Ghostly Generation Games: Multidirectional Hauntings and Self-Spectralization in Bret Easton Ellis's Lunar Park

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Ghostly Generation Games: Multidirectional Hauntings and Self-Spectralization in Bret Easton Ellis's *Lunar Park*

This article analyzes the relationship between haunting, mourning and inheritance in Bret Easton Ellis's novel Lunar Park, *with a specific focus on gender. Read in conjunction with Derrida's theory of spectrality and Abraham and Torok's concepts of the crypt and the phantom,* Lunar Park *is seen to transform the linear patriarchal economy of haunting featured in* Specters of Marx *by making haunting multidirectional and evoking the possibility of self-spectralization.*

Keywords: *Bret Easton Ellis, Jacques Derrida, Nicolas Abraham, haunting, spectrality*

Having suffered a decline in popularity after the heyday of Victorian spiritualism, ghosts have made a comeback and are once again prevalent across contemporary culture. They appear in literature (from Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* to Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist*), television series (*Ghost Whisperer*, *Medium*, *Six Feet Under*) and films (*The Others*, *The Sixth Sense*), as well as being invoked in artworks like Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost* and the recent *Haunted* exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Far from representing a surge of belief in the actual return of the dead, however, these modern ghosts tend to function as figurations of the quandaries of history, memory, (inter)mediality, and (national) identity.[1] This is also the case in the contemporary ghost-text I want to examine here, Bret Easton Ellis's 2005 novel *Lunar Park*, where ghosts appear as disturbing forces with a specific bearing on practices of mourning and inheritance. The novel tells the story of a writer named Bret Easton Ellis, who shares many biographical details with his extra-diegetic creator and whose life disintegrates as he is haunted by the ghost of his deceased father, his disappeared son, and various fictional characters sprung from the pages of his novels. An additional level of haunting is provided by the fact that Ellis sets the novel in the wake of 9/11. The oft-noted spectrality of this event and its aftermath, the so-called War on Terror (with its extreme mediatization, elusive villains and the ghostly prisoners of Guantanamo Bay and extraordinary rendition),[2] is augmented by Ellis's narrative, which sees 9/11 spawning an infinite series of ghosts in the form of the many "faceless enemies" that continue to terrorize U.S. cities through suicide bombs and sniper attacks, turning them into "mournful places" (Ellis, *Lunar* 27).

To analyze the way the various ghostly appearances in *Lunar Park* reflect on mourning and inheritance, I will invoke Jacques Derrida's influential theory of spectrality, as outlined in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida associates ghosts or specters with an unhinged, disjointed form of temporality where the present is invaded by the past *and* the future, since the ghost not only comes from before—as *revenant*—but also always promises to return—as *arrivant*. The Derridean specter "makes the present waver" (Jameson 38) and prevents it from guaranteeing (self-)presence or stable, singular origins. Thus, ontology becomes *hauntology*:

> To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of the concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration. [. . .] Everything begins before it begins. (Derrida, *Specters* 161)

The specter, furthermore, opens up an ethical space by confronting us with absolute otherness. The only responsible or just way to face such alterity, according to Derrida, is to offer up *absolute hospitality*, a complete openness to the other that does not impose any questions or demands. Although such absolute hospitality can never be realized fully,[3] in trying to approximate it we can "learn to live *with* ghosts" instead of attempting to lay them to rest (Derrida, *Specters* xviii). This "being-with specters" constitutes "a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (xix). But who exactly does this politics concern? On the one hand, the specters Derrida encourages us to live with comprise divergent collectives of the oppressed and disempowered. He refers to

> the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they the victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. (xix)

On the other hand, the grounding of his theory in a close reading of the ghost of the king in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who represents sovereign, patriarchal power, suggests not only that the ghost itself can appear as an oppressive agency, but also indicates a narrowing of the spectral politics of memory, inheritance, and generations to a familial and decidedly gendered relation between fathers and sons, as both Gayatri Spivak and Nancy Holland have noted.

My discussion of *Lunar Park* picks up on these critiques and also addresses the way Derrida's hauntological scenarios, notwithstanding his insistence that the spectral logic of inheritance is "turned toward the future no less than the past" (*Specters* 181n2), unfold in a surprisingly consistent chronology, with the father inevitably visiting himself on the son(s): the dead King Hamlet is seen to haunt and taunt his heir, while Marx and Stirner are conceived as brothers fighting over the legacy of "father Hegel" (121). Invoking not just Derrida, but also Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's psychoanalytical theory of intergenerational memory, I argue that in relation to both the gendering of the ghost and the temporal vector of haunting, Ellis's novel suggests an alternative perspective.

First of all, *Lunar Park* envisions the inclusion of women in the spectral economy of inheritance as a productive (albeit belated) possibility. Second, by multiplying the sites of spectrality to include three generations—Bret, his father, and his son[4]—it turns haunting into a multidirectional system. *Lunar Park* suggests that the futural dimension of the specter lies not only in the fact that

the ghost of the past (the father as *revenant*) will return again in or from the future (as *arrivant*), but that the future itself (in the shape of the son) can also haunt the present. This is important in relation to the question of answerability: by placing responsibility for the inheritance squarely on the descendent (the son has to select from and interpret what has been left behind by the father), Derrida passes over the ancestor's accountability for his legacy. Is the tragedy of *Hamlet* not in part caused by the way the dead king chooses to convey his message, rather than by Prince Hamlet's wavering alone? In *Lunar Park*, relations of debt and responsibility extend in various directions. The spectrality of Bret's deceased father, who appears as a classic if media-enhanced ghost *from the past*, is matched by that of Bret's son Robby, who, throughout the novel, is about to vanish. In this way, Ellis adds to the debt to the past (which *Lunar Park* literalizes by having Bret keep his father's ashes in a safe-deposit box at a bank) the simultaneous debt to the future, owed by the father to the son. Ultimately, the ghost in *Lunar Park* not only signifies the (re)appearance of an ancestral injunction or inherited trauma, but also works, as a figure of *dis*appearance, to effect a dislodgment of intergenerational obligation—a truly destabilizing way of dealing with the fact that "the *being* of what we are *is* first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not" (Derrida, *Specters* 54). Such dislodgment, I propose, becomes possible through the *self-spectralization* achieved by Bret's son Robbie, who engineers his own disappearance in order not to have to inscribe himself into the injunction to "inherit from the law," which Derrida defines as that of the father (*Specters* 7). Before specifying how the ghosts of the father and the son mediate the question of (patrilineal) inheritance and how *Lunar Park* writes women out of and then back into the spectral will, it is necessary to first explore the nature of the ghosts in Ellis's novel and their relation to Derrida's theory of spectrality.

