or explanations. Wyld's (2013) novel seems to contain the promise to reveal the 'monster', or at least whatever has been killing the sheep on protagonist Jake's farm, but the novel ends with Jake's friend Lloyd stating he 'sees it' (Wyld, 2013, p.227), after they hear movement in the undergrowth. Lloyd asks Jake if they should run and Jake says no. Wyld never reveals the monster, but as the characters don't feel the need to run away, the reader can only assume it is not as bad as they feared or perhaps Lloyd, understanding Jake is haunted, is entertaining her wild imaginings.

I dislike too much exposition and prefer novels where the reader is able to form their own interpretation of the work. I've often felt when writing, the more exposition I have, the less atmosphere and that one comes at the expense of the other. In aiming for uncertainty, I was aware

the work carried a nervy anticipation of a danger which doesn't materialise, and the work can appear oneiric as I aim to extend the sensory experience of emotion and place.

As I was writing from a child's perspective, I wanted to explore the fears of children and write about what they find disturbing or traumatic and the confusion which arises when the adult world collides uncomfortably with the childhood. Some of the novels explored in this thesis offer a fictive insight into situations that are too bewildering or disturbing for a child's mind to comprehend and are often not resolved in adulthood. The character's adult lives are written with unease: LP Hartley (1997), Arundhati Roy (1998), John Banville (2005) and Anne Enright's (2007) work all contain children whose memories are corrupted as they experience the adult world amidst confusion. Roy's (1998) Ammu tells Rahel after she makes an innocent joke at Ammu's expense that: 'When you hurt people, they begin to love you less. That's what careless words do. They make people love you a little less' (Roy, 1998, p.112) Her mother's inference that she loves Rahel less stays with Rahel for the rest of her life. I was keen to portray my protagonist as often being confounded by adult behaviour and lacking the emotional experience necessary to interpret it. Much of this first-person exploration of fear did not make it into the final draft. It existed purely to explore an objectless fear, but a small number of scenes ultimately crystallised into an arc for my character, emerging from a loose connection with the work's emotional tone and broad themes. Tension arises because the narrative is unknown. My authorial blueprint is still there and I'm far more concerned with letting the characters react to their environment when there is stillness in the work.

I will speak more about process in Chapter Five, but I am never sure of my protagonist's motivations initially, they rarely have an antagonist in the beginning, but I have a broader notion of their needs and wants, but more importantly what they choose to present to others and what they choose to hide. My early drafts focussed on the protagonist's emerging sexuality and division from her family, in particular from her once-inseparable twin and her voice and mood saturates the page. At this stage the creative process becomes bifurcated as I discover the character's voice and *I* cease to exist, and the narratee becomes the narrator.

Tracing the origin of the creative output has proved difficult, partially because in writing uncertainty, much of my process is instinctive and the relationship to the era was tenuous. I was writing the 1986-1987 academic year and through encounter with that era, broad themes of social disharmony and disturbance came to the fore, which drew a more solid, emotional response than merely an underlying unease or anxiety. The era influenced much of the topography and introduced further ideas of childhood fears, but for the most part, specific events and cultural signifiers rarely feature on the page, especially when compared to other novels set in a similar era such as Mitchell (2007) or Mclean (2021). I would suggest that *Stranger Like You* is so temporally ambiguous that readers without knowledge of the explosion of the Chernobyl reactor would be hard pressed to define the period, although there are no mobile phones or internet, which fixes it before mid-nineties. According to Fisher (2014) the absence of modern technology further removes the ability to break through any isolated temporal and physical spaces. The characters have to rely on memory and their physical isolation is one of the facets of the novel.

It is the first historic novel I've written involving a period which I lived through, which provided a further complication for writing uncertainty but also for the accuracy of the work. None of my experiences of 1986-87 entered the novel other than minor similarities in the rural landscape. Looking back at my memories of 1986-87, special events such as birthday parties are sharply defined in colour, possibly aided by the fact they were photographed. In revisiting my own records, I found photographs and their purpose entering the narrative of the novel, and the primary polychromic colours of cheap film cameras and polaroids which fade over time, are mentioned several times. I wanted the narrator to acknowledge that inanimate past-objects also change, along with her memory, because what will be called into question is her interpretation of events. My own objects held in storage, and sometimes repurposed in later years, are easily remembered, but my memories of 1986-87 less so, as routine events over the years wash into one another. Hartley's protagonist Leo Colston states that his memories are 'like effects of chiaroscuro, patches of light and dark: it is only with effort I can see them in terms of colour. There are things I know, though I don't know how I know them, and things that I remember. Certain things are established in my mind as

facts, but no picture attaches to them; on the other hand there are pictures unverified by any fact which recur obsessively, like the landscape of a dream' (Hartley, 1997, p.28). Alison (2019) states that her own 'envisioning mind' tends towards 'Bellini hues' and this appears in what she writes as her own 'private palette shifts onto the page' (2019, p.60). 'Envisioning' is the correct term and the 1980s era palette felt gloomy and dismal after researching the cultural and political events, as though I pictured it through a Claude glass.

May (1975) was helpful in understanding how to separate the individual from the creative act. For May the attribution of creativity falls too often onto the person creating, rather than the creative act which requires encounter. May (1975, p.50-53) argues without encounter, we cannot arrive at a theory of creativity. He gives an example of Cezanne painting a tree and defines the encounter as the relationship between the human being, Cezanne, and *objective reality*, the tree. He avoids any attempt to find something within the individual that is projected onto the work of art, even if the output from the encounter is something unique to Cezanne. 'Obviously, early experiences play exceedingly important roles in determining how artists will encounter their world. But these subjective data can never explain the encounter itself' (May, 1975, p.80) and to try to define the process is like the 'interpretation of a dream' (May, 1975, p.106). Creativity is unscientific and mysterious, defined by 'expressions as "a thought pops up," an idea comes "from the blue" or "dawns" or "comes as though out of a dream," or "it suddenly hit me"' (May, 1975, p.75). He argues encounter requires conscious engagement of the creator's subject, which provides limitations.

As an author there are other limitations other than encounter or subject matter, such as chosen form, point-of-view, plot, word limitations, character, themes or even genre conventions all provide structure and boundaries. Yet, so much of my own process means the story, and to a certain extent the words on the page, arrives instinctively or unconsciously, without what feels like a conscious engagement or encounter, but 'a dynamic struggle goes on within a person between what he or she consciously thinks on the one hand and, on the other, some insight, some perspective that is struggling to be born' (May, 1975, p.58). From my own perspective, too much focus on encounter,

without any abstract thought, often results in my inability to produce or the writing becomes stilted or forced.

That is not to say that my creative output did not arise out of encounter with the era, but subliminal, instinctive and subjective interpretation combined every step of the way with encounter which felt more like an unconscious engagement when writing the novel. Any authorial interpretation feels like a second consciousness, a doubling, which fundamentally gives shape to the encounter, in the same way as authorial voice exists alongside character, and I will speak about Derrida's (1988) ideas behind the indeterminacy of the addressee in Chapter Five. May acknowledges the risk in viewing creativity only in terms of encounter is that we are not dealing with 'creativity itself,' but 'only some artifact, some partial, peripheral aspect of the creative act' (1975, p.38). Elements such as structure, theme, form, content and instilling apprehension were conscious decisions, but certainly when producing the creative work, on a line-by-line something more subliminal took place.

I drew on the experience of the first time I found a beached jellyfish as a young child. I don't know what type of jellyfish it was, nor do I remember it having a purple centre like in the novel, but I do remember thinking as a child it looked like melted plasticine when lifted. My vocabulary was limited, it was a childlike observation, and I took this experience and transported it onto the page where it became something else when written through my character's point-of-view. I wanted my character to be ambivalent about a dead jellyfish and it takes her brother's observations to sense that Lila might not be altogether straightforward. This was an authorial steer. But unconsciously the beach in my novel was nothing like the beach in Wales, it exists in my mind as fragments and composites of the many beaches I've visited. To the best of my knowledge nothing like it exists on the North Yorkshire Coast or anywhere in the British Isles I suspect. Sand dunes do not often give way to a cliff face and usually neither have causeways. No reader questioned this illogical collection of facets, because through a strange process of 'reading-effect' (Royle, 1990), they were forming their own composite beach, and the mere mention of sea and sand was enough to conjure their own childhood memories which allowed them to inhabit the location and trust it. My conscious-self

wanted to suggest an otherness in Lila, an otherness she is aware of, but drawing her as reactive and low on empathy came much later and yet in early drafts I was keen to portray her as the dominant twin, so wrote her standing over the jellyfish and photographing it in her shadow, aware that jellyfish have no brain or heart, only a system of nerves in their tentacles which allows them to react. I'd placed a heartless creature where the character's heart was and this was instinctive, as the character voice came to the fore and my own memory of the encounter ceased to exist.

I kept a practice-based notebook with presentations and social commentary of the era, along with drafts and dates of the creative output, but I often paired disparate and illogical elements, as the creative precedence led to inaccurate and altered presentations. The traffic jam is an example of an invented object which was partially created through encounter, but exists as a fusion of recycled material which was repurposed. In 1979 the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi produced a political advert for the Conservative Party headed 'Labour isn't Working' with a photograph of a long queue outside an unemployment office. Cozens (2021) states it was deemed so effective it heralded the era of marketing and advertising within the political arena in the UK. However, the picture was entirely fabricated. The queue never existed and was actually a group of only twenty young Hendon Conservatives whose photographic image was doctored and manipulated by the advertising agency, to make a queue of over a hundred people, to suggest that unemployment under a Labour government was out of control. Yet it was 'January 1982', during a Conservative government, that unemployment reached 'over 3 million' 'for the first time since the 1930s' (Vinen, 2009, p.125). It wasn't that the advert misrepresented the facts, it was entirely deceitful, yet the voting public accepted this false narrative, leading to a blurred and questionable political landscape. The same week, I wrote about encountering my first scrapyard, behind the forecourt of a showroom where reconditioned vintage MG and Triumph motorcars were lined up, appearing brand new, but I could smell the scrapyard's accretion, witness the decay and was entranced by its prohibitive sign of 'Keep Out – Danger.' I don't think I had ever seen anything so industrial before. I couldn't stop picturing this long snaking queue in the advert, until I pictured a scrapyard encroaching into the surrounding area with burgeoning foliage growing over a defunct road, leading to a disused mine,

abandoned cars side-by-side in crocodile form, similar to the queue in the advert. I cannot say with certainty that the stark image of political advertising combined with an early experience to give me a fictional object which my character interacts with, because it seems too illogical, but around this type of research, the scenery was created, which tonally fit the decline I was trying to impart and thematically the advert's epistemic tilt from fiction to truth stayed with me.

Lamott (2020) compares writing place to 'set design' and for any writer 'every room [they create] is about memory. Every room gives us layers of information about our past and present and who we are, our shrines and quirks and hopes and sorrows, our attempts to prove that we exist and are more or less okay' (2020, p.108-109). The landscape I drew felt entirely fictional, created from loose cultural connections and selective depictions of the era which were heavily filtered. The act of interpreting the 'object' of early to mid-1980s Britain was closer to an imagining or dream to legitimately be called memory, and the place I wrote became a dreamscape. The fusion of realistic landscape and imagined, reminded me of the practice of Dutch Artist, Jan Abrahamsz Beerstraaten (1661), who frequently brought imagined objects or buildings into otherwise realistic settings. His painting of Warmond castle (1661) is mostly accurate, but the church that sits alongside the castle is Berstraaten's creation, possibly brought in from another town. Most of the novel is a surreal concoction of snippets of information that are so elusive I struggle to find the origin of what I have written. It is difficult to explain the unconscious and irrational elements in this thesis, nor is the era of primary relevance to the plot or characters and although a lot of research was done into the events of 1986-87, many do not transpire onto the page, but an encounter with the era did produce some of the novel's themes and informed the tone of the piece. The Britain of the 1980s felt disenfranchised, polarised and sometimes chaotic and violent. While this is partially owed to a residual authorial blueprint which informed the interpretation, I believe the era also informed or certainly enhanced the underpinning desire to instil apprehension and fear for the reader. Either way, the more cultural and political events I researched, the more my subjective interpretation became vivid and my character's experiences began to come to life. I can't say where my tendency to write apprehension or uncertainty originated, but as this thesis involved revisiting some

childhood influences, I would like to make a short autobiographical digression about these early influences which probably indirectly shaped not just this thesis, but what I write and how I write it. I would like to note that Todorov (1975, p.35) dismisses the idea of the 'fantastic' as something that is present in the author.

Revisiting Childhood Influences

In the writing of this novel, I considered the cultural influences on my adolescent protagonist, which involved revisiting and reimagining a 1980s childhood, and as much of my writing is instinctive, I tried to immerse myself in the kinds of things an adolescent protagonist might read, watch or listen to. As the novel takes place in 1986-87, which was a period I lived through, I did reflect on my own childhood influences, as well as a wider exploration of the era, and in the writing of this thesis I realised that these early influences shaped me more as a writer than I initially thought.

I first saw Ingmar Bergman's films at home in the 1980s. Films such as *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and *Wild Strawberries* (1957) were possibly too mature thematically to resonate with me as a pre-teen but one of his lesser-known films *The Hour of the Wolf* (1968) did. I even loved the title. Scovell (2017) states that it is Bergman's only true horror film. Through its use of framing and breaking the fourth wall, it also produces an uncanny effect.

The film is framed by two opening titles. The first explains that the hour of the wolf is 'the hour between night and dawn […] the hour when most people die, when sleep is deepest, when nightmares are most real. It is the hour when the sleepless are haunted by their greatest dread, when ghosts and demons are most powerful' (Bergman, 2009, p.96). The second title page explains that the painter Johan Borg disappeared from his home on the Swedish Island of Baltrum and that Johan's diary, which his wife, Alma, gives the filmmaker forms 'the basis of [the] story' (Bergman, 2009, p.96). The character of Johan Borg is entirely fictional, but I made the assumption I was watching a biopic.

The first scene breaks the fourth wall when Alma addresses the camera directly and states she isn't sure why she stays on the island given everything that has happened. The secluded island was chosen so Johan can be free of people, but already anxious, he becomes sleepless, which is unfortunate given he is afraid of the dark. What begins as a study of insomnia and an artist's creative disruption, takes a turn towards the supernatural. During his sleepless hour Johan shows some of his sketches to Anna of 'them' (Bergman, 2009, p.100). Bergman never reveals these sketches to the audience.

> 'There's the old lady, the one who's always threatening to take off her hat. Do you know what happens then? Her face comes with it. Here's the worst of them. I call him the bird man. I don't know whether it's a real beak or just a mask. He's incredibly quick, and supposed to be related to Papageno of The Magic Flute. Then there's the others, the meat-eaters, the insects, the spider-men and the school teacher with his pointer in his trousers and the cast-iron cackling woman' (Bergman, 2009, p.100).

After Johan shows these sketches to an unresponsive but worried Alma, he urges her to stay awake until dawn when he can sleep. Time itself causes Johan pain when combined with the dark: 'A minute can seem an eternity' (Bergman, 2009, p.100). We also know if Johan sleeps during the day, he'll be awake at night when his monsters appear.

However, it is an exhausted Alma who has the first supernatural encounter. Despite not being afflicted with insomnia or waking nightmares, she is approached by a woman who claims to be 'two-hundred and sixteen' (Bergman, 2009, p.101). The woman corrects herself, as though Alma has misheard, which we know she hasn't. We entertain momentarily that the monsters are real, before we loop back, supposing Bergman has put us firmly in Alma's point-of-view, that he wants us to hear what she mishears, and we occupy a hinterland whereby the island, or the story, isn't quite real but not fully imagined either. Although Alma appears initially unaffected, she's open to supernatural suggestion, which suddenly lends the environment, rather than the character, a slippery uncertainty.

The viewer never sees Johan's monsters until the end of the film, in a millisecond shot, when Johan's descent into madness is complete. As a child, I found Johan's descriptions of the Birdman far

scarier than the actual footage. His description, auditory rather than visual, was more compelling, even in the era of video nasties, when monsters like Freddy Kruger entered the mainstream.

