

Uncanny Houses, Sinister Homes

-the Architecture of Feminine Anxiety
in Gothic Literature-

不気味な家・怪奇な住居
—ゴシック文学における女性の不安の表象—

A Dissertation Presented to the Division of Comparative Culture,
the Graduate School of International Christian University,
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

国際基督教大学 大学院



April 15, 2014

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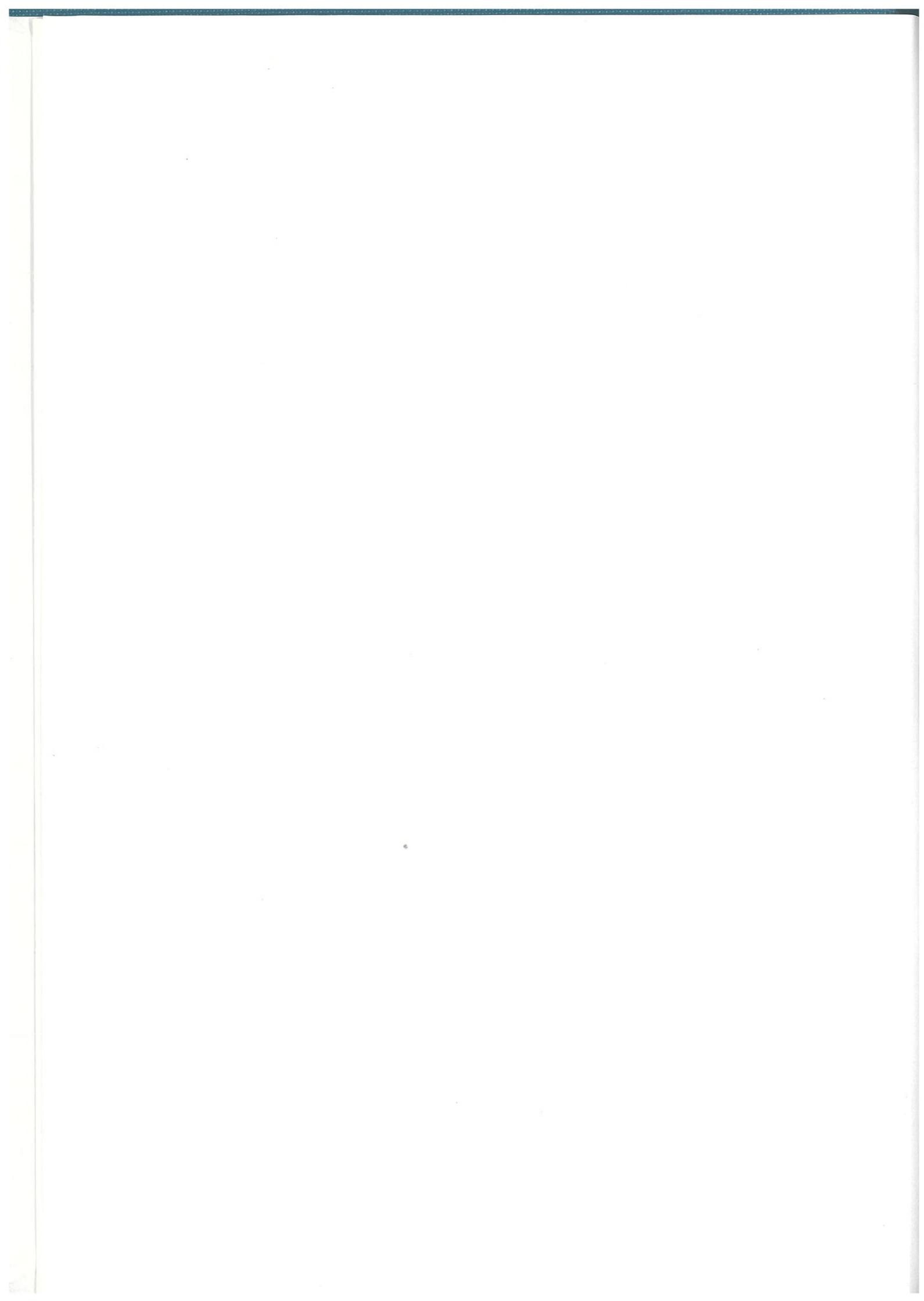
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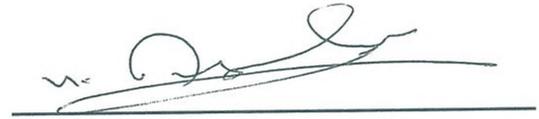


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This dissertation is first and foremost about the place called “home” and its representative building, the house. It is perhaps ironic that I have written the bulk of it more than 7,000 miles from my own birthplace and the house I grew up in, which is located on the East Coast of the United States. The distance between myself and my home has enabled me to reflect more deeply upon my own identity. It has also impelled me to consider the profound contributions of authors who remain important representatives of English language literature.

In its current form, my doctoral thesis is both a testament to my love of literature and dedication to writing, and to the incredible support I have received over the years from my advisor, other professors and teachers, colleagues, friends, and most of all, my family. For that reason, I’d like to dedicate this dissertation to my family, especially my parents and my younger sister, because they are my home. Their love and encouragement has helped me through this incredibly difficult scholarly endeavor, and has inspired me to work harder than I ever thought possible. Writing is a creative labor to be taken up alone and struggled with alone, but it can never be completed without a good support system, and my family is the best support system I could ask for.

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Notes on Citations, Abbreviations and Special Resources for Emily Dickinson's Works

The chapters with information and criticism concerning the works of Emily Dickinson follow the accepted citation format for Dickinson scholarship. Therefore, numeration of the poems is according to the edition edited by R. W. Franklin, with each citation beginning in F, followed by the number of the poem. For example, the poem "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—" is numbered 591 by Franklin, so it is cited as (F591) in this dissertation.

The numeration of her letters uses the convention of citing the volume number first—there are three volumes of letters in print extant, and so they are, respectively, LI, LII, and LIII. The letters were put into a semblance of chronological order by Thomas H. Johnson, so letter number follows volume number. Finally, the page number on which the letter may be found is cited last. For example, a letter from in the second volume, number 591 and found on page 634 would be cited as LII, 591, p. 634.

The *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* (cited as EDL) will also be an important point of reference because it goes a step beyond the paper Concordance. It is a database-dictionary of over 9000 words and variants found in the collected poems; it uses the poems, the Webster dictionary published in 1844 (which Dickinson read as diligently as the Bible), as well as the Oxford English Dictionary and other resources to create its entries. It is viewable for both registered and unregistered users (registered users can view the definitions, variants, and associated poem lines/numbers in both Franklin 1998 edition and Johnson 1955 edition numerations). It is

maintained by Cynthia Hallen of Brigham Young University. For more information see:

<http://edl.byu.edu/>

Notes on Translations throughout the Dissertation

Because this dissertation primarily centers on works in English and American fiction and poetry, the primary language of sources used is English. However, when appropriate, translations of critical studies and theory are also used. Unless otherwise noted in the bibliography, all translations from French and Japanese into English are my own. Texts translated by myself will be evident as both the original and the translated text will be offered alongside each other, as is called for in MLA formatting.

Titles and bibliographic material for translated sources will be transliterated into Roman characters if sourced from a Japanese text. Further, there will be an English translation of the article or book title in brackets directly following said title. These translations are also my own.

要旨

文学作品における空間の概念は、我々が「家」と呼ぶ場の特種な性質を認め、それを読者に向けて提示する作家たちによって、中心的主題として用いられている。そうした作家たちは、家や日用の家具の機能を、ひいてはそれらの中で暮らす我々の生そのものを再考するよう読者に促す。物語や詩の中では、肉体を備えた存在のための物質的な建築様式を乗り越えて、人間の住居に関して想像上の布置からなる精神的な建築様式を作り出すことが可能になり、その結果、建物、家屋、アパートメント、部屋、扉、窓、そして戸口でさえも物質的制約から解放されて自由に配置することが許されるようになる。

文学において家は極めて多くのジャンルで重要な役割を与えられるが、ゴシック作品にとってはとりわけ重要な存在となる。ゴシック作品は怪奇現象の生起する中心地として空間を利用するのであり、従って、ゴシック小説における家は、不気味な事象の現場として働くか、不気味な者たちの住まう場として機能する。そこでは、ありふれた物に新しい意味が付与され、そうした場としての家の中で、部屋は、登場人物たちが陰惨な最期または喜ばしい結末を迎えるための夢と悪夢の宝庫へと変貌していく。さらに、ゴシック的空間は家自体に限定されるものではなく、家を取り巻く領域をも内包している。森や人里離れた土地は、家に対置され、人間に馴致されていない無人の空間の表現となり、他方で村や都市は住居の集合として位置づけられる。工業

化および都市化の時代に書かれたゴシック物語においては、都市空間は馴染み深いものと馴染みの無いものが互いに衝突する結節点として用いられている。これらの空間は、ゴシック的想像力によって野蛮でグロテスクなものに変容され、犯罪や抑圧、罪そして死の温床としてその姿を顕わにされることになる。

ゴシックというジャンルの研究には、精神分析理論や文学理論、芸術理論に建築理論、さらには文化人類学や社会学の理論に至るまで、多種多様な視点を活用することが求められる。それゆえ、本論考も広範な歴史的、古典的、理論的な手法を援用している。そうして、それらの基盤の上に、テキスト上の根拠と精読の結果を総合して、本論で分析される英米文学の著者のそれぞれにとって、家の表象が数多の意味を備えていることを実証する。こうした内部（精神の空間）と外部（身体が住まう空間）の二分法を示唆するものの中でもっとも重要であり、そしてその二分法を馴染み深いと同時に恐ろしいものとして提示するのが、“the uncanny”（不気味なもの）として知られる概念である。

ゴシック文学における不気味な家の概念を考察するためには、批評理論およびテキストの精読が不可欠である。そこで本論では、第一に、「ゴシック」という用語の定義が与えられ、そのジェンダー的、空間的、文化的な諸問題との関係が明確にされる。続いて第二に、「不気味なもの」の概念とそのゴシックへの関係が素描される。不気味なものは何であれ必然的に馴染み深いものと馴染みの無いものの双方を必要とすることから、その両者への考察が不可欠となる。そのために、特にジョン・ラスキンの理論、中でもとりわけその男女の分離領域説と建築理論の著作の影響、そしてジグムント・フロイトの、不吉で曖昧なもの全般についての独創的な著作である„Das

Unheimliche“（「不気味なもの」）（1919年）に着目しながら論じていく。近代を経てポストモダン期へと向かう中で、後代の理論家たちによってこの不気味なもの定義に関する議論が積み重ねられていったことを踏まえ、そうして付加された理論にも同様に言及し、またそうした見解の文脈についても説明する。

理論的な諸概念と、作品の背景をなす社会文化的な文脈という分析装置を通じて、家の表象をめぐる個々のゴシック文学の成果を読解する根拠が与えられる。アン・ラドクリフの *Mysteries of Udolpho*（『ユードルフォの謎』）は、表題となっているユードルフォ城の描写を通じて、まだ形成途上にあるゴシック小説における家の初期の一例を示す。その歪んで、不吉で、荒れ果てた姿は、エミリー・ブロンテの *Wuthering Heights*（『嵐が丘』）やシャーロット・ブロンテの *Jane Eyre*（『ジェイン・エア』）といった小説において典型的に示されるような、ネオ・ゴシック様式のマナー・ハウスの先駆ともなっている。また、これらの物語は、前述のラスキンの男女の分離領域と、女性が経済的自由や創造的自由を獲得することを困難にしていた当時の厳格な階級構造によっても特色づけられている。

これらの主題は、その著作の大半が生前未刊行に終わり、生後百年以上経ってからようやく詩人としての名声を獲得した、エミリー・ディキンソンの詩に一際顕著に表れている。彼女は、上述のゴシック文学の作者たちが示したその創造性のみならず、男性優位の出版界の中で出版まで漕ぎつけた粘り強さに対しても憧憬の念を抱いており、一連の作品群から強い影響を受けている。また、ゴシックの影響を別にしても、彼女にとって家が大きな意味を持つことは明らかである。それは、ディキンソンが採り上げる数多くの主題と象徴の中で、わけても家の喪失こそが、彼女の作品の語り手

たちに対して、周縁の存在であり、心乱され、「家」と呼べる場所を見出すことができない存在だと宣告するものとされていることから理解できる。

その後、世紀の変わり目において急激な発展を見せた精神科学は、シャーロット・パーキンズ・ギルマンの「黄色い壁紙」でその特徴が顕著に描き出されているように、女性たちに有害な影響を与えていた。ゴシック様式の別荘内の壁紙による象徴表現と、監禁という主題を通じて、「黄色い壁紙」の語り手は、一方では登場人物たちが潜在的に引き起こし得る狂気を明示しながら、同時にゴシック的ヒロインのロマンティックな空想と混乱した想像を具現化して見せている。

世紀末から第一次世界大戦にかけての時代の移り変わりの中で、ゴシック小説における家は、社会階級の緩やかな解体と、ブルジョア階級の勃興および働く女性の誕生とも結び付けられるようになった。この素晴らしき新世界に対する女性の不安感を卓越した技量で描き出した小説の一つが、ダフネ・デュ・モーリアの *Rebecca* (『レベッカ』) である。この物語は、その内気なヒロインと、生気の無い呪われた館の描写によって、相反する二つの潮流を呼び出して見せる。すなわち、女性が社会で相互交流を果たすことを可能にする新しい在り方の意義を認め評価する態度と、それを良識に反した不道德なこととして退ける態度である。作中で館はこの対立の舞台となり、物語の終末では燃え盛る炎の中に崩れ落ちることになる。最後に、シャーリー・ジャクソンによる二つの小説、*The Haunting of Hill House* (『丘の屋敷』) と *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (『ずっとお城で暮らしてる』) は、第二次世界大戦後のゴシック小説における家の展開を照らし出す。これらの作品の主人公たちは、それ以前の時代のゴシック的ヒロインたちと深く結びつけられており、作中の家は、実際には

彼女たちの幸福は罪にまみれた偽りものに過ぎなかったにもかかわらず、薔薇色の過去への郷愁を呼び起こす。登場人物たちの行動は論理的というよりは感情的であり、また彼女たちは、戦時中には比較的自由を享受しながらも、戦後には再び家の中へと押し戻されてしまった第二次世界大戦後の女性に特有な自立への願望を反映している。世紀をまたいだそれぞれの時代からのゴシック作品の分析を通じて、二つの共通の筋道が明らかになる。すなわち、ゴシックというジャンルは、創造性と個性を保持しようとする女性の苦闘を際立たせ、そしてさらに、現代に近づくにつれて、家父長的な社会が統制し隠蔽しようとしている社会的混沌を、より一層顕わにするのである。

Abstract

The idea of space in fiction is directly addressed by authors who recognize and inform us of the special nature of the places we call "home." These authors ask us to reconsider the function of our houses, of our mundane furniture, and by extension, the lives we live in them. In stories and poems, we are able to surpass the physical architecture of our corporeal existence and create a mental architecture made of imagined configurations of the structures we inhabit: buildings, houses, apartments, rooms, doors, windows and even thresholds.

In literature, the house figures prominently in many genres, but it is especially important to the Gothic. Gothic fiction utilizes space as a locus of haunting; Gothic houses thus act as the site of uncanny events or function as homes to uncanny persons. Commonplace objects are assigned new meaning: rooms become repositories for dreams and nightmares to play out to their insidious or delightful ends. Further, Gothic space is not limited to the house itself—it also includes the areas surrounding the house. Juxtaposed against the house, the forest and the countryside represent space uninhabited and untamed by humans, while villages or towns represent a conglomeration of dwellings. In Gothic tales written during periods of industrialization and urbanization, the Gothic also makes use of the city as the nexus where familiar and unfamiliar collide. These spaces, made savage and grotesque by the Gothic imagination, are revealed to be repositories of crime, oppression, sin and death.

Those who study the Gothic genre make use of a wide variety of perspectives ranging from psychoanalysis and literary theory to art and architectural theories and even anthropology and sociology. Therefore, this dissertation will also utilize a diverse group of historical,

classical and theoretical sources. Upon those foundations, a combination of textual evidence and close readings will prove that the image of home in American and British literature signifies for each examined author a multitude of meanings. The most significant of these denote the dichotomy between the interior (the space of the mind) and the exterior (the space which the body inhabits), and the way in which that dichotomy is presented as both familiar and frightening, a concept known as "the uncanny."

In order to address the concept of the uncanny home in Gothic literature, critical theory as well as close reading is necessary. First, a definition of the term "Gothic" will be given and its relationship to gender, spatial, cultural issues will be made clear. Second, the concept of "the uncanny" and its relationship to the Gothic will then be outlined. Because anything uncanny necessarily requires both the familiar and the unfamiliar, both will be discussed, with particular attention to the influence of the theories of John Ruskin, especially with regard to the doctrine of separate spheres as well as his writings on architecture, and Sigmund Freud, concentrating on his seminal work on all things sinister and ambiguous, "The Uncanny" (1919). Leading up to the modern and post-modern periods, the definition of the uncanny was built upon by later generations of theorists; their additions will also be mentioned and the context of their ideas explained.

Theoretical concepts and socio-cultural contexts will then provide the basis for close readings of works of Gothic fiction that center on the image of home. Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* will provide the formative version of the Gothic house through its title building, the castle Udolpho. Its twisting, sinister, ruined shape became the precursor of the Neo-Gothic manor house, which is exemplified in novels such as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. These stories are also informed by the aforementioned Ruskinian separate spheres as well as the strict class structure of the time

period, which made it difficult for women to achieve either financial or creative freedom.

These themes also figure significantly into the poetry of Emily Dickinson, whose writing remained mostly unpublished throughout her life and who only gained prominence as a poet over a hundred years after her birth. She was influenced by the above-mentioned works of Gothic literature, as she admired their authors not only for their creativity, but also for their tenacity to publish in the male-dominated world of print. Beyond the influence of the Gothic, it is clear that the house has great meaning for her: Dickinson employs numerous themes and symbols, but it is the loss of the house that condemns her narrators to a marginal existence, disturbed and unable to find a place to call "home."

Later, at the turn of the century, the burgeoning field of mental science had a deleterious effect on the female population, which is featured prominently in "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Expressed through the symbolism of the wallpaper of a Gothic summer house and the theme of imprisonment, the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" epitomizes the Gothic heroine's romantic fantasies and disturbed imagination while at the same time demonstrating the madness that they have the potential to cause.

In the intervening years between the fin de siècle and WWI, the Gothic house became associated with the slow breakdown of social classes and the rise of the bourgeoisie as well as the working woman. One novel that masterfully shows the anxiety of women towards this brave new world is Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. With its timid heroine and ghostless haunted manor, the story conjures forth two contradictory trends: to appreciate and value the new ways in which women interacted in society, or to dismiss it as transgressive and evil. The manor becomes the stage for this conflict to play out to its conflagrative end. Finally, two novels by Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, will illuminate the evolution of the Gothic home in the post-WWII period. Their

protagonists are deeply connected to the Gothic heroines of previous eras, and the houses in the story recall a nostalgia for a falsely rosy past that is actually shrouded in transgression. Their actions are aligned with the emotional rather than the logical, and they reflect a desire for autonomy peculiar to the women of the post-WWII era, who were pressured back into the home after having had relative freedom during the war. Through examination of these stories from different periods across the centuries of Gothic writing, two common threads will become clear: the Gothic genre highlights the struggles of women to maintain their creativity and individuality, and furthermore, as we approach the modern period, it reveals the hidden social chaos that patriarchal society seeks to reign in.

Introduction

The spaces we inhabit permeate so much of our daily existence that we often cease to notice their familiar or unfamiliar qualities. Despite the fact that our attention is sometimes called to those qualities, we repress our reactions to our mundane furniture. We ignore the possibility that its doors and windows might be useful for something other than opening or shutting. Spaces in which we find creative inspiration make more of an impression: the vacation to the mountains, the summer holiday at the seashore. However, the home itself, while we dwell within it, is more or less taken for granted. Most people will never ponder whether there is a skeleton buried behind their basement wall or imagine a dybbuk hiding in an attic cupboard. Furthermore, most people will not draw a comparison between the space we physically inhabit and the space we psychologically dwell, in spite of language's implicit metaphors that lend themselves so well to describing the mind as a house.

Fiction directly addresses the idea of space, especially mundane spaces such as rooms, compartments and apartments and their entrances and exits (doors and windows). Houses, as well as their exteriors, interiors, and furniture, are therefore worthy of closer examination. The authors of that fiction see something that we cannot or choose not to; they alert us to the strange uniqueness of our mundane world and force us to reconsider the placement and purpose of our dwellings, and the lives we live in them. Further, fictional space enables the mind to go beyond the physical architecture that surrounds our corporeal form, creating a

mental architecture that has projected forms of the structures we inhabit: buildings, houses, apartments, rooms, doors, windows and even thresholds.

In literature, the genre most concerned with the house is the Gothic, which is signaled by its use of the space as the locus of haunting. Gothic houses may also give rise to uncanny events or act as homes to uncanny persons. Prior to the nuclear family unit's displacement of the extended family as the predominant family structure in British and American society, the Gothic utilized spaces such as the forest, countryside, manor house, cottage or castle; after industrialization and the rise of single-family homes, the Gothic transformed these more private (and therefore more secretive) spaces into the nexus where familiar and unfamiliar clash. Gothic is also a fascinating genre in that scholars who discuss the Gothic utilize a myriad of perspectives from psychoanalysis, architectural theory and literary theory to anthropology and sociology.

According to David Punter, "Gothic" is a term typically used to describe a group of novels written between the 1760s and the 1820s (Punter, 1996, Vol. 1, 1). Gothic is a term used to describe literature that addresses perceived threats to the values of logic, enlightenment and humanism prominent in the eighteenth century. To do so, it utilizes the supernatural, human evil, religious and social transgression, and madness or spiritual corruption. It also depends upon an excess of imagination and delusion; as such, it requires no monster, only terror. It is, in that sense, reliant on a discourse of haunting.

In the mid-1700s, at the inception of what may be termed Gothic Canon, some of those most prominent within that canon were Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. Later, authors such as Mary Shelley, William Godwin, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe and many others continued the genre in the form of the Neo-Gothic, which is generally thought to begin around the 1820s—when Gothic tapered off—and end in the Antebellum

period in the 1870s. Although the terminology of “Gothic” and “Neo-Gothic” seem synonymous (indeed, Punter states that “literary history has tended to group them together into a homogenous body of fiction”), there are important differences between the eras of Gothic texts and the authors who wrote them (*Loc.cit.*). Despite the fact that they are comprised of similar elements mentioned above—such as nostalgia, anxiety and fear—there are important differences in the focus of each of these authors’ works, and even striking differences between Gothic works written by the same author. Scholars such as Punter and Botting deal with these differences in great detail; the contents of these books seek to define the Gothic as a genre, in addition to discussing some of its more prominent authors.

The motif of the house is central to the construction of the Gothic as a genre because of its role in creating and perpetuating the anxiety felt by the characters with regard to their image of family and home. As discussed in the previous section, the discourse of nostalgia for a prior age, rife with Gothic excess, evokes anxiety concerning the characters or objects in the story: one of these objects is the house and/or home and another is the image of the family. The two are actually deeply connected: a family occupies a house and loves each other and their home. Therefore, the image of the house should symbolize growth, nurturing, and mothering, and the motif of home present in the text should elicit warm, fuzzy feelings from the reader. Yet in the Gothic, disturbing elements are introduced, which displace the nurturing nature of the home. The results are ghastly: the destruction of the idyllic image of home. Such destruction relates to the Gothic’s connections with the discourse of the sublime and abject, a discourse that reminds us of events and objects that can simultaneously inspire overwhelming awe, superb happiness, dismal spirits, or helpless fear.

The focus of this dissertation is the motif of the Gothic House as written in Gothic literature by women writers. Women, whose place in society has been and remains very

centered in and around the home, maintain an important perspective on the significance of the house. They therefore utilize the motif of the house to express their domain, their position in society, and how it affects them. Their perspective differs from their male contemporaries because they are discussing their own gendered experiences within the home, which possesses a dualistic nature of freedom and oppression, canny and uncanny. The study spans from the early inception of the genre, with the works of Ann Radcliffe in the eighteenth century, to the works of Shirley Jackson in the mid-twentieth century. Drawing from the broader notions of space in fiction, the dissertation primarily concerns the dualistic nature of the home, which can be both familiar and uncanny, and seeks to illustrate how that juxtaposition is considered by women writers. This theme is easily viewed in the context of Gothic literature, in which settings are made uncanny, horrific or grotesque due to the underlying changing nature of those settings; that is, while they recall the familiar, they are the face and fact of the familiar changed into the unfamiliar. This leads the characters, and by extension the reader, to question the socio-cultural structures present in the text.

These Gothic homes are also repositories for dreams and nightmares, which make ambiguous the feeling of reality in the text and connect the Gothic to the fantastic. They are also the locus for the collision of different ideas about how society should be structured, especially with regard to the role of women. The Gothic house is both a locus of anxiety (which is expressed with the motif of haunting), and of uncanny persons, events and/or objects. The rooms of the house may represent the repositories of dreams (both to be feared and desired), and provide the setting for happiness as well as sorrow, crime or transgression to occur. Thus, the house is itself essentially both familiar and frightening.

To address the dualistic nature of the motif of the home, a variety of perspectives is necessary—the reason being that Gothic has been both influenced by and affected many areas

of research, for example art and architecture, literature, psychoanalysis and even anthropology. Upon those foundations, a combination of textual evidence and close readings will prove that the image of home in American and British literature in the modern period signifies for each examined author a multitude of meanings, the most significant of which are the dichotomy between the interior (the space of the mind) and the exterior (the space which the body inhabits), and the way in which that dichotomy is presented as both familiar and frightening.

First, as the Gothic is central to this dissertation, the Gothic as a term and its relationship to issues of gender, space, architecture and culture are examined. In order to do so, a variety of resources on the genre (which has seen a boom in scholarship in the past fifteen or so years) are utilized. While other scholars have considered gender as well as the domestic in their investigations, as of yet, there is no full-length study of the domestic Gothic house by women writers, a gap in scholarship that this dissertation attempts to fill. The first chapter will pay particular attention to how the Gothic is defined by Fred Botting and David Punter, among others.

In order to build more specifically upon the idea that the house presents a dual image, it is necessary to establish first that the house is a canny space. To do so, the dissertation utilizes the works of nineteenth century critic John Ruskin, who wrote both on the doctrine of separate spheres and on the "Nature of Gothic" in architecture. Additional information on architecture in this section also gives a visual background to the structure of the homes written about in literature, especially those informed by the Gothic imagination. After establishing Ruskin's theories as both prominent and accepted in terms of the nineteenth century image of home in the cultural imagination, Freud's theory on "the uncanny" is offered to reveal the inconsistencies in the image of home as merely comfortable and happy. Freud's theory on "the

uncanny” states that the familiar, or *heimlich*, may be shrouded upon recollection, rendering it unfamiliar, or *unheimlich*. However, it is of the author’s opinion that this theory must be re-evaluated, because the way Freud addresses the topic is not only male-centric, but it also denies the variety of loss and repression associated with a feeling of disturbing nostalgia. These losses may include loss of creativity, loss of life or love, loss of home and loss of place in society. Fear of these types of loss can also haunt the text, which is essentially a Gothic theme. All of these aforementioned theoretical concepts and socio-cultural contexts provide the basis for a close reading of several texts that form the bedrock of both the Female Gothic subgenre and the motif of the house in Gothic literature.

After considering the definition and history of Gothic as well as theory related to the uncanny, close textual analysis of several novels, short stories and poems will prove the multifaceted dimensions of the motif of the house in Gothic literature. First, chapter 2 will expand upon the concept of the domestic Gothic by incorporating Ellen Moers’ definition of Female Gothic.¹ This explanation will be followed by a brief reading of Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), whose Castle Udolpho is the forerunner of the image of the Gothic House, as it is established in the genre by women authors. Afterwards, an examination of *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) will form the next layers of the research. These two texts provide a background of the image of home in Gothic literature as informed by Ruskin’s theories on class structure and a lack of freedom (both financial and creative) for

¹ Ann Williams’s essay on the nature of Gothic is often cited as one of the seminal articles in stating that all Female Gothic is not the same; see Ann Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik also make a similar point; see Horner and Zlosnik, 25-30. The collection *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, containing a number of essays that explain the multifaceted nature of Female Gothic, goes beyond simply defining the term (coined by Ellen Moers). It addresses issues of race, historical and socio-cultural background of Gothic, literary canon, problematic politics and nationalism and even the supernatural. See Wallace and Smith. The Female Gothic, as a term, will be defined in further detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

women, which are exemplified in the interactions at the house as well as by the house itself. Both texts were significant in recasting the themes of Female Gothic, especially regarding violence towards women, women's experience of loss of property or homes and the deep connection between women because of or in spite of these hardships. The houses in the stories reject the presence of the women and contain uncanny elements, such as the "double." These two stories preach the necessity of escaping the patriarchal order, either through death, destruction of the house, or reform of it—a theme that carries throughout the works addressed in this thesis.

In the third chapter, the image of home in Emily Dickinson's poetry will build upon the complexities afforded by these nineteenth century texts, while at the same time adding a different dimension to the definition of the Gothic home through her treatment of ambiguous architectural constructions, as well as such liminal spaces as windows, doors, and thresholds. Dickinson not only admired female Gothic authors and emulated many of the themes, motifs, and symbols they used, but she was also preoccupied with the space of the home.² Dickinson discusses houses in a similar way to Gothic authors in how she writes of the house's dual nature—that it can be both familiar and frightening.³ Further, she treats the house as an ambiguous subject and a powerful setting that can indicate a radical differentiation between meaning and unmeaning of events, and significance or insignificance of persons.

² Dickinson's poetry is, however, essentially different from the other exemplary texts addressed in this dissertation, as the poems were not really written for publication: less than 10 of her poems were published during her lifetime and the rest continue to be published posthumously.

³ Charles L. Crow alludes to Dickinson's meaningful connection to Gothic authors and even inserts her into his definition of American Gothic canon. He states: "She possessed a true Gothic imagination, exploring the haunted regions of the mind and confronting the reality of death and dying, even in one startling poem assuming the point of view of a dying person. She wrote of the ways society enforces its definitions of normalcy and of madness, anticipating later writers such as Gilman and Plath" (Crow, 2013, 17). The inclusion of Dickinson's poetry in this dissertation thus embellishes upon the heretofore relatively ignored dimensions of the Gothic present in her poems. Writing on Dickinson's Gothic also serves as an important link between the physical spaces discussed in earlier Gothic works like *Jane Eyre* with the blurring of those physical spaces with mental space, as in Gilman's works.

The fourth chapter expounds upon the themes of madness and feminine hysteria arising in domestic space in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). In this story, Gilman uses the theme of imprisonment, which is inextricable from the motif of the house. She combines it with the Gothic disturbed imagination, while expanding the notion of the potential for madness extant in the works of Dickinson and the Brontës.⁴ "The Yellow Wallpaper" also presents psychoanalysis as an emerging field that victimizes women, but also gives them an opportunity to reveal the breakdown of patriarchal social structures. Additionally, it reminds us of the potential for women, denied creative outlets and imprisoned in the home, to "escape" the situation mentally, one of the aforementioned methods of circumventing the patriarchy.

These themes carry over and are updated in the twentieth century by Daphne du Maurier in her novel *Rebecca* (1938). *Rebecca* discusses many of the themes and motifs of previous Female Gothic novels, such as disturbance of the patriarchal system by a perceived haunting, a heroine of unknown origin, exile from the home and anxiety towards the changing role of women. Further, it features a departure from previous works of the subgenre, namely a stark contrast between the image of housewife as being both trapped in the house and complicit with the patriarchal order found in the narrator, to the image of an independent woman who is capable of working outside the home (or inside the home, as the manor is actually a workplace). The destruction of the manor in this story also signals the destruction of the hereditary order.

The final two novels addressed in this dissertation are by Shirley Jackson—*We Have*

⁴ It should again be noted that Dickinson's poems were not given critical attention at the time that Charlotte Perkins Gilman was writing, and so it is unlikely that they influenced the latter in any way. It is, however, of great interest that both authors' works contain similar themes, motifs and symbolism.

Always Lived in the Castle (1962) and *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959). The research on Jackson is particularly original, as there have been few full-length studies on this author, and there remains a great necessity for more scholarly attention to the importance of her works. These two novels illuminate the situation of the post-WWII Gothic and the increasingly diverse position of women. While women have more nominal freedom to work outside the home, it often either goes unacknowledged or leads nowhere. The protagonists in these two stories are very different characters, yet they remain attached to previous eras of Gothic heroines. The stories also recall the Gothic theme of a false nostalgia for a beautiful past that is actually full of transgression or oppression, and therefore should be feared. In particular, these stories are significant because both heroines desire autonomy, either within the social order (in the case of Eleanor of *The Haunting of Hill House*), or outside the social order (in the case of Merricat of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*). This struggle for autonomy is contextualized with post-WWII socio-cultural influences in the background, and so must be considered a re-conception of the Domestic Gothic in the modern period.

A close examination of the above texts through the lens of Gothic and the application of critical theories to those texts illuminates women's struggles toward individuality and toward obtaining or maintaining creative autonomy. Further, it reveals the social chaos that the patriarchal order seeks to hide or to reign in. These important concepts are visible when discussing the image of the Gothic house, and its essential duality: that it may be both familiar and unfamiliar, anxiety-causing and comfortable. By addressing this motif and the texts it appears in, broader implications to the treatment of space in literature become clear. Societal change has greatly impacted not only the ways in which space is inhabited or owned, but also the gender roles associated with that space over time. Since the inception of the Gothic genre, the metamorphosis of the uses and meaning of space in Gothic literature have provided an

important commentary about the mental stability of women in the domestic setting. By offering a critical analysis of women's anxiety within the space of the home, this dissertation will prove relevant to the discussion of modern literature as a discourse of the slow revelation of the underlying chaos of society that the patriarchal order seeks to conceal.

Chapter 1

Origins of the Gothic and the Uncanny Home

1.1 Gothic Literature

According to Fred Botting, Gothic literature is signified by excess, condensing “the many perceived threats” to values within the Enlightenment and Humanist movements during the 18th century (Botting, 2). Those threats are “associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption” (*Loc.cit.*). Gothic relies on a discourse of haunting and haunted language to evoke anxiety—as such, it requires no monster, only terror. By leading us away from the familiar realm of the everyday into the realm of uncanny events and fearful occurrences, Gothic exists outside of the basic system of “truths” as would exist in a normal, physical or social world, which come in the forms dictated by the church, laws decreed by the government, lessons taught by parents and family, etc. Within that unfamiliar realm of the Gothic, such threatening elements as violence, malice and terror are depicted as occurring first in landscapes like forests and castles, and then in more modern times, the winding streets and dark alleyways of cities, and the seemingly mundane suburban or rural home. Excess and terror become associated with those physical spaces because of the ideal of stability those spaces represent, historically, psychologically and socially as with the castle, or

because of the taboos associated with them, as with the forests or the alleyways in cities that mimic wooded paths.

In early Gothic fiction, the aforementioned castle was a major location for Gothic plots to unravel to their insidious and horrific ends. Botting relates that castles, with their neighboring churches and graveyards, remind us of a “feudal past associated with barbarity, superstition and fear” (*Ibid.*, 3). The hierarchical connotations of such a feudal system remind us of a time in Europe romanticized as the “Gothic era,” an era between the 12th and 14th centuries, when all but the most wealthy and titled were illiterate, the castle was the focal point of manor life, and the church was the center for guidance towards the afterlife.⁵ Reflecting on that time period, many novelists of the 18th and 19th centuries focused on a narrative that emphasized the power of the middle class faith in the progress of individualism, reason, and autonomy of the people.⁶ However, other novelists possessed a different perspective: that of revolt against a world becoming increasingly mechanical due to an increase in industry and socially chaotic due to an increase in migration. The Gothic is that revolt; framed by nostalgia for an idealized medieval past, it longs for the symbolic system recalled by folk traditions. At the same time, it is imbued with the ancient superstitions and fears associated with those traditions (Punter, *Op.cit.*, 6). Nostalgia for the Gothic era is also in direct conflict with the emerging bourgeois society that emphasizes reason and logic (and to an extreme, greed), which may also be said to be comprised of “atomistic possessive individuals, who have no essential relation to each other” (Kilgour, 11). When compared with the idealized image of

⁵ However, some authors have set their gothic novels just after that time period; Horace Walpole, for example, sets *The Castle of Otranto* in the 16th century.

⁶ Literally hundreds of authors can be categorized as gothic writers or be said to have written using gothic motifs or symbolism. For specific examples of novels that focus on these themes or use this narrative style, please see Kilgour, 10-11. See also Tracy; see also Hughes, Punter, and Smith.

family that supports each other, with a decisive father as the leader of the family and a passive, comforting mother who stays at home—a patriarchal ideal propagated by such theorists as John Ruskin—the Gothic image of family denotes a very serious change in society. In addition, the emergence of nostalgia during the 18th century for the time period titled “Gothic” may be read in other ways, such as the need for a belief in sacred and awe-inspiring supernatural forces and events that was denied by the Enlightenment, which focused heavily on secular forces and logic (*Ibid.*, 3).⁷

Nostalgia relates the word “Gothic” to an archaic past for which we long. It also associates Gothic fiction with an image of barbarity, as its original meaning “was literally ‘to do with the Goths,’ or with the barbarian northern tribes who played so reviled (somewhat unfairly) a part in the collapse of the Roman empire” (Punter, *Op.cit.*, 4). Yet the Gothic, and specifically Gothic literature, has little to do with the Goths themselves or their contribution to European history. The invocation of this history is replaced by fantastic lore and the imagined presence of what the original Gothic era was according to those living in the 18th century, rather than an expression of what they actually were.

The role of anxiety arises from all of this history (nostalgia) evoked by the Gothic. It is also elicited by the excess Gothic signifies, which arouses trepidation concerning what Botting terms “the murky recesses of human subjectivity” (Botting, 11). Further, Botting reminds us that human subjectivity continues to be influenced by those murky recesses during the development from primitive to industrial societies:

The city, a gloomy forest or a dark labyrinth itself, became a site of nocturnal corruption and violence, a locus of real horror; the family became a place rendered

⁷ Herein, Maggie Kilgour gives a detailed explanation of the polarization of beliefs of the day, placing the tradition of the Gothic solidly in juxtaposition with the Rational (thus, the Enlightenment movement). As the Gothic seeks to subvert the structures of society such as government and patriarchal family structure, it naturally draws on those things that also subvert those structures, such as the supernatural, the sacred, and taboos.

threatening and uncanny by the haunting return of past transgressions and attendant guilt on an every day world shrouded in strangeness. The attempt to distinguish the apparent from the real, the good from the bad, evident in the standard Gothic device of portraits assuming life, was internalized rather than explained as a supernatural occurrence, a trick of the light or of the imagination. Uncanny effects rather than sublime terrors dominated (*Ibid.*).

These uncanny effects and internalized inability to distinguish the real from the fantastic give birth to what may be termed a deep-seated anxiety. In medical terms, "anxiety is . . . a form of dread that has no immediately apparent stimulus" (Gaylin, 124). It may exist without any consciousness of a direct source of threat or justification. Such anxiety is intimately connected with the aforementioned uncanny because nostalgic evocations are not usually immediately apparent to the character feeling them (although to the reader they may seem obvious).

Uncanny, as mentioned in the introduction, is a concept first developed by Jentsch but made famous by Freud in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919). In his essay, he examines the terms *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (uncanny) through two approaches: by defining the words in linguistic terms and by explaining the words through exemplary phenomena. The term is connected with various symbols and motifs, such as that of the double, fear of loss, and fear of death. Although his conception of the uncanny actually is, in some sense, a retrospective on Gothic and Neo-Gothic forms, it also paves the way for future scholarship to criticize, add to, and revise his definition. There are several important points that Freud makes which will be essential to the literary analysis that forms the second half of this dissertation, and which will be dealt with in the second half of this chapter. However, two brief points are essential to the definition of Gothic: that the uncanny relies on the uncertainty of remembrance, and that the uncanny exists as a spectrum (different events, people, things and places elicit different responses to the uncanny; in other words, it is subjective).

The feelings evoked by Gothic literature include what David Punter terms the terror of “delirium”—meaning while we are in a fearful state, we are temporarily mentally disturbed, extremely excited, or even confused. He claims that “in Gothic, we are all suffering from delirium . . . for delirium is merely the experience of being at the mercy of conflicting and unassimilable impressions (as it is in the decay of delight)” (Punter, 1996, Vol. 2, 186). Just as Freud explains that the close connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar is precipitated by recollection and the impossibility of perfect remembrance, the terror Punter describes herein recalls that our memories are both part of us and separate from us; therefore, they have the power to turn and frighten us and we are powerless against them. This terror is also related to the anxiety borne of anticipation of horrific events or being faced with the abject.⁸ We are unable to face that terror or abjection; otherwise, we risk losing ourselves. Gothic fiction therefore gives us the option to choose a delusion rather than accept abjection as real. It also gives us the option to allow the opposite: Gothic elements can triumph over the rational elements in the text.

Informed by both the socio-cultural construct of home and the philosophies that discussed it, the Neo-Gothic readdresses the motif of the Gothic house in the context of industrialization and significant social change, which destabilized the image of home and family. During the time that the Gothic gave way to the Neo-Gothic in literature, English society developed from a feudal system to an industrialized democratic nation. Changes

⁸ The abject is a state of broken consciousness in which the subject and other reject each other and therefore collapse into the boundary between (the abject) because neither can exist without the other. Julia Kristeva explains that abjection has resonances of ancient anxieties linked closely to taboos, so it allows us to touch upon a primal state that endangers both the subject and the object. Closely related to Lacan’s theory of the other/Other (“other” standing for a projection of the ego; “Other” representing another subject entirely that may not be assimilated through identification and projects a symbolic order), a person in an abject state demonstrates both a loss of the self (of identity) and a fundamental desire for re-identification. Abjection forces the subject to re-identify against impossible and unreal images from the outside, losing the “self” in the process. See Kristeva, 1982.

occurring both politically and socially in the 18th and 19th centuries caused a disturbance of the traditional image of home—it metamorphosed from a central building housing extended family to the heart of nuclear family activity. On one hand, this activity should have signaled a corroborative response from social theory that industrialization was helping to transform the way people interacted in the home. On the other hand, a proliferation of critics and authors, not the least of which was the very influential John Ruskin, insisted upon the sanctity of the home, its hallowed space a zone of comfort and of refuge from the evils of the outside world. Although appealing in a rather twisted way (who would not want to live in an ideal space?), it was the duty of the Gothic to reveal the truth about the underlying shifts in the balance of society. Modern historical scholars have substantiated this claim as well. According to Penny Kane, Victorian families actually had very little family fluidity. She states: “[Families were] unstable groupings, altered by frequent deaths and re-formed by new marriages” (Kane, 1). While the extended family still formed the vision of the familial unit ideal, population expansion combined with the fact that the older generation were less likely to be living with their grown-up children (*Ibid.*, 2). New job opportunities provided by the industrial revolution lead to cities engorged with first-generation migrant workers with little or no extended family networks (*Ibid.*, 8). With the migration of people to cities, the fact that widowers often remarried, and the likelihood of childhood death, the extended family unit became disoriented, leading to a new discourse of fear with relation to the home and family. However, the reality of the instability of the family structure, often disturbed by death, financial problems, or internal strife, was masked by the Victorian ideals of propriety and morality, and the overwhelmingly important role women played in the household environment. The Neo-Gothic is therefore vital to betraying the secrets of Victorian society: that the patriarchal structure of the family was not only under immediate threat, its foundations had already been rotting away.

As in the works of Neo-Gothic works of authors like Hawthorne, Brontë, Shelley and Poe, and the original Gothic works of Radcliff and Walpole, modern texts can be identified as evidence to support the thesis that the Gothic is a discourse of destruction of the family unit within the home. Just like the Gothic of previous eras, the Modern Gothic subverts the social structure of society by attacking its basic foundations. According to Irving Malin, “because the family is considered a stable unit, new American Gothic tries to destroy it—the assumption is that if the family cannot offer security, nothing can” (Malin, 50). This opinion may also be carried over into new British Gothic, by way of the similarities of family types and scenarios that reoccur, such as evil parents or spouses, child-like heroines and seriously flawed heroes. The Gothic occurring in the modern period may be read as a deconstruction or delusion of the realm of the mundane, rather than a true physical escape from it. But the vicious nature of the escapism present in the Modern Gothic has “a deeper moral purpose” according to Maggie Kilgour: by putting distance between the real and the fantastic, it becomes a critique of society as it is (Kilgour, 9).

Just as there are numerous texts that illustrate the image of the home in the early Gothic and Neo-Gothic periods, there are also many texts that illustrate the image of home in the Modern Gothic; a sub-genre, the Domestic Gothic, has even been identified in the Modern Gothic, emphasizing the home’s central role in the Gothic tale. The Domestic Gothic’s purpose is to expose the truth of familial relationships in which the female is at the mercy of the patriarchal order:

... through [use of] the technique of estrangement or romantic de-familiarization: by cloaking familiar images of domesticity in Gothic forms, it enables us to see that home is a prison (*Loc.cit.*).

By establishing that the familiar can become unfamiliar, underlying truths about mundane spaces can be revealed. For Kilgour, this means the home, which should be a space of relative

freedom and comfort is actually a place of entrapment and oppression. In this sense, Domestic Gothic and Female Gothic can be related, and often overlap; however, Domestic Gothic deals primarily with the image of house and home, while the Female Gothic is not limited to a certain place.⁹ As in the Neo-Gothic, home remains representative of the social order.

However, there is one important change: the Domestic Gothic focuses on the house as the disturbing element, and so the characters seek either to destroy its representation (family) or the building itself. Elaine Hartnell-Mottram explicates the reason for the Gothic to become Domestic is related to representations of the “domestic ideal” in society (184). She further explains:

“Domestic” becomes “domestic Gothic” proper when everyday matters relating to the home become magnified to nightmare proportions, framed by recognizably Gothic tropes and presented in the language of excess. Domestic Gothic narratives magnify the family problems of the non-Gothic domestic novel into horrifically abusive intergenerational relationships. Such novels also frequently deal with their subject-matter through the trope of haunting, whether the characters are haunted by a discoverable spectral past or a supernatural spectral presence (Hartnell-Mottram, 185).

