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**Haunting of the Cultural Past:
Unreliability, Class and the Spectral in Sarah
Waters' *The Little Stranger***

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Abstract

Sarah Waters is an acclaimed author of several bestselling and award-winning novels. The existing body of research on Sarah Waters' novel *The Little Stranger* has been valuable and mostly engages with and suggests a correlation between class and the hauntings taking place at Hundreds Hall. Some scholarly research has also explored the unreliable narration of the novel by focusing on different themes, and focusing on either unreliability based in the novel or through reader reception. However, the intersection of the unreliable narrative perspective, class and spectrality has been neglected. The aim of the paper is to investigate the unreliable narration of Faraday, who is both narrator and a participant in the story. It, furthermore, examines how the narrative perspective explores the themes of class and haunting. I have, by close reading of passages in the novel and by combining the concept of unreliable narration and Derrida's concept of hauntology, been able to conduct a study of both the Derridean haunting of the protagonist, Faraday, and his narrative perspective. This paper argues that Faraday's unreliable narration functions as a deliberate literary strategy that both exposes and obscures the themes of class and haunting in the novel. Furthermore, Faraday's narrative perspective itself becomes a site of social liminality and spectral presence, embodying the tensions between class identity and the ghostly remains of a decaying social order. This study adds to an existing scholarly field that is focused on the aspects of class and haunting by further nuancing these themes through the narration of Faraday.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Background	2
2.1. The Unreliable Narrator	3
2.2. The Hauntological Reading	4
2.3. The Concept of Liminality	5
3. Class-based Unreliability	5
3.1. Spectrality of Class	5
3.2. Faraday's Liminal Class Position & Class Perceptions	7
3.3. The Liminality of Unreliable Narration	9
4. Derridean Haunting	10
4.1. The Trauma and Haunting of Faraday	10
4.2. The Class Trauma of Faraday	12
4.3. The Spectrality of the Unreliable Narration	13
5. Unreliability & Repression	14
5.1. The Little Stranger	15
6. Conclusion	17
Works Cited	18
Primary Literature	18
Secondary Literature	18

1. Introduction

Sarah Waters is an acclaimed author of historical fiction (Goodings); she is known for, among other things, her retelling of the neo-40s (Boehm 237). *The Little Stranger* (2009) is one such novel; it is centred around the class collapse in England in the wake of the Second World War. The novel follows the unreliable narrator, Faraday, a doctor born to lower-class parents who strived to help him rise in socioeconomic status by giving him an education. One morning, he meets the upper-class family, the Ayreses, who are faced with the crumbling estate, Hundreds Hall, and the end of their gentry way of life. However, as Faraday befriends the family, a little stranger begins haunting the Ayreses; there are strange fires, furniture coming to life, and it seems their past has come back to haunt them. Slowly, due to these inexplicable hauntings, the Ayres family succumb to what appears to be madness and even death.

The Little Stranger is especially interesting to investigate as it is among Waters' least researched novels. In addition, it involves unreliable narration, which, although a popular theoretical framework, is still being debated (Phelan and Martin 94; Matiychak 136). Booth, who coined the term, has been criticised for some of his notions and how he determines the reliability of the narrator. Other scholars have developed on his idea or disputed parts of his notion, such as Nünning and Rimmon-Kenan. Another scholar, Zerwick, has established that the theoretical framework has already been through changes (151), but argues that more change is needed. This theoretical framework of unreliable narration is, therefore, still being established and discussed.

There has been some scholarly interest in *The Little Stranger*. Both Heilmann and Klonowska investigate the theme of class and its relation to the hauntings. Heilmann focuses on the intertext of the novel, while Klonowska argues that the hauntings represent the class divide and Faraday's vengeance. Both Letissier and Boehm investigate the historical period of the novel. Letissier uses Derrida's hauntology in his analysis to explore the trauma of the post-World War period, and then compares that trauma to the hauntings. Boehm focuses on the materiality of history by using De Certeau's theories and by investigating Hundreds Hall specifically. Existing scholarship focuses on the hauntings and some on the issues of class and unreliable narration, which are all central to the novel. Matiychak investigates the unreliable narration, but from a reader reception perspective, by exploring reader reviews and interviews with Waters. The signals of unreliability in the novel have, however, not been thoroughly researched, and as Booth, who coined the term of unreliable narration, argues: "if he [the

narrator] is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays is transformed” (158). Moreover, the intersection of class, spectrality and the unreliable narration has been neglected. The question, therefore, remains: How does Waters' narrative technique of portraying Faraday's perspective contribute to the novel's exploration of social class dynamics and haunting?