The withholding of a monster, or rather its non-appearance feels like a strange circular logic, as though my unconscious is a sentinel, guiding me back to the same places, with my characters frequently arriving at my dark tower in inexplicable ways. If I project *I* onto the work, rather than focussing on encounter, there are obvious parallels between *Stranger Like You* and previous works. During the writing of the creative output, I couldn't stop seeing doubles and I couldn't stop creating doubles. There was Noah and Lila, Lila and John, John and Nathan, Lila and her second-self, expressed as a dark-eyed creature and all these doubles were undergoing and reliving a repetitious history. According to Dorfmann (2020) if we pit the double as opposites, it will be found everywhere, and my work is full of subliminal repetitions and returns; doubles abound in both characters and events.

During my reflection on process, I noted my tendency to uproot my characters. Nearly all of the novels mentioned in this thesis involve journeys to unfamiliar places or returns to childhood places. Banville's (2005) Morden to the place of his childhood holidays, Enright's (2007) Veronica to her family home and her aunt's place where she believed she witnessed the abuse, Roy's (1998) Rahel to her family home and Hartley's (1997) Leo Colston back to Bradham Hall. Their displacement isn't physical, as much as it is of time and self, of revisiting a childhood almost forgotten.

It was only in writing a 1980s childhood, I realised how much returns, doubling and doppelgangers featured in my childhood viewing, often with actors duplicating roles. Virtually every Christmas, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) repurposed characters from Kansas to play parts in Oz, with the exception of Dorothy's surrogate parents Aunty Em and Uncle Frank. We assume she's an orphan, so from the beginning we are in a story of displacement, and by the time we enter Dorothy's dreamscape, everything is back to front, much like Carroll's (2009) *Looking-Glass* World. Later considered a children's film, Oz doesn't carry the same undercurrent of portent as *Valerie and her Week of Wonders* (1970) or *Company of Wolves* (1984), films which are also about young women's

dreamscapes, but it is still disturbing, because what should be a danger, often isn't; Dorothy has immunity from the witch because of her red slippers. A talking scarecrow without a brain should be the thing of nightmares, as should an axe-wielding tinman without a heart, but by the time we meet the cowardly lion we realise what is initially foe becomes friend. In contrast what appears outwardly terrifying, like the face of Oz, is all theatrical presentation, suggesting that even subliminally Dorothy knew she was being duped by the crystal-ball gazing man she happened upon in Kansas. The violence in Oz often comes from the landscape, usually when the characters least expect it; whether it's a field of poppies or an orchard of trees ready to protect their cargo. The witch may not be able to hurt Dorothy directly, but that immunity does not extend to Dorothy's friends and Scarecrow is set alight. In a dreamscape everything is unfixed, in Dorothy's unconscious, where everything is pitted as opposites, in extremes, and villains are not deserving of empathy. A house lands on the witch's sister, who has her ruby slippers stolen. Miss Gulch wants Toto humanely retired because he bit her. Dorothy's dreamscape offers an incredibly childlike and simplistic moral point-of-view, revealing an oblique world and questionable outlook, which was something I tried to replicate in my character.

The sequel to this film seemed to epitomise 1980s children's cinema. A nine-year old actress played Dorothy in *Return to Oz* (1985) and unlike its predecessor the film was critically regarded as too dark for a children's film with its 'emphasis on insecurity and peril hark[ing] back to the treat-'em-rough days of children's fiction, and the disturbing / comforting ration tilts conclusively towards the former' (Time Out, 2006). The film was shot on location in England which explains the films overcast scenery. Aunty Em is transformed into a creature of despair, owed to their dire economic situation, because Uncle Frank hasn't rebuilt their farmhouse following the tornado, and Dorothy is having nightmares. Her niece's inability to stop talking about Oz leads Aunty Em to seek experimental medical treatment akin to electric shock treatment, but far more primitive given the film's time period is during the advent of electricity. The hospital is a gothic mansion and when Dorothy is tied to the operating table, she hears the screaming of the previous patients who have been locked away in the basement by the experimental Dr Worley.

The film has adult themes: potential psychosis in children, domestic disharmony, poverty, the dangers of early medical science. It paints a bleak and dangerous environment before we enter Dorothy's dreamscape. The only doppelgangers to emerge in this film are the villains. Dorothy's friends are puppets and models, giving it a further uncanny air, not present in its predecessor. The yellow brick road has been churned up, shot through with grass and weeds, unkempt and neglected. The Emerald City is abandoned and filled with decay, showing a level of destruction more familiar to a warzone. The first doppelgangers we meet in Oz are the porters who wheeled Dorothy to the operating table on a trolley with squealing wheels. They become the *Wheelers*, long-limbed, stilt-like creatures, with hands and feet of wheels, who move face down to the floor, the top of their caps emblazoned with ghoulish faces; there's a semblance of a face where there isn't one, because it's scarier if you can't see it.

In contrast to the original film, *Return to Oz* (1985) does have danger where you most expect it and this dangerous journey is unrelenting. There is little levity. No songs are sung. No one tap dances down the yellow brick road. It isn't uncanny, we're firmly in the fantastic, but we are caught in the character's fraught dreamscape, pondering whether she escaped or whether her experimental medical treatment went ahead. The distinction with its predecessor, both in terms of content and gloomy outlook is notable.

Doppelgangers, dream sequences and displacement featured in other children's novels I read in the early 1980s. Carroll (2009), Cresswell (1987), Storr (1958), Masefield (1935), Pearce (1958) and Garner (2017) were the first children's novels I read which dealt with the blurring of reality and sinister dreamscapes, where the character's environment was psychologically slippery, which distinguished them from other books where magic abounded and was accepted.

The first draft of my novel contained several dreamscapes as Lila struggles to cope with Noah's death, but they made way for further plot developments, and only two remain: the prologue which is the dream within the dream, and Lila trapped in a chicken coop which was a nod to Garner (2017). In writing the novel I treated dreams as a liminal place, where the characters are sunk in

unconscious thoughts, a place below awareness, where the reader can be open to fantastical suggestion.

Writing Setting and Era

Raymond Williams defines a 'structure of feeling' as a 'sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time' (1975, p. 47). He states that trying to arrive at an insight into the emotions of a specific culture at any given point in time, when 'consciously studied, is necessarily different from the culture as lived' (Williams, 1975, p. 59). It is difficult to gauge a culture from within and without hindsight. I found that, looking back can lead to inaccurate depictions of an era and Fisher describes the human tendency to mix up different eras as a 'dyschronia' (Fisher, 2014, p.14). I was aware of this when I made reference to a 'pop-tart' which was not a product available in the UK in 1986.

I pinpointed to 1986-87 because I was a similar age to my protagonist. As a child in 1980s Britain I wasn't oblivious to the economics and culture of the time but was too young to actively engage with it. Looking back, I have the feeling of being incredibly distanced from it and the era appearing strange. Certain incidents, when remembered from a place of future safety, such as the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor appear less terrifying. Others, such as the speech that Margaret Thatcher (1987) gave at the Conservative Party Conference about the issue of homosexuality in schools is more so and although temporally anachronistic, I placed this speech in Autumn of 1986 in my novel, because it fit the tone.

In writing the fear of the outside on a domestic level, the era leant a further air of discord, as economic difficulties were also experienced overseas, as demonstrated by the failing U.S.S.R. Digesting so many notable political events in quick succession probably informed the mood and perception of the era as being violent and chaotic.

The economic decline of the 1980s led to depictions of social and financial decline in the novel, with the once affluent Clearwaters forced to abandon their home for a more modest one. I wanted to portray social divisions within a Britain still riven by class structure, which took shape in

the form of a traditional traveller family who are not welcome by some residents. It was research into travelling communities in the 1980s which led to finding the New Age Traveller's facing violent assault and destruction of their homes at the hands of the police during the 1985 Battle of Beanfield (Melville, 2014). This was not included in the novel and nor were other erosions of the social contract during public protests at the Battle of Orgreave in 1984 and Brixton riots in 1981, when our traditional protectors, the police, became perpetrators, leading demonstrations to become bloody and violent. The children in my novel have largely secret lives, are distrustful of authority figures and have their own moral codes and clannish sense of identity. It's likely this came from engagement with the era. According to Harris (2016) football hooliganism was on the rise again leading to Margaret Thatcher establishing a 'war cabinet' to tackle its rise in 1985. Vinen (2009) highlights the reemergence of British fascism with the British National Party being founded in 1982. Although there was a cessation in the Cold War after 1985, for the duration of Thatcher's premiership there still remained 'weapons of mass destruction pointed at London' (Vinen, 2009, p.8) which is lightly touched on in the novel. There were notable IRA attacks and an attempted assassination of the cabinet in Brighton 1985.

Economically talk of individualism came to the forefront and free-market economics became king. One phrase that seems to have stood the test of time is Margaret Thatcher's willingness to curb inflation which led to enormous wage disparities. She announced that 'there is no alternative' (Marget Thatcher Foundation, 1980) during a speech at the Conservative Party woman's conference in 1980. Bounding through the ages this exact phrase was used by David Cameron to justify austerity measures (BBC, 2013) and Rishi Sunak to justify rises in interest rates (BBC, 2023). The phrase *there is no alternative* entered the first draft of the novel with no economic implication, only that I wanted the protagonist to divorce herself from the proceedings, to admit no liability for the suffering and harm caused. The overarching focus away from collectivism and towards individualism felt like an insular, inward gaze. During a period of intense economic polarisation following industrial closures, and a dismantling of the unions, Britain found itself in yet another recession with unemployment reaching 'over three million' by 1982 (Vinen, 2009, p.215). I remember as a child it felt like an

environment that fostered divide between the haves and the have-nots, which lacked societal cohesion. By the time I'd reached my teens there seemed to me a sustained pessimism about the inscrutability of politicians who seemed to hold the economic viability of the north in their sway.

Researching this chain of events, as an adult, without the years being interspersed with all the wonderful experiences of childhood, the *structure of feeling* that remained meant a mood of division and violence permeated the novel. My original draft had an ending so cartoonishly violent it was enough to have my supervisors suggest that I remove it and substitute it with something tamer as it didn't serve my narrative intention. It was more video-nasty bloodshed than public-information-film threatening, and it was the latter I was aiming for.

It would appear in terms of structure of feeling I was not alone in viewing Britain through a glass darkly. The British Culture Archive (Wright, 2017-2024) is an online platform of historic social and documentary photography, containing collections from 1980s Britain, which captures some of the more economically deprived northern cities, featuring tracts of derelict housing, inequality, poverty, vandalism and brutalist architecture. Andrew Moore's (2017-2024) 'Riots & Unrest, UK 1980s-90s' makes for harrowing viewing.

It is difficult to regard the 1980s socioeconomic divide and not feel a sense of melancholy. The perpetual unease running through the novel does lend a gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere, which still felt current when writing. While structure of feeling is a post-assessment viewpoint, it is not difficult to imagine the emotion of people living through that period.

King (2016, p.43) states that horror novels and films enjoy an increased popularity during periods of economic difficulty and political turmoil because horror reflects more accurately the anxiety of a nation. The 1980s saw horror and paranormal fiction becoming easily accessible for teenagers. *Point Horror* fiction dealt with adult themes and had front covers that were comparable to adult horror novels. Paranoia and suspicion were rife throughout the works. In my novel the twins draw their own comics and according to Brotherstone & Lawrence (2017) comic books were still popular in the 1980s, with teen-horror titles *Misty*, *Spellbound* and *The Fright House* providing pictorial representations of the spooky and grim, which did not shy away from graphic depictions

of gory body horror or brutal bullying. Bullying tales were not unique to the 1980s but it was a frequent storyline in *Grange Hill* (1978-2007). Like the Public Information Films of the era, Brortherstone & Lawrence (2017) state *Grange Hill* wasn't scared of showing teenaged characters dying, shoplifting or being addicted to drugs, accompanied by scenes of general bullying and even racial abuse. An episode that contained fibreglass being pushed down a younger child's shirt caused a 'copycat incident' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p.32) in a school in Devon and fuelled further calls for the television programme to be banned. Childhood deaths were frequent, including death by heroin overdose, drowning in a school swimming pool, a fall a car park wall and the uncanny disappearance of a child with a neurological disorder who was found dead on the backseat of a car in a council estate outside London. The programme aired at teatime before the watershed.

Watership Down (1978) initially received a BBFC classification of U, despite portraying a journey through brutal and unstable environments, saturating the picturesque English countryside with lurking threats, be it human or animal predators. Adapted from the novel, the filmmakers retained the anthropomorphism of the rabbits, which made the bloody-mouthed fights all the more disturbing. Woundwort's totalitarian regime relies on a system of torture and imprisonment. Fiver's earlier visions were designed to terrify, with sunset fields becoming drenched in blood, glimpsed after he encounters the wooden post of a billboard advertising new homes. Later in the film we see the builder's violent massacre of their warren, as their burrows are suffocated and bloody bodies are thrown into the air.

My attempts to tune into the era resulted in a tone far bleaker than the happy memories of my childhood. Bringing together the familiar and unfamiliar facets was underpinned by a general picture of decline and decay, but it's difficult to say which came first. For my generation Thatcherism and neoliberalism was all we knew until adulthood. It's possible that the era left an indelible mark on me, rather than a conscious decision to engage with the era, and I can't say for certain whether the era influenced my interest in writing uncertainty. Horror 'arises from a pervasive sense of disestablishment; that things are in the unmaking' (King, 2006, p.22). I was too young to have any sense of what we were living through, but even at the time the wage disparity was evident and the

erosion of public spaces was easy to see. We all knew children or heard tales of those bullied, sometimes physically and violently.

I've never kept a diary or a notebook but on embarking on this thesis I did, so I could try to piece together the more tenuous aspects of the creative process. The practice-based notebook became a strange fusion of historic and current reflections, filled with temporal anachronisms, which made the novel feel current when writing, especially when most of the minor cultural details were excluded. And arguably the overarching sense of unease, the rumbling of potential violence, neglect and alienation, could be found in any era if the research dictates it.

One event in the novel isn't temporally ambiguous. On the 26th April 1986 the fourth reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near the city of Pripyat in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic exploded and this catastrophic accident became emblematic of a failing Soviet system, with the historic opinion being that the U.S.S.R had settled for 'a poorly designed reactor and then staffed it with a group of incompetents' (Alexievich, 1997, p.xi). Alexievich (1997) states the U.S.S.R did not impart the seriousness of the explosion to the rest of the world until over a week later. By the 29th April 1986, 'instruments recorded high levels of radiation in Poland, Germany, Austria and Romania. On April 30, in Switzerland and Northern Italy. On May 1 and 2, in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Northern Grece' (Alexievich, 1997, p.2) and 'fifty million Ci radionuclides' were released into the atmosphere which reached as far as the US, Japan, Canada and India by the 6th May (Alexievich, 1997, p.2). It took less than two weeks for the explosion to reach virtually every country in the world.

Researching the effects in the UK have proved difficult and although a huge amount of research went into trying to find the effect of Chernobyl on the land, its livestock and people, very little is publicly available and lacks detail. According to the BBC Archive (1986) the BBC news reported that radiation levels were falling but that contamination of milk was still a concern. *The National Radiological Protection Board* referred public queries to the *Department of the Environment* who then referred them to the *Ministry of Agriculture* who stated that the potential exposure in South England was less than half the radiation exposure a person may get from a chest x-ray.

However, in the north and Scotland this 'would be more' but they provided no further details of what those levels might be (BBC Archive, 1986). It is unclear whether the government didn't know or didn't want to create a public hysteria but the article suggests it was impossible for them to gauge. Hansard (1986) details how affected cattle were rounded up and disposed of following a period of testing. Nothing was available about how the remains were disposed, although one of the more common methods was incineration at a slaughterhouse.

