

SOME CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION

How did Shirley Jackson become a writer of heteroglossic fiction with political themes?

She and her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, who was an eminent critic, knew many of the leading scholars, editors, and fiction writers of the 1940s and 1950s. Jackson's children recall playing baseball with J. D. Salinger. Ralph Ellison, who taught with Hyman at Bennington College and whom Hyman touted before *Invisible Man* appeared, was godfather to one of her children. Jackson and Hyman also knew Bernard Malamud when he taught at Bennington. Another Bennington faculty member, Howard Nemerov, was a close personal influence on Jackson. She refers to him often in her diary. Perhaps even more influential was another Bennington faculty member, Kenneth Burke, who hired Hyman. Hyman regarded Burke as the greatest critic ever, and following his example, Hyman was adept in psychoanalytics, formalism, myth criticism, and Marxism.

The greatest influence on Jackson was Hyman. This influence began in 1937 when they were both undergraduates at Syracuse University. One of their friends said, "Shirley had the highest respect for Stanley as a writer [and] as her critic" (Friedman 42). This New York Jewish Marxist radicalized this suburban Anglo daughter of a Republican businessperson. Following the lead of Hyman and his friend Walter Bernstein, she joined the Young Communist League. (Bernstein would be blacklisted as a screenwriter during the McCarthy era; much later he would be employed by Woody Allen as a screenwriter for *The Front*.) At Syracuse University, Jackson and Hyman coedited a radical literary journal, *Spectre*, named after Karl Marx's spectre haunting Europe. After Hyman wrote an essay on blues and Jackson wrote a sonnet and an editorial on racism, the university shut down their journal. Not until the

late 1950s did her belief in the certainties of Marxism wane, apparently because of her growing prosperity and mental instability.

Hyman and Burke also mentored her in psychology. With their help, Jackson studied all of the major works on the multiple personality, such as *The Three Faces of Eve*, but primarily Morton Prince's work on the multiple personality, which influenced her fiction in general and *The Bird's Nest* in particular. About preparing for that novel, Jackson wrote to her parents, "i did a good deal of background reading before i wrote the book and one area of hysterical behavior i know backward and forward is the dissociated personality."¹ From such research, Jackson knew that the popular psychology used in the movie based on that novel was invalid, especially as it distorted her protagonist: "they have made her into a lunatic, which she can't be, by definition, and the doctor cures her with a very interesting combination of freudian analysis, pre-freudian hypnosis, jungian word-association, and rorshak inkblots. not one of these systems gets along with any of the others in real life, but i guess it is different in the movies."

Perhaps Hyman's greatest influence on Jackson was in the study of myth and ritual. Jackson drew on Hyman's knowledge of myth and ritual especially in the early years of her production. For example, a book he had given her about rituals of human sacrifice influenced her writing of "The Lottery." Hyman even originated the story's incantation, "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon" (Oppenheimer 130). (However, Jackson's production increasingly undercut Hyman's increasingly ahistorical privileging of myth.)

In turn, Jackson came to influence Hyman. Phoebe Pettingell, a student of Hyman's whom he married after Jackson died, notes that they "worked with almost total interdependence. Their effect on each others' writing is too great to be calculated" (xiv). In particular, Hyman depended on Jackson for his many reviews of contemporary novels. In his introduction to an anthology of his reviews, Hyman stated, "[She] winnowed out books for me, discussed each book with me before I reviewed it, corrected each review as I wrote it, and proofread each galley" (*Standards* Acknowledgments). Thus in important respects, they collaborated, each benefiting from the other.

Hyman not only collaborated in Jackson's production, but also manipulated the marketing of that production. At a time when a remarkable media image preserved the moribund career of Ernest Hemingway and pushed Norman Mailer and Truman Capote to the front of the crowd, Hyman saw to it that Jackson was promoted as a witch. He wrote the blurb on the jacket of her debut novel that claimed she practiced witchcraft. Jackson cooperated at first because the story that she

believed in witchcraft was important not only for the sale of her writing, but also for the movie deals based on that writing.