I will argue that Faraday's unreliable narration functions as a literary device that simultaneously reveals and conceals the novel's engagement with class conflict and Derridean haunting, demonstrating how narrative perspective itself can embody social liminality and spectral presence. To argue this point, I will first account for the theory of unreliable narration, the concept of liminality, and Derrida's term 'hauntology'. As part of the analysis, I will begin by establishing the historical setting of the novel, and I will explore how the class conflict is both revealed and concealed through its narration. I will, moreover, expand on the ideas of class by examining Faraday's liminal class position and the liminal space of the narration. Secondly, I will investigate the character of Faraday through the lens of hauntology, and I will further argue how his class trauma colours his perspective as a narrator, and how the narration in itself is spectral. Lastly, I will examine how the class conflict, Derridean haunting and the unreliable narration intersect and how Faraday might be the little stranger the title refers to.

2. Background

The unreliable narrator is a theoretical framework which works to uncover the unreliability of a homodiegetic narrator, meaning only one character's perspective is visible. This framework I combine with Derrida's hauntology, a somewhat newer theoretical framework that has not been developed by many scholars, but that has been appropriated to different disciplines in the scholarly field, such as literary studies. It is, moreover, important to note that the book is published much later than the time in which it is set, as the novel is within the genre of "historiographic metafiction", as Linda Hutcheon calls it. Hutcheon defines this type of literature as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (5). For that reason, it is our current understanding of the 1940s class disruption and class anxieties which the novel explores.

2.1. The Unreliable Narrator

Wayne C. Booth coined the term *unreliable narrator* in his work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. He defines it as: "reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (158-159). Booth has, however, been criticised for the details of his notion, especially concerning his definition and arguments about the implied author (Nünning 85-86; Rimmon-Kenan 104). There have been developments and refinements on the concept in the following years. Rimmon-Kenan defines it as: "one whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect" (101-102). Nünning argues that the unreliable narrator can be determined and defined by specific signals, such as contradictions and appeals directed to the reader (96, 97). I have used Nünning's signals to determine the unreliability of Faraday. Nünning also argues that the narrator gives cues to the reader about their peculiarities, desires, and psychological state unconsciously in telling their side of the story (97).

According to Phelan and Martin, there are six different types of unreliable narrators: "misreporting, misreading, misevaluating [...] underreporting, underreading, and underregarding" (95). They are distinguished by two categories: "improper and insufficient" (Matiychak 135) reporting of events. Phelan and Martin, furthermore, argue that the six types of unreliability tend to occur together; a narrator, for example, tends to misreport due to their misevaluation. Matiychak argues that Faraday's unreliability contains: "misreporting, misinterpreting, underreporting and misevaluating" (135). Faraday both misreports the sequence of his events due to his misinterpretation and his misevaluation, and he underreports as he "tells us less than s/he knows" (95). I will argue that Faraday is coloured by his personal feelings and desires, and that he both misreports and underreports in his narration. Throughout the novel, Faraday alludes to his desires and resentments, which colour his narration. This is both due to his unconscious trauma and haunting, but it also seems as though he knows more than he is letting on.

As mentioned previously, the concept of unreliable narration has undergone some change. Zerweck has argued that the historicity and the cultural conditions of the reader must be considered to determine the reliability of the narrator (157-158). I will account for the history of the work and the narrator Faraday, as I am combining a study of the unreliable narrator with Derridean hauntology. I will, however, not go into the historiography of the reader, as this will be too broad to cover in this paper, and I am not focused on reader reception theory.

2.2. The Hauntological Reading

Derrida begins his book *Spectres of Marx* (1993) with the words of Hamlet: “the time is out of joint” (as cited by Derrida 1). He uses the famous words of Shakespeare to account for a historical time, an in-between period, and the death of an era, as he explores the end of Marxism and communism. Derrida argues that at this liminal point in history, “the time is out of joint” and spectres are conjured up and begin to haunt. This he calls *hauntology*. It is the combination of ontology and haunting; therefore, a combination of the study of being with haunting, as Derrida investigates the being of a spectre and its conjuration. Derrida defines the spectre as a “non-presence” (5) which “becomes, rather, some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name, neither soul nor body, and both one and the other” (5). Derrida, however, gives no specific definition of hauntology but accounts for it throughout his work. He argues that elements of the cultural past can persist and return as spectres and thereby interact with us after their passing. He also argues that there is no escape from the haunting since the spectre always returns (123).

Derrida, furthermore, argues that “this non-presence of the spectre demands that one take its time and its history into consideration” (101). Derrida’s term, hence, investigates the time and the history of spectres, since he argues that it is conjured out of a cultural past. This haunting, however, is not only societal but also individual. One can be haunted by a personal past: “this *living individual* would itself be inhabited and invaded by *its own spectre*” (Derrida 166, original emphasis). Derrida, therefore, accounts for the spectres which can be conjured up at the end of an era, but also the spectre and past which can haunt the individual.