Within the genre of the Domestic Gothic, the expectation of canny space is replaced with the uncanny. Exaggerated by the Gothic mode, Domestic Gothic stories demonstrate that the family is neither a refuge nor an unbreakable ideal, as Ruskin would have us believe. Instead, the family unit is the foundation: it acts as both a concealer and revealer of evil forces and sinister bedfellows within the community, which have already crept into familiar areas and are already dwelling alongside us. Domestic Gothic novels must thus alert us to the duality of this underpinning force by embodying it in ghosts or doubles.

⁹ David Punter and Glennis Byron define the basic Female Gothic plot as one that revolves around a man threatening or oppressing a woman (41). The final chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate that that is not always the case with the Domestic Gothic, especially with regard to 20th century texts.

Furthermore, the plot of the Domestic Gothic tale generally concerns the main female character's transition from one state to another (e.g. child/daughter to grown woman, unwed to wedded, wife to mother) as the change that sparks the introduction of the Gothic into the story. These two important elements are certainly present in previous eras of Gothic texts (one notes again that it is Catherine's burgeoning womanhood in *Wuthering Heights* that spurs the conflict forward); however, the argument of industrialization (Rational) versus primitive and supernatural forces (Gothic) have been placed forward in time, to an epoch in which the Neo-Gothic becomes the longed-for nostalgic period and the Gothic, a deep-rooted ancestry.

There are a multitude of texts that would describe the function and manifestations of the motif of the home in the Domestic Gothic. Many novels utilize Gothic symbolism and motifs to focus on the image of the house and the home, such as Mervyn Peake's Gorgmenghast trilogy,¹⁰ Toni Morrison's *Beloved*,¹¹ and Neil Gaiman's recently published novel *The Graveyard Book*, which is an uncanny-fantastic tale of a boy who is raised in a graveyard by ghosts.¹² There are also many short stories such as "The Dead," one of the stories contained in James Joyce's *Dubliners*,¹³ and stories concerning fear of maternity, racial

¹⁰ This series of novels utilizes gothic forms such as the castle and its lord, and balances grotesque fantasy against grim reality.

¹¹ This story concerns a family living in a house haunted by a sad and reproachful baby ghost, dealing heavily with the uncanny. From the very beginning until the very end, *Beloved* approaches memories as if they are something physical one could "bump into." See Morrison. See also Botting, 161.

¹² In *The Graveyard Book*, replacing a child's home with a crypt (displacement) and the ensuing disturbance of the motif of home within the story creates an intense and frightening atmosphere juxtaposed against the homely feeling that the ghosts of the graveyard lend with their kind personalities and familial manner towards the young main character. It is almost as if he is living between the world of the dead and the living (otherwise known as the liminal) because he has lost his family and home. This fascinating situation merits further inquiry as to how the motif of home can be disturbed or mutated by the destruction of the family in modern literature.

¹³ Joyce basically describes several joyous yet mundane family scenes only to end with a vignette between husband and wife, in which the wife is entirely focused on the memory of a boy she once loved and who had died many years before. The husband becomes terribly jealous, but he has no outlet for his jealousy except anxiety because the boy his wife loved is already dead and buried. In this case, death also serves as a severing force that can break an emotion connection, a familial commitment, and create doubtful anxiety where there was once only joy and love.

and gender clashes by Flannery O'Connor, ghost stories by Eudora Welty and Ray Bradbury's fantastic stories about the October Country. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* both create and perpetuate anxiety through the motif of home.¹⁴ This motif is not only extremely prominent, it is also deeply connected to the force driving two of the main characters to murder a family member (or several, in the case of Jackson's protagonist). The related theme of transgression leading to the disturbance of the home's sanctity, as well as the resulting attempt to revise the definitions imposed by patriarchal society, are deeply connected to literature of the previous era, such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, which will be discussed in close reading in Chapter 2.

Before studying these texts and their implications, it is important to first provide a basis for them in the form of theory related to the socio-cultural constructs of house and home, and the situation of gender in the space of the home. To that end, the place of women, their educational status, and their role in society will be briefly considered before delving into this gendered situation's enmeshment with architectural structures and the theory behind them. After establishing several key points regarding gender, architecture and the image of the home as comfortable, theories regarding the disturbance of that comfort, the uncanny, will be explained in depth.

1.2 Victorian Angels and the Gothic Mode

¹⁴ As recently as 2013, these two authors have been recognized formally as part of Gothic canon; see *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in particular Lootens, 363-366, who writes on Shirley Jackson; Foley, 287-294, who references du Maurier; Spooner, 294-303, who references Jackson; Horner and Zlosnick, 209-213, who writes on du Maurier.

When considering the significance of the home at the turn of the 19th century and the beginning of the Victorian period, when the home became known as a place of refuge and as the place of women, the oppression of those women has different implications. According to Judith Flanders, in the late 1700s the domestic sphere began to take on a new importance and meaning:

As the Industrial Revolution appeared to have taken over every aspect of working life, so the family, and by extension the house, expanded in tandem to act as an emotional counterweight. The Victorians found it useful to separate their world into a public sphere, of work and trade, and a private sphere, of home life and domesticity. The Victorian house became defined as a refuge, a place apart from the sordid aspects of commercial life, with different morals, different rules, different guidelines to protect the soul from being consumed by commerce. Or so it seemed (5).

Flanders points out that the home became a refuge from work, that it became the center of relaxation for the family unit. While the outside world hummed and whirred with new factories, new bureaucracies and new fads, the house became an increasingly secreted away and private space. It was even reflected in architecture of the time: the Georgian style of wrought-iron balcony started to be replaced with windows that could be masked by heavy curtains, preventing outsiders from looking in and at the same time, helping those inside to detach from the outside world (*Ibid.*, 8-9).¹⁵ While new inventions were certainly important to the home, they existed only to make the lives of residents more easy and comfortable.¹⁶

Further, as Flanders explains, it was women's job to keep the home comfortable, to make

¹⁵ Flanders also explains how subdivisions within the home reflected the world of the Industrial Revolution, and how the space of the home became increasingly segregated, compartmentalized and specialized towards the middle of the 19th century. For example, during Ann Radcliffe's lifetime, furniture and rooms would have had multiple uses; but by the middle of the 19th century, rooms such as the bedroom were only for family; the sitting room was for casual company; the dining room was for dinner and for entertaining dinner guests.

¹⁶ The beginning of modern conveniences in America, Merritt Lerley tells his readers, was around 1805. This is coincidentally only a decade or so after the Gothic genre became popular, and is just before the rise to popularity of the Neo-Gothic in the 1820s. For more on the way home changed to become more comfortable, see Merritt Lerley's book, *The Comforts of Home: The American House and the Evolution of Modern Convenience*.

home “the focus of existence, the source of refuge and retreat, but also of strength and renewal” (6). Certainly, from one perspective, it was women’s job to keep the house a cheery, canny place for the menfolk to return to. What Flanders is not saying here, however, is that just as the Industrial Revolution increased the emotional burden on men in the workplace, the emotional burden on women similarly increased in the home. Subsequently, women authors who address the idea of home in their works both consciously and unconsciously incorporate their attitudes towards their assigned role in the home. In other words, their perspective is different from their male contemporaries; when they point out the hidden or uncanny aspects of the home through their writing, they are also commenting on their own experiences as women, an experience which for some could certainly be termed oppression.

That oppression is also expressed in terms of the suppression of knowledge, or the supposition that women would not gain the same education as men. Philosophy, classics and science were factors that greatly informed both the fictional and real image of home, but since the sphere of the house was considered a woman’s domain, the position of women in society and their education also affected how authors wrote about home. Stereotypically, young women of the middle or upper class were expected to gain education in “accomplishments—needlework, a smattering of French, a bit of painting, and piano” (Peterson, 678). It is this so-called education that formed the focus of the gentlewoman’s acquisition of literacy. She later used her skills in order to attract a suitable mate and then take care of his household and children, but never for intellectual pursuits that would give her status outside of the family realm. In the middle- and upper-classes, this affected the form of females’ required literacy level. They needed to read and write so far as it enabled them to carry out “the religious and social mandates of the angel model” (*Ibid.*, 677)—in other words, the ideal Victorian woman was expected to be “superficially accomplished” enough to manage her husband’s household,

promote her family's well-being, and perform when necessary to entertain guests (*Ibid.*, 678). The metaphor of "domestic angel" is one often used to describe the women of this time period—one that inevitably traps the reader into choosing to believe either that men and women merely inhabited different spheres during the 19th century, or that women were forced into and caged within their role by male domination. The patriarchy's influence provided the perfect opportunity for men to censor their wives and daughters with words like "propriety" and "morality."

Morality, for one, firmly rooted in Victorian society, became a singularly powerful instrument of restriction. Morality had its basis in religion: "a religious frame of reference naturally informed the uses of the concept and terminology, for morality of course derived from Christian ethics" (Graff, 25). The state of literacy amongst Victorian women of the middle- and upper-classes was heavily influenced by the images impinged upon them by their male counterparts—it bears repeating that the Christian image of Mary, mother and caregiver, was one applied to all women, but most especially to those of the middle- and upper-classes. She would remain the epitome of the good wife, the mother, the asset, always endeavoring to bring the selfless Pièta image to mind. Her life "revolved entirely around social engagements, domestic management, and religion" (Peterson, 678). In other words, her duties were not to be intellectual, or engage with men as their equals; their duties were to be part of a separate sphere from men, a sphere of home.

Propriety, or how one's social interactions were limited based on gender, ethnicity and economic class, combined with morality into a viscous stew of psychological inhibition. For Victorian women, the male figures in the family imposed rules about the facility of reading and writing and which materials were considered outside the realm of a woman's "proper" sphere. According to Elaine Showalter in her ground-breaking work *A Literature of Their Own*

(1975) “the training of Victorian girls in repression, concealment, and self-censorship was deeply inhibiting, especially for those who wanted to write” (25). The inhibition Showalter points out not only covers the issues within the women themselves with regard to the anxiety of authorship,¹⁷ but also their susceptibility to allowing men to edit their works.¹⁸

The social structure in the context of England and America during the 19th century was already strictly patriarchal and had become even more stubbornly entrenched during the radical changes of industrialism, leaving a staunchly traditional male authority which held the image of the woman as a mere domestic in place (Zlotnick, 74). The patriarchy found it easier to extort existing gender inequality and standards of morality, controlling women’s right to education, and the contents of that education. Historical accounts totalize and reduce their privileges, further proving that cultural power and the control of social beliefs are intertwined with literacy practices (Kucich, 202).

The institution of English patriarchy caused women not only to “dominate among the illiterates” it also lead to their overall suffering from “unequal allotment of schooling in an unequal society” (Graff, 63). “Faced with sexual stratification, women found very few benefits in education” (*Ibid.*, 75). Indeed, education lacking the purpose of social mobility or freedom

¹⁷ Briefly: “Anxiety of authorship” is a term that arises first from famous literary scholar Harold Bloom’s book *The Anxiety of Influence* and is criticized by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their landmark literary study *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. The term states basically that authors feel anxiety towards both their peers and their authorial forefathers, desiring at the same time to break tradition and bring an original creativity to literature while they desire to part of literary canon, which requires the adherence to and mention of previous famous literary works. Gilbert and Gubar explain that the anxiety of male authors that they cannot write anything truly original is akin to the castration fear discussed by Freud. However, this fear does not carry over well when applied to female authors, as female authors feel a different sort of anxiety: the anxiety that the patriarchy will silence them.

¹⁸ This becomes especially important in considering how many of the women authors prior to the turn of the 20th century were forced to publish under male pseudonyms and faced serious criticism or even slander if they revealed their female identities. Charlotte Brontë, having published *Jane Eyre* under the pseudonym Currer Bell, desired nothing more than to be recognized, praised, for the female author she actually was. When she finally decided to reveal her identity, her sister Emily counseled against it, afraid of the shame and ridicule the revelation might bring.

in the quest to expand one's horizons lacks meaning. Moreover, allowing men to define "proper" reading and writing seems the norm even for families with academic patriarchs. The capture of the socialization process that surrounded women of the Victorian era is more easily described by the historical record of relationships between those women and their fathers, brothers, and husbands, who masterminded their allowance of education. Extending far beyond those considered highly literate, such as female authors, women were still confined by similar standards and forced to conform to the idea that reading and learning was for domestic purposes and not for entering the public sphere.

1.3 Gothic Architecture and the Uncanny

In America and Britain during the nineteenth century, both male and female writers of fiction were highly concerned with journeying home, creating home, the nostalgia for home and the absence of home. This preoccupation played a central role in bringing elements of the domestic to the fore, establishing the motif of home as essential to the English literary canon. The ideal of home functioned as a key component in the creation of characters' identities as individuals, rendering important the dualistic nature of the connection between physical structures and those who inhabit them: from the inside, a house or home can offer protection, but at the same time it can stifle; from the outside, it can cause longing, curiosity, alienation, and loneliness. Thus, the image of home retained the ambiguous ability to be at once intimate and yet strange, causing anxiety to arise. This anxiety was also dual: on one hand, it could be driven by the desire to leave the home or to change it; on the other, it could arise from a lack

of home or a desire to return to it. The aforementioned separation between public and private, the juxtaposition of the microcosm of home to the macrocosm of society, or rather, interior versus exterior worlds also played an important role (Bogan, 138).

The distinction afforded to the image of home also supported the integration of family and community with burgeoning new philosophies of the time period. Emily Miller Budick states: "Neoplatonism, Romanticism, Transcendentalism—these are only some of the systems whereby men and women have tried to familiarize and domesticate the world" (307).

Furthermore, Budick tells us that the motifs of house and home are prominent in the works of many nineteenth century authors, who wrote both gothic and mainstream narrative, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Susan Ann Warner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Henry James, and even Herman Melville. British authors thoroughly concerned with the idea of home include such famous figures as Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë siblings, Charles Dickens and later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. These authors' novels, which examine such issues as class and social inequality, gender inequality, the utopian society and familial strife, are at the same time examining the role these issues play in forming the basis for a very real anxiety about "home." This anxiety was increasingly felt as the structure of society changed and people became more mobile throughout the long 18th century. Moreover, it was arguably the most influential force on the home between the 19th century and post-WWII periods.

These authors were also undeniably influenced by and interested in discussing the changes in the world surrounding them. When considering the motif of home and the fact that the house became central to the idea of home, it is important to also address major social, architectural and psychoanalytical theories that touch upon that idea and its relation to the Gothic. Gothic is more than just a literary motif, or an architectural style: its motives went

beyond fantastic fiction and modifying the shape of windows, staircases and roofs. It infected society and then, in turn, was repurposed and re-influenced by the society it changed. During the 18th and 19th centuries, social theorists as well as architects had great impact on the way people lived in their homes, through the proliferation of information in the form of books and propaganda. The most famous of these with the most lasting impact was John Ruskin (1819-1900), who was primarily a theorist (and not an architect himself, which distinguishes him from his contemporaries), and whose works touched upon literature, architecture and sociology. Ruskin's theories were related to the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement as well as perpetuated the idea of separate spheres. After Ruskin, quite a few architects followed gothic principles, including Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942) and Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857-1941). They took the Gothic style of architecture into the early 20th century, where it unfortunately went out of vogue, due to changing economic conditions and the aging of the British Empire. In the 20th century, the Gothic then turned into a ghost of the 19th century; it became a fixture for the nostalgia for the era of what seemed to be social stability prior to the two World Wars. Ruskin's and his disciple's principles affected several generations of home-builders and dwellers, and his idealization of home as a sacred space stands in opposition to the Gothic. As such, his theories must be examined before moving forward towards defining the uncanny house and its role in Gothic literature.

As a cultural haunting, Gothic architecture turned into material to be addressed by philosopher-theorists such as Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), and further, it became a subject of great interest to psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud (1859-1939). Freud in particular, with his paper "The Uncanny" (1919), examines the potential for familiar spaces, situations, people and even objects to become unfamiliar. He takes both an etymological approach by examining the history of the words *heimlich* (canny/homely), *heimisch* (native), and

unheimlich (unhomely/uncanny) as well as mentions previous scholarship on the subject and criticizing it. He then tries another approach, which is to define the uncanny through phenomena, persons, places and things that elicit fear or a feeling of unease.

Freud's theory also set the stage for later 20th century architectural theorists like Anthony Vidler as well as feminist and psychoanalytic theorists such as Hélène Cixous to critique and expand his definition of the uncanny. Hélène Cixous's paper "Fiction and its Phantoms" provides an essential critique of Freud's theory that the double arises from castration fear. She refutes that the double *only* occurs on such occasions, and further, explains why it is necessary to explain that it is the sense of loss, not of castration, that is important when addressing the double in Gothic texts. She also addresses the problematic vision of Freud's reading of the female characters in the text. Finally, Anthony Vidler, in his seminal work on uncanny architecture, *The Architectural Uncanny*, combines Freud's theory with other theories on the occupation of and building of inhabited spaces and dwellings. Examining these modern theorists will provide connections between the socio-cultural influences on the Gothic and its heritage, as well as provide insight into the evolution of the home as uncanny space into the modern era.

1.3.1 Gothic, Architecture and Society in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Gothic as a motif is interconnected in the genres of architecture and literature, and continued to be so for at least one hundred years. Beginning in the late 18th century and continuing until the *fin de siècle*, Gothic was an important part of the public's consciousness:

they saw it everywhere. Some authors created or lived in their own gothic manses, and critics and scholars took an increasing interest in the genre. According to Kenneth Clark, the Gothic Revival's motives

. . . were never very strictly architectural, were rather literary, patriotic, archaeological, and moral, and though this does not account for the movement's failure . . . it suggests that the chief legacy of the Gothic Revival is to be found not in buildings, but in a body of principles and ideals (Clark, 219).

In other words, Gothic, from its inception, was motivated by more than simple aesthetic values, which separated it from other architectural styles. While Clark goes on to point out that Gothic architecture has deep connections to a variety of genres, the one that benefits our discussion the most is that of its relationship to literature.

Beginning in the 18th century, architecture and literature were often considered together. In fact, the aforementioned forefather of Gothic, Horace Walpole, was also very important to the spread of Gothic into both culture and art. Although he did not originate the style, through his writing fiction and his passion for archaeology, and most importantly, through his building of Strawberry Hill, his gothic manor, he was a highly influential figure in the 18th century Gothic imagination (Clark, 41).¹⁹ Having purchased Strawberry Hill in 1747, renovations for its metamorphosis into the Gothic manse Walpole dreamt of when he wrote *The Castle of Otranto* were completed in 1753. Kenneth Clark says of Walpole's efforts that "Walpole deserves his place as the central figure in every account of eighteenth-century medievalism" (Clark, 41). Indeed, Walpole should be given credit for spreading his notion that his Gothic castle from his novels was more than imaginary, it was buildable. And while his was considered the first foray into making the Gothic manses of novels into reality, it was

¹⁹ Additionally Clark provides an account of the extent of Walpole's Strawberry Hill's influence on the romantic and Gothic imagination of those who read his books. See Clark, 46-65.

certainly not the last. Further, Walpole's writing was responsible for disseminating the concept that Gothic ruins were more connected to the medieval past: "any ruin might inspire melancholy, but only a Gothic ruin could inspire the chivalry of a crusader or the pious enthusiasm of a monk" (*Ibid.*, 48). Thus, the creation of Strawberry Hill was significant both for its embodiment of the Gothic imagination, a symbol of Gothic literature manifesting in the physical world, and for inspiring later generations of authors, designers and builders to use Gothic elements in their creations.

Strawberry Hill was built in the late 1700s, but prior to 1840, not very many architects were interested in incorporating elements of the Gothic into their designs; however, John Ruskin's publications changed everything (*Ibid.*, 192). Victorian art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) began to publish a series of articles in *Architectural Magazine* under a pseudonym, entitled "The Poetry of Architecture" starting in 1837; ten years later, his book *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) which was arguably the greatest apology for architectural-social theory written in the 19th century and was incredibly popular, launched him into fame. John Ruskin's theories gained the most popularity after the Gothic Revival style of architecture was already very popular:

The Gothic Revival was well established when Ruskin published *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), which was an immediate success, encapsulating the mood of the period rather than creating new ideas. He argued that architecture should be true, with no hidden structure, no veneers or finishes, and no carvings made by machines, and that Beauty in architecture was only possible if inspired by nature (Stevens, "Gothic Revival").

The Gothic Revival was an extremely influential movement on the space of the house. It began in England as an effort to revive Gothic forms, including lighting, spatial treatment, hand-made furniture and asymmetric facades to houses. The Gothic Revival heavily influenced other movements such as the Domestic Revival and the Arts and Crafts

movements, and provided inspiration to artists, artisans, designers, and architects from the mid-18th century all the way until the early 20th century just prior to the First World War. Although *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which adopts an apologia structure of seven cross-sections between architecture and other fields, is often considered to be the most important work of its time, in consideration of how long Gothic forms were popular in some shape or another since Walpole's time, his apology is rather unoriginal. That does not, however, diminish its importance, as it gives the best summary of the movement itself. Further, Ruskin was both an influence to and influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, which emphasized utilizing natural designs as well as hand-made methods to create them (in opposition to the increasing amount of industrialization and factory-made furniture and other accoutrements of the home).

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, these philosophies are connected to the world of literature through poetry, the most classical form of literature:

It is the centralization and protectress of this sacred influence, that Architecture may be regarded by us with most serious thought. We may live without her and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her. . . . there are but two strong conquerers of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture; and the latter in some sort includes the former, and is mightier in its reality; it is well to have, not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life (Ruskin, 1849, 224).

Architecture is passed down in one form or another: each era informs the next era's concepts of structure and form; the composition of building materials is passed from one generation to the next and possibly improved upon; past styles are re-incorporated into new styles (or, conversely, rejected in favor of their opposites). This is because building materials, made of stone or wood, lasted longer than the lifetime of the average human being; buildings could be handed down to a later generation, along with the ideas that helped construct them. Ruskin explains that oral traditions and the written word, which one might consider poetry

representative of, are similarly passed down to future generations. He therefore concludes that both architecture and poetry are the cornerstones of history. According to Ellen Eve Frank, this passage also tells us that history may be read positively in that Ruskin tells us to “conquer forgetfulness” (Frank, 219). But at the same time, if one cannot remember, the architecture and literature would take on qualities of the uncanny. Thus, Ruskin’s conclusion is in affinity with Freud’s: nostalgia and memory, irreducible from architecture and literature play a large part in our interpretation of both; the familiarity or unfamiliarity of the two and the anxiety they have the potential to evoke are strongly related to the way we interpret the world around us.

Ruskin’s architectural and social criticism also relates to the Gothic and to literature through his essay entitled “The Nature of Gothic,” included in the three volume collection *The Stones of Venice*; therein he explores the uses of the term Gothic while describing both the buildings of Venice and the social constructs that both support and disparage those structures. He defines Gothic as visible in two forms: within the building and within the builder. If in the building, the qualities he assigns are: “1. Savageness, 2. Changefulness, 3. Naturalism, 4. Grotesqueness, 5. Rigidity, 6. Redundance” (Ruskin, 1851-53, 155). In the builder, Gothic becomes: “1. Savageness or Rudeness, 2. Love of Change, 3. Love of Nature, 4. Disturbed Imagination, 5. Rigidity, 6. Redundance” (*Loc.cit.*). Gothic is thus a conglomeration of qualities, not any particular one quality. (One notes this definition fits closely with that given by scholars of Gothic literature, such as Botting and Punter, which were discussed earlier in this chapter.) Losing one or more of those elements does not change the essential Gothic nature of the architecture, but removing most of them would set it apart from the Gothic genre. While Ruskin’s definition certainly aims to identify specific details and qualities of Gothic buildings, it is underwhelming in its ambiguity and overwhelming in its obvious commentary

on the people who construct and inhabit those spaces. Gothic is therefore more than a style or a form, it is imbued with “various moral or imaginative elements” that contribute to its place in the public imagination (*Ibid.*, 205).

According to Alan Windsor, in Ruskin’s attempt to define the term “Gothic” he actually committed what seems to be an intentional faux pas: instead of mainly devoting his attention to breaking down and defining the way the Gothic edifices were erected, he “used the subject as a platform for a much wider and deeper argument about the cultural and social morality of modern Europe” (24).²⁰ In other words, by describing both the form and the people who built it, Ruskin’s attention is also on the culture brought forth by the space. For Ruskin, Gothic does not necessarily describe the architecture of northern Europe, or describe the architecture invented by the Goths. He is aware that the style has more to do with the feelings it evokes of “sternness and rudeness” (Ruskin, 1851-53, 156). Further, he posits it offers a juxtaposition to the Romans’ whose civilization became the cornerstone of all that is civilized in Western Europe. Ruskin tells his readers that this particular juxtaposition gave birth to the equating of Gothic with the Middle Ages: “the word Gothic became a term of unmitigated contempt, not unmixed with aversion” (*Loc.cit.*). He concludes that despite its “rude and wild” nature, the Gothic “deserves our profoundest reverence” (*Loc.cit.*).²¹ Despite eliciting feelings of disdain, Ruskin’s determination is that we should respect Gothic architecture, probably because of its innate quality of being honed by man’s instincts. These instincts are, in turn, informed by the building itself as art. Art, he says, should inspire its inhabitants as well as its

²⁰ Windsor also points out that Ruskin, in focusing on culture over architecture, also misses the fact that structures such as pointed arches, stained glass windows, vaulted ceilings, pillars, spires and reliefs in Venice actually differed greatly from other parts of Italy, as well as from similar structures in France, Britain and Germany, to which he purported to be offering a comparison. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Windsor, 25-26.

²¹ In this sense, he is perhaps evoking the Burkean sublime—we cannot understand it, therefore we either reject it or are in awe of it.

creators to certain behaviors that follow a moral code of conduct. If it does not, he reminds us, the purpose of the art/building becomes murky and shadowed (Ruskin, *Op.cit.*, 191-192). This inspiration, however, must come with balance: “there is virtue in the measure, and error in the excess, of both these characters of mind, and in both of the styles which they have created” (*Ibid.*, 205). To be truly Gothic architecture, therefore, is to insert a certain level of ambiguity into human creation, and by extension, into our interpretations of our domestic way of life.

Beyond Ruskin’s theories on architecture and the Gothic, his writings are important because he both examined gender roles in the home. Regarding gender issues, he was an advocate of the idea of separate spheres. Scholarship has pointed out that one of his most enduring works, *Sesame and Lilies*, is credited as one of the “foundational apologies” that forms the basis for liberal arts education (Jones, 241). Unfortunately, it also contains two essays, “Of Kings’ Treasuries” and “Of Queens’ Gardens,” which “offer gender-specific guides for reading that are founded in ‘natural’ differences between the sexes” (*Ibid.*)²² Of this work, Nina Auerbach offers the critique that it serves as an example of the “undiluted form” of “the Victorian stereotypes we love to hate” (1982, 59).²³ The Victorian Angel, as described by Ruskin (and defined earlier in this chapter), is termed “a bizarre object of worship” by Auerbach (*Op.cit.*, 72). While men are depicted as archangels, angels of vengeance or protection, and masculine angels’ wings take them anywhere, Auerbach explains that the female angel is a captive in her own home, which is radically different from the image we have of the freedom of winged creatures. Basically, she explains, “the Victorian angel is defined by her boundaries” (*Loc.cit.*). Instead of domestic angels (women) having freedom,

²² Jones also points out, however, that reading Ruskin as a supporter of separate spheres has also been refuted. See also Birch and O’Gorman. Birch and O’Gorman’s book addresses the topic of Ruskin and gender from a variety of angles, including education and childhood, feminism and women’s rights, and masculinity.

²³ See also pp. 58-61.

their lack of it is what differentiates them from their male counterparts and becomes an expression of their oppression. This lack of freedom, binding women to the sphere of the domestic without hope of escape, significantly influences women's rebellion against or subversion of social norms. Subversion/rebellion thus juxtaposes against the homely/canny, and emerges as an important underlying theme of uncanny texts.

Ruskin's social commentary on the place of women in the home, however, was merely a summary of the prevailing opinions of the time, which painted the house as a sacred space and positioned the woman as caretaker of that space. The doctrine of separate spheres put pressure on women to refine men's morals and affections; in the home, this translated into a romanticized image of family and house:

By the nineteenth century, these economic and social changes were idealized in a vision of the "family circle" as a private and protected place, the peaceful repository of higher moral and spiritual virtues deemed to be threatened by commercialization—a safe arena for the sentiments and affections of family members. The doctrine of separate spheres represented family as a sanctuary from the evils of the world outside, and the cult of true womanhood asserted that women were peculiarly suited to their new role as priestesses of the sanctuary by their unique qualities of passionlessness, piety, passivity, and domesticity, which rendered them morally superior to men (Halttunen, 140).

The space of home, where the family slept, ate and enjoyed leisure activities, was a sacred space in the 19th century not only because it provided privacy in juxtaposition to commerce's public sphere, but also because it came to symbolize a harmonious place where women created a haven for their families. As mentioned previously, women's role was to maintain the moral and spiritual sanctity of the home so that those who inhabited it could live comfortably, safely away from the perceived dangers of the outside world. This overly canny or familiar ideal necessarily had its opposite in the outside world of business, which came to be considered immoral, full of crime, passionate and debasing to those who worked in it. Therefore, men (who necessarily worked outside the home) required a retreat into the home,

and, according to the doctrine of separate spheres, also required women to cleanse them of the stain of the outside world. In this way, women took on a role of caretaker, of "priestess" of the sacred space of home; further, qualities attributed to the sacred were thrust upon them. Inseparable from the domestic, they acquired its symbolic status. This status was not limited to British women, either; in America, where women looked towards England for all of the latest trends in domestic living and decorating, the doctrine of separate spheres had also taken firm hold.

Ruskin's theories continued to influence architects and artisans in both Britain and America until the turn of the century.²⁴ For example, Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942), one of the architects who took up the flag of the Arts and Crafts movement as well as preached Ruskin's ideals, set up a school of Ruskinian theory in 1886. He received government approval for his school in 1888, and it became one of the cornerstones for the creation of the Guild of Handicraft (Davey, 139). Charles Francis Voysey (1857-1941), whose temperament

²⁴ Ruskin's and Morris's influence also extended towards the U.S., particularly to California and New York, as well as areas that were touched by Gold Rush money in the 1880s. For example, in Bennington, Vermont, where Shirley Jackson made her home, the Park-McCullough family used their Gold Rush fortune to build a several-storied mansion with hand-made interlocking wood floors, lavish wallpaper, multiple sitting rooms, a wrap-around porch, a cupola, and more bedrooms than family members or guests. The mansion, however, required so much upkeep that by the 1950s, the family's fortune had dwindled so much that in order to keep the mansion standing in perpetuity, a non-profit fund was made for its upkeep and the remaining fortune was put into the fund. The house today stands with its wallpaper peeling, in continuous need of repair, a testament to the unsustainable practices of Gothic Revival architecture. Considering the family fortune was already running out by the time Shirley Jackson moved to Bennington and that the family members were quite reclusive, it is not unlikely that the prosperity and decline experienced by the Park-McCullough family provided some inspiration for Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* as well as some of her short stories.

Moreover, in the San Francisco Bay area, prior to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, Gothic architecture was in vogue. In fact, Shirley Jackson's grandfather Samuel C. Bugbee had a booming architectural design and building business and his designs were most often in the Gothic style. His firm built many famous buildings such as the Grand Opera House and several mansions for tycoons like the Stanton family and the Colton family. Many of these structures burnt down during the 1906 Earthquake and Fire; however, some examples remain. Those that are not private homes are listed in various architectural guides of the San Francisco area. Some houses are also listed, most of which are in the Italianate style. See Cerny, 81-83. See also p. 273 for an example of a stick Italianate house by Charles S. Bugbee, Shirley Jackson's uncle. The house is called "Hugh Craig House," which might be indicative of some early inspiration for the Hugh Crain House of *The Haunting of Hill House*. They also built the Church of the Good Shepherd in West Berkeley. See Thompson, "East Bay Then and Now: This West Berkeley Landmark is a Proud Survivor."

and personal beliefs were similar to Ashbee's, especially in his respect for Ruskin, different from Ashbee in that he favored building asymmetrical buildings that put priority on the internal space rather than trying to make an aesthetically pleasing external façade. Voysey felt that a building's staircases, windows and hallways were far more important than the need for a superficial symmetry. This idea is essential to Gothic in both literature and architecture, in that the literature of terror depends upon the element of the internalization of space. As we will see in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, Gothic architecture's emphasis on the internal clearly affects the inhabitants; Hill House's architect has purposefully made the internal shape of the house superior to its edifice, and its slightly skewed shape causes great confusion for the characters.

However, Ashbee's and Voysey's theories and beliefs were not to remain very influential after the 1890s. They were supplanted and contradicted those of Edward Schroeder Prior (1852-1932), who had barely anything in common with them, except in that they all had a great respect for Ruskin. Prior felt that by the turn of the century, there were no more new Gothic architects and those who lingered were not very influential (Davey, 70).²⁵ His books on Gothic architecture were widely read and praised, and in his position as professor of Fine Art at Cambridge, he was in a unique position of influence. Eventually he founded the Cambridge school of architecture, so it is undeniable that his ideas were disseminated to the next major generation of designers and builders (*Ibid.*, 68). Because he believed that Gothic was a thing of the past, his theories allowed room for Gothic architecture, and by extension Gothic space, to haunt the architects, artists and authors of the modern era.

²⁵ See also Prior, 145.

Voysey had few commissions after 1906, and those he got, he made overly Gothic, which according to Peter Davey, decreased his popularity (*Ibid.*, 154). Additionally, Prior faded out as an architect because of his overly strict adherence to Ruskin's separate spheres concept, which, with the rise of women's equality movements, was increasingly criticized. Individual craftsmanship preached by Ruskin and William Morris was under attack as well, as with the inception of the assembly line, the automobile and electricity, corporations and factory-owners had an ever increasing amount of influence in the sphere of home; everyone wanted the new inventions to propel them down the roadways and illuminate their houses with ambient, smokeless light. This was even truer after World War I:

A few anachronistic clients clung to the free style after the War, but Arts and Crafts architecture had been dying for a decade before 1914. Without a radical change in society, it was impossible for the movement to have any more permanent basis than the production of luxuries for the upper middle class. When upper middle class taste began to change, the architect and designer had to change too. As the social ideals of Morris and Ruskin lost their force in the imagination of the time, the Gothic spirit withered, and architects turned increasingly to classic styles for inspiration. The few Arts and Crafts men who stuck to Gothic principles were increasingly left out (*Loc.cit.*).

It was not only the First World War that forever changed the social structure and affected the way people lived in and built their homes; in the years leading up to the war, the changes were already visible in the decline of Gothic as a popular architectural style. Further, because of the way society was changing, moving towards mechanized production and away from artisan craft, designers of the Gothic style also had to adapt. In addition, the Victorian values of separate spheres for women and men were also evolving, and with them, the way people lived in their homes necessarily had to change.

In short, Gothic authors who made their dreams into reality like Horace Walpole were extremely important because they provided the cornerstone for the revival of Gothic architecture. Moreover, Ruskin's influence, as well as the influence of those architects and

thinkers who built upon his ideas, was the mainstay of more than a generation of people who inhabited the homes of the Victorian period. As such, these theories are essential to understanding the evolution of the concept of home through into the 20th century. They are also important to writing about literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, as they would have inspired the authors who lived within the walls of those Gothic spaces.

1.3.2 The Uncanny Home in Modern Literature

As precursor to Bachelard, Vidler and Freud, Ruskin's philosophical inquiries and apologies played an incredibly important role. By influencing close to a century's worth of social, architectural and literary theory, Ruskin provided one of the cornerstones for the way people viewed the home. However, the world at the turn of the century was not a kind world to the perpetuation of the same kind of Gothic as that of the 19th century, and accordingly its form had to change. One reason was that tax reform began to affront British exports and imports. While the 19th century had seen increases in profit and British control, the early 20th century saw the beginning of the collapse of this power structure. Virtually all of Britain's main trading partners—European nations, the U.S., Australia and Canada—erected high import taxes on British goods. As a result, there was less ready money available and bigger projects stagnated. Peter Davey explains:

If you were wealthy and middle class, the years after 1906 were not a good time to build. But even if you were secure enough to do so, your attitude to what was proper building was likely to be very different from that of the previous generation (154).

In other words, people who already owned Gothic homes were willing to contribute to their upkeep, but no new homes were being built. The Gothic's decadent style was simply too expensive to become the main building technique of the early 20th century. As such, turn of the century Gothic literature placed an emphasis on such homes as the locus of mysterious events; because these buildings were erected at a time perceived to be more economically stable, they gained the uncanny ability to recall both nostalgia for that stability and dismay at its decay. Moreover, manor houses, such as the summer home that Merricat and Constance inhabit in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* become symbolic relics of affluence, when Gothic Revival manses were being built and well-to-do families felt their properties were not only safe but could be improved and expanded. In contrast to these more modern houses, the mansions of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Rebecca* pre-date the Gothic Revival period; as such, their uncanny nature recalls a more uncertain, amorphous architecture. Moreover, the houses could be anywhere from one hundred to several hundred years old and are thus connected more intimately with the social structure of by-gone eras.

As mentioned earlier, by the end of the 19th century, the home was increasingly associated with both privacy and hidden social problems; this in turn influenced the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis by catching the attention of one Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The ambiguity associated with the architecture of the homes in Gothic works is essential to its nature, and Freud's treatise on "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche," 1919) remains pivotal in the study of space as disturbed by repressed emotions or nostalgia. Written at the beginning of the modern period, it may seem redundant to compare it to modern literature; however, its publication was prior to two world wars and a technological boom that changed not only how we live, but where we live and what we use in the spaces we live in. It

is therefore important to consider "The Uncanny" as both a precursor and a cornerstone to the way modern authors consider the home and its ability to elicit terror, longing, and happiness.

As mentioned previously, the associated feudal system and religious superstitions manifest an image of excess; additionally, they call forth nostalgia and anxiety by their very nature: an uncanny nature. He not only discusses the very same fear of the unknown and what arouses it that is present within the Gothic genre, but also discusses how nostalgia for a "familiar" or "homely" (*heimlich*) situation may be shrouded upon recollection, rendering it "unfamiliar" or "unknown" (*unheimlich*) (Freud, 1919, 219). His fundamental argument is that "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (*Ibid.*, 220). Therefore, his definition draws a connection between the nostalgia the Gothic evokes and the uncanny atmosphere it contains, as well as explains how the uncanny, derived from once-familiar objects, places or people, can lose familiarity, and frighten us.

Freud begins by mentioning the origins of the concept of the uncanny. First, he discusses Jentsch's study on the uncanny. He explains that, according to Jentsch, feeling that a person, place, thing or event is uncanny is very subjective (*Loc.cit.*). Freud's approach, however, contrasts with Jentsch's because Freud wishes to study the uncanny in a more scientific, compartmentalized way through treating literature and language as human experience. This in turn recycles uncanny phenomenon and persons into viable material for a psychoanalytic case-study approach. Further, Jentsch posits that uncanny is dependent upon intellectual uncertainty, whereas Freud makes the point that the well-known can also function as uncanny. After establishing that subjectivity is the largest fault in Jentsch's argument, Freud also points out how that flaw may be ameliorated. By taking either an academic-linguistic-historical perspective and examining the meanings that are associated with the word *unheimlich*, or, by gathering "all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions,

experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what all these examples have in common" (*Loc.cit.*). Basically, Freud's approach is twofold: an etymology and a phenomenology of the uncanny. Freud continues his definition by pointing out that uncanny is frightening because it is unknown, but that not everything new or foreign must necessarily be frightening (*Ibid.*, 221). Indeed, upon sojourning to a distant land for vacation, one may find that country strange and its customs unfamiliar, but have a very pleasant time just the same. Thus, it is important to differentiate Freud's uncanny from its predecessor's because he indicates the close connection between canny and uncanny. The familiar and the unfamiliar are like a spectrum, with one running into the other until it becomes the other.

Freud's analysis runs the gambit from linguistic to literary to psychoanalytic. He begins with an etymology of the word uncanny (*unheimlich*) in a diverse array of languages. In what follows, he draws upon German fairytale and literature, in particular E.T.A Hoffman's short story, "The Sandman." The story of the Sandman details the childhood and adulthood of the protagonist Nathaniel. The story begins with his mother warning him to sleep, or the Sandman would come. He ignores her on more than one occasion, and ends up witnessing his father's murder and being threatened with blindness by the perpetrator, whom Nathaniel believes to be the Sandman of fairy tales who threw dust in the eyes of naughty children who would not go to sleep.²⁶ Nathaniel cannot forget the terrible sight of his father's death, nor can forget his fear of losing his eyesight. Later in life, when he is engaged to be married to Clara, he encounters a man who reminds him of his father's murderer, Coppelius. Suspicious, he follows Coppelius only to encounter Coppelius's "daughter"—the doll Olympia. Olympia, an

²⁶ This is because on one of the occasions he snuck out of bed to see the Sandman, the murderer (Coppelius) threatened to poke out his eyes with hot coals.

automaton and symbol of the double, replaces Clara as the object of his affections. In the events that follow, urged on by Coppelius's sinister machinations, Nathaniel slowly descends into madness. He suffers a mental breakdown, from which he almost recovers, but, relapsing, attempts to kill Clara, and then succeeds in killing himself.

By including this story in his analysis of the uncanny, it is undeniable that Freud means to include the Gothic. His most significant point, that the uncanny is related to repression and anxiety arising from that repression, is certainly related to the ambiguous nostalgia evoked by the Gothic genre. He explains:

. . . . if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs* (Freud, 241).

Psychoanalytic theory reasons that any repressed emotional impulse can give rise to anxiety—an anxiety that implies the repressed emotions have taken on ambiguity. They therefore become a type of frightening thing, he asserts, which is called the uncanny. The uncanny is also something that should have remained secret or hidden but is instead revealed, like the terrible secret that Coppelius murdered Nathaniel's father.

A second important point in Freud's analysis is his discussion of the double. The double is important to the discussion of the Female Gothic because it is the symbolic manifestation of repressed fears and forms an integral part of the Uncanny, by Freud's definition. Freud addresses the double through its manifestation as Olympia, who, as an automaton, mimics a human likeness. Yet it is her eyes (which actually are human eyes) that convince Nathaniel she is not only a doll: her disturbingly human-like qualities, which she has gained through her emotive eyes. The double is not a symbol limited to Hoffman's tales, of course, nor is it unique to Freudian analysis. In fact, Freud credits Otto Rank, another

psychoanalyst, with the original conception of the double—Rank connects it with mirror images, shadows, spirits, souls, and fear, and Freud states it “was originally an insurance against the death of the ego” (*Ibid.*, 235). Rank’s essay “The Doppelgänger” (*Der Doppelgänger*, 1914), is the first time he links the double to overarching themes in literature and anthropology such as “the soul as duality,” the rational versus the superstitious, and the mortal versus the immortal. As it concerns the works presented for close reading in this dissertation, the complex presence of opposing dual urges—such as the desire to conform to the social order alongside urge to rebel against it—represented by the double is particularly conspicuous. Rank articulates that the double truly depicts this struggle because its symbolism shows “man’s eternal conflict with himself and others, the struggle between his need for likeness and desire for difference” (Rank, 99). Man, or woman, for that matter, cannot reconcile his or her longing for individuality with his or her yearning to achieve a state of continuity with others through engaging in behaviors such as adhering to social structures or participating in rituals. Inability to reconcile this conflict, therefore, allows the repressed fear that created the double in the first place to overwhelm the subject.

In a later publication, *The Double (Der Doppelgänger, 1925)*, Rank expounds on his initial theory of the double from the essay of the same name. He states that the double is a construction of the ego that can appear in many forms—twins, shadows, portraits, reflections in mirrors or mirror-like substances, genetic traits (which are reflections of the previous generation) (de Mijolla, 434). These forms are found in animism, and in primitive religions, are guarantors of immortality (*Loc.cit.*). But their positive power to give life beyond death also has a dark side: they may portend death itself, which can cause an inherent sense of persecution, fear and anxiety. In his study, Rank considers the double in light of two different types of scholarship: anthropology and psychopathology. He approaches the former through

Freudian analysis similar to that discussed in "Totem and Taboo." Basically, he studies the double as representative of the soul, related to rituals and sacrifice, and totems and taboos themselves (de Mijolla, 435). His second approach, through psychopathology, is explained through studying fiction: by examining the authors' personalities and the themes, motifs and symbolism related to the use of the double in their texts, one can form an understanding of primary narcissism, and representations of the ego in literature.

After Freud and Rank, Ralph Tymms discussed the double in his book *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (1949). Tymms's theory explains the double as allegory or as a projection of the unconscious (Tucker, xv). Conversely, Rank and Freud both utilize Freudian narcissism to explain the phenomenon of doubling—meaning that the double represents that which complicates the formation of the personality in a healthy way. Tymms does not, however, make any meaningful or deliberate connection between the double as presented in literature and the issue of gender. Psychoanalytic interpretations of the double thus needed expansion in order to be useful to studies of Gothic literature. To that end, several Gothic critics and scholars have picked up the double as a major motif, and have expounded upon its appearance.²⁷ Thus, it may be said that the double itself has been recognized as important to the Gothic genre.

²⁷ Most apropos to the discussion of the double in this dissertation is probably that of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*; this is especially true of their discussion of Mary Shelley (213-247) and of the comparison they draw between Jane and Bertha in *Jane Eyre* (347-358). For examples of Gothic in the modern period that feature doubles, see Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*. While Dryden's work does not overly concern the Female Gothic or the Domestic Gothic, it provides perspective on the use of the double in the Gothic Genre overall, especially at the turn of the 20th century. For a comparison of theories on the double that are often applied to Gothic literature in analysis, including those of Kant, Blanchot, Freud, Benjamin and Kafka, see Dmitri Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy*. See also Nicholas Royle's theory, which provides a more overreaching perspective of the uncanny and the importance of the double, in *The Uncanny: An Introduction*.

