"I AM NOT ALONE IN MY FASCINATION": CULTURAL FEAR AND THE "TRUE"
WILMINGTON GHOST STORY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The past ten years have seen a spike in the development of the ghost tour industry, and the "true" ghost story anthology serves as both a precursor and a source for these economic endeavors. Ghost tours are an inexpensive way to see the sights, hear some "history," and experience the attractive sensation of contained fear. The ghost industry, often centered on museum-like re-enactments, create a new type of culture centered on the commodification of the past. I argue that ghost tourism works to solidify particular social agendas. This ghost tourism is particularly salient in Wilmington, North Carolina. Ideologically constructed behaviors, such as gender roles, are safely reified via the commodified culture shared in these "true" ghost stories. The spectral sells, and "morbid" tourism offers quick, voyeuristic insight into terrible moments of human history. It allows for its audience to briefly release repressed anxiety over traumas committed by past generations, but this release occurs within the commodified confines of tourism. The twenty-first century audience can experience the ugliness of slavery and war without delving too deep into the topic, where the burden of blame might be more solidly laid at their feet or the feet of their ancestors. In the ghost tour, this historical and social trauma is alleviated via momentary fright – yet this fear is misdirected at the specter, and not the underlying socio-political-cultural fact. The liminal, marginalized spirit receives no rest within this new industry; rather, they are continually agitated by their paranormal position.

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My family and friends have been particularly instrumental in helping me manage scholarship and a social life. I am thankful for their support and humor over the past twenty months. I would also be remiss if I did not mention my dog, Duncan, who has been a wonderful listener throughout multiple thesis drafts.

Finally, I could not have made it this far without the amazing members of my cohort. We came together at UNCW to share ideas, and I am extremely privileged to be in their company. I will miss their intelligence and kindness.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful family.

Introduction: "Without Rhyme or Reason": What is the Purpose of the "True" Ghost Story?

I have always liked ghost stories. I remember purchasing a book about the ghosts of the British Isles and not sleeping for a week. As I got older, I began to collect these anthologies from various vacation destinations. I was not attracted to the literary ghost story, in the tradition of *The Turn of the Screw* or *The Woman in White*. Instead, I liked the "true" tales of ghostly nuns and misty monks re-enacting spectrally their illicit affairs over and over again. I liked the folkloric ghost narrative, the stories rooted in superstitious and oral traditions. The alleged authenticity of *these* ghost stories is what fascinated me. I liked the unsubtle hint that they *could* be true. I also learned about English monarchs, the Salem "witches," Native Americans, lighthouses, Mary Todd Lincoln, the Battleship North Carolina, Theodosia Burr, and the Outer Banks pirate.

Thus, when I began my Master's thesis last summer, my topic was an obvious choice. I started with what I knew best, and then I thought about how and why I knew certain things so well. I learned about the siege of Fort Fisher, North Carolina, from a Ghost Hike through the state park. I discovered facts on the Underground Railroad along the Cape Fear River from an anthologized ghost story about a tortured slave. I read about the influx of freed black men working as craftsmen in the antebellum south from a ghost tour. Within these "true" scary stories, there resided small kernels of historicity and important socio-cultural commentary. And now, with the advent of shows like *Ghost Hunters* and *Paranormal State*, these small nuggets of knowledge are being more widely and more frequently disseminated. However, the problematic manifests itself when the underlying, latent history is inaccurate or incomplete.

Along with these popular television shows, the past ten years have seen a spike in the development of the ghost tour industry. The "true" ghost story anthology serves as both a precursor and a source for these economic endeavors. Ghost tours are an inexpensive way to see

the sights, hear some "history," and experience the attractive sensation of contained fear. These ghost tours, often museum-like re-enactments, create a new type of culture centered on the commodification of the past. I would argue, based on analysis of roughly forty-two "true" ghost anthologies and associated tours, that the ghost industry[1] solidifies particular social agendas within falsely innocuous spirit walks. Ideologically constructed behaviors, such as gender roles, are safely reified via the commodified culture shared in these "true" ghost stories. The "true" factor is thus two-fold; the stories purport to be authentic, and they reveal truths about societal situations across time and place.

The main distinction between the literary ghost and the literal ghost is that the latter is considered an authentic manifestation of a heretofore dead human being. Historically, these tales were used as macabre bedtime stories, or spooky cautionary tales. Now, in the twenty-first century, economically depressed towns across the United States utilize these "true" ghost stories in an attempt to increase tourism. I argue that Wilmington, North Carolina, located along the southeastern seaboard of the United States, serves as the site for a host of noteworthy "true" ghost stories. In addition to my personal proximity to this location, Wilmington is known as a nationally recognized "haunt jaunt" (Mroch) or Carolinian travel destination for those deliberately seeking ghost tourism. Several Wilmington "true" ghost stories have served as the basis for television shows. It is well-known as a spooky spot.

These "real" ghosts, both male and female, both white and black, both rich and poor, haunt the streets of Wilmington and its nearby coastal environs with what can only be described as intense determination. These published stories, were originally part of an oral tradition, and they have been revised differently from anthology to anthology; each author includes details that another author might exclude for unexplained reasons. These anthologies all purport to tell "true"

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[1] I will use the term "ghost industry" to discuss the combination of the folkloric ghost story and local tourism.

ghost stories, thus deviating off from the more literary genre associated with Edith Wharton, Wilkie Collins, and Henry James. I plan to use specific details from each collection to explore the overarching social agendas within certain ghost stories.

For my purposes, the following local texts will be analyzed: *Ghosts of the Carolina Coasts* by Terrance Zepke; *Haunted Wilmington* by Brooks Preik; *Ghosts of Old Wilmington* by John Hirchak; *Ghosts of the North Carolina Shores* by Michael Rivers; *Ghosts from the Coast* by Nancy Roberts; *North Carolina Ghosts* by Lynne L. Hall; *Haunted North Carolina* by Patty A. Wilson; and *Tar Heel Ghosts* by John Harden. These popular anthologies offer similar ghostly archetypes and commonalities across the "true" Wilmington ghost tale. These texts also provide a framework to discuss how and why fear is projected then consumed and eventually repressed by twenty-first century audiences. Each collection contains informative Introductions, Prefaces, and Forewords that also provide insight into fear production for the modern audience. I have also chosen specific stories that are more frequently anthologized. With the exception of the story of Cooter, retold in Chapter Four, all of the stories chosen can be found in at least two of the aforementioned anthologies. My selected ghost story collections depict the most popular "real" ghosts associated with Wilmington.

I plan to explore whether the ghost industry should be held historically accountable, especially when recounting the stories of marginalized people. Slaves, females, soldiers, and children – the list of specters rarely includes persons who thrived historically within the confines of class, race, or gender. Even in the living world, these ghosts existed as outside others. They operated as liminal characters, or peripheral persons overlooked by a racist, sexist, and/or elitist society. These extra-societal groups have been explored by social anthropologists, folklorists, and literary critics alike. However, the purportedly "true" ghost story, framed around the premise

of "it-could-be-true," has not been closely examined within the southern literary experience. The literary ghost story has been examined[2] and there is extensive scholarship on the specter of slavery, misogyny, economic disparity, incest, poverty, and war haunting the American South. Despite an obvious plethora of texts, the tourist trade in "true" ghost stories has not been thoroughly explored. I believe this literary tradition offers an invaluable way to understand how certain societal situations were understood in a particular historical moment, and how they continue to be understood in the twenty-first century. As is often the case with legend, fiction gets conflated with the real story - whatever that is, and however it is understood, processed and/or repressed.

My study will use Wilmington-centric sources in order to comment on the geographic, historic, and demographic features and fears in the coastal Carolina region. I seek to understand why certain characters and locations are utilized, and how the local author manipulates language to scare the twenty-first century audience. I am intrigued by the shadowy, fragmented specters within each story. I believe this blurriness to be symptomatic of how the marginalized get erased from the historical record. These liminal entities can only find self-expression in the quick-to-dismiss supernatural. Their storylines get exploited and displayed for the tourist's diversion, but there is little acknowledgement of the latent reality in each ghost narrative. This is what I find to be problematic.

My theoretical parameters will be primarily psychoanalytic in scope. Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Uncanny* will be used. Psychoanalytic concepts of fear projection and release of repressive tension will also drive the discussion, as well as Foucauldian Panopticism. In addition, Victor Turner's anthropological definition of liminality, from his

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[2] The use of ghosts and haunting has been extensively examined by literary critics in the work of American writers like Toni Morrison and Washington Irving.

seminal 1969 text, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure,* will be utilized. I will also explore Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's concept of transgenerational trauma; this provides insight into this subconscious need for spectral stories of the dead.

Despite the theoretical tools available, this is a research project with little contextual placement. However helpful literary criticism concerning abstract Southern specters may be[3] it is still limited. Because of this lack in literary studies, it is helpful to use the language of consumption and folklore. Most "true" ghost stories infiltrate the modern cultural consciousness via the tourism industry. This infiltration is where psychoanalysis and consumerism meet to create revised versions of coastal history. Ghost tours and anthologies educate the twenty-first century public, however subconsciously, far more frequently than more traditional sources of historical data. In fact, this "packaging of the supernatural as entertainment has helped perpetuate the notion that ghost stories are trivial" (Thomas, "Usefulness of Ghost Stories" 30) and thus have been overlooked until approximately the last decade. There has been a proliferation of folkloric, sociological, and cultural studies texts published on the latent issues haunting geographic place and literary spaces. Some titles include *Cultural Hauntings: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* by Kathleen Brogan, and *Haunted Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore* by Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas. As the titles of these texts suggests, the study of haunting crosses disciplines and methodologies. However, as previously stated, the "true" ghost story has somehow been overlooked by scholars.[4]

It is important to note that these studies are not concerned with veracity, and even my immediate project does not seek to prove (or disprove) the actual existence of spectral beings

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[3] Some of these have been identified as slavery, sexism, poverty, war, etc.

[4] Judith Richardson's text, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley*, is one exception to this scholarly oversight. Her organizational structure was the inspiration for my own study's composition.

hovering over childhood beds. In fact, whether these stories are labeled fact or fiction is inconsequential. Rather, these "true" ghost stories operate as locations of cultural insight where important societal codes and gender roles can be subliminally absorbed and disseminated/reproduced. For, as folklorist Diane Goldstein argues, "the act of consuming culture [through ghost tours and anthologies] itself is a culture-creating and culture-altering force" (194) that can have negative, positive, and neutral connotations. All of these connotations must be processed in order for cultural understanding to occur. In her 1997 study, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination,* sociologist Avery Gordon writes that the twenty-first century "must learn how to make contact with what is without a doubt often painful, difficult, and unsettling" (23). Consumption of these traumatic narratives, however earnest, can also be misguided. Modern society is also "a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility … [and is] led to believe not only that everything can be seen but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption" (Gordon 16). "Hypervisibility" is manifested in the ghost tour anthology and the ghost tour tradition. If we, as modern consumers, can see it, then we can dismiss it and move on. In this "hypervisible" industry, "true" ghost narratives are both open to quick distribution, and subject to specific social agendas, like gender roles and class codification.

I am interested in what simmers beneath the surface of the "true" Wilmington ghost story. In the following chapters, I will use ghost stories, centered on geographic locations, liminal spaces, gender roles, and problematic societal institutions, to illustrate the deeper, latent meaning within these spooky tales. Each chapter begins with a brief "true" ghost story that is one of the most commonly cited ghost narratives connected with the Cape Fear[5] region. It is

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[5] I will be using "Wilmington" and "the Cape Fear region" to refer to the thirty mile boundary encapsulating my analysis.

important to remember that when the pleasurable sensation of fear, often experienced while on restful vacation, recedes, the twenty-first century audience is left with a choice to either accept the historical record projected through these "true" ghost narratives, or to continue to repress their latent meaning. The horror is not about the modern percipient's terror at discovering an apparition floating by one's bed. Rather, the scariness comes from understanding the deeply rooted historical and societal beliefs that keep these stories in the public's eye. There is plenty to fear in the Cape Fear region beyond ghostly warnings, and these selected stories reveal more about what is true for twenty-first century audiences than the "true" ghosts themselves.

Chapter One: "Layers upon layers of ghost stories": Geographic, Topographic, and Historic

Signification in the "True" Wilmington Ghost Story

In his study, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, Owen Davis stresses the importance of understanding *where* ghosts linger as much as *why* they linger (45) and identifies haunted spots near and on water "as liminal places [or] portals between the worlds of the living and the spirits" (57). The Cape Fear region is certainly a border space, located between the sea and the land. The start of my analysis must happen "quite literally, from the ground up, cordoning off a territory and a stretch of time, and examining hauntings as they work *in place*" (Richardson 4). The Cape Fear region offers cinematically frightening locations for specters to manifest themselves: foggy marshes, deserted beaches, abandoned plantations. It also has a disturbing historical past. These two areas combine in the ghost industry, and my analysis ties together geography, which is simply *where* something is located; topography, which is essentially *what* something looks like from the ground up; and history.

The following story exemplifies how the geographic can be linked with the historic. In this context, Joe Baldwin's story (and its ghostly counterparts) reads like a cautionary tale and warns audiences across multiple generations that there is much to truly fear in the geographic, topographic, and historic Cape Fear region.

1. THE MACO GHOST LIGHT

In the late 1860's, Joe Baldwin served as a dedicated conductor on the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. The southeastern portion of North Carolina, the city of Wilmington included, was once crisscrossed with railways delivering and collecting supplies. This industrial tattoo on the coastal landscape peaked at the turn of the nineteenth century. Late one evening, Baldwin was riding in the rear car of a supply train passing near the Maco, North Carolina station when he realized that

the caboose had become uncoupled from the moving train. Fearful that this runaway caboose

would endanger the approaching trains, Baldwin climbed to the "rear platform of the wild coach"

and began to wave his lantern "frantically" in an attempt to warn the unaware conductor (Harden

45). Instead of halting the oncoming train's progress, Baldwin's own train car came to a slow

stop as his lantern signal continued to wave. The approaching train crashed into Baldwin's car

and "completely demolished it. In the terrific impact, Conductor Joe Baldwin was decapitated

(Harden 46). Eyewitnesses to this horrific accident swear that Baldwin waved his lantern until

the very end, desperate to save others and not himself.

It seems that Baldwin's selflessness did not save him from becoming a restless spirit.