As I was writing a narrator who feels a sense of threat from a stranger, I wanted to imbue a sense that her environment is also under threat and wrote the impact of the Chernobyl disaster in order to compound her sense of isolation and lack of control. She is unable to influence her surroundings, and of course her thoughts quickly turn to self, when she realises a global event could directly impact her. I also wanted to present the twins as becoming aware of their own mortality. The first chapter contains a loose depiction of the sole newsreel footage I found relating to Chernobyl. I wrote it being broadcast on an old black and white television, the picture grainy, struggling to transmit, and envisioned something akin to the flickering footage of early silent films. Not only was information in the news report lacking, so was the transmission, reflecting the lack of communication for the Clearwater family. Other events around that time also leant themselves to a fear of the unknown. The AIDs crisis a year later in 1987 restricted public access to emergency services and attendance at schools. But the initial secrecy surrounding Chernobyl, and the U.S.S.R's economic decline, parallelled the Clearwater family's economic struggles and silence.

I had a compromised interpretation of Chernobyl and its effects. I lived in Cumbria 2001 and footage of slaughterhouse pyres became a conflation I couldn't abandon in the act of writing. I remembered coming across tangles of charred wool caught in barbed-wire fences. Accessing any local footpaths became constricted and there was a nervousness that any movement could spread the disease. This sense of an unseen pollution carried into the novel.

I wrote a child character in the novel making a further conflation, comparing the radiation from Chernobyl to nuclear fall-out, when he mentions his father has built a nuclear bunker in the garden. While this might sound farfetched, Britain was gripped in the risk of nuclear fall-out and the

issue was a concern for the public. The Cold War continued 'feeding our unconscious with a lifetime's worth of retina-melting nightmares' (Fisher, 2014, p.56).

Protect and Survive (1975) was directed at adults but there were a number of Public Information Films throughout the 1970s and 1980s aimed at children and it's worth pointing out that, in contrast to today, this was an era when we intentionally tried to scare children, in order to force them to act in their own self-interest. They suggested children couldn't be trusted to do the right thing. I rewatched some of the Public Information Films we were shown in school, particularly ones that highlighted the dangers of the British countryside. All were all cautionary tales in one form or another, taking everyday settings and highlighting the unseen dangers in them and all were deliberately designed to horrify and leave children with a paranoia of open tracts of water, pylons, roads, strangers, farms and misuse of fireworks. None of the films came with any form of trigger warning, they carried no age rating and there was no parental guidance that warned of the persistent, residual threat these films carried, with some employing violent and graphic imagery. *Lonely Water* (1973) and *Apaches* (1977) were aimed at 7-12 years of age. The former was produced because of the 'statistics showing an abnormally huge number of children drowning in water-based accidents in the UK' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p.406). *Apaches* (1977) also ends with a long list of names of children who died on UK farms. The films employed a sense of foreboding from the outset and some of the directors utilise the types of effects later imitated in horror films. *Lonely Water* (1973) has long sweeping ground-level shots along misty waters, a similar technique later employed in the opening shots of *The Evil Dead* (1981). The sign 'DANGER – NO SWIMMING' is not dissimilar to the sign I envisaged outside the farm in the novel.

Lonely Water (1973) lacks some of the graphic images contained in *Apaches* (1977), relying instead on the shadowy, cloaked and hooded figure of Death whose face is obscured. It is clearly influenced by Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957). Death is not an apparition, although the children in the film never see this cloaked figure. Death is inextricably linked to the landscape, which appears peaceful, even inviting, but the bucolic idyll swiftly becomes dangerous, even weaponised. The film is terrifying not because its scenes are designed to shock, although shots of drowning children

flailing in water undoubtedly do, but because it suggests that death has a design, that its existential goal is to seek out and entice foolish children. Grant states he was aiming for 'understatedness' and through its subtlety 'it leaves the worst horror to the imagination, which, in turn, draws on the accumulated and often unexpressed fears from one's childhood' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p.408). Grant was influenced by Bergman's work, not because Bergman's work is 'overtly horrifying', but because it relies on 'an ominous understatement which leaves the audience to follow wherever their own personal demons lead them...By slowly building an almost tangible atmosphere of menace, yet stopping short of graphic horror' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p.408).

Apaches (1977) was certainly an influence on *Stranger Like You.* Without it, I probably would not have had a farm in my novel. Despite its more explicit content it contains the same creeping menace and foreboding of *Lonely Water* (1973). In contrast to *Lonely Water* (1973), no children survive *Apaches* (1977). The film's structure is interesting because the footage of the children's play on a working farm, is interspersed with footage from different locations, one which shows the narrator's parents getting ready for a party and the assumption might be that time across the two locations is running synchronously. However, following the first tragedy when a child falls underneath the wheels of a moving flatbed trailer, the footage cuts to a school cloakroom with the nametag removed from a hook. We realise the schoolroom footage is either current or a prophetic future, leaving the audience questioning whether the footage on the farm has already occurred.

A girl is taken prisoner during a game of hide-and-seek, meaning she is not allowed to cry for help; naturally the director is telling us something will happen imminently which will make her want to cry out. At this point, you'd be forgiven for wondering why the farmer is so negligent, as he speeds along in his forklift truck without visibility of his yard, running the risk of killing other children. Or why their parents let them return to the place of their friend's demises. But the children do return; one drowns in a slurry pit; a collapsing metal partition crushes a boy; a girl drinks chemicals; another rolls into a quarry when a tractor brake releases. Present time footage shows parents clearing out drawers and we realise the 'party' the parents are getting ready for is actually

a wake and for the duration of the film a boy has been narrating his own death, and that of his friends.

The structure of the film is unsettling, as it gives the impression the children are compulsively returning to the farm to play, in spite of the series of accidental deaths and it gives *Apaches* (1977) a nightmarish feel, as though the children forget the previous day's events, or like Roland's Dark Tower they seem unable to leave, because time, or fate, like *Lonely Water's* (1973) Death, has its own trajectory. Change isn't an option. There is no alternative. The future is pre-determined and the two time periods are temporally unmoored and presented together. I have my narrator state in the novel while sitting astride a crumbling beam in the higher floors of a collapsing house, there is no other avenue, no other path, all roads lead back here.

I presented my own farm in the novel as a potential site for accidental or even deliberate death. My fifth chapter is peppered with farmyard unease. I wanted to employ the same overwhelming sense of the environment as potential perpetrator that is presented in *Lonely Water* (1973) and *Apaches* (1977). Of course, if Death is correct, it's in the children's gift to avoid these places, but children are curious, playful and I was keen to present my characters as such. We were drawn to abandoned mine shafts and deserted places. Locke House is partially based on an abandoned vicarage in the village where I grew up, which although free of subsidence, did have a broken door and missing floorboards. We never discovered where these missing floorboards went and over time more floorboards disappeared until joists and beams were revealed, which we walked across. At its rear was a large, neglected orchard, bordering the gardens of our houses, a long way from anyone seeing or hearing us, and there were inherent dangers in our childhood exploration.

In *Apaches* (1977) machinery, chemicals and slurry are the reasons for death, but *Lonely Water* (1973) also warns about rusted metal below the surface, specifically old cars and bedsteads, a suggestion that fly-tipping wasn't uncommon. These manmade problems of industrial waste, along with economic decline, neglect and civic failure, seemed to epitomise the 1980s, and something I was keen to utilise in the novel. On rewatching *Apaches* (1977) I was struck by the children's obliviousness to the dangers unfolding around them, particularly the two children playing with

swords, as a fork-lift rumbles past. The children's remorse as to the loss of their friends is never shown or explained and there is a surrealness to the children being stuck in this environment without questioning or even noticing what is happening. In my fifth chapter a shotgun, a dog, a scrapyard of accreted metal and a nail gun all appear and I hoped to infuse the text with this same dreamlike unease, although overt violence is also incorporated, with a similar red-stained concrete from *Apaches* (1977) making an appearance following Noah's accident.

Never Go with Strangers (1971) warns children that strangers might be cruel and 'perhaps a bit odd in the head.' Structurally the film poses the question of *what if?* A pre-adolescent girl is offered a lift home and a cautionary voiceover warns she no longer has choices, telling Janet that the *kind of hurt* the stranger might inflict would not be like the kind another schoolchild might inflict, like pulling hair or punching. The word *strange* and *stranger* are used repetitively for emphasis and are probably the two words most frequently used in my novel. The film forewarns that strangers can look like anyone and this is depicted in a short frenetic scene, showing a zoetrope of changing faces. The actual stranger who takes Janet is only ever seen as a shadow on a wall looming over the scared child in a small windowless room. The film cautions that while 'fairy tales end happily […] there's no genie of the lamp to help you' (1971). Although *Never Go With Strangers* (1971) is aimed at 7-12 years, the narrator acknowledges 'you're not babies anymore, you want to be free and find a bit of adventure, but you must be sensible.'

When writing Lila, I wanted to portray her as feeling marginalised, with a wish to be under the parapet and prone to sneaking off without telling people where she's going. According to Brotherstone & Lawrence (2020) wariness of strangers hit hysteria in the 1970s but it perpetuated into the 1980s and as the Yorkshire Ripper was making the evening news, it wasn't just children who were fearful.

Charley says: Strangers (1973) shows Charley and Tony are in the park playing on the swings. A man walks by, stopping and turning for only a millisecond of footage, and I had a childhood memory of his ill-intent being captured in that glance, despite the film being a basic animation. I remembered his glance lasting ten, maybe fifteen seconds of footage. It's unclear why Charley and

Tony are alone in the park, are they skipping school? I have Lila skip school several times in the novel and it's the park she goes to.

It was drilled into us to fear strangers and the Public Information Films portrayed strangers as exactly that, people you barely knew; men in cars, dark alleyways or casual strollers passing playgrounds in the middle of the day. But I wanted to present home as equally as terrifying as an empty playground or side street when infiltrated by strangers, especially for much younger children. In my earlier drafts, Uncle John didn't exist, but Sam, a friend of Lila's father did and I drew on the encounter with the era in attempting to distil ill-intent in a small glance, but also a consideration that as children, we were not supposed to answer back, we were to obey adult commands and we viewed adults as figures of authority, which gave the novel one of its strands of uncertainty about what constitutes a stranger and perceptions of what a family should be. A family is usually comprised a group of people who know one another intimately and the family home offers a place of safety and comfort where we are accepted for who we are. As Robert Frost states:

> 'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
> They have to take you in' (Frost, 1914).

The reality is that families can be subject to change and a childhood fear of this potential instability is not uncommon.

All four films assisted in building an environment of uncertainty. Without *Apaches* (1977) I would not have had a farm in my novel or written my younger characters as having such a sense of abandon, and without *Never Go with Strangers* (1973) it's unlikely I would have portrayed the children being alone so often and behaving without abandon. Public Information Films were designed to make children question their actions in order to change behaviours. Put simply, they played on primordial fears, including the threat of death or disfigurement.

Thematically an exploration of what constitutes fear and whether we can recognise its source runs through the novel. I didn't intentionally try to write a full suite of fear, but in exploring the epistemic uncertainty of a young narrator, I wrote her environment and landscape as saturated with unease, which gave the novel some almost fairytale like elements. Although, the research began

by looking at the etymological root of *unheimlich* or 'unhomelike,' it is a novel about the discomfort within, rather than outside. I drew a rural, remote landscape to further emphasise the return of a stranger. In terms of story, the remoteness served as a device; the location is small enough so village gossip is sustained and plausible, but also the insularity provides questions of how the presence of an outsider might be felt. As Bachelard states, the mutability of space, can be a source of unease, as 'Outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility' (Bachelard, 2014, p.235). I made both home and village isolated and confined spaces for the character, an environment she believes she knows intimately and therefore regards as safe. I wrote her being continually reminded by others of the novelty of her uncle's presence. In presenting the village this way, I hoped to invite the reader to question what would be discovered.

5. Double Voicing: Finding the Character

Stranger Like You has the largest suite of characters of any work I've written and is the only historical work I've produced. While I researched the era and its politics, I didn't do so to consider how it would affect any character's outlook, even Jake who is in the medical profession. Having grown up in the North of England during that time, I witnessed first-hand the impact of the divestment in UK manufacturing and wanted to write what I knew. The historical period and the environment slipped easily into story and the family's middle-class mobility meant they were immured from the worst of the economic impact but not entirely unscathed. Children are often protected from the worst political, economic and social decline, yet I wanted to write Lila with an awareness of her family's financial privilege but also acknowledge its potential for instability.

Every work of fiction I embark on is influenced by the current period in which I'm writing and the novel is an abstract fusion of that period and the era the novel is set. At the time of writing the novel, the UK had entered an era which felt as divisive as the 1980s and no doubt influenced my character formation. The two-periods combined in my imagination to form a malleable portrayal of time and place filled with temporal anachronisms. I had a slanted view of the 1980s, and perhaps this distortion of the past is important, because my subconscious is telling me what I really think about it.

It's incredibly difficult to say how Lila and her world came about, in the same way it's difficult to say how the story or place materialised, which felt almost accidental. An amorphous mass of material exists before the story, which often warps as I think about the work. There is further distortion upon writing because I write instinctively and the work is limited because of my ability as a writer, which is to say my process can be expansive and the execution not as I first envisaged. In the amorphous, foggy stage there is never a story, only a scene. No matter how much research, or how wedded to themes or events the work is at the outset, if it lives long enough, it becomes stretched and altered. I have stated that my process begins with tone and a large part of defining the story is drawn through place, I knew I would write someone who lacked identity, fraternity and who was at a difficult period in her life, and knew I would write about twins and their childhood

inseparability, so I had a broad idea of the type of character, but it was largely unformed. After reading Segal (2000, 2017) I decided to write different-sex fraternal twins and a series of scenes materialised around a dominant female twin. At this time the more conscious, reasoned and detailed research into the character, seemed less authentic than writing with loose assumptions and instinct. The environment in which the novel is set shares some familiarity with my childhood one and character is likely the way I kept my distance from it. The landscape provided me with enough certainty and material that 'I' could be placed easily within it. I was also writing to discover, inhabiting more closely Lila's older voice, while anxious not to appear on the page. Initially I felt Lila would view her younger self as a third person, through the lens of time, but the process of writing Young Lila became more immersive and detailed.

Broad Character Traits and Segal's 'Mythconceptions'

I am indebted to Segal's (2000, 2017) research into twins. Segal's (2017) studies into 'mythconceptions' was fertile ground for fiction and many of my initial character ideas came from this. Segal (2017) states that although literary criticism regards them distinctly, many twin tales act as tales of the double. While a twin is a separate physical entity and should not be confused with a self-projected 'other', physical similarities may lead us to see twins as a double. There is an incredible amount of mythology about twins in literature, often involving ideas of telepathy, duality, interchangeability and similarities in twins are often presented as radically different to those of siblings.

Tales of good twins versus bad twins tie closely with the double and we view the 'bad twin' as an embodiment of the good twin's repressed fears or hidden conscience that they have no control over. There are numerous fiction and non-fiction works exploring these fears such as Morgan (2016), Tremayne (2015), Niffenger (2009) and Wallace (1986). Other novels portray the death or loss of a twin with elements of fright or terror such as Hall (2010), Bennett (2021) and Sittenfeld (2013). Twins 'easily lend themselves to explorations of duality – good and evil, rich and poor, moral

and amoral – two halves of the same whole' (Segal, 2017, p.xix). Further to this 'Identical twins are also convenient literary devices that allow writers to explore the duality of good and evil, wealth and poverty, and honour and shame' (Segal, 2017, p.10). Our assessment of identical twins, involves identifying small degrees of differences which become exaggerated, until we reach polar opposites and one twin is 'good' and the other 'bad' (Segal, 2017, p,209). Segal (2017) states that we assign identical twins labels in order to distinguish them, utilising minor differences to create a gulf to satisfy our societal belief in variation, uniqueness and autonomy. Segal (2017) shares extraordinary experiences highlighting that twin tales are vulnerable to the kind of folk tales and half-truths rarely found in any scientific journals but are widely circulated by word of mouth. She shares stories such as identical female twins sharing labour pains, a same-sex female twin who knew the exact moment her twin died, and a mother observing an inoculation mark appearing on one twin's arm the moment her cotwin was jabbed.