Hauntology is, however, not only concerned with the past, but also the future. Riley offers his own interpretation of the concept of hauntology and writes: “Derrida’s hauntology, then, is not only a way of conceptualizing our repressed past but also a way of understanding our obsession with failed futures” (19). This last notion about failed futures is supported by Fisher, who further developed on Derrida’s term, and who argues that a so-called dead future can haunt the present (107). By a dead future, he means a predicted future that is then ripped away, never to be lived and experienced, and this loss can continue to haunt.

As Derrida investigates the nature of the spectre, it is worth noting that he uses words like *spectres*, *phantoms* or *ghosts* in his work synonymously. In this paper, I will also use words like spectre and the little stranger or haunting as markers which describe the perpetrator and what is happening at Hundreds Hall, since there is a certain ambiguity about what happens at the house, or what haunts it and its occupants.

2.3. The Concept of Liminality

The term *liminality* was first coined by the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep in his work *The Rites of Passage* (1909) and has been further developed by Victor Turner. Turner's definition is often used and appropriated in literary studies. Turner writes, "the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (85). Liminality is, therefore, something that is in-between and, consequently, ambiguous and hard to clearly define. The concept of liminality is also applicable to places, as well as historical periods and people. This concept has been used by Homi Bhabha in postcolonial studies, where he accounts for the *liminal space* in order to explain this place of "in-between the designations of identity" (5). Like Turner, Bhabha thus argues that there is not only a physical liminal space, but also a liminality to identity and personhood.

3. Class-based Unreliability

Faraday is a unique narrator because of his social position of not quite belonging to a class. This means that he has access to several social classes and, therefore, can explore a broader sense of class through multiple characters in the novel. This grants the reader a unique window into the class conflict of the time; it is, however, further nuanced and concealed as Faraday is an unreliable narrator. Faraday is a misreporting and underreporting narrator, and by consequence, his contradictions and version of events are ambiguous. What, first and foremost, colours Faraday's narrative perspective is the cultural past of the class divide. Faraday's class anxieties and resentments, caused by the class disruption of the 1940s, distort his retelling of the story and, therefore, make him unreliable. Faraday tends to give more away than he means to; he contradicts himself and often appeals directly to the reader. This narrative perspective works to both reveal and conceal specifics about the issues of the class conflict.

3.1. Spectrality of Class

The class disruption of 1940s England is the aspect that truly haunts Waters' novel. The historicity of the work is important, as Derrida argues (101), and it is, therefore, paramount that the time in which the novel is set is established. As mentioned, the novel is set in Warwickshire,

just after World War II. This was a time of great change, due to, among other things, the end of the war, the Labour government in power, and the coming of the NHS (Boehm 249). There had, furthermore, since the end of the First World War, been several social initiatives that had begun to dismantle the aristocracy (Boehm 249). The Labour Government introduced a higher inheritance tax, making it difficult for old, wealthy families to pass on their estates without financial strain, and the rising middle class shifted social and economic power away from the gentry. Accordingly, *The Little Stranger* explores the social shift and the declining wealth of the landed gentry in England, and by consequence, this in-between period, where “the time is out of joint” (Derrida 1). The old social system prevails, but it is also being phased out. This major shift brings about somewhat of an end to the landed gentry lifestyle, at least for the Ayreses, and a spectre of the cultural past begins to haunt.

The old system of the landed gentry and this in-between period cause the class conflict, which is central to Waters’ novel. *The Little Stranger* is centred around the relationship and class conflict between the Ayres family and the unreliable narrator, Faraday. It displays a clear contrast between Faraday, the lower-class doctor, and the Ayreses, an upper-class family. Both classes harbour some resentment against the other. The Ayres family clearly have grievances against the social shift of the 40s and still adheres to the old social order, or as Parker argues, “despite their position of privilege, the Ayres claim oppression” (102). Rod specifically claims, in calling for a doctor for their maid Betty, that servants are “to get better treatment than us, apparently” (6). Faraday harbours his own resentment for the upper class as represented by the Ayreses, particularly in connection with their disregard for his mother, who used to serve the family at Hundreds Hall, and he feels “the faintest stirring of dark dislike [...] Perhaps it was the peasant blood in me, rising. But Hundreds Hall had been made and maintained, I thought by the very people they were laughing at now” (27). It is clear that Faraday also bears a grudge against the Ayres family and the old class system. However, although there are clear examples of class conflict in the novel, there are also aspects that are concealed from the reader through Faraday’s unreliable narration. Faraday tries to conceal the depth of his class resentment when he appeals directly to the reader: “I have never thought of myself as a discontented man” (39), regarding his class position. He, therefore, tries to describe his character and argues that the class resentment and discontent he feels are only fleeting and not who he is, although there is evidence in his narration that shows his discontentment and class anxieties throughout the novel.