Rank's and Freud's analysis of the meaning of the double is significant to many works of literature beyond those of the German Gothic exemplified in E.T.A. Hoffman's tales. Fin de siècle Gothic featured novellas such as *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde, and *The Strange Tale of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, both of which deal with the double and its relationship to the theme of the struggle between good and evil. Yet in works by female authors, the double may have figured into literature earlier than the late 19th century. As relates to this dissertation, the connections are numerous. Ann Radcliffe uses the double in the form of imagined ghostly presences throughout her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; Emily Brontë takes those specters to the next level by uniting her doubled characters, Catherine and Heathcliff, as ghosts in *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* removes the spectral element and creates a double of flesh and blood for Jane in the form of Bertha. In Dickinson's works, the double is present in such poems as "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—" (F407), in which the speaker describes the space of her brain as haunted by her own repressed anxiety. Further, it appears in the struggle between longing for individuality and togetherness renders many of her poems' speakers in a liminal placement, pining for a home or a place to belong to. Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" deals with the double in her narrator's struggle to come to terms with being both wife and creative writer, which is embodied by the shadowy wallpaper woman haunting her sickroom. On one hand, in the works of Daphne du Maurier, particularly *Rebecca*, the double is of import to the narrator's feelings towards her husband's first wife, Rebecca because she desires to both be Rebecca and destroy her. On the other hand, Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* concerns Eleanor's search for her double—her soul—she perceives it in one character, then another, but finally finds it in Hill House itself. The house, as the double of Eleanor, leads to her destruction. Each one of these authors emphasizes that the double is an important factor in

the intrusion of the uncanny in the house. The double in their works is substantial, connected with both repression and powerful creative force that is both desired and feared by the central female characters. As in many stories that deal with doubling, the repressed emotions, once faced, lead to the possibility of being overwhelmed and having her individuality destroyed, as with Eleanor and the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper."

In summation, Freud's definition of the homely and unhomely and his explanation of how they interact are incredibly relevant to the terror elicited by the Gothic, as is Rank's consideration of the possibility of doubling, which may be extended to apply to space as well as people. When the home, which is considered a familiar refuge, is suddenly revealed as an unhomely space, the resulting shock resounds. Moreover, Freud's uncanny is necessarily an ambiguous term, a term that he defines by circumscribing absolute meaning and by giving a multitude of synonyms and antonyms as descriptors. His enquiry is anchored in readings of literature and human experience through the eyes of an analyst, and is thus extremely limited. After Freud, several theorists made very important contributions to extending and revising his theory, and it is in those additions that we will find a closer definition of the uncanny to describe the phenomena occurring in the Gothic house.

1.3.3 The Evolution of Freud's "Uncanny"

With the doctrine of separate spheres affecting the image of the home during the 19th century and the way the house itself became increasingly isolated and private, the home became an ideal setting for mysterious events. It may therefore be said that the uncanny

reveals or uncovers “evil” (transgression) in what is considered to be “sacred” (home). As the 19th century progressed, family space became more decentralized and communal space more private; as time progressed and families started to live in separate spaces rather than together, the extended family norm slowly became a nuclear family norm. With a lack of community surveillance and a lack of multiple individuals inhabiting one house, Freud’s writings take on new meaning (Halttunen, 143).²⁸ The crimes committed in the house thus become transgressions perpetrated in an area that is *near* one’s own home, but secreted away behind walls, an ideal setting for the trepidation evoked in Female Gothic novels.

Freud’s theory of uncanny in combination with the way social theory of the 19th and 20th centuries is not enough to explain how the uncanny is related to domestic Gothic and the terror that Gothic evokes when centered on the motif of the house, however. Commentary and criticism of Freud’s uncanny will lend several additional dimensions that are necessary to the discussion. First of all, Freud’s theory is dependent upon one of the concepts that remained central to his psychoanalytic theory throughout his career: the castration theory. Second, as Hélène Cixous’s criticism has indicated, Freud’s reading of “The Sandman” purposefully ignores the position and viewpoint of the female characters in the story, which detracts from the power of his argument; women, as the purveyors of domestic space, figure in the story as both doubles and revealers of the uncanny and should therefore have a prominent role in the discussion. Additionally, Freud favors an anthropological or psychological approach to the uncanny, despite the fact that it may also be approached through philosophy, experience and emotion (as well as psychoanalysis). His preference, however, has left room for other scholars

²⁸ Jenny Bourne Taylor also argues that the development of mental science alongside that of criminology and the privatization of the home contributed to new metamorphoses in the realm of fiction, including changes in Gothic fiction and sensational novels. See Taylor, 1988, 1.

such as Gaston Bachelard to explain these short-comings and explore the uncanny in other contexts. In the modern period, these additions to Freud's theory of the uncanny both broaden its definition and modify it slightly so that becomes more applicable to 20th century society and thought.

First, Freud depicts the uncanny as a phenomenon dependent upon fear of castration, especially because of his use of "The Sandman" as an exemplary text, since "The Sandman" centers around Nathaniel's fear of losing his eyes to a mysterious, horrific fairytale monster. It also concerns Nathaniel's distorted vision—he becomes unable to discern humans from automatons, and ends up falling in love with the doll Olympia. Further, the villain Coppélius/Coppola (the Sandman) disguises himself as a maker of eye-glasses, clock-works and glass eyes. All of these are, according to Freud, essential to the uncanny nature of the story and Nathaniel's recollections (Freud, 1919, 228-229). Freud's dependency upon castration theory makes his criticism of "The Sandman" into male-centric theory, and by extension, his version of the uncanny becomes supported by a patriarchal social structure. However, his reading of both the short story and the uncanny itself seems to limit the critical potential of both the uncanny and the text of the story.

While Freud's theory of castration is not without merit, "The Sandman," as with most Gothic-uncanny tales, is not really about castration fear as much as it is about fear of loss, or fear of death. Nathaniel associates his fear of losing his eyes with the threat against his own life and that of his father, but represses his fears. These trepidations come back to haunt him in the form of uncanny visions and episodes akin to *déjà vu*. Similarly, in Gothic fiction, an uncanny discourse is established through loss—as will be explored in later chapters of this dissertation, characters in Gothic fiction are haunted by loss of life or love, loss of a home, and

loss of their place in society. If such loss has not yet occurred in the text, then the trepidation of that loss can follow the characters with its ghostly presence, eliciting anxiety.

Especially for female characters, loss is not only associated with social expectation or romance, but also with an acknowledged or unacknowledged frustration with loss of potential or repressed creativity. Because Freud's reading of "The Sandman" concentrates solely on Nathaniel's perspective, readers are unable to determine how Clara deals with his fear and concern, as well as her own. Therefore, Cixous also very astutely criticizes Freud for his lack of attention to Clara's role in the story, as well as the role played by the uncanny double of the fiancée, the doll Olympia. Moreover, Cixous asserts, by concentrating on the castration fear and eliminating Jentsch's requirement of certainty on an intellectual level to establish the homely, Freud can focus on the protagonist Nathaniel and ignore the part of the narrative that focuses on Olympia and Clara. In stringent terms, she says that Freud has re-written an ambiguous narrative into a straightforward form:

As a condensed narrative, Freud's story is singularly altered in the direction of a linear, logical account of Nathaniel and strongly articulated as a kind of "case history," going from childhood remembrances to the delirium and the ultimate tragic end (Cixous, 533).

Freud has, in effect, written the female narrative out of the story and has changed its shape from fiction into a history of Nathaniel's mental state. It also allows him to change the flow of time, which in Hoffman's version is ambiguous and told through different narrators. In Freud's retelling and analysis, "The Sandman" seems as if it were written in a linear fashion and told by one narrator. This allows Freud to remove the female element from the story and reframe the Gothic double (female) into a masculine fear of the feminine. Nathaniel's fear of the Sandman as well as his fatal attraction to Olympia are confused with his rejection of his fiancée. Therefore, if one does not take into account Clara-the-fiancée's feelings towards

Olympia-the-doll as well as her narrative voice, "The Sandman" merely renders woman as an object of desire.²⁹

Cixous is not the only critical voice against Freud's limited purview of the uncanny; Moers also reminds us that Freud never referenced women writers, or their Gothic creations. The only reference he makes to women, she says, is to the monstrous nature of the female genitals; he never acknowledges the Female Gothic, and never uses a novel or a short story by a female writer to help outline his point (Moers, 109). Nancy Chodrow, too, points out that Freud's reading of women leaves much to be wanted, especially in terms of how he interprets their interpersonal relationships and their interactions with their environment (225). Further, she accuses, he oversimplifies women's relationships with each other, especially those between mother and daughter.³⁰ Little could Freud have realized that his theory of the uncanny, especially concerning the disturbance of home and family, would be expropriated by a scholarship determined to explain uncanny space in terms of its distinctly female qualities, especially with regard to the Gothic house.

As indicated by Nathaniel's repressed fears, the uncanny is also not limited to domestic or public space, but is also embodied in the people that populate those spaces. Those people may be rendered friendly or sinister as they metaphorically house the uncanny, imbuing it in their actions and intentions. Just as Freud indicates that the villain of "The Sandman" is someone familiar to the protagonist, the concept of the uncanny indicates that the antagonist or

²⁹ Freud also never questions what animates Olympia, or treats her as any more than a "detached complex of Nathaniel." Cixous gives a particularly intelligent breakdown of Freud's mistake in not treating the female characters in the story more seriously in the context of the uncanny. In particular, see Cixous, 538.

³⁰ Nancy J. Chodrow provides an intelligent discussion of mother-daughter relationships in the context of the uncanny, as well as the shortcomings of Freud's critical studies on female relationships (both with men and each other). See Chodrow, 233-236.

evil in the story most often lies in plain sight, even within the home itself. Karen Halttunen explains:

If murder could occur within apparently happy families living in ordinary American homes, then who was safe? The moral alien, the monstrous murderer, it turns out, lurked in the most intimate of human communities, plotting his crimes amongst the pots and pans, the beds and bureaus, while engaging in such mundane household tasks as fixing hot chocolate, administering medicinal wine, and sharpening the kitchen knives (Halttunen, 170).

The uncanny and the criminal lie unacknowledged until the moment of their revelation; further, because they are incipient in the domestic realm, Halttunen implies that they are inescapable. Thus, the villain in the Domestic Gothic of the modern period is no longer the identifiable black cape wearing, masked marauder who sets upon unsuspecting travelers, or the invader who disturbs the peace of the household from without. Instead, the threat is dormant, concealed within the walls and inside the bodies of seemingly normal citizens and homes: it is a mother, a father, a child, a neighbor, a friend. The danger in Domestic Gothic comes from one of these personages who manages to hide his or her true nature from and amongst mundane housewives in a suburban setting, the other children at school and at play, or even the other members of his or her family. Thus, Gothic literature of the 20th century features fewer outright supernatural occurrences and more psychological hauntings caused by repressed anxiety or fear. However, anxiety and fear, which play such a huge part in Freud's "The Uncanny" are not the only emotions elicited by space.

Perhaps because Freudian analysis was problematic for some because it turned literary narrative into case study and marginalized the female voice, other scholars and theorists have sought to depict the duality of the home in other ways. The philosopher who contrasts most with Rank and Freud and challenges Ruskin's image of what defines the "happy house" is Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962). He provides a more balanced investigation of both the

disquieting and comforting aspects of space. While his theory of space draws upon similar themes to Freud's "The Uncanny," examining space as both a literary and a physical place, he explores its facets intimately from immensity to furniture in his seminal work on the relationship between poetry and space, *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Bachelard's is an almost philosophical enquiry into sentiment, the phenomenology of poetic space, and its "resonance," contrasting with Freud's methodical, scientific, case-study approach. His language twists and twirls around his point, describing it but never exactly pinpointing what he means; he knows that he is trying to explain the unexplainable. He values the house for its effect on the psyche and its connection to the formation of identity. He explains that the "reverberation" of poetry surpasses "all psychology or psychoanalysis," uniting with the power of words innate within all humans (Bachelard, *xxiii*). This juxtaposition calls into question whether the uncanny is related to repressed memory, or whether it is closer to a response from some deeper part of human nature. For the purpose of this dissertation, we shall assume the former; however, the latter is certainly a valid strain of enquiry.

Unlike Freud's account of the uncanny and theorists who later built upon or criticized Freud's theory, Bachelard uses French poetry as exemplary texts, and meanders from point to point, discussing such concepts as the house, various types of furniture, the dichotomy of interior and exterior, and the universe. Above all, he investigates how space and the human imagination influence each other. He puts forward the idea that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (Bachelard, 5). The places we dwell in, whether they are corners, bedrooms, attics or vast palaces, somehow leave their mark on our consciousness as an area we have laid claim to. Further, in any situation that a human has claimed a space as his or her shelter, Bachelard posits that the imagination builds walls:

He [the sheltered person] experiences the house in its reality and in its virtuality, by means of thought and dreams. It is no longer in its positive aspects that the house is really "lived," nor is it only in the passing hour that we recognize its benefits. An entire past comes to dwell in a new house (*Loc.cit.*).

Not only is the house a positive influence, it also possesses an inherent duality: its corporal form, and its form in the human imagination. Therefore, it is both the repository for and the subject of dreams. Bachelard lingers quite a bit on dreams, his segue to the world of the fantastic; for as Dickinson's poems will demonstrate in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, humans have the ability both to create new exterior spaces using found objects such as wood, metal and glass, and the gift to build interior spaces through our imaginations.

Intimately related to imagination is the subject of memory, and it is for this reason that Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* is deeply connected to the concepts of the uncanny and the Gothic. Time and again, he elucidates the role of memory, its primary function to make ambiguous that which seemed logical and real to us at the time of the remembered events. Memories can metaphorically take the shape of the familiar rooms and furniture of our dwellings. They can also invoke size: vastness, verticality, great depths and great heights.³¹ Of the underground, Bachelard insists that the cellar is a receptacle of fear and exaggeration. It is thus a potentially Gothic space, if we are to follow Ruskin's definition of Gothic. Bachelard explains:

The cellar dreamer knows that the walls of the cellar are buried walls, that they are walls with a single casing, walls that have the entire earth behind them. And so the situation grows more dramatic, and fear becomes exaggerated. . . . The cellar becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy. Stories of criminal cellars leave indelible marks on our memory, marks that we prefer not to deepen. . . . (*Ibid.*, 20).

³¹ Regarding size, Bachelard discusses both the large (immensity) and the small (nests, shells, and corners). Curiously, he also discusses the concept of "roundness," which is likely related to what Dickinson had earlier termed "circumference." He also discusses the idea of "intimate immensity," which concerns the feelings evoked by a space that seems at once homely and vast.

Unlike Freud, who associates it with repressed desires and urges, and with the unconscious, Bachelard focuses on the dream itself and the effect of the dream, but does not attempt to interpret its meaning. As such, his theories are in affinity with the poetry of Emily Dickinson.³² They are also in affinity with Dickinson's writing because his notion of cellars and attics—of depths and heights.

While Bachelard does not mention the Gothic genre as such, his phenomenology touches upon several poets and novelists that utilize Gothic themes, such as Zola and Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine; he even mentions Edgar Allan Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" in his addressing of the role of the cellar in human consciousness, a veritable Gothic work, and recognizes that the horror it elicits is an agent of repulsion. Of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and its relationship to the Gothic, Maurice Lévy deftly explains that even works like *The Castle of Otranto* are connected through both the recognition of imagined Gothic space as liminal. They are related to what Bachelard terms the "dream labyrinth" and are only "triggered upon reaching the threshold of the Gothic castle" (168-169). At the instant the hero reaches the castle, he is the reaffirming power that the door belongs to a "malevolent abode" (169). On the entrance to the Gothic manse, in that liminal placement, Bachelard's theory defines the connection between memory, dreams, and the fear and excess elicited by the Gothic mode.

Finally, *The Poetics of Space* is an important work to consider in juxtaposition to Freud's theory, as it concentrates simply on space itself, how space evokes emotion, and how authors express that emotion through poetry. Instead of complicating the literary analysis with

³² The first scholar to point this out was Jean McClure Mudge. See Mudge, 13-14, in which she explains that Dickinson also has a propensity for approaching phenomena by circumventing the logical descriptions. See also p. 20.

psychoanalytic theory, Bachelard uses poems as his supporting evidence. He neither attempts to over-analyze the texts, nor does he attempt to rewrite them. He extracts the house's human qualities, what he determines to be "virtues of protection and resistance" that are both admirable and inviting to the reader (*Ibid.*, 46). In this positive interpretation, space becomes more than a mere container for fear and apprehension—it becomes a space of possibility and creation. It is this duality, in light of the notions of the homely and the unhomely, that concerns the discourse of the Gothic as written by women authors in the 20th century.

Overall, Bachelard's and Cixous's extensions of Freud's theory lay the groundwork for later scholars' and authors' interpretations of the duality of the spaces in which we dwell. Their theories incorporate changes in the way people considered both the role of the house and the gender roles of those who inhabit it in the post-WWII period. This is significant because the World Wars have been considered forces of extreme chaos and death that forever changed the way many people viewed the notions of safety and of family. While Cixous focuses on restoring both women's voice and the essentially personal nature of narrative expression, Bachelard gives a new interpretation of the dichotomy of familiar and unfamiliar space. Their theories both remind us of the nostalgia associated with the home and invert that nostalgia so it invokes eerie and disturbing images. In the post-modern period, the image of home will become more twisted by the breakdown of the nuclear family unit, the dislocation of inhabitants from their community in urban and suburban settings, and a warping of moral values that the pre- and post-WWII theorists have alluded to, which stains the house an uncanny and unnerving color.

1.3.4 Post-Modern Uncanny

In the post-modern period, with its world wars, globalization and quickly changing use of space, the uncanny took on new significance. One could argue, as Sandra Opdycke has, that America's changing use of space, both public and private, lead to a shift from local residents' daily interaction in communal spaces such as city or town streets to a lessening importance of these public spaces (33). In other words, instead of the community being the focal point for family life, the home becomes the center around which the family unit revolves, which caused gradual changes to the formerly established extended family model. No longer did large groups of relatives live together in one house; this pattern of domesticity was slowly abandoned for the nuclear family model. With society's very threads modified so that the uncanny could easily take root in the ever more private chambers and kitchens of the home, new theories of uncanny space were bound to arise. The uncanny became complicated further with architectural, anthropological and literary theory; in particular, Anthony Vidler's writings are of importance to the discussion of the interdisciplinary applications of the uncanny in the 20th century. Additionally, the uncanny has been shown to be connected with the fantastic through the metaphorical space of the imagination, as Tsvetan Todorov (1939-), Rosemary Jackson³³ and even Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) have claimed. All of these aspects both broaden the definition of and give a growing sense of import to the theory of the uncanny, from the 20th century to the present.

Anthony Vidler,³⁴ whose theories on the uncanny are the more modern version of the aforementioned Freudian analysis, considers the house both the center of mundane activity

³³ Professor at the University of East Anglia; date of birth unavailable.

³⁴ Professor of Art and Architecture at Brown University; date of birth unavailable.

and a place of uncanny occurrences. Hauntings, transgressions, fear, and modernity represented by anti-utilitarian architecture are just some of the themes his books deal with. His seminal work on architecture and the uncanny, *The Architectural Uncanny* (1994), first gives a basis for the uncanny in theory as well as concrete examples from literature and structural design. Then it proceeds to explain how modern architecture is a deconstruction of familiar forms, and is thus uncanny space. *The Architectural Uncanny* is of particular interest precisely because it brings together art, architecture, psychoanalysis and literature while considering the history of the study of uncanny phenomena. While Vidler seems particularly interested in what he terms “the unsettling qualities of contemporary architecture” such as transparent and dark space, mirrors and reflective space, or the use of robotics, he also provides a solid background in 19th and early to mid-20th century uncanny spaces (Vidler, 1994, ix). By giving an updated version of appearances of uncanny spaces in literature, Vidler paves the way to connect past and present destabilizations of the image of home. He explains these threats to the definition of canniness actually do not have their origin in the modern period, and he sets out to prove that:

Marked by its origins in romantic thought, the theme of the uncanny serves to join architectural speculation on the peculiarly unstable nature of ‘house and home’ to more general reflection on the questions of social and individual estrangement, alienation, exile, and homelessness (*Loc.cit.*).

He states his purpose is to trace the modern uncanny to its origins in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in so doing, examine the instability of “house and home.” The volatility of the house and home are examined in several dimensions: houses, bodies and spaces. “House” becomes a descriptor for architectural habitations including lost childhood homes, uncanny houses, and the grave. This first definition is what mainly concerns the literary uncanny up until the 1970s. In fact, Vidler explains, homesickness and nostalgia are critical parts of our

modern culture: “‘homesickness,’ nostalgia for the true, natal home, thus emerges in the face of the massive uprooting of war and ensuing Depression as the mental and psychological corollary to homelessness” (*Ibid.*, 7). Vidler explains that at this time, when great thinkers like Bachelard and Heidegger were considering both nostalgia and homelessness, people understood those concepts in the context of loss, that dwellings possess an unsettlingly dual nature as well as a fundamental instability. It is that instability with which female authors, especially Dickinson and Jackson, were concerned.

In his second and third sections, Vidler discusses an ever-increasingly chaotic aspect of architecture and the way humans create and inhabit dwellings. “Bodies” is the term Vidler uses to refer to the metamorphosis of architectural dismemberment beginning with Le Courvoisier and ending with our modern cities that function like jungles of glass and steel, and “dark space” denotes the psychological effects of an ever-increasing disconnect between humans who inhabit those cities in the post-modern period. Because this dissertation concerns house and home, and not a discussion of cities, the latter two will not be mentioned in any detail; however, it would be an interesting subject of further study to compare the Gothic as it occurs in a city setting to that of suburbia or the countryside.

Vidler’s other major work on uncanny space, *Warped Space* (2002), is about what he terms “spatial warping”—a phenomenon that arises in two forms: one psychological and the other related to the boundaries of genre.³⁵ The psychological form of “spatial warping,” Vidler explains, is “produced by the psychological culture of modernism from the late 19th century to

³⁵ This second definition is not altogether related to the topic of this dissertation, but for the sake of continuity, it should be explained. The other definition of “spatial warping” that he provides refers to a kind of interdisciplinary approach to space. It is produced, he states, “by the forced intersection of different media—film, photography, art architecture—in a way that breaks the boundaries of genre and the separate arts in response to the need to depict space in new and unparalleled ways” (Vidler, 2000, *viii*). While this dissertation seeks to meld the concerns of architecture, psychoanalysis, feminism and literature, it does not refer to mixed media or art, and is therefore less relevant to Vidler’s claim here.

the present, with its emphasis on the nature of space as a projection of the subject and thus as a harbinger and a repository of all the neuroses and phobias of that subject" (2000, *viii*). Space is also not empty; it is instead brimming with disturbed objects and people and architectural forms. His study focuses on the city as the locus of this troubled space. Although neither the house's place in the city, nor the country house juxtaposed against the concrete jungle of the city will be discussed in this dissertation, it should be kept in mind that the city and its symbolic function of driving the economic and political heart of society becomes increasingly important to the representations the space that the protagonists of Domestic Gothic and uncanny tales seek refuge from. For example, the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" has contracted her nervous prostration in a city; Eleanor of *The Haunting of Hill House* escapes from her overbearing suburban/city-dwelling family; and Merricat and Constance refuse to follow their cousin Charles to the city to become part of his greedy, patriarchal world.

While Vidler does not clearly give voice to the people who inhabit uncanny space, nor does he make reference to gender in his study, *The Architectural Uncanny*, despite the fact that gender has an important role to play in analyzing and determining what constitutes uncanny space, he does touch upon this issue in *Warped Space*. In his second book, he states that phobias in the turn of the century were seen as part of the urban landscape and distinctly feminized. His theory makes sense because there was a tendency towards gendering in the burgeoning field of mental science. Thereafter, mental scientists and psychoanalysts distinguished several nervous disorders associated with space, such as agoraphobia and claustrophobia. Since, at the same time, women were realizing that their confinement to the sphere of the home was both unnatural and anxiety-inducing, it is unsurprising that science would begin to create terminology to describe and cures to assuage that phenomenon.

As will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 4, nervous disorders related to space

had many male sufferers, but women were considered the primary sufferers. Spatial diseases were termed “fundamentally ‘female’ in character” (2000, 35). Vidler further explicates that:

... it is no accident that today “agoraphobia” is commonly called “housewife’s disease” by doctors. If agoraphobia and its cognates were species of neurasthenia, then it followed that all those prone to neurasthenic disease—the “weak,” the “enervated,” the “overstimulated,” the “degenerated,” and the “bored”—were bound to succumb to mental collapse, and first in line, for psychologists and psychoanalysts, were women and homosexuals (*Ibid.*, 36).

While his jibe against sex and sexual orientation is not considered politically correct in the 21st century, it was considered true by psychoanalysts up until the late 20th century. Agoraphobia, fear of open spaces, and claustrophobia, fear of enclosed spaces, are both associated with anxiety disorders (neurasthenia). In identifying those sections of the population who are more prone to anxiety than other portions, mental scientists sought out those who were thought to be physically less strong or more likely to become uncontrollably excited. Before psychonalaysis was even a recognized profession, women were writing about (and against) being pigeon-holed in this way. Further, as each of the female authors whose works are addressed in close reading in this dissertation were intimately aware of these stereotypes and incidents that precipitated them, anxiety regarding space is important to address—each of the stories and poems allude to an increasing urge to dispel these categories, as well as reveal the falsehood that anxiety is attached somehow to gender. For it is not the space itself or the occupation of the occupant of that space that matters, but their place in the social order that most often determines the source of their anxiety.

Moreover, Nina Auerbach explains that the woman who inhabits uncanny spaces is a multifaceted creature, often termed an hysteric, but deserves to be considered as much more than that. Moreover, she is more than just a woman relegated to a separate sphere by the

precepts of the domestic sphere as explained by Ruskin. Auerbach posits that her position is iconic, symbolic:

She has a life beyond her incarnation as a madwoman in the attic, crushed into subterranean life in a female literary tradition, for she shapes the perceptions of men as well as women, scientists as well as artists, social anatomists as well as romantic adventurers. Her rule is not limited to an attic or a house; she is the source of a common cultural iconography of woman. In the nineteenth century her field was as broad and as wide as her culture's imagination (Auerbach, 61).

Both literally and figuratively, these women are more than symbolic of madness or of Gothic. By exploring how female authors treat the home and comparing it to social theory, architectural theory and psychoanalytical theory, the Gothic's impact as well as the impetus to consider it from a critical standpoint becomes clear.

The female characters that inhabit uncanny spaces are not only subsumed into female literary tradition, they are indicative of a larger literary trend that demonstrated the increasing importance of the space of the home in the public consciousness. Gothic novels that focus on the home, the space assigned to women, the ordinary gains the potential to become ominous:

. . . the domestic-Gothic brought the mystery home, removing the roof and mapping the domestic interior to locate the crime—not in an urban brothel, roadside tavern, or pirate ship, but in the kitchens and bedchambers of ordinary houses; removing the “veil” of domestic privacy to expose the terrible transgressions enacted in the secret spaces of American homes; demonstrating the uncanny quality of that which was simultaneously most familiar and most alien (Halttunen, 170).

The Domestic-Gothic as a subgenre of the Female Gothic allows the reader to discover the disturbing truth about home: it is not only a mundane environment, but a locus of transgression and hidden desire, of crime and passion. By discerning this truth, the reader revises his or her image of home, and recognizes its potential to affect the psyche both negatively and positively. Further, by understanding the uncanny as a phenomenon, the reader will detect the Gothic not only in the fantastic world of the novel, but locate it in the everyday world as well.

Finally, an additional conception of the uncanny is that it is fueled by the perception of culture and gender and is therefore related to the fantastic. Tsevetan Todorov's landmark study *The Fantastic* (1970) explains how reality is interpreted into literature (or vice versa) and thus requires explication of literary subversions. He split the "fantastic" into three categories: uncanny (natural), fantasy (unnatural) and marvelous (supernatural) (Todorov, 44). The "uncanny" category is related to the natural world because it requires the familiar to be broken by a turbulent element, which may be explained by unconscious forces; "fantasy" requires a step further, that no logical explanation can really be found, so it is termed unnatural; the "marvelous" asks of the reader that he or she must accept supernatural events as reality. Rosemary Jackson has said that, in a general sense, "all literary works are fantasies" (R. Jackson, 13). Therefore, all works of literature may require some sort of translation of the symbols, metaphors and events that occur within them, whether or not they may be explained to a satisfactory level. In the context of the narratives that will be discussed in detail, it will become clear that each work has a tendency towards the uncanny and the fantastic rather than the marvelous. Female Gothic texts which consider the anxiety of women with regard to the spaces of house and home do not function by asking the reader to accept the virtually impossible. Instead, they draw from the aforementioned tradition begun by Ann Radcliffe to weave in seemingly supernatural forces and then explain them through natural means. This method is based on a hypothesis of the unnatural or supernatural presences in the story. The "real world" presented in the story becomes strange without providing a reason for it.

Rosemary Jackson theorizes:

In secular culture, fantasy functions as a presentation of 'the natural world inverted into something strange, something 'other.' It becomes 'domesticated,' humanized, turning from transcendental explorations to transcriptions of the human condition (*Ibid.*, 25).

Fantasy is only explained through the focus of the natural order—it takes elements that we are familiar with and turns them on their heads. The uncanny-fantastic, in trying to adhere to homely objects, people, and places, is thus able to explore the human world and describe what it means to be human. In the case of the works chosen for close reading in this dissertation, fantasy provides a method of questioning accepted societal norms, of confronting power structures, and of reshaping relationships and spaces.

The function of elements of the uncanny-fantastic in works of the Female Gothic genre is similar to Nabokov's theory of authorial vision as a *camera obscura*: like the *camera obscura*, which distorts the light, translating it into the output of an entirely different image, fantasy serves as a translation of the natural world inverted into something other while at the same time recalling that natural world. Jackson's theory has a further link to Nabokov's: she suggests that the reality of the story may be compared to a "paraxis," which is not unlike Nabokov's comparison of authorial vision to a *camera obscura*. The paraxis, which represents a "process of transformation and de-formation," shows the link between two regions, with a "paraxial region" between them (*Ibid.*, 19). In that paraxial region, the light rays seem to unite, object and image seem to become one, but in fact, neither actually does. This represents that inextricable link between the "real" and the space of the fantastic, which threatens the real. Jackson states that this paraxial region is akin to the fantastic: a region in which neither the real "object" nor the unreal "image" may exist, but is located intimately between the two. As in the *camera obscura* of Nabokov, fantasy here becomes a distorting factor that at once brings together the "real" and "unreal" and keeps them apart. The key here is how each person views the paraxial region's function in the story amongst the other layers of the text.

Whether one prefers to call it in a state of paraxis or *camera obscura*, when

complicated with the fantastic in literature, the house of the 19th and 20th centuries is slowly revealed to be the center of the patriarchal order's attempt to conceal the chaos within society, and by extension, within each of us. On one hand, 19th century critics and authors seemed to deem the house the ideal, comforting, happy space in a world teeming with the threatening forces of war, commerce, and politics. This homely space was famously discussed by 19th century critic John Ruskin, whose theories on separate spheres and Gothic architecture greatly influenced society. On the other hand, the home was a site of suppressed creativity, of oppression, abuse and victimization, and of crime. The trend to make literary Gothic into a physical form through architecture became a precursor to the development of the theory of the uncanny. Gothic, which reveals the house to be the focal point of menacing forces, the locus of shrouded secrets, and a place imbued with nostalgia, then plays a central role in displacing the image of home as full of joy and harmony, undisturbed by any disunity caused by fear, crime, or desire.

The degree to which the house remained a refuge in the public imagination was also dependent upon the time period and its literature. During the 19th century, the Victorian ideal of home as comfortable was prevalent. But the *fin de siècle* saw a rise in different world views that harshly criticized of the Victorian social structure—whether it was because of its tyranny against female creativity, subjugation of peoples through colonialism, or persecution of those who were considered outside the realm of the normal. Authors became more concerned with showing the home as an ambiguous space, and their protagonists' attitudes and actions also reflected that uncertainty. Concurrently, the development of mental science and psychoanalysis affected the authors' writing. Consequently, Gothic literature at the turn of the 19th century became more concerned with haunting, ghosts and troubled, anxious minds; female Gothic of the 19th century concentrated on subversions of space, showing the liminal

place of creative women through their demonstrations of anxiety and madness.

During the post WWI period, societal upheaval was no longer a ghost; it was a reality. Freud's theory of "the Uncanny" commented on those changes while referencing other related concepts such as the double, anxiety neuroses, and loss. It further explains why the house should possess the duality of being both comforting and frightening. By explaining the terminology of *unheimlich* and *heimlich*, Freud sets the linguistic stage for his explanation; by explicating the uncanny in terms of literature and art, he provides a background for the phenomenon of the uncanny. Moreover, by including E.T.A. Hoffman's story, his literary analysis adds a dimension to the treatment of the Gothic house in critical theory.

In the mid-20th century, Female Gothic reconnoiters the space of the home, repurposing it, reforming it, and further, destroying it. Female Gothic, together with the perspective of later interpretations of Uncanny such as those of Vidler, Cixous, and Bachelard, are essential to discussing the image of home from a social-cultural, an architectural and a literary standpoint. The path forward, paved with the theoretical background provided by Ruskin and Freud, allows modern scholarship to both comment upon the faults of their theories and expand upon them. As previously mentioned, Bachelard's redefinition of the space of home as both immense and intimate, possessing of entryways and exits that exist as liminal spaces, will become important when considering the Gothic in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Cixous's theory, which expounds upon Freud's as well as criticizes it, will provide the flexibility for our own discussion to expand Freud's as well. Finally, Vidler's compounding of architectural theory with literary analysis and the theory of the uncanny uncovers important connections among the three and inspires us to consider both modernity and past eras when discussing Gothic texts.

In the chapters that follow, Gothic and uncanny texts will be examined in a loosely

chronological order, beginning with Neo-Gothic (and utilizing the aforementioned doctrine of separate spheres to explain the necessity of the Gothic), and ending with modern Domestic Gothic. Each text will build upon the next, so that the linkage between them is clear. The heritage of uncanny spaces and sinister homes appearing in Gothic texts, which continues even at the present day, is a fundamental part of Gothic canon, especially in Gothic written by women. In each era, the Gothic's most essential purpose, to revelation of the chaos within, became closer to literature's central purpose: to clarify and refract the existing issues in our society, and to challenge the values and structures that lead to oppression and suppression.

Chapter 2

The Prototypical House in the Female Gothic

2.1 Female Gothic

The “Female Gothic” is a term coined by Ellen Moers in her book *Literary Women*, published in 1963. In the most basic sense, Female Gothic is defined by Moers as a sub-genre of Gothic in which the main character or focus of the action is female. Most Female Gothic works depict women as threatened by men (both strangers and known persons alike) or unknown, supernatural forces.³⁶ In their article “Female Gothic: Then and Now” (2004), Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace argue that Ellen Moers’ definition of the Female Gothic as a genre

... not only engendered a body of critical work which focused on the ways in which the Female Gothic articulated women’s dissatisfactions with patriarchal society and addressed the problematic position of the maternal within that society, but placed the Gothic at the centre of the female tradition (1).

In that sense, Moers gave a name to an already existing practice of women voicing their dissent of the patriarchal order through thematic and symbolic means in fiction. By entitling the sub-genre, she also paved the way for later scholars to further define it by examining

³⁶ It should be noted, however, that the sub-genre has been influenced by the changing role of women in society. Up to the 20th century, most Female Gothic works were defined as stated above and the action took place within a castle or mansion. However, works identified as similar to or part of the Female Gothic from the 20th and 21st centuries can have different focuses, menacing forces, and even different settings.

related texts and for new authors to join through writing fiction using the key components of it.

The portion of the genre Moers discusses traces its roots to the late 18th century, with the publication of works by Ann Radcliffe in Britain. In this early period of the genre's rise to popularity (or, it could be said, rise to ubiquity), Radcliffe's novels such as the *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of the Forest* had readers shivering in their flowery upholstered chairs. They savored a terror that Ellen Moers terms "that vague paranoia of the modern spirit for which Gothic mechanisms seem to have provided welcome therapy" (Moers, 91). Moers implies here that when they read Radcliffe's works, they recognized that Gothic is a reaction against the rise of new ideologies (such as those brought by the Enlightenment) and new technology, towards which those entrenched in or clinging to the old order felt a certain anxiety. Moers also suggests that even more modern-minded thinkers may have felt uneasy about the direction of politics, technological developments, new literary movements or all three. At that juncture, the stage was set for the rise of the Gothic in the popular imagination. In fact, Radcliffe's stories were not only the most popular of the genre in that period; she was also the highest paid novelist of her century.³⁷

Although Radcliffe is not usually credited for the inception of the genre (Horace Walpole is generally considered to have written the first truly gothic novel, his *Castle of Otranto*),³⁸ it is undisputed that it was Radcliffe who quickly became the decisive figure in the

³⁷ Both Ellen Moers and Robert Miles describe Radcliffe's stories' popularity, their translation into other languages, the importance of her role in the gothic genre at the time, and the very interesting fact that she received a higher salary for her novels than her male contemporaries. See Moers, 91. See also Miles, 2007, 10.

³⁸ *The Castle of Otranto*, written in 1764 and supposedly inspired by a dream Walpole had, details the story of Manfred, the Lord of Castle Otranto, and his family. Manfred's sickly son dies in a freakish accident soon after his wedding to a princess, and Manfred, fearing the interference of supernatural powers, vows to marry his son's bride and divorce his wife (who had not yet given him an heir). What ensues is a classic example of a man obsessed by carrying on his family line to the detriment of all around him.

early years of the genre (Miles, 2007, 10-11).³⁹ Radcliffe was certainly intrepid, using her works to create a new sub-genre, which later became known as the Female Gothic. By focusing on the element of terror in the text (instead of the horror employed by Walpole), she managed to differentiate herself from both her precursors and contemporaries. Veritably, Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* was so popular because of its quality of blending genre.

Bonamy Dobrée explains:

The reasons for its immediate vogue, and its continuation as a moderately popular book, are that it was at once a "horror novel" and a "novel of sentiment," both these aspects of our emotional existence having a perennial appeal (v).

By bringing together elements from the more sensational "horror novel" as well as the sentimental novel, a far more mainstream type of story that appealed to one's emotions, Radcliffe wrote a slightly more realistic fantasy world than that of Walpole or Matthew Lewis, one which did not need lascivious monks being dropped by gigantic eagles to their doom in order to emphasize the demonic nature of the villain or of his punishment.

Not only did Radcliffe influence Gothic genre with her popularity, she also laid the groundwork for a longer-lasting impact: her formula of featuring a plucky heroine in dire straits still popular in the Gothic genre today. This heroine is perhaps best typified by *The Mysteries of Udolpho*'s protagonist Emily St. Aubert. Emily's father dies while they are traveling; her mother absent, she is thus the typical Gothic orphan, left to the mercy of the world and its hidden nightmares. Whisked away to live with an aunt with whom she does not get along well, she is nonetheless determined to keep her station in life (and marry her romantic interest, Valancourt). Her plans are foiled by her aunt's shotgun marriage to a

³⁹ The most comprehensive account of why Ann Radcliffe forms the basis of Female Gothic is probably given in *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, in which Robert Miles explains why absent or replaced mothers, murdered fathers, villainous stepfathers and persecuted heroines form the basis of the genre. See Miles, 1995.

despicable man, Montoni. Montoni, a suspected pirate, thief, and murderer, moves their household first to Venice and then to the mysterious castle Udolpho, where the motif of the gothic castle comes into play. Away from her beloved Valancourt, Emily discovers hidden corpses (both real and faked), suspects her aunt to have been murdered (her aunt later dies of neglect), and has to fight against Montoni, who tries to force her to sign away her inheritance (an affront against the patriarchal order). Montoni does not succeed, however. Through a series of helpers, including a stranger named Du Pont who also loves Emily, Emily is able to escape. Then, after some difficulty, she reconciles with Valancourt and the two are married at the end of the book. In short, Emily St. Aubert actually represents the reverse of Walpole's anti-hero. Not only does Emily defeat the forces of patriarchy that would disinherit her, she is reunited with her love and joins in the social order with the marriage of her choosing. This is significant because it sets the stage for later Gothic heroines to do the same, only more radically, or die trying.

Another important idea introduced by *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the essentiality of the space of the castle to the plot. The castle Udolpho is the central to events in the story, even giving the book its name, and its principle feature is the evil hidden within its twisted, sinister architecture. From her very first sight of Udolpho, Emily's task seems to be to color it with Gothic. It is not only "vast, ancient and dreary" it is also "gloomy" and has a gateway "of gigantic size" (Radcliffe, 227). While it was, at one time, well maintained, the turrets are now hanging with "long grass and wild plants" instead of flags or banners (*Loc.cit.*). War has ravaged the land around the castle, too, and the darkness of the scene makes it seem even more like a ruin. Emily is certain that she will be imprisoned in the castle. But more important to the Gothic motif in the novel is that Emily gives in to flights of fancy when describing it: "her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could

justify" (*Ibid.*, 228). The ambiguity suggested by her fear evokes the psychological aspect of the Gothic as well as the real threat Emily associates with her host. The reader feels affinity for her situation, knowing that she is completely out of her realm of experience, and thus perfectly positioned to become the epitome of the Gothic victim. The castle threatens her because of its excess of dark space and gloom, because it is a representation of decay of the ideals that the building represented and which are now crumbling, and because of the risk of violence from the menacing Montoni, its master. Moreover, the castle conjures the lurking presence of the social order, which has been forced out by Montoni's evil ways, and to which Emily desires to return through marriage to Valancourt.

Emily's actions illuminate the connection between trepidation and memories, which will become a key point raised later in this chapter in the section on the uncanny. As she explores the castle and examines these rooms filled with pain, she does not rush through them. Emily Jane Cohen elucidates that the reason the protagonist "lingers pensively over every object, every room" is that while she is filled with dread at the possibility of the memories she's creating, she also desires to remember (896). Despite the likelihood that her memories will turn into something frightening, into the uncanny, she still self-identifies with them. These memories are evocative of "a sudden terror of something supernatural" (Radcliffe, 95). At the same time, Radcliffe's tale establishes that there is really nothing truly supernatural in the world; all can be explained, except the ambiguity caused by the uncanny. For example, she feels unsafe in the castle Udolpho because her door cannot be locked from the inside; she complains: "the thought of passing the remainder of the night in a chamber, which the door from the stair-case made liable to the intrusion of any person, now alarmed her more than ever" (271). Her fear is significant because it is the proof of the destabilization of her place in

the social order: she is at the mercy of whomever would enter her room, and she can imagine things and people both real and supernatural who would come in and harm her.

Emily discovers evidence of torture and of domestic violence in the castle—but it is not only suffering indicates the gothic, it is the very architecture of the building in which malevolent forces rest in disquieting ways. Maurice Lévy clarifies:

. . . les architectures d'Anne Radcliffe mettent mal à l'aise et inquiètent par leurs invraisemblables dimensions. Comme sur les dessins de Piranèse, le fantastique naît de la disproportion entre ces vastes halls, ces porches gigantesques, ces escaliers sans fin, ces voûtes démesurément amples et hautes, ces perspectives de colonnes qui se perdent dans les ténèbres, et les chétives personnes qui s'y meuvent. L'architecture oppresse, accable, étouffe, elle n'est pas à la mesure de l'homme.

. . . the architecture of Ann Radcliffe puts one ill at ease and disquiets with its improbable dimensions. Like the drawings of Piranesi,⁴⁰ the fantastic derives from a disproportion between vast halls, gigantic porches, unending staircases, immeasurably large and high archways, the perspective of columns that lose themselves in darkness and the paltry people who move about there. The architecture oppresses, stifles; it is unworthy of man (270-271).

The architecture and the people who inhabit it are both an amalgamation of the sublime, and by extension, the abject. The description challenges the reader's imagination to go beyond its limits, to envision the vastness and enormity of the castle with its "unending staircases" and unmeasurable vaulted ceilings. In spite of all of this cavernousness, Lévy makes a point of saying that it is oppressive in its immensity. Indeed, its size reminds the reader that there is nothing homely about the castle Udolpho for Emily; its enormity frightens her and represents to her the powerless nature of her position as a woman in society.

The Mysteries of Udolpho reminds us that in the Gothic genre, the spaces occupied by

⁴⁰ Giovanni Battista Piranesi was an Italian artist famous for sketching scenes of Rome and for his fanciful scenes that resembled prisons. Most interesting about his work was that he often reconstructed buildings from ruins to what he imagined them to be in their heyday, merely through inference and architectural skill. For more details on this artist and his imagined architectural structures, see Andrew Robinson's book, *Piranesi: Early Architectural Fantasies*.

the characters may have a life of their own, a life which is dependent upon the secrets they keep either for themselves or for their owners. Because inanimate objects cannot technically be alive, the power of the Gothic castle confuses and creates ambiguity. In his book *Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*, Manuel Aguirre describes how the Gothic castle is animated by twisted nature of the secrets it keeps, which contribute to its architectural form and presence. He ends up equating the Female Gothic with numerous ideas related to domesticity: native country, spouse, the unknown, the oppressed, the numinous; his ideas culminate with the theory of Otherness. But he also comments upon the relationship between Gothic space, the motif of the house (castle), and the characters' perception of the uncanny, especially those of the female characters. He states that "it [the gothic building] tends to have an irregular, asymmetrical shape; its geometry is uncanny, whether because of an actual distortion of the whole or because a part of it remains unknown" (Aguirre, 92). He goes on to point out that Radcliffe's *Udolpho* is a "strange rambling place" of "proud irregularity" (*Loc.cit.*). Indeed, *Udolpho*'s peculiar "irregularity," which elicits fear because it does not conform to the expectation of comfort or homeliness one expects of a habitation, is also one of the archetypal qualities of the Gothic manse.

In the novel's denouement, Emily's flight from the castle establishes escape as one of the fundamental methods of overcoming the problems arising in the Gothic castle. In the years of female Gothic authorship that followed the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, other authors would reshape the idea of escape into both physically leaving the Gothic space of the house, and mentally departing from it, e.g. insanity. Further, other authors would test the boundaries of the uncanny nature of the space to see if the familiar could be reestablished through exorcism or the driving out of the Gothic forces that haunting the house. If they are unable to be exorcised, the final alternative is to remake the space: destroy it and build it

again, differently, so that the Gothic cannot intrude on the new order.

2.2 *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and the Neo-Gothic Home

Perhaps no novels could solidify the motif of the house as central to the Female Gothic genre as well as *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë (1818-1848) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855).⁴¹ The former, with its destruction of the patriarchal structure by the transference of ownership of venerable estates to the orphaned, untitled Heathcliff, is an exemplary Gothic text. It addresses the concept of the double in the form of the soul-bond between Heathcliff and Catherine, as well as contains symbolism and plot devices that present criticism of the social order, such as ghosts and doomed lovers. The latter text, with its madwoman hidden in the attic, an ancestral home destroyed by fire, and its determined orphan heroine, typifies the Female Gothic within the Neo-Gothic canon. With its multiple houses that never quite seem like home to Jane, it also provides the precursor to the modern Female Gothic.