I was trading in fiction, not fact and folk-tales and half-truths give us an insight into how we feel about something emotionally. Wallace (1996) wrote about June and Jennifer Gibbon, who were nicknamed the 'silent twins' because they would only communicate with one another and refused to be separated when young. As the twin daughters of immigrants who grew up in Wales, they were the only black children in school, and they had a traumatic childhood. Their language became unintelligible to others, a form of cryptophasia, and they were often perceived as having simultaneous actions, and mirroring each other. In their adolescence their petty theft, arson and vandalism, led to their arrest where they were admitted to Broadmoor Hospital, under the Mental Health Act 1983 and sentenced to indefinite detention. June later blamed this lengthy sentence on their selective muteness and when confined to a single cell their mutual hatred grew, as they constantly compared themselves to one another. The twins formed an agreement one of them should die and the other must begin to speak and become normal. Through a mutual pact they agreed it should be Jennifer. In what was a bizarre stroke of fate, shortly after Jennifer died of acute myocarditis.

In my novel, my twins' close relationship appears mostly as flashbacks, but much of the research formed the foundation of the character's relationship. Segal (2000, 2017) highlighted the following aspects which were incorporated into my novel. It is common to separate twins in the classroom and for twins to constantly be compared. Even fraternal twins are affected by the idea of a societal uniqueness and closeness, even though on average they only share 50% of their genes, exactly the same as ordinary siblings and our widely held societal beliefs affect how we treat twins, because we make their similarities or marginal differences meaningful. Being first-born in a same-sex twin relationship increases resilience and confidence, not because of genes, but because we treat first-borns differently. It was a surprise to read female twins in opposite-sex pairs are always judged to be more dominant irrespective of birth sequence. This misperception probably gave birth to Lila. I liked the idea of a dominant female twin, even if only by perception. A lot of the scientific research on opposite-sex twins is derived from research on rodents, whereby females who share the womb predominantly with males exhibit more aggressive behaviours. Segal acknowledges that females growing up with male cotwins might emulate their brother's 'sensation-seeking behaviours.' (Segal, 2017, p.194). The theory is that testosterone transfer results in some masculisation of their behavioural and physical traits but there is absolutely no evidence for this in humans. (Segal, 2017, p.193). Male twins are equally as likely to adopt behaviours that are considered feminine, such as playing with dolls. Given the date of the studies, I wondered how much prejudice was involved in societal ideas of female children or young women, whereby even mild aggression could be viewed as unfeminine, and therefore masculine, and our very idea of what constitutes femininity tainted these informal studies. In situating my character in a small Yorkshire village, I wrote the community with fixed or conventional ideas of gender and I wondered how bold or flamboyant behaviours might be perceived in a young woman, in contrast to more caring or nurturing behaviours. Difficult or uncooperative women in literature are nothing new, but female violence, particularly violence at a young age isn't an often-broached subject. Perhaps we're averse to the idea of young women having physical reactions when angry, in the same way 'sensation-seeking' might be deemed

acceptable for boys but not girls, who are expected to play quietly. In thinking about these constraints, I began to form the bare bones of a character.

According to Segal (2017) an unfortunate fact about twins is their parents are more likely to divorce. Whether twins create double the work or put a greater strain on finances is not clear, and further to this, mothers of multiple births are more likely to suffer from depression than mothers of single births. This informed my ideas of a mother struggling with her children's strange behaviour and the stigma within the local community.

Segal (2017) also outlined that twins are likely to believe in their own special twin 'telepathy', however this supposed *telepathy*, or rather empathy, does not differ to that of close siblings but the perception likely arises because we are inclined to notice it in twins. Similarities in abilities, interests, tastes and temperaments, can make it appear that twins are reading one another's minds. The reality is a 'look, a glance, or a gesture often conveys more information than an extended verbal conversation' (Segal, 2017, p.176). Similarly, cryptophasia is not unique to twins and is rarely a full formed language but likely imitations of existing language overheard from adults. Yet people are more inclined to think of it as a secret language if they hear twins speaking it.

Informal myth-making and societal perceptions were far more interesting to me than fact, and these folktales helped form ideas around telepathy and the uncanniness of twins' bonds, which is something I wanted to explore from within the twin relationship.

While this came much later in the creation of the novel, it is worth noting here as an attribution to Segal (2017) and her study of antisocial personality traits in twins, or those that show little emotionality, between 5-10 years of age. Although an American study, Segal (2017) found twins from deprived economic areas were more likely to be in receipt of collective intervention that reduces their antisocial behaviour when compared to affluent ones. I decided my twins would be from an upper middle-class socioeconomic family, which also meant Lila, being free of financial strain, could focus on more minor issues. Segal's (2017, p.212) same study showed that self-control became worse with an attraction to 'wayward' friends which is a recipe for disruptive behaviour. Shortly after, Finn and Zoe were created.

A Broad Character Arc and Family Dynamics

Telepathy cannot exist without familiarity and both Segal (2000) and De Nooy (2005) agree that the frequency of twin tales captured in documentaries and newspapers suggest, as a society, we have a willingness to believe in this twin telepathy; telepathy not to be mistaken with an extreme form of empathy but as extra-sensory perception 'ESP', a transmission of thoughts by means other than the senses. It felt necessary to approach the subject of telepathy, not as psychic phenomena but extreme empathy. 'The history of the term "telepathy" is intimately related to that of the concept of sympathy' (Royle, 1991, p.4). The ability to share and understand the feelings of another is present in most families whereby an exchange of thoughts or feelings, whether conscious or unconscious, is facilitated by familiarity and empathy. Writing the uncanny, with its connotations of *unhomelike,* is about making the familiar – or the familial – strange. For Fisher the uncanny is about 'the way the domestic world does not coincide with itself,' and the 'estrangement of many of the common notions about the family' (2016, p.10).

Shadow of a Doubt (1943) offers one of the first references to telepathy in film. I had elected to tell a domestic drama and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) offered both telepathy and family. Bannon (1985) has noted Hitchcock's use of doubles, and how he tends to feature the good and bad, frequently pitted as extremes playing opposite one another, to highlight the most abhorrent traits of his villains. Immediately in the film Uncle Charlie is portrayed as nefarious. He is lying on his bed with a pile of money on the bedside table, so plentiful, notes have fallen onto the floor. His landlady tells him two men are looking for him and we know immediately it is the police. He escapes to his sister's, where his favourite niece resides, who is also his namesake. Uncle Charlie represents all the facets of a psychopathic personality. His kills rich widows for their money and would be a misogynist if he viewed them as human beings.

Young Charlie is infatuated by her uncle, as most women are; he's magnetic and good looking, and easily able to charm when it suits him. However, when Young Charlie discovers he is a

murderer and asks him to leave town, he tries to kill her twice. The first through trapping her in a garage with a running car and secondly on a moving train, where an unlikely struggle between a young woman and a much bigger man, results in Young Charlie pushing her uncle from the carriage and under the wheels of another passing train.

It is unsettling, in so far as you are watching the machinations and thoughts of a man theoretically devoid of any human empathy, who inveigles his way into a family home and manipulates his niece. One critic states the film is where Hitchcock is at his 'most manipulative, making us afraid of our own family', and '…like the more famous *Psycho*, *Shadow of a Doubt* has a lasting ability to shatter the illusion of safety within our homes, with Uncle Charlie forever responsible for a sense of unease every time our own "fun uncle" comes to visit' (King, 2012).

The film is not really about fear of family, or fun uncles, but a fear of the double and this is indicated in its title. From the opening scenes, both Uncle Charlie and Young Charlie lie on their beds in the same poses. It's a ploy by Hitchcock, in his positioning of the camera, to suggest similarity and we know she is his namesake and that Uncle Charlie is a villain.

One reviewer describes Young Charlie as 'a wholesome person; sound, in spite of present conflict' (Wakefield, 2015). I disagree. Young Charlie demonstrates her uncle's facets of selfishness. My first impressions of the two Charlies was one of uncomfortable synchronicity. When Young Charlie realises that hers and Uncle Charlie's telegram have crossed, she declares to the postmistress that, 'suppose you have a thought, and suppose the thought is about someone you're in tune with. Then across miles, that person knows what you're thinking and answers you. And it's all mental. He heard me. He heard me' (Shadow of a Doubt, 1943). She views their relationships as unique and is certain Uncle Charlie has heard her request via telepathy. She takes pleasure in the fact she's named after him, a further indication of their special and unique relationship, even saying to her uncle, 'we're not just an uncle and a niece. It's something else' (Shadow of a Doubt, 1943). Hitchcock wants to present the uncanny idea that Uncle Charlie can read Young Charlie's mind, to increase the suspense as they ensue in a dangerous game of cat and mouse. Their close bond and supposed telepathy mean Young Charlie is unable to hide from her uncle, even when at threat from him.

However their telepathy also signifies similarity in thoughts and behaviours, which leads to their dangerous alignment.

It is an uncomfortable watch. From the beginning, Uncle Charlie is an arch manipulator who singles out Young Charlie: 'Love to you all and a kiss for little Charlie from her Uncle Charlie' (Shadow of a Doubt, 1943). The only time Young Charlie is distressed is when she fears her beloved uncle will get the electric chair. She shares her uncle's emotional detachment and colludes with him in many ways; she does not tell her parents about his crimes and keeps the detectives on his tail guessing. Eventually she threatens to kill Uncle Charlie unless he leaves, demonstrating she is willing to employ any means, even his means, to get what she wants. She is aware this might mean he kills more widows. 'At first glance [she] seems like a totally innocent person…but she progressively reveals her moral grayness to us' (Bannon, 1985, p.59-60). Young Charlie kills Uncle Charlie in self-defence when attacked, but Hitchcock leaves her intent ambiguous and doesn't make clear whether she is aware of an oncoming train passing at that moment. Bannon states: 'The questions of "how guilty is she?" also implicates us, since we have ben identifying with her through the film' (1985, p.60).

Young Charlie may not be guilty of killing widows, but in her silence and collusion she is guilty. We witness the story through her lens and it is her identity we assume. As she becomes increasingly compromised, so are we the viewers, although the question of her moral decay is likely different for everyone.

The 'moral grayness' of Young Charlie lies in her immediate exposure to her uncle and raises questions around influence and nurture or nature. It is a story of a family disrupted and chimes with Fisher's notion of the uncanny being 'the way the domestic world does not coincide with itself,' and the 'estrangement of many of the common notions about the family' (2016, p.10). Home is a place we are supposed to feel safe, and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) plays on inherited genetic traits, suggesting that children can exhibit their parent's behaviour from a young age through supposed biological similarities. This is a strand which runs through my novel. It is uncanny to see children using the same phrases, sharing viewpoints, and replicating their parent's likes and dislikes.

However, despite this, children's lives are often hidden and withheld. Young Charlie speaks to no one in her family about her reservations, which is something I replicate in Lila. Part of the discomfort in the film is showing a family with lives running in parallel, but not necessarily crossing. Children are uncanny because they exist after their parents have gone and this future is not something their parents may be privy to. It is unfortunate that Young Charlie shares more personality facets with her emotionally bereft uncle than her mother, which no doubt gives the viewer pause for thought. If children are a temporal double, even with her uncle gone, we can feel uncertain about how Young Charlie will fare in the future.

On Telepathy

My research into telepathy provided not only an insight into sympathy and empathy but also my writing process. Derrida (1988) explores the effect of telepathy as words on the page, paying particular attention to the indeterminacy of the addressee. Derrida states that no author knows with certainty who may read their words, so it is impossible to know their effect on the recipient. Arguably the addressor is as indeterminate as the addressee because their words enter the mind of the addressee and are open for inhabitation and subject to interpretation. Therefore, the written word exists as a form of telepathy.

Royle (1991, 2008) terms telepathy a 'reading-effect.' There is a trilateral relationship between author and character, character and reader, and author and reader. The addressor can only hope to capture the reader's imagination as the reader 'inhabit[s…] the mind' of the character (Royle, 2008, p.ix). I would also state the author also inhabits the mind of the character, so there is also an indeterminacy of the addressor for the author. When reading fiction, I'm a passive voyeur, rather than an active participant of the work, which is to say I am imagining and picturing scenery, hearing the character's voices, but not as actively as when I'm writing. In the act of writing, while my intention is still there, I exist outside of my character's voice. The act of writing offers a duality or symbiotic doubling. I move from an unanchored overarching intent, be it era, tone or mood,

towards a narrative voiced by a psychologically troubled character, but there are undoubtedly authorial trace elements, which according to Bennet & Royle (2016) might be termed 'double-voicing', where the authorial voice exists alongside that of character. (2016, p.75).

Writing character is an anthropological exploration. Writing a novel is a convoluted, cognitive undertaking, which even on completion I cannot be certain is successful. At the beginning of the process there is no reading-affect because there is no reader for the work. My focus is wholly about finding who the addressor is and small technical decisions such as whether the point-of-view is omniscient, close third-person or first-person. Despite broad ideas, there's an incredible amount of improvisation and discovery happening in the writing and a symbiosis occurs between author and character. The reality is the addressor as character is never studied but consists of a whole host of people who have left an impression on me. Short exchanges, overheard phrases and innocuous experiences combine to form a character exploration which grows on the page. The character is malleable and manipulated until the initial encounter isn't recognisable or reduced to a shadow, possibly with some trace characteristics remaining, but ultimately divorced from the original.

For me, any writing is an incredible leap of faith; I may be immersed in vivid sensory images and a character's experience, but there is always the possibility the reader may not have the same interpretation or immersion. I have to constantly remind myself that the words I produce are just that and according to Derrida (1988) as soon as they are handed over, the text exists outside of myself and belongs to the reader who forms their own impression of the work. But the process can feel fraudulent in the initial stages because there are so few words involved and it feels closer to a kind of acting than writing. Creating a character and inhabiting their world feels like an impersonation. Royle defines a reading effect as a 'collective hallucination' (1991, p.164) and certainly the act of writing feels hallucinatory.

On the Mechanics of Form: Point-of-view and Voice

My presence in the novel is not required for the reader, but the words I use are, as is the story I tell and who I choose who to tell it. This isn't always right from the beginning. Initially I wrote from a first-person plural perspective. The form was potent in terms of ideas but the collective voice lacked emotion and alliance. The character was indistinct and I was concerned the reader would not root for this twin collective. The act of writing felt distant and I found I identified more closely with the female twin, until it became obvious that 'we' was Lila's perspective of her sibling relationship. It wasn't long before first-person point-of-view began to slip into my text without realising. I abandoned the form. This led to many of its elements being incorporated into Lila's remembrance of her twin in childhood and their once close bond is relayed in dense, retrospective prose when she tells the reader of her loneliness at the perceived erosion of her relationship with her brother. In departing from first-person plural, I lost closer moments between the twins which I was aware could leave the reader questioning their authenticity. This retrospective position contrasts with the small yet intense moments she experiences with Uncle John, which are relayed as though they are in 'time-present', yet are 'time-past.' I wanted her relationship with her twin to be idealised when viewed through the lens of grief and loss. Lila states that her brother is outdistancing her. It is this distance, coupled with her belief they are no longer close, which dictates her behaviour. Uncle John merely serves as an accelerant. She fears being left behind, when the reality is the twins are moving at a different developmental pace. I wanted to portray Lila as having an intensity to her relationships with everyone she meets; she engages with people closely because she struggles to understand them. The novel doesn't show the close nature of her relationship with her brother, which is merely told through Lila recounting her story. The novel begins at the point they are drifting apart and I wanted to emphasise this perception of closeness was one-sided and her fear of its erosion.