Another way in which the novel and the narrative perspective both conceal and reveal aspects of class conflict is through Hundreds Hall. The reader first encounters the house through the eyes of a 10-year-old Faraday, who develops an obsession with it (2). The house follows the decline of the gentry and becomes “a symbolic reflection of the declining power of their class” (Parker 101). The house is also the only space where the hauntings take place, and symbols of the class divide begin to break down or become haunted. Boehm argues that “Waters is fascinated by the ways in which material objects may serve as ‘silent’ reminders of forgotten and/or repressed historical knowledge” (253), so when the call-bells become haunted, they are a manifestation of the class conflict, and the breaking down of the old social order. The call-bells installed in the basement begins calling on their own (330), which results in the Ayreses cutting off the bells, so they can no longer call on their servants, and the Ayres women end up “carry[ing] on down to the kitchen and see[ing] to the chores themselves – just as if they had no servants at all” (331). This means of communication in the house, which has kept the lower class in the basement and the upper class in the rest of the house, is being haunted until the family puts it out of use. Thus, the lines between the classes begin to blur. Klonowska argues that “haunting and spectrality appear both as manifestations of suppressed emotions, and as a trace of powerful social conflicts” (173). The hauntings of Hundreds Hall are, therefore, used to engage with class conflict and work to identify the class divide, while simultaneously closing it. However, while it exposes the issues of class, it also conceals them through the hauntings. The class conflict is manifested through hauntings and repressed emotions, rather than dealing with them openly. Thus, the narration of Faraday both reveals the class conflict and conceals it by using the house as a symbol of the class conflict.

3.2. Faraday’s Liminal Class Position & Class Perceptions

As mentioned above, Faraday is in a unique social position because he does not belong to a specific class and, therefore, has a liminal class position in society. Faraday was born into the lower working class, but due to his education and profession, he is no longer a part of it. This is evident as Faraday runs into his cousin: “I knew that even after all this time it was queer for him to call me ‘Doctor’, but out of the question, too, for him either to use my Christian name or to address me as ‘sir’” (248). Faraday is, furthermore, contrasted with Betty, the maid at Hundreds Hall, who is lower working class and the Ayres family, of the upper class. At the same time, Faraday is compared to and contrasted with Graham, his younger business partner, who is doing better in the profession, as “he had entered the practice as a doctor’s son, with

money and standing behind him" (35). Faraday, therefore, does not strictly belong to this upper middle class either. Faraday does not fit into a certain class, but he can be described as what is later the rising professional middle class. Consequently, Faraday is in a liminal class position. Faraday himself reveals an understanding of this tension: "They [the patients] don't like me. They never have. They've never been able to place me. [...] I'm not grand enough for the gentry—not grand enough for working people, come to that. They want to look up to their doctor. They don't want to think he's one of them" (36). Faraday's liminal class position gives him a unique insight into the class conflict of the time, but it also poses problems for him, as it interferes with his life and job.

Faraday's liminal class position is further nuanced, as he is given access to Hundreds Hall, which previously had been off limits to him. He initiates a friendship with the Ayres family by helping Rod recover from his war injuries. Faraday, therefore, now not only associates with the doctors in the professional upper class but also with the gentry of the area, Faraday's humble origins keep him perpetually on the outside, as becomes clear at the party at Hundreds Hall when he speaks with Mr Baker-Hyde, who automatically assumes that Faraday is there in a professional capacity to treat Rod Ayres rather than as a guest (95). Even after Faraday has become a friend of the family and has access to Hundreds Hall, he is still treated as an outsider. Faraday's liminal position is not accepted by the people around him, and he is resentful of being perpetually on the outside. In addition, it seems that Faraday's class definitions and his understanding of them are at the centre of his unreliable narration, as his liminal class position distorts his perspective and colours his view of events.

Moreover, Faraday is unreliable because his perspective on class changes depending on which class he considers himself a part of. Parker argues that "as Faraday spends more time at Hundreds and becomes 'one of the family', he grows increasingly wedded to class hierarchy" (104). This is visible when Faraday encounters Hundreds Hall and its basement kitchen as an adult. He reacts to the call-bells, calling them an "imperious little machine" (15) with clear resentment towards the symbols of the class divide. However, when he is later engaged to Caroline Ayres and believes himself soon to be the master of Hundreds Hall, his attitude towards the call-bells changes: "that imperious device, as I had once thought of it" (330). There is a clear change in Faraday's attitude towards the bells, but the only thing that has changed is how he views himself and which class he considers himself a part of. This change is explored further, as Faraday, at the beginning of the novel, explains the "discontentment" he sometimes feels (39-41), but after the engagement and the death of Mrs Ayres, he declares this time "one

of the brightest of my life” (437). It seems his happiness and resentment are tied to his perceived class position, and it clearly interacts with his narrative perspective, which causes him to be unreliable when it comes to class issues. The narrative, therefore, works to both reveal and conceal the specifics of the class conflict.

