Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justicessue
45.2 (2024)
Special Issue: Take Back the Future: 2023 WGSJ Conference
Research

The Bar Butch in the Attic: Lesbian Hauntings in Jane Rule's "In the Attic of the House"

by Emma Wood

Abstract: In an analysis of Jane Rule's "In the Attic of the House" from her 1981 anthology *Outlander*, this article examines how Rule uses both the figure of the lesbian and the figure of the ghost to demonstrate the complex, temporal relationship between two lesbian generations in Canada in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Rule's "In the Attic of the House" follows an older butch lesbian, Alice, as she is haunted by both the unseen apparition of her dead, once closeted, femme lover and by the presence of younger lesbian feminists in the main floor of the house who begin to consume and rewrite Alice's queer past. In analyzing three types of social hauntings within this short story, this article draws on both Avery Gordon's theories of hauntology and Heather Love's queer theory of "feeling backwards" to imagine how lesbian-feminists in 1970s-80s Canada conducted a "backward" haunting of femme-butch lesbian elders, hailing from the culture of the lesbian working-class bar. By drawing parallels between Rule's short fiction and the real, historical events of lesbian communities in Canada, this article seeks to recenter the erasures (i.e., the ghostings) and the (in)visbilities of lesbian existence and embodiment in Canada. This paper ultimately analyzes how Rule as author calls upon her readers to consider and contemplate the historical tensions and intimacies between butch-femme elders of lesbian bar culture and the emerging lesbian-feminist collectives in the early 1980s.

Keywords: Canadian literature; Gothic; hauntology; Jane Rule; lesbian bar; lesbian-feminism; lesbian studies

Résumé: Dans une analyse de la nouvelle « In the Attic of the House » de Jane Rule, paru dans son anthologie *Outlander* en 1981, cet article étudie comment elle utilise la figure de la lesbienne et celle du fantôme pour démontrer la relation temporelle complexe entre deux générations de lesbiennes au Canada à la fin des années 1970 et au début des années 1980. Dans « In the Attic of the House » de M^{me} Rule, Alice, une lesbienne masculine d'un certain âge, est hantée par l'apparition invisible de sa défunte amante, longtemps inavouée, et par la présence de jeunes lesbiennes féministes au rez-de-chaussée de la maison, qui se mettent à consumer et à réécrire le passé queer d'Alice. Pour analyser ces trois types de hantises sociales dans cette nouvelle, cet article s'appuie sur les théories de la hantologie d'Avery Gordon et sur la théorie queer de Heather Love « Feeling Backward » pour imaginer comment les lesbiennes féministes vivant au Canada dans les années 1970-1980 ont fait subir une hantise « inversée » aux aînées lesbiennes féminines et masculines, issues de la culture des bars de la classe ouvrière lesbienne. En établissant des parallèles entre la nouvelle de M^{me} Rule et les événements historiques réels vécus par les communautés lesbiennes au Canada, cet article tente de revenir sur les effacements (c.-à-d. les fantômes) et les (in)visibilités de l'existence et de la représentation des lesbiennes au Canada. Finalement, l'article analyse la façon dont M^{me} Rule, en tant qu'auteure, pousse ses lecteurs à réfléchir aux tensions historiques et à l'intimité entre les aînées masculines et féminines de la culture des bars de lesbiennes et les groupes de lesbiennes féministes qui ont émergé au début des années 1980.

Mots clés: littérature canadienne; gothique; hantologie; Jane Rule; bar de lesbiennes; féminisme lesbien; études lesbiennes

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Jane Rule begins her short story "In the Attic of the House" (1981) by outlining a tense dichotomy between two lesbian generations in Canada. For instance, she writes that Alice, the main character, "hadn't joined women's liberation; she had only rented it the main floor of her house" (95). Here, Rule uses the setting of Alice's house as an architectural, symbolic representation of a shifting lesbian landscape in 1970s and 1980s Canada. The story follows Alice, an older butch lesbian who, in order to make ends meet, moves up to the attic of her house and rents out her main floor to a group of lesbian-feminists, Bett, Trudy, Jill, and Angel. As Alice gets to know the lesbian-feminists, she is also haunted by the ghost of Harriet, her closeted lover who died by suicide in the same house.