Although the novel lost some of its depictions of what could be called a hive-mind I was correct to abandon the form. First-person plural was a struggle. It felt more like an academic undertaking, at the detriment of character or emotion. The work lacked identity and read as an exercise in concept. Nor did it feel particularly original. I found themes were not an effective way to sustain a story, which read like part-essay. Voice and character eluded me. The ideas layered onto

one another seemed to get in the way of the writing, which was not instinctive. In writing a concentration of ideas, it pushed me into a sort of reflectiveness, whereby I clipped and polished sentences and the voice was unnatural. Mechanics of form is something I struggle with in general. Early on, a previous supervisor suggested writing first-person present-tense, presumably for immediacy, but this led to motion-based writing free of reflection and reduced everything to the bare dynamics within a scene. It did not suit the timeframes or ideas behind the story which required moments of contemplation. Part way through writing the novel I realised that telling a multi-generational story from a first-person perspective was a problem, one I had overlooked because I hadn't paid enough attention to form. All the multi-generational novels cited in this thesis are written from a third-person point-of-view: Roy (1998), Garner (2017) and Barker (1998), which allows for seamless changes of point-of-view and experiences.

The Foundations of Character: Daydreaming

My school had a joint English and Drama teacher, and without this combination, I doubt I would have become a writer, or at least not one with the process I have today. Imagination on stage is necessary in order to picture scenery which doesn't exist, as well as inhabiting a character in an authentic way. Freud's (2003) description of the writer as 'more of an onlooker' who pictures the 'actions' of others and experiences the emotions or 'sufferings' in the form of an 'analogous […] daydream' (Freud, 2003, p.31) feels close to my own the process of writing. Similar to May (1975), Freud states that the process of creative writing requires a 'tangible object' with which to engage (2003, p.26) and likens any imaginative writing as 'fashioning what are called daydreams' (2003, p.27), although a creative writer will go beyond 'the naive daydream' (2003, p.31). For me, the process of writing goes beyond a daydream because of the act of committing words to the page, but a vast amount of daydreaming occurs before this. When acting a part in a play, our teacher always instructed us to be impartial. His theory was that this would lead to authenticity and give the character an emotional rounding which prevents them being too predictable for an audience.

Therefore, we should always consider and inhabit their perspective. For him, there were no heroes or villains, only different points-of-view, even if the play presents a character in a particular way for the audience. This idea entered my novel. We were at liberty to annotate scripts and write our own interpretations of characters and delving into what wasn't on the page became my first foray into storytelling. I will speak about the process of inhabiting a character in the next section but I would like to briefly describe Ted Hughes's (1995) insight into his own creative process. He states creativity lies in having an 'inner life' which he defines as a 'world of memory, emotion, imagination, intelligence, and common sense, and which goes on all the time, consciously or unconsciously, like the heart beat' (Hughes, 1995, p.16). For Hughes (1995) the ability to hold onto thoughts and pay attention to detail is a fundamental part of the process and he illustrates this in describing something he knows intimately:

> 'Imagine your uncle and nothing else – nothing whatsoever. After all, there is plenty to be going on with in your uncle, his eyes, what expression? His hair, where is it parted? How many waves has it? What is the exact shade? […] you could spend hours on him, if you could only keep him in your mind for hours; […] and examining the thoughts you have about him' (Hughes, 1995, p.16-17).

Similarly, if you were to imagine a room, say your own kitchen, then you could describe it in a similar amount of detail. Through a process I would describe as 'transportation', it becomes easy to reimagine another kitchen within your imagination. It may look nothing like your own kitchen, but it is likely to have a stove, fridge, countertop. The detail Hughes describes, whether an uncle, or imaginary kitchen, never appears on the page unless there is a good reason for it to, but it is the sort of 'daydream' that exists for an author to watch his character's behaviours. It exists in the mind of the author albeit it does not need to exist for the reader. Similarly, Stanislavski (2022) describes the creative mind not as a 'daydream' or 'inner life' but as an 'inner vision' which creates an 'illusory existence' or 'make-believe existence' (p.56, p.57, p.70). Similar to Freud (2003), Stanislavski (2022) draws on utilisation of 'objects' and experiencing 'analogous' emotions to a character (p.66, p.42).

Stanislavski (2022) states this requires focus and like Hughes 'concentration of attention' is key to the creative process (p.73-76).

On Practice: Creating a Character

The most time-consuming part of my process is envisaging the character's environment, because it's only when I feel I know a character's world intimately and think of a character experiencing moments of stillness that they come alive. At early stages there is little narrative cohesion while I find the voice. Small moments distil into pivotal scenes which grow out of my character's interaction with their environment or others.

While I have stated I knew I would write about twins, I'm rarely settled on a definite idea of character and who I will give voice to. It is a journey of improvisation through setting, relationships and story, albeit there is no definitive story arc. That comes much later. I am largely interested in what isn't on the page, what characters don't say publicly and their sense of self-perception, so often my work has a degree of narratorial unreliability. One of the joys of writing has always been to delve into a character's traits and tics, their wants and needs and more importantly how they dissemble. From an authorial viewpoint what kept my momentum in this novel was unfolding the family relationships and thinking about the lengths people will go in order to conceal. Lila is a first-person narrator, relaying her own story from her present, all the while considering her own culpability and guilt. As the sole narrator she determines what is being told and is the single authority to the story; no one interrupts her or provides a contrasting viewpoint and this was a conscious decision. The form is always close, never veering away from its narrator, and while it prompts me to write invitationally by asking the reader to look closely at their world, I can never avoid injecting a sense of claustrophobia. I didn't consider her to be unreliable, any more than anyone trying to remember the past after a significant length of time, but knew she would have an inaccurate view of herself.

In critical analysis, character is often regarded as synonymous with voice, but not always with the environment, although writing both the environment and character is almost synchronous

for me. I do try to capture tone, inflection, vocabulary and phrasing to reflect social class or education, but consistency comes much later in the process, when I have distance from the work and can read the words objectively. Early stages are much more focussed on the character's perspective, on what they are saying in terms of content, rather than how. What they are not saying is also equally as important as what they are. How they present themselves to others is tantamount, as is how they behave alone and whether there is contrast there. I delve into what they find uncomfortable and want hidden from others. How others perceive them comes later and is always an authorial interference or ploy, as I consider unreliability and the overall story I want to tell. Voice has far more to do with the content of their story than the language employed.

At the start of the process the character initially exists as though I am an observer of their life and following them from a distance, as though they appear in my peripheral vision. In the early stages, writing from a first-person point-of-view feels incredibly flawed and wooden; Lila encounters the environment I've created and it feels like breaking a fourth wall. Through a series of long-winded stages, eventually any authorial thoughts shift to that of the character. This is clunky and awkward and usually happens when I am not in front of a notepad or screen. In an early stage of this book, I pictured an adolescent girl on a beach with her brother, who I broadly knew would be her fraternal twin. I formed ideas about what they might be thinking or discussing, and what they talked about alone, in contrast to how they behaved when in the presence of their parents. The more I think about this, the more I begin to become a ghost in my own scene. An 'object' (Freud, 2003, p.26) appears, or a pivotal exchange, perhaps something from my own childhood, my day or something invented, and it feels like both character and author have it in our gaze. I focus on the object as I see it, perhaps describe it for the reader, who I will never know, but I trust they will form their own image, and whether it ties to mine doesn't concern me at this stage. What I focus on is my character's reaction and how they consider the object. Even if it runs close to my own experience, such as a jellyfish on a beach, it ceases to be as though I have experienced it. It is not 'voice' or words on the page, but a daydream and usually after many fruitless attempts, through some strange osmosis I believe I am seeing through the character's eyes and start to write in their voice. The object

is viewed anew. The character ceases to be in my peripheral vision, and it is at this point I have an intense engagement with the character and environment. More importantly if I reflect on my own process, it feels like there is energy to the writing because I am in my character's perspective. I can only describe it as conscious dreaming, and often there are so few words involved, yet it exists clearly in my mind. It feels like a subconscious undertaking but the act of writing makes it conscious. The more I delve into a journey, through imagining facets of a character's life and building their point-of-view, it becomes more trance-like, as though I am seeing the environment through the character. In short bursts, I can seamlessly become the character until their voice is in free-fall and eclipses my own. The less alike the character is to anyone I know, including me, the easier the process is, because it frees the imagination and removes any self-consciousness or self-censorship. The parts that resonate more with the readers are always the parts when on writing I feel like I have disappeared in the process, as though I'm divorced from my conscious. Often on editing these pages I'm surprised I've written them. I've created it, I'm part of the process, but I'm strangely absent. Its contradiction lies in feeling like I am further away from the text because I no longer inhabit the scene, but I am closer than ever to the sounds, sights, smells and thoughts. It's usually successful, if on rereading the work it doesn't sound like something I've written, or I've forgotten myself in the writing of it. Negative capability is being 'capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason' (Keats, 1817). As the work is not arrived at through reason or logic, it's strange to refer to fiction as correct or incorrect but often this is how it feels because the practice has to be correct. My character's trajectory is invisible because so is mine.

In order to avoid conflation, I will say Lila is a construct born out of my conscious viewpoint of who and how she is. The thoughts expressed aren't mine, but my assumption of what the character would think. When the voice begins to feel right, and the writing feels more like an unconscious undertaking, I feel comfortable putting my characters in scenarios that upset either their own idea of themselves or the impression others have of them and this mostly comes from putting them under pressure. I'm not a huge believer that a character has to change in a novel, but I do like to subvert a reader's expectations. Mr Somers is polite, with a strong sense of civic duty, but

I envisaged a scenario where he screams and swears at Jake. While Lila understands and acknowledges her lack of empathy at the outset, I put her into a situation whereby she is forced to identify and align herself with the emotional undercurrent of others, or in childish terms, she is forced to choose sides, to see things as others do and support them through it. I was writing a coming-of-age, or rites-of-passage story and if I'd followed traditional character or plot arcs, the suggestion was that a degree of change has to happen or a life lesson learned, but I've always preferred writing characters who don't change, or learn from their mistakes, and their stubbornness and immutability is more interesting. I tend to write characters lacking in self-awareness which prevents life's lessons being absorbed and they are doomed to make the same mistakes.

It's often away from the screen, or a notepad, that I begin to depart from my ideas, my reactions and my conditioned responses to situations and this occurs when I am beginning to think about character daily. For me this is by far the most important aspect of the process. I don't tend to find character in the minute details, although I've often wondered, for those writers who know what their character eats for breakfast, whether it is the same means to an end. At any point, at any time of day, my observation of people, places or experience can be framed from my character's point-of-view. I'm indifferent to birthday cakes, but it's easy to imagine how Lila may react and the state of confusion that might arise through not being able to read people's expressions too well or being unable to discern the unspoken messages or the atmosphere of a room, something we all take for granted. It was at a swimming pool when I unlocked Lila. The water temperature was five degrees lower than comfort, so I was already reminded of school, and I'd thought about the character most of the day. Someone walked away with my towel, which was mildly annoying, but the lifeguard kindly provided me with a spare and I had a sense of how disgruntled Finn or Noah might be. But I had a breakthrough about how the hot-headed, yet emotionally chilly Lila would react, which is to say disproportionately, but more calculating than I first envisaged. Later, I wrote a scene whereby she follows someone, an embodiment of surreptitious predation and scheming.

Initial daydreams are only for short bursts and around clusters of scenes, whereby I no longer feel like an observer, or the author writing the words. The more the world is revisited or

'recall[ed]' (Stanislavski, 2022, p.57), the more solidified and real it becomes despite being imaginary. It becomes easy to access because I thought about it yesterday and visual images replay like a reel; house, forest, village which don't feature in much detail in the novel. Stanislavski (2022) describes this as 'unbroken series of images […] like a moving picture' (p.55). Character quirks stick in my mind which are often gestures that epitomise who they are; Jake smoothing his shirt with a frown, Laney laughing in a polite, but non-humorous way, Connie appearing lost in thought, John's charming smile a second or two late to the party. These tics provide a means of return. At the beginning of the project, I can lose sight of secondary characters and sometimes struggle to hold onto the primary one. It's during this period I convince myself I've forgotten how to write, without my pen ever having touched paper, so I have to mentally go for a walk in my consciously constructed daydream and live in my protagonist's shadow again, to let scenes unfold in moments of stillness.

Moments drift back under authorial control. I tend to edit as I go along, and my voice for young Lila, is more of a subconscious letting go, when she reveals the small details of her life. The parts that come under authorial control and feel more conscious are the parts whereby the story is reflective and condensed and it moves along more rapidly, which is older Lila looking back, which runs closer to my existence on the page. Lila was somewhat sacrificed to move the story forward. I envisaged an older Lila reflecting, which became a mechanism to tell whole chunks of story succinctly. I don't think it's coincidence that as a whole, readers have been more drawn to Young Lila, possibly because the small period details make the story more immersive, in contrast to the older voice which tells rather than shows the story, but also writing the childhood voice was more immersive for me as a writer, and my own author engagement likely assisted the reader.

After I feel like I have captured the character, the first draft comes in a rush, and the writing is all-consuming. It doesn't necessarily have narrative cohesion and beginnings are often found on completion. Lila's adolescent chattiness and informality occasionally gave way to my more rigid, formal prose. By second and third draft, the text is studied, and can become more ornamented, often to its detriment. I'm attracted to the very dense descriptive prose of people like Angela Carter and often my scenery becomes purple. It requires further drafts to remove this and take it closer to my

messy first-draft voice. I often prefer my meandering first drafts written quickly when in the grip of character, to the finished text which feels riven with interference, but it is something I go through to make the story clearer.

I watched and read too many 1980s books, comics, magazines film and television for the writing of this novel, primarily things I thought my adolescent character would be interested in. 'Crackerjack timing' can be attributed to *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986). 'Super creeps' stolen from David Bowie (1980). 'Don't be stupid, stoopid' from *E.T, The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). None of these references were caught by my somewhat highbrow first readers. Much to my chagrin, during the writing of it, I couldn't stop describing things as 'awesome' in my own life, a term frequently used by the twins. In contrast I wanted Uncle John to sound anachronistic, with the formality of a different era, much like a character from *Brideshead Revisited* (1981). Despite his stiff, formal politeness, I envisaged the painting he produces of his twin as stylistically in the manner of Francis Bacon.

In terms of authenticity, the process of entering a daydream is far more important for me than for the reader. It exists to get words on the page, but the moment I feel as though I cease to inhabit the character, the less effective the writing is for the reader. If I 'feel' as though I'm engaging with what the character is experiencing emotionally, without any overt consciousness to words on the page, this usually leads to a reader being convinced, providing they aren't hindered by bad and clunky prose.

I'm moving through scenes in an 'analogous way' (Freud, 2003, p.31), with some emotional symmetry, because my emotional ideas of the experiences are loaned to my character. I use the word 'analogous' and 'experience' lightly; I am not, for example, suffering or elated as the character might be. I can imagine what an unhappy thirteenth birthday might look like, or the interior of a farmhouse, despite having never set foot in one. My authorial footprint often remains. Having lived in a secular community before arriving in the UK, I was transfixed by religious iconography and abandoned, crumbling buildings. I'm aware in my dreamscape that the only barrier Lila has to Wiley is a flimsy fence and my nub of fear is present. It's not difficult to imagine the exhilaration of Lila's

risk-taking when she climbs onto the cars. Similarly, as she is quite controlling, in a relatively stiff and formal environment, I imagined the farm would constitute a site of interest and uniqueness. Golding (2016) and Banks (2008) were great examples of the sense of ownership that remote, secluded places can provide children. It no doubt helps that I lived through the period because knowing the minute details, which while irrelevant to story, helped me to enter an imaginary environment where I already knew that school buses had prickly velour and leatherette seats, that their engines roared and vibrated and there were no electric cars on the road.