While Hyman managed Jackson's literary production, he directed her domestic labor. In short, she did all of it. In addition, Jackson did all of the driving, which meant that she did all of the shopping and transported not only their four children, but also Hyman (Friedman 31). The following anecdote is representative of the way in which he used her. One day he saw her, very pregnant, trudging up the walk with loads of groceries. He rushed out to her, yanked the newspaper from under her arm, and ran back to his easy chair, leaving her to continue struggling with the groceries (which she would soon be preparing not just for him but possibly for one of the many female students he often brought home) (Oppenheimer 115–16). Presumably, two people with their knowledge of psychology understood the manipulation behind such treatment.

For Hyman did not just influence her. He controlled her. From the start, he took the attitude that he was the master and she the apprentice: she would produce according to his specifications. A terse entry in his diary reveals his attitude: "I fixed her story, then she rewrote it."² They were not only collaborators but also codependents. At his best he was arrogant and contentious; he was usually malevolent and tyrannical. According to his second wife, Hyman admitted that his talent was "mainly of a destructive order with a highly developed instinct for the jugular" (Pettingell xi). His first book, with the appropriately aggressive title *The Armed Vision*, was a gratuitous ad hominem attack against every critic before William Empson and Kenneth Burke. A reviewer deemed it "one of the least tasteful bits of venom that has appeared in a long time" (xi). Hyman's reviews were as hostile as his criticism. His worst vitriol he directed at homosexuals. For example, he stated that James Purdy "is a terrible writer, and worse than that, a boring writer" (*Standards* 254). And he stated that almost all of the reviews of Purdy except Hyman's were mindless. Similarly, his review of Truman Capote was entitled "Fruitcake at Tiffany's" (148).

As in his professional life, so in his personal life: Hyman was, in a word, hostile. It might be reasonable to posit hostility and domination at the beginning of his relationship with Jackson. Before Hyman met her, he read a story of hers and declared that he would marry her. The story was about a suicidal young woman. He expressed his hostility sexually. One form of his aggression came out in his Don Juanism (an interesting trait in a homophobic Freudian). From the early days of the marriage, Hyman had affairs with numerous women, once at home with Jackson in the next room yelling at them.

In addition to dominating her professionally and abusing her personally, he exploited her financially. She was, in the vernacular of the blues music they both loved, a mule: she did the work and gave him the money. Her labor paid for the vast majority of their consumption. As Hyman put it, "My earnings pay the bar bill and that's it" (Oppenheimer 175). He bought her a dishwasher (with her money) because her labor was worth so much more as a writer. She wrote to her parents, "stanley said he figured it was costing us a couple of thousand dollars a day to have me wash dishes." The effect of this attitude was to make the household income even more of Jackson's responsibility, and she therefore had to spend more time writing, especially her most profitable production, the domestic narratives for slick women's magazines. For Hyman was bent on keeping his wife busy. In 1955 Jackson wrote her parents,

one of stanley's inspirations was the singing lessons, which i start the first of the year. he has the idea that i must busy myself at interesting things, and not have any time idle to be depressed, so he has about three dozen brand new books lined up for me, all kinds of lists of new things i am to decide about buying, and these darn singing lessons.

Despite his ostensible concern for her—his seeming desire for her to have constructive hobbies such as singing lessons—it must have been obvious to him that the depression of the primary breadwinner and sole housekeeper, cook, and chauffeur was not a result of inactivity. Referring to her family doctor, Oliver Durand, Jackson wrote to her parents, "stanley says he is going to kill oliver for deciding that my jitters were due to overwork, because now i am all calm and collected again i still don't work, and he wants oliver to find something that he can diagnose as underwork." By 1964, after she had had a nervous breakdown, she felt guilty about writing in her diary because she was using time that could be spent making money: "i am oddly self-conscious this morning because stanley is at home and there is literally no telling him what i am doing. i think he would regard me as a criminal waster of time, and self-indulgent besides. i feel i am cheating stanley because i should be writing stories for money."³