This paper will begin with this rift, or divide, between Alice and Harriet, who come from the era of bar lesbians of the 1940s and '50s, and the lesbian-feminists of the 1970s and early '80s. Drawing on both Avery Gordon's theories of hauntology and Heather Love's queer theory of "feeling backwards," this article discuss three kinds of hauntings within Rule's short story: the more apparent haunting of Alice by the ghost of her dead lover Harriet; a kind of living haunting wherein Alice—as a queer mad woman in the attic—haunts the lesbian-feminists; and, finally, a complicated, backward haunting whereby the young, lively lesbian-feminists of the ground-floor haunt the dwindling Alice. Within these hauntings, I will trace how, in contrasting lesbian-feminists with bar lesbians, Rule's story reflects both a progressivist narrative wherein the lesbian-feminists understand themselves as proudly out, and a regressive narrative wherein unwanted feelings of closetedness can emerge for Alice. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how, in perhaps refusing to simplify the relationship between Alice and the lesbian-feminists, Rule offers possible intergenerational intimacies for the fictional women within this story. Thus, in drawing Rule's fictional warnings, this paper will contemplate how we can re-examine and understand these complex and messy histories of lesbian life in bar culture without reproducing erasures and hauntings.

Before analyzing Rule's short story, I first briefly outline the theoretical and historical frameworks I will draw on within this paper to contextualize the relationship between Alice, Harriet, and the lesbian-feminists. First introduced by Terry Castle in *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993), I begin by highlighting the often erased or tragic figure of the apparitional lesbian as a way to examine the initial haunting of Alice by the ghost of Harriet. I then turn towards both queer hauntological frameworks from Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* ([1997] 2008) and Heather Love's *Feeling Backwards* (2007) in order to examine both the "living" haunting, wherein the lesbian-feminists are haunted by Alice's almost ghostly presence from the attic, and the backwards haunting, wherein the lesbian-feminists haunt Alice as well.

The first ghost in Rule's story comes in the form of Alice's lover of more than thirty years, Harriet, who died by suicide in Alice's bathtub. Initially, Harriet appears as the stereotypical representation of the appar-

itional lesbian; that is, she is spoken about but never truly seen. In defining the history of the apparitional lesbian, author Terry Castle explains how "to try to write the literary history of lesbianism is to confront, from the start, something ghostly: an impalpability, a misting over, an evaporation, or 'whiting out' of possibility" (1993, 28). In this sense, to write or speak about lesbianism before a more modern period in Western culture is to only speak about ghosts or purposeful, heterosexist erasures. We can see this "whiting out" or erasure of Harriet in Rule's story. For instance, Alice, at least when sober, attempts to never "speak Harriet's name" (Rule 1981, 97). Furthermore, Alice refuses to recognize her relationship with Harriet, or even Harriet's death, to the men she has worked with for decades. When Bett asks why she refuses to "come out" at work, Alice states, "What has a woman bleeding to death in my bathtub got to do with who I am?" (Rule 1981, 101). Unlike the lesbian-feminists, Alice does not associate her sexual identity, or sexual relationship, with either her personal or professional identity. Castle defines this unspeakability or refusal to speak of lesbianism or lesbian desire as "a kind of love that, by definition, cannot exist" (1993, 30-31). Emerging in this perceived context of "unspeakability," Harriet and Alice first meet in a beer parlor and Alice remembers Harriet as such: "Harriet had her own money. She was a legal secretary. Alice remembered the first time she ever saw Harriet in the beer parlor wearing a prim gray suit, looking obviously out of place" (Rule 1981, 98). In opposition to Alice's short haircut and androgynous Safeway workers' uniform, Harriet's more femme-perceived secretary's outfit looks out of place in the male-dominated—and butch-affiliated—working-class bar. Alice and Harriet's story is reminiscent of the histories and experiences of many working-class lesbians in 1940s and 1950s North America. As Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy outline in their ethno-historical work on lesbian bars in Buffalo, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* (1993), bars were central to finding lovers and to building a "lesbian-consciousness." They write, "Bars were the only possible place for working-class lesbians to congregate outside of private homes. They were generally unwelcome in most social settings. Open spaces like parks or beaches, commonly used by gay men, were too exposed for women to express interest in other women without constant male surveillance and harassment" (30). These bars, either with a "woman-only" section or occupied by both men and women, were one of the only meeting-places for queer women in urban spaces. Beginning in the 1990s, however, some queer scholars noted both the empowerment and community found within these bars while also highlighting the commercialization, substance use, and abuse that often went hand-in-hand with this existence (Duder 2010; Faderman 1991). This is the backdrop for Alice and Harriet's long-term relationship.