The conscious part is not without struggle. So many major scenes in this novel are not analogous to any experience I've had. With Lila I tried to put myself into her situation without taking for granted the experiences and emotion I possess; it felt incompatible to writing which involves an incredible amount of empathy. The emotion in this novel, be it grief, shock, denial, fear, happiness was pushed so far from any original experience it felt overblown on occasion. Without comparable experience the writing became laboured and writing Noah's death caused me to falter and lose character, meaning I relied too much on metaphor and control of language. It was written from an authorial distance. Following Lamott's (2020) advice, I broke the scene into several smaller parts and step by step considered Lila's train of thought. It didn't help that the circumstances made Lila a passenger rather than an instigator, something which doesn't sit comfortably with her character. Describing the event physically was far easier than breaking down its impact on Lila and her gamut of emotion. It was a scene that required movement and action throughout, but I wrote Lila returning to metaphor-laden reminiscences which were lengthy and unwieldy. The latter part of the novel was less dream-like, more persistent towards conclusion, and I had a determined belief that if the reader felt strongly enough about the character and the story they would forgive any mishaps. In breaking down the climactic scene, the emotional pinch points felt oddly displaced and distinct from one another, and I hoped the reader would take up the baton and read quickly to conclusion. There was an incredible amount of daydreaming and visualisation of events, and the sentence structure, readability and accessibility came later. I wanted losing her twin to be difficult to articulate, and have her struggling to depict a traumatic event, but also for time to be elongated and to have her

relive each moment singly. On choosing how to write it, I was influenced by the final moments in Hartley's (1997) novel. Lila expresses her loss of Noah as the death of the only good part of her and I wanted her viewpoint to remain with everything still in relation to her. She is fundamentally unchanged. Noah's death follows an encounter with Uncle John, which is claustrophobic, so I wrote her ingratiating herself, one which felt at odds with her character, but ultimately remained in cohesion with their relationship, which is one of discomfort. I was interested in writing Lila having to adapt to an environment she can no longer control and if I had doubts about its authenticity early readers sped through at pace, because the narrative gained momentum, even when broken down into tiny constituent parts.

Characterisation and daydreaming remain the strangest part of the process, and I still think of it as distant to writing because for the majority of the process it does not involve words. After I had written a first draft of the novel, I referred to my character by name and pronouns in some critical analysis. My supervisor asked the valid question about whether I could refer to a character this way given that Lila is a collection of words I'd written. It was an interesting observation because by the time I'd breathed life into her she felt fully formed in my mind, as though she existed off the page. It was hard to refer to her, and therefore reduce her, to a collection of words, which is all she is to the reader. I'm aware I'm voicing the story and Lila's narration, but the act of navigating her perspective feels more authorially consuming and not limited to words.

On psychological tropes

I envisaged Lila as selfish, self-centred, controlling and manipulative, as well as low on empathy, but always tried to write from her perspective and without authorial judgement. I hope in approaching a character this way, their less endearing facets become the subject of the reader's gaze, rather than mine and readers can come to their own conclusion about the nature of the character.

People, however well-intentioned often don't behave in the common interest, or in the nicest way they're able and having set out to write Lila as flawed, it was a surprise to find people drawn to

her. Most people have experienced shame, horror, embarrassment in their life and we forgive the complex and multifaceted. Nicholas Royle states, on the peculiarity of literature, the reader trusts the 'conception of the author and […] characters' (Royle, 1991, p.89). In other words, we identify immediately with the storyteller. So much of the premise centred on what is kept hidden from the twins and early readers drew their own sympathetic interpretations, warming to Lila's growing self-awareness. Even at the beginning of the novel, Lila's inflated ego and strong sense of self, along with her acerbity and transgressions did not alienate. If anything, readers found her appealing. The very fact that Lila knows she is emotionally absent, somehow made her reprehensible thoughts acceptable. Coupled with this, at the novel's close, I hope readers understand Lila has little self-determination. She occupies the centre of a family with pre-existing behaviours and conflicting needs, self-interests and desires, and is surrounded by people with their own vested interests in a biased outcome. She may have an unending desire for self, but so do others. This alone possibly isn't reason enough to forgive her transgressions, but Lila encounters a man who is in effect a stranger, who just happens to be family, who may or may not have her best interests at heart and she is confronted and defeated by something she doesn't understand. With the hubris of her misguided superiority, she states she isn't clear who has the upper hand. I know as an adult, and suspect I knew as a child, no teenager ever has the upper hand in a relationship with an adult and the reader likely carries this awareness.

Outward appearances rarely crystallise for me at an early stage unless they provide some purpose. I knew Lila would be small because I wanted her potentially vulnerable. It served no purpose to write Lila as attractive, but I did want her to appear innocent. According to Pifer (2000, p.19-21) there is a highly romanticised view that 'childhood innocence' is wrapped up in beauty. James's (1991, p.13) Miles and Flora are considered to be exceptionally beautiful to their governess and this impression is intrinsically tied to their innocence. As soon as she suspects the children's complicity and deceit their 'more than earthly beauty' becomes 'unnatural' (James, 1991, p.47). I read the novel primarily for its framing and the idea of uncanny children, however, it's possible I was influenced by these early juxtapositions of innocence and beauty, and their subsequent inverse.

I believe the idea of how Lila looked came from Wright's (1768) 'Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump', a painting which depicts children who are forced to watch a harrowing scientific experiment. Alongside the children are an unnamed woman, whose eyes are directed towards those of her partner with a slight smile, oblivious and presumably in love and both are apathetic to the unfolding experiment. Her typical Georgian beauty became fused with an unsettling cold indifference.

In writing Lila, there were four facets at play: her historic desire to maintain her bond with her twin, her current grief after his death, her historic distrust of John, but also her current fears of succumbing to her own perceptions of herself. All are instigated by the arrival of a letter from her uncle. While the novel is set in the past, it deals primarily with her immediate fears and concern for the letter's content. I wrote Lila at an intersection, still tied to the small village in which she grew up, caught between past and future. Her desires had to tie together. But the historic motivation I gave Lila, which is to rid her twinship of John, dampened as I became sympathetic towards him, which I hadn't intended and subsequently I felt Lila's drive became vague and indeterminate. Her current fears were also in danger of becoming a crude psychological trope. Many facets of Lila conformed to popular ideas and simplistic presentations of character; as a twin, readers expected either conflict or grief and as she lacks empathy, reader expectations were that she should conform to coarse ideas or societal notions of what psychopathy looks like. I never envisaged Lila as having a borderline personality disorder. I wanted to explore what a lack of empathy may look like in a twin relationship and initially viewed Lila as not having an ease with relatability.

However, following some early reader feedback I did some basic research. Both Adshead & Horne (2021) and BBC Horizon *What Makes a Psychopath?* (2017) were informative. Borderline personality disorder in its most extreme form manifests as a complete inability to read expressions, which didn't sound conducive to writing a first-person point-of-view novel. It was disheartening to read that all the cliches were absolutely true and facets such as a tendency towards manipulation and low emotional awareness or engagement had already been put to use in novels by Lessing (2001), Golding (2015) and Thompson (2006).

Writing a trope, even if it meant the character conformed to first readers expectations, threatened to invite the kind of lazy writing and preconceived notions of character which didn't leave much room for manoeuvre. Early readers had strong expectations of how Lila should appear. Low empathy had an association with serial killers and it felt as though any subtlety should give way to theatrical presentations of psychopaths, which is to say the kind of dangerously debonaire, charismatic and intelligent depictions in cinema such as Uncle Charlie. I struggled to write Lila too free of emotion or too cut-off from the emotions of others and as her character developed, she became at odds with the character I set out to write, as she takes a more nuanced attitude towards her uncle amongst other things.

I made a subtle change from writing someone low on empathy, to moving Lila towards suspecting she *could be* this way. The change was minor but allowed more leeway and it changed how I thought about the work. It was liberating to realise that how Lila scores in this life on an empath scale, if there is such a thing, has little relevance. What actually drives the story is her self-perception and her want to be a better person. It was also satisfying to write her failing at school, whatever her bombastic claims to intelligence are, and without a doubt I wrote her a long way from charming and charismatic.

Despite numerous redrafts, my first reader's expectations of character steered my direction somewhat, and Lila has a certain flamboyance in the novel; at times drawn too darkly, at others too comical. The character exists in an era when children's television was occasionally cartoonishly violent: Morph, Rod and Emu, Grange Hill. But irrespective of the 1980s, we have an unnatural interest in psychopathy, with more recent dramas, providing portrayals of personality disorders with a disturbingly glamorous edge, with an emphasis on childhoods and a focus on who or what made the killer this way. More recently 'Monster' (2018) has provided solicitations of sympathy for the serial killer on social media, as did 'Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile' (2019). All of these mass market films and documentaries fix in a reader's mind who or what they will be reading. They present their characters as charming, unapologetic and without reproach, suggesting there is something exciting, daring and even attractive in their lack of compunction. For Eagleton (2010,

p.210), the concept of evil is linked to original sin and the very notion of sin is anchored to an act of freedom, the simple deed of 'eating an apple.' Before reading Eagleton I'd already written Lila state she wants to be Eve eating an apple and letting its juices run down her chin. It was difficult to remove all preconceived notions of a character who was low on empathy, and occasionally Lila has fallen into fitting tropes.

I wanted Lila to have an otherness, much like Roy's (1998) portrayal of Estha's octopus or Jackson's (2009b) portrayal of Merricat believing she should have been born a werewolf. Golding (2015) writes Sophy, a young violent girl of eleven, as aware she is not Sophy but '*This',* (Golding, 2015, p.184), which is an unnamed thing which sits in the 'mouth of the dark tunnel […] without any feelings' and manipulates the 'Sophy-creature' (Golding, 2015, p.84). Golding (2015) makes Sophy the creature, at the behest of *This*. The term 'woof' is more widely used in America to describe flashes of irritation or anger. However, Merriam-Webster defines it as a verb, with a second meaning of 'express[ing] oneself in a usually stylised boastful or aggressive manner' (Merriam Webster, 30th Oct 2024). It seemed to be suitable for Lila, who I wanted to portray as self-important at the beginning of the novel, only to later reveal her vulnerability. Early on in writing the novel I attempted to give the twins a form of cryptophasia, formed through research into an archaic regional dialect, and the insult 'donkey-stone' remains which came from Kellet (1994), along with boggles (a Yorkshire ghost) and a Barghest (a supernatural black dog, often referred to as a padfoot in the South of England) which were cut in subsequent drafts. Lila's black dog became a 'creature' owed to reader connections to Churchill's metaphor for depression. However, Lila's aggression portrayed as a rabid dog appealed to my schlockier inclinations and I liked the thought of it erupting in her character. Much of the archaic dialogue was modernised when I made the decision not to write a cryptophasia in the form of first-person plural fiction.

Another aspect not easily avoided was the question of nature versus nurture which entered the novel. The story ends after Noah's death following Jake and John's accounts of what happened on the beach. I wrote both accounts slightly conflicting, neither fully believable. Lila has two different versions of this story that do not comport. Both her father's and uncle's story are their own

traumatic interpretation, which Lila reinterprets following her own traumatic experience. There is phantom after phantom, either newly formed or reappearing, throughout the Clearwater history. I wanted the reader to wonder how much Lila dissembles, self-projects and how much she buries in the act of telling her story. However, if the reader believes Connie's comments about John being a rotten child from birth, then a difficult family history and potential psychosis slide into one another, posing questions about nurture's impact. In writing about transgenerational phantoms, the question of what is inherited is already there. I'd read novels that firmly presented the case for nature and embodied all the psychological tropes surrounding that. Golding (2015) presents Sophy as somehow born violent, in sharp contrast to her twin Toni. Their innate difference suggests that it is nature, not nurture which is at the root of Sophy's terrible behaviour. Her early pleasures are found in killing young dabchicks in the nest and listening to their mother's cry of distress and her violence appears unrooted and without reason. While Sophy and Toni's childhood is not ideal, and their mother abandons them to be with another man, their father raises them in a solidly middle-class environment free of poverty, but he isn't physically demonstrative and is largely indifferent to them. Sophy's childhood thrill of killing defenceless creatures stays with her into adulthood and she stabs her boyfriend when she tires of him. Golding (2015, p.187) offers no rational explanation other than Sophy has a 'weirdness,' which is an understated term for Sophy's desperate need to sate her violence. She kidnaps a boy for ransom, but instead fantasises about killing him as she would a rabbit. Towards the end of the novel Sophy has no wish to steer away from any innate darkness but to let it engulf her entirely.

Similarly, Lessing (2001) presents the Lovatt's perfectly normal four children in contrast to their monstrous fifth child who strangles the family dog in his first year. It seems that the child is inherently evil and his 'small cold eyes' are 'malevolent' (Lessing, 2001, p.62). Of course, this is the parent's perception and a doctor tells Ben's mother, Harriet, that 'the problem is not with Ben, but with you. You don't like him very much' (Lessing, 2001, p.124).

Whether the cause is poor parenting or some absence or corruption of a genetic strain, troublesome children are within the family home and not easily escapable, which is what prompts

discomfort for the reader. The question of where responsibility for misdeeds begins and ends has always fuelled the nature versus nature debate. Questions about whether an entire family could be guilty, posed a question for how I wanted to frame the Clearwater family. No single character is solely responsible for killing Simon in Golding's (2016) *Lord of the Flies.* An entire group of boys mistake him for the beast, all whipped up by their own primitive fears, terrified of a mythic creature of their own making, albeit Jack and his leaders stoke and utilise these fears to keep their masses in check.

The detailed explanations began to feel less important and what John did or didn't do could remain unanswered. Culpability or guilt through absence became a consideration and I became interested in the family inventing their own narrative of John. Although the question of how Noah died hung over the novel, the question of why remained the most important one for me for quite some time, and not one I managed to answer. Both reader expectations and the *why* pushed me into a psychological rabbit hole where I needed to understand who Lila was, why she was the way she was, what she needed and the lengths she might go to in order to get it. I tend to like to know why my character's story has to be told at a point of time, and this often becomes the backbone of the narrative. However, I couldn't answer this question when writing Lila. The idea for the letter came later. I knew I wanted her to be the problem in the twin's relationship, with a gradual shift from a sense something is off, to one where her environment becomes imbalanced with the introduction of her uncle. Her frustration at her failing sibling relationship turns inwards as she battles with herself. Accidental deaths are always plausible but arguably would fall short for the story I wanted to write. My feeling was that in a triangle, only two could be left metaphorically standing, and Lila would ensure she survived, but on completion, the thought that her uncle somehow eclipsed her twin didn't sit well with my aversion to older men and young women narratives and it was changed.

A metaphysical fear as a fever-dream of our own making and created by our own wild imaginings became more appealing. I wrote Lila stating in the prologue that there are worse things than nothingness. I left this ambiguous as to whether she referred to her lack of empathy, or her knowledge that her story hinges on people's inaccurate assumptions of others, or that she did

nothing to save her schoolmate. I knew I hadn't written 'there are worse things than nothing' and discovered its source in Sterne (1996), which I read during my A-levels, and under duress I might add, albeit the novel evidently stayed with me. There are voids in the novel, with typeface blacked out, which forced me to wonder whether Sterne was trying to imply something dreadful was occurring and I was witnessing an early redacted document, but he answers his own question later: 'I look upon a chapter which has only nothing in it, with respect; and considering what worse things there are in the world […]' (Sterne, 1996, p.442). Between nothing and the worst, I'll take nothing. There was the question of Finn. At the end of the novel, Lila believes doing nothing is the worst possible act. It was a struggle to write, not only because I had to question what Lila might do and to contemplate that a child, or anyone with any interest in self-preservation, could instinctively choose to do nothing, irrespective of whether we believe we would.

Abraham & Torok (1994, p.179) argue that the unconscious of one person can react to another person's unconscious, without passing through the conscious at all. It is more likely to happen with the unspeakable, the repressed or our phobias emitting anxiety signals and behaving as a non-verbal language. Fear, repressed memories or emotions can be inherited. Lila is haunted, by what she doesn't know and is intrigued by a secret she senses, a *phantom* that she can't identify within her. 'The "phantom" is a formation in the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject's own repression but because on account of a *direct empathy with the unconscious or the rejected psychic matter of a parental object*' (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p.181). It's a presence within that a person cannot identify so it is unreachable, yet it is there, and I began to form ideas of Lila's unattributed anxiety and to write her apprehensive of herself, or of her family.

The approach to character is as magpie-like as the rest of my writing but I hope that at the end of the novel, it is evident Lila's unreliability comes from her sense of guilt. She isn't psychotic and for much of the novel she empathises and relates to others, particularly her twin who is absorbed into her sense of self. Her self-perceived culpability has remained private for eight years, leaving her isolated and voiceless about a traumatic event which has shaped her. The prologue contains a dream within a dream to show that Lila is telling her story after years of exhausting

encounters with revenants, to the point she's unclear about whether she is in waking hours. Being relentlessly haunted is what makes her unreliable, not her own perceived monstrosity.