Terror and cruelty go hand-in-hand in *Wuthering Heights* and are exemplified by the violence perpetrated in and around the manor house, *Wuthering Heights*, for which the book is named. Emily Brontë uses the Gothic mode and its most basic elements:

⁴¹ Both women were forced to publish under male pseudonyms to avoid the scandal associated with publishing as a female author. Charlotte called herself Currer Bell, and Emily called herself Ellis Bell. For minute details of their use of male pseudonyms in order to hide their gender from the general public, as well as correspondences regarding the eventual revelation of their identities and the resulting reactions, see Gaskell, 277-283. See also 321-322, in which there is a letter from Charlotte who explains that she wishes her publishing persona to remain anonymously male. Gaskell herself already knew Currer Bell was a woman by 1850, but suspected as early as 1847 upon the publication of *Jane Eyre* (Easson, ix).

... there are the graveyard lusts and wandering ghosts, the mysterious foundling and tyrannical father; the family doom, repeated generation after generation; the revenge motif; and the aroma of incest that persists from the introduction of the bastard Heathcliff to the family at the Heights, and to the bed he shares with the girl-child Catherine, his playmate, his sister, his torment, his victim, his beloved, but never his wife (Moers, 100).

Sins of the father and mother visited upon the children, ghosts, violence and sexual taboos all coalesce in the figure of the anti-hero Heathcliff and the way he forever changes the protagonist Catherine's house Wuthering Heights from a slightly ramshackle home to a locus of uncanny events and sinister happenings. Part of the story focuses on the forbidden romance between Catherine and Heathcliff. Their relationship is reminiscent of incest (they grew up together as brother and sister) but in reality the problem is not the implied sin, but the difference in their place in the social order (Catherine as the daughter of a landowner, Heathcliff as an orphan of unknown origin) that prevents them from marrying. Catherine accepts this as her fate, but Heathcliff rails against it, and upon gathering a fortune, returns to claim the property of Wuthering Heights as well as Catherine's descendants for his own. The two are only reunited as lovers after their respective deaths, when they appear to the novel's narrator as ghosts in the graveyard. Thus, *Wuthering Heights*, with its themes of violence, sexual taboo, stolen inheritance and disturbed social structure, all of which occur in the space of the home, is prototypical Gothic text, and should be considered for meaningful textual analysis.

Like *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is an exemplary novel of the Female Gothic genre. The protagonist, Jane Eyre, tells her story in first person narrative, starting with her orphaned childhood and the abuse she faced, to working as a teacher and then a governess. Finally, she becomes entangled with Mr. Rochester as first governess to his young charge and then as his romantic interest, which leads to her discovery of his hidden-

away, mad wife Bertha. The story, on the surface, seems heavily influenced by romanticism and bildungsroman, but the execution, motifs and symbolism are certainly Gothic. To start, the protagonist's rebellion against the patriarchal order from the very first page of the novel. Further, the houses she inhabits both reject her presence and contain uncanny elements. Finally, Mr. Rochester's concealed, insane wife Bertha, with her violent outbursts and unrestrained passion, who represents Jane's dark double. These gothic symbols and motifs all coalesce in the gothic mansion, which is the apex of two powers struggling against each other—patriarchal control of the female and the female will's attempts to subvert or overthrow that control.

These two novels, published in the same year, are exemplary works of Female Gothic because they address 19th century women's concerns and anxiety with regard to both culture and society. According to Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar, *Jane Eyre* was "immensely significant" in recasting the themes of the Female Gothic, themes which they describe as "women victimized by violence in their own homes, of women dispossessed of homes and property, of the necessity of understanding female history, and of the bonds between women, living and dead, which help to ensure women's survival" (10). Women were considered the property of men: first of their fathers, and then of their brothers or husbands who would take care of them; they were often prevented by law and sometimes avaricious intent from inheriting property, or tossed about until they were finally settled in the legal arrangement that was marriage. Because these travesties were such a norm, authors like the Brontës were not only aware of them, they actively wanted to show the female perspective on them through their writing.

Jane Eyre and *Wuthering Heights* also reflect the truth about women's future in 19th century society, as experienced by the Brontë sisters. Their potential and opportunities were

determined by class, and unless one married up or became educated enough to get a job, one was unlikely to be able to climb the social ladder. Thus, the class of one's birth as well as the class one married into held great significance. For Emily and Charlotte, this was something they learned at an early age: when they were six and eight respectively, they were registered at the Clergy Daughter's School with their future careers listed as "governess" (Gordon, 15).⁴² Their experiences being raised to be teachers, as might fit their station in life in the middle class if they had to work, exposes some contradictions on this early form of so-called acceptable labor for gentlewomen. Being a governess was at once considered a natural profession and a job that somehow implied women were the source of repressed passion. Mary Poovey explains that "private teaching was almost the only occupation considered sufficiently 'genteel' for middle-class women, because this form of work most closely approximated that of the wife and mother" (43). Indeed, Jane Eyre's experiences as a governess raising a small girl are similar to those she might have as a mother—except that she is paid for her work and the child is not her own—a fact that Charlotte herself was probably aware of. This role's hidden aspect, however, was the pleasure-seeking factor, as demonstrated by Jane's attraction to her employer, Rochester, and her fear of becoming like the unbridled, violent Bertha. Further, the position of governess is an unstable one: a child needs a governess only so long as he or she needs tutelage, and when sufficiently grown, the governess must seek another family to work for.⁴³ The governess was also a step above domestic servants, while at the same time

⁴² As Charlotte would relate to her biographer Mrs. Gaskell, this school is the very same that would become the inspiration for *Jane Eyre's* Lowood. It was at the Clergy Daughter's School in Cowan Bridge that Charlotte and Emily were starved, lived in poorly sanitized conditions, and lost two of their elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, to disease in 1825 (Gordon, 15). Maria Brontë was one of Charlotte's idols, both in the way she stood up to mistreatment at the school and in how she fought her illness. Thus, in her novel, Charlotte immortalizes Maria as the beautiful, frail, dying Helen Burns, Jane's hero who was also persecuted by the teachers (*Ibid.*, 16).

⁴³ This was especially problematic in the 1840s, when Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* due to the depressed economic conditions in England at the time. It was also an issue due to the dearth of women who could ably function as governesses because of the growing ease of access to better education. See Poovey, 43.

removed from the social class of the family she works for. In that social limbo, her position actually took on a rather threatening tone. Poovey explains that the governess became the poster-child for men's argument that women should stay in the home and neither intrude on the world of business nor snatch jobs from men who needed it to support their families (45). Any working women, they asserted, threatened the idea that women were content in the home (*Loc.cit.*). As such, Jane is both needed by Rochester to care for his young charge, and a danger to him that must be neutralized through incorporating her back into the social order through the institution of marriage.

Besides being a reflection of the social issues 19th century women were embroiled in, both texts also explore the ideas of the uncanny and of the double in different ways. Characters with evil intentions such as Heathcliff,⁴⁴ and mad characters such as Bertha,⁴⁵ elicit uncanny responses in readers; more importantly, the houses where they perpetrate their disturbing actions become dark shadows obscuring the image of the idealized 19th century home discussed by John Ruskin. Thus, the idea of doubling becomes prominent in the text as well. Adrienne Rich explains that "while *Wuthering Heights* is concerned with the double, the dual soul (split soul), *Jane Eyre* uses the idea of what it means to be born a woman" (Rich, 469). Basically, these two novels present different aspects of women writer's approach to the Gothic: on one hand, Emily's tale explains how the intrusion of the gothic (in Heathcliff) is deeply connected to the already transgressive power of Cathy; on the other hand, in Charlotte's novel, Jane's struggle to both be herself and be accepted in/by society eventually

⁴⁴ Living persons can be uncanny, according to Freud, if their intention is to harm, as they recall supernatural powers and animism. See Freud, 1919, 243.

⁴⁵ Persons perceived as mad also have an uncanny effect as they alert us to features of the human condition that lie dormant in our bodies and may be triggered at any time. See Freud, 1919, 242-243.

leads her to the role of Rochester's caretaker, an outright subversion of the social order—Jane herself is the gothic intruder.

2.2.1 *Wuthering Heights*

The novel *Wuthering Heights* demonstrates the intense relationship between blood relations, adopted family members and their homes, which is further complicated by the patriarchal social structure. The action arising in and around the home in *Wuthering Heights* is both dramatic and devastating to the image of the family in the story. It takes place in two neighboring houses in the north of England: Thrushcross Grange, which seems to be a well-kept manor house owned by a wealthy family, and a shambling moorland farmhouse known as Wuthering Heights, which Botting describes as a “desolate, stormy and wild landscape and decaying family house” (Botting, 129). The story is narrated by an unrelated third party, Mr. Lockwood. Upon renting Thrushcross Grange, he realizes there is something strange about the house and its relationship with Wuthering Heights. Inquisitive, he manages to get lost on the moors and spend the night in Wuthering Heights. He encounters Mr. Heathcliff, the owner of the house, a girl Catherine, and a young man, Hareton. He also believes he has seen and spoken with the ghost of a woman named Catherine Earnshaw. Upon return to the Grange, he begs the Grange housekeeper, Ellen Dean (Nelly), to tell him about the history of Wuthering Heights and its strange inhabitants.

Ellen Dean then relates a story of love, revenge, and a surfeit of Gothic elements.⁴⁶ Heathcliff, who is both hero and villain, is adopted by the Earnshaw family.⁴⁷ On one hand, the tale is one of a broken home: Heathcliff's intrusion into the Earnshaw house as an adopted child brings about a series of unfortunate events that leaves the Earnshaw children orphaned and creates a violent drunk out of Mr. Earnshaw's weak son, Hindley. Hindley blames his father's death on Heathcliff, reduces his status to less than that of a servant and even physically abuses him. On the other hand, it is a love story: Heathcliff grows up and falls in love with Catherine Earnshaw, Hindley's sister. Catherine (or Cathy) is a rebellious girl lacking the expected passivity and domesticity of a woman of that age; further, she embodies Heathcliff's sister figure as well as his lover. Yet the ferocity of Heathcliff's love and the wretchedness of his personality drive her to find sanctuary in the home of a wealthy neighbor whom she ends up marrying. At that point, Heathcliff leaves for parts unknown, vowing revenge on the Earnshaw household. He later returns to wreak havoc: he marries Catherine's sister-in-law only to abuse her terribly; he obtains the deed and title to Wuthering Heights (the Earnshaw manor) from Hindley through deceptive means. Catherine's marriage is then fraught with anxiety because of her fatal attraction to Heathcliff, an attraction that is implied ultimately leads to her death. But Heathcliff does not stop there—he desires to own Thrushcross Grange as well as Wuthering Heights. The second half of the novel details the events surrounding his machinations: he contrives a plan to marry his son, Linton, to Catherine's daughter, Catherine II; however, the plan fails because of Linton's weak health

⁴⁶ By telling the story through Mr. Lockwood, and then again through Nelly, the narration, the story, becomes distorted by multiple perspectives in the retelling. This is a necessary factor of the uncanny in literature, according to Hélène Cixous. See Cixous, 532-533.

⁴⁷ Heathcliff's character combines elements of the Gothic villain and the Romantic outcast in his antisocial behavior, vengeful actions and mercenary tendencies. See Botting, 129-131.

and Catherine II is instead blackmailed into living at Wuthering Heights. The story reaches its climax when Mr. Lockwood returns to Wuthering Heights to find that Ellen Dean is now living there, taking care of Catherine II and Hareton, and that Heathcliff has mysteriously died in his room after seeing the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw. Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is central to the intrusion of the Gothic in the story—it defies the socio-cultural order in terms of family structure and class structure. Moreover, it goes beyond the mortal plane as Catherine and Heathcliff are reunited in death.

Wuthering Heights is rife with Gothic imagery; yet it is Heathcliff's breach of the sanctity of the home that allows that Gothic excess entry. He comes as a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child" that could only repeat "over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (E. Brontë, 51). He is not only different in his origins, but also excretes an aura of contained violence within the domestic setting of the Heights (Kavanagh, 20). Because the family in *Wuthering Heights* may be read as a socio-economic institution, the sudden adoption of a boy such as Heathcliff who does not belong to that institution by marriage, contract or blood, disturbs the system, creating a fundamental anxiety within the household of Wuthering Heights. His arrival disrupts "not only the structure of a family, but also a family structure—a carefully articulated order of families within a self-contained social world" (*Ibid.*, 17). His orphan nature possesses the power to disturb the Earnshaw family's patriarchal structure. Furthermore, as Heathcliff lacks both linguistic ability (he speaks gibberish) and remains illiterate for some time due to the cruelty of Hindley, it exacerbates the class differences between himself and the Earnshaws. On one hand, his sadistic nature also seems to influence the increasing disorder that reigns in the Earnshaw household after Hindley's death, and then is exacerbated by Catherine's death and Catherine II's birth in the middle of the novel. On the

other hand, it is possible that his violent nature merely reveals structural faults that existed all along. Donna Heiland posits that:

His [Heathcliff's] uncanny power results less from the occasionally overt violence of his conduct, however, than from the consistently and quietly unsettling force of his presence. He does not so much tear things apart as show us how fragile they were to begin with (117).

Basically, Heathcliff's malevolence towards the patriarchal order that shuns him is not the only reason for his appearance as an uncanny force. He functions the same way as other Gothic plot elements do: he reveals the tenuous nature of society's ever-changing structure. To do so, however, he needs to understand the patriarchy, which he learns from Catherine.

In a sense, their relationship is a form of doubling; they represent the unbridled power and chaos associated with the Gothic versus the repressed emotion/desire of the Victorian social structure, the differing gender roles assigned to men and women, and a dichotomy of inside and outside, which is expressed in the closeness of their relationship. Throughout most of Heathcliff's childhood, he manages to have a close relationship with Catherine, close enough that Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar term Catherine "his soul" (293). Catherine and Heathcliff's connection, their doubling, is perceived to be unbreakable by Catherine, but Heathcliff understands that if it is not consummated economically as well as spiritually, it will cause them both trouble. This is because Catherine sees soulmates as different from marriage and, at first, sees no conflict in both marrying and maintaining her relationship with her "other half." Marriage was one way that Catherine could cross class difference, could become upwardly mobile. While Heathcliff asserted his mobility through power and money, Catherine demonstrates that as a daughter of a middle-class household, she has the ability to elevate herself through the economic ties of matrimony. However, her married relationship does not function well on an emotional level; because Heathcliff exists, Catherine finds it hard to

accept the social expectation that she should marry someone from a higher social class. Her fragile state of mind is caused by the fact that her love for Heathcliff is incompatible with her marriage to Edgar Linton. Further, the economic forces that drive her into Edgar's arms also imperils her connection with Heathcliff because the latter functions on a level that would accept a marriage of love, or, conversely, he aims to gain enough wealth to buy his way into the upper echelons of society (in other words, he is representative of the *nouveau riche*). He is not titled, however, and that makes a difference in the caste system as well; from a patriarchal standpoint, Edgar is the more acceptable choice. Catherine's predicament is therefore both a statement of social commentary towards the ways in which men and women were able to better their station in life, and a criticism of women's limited options in terms of freely choosing a life partner.

Gilbert and Gubar also state that Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship works well because "she fills his need for a soul, a voice, a language with which to address cultured men" and he "provides her with an extra body to lessen her female vulnerability" (Gilbert and Gubar, 295). The two can thus circumvent the subscribed social order, in effect destroying the previously existing order of the family and household hierarchy at *Wuthering Heights*. Gilbert and Gubar assert that without his soul (Catherine), he succumbs to his id-like qualities which stem from his original alienation from so-called civilized culture (294). His desire to destroy the social order that oppressed him is as natural to him as loving Catherine should be foreign. But it is in fact his relationship with Catherine that allows him to understand enough to carry out his revenge, taking over not only the ownership of *Wuthering Heights* as its patriarch, but also usurping the role of father of Catherine II from Edgar Linton. Heathcliff has subverted the legitimacy required by patriarchy by impersonating it: he apprehends the roles of both father and landlord through devious methods because he knows that as an orphan, the socio-cultural

structure will never allow him to attain that status any other way. Gilbert and Gubar tell us that he is able to pull off his deception because he has realized: "to kill patriarchy, he must first pretend to be a patriarch" (297). In order to destroy the social order that wishes to subdue both Catherine and himself, he must also become complicit with it—sort of like a double agent. He himself must become two-faced, doubled, both patriarch and rebel. Heathcliff faces this problem precisely because of the Earnshaw father's dominance through him and Hindley. The story opens with a strong father figure in Mr. Earnshaw, which U.C. Knoepfelmacher asserts deeply contrasts with the lack of any dictatorial male presence at the outset of *Jane Eyre* (94).

Heathcliff's representation of the element that forever disturbs the image of family and home in *Wuthering Heights* is not the only element bringing the clash of the Rational and the Gothic into play in the novel. Emily Brontë makes clever use of spatial manipulation in *Wuthering Heights*. Elizabeth Imlay points out that Brontë utilizes "the Gothic elements of buildings, rooms and enclosures, some of which literally become prisons" (Imlay, 28). Furthermore, Brontë expands their use: they become what Imlay terms "complex structures of containment and escape, which mirror states of psychological stress and release in the characters" (*Loc.cit.*). Hindley, as the owner of Wuthering Heights, imposes punishments and servitude on Heathcliff; Heathcliff and Catherine then escape the oppression of the social order in their home to the only place they can: the moors. Catherine's solution to her emerging womanhood is a childish escape with Heathcliff towards Thrushcross Grange. Nevertheless, running away from the repressing space of the Heights across the moors actually brings them closer to the very fate that they wish to avoid: their separation by the forces of cultural and class difference in Victorian society. Yet the consequences of growing up and entering society cannot be avoided: instead of running free for miles on the moors, they run directly into Thrushcross Grange, a space symbolic of the ideal patriarchal order. The space of the home at

Thrushcross Grange not only physically traps Catherine—she is bitten by a bulldog guarding the building and is forced to remain there for medical treatment—it also changes her psychologically, forcing her to realize her inability to achieve social acceptance if she remains loyal to Heathcliff in romantic terms. This realization creates anxiety within Catherine as it clashes with her already existing desires. It is also incomprehensible to Heathcliff: Heathcliff is rejected by Thrushcross Grange as harshly as Catherine has been attacked and trapped by it. Thus, Catherine and Heathcliff's separation is not only caused by patriarchal forces, but also by Catherine's new sexual awareness, that Heathcliff is not her brother by blood, and can therefore be an object of desire. However, her growth into womanhood is accompanied by "all the terrors which attend that phenomenon in a puritanical and patriarchal society" (Gilbert and Gubar, 270). She should fear being thrust out of the patriarchal order (and thus, society) if she should choose Heathcliff. He is not the right type of man for her to marry, as he is neither titled nor wealthy, and as his origins are unknown, exists outside the caste system.

Meanwhile, Catherine finds a preferable and more socially acceptable home in Thrushcross Grange. She is transformed by the pampering she receives in the Linton household, an exemplary vision of the intact social order of the family. Because she is separated from her lover/brother, Heathcliff, whom she feels is the strongest part of herself, she is easily convinced that her wild and reckless behavior had been contrary to her basic nature as a woman. Away from Heathcliff's influence, she is instructed in the ways of reason and order, which proves fatal to her—after having changed so much, she can neither rationally accept the incomprehensible and uncouth Heathcliff, nor can she fully accept her marriage to Edgar as the right decision. Having exiled her primary desire in order to socialize within a family undisrupted by the Gothic elements, she effectively exiles her primary narcissistic

identity.⁴⁸ Yet, her consciousness that Heathcliff is part of herself cannot be destroyed; Heathcliff's intrusion, and therefore the intrusion of the Gothic, prevails in *Wuthering Heights*, as Heathcliff and Catherine are reunited in death rather than life.

2.2.2 *Jane Eyre*

While both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are inextricable from the discussion of the Gothic home, *Jane Eyre* is the more important of the two when connecting the discourse of the Gothic unhomely to later texts, especially through theme, characterization and symbolism. Therefore, a close analysis of the houses in the story and the events that play out in those domestic spaces will lead to further insights about the integral role the house contributes as a symbol of the destabilization (or stabilization) of the social order. In *Jane Eyre*, the gothic mansion is the apex of two powers struggling against each other—patriarchal control of female will and sexuality, and the rebellion of the female will against that control. This struggle is played out in two major ways: Jane's feelings of homelessness despite the number of houses she lives in, and her foil, Bertha, who acts as both a dark double and as a symbol of the potential of unbridled passion's destructiveness. The setting for this struggle is a series of four houses, none of which are welcoming to Jane.

⁴⁸ Kavanagh uses Freud's theory of primary narcissism to support the claim that Catherine has rejected the identity she originally established through narcissistic identification because she rejects the environment (*Wuthering Heights*) and objects (especially Heathcliff) that had enabled her to establish herself as Catherine. He then explains that rejection of her primary narcissistic identity necessarily leads to a situation of extreme anxiety, self-exile and ultimately death. See Kavanagh, 87.

The story follows its title character, Jane Eyre, as an orphan who is first unwelcome in her aunt's house, then thrust into a school called Lowood, whose sinister headmaster treats the schoolgirls like small criminals. While at school, she gains a mother figure in her favorite teacher. Later, she also loses said mother figure to marriage. Thus, from a young age, Jane knows the transience of the feeling of being at home: in fact, she learns what being homeless at home (in other words, treated as an intruder in what should be her home) means before she ever learns what it feels like to be welcomed. When she leaves the school to become a governess at Thornfield Hall, she is again confronted by the feeling that she is an interloper: not quite a servant, but not a member of the household, she feels affronted by the strange attitude of the manor's master, Mr. Rochester, and finds his house both visually and aurally uncanny. Despite her better judgment, she falls in love with him and they become engaged; however, it is revealed that he is already married to a madwoman, Bertha, and Jane is forced to leave what should have been a comfortable situation again. The fourth house in the story, belonging to the Rivers family provides solace, and in a way, family: the Rivers are revealed to be her cousins, and later, Jane learns a large inheritance has been bequeathed to her by a distant relative. While she is at first determined to stay with her family, the Gothic, this time in the form of dreams, pushes her towards returning to Thornfield Hall. This romantic, yet uncanny happening leads her back to the site of the unresolved transgression of bigamy, Rochester's cruelty towards his mad wife, and Jane's disgrace. She then discovers that Mr. Rochester has been maimed by a fire that consumed both his house and his mad wife. Jane, the Gothic intruder, now has her own inheritance, and therefore becomes the equal of Mr. Rochester. As his caretaker, they reconcile and marry. Thus, Jane, as a Gothic heroine, brings an essential homelessness to her role, and her continual placement in uncanny space (even up to her marriage) marks the destruction of the patriarchal order that rejected her. Moreover, the

houses in the story provide significant insight into the social order and Jane's role within it.

Jane Eyre has been studied many times over and for many different reasons and readings, but it is significant here because like *Wuthering Heights* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, it encapsulates a discourse of haunting.⁴⁹ From the very beginning, Jane experiences the threatening power of the patriarchy, in having been incarcerated by her aunt in the "red room." The room, which had belonged to her uncle, and in which he awaited burial after his death, symbolizes the violence and destructive power that the patriarchy can have on the feminine psyche. Jane has been put there by her aunt, who is complicit with the forces of repression, and who wishes to discipline her orphaned niece. She refuses to listen to Jane's claims that the room is haunted, and as a result, Jane comes out of the room both physically ill and mentally disturbed. Because Jane can be considered a haunter of buildings, she must herself clash with the already present ghost of the patriarchy in her aunt's home, reflecting that Jane herself is Gothic, and setting herself in juxtaposition to the family structure so that she emerges from the red room may have been a natural event. Adrienne Rich explains that the red room represents the tyranny of the patriarchy in both the reason Jane ends up there (her cousin's violence towards her, the hostility of a patriarch-in-training) and the psychological effects (hysteria and illness) that the imagined ghost—the imagined patriarch—has on her (Rich, 471-472). Rich also explains that the cruelty shown to her by her family also leads to Jane receiving the first womanly kindness she has ever known: Bessie, the nursemaid, is

⁴⁹ This fact has also been briefly noted by Lynnette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar. They explain: "*Jane Eyre's* language of captivity and freedom, female empowerment and disempowerment, its images of the ghostlike double who wanders the house at night, and its fiery denouement, in which the woman burns the house where she has been permitted to be mistress: these would all be incorporated into the ghost story tradition as it was practiced by American women, a tradition that remained hidden until recently" (Carpenter and Kolmar, 11). Interestingly, the same collection of essays in which they state this also contains an essay on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and an essay on Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, both of which are related to *Jane Eyre's* established tradition of the feminine anxiety that haunts houses and both of which are subjects of interest to this dissertation's topic.

finally open-hearted to her suffering (472). Bessie becomes her first feminine ally, supporting Jane and her intuition. Jane has always felt women should be kind to one another and men should not act violently or unjustly; Bessie is the first to accede that Jane's feelings are the truth. Because of Bessie, too, Jane finds the inner strength to confront her aunt, her betrayer. She is thus able to realize that it is women complicit with the patriarchy, like her aunt who is in league with her dead husband and her son, who are most dangerous to Jane's individuality and free will.

In Jane's first person narrative, the reader is treated to detailed descriptions of how, in each house Jane inhabits, she feels as if she is an interloper. In her aunt's house Gateshead, in Lowood school for girls, in Thornfield Hall and finally at the home of her cousins the Rivers, she is unable to assimilate into the social order. Gateshead, her aunt's house, should be her first place of welcome after she loses her parents. However, since she is neither a member of staff, nor is she a member of the family, she is treated simply as other. Even the memory of her dead uncle abuses her, through the supposed haunting of the red room he inhabited during his lifetime, and which he supposedly lingered in after death in Jane's imagination. In one of the most famous yet troubling scenes in the book, Jane is shut into her dead uncle's red room as a punishment. She fantasizes that his ghost still haunts it, and although she supposes him to be a benevolent spirit, she also believes that ghosts are true to their nature—and their natural purpose is to terrify.

Once at Thornfield Hall, Jane's role as governess is just another construction of Jane's othering—the governess is a job that neither allows her to be a proper member of staff, nor is it of the same social status as the family. Jane takes to her new role with zeal, however. Of the role of governess in 19th century Britain, Mary Poovey states that it is easily recognized as important:

. . . private teaching was almost the only occupation considered sufficiently 'genteel' for middle-class women, because this form of work most closely approximated that of the wife and mother. Moreover in the 1840s the number of middle-class women who sought work outside the home rose substantially (43).

Becoming a governess is, then, an important step in Jane's climb in the social ladder. She has gone from being abandoned by her only living relatives to rising to the highest status of household help. Yet Jane seems blind to this very important differentiation between the role of private tutor and servant. She says that she felt the housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax to be her equal because she was a dependent: "this affable and kind little widow was no great dame, but a dependent like myself. . . . The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: so much the better—my position was all the freer" (C. Brontë, 85). Although Jane states here that she feels a real affinity and equanimity between herself and Mrs. Fairfax, if Mary Poovey's statement is correct, then it is a false equality. They may converse as equals, but Jane is actually Mrs. Fairfax's better. Jane's misconception of their differing social status reflects upon Jane's sheltered lifestyle at Lowood and her abuse at Gateshead: she cannot truly tell where her place is in the social structure. This leaves her with an anxiety in social situations, similar to her experience upon meeting Mrs. Fairfax (she assumes Mrs. Fairfax is her charge's mother until she is corrected). While she longs to know who her equals are and to have equals so that she can speak her mind freely, she does not know how to find them.

Jane's misreading of the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, as the owner of Thornfield is important because it confuses the class distinctions between Jane, Mrs. Fairfax, and Rochester. It also reminds the reader that housekeeping and childcare, women's occupations, are the main concerns for the women of Thornfield (DeLamotte, 200). With Rochester away so often, the house possesses two sides: the governess/housekeeper side, with his child, and the hidden,

mad wife side. This duality suggests that “women suffer silently and in secret—not because no one knows in what castle or dungeon they have been hidden away, but because no one knows the restlessness beneath their apparent calm” (*Ibid.*, 201). Thus, the suffering of Bertha, hidden away in the attic, reminds us that although women of the 19th century often conceded to the Victorian Angel ideal and sometimes allowed their innate creativity to be curbed or even killed, they were still intensely, powerfully, and vehemently alive.

The site of that power is Thornfield Hall itself, as it is the receptacle of Jane’s anxiety during her foray into the working world, a journey that raises her status from the teacher of orphans to the governess of a landowning gentleman’s daughter. Thornfield has many faces, some welcoming and some sinister, which leads to the proposition that the house itself is a candidate for doubling. The concept of the double, as explored in Freud’s essay “The Uncanny,” does not properly mention the home or the house as doubles. It mostly addresses the idea of the double as a mimic of the human figure (in the doll Olympia), and that figure’s eliciting an uncanny feeling in the onlooker because the double has traits that so closely copy those of people as to fool the onlooker into thinking the automaton is a person. This sort of uncanny double is slightly different from that addressed in *Jane Eyre* in the character of Bertha. Bertha, as a double, is an often discussed, yet rarely clearly defined, type of double—she is what Jane imagines her doppelgänger would be. The house, especially the deserted wing in which Bertha is incarcerated, is described as hushed, gloomy, and eerie. It recalls the Gothic of Castle Udolpho from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* while at the same time building upon its legacy. On one hand, the house is both a home to the transgressive male who seeks to imprison the heroine, Jane, which is similar to the predicament Emily faces, in that she is also incarcerated by such a person. On the other hand, Jane has come to Thornfield of her own volition, in order to better her economic status through work. While she is metaphorically

trapped the same way as her predecessor Emily, Jane does not face the same imperilment, as she knows she has the power to leave if she must. The complicating factor, then, is Jane's desire to be accepted—to journey from the unheimlich to the heimlich, from Gothic outsider to accepted member of society. In that sense, the house's concealment of Bertha intimates that within its domestic walls lies the power to both grant Jane's wish, and imperil her freedom to leave.

The image of the double, as mentioned previously, was first discussed by Otto Rank in his book *The Double* (1914); it is essential to the examination of the similarities and differences between the characters of Bertha and Jane and how they interact with each other, their "home," and Rochester. Both present Gothic elements—Jane as an orphan and Bertha as a madwoman. Both are also deeply connected to Rochester, which crushes them under the thumb of the patriarchal order—Jane through her schoolgirl love for him and Bertha through the ties of matrimony. However, the meaning of "doubling" goes far beyond similarities or differences they have as characters, and provides an explanation for the deep level of animosity and fear existing between them. Bertha is used as a device to disrupt a seemingly fixed system, and to alert Jane to the dangers of becoming complicit with a man like Rochester through marriage to him. DeLamotte explains:

For the angry woman hidden away at the heart of this boring domestic world is Rochester's wife, and there are strong suggestions in the sequences that follow that his attempt to commit the repetition that is bigamy may indeed make Jane his wife—condemn her to repeat Bertha's experience. Association with Rochester makes Jane susceptible to confinement in the same realm Bertha inhabits (206).

Rochester will give Jane a gateway to the outside world, which she longs to know, but he is also dangerous; he threatens to confine her creative spirit in the same way he has already done

to Bertha.⁵⁰ Thus, within Jane there is a dichotomy of desiring to belong through sacrificing her individuality, and valuing freedom over adherence to social expectations. This is important because it establishes the foundations of a theme prominent in both the Domestic and Female Gothic subgenres that would last for over a century after the publication of *Jane Eyre*. As we will see in "The Yellow Wallpaper," this division may become blurred if the protagonist allows herself to become trapped by a transgressive male; Bertha's presence reminds us of Jane's near-miss at having faced a similar fate.

In addition, the double is primarily related to desire, and to the dysfunctional who desires but cannot consummate that desire.⁵¹ In the case of Jane, her viewing of Bertha awakens in her the realization that Bertha's passion supersedes her own. She cannot be Bertha's equal (and probably she does not want to be) and so is utterly repulsed by her. At the same time, she sees in herself the potential to become like Bertha if she does not reign in her innately rebellious nature; some part of Jane may desire to unleash her feelings and become more like Bertha. If she did, her fate would more closely resemble that of Catherine from *Wuthering Heights*. However, as we have established, the important difference between Catherine and Jane is Jane's good utilization of the self-restraint and experience as a woman that she learnt through hardship at Lowood. She is no more capable of becoming Bertha than Bertha is capable of becoming sane again. The potential for them to merge, then is, a threat, a fear, born of their mutual desire for Rochester. Because Jane is able to gain a degree of certainty that she will have a home with Rochester, that fact is threatened by fear of loss, and

⁵⁰ It may also be noted that Bertha, who is Creole in origin, is described as bestial, demonic and monstrous—this may be a reflection of another type of uncanny, which is the byproduct of British imperialism. Heiland explains that Bertha's anger may be read as "a nation's uncanny double come back to haunt those who made her" (126).

⁵¹ This is discussed at length in the context of Dorian Grey as well as Narcissus, both of whom find their images perfect, but both of whom cannot love another. See Rank, 1993, 123-124.

by extension, by Bertha.⁵² Therefore, the two doubles often seek to destroy each other in order to possess (or maintain possession of) the object of their desire. In discussing the association between the double and destruction (which often plays out as death), one must also explain why one is doomed to die or disappear: the fear of annihilation, or of descent into madness due to an inability to differentiate oneself as unique to others.

The novel suggests that a new social order may be established if there are characters with the will to refashion or subvert the existing (or unraveled) socio-economic ties, which appear in such forms as marriage. The anxiety towards home also plays out in the motif of the fairy tale marriage that is throughout the text. Rather than a singular fairy tale tradition, *Jane Eyre* recalls an overall mythic tradition in which a heroine of uncertain origins (thus thrust out of the patriarchal order) faces trials and seeks acceptance into society again through a successful marriage (often to a prince).⁵³ Jane's story ends with her domestic happiness, albeit not in the way that was intended for either her or Rochester by patriarchal society. Because Jane inherits money and the house is destroyed, she is on a more economically equal footing with her romantic interest than most heroines in fairytales. So while the Thornfield manor had been referred to as "Bluebeard's castle," its destruction signals both the end to the presence of the Gothic manor as a locus of fear and oppression to women, and the ability for the patriarch to be forced to change, to accept a different way of life.

⁵² While one achieves primary identification through the mirror stage, i.e. being able to recognize one's self through one's image reflected in another person or literally in a mirror, one can achieve a level of human desire satiable by achieving a degree of certainty by relating that desire through another. See Maccannell, 63-68. See in particular pp. 63-64 for the context of the term in feminist readings of texts.

⁵³ The reminiscence of fairy tales has been pointed out by numerous scholars, but it seems that none of them agree; they mention Cinderella, Snow White, Bluebeard, and even Beauty and the Beast as suggestions of related fairy tales. However, since each scholar seems to argue in favor of a different fairy tale, it seems more appropriate to suggest that all of these scholars are correct and the novel is actually related to all of the fairy tales at once. In other words, reading *Jane Eyre*, we recall the marriage of fairy tale, and the trials that the heroine goes through prior to that marriage.

While Adrienne Rich has argued that Jane's struggle is that of a woman in society, and Catherine's is that of a double (or a dual soul), this section of the dissertation has argued that both present conflicts that reflect the anxiety of women, refracted through the lens of literature. In *Wuthering Heights*, the conflict between Heathcliff and the two families is solved through his overpowering them, through his reestablishing his own definition of the social order by usurping the deed to both houses. These houses, then, become uncanny spaces in which ghosts and other gothic imagery are free to roam, and in which the memory of the anxiety of the characters becomes trapped. These elements make *Wuthering Heights* an important text to consider when discussing the image of home in Gothic literature. In *Jane Eyre*, the patriarchal forces fighting to maintain control of the social order, Jane's inability to claim any of the houses she inhabited as home, and the symbolism of the dark double demonstrate that while the execution is different, the motif of the house in *Jane Eyre* lies in affinity with other Neo-Gothic texts and Gothic texts that discuss the image of home. Further, Jane's anxiety towards her double, towards marriage, and towards establishing herself as a member of the social order becomes a precursor for later texts like "The Yellow Wallpaper" and *Rebecca* to deal with such problems. Jane's headstrong nature also becomes a template for future heroines' rebellion against the patriarchy (for unlike Catherine, who dies, Jane lives, which is a fundamental subversion of what should happen to a rebel in a society with a strictly patriarchal structure). By analyzing these texts, several different implications regarding their use of gothic and its relation to feminine anxiety have become clear.

The gothic intruder aids both Brontës in either subverting or circumnavigating the social structure. Terry Eagleton explains that although both authors use similar modes, and sometimes even similar symbolism, their characters' actions demonstrate a different attitude towards society.

Where Charlotte Brontë differs most from Emily is precisely in this impulse to negotiate passionate self-fulfillment on terms which preserve the social and moral conventions intact, and so preserve intact the submissive, enduring, everyday self which adheres to them (Eagleton, 51).

Both Charlotte and Emily's characters are very passionate; however, Charlotte's Jane negotiates society in a very different way from Catherine. On one hand, Catherine joins the social order through marriage to Edgar and denial of her true feelings for Heathcliff. On the other hand, Jane becomes able to subvert the social order, marrying Rochester after first rejecting/leaving him: it is only after he has lost both his house and has been maimed by the fire, and after she has inherited enough money to become his social equal, that she establishes a different kind of social order by marrying him.

Both of these stories emphasize the role of marriage and landownership in determining the course of the protagonists' lives, as Catherine and Heathcliff's ghostly reunion is a shadow of the marriage between the now self-sufficient Jane Eyre and the maimed Mr. Rochester. These endings signify the conclusion of the vicious cycle propelled by the Gothic in the story. Catherine and Heathcliff's home together becomes their graves; Jane and Rochester create a corporeal home together. Both homelessness and the creation of home in life are significant in the works of later women authors who wrote Gothic fiction. Further, both of these novels also feature child abuse, both implied and real. Most importantly, the significant emphasis on the motif of home in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* presents a fundamental anxiety with regard to the home and the image of family connected to it. Further, these stories echo the marriage entanglements and bungled inheritance of *Mysteries of Udolpho*. The anxiety present in the Neo-Gothic re-manifests itself, haunting works of modern literature in a similar fashion. In order to prove the connection and assert the centrality of the motif of the house in the Gothic, the final section of this essay will primarily deal with explaining how the motif of

house/home is central to this genre, and how it is connected to the long tradition of the Gothic novel by way of demonstrating how the motif of house/home figures in such Gothic and Neo-gothic novels.

The image of home in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* provides an important cornerstone in the sub-genre of Domestic Gothic. These texts are also exemplary for their exploration of the double and its effect on narrative. More importantly, *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* propose an anxiety surrounding the home and the family. These two texts clearly illustrate Charles L. Crow's assertion that while the reader wishes to believe in the ideal family and the ideal home, the Gothic lies bare any hidden secrets or unacknowledged truths, that "hatred that can exist alongside of love, the reality of child abuse, even incest" (1999, 2). Evolving over the more than two hundred years of Gothic fiction, the stereotype of the Victorian woman as an angel necessarily had her reverse in the perversities that played out to their insidious ends in the story. As later exemplary texts will continue to prove, even in modern times, the Gothic serves as a vehicle for female authors to express and free their characters' repressed passions and urges, which lurk in the very walls of the houses in the texts.

Chapter 3

The Gothic Home in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson

3.1 The Architecture of *Home* in the Works of Emily Dickinson

The poetry of Emily Dickinson has been and continues to be a subject of much lively scholarship as well as avid readership; those interested in Dickinson range from academics and schoolchildren to botanists and manuscript scholars. One of its most important aspects of her oeuvre is its multifaceted nature, its inability to be pinned down into any one genre. By placing Emily Dickinson's works in affinity with the motif of the house in gothic literature, this dissertation does not seek to categorize all of Dickinson's poems. Instead, using two groupings of poems (architecture and liminal) and their interpretations will assist in proving that the gothic house in Dickinson's poetry has a similar dualistic nature to those of the houses of other gothic authors. A brief history of Emily Dickinson's life will provide historical background to the poems and to Dickinson's interaction with the gothic genre; close readings will magnify the threads of gothic interwoven into her poems and establish a basis for which to read the houses and homes in Dickinson's poetry as uncanny.

According to the Emily Dickinson Lexicon, there is a broad range of meanings that "house" and "home" are meant to stand in place of, which only serve to illustrate the

irreducibility of these terms in Dickinson's vocabulary.⁵⁴ The poetry contains approximately 93 references to the word "house," which mean: biological family, home or dwelling, nest, heaven, theater audience, tomb, church, wealth or estate, residence of the soul, nursery for plants, Earth, light house (*EDL*). 94 references are made to "home" as a noun, defined as: nest, haven, habitation, familiar dwelling, native country, family, heaven, mortal existence (*Loc.cit.*). The phrase "at home" can mean: comfortable, able to receive guests, alive and at one's place of residence. "Home" is also listed as an adverb, with 89 references (*Loc.cit.*).⁵⁵ These include definitions for "home" such as homeward, heavenward, back, away, and domestically. Dickinson, in being so inclusive of various meanings of home, demonstrates an effort to show the reader the multifaceted nature of the home. She also seems to ask the reader to suspend his or her personal definition of those two words, or perhaps more correctly, expand it.

According to Jean McClure Mudge, whose work on Emily Dickinson specifically addresses the image of home, Dickinson's use of "house" and "home" refers both to actual physical structures as well as "a beloved, security, fulfillment, immortality, a state of peace or rest—or their reverse" (Mudge, 12).⁵⁶ Therefore, it may be said that the image of home is haunted by contradictions, demonstrating a fundamental ambiguity. Further, Mudge's observation that house and home can be both literal and figurative also puts Emily Dickinson's

⁵⁴ The *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* (*EDL*) itself, by presenting so many variants and definitions, stands as proof that it is impossible to read any Dickinson poem in any one way, underlining the fundamental ambiguity present in her oeuvre.

⁵⁵ Each definition also references a variant of the poetic line in which it was found.

⁵⁶ Mudge's seminal work on the image of home in Dickinson's poetry remains the only full-length study on the topic. Diana Fuss's *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them* dedicates only one chapter to Dickinson. While Fuss's is a very detailed contribution to Dickinson scholarship on the image of the house, it does not have the same impact as an entire book. Other studies of Dickinson simply mention the symbolism of house or the motif of home in passing. Considering the significance of this topic to Dickinson's oeuvre, it deserves to be revisited as an updated, full-length study in the near future.

poetry in affinity with other contemporary New England authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The former's emphasis on the importance of incorporating a conscientiousness of nature into man's daily existence as well as his encouragement to expand perceptions of reality and the latter's treatment of House and Home are specific traits she holds in common with them.

Nevertheless, the architecture of Home in the poetry of Emily Dickinson extends beyond its connections to the works of her contemporaries—first because of her usage of the words “house” and “home” and other related items such as doors and windows, and second, because it is well documented that during her life, Dickinson became increasingly reclusive. Throughout her life (even before her period of hermitage), it is undeniable that she was very attached to her family's dwellings. But why? Alfred Habegger, in his lengthy biography on Dickinson, questions regarding “I Years had been from Home” (F440):

What does it mean that memory is so often a “house,” and that the threatening rooms are associated with storage and rubbish, and that the idea of not entering, or escaping, is always coming up? Does this material have something to do with the strict spatial limits Father seemed to mandate, or with the fact that her memories were divided between two houses? (2001, 534)

Habegger, in discussing this poem, briefly touches upon the idea of memory, and that Dickinson's memory of her houses disturbs her. While she is attached to her houses, it does not mean that she always depicts them in an idealized or homely fashion. In fact, as Habegger seems to imply, Dickinson's treatment of the image of home is much closer to our discussion of the uncanny than it is to Ruskin's vision of separate spheres and a happy home. Dickinson's vision of home is complicated by the ideas of entrapment and of escape. Further, her poems describe home not only as existing in the present but also of in the past and the future. Her focus on memory, then, is related to a nostalgia that may elicit uncertainty and fear.

By the Reconstruction period during the post-Civil War era, she barely left the house even to visit her neighbors. Even when she was asked to make a trip to Boston in order to meet Editor T. W. Higginson, regarding the prospect of publishing her poetry, she wrote to him in reply (1869): "Could it please your convenience to come so far as Amherst I should be very glad, but I do not cross my Father's ground to any House or town" (LII, #330, 460). Even for her own benefit, even to ask the advice of a man she considered important to her writing life, she would not leave her father's house to travel. Maryanne Garbowsky explains that this was due to psychological illness—namely, agoraphobia. She states with scientific fact and thorough research that Dickinson's agoraphobia lead to her seclusion in the home.⁵⁷

Even in death, she did not want to be parted from the Homestead, indicating her relationship with her physical home was profound, inextricable from her identity and possibly also her mental stability. In fact, she was so attached to her house that she requested that upon her death, her funeral procession should march through the house first, and then out through the garden and down to the family plot, but always staying within sight of the house (Sewall, 610). Today, visitors to the Dickinson Homestead and the neighboring Evergreens (her brother Austin's house) can take a short walk down the road to the Dickinson family plot; it is about 5 minutes away from the house by foot. The plot itself is not in view of the home that Dickinson cherished so dearly she engaged in the obsessive-compulsive behavior of declining to leave its grounds, but it is close enough that Dickinson, even in death, must feel its presence.

The presence of home in Dickinson's poetry offers a dual image: it is both a physical space (the house) and a mental space (the mind). These spaces present positive possibilities as

⁵⁷ Garbowsky's work is in a similar vein to John Cody, whose book *After Great Pain* attempts to psychoanalyze Dickinson through use of her works. However, Garbowsky's research encompasses letters and historical facts that would lend greater authentication to the idea that Dickinson really suffered from the inability to leave her house. In particular, see Garbowsky, 17-30.

well as menacing confinement. Architectural metaphors lend support to her inherently ambiguous and often uncanny subject matter. For examples of these metaphors in her poetry, one might examine "I Dwell in Possibility" (F466) in which the narrator finds that Possibility, as a house, is "more numerous of Windows" and "Superior—for Doors—," citing the structures of the home that exist as borders and in borderlines (walls) that allow one to be transported in or out. One might also examine, "I Years had been from Home" (F440), which portrays the fear of returning to a place one used to call home only to see that strangers live there and one is unwelcome: the first two stanzas are grounded by the image of standing before the door of the house, poised to knock; the second two stanzas are full of ambiguity, detaching her from possession of the house by reflections of nostalgia for a time when the speaker could call that place home. Additionally, in her letters she describes two very different images of home: she felt a house could be both her "palace in the dew" (LI, #89, 204) and also a place where "skeleton cats ever caught spectre rats in dim old nooks and corners" (LI, #52, 134). These images also translate into a dual image of house, which could be both delightful and uncanny.