3.3. The Liminality of Unreliable Narration

Faraday is not just in a liminal class position, as a narrator, he is also in a liminal space; he is both a participant in the events that transpire and the lens through which the reader is presented these events. This liminality creates a certain ambiguity since Faraday is also unreliable, and so his involvement in the events becomes blurry. Faraday is, furthermore, not objective in his storytelling, as his class position and anxieties colour his narration, as previously argued, and he is both concealing and revealing his feelings on the class conflict. Faraday’s narrative perspective, moreover, embodies social liminality because the narrative of Faraday mirrors his unstable and liminal position in society.

Another way in which the narrative creates ambiguity and liminality is through Faraday’s continual rationalisations about the hauntings. As Caroline notes: “You have an answer for everything” (352). Faraday continuously dismisses the family’s explanations and concerns about what is taking place at Hundreds Hall, although everyone in the Ayres family has a theory when it comes to the little stranger. Faraday, however, tends to explain the hauntings with rationale, and as Boehm puts it: “Faraday’s sober rationalism collides again and again with the mysterious events at Hundreds Hall and the more esoteric theories of its inhabitants” (252). The rationalising of Faraday is what creates this liminal space of oscillating between a ghost story and the psychological downturn of a gentry family.

The liminal space of Faraday’s narration and his rationalisations causes a certain ambiguity and makes multiple readings of the novel possible. Although Matychak does include authorial intention as part of her study, which is not a standard practice in literary studies, she does rightfully pinpoint “that the peculiarities of his narration cause doubts about his adequacy, freeing the reader from his influence and making it possible to create various interpretations of the story” (144). Belief and doubt are a big part of the reading, as Eve also argues is the case for Waters’ earlier novel *Affinity* (1999), where the narrative leaves the reader in a liminal space between “scepticism and belief” (98). *The Little Stranger* dwells in a similar space of liminality, as the novel straddles the line between a supernatural ghost story and a psychological thriller. Boehm argues that it can be a gothic ghost story (253), and so the

hauntings are caused by a supernatural ghost. Another way to read it is to trust Faraday as a reliable narrator, as it seems Klonowska has done. The hauntings can then be explained as Seeley, the other town doctor, argues: “the Ayres, unable to advance with the times, simply opted for retreat - for suicide, and madness” (498). There is, however, another possible reading of the novel, which I will return to later. But this ambiguity about what happens in the novel and this “contrasting realism with Gothic fantasy” (Boehm 225) does mean that the narrative exists in a liminal space.

4. Derridean Haunting

The novel explores the cultural past of the neo-forties by way of a spectre, but this is not the only type of haunting that the novel contains; it also explores the haunting of people by their pasts. Hauntology, as it deals with the conjuration of a spectre, is also appropriate to examine the personal spectres of one’s own making, since a person can be haunted by the ghosts of their past. This is evident in the individual trauma of the Ayres family, but they are not the only ones haunted. Faraday is just as traumatised and haunted by his past and his unrealised future. He is haunted by his parents’ lives and deaths and their sacrifice for his education. This has resulted in his obsession with the house, the Ayreses, and with rising in socioeconomic status. It has, furthermore, affected his views of his future, which remains unrealised for the majority of the novel. Faraday is, therefore, an ideal literary character through which one can explore hauntology, and how characters can be haunted by the past and an unrealised future.

4.1. The Trauma and Haunting of Faraday

Faraday’s life is dominated by the lives and deaths of his parents throughout the novel; they are the root of his trauma and continued haunting. The reader does not, however, learn much about his parents, except that they are of the lower working class: Faraday’s mother worked as a nursery maid at Hundreds Hall for the Ayres family and his father as a grocer’s boy (28). What the reader does learn is that his trauma with class is closely linked to the trauma of losing his parents. Rather than mourn the loss of his parents, Faraday has channelled his sorrow into a class resentment, as the hard labour of the lower class is part of what killed his parents. It can, therefore, be argued that Faraday is haunted, and as Fisher argues in accordance with

hauntology: “haunting, then, can be construed as a failed mourning. It is about refusing to give up the ghost or—and this can sometimes amount to the same thing—the refusal of the ghost to give up on us” (22). Faraday’s trauma can be interpreted as rooted in a failed mourning of his parents; he still hasn’t processed or come to terms with their deaths. This failed mourning has resulted in the conjuring of a spectre that continues to haunt him.

Faraday’s relationship with his parents does, however, remain elusive in the novel. Faraday’s parents and their lives remain not just concealed from the reader, but it seems it is even hidden from Faraday himself. The narration of Faraday is, therefore, incomplete in certain aspects. He is not holding back a truth from the reader; he instead misreports and is unaware of his trauma. The novel, consequently, conceals certain aspects of Faraday as a character and his relationship to his parents. When Faraday is looking through some of his parents’ keepsakes, all he finds is one photograph of them and realises: “of my parents’ own lives, I discovered, there was shockingly little record” (38). His parents’ lives are somewhat concealed from him. This is evident when Mrs Ayres gives Faraday a picture of his mother (29), and as Letissier argues: “it is sadly ironical that on the picture that Mrs. Ayres presses him to accept as a memorandum, Faraday should fail to identify her [his mother] for certain, as if this trace of the past was to remain like an optical unconscious” (38). Letissier makes the argument that what should be a memory of his mother, sadly, only signifies absence and the inaccessibility of his mother and even that which is repressed. This provides the context for Faraday’s complex relationship with his parents; he is haunted by their brief presence in his life and the time and future he has lost with them.