I always knew Lila wouldn't have the capacity to commit crude undirected acts of violence because I was aiming for something far emptier and made a note of a passage from a novel: 'What does she remind you of? Sitting there so cam and beautiful and all wrong inside. What does she remind you of? One of those brilliant things that grow in the woods, isn't it? One of those apparently perfect things that collapse into dust at a touch because they are hollowed inside' (Tey, 2011, p.174).

Writing Lila was always about what low empathy might look like for twin telepathy but I was interested in what unease looked like and what made an uncanny child. If we can call uncanny a viewpoint, an uncanny child in fiction is usually a story told by an adult character. Jackson (2009a) in 'The Intoxicated' tells the story from the viewpoint of a man who meets the hostess's seventeen-year-old daughter at a party. He believes teenage girls are only interested in 'cocktails' and 'necking' until he finds out she is writing an essay about the end of the world (Jackson, 2009a, p.1). She remarks that the trouble with his generation is they hadn't been scared enough at her age, which is why the world is such a mess. Then in a state of 'numb excitement', she muses how the end will happen, elaborating on the order of things: 'I think of the churches as going first, before even the Empire State Building. And then all the big apartment houses by the river, slipping slowly into the water with people inside' (Jackson, 2009a, p.3). Her vision for the world's demise is organised religion first, quickly followed by the wealthy drowning. It is sinister, more so because stylistically is relayed in a matter-of-fact way.

Both Jackson's (2009a) 'numb excitement' and Tey's (2011) 'hollow inside' set the tone for Lila. The former encompassed the contradictions I perceived in my character. However, these stories are very different to what I was trying to achieve. Both are third-person point-of-view and rely on an adult's perspective. There is little interiority, leaving more for the reader to interpret. First-person viewpoint alters what constitutes uncanny, opening the door for self-awareness, or unreliability, or potential confession or awakening. Jackson's (2009b) novel, opens with Merricat telling us that, 'I have often thought that with any luck at all I would have been born a werewolf,

because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length' (Jackson, 2009b, p.1). She provides a matter-of-fact account of her dislikes: washing, dogs and noise. Her likes are: Her sister, a man called Richard and 'deathcap mushrooms' (Jackson, 2009b, p.1). Immediately after professing her love of poisonous fungi, she states: 'Everyone else in my family is dead' (Jackson, 2009b, p.1).

Franklin (2016, p.3) notes that critics were puzzled by Jackson seamlessly operating across two very distinct genres, that of 'literary suspense' and 'comedy.' Merricat's emotional absence can occasionally be entertaining and shocking, despite the fact we suspect she's murdered her entire family, and I wrote Lila at several points having moments of black humour, albeit I hoped the reader would feel mild embarrassment on reading.

Much of the novel focusses on what is unsaid. The question or promise posed to the reader is one of anticipation, whereby the reader will find out what happened in the past. After reading Royle (1991) I had an idea to begin the novel with a letter. The arrival of the letter, and Lila not reading it, signifies her inability to look and listen to what is immediately in front of her. John does not exist as anything other than a memory until she opens the letter at the end of the novel and the letter's arrival is the reason Lila relays her story, supposing its contents refer to the nature of Finn's death. On opening the letter at the end of the novel, she finds it addresses nothing relating to that year. John still does not exist as a living, breathing person but words on the page, which has an enormous impact on Lila despite its lack of content. She is haunted by its mere presence, a sharp reminder of who she was, and the object itself becomes her own metaphysical phantom. Royle's (1991, p.163) study of the telephone, in the context of Raymond Chandler's *The Little Sister* (1949), shows that the telephone has a 'disruptive' impact not only on Marlowe's train of thought but on the text itself. In *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), it is an unexpected telegram from Uncle Charlie which announces his visit, and it is this communication which will disrupt their lives more than they could have imagined. The viewer knows Uncle Charlie has murdered. A letter is less invasive than a phone call, but still a disrupting influence, with a permanence the telephone doesn't possess. For Derrida (1988) a letter can be read and reread and disrupts the notion of time. Without the intonation of voice, or the benefit of expression, its reader's state of mind can also be instrumental to its

interpretation. Royle (1991, p.11-12) states there is something frightening yet 'seductive' about telepathy, even when linked to sympathy and free of supernatural connotations, it can be deemed a sinister act, with thoughts transmuted to another rendering a person without privacy. I wanted an unopened letter to lead to Lila reinterpreting her past in a state of turmoil about opening it, only to discover what has been omitted from its contents. She is not divested of her past bond.

However, the lack of knowledge is not just owed to an unopened letter. Reflections and doubles abound and I intentionally wrote Lila's reflection everywhere she goes, from John's eyes, to the lake surface, to windows, to mirrors and the use of cameras and pictures filled with artifice, and mistaken identities, are all written to question who is who. There was no simple origin to John and Dad's stories which are strangely mirrored until they diverge. I made use of sound, particularly poor transmission, to demonstrate the fractured family communication. It is difficult to know as an author whether all of this hints at uncanny repetition or if it is just plain repetitive.

Current Period Influences

Anything I write is a product of its time. While the novel is set during the 1980s its production has sat alongside my present day and was produced during a major global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, an insurrection on America's capitol following a surge in right-wing populism also present in Europe, and a long overdue rebuke of the patriarchal system in the film industry and the judicial system. Never before had society felt more conflicted or divided with mainstream media giving voice to extremism. While writing the novel it was impossible to escape modern influences.

The 2019 Me-Too movement brought an increased dialogue about historic behaviours. It was a dialogue many women I knew had had before informally but not en-masse. It was impossible not to view the 1980s through this current lens with my own childhood and its behaviours appearing archaic, even occasionally extreme. Harassment was often described as pestering or teasing, bringing an almost playful description to inappropriate behaviours. Occasionally unwanted attention was deemed to be a compliment and should be taken as such. Most of us diffused bad

behaviour through being neutral or amicable. So few women had stories of confrontation or retaliation and certainly not retribution. I wrote an environment where there was an expectation, albeit not acceptability, for boys to be cheeky, mischievous, ebullient, and trouble-making and for Jake to view their disruptive behaviour as a sign of their youth or rite of passage. The modern-day lens influenced my narrator's agency, her militancy and her observations about the perceived rigidity of the double standards she is subjected to.

Screen portrayals of young women I first saw in the 1980s made for uncomfortable viewing. *Valerie and her Week of Wonders* (1970) view of a young woman's sexuality was frolicking in fountains while wearing a diaphanous nightgown. *The Owl Service* (1969) television adaptation had a much older actress portraying Alison, who demonstrated a manipulative sexuality I hadn't been aware of in the book. Her nightmares or possessions were shown as bare-legged writhing on the bed while softly moaning, which had an almost orgasmic suggestion. *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) didn't avoid suggestive scenes involving its young leads and at school we read O'Brien (1974) which features a rape.

One of my scenes was problematic because a first reader assumed I insinuated a teenage boy could consider rape. This wasn't intended, but I wrote a boy with an aggressively charged manner, perhaps with a lingering playground air, even though something more adult is coming to the fore when he approaches the narrator. If I reflect on my own youth, I never feared escalation. Growing up in a small village with no anonymity made me feel safe. But another reader pointed to a slew of articles about teenagers doing exactly that. I knew on writing Lila she would be less wary and I wrote her having a confliction about her newfound sexuality. I wrote admiration, even when unrequited, as not repulsive, but instead exhilarating. It is possible this confliction is why the scene suggested more. However, I envisaged admiration as one thing and being approached quite another. I'm not convinced without the Me-Too movement I would have broached any adolescent sexuality. My work is usually devoid of romance so it's easy to avoid, but at the time of writing, I felt unable to write Lila without being subjected to some unwanted attention. I wanted her first kiss to begin with a sense of control, until she finds her predicament increasingly uncertain, which confirms what the reader

likely already knows, which is she was never in control. Trapped in an uncomfortable scenario she mistakenly uses a foothold of attraction, which incurs her brother's disgust and his friend's dogged determination. It has nothing to do with her own desire. It is easier to kiss Finn than not to. It was intentional to have Noah stop it; I knew before writing Lila's wishes would not be heard.

During the writing of this thesis several films and television series aired which contained close relationships between older men and young, impressionable women or children, some of which weren't biological: *The Last of Us* (2023), *Logan* (2017), and *Gifted* (2017). None portrayed the relationships in a particularly negative light, but the films depicted young women being actively pushed into adult worlds where they can no longer be children. They paled in comparison to some of the literature I reread.

In James's (2010) novel Maisie has a keenness to know about adult relationships, something present in Lila. Maisie is enamoured by her new stepfather and although their relationship is never written explicitly, James makes use of subtext and there are highly charged encounters where it is evident what isn't said. The exchanges which are free of dialogue felt relevant to my own story. I was interested in how James demonstrates Sir Claude's manipulation, through an awareness of his stepdaughter's affection and it was reading James (2010) which prompted me to write Lila with a far from positive view of her biological long-lost uncle

Although it is narrated in the third-person we see things from Maisie's point-of-view as she makes close observations of the adults around her, particularly Sir Claude who admits to being a 'beastly cad' (James, 2010, p.244). He confides in his stepdaughter about his adult life, including the danger of being adored by female friends. Unlike Nabokov (2015), James does not write Maisie as a 'nymphet', nor is the relationship paedophilic, but there are strong overtones of suggestion despite Claude giving the impression their relationship is avuncular and jocular, constantly referring to Maisie as 'dear boy' (James, 2010, p.172). Nabokov's (2015) Dolores has so little agency or autonomy, her name and identity is inconsistent throughout the book: Lo, Lola, Lolita, Dolly, Dolores Haze, Colo. The names are whatever Humbert assigns her given how he feels about her in the moment.

Sir Claude is aware that Maisie's gaze is 'more than filial' (James, 2010, 194) and the simple gesture of her passing him his hat results in 'something moved her still to hold the other side of the brim, so that, united by their grasp of this object, they stood some seconds, looking many things at each other' (James, 2010, p.183). Whose gaze we are in is difficult to say, but James provides an insight later when Maisie and her stepfather 'held each other long enough to reaffirm intensely their vows; after which they were almost forced apart by Mrs Wix's jumping to her feet' (James, 2010, p.192-194). When it becomes clear at the end of the novel that Maisie is unlikely to elect to live with Sir Claude, he repeatedly asks whether Mrs Wix has 'tried to affect' her (James, 2010, p.243). It is ironic given the only person affecting Maisie is Sir Claude. We are under no illusion of Maisie's affection for her stepfather, or his for her, but in their reciprocation, I wonder if James's depictions of Claude's confidences about the maternal figures in Maisie's life, which is a gross departure from any caring role, were intended as such. Through a modern lens, Claude's behaviour might even be considered grooming. While Nabokov's (2015) novel is distressing and bleak, I took comfort from Dolores's pluckier aspects. She has less autonomy and independence than Maisie and Humbert acknowledges that his new stepdaughter is 'my own creation, another, fanciful Lolita—perhaps more real than Lolita; overlapping, encasing her; floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness—indeed, no life of her own' (Nabokov, 2015, p.62). It is with some relief that Dolores becomes increasingly irreverent in her dealings with Humbert, especially when she consistently mocks him. She confronts him, reminding him sharing a bed is 'incest' (Nabokov, 2015, p.119) and that he is an 'old thing' (Nabokov, 2015, p.118), later calling him a 'chump' and stating that she was 'a daisy-fresh girl' who has been soiled by a 'dirty, dirty old man' (Nabokov, 2015, p.141). It's an irreverence I tried to carry into my own work.

Somewhere between *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and James (2010) I knew Lila would take an active dislike to John. It felt necessary. However, I tried to emulate Hitchcock's and James's circular structure of their unfolding central relationships, with all of Lila's unknowns, leading her back to John. I knew she would start the novel with less innocence and would demonstrate agency in her dealings with her uncle. I ended up writing John more sympathetically than I intended and he does

have an avuncular relationship with Lila, defending her swimming record and taking care to encourage her hobbies. It is only at Christmas that he teases her about being bad which becomes fodder for Lila's fertile and imaginative mind. Despite shades of *A Shadow of Doubt* within my work, Uncle John is not a fun uncle. He is Lila's antagonist-double but also her grief-object, and the person she is ultimately twinned to because of the secret they share. The division between the hero and the evil rival is blurred. Yet most of the novel is about their struggle, with Lila's antagonism clearly defined from the outset, which John is aware of. In her uncle's affinity with Noah, she grieves for her twin but also in a way for her uncle, as she fails to recognise a friend in her mirror image.

6. Final Thoughts

To be critical of a piece of work shortly after having written it is a difficult task. The practice involved in the creation of *Stranger Like You* has been very different to any other creative work I have produced. On the one hand, I wrote conscious of the theory and research undertaken, hoping to address some of this in the creative output. At the same time, I was influenced by, as any writer is, the period in which the novel was written. The minutiae of my day-to-day was aggregated with the theory and lived experience forced its way into the work. No work is ever cleanly what I set out to produce, it is subject to change.

The act of writing is an act of being double. There was a strangeness in trying to make sense of a historical period, when reconciling my own experiences and assumptions with societally how we view that period. It prompted questions for my own memory; about the world, the trust in institutions and authority, what was real and genuine, what was coloured by my emotional response at the time and subject to change with hindsight. To write the era was to double the experience of it. I wrote a fictional character, but I was present within the fiction, writing my own memories of a topography and era, which were likely fictional given the passage of forty years. I couldn't stop forming connections to disparate experiences and objects, which made me realise the strangeness, and even otherness, in cognition and recall.

I was conscious that the temporal double as a research subject is also about the act of being double. The temporal uncanny originates in the unconscious. By its nature memories are occluded, or not fully accessible, and in those occlusions, the subject often forms a narrative in order to make sense of any voids. In writing childhood trauma, I was aware the character would be revisiting a historical period, with all the questions around the accuracy of what was real and what was imagined. Given the aestheticism of the uncanny and its ties to the supernatural, I had questions about whether a trauma narrative containing uncanny facets was appropriate given the seriousness of the subject matter. The fictional works I drew on showed uncanny facets can be acceptable if they are sensitively written and show the experience as shaped partly by memory and partly through an imagination filled with impressions that do not readily give up their secrets. Psychological

uncertainty is uncanny, whether it draws on traditional aesthetic ideas of the uncanny or not. I hope the novel presents a young woman who is unable to leave her past behind, never wholly comfortable in her present or able to advance without a painful revisiting. I thought about this uncertainty or unattributed anxiety as a downstream effect. It is something that happens beyond questions of the fantastic or frightening, a sort of 'post-uncanny' sensation, where occlusions are dreamlike, not quite present and never fully absent. It does not concern itself with fright or terror, although in its realism, this has been by far the most frightening work I have produced, although I had no intention to scare.

My future relationship to the work will be one of repositioning. To produce a work for a thesis is to produce one within time constraints and can involve turning in first-drafts of creative work that are not always ready for assessment. However, any revisitation will be after a period of time when I can view the work anew. Before then, I am ready to explore a new creative project.

Works Cited

FICTION

Core Texts

BANVILLE. J. 2005. *The Sea*. London: Picador.
BARKER, P. 1998. *Another World.* London: Penguin.
ENRIGHT, A. 2007. *The Gathering.* London_ Vintage Books.
GARNER, A. 2017. *The Owl Service.* London: Harper Collins.
HARTLEY, L.P. 1997. *The Go-Between*. London: Penguin
ROY, A. 1998. *The God of Small Things*. London: Flamingo.