The Ghosts of *Lunar Park*

The following passage from the first chapter of *Lunar Park*, which does not yet conjure up any literal ghosts (those returned from the dead), nevertheless configures Bret's authorial practice as a *ghostwriting*:

> What I didn't—and couldn't—tell anyone was that writing the book [*American Psycho*] had been an extremely disturbing experience. That even though I had planned to base Patrick Bateman on my father, someone—something—else took over and caused this new character to be my only reference point during the three years it took to complete the novel. What I didn't tell anyone was that the book was written mostly at night when the spirit of this madman would visit [. . .]. When I realized, to my horror, what this character wanted from me, I kept resisting, but the novel forced itself to be written. [. . .] My point—and I'm not quite sure how else to put this—is that the book wanted to be written by someone else. It wrote itself, and didn't care how I felt about it. I would fearfully watch my hand as the pen swept across the yellow legal pads I did the first draft on. I was repulsed by this creation and wanted to take no credit for it—Patrick Bateman wanted the credit. (Ellis, *Lunar* 13)

This spooky lament brings together the two central actions related to the specter that Derrida distinguishes. First, there is a conjuration in the sense of a magical incantation that causes something to happen or to appear, which Derrida reads as a productive form of agency that opens the subject up to a radical alterity. Second, there is a conjuration in the sense of an exorcism, a

keeping at bay of the specter, which he perceives as an attempt to escape the ethical implications of dealing with such alterity, "a way of not wanting to know what everyone alive knows without learning and without knowing, namely, that the dead can often be more powerful than the living" (Derrida, *Specters* 48). Patrick Bateman—the protagonist of *American Psycho*—is performatively produced or conjured by Bret's writing as something that is no longer under his control. The resistance, horror, fear, and repulsion that characterize Bret's reaction to his own passivity in the face of the ghostwriting "spirit" point to his desire to exorcise, his "not wanting to know" and, concomitantly, the (necessary) failure of absolute hospitality.

Bateman haunts *Lunar Park* as a textual *revenant* from this ghostwriting passage until Bret "kills" him by writing a story in which he dies: "The purpose of the story was to let myself be carried into the past, advancing backwards and rearranging something. The story was a denial. Soon Patrick Bateman's voice was resonating faintly, whispering and scattered, until he flickered away and was void" (Ellis, *Lunar* 283). This second act of writing redoubles the performative gesture, turning conjuration as exorcism against conjuration as creation. Its description conveys both the temporal disjunction Derrida associates with the specter ("advancing backwards and rearranging something") and the way exorcism signals a desire to resolve the disorder of haunting without taking responsibility for it ("The story was a denial"). The murderous narrative again signals Bret's refusal to heed Derrida's injunction "to learn to live *with* ghosts [...]. To live otherwise, and better. No, not better, but more justly. But *with them*" (*Specters* xviii). While this refusal can be read as a cowardly abdication of Bret's responsibility for his own creation, *Lunar Park* also questions Derrida's injunction by asking, on a very literal level, whether exorcism is not a legitimate response to a ghost/other who takes over completely and appears to be engaged in a violent killing spree.

Through the ghostwriting spirit, *Lunar Park* materializes the disquieting aspect of the post-modern writing condition, in which the play of the signifier escapes the control of the author: "It wrote itself, and didn't care how I felt about it" (Ellis, *Lunar* 13). Even the story that "kills" Bateman does not so much return control to the author as reaffirm the performative power of the word, which once more exceeds Bret's intentions and expectations. Not only does it remain uncertain whether Bateman has truly died—"Even as he is consumed by flames he says, 'I am everywhere'"—but he also implicates Bret (as the author-father) in his crimes by once more raising the question of responsibility: "(*But he was curious, and he lusted*, the writer argued. *Was it his fault that he had abandoned his soul?*)" (283). The "writer" character that appears here (and that always speaks in italics) adds yet another layer to the complex narrative structure of *Lunar Park*, suggesting that Bret himself may be a specter conjured by another author. The way authorship is repeatedly configured as a phantasmagorical activity situates *Lunar Park* on the same intersection of the Gothic and the postmodern where Ruth Helyer's article "The Postmodern Gothic of *American Psycho*" places Ellis's earlier, most notorious novel. Only here the appearance of literal ghosts and a haunted house makes the invocation of the Gothic far more immediate.

One function of the ghostly in *Lunar Park* appears to be to express discomfort with the disintegrated, multiple, and ephemeral identities offered up by postmodernism. This was also a key concern in *American Psycho*. Like Patrick Bateman, who is "a frequently misrecognized person" (Helyer 740), Bret is a highly spectral character: he is constantly confused with fellow writer Jay McInerney, subject to a "desire to erase myself," and he literally rises from the dead after he "technically died for three minutes" because a drug overdose (Ellis, *Lunar* 23, 20). In the third chapter of the novel Bret explicitly identifies as a ghost, when he wakes up disoriented and walks through the house wrapped in a sheet. His feelings of self-alienation are emphasized

by erratic shifts between first- and third-person description: "I wanted to figure out why, but the sound of the vacuum merging with Victor's barking forced the ghost to move quickly toward the kitchen" (53). This notion of the subject as a fragmented, self-haunting construct is by now quite familiar. Yet, what is ultimately at stake in *Lunar Park* is not so much the ghost as a classically Gothic figure of fright or a postmodern metaphor for repressed anxieties about dissolving (masculine) identities, but haunting as an interpersonal and intergenerational ethics.