Apparently Hyman was not only pleased that his wife did all the dirty work and brought in a lot of money, but also jealous that his wife was making much more money than he was. Indeed, his friends chided him about her success. Burke's letters to Hyman often alluded to Jackson's success. For example, in a letter of 9 September 1961, Burke refers to Jackson's royalties, calling them "a check you can cash at your wife's bank."⁴ This jibe also alludes to Hyman's book, *The Tangled Bank*,

which he had been unable to finish for over a decade (during which time Jackson's writing was at its critical and financial peak). Burke made similar allusions about the biographical investment Jackson made in her fiction. Two of Burke's letters alluded to Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*: Burke addressed Hyman as "Castleman" and called the Hyman home "the castle," a veiled reference not only to the true breadwinner in the family, but also to the recurrent theme in Jackson's fiction of patriarchs appropriating the fruits of women's labor.

For Jackson's writings were among the most lucrative of her time. Her novels were best-sellers. There were movie deals on two of those novels, *The Birds' Nest* and *The Haunting of Hill House*. Her short stories and essays were also extremely profitable. Jackson's agent, the powerful Carol Brandt, demanded and got a minimum of one thousand dollars for each short story and essay appearing in a mass-market magazine (SJP Box 4). Her average fee was undoubtedly much more. The editors of the women's magazines knew that Jackson's name on the cover meant higher sales. The advance on her contract with *Good Housekeeping* to supply a few mass-market domestic narratives each year enabled Hyman and Jackson to move to Westport, Connecticut, in 1949—only a few years after she started writing.

These Marxists of the thirties became consumers of the fifties. Their house in Bennington had about nineteen rooms. The house was so big that it had once been divided into four apartments. They amassed their own library, which was bigger than the town library and even bigger than Bennington's college library. Their commodities fetish required ever more goods, and in turn ever more income to pay for them. Like Herman Melville confessing that some of his books were "jobs" done only for money, Jackson was quite honest with herself and her parents about the monetary reasons for writing the mass-market domestic narratives: "they are written simply for money and the reason they sound so bad is that those magazines won't buy good ones, but deliberately seek out bad stuff because they say their audiences want it."

In addition to her commodities fetish, Jackson was dependent on alcohol. Turning down an invitation to a panel discussion on the misfortunes of alcoholism, Jackson wrote to her parents that she was "more in favor of alcoholism than against it." Dr. Durand encouraged her to drink:

i will just have to get the food down to fewer calories to make room for the cocktails. oliver said definitely plan to include some drinks in each day's count, since the intention was to make me feel better, not worse. . . . oliver said to plan on a couple of cocktails before dinner, just for morale, but if i have two cocktails before dinner now i almost pass out.

After checking into a hospital to give birth, she had Ellison bring her liquor and she drank it to hasten her delivery. Eventually, she could not travel without alcohol. She wrote to her parents in 1963, "tomorrow we leave for michigan. . . . we have a bedroom on the train (i am still not equal to flying) and we get on at nine-thirty with a bottle of bourbon and a bottle of scotch and wake up at six a.m. in detroit. . . . i will be full of wine when we get on board."

She was dependent not only on alcohol but also various drugs. In her early twenties, she took large doses of codeine not only for her toothaches, but also for her migraines (which started after she married Hyman). She depicts the hallucinatory effect of this opiate in two of her stories, "The Tooth" (1950) and "The Bus" (1965). Jackson started out on codeine but soon hit the harder stuff. In her early thirties, a doctor in Westport got them both hooked not only on diet pills but also on amphetamines. Jackson wrote home,

i got me a real fancy doctor—did i tell you about him? He is what i would call a westport society doctor, and he was highly recommended to me by about the kind of people who *would* recommend such. . . . i am supposed to go back once a week, having eaten all i want, and he will give me an injection which will take it off me. it's sort of diets anonymous. . . . p. s. went to the doctor yesterday and discovered that i had lost seven pounds in a week; he says it will keep up at about that rate.