3.1.1 Historical Influences and Theoretical Conceptions

Before delving into poetical analysis, it is important to provide a brief historical background to the cultural and social image of house and home. Between 1796 and 1862, the U.S. Congress passed a series of public land acts in order to entice people to become settlers by taking advantage of extremely low land prices. Acts such as the Public Land Act of 1796

and the Homestead Act of 1862, as well as federal land grants to veterans, all helped Americans purchase their own land in greater numbers than ever before. In the public consciousness, and thus in literature, homebuilding was seen not only as an idea, but also as a project. For those who could afford it, building or purchasing a house was a necessity, especially in communities like Amherst, where families grew with each generation (Mudge, 126). This was also true for the Dickinson family—as with both her grandfather’s building of the Dickinson home, the Main Street Mansion, and later, her father’s building of The Evergreens just next-door for her older brother.

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 in the house her grandfather Samuel Fowler Dickinson built, the middle child of three, with an older brother Austin and a younger sister Lavinia. She led the financially comfortable life of a well-respected community member; her grandfather was a founder of Amherst College; her father was a lawyer, elected representative to the United States Congress, and Treasurer of Amherst College for thirty-seven years (Martin, 1). The prestige of the family, however does not match the story behind the houses they inhabited. The Dickinson family ownership of the house Samuel Fowler built in 1813 is a convoluted tale of debt, one caused by his supreme commitment to the founding and support of Amherst College, into which he funneled much of his money and eventually bankrupted his family. The ensuing debts caused the house to be mortgaged and then rented; the Dickinson family could occupy only half of the house and shared it with the family of preacher David Mack. For the first nine years of her life, young Emily shared that house; she was very aware that the house was divided along a line that went down the front hall.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Both Mudge and Bianchi describe the emotional difficulties that the Dickinson family faced in sharing what they felt should be *their* space of home with the Macks. See Mudge, 26. See also Bianchi, 3.

According to most Dickinson scholars, including Sewall and Mudge, when she was nine, her father found himself unable to continue paying for the space the family occupied in the Main Street Mansion, so he moved the family to a house located on Pleasant Street. She lived there from ages nine to twenty-five. However, Alfred Habegger presents a very different version of the story. He explains that it was not in 1833 that Samuel Fowler Dickinson was unable to keep up the deed and title to his house, but in some indistinct period between 1826 and 1828, much earlier than previous scholarship has suggested (Habegger, 1998, 165). After that, the newly wed Edward was forced to find other living arrangements; it put great stress on his marriage. He thought at one point that he would be able to purchase a cousin's house, even began to order furnishings and curtains for it, but the deal fell through (*Ibid.*, 167-168). Thus, when Emily Dickinson was born and the arrangement to share the Homestead with the Macks in place, Edward must have felt some sort of relief. It was not to last, however, as he had to move his family again to the Pleasant Street house, and then finally back to the Homestead when he was able to re-purchase it. The whole ordeal spanned a time period of about 1826 to 1855, all of the early years of her parents' marriage and into Emily's young adulthood. This sort of rootlessness must have been very nerve-wracking for Dickinson's parents, who had both grown up in stable households. Habegger concludes:

These repeated uprootings have rich implications for our understanding of some of the peculiar later events of Dickinson family history: Edward's extraordinary generosity in building the Evergreens for his own son . . . and his older daughter's powerful attachment to the home on North Pleasant Street and then to the Dickinson Homestead. Edward's early dream of domestic security was spoiled repeatedly by his father's financial mismanagement, and he was determined that his own offspring would escape the painful uncertainties he had known at the time they were born (*Ibid.*, 189).

The family's economic troubles lead to anxiety, but they also lead to Edward's generosity towards his children. His understanding of the importance of providing a stable home to his children lead him not only to build a house for his son, but also to provide for both his

daughters, who never married. Thus, the “home” for Dickinson’s family was both a cause of worry and an ideal to strive towards.

Emily Dickinson may have developed many of her positive ideas about home while she was living in the Pleasant Street house. Mudge asserts that “the signal importance of this house is in its influence in forming Emily’s ideas about the idyllic possibilities of home, despite moments of despair and frustration she suffered there” (Mudge, 4). Because she spent all of her adolescence there and quite a bit of her later childhood, she must have made many memories in the Pleasant Street house, despite the circumstances of her moving there (her family’s dire economic situation) having been far from ideal. The happiness she experienced in her youth inside that house must have informed her later vision of the canny, familiar, and welcoming home in her poetry. Yet the house’s proximity to the Amherst town cemetery might also have influenced her fascination and familiarity with death rites; the funerary processions passed the back of the house in full view from the indoors (Mudge, 45). This gives the house, very literally, an uncanny face. The house itself is a place of life, even a place where life is mourned, but the cemetery is a place for the interment of dead bodies, a place of death. In the 19th century, death was a real possibility during both childhood and adulthood, a fact that Emily knew well. But she also knew it because she could see it out her very own bedroom window. In her poetry, the association between death and house arises as a visual confusion or ambiguity between images of tombs and homes, sepulchers and houses. For example, the speaker in “There’s been a Death, in the Opposite House,” (F547) describes viewing a funerary procession across the street from a window. In the poem “Sweet—safe—houses” (F684), the reader realizes the houses are actually tombs upon the description of their “Lids of Steel—on Lids of Marble.” Moreover, the “House that seemed/A Swelling of the Ground—” in “Because I could not stop for Death—” (F479) seems a gravesite, and the topic

of “I died for Beauty—but was scarce” (F448) is adjusting one’s self to being in a Tomb as if it were a new place of habitation. All of these are all good examples of a house or home as a structure with a metamorphic nature.

Finally, after living in the Pleasant Street house for fifteen years, Emily’s father re-purchased the Main Street Mansion in full from the Mack family.⁵⁹ For Edward Dickinson, the return to the house his father built was public evidence of his ability to reinstate the Dickinson fortune and honor in the community, which had been lost in the 1830s. However, the move from the Pleasant Street house disturbed Emily—she remarked in a letter to a friend: “I cannot tell you how we moved. I had rather not remember. . . . Such wits as I reserved, are so badly shattered that repair is useless—and still I can’t help laughing at my own catastrophe” (LII, #182, 323-24). Emotionally attached as she was to the Pleasant Street house, moving away from it had a devastating effect on her mental state. Curiously, however, this “catastrophe” would be the precipitating event for her to write significantly in the very same letter: “They say that ‘home is where the heart is.’ I think it is where the *house* is, and the adjacent buildings” (*Loc.cit.*). In other words, for Dickinson, house, home and heart are all equivalent, the center of her emotional landscape. Further, it is not going too far to say that this equation even suggests that the three are inextricable. Therefore, the image of home presented in her poetry not only describes the physical spaces, or houses, that she inhabited during her lifetime, it also connected them closely to her emotions associated with those physical spaces.

⁵⁹ For specific information on the re-purchasing of the house and the minute details associated with the purchase, see Leyda, 332. See also Habegger, 1998, 184-188.

3.1.2 Dickinson and the Gothic

According to her friend Emily Fowler Ford, the two “were reading Byron, Lowell, Emerson, Motherwell, and Margaret Fuller’s translation of *Günrode*” (Gelpi, 60).⁶⁰ This wide array of authors includes Romantics, Transcendentalists and Gothicists, all of which shaped Emily Dickinson’s writing. Thus, Daneen Wardrop, in the first full-length study of Dickinson and the gothic, begins her analysis by attempting to draw a comparison between Dickinson’s poems and the two gothic novels that form the aforementioned heart of gothic canon, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Castle of Otranto* (1764); she states that because a discovered or secreted manuscript is central to both of these novels and because Dickinson’s poems were discovered secreted away in a box, the fictional novels are related through the uncanny nature of their placement to Dickinson’s oeuvre (4). Wardrop goes on to explain that in *Udolpho*, Emily St. Aubert burns her father’s manuscripts and Emily requests that Lavinia burn hers upon her death (*Loc.cit.*). However, as far as a comparison goes, it should be pointed out that the burning of documents is not unique or even a mimic of the actions of a literary figure as Wardrop would have us believe. While Dickinson may have been inspired by the story, there seems to be no solid evidence that that was the impetus for her request to her sister; further, it is a very common practice for authors to burn manuscripts or ask for them to

⁶⁰ Transcendentalism is mentioned here in the same sentence with Romanticism. It is easy to conclude, then that Romanticism not the only literary movement besides the gothic that influenced Dickinson and it must be noted that she was inspired by Transcendentalism as well. According to Albert J. Gelpi, there is much evidence of allusion to Emerson’s work in her letters; he indicates that LII, #539, #756, #775, #856, and #882 are all allusions to Emerson’s poetry. He further states that present in her works even before the 1860s were “the essential features of Transcendentalism—the optimism, the emphasis on experimentation and originality, the sense of social purpose, the metaphysical and mystical speculations, the pulse and rhythm, of imagery” (Gelpi, 63). Evidence thus suggests that she was already thoroughly enamored with the philosophy of Transcendentalism.

be burnt.⁶¹ Dickinson's wishes only seem to explain that she took her writing seriously and since she published so few poems during her lifetime, one can only suppose that she did not wish her work to be edited posthumously when she could not control its published form.

The Gothic was not a genre foreign to Dickinson by any means, as it was widely read during her time period, as previously explained. Habegger asserts: "frequently drawing on the machinery of Gothic romance, her poems treat memory as a place best avoided—a long-abandoned house, a closet that had better not be dusted or swept, a cellar not to be opened lest something 'in its Fathoms' be roused to pursuit" (2001, 532-33). It is understood from her treatment of subjects like "memory" that the uncanny has the ability to haunt us, a subject often treated in Gothic literature. As discussed in Chapter 1, especially with regard to Freud and Bachelard, remembrance and forgetfulness are a fundamental to the uncanny nature of the Female Gothic. Thus her poetry contained elements of Gothic; more importantly, it used the Gothic to describe space as an uncanny house—a house that should not be opened, even for cleaning, because some frightening event or unfortunate happening might be recollected.

⁶¹ Book, letter and/or manuscript burning is a common enough practice, although it is mostly engaged in to destroy a cultural heritage or for ceremonial reasons. In literature, it is certainly not unique to Ann Radcliff's story. It figures in other famous books that Dickinson had read, such as *Don Quixote*, in which the priest and the housekeeper try to burn the books that they believe are driving their master mad, and in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story collection *Mosses from an Old Manse*, which features a tale about a society that burns all of the books they find offensive. Amongst famous literary figures, the burning of manuscripts may be a sign of frustrated genius. For example, it is a well-known story that ten days before he died in 1852, Nikolai Gogol burnt the second half of his masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, his take on Dante's *Inferno*; the first half managed to escape the flames to become one of his most famous works. Moreover, Franz Kafka's situation was similar to that of Emily Dickinson: it is said that Kafka asked his literary executor to burn his papers after his death. Thomas Hardy, too, wanted his papers to go up in smoke, but luckily his second wife saved them. Even contemporary British poet Phillip Larkin did not want anyone else to read his correspondence and his preferred method of disposing of it was to have his will's executor to burn everything. See M. A. Orthofer, "Weighing Words over Last Wishes" in *Poets & Writers* (November-December 2003). See also Elif Batuman, "Kafka's Last Trial," *The New York Times* (September 22nd, 2010).

The motif of home is central to the poems related to the gothic and to the uncanny.

Jean McClure Mudge, in her ground-breaking study on the image of home in Emily Dickinson's poetry, asserts:

Not only does Emily Dickinson describe physical views of her house and home, fulfilling the common first understanding of the word image as something seen or represented, as in a painting. She also packs into these words her felt life and her memories, expanding the sense of image beyond the visual to the experiential and the remembered (Mudge, *xviii*).

Here, Mudge wishes us to recognize that house and home can be both literal (as in a full explanation of the speaker's surroundings in the poem as imagined by Emily) and figurative (as in a metaphor or symbol to describe the way the speaker is feeling or what the speaker is experiencing). This is important to remember, as the gothic relies more upon the figurative rather than the literal, and, in fact, the confusion between the two may be considered essential to Gothic as a genre. While in poetic terms, this ambiguity would merely be another expression of metaphor, in Gothic, it has the uncanny effect of blurring fantasy and reality.

As explained previously, the dualistic nature of experience is essential to the Gothic. The houses of *Jane Eyre*, for example, defy Jane's expectations of comfort: Lowood does not provide proper shelter; her aunt's house does not provide love or familial affection; and finally Thornfield Hall is both brilliantly illuminated and obviously hiding a multitude of secrets, with its locked attic rooms and strange noises echoing in the walls. As mentioned, these houses challenge Jane's definition of home, causing in her a deep anxiety towards the space of home and symbolizing the problematic relationships she has with those who inhabit those structures with her. Dickinson, influenced by her reading of literature like *Jane Eyre*, may have incorporated this problematized image of home into her poetry. According to Daneen Wardrop:

Dickinson . . . dissembled the material of gothic novelists she read. She read many. Foremost among her gothic tutors are the “electric” Brontës, as she called them (L822).⁶² She read *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. . . . Not only does her imagination engage with the characters of the Brontës—Catherine Earnshaw, Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason, Lucy Snowe—but with the Brontës themselves. The Brontë family invited interpretation as a gothic invention in its own right: the unwed sisters subject to the dictatorial preacher-father and the alcoholic brother. Dickinson, in the process of creating her own persona, must have found them riveting. Indeed, she was so familiar with the family that she could mention offhandedly to her Norcross cousins, “Vinnie has a new pussy the color of Branwell Brontë’s hair” (L471). Such frequent references to the Brontës pepper Dickinson’s letters (Wardrop, 9).

Wardrop asserts that because she read and felt affinity with the heroines of the Brontë sisters’ novels. Her imagination “engaged” with these characters, she consciously or unconsciously wrote poems in which the speaker had a presence very much like those heroines. Furthermore, she was inspired by more than one character, and by more than one type of character:

Catherine Earnshaw is an atypical heroine (one might term her the anti-heroine that matches Heathcliff’s anti-hero) whose story ends in death and Jane Eyre a rebellious heroine whose story ends in marriage; these two juxtapose against the mention of Bertha, who may be considered Jane’s enemy, her foil, symbolic of her darker self, but also the catalyst in Jane’s growth into awareness of the real world. The proliferation of the appearance of these characters signaling that the influence of these gothic works was, as Wardrop indicates, something that in all likelihood Dickinson made a conscious effort to incorporate into her oeuvre. Wardrop also explains that it was not only the stories the Brontës wrote with which Dickinson was concerned; she makes mention of the authors themselves including their appearance. Because photography was available but not yet prevalent during Dickinson’s lifetime (one might sit for a photograph anywhere between once to a handful of times in a

⁶² (L822) refers to LII, #822; Wardrop utilizes an older style of citation of the Dickinson letters.

lifetime during the 19th century), Dickinson wrote about Branwell Brontë's hair color, indicating that she was very familiar with the family indeed.

Daneen Wardrop is not the only scholar to argue that Dickinson's reading of the Brontës inspired her creatively. In her book *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*, Judith Farr takes special care to review the influences of gothic and romantic novels on Dickinson's writing, with attention to the effect that *Jane Eyre* had on the composition of the so-called "Master Letters."⁶³ She asserts that the Master Letters could be a character study of Jane writing to Mr. Rochester and professing her love, or that she is apprehending Jane's attitude and narrative voice in order to express her repressed feelings for a person she loves. Because Dickinson's poetry has a great amount of ambiguity, and because she very often made literary references, it is possible to argue that these letters are also associated with Gothic literature.

In summary, it can be said that Dickinson's poetry lies in affinity with Gothic literature. Further, it can be said that the dichotomy of familiar and unfamiliar, public and private, exposed and secret, is also a major concern addressed in her poetry. The definition of Home vacillates between two extremes, and is sometimes placed in the liminal space between them. In the following close readings of the poems, architectural metaphor and Gothic imagery will be examined in close reading.

3.1.3 The Architecture of Home

⁶³ The "Master Letters" are a set of much-debated letters addressed to an unknown person whom Dickinson refers to as "Master" in the letters. Judith Farr gives considerable textual evidence that these letters both refer to Samuel Bowles, Emily and Austin's very close friend and editor of the newspaper the *Springfield Republican*, as well as to the events in the novel *Jane Eyre*. She concludes that the connection is a purposeful one drawn by Dickinson to perhaps show the similarities between Rochester and Mr. Bowles. See Farr, 178-244.

When considering the mind and emotion as existing as or within a physical architecture with rooms, corridors, doors and windows, one may consider numerous poems, many of which focus on the anxiety present within the mind of the narrator. These poems often speak of a borderline mental state, tenuous and ambiguous. Using symbolism of the house, they provide a connection between the narrator, her consciousness, the threat of descent into an abject state, or some place in her unconscious that frightens her. A prominent explanation of this situation is offered by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their landmark study, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. They state: “. . . at this point in the fiction of her life (J475), a wound has become Dickinson’s ontological home” (Gilbert and Gubar, 604). They also assert this wound symbolizes “her guilt . . . her powerlessness . . . and her retributive fate” (*Loc.cit.*). They are referring to their argument that Dickinson’s poetry is an attempt to write herself away from the stereotypical woman who is categorized as either angelic or monstrous; Dickinson’s wound then stems from her inability to change the way people see her or think of her; she is trapped by the patriarchal view of what she ought to be and punished for even subversively rebelling against the patriarchal order. Stemming from their combined reading of several poems that give clues to Dickinson’s mental state, they use the poem “A not admitting of the wound” (F1188)⁶⁴ to make their claim. Yet the speaker’s statement that “That all my Life had entered it” [the wound], establishes that it is her *life* being overtaken by the wound, not her home. The dichotomy presented in this poem is rather one of life and death, not home

⁶⁴ It should be noted here that while Franklin numbers this poem 1188, Johnson has numbered it 475; these two point to completely different time periods in Dickinson’s life: the former in the 1870s and the latter in the 1860s. The difference may certainly have influenced Gilbert and Gubar’s reading of the poem, as the 1860s were Dickinson’s most prolific period and coincided with the American Civil War, a topic much discussed in recent Dickinson scholarship.

and homelessness. Gilbert and Gubar link this poem to the image of house in "Doom is the House without the Door" (F710), stating that "house" transforms from the possibility of "fulfillment" into the "certainty of abandonment." But their reading never addresses the symbolism of door or ladder, the possibilities of entrance and escape presented in the poem; nor do they utilize its dual structure of interior/exterior to support their claim. There seems no cause to place her "ontological home" in a "wound." However, with regard to the guilt and powerlessness that Gilbert and Gubar associate with anxiety towards home, one may offer an alternative theory: these feelings relate to that class of the frightening, which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar, the uncanny. As previously explained in detail, Sigmund Freud, in his work "The Uncanny" (1919), gives us a basic explanation of this term: the "homely" or "familiar" (*heimlich*) and "unknown" or "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) are juxtaposing terms that describe a situation of duality in the mind in which something that was once familiar somehow loses its familiarity and, in the process, becomes something frightening to us. In other words, the anxiety felt by Emily Dickinson is not caused by some "wound" in her conscious or subconscious mind, but by her mutable perception of the home and its structure, and its ability to become both familiar and unfamiliar at any given point in time.

The uncanny power of the home saturates Emily Dickinson's entire body of works, and she utilized a multitude of metaphors and images to describe it. The poems we will examine here in close reading, "I learned—at least—what Home could be—" (F891), "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died" (F591), and "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—" (F407) best address the duality of home, ultimately describing it as an ambiguous place found within us, rendering the narrators homeless in a corporeal sense. Each poem will also be included in the

close reading so that the *sound* of the words may also make clear the architecture of the stanzas.⁶⁵

Using symbolism of haunted chambers, corridors and other physical spaces in “One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—” (F407), Dickinson describes the feelings that Gilbert and Gubar have mentioned of guilt, powerlessness and her retributive fate.

One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—
One need not be a House—
The Brain has Corridors—surpassing
Material Place—

Far safer, of a midnight meeting
External Ghost
Than it's interior confronting—
That cooler Host—

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
The Stones a'chase—
Than unarmed, one's a'self encounter—
In lonesome Place—

Ourself behind ourself, concealed—
Should startle most—
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least—

The Body—borrows a Revolver—
He bolts the Door—
O'erlooking a superior spectre—
Or More—

In “One need not be a chamber—,” (F407) the interior, or the narrator's mind, has different “chambers” or “rooms” in the conscious and subconscious, which exist in opposition to the external world. The outer world, mentioned as Abbey stones, the implied horse galloping, and the midnight hour, juxtaposes against the inner, giving layers to the scenery of the poem. The

⁶⁵ It may be of interest to note at this point that the word “stanza” comes from the Italian for “standing, stopping place”—poets sometimes refer to each stanza as a “room.”

inner world with its “Assassin hid in our Apartment” and “that cooler Host,” who disturb the mind, support her declaration that “the Brain has Corridors—surpassing/ Material Place,” that there are more endless winding hallways in the mind than exist on the corporeal plane. The Assassin mentioned remains ambiguous; however, narrator’s reaction towards it hints that it may be a memory, a fear, a desire or an anxiety given such power as to become a corporeal being that chases us with the intent to kill. Indeed, the line “Ourself behind ourself, concealed” reminds us that such anxiety can become our doppelganger. Besides, ever present is the concept that one may also hide one’s true self or fear one’s urges and desires as if chased by ghostly apparitions. “Far safer” she repeats twice, reminding us that facing one’s self alone is much more frightening than any “External Ghost” one might meet at midnight, or be chased through an Abbey at a gallop. The idea presented here is one of “haunting” oneself, as if the Brain is a chamber and the Body a House. The poem touches upon the idea that imagined ghosts are more frightening than any real threat because they can chase us eternally. Barbara Mossberg tells us that the mental landscape of this poem reveals “the persona . . . dodging yawning chasms and fissures as she flees from the hound Identity, running from the self down the mind’s ‘corridors’ whose terrors surpass ‘Material Place’” (18). Mossberg’s statement illustrates the relationship between building features and the narrator’s mind, creating an image of identity’s constructions, which, through the chase, provides a link between the levels of the house of the conscious and subconscious.

“Ourself behind ourself, concealed—” indicates that the concealment of our true nature startles even ourselves; and that whatever hides in the “Apartment” of our mind has deadly potential. Emily introduces a power to rival to that potential: the revolver is a responding violent image, and adds urgency to the anxiety that permeates the poem. It also illustrates how far one should go to protect one’s own mind—even using violence is acceptable. We should

also note at the bottom of the page that Emily has put an alternative reading for "Body" in the line "The Body—borrows a Revolver—" so it may alternatively be read "The Prudent— borrows a Revolver." But even the Prudent who bolts door and arms with a revolver cannot fully conquer this interior intruder as it belongs just as much to the house as the narrator herself, as she states, in the final truncated lines "O'er looking a superior spectre—/ Or More—"

The fate discussed "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—" is also the main theme of such poems as "Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?" (F268) and "They shut me up in Prose—" (F445). Although the former deals with being shut out and the latter deals with being shut in, both are representative of others forcing their will on the narrator and punishing her psychologically for a crime she is not sure she committed or did not commit at all. All three poems also use pieces of the house, especially doors, to illustrate an almost antagonistic relationship between the interior mind and the exterior world.

Overall, "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—" (F407) supports the proposition that the mind is the only "home" she possesses *now* and there is an urgent need to retain and maintain that home. As she stated in a letter, ". . . consciousness is the only home of which we know *now*. That sunny adverb had been enough were it not foreclosed."⁶⁶ We can know only the current assembly of our minds: our fears, hopes, dreams, and desires; these inhabit our consciousness, and lurk in our unconscious, the same way people inhabit a house. The house can only be haunted and frightening if it is first familiar, just as we fear more what is inside us because we know it best.

⁶⁶ See LII, #591, 634, which she wrote to Maria Whitney.

The concept of owning our consciousness, as if it could be maintained or foreclosed like a house, is brought to light again in "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died" (F591). In this poem, the speaker is a dead (or dying) person, who asks us to listen to his or her last remembrance. The speaker describes the grotesque sound of a fly, the sobs of the mourners gathered at the wake, the reading of the will. Finally, the speaker's conscious thoughts succumb to nothing; the speaker can no longer "see."

I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air—
Between the Heaves of Storm—

The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset—when the King
Be witnessed—in the Room—

I willed my Keepsakes—Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable—and then it was
There interposed a Fly—

With Blue—uncertain—stumbling Buzz—
Between the light—and me—
And then the Windows failed—and then
I could not see to see—

This poem presents a disturbing scene; with its dying narrator on her deathbed surrounded by mourners, signing away her possessions and leaving the mortal world in an anticlimactic moment of blindness, which forces us to consider the boundaries between the physical room the narrator's body is in, and what lies beyond the windows of that room that the narrator "could not see to see." The narrator's disquieting decent into death in the last stanza of the poem recalls death as taboo; images of the corpse, a fly-ridden, putrid and rotting away shell of the body, lurk underneath the narrator's every word, charging them with implication that

while she knows what will happen to her body and her earthly possessions when she is gone, she is not sure where her conscious mind will be housed.

In the moments of calm that occur “Between the Heaves of Storm,” those moments described as a “Stillness in the Room,” she waits for a sign that the “King” who will be “witnessed—in the Room” may come. The storm, the stillness, the “King” all imply an apocalyptic situation, in which the “waiting” may be for resurrection or the afterlife, and the King may be God. Thus, her anticipation is energized, anxious to witness a sign from the “King” of her promised home, a sign that redemption is waiting for her after she passes away.

In the third stanza, with regard to her passing, she accepts the social order, approaching the border between life and death with level-headed and honest description. She describes how those who mourn her cease to weep, “the Eyes around—had wrung them dry” as she “willed her keepsakes—signed away/What Portion of me be Assignable—,” aware that death separates the belongings of this world from those of the next. Her preparations are veritably symbolic, expressing her adherence to societal norms still present in the room. There is significance to the connections to patriarchal laws evoked by the willing away of the keepsakes and the confusion of “sign” and “assignable” in this context. According to Joan Kirkby: “. . . in death, the subject relinquishes the power to sign, to signify, to mark with characters, and to assign, to transfer or designate by writing. The corpse is outside the sign, outside the system of differences inscribed by the social order” (Kirkby, 102). The corpse is separated and removed from the order that governs both the mourners and the house that surround it. Moreover, it is curious that the narrator should be within the house, as the house

can symbolize the social order itself.⁶⁷ It seems, then, that the ceremony of the mourners and the space of the house is in conflict with the flight of the soul.

Despite the tenseness of the impending “storm” and death, Dickinson masterfully constructs a room full of the living to contrast with the destination of the dead. On this topic, Richard Sewall comments:

In ‘I heard a Fly buzz,’ there is the drama of the deathbed scene, the watchers by the bedside, the dying person—quite composed, signing away the ‘assignable’—and the buzzing fly accentuating the stillness. It is dying dramatized; but there is no shock, no lamentation, nothing mortuary. Few poets have dealt with this all-engrossing subject with such intense feeling under such perfect control (718).

There is a startling lack of any mourning from the corpse at loss of life, or acknowledgement of the mourners beyond the implied sobs in line 5. The whole situation is described, rather, in the context of a storm gathering in the room and a fly buzzing. The narrator’s body inside the house, therefore exists in a borderline state, unable to name the house as a corporeal home (the living occupy houses), but unable to ascend to the eternal home of paradise. The Fly “interposed” at this point in the poem, seems a symbol of the ambiguity expressed by the situation of the speaker as it blocks out the light of differentiation between states of life, death and the liminal. Between the windows and the unfolding scene of the wake, the fly circumscribes the inside/outside/in-between nature of narrator and motif of the home here, synthesizing the uncertain quality of the speaker’s eyesight and the sound of the fly. The “blue” of its “buzz” suggests that it has confused the senses of the dying, a sort of synesthesia, an inability to differentiate sight from sound. The fly leads the speaker to the windows, which presents the option of escape or exit. But then the windows “failed”—an event that heavily saturates this final stanza with meaning. As the wake or vigil ends, we may assume this means

⁶⁷ One may note also that this is not the only poem in which Emily Dickinson discusses the “signs” of Death in the context of sign versus assignable. In particular, see “There’s been a Death, in the Opposite House” (F547).

the corpse's "consciousness" or "soul" ascends to judgment in the final line, which renders the narrator-corpse blind. Farr's reading of this poem connects the liminal state of the speaker back to the image of home even further:

The speaker isolates the precise moment of death as the failure of light: not only of daylight but of the ocular mechanism by which light is received, and (by analogy) of the light of the spirit. Just as this happens, however, the windows fail—that is, the apertures of the house darken as do those of her body's house, her eyes—she hears a buzzing fly. . . . All has proceeded so far with the ceremony, even to the willing of keepsakes, while what is expected is the storm of dissolution, the sublime moment of passage. Instead the speaker relates, the last thing she sees on earth is that household nuisance, a blue-bottle fly, its stupid aimlessness a suggestion of the puzzlement that is life as well as its homely sweetness (310).

First Farr mentions the common association of the body as a home in Dickinson's poetry, which seems apropos in this case. She then draws a connection between the visual symbolism of the eyes and the house, but takes it a step further by also linking it with light. Moreover, by associating the fly (which is symbolic of death) with home (symbolic of life) here, Farr also easily manages to capture the closeness of death to the everyday life of a Victorian. (As mentioned previously, the Pleasant Street house that Emily Dickinson spent all of her adolescence in had funerary processions going by it, and her own family plot was located only a few minutes' walk from the Homestead, where she spent the rest of her life.) The closeness of death becomes even closer in consideration of the fly, who play a role in helping to decompose as well as becoming a regular nuisance in the kitchen.

But there are other possible readings. If one considers the multiple functions of windows, one may ponder one's ability to see through it to view the outer world.⁶⁸ This may be related to the oft heard adage "the eyes are the windows to one's soul." If the corpse becomes blind, then the "windows" to his or her soul have "failed." Or, the failure of the

⁶⁸ For another interpretation of the role of the windows in comprehending the value of "sight" in this poem, see Wolff, 226-227.

windows implies the total breakdown of the experience of "life" for the corpse and the radical separation of the consciousness of the dead body from that of the mourners. Yet another reading is that the narrator's soul escapes through the window and tries to look back inside the house, but is no longer able to see in as she is radically separated from the mortal plane. Additionally, if the failure means her soul cannot exit the room, it may indicate the un-meaning of the whole social order implied by the wake, the mourners, the willing away of items and the room itself. Those who live by placing too much faith into what lies beyond the moment of death are fooling themselves because we are really blind to what is to come.

The same sense of un-meaning, a radical differentiation between home in this world and the next, is again addressed in the poem "I learned—at least—what Home could be—" (F 891). The poem, with its nature imagery and Christian symbolism, establishes a canny image of home but then deconstructs it over the course of a day's time-frame, ending with the cryptic statement that the place of the speaker "seems a home" but "home is not" in the final stanza.

I learned—at least—what Home could be—
How ignorant I had been
Of pretty ways of Covenant—
How awkward at the Hymn

Round our new Fireside—but for this—
This pattern—of the way—
Whose Memory drowns me, like the Dip
Of a Celestial Sea—

What Mornings in our Garden—guessed—
What Bees for us—to hum—
With only Birds to interrupt
The Ripple of our Theme—

And Task for Both—When Play be done—
Your Problem—of the Brain—
And mine—some foolisher effect—
A Ruffle—or a Tune—

The Afternoons—together spent—
And Twilight—in the Lanes—
Some ministry to poorer lives—
Seen poorest—thro' our gains—

And then away to You to pass—
A new—diviner—Care—
Till Sunrise take us back to Scene—
Transmuted—Vivider—

This seems a Home—And Home is not—
But what that Place could be—
Afflicts me—as a Setting Sun—
Where Dawn—knows how to be—

This particular poem has received very little scholarly attention with regard to its treatment of the image of Home, despite the fact that Home is mentioned in the poem four times. It is this frequency, as well as the vibrant domestic imagery present in the poem, that draws us to include it in close reading. The poem unites representations of homely elements, such as the hearth and a garden inhabited by birds and bees, but curiously never mentions a house directly. Instead, its focus complicates home with images of the eternal versus the mundane.

For example, the “Covenant” and “Hymn” mentioned in the first stanza hold dual meaning. Initially, they describe a religious situation—hymns being songs of praise to God, and covenant referring to either the Covenant of Works bestowed on Adam and his posterity, or the Covenant of Grace with the 2nd Adam and his elect for deliverance from their transgressions. Religious meaning then combines with the “pretty ways” and the narrator’s “awkward”ness to imply marriage, a more earthly manifestation of “covenant.” Subsequently, the “new Fireside” and “This pattern—of the way” also support the domestic symbolism in this poem—a fireside is a symbol of home-life—and according to Fordyce R. Bennett, “‘the pretty ways of Covenant’ of marriage are shadows of heavenly things; the ‘patterns of things

in the heavens' are instantiated by that unity of Christ and Church, husband and wife" (Bennett, 264). The garden mentioned in the third stanza then also takes on a dual meaning—the garden outside the married couple's house where they spend pleasant hours together, or an allusion to the Garden of Eden or Paradise, where they may spend eternity. The "Theme" of stanza three then refers to the daily rhythm of domestic life—"play" and "task" alike. The poem continues with scenes in afternoon and in twilight, where the married pair devoted themselves to charitable activities, which should contribute to their "life to come."

As "You" passes away at the end of the day, symbolically finishing his lifetime—the subsequent "Sunrise" that brings a "Transmuted—Vivider—" scene alludes to the afterlife, but seems not to meet the expectations of the narrator's vision of what that should be—a final coming home to God. Until this "Sunrise" the narrator does not mention any real emotion and merely describes the action. Yet upon witnessing it, she admits her "affliction"—this *seems* to her like Home but is not. She is trapped, associating home with the horizon at ambiguous times of day such as sunset and dawn. These may be termed liminal moments in time, which render the placement of *home* and the actions taking place in the poem in a perpetual borderline state. Upon viewing a sunset, the narrator knows the potential of Dawn exists therein, but can only prove the day's end, not the coming of the next day. This potential recalls the narrator's retributive fate: that following these "pretty ways" and abiding by this "Covenant" may not lead to "A new—diviner—Care—" for her. The situation is not unlike that of "I heard a fly buzz—," as there is a disjunction between the narrator's knowledge of the potential of the situation and her perception of the now. All of the togetherness with her partner morning, afternoon and twilight may culminate in some unmeaning—as the fly's coming coincides with the narrator's loss of sight, the narrator here supposes an affliction by

the “transmuted—vivid” Sun, whose monotonous rise and set leads her to doubt the meaning of the apocalyptic—the end of days.

The narrator has begun with the promise of establishing a home in both this world and the next, imagines the activities with her partner across morning, noon and evening, but ultimately doubts the fulfillment of the circle. This reflects the fundamentally dualistic image of home present in Dickinson’s poetry that Home could be a “a paradise of possibility,” and yet “be transfigured by the poet into a prison, which she felt either as a confinement, or, more menacingly, as nowhere, ‘Homeless at home’” (Mudge, 12).

The complicated relationship between narrator and house/home is reflected in Dickinson’s poetry; behind the doors and the windows, inside the chambers and underneath the gables of the houses in her poems, there exist social values of hospitality, gentility, and distinction, the joy and comfort associated with a happy home, but also anxieties, guilt, and fears. Home, as a place representative of a secure identity, is evoked in terms of the architecture of a house, which circumscribes the narrator’s psyche as well as the action that goes on within it. Thus, domestic scenes are intimate and at the same time inherently ambiguous. The imagery of the house uses the symbolism of buildings to anchor impossibly vague concepts such as “possibility” and other ambiguous terms such as “remembrance,” “despair,” and “eternity” that can be present and interpreted only within her mind. While houses and their contents present the home inscribed by the social order, a home accepted and beloved of the narrator remains as elusive as these concepts. That is why Dickinson’s narrators approach home as a paradox of canny and uncanny forces perceived by the human mind. Within her poems, imagery of houses haunted by phantasms, funerary rites, and daily activities all present themselves as metaphors describing the boundless nature of the human imagination, the only home we have that cannot be boxed in.

According to Domhnall Mitchell, who wrote on Emily Dickinson's perception of the world, "the trope of home . . . provides the speaker with a means of exploring this paradox of simultaneously inner and outer states: the home is connected with privacy and interiority, of course, but also exists as a structure, which is subject to other, outside, forces" (47-48). This trope becomes redefined in light of the preceding discussions on the multifaceted image of the home; one realizes that Emily Dickinson's poetry does not present an ideal of home, but rather a search for it. Connected with interiority yet subject to outside forces, Emily Dickinson's perception of home and rendering of domesticity is complex. Its architecture addresses the image of Home as metaphor for Heaven, for the Afterlife and for the Tomb; further, it proposes that Nature, the Mind/Brain, and even Possibility can be Houses. As throughout the canon of her poetry, these themes and images intermingle and cannot be separated; therefore, by deeply considering the relationships between them, we will be one step closer to bridging the divide between her intended authorial voice and interpretations of it.

3.2 Doors and Windows: Liminal Spaces in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson

As explained in the previous chapter, Emily Dickinson's search for identity and "home" in her poetry starts not in the outside world, but in her inner world. That inner world hosts her authorial universe, which, with cities, countryside, and houses, mimics the spaces that she inhabited interacted with every day. Further, the prevalence of the architecture of those spaces as motifs and images in her poetry indicates her consciousness of the connection

between them. Yet, the contradiction she presents, that house and home can be both mental and physical space at the same time, depends upon an inherent ambiguity.⁶⁹

Scholarship offers a multitude of reasons for this preoccupation with home: religious views, feminist opinions, and even agoraphobia.⁷⁰ Wendy Martin states: "As a woman poet, Dickinson has been portrayed as singular and enigmatic and even eccentric. . . She has been perceived as agoraphobic, deeply afraid of her surroundings, and as an eccentric spinster" (1). Martin believes that the vision of Dickinson as a reclusive woman dressed in white adhered to by her first editors, T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, continues to affect the interpretation of her retreat from the world. As two people who had not been in close contact with her and had not known her before the late 1860s (at which time she spent increasingly more time in her bedroom until she barely left it), they were hardly in a position to paint a reliable picture of either Emily the woman or Emily the writer.

On the other hand, according to Gilbert and Gubar, the recurring instances of agoraphobia in Emily Dickinson's poetry imply "the desire for walls, for reassurance, for love

⁶⁹ According to Empson, "'Ambiguity' itself can mean an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings" (Empson, 5-6). By giving examples of sentence meanings, Empson points out that explanations are rather insufficient because they provide only one rational way to read said sentence. It is impossible to list all the meanings of a sentence, including every implication. The reason is those implications would also depend upon the context of the sentence. Because of its incredible and numerous uses, ambiguity can be a very powerful tool for both poets and novelists, but it presupposes a precision in reading and writing that is a pre-condition for well-crafted metaphor. Empson therefore proposes that we may term a "series of definite and detachable ambiguities, in which several large and crude meanings can be separated out" (*Loc.cit.*). He goes on to explain that literary ambiguity comes in seven different forms. He outlines these at length in his book, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, in which he also gives a multitude of examples with detailed explanations.

⁷⁰ There are several incipient reasons for this, but the biggest is that Emily never wrote down her thoughts on the subject in any definitive way. Thus, scholarship has taken to speculation. For example, John F. McDermott attributes her preoccupation with home to a nervous prostration that left her unable to leave the house—her world shrunk to just that house. See McDermott, 71-86. Cynthia Wolff similarly concludes that "by the last years of her life, Emily Dickinson had become altogether homebound, probably phobically so" (167). Garbowsky also comes to the same conclusion, even stating that her agoraphobia caused her to feel a prisoner in her own home, and to understand that she might never leave it except for when she died (133). In his book *My Wars are Laid Away in Books*, Alfred Habegger posits, instead, that Dickinson was an introvert who might possibly have had hypertension. See Habegger, 2001, 243-244. For additional evidence, see also *Op.cit.*, 31, 259-261, 290, 328, 373-374, 447, and 450-451.

and certainty” as well as juxtapose against a surfeit of those qualities, becoming claustrophobia, “inescapable walls, ‘love’ transformed to limits” (Gilbert and Gubar, 604). Gilbert and Gubar of the opinion that agoraphobia is a two-sided disease, that it is both desired and inescapable. Further, it is the opinion of Gilbert and Gubar that these themes show how “Dickinson [has] also characterize[d] herself as entombed,” locking herself away in the very qualities she once desired (*Loc.cit.*). Not only does her agoraphobia trap her in the desire for affection and create walls that encroach upon her freedom, these walls also brick her up as surely as if she were in a coffin in a crypt. Gilbert and Gubar’s reading of Dickinson’s concept of home, then denies those poems that address the idealized, free space of the house, like that of “I dwell in Possibility—” (F466). And while it is true that Dickinson was often pre-occupied with latches, doors, and other features of the entryway,⁷¹ which will be examined further at a later point in this chapter, those thresholds did not necessarily “entomb” her. Rather, they indicate a radical differentiation between two states of being, or the state of being trapped between one state of being and another.

Therefore, the reasons stated by Gilbert and Gubar do not adequately address the ambiguity present in Dickinson’s treatment of home. Further, while all of those are viable reasons to write about home, they do not discuss the actual placement of home: the architecture of Home in Dickinson’s poetry straddles the line between homeless and home, an uncanny placement. Further, “Emily Dickinson likes her houses to be haunted; she mandates that art be a house that attempts hauntedness,” Daneen Wardrop explains (19). She continues, “she builds her poetic house full of liminal spaces—the windows and doors that gape at the reader” (*Loc.cit.*). These windows and doors provide the escape that Gilbert and Gubar do not

⁷¹ According to Habegger: “Nothing conveys a better sense of the stage Dickinson had reached than her poems on memory featuring gates, doors, and latches that *must* be kept closed” (2001, 532). See also *Ibid.*, 531-535.

allow space for in their reading of Dickinson; further, Wardrop's reading of Dickinson's house imagery indicates that it is both Gothic and liminal at the same time.

Houses are often described in conjunction with the liminal.⁷² "Liminal," a term coined by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later used by Victor Turner, has its basis in Jungian psychology, and is prominently featured in Turner's books *Forest of Symbols* and *The Ritual Process*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, liminal is defined as "of or pertaining to the threshold or initial stage of a process" or "of or pertaining to a 'limen' or 'threshold'" (*OED*). While the liminal was first associated with ritual practice in the study of social anthropology, it has also come to be associated political upheaval, cultural change and the separation of the initiated individual(s) from the group.⁷³ In the study of literature, it relates to a point at which existing social hierarchies may be destroyed or reversed, causing the continuation of traditions to become uncertain. While at this point new hierarchies may develop, in the case of the uncanny and the gothic, these new hierarchies may only be counterpoint to or burnt out shell of what went before—in other words, the social structure may be displaced in favor of chaos, the meaning of the sublime replaced with unmeaning, or the foundation of truth on which society rested revealed to be an enormous lie.

In particular the liminal addressed in conjunction with the imagery of the uncanny house concerns several major motifs such as time, light and dark, journeying, escape, size and love. As with *home*, its meaning can vary greatly; it goes beyond theme and motif to also concern images such as doors, walls, circumference, house, rooms, thresholds and even the

⁷² It is important to note that in the body of her poetry, Dickinson does make some distinction between dwellings and speakers. For example, while a house is a home for many of her human speakers, her dead variously find the grave or heaven a home as in "Sweet—safe—Houses—" (F684), her birds use nests as in the poem "For every bird a nest" (F 86) and her gnomes have "general Homes" (F303), a fact she may have picked up from a fairy tale source.

⁷³ For a discussion on the connections between Jungian psychology and Turner's liminal as well as some more recent applications of liminal theory, see Homans, 206-209.

overall idea of architecture itself. The number of poems related to these topics is therefore numerous enough to fill far more than this dissertation's allotted space and would unfortunately force the author of this chapter off the topic of the uncanny home; therefore, only the most closely related categories will be considered in light of the definition of liminal as it relates to the imagery of the house: doors, walls, windows, rooms and, of course, the in-between thresholds. Poems with those images will also be examined in conjunction with themes of journeying and with love as the liminal facilitator bonding life to death.

3.2.1 Knocking on Liminal Doors

The imagery of the door is a projection of Dickinson's consciousness of movement from one state of mind to another, from one state of being to another, or from one place to another; these may happen in conjunction with each other or all at the same time, but her focus on the moment of crossing-over is essential. Motifs such as resurrection and the sacred are also prevalent. Dickinson's poems contain approximately 49 references to doors according to the Concordance, and 83 references to doors according to the Lexicon.⁷⁴ In addition to the door itself, motifs such as knocking, waiting outside an entrance, passing by a portico, and being shut out of a building are also prominent. The frequency of the appearance of the word door is

⁷⁴ The discrepancy in numeration arises for two reasons. First, because the Concordance to the poetry, which uses Johnson Edition numeration and texts, does not list some of the fragments of poems (small scraps of paper on which Dickinson wrote drafts) and concentrates mainly on the fascicles (fair copies that Dickinson bound together). The Lexicon lists both but is mainly true to the Franklin, who included more variants and fragments of poems than did Johnson. A new and updated Concordance is due to be published in the near future to ameliorate this incongruity.

exponentially larger than that of “window,” “knock,” “entrance,” and other related words. Moreover, one curiously notes that the word “threshold” itself figures only once into the whole body of poetry. Therefore it may be said that Dickinson’s image of entering and exiting is concentrated on the object that opens and closes, shuts out or welcomes in: the door.

The door is actually just symbolic of the entryway, by which one usually goes into or out of a room or a house. Obviously not all entrances have doors, and not all of Dickinson’s poem-houses have doors either (we recall the wall-less door-less house of “possibility” from “I dwell in Possibility”). However, the frequency of the word would suggest that the symbolic action of exit and entry is significant to Dickinson’s speakers. Further, those actions may be associated with great trepidation, as the speakers in many of her poems are using the doors to cross from one state of being to another. Diana Fuss reminds us that “Dickinson’s poems are generally not about the fear of *leaving* interiors but more commonly about the anxiety of *entering* them. The problem of gaining entry is, for Dickinson, a far greater preoccupation” (Fuss, 40). Dickinson’s speakers, therefore, are connected to other Gothic intruders, such as orphaned Heathcliff trying to find entry into the patriarchal order, or Jane’s struggle to find a home in all of the houses she lived in. However, unlike these other literary characters, Dickinson’s speakers are not as preoccupied with their previous state as they are with the unknown, what exists beyond the liminal. A classic example of this problem is found in “Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?” (F268), which describes a speaker knocking at the door to Heaven while a white-robed “Gentleman” refuses her entry:

Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing—too loud?
But—I can say a little “minor”
Timid as a Bird!