The way *Lunar Park* multiplies the position of the ghost to include (either literally or metaphorically) virtually all its characters invokes Derrida's insistence that "[t]here is then *some spirit*. Spirits. And *one must* reckon with them. One cannot not have to, one must not not be able to reckon with them, which are more than one: the *more than one/no more one* [*le* plus d'un]" (*Specters* xx). In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman's overwhelming fear of not being someone, of not being able to "establish a definitive version, origins on which he can rely," results in the creation of "an apocalyptic reality" where the other is eradicated through extreme eroticized violence against mainly women (Helyer 739–40). In contrast, *Lunar Park* does not allow for the displacement onto others of the fear produced by the fragmentation of identity. Rather, the ghostly others that assail Bret—and with which he is forced to interact—bring the reality of his fragmented identity home to him. The multiple hauntings he suffers force Bret to accept that he is indeed "*no more one*": "Because Clayton was—and had always been—someone I had known. He was somebody who had always known me. He was somebody who had always known *us*. Because Clayton and I were always the same person" (Ellis, *Lunar* 295). At the same time, he is made to recognize that there is always *more than one* ghost to whom he owes a debt and for whom he has to take responsibility: his father, the fictional characters he has created (of which Clayton is one), and, not least, Robby.

Ostensibly, *Lunar Park* reiterates *Specters of Marx*'s presentation of spectrality as a predominantly masculine scenario. Ellis's general preoccupation with changing notions of masculinity is well-documented. Mark Storey, for example, traces Patrick Bateman's savage killings in *American Psycho* back to a "crisis of masculinity" and "pomophobia." Storey argues that Bateman represents a satire of "masculinity with the volume turned up, an identity created not from internal, subjective coherence but from an uneasy chorus of voices, each one representing elements of a dominant masculinity" (61). Consequently, "the murderous insanity of Bateman is merely the ultimate realization of normative masculinity's internal logic" (62–63). The (fantasy of) violence against women is seen to originate in a masculinity besieged by the postmodern disruption of identity as secure and "real."[5] Carla Freccero has pointed out that Bateman's violence in *American Psycho*, in a notable departure from the conventional serial killer narrative where the mother is the cause or instigator (e.g. Norman Bates in *Psycho*), does not come from the maternal side but is "patrilineal, and thus located squarely within the dominant order itself" (51). This interpretation receives support not only from the fact that Patrick's mother is the only one in the entire novel who notices that he is unhappy—"'You look unhappy,' she says suddenly" (Ellis, *American* 365)— but also from Bret's assertion in *Lunar Park* that "I had planned to base Patrick Bateman on my father" (Ellis, *Lunar* 13). Whereas *American Psycho* places the crisis of masculinity and the accompanying patrilineal legacy of violence primarily in the context of sexual relations,[6] *Lunar Park* takes up these same issues and examines their effect on the nuclear family—at least on its male members. For, as in *Specters of Marx*, all of the novel's ghosts are either fathers or sons. It is as if their shared intertext (*Lunar Park* references *Hamlet* in many of its locations: Elsinore Lane, Claudius Street, Ophelia Boulevard, and Fortinbras Mall) enforces a focus on fatherhood, which,

as I have already shown, is invoked not only in the biological sense, but also as the metaphorical paternity of an author in relation to his texts.

Written Out of the Will

When reading *Specters of Marx* closely, the conclusion that the specters Derrida conjures operate within a masculine economy of inheritance is inescapable. Women are conspicuously absent from the book; none of the female characters from *Hamlet* are mentioned,[7] and the only female theorist to appear is Sarah Kofman, who is relegated to a footnote (*Specters* 194n33). Already in the first chapter, Derrida conjures a spectral family tree with only male branches:

> In the shadow of a filial memory, Shakespeare will have often inspired this Marxian theatricalization. Later, closer to us but according to the same genealogy, in the nocturnal noise of its concatenation, the rumbling sound of ghosts chained to ghosts, another descendant would be Valéry. *Shakespeare qui genuit Marx qui genuit Valéry* (and a few others).
>
> But what goes on *between* these generations? An omission, a strange lapsus. *Da*, then *fort*, exit Marx. (5)

Here, it is men who generate ghosts that are all sons. The mother's reproductive inevitability is easily elided precisely because of the ghost's lack of materiality and maturation. Ghosts are *after* life, they do not age, and consequently do not need to be given birth to or nurtured. Hence, the popular expression "raising ghosts" does not refer to bringing up ghosts, but to conjuring them out of thin air. Because spectral beings require no gestation, the genie of motherhood can be kept safely in the bottle.[8] The "omission" or "strange lapsus" that marks Marx's exit from the world stage in the above quote thus masks an even bigger omission: that of women, who are not even brought onto the stage in the first place. In the words of Gayatri Spivak, *Specters of Marx* is a "how-to-mourn-your-father-book" where woman is absented: "If Derrida plays Hamlet to Marx's Ghost, there are no takers for Gertrude or Ophelia" ("Ghostwriting" 66).[9]

In response to Spivak's critique, Derrida has argued—in an article with the purportedly ironic, but ultimately not fully invalidated title "Marx & Sons"—that *Specters of Marx* actually constitutes an indictment of the way the specter has traditionally been thought as masculine: "Expressly identifying itself as a book on inheritance, *Specters of Marx* also analyzes, questions and [. . .] 'deconstructs' the law of filiation, particularly patrimonial filiation, the law of the father-son lineage [. . .]. I have simultaneously marked out the law, effects and ethical-political risks of this filiation" (231). In other words, far from arguing that the specter can *only* appear in the form of patrimonial filiation, Derrida merely sought to show that this is how it appears in *Hamlet*, Marx, and the larger Western philosophical and literary tradition, with all the "ethical-political risks" this implies. After all, *Hamlet*'s spectral inheritance is hardly a happy one, climaxing as it does in an excessive multiplication of death. Nancy J. Holland, in her article "The Death of the Other/Father: A Feminist Reading of Derrida's Hauntology," accepts Derrida's explanation when she writes that "at the very moment when Derrida attempts to say something, however partial and attenuated, about *the* ghost, he must at the same time recreate a tradition in which the Father/Ghost, and all that they represent, speak only to the Son" (69).

According to Derrida, *Specters of Marx* moves beyond such "recreation" by presenting a plea for a different reading of the ghost that multiplies it so that the notion of *legitimate* inheritance

is destabilized, and daughters as well as sons become capable of being written into the will. The principle of inheritance, he writes, "should not be confined to the 'sons of Marx,'" since there always exist "clandestine and illegitimate" heirs and "sons—and daughters—who, unbeknownst to themselves, incarnate or metempsychosize the ventriloquist specters of their ancestors" ("Marx & Sons" 219, 231, 262). These statements, however, again appear to consign daughters to the position of afterthought or addendum and at best seem to propose a *gender-neutral* theory of the ghost, where daughters become *as* sons and mothers *as* fathers.