In both their intimate and sexual encounters in the thirty years of living together, Harriet would often portray herself as the victim and Alice as the aggressor; for instance, Harriet would often say to Alice, "You took advantage. I'd been jilted" (Rule 1981, 98). Rule, in a stereotypical and darker misrepresentation, could perhaps here be framing Alice and Harriet's relationship as the dynamic of a femme pleasure-receiver and a cold stone butch provider. In carrying on this stereotypical perspective, Harriet would often associate Alice's behaviour and sexual desires with male, heterosexual desire. With almost "no protest" (Rule 1981, 98) to Alice's sexual advances, Harriet would simply state, "You're as bad as a boy, Al, you really are" (Rule 1981, 98). This seeming dysfunction, however, was not solely a consensual and teasing relationality. It was often violent as, after the first ten years of their relationship, Harriet would refuse to go to bed with Alice, especially when Alice would come home drunk from the beer parlor. Alice would not even keep alcohol in their house so that Alice could use "drink as an excuse to escape Harriet" (Rule 1981, 103). In this sense, Alice laments how she and Harriet had a toxic and complex relationship in that Harriet suffered from depression and internalized lesbophobia while Alice was aggressive and perhaps violent towards Harriet. For example, Rule writes: "Never in the last twenty years had Alice and Harriet so much as touched, though they slept in the same bed," and Alice would come home sometimes "drunk and mean, sometimes threatening rape, sometimes in a jeering moral rage" (Rule 1981, 98). This toxic relationship and the brutal way in which Harriet died is the context in which Harriet's ghost emerges.

Before the lesbian-feminists moved in, Harriet would often haunt Alice in the same state in which she died —"blood-filled" and lying in Alice's bathtub (Rule 1981, 100). However, once the lesbian-feminists occupy the ground-floor, Harriet begins to haunt Alice in her dreams. These dreams were less visibly horrific than the "blood-filled" ones but they still managed to fill Alice with a sense of dread because Harriet would emerge more as a holy figure than a tragic one. Rule writes, "That night Harriet came to [Alice] in a dream, not blood-filled as all the others had been but full of light. 'I can still forgive you,' she said. 'For what?' Alice cried, waking. 'What did I ever do but love you, tell me that!'" (Rule 1981,100). Similarly, in three different instances in the story, Alice, in her own internal ruminations, followed the murmuring of Harriet's name with the statement, "Rest her goddamned soul," which is perhaps both a blessing and a curse of Harriet's actions while she was alive and her behaviours as a ghost (Rule 1981, 95). The changing, spectral states of Harriet's ghosts, and the way in which Alice experiences both hatred and deep love for Harriet thirty years on, demonstrates the complexity and multi-layered nature of their enduring relationship. While there was external homophobia, internal shame, and sometimes relational violence, they still lived with each other for many years and found some form of connection or relationality within one another's bodies and desires that they could not find, nor wanted to find, with men or within a heteronormative context. Nevertheless, as demonstrated above, Harriet is seen as the unresolved matter of Alice's life. This is evident when Harriet appears to Alice as almost an angelic figure and states that she can still provide forgiveness or redemption for Alice, as if Alice has committed injustices or perhaps "perversions" in loving women and in loving Harriet (Rule 100). In this sense, Harriet is haunting Alice until she is meaningfully recognized.

Here, I am reading Harriet's ghost through the theories of Avery Gordon's text *Ghostly Matters*. In this text, Gordon writes how ghosts from the past will appear almost as a symptom of a social haunting because something, usually an unresolved historical trauma, is calling out to be heard, resolved, or recognized (2008, 15). Similarly, I theorize Harriet's ghost's appearance as a calling out to be heard or addressed by Alice. As Alice says, "The trouble with ghosts […] is that they're only good for replays. You can't break any new ground" (Rule 1981, 100). Here, Rule invokes the very hauntological or apparitional history that many lesbian discourses theorize from, such as Castle's ghostly lesbian. Harriet's ghost appears because of a complexity of love, haunting, and loss, and because of Alice's inability to confront her grief for her secret lover. In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed explains how "when lesbian grief is not recognized, because lesbian relationships are not recognized, then you become nonrelatives. You become unrelated; you become not. You are alone in your grief. You are left waiting" (2017, 219). If we apply this idea to Rule's story, we can infer that the haunting of Alice by Harriet occurs in part because their relationship is unrecognized by heterosexist society but also because the complexity and messiness of their relationship is unresolved and perhaps unseen by younger, queer generations. There is a kind of forever waiting or longing when a loss, specifically a queer loss, is unrecognized.