Later her psychiatrist in Bennington, James Toolan, treated her obesity and food addictions (she ate a pound of butter a day) by prescribing even more amphetamines. Shirley wrote to her parents, "i am on a very lenient diet . . . and taking fancy pills." Jackson and Hyman were so impressed by the system of amphetamines as an energizer and diet aid (and so unaware of the danger of these new drugs they and others confused with vitamins) that they sometimes gave Dexedrine to their children.

By the fifties, she added tranquilizers (such as Miltown, Phenobarbital, and Thorazine) to her regimen of amphetamines, alcohol, and codeine. She wrote to her parents, "my pills also include one of these relaxing dopes, which does take the edge off that jumpy feeling." Jackson wrote to her parents regarding her delirium and high blood pressure, "Toolan gave me a shot that put me out cold." Toolan later denied that he was the source for her tranquilizers.⁵

She became dependent partly as a result of her growing agoraphobia. In the forties, she began to develop a fear of New York City. (This anxiety was probably part of the reason why she and Hyman moved to

a small town like Bennington.) Soon she felt threatened by small towns as well, although for different reasons. While her fiction and biography suggest a fear of collapsing buildings in the big city, it was the reactionary small-mindedness of the villagers that frightened her in the small towns. A particular sore point was the locals' racism. She once publicly denounced a Bennington blackface play. She was especially worried that the incubus of provincial racism would infect her children. She made a special point of warning her son and his friends about mistreating Jackson's black housekeeper. Racism and anti-Semitism threatened her personally, not just because she knew many blacks and Jews but because she had married a Jew (and therefore she and her family would have been subject to the Holocaust had they lived in Europe).

Her fear of Bennington was not delusional. Some of these local Vermonter sent her hate mail. Some of them dumped garbage on her lawn. When she walked into the post office to mail her manuscripts, all talking stopped. Her fear of such provincialism emerges, of course, in "The Lottery." But it informs her fiction all the way from the beginning of her career through her last completed book, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. She told Nemerov that the townies' harassment of the reclusive sisters in this novel referred to her life in small town New England (SJP Box 10).

But her agoraphobia was a response not just to the built environment of cities and the social environment of villages, but to many kinds of stressful situations. In 1951, she risked accepting an invitation for a job interview at Smith College, but she passed out during the interview and declined the position. By the sixties, she could barely go anywhere without drugs and alcohol.

She was similarly anxious about publicity—about being exposed in the media. Beginning her career before the age of television, she could at first manipulate her public image rather easily. Few knew what she really looked like because she appeared only on radio and released only two photographs of herself, ones that had been taken when she was young and not yet obese. As her books kept coming, the reviews kept running the same photographs of her. Those who met the real Jackson were shocked. By the late fifties she turned down a televised interview with Edward R. Murrow, an opportunity that for others would have meant lucrative publicity. When *Time* published a photograph of what Jackson really looked like in 1962, even her mother was stunned. Anxious almost everywhere but home, Jackson eventually could not stand to be there either because of the pressures of doing all of the domestic duties while producing not only mass-market moneymakers but also serious literature.

Harassment by the locals was not the only reason for her fear of the outside. As a result of all of the *stress* (if that word can cover the ravages of scapegoating plus alcoholism, drug addiction, and abuse by her husband) Jackson developed colitis, which gave her not only nausea and diarrhea, but also caused a precipitous drop in her blood pressure. The attacks were, she wrote to her mother, “exactly like getting kicked in the stomach, and i all but pass out; i get dizzy and sick and staggy and shaking, and of course very scared.” These attacks usually occurred in the morning: “i stay home as much as possible in the mornings, and so am making fine progress on my book; there’s nothing like being scared to go outside to keep you writing.”

Her agoraphobia, however, was not absolute. In an unsent letter to Nemerov, she said that she had a great urge to travel. In the months before her death, she sometimes yielded to the impulse, if only to drive herself thirty miles away to North Adams (maybe to see Edith Wharton’s home). Once she even drove alone to New York City. And in June 1965, two months before Jackson’s death, she drove Hyman to Georgia so they could meet the mother of the recently deceased Flannery O’Connor. Given the amount of chemicals it took just to get her across town, it must have been a road trip oddly rivaling those of Jack Kerouac and Ken Kesey.