What does not emerge is a view of the ghost as a gendered concept where gender acts to inflect (and possibly transform) the spectral economy. Such a view would escape the link Spivak perceives between legacy and "heteronormativity" and would come to mark that ambiguous space of potentiality where "women may inherit differently" or, in a more radical refusal of the entire structure of patrilineal inheritance, "women may not inherit at all" ("Forum" 492). In Derrida's work, we find neither. His ghostly generation game continues to absent mothers and daughters: they are always still to come but never actually there to be reckoned with.[10]

A similar point can be made about Werner Hamacher, who describes *Specters of Marx* as a "familial phantom story" (184) that involves mothers and brothers, but that ultimately leads back to the father: "The *persécution* de Marx does not cease to be his *frèresécution* and his *mèresécution*, for the very reason that it was, from the very beginning, a *pèresécution*" (185). From this insightful realization Hamacher moves not to a differently or multiply gendered figuration of the specter, but to its conceptualization as the messianic. The messianic is characterized by a featureless speculation and expectation—a waiting without horizon—that is ultimately related to God and thus (at least traditionally) to yet another father figure: "God himself would be the promise that the promise is a promise" (204).

In *Lunar Park*, like in *Specters of Marx*, the inheritance is passed exclusively down the masculine line. When Bret's father (with whom he had a highly contentious relationship) dies, it turns out he has named Bret his trustee, leaving him a large tax debt, two expensive watches, a box of Armani suits and "a monumental relief that he was gone" (Ellis, *Lunar* 15). To this, Bret poignantly adds, "My mother and sisters—nothing" (15), indicating that the women in the family have been written out of the will. The ghost story that subsequently unfolds is, from the beginning, linked to a patrilineal system of inheritance, as Bret insists that his wife Jayne's decision to name their son Robby, after his father, "is the reason that the following events in *Lunar Park* happened" (16). Jayne's motivation for placing her son so deliberately in a particular male lineage, underplaying her own role as a mother, can be found in Bret's initial contestation of the boy's paternity. From the first pages, therefore, "who's the daddy?" is the pertinent question. Fatherhood becomes even more central when Bret sinks into a depression and "saves" himself by marrying Jayne and moving to the suburbs with her, Robby, and Sarah, Jayne's daughter by another man. It is primarily his newfound role as Robby's father that promises to give Bret some stability and control over his life, and snap him out of his spectral state of alienation. Jayne plays only a bit part in the Gothic ghost story that ensues, and Bret summarily excludes both her and his mother from the events, even when they try to have their perspectives included: "[t]here are also people who dispute the horror of the events that took place that autumn on Elsinore Lane, and when the book was vetted by the legal team at Knopf, my ex-wife was among those who protested, as did, oddly enough, my mother, who was not present during those frightful weeks" (30). The female characters are relegated to the sidelines and participate in the economy of haunting only in the sense that they are sketched so indistinctly that they become ghostly themselves; barely seen and never really listened to.

The only female character who does manage to insert herself into the ghostly economy is Sarah, Bret's six-year-old stepdaughter. The first apparently supernatural event of the novel occurs during a Halloween party thrown by Bret and Jayne. After Bret has already been slightly disturbed by someone who has come dressed up as Patrick Bateman, Sarah tells him that her electronic Terby toy—described by Bret as a "misconceived and grotesque" bird (Ellis, *Lunar* 42)—is mad at him, and later that it has scratched her and is flying around her room. When Bret goes upstairs to check, he hears a "guttural squawking" coming from behind the door (51). Sarah's room, therefore, is the site of the emergence of the uncanny, of the first intimation that what was familiar is no longer so.[11] Moreover, unlike her mother, Sarah appears acutely aware of the ghostly activity around her. She keeps drawing the Terby, "swooping down on a house that resembled ours, angry and in full attack mode," and reports that "he says he knows who you are" (151, 163). When Bret receives mysterious e-mail messages from the bank where he has stored his father's ashes and starts to see his father's old cream-colored Mercedes everywhere, Sarah even tells him she has spoken to her grandfather and that he "isn't dead" (109). Bret, however, does not seem to notice that Sarah is able to communicate with the spectral presences and, by implication, with his own unconscious fears. He mostly ignores her, except when he tells his therapist that he not only finds it disturbing that she thinks the Terby doll is alive—even though he himself suspects the same—but also that she keeps calling him "Daddy" (86). In Derrida's terms, we could say that Sarah is trying to assert herself as a "clandestine and illegitimate" heir ("Marx & Sons" 262), but that her gender and her status as a stepchild cause Bret to aggressively foreclose this possibility.

The way *Lunar Park* insists on keeping the ghostly between men is exemplified by the following passage: "(Note: the sconces in the hallway were flickering, and according to Robby this was something he had noticed before, as I had, though neither Jayne nor Sarah—nor Rosa, nor Marta, for that matter—had seen it)" (Ellis, *Lunar* 232). Here, the women of the household are summarily excluded from the spectral phenomenon. Moreover, when the assistant of a paranormal researcher Bret has hired to "fumigate" the house notices a skeletal form coming out of Sarah's room, the story is quickly redirected: "*Actually*, the writer informed me, *Sam was wrong. It came from Robby's room, since Robby is, in fact, the focal point of the haunting*" (271). The implication is that the story simply *cannot* be concerned with haunted or haunting women, and that the ghostly *has* to remain a form of commerce between fathers and sons, at least until the novel's ending, to which I will return later.

The Ghost of the Father: Crypts and Phantoms

As noted above, when Bret's father dies, he alone is obliged to deal with his inheritance and will. He describes this legacy as "worthless" and "invalid" (Ellis, *Lunar* 15) in an attempt to deny the hold his father has on him (marking Derrida's inescapable debt to the previous generation). Instead of fulfilling this debt by investigating the "irregularities" noted by the coroner in relation to his father's death and respecting his father's wish to have his ashes spread at sea, Bret resolutely rejects it by irreverently placing his father's ashes in a safe-deposit box "in a Bank of America on Ventura Boulevard next to a dilapidated McDonald's" (15). In Derrida's terms this constitutes an attempt to avoid the ethical encounter with the radical other by making sure that the dead stay dead, that the corpse stays in its place and does not wander: "it must stay in its place. In a safe place ... *it is necessary* (to know—to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more!" (*Specters* 9). Or, as Bret puts it, "I didn't

want to keep our father alive" (Ellis, *Lunar* 278). Throughout the novel, all his actions are geared toward exorcism, toward escaping his father's demands and keeping buried "a past I didn't want to remember" (170).