As I will demonstrate below through the concept of a backward haunting, Rule perhaps invokes the ghost of Harriet to express both Alice's loss and a loss of intergenerational recognition between the bar lesbians and the lesbian-feminists in the house. This becomes evident when Harriet no longer haunts Alice once the lesbian-feminists take over the main floor. Once Alice moves from the ground floor to the attic, Alice wonders if Harriet is now haunting the newly arrived lesbian-feminists. This is where Rule introduces her readers to the powerful divide between Alice and Harriet as bar lesbians and the lesbian-feminists of a younger generation. Here, the attic interrupts Harriet's haunting, or perhaps Harriet's need to be addressed, as the lesbian-feminists move in and begin to take over. Rule explains how this generational shift impacts Alice:

To be alone in the attic was a luxury Alice could hardly believe. It had been her resigned expectation that Harriet, whose soul had obviously not been at rest, would move up the stairs with her. She had not. If she

haunted the tenants as she had haunted Alice, they didn't say so. The first time Trudy and Jill took a bath together probably exorcised the ghost from that room, Harriet obviously wouldn't have any more vegetarian fare in the dining room than Alice did. And for what probably went on in the various beds, one night of that could finally have sent Harriet to hell where she belonged. (Rule 1981, 99-100)

This is where the haunting begins to shift from Harriet's ghost towards the living spectre of Alice in the attic of the house. As framed by Alice above, the lesbian-feminists come to represent everything that Harriet, and perhaps Alice herself, internally resented or attempted to actively resist in their lives, that is, a seemingly "out and proud" lifestyle of lesbianism. Here, Harriet's own shame about her sexuality and desires emerges as Alice imagines the exorcise or final death of Harriet's ghost at the sight of lesbian sex, the stereotype of the vegan lesbian-feminists or the unashamed way in which these lesbians loved and desired each other in a collective living space. Thus, Harriet's ghost is no longer the most pressing haunting in the story. As Alice moves to the attic and the ghosts are further complicated, Rule's story draws our attention to a need, ongoing today nearly fifty years after Rule's story was published, to attempt negotiations of the tension between generations of lesbians rather than working to erase valuable pasts, no matter how complicated or tense they may seem.

Alice makes her feelings on the lesbian-feminists and the women's liberation movement clearly known when she first introduces them: "Alice hadn't joined women's liberation," Rule writes, "she had only rented it the main floor of her house" (1981, 95). Although an economic choice, Alice is still displaced by this younger generation of lesbian-feminists. Alice continues to define these women as such: "Bett, the giant postie; Trudy and Jill, who worked at the women's garage without a grease mark under their fingernails; Angel, who was unemployed; young, all of them, incredibly young, killing her with kindness" (Rule 1981, 95). In the first paragraph of her short story, Rule situates Alice as a half-living, half-dead character as the lesbian-feminists take over and begin to "kill her," albeit with kindness. This kindness will eventually develop, at least in the eyes of Alice, as a kind of pity and misplaced sympathy. However, Alice begins her haunting of the lesbian-feminists simply through her persistent presence and perhaps her inability to die. Alice's occupation of the attic could be seen as synonym for the closet; however, instead of the colonial Western literary tradition of the mad woman in the attic, it is the bar butch firmly in the closet. Alice is self-aware of her "aging" position, as she conceives of herself as "one of the ones too mean to die" (Rule 1981, 95). In this sense, Alice is well aware of her presence being a "nuisance" for the lesbian-feminists. Furthermore, she also knows that she, as a lesbian of a "different time," does not belong in the ground floor of the women's liberation. When Bett, the one lesbian-feminist who is often kind to and understanding of Alice, asks Alice if she minds being moved to the attic of the house, Alice responds, "Mind? Living on top of it is a lot better than living in the middle of it ever was. I don't think I was meant for the ground floor" (Rule 1981, 96). Rule configures Alice's haunting, or Alice's own queer manifestation of the mad woman in the attic, through this tension between the ground floor of the lesbian-feminists and the attic of the lesbian bar elders. This tension is reflected in the context in which Rule is writing. For example, in *The House That Jill Built* (1995), Canadian historian Becki L. Ross contextualizes the organization of 1970s LOOT (The Lesbian Organization of Toronto) within past lesbian generations in Canada. She writes, "In the 1970s, […] new constituencies of lesbian feminists […] scorned practices of 'passing' in straight society, sustaining closeted lesbian relationship in suburbia, and relying on what they felt was seedy, 'apolitical,' and 'regressive' butch/femme bar life" (1995, 15). In this sense, Alice's haunting, filled with spectres of the past bar life, appears as an obstacle to the lesbian-feminists' liberation from both heterosexism and the negative stereotypes of bar culture.