This, moreover, alludes to the fact that Faraday’s trauma is unconscious, and his narration is at times a misreporting of events, as Faraday himself is unaware of the family trauma he carries with him. This means that his narrative both reveals and conceals aspects of his Derridean haunting, since he is aware of some of his trauma, but some also remains hidden from himself and, thereby, the reader. Germaná, however, argues that in hauntology, there is also a confrontation of the past by the spectre: “subverting the logic of sequential time, the spectral apparition representative of the paradoxically absent presence of an earlier time, disrupts linear chronology, forcing its witnesses to confront the residual traces of their past in their present” (120). Although Faraday’s trauma is unconscious, this coming or the return of the spectre forces him to face his past and the death of his parents. His subconscious is, therefore, making itself known, and it can be argued that it does not continue to be concealed from Faraday or the reader.

4.2. The Class Trauma of Faraday

Faraday's class trauma is evident throughout the novel; Faraday is haunted by his class position and past. This trauma is rooted in the class structure, which has kept him perpetually on the outside. It is Faraday's lower-class status which has stopped him from achieving anything great, as he argues (39). He has been able to become a doctor, but at the expense of his parents, and without much success in gaining wealth or rising in socioeconomic status (35). He, furthermore, has been in love previously, but the engagement was called off once the girl's parents convinced her that he was not a "suitable match" (39) due to his lower-class status. Faraday, therefore, has not had much success in either his career or in his family or love life. Consequently, his trauma and his unrealised future are rooted in the issues of class, and this trauma is due to his liminal class position. In addition, Faraday has endeavoured to escape his past by rising in social status, but there is no escape, as is emblematic of Derridean haunting. Fruzińska argues: "In accordance with the hauntological understanding, [it] presents individuals as not fully belonging to themselves, since they are composed of layers inherited from previous generations. [...] people are never free to be just themselves" (8). Faraday cannot escape his past because of the inheritance he was born into, and this results in his continued haunting.

Faraday is, however, not only traumatised by his current social position, but he is also traumatised by his unrealised future. Faraday reveals that his parents have sacrificed themselves to give him an education, so he could rise in society. Faraday is, however, resentful and angry because he feels this sacrifice has come to nothing: "I felt ashamed. My father had taken on debt after debt in order to fund my education. These debts had probably ruined his health; they had most certainly helped weaken my mother. And what had been the result? I was a good, ordinary doctor" (38-39). Faraday is ashamed because he has not been able to make anything of their sacrifice; he is just an "ordinary doctor" (39). Faraday is, therefore, haunted by an unrealised future. Both Faraday and his parents aspired for him to move out of the lower class and to rise in society, but so far, according to Faraday, it has come to nothing. Faraday has failed to mourn the death of his parents, and he is not mourning the loss of his unrealised future. Hence, Faraday is haunted by a spectre of his own making.

Furthermore, Faraday's Derridean haunting is also explored through his desire for Hundreds Hall and what it represents. As Faraday is haunted by his unrealised future of rising in social position, he has attached this class trauma and desire to Hundreds Hall, since the house

is a symbol of the gentry, wealth, and the upper class. The desire that Faraday has for the house can also be rooted in his desperate desire to belong, not only of belonging to a specific class to escape his liminal class position, but also to truly belong to the gentry, a family, and a place. Faraday's obsession with the house is made clear within the first pages; however, how far Faraday is willing to go to obtain this dream is firmly hidden from the reader. The house is not only a symbol of the gentry but also a symbol of Faraday's repressed desires and class anxieties. Heilmann argues that Hundreds Hall is "a symbolic repository of his [Faraday's] class dysphoria" (48). Nevertheless, I would argue that to Faraday, as he makes known in his narration by never speaking ill of Hundreds Hall, the house is not just a place which symbolises his class trauma, but it is a place that symbolises his dream and unrealised future of rising in society and belonging to the landed gentry. It is by obtaining the house that Faraday can realise this dream and future. These subtleties of his class resentment and desires are explored through Hundreds Hall, as Faraday's unreliable narration both reveals and conceals the depths of these resentments and desires.

4.3. The Spectrality of the Unreliable Narration

The class conflicts and conflicting class perceptions are reasons why Faraday is an unreliable narrator, but his unreliability also conceals and reveals something about the hauntings. Interestingly, Faraday is never personally haunted by the spectre of Hundreds Hall, as the little stranger only haunts the Ayres family, and it seems to only reside in the house. The hauntings, therefore, never involve Faraday; he is instead told the story of the haunting after the fact by the members of the family. The reader, therefore, never gets a first-hand account of the hauntings; it is always retold by Faraday. The narrative perspective of Faraday, consequently, both reveals specifics about the hauntings at Hundreds Hall and what happens to its occupants, but it also conceals what happens during these hauntings and what causes it, since the reader only ever knows the story through Faraday's perspective.