Several anthologies[6] have published this story, making it one of the most infamous Wilmington

ghost story. Ever since his tragic death, there have been sightings of an "inexplicable light

coming from the swamp around Maco Station" (Zepke 14). There are many eyewitnesses to this

phenomenon; in fact, Michael Rivers writes that this "light appeared so often [so close to the

train tracks] that the Atlantic Coastline Railroad was forced to change their signal lights to red

and green to end the confusion for other trains (53). The ghostly orb is always depicted as

swinging from side to side; some accounts have it zooming towards the audience (Zepke 14)

while others describe it as speeding away (Harden 47). President Grover Cleveland reportedly

witnessed this light when traveling through the Cape Fear region in 1889 (Zepke 14; Harden 48).

The now defunct Maco Station serves as a frequent late-night excursion for paranormal

investigators and thrill-seekers alike.

The most commonly cited explanation for the ghost light at Maco is "swamp haze, or

phosphorous gas (*ignis fatuus*)" but this does not explain the quickness with which the light

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[6] These anthologies include Terrance Zepke's *Ghosts of the Carolina Coasts*, Michael Rivers's *Ghosts of the North Carolina Shores*, and John Harden's *Tar Heel Ghosts*, among others.

travels along the railways (Zepke 15). Car lights, reflected from the nearby state highway, have also been considered, but these do not account for the pre-automobile sightings in the years immediately following Baldwin's death. This light is intimately tied to the ground, and it is quasi-synonymous with the township of Maco. It is a mile marker and a point of interest on the landscape. The location of poor Joe Baldwin's final moments is just as important as his last act of courage; along the peripheral train tracks, his phantom lantern still serves as a warning. The twenty-first century audience has to wonder what Joe is warning his percipients to look out for along the landscape.[7] The spectral orb is a powerful archetypal reminder about the dangers along train tracks. In Joe's time, the fear was of careening wrecks; now, abandoned train tracks offer potential spaces for misbehaviors and miscreants. The railroad system has come and gone in the Wilmington area, but Joe Baldwin still warns of something approaching on the horizon. Industrialization may have momentarily infringed upon nature, but the supernatural continues to warn how technology[8] can backfire tragically. These ghostly sightings warn the modern audience about historical fears but they also suggest that the Cape Fear remains a dangerous geographic site. The ghostly warnings continue.

2. HISTORY OF THE CAPE FEAR REGION

It is notable that stories of ghost lights serve as the main source of fright for the modern Wilmingtonian resident and visitor alike. By stressing out about the spookiness of the region, the living audience's attention is drawn from actual fearsome natural and not-so-natural elements. The focal pressure is also deflected from the problematic in history; the real issues of racism, classism, slavery, sexism, and poverty get pushed aside in favor of spectral orbs hanging over

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[7] Ghost lights traditionally reveal real fears about getting lost in the woods and overall dangers in the natural world (Thomas 49). There is also the added trepidation about train travel in the early part of its use in the United States.
[8] It is noteworthy that this industrialization historically came from the North.

10

train tracks. The Wilmington area is also known by its well-earned moniker of "Cape Fear." The region was not named after a captain named "Fear" nor a vessel christened "Fear"; instead, this small strip of land witnessed diseases, hurricanes, pirate attacks, wars, riots, and massacres - all of which earned it such a fearsome title. The Confederate States of America (C.S.A) Attorney General George Davis gloomily described the Cape Fear peninsula as a "naked, bleak elbow of land, jutting far out into the ocean …. it stands today, bleak and threatening and pitiless … and as its nature, so its name, is now, always has been, and always will be the Cape of Fear" (qtd. in Ross 7). The area had been named so in the mid-1600s, as early European adventurers named the exposed area, devoid of trees and rocky outcroppings, "the Cape of Feare" (Ross 9). The moniker[9] primarily stuck because of the Frying Pan Shoals, a hidden sandspit off the Cape Fear tip that grounded and wrecked many shipping vessels (Ross 9).

Beyond the underwater threats and bleak beachy landscape, the early Cape Fear colonists were threatened by small groups of Native Americans. This fear was quickly neutralized in 1730 with the mass genocide of the Cape Fear Indians by Captain Maurice Moore and his soldiers (Fonvielle 8). However, war loomed ferociously across the land for almost two centuries. The Revolutionary War brought British soldiers to Wilmington, where General Cornwallis envisioned his troops would "refit, recover, and rest" (Fonvielle 29). Instead of being an uneventful siege, the British commanding officer instituted a "reign of terror" through the capture and torture of dissident Patriot resistance (Fonvielle 30). When the American Civil War tore up and down the Atlantic Coast, Conferederate blockade runners used the City of Wilmington as a point to resupply and rejuvenate the Rebel forces. Fort Fisher [10]guarded the

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[9] Interestingly enough, in 1663 there was a move to alter the persona of the Cape Fear to encourage the migration of New England settlers southward. Captain William Hilton, of the Puritan Plymouth colony, began to refer to the area as "Cape Faire"; however, this 17th century advertising gimmick obviously did not work (Ross 11-12).
[10] The site of an interesting haunting discussed within Chapter Two.

mouth of the Cape Fear River, an important supply route for the C.S.A when all the other Southern seaports (i.e. Charleston, Savannah) had fallen into Federal hands. In January of 1865, the fort fell in a firestorm of bombardment from Union ships anchored off the coast. Historian Chris Fonvielle[11] writes that this capture "certainly the downfall of the Confederacy" (44) as the path to Wilmington laid wide and open through the Cape Fear peninsula. Wilmington served as the final stronghold of the Confederacy, thus also representative of the faltering, archaic, and insidious institution of slavery; Fonvielle writes that "significant social change … came about with the destruction of slavery" (44).

Colonialism and wartime left legacies of not only violence and geographic destruction but also disease – or the fear of disease – and racially motivated rioting. In summer of 1862, yellow fever decimated the Wilmington population and increased the already significant wartime economic depression. Families evacuated, businesses shut down, and supply services were extremely limited (Cooke 113; Ross 184; Fonvielle 40). In November of 1898, "deep seated racism" (Fonvielle 50) caused an explosion of violence targeted at Wilmington's black population and the editor of *The Wilmington Daily Record*, Alex Manly. This riot was "the only political coup d'etat in U.S. history" (Fonvielle 51). World War II also brought German prisoners of war to the Cape Fear region and an alleged German U-boat attack on a chemical plant at Kure Beach (Fonvielle 55). What is interesting about this litany of legitimate, historical fears is that while they are often present within the "true" Wilmington ghost story, they are not the focal point. It would seem that the wars, diseases, massacres, and inhospitable landscape would be the true fear in the Cape Fear region. However, these geographic, topographic and historic components simmer underneath the Wilmington ghost story. The transgenerational

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[11] Fonvielle is also a professor of history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

trauma[12] is hidden by spooky language and uncanny gothic elements that hypnotize the modern audience into transference of terror from the terrible events rooted in actuality to the fear of wispy phantoms on the periphery of existence. There is complete *re*direction and *mis*direction of fear from historic traumas towards the surreal supernatural. I seek to understand why this happens.

3. GHOSTLY GEOGRAPHY AND THE CAPE FEAR REGION

In most areas where tourism is the main source of municipal income, ghost stories are also the first introduction to a geographic location. They become an integral part of the history of an area, and the legacy to future generations. If this history is revised and cloaked in spookiness, residual historicity is lost on an audience that most likely will not do an in-depth historical study. The "true" Wilmington ghost story allows for exploration of geographic and historical moments, such as the Maco Light and President Cleveland's visit, while diminishing certain important facts like Joe Baldwin's race and class distinctions. Knowledge of the latter facts would certainly explode the former and reveal interesting elements within the ghost story's folkloric construction. As such, this information is not known.

With the Maco Light in mind, the "true" ghost story or legend operates as a perfect way to connect the physical topography with the metaphysical landscape. Folklorist Judith Richardson has previously explored how a geographic landscape can serve as the ideal catalyst for spooky stories with deep cultural signification (8). Her study, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley,* "explores how haunting relates to the construction of localness in a region where social and historical connections seem particular fragile" (7). In this fashion, the Wilmington ghost narrative mirrors the Hudson Valley ghost narrative. Both East

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[12] A term defined by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and explored at length in Chapter Four.

13

Coast regions feature "the convergence of unfamiliar people, the uncertainty of place created by frequent influxes and movements, created a sense of troubling uncanniness and unfathomable otherness that could lend itself to a sense of hauntedness" (Richardson 24). From European settlers to Revolutionary War soldiers to German POWs, from hurricanes to balmy summer winds to terrible ice storms, the Cape Fear region has an impermanence that is reflected in its desperate need for "true" ghost stories. This area allows for a certain "demographic transcendence," as folklorist Jeannie Banks Thomas terms the uniting of different people together in the common consumption of popular supernatural texts with particular warnings. This "demographic transcendence" is essentially the definition of the Wilmington tourism industry. The linking of land-to-apparition allows for more access into historical, societal, and cultural warnings. Insight can come from digging into the narrative soil for buried historical secrets, obscured social misconceptions, and political phantoms shrouded in the cloak of fear.

Since the "true" ghost story is copied down by a selection of regionally affiliated writers, their framing introductions offer important commentary on how they choose to use (or not use) the history and geography of the Cape Fear region. Several authors tie the real fears of the Cape Fear to their inclusion of geographic and historical data wrapped up with tales of the supernatural. In *Ghosts from the Coast*, Nancy Roberts gives a short account of the gray male ghost that allegedly warns families on Pawley Island, South Carolina, of impending hurricanes (xi). Lynne L. Hall's *North Carolina Ghosts* tells of the "strong connection between the spirits and the places they were haunting" (9). In *Ghosts of the North Carolina Shores*, Michael Rivers conflates history and geography with the supernatural, arguing that "from the white sands of the Outer Banks to the swamps and rivers that run inland, [one] can almost see the history of the Old North State forming before [one's] eyes" (7). These authors all suggest an intimate preternatural

14

knowledge within the specters they narrate; clearly, the ghosts are familiar with their landscapes, while also operating on an alternate plane of existence.

Other anthologists mention the topographic elements first, as if to suggest the spooky elements lurking underneath lush foliage and along picturesque beaches. Terrance Zepke's *Ghosts of the Carolina Coasts* mentions "palmetto trees, wild magnolias, stately old rice plantations and lots of ghost stories" along the Carolina coast (9). Zepke's introduction suggests that the ghost stories are as native to the area as the palmetto trees. John Harden's *Tar Heel Ghosts* introduces human-made topography to the discussion, mentioning how "ghosts come from, or inhabit cabins and mansions, boats, trains, trails, and mountain recesses"; spooky ghosts know no limit, recognize no difference between settings both urban and rural (x). Harden introduces the meteorological element, which plays a part in the Maco Light story, writing how "weather has a great bearing on ghosts and their activity [because] dreary days – not bright sunny ones - are the time for flexing ectoplasmic muscles or wreaking post-mortem revenge" (xiii). The warning is clear here: beware the rainy day. Nancy Rhyne's anthology *Coastal Ghosts* also favors the human-constructed landscapes to essentially "tour" through the ghostly narratives which operate along back roads, riverfronts, cobble stone streets and antebellum mansions (9-13). These Introductions, Forewords, and Prefaces emphasize the look of the land but stop short of illuminating the importance of such topographical significance. The landscape and history is all part of emphasizing the spooky Cape Fear atmosphere.

Perhaps the most historically minded, Patty A. Wilson's *Haunted North Carolina* acknowledges in her opening paragraphs the "vast and varied" geographic situation at work within her anthology (1). She details how Spanish and Italian explorers came to the Carolina cost but the "British chose to first settle [there] … [bringing] their culture and their diseases, forever

changing the landscape of North Carolina" (1). In this statement, there appears to be an indictment of colonial practices and the responsibility of modern audiences to recognize such changes. The geological connotation is also evident in Wilson's description of the "layers upon layers of history" at work within the Carolinas (2). However, just as Wilson injects some social criticism into her anthology, the supernatural veil descends upon any historical revelation. She states that "it should come as no surprise that a state with this much history and passion is also a most haunted state" (Wilson 2). The historical is superseded by the folkloric, which is what the editors of the Carolinian ghost anthology *Boogers and Boo Daddies* argue is the "true mother of history" (ix).

4. MORE GHOST STORY EXAMPLES

To explore the spectral use of geography and history to give specific societal warnings, it is necessary to dig deeper into Cape Fear "true" ghost stories rooted in the actual geographic landscape. The Maco Light, retold earlier in this chapter, begins to exemplify this connection, but it does not offer a complete composite sketch of this localized spectrality. My first example illustrates the horrific ending of Theodosia, the daughter of Aaron Burr and the wife of South Carolinian governor Joseph Alston (Preik 113; Zepke 79). Theodosia's story and her fellow landscape-connected ghosts illustrate what Kathleen Brogan, author of *Cultural Hauntings: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*, calls "the uncanny power of the ghost [to] reflect the disruptive force of strong women in societies that restricts the expression of female power" (25). For Brogan, a "cultural haunting" explores the "hidden passageways not only of the individual psyche but also a people's historical consciousness" (5). The community is the thing within Brogan's arguments; there is an ability to regain access to "a lost or denied past" (6)

16

through analysis of the haunting, especially when said haunting takes into consideration

subjugated categories of peoples. In all anthologized accounts, Theodosia is primarily identified

relative to her father or husband, thus evidencing the patriarchal nature of her worldview. This

worldview gets disseminated through two versions of her story. The modern audience is once

more warned about traveling. This time, it concerns females taking a solo voyage.

Theodosia's story begins on a geographic journey. She is heading to New York in order

to visit her exiled father, Aaron Burr. In her decision to leave South Carolina, the young woman

opted to brave the dangerous, pirate-infested Atlantic coast on her own (Zepke 80; Preik 114-

115). Theodosia's boat, allegedly called the *Patriot*, was ambushed by pirates and Theodosia was

imprisoned at Smith Island, now commonly known as Bald Head Island. In order to avoid sexual

defilement, as suggested by the Terrance Zepke retelling (80) or the plank, as suggested by the

Preik account (114), Theodosia willingly walked into the ocean to end her life. Theodosia's

ghost stalks the dunes of Bald Head, only manifesting herself to men. These male percipients

frequently feel that "the woman [specter] was trying to tell" them something (Preik 115). Her

beauty is stressed and her ghost is connected to the full moon – the monthly moment when the

ghost is most frequently witnessed.

Theodosia is tied to the land; her life was ended, either directly or indirectly, by pirate

attack, which was an major fear for sea travelers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her

specter wanders the location of her alleged demise and she looks to males for intercession. She

serves as a model female ghost, despite her agency in committing suicide post-pirate capture.