Another reason why Jackson became agoraphobic is that she had long felt controlled not by her will but by forces outside herself. Jackson felt like a subject, not a site of her own agency but the effect of agencies that resided elsewhere—a result, not a cause. Like a Gothic victim, she felt powerless, controlled from without, at the mercy of the Other. In her diary as an adolescent, she wrote of her writing as something that came not from her but from her pen or her typewriter. As an ineffectual adolescent to whom things happened, she marked the days on her calendar as lucky or unlucky according to whether or not she happened to see her secret love (whose name, in a case of life imitating parodic art, was Bud Young) (SJP Box 1).

Apparently she believed that she needed Hyman to control her. While the chemical dependencies were bad enough, they were matched by her psychological dependency on him. She felt dependent on Hyman for what stability she had. In the late forties, she wrote in her diary,

i know perfectly well that i have no control over what i think or say right now and that whatever comes from me is not made by my mind or the thinking part of me but by the small hysterical part which has taken over the whole system. . . . stanley . . . stopped taking care of me and my one security is gone. . . . will he let them lock me up or will he start taking care of me again when it’s too late. . . .

She felt this dependence in spite of his mistreatment of her. Early in the marriage, she wrote in her diary about Hyman's psychological abuse: "We should never have gotten married and I keep thinking that now." And the abuse was not just psychological. In one of the many telling passages not cited in any of the Jackson scholarship—not even in her biography—Jackson wrote that Hyman raped her: "If it's sex I can't do anything about it. He forced me god help me and for so long I didn't dare say anything and only got out of it when I could and now I'm so afraid to have him touch me."

Jackson continued to vacillate between her desire to stay with Hyman and her desire to get away from him. In the late fifties, she again wrote about the marriage ending. In a letter to Hyman that she apparently did not send, she wrote, "there are going to be, eventually, the reasons why our marriage ends." But she blames herself: "you have said positively that our sexual difficulties are entirely my doing; i believe you are right" (SJP Box 1). In her diary in late 1964, after she had broken down and would not live another year, she was still writing to herself that she wanted the marriage to end—over twenty years after the first statement in her diary that she wanted out of the marriage: "i do want the marriage to be broken yes i do because i have no chance to be alone." Thus she felt both isolated and crowded.

It is something of a cliché to find origins of such cyclic, compulsive dependency in the first object relations. Yet Jackson seems to be a textbook illustration of Nancy Chodorow's theory of the pre-Oedipal, for Jackson's compulsions seem undeniably to have begun with her mother. Moreover, her mother appears to have been a perfect example of what Jane Gallop calls "the phallic mother." The first line of her biography, "She was not the daughter her mother wanted," understates the problem, for Geraldine Jackson did not want any children at all. When Jackson was an adolescent, her mother told her that Jackson was the result of a failed abortion (Oppenheimer 14). Her mother felt that her neo-Victorian duties as a mother interfered with her status as a proper bourgeois; she was more interested in her activities as a member of the country club and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

As Hyman would be later, her mother was controlling. She insisted that Shirley conform to the most mundane gender conventions (although her mother resisted the nurturing role). Also like Hyman, her mother insisted that Jackson perform the duties of domesticity. The spectre of an introjected authority figure haunted Jackson. To the end, she was subjected to her mother's manipulative attempts to force her to conform to superficial conventions. Affronted by Jackson's less than anal-retentive grooming and housecleaning, the mother wrote her, "I

don't know how you are training your children—with you and your house in such a sad condition.” (Note the connection of “you and your house”; in many texts, Jackson makes detailed use of the house as a symbol of the self). When *Time* published the picture showing how unattractive Jackson really looked, her mother wrote, “Why oh why do you allow the magazines to print such awful pictures of you? I am sure your daughters at school are proud to show off your picture and say, ‘this is my mother’. . . . Your children love you for your achievements but they also want you to be worth looking at too.”⁶ And about those achievements, which were altogether too nonrealist for the mother, she wrote her daughter, “We love getting your letters and like them better than your stories.” Jackson’s mother, then, would rather read of her daughter’s own Gothic entrapment in addiction than to read nonrealist fiction. In late 1964 during her nervous breakdown, Jackson wrote in her diary, “Who is looking over my shoulder all the time?” (The schizoid protagonist in *The Haunting of Hill House* asks, “Whose hand was i holding?”) Her biographer says it was Jackson’s mother who was looking over her shoulder all the time (15), but that puts it too literally; the mother determined the floor plan of her daughter’s self, and Jackson’s compulsions were constructed on that design and in turn form the basis of the storeys in that design.