At this point in the short story, Alice's haunting of the lesbian-feminists from the attic is somewhat counteracted by the third haunting in the story or, as I argue, the backward haunting committed by the lesbian-feminists against Alice. Although I will return to Alice's haunting near the end of this article, I introduce

the backwards haunting here in order to demonstrate how Rule, in portraying both Alice's haunting of the lesbian-feminists and the lesbian-feminists haunting of Alice, may be offering a wider re-centring of lesbian generational and communal complexities. As I will argue, perhaps Alice's living haunting of the lesbian-feminists is also a symptom of a larger haunting of the unresolved or perhaps unheard complex narratives and real lived experiences of past lesbian generations, specifically ones that may not fit into a modern or contemporary understanding of queerness or lesbianism. While Alice sees the lesbian-feminists as the younger generation encroaching on her space, the lesbian-feminists begin to see Alice as less of an active spectre and more as a pitiful, naïve subject of the past. This attitude of the lesbian-feminists is reflected within the historical context of Rule's writing as well. For example, Lillian Faderman, in her expansive collected anthology of lesbian literature *Chloe Plus Olivia* (1994), defines the lesbian-feminists of the 1970s and early 1980s as the "lesbians of earlier generations" and defines the bar lesbians of the 1940s and 50s as the lesbian-feminists' "predecessors" (550). In an introduction to a 1994 edition Rule's "In the Attic of the House," Faderman outlines the context of these lesbian generational erasures or apathies in which Rule is writing. She writes that

> lesbians of earlier generations considered their predecessors as unevolved products of a dark age […] They were critical of lesbian lives that had been played out in gay bars, where evils such as alcoholism had been encouraged, or in hiding, which had made lesbians fearful and full of self-loathing. Lesbian feminists saw the earlier lesbian society as having been a product of male chauvinism and homophobia, and they were determined to change it. (Faderman 1994, 550)

Therefore, in some predominantly white lesbian-feminist movements of the 1970s, the bar butch/femme figure seemed to embody the shame, the negative, and the closetedness while the lesbian-feminist championed the positive and the proudly out. This divide thus created a vacuum of dispossession and refusal between these lesbian communities wherein lesbian-feminists refuse or rewrite the past of working-class, lesbian bar existences. Drawing on Faderman's context then, Alice represents both the "regressive butch/femme bar life" (Ross 1995,15) and "evils" of a lesbian "dark age" (Faderman 1994, 550) that the lesbian-feminists wish to change or re-define in order to conceive of a more "positive" or feminist appropriate historical heritage within lesbian communities. This attempt to redefine the historical experiences of bar lesbians is demonstrated in a heated discussion between Alice and Angel, another of the lesbian-feminists. After inquiring about Alice's relationship with Harriet, Angel states, "We're looking for role models […] anybody who lived with anybody for thirty years…." (Rule 1981, 99). Alice, however, interrupts Angel by saying, "Thirty years is longer than reality, you know that? A lifetime guarantee on a watch is only twenty. Nothing should last longer than that. Harriet should have killed herself ten years earlier, rest her goddamned soul. I always told her she'd get to hell long before I did" (Rule 1981, 99). While Alice defiantly resists Angel's attempt to romanticize her relationship with Harriet, this piece of dialogue nevertheless signifies the lesbian-feminists' attempt to redefine Alice's own history so that they, as Angel states, may have inactive—even dead—role models to think of and look back on fondly. Throughout the short story, the lesbian-feminists are attempting to mold Alice into an acceptable and simple identity that they can claim for their own narratives for lesbian futures. Furthermore, the lesbian-feminists do not wish to sit or live with the tension that is Alice's embodiment of queerness and her identity as lesbian. Driven by a kind of simplification, the lesbian-feminists turn backward only to haunt Alice, to resolve her complexity, and then turn away towards the future without connection or grounding within the past. This backward effect is explored by Heather Love in *Feeling Backwards.* She writes that "contemporary queers," or, for this paper, lesbian-feminists, find themselves "in the odd situation of 'looking forward' while [they] are feeling backward" (Love 2017, 27). Specifically, lesbian-feminists thought that "social negativity" clung "to those who lived before the common era of gay liberation—the abject multitude against whose experience [they] define [their] own liberation" (10). With their vision of a seemingly liberatory women-orientated future, lesbian-feminists find themselves looking forward while they are still feeling the effects of, what they as-

sume as, "negative stereotypes" of pre-gay liberation queer culture (Ross 1995,15).