She is willowy, needy, and strangely attractive. Her story is so frequently anthologized that it

comes to define her father's. Does her haunting suggest an empowerment, a proto-feminist move

to avoid sexual abuse at the hands of the pirates? Or does her punishment post-death, evidenced

by her restless wandering, serve to further castigate her own father, whose historical reputation was tarnished by his role in the dueling death of Alexander Hamilton? There are a few clues that suggest both questions get at the heart of Theodosia's story's latent meaning. Primarily, Theodosia's ghost is aware of her feminine positioning;[13] she is identifiable by her flowing skirts and hair ribbon, and within her ghostly narrative, Theodosia quickly recognizes that "she has no food or survival skills" (Zepke 81). Her femininity dooms her; she is vulnerable as a potential sexual plaything for her pirate captors and incapable of surviving on her own. Her use of Bald Head Island, a small strip of land at the very edge of the Cape Fear region, also suggests how the liminal nature of her landscape reflects her liminal location as a ghost in between worlds and identification. She is also in between her patriarchal identifications, on the geographic boundary between her husband's domain and her father's protectorate. In her inability to reach either location safely, Theodosia becomes a restless entity. She is neither here nor there primarily due to her inability to operate within the harsh, phallocentric world around her. Her story warns a modern (female) audience that dangers lurk off the coast, and it is not desirable to wander far from hearth and home.

When thinking about the real historical and geographic fear of pirate attack, it is almost inevitable that the modern mind will be drawn to the fearful and frequent threat of hurricane or sea squall. Frying Pan Shoals has already been described in this chapter as a major factor in the decision of European settlers to label the Wilmington peninsula "the Cape of Feare." Shipwrecks, caused by these perilous sea hazards, certainly serve as the source of many coastal Carolinian ghost stories (Hall 32). One such story recounted in Brooks Preik's anthology, *Haunted Wilmington*, is entitled "Captain Harper and the Phantoms of the River" (93). This is a tale recounted in other ghost anthologies, most notably in John Harden's *Tar Heel Ghosts* where

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[13] Gender and ghosts will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

18

the story is named "A Colonial Apparition[14]" (1). Captain Harper, a well-known riverboat captain from Wilmington, is in charge of transporting Christmas shoppers from the city of Wilmington to the fishing village of Southport; because of an unexpected December squall, where "the wind swirled the snow around in white funnels mixed with blankets of blinding sleet," the steamer *Wilmington* is unable to leave the port at its scheduled time (Preik 94). In the midst of this storm, Captain Harper and his lone Scottish passenger share ghostly tales, further increasing the spooky factor while repressing the real danger of river travel in such conditions. The inclusion of the Scottish presence allows for Kathleen Brogan's earlier conclusion to be applicable. There is a specific historical commentary being stated here; Captain Harper is the voice of reason throughout the storytelling session, but his Scottish companion allows for the presence of superstition and paranormal elements which precede and introduce the subsequent supernatural event.

In the midst of this terrific winter squall, Harper's first mate Peter Jorgensen hears a voice pleading for help and witnesses a bedraggled man who is "dripping wet … [and] generally disheveled, a most frightening apparition" (Preik 96). Harper dismisses Jorgensen's fears as evidence of the first mate's inebriation. However, the Scottish passenger states that this "apparition" must be evidence of further supernatural experiences; Harper is nonplussed throughout this entire encounter. Moments later, the men all witness the spectral manifestation of two Scotsmen, historic remnants of the Revolutionary War who were each executed for treason, piloting a boat headed for safer, homey waters. This sighting leads the crew and lone passenger of the Wilmington to discover two shipwrecked sailors clinging to the remains of their vessel a short distance from the *Wilmington* – and the initial paranormal experience.

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[14] The specter of colonialism, while not the primary focus of this chapter, would make a fascinating focus for a rhetorical analysis of "true" ghost story titles.

19

Captain Harper's story revolves around the Revolutionary War, the colonial presence in the Cape Fear, and natural, weather-related fears. It compiles and connects all the aforementioned elements into a grand tale that hides a multitude of latent meanings. The uber-masculine Harper is contrasted with the feminized Norwegian first mate and unnamed Scottish passenger; the story attempts to support the notion that American patriarchy outweighs anything superstitious or hysterical. After all, despite Captain Harper's realization that something paranormal manifested itself to him and his compatriots, he is still the title of the tale. Harper portrays the hyper-rational male who witnesses the unexplainable yet still manages to maintain masculinity according to societal norms. His Norwegian and Scottish "charges" are allowed, if not encouraged, to display fear and uncertainty. The geographic location further solidifies this characterization. Harper, as master of his profession, knows the geographic location like the back of his hand. While he acknowledges that he is "unable to take the [spectral] matter seriously" (Preik 97), Harper also indulges his companions and looks for a rational explanation where none reside. His demeanor in both accounts is patronizing and condescending, even when facing the very real fear of an intense winter storm. The modern (male) audience is warned to not lose their cool in treacherous weather, and the suggestion is to emulate Captain Harper's model of masculinity.

Along with the fear of pirate attack and intense storms, the threat of disease also haunts the "historical consciousness" of the Cape Fear/Wilmington region. As previously described, disease was a very real fear affecting many families throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This fear translates into the ghost story through the societal dread of losing one's child. Terrance Zepke recounts the story of sea captain Silas Martin, who took his two children on a sea voyage to the West Indies (53). The voyage ended in tragedy, when his young daughter died of either

dehydration or yellow fever (Zepke 55) en route to the island. Since it was the days before embalming, Captain Martin opted to preserve his child in a barrel of rum in order to bring her home for burial. His ghost is allegedly heard weeping in his daughter's bedroom, bemoaning the supreme tragedy of outliving his child. The real presence of death, disease, and decay pervade this story, where the legitimate fear of losing a loved one is supplanted by ghostly moans and rattling chains. The warning to modern (parental) audiences is clear; the death of a child is frequent and painfully fast.

Within these three examples, there is an attempt or ability to recognize oneself in these spirits who haunt similar locations. This is reflective of a desire to control the uncontrollable: nature and landscapes, disease and kidnapping, death and weather. The projection or transference of fear of natural disasters (disease, hurricanes) and man-made disasters (war, economic depression) ignites the ghost – this projection makes the specter appear to be part of the unknown but the transfer instead reflects legitimate fears that death was around every corner for the Wilmingtonian in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The next few chapters continue this exploration of the latent meaning within the "true" Wilmington ghost story. This geographic, topographic and historic haunting is complemented by Brogan's definition of "cultural haunting"; both offer necessary insight into what is simmering underneath the fearful textual elements of liminal spectral spirits, otherworldly warnings, and raw paternal paranormal activity.

Chapter Two: "Betwixt and Between": Liminal Spaces and Cape Fear Specters

In the "true" Wilmington ghost story, the specter exists "betwixt and between" (Turner 95). Much like the liminal or peripheral being from anthropological studies, the Wilmington ghost is trying to warn its community about very important things. It wants to draw attention to the historic and cultural spaces unexamined because of what psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok term "transgenerational trauma"[15] or deliberate avoidance. In this fashion, the liminal figure is always on the margins of acceptable communal categorization. Often, this marginalization points towards something the community is unwilling to address, resulting in the liminal being as a source of unacceptable critique. This communal refusal acts as a distraction from the true historical and societal issues that need to be dealt with, such as the Civil War and the institution of slavery.

My analysis brings me to the specter of the Confederacy, which still haunts the Wilmington area through reenactments both ghostly and living. The ghostly General Whiting operates as both a way to understand how the Civil War is remembered within the ghost industry. This remembrance comes through liminal positioning.

1. GHOSTLY GENERAL WHITING AND FORT FISHER

Brooks Preik's 1995 anthology, *Haunted Wilmington*, recounts a tale about a ghost re-enacting the Civil War Battle for Fort Fisher. This fort is located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and it was a stronghold for the Confederacy, which had watched as its seaports fell "like dominoes under Federal attacks" during the Civil War (Preik 106). In December of 1864, Fort Fisher was refortified to ensure its continued role as protection for Confederate blockade runners

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[15] The Freudian concept of transference will be explored in Chapter Four.

who were essentially supplying (and resupplying) the embattled and surrounded Confederate States of America (C.S.A.). An attack by Federal troops in late 1864 was repelled by the Rebel forces, but sustained bombardment in early 1865 ensured that the fort would fall sooner rather than later. Union warships were staggered along the skinny tip of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River. Before long, the shelling reduced the Confederate numbers and strength. Rebel reinforcements were not dispatched to aid the soldiers because, in the words of the Confederate General Braxton Bragg of the Army of Northern Virginia, it was officially a "hopeless cause" (Preik 108).

It turned out that Bragg was correct. Fort Fisher fell to Union forces on the "evening of January 13," pitting 8,500 Federals against 1,900 Rebels, many of whom were weakened by the Union blockade and injured by the consistent shelling (Preik 108). General William Whiting and Colonel Charles Lamb fought side by side, often in hand-to-hand combat that allegedly lasted three days. Lamb is quoted as referring to the battle as a "magnificent struggle unsurpassed in ancient or modern warfare" (qtd. in Preik 108). The Confederate forces were not easily defeated, but in the end both Whiting and Lamb lost their lives in the ultimately futile defense of Fort Fisher. In a final moment of what could arguably be described as a "patriotic act," Whiting attempted to scale one of the traverses, or earthworks, at the fort and rip down the United States flag being raised. He was felled by two bullets almost immediately upon reaching the top of the traverse, but Whiting still managed to wave his sword to encourage his flagging forces.

In the midst of this violence and bloodshed, chaos and uncertainty undoubtedly reigned supreme. The C.S.A was in the literal throes of its final death spasms, and the final surrender by General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox was only two months away. The psychic traces of this wartime horror and bloodshed undoubtedly left behind more than just a destroyed fort and a

decimated Confederacy. Preik explains her theory that "the phantoms of those who die a violent death often return to the scene of that violence as if to right some wrong or complete some unfinished task" (105) – this is not a concept exclusive to Preik either. Lynne E. Hall, author of *North Carolina Ghosts*, writes in her introduction entitled "They Are Among Us" how in each of her stories, "there [is] a strong connection between the spirits and the places they were haunting…. there was something in their lives that, in death seems to keep them bound to this world. Perhaps the death was a violent or sudden one" (10). Patty A. Wilson's text, *Haunted North Carolina: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Tar Heel State*, opens with a statement about North Carolina's participation in the "bloody conflict [of] the Civil War … [and] it should come as no surprise, then, that a state with this much history and passion is also a most haunted state" (1-2). These "violent deaths" leave behind trace evidence of their historical importance, and the ghost narrative "becomes more enjoyable because it hints at credibility and believability" (Barefoot xi). This trace evidence manifests itself in hauntings and spectral sightings. The fall of Fort Fisher translates into the spectral soldier racing across the dunes, desperate to reach the flag.

Over the ensuing century and a half, the ghost of General Whiting has been sighted racing over the dunes at the recreated Fort Fisher State Park. In the early twentieth century, his phantom was seen by two Civil War veterans who had known Whiting in his final moments at Fort Fisher. Their witnessing lends credibility to the haunting: "In the twilight, they recognized the general who had led them in battle. He was waving his sword, seeming to urge his men forward in a show of force against the enemy" (Preik 110). Preik makes sure to mention that these two C.S.A veterans watched the ghostly manifestation "in panic-stricken awe, knowing that the scene which now unfolded before their very eyes had actually taken place many years before" (Preik 110). The ghost of General Whiting is just one of the many Civil War soldiers

purportedly seen on the Fort Fisher property, an area that journalist Nancy Roberts describes as set against the "backdrop of the random violence of the ocean" (xi). The ocean, as a moving, fluid-yet-constant force along the Cape Fear region, provides a powerful geographic landscape that Roberts argues "bends and shapes and sometimes breaks the lives of those who live beside it" (xi).

The ghost(s) of Fort Fisher operates as a reminder of a violent battle that took place in what is currently seen as a peaceful, relaxing vacation spot. Without the spooky tales (or a quick visit to the Fort Fisher Museum), a newcomer to the region might never be aware of the history surrounding the area. In this way, the ghost story of General Whiting, whether read or orally recounted, provides a small amount of historical fact encased within the "spectral reenactment" (Preik 110) that repeatedly disseminated. In fact, the character of the Confederate Whiting is defended within Preik's closing statement[16]: "Even death could not deter the courageous general from his duty" (110). The ghost's character is being protected here; within Preik's narrative, Whiting serves as a symbol of bravery, not treason, for later Cape Fear generations. In this manner, he begins to depict the essential spectral elements of liminality, a characteristic important to not only understanding the ghost but also its surrounding (and future) community.

2. LIMINALITY

Within my study, the liminal positioning of ghosts is noteworthy. Liminality can be used in so many literary, anthropological, and sociological contexts. For purposes of this analysis, the frequently cited definition put forth by anthropologist Victor Turner will be used. For Turner, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned

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[16] Preik, more than any other ghost story anthologist, displays a nostalgic tone throughout her depictions of specters in the South.

and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (95). In this way, his ethnographic

work, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, is similar or perhaps comparable to the

work of structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss and predecessor in anthropological study, Arnold van

Gannep. Since theirs is an anthropological study, Turner, Levi-Strauss, and van Gannep were

looking at three specific "rites of passage or 'transition' marked by three phases: separation,

margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin) and aggregation" (Turner 94). The liminal

moment is marked by a failure to categorize according to acceptable "states and positions in

cultural space" (Turner 95). When a figure does not move past liminality back into the

acceptable aggregate society, the "ambiguous and indeterminate attributes" of the liminal being

take on specific cultural symbols of transition: "Thus, liminality is frequently liked to death, to

being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or

moon" (Turner 95). All of these transitional moments are arguably found within the various

retellings of the Wilmington ghost story. General Whiting's ghost certainly operates as a

projection of his death throes, and is frequently seen in the misty mornings or dusky evenings

between the transitional creases of day and night.

Turner's definition of liminality[17] illuminates the mystical and spiritual role that ghosts

play within their respective narratives in their respective geographic sites of haunting. Turner is

also looking at liminal figures that are *extra* to their societies and their presence is necessary for

the formation of certain spiritual rituals (102). These figures provide something intrinsic to the

community; through the liminal experience (whether a religious rite or initiation) the liminal

being "is brought closely in touch with beliefs in the protective and punitive powers of divine or

preterhuman beings or powers" (Turner 105). In this discussion of Turner's expanded concept of

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[17]   When stripped of the condescending attitude often paid to so-called "primitive societies" and problematic
research processes, the term is amazingly illuminating across a variety of disciplines.

liminality, it is also important to note that the liminal figure "must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group" (103). For example, General Whiting's ghost is imparting a projection of his alleged historical death; was he really waving his sword in his final moments, or does this haunting merely serve to assuage the deeply intrinsic humiliation still at work underneath the South's collective past? Brooks Preik attempts to answer this question by placing her ghostly General in the presence of two Confederate vets who actually saw the original last stand. This serves to show the powerful narrative influence of the ghost story anthologist; they have the final say in what gets projected onto the ghost and eventually transferred to the audience.