Would’nt the Angels try me—
Just—once—more—

Just—see if I troubled them—
But dont—shut the door!

Oh, if I—were the Gentleman
In the “White Robe”—
And they—were the little Hand—that knocked—
Could—I—forbid?

The speaker in this poem has been shut out of Heaven by both the Angels and a Gentleman wearing a white robe. While many of Dickinson’s speakers have been shut out without ever having gained entry, the speaker in this poem implies that at one point she was actually inside. We know that she was inside because she asks if the angels would try her “Just—once—more—” and implies that she has caused some trouble with the next line “Just—see if I troubled them—” as if she had been naughty and was punished by being thrown out. This is not unlike the story in Genesis of Adam and Eve being thrown out of the Garden of Eden; however, in this case, the speaker does not seem to have a concrete reason for her punishment. At the same time, this poem has serious Gothic overtones because it references both an oppression by a majority and the attempts/desire of the speaker to subvert it.

Dickinson’s syntax in this poem reflects its mood as well. The inflections of the narrator are like a little child being interrupted, or hiccupping while crying. There is curiously only one comma; all of the rest of the punctuation are exclamation points, question marks and many dashes. The lines repeatedly start with words like “Just,” “But,” and “Why.” These recall a plaintive child who questions rules set down by parents or other adults, especially with regard to the social structure—many children, who have not yet been conditioned to accept social norms, question the institutions and adults that instruct them. The dash, perhaps the most important punctuation in Dickinson’s poetic arsenal, is employed here as a divisive force and each line has at least one. Some lines, like “Just – once – more –” and “And they – were

the little Hand – that knocked –” even contain three dashes. These serve to accentuate words like “once,” “dost” and phrases like “too loud” and “shut the door.” Further, dashes separate the “little Hand” from “they,” which underlines the difference between the two. In addition to the dash, Dickinson’s use of capitalization underscores the same difference. Capitalization of I and Me, emphasizes that the speaker feels her place to be at least as important as the Angels and Gentleman (also capitalized) whom she is being punished by. Capitalization also provides some subversive qualities to the poem: the lower case of “they” separated by a dash from “little Hand,” with Hand capitalized calls attention to the speaker’s attitude that her knocking had has importance, while the crowd of angels is less important than her hand. The syntax of this poem therefore stresses that because she cannot raise her status to theirs (or, for that matter, prove that her status is already equal to or greater than theirs) without crossing the threshold of the door on which she knocks. She is trapped on the periphery in a liminal state, unable to reintegrate into Heavenly society, just as the words cannot integrate themselves into smooth phrases due to the disruptive nature of the dashes.

The door and the location of the speaker as on a threshold are significant images in the poetry. Other scholars have noted both the positive and negative traits of this locality. For example, Fuss goes on to point out that “the door ajar—half open, half closed—evolves over the corpus of Dickinson’s poetry into one of her most positive images” (Fuss, 42). However, it is perhaps more appropriate to point out that throughout her canon, Dickinson takes a more ambiguous stance towards the door—the speaker may feel the door a positive, negative or even neutral presence. For example, in “The Soul selects her own Society” (F409), when the speaker tells of the soul selecting with whom she chooses to associate, she describes not only the lack of emotion associated with it but also the finality of it:

The Soul selects her own Society—

Then—shuts the Door—
To her divine Majority—
Present no more—
Unmoved—she notes the Chariots—pausing—
At her low Gate—
Unmoved—an Emperor be kneeling
Opon her Mat—

I've known her—from an ample nation—
Choose One—
Then—close the Valves of her attention—
Like Stone—

Not only does she choose to close the door here, she does it so completely that it is “like Stone.” This poem stands in stark contrast to “Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?” (F268). First, because the speaker is more like an omniscient narrator discussing the state of her soul. (Or perhaps just the state of souls in general.) This speaker also assumes that the Soul is free to choose, even if the one wishing to gain entry is as powerful a figure as an emperor—even he would kneel before her. Her attention is very selective, as she chooses only “One” from amongst a group as large as a “nation.” Once she has chosen, she is so uninterested in the remaining group that she closes “the Valves of her attention— / Like Stone—.” In other words, like closing the drawbridge to a castle with a final and resounding clang, her mind is made up and will not be changed. This implies not only a will of her own, but a certain freedom that subverts the social order to which the speaker in “Why—do they shut me out of Heaven?” (F268) has become a victim. The Soul, unlike the little hand that knocks, is in control. Garbowsky interprets the imagery of stone in Dickinson’s works as the revelation of her sequestered life. She states that Dickinson “uses the word *stone* and particular types such as marble, alabaster, carrara frequently in her poetry, letting them stand for death, hardness, and endurance. They also stand for protection, withdrawal, safety, and the speaker’s own numbed sense of being” (134). Stone, like house, has both positive and negative connotations.

It can mean that the speaker has become entombed, even freely chosen such a final withdrawal from society, while at the same time possessing of a dualistic nature of both imprisoning the speaker and keeping her safe.

In other poems, the form of the door disappears as the subject of the poem focuses on an inability to enter. One example of this is found in "At least—to pray—is left—is left—"

(F377):

At least—to pray—is left—is left—
Oh Jesus—in the Air—
I know not which thy chamber is—
I'm knocking—everywhere—

Thou settest Earthquake in the South—
And Maelstrom, in the Sea—
Say, Jesus Christ of Nazareth—
Hast thou no arm for Me?

The first stanza begins with jerky, almost convulsive syntax created by dashes that gives the impression of breathless supplication and is evocative of sobs. Although the speaker is seeking for a method of offering her prayers personally, she is effectively blocked from doing so—Jesus's "chamber" in the poem is in the air, and knocking on the air itself produces no sound. Her actions of knocking, of praying, are thus feel completely impotent. And yet, she persists in them. Perhaps the "chamber" is inaccessible to the reader unless a liminal state, a threshold, has been crossed. While prayer is one effective tool to reach a liminal state, it is obvious that prayer here is ineffective.⁷⁵ By evoking the prayers used in everyday life, Dickinson's speaker is proving her unpreparedness for a transition into the liminal state.

⁷⁵ Turner (1969) describes the liminal process, the second in the three phases of rites of passage, as a time when norms and values of society are disturbed, destroyed or left behind in order to attain the state of "reaggregation" after the liminal challenge has been overcome (166-167).

The second stanza feels a great deal smoother in comparison, and the tone changes as the focus turns from the chamber of Jesus to the problems plaguing the earth. It seems that Dickinson's speaker is transposing the landscape of biblical punishment for sinners onto her current place of habitation. It also seems that the speaker is using the same method of avoiding punishment as in the bible: prayer. One notes that in the tales of the greatest possible destruction from the 5 books of Moses, such as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, the key to avoiding being destroyed along with the sinners was to repent and to pray. Here, however, the speaker finds that prayer has no effect. Repentance, though sincere, has no feasible way of reaching Jesus as there is no gateway or threshold her prayers might use to be heard in the beyond.

Prayer is evocative of the ritual process discussed by Victor Turner and Van Gennep, who posit that this process is necessary to go between culturally defined states of being (Turner, 1969, 166). The narrator's inability to discern which door to knock on indicates not only her ineptitude with the ritual threshold she desires to pass, but also her concern that her behavior and her understanding of cultural symbols, for example Jesus's "chamber" and his "arm," is somehow wrong. This reflects Turner's opinion that "if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization [sic] of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs" (*Ibid.*, 167). In other words, the liminal impels the speaker to question the beliefs and values that she had theretofore accepted as social norms. Dickinson's speaker is questioning the very foundations of her belief system, that there is indeed a heavenly "chamber" which she could enter, and that Jesus's outstretched "arm" should be what leads her there.

This poem also indicates that the entrance into a new state is precipitated by great loss and initiated by prayer. Shira Wolosky explains:

A pervasive structure in Dickinson's work is that which balances gain and loss. Repeatedly, Dickinson measures the one against the other, attempting to determine whether the privation, sorrow, and death inherent in the temporal process give rise to some positive condition. She asks whether undeniable loss can be construed as gain and, if there is some gain in and through loss, whether this indicates anguish. The problem of suffering and its possible justification is constantly addressed as the poet considers the various possible relations between negative and positive experiences (64).

According to Wolosky, a dichotomy of gain and loss is an essential feature of Dickinson's poetry. By losing one thing, she gains another; by gaining something, she loses something; it is a cyclical, sorrowful process, eliciting despair and torment. Her speakers deeply question the values of the religious structures and social structures that have brought her to the point of gain/loss as they consider worth of the whole procedure in the long run. Thus, Dickinson's speakers, between one door and another, are trapped in an ambiguous state as they try not to lose any more and fear the unknown gains to come.

The central problem of the poem is, then, if the door is opened, what salvation might be achieved? Should prayer for salvation be awarded in this world (instead of the next)? Or is salvation reserved for heaven in a separate sphere, close enough to be surrounding us like the air, but as untouchable? While prayer facilitates the speaker on a conscious journey towards the liminal in this poem, the threshold remains as ambiguous and invisible as air. The final supplication of the poem, "hast thou no arm for Me?" rings with a finality that not only is the door closed, but that the speaker doubts that the door even exists.

Another very different example of a speaker standing on a threshold is "I Years had been from Home" (F440), which portrays the fear of returning to a place one used to call home only to see that strangers live there and one is unwelcome.

I Years had been from Home
And now before the Door
I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before

Stare stolid into mine
And ask my Business there—
“My Business but a Life I left
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe—
I lingered with Before—
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear—

I laughed a crumbling Laugh
That I could fear a Door
Who Consternation compassed
And never winced before.

I fitted to the Latch
My Hand, with trembling care
Lest back the awful Door should spring
And leave me in the Floor—

Then moved my Fingers off
As cautiously as Glass
And held my ears, and like a Thief
Fled gasping from the House—

In the poem, the first two stanzas are grounded by the image of standing before the door of the house, poised to knock; the second two stanzas are full of ambiguity, detaching her from possession of the house by reflections of nostalgia for a time when she could call that place home. More importantly, she fears that she would no longer be welcome: she dreads that the current inhabitants would ask her Business there, yet at the same time, she is more afraid of having to admit that she left her Life there and has returned to fetch it:

I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before
Stare stolid into mine
And ask my Business there—
“My Business but a Life I left
Was such remaining there?”

This stanza is also telling in that the speaker tells us that she does not know whether the inhabitants of the house would recognize her—and she is afraid that they will not. This dread turns to terror, as she is “Compassed with Consternation”—in other words, surrounded with extreme alarm—but the syntax here is ambiguous, leading the reader to believe that either the narrator is frightened of the door, or the door is frightened of the narrator: both readings are valid. Despite her desire to reclaim her life (and thus her home), she never endeavors to knock and instead “like a Thief/ Fled gasping from the House—,” all the while holding her ears (perhaps she does not want to hear if someone should call after her). Diana Fuss reminds us that whether or not this house is real or extant only in the speaker’s imagination, the speaker faces the same problem: “terror in the face of an unknown presence hidden behind a familiar barrier” (Fuss, 40). Here the issue of entry into the past is problematized, as without a time machine, the past cannot be accessed as it was. In other words, even if the house’s physical presence remains mostly unchanged, those living within the house, their emotional state, will have changed, thus rendering both the situation and the building uncanny.

There must be some significance in the narrator’s having left home only to feel like a timid thief upon return to it, and to fear a door so much she cannot even attempt to knock upon it. We recall that Emily Dickinson grew up in the Pleasant Street house, but fantasized returning to the Main Street Mansion in “‘Houses’—so the Wise Men tell me—” (F139)—but what if, after having moved back to the Mansion, she fantasized about a possible return to Pleasant Street? Mudge feels that the poem “I Years Had been from Home” (F440) “doubtless refers to the Pleasant Street house. . . . It shows her inability even then to adjust, a measure of her consistent loyalty to memories” (78). The focus of this poem is a longing for a life she lived in a house that she truly felt was her home. Mudge continues: “Home as a locus of safety and peace seems to have remained as a fervent hope in Dickinson’s consciousness, playing

against her hard knowledge of death's house. The new environment of the homestead could not erase the earlier inscape" (*Ibid.*, 80). Her persistence here in reconstructing home from a good memory causes that home to present itself in an uncanny fashion—the narrator is unsure what she may find within the house's structure (welcome or rejection?) and that frightens her enough to chase her away.

"I know some Lonely Houses off the Road" (F311) presents us with an entirely different perspective of the house—instead of presenting us with a narrator who has lost the safety and sense of "home" she seeks, this poem presents a third person narration of a comfortable and safe home being infiltrated by robbers. As in "I Years had been from Home" (F440), Emily Dickinson has characters trying to get inside a house, but this time there are two of them, and they are really trying to burglarize it, which disturbs the image of safety surrounding the home. Within the six stanzas of the poem, standard rhymes and ballad style interplay to create a Mother Goose-like atmosphere. Personification of the Clock, Walls, Spectacles, Almanac, Mat, Moon and Star also support the image of a fairytale home, as do the lines concerning the inhabitants, the "Old Couple" who don't stir—the "Almanac's aware," a Mat that winks, a Moon that "slides down the stair,/ to see who's there!" and a "pair of Spectacles ajar just stir" all as if they are animals or inhabitants themselves. Yet despite this uncanny atmosphere of a house at night juxtaposed against the image of a cozy house, the most disturbing element may be the adjective describing the houses in the first line—"lonely." If they are inhabited, why are they "lonely?" This comment may provide a final clue about Dickinson's treatment of Home and House—that no matter how homey, they always seem to possess an element that prevents them from becoming *home*.

3.2.2 The Unreachable Home

According to Sewall, “it is clear that in her poems and letters, Emily tended to associate certain images, or clusters of images, with specific people, experiences, ideas” (Sewall, 209). Yet she was not consistent or systemic about her associations, nor did she “set up private symbolic structures as Blake or Yeats did” (*Loc.cit.*) Therefore, one is disinclined to make overall judgments on the poems, such as the presence of Birds equals a reference to so-and-so or such-and-such.⁷⁶ In “For every Bird a Nest—” (F86), one does not first think of comparing the Lark to Susan and the Wren to Emily, although the comparison may be made. Similarly, one does not imagine the symbol of the House to mean only the structure of the house itself; as we have seen so far, it has the power to recall her mental architecture as well. Therefore, it may be said that we have seen examples of how architectural size and fact may fit Emily’s mood (Mudge, 5). Such flexibility and new building methods have shown that House and Home in Emily Dickinson’s poetry may represent a range of emotions such as hope and joy, anxiety and doom; here, we will address one final facet of the image of the House: its existence as a real place, yet unreachable, which renders Dickinson’s speaker in a liminal state.

In this context, there are two conflicting images: the House is to express it as a Home being cared for by a housewife, and that of the rejection or loss of such a role. The image of the housewife in Emily’s poetry also has several other meanings discussed in various

⁷⁶ There are instances, however, when it is fairly obvious. See Sewall’s connections between the poetry and Emily’s relationship with Susan, in particular 209-214.

publications and poems,⁷⁷ not the least of which is connected with the critiques of gender roles and the servile position of women during her lifetime.⁷⁸ Many of these other critiques focus on such poems as "I'm 'wife'—I've finished that—" (F225), which focuses on first stripping away the innocence of girlhood,⁷⁹ and then re-claiming one's role as a woman while at the same time using male descriptors (one notes that she used "Czar," which means King, rather than "Czarina," which means Queen). Missing from the criticism of this type of poetry, however, is a confrontation with the dualistic desire to both possess/re-possess home and flee from it. This theme is prominently represented in several of Emily Dickinson's poems, specifically in "I cannot live with You—" (F 706) and "It was not Death, for I stood up," (F 355).

Possibly Dickinson's longest poem, "I cannot live with You—" (F 706) is also one of her most sorrowful. The 12 stanzas of this poem present a curious juxtaposition of the capitals "Life" and "Death" and less significant "live" and "die;" furthermore, it is set up in several sections, which may describe life and marriage vows, death, resurrection, judgment, and concluding reasons against the unfeasibility of the two characters in the poem spending their lives together. The imagery related to the home here is prevalent and depicts in symbolism the impossibility of the relationship.

I cannot live with You—
It would be Life—
And Life is over there—
Behind the Shelf

The sexton keeps the key to—

⁷⁷ For poems mentioning housewife as it pertains to the house or home, see "Except to Heaven, she is nought." (F173), "How many times these low feet staggered—" (F187), "The Night was wide, and furnished scant" (F617), "I cannot live with You—" (F706), and "Wert Thou but ill—that I might show thee" (F821).

⁷⁸ For some examples of these critiques, see: Gilbert and Gubar, 581-650; Mossberg, 177-188; Wolff, 169-178 and 200-219; among others.

⁷⁹ While Mudge treats this in the context of Emily Dickinson's consideration of size and fact (Mudge, 19-20), Gilbert and Gubar consider it in the feminist context of re-claiming one's identity (Gilbert and Gubar, 581-650).

Putting up
Our Life—His Porcelain—
Like a Cup—

Discarded of the Housewife—
Quaint—or Broke—
A newer Sevres pleases—
Old Ones crack—

I could not die—with You—
For One must wait
To shut the Other's Gaze down—
You—could not—

And I—Could I stand by
And see You—freeze—
Without my Right of Frost—
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise—with You—
Because Your Face
Would put out Jesus'—
That New Grace

Glow plain—and foreign
On my homesick eye—
Except that You than He
Shone closer by—

They'd judge Us—How—
For You—served Heaven—You know,
Or sought to—
I could not—

Because you saturated sight—
And I had no more eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise

And were You lost, I would be—
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the Heavenly fame—

And were You—saved—
And I—condemned to be
Where You were not

That self—were Hell to me—

So we must meet apart—
You there—I—here—
With just the Door ajar
That Oceans are—and Prayer—
And that White Sustenance—
Despair—

First, the Sexton has the key to the shelf, which they must be “Behind” because they cannot live together. On that shelf sits their “Life,” or, she says “His Porcelain,” which like a cup that a housewife discarded, is “Quaint—or Broke—.” The porcelain cup is a symbol implying a relationship acknowledged by society; first, because one would receive a set with the bride’s dowry or as a wedding gift, and second, because it is a symbol of a comfortable and domestic lifestyle. In the third stanza, the porcelain breaks because “A newer Sevres pleases,” which alongside “Old Ones crack” implies that relationships are fragile and much like china, could end up discarded in time. Further, the breakage of the china shows their inability to achieve the creation of the relationship they desire, a relationship acknowledged and approved of by society. This inability extends throughout the poem, from life to death to afterlife.

After establishing that she cannot live with him, the speaker states that she also cannot die with him because she thinks that neither of them could live without the other—he could not “shut her gaze” (i.e. close her eyes when she is gone) and she cannot watch him die without her. The implication here is, perhaps, that she loves him too much to lose him. Or perhaps it is another kind of liminality: they are trapped on the threshold together, but unable to go forward to the next state of being together. Further, when she says she cannot watch him die, she also implies that people cannot choose their time to die—the “Right of Frost” versus “Death’s Privilege” shows an unalienable right versus a gift, echoing the promises and possessions of married life first stanza.

The state following death (in Christianity) is resurrection—described by the stanzas that deal with “rise.” Even after rising, the two still cannot be united. The speaker says she cannot “rise” with him because his face, with its “New Grace,” would extinguish Jesus’s light, preventing them from achieving salvation. His face outshines the grace of Jesus, despite its earthly origins. She uses the word “homesick” here, gazing upon him, her eyes seeking. On one hand, this homesickness recalls the fervent, unachieved desire to make a home with her beloved; on the other hand, it reminds us that in Christianity, one’s final home should be Heaven, and the speaker is rewriting heaven onto the space her beloved occupies. In other words, because the beloved’s presence is closer than Jesus, the need to be with him is more immediate than the need for the eternal. (The sacrilegious nature of this desire is addressed in stanza 8, with the judgment that she could not serve Heaven.)

One also notes that the gaze and vision are repeatedly mentioned in this poem in conjunction with light sources. This is a motif, supporting both the religious imagery throughout. Further, it provides the outline of a time-frame for the poem’s events. The light of Jesus and “You,” described as “glow” and “shine,” does not seem very flashy. Instead, it is more like a slowly glowing light source, such as the sunrise. This becomes important when considering the line “rise—with You,” which could imply both morning and resurrection. It also connects to the image of waking at daylight to start the work of daily life, as a housewife might.

The plethora of religious imagery appears to link to the themes of “live” and the place *where* one can live—yet they are all rejected—the sexton’s shelf, the places of judgment and resurrection, Paradise—all are unsavory “sordid excellence.” If he is unredeemed, she loses everything even if she were to attain redemption by herself; but if he is saved, and she “condemned to be where You were not—” then that is enough to be Hell for her. The

emphasis on vision is here again: "You" possesses "Saturated" sight with eyes full-on redemption/Paradise, while the narrator "had no more eyes." Another reading might be that "You" saturates the narrator's vision, much like how "Your face" would displace that of Jesus. If they cannot even envision the same surroundings—how could they ever make a home together?

Cups, shelves, housewives and homesickness, all are bound together by the entrance/exit imagery at the end of the poem. First, there is the open door, standing "ajar." The door is a concrete object, normally part of a house or building. However, this particular door allows them to exist in the contradiction of "meet apart"—in other words, its openness represents a physical boundary, a threshold, between them that cannot be crossed. This open door, this threshold, can contain such ambiguous, immense things as Oceans, Prayer and Despair. All are ephemeral, yet seem eternal to human beings. The despair is described as "white sustenance." The whiteness recalls the porcelain cups of our previous conversation—the cups discarded by the housewife. It also recalls the frost of death from the stanzas that discuss why the speaker cannot die with him. Life, death, or afterlife, in any state of being, she cannot be with him. The possibility of their "home" together is thus transformed into something impossible, and further, from the familiar socially accepted form to something unfamiliar—unattainable—a "meet[ing] apart" that forever replaces a "living together."

The use of extended metaphor of life, death and resurrection is supported by intricate symbolism that can be read for multiple meanings. Colors such as white are representative both of cups (domestic life) and frost (winter/death). Doors are both entrances to houses and to heaven, as well as the boundary that forever separates the speaker from her beloved. These combine with the motifs of vision and of house/home to aid in describing the feelings of the speaker in intimate detail, that she can never marry the object of her desire.

The concept of home in this poem is associated with loss: the interior of the house is described as being cared for by the housewife; the speaker of the poem positions that home in a place of loss along with her rejection of the role of housewife. Thus, the impossible relationship of the poem is not only about a rejected heterosexual desire; it is also about the rejection of a social role, a type of socially acceptable relationship, and a lifestyle. While we cannot clearly read any of Dickinson's poems as confessional, it is perhaps appropriate to say that this intimate poem provides a certain confessional critique of gender roles forced on Victorian women, and offers a glimpse into the mind of the author, who was clearly committed to telling the story of these two characters who can never be together.

While the speaker in "I cannot live with You" (F706) addresses the liminal as a differentiation between life and death that she cannot choose to exist in, the speaker in "It was not Death, for I stood up," (F355) already seems to be in that ambiguous state. This poem uses similar motifs of time and the senses as well as the imagery of doors to make real the abject state of the speaker:

It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down—
It was not Night, for all the Bells
Put out their Tongues, for Noon.

It was not Frost, for on my Flesh
I felt Siroccos—crawl—
Nor Fire—for just my marble feet
Could keep a Chancel, cool—

And yet, it tasted, like them all,
The Figures I have seen
Set orderly, for Burial,
Reminded me, of mine—

As if my life were shaven,
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key,
And 'twas like Midnight, some—

When everything that ticked—has stopped—
And space stares—all around—
Or Gristly frosts—first Autumn morns,
Repeal the Beating Ground—

But, most, like Chaos—Stopless—cool—
Without a Chance, or spar—
Or even a Report of Land—
To justify—Despair.

Dickinson starts the poem with a stark contrast between the living and the dead: one stands up while the other lies down. Up-down also gives the reader the insinuation of life as free while death is boxed in. This boxed-in imagery is later echoed in stanza two as “marble feet,” and in stanza four as her “life . . . fitted to a frame,/And could not breathe without a key.” Not only does the speaker see her feet encased in stone, immobile, she also feels she has been shoved into something like a doorway—without the door, a doorway is only a frame—and she herself has been forced to become a door. The keyhole (to breathe through) would thus be her mouth. The body itself, here, becomes the threshold.

Heralding the body as the door are several different images, the most significant of which relate to place and time. The times of day mentioned recall our previous discussion of “I learned— at least—what Home could be—” in which we found dawn to be a liminal timeframe. Here, dawn is mentioned in stanza four as “Autumn morns” and gives contrast to the first stanza, in which the narrator makes clear that the time of day can neither be “Night” nor can it be “Noon,” both times of day that could be told easily even on a sundial. The place is far more ambiguous than the time. From the final stanza’s lines “Without a Chance, or spar—/ Or even a Report of Land—” one might assume the speaker aboard a ship. Yet in stanza three we have already been told by the speaker that she feels her position akin to “The Figures I have seen/ Set orderly, for Burial,” as if she is waiting to be put in her grave. The

ship metaphor may also be related to the allusions to “Frost” and “Fire” from the second verse. All three may vaguely recall Dante’s *Inferno*—the ship is the boat that ferries the dead across the river Acheron to Hell, the Frost is the ice of the Ninth Circle (Treachery) which has encapsulated such figures as Judas Iscariot and Satan, and the fires of the Sixth Circle (Heresy) in which perpetrators are encapsulated in fiery tombs. At the same time, it is more important to note that these images are merely allusions, and are meant to describe the extreme heat and cold experienced by the speaker.

Yet while the speaker does reference doors and windows, these spaces are certainly not where the speaker is. She mentions “Siroccos,” which are Mediterranean winds that come up from the Sahara and reach hurricane speeds as they race across North Africa and Southern Europe, and “Chancels,” which are the spaces traditionally found around and behind the altars in churches and which may include an apse. Both exist in the plane of the real; therefore, the speaker has not yet departed from the land of the living. The final stanza compliments that notion: without the “Report of Land” she has not yet arrived in Hell and therefore cannot reasonably justify losing hope (Despair). The limbo experienced by the narrator is curious as Dante’s poem already has a different kind of limbo, which is mentioned as the first ring of Hell.

Finally, this poem presents a very clear sensory description that allows the reader experience the liminal along with the speaker. The first stanza imparts touch in the form of the aforementioned up-down standing-lying position of the living and the dead, taste in the form of the bell’s “Tongues” and sound in the form of the bells themselves. The second stanza uses only touch, providing a contrast between extreme hot and cold with such language as “Frost” and “Siroccos,” “Fire” and “cool” alternating within the quatrain. She feels her “marble feet” cool, but does not say that she can see them. Stanza three brings back the idea of taste from

stanza one with "And yet, it tasted, like them all," in a strange synesthesia—one cannot really taste a Sirocco, a fire, frost or coolness. Touch is again prominent in the fourth verse, as we first realize the speaker is like a hunk of wood to be shorn down and placed in a frame like a door. Then abruptly, after using only taste, touch and sound, the speaker interjects sight and a lack of sound into stanza five. All things that have been making noise cease to do so—"When everything that ticked—has stopped—" and the sound of the ground itself "Beating" is "repealed." Up to this point in the poem, it might have been safe to assume that the narrator heard only muffled noise or none at all, and that she either had her eyes closed or was unable to open them. But the fifth stanza and the sixth stanza, which concerns the metaphorical search for land (an activity requiring sight), seems to indicate that perhaps the speaker has only closed her eyes and refuses to open them. It is, perhaps, this refusal that traps her in a liminal state, herself a door to an unnamable beyond, which might be Chaos, or Despair. The central problem in this poem, then, is not only the opening and closing of metaphysical space, but also the power of that space, that door, to transform the most familiar state of being, life, into the most unwelcome, hell.

Each one of the poems addressed in this chapter added dimensions to Dickinson's interpretation of the house and home as dubious spaces, easily imperiled by the speaker's indecision, inability to overcome a liminal state, or even exile. Surely her experience of losing her own home was meaningful to her writing, and contributed to her interpretation of home as an insecure space. Wolosky points out that Dickinson has a "profound misgiving regarding the metaphysical order itself" (63). Her speakers express her distrust of both the social order in life, and the metaphysical order, which refers to the point after which we have shuffled off this mortal coil. That is why her speakers so often find themselves in a liminal placement, outside

the norms, endangered, experiencing the loss of a cherished dream of love, safety, comfort or belonging.

Through the crossing of the threshold, Dickinson's poetry approaches liminal spaces, examining the border between different states of being such as life and death, damnation and salvation. The imagery she chooses to use to describe this border is curiously homely, with its usage of familiar gestures such as knocking on a door or standing in an entryway. Further, her depictions of the threshold itself include objects present in both the physical threshold such as doorways, and the religious threshold such as church altars. Home is defined both by the social order and by the religious order, in that sense. It is also out of the reach of the speaker in most if not all of the poems that deal with the liminal. In this way, Dickinson's speakers paint the known onto the unknowable, and articulate the ineffable. By circumscribing the subject, Dickinson puts the speaker both inside and outside of the space of home, an uncanny placement that disturbs the definition of home, a place of belonging and replaces it with homesickness, a word that in Dickinson's poetic language meant "longing" (*EDL*).

Dickinson's speakers remind us that within the uncanny, there is the seed of the familiar; the former cannot exist without some recollection of the latter. In the chapters that follow, this symbiotic relationship will become increasingly clear. In the larger context of gothic canon, Dickinson's work presents us with a phenomenology of home with which to begin our sojourn into the gothic house of the turn of the 20th century, and further, into the modern age of the 20th century itself. By demonstrating that home is itself an uncanny space, Dickinson attaches herself to a tradition of treating home as both a frightening and welcoming space. Furthermore, she asserts that the loss and gain of a house or home lends a sense of insecurity to the identity of the speaker. It perhaps alludes to the fact that without the handing down of property through generations, the social order is itself imperiled by the possibility that

one's home may be repossessed. The way Dickinson discusses the threat of homelessness will become even more important as our discussion takes us into the modern period, as the heroines of du Maurier's and Jackson's novels are in a similarly threatened state.

Chapter 4

Madness at Home: "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the Female Gothic in the late 19th Century

4.1 The Historical Background and Significance of "The Yellow Wallpaper"

At the end of the 19th century, novels and stories with gothic motifs by male authors such as the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle addressed the intimacy of space forever changed by industrialization and migration;⁸⁰ novels like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* addressed the evils of colonization, a space of alienation, otherization, exile and perversion.⁸¹ On the other hand, women authors built upon their precursors' use of terror and

⁸⁰ In an increasingly global and chaotic world, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series offers cases that baffle the police and seem to defy reason, symbolic of the social order's decay and the institution's loss of power. His detective then steps in with a new, peculiar methodology of analyzing clues that are actually in plain view of all involved, i.e. his central idea of "seeing without noticing." Holmes then miraculously solves the crime with the only logical conclusion possible, however improbable that may be. While the Holmes stories are by no means only about murder and mayhem (they contain a good deal of thievery, lost property, mistaken identity and larceny as well), the murder mysteries are of particular note because of the way they treat homely space. Not only do murders forever change the home into an uncanny space for their occupants, many of the murders are perpetrated in old estates and involve old money, thus complicating the story with recollections of the British Gothic tradition. Further, by solving murders, especially murders of family members (husbands and wives) and other mysteries, Holmes confronts a new sort of uncanny space: the precursor to the modern Gothic. In Holmes' confrontation of both transgression (crime) and the breakdown of the social system (represented by the incompetent police) through his use of logic to circumscribes/circumvents the existing system, elements of the Gothic are confronted and controlled outwardly: the secrets of the house are brought to light and new order is restored with new science.

⁸¹ Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy remind us of the Gothic's exportation as essential to the canon: "Definition of national identity or literary tradition is bound up with the historical forces that shaped that identity or that tradition. Moreover the diasporic spread of Gothic from England to Scotland, Ireland, North America, Australasia and beyond is inescapably the movement of colonial expansion. Whether framed in terms of struggle

expression of complicated feelings towards the home: of anxiety and comfort, escape and oppression. Stories like "The Yellow Wall-Paper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman confront the issue of madness experienced in the home and the pre-psychoanalytical concept in a negative manner. While Holmes uses his scientific knowledge to prevent crime in dreary spaces such as city alleyways and decaying, venerable manses, Gilman's story reminds us that it is not only crimes from without that astound and appall but also the madness within. Moreover, "The Yellow Wallpaper" stands in juxtaposition to other novels which also deal with the use of science such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* because "The Yellow Wallpaper" humanizes hysteria and anxiety through sympathy with the narrator. Before analyzing the text, however, it is important to understand two factors that influenced Gilman's writing of her seminal work on the madness experienced by women in the domestic sphere: the prominence of science as a late Victorian gothic motif (either as a force dissolving the gothic, or as an expression of the gothic's omnipotent power to obfuscate logic and reason), and the importance of Gilman's own experience of overcoming depression and anxiety.

Gothic literature at the fin de siècle⁸² was marked by a rise in the number of stories dealing with the supernatural and the fantastic that also featured science and scientific discovery as prominent motifs.⁸³ The aforementioned Arthur Conan Doyle is not the only

with England's central rulership, the legacies of imperialism, or those of slavery, each of these modes of 'national Gothic' are structured by a common narrative of the buried past that rises up to haunt the present" (51). Thus, *Heart of Darkness* and other stories that offer critique of imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and orientalism can be considered part of Gothic canon. See Spooner and McEvoy, 51-53.

⁸² Rather than refer to the end of the 19th century as "the turn of the century," calling it fin de siècle has a connotation of decadence and decay, which is often referred to in Gothic novels of the time period. See Baldick, 2008. See also "fin de siècle," *OED*.

⁸³ According to Jenny Bourne Taylor, authors like Max Nordau and H.G. Wells, who wrote on "morbid mental pathology" and "contemporary decline" exemplify the attitudes of fin de siècle authors towards what they perceived as the decay of society (13). In particular, she views *Degeneration* (1895) by Nordau and *The Time Machine* (1895) by Wells as powerful examples of how science and fiction can be combined to show the

author to use science in juxtaposition with gothic forces beyond the control of the characters, or science that turns into the expression of gothic forces; this theme figures prominently into the works of authors such as H.P. Lovecraft, Edith Wharton, H.G. Wells, Robert Louis Stevenson, Charlotte Riddell Bram Stoker, and even Oscar Wilde. Their works may reflect a general anxiety with regard the revolutions in technology that lead to an important period of transition in science as well as medicine, especially with regard to psychology and neurology, two emergent fields.⁸⁴ Furthermore, these authors' works note changes that occurred in accepted forms of treatment for mental disease and disability, and subsequently began to question the stability of identity (Grimes, 14).

Evidence emerged that the conscious and unconscious mind might be split, or doubled. Doctors who dealt with mental science began "anxiously policing boundaries of the self and mind in unprecedented ways, despite the fact that cases of multiple personality only drew attention to the impossibility of mapping and delimiting identity" (*Ibid.*, 22). They searched for ways to academically explain any and all workings of the mind, both conscious and unconscious, and presented cures which they felt would not only make the mentally ill "normal" again, but also would reassure them of "normality" itself. In spite of that, their efforts only served to delineate the real problem: their meticulous research divulged that ". . . the foundations of identity had become incorporeal and ghostly" (*Loc.cit.*). After becoming

degeneration of human social structures and values. She goes on to mention Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1888) as well. See Taylor, 13-18.

⁸⁴ Up to the American Civil War, psychological studies were approached through either philosophical or religious viewpoints, and the mind's faculties were separated into categories of cognitive, affective and behavioral (Goodwin, 172). However, starting in the 1870s, both scientists and medical practitioners began to utilize new theories and cures that unified the behavioral with the cognitive. One important example of this blending can be found in the work of William James, who is widely considered America's first psychologist. His *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) establishes laboratory psychology in practice and incorporates philosophy into psychological theory. He then brought his theories to Harvard, wherefrom they were disseminated. His research was influential in the continuing discussion of consciousness, emotion, and the blending of philosophy with new approaches to psychology. For further details on the development of the discipline of American psychology in the 19th century, see Goodwin, 142-175.

aware of this revelation, some authors, like Henry James, tried to circumvent this issue by clinging to the notion of public and private as separate spheres (Grimes, 23). Female authors, however, having been relegated to the sphere of the private as their proper domain, addressed this spectral force as one that could lead to liberation. Combined with the shifting fabric of late 19th century society and the slow progression towards equality between the sexes, the separate spheres dictated by John Ruskin were revealed to be not so separate after all.

The fiction written by the women who lived and wrote during the *fin de siècle* connects the women writers of the 1800s to an era of burgeoning feminism after the turn of the century. While Victorian values still reigned at the end of the 19th century (women were still disenfranchised in America and still relegated to the home as their proper sphere), discernible changes were occurring with regard to the way women reacted to those values, especially in print. Instead of publishing anonymously or under a male pseudonym, women voiced their opinions on social issues publicly. Social activists such as Dorothea Dix advocated for the indigent and the mentally ill, leading to the creation of institutions devoted to their care (Goodwin, 347-48).⁸⁵ Beginning as early as the great success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery narrative *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and continuing with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884), which brought to light despicable acts against the Native American peoples, women's role in advocacy against oppression and suppression slowly grew. By extension, they

⁸⁵ Dix pioneered fair and improved treatment of mental patients in asylums throughout the mid-1800s. Beginning in the early 1840s, she toured and wrote exposés on the treatment of those housed in state jails, hospitals and work houses. Through the impact of those exposés as well as additional efforts, a series of reforms was instituted in her home state of Massachusetts; her continued work, which took her across the United States to almost every state, led to improved conditions for many impoverished mentally ill persons. Dix's work is important in that it indicates a growing awareness of the existence of the mentally ill. However, it differs from the *fin de siècle* attitude in that she dealt mainly with patients who would spend their entire lives institutionalized. By the end of the 19th century, there was an emphasis on "curing" mental patients, especially those who had, up to the point of their breakdown, lead healthy lives. For more on Dix's work, see Viney and Zorich, 211-218.

started to become vocal about their own unstable position in society.⁸⁶

Later, the emergence of the New Woman in the 1880s and 1890s marked the beginning of a public debate on women's role in the domestic sphere, which there-to-for had not been seriously considered in such a format.⁸⁷ A major shift from a three-set novel format to short stories published in periodicals and literary magazines changed the economic structure of publication also contributed to women's ability to start contributing to and competing in the literary marketplace. Showalter (1993) explains:

... women were a major presence in the new literary world of the 1880s and 1890s. They were writing with unprecedented candor about female sexuality, marital discontent, and their own aesthetic theories and aspirations; and speaking to—and about—the New Women of the *fin de siècle* (viii).

These women gained a kind of fame close to notoriety (to some, they were indeed notorious, even reviled); and out of their ranks, most stories have faded from fame while their male contemporaries continue to be read. Amongst those stories that remained, however, Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" has been constantly in print and referred to by scholars of social criticism and the gothic alike.

Like her contemporaries and the women authors who preceded her, writing was incredibly important to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She was already a writer when her first husband, Charles Walter Stetson, proposed to her. She convinced him to allow her to continue

⁸⁶ For instance, Harriet Beecher Stowe became particularly outspoken about the similarities between slavery and wifery—both, she explained, were treated as property, and had no legal rights: a woman could not inherit, make a legal contract, or even keep her own wages if her male guardian disapproved. For further information on her arguments, see *Homestead*, 29.

⁸⁷ In the context of "The New Woman" and emergent feminist movements, Sally Ledger explains with balanced perspective that Gilman's contemporaries were deep in an argument over what a separation from the domestic sphere might mean for women's role: free love versus faithfulness, independent identity versus identity based on identification with the family unit, education obtained at institutions (outside the home/village) or home-schooling, separate but equal or integration with men. See Ledger, 154-157. See also Dowling, 47-63. For further examples of women writers associated with the New Woman and/or the changing place of women in the *fin de siècle*, see Showalter (ed.), *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. This book includes authors such as Kate Chopin, Olive Shreiner, Edith Wharton, and significant to this dissertation, "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

her work as an author after they were married in 1884. Upon the birth of her daughter, she experienced severe post-partum depression and psychosis. She underwent treatment of isolation and little work by the famous nervous anxiety specialist S. Weir Mitchell (Gilbert and Gubar, 89). For 3 months, she followed his advice and was told that if she adhered to her treatment, she would be cured.

S. Weir Mitchell's treatment of Gilman was similar to the way he treated many other patients and was based on the late 19th century trend of diagnosing unstable emotional states as neurasthenia.⁸⁸ Starting in the late 1870s, the term neurasthenia became a popular diagnosis for hemmed-in women and over-worked men of the middle and upper classes.⁸⁹ Although the condition was neither unique to Gilman, nor to her gender, and although similarly debilitating symptoms affected men, the rigidity of the Victorian ideal of woman lead to a sort of specialization of the field aimed at women who had been overstimulated by either domestic or social tasks (Golden, 45). He not only treated Gilman, but also other female intellectuals such as Edith Wharton and Jane Addams, and was considered one of the most prominent practitioners in his field; he was even given a positive review by Sigmund Freud (*Loc.cit.*). Freud "approved of Mitchell's rest cure, and even adapted and used it for a period of time" (*Loc.cit.*). He describes the combination of approaches he uses to treat those suffering from nervous exhaustion in his book *Fat and Blood* (1877) as a method which features "seclusion,

⁸⁸ Literally "weakness of the nerves," this illness was well-illustrated in *American Nervousness* (1881) by George M. Beard, a doctor who specialized in neurasthenia. See Abma, 100.

⁸⁹ "Neurasthenia was a useful concept because it carried the suggestion of a medical disease entity, while simultaneously avoiding the stigma of madness. Apart from identifying a new group of patients, it served as a vehicle for neurologists as a new category of medical specialists. From the mid-1800s onward, neurology had developed as a new medical specialization, claiming to offer valid results not just for nervous disorders, but for mental disorders in general. Neurologists denied that the asylum system had any therapeutic value. Instead they advocated treatment in private settings or in university clinics, using methods such as hypnosis or suggestion" (Abma, 100).

certain forms of diet, rest in bed, massage (or manipulation), and electricity” (Mitchell, 48).

Further, he explains what the rest cure entails in his book *Doctor and Patient* (1887):

In carrying out my general plan of treatment it is my habit to ask the patient to remain in bed from six weeks to two months. At first, and in some cases for four or five weeks, I do not permit the patient to sit up or to sew or to write or read. The only action allowed is to clean the teeth. In some instances I have not permitted the patient to turn over without aid, and this I have done because sometimes I think no motion desirable, and because sometimes the moral influence of absolute repose is of use (*Ibid.*, 49).

The text proceeds with an explanation of Mitchell’s theory that rest is of moral value to the patient, that it encourages regular hours, quiet, order and control (*Loc.cit.*). His method of “absolute repose” was basically a prison sentence for most of his patients—many of them were not allowed to have visitors, to write or read, or even to leave their beds for meals. His technique separated them from their usual routine. It was meant to impose virtue and calm on an overly passionate or nervous person, but, as Gilman’s account attests, it more often made the patient more anxious because there was nothing to concentrate on except for his or her anxiety.

Despite the fact that both of Mitchell’s books contain numerous accounts of women leaving his practice satisfied that they had been treated well and cured, Gilman (along with many other women) suffered through his ministrations. She felt as though she was being punished. Not only was she forbidden from writing or reading, her primary occupations that did not conform to the Victorian ideal of wife and mother, she was shut away in a room. She was then told that she should “live as domestic a life as possible” (Gilman, 1935, 62). Golden relates that Gilman “made a rag doll baby that she hung on a doorknob and began to crawl into dark corners in a state of mental despair” (7). Those are not behaviors of a woman who feels that her position as a nurturing mother is with her living child; neither are they the behaviors of a woman who considers lack of mental and physical exercise and contact with other human

beings “restful.” After realizing that Mitchell’s treatment was actually driving her to the boundaries of her sanity, she did an about-face and abandoned treatment.

Her experience with Mitchell’s extreme control of both her body and mind became an impetus for her to restructure her life around writing against the concepts he stood for: she divorced her husband and moved to California with her daughter Katherine, intent on travelling, lecturing and writing every day. But realizing the hardships facing her as a single mother, she ended up sending her daughter to live with her former husband and his new wife (he had remarried). Once resettled on the West Coast, she was able to remarry, this time to her cousin George Houghton Gilman—notwithstanding the public criticism she faced—and was able to partake in an amiable domestic relationship. She joined in feminist and reformist groups, publishing such works as the feminist utopian *Herland* (1915) as well as many short stories and commentaries on politics and economics such as *Women and Economics*, and *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903). Her fiction and nonfiction contain themes of women working together, questioning childrearing as an exclusively female right, education as a necessity, and reform of the structures of marriage and family.

Significantly, her experiences also lead her to write “The Yellow Wallpaper.” While she had voluntarily undergone treatment by Mitchell, through the process she discovered that his method only served to imprison her body and castrate her creativity. According to Catherine Golden, “more than in her autobiography, the language and imagery of ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ reveal the lasting negative impact of the author’s treatment by S. Weir Mitchell” (46). Her writing gave her life purpose; without that purpose, her identity was endangered. As a result, she formed a scathing opinion of Mitchell’s therapeutic techniques, which she expounded upon in her autobiography. Therein, she stated that his rest cure had the “inevitable result” of “progressive insanity” (Gilman, 1935, 63). Further, she affirmed that she intended

"The Yellow Wallpaper" to be a criticism of his treatment, to "convince him of the error of his ways" (*Ibid.*, 65). In addition to the information in her autobiography, she separately published an explanatory account entitled "Why I wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" (1913). Therein, she alludes to her post-partum depression, how writing helped her regain her sanity, and how the publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper" helped other women who were suffering through similar ordeals.⁹⁰ Overall, Gilman's experience is a result of gender discrimination as well as discrimination against those who do not conform to society's norms of psychological well-being.