In his foreword to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*, Derrida connects the idea that the deceased "must pledge, on his own, warmly, to occupy his place as dead, not to budge from it" to Abraham and Torok's concept of the *crypt*: "The crypt is perhaps itself that contract with the dead" ("Fors" xxxviii). Bret's attempts to bury the past and in particular his use of the safe-deposit box to keep his father's ashes "safe" (i.e., unable to interfere with his life) speak to this concept. The crypt, for Abraham and Torok, is what results from a failed mourning. Such failure transpires when the healthy process of introjection—where the self expands itself by assimilating (or working through) its own desires as well as external objects and events—is unsuccessful and incorporation—where the self takes the object into itself whole and preserves it as a secret never to be revealed—occurs. The "secret tomb" of incorporation, however, is never completely sealed off, and its content always manifests somehow: "Sometimes in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations" (Abraham and Torok 130).[12]

In *Lunar Park*, the ghost in the crypt indeed refuses to remain hidden. Bret's determination to keep the trauma of his father's death from his consciousness is thwarted by the endless stream of messages, clues, and ghostly appearances assailing him, all leading back to his father and their disturbed relationship. The messages are cryptic in nature and have to be decoded. Thus, Bret comes to realize that the mysterious e-mails from the bank all arrived at the exact time of his father's death and that the first one came on its anniversary; that the film *1941*, which keeps being played on TV without being scheduled, refers to his father's year of birth; that the number of his house, 307, translates into his own birthday (March 7); and that the Terby can be decoded into a question: YBRET, or *Why, Bret?* The novel thus enacts the way "like a commemorative monument, the incorporated object betokens the place, the date, and the circumstances in which desires were banished from introjection: they stand like tombs in the life of the ego" (Torok 114). As if to reinforce this connection, an actual tomb also appears to Bret when he finds (or hallucinates) a gravestone in his backyard inscribed, ROBERT MARTIN ELLIS 1941–1992 (Ellis, *Lunar* 96). Finally, and most significantly in light of Abraham and Torok's theory, the story Bret wrote as a twelve-year-old from which a monster has now come to life is called "The Tomb" and was written as a direct result of his fear of his father (250).[13] From this point of view, Ellis's narrative becomes a gradual unlocking of the crypt, with the character of "the writer" acting as Bret's therapist, who "seeks to reveal the crypt's secret content in order to effect its reintegration into consciousness" (Rand 22). Ultimately, Bret's crypt crumbles, and what emerges is the father:

> The denial of everything would pull me gently away from reality, but only for a moment, because lines started connecting with other lines, and gradually an entire grid was forming and it became coherent, with a specific meaning, and finally emerging from the void was an image of my father: his face was white, and his eyes were closed in repose, and his mouth was just a line that soon opened up, screaming. My mind kept whispering to itself, and in my memories it all was there—the pink stucco house, the green shag carpeting, the bathing suits from the Mauna Kea, our neighbors Susan and Bill *Allen*—and I could see my father's cream-colored 450 SL as it crossed the lanes of an interstate lined with citrus trees, racing toward an off-ramp, not far

from here, called Sherman Oaks, and sometimes on the night and early morning of
November fourth I laughed, with disbelief at the noises roaring in my head and I
kept talking to myself, but I was a man trying to have a rational conversation with
someone who was losing it, and I cried *let it go, let it go,* but I could no longer
avoid recognizing the fact that I had to accept what was happening: that my father
wanted to give me something. And as I kept repeating his name I realized what
it was.

    A warning. (Ellis, *Lunar* 170)

This passage illustrates the move from denial to acceptance, from fragmentation to connection
and coherence, as well as the fervent resistance of the subconscious to the emergence of the secret
contained in the crypt ("*let it go, let it go*"). It also suggests that Bret's entire life in *Lunar Park*
is a (possibly hallucinatory) reenactment of that of his father: he is living in the same house and
has neighbors with the same last name. The trauma he is repressing, therefore, is both his own
and his father's, invoking not only Abraham and Torok's crypt but also the related concept of
the *phantom*, a figure of transgenerational haunting that refers to an "undisclosed family secret
handed down to an unwitting descendant" (Rand 16).

    The phantom is the crypt of an ancestor ensconced in our psyche ("in my memories it was all
there"), affecting our behavior without our realization. Bret appears to sense his father's phantom
when he writes, "as much as I wanted to escape his influence, I couldn't. *It had soaked into me*,
shaped me into the man I was becoming" (Ellis, *Lunar* 7; emphasis added). This refers not only to
the direct influence his father has had on him, but also to the way Bret is involuntarily reliving his
father's life and his father's traumas of inadequate masculinity and failed fatherhood. When Bret
receives his father's Armani suits after his death, the phantom of the father's failed masculinity
is visited upon the son in a very direct, material manner: "I was revolted to discover that most
of the inseams in the crotch of the trousers were stained with blood, which we later found out
was the result of a botched penile implant he underwent in Minneapolis. My father, in his last
years, due to the toxic mix of diabetes and alcoholism, had become impotent" (15). Impotence
not only characterizes the father's sexual life, but also his failure *as a father*, which is the primary
component of the phantom that lives on in Bret. At one point, he notes, "it's been really hard
fitting into this whole world, and all these pressures about being the man of the house or whatever
you want to call it are getting to me" (86). The traditional roles imposed on men by society ("the
man of the house") and the difficulty of adequately enacting these roles when the postmodern
questioning of identity as a stable category has made their content fluid and ambiguous turn out
to be what his father's ghost has come back to warn Bret about.

    What haunts Bret, therefore, is not the all-powerful father of the phallogocentric tradition—
the imposing ghost of King Hamlet, who hands down absolute commands—but the vulnerable and
insecure specter of postmodern fatherhood. Such a specter cannot haunt the son in the conventional
way by ordering Bret to be a "man" and avenge him, since it is precisely the definition of manhood
that has come undone. In combination with the fact that Bret's father was not murdered by a rival
but died a failed father and man, this precludes vengeance as the ghost's command. In effect,
the ghost cannot order the son to do anything; it can only warn Bret not to repeat his father's
mistakes.