The limited perspective of Faraday as a narrator also contributes to the spectrality of the narrative itself. It can be tempting to read Faraday as reliable; however, it seems that his unreliable narration is key to the ambiguity of the hauntings and the spectre. The reader never discovers what causes the hauntings, whether the hauntings are just figments of the Ayreses' imagination, or who the little stranger is; this remains ambiguous throughout. Consequently, the little stranger is not the only thing that haunts the novel. Letissier argues that Faraday is not reliable as a narrator and that: "his biased account of facts calls for competing versions, doomed

to remain as spectral narrative alternatives” (37). The alternatives to Faraday’s telling of the ghost story are what remains spectral in and of itself. The little stranger of Hundreds Hall is, therefore, not the only spectre that haunts the novel, but the unreliable narration and its ambiguity about what really happened at the house remain spectral and continue to haunt. Thus, the unreliable narration not only conceals some truth, but it also embodies the very spectrality that the novel explores.

The reading of Faraday as unreliable is, therefore, integral to Waters’ work. Whether Faraday is understood as reliable or unreliable determines what the reader believes about the hauntings and Faraday’s own implication in the occurrences at Hundreds Hall. If Faraday is read as reliable, then the reader misses out on the liminality between the rational and supernatural explanations of the novel. By using the unreliability of Faraday, Waters is able to create an ambiguity about the hauntings of Hundreds Hall, leaving a clear gap for the reader to interpret and fill. Thereby, the novel can continue to haunt the reader and embody the very spectrality that the Ayres family themselves experiences in the novel.

5. Unreliability & Repression

Faraday’s narrative perspective works to reveal and conceal both the aspects of class and of haunting in the story, as he is concealing his own feelings and implication in what takes place at Hundreds Hall. Scholars have previously argued that there is an intersection of the hauntings and class, but I argue that as the novel explores class and spectral presence through Faraday’s narration, there is an intersection of not only Derridean hauntings and class conflict but also of the unreliable narration. Faraday has reasons for misreporting, as caused by his misevaluating and misinterpreting, as he is affected by his class trauma and haunting, which becomes visible through his narrative perspective. Nonetheless, he also has a specific reason for underreporting and concealing parts of the narrative, as he desires to possess Hundreds Hall and to rise in socioeconomic status. Whether Faraday deliberately deceives the reader or if he is driven by something unconscious can be debated. He does, however, have a clear motivation to look innocent, as the story involves both madness and suspicious deaths.

5.1. The Little Stranger

As argued previously, the novel contains ambiguities, as there are multiple ways to interpret it; however, I argue that the novel exists in a liminal space. Boehm argues that the novel is a supernatural ghost story where furniture is materialised and the house haunts its occupants, while Heilmann argues that Caroline's notion of the "subliminal self" can explain the hauntings. I would, however, offer the interpretation that psychology and the supernatural converge in this novel. Due to Hauntology, the spectre can be conjured out of a cultural past, out of trauma and a failed mourning. Hence, the conjuring of a ghost comes out of a psychological state, and the story can move from psychological to supernatural and exist in a liminal space. The spectre is, moreover, according to hauntology, liminal; it is a non-present presence; it is both without and without a body (Derrida 5). The nature of the gothic ghost story is, therefore, in certain aspects liminal according to hauntology.

Faraday's class resentments and desires are concealed by his unconscious and, therefore, not explored in his narration, but these resentments and desires are also revealed to the reader in the spectre that haunts Hundreds Hall. Faraday's unconscious keeps certain aspects of his feelings hidden from himself and, by consequence, the reader. This unconscious and his narrative obscures Faraday's desires and resentments, but as the spectre confronts him with the past, his desires and anger become known by way of the Derridean spectre. Derrida argues that a spectre can be conjured out of a cultural past, when "the time is out of joint" (1), that through trauma, an unrealised future, and a failed mourning, a spectre can begin to haunt. Faraday is both haunted and that which haunts. At the beginning of the novel, Faraday clearly harbours resentment for the Ayres family and the class system; however, as the novel progresses, he seems to no longer be resentful of either. Faraday, when engaged and considering himself as part of the upper class, no longer resents the class system, as he is achieving the very thing that he has always wanted. However, it seems unlikely that this resentment for the Ayreses and the gentry should suddenly disappear. It seems far more likely that Faraday's class resentments make themselves known in other ways: by means of a spectre.