In this manner, the liminal ghost also acts as the ultimate societal o/Other. There is a desire to attain or understand this "Other" but this "desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference resulting from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting" (Lacan 81), which provides an interesting element to this discussion of liminality and hauntedness. Colin Davis argues, in a chapter from *Haunted Subjects* entitled "Lying Ghosts in Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis," that the strength of a ghost story's fear depends on the Lacanian Other, which is essentially a fiction perpetuated by the hegemonic culture in power to keep latent issues (sexism, racism, inequality) mysterious, repressed, and hidden. The moves to understand the mysterious are continually re-mystified in an effort to produce fear (Davis 71). It is a false Other, dispatched by the prevailing social discourse to cloud and blur the deeper social implications of stories revolving around Confederate generals, sexually exploited young women, and tortured slaves.[18]

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[18] The story of Cooter, a runaway slave, will be looked at in a later chapter. He embodies the archetypal slave ghost, a subgroup hideously underrepresented in the "true" Wilmington ghost story anthology. These tales do not play as well to the underlying tourist trade operating around most of these stories.

In acknowledging the ghost's liminal otherness, the ghost industry claims the unknown and unrecognizable as commercial venues where the consumers feel themselves on the boundary of belief and non-belief. The ghost tour industry prides itself on this anxiety-ridden disconnect; the ghost is presented to the captive audience as the conundrum that can never be exorcised or explained. It is only in the uncertainty that the ghost story audience is certain – and the divide between verisimilitude and facetiousness both obsesses and frightens the living audience. Historicity is not established, no matter how many authors argue to the contrary. There is no firm ground on which to settle, and the story exceeds the limits of comfortable realism. To quote Daniel W. Barefoot in *Seaside Specters,*[19] the ghost tales "may be only legend, a tradition. [They] may have happened, [they] may not have happened. But [they] could have happened" (xi). It is in this nebulousness that the true ghost story's liminality truly manifests itself. These are tales outside the traditional, scholarly literary categories. They are not quite history, not quite horror. They are outside acceptable genres, and this makes them "other" within the folkloric and literary tradition. The liminal is the o/Other in this framework.

3. LIMINAL TERMS

The connection between "otherness" and "liminality" manifests itself when looking closer at the terms that ghost story anthologists use to refer to their main characters. From "apparition" to "ghost," these terms are also *extra* to what is recognizable and acceptable. To start, the oft-used term "ghost" suggests the soul or spirit of an entity; its connotation implies the in-between moment of metaphysical existence. "Phantom," in the dictionary sense, suggests an illusion or delusion. However, the theoretical framework expressed in an earlier chapter pins an additional definition that revolves around continued repression of what Nicolas Abraham and

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[19] Barefoot is, in turn, also paraphrasing Mark Twain in this quotation.

Maria Torok term "transgenerational trauma." In *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals in Psychoanalysis*, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok conceive of the "phantom" as a "direct formation in the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject's own repression but on account of a direct empathy with the unconscious or the rejected psychic matter of a parental object" (181). Their "phantom" suggests something other than the self. This phantom causes anxiety because it is completely "alien to the subject who harbors it" (181). The otherness disrupts the conventional release of repression because this is a phantom that cannot be understood by the subject's unconscious.[20]

    "Spirit," too, suggests an otherness, something immaterial and incorporeal; the intangible haunts the living audience as evidence of something otherworldly and liminal. "Specter" is another term often synonymously connected with "spirit" but it takes on an interesting connotation in light of Derrida's concept of hauntology. Derrida sees the "specter" as a being that does not need to be exorcised and understood, but rather studied for information about the "still unformulated future" (Davis 14). This "specter" is desired, is looked to for understanding primarily because it is other. The ghost, in Derrida's opinion, is outside the conventional binaries of life/death, man/woman, visible/invisible (Davis 74-75). This makes the specter's liminal position enviable and necessary, for "it is through [an encounter with the specter] that something previously unheard of might occur" (84). In this manner, Derrida's "specter" becomes a more positive projection of as-of-yet obtuse societal situations, both current and historical; in contrast, Abraham and Torok's "phantom" must be exposed as negative and defeating in order for cultural healing to occur.

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[20] Fragmented or piece-meal ghostly apparitions are also a sign of the liminal: "The common understanding of ghostliness articulated … is the very image of historical insubstantiality and fragmentariness" (Richardson 26)

All of these terms require the word "haunting" to have any type of cultural significance. After all, the liminal figure of General Whiting suggests that the Cape Fear region is still re-enacting (both literally and figuratively) the bloodshed and defeat of the Civil Way. The "lack of historical continuity" (Richardson 25) in this story only serves to further the haunted quality within the othered, unrecognizable (in a transparent, otherworldly way) figure of Whiting. He is a "phantom" in the sense that Abraham and Torok advanced in their co-authored work, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. The Confederacy, as a symbol of the South's desire to maintain the institution of slavery, is something that needs to be exposed and "killed" once and for all. After all, the ghostly General Whiting is remembered and recorded by Brooks Preik as a symbol of Confederate courage, not the last stand of a deteriorating, deeply flawed culture. In this manner, Derrida's "specter" does not fit within the Wilmington ghost story; while the twenty-first century ghost story consumer can learn vital information hiding latent within these narratives, the spirit cannot stay. It must be recognized in its liminality as a site of the problematic.

Beyond the specter of General Whiting, there are several Wilmington ghosts that meet this "liminal other" criterion; there are male and female ghosts who operate on the margins of what is natural, acceptable, and recognizable. Sometimes, this liminality even manifests itself in the gender role the ghost adopts in his/her haunting, which will be examined in the next chapter. The liminality of ghosts also offers proof of something mystical and magical, which might also account for the tourism industry entirely devoted to the consumption of these true ghost stories in tours, anthologies, and shops, which is yet another topic to be discussed at a later point. It is important to remember that the liminal spectral entity operates in liminal geographic locations. For example, the ghostly General Whiting manifests himself along the ever changing sand dunes

of Fort Fisher, situated alongside the ever liminal and volatile Atlantic Ocean and Cape Fear River. His apparition, contrasted with the roar of the ocean and the flow of the tides, suggests something historical but unclear. This indistinct positioning truly renders him a *tabula rasa*; his figure points towards something mystical and spiritual by merely being between life and death but his true role is unclear and vague. Does he represent a symbol of courage, as Preik would have her audience believe, or is he warning of military defeat and humiliation? As with Victor Turner's liminal figures, the liminal Wilmington ghost can be rewritten according to the community's whims and cultural needs. If General Whiting's ghost was witnessed or recounted by a folklorist or anthologist not intimately connected to the region, as Preik is, the tone of the repeated apparition might alter dramatically.

4. MORE GHOST STORY EXAMPLES

Geographic locations can be especially liminal. The Wilmington ghost community operates on bridges, along roads both rural and urban, and in the traditionally spooky setting of grave/churchyards. These specific locations are also liminal or what Judith Richardson terms "sites of transition" (28) that explore and perhaps exploit the "relationship between life, death, the afterlife, and natural and man-made features in the landscape" (Davies 45). For example, Terrance Zepke's 2009 anthology *Ghosts of the Carolina Coasts* tells the little-known tale of a young, nameless, female ghost who wanders the Wrightsville Beach area along Airlie Road. Zepke begins her narrative by outlining the story of Pembroke Jones[21], a wealthy tycoon who once owned the land where the gated community, Landfall, now exists (113). Pembroke Jones Jr., the focus of this ghost story, is a Jazz Age playboy "usually with a girl on each arm" at his

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[21] Zepke invokes the specter of fictional Jay Gatsby to describe the lavish parties held by Jones throughout the 1920s.

father's "opulent functions" (Zepke 114). One such evening, Junior noticed one of the servants, "a petite, dark-haired girl who wore her hair up in a wide, red bow [and] was the daughter of a fisherman" (Zepke 114). This girl is unnamed in Zepke's narrative, only defined by her relationship to Pembroke Jones Jr. and her fisherman father. At the party's end, Junior allegedly offered the young woman with the red bow a ride back to her home, which she willingly accepted. What happened between the two young people can only be extrapolated by her specter, which is seen wandering up and down Airlie Road where her body was discovered ninety years ago.

The ghostly girl with the red bow is noted by multiple eyewitnesses as sporting "soiled clothes, and appears to be crying" (Zepke 114). When motorists speeding along Airlie catch sight of the young woman, they frequently stop to offer assistance and the figure promptly disappears. Since the girl's death was suspicious, Pembroke Jones Jr. was almost immediately ostracized by the community despite his (and his father's) protestation, and immediately "fathers forbade their daughters from seeing" him and Junior was never again included in the upper echelons of Wilmington society (Zepke 115). In fact, his demise was as mysterious as the girl with the red bow's death; Pembroke Jones Jr. was found dead in a car accident along an unnamed Wilmington road (Zepke 115).

The ghostly girl is often subtly blamed for the "accidental" death, supporting the concept that ghosts often manifest themselves "to haunt the sinful and plague the consciences of moral transgressors" or "to wreak revenge on their killers" (Davies 4-5). In this way, the ghostly girl also fulfills her role as liminal figure that is responsible for ensuring that the "punitive powers" of a higher being; she also haunts a liminal space that serves as a conduit for travelers thinking on other topics but confronted by the traumatic experience of an earlier Wilmingtonian. This

female ghost is also a tabula rasa in a similar fashion to General Whiting's blank slate. Her final moments are also deciphered through the narrative control of Terrance Zepke. The ghostly girl serves as a cautionary tale not only to her contemporaries, but also to more modern audiences. After all, this is not an unfamiliar tale. It's a repetitive culturally coded tale warning against "riding in cars with boys." In this way, the girl with the red bow haunts a liminal space (Airlie Road) with a message warning that *un*chaperoned behavior might result in a liminal state of existence; the operation "betwixt and between" offers significant warning that modern, impressionable audiences receive subconsciously. The young girl is denied a resting place in a culturally recognizable afterlife. Instead, she is doomed to roam a liminal space that was not her own in life and is only owned by her now via the Zepke story.

This liminal lack of ownership affects both the male and female Wilmington ghost. These specters rarely owned the spaces they continue to haunt.[22] This is yet another level to the liminal experience, for Victor Turner states that "liminal entities… may be represented as possessing nothing" (95). They only project the story transmitted through the ghost story anthologist and it could be argued that they do not even own their own story. After all, their ghostly tales alter and revise from anthology to anthology; this is a phenomenon to be discussed in the next chapter. The liminal phantom, which exists in a liminal geographic space, also does not (and did not) have any agency or ownership within their own, personalized ghostly tale. The liminal spaces a ghost "exists" in also offer a potential point of analysis; they are no longer in their respective era or even the precise geographic location they knew in life. Property ownership is ascribed by the ghost's haunting; this would account for the myriad of "true" ghost narratives where the living describe their phantom as "the rightful owner" often stating, "they'll be here long after we move away."

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[22] Property and ownership will be discussed in Chapter Three.

To give a few examples of this, it is helpful to preview some tales that will be analyzed in the next section. Alexander Hostler and Samuel Jocelyn still spectrally inhabit the graveyard where Jocelyn was interred (Preik 12; Zepke 21; Hirchak 74). This is not a spot where either man laid some type of land-owning claim, but rather the spot ascribed to them by multiple ghost story writers. Ghostly Tony Caseletta was liminal in his ethnicity as an Italian living in the United States of America; he operates outside of the categories culturally arranged by the community of early 20th century North Carolina (Preik 34). Llewellyn Marwick was allegedly murdered at the corner of Dock and 3rd Street in downtown Wilmington, which is a spot his ghost returns to stumble about in search of his horse (Hirchak 79). Crossroads are traditionally liminal spaces, "betwixt and between" addresses and city locations, and Marwick's specter does not inhabit the space he rented or owned as a living, breathing human being.

Female ghosts, as evidenced by the aforementioned ghostly girl with the red bow, also exist in liminal geographic spaces where ownership is not determined and the story alters from retelling to retelling. Theodosia Burr,[23] the daughter of Aaron Burr, wanders Bald Head Island, off the coast of Southport, North Carolina, in an attempt to avoid or attract attention to her flight from pirates (Zepke 79). Her ghost manifests itself along the liminal space of not only an island but also along "the water's edge when the moon is full" (Zepke 81). Theodosia's ghost operates in a different, female liminal manner. Her haunting is connected with the water and the moon and "hair ribbons" floating along the shore (Zepke 81). Her liminality and lack-of-ownership does not detract from her spectral beauty nor her depiction as a force to be reckoned with, since she allegedly killed two pirate scouts before taking her own life in the sea. Gallus Meg also haunts a liminal space, the Blue Post tavern that served as a stopping point for many transient sailors working their way along the Carolina coast in the early 1700's (Hirchak 24). Her behavior

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[23] This was previously discussed in Chapter One.

was brutish; she would allegedly tear the ears off of unruly, drunk sailors that she would forcibly put from the space. These ears would be kept in a jar at the end of her bar to serve as warning against future troublemakers (Hirchak 26). Her hulking specter is purportedly seen in the alleyway between the Blue Post and Front Street. These two female ghosts, Theodosia Burr and Gallus Meg, both operate outside of cultural categories, both as a ghost between worlds and as women with active agency in their own lives. They defied the gender roles of their respective living lives and the more ambiguous gender roles still at work within their haunting. In this manner, they reveal liminal characterizations *other* than the traditional ideology.

Finally, the liminal suggests a lack of physicality. Wilmington ghosts are mostly fragmented, transparent creatures. After all, the eyewitnesses to General Whiting, the girl with the red bow, Theodosia Burr and Llewellyn Markwick are not quite sure what they see. The accounts only mention the sound of a faint voice, the glimpse of a rough outline, and the manifestation of a small shadow. In this way, the liminal entity is "betwixt and between" the recognizable and identifiable elements of everyday life. They are on the periphery, but this marginal positioning reveals something essential. It allows for more dwelling and consideration by the living percipient audiences. As Lynne L. Hall describes in the opening of her ghost story collection, the more she became involved in researching the ghost stories of North Carolina, the more she became convinced about the possible "reality" of such stories (10). The liminal catches the living audience's eye in a way that is literally and figuratively haunting; from the Confederate veterans to the Airlie road motorist, these liminal phantoms provide insight into the ways in which cultural codes are transcribed and ascribed to certain ghosts in certain geographically liminal spots in and around Wilmington, North Carolina.

