

# GHOSTS, DIRECT ADDRESS, CHARACTER

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S ROVING SELF

**LECTURE BY PROFESSOR FLORENCE DORE**

CATHERINE GALLAGHER HAS ARGUED THAT FICTIONAL CHARACTERS ARE "NOBODIES." THAT IS, AS ENTIRELY SEPARATE FROM ACTUAL PERSONS IN THE WORLD, PERSONS WITH CLAIMS TO THE SELF AS A FORM OF PROPERTY, CHARACTERS ARE "A SPECIES OF UTOPIAN COMMON PROPERTY, POTENTIAL OBJECTS OF UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION." DOROTHY HALE ARGUES THAT BY THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, THE SITUATION HAD CHANGED: THE NOVEL'S AESTHETIC SUCCESS IS NOW UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF ITS ETHICAL TREATMENT OF THE OTHER, WHICH ENTAILS NOT "UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION" BUT A BLOCKING OF THE READER'S ACCESS TO CHARACTER. THE NOVELIST'S FAILURE TO REPRESENT THE "OTHER," ARGUES HALE, "ENHANCES THE NOVELISTIC EFFECT THAT CHARACTERS EXIST PRIOR TO AND BEYOND THEIR CREATOR'S CONTROL" (51). TIMOTHY BEWES HAS RECENTLY ASKED NOVEL SCHOLARS TO DISASSOCIATE "FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE" FROM ANY "ENCAPSULATED SELF OR OTHER" AT ALL. BUT I WILL ARGUE THAT GHOSTS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S NOVELS CHALLENGE BEWES' IDEA THAT THE NOVEL IS BEST UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF A "DISSOLUTION" (6) OF LINKS BETWEEN THE "WORK AND WORLD." BY DRAWING OUT THE LINKS BETWEEN FAULKNER'S GHOSTS AND THOSE FOUND IN THE FICTION OF EDGAR ALLEN POE, NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, AND HENRY JAMES, I WILL SHOW, ON THE CONTRARY, THAT THE GHOSTS OF AMERICAN FICTION CLARIFY THE CULTURAL BASIS OF A FORMAL TENSION IN AMERICAN NOVELISTIC CHARACTER BETWEEN "UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION" AND WHAT HALE HAS IDENTIFIED AS "ALTERITY."

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