Other Texts Cited

BANKS, I. 2008. *The Wasp Factory.* Ilford: Abacus.
BENNETT, B. 2021. *The Vanishing Half.* London: Dialogue Books.
BERGMAN, I. 2009. *Four Stories.* London: Marion Boyars.
CARROLL, L. 2009. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.* London: Penguin Classics.
CARTER, A. 1996. *Collected Short Stories: Burning Your Boats.* London: Vintage.
COLLINS, W. 2008. *The Woman in White.* London: Wordsworth Editions.
CRESSWELL, H. 1987. *Moondial.* London: Faber & Faber.
.
GOLDING, W. 2016. *Lord of the Flies.* London: Penguin.
GOLDING, W. 2015. *Darkness Visible.* London: Faber & Faber.
HALL, S. 2017. *How To Paint a Dead Man.* London: Faber & Faber.
HOFFMAN, E.T.A. 2011. *The Sandman.* London: Fantasy & Horror Classics.
JACKSON, S. 2009a. *The Lottery and Other Stories.* London: Penguin.
JACKSON, S. 2009b. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle.* London: Penguin.
JAMES, H. 2010. *What Maisie Knew*. London: Penguin.
JAMES, H. 1991. *The Turn of the Screw.* New York: Dover Thrift Editions.
JOHNSON, D. 2020. *Sisters.* London: Jonathan Cape.
LESSING, D 2001. *The Fifth Child.* London: Flamingo.
MACLEAN, W. 2021. *The Apparition Phase.* London: William Heinemann
MASEFIELD, J. 1935. *The Box of Delights.* London: William Heinemann
MITCHELL, D. 2007. *Black Swan Green.* London: Sceptre.
MORGAN, A. 2016. *Beside Myself.* London: Bloomsbury.
NABOKOV, V. 2015. *Lolita.* London: Penguin.
NIFFENGER, A. 2010. *Her Fearful Symmetry.* London: Bloomsbury.
OBRIEN, R.C. 2014. *Z for Zachariah.* London: Penguin.
PEARCE, P. 1958. *Tom's Midnight Garden.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
TEY, J. 2011. *Miss Pym Disposes.* London: Arrow Books.
REID, I. 2017. *I'm Thinking of Ending Things.* New York: Gallery Books.
STERNE, L. 1996. *Tristram Shandy.* London: Wordsworth Classics.
STORR, C. 1958. *Marianne Dreams.* London: Faber & Faber.
TOON, F. 2020. *Pine.* New York: Doubleday.
THOMPSON, J. 2006. *The Killer Inside Me.* London: Orion.
TRYON, THOMAS. 2012. *The Other*. New York: NYRB Classics.
WALTERS, M. 2019. *The Complex.* Cromer: Salt Publishing.
WYLD, E. 2013. *All the Birds Singing.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Film

Apaches (1977) Directed by J. Mackenzie. BFI Player. Available at: BFI Player (Accessed: 16th November 2024).

Big Trouble in Little China (1986) Directed by J. Carpenter. (DVD). United Kingdom: Fox.

Brideshead Revisited (1981) Directed by C. Sturridge. (DVD). London: ITV Studios Home Entertainment.

Charley Says: Strangers (1973) Directed by R. Taylor. National Archives. Available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230801174124/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/1964to1979/filmpage_strangers.htm (Accessed: 16th November 2024)

E.T the Extra Terrestrial (1982) Directed by S. Spielberg. (DVD). United Kingdom: Universal Pictures Studio.

Gifted (2017) Directed by M. Webb. (DVD) United Kingdom: Searchlight Pictures.

Logan (2017) Directed by J Mangold. (DVD) United Kingdom: 20th Century Studios.

Lonely Water (1973) Directed by J. Grant. BFI Player. Available at: BFI Player (Accessed: 16th November 2024).

Never Go with Strangers (1971) Directed by S. Erulkar. BFI Player. Available at: BFI Player (Accessed: 16th November 2024).

Protect & Survive (1975) Directed by B. Stewart. BFI Player. Available at: BFI Player (Accessed: 16th November 2024).

Return to Oz (1985) Directed by W. Murch. (DVD). Poland: Walt Disney Studios.

Romeo & Juliet (1968) Directed by F. Zeffirelli. (DVD). London: Paramount Pictures.

Shadow of a Doubt (1943) Directed by A. Hitchcock. (DVD). London: Universal Pictures Video.

The Evil Dead (1983) Directed by S. Raimi. (DVD). London: Sony Pictures.

The Company of Wolves (1984) Directed by N. Jordan. (DVD). Austria: ITV Home Studios.

The Owl Service (1969) Directed by P. Plummer. (DVD). London: Network.

The Hour of the Wolf (1968) Directed by I. Bergman. (DVD). California: Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

The Seventh Seal (1957) Directed by I. Bergman. (DVD). United Kingdom: BFI.

Valerie and her Week of Wonders (1970) Directed by J. Jires. (DVD). United Kingdom: Redemption Films.

Watership Down (1978) Directed by M. Rosen. (DVD). United Kingdom: Warner Home Video.

Wild Strawberries (1957) Directed by I. Bergman. BFI Player. Available at: BFI Player (Accessed: 16th November 2024).

Wizard of Oz (1939) Directed by V. Fleming and K. Vidor. (DVD). United Kingdom: Warner Brothers Home Entertainment.

Broadcasts

The Last of Us (2023). *Naughty Dog.* New York: HBO, 15th January 2023.
What Makes a Psychopath? (2017). *Horizon*. London: BBC2, 30th August 2017.
Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile. (2019). *COTA Films.* California: Netflix, 3rd May 2019.
Monster. (2018). *Prospect Films*. California: Netflix, 22nd January 2018.
Grange Hill (1978-2007) *BBC Television.* London: BBC, 8th February 1978.

Album

BOWIE, D. (1980). *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*. (CD). New York City: RCA Records.

Paintings

BEERSTRAATEN, J.A. (1661). *Warmond Castle in a Winter Landscape.* (Oil on Canvas). National Museums, Liverpool.
WRIGHT, J. (1768). *Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump.* (Oil on Canvas). The National Gallery, London.

NON-FICTION

Books

ALISON, J. 2019. *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative*. New York: Catapult.
ALEXEIEVICH, S. 1997. *Voices from Chernobyl.* New York: Picador.
ABRAHAM, N. & TOROK, M. ed RAND, NT. 1994. *The Shell and the Kernel. Volume 1.* London: The University of Chicago Press. ADSHEAD, G & HORNE, E. 2021. *Better the Devil You Know.* London: Faber & Faber.
BACHELARD, G. 2014. *The Poetics of Space.* New York: Penguin.
BENNET, A & ROYLE, N. 2016. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory.* London: Routledge.
BOTTING, F. 2014. *Gothic*. Oxon: Routledge.
BROTHERSTONE, S & LAWRENCE, D. 2017. *Scarred for Life Volume One: The 1970s.* North Carolina: Lulu Press.
BROTHERSTONE, S & LAWRENCE, D. 2020. *Scarred for Life Volume Two: The 1980s.* North Carolina: Lulu Press.
CARUTH, C. 1995. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
CARUTH, C. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative & History.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
COATES, P. 1988. *The Double and the Other: Identity as Ideology in Post-Romantic Fiction*. London: Macmillan.
COLLINS, J & JERVIS, J. 2008. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
COXON, D & HIRST, R. 2021. *Writing the Uncanny: Essays on Crafting Strange Fiction.* Liverpool: Dead Ink.
DE NOOY, J. 2005. *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture: Look Twice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
DERRIDA, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International.* (Translated from the French by Peggy Kamuf). Oxon: Routledge.
DORFMANN, E. 2020. *Double Trouble: The Doppelgänger from Romanticism to Postmodernism.* New York & London: Routledge.
EAGLETON, T. 2010. *On Evil.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

ELIZABETH, S. 2022. *The Art of Darkness: A Treasury of the Morbid, Melancholic and Macabre.* London: Frances Lincoln.
FELMAN, S. 1982. *Literature and Psychoanalysis – The Question of Reading: Otherwise.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
FISHER, M. 2016. *The Weird and the Eerie.* London: Repeater Books.
FISHER, M. 2014. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures.* London: Zero Books.
FRANKLIN, R. 2016. *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life.* New York: Liveright Publishing.
FREUD, S. 2003. *The Uncanny.* London: Penguin.
FREUD, S. 2004. *Studies in Hysteria.* London: Penguin.
FREUD, S. 2011. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.* London: Imago Publishing.
FREUD, S. 2014. *The Neuro-Psychoses of the Defence.* London: White Press.
FREUD, S. 2015. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* New York: Dover Thrift Editions.
FREUD, S. 2001a. *Totem and Taboo*. London & New York: Routledge.
FREUD, S edited by GAY, P. 1995. *The Freud Reader*. London: Vintage Books.
HEIDEGGER, M. 1967. *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.
HUGHES, T edited by SCAMMELL, W. 1995. *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose.* London: Faber & Faber.
KELLET, A. 1994. *The Yorkshire Dictionary of Dialect, Tradition and Folklore.* Leeds: Smith Settle.
KING, S. 2006. *Dance Macabre.* London: Hodder.
KROGER, L & ANDERSON, M. 2019. *Monster She Wrote: The Women who Pioneered Horror & Speculative Fiction.* Philadelphia: Quirk Press.
LACAN, J. translated by SHERIDAN, A. 2005. *Ecrits: A Selection.* London: Routledge.
LAMOTT, A. 2020. *Bird by Bird: Instructions on Writing and Life.* London: Canongate.
MAY, R. 1975. *The Courage to Create.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
PIFER, E. 2000. *Demon or Doll: Images of the Child in Contemporary Writing and Culture.* Charlotesville and London: University Press of Virginia.
ROYLE, N. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
ROYLE, N. 1991. *Telepathy and Literature*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
SCOVELL, A. 2017. *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange.* Luton: Auter Publishing.
SEGAL, N.L. 2000. *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us About Human Behaviour.* New York: Penguin Group.
SEGAL, N.L. 2017. *Twin Mythconceptions: False Beliefs, Fables and Facts About Twins*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press.
SEITZ, B. 2019. *Intersubjectivity and the Double: Troubled Matters.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
STANISLAVSKI, C. 2022. *An Actor Prepares.* London: Bloomsbury.
TODOROV, T. 1975. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre.* New York: Cornell University Press.
VINEN, R. 2009. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s.* London: Simon & Schuster
WALLACE, N. 1996. *The Silent Twins*. London: Vintage.
WILLIAMS, R. 1975. *The Long Revolution.* Westport: Greenwood.

Journal Articles

BANNON, B. 1985. *Double, Double: Toil and Trouble.* Literature Film Quarterly, Vol 13, Iss 1. Jan 1, 1985. Pp 56-64. Salisbury Md.
DERRIDA, J. 1988. *Telepathy.* Oxford: The Oxford Literary Review Vol 10. pp3-41.
FELMAN, S. 1977. *Turning the Screw of Interpretation.* Literature and Psychoanalysis - The Question of Reading: Otherwise, No. 55/56 , pp. 94-207. Yale University Press.
FREUD, S. translated by STRACHEY, J in collaboration with FREUD, A. 2001b. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Volume XVII (1917-1919). *An Infantile Neuroses and Other Works.* London: Vintage.
RADCLIFFE, A.1826. *On the Supernatural in Poetry*. New Monthly Magazine, 16 p145-152.

RILEY, M & PALMER, J. 1978. *Time and the Structure of Memory in 'The Go-Between'.* College Literature, Fall 1978, Vol 5, No.3 (Fall 1978) pp. 219-227. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
ROYLE, N. 2008. *Telepathies.* Oxford: Oxford Literary Review Vol 30 ppv-ix

Websites

BBC. 2008. *BBC nuclear bomb script released.* (BBC [Internet] Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7648042.stm#:~:text=A%20script%20written%20by%20the,stay%20in%20your%20own%20homes%22 [Accessed 15th January 2024])

BBC. 2013. *Economy: There is no alternative (TINA) is back* (BBC [Internet] Available from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21703018 [Accessed 8th October 2023])

BBC. 2023. *Sunak: We'll hold our nerve and stick to inflation plan* (BBC [Internet] Available from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-66012824 [Accessed 8th October 2023])

BBC ARCHIVE. 1986. *Radioactive Cloud from Chernobyl, 1986.* (BBC Archive [Internet] Available from https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/radioactive-cloud-from-chernobyl-disaster-1986/zs29r2p [Accessed 24th November 2023])

CONN, D. 2015. *We were fed lies about the violence at Orgreave. Now we need the truth.* (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/22/orgreave-truth-police-miners-strike [Accessed 21st January 2024]).

COZENS, C. 2001. *Saatchi Poster 'cost Labour the 1979 election'* (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2001/may/30/advertising.marketingandpr [Accessed 26th January 2024])

FROST, R. 1914. *The Death of a Hired Man.* (Poetry Foundation [Internet] Available from https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44261/the-death-of-the-hired-man [Accessed 12th January 2024])

HANSARD, 1986. *Chernobyl Accident: Movement of Sheep.* (Hansard [internet] Available from https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1986/jun/20/chernobyl-accident-movement-of-sheep [Accessed 24th November 2023])

HARRIS, D. 2016. *Margaret Thatcher's government thought football fans so violent she set up a 'war cabinet'* (The Independent [Internet] Available from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/margaret-thatcher-s-government-thought-football-fans-so-violent-she-set-up-a-war-cabinet-a6883226.html [Accessed 23rd November 2023])

HOWLEY, C. 2022. *Three of England's four most sparsely populated areas are in Yorkshire, 2021 census data shows.* (Yorkshire Post [Internet] Available from https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/three-of-englands-four-most-sparsely-populated-areas-are-in-yorkshire-2021-census-data-shows-3748187 [Accessed 23rd November 2023])

KEATS, J. 1817. *On Negative Capability: Letter to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817.* (Poetry Foundation [Internet] Available from

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69384/selections-from-keatss-letters [Accessed 10th November 2024])

KING, D. 2012. *My Favourite Hitchcock: Shadow of a Doubt.* (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2012/aug/15/my-favourite-hitchcock-shadow-of-doubt [Accessed 19th August 2024])

MACFARLANE, R. 2015. *The eeriness of the English Countryside*. (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/10/eeriness-english-countryside-robert-macfarlane [Accessed 23rd November 2023])

MARGARET THATCHER FOUNDATION. 1980. *Speech to Conservative Women's Conference.* (Margaret Thatcher Foundation [Internet] Available from https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104368 [Accessed 8th October 2023])

MARGARET THATCHER FOUNDATION. 1987. *Speech to Conservative Party Conference (*Margaret Thatcher Foundation [Internet] Available from https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106941 [Accessed 21st January 2024])

MERRIAM WEBSTER. 2024. (Merrian Webster Dictionary. [Internet] Available from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/woof [Accessed 25th July 2024])

MELVILLE, R. 2014. *The Battle of Beanfield*: *Stonehenge 1985* (You Tube [Internet] Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LHizyCtakw [Accessed 8th October 2023])

ROSE, S. 2017). (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jul/06/post-horror-films-scary-movies-ghost-story-it-comes-at-night [Accessed 29th October 2024])

ROSE, S. 2022). (The Guardian [Internet] Available from https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/aug/02/i-created-a-monster-how-post-horror-it-comes-at-night-a-ghost-story [Accessed 29th October 2024])

SHAKESPEARE, W. *Julius Caeser*. (MIT [Internet] Available from http://shakespeare.mit.edu/julius_caesar/full.html [Accessed 7th October 2024])

TIME OUT. 2006. *Return to Oz.* (Time Out [Internet] Available from https://www.timeout.com/movies/return-to-oz [Accessed 15th January 2024])

WAKEFIELD, T. 2015. *The Trouble with Doubles.* (The White Review [Internet] Available from https://www.thewhitereview.org/white_screen/the-trouble-with-doubles/ [Accessed 05th Aug 2022]).

WRIGHT, P. 2017-2024. *The British Culture Archive.* (Available from [Internet] https://britishculturearchive.co.uk/ [Accessed 8th October 2023])

References

Collins Concise English Dictionary (2001) ed by Sinclair, J.M. London: Harper Collins.

Merriam-Webster.com. 2024. (Available from [Internet] https://www.merriam-webster.com (Accessed 20th Nov 2024]).

Oxford English Dictionary (1990) ed by Allen, R.E. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

THE REMAINDER OF THIS THESIS IS REDACTED