Chapter Three: "Two-Thirds of a Man": Liminal Gender Identification and the Wilmington

Ghost

As evidenced by the previous two chapters, the "true" ghost story industry is about

ideological control. However, the paranormal is never resolved within the finale of each tale. The

unexplained remains unexplained, and the panoptic powers of socially constructed gender norms

reinforce particular codes of behavior. This serves the folkloric intent that often uses these vague,

hazy tales as cautionary parables. Restless, spectral wandering is the specific punishment for

males who behave as feminized male in life. In their paranormal *after*life, this feminized male

phantom remains as the ultimate other.[24] The repetitive retelling of his story ensures an

ideological Panopticism in the tradition of Michel Foucault. The feminized and often

maternalized male ghost is an "object of information, never a subject in communication" (200).

In the "true" ghost story, these paranormal specters are not meant to tell their story; their

narratives are recorded and revised by someone else, with a different agenda.

In this manner, the cautionary tale of a men behaving like a female historically

transforms the "true" ghost story into something more insidious. I propose to explore several

tales where this gender role reversal occurs, beginning with a weepy, nameless male ghost.

1. THE MALE LIBRARY GHOST

In the Local History room of the New Hanover County Library, footsteps can be heard

pacing in agitation and moans of anxiety issue from the stacks. These sounds do not come from

weary historians or bleary-eyed students. Rather, this is a spectral manifestation of a nameless

man who spent his final night in the home where the newly constructed library now stands. He

was allegedly killed in a duel the morning after his sleepless final night in what was called the

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[24] This "othering" was discussed in the previous chapter.

Woods house. This male ghost is nameless, and he is often mistaken for a female specter that

also makes herself known in this same library space. Brooks Preik recounts that there is a

disconnect between the ghostly library "visitor [that] seems to be a woman when the ghost in the

Woods house was a man" (51). The male ghost weeps and paces and is mistaken for a female.

His behavior contradicts the stoicism so admired in males facing a dueling challenge in

the eighteenth and nineteenth century. His namelessness also implies his impotence and his

inability to manifest an actual, visible body; his specter is only noticed by noise, not physicality.

This story suggests the feminized male specter, which is an interesting part of the Wilmington

ghost story. What can be inferred or understood about this ghostly male, humiliated in life and

now humiliated in the *after*life? After all, these stories are set in is the same era as *Moby Dick*

and Walt Whitman. This is the moment when male-male relationships enter the homosocial à la

Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Why do some males get treated as emblematic

and worthy of admiration and others get doomed to repetitive humiliation in the "true" ghost

story? There is a connection between unmanly behaviors at the final moments of life that dooms

the feminized male ghost to repeat his ideologically unfavorable activities in the *after*life.

2. GHOSTS AND GENDER

The following stories provide a socially constructed learning experience for the modern,

rapt audience. This learning experience is shared through a subtle "exercise of power … lighter,

more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come" (Foucault 209).

This "exercise of power" is the nebulous ghost story experience, an understated affair that

usually comes in the form of entertainment but only reinforces what Michel Foucault calls

"homogeneous effects of power" (202). The audience receives messages that some*thing* is

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always watching, even post-death. When it comes down to it, the experience supports Foucault's argument that this "society is one not of spectacle but [instead] of surveillance" (217). If a person operating within this panoptic society behaves counter-heteronormative, then his fate might involve thousands of tourists traipsing through his "resting" place. The inclusion of "perhaps" and "resting" are ironic because these feminized males are involved in stories that are not proud or awe-inspiring. These are not moments where an injustice is overcome via brute masculine strength, nor are these phantoms experiencing anything close to restful peace. The Wilmington ghost may sometimes display what anthropologist Victor Turner calls the "attributes of sexlessness and anonymity [that] are highly characteristic of liminality" (102); however, the liminal position of these gendered ghosts suggest an ideological stranglehold on acceptable behaviors across the life/death dyad.

In her discussion of gender within ghost narratives, folklorist Jeannie Banks Thomas argues that "ghost stories … offer [living audiences] a view into a radically reconfigured world in which gender does not matter" ("Gender and Ghosts" 110). This new ghost-world order, as outlined by Thomas, continually shows how unaffected the ghost is by its living percipients. Once more, the "true" ghost story is more about modern audiences than the apparition. Specters rarely react to their observers. In a similar manner, gender does not trouble the ghost, caught in a liminal state of undead-yet-dead, but the repetition of specific gender roles certainly leaves a mark on the living eyewitness and storyteller. More to the point, the male ghost is routinely feminized in his death and subsequent haunting. This characteristic is attributed to ghosts who displayed emotive or feminine traits in their historic lifetime. These expressive tendencies counter almost all historical and cultural depictions of masculinity. For, as Milette Shamir and Jennifer Travis state in the Introduction to an essay collection entitled *Boys Don't Cry:*

Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S., American society tends to "cling hard to some of the most well-entrenched truisms about masculinity: that it connotes total control of emotions, that it mandates emotional inexpressivity, that it entraps in emotional isolation" (1). These "truisms" rarely manifest themselves within the male-centric ghost story. Whether the ghost story narrates the friendship between two young Wilmington youths or the economic distress of a middle-aged businessman, they provide the modern audience with a cautionary tale. The ghost story, whether recounted in an anthology or on a tour, warns the living of what could happen if traditional gender roles are not adhered to. The masculine-focused ghost narrative acts as a regulatory force, operating subliminally beneath the production/projection of fear. This displacement of attention, from the gender roles to the terror produced, allows for transference of ideologically traditional male-female binary. After all, some ghosts are not at peaceful rest; they are wandering and ostensibly atoning for something.

3. MORE GHOST STORY EXAMPLES

It would seem that the female ghost offers a more interesting locus to explore how behavior beyond the normative gender roles dooms the female to repetitive haunting. However, upon closer examination, it is revealed that physically female ghosts overwhelming performed according to their socially acceptable gender role or in ways socially admirable. For example, Brooks Preik's anthology depicts two stories where the female apparition behaves in the traditional maternal role after death. In her first story, entitled "Maggie," Preik gives the firsthand account of a Wilmington homeowner who witnessed the silhouette of a woman, "all in black … with hoop skirts … who seemed harmless" (70). The story goes on to reveal that the silhouette is assumed to be the ghost of a woman named Maggie who died while giving birth in

1889 (Preik 69). In her postmortem anguish at having not completed her maternal duties, Maggie returns to "haunt the second floor bedrooms and stairway of the home, checking on motherless children" (Preik 69). Maggie is notable in her dislike of renovations[25] within the home her husband built for their family in the late nineteenth century (Preik 71). Maggie's dislike manifested itself in "current[s] of air – no footsteps, but definitely the sound of rustling petticoats" (Preik 71). Her ghostly behavior is still entirely in line with prevailing gender roles – she is aesthetically linked with feminity from her "rustling taffeta petticoats" to her preoccupation with checking on "her" sleeping children, a quintessentially female act of child ownership.

Preik also includes a mother-son haunting in Southport, North Carolina, a small village about thirty miles south of Wilmington proper. The ghost story, entitled "Spirit from the Sea," depicts the fury of the natural Cape Fear landscape impacting the interiority of a mother worried for her sea captain son. She sees his weary figure, what Emily Evans terms as a "crisis apparition,"[26] in shadows, wandering about the parlor room of his childhood home ostensibly seeking solace or warmth by the fire. The mother in this story is "unable to shake the feeling of foreboding that had been with her all day" (Preik 3) and her maternal empathy at his figure's weary stance. The punch line is, of course, that her son was killed in a Nor'easter storm while attempting to seek harbor in his hometown. The maternal drive gave license for this solace-seeking ghost. He just wanted his mother, a familiar feeling to many in some type of distress, whether physical or emotional; however, when his mother attempted to reach out and "place both hands in a gesture of comforting love" (Preik 4), the apparition removes itself from the scene.

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[25] It would seem that Maggie did not appreciate the mainly superficial, decorative alterations to her ancestral home, which is a common theme in ghost stories across geographic locations.

[26] This term refers to ghosts who appear to a living percipient at intense moments of physical, emotional, or mental trauma.

The comfort craved eludes the ghost continually, across archetypal texts and multiple retellings, as they perform again and again, their respective cautionary gender role.

John Hirchak's Wilmington ghost anthology, *Ghosts of Old Wilmington*, offers the interesting gender-bending tale of Gallup Meg.[27] This is an interesting tale, a slight anomaly within this discussion of ideologically acceptable gender manifestations. However, Meg provides an image of agency and personal determination. Her ghost uses its story, not the other way around. As Kathleen Brogan argues in *Cultural Hauntings*, "the fluid, shape-shifting body offers an alternative to the anchored, all too physically defined bodies of women trapped in the role of guardians of a changeless, patriarchal culture" (26). Meg is dominating and aggressive, both in her life story and in her *after*life story. Her specter still bosses men around, and it still serves as a frightening threat to the male drunk staggering around downtown Wilmington. While there is nothing feminine and attractive about her demeanor, she is not ridiculed for her violence. She is remembered as fearsome, which is not even close to the description of her male counterparts.

There are several more instances of females, both as the percipient and the apparition, behaving the way females traditionally are told they should: docile, nurturing, mournful, melancholic, passive, maternal. The depiction or characterization works well within the Wilmington region, both historically and culturally. Women were the static fixtures on land; historically, they were asked to stay home, raise children, and keep the home fires burning while men fished, scouted, and sailed the seas. Despite the seemingly contradictory associations of the masculine as ocean-based and the female as land-based, the male-to-be-admired societally is not as mercurial as the sea metaphor customarily suggests. The hegemonic masculine example of stoicism and bravery infiltrates both historical and literary documents.[28] Men living along the

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[27] This tale was briefly recounted at the end of Chapter Two.
[28] This is exemplified in the story, "A Colonial Apparition," also discussed in Chapter Two.

volatile Cape Fear were expected to show no trepidation in the face of death, nor should they *appear* emotive in any situation. More specifically, males in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were required to enforce the patriarchal codes set forth by their fathers and leave the maternal urge to the biological women.

Arguably, woman has become culturally and perhaps historically conflated with mother. In Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytic study, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, she argues that "mothering [is] a central and constituting element in the social organization and reproduction of gender" (7). When the female to mother sign is ripped apart and the new equation becomes male to mother, there is something disturbing and uncanny revealed within the audience's unconscious. This reaction within the audience, when standing on the spot where a male ghost routinely and perhaps ritually behaves in ways labeled as feminine and maternal, it serves to reinforce and reeducate the living, already exposed to powerful ideological forces by engaging in the fear production process, on ideological constructs concerning appropriate gender roles.

The interesting aspect of this reinforcement and reeducation is that it occurs *in situ*; on a ghost tour, these tales are retold where the male behaved beyond their appropriate gender role and disrupted the male-female binary; this disruption mimics their ghostly manifestation, which also disrupts the dead-living binary. Ghosts, identified as man or woman, exist in an unintelligible plane of existence, a liminal space where rationality and logic cease to function. In this manner, the gender of the ghost becomes as performed in the haunting as it was in the living. To use the words of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*: "Gender proves to be performative [and, I would argue, in both life and afterlife] – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (33). Since society, whether the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth/twenty-first-century, can only process hegemonically "intelligible genders [or] … those which in some sense institute and

maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire"

(Butler 23), the male ghost who behaves womanishly defies two separate cultural binaries -

doubly ghosted and even more unacceptable.

Within this framework, the overly emotive phantom figure within most coastal ghost

tales is not the female, but the male – and this feminized behavior meets punitive consequences

when it manifests and projects through the "true" ghost narrative. Two brief examples of this

reveal something about current society. The first concerns a young gentleman named Llewellyn

Markwick, who came to Wilmington in the mid-seventeenth century from vague origins. This

vagueness suits this chapter's research purposes, for the character of Llewellyn is more easily

tied to a host of cultural signifiers, and this nebulousness, much like his ghostly manifestation,

allows his "story" to be adapted according to the respective period of the retelling. Markwick

was apparently a fan of the jewelry; he wore a "one of a kind ring" that was "large, depicting two

intertwining snakes with their heads upright" (Hirchak 77). The phallic overtones of this item

are obvious, but the fact that it is small enough to fit on a ring suggest something less-than-manly

about its owner.

For reasons both unclear and nefarious, Marwick ends up dead and buried at a crossroads

in downtown Wilmington. His body is only identifiable by his showy ring, which was not

removed from his body pre-burial. This suggests that his death was not motivated by robbery but

perhaps mistaken identity (Hirchak 79). The story is told in one ghost story anthology and

Marwick's ghostly activities display undertones of feminine behavior. He wanders about looking

for the horse he fell off, and this is a common trope in the liminal, feminized male ghost story.

The horse, as a sign of patriarchical potency and power, is unavailable to the male ghost.

Oftentimes, it is the source of the ghost's demise. Markwick is depicted as passive, unaggressive

and unable to protect himself from robbers. He failed to defend himself and he is doomed to wander about, *on foot*, in search of something. This lack of direction, the act of wandering, is also unmasculine; it suggests a passivity and inertness that does not gel with potent, hegemonic masculinity. He is not striding confidently into the night; he is treading softly to remain hidden from his more powerful attackers.

Llewellyn Markwick's ghost behaves like an earlier manifestation of the dandy. He is more concerned throughout his life and now his ghost-life with appearance rather than physical prowess. This is where Markwick's cultural importance resides, in the cautionary tale his death and his haunting offer: don't wander the streets of a rough town unless you can take care of yourself/protect yourself – and if you were man enough, this would not be a problem because a better, a stronger man, would have been able to stave off a mere case of mistaken identity; Markwick's accoutrements did nothing to save him, they only enable his identification.

The second example depicts the overtly homosocial or even homosexual connection between two men, once more in the early nineteenth century. The friendship between Alexander Hostler and Samuel Jocelyn has been recounted in several Wilmington-centric texts, most notably in *Haunted Wilmington* by Brooks Preik and *Ghosts of Old Wilmington* by John Hirchak. Hostler and Jocelyn are described as having an "interest in all things intellectual, including the supernatural" (Hirchak 64) and their cohabitation certainly gels with Eve Sedgewick Kosofsky's outline of the homosocial as "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (1). In fact, the connection between Hostler and Jocelyn, a bond that transcends life and death in a crisis apparition, borders on homoerotic; certainly, Kosofsky's assertion that "to draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (2). The Hostler-Jocelyn

story certainly slides along the continuum throughout the ghostly tale. This relationship, and its subsequent ghost narrative, supports the "view that intimacy with the male – rather than female – other is the principle threat to the masculine self" (Shamir 71). By being so intimately connected, Hostler and Jocelyn threaten the hegemonic masculine system and are punished to existence in the liminal ghost state.