It, therefore, seems that Faraday might be the little stranger that the title of the novel refers to. Twice in the novel, Faraday has a conversation about the theory that people can have a so-called *subliminal self* that separates from the conscious self, a self that is driven by anger or ambitions (264, 379). As Caroline puts it: "They're parts of a person [...] Unconscious parts, so strong or so troubled they can take on a life of their own" (364). In Faraday's class trauma, resentments and desires, a subliminal self has detached itself from him and is haunting the

Ayreses. This explains why the spectre haunts the symbols of class and oppression in the house, and why the spectre begins to haunt as soon as Faraday is welcomed into the family, but firmly kept on the outside. Faraday's repressed class resentments and his desires manifest themselves as the hauntings he reports on, thus making his unconscious class resentments and desires clear to the reader. Faraday is, moreover, close to Hundreds Hall the night that Caroline dies and envisions himself traveling to Hundreds Hall that same night (473), almost as if a subliminal self has ripped itself from him and travels to the house: "by wretched coincidence, I'd actually been asleep in my car, only a couple of miles from Hundreds (477). Faraday, furthermore, feels guilty at the inquest of Caroline's death (485).

Moreover, it seems that Hundreds Hall is at the centre of Faraday's class desires and the reason why the little stranger is conjured up in the first place. Faraday is not only full of class resentments, but he is also influenced by his strong desire for Hundreds Hall and what the house symbolises. Faraday is obsessed with the house and works to possess the ancestral home of the Ayreses, as Betty argues: the spectre "wanted the house all for its own" (485). And it becomes clear as Parker also argues "that Faraday seeks to become master of Hundreds Hall by removing Roderick and marrying Caroline" (Parker 108). As established previously, Faraday's unreliable narration is coloured by his liminal class position and trauma; his desire for the house, however, also influences his narration. In Faraday's narration about the house and his wish to possess it, he underreports and conceals aspects from the reader, although this strong desire for the house is made clear at the end of the novel, when he is the unofficial owner of Hundreds Hall (497-498).

Finally, there is an intersection of the unreliable narration, spectrality and class, because they all intersect in Faraday, and in his being the little stranger that the title refers to. Parker argues that "the spectre that haunts Hundreds Hall functions as a metaphor for class unrest" (105), and both Heilmann and Klonowska agree and argue that there is an intersection of haunting and class. I, however, propose that the unreliable narration is just as important in this intersectionality of the novel. Faraday is haunted by his liminal class position and class trauma, which has conjured up a spectre, which in turn haunts the Ayres family. He is, moreover, the narrator, so all events of the novel are mediated through him, and his narration of the hauntings and the class conflict is an integral part of how these themes are explored. The narration, furthermore, lends itself to concealing and revealing certain aspects of these class conflicts and hauntings, which creates this ambiguity, liminality, and spectral presence of the narrative. In addition, as Faraday can be interpreted to be the spectre, then his unreliability also becomes more crucial. Faraday might have a specific agenda, which motivates his underreporting and

how he tells the story and what to reveal. His narration is significant because he tells the story within which he is implicated. *The Little Stranger* is, therefore, not only a story about how the past can come back to haunt, but also of a lower-class man who has fought his way out of this class position and how he chooses to tell a story. Faraday is in control of the narrative, and I argue that this unreliable narration works to conceal Faraday's own implication in what takes place at Hundreds Hall, whether Faraday usurps the Ayres family unconsciously or not.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I suggest that Faraday's unreliable narration is not just a narrative technique that Waters employs to confuse the reader or for the reader to disregard. The narrative perspective is utilised to create ambiguity about the spectre and the hauntings, and it is, moreover, crucial to how Waters explores both class dynamics and haunting in the novel. Faraday's distorted perspective reveals and conceals his attitudes about class and spectrality in a way that a reliable narrator could not; establishing Faraday as unreliable is, therefore, crucial to the reading of Water's novel. It is, furthermore, through the lens of the unreliable narrator that the class conflicts and the Derridean haunting become visible to readers. The supernatural disturbances and class are at the heart of the novel, but it is through the class trauma of Faraday and his narrative perspective that this becomes visible and through which the hauntings take place. Faraday's narrative perspective, furthermore, does not just tell the reader of a sequence of events; it is part of the story and its exploration of the themes of class and Derridean haunting, making the narrative voice itself spectral and liminal. This study, therefore, further nuances the research of the existing scholarly field, as the unreliability of Faraday is crucial to how the reader interprets the haunting and understands the class conflict and disruption of the time. It is only through the narrator's perception and class trauma that the issues of the lower and upper classes in a time when there are disruptions to an age-old system are visible to the reader. For further study, one could continue to focus on the unreliability of the narrator, as there has not been enough research conducted on this. It could be interesting to engage with Faraday's perspective on things other than class and haunting, and thereby further nuance the study that I have conducted. As has been argued throughout, the class conflict and the haunting clearly intersect in the novel, but it is Faraday's unreliable narration which is at the heart, and it is through him that the class disruption and the hauntings are both revealed and concealed.

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