    Consequently, what the ghost finally articulates in *Lunar Park* is not a demand for revenge
related to the past, as was the case in *Hamlet*, or a debt to be settled, as Derrida suggests, but a
caution about the future that comes from past experience:

> I saw my father, the crows turning in the sky above him, and he was standing at the
> end of the Commons lawn, and his face was white and his stare was fixed on me and
> he was holding out his hand and I knew that if I took that hand it would be as cold
> as mine and his mouth moved and from where I sat I could hear the name he kept
> repeating, insistently escaping his lips. *Robby. Robby. Robby.* (Ellis, *Lunar* 186)

Bret, however, does not heed this warning, because he is too focused on the past (his father) to pay attention to the future (his son). He keeps approaching the ghost as though it *was* still functioning within the traditional patriarchal model, as if his father *had* made a demand for himself—to solve his possible murder or to disperse his ashes—only to recognize his mistake at the very end of the novel when Robby has already disappeared: "I realized the one thing I was learning from my father now: how lonely people make a life. But I also realized what I hadn't learned from him: that a family—if you allow it—gives you joy, which in turn gives you hope. What we both failed to understand was that we shared the same heart" (304). The shared heart here stands for the phantom that Bret has inherited from his father and of which he has finally become conscious. But it is too late: like his father, he has become "someone who either didn't know his son was lost to him or refused to believe it" (177).

   This brings me to the third generation in *Lunar Park*. With Robby, the phantom is actively and creatively conjured into something new, contesting both the model of traditional fatherhood and that of Derridean spectrality. What I will read as Robby's strategic *self-spectralization* prevents the oppressive model of the "man of the house" so unsuccessfully enacted by both Bret and his father from being visited upon the next generation, thus challenging its status as an established social practice. For that is what Abraham argues becomes of common phantoms that are not effectively exorcised: "shared or complementary phantoms find a way to be established as social practices along the lines of *staged words*" (176). In this case, the "staged words" constitute what Judith Butler would call a performative gender norm, that of the "man of the house."

The Ghost of the Son: Self-Spectralization

   The unidirectional patrilineal scenario of haunting that dominates Derrida's account of spectrality is complicated in *Lunar Park* by the fact that Bret is himself, however reluctantly, a father. After trying to convince Jayne to have an abortion and refusing to acknowledge his son until a paternity test proves his fatherhood beyond any doubt, Bret finally steps into the role of father when Robby is eleven. Haunted by his troubled relationship with his own father, Bret finds it difficult to adjust to his new position: "I was thrust into the role of husband and father—of protector—and my doubts were mountainous" (Ellis, *Lunar* 29). For Bret, consequently, the demand to fulfill a debt not only comes from his father, but also from Robby, suggesting that the vector of the intergenerational spectral scenario may also point from son to father: "It was all about what he wanted. It was all about what he needed. Everything I desired was overridden, and I had to accept this. I had to rise up to it" (28). The duties of fatherhood in *Lunar Park* are every bit as imposing as the filial duties Derrida outlines. Bret fails spectacularly to fulfill the debt owed to his son, and soon he realizes that what is happening is a replay of the relationship he had with his father: "I was now my father. Robby was now me. I saw my own features mirrored in his—my world was mirrored there [. . .] Why hadn't I noticed him until he was lost to me?" (160). It is this vicious circle of obligation and nonfulfillment (emanating from the crypt and phantom lodged in Bret's psyche) that manifests as the Gothic nightmare of the novel. This nightmare, moreover, is not

individual but communal; the phantom has indeed become a social practice in Abraham's sense and, as such, much more difficult to exorcise.

For, in the suburban setting of *Lunar Park*, Bret is not the only adult struggling with parenthood, and the circulation of crippling demands between parents and children is pervasive. Parents are seen to prevent their children from living their own lives. As Bret says of Robby, "his future flattened by my presence" (Ellis, *Lunar* 116). At the same time, parents feel they invest so much in their offspring that they should receive something in return: "it wasn't that they weren't concerned with their kids, but they wanted something back, they wanted a return on their investment—this need was almost religious" (133). The parent–child relationship thus becomes an economic system with both parties acting as commodities or sites of speculation for each other. In such a scenario, debts can no longer be paid off because they extend in every direction (past and future). When the son is at the same time also a father and when intergenerational phantoms are at play, the neat pattern of inheritance outlined by Derrida (which, even when it makes room for illegitimate heirs, remains conventionally chronological) is rendered multidirectional and potentially perpetuates itself endlessly, not just as a labor of selection from the past but also as a responsibility to the future.

In *Lunar Park*, this oppressive economy is interrupted when Robby and the other sons portrayed in the novel decline to cooperate with its mechanisms by refusing to take into themselves the phantoms of their fathers. Robby and the other boys appear in the novel as live specters, not dead but nevertheless choosing to become ghosts; ghosts, it should be emphasized, without phantoms and therefore capable of haunting differently.

From the start of the novel, the area where Bret lives is plagued by a surge in missing children, significantly "only boys" (Ellis, *Lunar* 55). The boys vanish without a trace, and no bodies are ever found. Soon, there are warning signs that Robby, too, is about to go missing. According to Bret, "Robby seemed lost, as if he didn't know what to do" and "his favorite songs had the word *flying* in the title" (63, 89). Later, Bret muses that "no one was going to take him anywhere (*unless he let them*, came an unbidden thought)" (112). Bret, however, remains stubbornly oblivious to the seriousness of these omens, preferring to believe that somehow Robby and he will find a way to become a "proper" father and son.