The two men make a pact that whoever dies first will let the other know about life after death. This is a tender, intimate pact; theirs is a brotherhood that transcends the life-death binary, much like their later feminization clouds their association with regulated gender roles. When Jocelyn is killed, after being thrown from his horse, Hostler is inconsolable, melancholic and hysterical. Hostler's character seems to know his behavior is not socially acceptable in this portion of the tale; he is displaying his grief in ways traditionally associated with female behavior. Hostler secludes himself primarily to express himself in ways his ideological construct finds problematic. However, Jocelyn visits him three times[29] to bemoan the fact that he was buried alive, having fallen into a coma. Hostler denies his friend's spectral visit and blames his behavior on his "hysteria" – language coded as feminine. This confirms the traditional gender roles imposed upon Hostler, for "self-control under pressure of strong feelings serves as something of a hallmark of manliness" (Haralson 89-90). Upon the third visit, Hostler engages a male acquaintance to unearth Jocelyn; to the horror of Hostler, his gravedigger, and the reading audience, Jocelyn was in fact buried alive. His body is bloodied from fighting to get out of his coffin and he is lying face down, as opposed to face up. Hostler clasps his friend's body to his chest, wails to the night sky, and lives the remainder of his life in mindlessly tending garden in the cemetery where Jocelyn was reinterred.

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[29] The overtones to Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* are obvious here. This might be an instance where the literary ghost haunts the literal ghost – or vice versa.

There are many noteworthy elements within this tale that create a portrait of feminized behavior manifesting itself beyond the narrative confines. First, Hostler and Jocelyn are reunited in the liminal afterlife. Jocelyn allegedly cries from his burial plot and Hostler stumbles[30] around the graveyard begging his friend's forgiveness. There is a darkly maternal quality to this action, a spectral caregiver who failed his charge in life. Second, Jocelyn is mistaken for dead because he falls off his horse. If he had been strong enough to stay astride his horse, perhaps his horrific fate would not have been met. Variations of this tale depict Hostler as a poor horseman, which is why the two men were not riding together. Finally, Jocelyn is married in at least two versions of this true ghost story; he chooses not to visit his wife, but rather his male friend. Here, another cultural binary is disrupted; the husband-wife connection is cut and the best friend supplants the more ideologically favorable female companion. The societal punishment for this behavior is not peaceful rest but agitated wandering and stumbling recreation of the terrible final moments pre-death.

These issues also bring up the important element of land ownership and autonomy, which bore the myth of the Self Made Man at the turn of the nineteenth century. Michael Kimmel discusses this transition in his Introduction to *Manhood in America*. The assertion of masculinity is rooted in overcoming the forces that render men impotent and powerless – lack of possessions, whether material or intangible. As the Industrial Revolution moved male displays of power from land ownership to an interconnected marketplace insecurity and anxiety came to plague the American man (Kimmel 9). Industrialized moments of uncertainty, such as failing business and increased competition, enforced an ideology of economic success – otherwise known as the Self Made Man (Kimmel 9). Anything effeminate was othered, and the result placed many

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[30] There is much stumbling in the feminized male ghost story. This further suggests unmanly insecurity and lack of confidence.

unintelligible manifestations of maleness in the category of unacceptable. The ghosts of Marwick, Hostler, Jocelyn and the library ghost all exhibit the contrary characteristics of the desired male mythology. They are melancholic, unaggressive, weepy, anxious, and defeated. They do not even occupy spaces that they owned in life; the stress on land ownership, so often the major sign of admirable masculinity, is revised out of the feminized male ghost story. They operate in truly liminal spaces that they only inhabit because someone wrote them into the landscape. Their behaviors are observed and recorded; there is zero agency and potency within their narratives, regardless of the author. Their specters are not even that frightening, only sad and depressive.

These stories contain important kernels of ideologically constructed gender roles that are perpetuated from life into the *after*life. There is a warning to behave accordingly. Boys should be boys – unless they love men as they should love (or abuse) women. Girl equals mother. If there is no landownership, there is no potent display of phallic power. If the male/female binary is disrupted slightly, then the hegemonic patriarchy still operates from a Panopticon of paranormal power and will need to other the dissidents completely. These ghost stories provide important insight into various moments in cultural formation of gender roles, often ascribed to specific locations – which are often liminal spaces. Like fairy tales, they were and are often told to children, and in this telling specific mores are distributed in the seemingly innocuous ghost story. While it might be easy to wave off the uncanny, primal fear of liminal apparitions, gliding along staircases – also a liminal, geographic space, betwixt and between – folkloric and cultural studies tell us that it is not so easy to wave off how many of these tales present pictures of acceptable behavior that society is still attempting to reinforce.

Chapter Four: "It's up to you, dear reader": Transgenerational trauma in the "True" Wilmington

Ghost Story

In the preceding chapter, I endeavored to combine the liminal, geographic and historic ghost with the gendered ghost to create a cultural persona shared in the ghost industry. These "true" ghost stories are still about warning, but they are specifically aimed at the modern audience. The ghosts are unaware of their audience, but the modern percipients (whether listening to the stories or actually witnessing a manifestation) are all too cognizant of the supernatural rolled into the historical/cultural. Whether they are simply on a family vacation or intensely consuming coastal folklore, the "true" ghost story reveals more about the modern audience than the ghosts themselves. The growing popularity of ghost anthologies and tours show how twenty-first century audiences process historical and social traumas. Psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok label this processing "transgenerational trauma."

In the Cape Fear region, slavery is arguably the most traumatic and true historical and cultural remnant. This social institution actually haunts the area, but is almost exclusively represented by the stock character[31] of Cooter, a runaway slave from Wilmington.

1. THE LEGEND OF COOTER

There are reportedly several tunnel systems running underneath the city of Wilmington. Local historian Jack E. Fryer Jr. gives several possible theories for how this tunnel system came into existence in his illustrated text, *A History Lover's Guide to Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear*. One theory links the tunnels to the tannery business that once operated along the Cape

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[31] The slave ghost is often a stock character. Ghost story anthologies all along the Eastern seaboard provide one or two stories of a spirited, runaway slave. However, these are archetypal ghosts; they are interchangeable and their stories are barely distinguishable. I have discovered that Cooter has a female counterpart in the colonial site of Williamsburg, Virginia. Her name is Eve. For more information on her story, see Jackie Eileen Behrend's *The Hauntings of Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Jamestown*.

Fear river in the middle of downtown Wilmington (Fryar 34); yet another postulation argues that

the tunnels were used to allow imprisoned Patriots to escape from the Burgwin-Wright house,

where British troops allegedly held and tortured colonial dissidents (Fryar 34). The most

frequently cited reason for this tunnels revolve around the Underground Railroad, as the

underground channels provided a "waterborne route" to the river and escape north (Fryar 34).

Although there is a noted absence of overtly slave-centered ghost narratives from the

Wilmington region, John Hirchak does include one tale, "The Legend of Cooter" in his 2006

anthology *Ghosts of Old Wilmington*. This story revolves around the murder of a runaway slave,

Cooter, who habitually ran away from his owner in the mid-nineteenth century (Hirchak 46).

Hopeful to encounter a "sympathetic abolitionist ship's captain to come his way" (Hirchak 46)

along the riverfront, Cooter hid in the tunnel system for several days before discovery by a

search party organized by his owner. What happened after his capture is truly, abjectly

disturbing.

Cooter's fate was not a beating or imprisonment. His captors opted to chop his feet off

just above the ankles, and take his severed feet to serve as warning to Cooter's fellow slaves. The

slave was left to bleed to death in the dark, damp tunnel. Hirchak retells Cooter's final moments

in terribly descriptive terms:

> While it's difficult to imagine the raw agony of the sudden violent loss of both feet, it's
>
> next to impossible to fathom the blinding surge of explosive pain Cooter endured as he
>
> tried to walk along the cold and uneven pressed earthen floor. Step by painful step he
>
> inched his way toward freedom, his gushing wounds clumping in the bloodies mud as
>
> agonizing jolts of pain shot up each calf. All to no avail! For long before Cooter reached

the entrance to the cave, delirious from blood loss and the unbearable pain, he collapsed

and died. (Hirchak 47-48)

An extended quotation is necessary here because it proves two concepts that this chapter will

seek to understand. One, Hirchak's description of Cooter's awful demise and the decision to

include the slave's story in his anthology suggests a willingness to address the horrors of slavery

in a public venue; Hirchak, as the owner of the main Wilmington ghost tour, knows his stories

will be told and retold in the ghost walk experience. Two, Hirchak, as a non-native

Wilmingtonian, is notably the only ghost story anthologist to include Cooter's tale. It does not

appear in any other ghost story anthology that depicts the phantoms of the Cape Fear region.

This omission reveals something about how the horrors of slavery are remembered and recorded.

Hirchak's[32] admission suggests that transgenerational trauma is being experienced by those only

removed by a few generations from the institution of slavery in the Cape Fear.

2. CULTURE OF FEAR

According to R.C. Finucane's text, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History*, ghostly

"phenomena represent[s] man's inner universe just as his art and poetry do" (1). Gendered

language aside, Finucane's argument inserts the true, purportedly authentic ghost story into

important and necessary historical and social contexts. This "inner universe" tells an often rapt

audience about historical situations, cultural mores, and frightening scenarios. The attention-

grabbing ghost tale provides an important piece of the collective psychological puzzle. The point

is not the veracity of said tales; Cooter's treatment is perhaps more archetypal, a representative

manifestation of how slaves were frequently treated in the antebellum era. Rather, the outside

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[32] John Hirchak moved to the Wilmington area in the late 1970's. However, some of his fellow anthologists (Brooks Newton Preik, Terrance Zepke, and John Harden) were born and raised in the Carolinas.

observer gains important information about societal traumas and cultural codification, however repressed that self-awareness might be. Via close analysis of these ghost story texts, identity, agency, and historicity collide, presenting an intriguing picture of a particular geographic place and what is repressed in said place. If Terry Eagleton's assessment that "culture [is] no longer a description of what one was, but what one might be or used to be" (31) then the true ghost story genre operates as an important site for cultural analysis as to why the fearful continues to provide intimate entry into a society's past and present.

When considering this topic, it is useful to visit other important terminology within the theoretical landscape. In *Keywords of American Cultural Studies*, George Yúdice points out that the term "culture" comes from a quasi agro-spiritual etymology, its root being "*colere* which also included in its original meanings [beyond cultivation of land] "inhabit" (as in colonize), "protect," and "honor with worship" (as in cult)" (71). The earth, as a location for both sustenance and suffering, often served as a religious symbol for both the synonyms of growth and its antonyms. If this ancient geographic and topographic connotation translates to the streets and tunnels of Wilmington, then a culture is certainly at work within the ghost industry. The stories often protect certain cultural codes and myths, like stoic masculinity in the face of certain mortality or the inhumane horrors of slavery. This allows for archaic cultural codes to be maintained over the centuries and projected onto the twenty-first century experience. When certain stories are omitted, the lessons are not learned and cultural traumas remain embedded underneath the consciousnesses of multiple generations.

The term "culture" also haunts the field of Cultural Studies. It is equally spectral within the South, where culture can mean a combination of terrible (slavery, war) and terrific (expansive land, gentility). Within the U.S. South, culture is primarily concerned within

maintenance of heritage. It is about reclamation of a way of life which should be dead and buried, but keeps manifesting itself within the tradition of re-enactment, within the memory of the Confederacy, and within the true ghost story. In this manner, the nebulousness which Yúdice remarks upon is made evident through a complicated understanding of culture within the American South. Colin Davis explores this nebulousness in his article "Et At Present: Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms." In his discussion of the Derridian concept of "hauntology,"[33] Davis writes that "phantoms lie in the past whilst specters gesture towards a still unformulated future" (379). Within this framework, where "the phantom is a liar; its effects are designed to mislead the haunted subject to ensure that its secret remains shrouded in mystery" (Davis 374), the Wilmington ghost story presents apparitions from the American South that certain sectors of the population might want to remain hidden. However, the ghosts' only agency comes from their frightening specterhood, which is controlled and often contrived by the ghost story anthologist. When these anthologized tales of slavery and the South are disseminated and consumed by the twenty-first century audience, repressed transgenerational traumas are manifested.

3. TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Maria Yassa's informative explication of this type of "transgenerationally transmitted" (83) trauma provides access into the complex system of psychoanalytic and structural theory and its correlation to the production of fear. Yassa's explanatory notes allow for deeper understanding of Abraham and Torok, whose discussions on haunting and phantoms also serve as the foundation for Colin Davis's aforementioned article. The pain of slavery, for example, is not directly experienced by twenty-first century citizens yet is still felt by its victims'

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[33] This idea was previous explored further in Chapter Two.

descendants via collective trauma. Yassa outlines this "ghostly" psychoanalytic project, which is essentially an attempt to comprehend the unknown/unknowable source of "language in the subject" (84). In this manner, the repressed truth behind the true ghost story becomes apparent as the translated "dream-content" becomes better-known as "the family secret and its powerful effects" (Yassa 83). "Family" here comes to mean something less intimate and immediate but no less similar in connotation; specifically in the South, the true ghost story tradition, either anthologized or in tour, provides safe, uncomplicated language to discuss social traumas (i.e. slavery, as Cooter's story exhibits) that are projected across familial divisions and historical eras.

Abraham and Torok explored the ability for a historical or psychological trauma to infiltrate multiple generations. In "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metaspychology," Nicolas Abraham writes that "what haunts are not the dead but the gaps left within us [the member of society] by the secrets of others" (171). The "departed may return, but some are destined to haunt: the dead who were shamed during their lifetime or those who took unspeakable secrets to the grave" (Abraham 171). Thus, the "theme of the dead – who have suffered repression by their family or society, cannot enjoy, even in death, a state of authenticity – appears to be omnipresent" in cultural institutions (Abraham 171) and the "phantom, whatever its form, is nothing but an invention of the living" (171). Thus, the subconscious, latent fears, anxieties, and shame of a previous generation repeatedly get transmitted and transferred from decade to decade. There is a projection of fear that is not focused on the latent, historically accurate traumas, but rather the terror produced is manifested by shivers up and down the spine at the thought of seeing a ghost.