While Gilman was a prolific writer and her many works reflect her views on writing, the creative process, feminism, and equality, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is quite possibly her most enduring work. It is often read as a feminist reaction against the medical trend of the time period, which was to categorize women with mental difficulties, periods of depression or those who wished to rebel against social norms as "hysterical" or "mentally diseased." In that sense, Gilman's story lies in affinity with many of the gothic works of her time period, especially those of other women writers preoccupied with the expression of the female condition in late Victorian society.⁹¹ The importance of the "The Yellow Wallpaper" lies in how the narrator explains her powerless position and her desire to somehow overcome it through the creative process of writing. Further, the story focuses on how to outgrow/overcome madness through the process of rejecting the social order in the form of rejecting anti-female medical science as

⁹⁰ "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" contains information that is more fully explained in Chapter 8 of her autobiography, "The Breakdown." She describes her "nervous prostration" in detail, from physical symptoms to hysterical episodes in her everyday life. See Gilman, 1992, 58-63.

⁹¹ For other examples of women writers who dealt with this theme, see the aforementioned *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. See also Vanessa D. Dickerson's *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural*. Dickerson argues that ghost stories written by women authors express the marginality forced on women at the fin de siècle. They also counter the "scientism, skepticism, and materialism of the age" (5).

junk. Thus while the husband of the heroine of "The Yellow Wallpaper" tries to force her to outwardly confront the gothic-uncanny, Gilman's main character knows that she may only face and overcome (or succumb to) those elements inwardly. Like Gilman herself, who underwent a failed cure for her anxiety and became skeptical of treatments for so-called nervous prostration, the narrator thinks very little of her doctor's method while still undergoing treatment. Unfortunately for the narrator, the remedy proves more dangerous than the malady; her condition deteriorates into madness. Despite the fact that the narrator's insanity frees her mind from her physically trapped existence, her psychotic break from reality means that she can no longer function in normal society.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is possibly one of the most disturbing tales of its time period. Gilman weaves her own experiences into a semi-autobiographical story, which describes the narrator's descent from a slightly nervous, anxious state to a complete detachment from reality. The narrator's husband, John, described by the narrator to be a renowned physician, takes his wife away from the city to the countryside for a rest cure after she has suffered from what he diagnosed as nervous exhaustion due to both their new baby and her feverish writing. He believes that if she ceases working all together, both as mother and as writer, it will restore her health. It is, however, unclear whether the narrator's health is actually endangered at the beginning of the story, or if John has diagnosed her with this ailment in order to control her. Upon arrival, the narrator muses that the house, a lovely old building, might be haunted: "A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but would that be asking too much of fate!" (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 115). In the sinister events that follow, the narrator is torn between following her husband's "cure" for her anxiety and her writing. She is told not to leave her bedroom, which has bars on the window and strange contraptions that resemble children's gymnastics toys. They seem, to the

modern reader, like something out of a comic book or a B-rate horror film—their purpose is rather absurd, considering the occupant of the room is an adult woman whose main occupation seems to be writing. It is curious, then, the narrator does not question their purpose; she puts her complete faith in her husband that refraining from writing and childcare, the two tasks she longs for the most, will calm her so-called manic tendencies. The longer she listens to her husband, however, the more preoccupied she becomes with the wallpaper, its pattern and its deeper meaning. She begins to see a woman creeping along the wall in the wallpaper, which causes her to rip the paper off the wall, at first in small pieces but then with increasing ferocity. In the final scene, she has locked herself in the room, and when John is finally able to open the door, he finds her creeping along the floor, having become the woman she saw in the wallpaper. John faints, but the narrator continues the mad behavior anyway.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” is an extremely subversive text and goes against the trends of fin de siècle gothic in several important ways. First of all, it subverts both the dominant style of narration, and the tendency to have a male narrator rather than a female. Second, the setting of the country manor recalls the gothic of earlier times, and stands in juxtaposition with the shift towards featuring a city setting, which was in vogue for gothic writers at the time. Both the narration and the setting combine to create the motif of imprisonment, both mental and physical, which is essential to the story. Finally, the narrator’s anxiety demonstrates her desire for selfhood, in that she feels she cannot achieve independence of the mind without her writing. This desire is embodied by the double that the narrator discovers in the wallpaper, a double that is slowly drawn out by the narrator’s progressive mental decline. Thus, the motif of home in “The Yellow Wallpaper” indicates the feminine desire for independence and creative power discussed in previous gothic works such as *Jane Eyre*. Further, through the madness of the narrator and the rite of passage initiated by her double and perpetrated in an

attic bedroom, it reveals 19th century women authors' awareness of the necessity to outgrow the decomposing Victorian values that restricted their creativity.

4.2 Imprisonment, Haunting, and "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Within the country house, the insanity confronted by Gilman's heroine seems to come from inside the very *walls*, and their liminal space is treated very much the same way as the doors, windows and thresholds present in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. The motif of imprisonment in "The Yellow Wallpaper" takes on several meanings in the text, connecting it to the motif of the house as well as the aforementioned historical background and the author's life. The narrator mainly takes note of two things in the house: her trapped condition (caused by her husband), and the house itself. Thus, imprisonment is most obviously represented by the narrator being physically trapped in her bedroom, unable to leave without her husband's permission. Just as many women were subject to being treated as property by their male relatives or spouses because they did not have the same rights as men in society, Gilman's narrator is bullied by her husband into a treatment that is more like a prison sentence than a cure. Further, both motifs are related to the problematic mental science of the *fin de siècle*, which metaphorically incarcerated women by ostracizing them as hysterical when they did not conform to the accepted idea of a normal wife/mother/daughter. Significantly, the locus of this internment is not the city as in other *fin de siècle* gothic novels. Instead, it is a house far out in the countryside, indicative that both modernity (for Gilman, the turn of the century) and previous eras treated women exactly the same way. Although the narrator's imprisonment in

one of the upper rooms of the mansion recalls Bertha's being locked in an attic in *Jane Eyre*, the narrator's behavior is read as more subversive than Bertha's; instead of violent outbursts, she *writes*; she leaves *proof* for the reader in the form of her journal of what happened to her. And while Bertha escapes physically through death, the narrator urges her fantasy of freedom to take shape as a woman in the wall, and she *escapes* mentally, rendering the house a locus of the Gothic: the patriarchy haunted by the feminine seeping and creeping out of its very walls.

First, Gilman's narrator establishes that the manse she has travelled to is a locus of the gothic. She not only states that the house is a "colonial mansion, a hereditary estate," she straightaway romanticizes it to be "a haunted house" (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 24). She explains that the house was caught up in some kind of trouble regarding its ownership and has not been inhabited by the heirs to the estate for years. This condition recalls our previous discussion of the gothic from Chapter 1—that one element necessary to a gothic house is a troubled past in which the line of heredity has been disrupted. While the legal issues convince her at first that the house isn't haunted—she says the condition of its ownership being in limbo "spoils my ghostliness"—her fascination with the wallpaper signals that the house is indeed a sinister force (*Ibid.*, 25). And while she describes her affinity for the gardens, with their broken greenhouses and trailing grape vines, she very clearly states her dislike of the wallpaper in her room:

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life (*Ibid.*, 26).

She has already established that the room is somehow connected to her being treated as a child through its former existence as a nursery; here, she continues that idea by expounding upon the point by mentioning it looks like it has been ruined by impetuous young boys, with both its

paint and paper “stripped off.” Inhaling the stale air in the room, the narrator’s first impression of the wallpaper is one of both detail and ambiguity. Not only is she repulsed by the wallpaper’s color and shape, she also finds repugnant the way in which it has been defaced by the room’s previous occupant. It seems to be in a state of extreme disrepair, but her husband refuses to replace any of it, forcing her to inhabit a disordered space with bars on the windows, as if she does not deserve any better.

Her further impressions of the wallpaper exhibit a fundamental ambiguity tinged with irrationality significant to the evocation of the gothic in the text. She describes the wallpaper’s pattern as “flamboyant” and “committing every artistic sin” (*Ibid.*, 26). Furthermore, it is characterized as “dull” and at the same time “irritating,” “confusing,” and “repellant” (*Loc.cit.*).⁹² The two seem to be contradictory: that which is boring cannot simultaneously

⁹² One interesting historical aspect that might also have influenced the writing of “The Yellow Wallpaper” was the sudden proliferation of house decorations that made their way into the home—including wallpaper (Ormiston and Wells, 126). The introduction of oil and gas lamps, and the abolition of window taxes, meant that, for the first time, the Victorian middle classes could put deep, vivid colours on their walls. There was a particular fashion for wallpapers in a color called “Scheele’s Green,” which was a brilliant, long-lasting green made from copper arsenite and therefore, unbeknownst to many consumers, very poisonous. *The Times* estimated that Victorian British homes contained 100 square miles of arsenic-rich wallpaper (*HistoryExtra.com*). As the interior became more visible from the added light—lamplight was far brighter and more efficient than candlelight—the decorating styles became more varied and detailed. The more vibrant the colors and the more flourishes, the more the Victorians wanted to decorate their homes with them. While this resource only explains what was popular in Britain at the time, it can be assumed that as most trends in design and interior decoration were imported across the Atlantic to the United States. Thus, these unfortunately toxic wallpapering habits were imported right along with them. The wallpaper was extremely dangerous: according to a BBC Four documentary, *Hidden Killers of the Victorian Home*, an expert paging through a swatch book from the Victorian era even states that it’s toxic to even handle the swatches and that he should thoroughly wash his hands afterwards (*BBC Four*). The documentary goes on to explain how the wallpaper in combination with the damp from poor ventilation in the standard Victorian home would have made the perfect habitat for mold. This mold, in degrading the wallpaper paste, would cause the paper to peel back in patches, exuding arsenic dust. The dust, once inhaled, proved deadly in some cases, and in others, made the occupants of the house very sick. See Meharg, 688. In “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the narrator describes the wallpaper is “stripped off” in places already, is a “sickly” yellow color and seems putrid. It sounds similar to the description of molding wallpaper with copper arsenite derivatives in it. One might therefore guess that toxic dust already floating around in the air of the room, and the longer the narrator stays in it, the more exposed to its toxicity she would be. The narrator also explained that the windows were large but barred, so it is unlikely that any ventilation would occur; the poison would be concentrated in the air of the room, in which she is trapped. However, one can only speculate that the arsenite wallpaper and the yellow wallpaper are related at this point.

illicit feelings of confusion or repulsion. The wallpaper therefore recalls the “savageness,” “grotesqueness,” “changefulness” and “redundance” required by Ruskin as elements of the gothic (Ruskin, 1900, 155). Moreover, her reaction to her new prison is as intense as Jane’s reaction to the various gothic elements in Rochester’s house. Besides, she describes its color as “a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight” with “dull yet lurid orange in some places” and “a sickly sulfur tint in others” (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 26). She cannot seem to make up her mind what shade of yellow it is. Later, she notices “a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down,” and says that on the wallpaper “absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere” (*Ibid.*, 29). Not only is the wallpaper faded, peeling and cracked, it inspires her overactive imagination to see images of the faces of hanged (wo)men.

The change from confusion and repugnance to violent imagery is striking. While the narrator has already told us that there is nothing wrong with her mentally, it becomes difficult (if not impossible) to believe that when she projects visions of a hanged man and staring, malevolent eyes onto the walls of her surroundings. Jeffrey Berman offers an explanation of the sudden change in her reaction: the wallpaper is like a “Rorschach test of the narrator’s growing fright” (232). While the wallpaper certainly functions as a reflection of two forces engaged in a frenzied struggle of wills within the narrator—submission to John’s treatment and rebellion against any treatment, asserting her own free will—it is not a struggle that frightens the narrator; rather it bewilders and repels her. Berman’s further observation, that “the chaotic pattern symbolizes her own unheard emotional contradictions: her need for security yet fear of dependency and entrapment; her acceptance of the American Dream (marriage, family, house) amidst the nightmare of reality; her passive acceptance of duty but rising protest” is more apropos (232). She accepts John’s management of the situation, and

even mentions that her brother has been complicit in her incarceration; like Gilman herself, she has clearly and willingly submitted to treatment. She, like other women of her time, understand that she is expected to suppress her desires and conform to her life's work of attending to the needs of her family. Her only rebellion is in her writing—this she cannot give up. The wallpaper symbolizes: her creative power, which exists on the outside of the social order (the walls) .

Several factors contribute significantly to the mental decline of the trapped wife, not the least of which is her husband's role in the story. Although the journal format of the story means the narrator explains his perspective to us (and he is voiceless), it seems clear that he belongs to the category of scientific men discussed by Gilman in the aforementioned autobiographical works. The narrator describes her husband as "practical in the extreme," lacking in "patience with faith," possessing of "an intense horror of superstition" and publicly derisive of "any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures" (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 24). Moreover, while she states that her husband does not believe that she is actually ill, he insists upon her following a regime of his own creation, encouraging her to control herself, at least in his presence (which, she says, is very wearisome) (*Loc.cit.*). She relates that he has given her "a schedule prescription for each hour in the day" (*Ibid.*, 26). As previously mentioned, the strict scheduling was part of Mitchell's treatment, and represented a form of control over the patient. In John using the same technique, he reflects the patriarchal vision of mental science of the age. His attitude represents a threat to female creativity because he has no imagination himself.

By giving the patient the power of narration, the story presents the opposite point of view to the prevailing trend of the fin de siècle gothic, which was narration by or centered on the scientist. Despite being repressed by her doctor-husband's overbearing and commanding

nature, the narrator continues to write—both through Gilman and in the story—which means she is actively pursuing self-expression. For instance, the aforementioned *Dr. Moreau*, a sort of fin de siècle *Frankenstein*, is similar to “The Yellow Wallpaper” in that it features science, doctor, patients, and a discussion of the mind, like many of its contemporaries; yet it and stories like it differ from Gilman’s short story in several important ways. Glennis Byron asserts that the city should be the setting and the doctor either the narrator or the protagonist in fin de siècle gothic:

If the city is now the primary Gothic landscape, the primary figure at the heart of most Victorian *fin de siècle* texts is the scientist. Many forms of nineteenth-century materialist science, including Lombrosian criminal anthropology, had attempted to provide tools for identifying and categorizing what was decadent, animal, abnormal within human nature, to establish and distance what was alien and reaffirm the stability of the norm (134).

First Gilman’s narrator is curious about subverting science; the subversion of science in *Dr. Moreau* is either frightening or impossible. Second, Gilman’s narrator is the patient, not the doctor, and the story revolves around the patient’s slow descent into madness proving the doctor’s so-called cure is illogical and unscientific.

By submitting to the treatment as prescribed by her husband, the narrator has effectively cut off her own voice, except through the journal that she uses to relate her tale to the reader—she subverts her husband’s efforts to control her by keeping a diary of her descent into madness.⁹³ This lack of a voice is discussed at length by Gilbert and Gubar, and termed “speechless woe” in the case of the narrator in Gilman’s story (85). Perhaps “woe,” with its

⁹³ The tool of unreliable first person narrative in describing social problems is often used in world literatures and is heavily influenced by the gothic. From Nikolai Gogol’s “Diary of a Madman” (1835) to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), and of course in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, Gilman’s predecessors both male and female made good use of the technique to create ambiguity—the reader does not know whether the narrator really witnessed the sinister events she or he articulates in the story. In fact, as in “The Diary of a Madman,” it becomes clear that the narrator is unable to convey the truth in a realistic format. Instead he speaks *his* truth, which like Gilman’s narrator’s, exposes the gothic forces at work in the social structure.

implication of mourning and loss, justly recalls the symptoms of postpartum depression. However, the narrator does not seem to be aware of loss as such, in a word. Instead, she seems to experience the impossibility of giving up the power of the written word. Her stress causes her to write more, not less, in secret and not in public. She is supposed to be hidden away, disappeared so-to-speak, but instead she attempts to subvert her husband's ideology by continuing to do the very thing he forbids her from doing: write.

Gilman's writing, then, may be read as a reaction against confinement, just like the actions of her protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper." Gilbert and Gubar also explain that Gilman's writing demonstrates her feelings of how "inevitable it was for a female artist to translate into spatial terms her despair at the spiritual constrictions of what Gilman ironically called 'home comfort'" (*Ibid.*, 84). Although they were imprisoned by the architecture of both house and social institutions, women were able to find escape into their artistic endeavors. However, for Gilman's protagonist, those artistic urges become warped by the house itself, symbolic of the patriarchal order—instead of continuing with her writing, she ends up concentrating on peeling off the wallpaper, convinced that she will peel away and release her other, stronger, more female self that can subvert the patriarchy.

The patriarchal forces at work, embodied in John's control of his wife's body and mind and emitted from the very wallpaper, are influenced by the accepted theory of the time that women were prone to hysteria and thus were unfit for pursuits that required flights of imagination that might set off their passions. It is therefore not a coincidence that John forces the narrator to stop writing; writing is evidence of education, which early psychologists thought contributed to violent mood swings in women; any tasks outside the domestic sphere were to be rejected. In 1840, Thomas Laycock, a precursor to the S. Weir Mitchell theory of the rest cure, explained that the trend towards co-education facilities, dancing, the alternation

of activities as sewing and drawing all contribute towards an "irritability of the brain" in women (189). He advocates that women avoid unusual mental excitement as well as schooling and any other activities associated with the male sphere (in the 19th century). Even in the pre-civil war era, doctors explained that being female necessarily meant being emotional: being "able to assign a satisfactory reason for the greater proclivity of the female sex to hysteria, and also for the absolute rarity of its occurrence in man" (Carter, 191). Thus assigned an overly emotional existence, the rest cure was a necessity to calm the seemingly over-excited woman. Women, the doctors felt, should be in control of their passions at all times; if she could not do so, then she would be unable to achieve her goal of maintaining order in the household: "One of things expected of Victorian woman, as mother, wife, and daughter, was that she control herself and suppress desire and passion, as these would be disruptive to her mission as stabilizer of the home" (Dickerson, 4). As mentioned previously, the ideal of the Victorian woman was an "angel" who avoided intense emotion and strove towards the ideal of comforting homemaker who provided solidity for her family. Any creative force directed towards other pursuits, be they educational or recreational, might jeopardize that saintly mission, and should therefore be avoided.

Women were thus forced into a role that necessitated doubling. The wallpaper, with its grotesque, poisonous aspect, is the harbinger of the haunting of that doubling. As previously discussed, the double can both be an actual person, like a twin, or a resemblance of one, like a shadow or a ghost. In the context of the late 19th century, spectral images such as the one seen by the narrator in the wallpaper might have been viewed as ghosts. Ghosts, as remnants of the past that come back to remind us they are not wholly gone, can appear as scents, sounds, the physical motion of objects, and shadowy figures:

They probed the chilling but also the domesticated tales of visitation, and the traces human misery left behind. The development of the ghost story was impelled by many forces. But it partook in the broadest level in cultural contemplations of the mystery of the grave. In those tales, however wretched and disturbing their spectral protagonists, were at least the dimmest outline of a reassurance that the dead were not wholly dead. . . . (Finucane, 261)

While "The Yellow Wallpaper" concerns the living and not the ghosts of the dead, it seems fair to say that this story is certainly a ghost story—the ghost being the double of the narrator, who haunts herself with the possibility of her own escape from the room and from the confining lifestyle that her husband has forced upon her.

As the narrator descends into madness, she feels she must assist her double's escape from her "textual/architectural confinement" (Gilbert and Gubar, 91). The flight of the ghostly double from the wallpaper and into the body of the narrator causes the two to merge. The narrator behaves as her double, crawling along the floor as if an animal in a distinctly uncanny manner—uncanny because she has not only left behind the control that her former self had been clinging to, but also because her actions remind her husband that the woman he married possesses qualities beyond his comprehension.⁹⁴ Her strange behavior causes him to faint because he cannot comprehend the forces at work—and as a character symbolic of the oppression of the patriarchal order, how could he?⁹⁵

Yet the doubling experienced by the narrator goes beyond a mere ghostly haunting; the doubles are able to merge in the end, and both achieve a sort of triumph over John's overly scientific and illogical cure. It begins with the narrator's observation that her double escapes the confines of the paper during the daytime, and returns to the paper at night: "I think that

⁹⁴ Her behavior recalls our previous discussion of the double and Bertha's animal-like tendencies as evocative of the uncanny. See Freud, "The Uncanny," 243-44.

⁹⁵ For a discussion on male hysteria and the reaction of the narrator's husband to her animal-like behavior, see Jacobus, 229-248.

woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her! I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight" (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 38). The woman seems to be able to get through the imprisonment of both the walls of the house and bars on the windows to creep in the garden. At the same time, the wallpaper woman and the narrator act similarly; the narrator confides: "I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once" (*Loc.cit.*). Thus "creeping" seems to be a metaphor for forbidden, liberated actions, for independence. The narrator admires the woman for her creeping by day or by night and seems to feel the woman's abilities an impossible feat to achieve. She supposes that no one could get through the pattern, which mimics the bars on her windows. This signals her feelings of futility at being understood, and her knowledge that her double is able to do things which she herself cannot. Thus, her double is deeply connected to both the meaning of the wallpaper and the socio-historical background of "The Yellow Wallpaper"—it embodies the passion that women were forced to deny themselves in order to conform to society's expectations.

The wallpaper's function in the story is therefore to alert the narrator to her predicament: she has to create a double because she is repressing the realization that she cannot continue to freely express herself (in either her writing or her speech) while following her husband's prescribed treatment. She is "haunted" by the possibilities denied her. So she forms an awareness of the wallpaper, taking note of both "a great many women behind and sometimes only one" (Gilman, 1992 [1892], 38) slinking within the paper, and of the creeping women she can see out the windows (*Ibid.*, 40). This perhaps insinuates that there are other women behind the wallpaper, imprisoned just like she is. Alternatively, those who have escaped the paper may be outside, creeping freely. The wallpaper double therefore symbolizes

women's quandary: to hide their true nature, which may be unacceptable to society, or to "creep" in public without fear or hesitation.

In demonstrating the double's ability to "creep" both within the house and without, the physical space of the room, the wall, and the garden clearly becomes part and parcel of narrator's mental space. Eventually, the narrator "pulls" and the wallpaper woman "shakes" until they had peeled off much of the paper in the room. In doing so, the narrator ceases to distinguish the border between what she imagines in the wallpaper, and what knows is in the room. In other words, she cannot differentiate the double from herself any more. According to Dickerson, such doublings that appear as hauntings indicate the social inequalities that plagued women: "The ghost corresponded more particularly to the Victorian woman's visibility and invisibility, her power and powerlessness, the contradictions and extremes that shaped female culture" (4). The double is therefore the embodiment of and reaction against the previously discussed motif of imprisonment. Gilman's narrator experiences the same difficulties as the heroines of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, in that she is forced to choose between the desire for self-expression, which she is told is "wrong," and the duty to adhere to the social expectations attached to their economic class, which she is told is "right." Her confusion and anger at being forced to choose between these polar opposites combine in the wallpaper, causing frightening visions of "strangled heads" and "bulbous eyes" that "shriek with derision" and anger her (Gilman, 1992 [1982], 40). These apparitions, seemingly part of the wallpaper and yet apart from her double, are actually mental projections that signal the narrator's inability to differentiate interior space from exterior. More significantly, her violent reaction against them and her triumphant speech to John that he cannot put her back into the paper, demonstrates the repressed discomfort and resentment that plagues her with regard to her marriage. In merging with her double, she overcomes her antagonism, proving that her

husband (who faints at the sight of her creeping) is unable to deal with women's unbridled creative force in the form of the narrator's madness.

Finally, the symbolism of the wallpaper not only signals the dilemma of the narrator, it is important to the dénouement of the story and to the story's classification as Gothic. It represents the invasion of liminal space of the walls (imprisonment) into the space of the room and also demonstrates the ghostly aspect of the double in the wallpaper, which shows the essentially marginalized nature of the narrator's condition. Moreover, because the literal "paper" aspect of the wallpaper connects to her journal-keeping habit, it is unsurprising that the wallpaper has already started to capture her imagination from her very first few days living in the room. Her mental state leads her to become one with a double exuded by a liminal space, the walls, rendering her fundamentally ambiguous: unable to be both writer and the Victorian ideal of woman, she becomes neither wife nor mother. The double/ghost is a liminal entity born of a liminal space, the wallpaper, and symbolizing the triumph of the repressed creative force that the husband (symbolic of male patriarchal order) wishes to suppress. Thus story's ending of the failed cure, the wallpaper woman taking over the consciousness of the narrator, the husband struck dumb by the events all signal the triumph of the double—the victory of the feminine creative force. In madness, the narrator rejoices in the fusion of her subjugated wife/mother/patient self and the freedom symbolized by the horrific wallpaper woman.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long (*Ibid.*, 26).

She notices immediately the wallpaper's relation to death and sickness, possessing of "outrageous angles" that "suddenly commit suicide" and "destroy themselves." The foreshadowing of the narrator's descent into madness is obvious and the implication that her nervous anxiety had suicidal implications is also plain.

By becoming one with the wallpaper woman, the narrator achieves her repressed desire to circumvent the imposed social order, to exist outside of it, to *become* liminal. Victor Turner has explained that in a liminal state one is "stripped of status and authority" and therefore "removed from a social order maintained and sanctioned by force" (1978, 294). Because the narrator had only the authority of wife and mother, and had even that taken away from her by her husband, her liminal state has been precipitated by her imprisonment. The wallpaper woman could then symbolize her rite of passage beyond the social order, using paper (her journal and from the walls) to achieve this liminal state. Undergoing her husband's treatment necessarily strips the narrator of her power as a Victorian woman—both as mother and wife, and as a struggling writer—which may simply be part of the process of ritual that she is undergoing, to be separated, challenged at the limen, and, in the end, re-aggregated. Re-aggregation for the narrator, however, does not take place. In her insane state, she is unable to communicate with her husband, and has thus exiled herself from the patriarchal order. Instead, she communes with the wallpaper woman, her double, who celebrates the feminine sacred. She is attracted to the moon, to the natural space of the gardens, and is liberated from the social structure. The narrator is then free to creep over and over her husband, who lies prone, child-like, in fear and awe of his wife's refusal to re-aggregate.

In conclusion, by circumscribing the treatment, the narrator might have saved her sanity (as Gilman herself did). The existing system "sees but does not notice"—the narrator's husband, with his preoccupation with and complete belief in scientific cures, is blind to the

fact that his wife is losing her sanity. The conflicts arising from gothic influences affect action and interaction, and it should be obvious to both the characters and the reader. It is also important to note the liminal aspect of the ghost, or double. There is a deep connection between the Victorian ghost story and feminine power (or the lack of it), which indicates the "emancipatory aspect of the ghost, its duality, its betweenness," and which should be further acknowledged (Dickerson, 4-6). Haunted by herself, and worse, the possibility of what she could be, the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" psychologically subsumes into the very walls of the house. The symbolism of the wallpaper and its being torn away to reveal a path along which the narrator slides herself on all fours has a multitude of possible meanings. As the paper is ripped back bit by bit, so too are the narrator's repressed feelings; it is all too obvious that home has become a prison for her.

Overall, the motifs and themes present in "The Yellow Wallpaper" provide the connection between the struggle of earlier gothic female authors such as Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson to define and find "home," and the approaches to concepts of transgression and madness used by later generations of authors. Gilman's short story delineates and truthfully portrays women's anxiety arising from the social order and the subsequent uncanny events that take place in the home as a result of that anxiety. Further, her avoidance of accepting scientific method as the only way to achieve a normal psychological state, her use of the countryside instead of the city as the setting, and her focus on the patient instead of the scientist as the narrator all place her story in juxtaposition to the well-known gothic texts of her male contemporaries. Notably, Gilman's subversive inclinations proves her the predecessor to the modern gothic's preoccupation with both psychoanalysis and crime, and forms a basis for the treatment of the uncanny home in the works of Daphne du Maurier and Shirley Jackson. Du Maurier's most famous novel, *Rebecca*,

is also narrated by an unnamed protagonist with an anxiety disorder. *Rebecca's* protagonist is also overwhelmed by a husband who thinks he knows what's best for her, servants who seem to work against her, and a house that seems to have a will of its own. In Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the power of the house, its psychological pull emitted from the very walls, provides the first hints to Eleanor's problematic relationship with the haunted house and her troubled interactions with the scientist Dr. Montague. Further, the madness/unreliability of the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a precursor to Eleanor of *The Haunting of Hill House*. In addition, Merricat of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* demonstrates a sort of insanity of the same bent. The chapter immediately following this one will consider the situation of each of these stories and their contribution to the development of the motif of the house within the Female Gothic genre.

Chapter 5

Modern Castles, Gothic Revenants

5.1 Defying Tradition and Remembering Ghosts in *Rebecca*

All of the aforementioned works come from a time when subversion of the social order was employed by characters in fiction to reveal the hidden idiosyncrasies and flaws which indicate the decay of the system itself. By the pre-WWII period, when du Maurier began her authorial career, those subversions started to elucidate very real fractures in the gender-biased ideas that held up society itself: that women and men were separate but equal, or that women should suppress their creativity and individuality in order to better support men (and by extension, society). Even before the First World War, those gender roles were obviously chafing on the hemmed-in female imagination, as we have just seen demonstrated in "The Yellow Wallpaper." Yet the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" still clings to the notion that perhaps those assigned gender roles do not necessarily need to be modified; she instead feels that she should conform to them. In her inability to either completely liberate herself from social expectation or do the accepted thing, she rejects both and descends into madness. Her behavior fits in with the pattern of Victorians, as U. C. Knoepfelmacher explains: "Whereas the Victorians had still placed their faith in a social order which they viewed with increasing skepticism as the decades rolled by, the First World War exposed the anarchic underside of

civilization” (107). Important to *Rebecca* is the fact that the Victorian way of life as well as the social structure was still very close in the public imagination. In the period after Gilman wrote at the fin de siècle, a great deal of social chaos ensued—in particular World War One (also known as the Great War) and World War Two, both of which had a profound impact on Europe and America. In terms of population, many millions of people were killed, especially the young men who fought, and the innocent civilians who were victims of forces of hatred and fear. During World War Two, the extermination of the Jews and other ethnic minorities led to the deaths of over 12 million people at the hands of the Nazis in such violent, grotesque and inhuman ways unfathomable to any sane person. Besides the amount of death, the wars brought new technology that had both positive and negative potential: atomic energy, flight, and submarines. All of this meant that society needed to change faster than either the social structure or peoples’ mental state could keep up with. Thus, the psychoanalyst’s role was broadened to include the discernment of the meaning of both social chaos and rapid change.

Moreover, gender roles that had, up to the World Wars, been set firmly into separate spheres, shifted because women’s help was needed for jobs in factories and to nurse the wounded during the wars. Especially in Britain, many villages and towns suddenly experienced a need to outfit makeshift camps for soldiers (Simmonds, 198) and to allow their womenfolk to do the same jobs as men had on farms (*Ibid.*, 201). After the wars ended, women’s consciousness of the outside world and the working world had been forever changed. Nevertheless, there were expectations that women should go back into the home anyway. This caused a deep and overwhelming anxiety amongst women regarding their value to society and their identities.

There is perhaps no British author of the post-war period more closely associated with the uncanny, gothic space than Daphne du Maurier. Born in 1907 into a family of immensely creative minds (her grandfather George was a famous author and cartoonist and her father Gerald was a famous actor-stage director), she was the middle of three sisters (younger sister Angela and older sister Jeanne). She came from a family that not only kept good records of the family history, they also retained diaries and letters. These, along with her family history of being the descendent of the mistress of a duke and a family of glass-blowers, would provide her with a wealth of material for her fiction (Cook, 15). According to Sheila Hodges, du Maurier was "convinced that the family matters more than anything else in life, which perhaps accounts, in some of her early books, for the fact that the stories run through several generations" (30). It also may account for her obsession with Gothic motifs, such as the traditional family structure being intruded upon, the revelation of hidden crimes from bygone eras, and male characters who are often both transgressive and at odds with their female counterparts. She also gives particular attention to the space of the home and those who inhabit it, as well as its familiar and uncanny qualities.

Du Maurier's fantastic imagination was nurtured from an early age. With her stage director and actor father, as well as a writer-cartoonist grandfather who had published famous novels such as *Trilby*, she was in a perfect position to benefit from their creativity and free spirits. Her father encouraged her to make-believe, and further, he spent time with her, a rare occurrence in that era (Forster, 7-9). Her mother, on the other hand, was not nearly as affectionate, a fact that both puzzled and hurt her as a child (*Ibid.*, 19-20). Although their family life was not as wealthy as her father would have liked (they were not titled), they did rub elbows with high society, and Daphne enjoyed the plentiful attention afforded to children of famous stage actors of the day. She had the opportunity to meet and befriend other famous

people, such as J. M. Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan*, and Noel Coward, a playwright who was one of the most sought-after of his day.⁹⁶ These friends encouraged her imagination and were, in turn, inspired by her genius. Her education, unlike the men of her time, consisted mostly of private tutoring by women with whom she would maintain close relationships her entire life; she therefore had very positive images of governesses. She also briefly attended a girls' boarding school in France.

Du Maurier's novels seem to contain some of the truths she learned in her life as well as some refractions of the society in which she lived. For example, her courtship with and marriage to her husband and experience of being a mother were instrumental in her characters' apprehension of gender roles. In 1931, after having read her first novel, *The Loving Spirit* (1931), her future husband Frederick "Boy" Browning set off to see Cornwall for himself on his boat. It was there that he met du Maurier and after a whirlwind romance, he proposed. She rejected him on the grounds that she did not believe in marriage (Mead, 46). Perhaps, as her characters seem to express in her fiction, she felt that marriage was a tool for controlling women's creativity and preventing them from having the time and freedom to write (a fate she considered worse than death). Nevertheless, a friend managed to convince her that in Britain at that time and in her social set, it would be unthinkable to live together out of wedlock. So they were married in 1932. Their honeymoon was brief; Browning, who was a Major in the British armed forces at the time, expected du Maurier to conform to his way of life and to her role as an army wife, a role she felt awkward in, even after their first child, Tessa, was born, in 1933. Just when her family life after marriage seemed likely to be consumed by being General

⁹⁶ J.M. Barrie was like an uncle to Daphne because he became guardian to her Aunt Sylvia Llwyn Davies' children after her aunt's untimely death. Further, it is said that her cousins were the inspiration for the Lost Boys and for Peter Pan.

Browning's wife and beginning a family, she began writing *Rebecca*.⁹⁷ It was 1936 and her husband was sent to a post in Egypt. It was far too hot to do anything, much less concentrate on writing, but the distraction of imagining Cornwall helped her survive the blinding, sandy days.

Rebecca was inspired by the Female Gothic tradition begun by Ann Radcliffe and continued by the Brontës; it was also informed by du Maurier's own experience in upper-middle class British society between the wars; but it presents a stark contrast to the works that came before. Because she both admired and envied her male peers, she bestowed upon her main male protagonist, Maxim, the same dying Victorian values as Gilman distained.⁹⁸ Yet unlike many of her other novels, in which the male characters take the lead, she gives the most independence and power to Maxim's dead first wife and namesake of the novel, Rebecca. Thus, *Rebecca* defies the so-called "female Gothic plot" as it is subscribed by Punter and Byron:

In the female Gothic plot, the transgressive male becomes the primary threat to the female protagonist. Initially, she is usually depicted as enjoying an idyllic and secluded life; this is followed by a period of imprisonment when she is confined to a great house or castle under the authority of a powerful male figure or his female surrogate. Within this labyrinthine space she is trapped and pursued, and the threat may be to her virtue or to her life (279).

⁹⁷ Judith Cook points out that it is possible the seeds of *Rebecca* were already sown in during du Maurier's childhood as she visited a house called Milton owned by a Mrs. Fitzwilliam. The events were extremely memorable for her: "Milton was an enormous Tudor mansion in which the Fitzwilliams had lived for over four hundred years. Daphne, who had never enjoyed the social life of the du Mauriers and who found meeting strangers and visiting their homes something close to purgatory, recalls that she felt quite at home in the huge house. Echoes of the life-style there were to appear, much later, in *Rebecca*" (53). The description of the breakfast, portraits and the way Mr. Fitzwilliam saw to his estate while his wife spent her days in her own drawing room echoes the way Mrs. Danvers describes the way a couple living in a large manor house ought to do things.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of the reason she felt nostalgic about these Victorian values and other influences from the 19th century in her works, see Light, 63-64.

Rebecca marks a clear departure from the heroine entrapped only by men. In du Maurier's novel, the threats come hard and fast from all sides. Rebecca and her delegate, the sinister Mrs. Danvers, represent the narrator's anxiety about adapting to life in a new echelon of society as well as her inability to differentiate herself from others. The narrator is suspended between the desire to be an insider, what she perceives to be the ideal of the perfect wife in her predecessor, Rebecca, and her feelings that she will forever be an outsider because she was not born into the same social class as her husband. She is also representative of a type of Jane who has become complicit with the patriarchy, an accessory after-the-fact to the murder of the prototypical New Woman embodied in *Rebecca*. However, none of these assumptions can be made in a vacuum, so it is necessary to first examine the literary influences in the text as well as a close reading of it.

There are two reasons to consider *Rebecca* as representative of the anxiety arising from women's role in the home. The first is the impetus for du Maurier's expression of the narrator's apprehension, her own experience of feeling inferior to her husband's former fiancée, and that she felt split between her desired role as a writer and the duties she had as a wife and mother:

... she seems to have regarded those roles as irreconcilable. Half accepting society's (and her husband's) interpretation of ideal womanhood, yet rebelling against it and rejecting it, she came to regard herself as a "half-breed" who was "unnatural" (Beauman, 59).

Du Maurier herself felt social pressure to conform to the accepted role of wife and mother. Despite the fact that she engaged nannies and tutors for her children, there was no escaping her duties as a woman in 1930s British society. Even though both World Wars triggered social change, it was yet to be felt amongst those of her station, and she came to feel herself an outsider. These feelings are reflected by many of the characters in *Rebecca*, from the narrator,

who feels ill at ease in Manderley, to Maxim, who seems to constantly want to run away from the only place he considers home. Even Rebecca, whose interior decorating and gardening skills completely alter Manderley's appearance so that she seems the ideal housewife, must reject the role of mother because she cannot have children.⁹⁹

The second reason this novel is important is its relationship with previous works mentioned in this dissertation as well as its re-interpretation of similar themes. The title character's presence in the story is completely psychological—Rebecca represents the anxiety arising from the same doubling that du Maurier herself faced. The narrator, who is so dependent and pale that she cannot even assert her own name, feels threatened by Rebecca, who represents the autonomous woman, capable of running a household. The narrator feels unequal to her because she both fears and wishes for Rebecca's power. But the story reveals that the effects of this desire and trepidation are controlling and insidious; they lead Rebecca to break her marriage vows and to bully her husband in a way that is interpreted as transgressive and evil. While her overpowering influence is as natural as the sea and rhododendrons that symbolize her dominion, it is the revelation of her murder that both solidifies the narrator's marriage and leads to the destruction of the Gothic manor, Manderley. Made homeless by the passion and fire ignited by Rebecca's creative, womanly force, Maxim and the narrator are exiled. Thus, they represent the remnants of an inherited order broken by the radical social changes of the early 20th century.

⁹⁹ Beauman offers a very good assessment of the difficulties du Maurier faced as she understood her own dualistic desires, and how those play out in the text. She asserts that far from being a romantic tale, *Rebecca* is disturbing in that it highlights the imperfections not only of the system, but also of the roles each character plays in it. None are free from guilt. See Beauman, 59.

5.1.1 *Rebecca's* Literary Influences

Influenced by novels like *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* is clearly a story that demonstrates Du Maurier's deep ties to British Gothic. While many of her novels contain windswept, haunted moors, and mysterious buildings, her novels *Rebecca*, *Jamaica Inn*, *Cousin Rachel* and *The House on the Strand* in particular feature a house prominently enough for it to be considered a character. Further, the houses in those novels contain secrets such as murder, thievery, lust, and even incest, making them very clear examples of Gothic homes. Manderley, the site of the haunting in *Rebecca*, seems a relatively untouched haven, possibly because it is in the Cornish countryside. It is in fact based on a real house that du Maurier rented and lovingly repaired, the Rashleigh mansion called Menabilly. Her love of Cornwall is vivid in her stories, as is her awareness that it harbored a long history, some of which was shrouded by evil and oppression, and some of which was nostalgic, comfortable and longed-for.¹⁰⁰ Further, Cornwall has been long considered a space of the Gothic. Paul Young has posted that even in the mid-1800s, it was seen as otherworldly and strange (55). Du Maurier's works thus build upon an already well-established tradition, utilizing the lonely Cornish landscape that gives rise to uncanny events and haunted spaces, especially in the form of isolated manors and farms.

As her first novel to prominently feature a building as the locus of haunting, *Rebecca* has a special place in du Maurier's canon. Further, because it very specifically echoes Gothic

¹⁰⁰ Sheila Hodges provides a gorgeous description of the Cornish countryside from du Maurier's *The King's General* while asserting that her intense and beautiful descriptions of nature deserve more credit. See Hodges, 35-36.

motifs and symbols present in *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca* is also a very important novel in that it provides an example of how Gothic did not go out of vogue after the fin de siècle, merely changed shapes. In writing *Rebecca*, du Maurier hoped that the readers and critics would pick up both on its connection to its forerunner, *Jane Eyre*, by noticing the similarities between the descriptions of the houses, of Maxim and Rochester, and of Rebecca's sinister power. Further, she desired readers to realize its potential as a "psychological study in jealousy" (Forster, 140). While the book was a great success and sold hundreds of thousands of copies on both sides of the Atlantic, neither the American nor the British critics noted its value as a work of literature comparable to *Jane Eyre*. In fact, the American critics were of the opinion that the writing was not as good (*Loc.cit.*). Nevertheless, they were cautious to dismiss the book as "an inferior *Jane Eyre*" and instead stated that "even if much more crude and less sophisticated in the writing, it had its own real power and a strange passion easily comparable with Charlotte Brontë's" (*Loc.cit.*). Even the reviewers at the time recognized the power of the book, but they seem to have been unable to pinpoint exactly why it was important. In reality, they should have realized that while "The Yellow Wallpaper" established that, for Female Gothic authors, being haunted by the double can signify the unconscious recognition of the changing role of women, du Maurier built upon this theme by reminding us of the rise of a new type of autonomous, capable, business-minded woman. The appearance of Rebecca may symbolize this idea; certainly, the narrator does not fit into this category.

In any case, *Rebecca* is significant as a work of Gothic fiction because it elucidates the situation of two contradictory trends in post-World War One society: on one hand, women who can handle both working outside the home and within it should be highly valued and appreciated, and on the other hand, those women should be dismissed as unwomanly, transgressive, evil, and overly-passionate, and should be rejected in favor of a return to the

Victorian Angel model. The Gothic genre, from its inception, has discussed and criticized the role of women's participation in society, and has highlighted the many conflicts that occurred as women strove for more autonomy, especially between men and women. However, in *Rebecca*, it is women's rivalry that comes to the forefront. For example, Rebecca's taunting presence which has overcome even the narrator's name (readers are never told her name) and niggles at her sense of accomplishment through the book (she has accomplished nothing in comparison). Further, Rebecca's representative in Mrs. Danvers, gives a daily slice of anxiety to the narrator by reminding her of her inferiority. Additionally, while *Jane Eyre* remains the main character, even unto the title of the book, the ghostly *Rebecca* has apprehended that privilege from the narrator.

There are several ways in which *Rebecca* updates the Gothic house of *Jane Eyre*: the time period (post-WWI), the focus on the psyche, and the lack of truly supernatural elements. These aspects are very important to consider, as they denote the text as one example of the 20th century Gothic home. The time period after WWI, which was rife with social change as landed families were forced to sell off more and more of their property and the bourgeoisie, untitled population was able to buy that property saw an undermining of the feudal system. Maxim's retention of his control of his family's ancestral property, despite his long absences from his home, underscores Manderley's role as an unchanged space of patriarchal control. Thus, Manderley is similar to Thornfield Hall, Mr. Rochester's home, which is also a space of ancient family ties. Further, *Rebecca* changes the focus from the madwoman (Bertha in *Jane Eyre*) to the woman scorned (Rebecca) versus the neurotic (the narrator). Du Maurier had become very interested in psychoanalysis, an important fact that ties into the image of home as

uncanny in the 20th century.¹⁰¹ The way in which she deals with the narrator's obsession with her dead counterpart recalls Otto Rank's double as well as disturbs the space of home: as long as Rebecca's "ghost" haunts the house, the narrator is ill at ease in her position as wife and caretaker of the manor. This juxtaposes against the conflict between Bertha and Jane because both of those characters are alive at the time of their discord. Despite the fact that Bertha is alive and Rebecca is already dead at the start of the story, *Jane Eyre* retains more supernatural features than *Rebecca*. In *Rebecca*, the supernatural is an imagined past that haunts the present, eliciting anxiety in the narrator. It is this anxiety, and not any spectral images that makes the home feel uncanny. Further, Jane and the narrator's position in society is similar up until the narrator marries Maxim—with that marriage, the narrator should actually be Maxim's social equal, as he has raised her status. There is no such raise in Jane's status through marriage; Jane raises her own status through her inheritance, and thereafter marries Mr. Rochester on equal ground. The inequality between Maxim and the narrator is exacerbated by the secrets regarding Rebecca, too. All of these elements coalesce to demonstrate that the Gothic motif of the house in *Rebecca* is heavily influenced by both post-WWI society and advances in psychoanalysis, which modify and metamorphose the way the house interacts with the characters in the text.

5.1.2 Hauntingly, *Rebecca*

¹⁰¹ Although du Maurier's more serious study of psychoanalysis took place in the 1940s and 50s, after she had already published *Rebecca*, it is clear that she was interested in aspects of the conscious and unconscious from the theme of anxiety she has interwoven into the text. See Forster, 276.