In applying Love's theories to Rule's story, the lesbian-feminists often criticize and judge Alice for what they deem the "social negativities" attached to Alice's lesbian and queer experiences. First, they understand Alice to be too "male-identified." In reflecting on the cleanliness of Alice's attic, Bett says, "Trudy says you're so male-identified that you can't take care of yourself" (Rule 1981, 103). However, in simplifying Alice's gender expression as too "male-identified," the lesbian-feminists erase both the butch experience and the working-class experience that was common-place in bar culture. They erase Alice's own connections with men, both as a butch woman and as a working-class woman. For example, Alice narrates how she "knew lots of men, was more comfortable with them than with women at the beer parlor or in the employees' lounge at Safeway, where she worked. As a group, she needed them far more than she needed women" (Rule 1981, 96). For the lesbian-feminists, gender fluidity and association with men meant male-identification and not a trans or non-binary or butch understanding of gender, sexuality, and desire. In common lesbian-feminist practice, femme expression was seen as appeasing the heterosexual male gaze while butch appearance was seen as being too male-identified and thus misogynistic. In *Female Masculinity* (2018), queer theorist Jack Halberstam also outlines this tension between bar butches with the lesbian-feminist dykes of the 1970s and beyond. Halberstam writes how "some women rejected butch-femme and its forms of sexual role playing as a gross mimicry of heterosexuality" (121). In this rejection, however, lesbian-feminists "pathologiz[ed] the only visible signifier of queer dyke desire," and thus "further erased an elaborate and carefully scripted language of desire that butch and femme dykes had produced in response to dominant culture's attempts to wipe them out" (Halberstam 2018, 121). Therefore, the lesbian-feminists, in labelling Alice as "male-identified," limit Alice's mobile "lesbian masculinity" to the idea of a white male body (Halberstam 1998, 15); they do not attempt to live with gender divergence or undoing of gender roles within the subversive and sometimes liberating space of the bar. Furthermore, they often associate Alice's destructive behaviour with her association with the bar. Alice's frequent drinking and smoking is most likely a coping mechanism to deal with the loss of Harriet; however, the lesbian-feminists often connect her drinking with her history and time spent in the bar. When Alice asks why they sit at home on a Saturday night, Trudy responds, "We don't drink; the bars aren't our scene" (Rule 1981, 96). As this divide between bar-going and non-bar-going lesbians demonstrates, the lesbian-feminists often present as morally superior or more progressive compared to Alice. This backward feeling is made most evident in the lesbian-feminists' approach to sexuality and their understanding of what it means to be an "out" and politically active lesbian.

In the text, Alice laments how the lesbian-feminists encourage her to be "open" with her body or at least what they deem to be "open" about sexuality and desire. For example, Rule writes of Trudy as "full of sudden sympathy and instruction about coming to terms with your own body, as if she were about to invent sex" (1981, 97). For Alice, there is an implication here in Trudy's sympathetic and condescending tone that Alice's understanding of her own desires and her embodiment of her sexuality, especially in her relationship with Harriet, was somehow "wrong" or not liberated enough. This attitude carries forward when the lesbian-feminists encourage Alice to officially "come out" because they believe that, in coming out, Alice can finally move on from her negative and ghostly histories. At their encouragement, Alice responds, "Come out? […] Of where? This is my house after all. You're just renting the main floor. Come out? To whom? Everyone I know is dead" (Rule 1981, 97). Once again, in the eyes of the lesbian-feminists, Alice is positioned as the spectre, or as the dying lesbian, who is too tragic to fully be who she is, to come out, and to live "authentically" because everyone she knows in now dead and therefore incapable of understanding Alice truly and wholly. At the time Rule was writing this short story, "coming out" was an essential step towards living an authentic, lesbian-feminist life. As Becki L. Ross explains, "Sex wasn't something to be sequestered in bar culture and private, closeted relationships; it became an integral feature of [lesbian-feminist] political identity" (1995, 114). The closet was no proverbial space for an out and proud lesbian-femin-