Within this projection, which often mimics the misty apparitions floating throughout downtown Wilmington, the specters of the South and slavery still maintain a hegemonic hold

over modern consumers. In this Gramscian hegemonic construction, the ghost story audience

"make[s] culture and are made by culture; there is [both] agency and there is structure" (Storey

11). After all, tourists and locals alike pay money to hear tragic stories of racism, sexism,

classism, and militarism on various ghost tours or in a multitude of texts. They are requesting

more ghost stories via the capitalistic nature of their patronage. Through this quasi-request from

the tourist, Colonial, Antebellum, and Civil War Southern culture is continually and consistently

projected and (re)produced in the true Wilmington ghost story. However, if this culture is

sanitized and selective, then the unaware consumer will never know the real story. They will

continue to be afraid of the wrong things.

To revisit *Keywords of American Cultural Studies*, Matthew Guterl Pratt provides a way

to discuss the South as a specter itself in his definition of "The South." The South is discussed in

thematic terms, as a site of intolerance and nostalgia. This strange dichotomy enables the

Wilmington ghost story to come alive. After all, the Southern ghost story tradition differs

dramatically from its Northern counterpart. The crumbling, gothic decay of the Southern ghost

story directly comes from what Guterl outlines as "romanticizing the past over the present"

(233). Even though the past is dead and gone, the Southern need for heritage and reinstatement

as legitimate (especially post-Civil War) does not allow official burial. Arguably, the South as an

entity operates as an undead persona in ghostly tales and it is precisely within this framework

that Hirchak's inclusion of Cooter's story becomes significant and his authorial counterpart's

exclusion of the slave ghost story becomes monumental.

The "true" Wilmington ghost story anthology does have a certain responsibility,

especially when recounting the stories of marginalized or brutalized people. To turn one final

time to *Keywords of American Cultural Studies*, Walter Johnson describes "Slavery" in the North

American experience as a shadowy, haunting presence. Slavery becomes symbolic and abstract within the larger context of freedom. This is a transformation from a tangible situation to a spectral entity, which allows for modern consumers to distance themselves further from the horrors of slavery. In this way, slavery becomes a "cliché" (Johnson 224) that is more easily and summarily dismissed by the twenty-first century ghost story consumer. Though the trauma of slavery is still simmering beneath the Southern cultural surface, its abstraction allows for the further repression of its horrors. Slavery can manifest itself as a ghost within the safe confines of the ghost story, but this is a haunting one can easily leave behind at the tour's end. In this manner, the dream thought is further untranslated from the dream content. The repression is solidified through the production of fear and slavery too becomes a spectral entity. In this light, it is almost unconscionable that this transgenerational trauma is not addressed.

Therefore, slavery in the South functions as a collective ghost story, an abstract apparition that moves from concrete reality to abstract signification when used for "arguments over the character of 'freedom'" (Johnson 223). In this manner, slavery becomes something indistinct. It loses its historical characterization as a site for "daily resistance on the part of the enslaved, terrific brutality on the part of the enslaving and frequent military conflict between the two" (Johnson 222). When stories about runaway slaves crop up on the ghost tour, twenty-first century tourists cringe to hear how slaves had their feet chopped off for multiple escapes (Hirchak 47). This cringe is a small release that supports Abraham and Torok's theory on transgenerational trauma, but the ghost tour consumer is still a tourist attraction in the truest sense. They operate as sightseers in an unfamiliar culture, working in a space that suggests both the supernatural and the shameful. People cringe at the abject horrors of slavery because the term/keyword has come to prosaically represent something sanitized and safe in the twenty-first

century. Walter Johnson closes definition of slavery with the statement that "the history of slavery has been turned into a set of images that have been emptied of any authentic historical meaning through their sheer repetition" (224). The tangible terror of slavery is made intangible and thus more summarily dismissed. Theoretical concepts are easier to forget than that which one can touch, feel, and see. It is easier to fear seeing the fleeting projection of a murdered slave in the mirror of a local pub (Hirchak 50) than to reflect deeply on the centuries of misery in Wilmington's historic backyard.

Beyond the memory of misery, the Wilmington ghost also returns to provide castigation for its liminal othering. Slaves, females, soldiers, and children – the list of common and popular specters includes persons who existed beyond the acceptable historic confines of class, race or gender. Within the historical spaces occupied while still alive, these ghosts existed as outside others. They operated as liminal characters, or peripheral persons overlooked by an inherently racist, sexist, and/or elitist society. The ghost is quite literally depicted as a splash of grey at the corner of one's eye, or the "faint sound of young voices or the laughter of a woman, but nothing clearly discernable" (Preik 56). They are extra-societal and blurry for a specific cultural (which oftentimes suggest a historical) reason. The Wilmington ghost story, framed around the premise of "it-could-be-true," needs the liminal ghost, located on the extreme periphery, for maximum fear production and guilt projection.

The liminal character operates "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 95). Liminality requires its subjects to "obey their instructors implicitly" (Turner 95); this translates to periodic loss of agency in life, and a complete denial of potency in death. After all, if the cultural capital is controlled hegemonically and there is a fear producer somewhere manipulating the ghost story for what is

56

ultimately economic gain, then the Wilmington ghost is further subjugated and othered by their

cultural controllers – the living person (re)telling their personal tragic story. Even in death, these

liminal ghosts are being spoken for by the dominant classes, who have good reason to further

repress the transgenerational trauma transferred from their ancestors. In the twenty-first century

framework, this dominant class is also arguably the most economically able. After all, the ghost

tourism industry is not an inexpensive evening out. People are willing to pay for such frightening

experiences.

There are arguably a host of Southern specters (slavery, sexism, poverty, war, etc.)

haunting the mid-Atlantic, Carolina, and Low Country. The "true" Wilmington ghost story offers

a concrete site for fear production and discussion of liminality. These projections of latent shame

in the aftermath of slavery or the sexism actually manifest themselves in hazy, indeterminate

shapes. This is not a symbolic haunting. The slave truly haunts the locus of his misery. The

murdered woman literally haunts the place of her abuse. The mortally wounded Civil War

soldier actually haunts the site of his premature death. In this way, the puzzle of Southern

recorded history is never solved because these liminal or periphery characters are continually

shrouded by the cultural requirements, and all the living observer can do is be afraid. However,

this fear is not a productive healing-based fear; rather, the true ghost story serves as a quick

release of historical, social, and psychological tension in the South but this relief is only mildly

cathartic. Until the root of these ghostly histories is explored, the specters will continue to remain

indistinct. These phantoms will not be laid to rest until their stories are historically and, perhaps

more importantly, culturally acknowledged. Thus, the real ghost story is an important cultural

artifact; it documents folklore interspersed with infrequent historicity. As is often the case with

legend, fiction gets conflated with the real story - however that is understood, processed and/or

repressed. This conflation happens within the ghost tour experience.

Chapter Five: "Morbid Tourism": The Business of Ghosts

In the previous chapter, the specter of slavery was embodied through the story of Cooter, the runaway slave from Wilmington, North Carolina. In a similar corner of the coastal world, Williamsburg, Virginia, the ghost of Eve[34] routinely reenacts her final, agonizing moments. These two coast environs are similar in many geographic, topographic, and historic ways, although separated by approximately three hundred miles. Historicity is what separates the "true" ghost story from a trivial tourist trade; it is rooted more deeply in the socio-historical context of a place. Much is understood about what haunts a location through the ghost stories attributed to a geographic location. Both Wilmington and Williamsburg are areas where something is always being built over something else. However, these changes do little to stifle the latent truths simmering close to the street during the commodified ghost tour experience, which can be further explained by what Thomas Blom labels "morbid tourism" (29).

1. COMMODIFIED HISTORIC SITES

The commodification of ghosts is not a new industry. It has existed since at least the early eighteenth century[35] (Goldstein 191). However, the modern type of supernatural tourism, which has exploded within the past ten years, also suggests a deeper cultural need to acknowledge the supernatural but not necessarily understand the history behind it. The emphasis on "morbid tourism" (Blom 29), defined as the public's fascination with sites of violence and death, supports my argument from Chapter Four: the ghost story reveals not only truths about particular historical moments but also revelations about current cultural beliefs. Folklorist Diane

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[34] See Footnote #30 for more information on this connection between Eve and Cooter.
[35] Goldstein writes that tourists visited the site of President Abraham Lincoln's death almost immediately following his assassination and the home where Lizzie Borden allegedly axed her father and stepmother to death has been a vacation destination for many an American for almost 150 years (191).

Goldstein states that "Belief tourism, like all tourism, is the marketing of the experiences of cultural 'others,' but with a particular focus on the images and traditions associated with spiritual, metaphysical and paranormal values" (Goldstein 194). This brings to mind the twenty-first century resurgence of religious and New Age pilgrimages. There is an intense societal need to believe in something beyond, however piecemeal and fragmentary.

I would like to briefly explore the connection between Wilmington and another coastal location that utilizes "morbid tourism" in its ghostly reenactments. Colonial Williamsburg, also identified as CW, occupies a similar geographic location as Wilmington, at the mouth of another mighty river. Both areas knew colonial settlements and wartime anxieties. They witnessed historical movements and societal traumas. They also continue to welcome an astounding number of tourists by specifically targeting the informal, or "arm chair" historian. In their 1997 study, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, Richard Handler and Eric Gable explored the social agenda at work within the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. This is as a museum operating around oftentimes revisionary history predicated on particular social themes. For example, this ethnographic study points out that "a new social history has been assimilated into Colonial Williamsburg's narrative of nationhood" (Handler and Gable 8). Now, more than ever, it is important to explore how most informal historians in the United States "visit and reconcile conflicting versions of the past in the vernacular" (Handler and Gable 8).

Like Colonial Williamsburg, Wilmington is also a historical site that recognizes and courts commodification; its tours use language that appeals to modern audiences while attempting, heroically, to depict the good and bad within history. However, certain socio-historical horrors, such as slavery, are sanitized within this tourist framework. Both Wilmington

and Williamsburg utilize the ghost tour to disseminate mini-American history lessons within the "vernacular" (Handler and Gable 8); the problematic manifests itself when this history is inaccurate or incomplete. Both Wilmington and Williamsburg offer "the perfect example of a region that preserves the past while moving into the future" (Behrend ix). They each utilize the tourist trade under the guise of historical veracity couched in contrived,[36] supernatural experience.

Ghost tourism solidifies particular social agendas within falsely innocuous spirit walks. Ideologically constructed behaviors, such as gender roles and historical revision, are safely disseminated via the commodified cultured shared in the "true" ghost story. This is culture expressed in the "vernacular" but it quickly becomes the only historical experience for many twenty-first century tourists. The ghost tour is marketed as pleasure-producing and thrilling.[37] Owen Davies identifies this as

> a voyeuristic thrill in glimpsing or hearing the hauntings of others [because] ghosts had knowledge of the past, present and future. Their existence was defined by the past, their presence was witnessed by the living, and most wondrous of all, their existence of the afterlife gave them intimations of the future life. No wonder, then, that there has always been a minority who have sought their company. (65)

In the twenty-first century, with a noticeable increase in ghost tourism manifesting itself in the last decade, this "minority" expands to a "majority." Ghost tours are an inexpensive way to see the sights, hear some "history," and experience the attractive sensation of contained fear. These

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[36] Handler and Gable refer to the dichotomy evidenced in CW's persona, as "representing the struggle between critical history and celebratory history, a dirty past and a Disney past, a new history and an old one" (7). This is something that most coastal environs struggle with. The ghost tour offers a way to make municipal money, but these tours require suppression of societal ills. Tourists can only absorb so much historical horror. Most tours combine a tragic story with a more humorous one to balance the trauma out.

[37] Many of these tours operate around alcohol consumption, thus lowering the level of trepidation and fear while increasing the sense of enjoyment. The use of pubs in this ghostly industry introduces a different type of "culture" into the discussion; the surreal atmosphere is enhanced by the drinking.

ghost tours, as museum-like reenactments/recreations, create a new type of culture centered on the commodification of the past and present.

To revisit an elitist, Arnoldian concept of culture, the absence of consistent cultural codification suggests a tendency towards "anarchy which [is] engendered by civilization itself" (Eagleton 11). The formulation and cultivation of ghost tour culture serves as a way to conquer the uncanny, uncontrollable "something which is secretly familiar which has undergone repression and then returned from it" (Freud "The Uncanny" 947). This (un)familiar specter is contained through the consumption of ghost stories; in the commodified fear production process, the apparition's real roots are further repressed and only the supernatural is retained. In this manner, the ghost story often operates like a dream where "the dream content [read: ghost story] appears … as a translation of the dream thoughts [read: repressed history] into another mode of expression, whose symbols and laws of composition we must learn by comparing the origin with the translation" (Freud *Interpretation of Dreams* 174). This other mode of expression becomes the true ghost tale, with "symbols and laws of composition" enveloped by contrived spookiness to ensure the "anxiety ... experience[d] in dreams is only apparently explained by the dream content [ghost story]" (Freud *Interpretation of Dreams* 68). In this manner, the fright ensures that repression remains cemented for yet another generational audience. For example, Cooter is represented as a tragic figure who suffered miserably; the audience is asked to pity him, but perhaps not asked to interrogate the social mechanisms that tortured him.

To explain this repression further, one must take a closer look at the psychoanalytic theory might explain it. In Sigmund Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," the psychological experience is "invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension and that [the unpleasurable tension] takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension"

(7). If ghost stories conceal real historical trauma (slavery, poverty, sexism), then the ghost story industry creates a safe space for just enough displeasure to occur before the "production of pleasure" (Freud "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 7) in the ghost tour experience. In fact, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" serves as the underpinning for many studies concerning haunting, both literal and symbolic. Primarily, Freud separates and defines the terms of fear, anxiety, and fright. The latter term is of particular interest, for fright is "the name [given] to the state a person gets into when [he or she] has run into danger without being prepared for it" (12). This feeling of unpreparedness somehow allows for a release of repressed emotion, however removed generationally. Perhaps the consumption of the "true" Wilmington ghost story relies on this unexpected "fright" to provide pleasure in place of trauma. The moment of terror, however authentic, may also be one of satisfaction and release. In going on a ghost tour, the modern audience expects fright but is psychologically unprepared to deal with the frighteningly latent issues at work within the ghost tour industry.