Robby and the other boys, however, have given up on this possibility. In order to prevent their entry into the cycle of frustrating and frustrated demand that has come to characterize the social practice of fatherhood, they coordinate their own disappearances, communicating by e-mail and using Mail Boxes Etc. to send their belongings ahead to an unknown location. This place, which is without fathers and without inherited traumas, they call, in reference to J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, "*neverneverland*" (*Lunar* 209). After Robby disappears, Bret notes, "I didn't want explanations, because in those, my failure would take shape (your love was a mask, the scale of your lies, the irresponsible adult at loose, all those things you hid, the mindless pull of sex, the father who never paid attention)" (298). Again, the failures Bret lists are both his and his father's, and they concern an injunction to justice that comes from the son. Absenting yourself from responding to this injunction by becoming a ghost (either in the sense of a traditional demanding specter like in *Hamlet* or as the nonpresences Bret and his father were to their sons) is not a valid reaction. As "the writer" points out, Bret was just as much a ghost (a nonpresence refusing to invest himself in the relationship) to Robby as his father was to him: "*Because his spirit had been broken. Because you never existed for him. Because—in the end, Bret—you were the ghost*" (298).

There is little doubt that Robby would have ended up repeating the same scenario had he not chosen to spectralize himself. Since a missing child is one of the most visible, frightening, and

communicative images possible, Robby's disappearing act does not constitute a passive abdication of responsibility or a simple flight or escape. Rather, it is a shocking interruption of normality, a ghostly intervention all the more disturbing because of its inexplicability and lack of someone to blame (there are not even any "faceless enemies" to hold responsible). As a deliberate rejection of the patrilineal economy of specters conjured in *Specters of Marx* and Abraham and Torok's intergenerational phantom, self-spectralization here marks a ghostly form of agency. What we are dealing with here is not an exorcism in the sense of a negative avoidance of ethical responsibility for the other, but a conjuration in the sense of a *Verschwörung*, a secret pact to struggle against a superior power (Derrida, *Specters* 41). What the boys' disappearance brings into being is a new type of interpersonal relationship that elides the nuclear family and the patriarchal model of inheritance. One potential problem remains. Since there are no missing girls, the boys' escape is ultimately as male-centered as the model it seeks to displace. However, this renewed exclusion of women can be explained as a necessary part of the boys' rebellion: after all, not allowing girls is the one way to ensure that the sons will never have to become fathers or "men of the house" themselves.

At the end of the novel, Bret is still wondering what he could have done to save his father and chastising himself for "thinking that I could just let go of the damage that a father can do to a son" (Ellis, *Lunar* 304). His passive strategy of repression ("just let go") in the face of an inheritance that has already been handed down contrasts with Robby's active intervention in an inheritance that is yet to come. Robby is not an illegitimate heir seeking to insert himself in the existing system of inheritance but a repudiating heir who challenges the system itself. He counteracts the force of reappearance enacted by the ghost of Bret's father with a force of disappearance that prompts a radical destabilization of the established social practice—with all the sons gone, the fathers will have to find new heirs, which could be daughters but also non-family members.

The final chapter of *Lunar Park* sees Bret and Robby reunited in the McDonald's across from the bank where his father's ashes were stored. It is not clear whether this reunion is merely another story concocted by Bret, but it does present a positive reading of Robby's disappearance. The boy appears as though "something had been solved for him" and he tells his father: "I'm not lost anymore" (Ellis, *Lunar* 305). While the past is still with him (he drives the same cream-colored Mercedes 450 SL as Bret's father), it no longer resides as a foreign object *inside him* and has therefore lost the power to determine his life: "wherever he was going, he was not afraid" (306). The future no longer promises a repeat of the past, but new directions. Bret, too, has made peace with Robby's departure: although he still asks him to come back, he is also able to show Robby "the flowering smile of acceptance" and to allow him to return to "the land where every boy forced into bravery and quickness retreats: a new life" (306). Thus, unlike the sons in Ellis's other novels, whose phantomatic inheritance of oppressive and/or unstable models of masculinity turns them into (self-)destructive drug addicts (*Less than Zero*), serial killers (*American Psycho*), or terrorists (*Glamorama*), Robby, through self-spectralization, stages a "brave," ingenious, and apparently successful challenge to these models and their perpetuation across generations.[14]

In marked contrast to *American Psycho*'s lack of resolution—encapsulated in its famous final sentence "THIS IS NOT AN EXIT" (Ellis, *American* 399)—the last pages of *Lunar Park* have even Bret envisioning a new beginning, instigated by the fact that the crypt has now literally disintegrated. When, in a final attempt to placate his father's ghost, he goes to recover his ashes from the bank, "the box containing what remained of my father had burst apart and the ashes now lined the sides of the oblong safe" (Ellis, *Lunar* 306). According to Abraham and Torok, with the crypt opened and the magic word revealed—"in the ash someone had written, perhaps with a finger,

the same word my son had written on the moonscape he had left for me" (306)—proper mourning and introjection can finally take place. In this case, the magic word remains hidden to the reader (I, at least, was not able to decode it) and functions to seal a new pact (*Verschwörung*) between Bret, his father, and his son, one based on different principles of inheritance and spectrality than those that produced the preceding Gothic nightmare. In *Lunar Park*, the dissolution of the crypt signifies a validation of the changes in the spectral economy wrought by Robby's self-spectralization and opens onto a new image of generationality that replaces the dominant and unquestioned father–son dynamic of *Hamlet*. When Bret finally sets out to scatter the contents of the safety deposit box according to his father's wishes, this is represented not as an act of subservience, placation, or exorcism but as a moment of reconnection not just to the father but to Bret's entire ancestry. At this point, moreover, women are explicitly reinserted into the narrative:

> In a fishing boat that took us [Bret and his sisters] out beyond the wave line of the Pacific we finally put my father to rest. As the ashes rose up into the salted air they opened themselves to the wind and began moving backwards, falling into the past and coating the faces that lingered there, dusting everything, and then the ashes ignited into a prism and began forming patterns and started reflecting the men and women who had created him and me and Robby. They drifted over a mother's smile and shaded a sister's outstretched hand and shifted past all the things you wanted to share with everyone. *I want to show you something*, the ashes whispered. (306)

Here the inheritance no longer comes just from men, but from "men and women," and it no longer concerns only sons but also mothers and sisters. The scattered ashes (here emphatically signifying a *shared* heritage) soothe the burden of the past without completely obscuring that the past is something that always stays with us. Whether we want to admit it or not, it runs in our blood, is nestled in our psyche, and not always comfortably so. Thus, in its final pages *Lunar Park* also counters Abraham and Torok's assumption that exorcism represents a definitive cure, that by opening the crypt we can ensure that the past will cease to haunt us. It does this by underscoring Derrida's point that absolute alterity is something we have to learn to live with responsibly by allowing it to remain other instead of seeking to eliminate it or to make it part of ourselves through assimilative processes like introjection (even Robby's self-spectralization refrains from doing anything *to* the other). In the end, something will always continue to haunt us:

> drifting over all the promises canceled and the connections missed, the desires left unfulfilled and the disappointments met and the fears confirmed and every slammed door and reconciliation never made, and soon they were covering all the mirrors in every room we lived in, hiding our imperfections from ourselves even as the ashes flew through our blood. (Ellis, *Lunar* 307–08)

In conclusion, it can be said that *Lunar Park* both evokes and questions Derrida's masculine scenario of haunting and Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt and the phantom. Like *Hamlet* and *Specters of Marx*, it is very much a meditation on father–son relationships and familial legacies. However, by distributing the figure of the ghost over three generations and making the temporal vector of spectral responsibility point in both directions (from father to son and from son to father), Ellis's novel envisions a different spectral economy that suggests creative ways of (re)constituting traditions of inheritance. Robby's self-spectralization in particular assuages some

of the dangers Hamacher detects in Derrida's figuration of the specter, including "the repetition of the familial, national and religious myths which it claims to rid itself of" and the danger of "activating the performative of the promise according to the schema of the jealous persecution of the father" (198). The gender dimension of the specter also shifts in *Lunar Park*, if only slightly. The belated insertion of women into the spectral scenario functions as a critique of their exclusion in the rest of the novel, and the narrative as a whole suggests that having women take part in the ghostly generation game may offer another way (besides the extreme act of self-spectralization) to facilitate a less traumatic process of inheritance. There is a strong indication, for example, that the resolution of Bret's haunting would have come sooner had the female characters been taken seriously (this not only applies to Sarah, but also to a neighbor's wife who, early on, tries to warn Bret that the boys are making themselves disappear).

To be truly appropriate as a figure for a new ethics of intersubjectivity (whether the other represents our ancestors, our children, or our contemporaries), the specter needs to include women as those who potentially haunt and are haunted differently, and it needs to haunt in multiple directions. This is what Bret comes to realize on the last page of *Lunar Park*, where a different, more productive kind of ghostwriting than that in the quote with which I opened my analysis is imagined; a ghostwriting that still takes itself beyond the control of the author, but simultaneously holds out the promise of turning the old into something new:

> The ashes were collapsing into everything and following echoes [. . .] somewhere out at the end of the Pacific—after they rustled across the pages of this book, scattering themselves over words and creating new ones—they began exiting the text, losing themselves somewhere beyond my reach, and then vanished, and the sun shifted its position and the world swayed and then moved on, and though it was all over, something new was conceived. (Ellis, *Lunar* 308)

Notes

[1] See, for example, Buse and Stott's collection *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Jeffrey Sconce's *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, and Peng Cheah's *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*.

[2] See Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Georgiana Banita's "Shadow of the Colossus: The Spectral Lives of 9/11," and John T. Parry's "The Shape of Modern Torture: Extraordinary Rendition and Ghost Detainees."

[3] In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida outlines how absolute hospitality is always thwarted by the concrete laws of conditional hospitality that are constitutive of it (79).

[4] To avoid confusion, I will refer to Bret Easton Ellis the extra-diegetic author as "Ellis" and to Bret Easton Ellis the narrator of *Lunar Park* as "Bret."

[5] This connects with David Anthony's argument about the way early Gothic texts such as Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" constituted a reaction to and reflection of an anxious form of masculinity that emerged after the financial crisis of 1819.

[6] See Jane Caputi's article "American Psychos: The Serial Killer in Contemporary Fiction" for a discussion of the sexual violence portrayed in *American Psycho*. Caputi argues that Bateman's behavior is grounded in a virulent antifeminism that is not adequately critiqued in the novel. Freccero provides an eloquent rebuttal of this argument by way of Judith Butler.

[7] Derrida's reading of the play, moreover, obsessively returns to the line "I am thy Father's spirit" (*Specters* 4, 7, 106, 127).

[8] It is significant that Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle connect Derrida's spectral economy to Harold Bloom's Oedipal scenario of anxiety of influence, from which the mother is likewise absented. See also Colin Davis's discussion

of Bloom's concept of *apophrades* in *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (58–61).

[9]In contrast, Jacques Lacan's famous reading of *Hamlet* appears to start by putting Ophelia and Gertrude center stage. However, the real hero of this interpretation is the phallus: Ophelia is reduced to the phallus—"Ophelia is *O phallos*" (20)—and the play as a whole is read as an Oedipal drama in which the father and his ghost play a far more prominent role than the mother.

[10]For a consideration of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Fay Weldon's short story "Angel, All Innocence" as texts in which women indeed haunt differently, see my article "The Ghost as a Gendered Chronotope."

[11]The uncanny effects of Bret's rebirth as a suburban family man—a role he clearly associates with a domesticating emasculation—can be linked in a Freudian manner to the castration complex, while the Terby specifically invokes Jentsch's assertion (disparaged by Freud) that the uncanny is a result of intellectual uncertainty, "doubts whether an apparently inanimate being is really alive" (Freud 201).

[12]Although Derrida clearly found inspiration for his hauntology in Abraham and Torok's work, there are significant differences between his elaboration of the specter and their notion of the crypt. Whereas Derrida sees exorcism as a refusal to interact responsibly with absolute alterity, Abraham and Torok advocate putting an end to the haunting of the cemetery guard by unlocking the crypt and bringing its secret contents out into the open. For a comprehensive account of the relation between Derrida's hauntology and the work of Abraham and Torok, see Colin Davis's "*États Présents*: Hauntology, Specters and Phantoms."

[13]The fact that in *Lunar Park* the decoding of the cryptic messages is relatively straightforward contravenes Abraham and Torok's emphasis on the extreme complexity of cryptonomy. In their most famous analysis of the Wolf Man and his crypt, the word that turns out to be its key has to be traced back through several languages and multiple semantic displacements.

[14]For a different invocation of self-spectralization as an effect of the inevitable uncanniness of human existence— "always homeless and always drifting"—in relation to Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, see Julian Wolfreys's article "Ghosts: Of Ourselves or, Drifting with Hardy, Heidegger, James, and Woolf" (14).

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