In her ambivalence about identifying with her mother, Jackson modeled herself mostly after her father. She got her intelligence and literacy from him. Uprooted as an adolescent from his native England and transplanted to America, he passed on the favor to Jackson by relocating her as an adolescent from San Francisco to Rochester, New York. Leslie Jackson arrived in San Francisco just before the earthquake of 1905. (The scene of architectural collapse will recur in her fiction.) Her speech contained traces of his English pronunciation.⁷ For Jackson, her relatively feminized father manifested the mother country, whose former pre-industrial conditions Jackson came to fantasize as a reference point from which the modern world had fallen. She found in the eighteenth-century sentimental novel a kind of golden age, and she found in the Gothic novel figures of the fall into modernity. One of her favorite authors was Samuel Richardson, for he was her emblem of fairness and love.

In addition to the actors, the scene is significant in the playing out of Jackson’s pre-oedipalism. Her fall from a tolerable childhood into a pathological adolescence co-occurs with the family’s move (in 1933 when Jackson was sixteen)⁸ from warm and sunny California to cold and snowy Rochester, New York. As soon as she arrived, she got hay fever for the first time in her life; such stress-related symptoms recurred

for the rest of her life. Jackson herself regarded the move as a spatial correlative of the loss of innocence. For Jackson, a friend recalled, California was a "lost paradise" (Oppenheimer 18).⁹

Jackson compulsively returned the rest of her life to this scene of adolescent conflict in which the subject tries to compromise conflicting demands by resisting and yet obeying both Desire and the Symbolic; Jackson struggled with not only becoming but also possessing both her father and mother, each of whom significantly inverted the dominant culture's gender rules, beginning with their androgynous names, Leslie and Geraldine. Jackson resisted socialization based on these two models of adulthood and this scene of maturation by becoming an introvert and social outcast. She simultaneously tried to fit in and yet cultivated her sense of self as Other. She spent most of her time in a room of her own, writing. When her parents insisted that she attend the University of Rochester, she dutifully obeyed and then (passive-aggressively) flunked out. She again withdrew to her room at her parents' home, and she resumed writing, this time for a year. Then she went to the more bohemian and radical Syracuse and took up with other Others: first a libertarian French woman, and then Hyman and his circle of radical Jews from New York City. When he came to visit her in Rochester, he had to hide so that Jackson's parents did not know she was fraternizing with a Jew.

Jackson remained a tangled bank of contradictions. She wrote both domestic narratives and proto-postmodernist short stories and novels that are among the most significant of her time. Despite the domestic narratives that gave her a national reputation as an expert on homemaking, she was even more indifferent toward some domestic duties than was her mother. Jackson's children were sometimes so unkempt that a neighbor once washed off one of Jackson's daughters and combed the child's hair. The person who produced expert advice on motherhood had to go to Burke's wife Libby for advice on homemaking (Libby probably missed the irony in her advice to leave Hyman and "go home to mama" [SJP Box 7]). The same Marxist who protested against Bennington's blackface show wrote a letter of complaint saying she would not "enter into explanations with tradespeople" (SJP Box 12). She was such a complex case that Burke arranged to have her studied as a special research project at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. Unfortunately, the study was never conducted, because her agoraphobia kept her from returning to her Eden.