ist and, in order to actualize this out vision of separatism and women-identity, lesbian feminists needed to sever the connection or association of modern, public, and out lesbians with the past stereotypes of the bar-going femme or butch lesbian. Essentially, in the perspective of the lesbian-feminists, coming out is the only way Alice can fully be herself. Their idea of "coming out," however, does not attempt to understand the complexities between visibilities and invisibilities in certain historical lesbian communities, nor the original ways in which bar lesbians explored their desires and cemented communal ties. Take, for example, Alice's resistance to the lesbian-feminists' attempt to modify her love story with Harriet. When the lesbian-feminists press Alice once again to "come out" by asking Alice if she was "in love with Harriet," Alice responds, "In love? […] Christ! I lived with her for thirty years" (Rule 1981, 98). For Alice, choosing between staying closeted or coming out was both an impossibility and an inconceivability; there was essentially no such thing as "coming out." Although they never "came out" as a gay couple, what could be more "visible" than living with only one woman, unmarried, for more than thirty years? As the lesbian-feminists attempt to change Alice's past while Alice's resentment of the lesbian-feminists grows, Alice's inability to "fully come out" and to shake off those supposed negative stereotypes of the past almost leads to the death of both Alice and the lesbian-feminists. This is the moment in the story where Alice's living haunting of the lesbian-feminists and the backward haunting collide.

This near-death experience happens when, after a particularly unsettling haunting of Harriet in her dreams, Alice accidentally sets fire to the attic from a lit cigarette. The lesbian-feminists, concerned for both their own safety and for Alice's, insist that Alice address the haunting of Harriet by speaking of her and, essentially, "coming out" to them. In other words, if Alice recognizes Harriet's ghosts and her own spectres of the bar culture, Alice's haunting of the lesbian-feminists will also come to an end. For example, Jill, the garage worker, says to Alice, "Al, if we can't talk about [Harriet], we're all going to have move out […] because we don't want to be burned to death in our sleep" (Rule 1981, 103). To this plea, Alice responds, "Move out? […] This is my house. I'm the landlady. You're the tenants" (Rule 1981, 103). Here, Alice attempts to re-centre her position as the landlady, not as the mad dyke in the attic, even as the power shifts from the older generation towards the younger generation. Alice continues to state, "You can't make conditions for me in my own house" (Rule 1981, 103). Similar to Harriet's ghost, Alice appears here as a tragic figure too haunted by the past to move on and "come out" or to even die. However, Alice's haunting may be more complex than that. While Alice's haunting represents Alice's own resentments of the lesbian-feminists, it also represents the larger, looming absent presence of bar lesbians that is calling out for an authentic recognition from the lesbian-feminists.

For example, in her article "Feminism and its Ghosts," Victoria Hersford writes, "To have a haunted relationship to the past is precisely to engage with what has been resisted, feared, or actively forgotten about that past" (Hersford 2005, 234). In this sense, in their haunted relationship with Alice and the bar culture, the lesbian-feminists are perhaps "actively forgetting" or attempting to change that haunted past by asking Alice to "come out" or to recognize her relationship with Harriet through their own contemporary frameworks. In doing this erasure, the lesbian-feminists are not allowing for or making space for the (im)possible ways in which Alice and Harriet loved each other or held love for each other. In the text, Alice reminds the lesbian-feminists that they did not truly know her relationship with Harriet, or even Harriet for that matter. Although macabre in its message, Alice screams to the lesbian-feminists, "What do you know about it? What could you know? Harriet, rest her goddamned soul, lived in mortal sin with me. She killed herself for me. It's not to pity! Get out" (Rule 1981, 105). While recognizing the often silent and silenced pain of Harriet within this story, Rule, in this excerpt, also reminds her reader that there was love between Harriet and Alice, even if it was dysfunctional. This is something that the lesbian-feminists, in their backward haunting of Alice, often forget about Alice as a person and also as a queer elder. In this sense, Alice's living haunting from the attic appears in order to readdress this one-dimensional history of lesbian bar elders and ancestors held by the younger lesbian generations.

