

## Report EAAS Transatlantic Grant 2023

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American author Shirley Jackson is currently enjoying a critical and popular revival, yet academic work on Jackson tends to cover the same few areas, such as domesticity in post-war America or 1950s gender roles. My research approaches Jackson's work in critically underexplored or completely neglected ways, as I am the only known Jackson scholar looking at her formative years and how historical interwar American contexts shaped new conceptions of women's bodies and minds. I argue that Jackson pushed back against early Twentieth-Century concerns regarding both physical and communal bodies, and also that she was adjacent to yet kept external to various intellectual community bodies in her adult years. Because of the EAAS Transatlantic Grant, I was able to travel from Dublin, Ireland to visit archives at Syracuse University and the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston to conduct completely novel research into key elements of Jackson's early years. I was also able to travel to Smith College to view a rare book.

One essential part of my research concerns Jackson's education, particularly her years at Syracuse University. The Syracuse archives contain some of Jackson's earliest publications in university periodicals including *Spectre*, the magazine that Jackson edited with her future husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman. I have been able to order copies of a couple of pages from *Spectre* in the past, but the copying cost is prohibitive and does not allow access to the full

issues, which are over fifty pages each. I was able to view all of the issues of *Spectre*, which not only include Jackson's editorial essays and early stories, some unpublished elsewhere, but also insight into her intellectual community at Syracuse and after. Additionally, I was delighted to find correspondence with Syracuse professors from both Jackson and Hyman, some of which concerned Jackson's legacy, like the work of Robert S. Phillips. In 1966, Phillips compiled an early chronology of Jackson's life and work, as well as a bibliography of biographies and criticism, and he corresponded with both Jackson and Hyman. The papers of Granville Hicks were also incredibly useful, not only because of his correspondence with Hyman but also because his papers also gave me access to first-hand experiences of the life of a public intellectual in McCarthy-era America. It was touching to find such documents as his handwritten notes, with figures, regarding the financial cost of responding to a subpoena from the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Such surprising insights provide depth to my exploration of the life of the intellectual in postwar America.

The most essential records for my research turned out to be those of Jackson's teacher and mentor Leonard Brown, also housed at Syracuse. Though I knew these papers would be important, I underestimated the impact they would have. Brown's lessons shaped Jackson's concept of fiction and had a huge influence on Hyman, whose work was central to the critical landscape until the late 1960s and is central to my thesis. Brown never published any of his critical ideas, so accessing the archives is the only way to see his work. His papers include class notes, drafts of articles and books never finished, and miscellaneous scribbles, all of which have provided the key to both Jackson's and Hyman's views on criticism, literature, and the world. I have now included many of Brown's ideas in both the introduction and multiple chapters of my thesis, and they provide crucial, previously missing support for my arguments.

Finally, I was also able to view the partially indexed archives of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, which gave me access to early versions of Jackson's stories that were eventually published in that periodical. The files also included comments from the publisher and early drafts of the publisher's introductions to Jackson's stories that changed my view of Jackson's relationship with the magazine. This grant made in-depth examination of these otherwise inaccessible archives possible.

This grant also helped cover some of the costs for two weeks of research at the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston. A central element of my research into Jackson's formative years is the rise of the mind-healing religion Christian Science, which Eddy founded in the late Nineteenth Century. Jackson's grandmother Evangeline was a Christian Scientist, and this belief system had a huge impact on Jackson's work. However, this influence has not yet been critically explored. I read Christian Science elements throughout Jackson's work and believe that this connection should be at the centre of Jackson studies. In March 2020 I was awarded a Mary Baker Eddy Fellowship to research this connection at the Mary Baker Eddy Library, a fellowship that was put on hold during the Covid pandemic. Though the funding that came with this fellowship is generous, it barely covered half of my costs for travel, incidentals, and accommodation. This travel grant covered the rest of my stay and made some very important research possible.

While at the Eddy Library, I was not only able to confirm Jackson's grandmother's official membership in the church, I gathered much-needed information about the history of the church in Jackson's hometown of San Francisco, information that is sorely lacking in histories of the religion (which tend to focus more on Boston). I was surprised to learn that Jackson's grandmother was taught by a leading figure in the establishment of Christian Science, a former student of founder Mary Baker Eddy named Frank W. Gale. I was able to

view Gale's correspondence with Eddy, as well as the correspondence of other founding members of the church in San Francisco, many of whom also studied directly with Eddy. Gale was also responsible for responding to unfair depictions of the church in California mainstream media, and I was able to access his articles, many of which provided useful information about the status of women in the church. Though some records are missing, I had access to the branch records for the relevant branches where Jackson's grandmother lived and was able to put together a complete picture of the explosion of Christian Science in the San Francisco area during Jackson's youth. Additionally, I found many articles from Christian Science publications that provided essential information for my argument that this religion influenced Jackson's perception of bodies and minds.

I also travelled to the Smith College Library to access an extremely rare book on diet culture in the interwar period, which gave me deeper insight into and new knowledge of an important topic in my discussion of early Twentieth Century perceptions of women's bodies. This travel grant allowed me to fill in so many gaps in my thesis regarding Jackson's formative years, and I was able to view information that I did not even imagine existed. It gave me further insight into the intellectual communities to which Jackson belonged. It also allowed me to build relationships with people in these libraries and archives, which will serve me into my postdoctoral work and beyond.