Jackson was such a site of conflicts that it seems she was almost, at least at times, a multiple personality. As is well-known, multiple personalities often arise from sexual abuse, and it seems that Jackson might

have been so victimized. A childhood friend recalls that she was molested by Jackson's maternal uncle, Clifford Bugbee, and speculates that he probably did the same to Jackson, or worse (Oppenheimer 27). Scenes of molestation occur in Jackson's fiction. A child in her first novel, *The Road Through the Wall*, is probably abused. The teenaged female protagonist of her second novel, *Hangsaman*, is molested by a friend of the family. The female protagonist in her third novel, *The Bird's Nest*, is a multiple personality who was molested by her mother's lover. Similar characters appear in her short stories. But it is inaccurate to describe her as a multiple personality, even during her breakdown. Following Michael Holquist's statement that for Mikhail Bakhtin the self is *dialogic* (19), it would be more accurate to use that term as a metaphor for her personality, not because she literally heard voices, but because her personality consisted of so many traces from the discourse of the social text.¹⁰

More precisely, the repressed oppositions were not so repressed in her. She was a bit like the multiple personality described in a book by Prince, which Burke had loaned her, and it had such an effect on her that she used it to develop Elizabeth, the protagonist with a multiple personality in *The Bird's Nest*. For Prince, we are all multiple personalities held together by one ideal personality, the others residing more or less in the unconscious. True multiples arise when their ideal personality does not maintain sufficient repression.

Jackson represents the personality (and the productions in which it takes part both as producer and consumer) as liminal, protean, and processual (with the repression of the other identifications incomplete). The conflicts are not always conscious; as with Elizabeth in *The Bird's Nest*, sometimes the ideal self has to sleep so that the other selves would communicate with each other. Sometimes when Jackson awoke, she found disturbing notes that she had written to herself while sleepwalking. One such note read, "Dead dead" (SJP Box 1). She wrote in a long unsent letter to Nemerov, "There is not a he or a she but the demon in the mind, and that demon finds guilts where it can and uses them and runs mad with laughing when it triumphs; it is the demon which is fear and we are afraid of words" (SJP Box 1). Significantly, her agency here was ungendered, played on her guilt, and was intimately connected with language.

Herself an active site of aporias, Jackson spoke of her mind in spatial terms as several selves with no center. She wrote in her diary in the 1930s while at Syracuse, "i am a psychotic case and i am going to go insane. . . . there is an empty space inside my head." In the end, she could not get access to a necessary room in her mind. The last entry in

her diary suggests one of those locked chambers: “only way out is writing please god help me please help me and do not show to anyone do not show to anyone someday please god help me do not show to anyone because locked.” Her fictions, a reproduction of her structures of conflict, convert the synchrony of her conflicting propensities into the diachronic outpouring of production—the projection of her inward structure into outward arrangements. In her diary in late 1964 she wrote, “i have been thinking of these pages as a refuge, a pleasant hiding place.” In those words, her mind creates a model, a trace of itself, and then retreats into itself by going out of itself. Having performed that act of contradiction, she doubles it by stating the opposite; she claims that her writing is *not* a refuge, not a place, but a process, an act: “this is not a refuge, these pages, but a way through, a path not charted; i feel my way, but there *is* a way through. not a refuge yet. on the other side somewhere there is a country, perhaps the glorious country of well-dom, perhaps a country of a story.” What she first gives and then takes away she gives back: process turns into place, act into scene. As Hawthorne said of Melville, she keeps going over the same ground, shuttling from one opposition to the other. Like Faulkner’s Darl Bundren, in *As I Lay Dying*, she desires to “ravel out,” outside of herself, and to penetrate the skin of others and to see inside them (193). For she experienced herself as Other, her in-here as conflicting traces constituted by the out-there.

Writing in this diary that she kept at the end of her life, she wrote about the joy of writing: “i am at home here,” which is an ironic metaphor for someone who felt exhausted because of her husband. For the home that this late diary (like all of her writing) returned her to was her first diary, the adolescent diary in which she first expressed the contradictions impressed upon her when she fell out of her childhood in California. In her notes for a lecture on writing, she states, “i personally love writing. it is a logical extension of the adolescent daydream” (SJP Box 10). Among the stories she kept telling as an adult were figurations of the pre-oedipal conflicts that developed during her adolescence and then with Hyman.