In my reading, Rule positions Alice as a ghost—or as the mad woman in the attic—because she is drawing our attention to a larger, unrecognized history of the bar lesbians and the dynamic and original ways in which they sought desire and community. In his text *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, queer theorist Jack Halberstam defines this queer, temporal relationality as a way of looking "to the way older generations of [queer] people lived and survived in the realms of the inauthentic" (Halberstam 2018, 82). Drawing on Halberstam here, perhaps Rule's short story is attempting to demonstrate the judgement and privilege of the younger generations while also expressing the inauthentic and messy ways in which past lesbian generations existed. In one final example from the text, Rule briefly transforms Alice from the tragic spectre, haunted by an even more tragic dead lover, towards an image of a radical lesbian elder. When one of the lesbian-feminists, Jill, asks Alice about her short haircut, another lesbian-feminist, Trudy, chimes in and reflects on Alice's haircut as "sort of male chauvinist […] as if you wanted to come on very heavy" (Rule 1981, 97). To this, Alice responds sardonically, "I don't come on […] I broke the switch" (Rule 1981, 97). Similar to the way power shifted when the lesbian-feminists took over the ground floor, Alice has now, for a brief moment, shifted the power in her favour. In this excerpt, Rule demonstrates to her readers the impact that bar lesbians had on the heteronormative landscape – they redefined the rules. Similar to the way Alice breaks the light-switch, bar lesbians broke through boundaries of societal etiquette, gender roles, and sexual desires. Rule, while using the ghostly trope of the apparitional lesbian, also manages to subvert the temporal and generational power dynamics of the traditional haunting. For example, as I have demonstrated above, we see three simultaneous hauntings in Rule's story. Alice is haunted by the apparition of her dead lover Harriet; Alice herself becomes the ghost in the attic; and, finally, Alice is haunted by the presence of the younger lesbian-feminists on the main floor of the house who begin to consume and rewrite Alice's queer past. However, in playing with the role of the ghost, Rule questions who is truly haunting whom and, also, who holds the power between these lesbian generations. Therefore, Rule, in part, is asking her readers to not simply erase the lives of the bar lesbians or categorize them as tragic existences in a homophobic world but to hold temporal spaces and intimacies for their complex experiences. These complex experiences included internalized homophobia and shame but it also included expressions of shared sexuality, desire, and companionship. Love defines this more intimate, temporal relationship as "living with" injury and not "fixing it" (Love 2017, 43). I argue, then, that Rule attempts to ponder this "living with" within her short story. For example, the story asks, what does it mean to sit with this tension between lesbian generations instead of turning away, absolving, or changing the narrative for more positive purposes?

Rule's short story does not simply and unequivocally support bar lesbians while reducing lesbian-feminists to a harassing stereotype. Instead, Rule's story reminds her readers that bar lesbians were and are complex people who searched for lesbian love, community, and kin. In understanding these experiences of bar lesbians, younger queer communities can begin to recognize and grapple with that enduring experience of erasure that lesbian, queer, trans, and non-binary communities know all too well. We may begin to think more actively about how we can, as Love states, allow "ourselves to be haunted" and to identify with the damages and shames of the past and to not turn away from them (Love 2017, 43). We must remember, however, that this "not-turning-away" (Love 2017, 19) does not necessarily mean an acceptance or wholehearted embrace of past queer dynamics and exclusions as we continue to unlearn and decenter the racism(s) and classism(s) of past and present white queer communities. As Alice and Harriet demonstrate, the experiences—both good and bad—of the 1950s bar lesbians can still mirror the lesbian experiences and existences of today. Additionally, the pride of the lesbian-feminists, as well as the damage provided by lesbian-feminist movements towards bar cultures, are also a part of our tense queer existence.

In a letter to Rick Bébout describing her experience in the 1950s and '60s, Rule writes that there were lesbians "who created their own social world with other lesbians, but most of us accepted our isolation, disdained a socially erotic world as you say you first did, and the bar scene, which I didn't know existed,

would have repelled me" (Rule 566-7). Although Rule's Alice is a bar lesbian, Rule herself did not associate —perhaps as middle-class university-goer—with the bar; however, instead of disassociating Rule from her main character, this letter further demonstrates the connection that multi-generational lesbians can find within the tension and complexities of lesbian history. The hauntings of Alice and the remnants of Rule as author haunting this short story provide a possible framework to begin this work of allowing ourselves to be haunted by our pasts and to begin to build a relationship that is founded within this tension wherein we can listen, challenge, and further complicate yet not simply erase. This story, much like a social haunting, is calling out for redress: an intimate kind of redress and recognition of complex lesbian or queer ways of life and being in the past, present, and possible futures.

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