In 2007, English Professor of Social History, Owen Davies, conducted a study of the English ghost tour industry. Davies states that "the tourist industry [continues to] reformulate and package the [paranormal] experience by creating a synergy between visitor, place, and ghost" (64). In this manner, the tourist is engaged by simply walking about the landscape where societal traumas occurred. The agency is with the tourist, who can choose to believe or scoff or dwell momentarily, then move on. Just as with most consumer situations, the ghost tourist is able to pick and choose tales that interest, while ignoring the stories that are unappealing, uncanny, or uncomfortable. If the story hits too close to home, the ghost tourist can opt to process the information in a manner that allows for further repression of transgenerational trauma. After all, the tours are not marketed as an objective lesson in colonial history *per say*. The characters are

always regarded as undefined specters, often floating nameless in the texts yet archetypal in their narrative importance. Socio-cultural ordeals are often vaguely referred to through a variety of generalized ghosts. These stock characters act as stand-ins for specific traumas: slavery, loss of a child, colonial treatment of Native Americans, disease, war, and mental illness.

However, these ghost stories do not present an accurate historical record; the tours are not marketed as a lesson in coastal Carolinian history per say. The characters are undefined specters, often floating nameless in the texts yet archetypal in their narrative importance. They are vaguely referred to in a variety of stock, generalized characters: "a sweet young girl, sixteen years of age" (Zepke 33); the slave nicknamed "'Cooter' though his actual name is unknown" (Hirchak 46); "shadowy figures of Union soldiers" (Roberts 60). The ghost thus serves as a stand-in for the South or for perhaps its historical sins. According to Matt Pratt Guterl, the term "South" is used "to invoke, above all else, the importance of place and history" (230); however, "this particular South … was the low-slung id to the North's preening superego" (Guterl 231). The psychoanalytic implications of this description should be addressed, but the South certainly operates as geographically and culturally lower than the North. This allows for a crucial fragmentation of cultural identity, where the South is both "portrayed as the home of slack-jawed, poorly bred, and half-civilized whites" (Guterl 232). This societal and cultural fragmentation is further projected within the ghostly apparition, often just a disembodied voice or seen as a "glimpse of a trouser leg or the flutter of a long skirt" (Roberts 58). The South, as a Cultural Studies keyword, is also a tenuous term and "cannot be contained by national borders" (Guterl 233); the Wilmington ghost is similarly undefined and indefinite. The apparition transcends the grave, the home, the streets, and wanders freely about the consciousness of its twenty-first century consumers. However, this specter is not accurate or even contextually fair.

If the ghost tour takes root and infatuates the living consumer, s/he is usually "not so much driven by the desire to prove profound truths about religion and the human condition … as by the thrill of the hunt and the prospect of perhaps one day finally coming face to face with spirits" (Davies 95). It continues to be a game, not a proper exorcism or acknowledgement of social and historical ills. Within this commodification of ghosts, the move from a ghost-with-purpose to ghost-with-no-purpose is complete. Andrew Lang, as quoted by Owen Davies, writes:

> the modern [twenty-first century] ghost is a purposeless creature who appears nobody knows why; he [or she] has no message to deliver, no secret crime to reveal, no appointment to keep, no treasure to disclose, no commissions to be executed, and, as an almost invariable rule, he does not speak, even if you speak to him. (8)

The modern ghost is what Cooter has become. His haunting is reduced and marginalized by the consumer culture which has once more enslaved, marketed, and commodified his horrific stories. The ghost tourist can feel that s/he learned about the horrors of slavery but they are truly hearing a sliver of the real story; there is no attempt to confront and discuss the real specter of slavery at work.

Within the ghost tour, veracity becomes painfully and noticeably unimportant; ghost story anthologists commonly argue in their Introductions, Forewords, and Prefaces that although all attention was paid to historical accuracy, their books are essentially enjoyment. This is a common trope in the "true" ghost story anthology; the author claims to be historically aware and thus accurate while simultaneously owning up to the potential for fictive elements. This is also the disclaimer mentioned at the start of almost all coastal ghost tours, from Williamsburg to Wilmington. In this marked denial, the modern audience must begin to recognize that the cultural insight provided by these "true" ghost stories cannot be overlooked any longer (Thomas 31).

However, since the ghost industry is about revenue, it is necessary to ramp up the entertainment factor. Wilmington straddles an interesting liminal boundary: sensationalized storytelling vs. modest-yet-macabre retelling, for the Hollywood-ized "supernatural is often hyperbolic; the folk supernatural is understated in comparison" (Thomas 34). The ghost tour attempts to connect the illogical with the logical, simultaneously reflecting the "deep cultural desire to mix both the scientific and the supernatural" (Thomas 25). Ghost tour operation, whether institutional or individual, is not about disproving the ghost story but rather what the ghost story reveals about the world (Thomas 25). This latent meaning, however, is not apparent to most ghost tour consumers. Regardless of location, "all [ghost stories] use a variety of cultural materials – from commodified forms to oral narratives – both to contain these anomalous experiences and also to keep them tantalizing before [society] in hopes they'll impart glimmers of meaning" (Thomas 29). Cooter's story offers more than a glimmer of insight; rather, it blindingly illuminates the societal ills constructed by the culture. Ghost stories suggest "the promise of scary stories and historical locations that consumers seek in choosing a ghost tour but also the potential for their own ghostly experience" (Goldstein 191). This promise of ghostly experience, often outright expressed by ghost tour companies, detracts from contemplation of transgenerational trauma and recognition of socio-cultural crimes, such as slavery and sexism. If the ghost is not witnessed, it somehow lessens the ghost's underlying message. The lack of manifestation suggests a historical powerlessness and marginalization. The modern audience once more loses interest in a ghost that does not deliver the supernatural pleasure punch.

These "true" ghost stories certainly encourage trivialization and induced supernatural experience. According to folklorists and cultural studies critics alike, this is undoubtedly happening. However, something new is always created with every ghost tour. In this way, the

66

Wilmington ghost tour, rooted in the concept of both belief and "morbid" tourism, changes the historical perspective with each oral retelling. The power of revision is manifested, as tour operators may chose to omit certain facts or simply forget the intricacies of historicity. In this manner, the Wilmington ghost tour offers a "hybridity … [or] dual character as educational institution and business concern" (Handler and Gable 29). It is self-aware as a money-making machine and, arguably, it displays a sanitized version of history produced via the ghost tour that rarely addresses salient historical problems. However, the rising number of ghost tours suggests that the modern audience is intrigued by its historical and societal past, but only within the entertaining confines of the ghost story narrative. After all, these are not a plethora of history tours making the big bucks in these coastal areas.

I find that the Wilmington ghost tour offers a unique setting in which to discuss these "true" tales. The excursion operates on the heels of historical recreation; the modern tourist knows that the scenes before them are being retold, but there is still a thrill in being part of something time-travel-y. When the modern tourist, bombarded with demonstrations of important historical moments, takes part in a ghost tour, the lines between creative re-enactment and historicity are blurred even further. The blurring is where the problematic resides. The spectral sells and "morbid tourism" offers quick, voyeuristic insight into terrible moments of human history. It allows for its audience to briefly release repressed anxiety over traumas committed by past generations, but this release occurs within the commodified confines of tourism. The twenty-first century audience can experience the ugliness of slavery and war without delving too deep into the topic, where the burden of blame might be more solidly laid at their feet or the feet of their ancestors. In the ghost tour, this historical trauma is alleviated via momentary fright – yet this fear is misdirected at the specter, and not the underlying socio-political-cultural fact. The

liminal, marginalized spirit receives no rest within this new industry; rather, they are continually agitated by their paranormal position. More importantly, modern audiences are not addressing, understanding, and exorcising the historical traumas that haunt their home or vacation destination.

Conclusion: "I ain't afraid of no ghost": What's "True" about the Wilmington Ghost Story?

The Bellamy Mansion sits atop the intersection of Market and Fifth Street, a huge white and black shuttered building with wrap around balconies and commanding views of the Wilmington riverfront. Built in 1859, the Bellamy family had barely moved in to their new home when yellow fever epidemics along the Cape Fear forced them to a healthier homestead. The Civil War brought Union occupation to the most regal house in town in 1865 (Hirchak 98; Preik 55). When they were able to finally return home, the Bellamy family had to swear full fidelity to the United States and never again own slaves (Hirchak 98). This last caveat was particularly pointed, as the Bellamy Mansion was essentially built by "enslaved builders"[38] (Hirchak 99) and newly freed slaves. The Bellamy family repaired the home, which had been wrecked by the seven month occupation, and lived there until 1972 when "a newly formed nonprofit group" obtained the building for restoration as a house museum (Hirchak 98). Not surprisingly, this home houses many ghostly spirits.

People have seen a gray-haired, "older couple in [antebellum dress] silhouetted in one of the upstairs windows" (Hirchak 102; Preik 56) and "the faces of small children, [their] small gaunt faces star[ing] straight ahead" (Hirchak 103). This latter detail could be attributed to the yellow fever epidemic and the covert use of the abandoned house by sick orphans. Brooks Preik writes about "the faint sounds of young voices [and] the laughter of a woman" (56) while John Hirchak attributes the wealth of hauntings to the Mansion renovations that occurred in the mid-1980s (99). Preik mentions the 2001 discovery beneath "several floorboards … [of] a neat stack of buttons" which she connects to the "enslaved builders" and their "West African traditions … to keep evil spirits at bay!" (99). Union soldiers appear and disappear with the blink of an eye;

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[38] The Bellamy Mansion Museum has an interesting exhibit on the enslaved and freed black men who worked on not only the construction of the building but also the intricate crown moldings and woodwork throughout the home.

horrific visions of a beaten, bloodied slave girl frequently assail the perceptive visitor (Hirchak 101-102). Wheelchairs roll about of their own accord. Blasts of cold air greet the living visitor without explanation. Strange presences are felt on the staircases.

The Bellamy Mansion haunting exemplifies the typical "true" Wilmington haunting. There are slaves and children, sounds and sensations. There is a clear historical arc combined with spotty supernatural happenings. There is sadness and there is decay. However, within these spectral manifestations, there is a clear world order. The children are heard and not seen. The slaves are always working. The owners survey their wealth from the floor-to-ceiling windows. The Bellamy Mansion provides a ghostly warning to future generations, and specific cultural truths are manifested within the ghost industry. For example, both Hirchak and Preik mention the Union occupation of the Bellamy Mansion, but with drastically different tones. Hirchak detachedly recounts the presence of Union spirits, while Preik frets about the damage done by carousing soldiers. Both briefly mention the slave element, but with little focus on the probable murder suggested by the haunting.[39]

Within the "true" Wilmington ghost story, some deaths are equally terrible yet the hauntings are not as terrifying (i.e. Samuel Jocelyn and Cooter). The slaves are bloodied but they still remain nameless and unacknowledged in the "true" ghost story while their white, wealthy counterparts get first and last names along with familial histories. If ghosts truly "make ideal guides for exploring the thoughts and emotions of our ancestors" (Davies 9) and eventually project hidden truths about current society, perhaps things have not progressed as far as twenty-first century audiences would like to think. The folkloric ghost story keeps the shame real and palpable, and it is the modern audience's responsibility to process the tales accordingly.

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[39] This haunting vision, of a slave girl bloodied and dying, reminds the reader and tourist of scenes from *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. The specter of slavery is also literal within this novel, but Morrison offers a "healing process" (Krumholz 397) that exorcises this phantom; the Cape Fear "true" ghost story does not offer such genuine release.

These are not a symbolic hauntings. The slave truly haunts the locus of his misery. The murdered woman literally haunts the place of her abuse. The mortally wounded Civil War soldier actually haunts the site of his premature death. In this way, the puzzle of Southern recorded history is never solved because these liminal or peripheral characters are shrouded and undefined. All the living observer can do is be afraid. However, this fear is not a productive healing-based fear; rather, the "true" ghost story and its corresponding tour serves as a quick release of historical, social, and psychological tension in the South but this relief is only mildly cathartic. Until the root of these ghostly histories is explored, the specters will continue to remain indistinct. Their phantoms will not be laid to rest until their true stories are historically, culturally and geographically acknowledged.

These are not silly stories to entertain tourists while they vacation along the Carolinian coast. There are deep, troubling cultural mores being disseminated through these stories. Blame is being assigned according to acceptable gender roles and social codes. Generational discomfort is being deflected and fear is all the modern audience is left with. Something is being hidden in these stories, so easily dismissed yet so easily accessed. The spirit world is where a diversity of genders, ethnicities, races, creeds, historical positions can mingle. Is this a location of equality? No, because there is truly no agency. The stories will not be (re)told unless there is someone living to bear witness. These marginalized ghosts still rely on being interpreted through someone more privileged – in this instance, the privilege is being alive. As Gillian Bennett states, "stories such as these [ghost stories] are the most effective way of showing what people actually believe or disbelieve" (5). Living people who witness these ghosts are immediately able to acknowledge that something is wrong or amiss. There is something out of place. Does this allow for immediate acknowledgment that societal fabric has been muddied? Are modern people removed from the

specific historical moment able to immediately access (even if they don't understand their discomfort) the wrongs it took people forever to eradicate? These manifestations are rarely chronologically aware or exact – they could be "anytime" and this allows for dismissal and trivialization within the ghost tour tradition rooted in a geographic and societal place that changes with time. The ghost industry offers cultural and historical advice, but the twenty-first audience must first be willing to acknowledge these specters.

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I am not sure if ghosts are real or not, but I have had the ghost fear as well. I am not concerned anymore but I know how you feel. For me I tried to tell myself 'if ghosts are real they are not here to harm me. They are hear for their own reason'. Â But then I started really reading into spirits and the history of them through different cultures etc and I found love for them again. Like don't get me wrong, you will never catch me walking in the dark alone and I'll still stay up to 3am some nights because I spike myself out about shadows but it gets better. Try buying a salt lamp if you can. They are great for creating positive energy and they provide a dim yellow light so you can keep it on while falling asleep without disturbing your sleep. You can also try talking to them if you won't feel super crazy. Being "alone" in the house became paired with being alone with malevolent spirits, in an emotionally charged way. That kind of association is difficult to break. We remember things that are paired with strong emotion.Â They may see the images or remember the moments long after, and the fear is still very activated in their minds. I imagine one of those MRI scans of the brain which shows the areas of brain activity, and that different people would show different levels of activation. So yours is highly activated by this stimuli.Â Film is artificial experience (as are all stories.) While you are there with us, your brain is processing the experiences as if it were all really happening. Thats what makes you excited, scared, turned on and everything else we want you to be during the movie. I love any kind of ghost story whether true or not because most of this type of story is about the history of a person or place which is interesting to me and they are just fun to read! (I am not easily frightened) I love older books and this little novel was terrific set in 1878 and a perfect way to spend Halloween Eve. 19th century ghost stories are quite different from modern tales as they tend to be more literary, less blood and guts grues A pleasant little diversion on my Amazon Kindle app.Â Maybe it doesn't deserve a full five stars on account of its brevity alone, but overall, the book is quite absorbing when it finally does get going.