The story begins after Rebecca's death, while Maxim is vacationing in the south of France. The narrator is a companion to an overbearing American woman with dreadful weakness for gossip and disgusting habits such as putting her cigarettes out in her cold cream. Maxim and the narrator enter into unlikely romance—they are, the narrator points out time and again, worlds apart in both age and social class. Yet when her American employer suddenly decides to leave France, Maxim is unable to bear parting with her and asks her to marry him. They return to Maxim's home, Manderley, after their honeymoon. It is their return as newlyweds to that manor house that precipitates the sinister events in the story and compounds the narrator's existing anxiety. Vestiges of Maxim's first wife are everywhere; the narrator cannot escape them. She feels imprisoned both by memories that are not her own and her insecurities arising from her youth and inexperience. The uncanny, haunting events climax when Rebecca's body is discovered in the boat at the bottom of the bay. It appears that she had been murdered, and an inquiry begins. At that point, Maxim is no longer able to hide his transgression from the narrator: he killed his first wife. He finally relates the whole story of Rebecca's true nature to the narrator. He says she was "... damnably clever. No one would guess meeting her that she was not the kindest, most generous, most gifted person in the world" (du Maurier, 271). But that after he married her, she confessed to him things about herself so terrible that he could "never repeat [them] to a living soul" and promised him that in return for her free will, she would act the part of the loving wife (*Ibid.*, 272). So he continued the façade of the happy marriage as long as he could, but eventually could not deal with her disrespect, her lascivious behavior, or the way she tried to seduce even his sister's husband and his best friend. Maxim issued an ultimatum, but in reply Rebecca revealed to him that she was pregnant with another man's child. She said that no one could prove that it wasn't his, and

it would bear his name and inherit his property (*Ibid.*, 279). In true Gothic form, he was furious, desperate to protect his family lineage, so he murdered her. But that was her plan all along—she was, in fact, dying of ovarian cancer. Her female organs were diseased and would be the death of her: the very opposite of pregnancy. Rebecca's deceptive image of a "domestic angel" is revealed to have been concealing both a dreadful disease and a monstrous personality (Gilbert and Gubar, 79). In that sense, Rebecca mirrors the nature of her rhododendrons: a monstrous distortion of the domestic. Moreover, she infects Maxim with her monstrosity by baiting him to murder her. Yet the narrator accepts all of this. She sees Maxim's confession as the path towards a fully honest and equal relationship between them. Maxim is exonerated, and the married couple sets off for Manderley. They never reach it, however; the house has been set aflame, and they are left houseless. Instead of rebuilding the house, they choose exile and the end of the book brings us back to the beginning—they are wandering the resorts of Europe, unwilling (and perhaps unable) to return to their home in Cornwall.

Rebecca is a novel whose contents present a serious dissection of both social anxiety and anxiety within romantic relationships. The story is told from the perspective of an unnamed, orphaned narrator and details her romance and marriage to the wealthy landowner Maxim de Winter. Her relationship with Maxim is entirely overshadowed by her neurotic anxiety with regard to the vestiges of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca. From the beginning to the end of the novel, the motif of the home in *Rebecca* is strongly representative of Rebecca's lingering and uncanny presence and presents an abundance of Gothic-toned images of death and dying by association with her. Nevertheless, Rebecca's haunting never takes a corporeal form; *Rebecca* is an exemplary text of the idea that "the new gothic is the horror of the mind isolated with itself" (C. Bloom, 3). The narrator sees Rebecca as the original wife and mother of Manderley, which influences her anxiety. Further, she sees Rebecca as a social caste above

and an image of the perfect wife and mother, attaching to her the status of a more mythological representation of the ideal wife and/or mother, which explains why she still has power over the living. In death, Rebecca's presence may therefore be deemed a metaphorical representation of the Archetype of the Mother, insofar as the narrator seeks to destroy and replace her. Just as Jane in *Jane Eyre* knows that she and her double cannot exist in the same place at the same time without a fundamental anxiety, so, too, is it impossible for the narrator. According to Otto Rank, the double can also be a dark echo of the mother-child bond.¹⁰²

This book is rife with the image of the house intertwined with Rebecca's influence. Rebecca, and by extension, her haunting presence has re-shaped Manderley into its current form by re-decorating and re-landscaping it: Rebecca planned the famous rhododendrons and trees lining the drive, the gardens and lawns, and even Happy Valley that the narrator enjoys walking through. She also decorated all of the rooms, choosing the fabrics and furniture, porcelain figurines and clocks herself. Each room is evidence of her presence in the home, and everything seems to bear her signature in some way or other. Moreover, her influence goes beyond the physical house and property and extends into the realm of heredity: Maxim killed Rebecca to prevent her from shaming his family name and to take back control of his household. He is haunted by that hidden crime, as the narrator is haunted by the idea that Rebecca was the perfect wife. Thus, Sue Zlosnick and Avril Horner conclude that: "Rebecca continues to function as a haunting presence for both characters and readers despite the burning down of Manderley" at the end of the book (25). Rebecca's surrogates, Mrs. Danvers

¹⁰² In the context of myth, Rank explains that Chronos eats his son because the son is too closely related to the father's dark side. If one tries to draw a similar conclusion about the mother, it may provide clues to the devouring, destructive nature of Rebecca. Jungian analysis is also quite apropos for this novel (compared to the others addressed in this dissertation), since it is of historical note that du Maurier read Jung heavily before and during her work on *Rebecca*.

(head servant at Manderley) and Jack Favell (her cousin), act as living extensions of Rebecca: they frighten the narrator and blackmail Maxim with exposure of his crime, and when their actions do not intimidate him into a confession, they commit arson, burning down Manderley. Maxim and the narrator's exile from their home at Manderley is therefore precipitated by the powerful memory of Rebecca; the resolution here, like many of Daphne du Maurier's other works, does not present an exorcism of the Gothic elements, but rather their triumph over the characters.

The significance of Manderley lies in its existence as a space transformed by Maxim's dead wife, Rebecca, and for that reason, it plays an important role as a "rejecting" body in the narrator's anxiety—even her "home" rejects her. This rejection also defies the traditional definition of marriage as the necessary step preceding the creation of a home as husband and wife, and further, having children and raising them in a nuclear unit-type setting. The narrator cannot possess Manderley as her home while it remains a space re-invented by Rebecca; neither can she take hold of the new identity she has created for herself as Maxim's current wife and the future mother of his children. Thus, Rebecca's sinister presence as a powerful memory of transgression haunts the text and threatens the precarious new social order of the home at Manderley.

Textual evidence of the narrator's many encounters of Manderley as Rebecca's home are present throughout the text. Even when she begins to settle in to the house, Rebecca's presence seems to be everywhere. Each location in the story seems to bring Rebecca's memory closer, creating a suffocating presence in the story. Even the narrator's vision of Rebecca's landscaping expresses duality: the outright aggressiveness of the drive up to the manor, lined by "black, herded woods" and "glaring rhododendrons, luscious and over-proud" (du Maurier, 109) are "too powerful, not plants at all" (*Ibid.*, 65), seems very unlike the

narrator's image of a domestic hedge, and juxtaposes against the Happy Valley, which the narrator describes as calm, peaceful and sweet smelling, located at "the core of Manderley" (*Ibid.*, 109), and is the Manderley she would "know and learn to love" (*Ibid.*, 108). Yet, the Happy Valley is described as "silent," with a myriad of white azaleas whose fallen petals are "crushed and bruised, and turning brown at the curled edge" (*Loc.cit.*) and whose scent Rebecca always wore as perfume. Behind that scent is a "richer, older scent as well, the smell of deep moss and bitter earth," recalling something not unlike the scent of a freshly turned grave (*Ibid.*, 109). The Happy Valley is also connected by a short pathway to the sea, which lies in shockingly close proximity, according to Maxim. It is interesting to note here that the sea is the location of Rebecca's body, and by association, the location hiding Maxim's past transgression. It also reminds us of Manderley's location in Cornwall as an echo of a "potentially wild and ungovernable area" reflecting the personality of Rebecca herself.¹⁰³

The cottage, the Happy Valley, the drive, and finally the house itself are all signifiers of both the anxiety of the narrator, and the disembodied presence of Rebecca that functions as a destabilizing force in the sanctimony of marriage. When Maxim shows the narrator the Happy Valley, she follows their dog down to the beach and discovers one more place that represents Rebecca: the decaying cottage on the shingle, in which he had shot and killed her. Maxim tries to stop the narrator from going along the beach after their dog in order to prevent her from seeing the cottage. The cottage itself is "dark and oppressive" and eaten away by rats and mold, even more of a sinister location than the driveway, with its glaring, proud rhododendrons (*Ibid.*, 112). As the narrator visits each locale and discovers more of Rebecca's possessions from her everyday life, she creeps closer and closer to the horrible truth that

¹⁰³ Horner and Zlosnik assert that the locations in the book reflect the personalities and moods of Rebecca, especially the house and the sea, which are feminine spaces. See Horner and Zlosnick, 100-101.

Maxim's first marriage ended not in suicide, but murder.

The narrator is thus affronted with everything Rebecca left both inside and outside; Mrs. Danvers has not changed anything and Maxim is too weak to stop punishing himself for taking back control of his household. The narrator cannot escape from Rebecca's influence, even her handwriting, which seems to be written everywhere around the house. From her first encounter with it, she describes the script as "black and strong, the tall and sloping R dwarfing the other letters" (*Ibid.*, 33). The writing on the pigeon holes at Rebecca's desk and the stationary on it in the morning room also have that same hand.¹⁰⁴ The letters and their arrangement on the pigeonholes symbolize Rebecca's ability to run the household better than the narrator could. Their imposing and impressive presence overwhelm the narrator with fear and awe that she cannot usurp the power of Rebecca as the first wife and she cannot approach her perfection. Inspiring such awe firmly places Rebecca a manifestation of the Gothic in the story.

The narrator's hesitancy to use the house phone, her inability to assert herself about the menus, and her guilt at looking through the desk that used to belong to Rebecca all indicate that two different types of anxiety. First and foremost, it reminds the reader of the aforementioned difficulties that women had balancing the running of the household with creative pursuits and their feelings of inferiority towards women who demonstrated they could do both. Second, the narrator's actions may reveal a broader trend in society: as social barriers broke down in the aftermath of World War One, women who did not have proper jobs started to realize that they felt out of place in homes that were also workplaces, as Manderley is.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed description of the desk and the handwriting and the stationary Rebecca used, see *Ibid.*, 82-84. Throughout the scene, the narrator is anxious, as if she were a naughty child sneaking in to use her mother's things without permission.

Rebecca is able to handle, even excel at dwelling in such a house, but the narrator is very apprehensive of her new role. She has no previous experience, having only been a paid companion, and so feels herself inferior to Rebecca in the same way that some women may have felt themselves mediocre compared to the newly emerging set of skilled women workers.

To make matters worse, Rebecca's presence is felt through her surrogate, the head housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers. Not only does Mrs. Danvers keep Rebecca's things just as she left them, the significance of Mrs. Danvers' role in the domestic sphere is further deepened by the fact that she was Rebecca's personal servant since Rebecca's childhood, and their bond was more like sisters or mother and daughter than of master and servant. Mrs. Danvers runs the household exactly the way that Rebecca did while she was still alive. More importantly, the second Mrs. de Winter allows her to continue doing so because she cannot assert herself. At the same time, she likely feels herself a member of the same class as Mrs. Danvers, since her previous job had been a lady's companion. Mrs. Danvers, on the other hand, probably feels that the narrator is lesser, from a servant's class, and so neither deserves to be married to a person like Maxim, nor has the right to order her about. She is also constantly comparing the narrator to her former mistress, and is thus an extension of Rebecca. As such, from the very first scene in which she appears, she represents of death and is described continuously as skeletal and skull-like. The imagery of death that Mrs. Danvers' character presents also intimates the connection between Rebecca in the land of the dead and those still living at Manderley. She is also the first to vocalize the narrator's feelings that Rebecca is still to be felt about the house and that Mrs. Danvers feels her and knows the narrator feels her, too. She says she fancies she hears Rebecca behind her, and asks pointedly, "Do you think the dead come back and watch the living?" (*Ibid.*, 172). The narrator stares at Mrs. Danvers' eyes, "dark and somber" in her "white skull's face," and thinks about how "malevolent" they appear, while

Mrs. Danvers tells her that she wonders whether Rebecca is watching Mr. de Winter and the narrator together at Manderley (*Loc.cit.*). This scene is one of the pinnacles of Mrs. Danvers' bullying of the narrator. The situation clearly demonstrates the anxiety permeating the text with regard to the illusion that Rebecca is indeed still present in the home.

Rebecca is truly dead, but the memory of her haunts the text, emphasizing her projection as the dark double of the narrator's feminine identity. Using Jung's theory of the archetypes of the collective unconscious becomes helpful at this point at puzzling out why Rebecca's uncanny and ghostly image is such a powerful force within the text. Jung explains that the contents of the collective unconscious deals with archaic, or "primordial types" that project as "universal images that have existed since the remotest times" (Jung, 5). The collective unconscious is a term that describes the part of the unconscious existing separately from personal experience and is not personally acquired, but rather owes its existence "exclusively to heredity,"¹⁰⁵ this quality of inherited archetypal images, much like the inherent anxiety against the social order in the Gothic canon, are signs that lost worlds are not really gone—they remain dormant in the collective unconscious until they can return through the manifestation of the uncanny.¹⁰⁶ In Rebecca, we are given a glimpse into the dual image of the Mother archetype: her association with qualities such as "maternal solicitude and sympathy . . . all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility" and their reverse, in the image of the Terrible or Devouring Mother (Jung, 82). The Terrible Mother, according to Jung, is the negative side of the Mother archetype, who may "connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces,

¹⁰⁵ The heredity on which Jung's theory is based becomes important in the Gothic because of the emphasis on a hereditary social order and the subversion of it. See Jung, 42-43.

¹⁰⁶ Botting points out a similar connection between the archetypes passed down the generations, the social order, and manifestations of the uncanny. See Botting, 130.

and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (*Loc.cit.*). At first we are constantly reminded of Rebecca's perfection (her seemingly Motherly attributes), but as the uncanny events draw the narrator closer to discovering the terrible truth of Rebecca's death, the Terrible Mother-like qualities of Rebecca come into sharper focus. Although she put on a beautiful face and acted the perfect wife, it is revealed that she was really committing adultery with several men at once, including her cousin Favell. Moreover, she refused or was unable to love Maxim in any way.¹⁰⁷ Much as the scent of the white azaleas in the Happy Valley is tinged with the smell of decay and signifiers of death and rot, Rebecca's façade of sweetness hides the image of the Other Mother, the Terrible Mother. Rebecca represents this Terrible Mother in a multitude of ways: her death has been hidden away; her body lies in the abyss of the sea; she is dead; but while living, she seduced and devoured men.

Rebecca is, then, the specter of a new and changing role for women, one that requires capability in both the workplace and the home, which haunts the narrator because of the narrator's ineptitude. This role also means that Rebecca is a representative of the numinous, as she represents an ideal to which the narrator feels she cannot aspire. Aguirre explains that such numinosity is necessarily accompanied by violence:

In the literature of Closed Space woman is to become a central object of domination at the hands of the same forces that set the Industrial Revolution in motion: the taming of the shrew is an essential part of the "methodization" of Nature. The woman of feeling and the persecuted woman are almost synonymous concepts in Gothic literature (101).

From its inception, authors concerned with the Female Gothic repeatedly return to the themes of oppression and violence against women. In the modern period, these necessarily become complicated as gender roles break down and the difference between newly liberated women

¹⁰⁷ Maxim, confessing his crime to the narrator, describes his heartbreaking anguish during his marriage to Rebecca, especially her inability to love (him). See du Maurier, 266-274.

and women who adhere to the Victorian social order becomes clearer. Thus a cycle of persecution ensues, not only perpetrated by the transgressive male characters, but also enacted by female characters as well. For example, it is obvious that the narrator feels herself persecuted by Rebecca. But Rebecca has already been persecuted by Maxim, whose desire to maintain the heredity of his estate has led him to murder her. Thus, woman is in a constant state of threat in the story, both from the patriarchy and by the changing role of women, which destabilizes feminine identity.

Finally, the domestic haunting present in *Rebecca* indicates how the ghosts of the Modern Gothic are no longer *deus ex machina* devices, but the characters' pasts, which conceal transgression and guilt concerning the family.¹⁰⁸ By mixing realism with myth, Daphne du Maurier achieves an exposition of "an uncanny narrative shadow that subverts distinctions between fictional forms and the narratives shaping reality, family and identity" (Botting, 169). Indeed, that subversive shadow is powerful. There are no moments when Maxim fondly remembers Rebecca as his wife or a member of his family; the nostalgia evoked in du Maurier's novel is entirely uncanny, right up to the point that it is revealed that he murdered her. Rebecca never was and never could be the archetypical image of a benign, nurturing mother; all of her incarnations, living, dead, and ghostly, consist only of the Terrible Mother. Her uncanny presence in the novel is both the element that disturbs the patriarchal order and brings about its demise in the burning of the home, proving that in *Rebecca*, nostalgia has both the power to haunt and to destroy. The narrator's triumph over Rebecca at the end proposes a triumph over the Terrible Mother so that feminine identity consecrates their marriage, but at a terrible price: permanent exile from the home.

¹⁰⁸ Botting has explained that as the Gothic as a genre developed in the modern period, the characters' secrets become increasingly important. See Botting, 123.

5.2 Nostalgia and the Destruction of Home in the Works of Shirley Jackson

Before we delve into the final textual analysis, some short background on the author might be in order. Born in San Francisco, California in 1916, Shirley Hardie Jackson completed six full-length novels, numerous short stories and humorous autobiographical tales before her sudden death of heart failure in 1965 at age 49.¹⁰⁹ Her short life seems to have been focused on writing: she began in high school in California and continued when her family moved to Rochester, New York in 1934 (H. Bloom, 2001, 11). In college at Syracuse University, she was an editor of a humor periodical, *The Spectre*, and published short stories; it was also through her writing connections at Syracuse that she met her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, who helped edit that same literary magazine (Murphy, 2-3).

Jackson's works focus on her interest in the duality of human nature, specifically our tendency to succumb to temptation and baser desires, to harbor anxiety, and to commit transgressions (for good or bad reasons, or no particular reason at all). Some reviewers of Shirley Jackson's literature have compared her to male authors of the gothic tradition such as Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne (H. Bloom, 1986, 1995-96). Harold Bloom explains

¹⁰⁹ Fictional novels include: *The Road Through the Wall*, *Hangsamen*, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, *The Haunting of Hill House*, *The Bird's Nest*, and *The Sundial*. She also has one unfinished novel that she was working on at the time of her death, and which has been published post-mortem in the collection entitled *Come Along With Me*. She also published two semi-fictitious biographical novels, *Raising Demons* and *Life Among the Savages*. Her most famous work, by far, is the short story entitled "The Lottery" to be found in the short story collection *The Lottery and Other Stories*. Literary prizes and honors include the Edgar Allen Poe Award.

that she is part of “a long American tradition of Gothic narrative, whose masters include Hawthorne, Faulkner, and Flannery O’Connor” (H. Bloom, 2001, 9).¹¹⁰ Some of the themes of her works are psychological hauntings, the splitting of the psyche, women trapped in their circumstances (either by sinister supernatural powers, or by unscrupulous villains), and the double, both as doubling of the self within and doubling reflected in others. In our analysis of *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*, and “The Yellow Wall-paper,” the double proved to be an important link between these texts and the theory of the uncanny. Jackson’s treatment differs slightly from theirs, as she has been influenced by other parts of Gothic canon, such as the Gothic that depends upon weird science. In that sense, her use of the double is not dissimilar to that of such works as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in which Dr. Jekyll undergoes a transformation through science, siphoning out his tendencies towards good and leaving behind a monstrous being, Mr. Hyde. However, Stevenson’s story deals more with scientific evil, and despite it being closely related to space, the anxiety associated with that space is more related to the breakdown of values due to Industrialization than the breakdown of values in the home.¹¹¹ As textual analysis will prove, Jackson’s idea of the double is closer to that of Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, or of Charlotte Perkin’s Gilman in “The Yellow Wallpaper.”

¹¹⁰ In researching Jackson and the Gothic, it is likely that one will come upon a book entitled *Shirley Jackson’s American Gothic* by Darryl Hattenhauer. This book, however, is not a literary study or a biography; it attempts to enmesh the events in her novels with her own personal life by extrapolating “facts” from journal entries and lines from her correspondences and projecting them as the impetus for her many of her characters’ actions, especially their psychological breakdown into madness. In doing so, Hattenhauer apprehends the role of detective instead of scholar, and ends up accusing her family, especially her husband, of both mental and physical abuse. It is for this reason that Jackson’s family wishes this book not to be considered a scholarly work and not to be cited as a critical study of her work. Out of the great respect I have for Jackson, her life and writing, and her family’s wishes, I will not be including this book in either my analysis or my bibliography.

¹¹¹ Vladimir Nabokov gives an intricate analysis of why the plot of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is inextricable from the ambiguity of the space it takes place in. His theory rests on an inability to clearly visualize the settings in which the most morally reprehensible or questionable events take place. He attempts to draw the neighborhood, which leads him to the conclusion that the most ambiguously described places are the very same locations in which the plot unravels to its insidious end. See Nabokov, 179-204.

The characters of Shirley Jackson's stories live their lives in prime examples of uncanny, sinister houses. More often than not psychologically disturbed, her heroines experience difficulties with their families and their surroundings. Some of those heroines quest for something stable to call "home" and people to call "family." It is important to note that Jackson does not emphasize the importance of family as equivalent to blood relationships so much as she emphasizes family as a psychological or psychic connection.¹¹²

Additionally, Jackson's stories have a distinctly New England flavor that also relate back to the motif of gothic as seen in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. In that sense, Jackson's stories recall the inescapable nature of evil that early New Englanders treated as part and parcel of their daily existence. According to Karen Halttunen, early New Englanders believed their world to be pervaded by the forces of good and evil struggling with each other; it is therefore no stretch of the imagination that Jackson's works would include that conflict as a motif. Halttunen explains:

New England cosmology taught that the ordinary everyday world was the site of an invisible ongoing battle between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. The activities of good and evil spirits, demons and ghosts and witches, were just as real and immediate to these New Englanders as their own houses and fields and livestock (Halttunen, 25-26).

In other words, early New Englanders felt that their lives were complicated by a war going on all around them and inside them, a war just like the battle fought inside of Dr. Jekyll between himself and Mr. Hyde, for control of the faculties of the individual to commit himself (or herself) to works of good or works of evil. Further, New Englanders felt there were real manifestations of the spirit world, and of the magical world, and of the world of demons, and

¹¹² Judith Butler, in her seminal work on Sophocles's *Antigone*, presents both the opinion of Hegel, who defines kinship as a "relation of 'blood' rather than one of norms" and the opinion of Lacan, who separates kinship from the social sphere through the symbolic. In other words, kinship can exist separate from cultural norms because in many ways, it pre-exists those norms. See Butler, 3.

these manifestations deeply affected their lives. For Jackson, New England was the site of insidious and sinister events, and these events had sown their seeds down through the generations and affected the present. The world was still the battlefield for evil and good in New England, and thus her works use elements of the supernatural and of the uncanny to express its war-torn state.¹¹³

Jackson's works show her to be acutely aware of evil; her stories also depict it, again and again, as existing on the inside of each and everyone one of us.¹¹⁴ This awareness of evil in Puritan times lead to "a multitude of ritual practices for dealing with it: not to avert it—an impossible task—but to see safety in the terrible face of it" (Halttunen, 26). Perceived threats in New England literature often recall those practices without giving a viable reason why. In Shirley Jackson's works, evil is both a force to be dealt with through ritual, such as in her story "The Possibility of Evil," in which the main character deals with her definition of evil by sending letters to unsuspecting recipients, and a force to be reckoned with that is both irrational and unconquerable, such as in her most famous short story, "The Lottery," in which a young woman is chosen by lots to be stoned to death. Neither of these stories provide a clue as to the impetus for the ritual, which evokes a fundamental anxiety towards whether there are actually logical reasons fueling human behaviors.

Although her authorial universe may at times recall gothic style of the works of Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne, its foundations cannot be described by a simple lack of rationale in regards to the supernatural, or a perversion caused by commitment to obtaining

¹¹³ Jackson is known to have done extensive research on her New England roots (her mother was a Daughter of the American Revolution) and also on witchcraft; she even wrote a young adult novel on the subject of the Salem Witch Trials (Oppenheimer, 208).

¹¹⁴ See the author of this dissertation's Master's Thesis, *The Devil in Mundane Manifestations*, for specific arguments on this topic.

knowledge beyond worldly means. And despite the fact that she is more often compared to her male peers than her female peers, as will become abundantly clear through textual analysis of two of her novels, she has more in common with the latter than the former. Dara Downey points out that Jackson's readership was vast and she was popular with a very diverse group of people, "ranging from bored housewives who felt that they had found in her a kindred spirit, to no less a personage than Sylvia Plath" (177). Frustrated by their continually hemmed in creativity and compounded by setbacks to their gains in education and employment, her female readers understood her authorial purpose: to comment upon their social situation in a way that was both subversive and compelling. Her works therefore have the same enduring quality and updated the important themes discussed by her literary foremothers, giving her stories the ability to address the lingering oppression of the women of the post-WWII period in a way that remains applicable to modern society. There is, indeed, nothing so ordinary about the topics on which Shirley Jackson wrote.

Amidst the turmoil of women who were being forced back into the household, Jackson was a self-defined author who fought back against those around her who were constantly labeling her "housewife."¹¹⁵ Bernice Murphy even posits that her uniqueness lies in the fact that she was never an ordinary anything: "the importance of so much of her writing lies in the fact that she suggested so strongly that it was doubtful whether such a creature [the ordinary housewife] ever really existed at all" (3). Here, Murphy reminds us that to some degree Jackson's preoccupation with her role in society informed her writing, so that when we read

¹¹⁵ There is a notable semi-autobiographical episode related in *Life Among the Savages* regarding the birth of one of her children: she checks herself into the hospital and tries to give her occupation as "writer" but the nurse refuses to allow her to do it and writes down "housewife" instead, much to Jackson's chagrin. See Oppenheimer, 134. Furthermore, magazine reporters who came for interviews seemed to be constantly trying to paint her as something of a super-Mom. She infamously played against that image by referring to herself as a practitioner of witchcraft (whether or not she was telling the truth is debatable). See *Ibid.*, 138-140.

her stories, we find a subversion of the social order akin to many other works related to the uncanny, especially those already discussed in the previous chapters of this dissertation.

Two peculiar aspects of Jackson's career stand out upon reading a brief biography of her life. Although she seems to have published much, she has maintained little recognition despite the amount. It may also be noted that a surprising lack of critical work has been done on this author; only about 4 works of collected essays and one biography.¹¹⁶ S. T. Joshi explains that the reason for "the odd case of Shirley Jackson" (i.e. the reason that scholarship seems to have overlooked her writing's richly gothic overtones and complex plots), is that classifying her work was problematic (Joshi, xv). Her stories "sat uneasily between the domains of mainstream fiction and psychological terror" (*Loc.cit.*). She may just have been before her time; writing conventions combining literary genres in order to reveal the cracks on the moral fiber of society would only be accepted by critics in the second half of the 20th century. Joshi rationalizes: "Critics rarely knew what to make of her unclassifiable work, with the result that she was largely ignored by both the mainstream community and by the cadre of Gothic devotees" (*Ibid.*, xvi). Moreover, the most lasting of her works are the most sinister: her short story, "The Lottery," and two of her novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. Within these two works, her writing incorporates an ambiguous attitude towards the supernatural exhibited by her gothic foremothers, particularly Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Brontë. This is by no means to say that these two novels are not the best of her work (they probably are) but they are certainly not a complete representative of

¹¹⁶ Compared to the dearth of critical studies on authors of the same time period such as Sylvia Plath, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty, one really wonders why Jackson has received so little recognition. After the millennium, however, fiction writers such as Neil Gaiman and Joyce Carol Oates have championed the reprinting and reexamination of Jackson's works; it is possible that her writing may be revisited to a wider critical acclaim some 70 years after her death, just as was the case with Emily Dickinson.

her oeuvre. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this dissertation, the two novels make a splendid example of that particular subversion of the social order informed by the gothic tradition and draped in the image of the uncanny home that Jackson specialized in.

Jackson's only two novels that have continuously been in print, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, both feature unreliable narrators and hidden transgression perpetrated in the home—in the former, Eleanor has “killed” her mother and in the latter, Merricat has killed her parents and brother. In the same vein as those of du Maurier, Jackson's works seek to combine themes of madness from within as well as an attempt to logically approach the illogical. However, du Maurier's and Jackson's works differ in one important point: while du Maurier's works often concern how the class struggle and changing social structure affected social subsets such as those living in and around the countryside manor, Jackson's stories are more often situated in a post-war suburbia and seek to make sense of the breakdown of the extended family unit. The nostalgia for “past ages” becomes even more tenuous; past ages in American history do not have the depth/history of Britain and American money/landownership had not gone on for more than a few hundred years. Moreover, Jackson's heroines differ from du Maurier's in that neither Eleanor nor Merricat are models for the new type of women that populated suburbia during the 1950s and early 1960s in America. Their respective plights recall a bygone era instead, while the world around them still remains engaged in the conflict arising from suspicion towards commonly accepted gender roles. They are therefore in direct conflict with the spaces they inhabit, and seek to rearrange both their homes and their familial structure.

5.2.1 Creating Feminine Space in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*

We Have Always Lived in the Castle presents an opposing view of the motif of the home in Domestic Gothic—instead of the Mother as the destructive force held therein, we find a murderous child: the story’s narrator, Mary Katherine Blackwood (nicknamed Merricat). Before the start of the novel, Merricat has poisoned most of her family by putting arsenic into the sugar bowl at dinner. She spared only her older sister, Constance, whom she regards as a “fairy princess” who has “long golden hair and eyes as blue as a crayon could make them, and a bright pink spot on either cheek” and “even at the worst time she was pink and white and golden, and nothing had ever seemed to dim the brightness of her” (S. Jackson, 1962, 28). However, Merricat allowed Constance, her “most precious person,” to be accused of the murders instead; Constance was subsequently acquitted after enduring a terrible court trial (*Loc.cit.*). Following the legal ordeal, the two sisters continued to live in the venerable Blackwood family estate with their Uncle Julian, who survived the poisoning but was mentally disabled by it. The story starts just before Constance and Merricat’s cousin Charles comes to visit and try to convince them to sell the house and family’s belongings and go to the city with him. Then, while Constance is being indecisive about whether to leave or stay, the existing bad blood between the remaining Blackwood family members and the villagers escalates, and a mob of angry villagers attacks the house, incinerating all but the back rooms of the first floor; Uncle Julian dies, but Merricat and Constance escape and hide in the woods. Afterward, they return to the house, and Charles’ final attempts to lure them away fail. Merricat and Constance decide to remain in the house, basically living only in the kitchen; Merricat remarks that they have come to live on the moon at last, and their house, which “smelled of smoke and

ruin” “was a castle, turreted and open to the sky” (*Ibid.*, 177). *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is story with complex imagery and character development as well as a heavy plotline that begs in depth analysis. However, in this section, we will deal only with the themes related to the motif of the home, and how it connects to the ambiguity and anxiety with relation to family that is present in the text.

The narration of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* relies heavily on the implied mental instability of the narrator, Merricat, and her psychotic¹¹⁷ behavior, to give an uncanny perspective of the tragic events that befall the Blackwood family both before and after the trial. Merricat’s remarkable strangeness is evident from the very first paragraph of the story. Therein, she states that if she had been lucky she would “have been born a werewolf,” dislikes both baths and dogs, and likes her sister and the death cup mushroom (*Ibid.*, 1). Seemingly random pieces of information like this abound in Merricat’s narration: she repeatedly states that she wishes she could “live on the moon;” she takes items from the house and buries them, nails them to trees, or breaks them in significant fashion in a way that reminds one of totems.¹¹⁸ All of these objects once belonged to her deceased parents. Therefore, it may be extrapolated that she is using her unexpressed affection for them to protect herself and the house from unnamed enemies, which exist past the boundaries of the drive and the woods beyond the house itself. It later becomes clear that she uses them to protect her house, which she considers a sacred space, from any family members or outsiders who threaten to force her

¹¹⁷ A psychotic person is one who has made a break from reality, choosing to believe a delusion as his or her reality instead. The delusion rationalizes already existing anxiety, which has consumed the person. The delusion may also be a product of extreme anger, an overwhelming sense of shame or guilt, or a combination of the above; in any case, the acceptance of the delusion is fueled by the psychotic’s feelings of impotence and helplessness to resolve the source of the anxiety. See Gaylin, 121-147.

¹¹⁸ Simply speaking, symbol or sign with a deep relationship to a projected emotion. For example, a neurotic cannot consciously admit his or her feelings with regard to his or her mother, so he or she must project those feelings onto an object symbolic of his or her mother. Freud examines this topic in depth in his essay “Totem and Taboo.” See Freud, 1955 [1913], 1-162.

to return to her lifestyle previous to committing patricide. She even chooses words that she feels are magical and will protect her from infiltration from the outside world, especially when she visits the village to buy supplies for the house. She knows that the villagers will not let her forget the patricide committed in her household.

While it seems that she killed her parents in order to destroy the patriarchal order, she feels that an all-powerful, “motherly” presence may protect her from the sneers and jeers of the world outside her home. In fact, her feelings towards her totems reflect that motherly presence. According to Julia Kristeva, totems establish “an ultimate identification with an archaic mother” (Kristeva, 1995, 175). This archaic mother harbors her identity because she “unabashedly defies ‘the law of the father’ that guarantees all normalized identity” (*Loc.cit.*) Continuity of identity is established through the connection to one’s parents, and by accepting that this continuity is present, one accepts that one is made in one’s parents’ image. Merricat does not accept that continuity. Instead, she identifies with the house as a space of genetic continuity (through the many generations of women who lived there, symbolized by the items such as the canned goods well-stocked in the basement). She also responds to the mothering qualities in her sister Constance far more positively than those of her birth mother. Both of these actions insist that Merricat’s totems defy the law of the father in order to establish a tie with the ancient bond with the lineage of mothers. (Out of which, she has stricken her mother from the record and replaced her with Constance.) So both her totems and murdering her parents may be related—and both guarantee her survival.

Nevertheless, her “totems” prove to be mere random words and objects. They do not have the power over the reality of the world outside her house, a world that still pays homage

to the patriarchal order.¹¹⁹ She suffers from serious delusions and her behavior may be deemed paranoid. According to Julia Kristeva, paranoia because it takes one “to the borders of psychosis,” where one is confronted “with a limit that turns the speaking being into a separate being who utters only by separating—from within the discreteness of the phonemic chain up to and including logical and ideological constructs” (Kristeva, 1982, 46). On the edge of psychosis, there is a border—the closer one gets to that border, the further away normalized language constructs and behaviors become. This causes a separation in logical thinking as well as ideology between the psychotic and mundane society. In other words, by creating verbal and physical totems, Merricat demonstrates her verbal ability is firmly in the grip of her aggressive drive. While humans normally understand their identities as separate beings through the process of individuation, Merricat instead determines her individuality as a discrete being by linguistically and physically constructing signs and symbols (totems) that further her separation from the rest of society and the patriarchal order. By using these symbols, she also distances herself from the past of the Blackwood family, which she perceives as a threat. Her skills of determining the difference between the objects that belonged to her family and her feelings for her family, whether love or hate, have been destroyed. Having replaced her family with the objects, she separates herself from the morality that had been imposed upon her by the social order in her household prior to their deaths and therefore feels no remorse for having murdered them. One might suppose at this point that Merricat is insane because she cannot differentiate between real objects and their representation of the Archaic Mother anymore. The objects delegated as protective totems are merely phantoms of anxiety and nostalgia, belonging to a prior time when Merricat asserts that

¹¹⁹ I.e. the aforementioned social order/hierarchy that the Gothic seeks to defy or destroy.

her parents cared about her and her family was at the top of the town hierarchy.

The reasons for and circumstances of the fall of the Blackwood family from the wealthiest and most powerful in town to the family that lived in what should have been only a summer mansion are entirely unclear, but Merricat's malevolent feelings with regard to those who stole her birthright are obvious. Also evident is the fact that the fall of the family has created a situation of doubling for the houses: the Blackwood house and the Rochester house once belonged to the same family, and both were the site of familiar, happy homes; separated, they have become distilleries for Gothic energy.¹²⁰ Merricat explains on her walk through the village that by rights the Rochester house should belong to Constance by way of heredity through their mother's side of the family. She goes on to describe its former glory, with the beautiful rose gardens, walnut-paneled library, ballroom and says it was the "loveliest in town" (S. Jackson, 1962, 4). It was somehow lost to the Blackwood family; the reason for the title and deed no longer belonging to the Blackwoods has something to do with their mother's marriage, but Merricat never elaborates her ambiguous reference. By the start of the book, the Rochester house is owned by a junk-collecting family named Harler. The Harler's home is certainly a center of Gothic symbolism: a constant racket of banging tin, which Merricat contemplates may be to drive away demons; broken plates and the "skeleton of an old Ford car;" the sidewalk in front of the house, which is always filthy (*Ibid.*, 7). It represents the decay of the old order, replaced by ugliness: the village is slowly rotting, blighted, unpleasant,

¹²⁰ One should also point out that this establishes Merricat's lineage in affinity with that of the characters in *Jane Eyre*, through the mention of Rochester. Not only does the story have a madwoman in Merricat, it also has a house destroyed by fire. The last name of Blackwood may be a reference to Algernon Blackwood, a famous satirist-gothicist. Contrarily, it might also be an inversion of the school in *Jane Eyre*, Lowood. Although these names recall British Gothic and early American writers, they are not the typical Mayflower names that we would expect to see, considering Merricat's lineage. Instead, these last names imply that Merricat's lineage is actually uncertain, a fact which is supported by her ambiguous retelling of the story of how they lost their grand house in the village to the Harlers.

contemptible, and drab.

The Harler/Rochester house provides a stark contrast to the Blackwood mansion; the former, located inside the town, a place both symbolic of change and disorder, has become a dark double of the Blackwood mansion, which is located outside of the town. Location here is also important, as it signifies that beyond the domestic uncanny lies an axis of unhomey space, one that according to Anthony Vidler can be “understood as a more general phenomenon touching the entirety of public territories—the landscapes of fear and topography of despair created as a result of modern technological and capitalist development from Metropolis to Megalopolis, so to speak” (2000, 2). The village has moved forward into an era of society that tears down the class structure and separate spheres of the 19th century; venerable old houses like the Rochester house have become the property of the lower class. Merricat seems to know this to be true. She theorizes that the houses of the village are so ugly and colorless because “the fine houses had been captured—perhaps as punishment for the Rochesters and the Blackwoods and their secret bad hearts?—and were held prisoner in the village” (*Ibid.*, 9). Furthermore, although she says “the people of the village have always hated us,” she notes that they are all too eager to take over property that in Merricat’s opinion should still belong to the Blackwoods (*Ibid.*, 6). Thus, the Harler/Rochester house is perhaps indicative of the possibility of what could happen should the Blackwood mansion fall out of the direct ownership of Merricat’s family. In that sense, Merricat’s refusal to leave her home even after it burns down indicates her twisted feelings towards the patriarchal order—she acknowledges that she cannot exist without it, but at the same time, she would like to rewrite it into a matrilineal order instead.

The reader is thus presented with an anxiety-wrought perspective of the story’s events quite unique to that of the other characters who would probably have something very different

to say about the burning of the Blackwood estate. An unreliable narrator such as Merricat invokes ambiguity with that anxiety, a device central to the Gothic genre, as her perspective of the story is the only one we are given, and hers is a perspective rife with contradiction—she both loves and hates her mother, loves and hates her heritage, rejects and embraces her home. This kind of ambiguity, according to William Empson, forces the reader to make interpretations of the text that may be different from the opinion of the author, as well as presents contradicting information (v-vi). Such ambiguity not only creates problems for the reader, it also enables the reader to see “a presentation of ‘unreal’ combinations of objects and events as ‘real’” (R. Jackson, 31).¹²¹ This is significant in light of our understanding of Merricat and her narration because it is a faulty perception, or “delusion” as Punter called it previously in a quote in this dissertation, which introduces Merricat’s deep association with anxiety towards her place within her family hierarchy, and furthermore, the society surrounding her.

Moreover, Merricat’s psychological problems and the uncanny events arising from them may directly contribute to the anxiety associated with the motif of the house in the novel, which stems from her anxiety towards her family, specifically her mother. Merricat’s attitude towards houses in general relates directly back to her perception of their familial and human-like qualities. Merricat treats her home as if it were alive, able to accept or reject people, become insulted, and protect her from harm. For example, when her cousin Charles comes to visit, she hopes that the house “would reject him by itself” (S. Jackson, 1962, 114). As in *Rebecca*, the house seems to have the power to reject and accept people; more importantly, the narrator in both stories feels that it does. However, unlike *Rebecca*, there is no Mrs. Danvers

¹²¹ This is one of the basic functions of the fantastic, but also of the Gothic, as was explained earlier in this essay.

or Maxim to share the narrator's fears with regard to the uncanny state of the house. Merricat's perception of houses in general is unique within the text; both the villagers and her family members treat the houses as if they were property to be acquired or lost according to conditions of the economy or marital status, but Merricat sees houses, particularly the Blackwood Estate, as attached to a discourse of the sacred, able to be protected by the aforementioned totems and childish delusions.¹²² She has not only inherited the home itself physically from her deceased parents; she has also subconsciously inherited the anxiety associated with protecting it as the one remaining proof of the former wealth and glory of the Blackwood family. As mentioned earlier, she purposefully places items in and around her home in order to safeguard it from the intrusion of the social order of the town, which she perceives is a decayed and dying version of what it once was (when her family owned more of it). This behavior of creating totems to guard her home both signifies her anxiety and arouses a feeling of "uncanniness" with regard to her actions.¹²³ The relationship between totems and the uncanny is established in the fact that the uncanny is related to taboos. Otto Rank has noted that certain taboos have their origin in a "narcissistic claim of immortality and the acceptance of the genetic continuity of parents through their children" (de Mijolla, 434-435). Similarly, this fact is at the center of totemism (*Loc.cit.*).

Therefore, her use of totems renders her house a sacred space, which must be protected from Charles and all other family members who threaten to force her to return to her lifestyle previous to committing patricide. Merricat desires to reject all forces and persons representative of the old order, which she associates with oppression, and live in a sphere of

¹²² Merricat describes the circumstances of the loss and gain of the family homes and differentiates her treatment of houses from the way her family members treat houses. See S. Jackson, 1962, 4-9.

¹²³ For specifics of totem symbolism and use, see Sigmund Freud, 1955 [1913], 103-107.

comfort and unconditional love. When she cannot drive Charles away through words, she sprinkles earth, leaves and twigs from the forest, where she keeps her totems; and when that has no effect, she uses fire to purify the house of the effects of Charles. Her actions finally enable her to achieve her goal—after the fire, it is clear that Constance will never again consider leaving Merricat. Dara Downey terms Merricat's actions "ritual exorcism"—one that burns down the house and calls forth the not-so-latent hatred that the villagers have for the Blackwood family (177). The ritual ends up involving the villagers, however, as they arrive to extinguish the fire. After doing so, they regret it and begin to vandalize the house, throwing stones through windows and breaking furniture and china figurines, ripping curtains and generally trying to make the house completely uninhabitable. They go as far as threatening to set the sisters alight, taunting, "put them back in the house and start the fire all over again" (S. Jackson, 1962, 157). It is not, however, the totems that save Merricat and Constance from the villagers' merciless derision and threats of violence; nor, is it Merricat herself (as Downey misinterprets).¹²⁴ In fact, it is the arrival of the doctor that saves them—he determines that Uncle Julian has perished of a heart attack and calls off the frenzy. Thus the final member of their immediate family representative of patriarchy is dead and Charles (still trying to steal their safe before he leaves) is driven away. Having murdered their parents, Merricat merely *started* a chain reaction that would lead to the establishment of a new, sister-dominated social

¹²⁴ Dara Downey explicates the retreat of the villagers as precipitated by Merricat herself, but it is in fact Mr. Clarke who tells everyone that Uncle Julian is dead and that they should all go home because there has been a death in the house. She states because Merricat drove the villagers away, "it would therefore be erroneous to interpret the narrative as establishing her and Constance as helpless victims of the villagers' persecution, and it is precisely because they have transformed their home into sacred space that, in the aftermath of the fire, they are in a position to exploit the fear that they inspire" (Downey, 191). It would be very convenient if that were the case. However, it is the death of the last patriarch, Uncle Julian, and the flight of Cousin Charles that seems to truly will the villagers to return calmly home. With the patriarchy and the Blackwood house both in shambles, it seems the villagers are also free to establish their own new social order, separate from the Blackwood family. Constance and Merricat are free to do the same. So in the sense of sisters' power, Downey seems to have misread the text; Mr. Clarke seems more powerful than the sisters in that tense scene. However, Downey is certainly right that the sisters still inspire fear. The villagers do not bother the girls in such a vicious way ever again.

order. This order, standing against both the persecution (imagined and real) of the patriarchal order represented first by their parents, then Charles and the villagers, threatened Merricat's ideal of home. Thus, she cleansed the space with fire, making it sacred, ushering in a new social order centered on the generations of *women* who inhabited the house (with the exclusion of their mother) and the spaces in which they were most comfortable: the kitchen, the garden and the cellar.

The creation of the space enables Merricat to make real her desire that Constance mother her. Her perception of a mothering ideal to which her mother miserably failed to reach—but which her sister Constance represents to her—is deeply important to her idea of womanhood in the story. According to Julia Kristeva, this presents a kind of projective identification, or “since I do not wish to know that I hate her, she hates me” (Kristeva, 1995, 179).¹²⁵ Perhaps Merricat's parents never treated her badly; we are given no evidence either way. We only know that her sister Constance *does* treat her in the way she wishes to be treated. Kristeva tells us that the child in question, who refuses to admit that it is she who hated her parents and not her parents who hated her, need not elaborate on the subject of hatred. She desires merely to assimilate her parents in order to replace them:

... [in order to] apprehend the external poles of narcissism within the fluid identity of an ever changing subject who lacks interiority, other than his potential to assimilate (*Ibid.*, 186).

Assimilating her parents by murdering them gives her the power to choose their replacement. It seems utterly abnormal that she would choose anyone else, but in fact Merricat's parricide represents a return to an infantile state, one in which she has abjected, rejected, her potential to

¹²⁵ Kristeva describes the modern situation of a growing number of borderline, narcissistic and psychosomatic patients who misidentify, engage in projective identification, narcissistic reiteration, or have other troubles with verbal representations that do not really demonstrate the difference between the I and the other.

become an autonomous woman. She has destroyed her mother in order to install her elder sister in the role of mother instead, and in doing so, also rejects her place in the household as an adult. It seems a warping of the concept of the Oedipal complex, in which one desires to replace one's parents by way of violent revolt and murder (*Loc.cit.*). Nevertheless, it is this transgression that precipitates Merricat's further delusions: that she has, with her sin, stormed the castle and violently overthrown both the family hierarchy and the village hierarchy, both of which she perceived as threats to her individuality and to her relationship with her sister. In purifying her home with fire and driven away both villagers and parents, she has achieved her ultimate *happiness*.

In other texts, such as *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, the purification of the house also drives out the main characters, and they either exist in a limbo-like exile state, as in *Rebecca* or create a new, more equal social order, as in *Jane Eyre*. It would seem natural that the fire in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* would also drive the sisters into exile, their fear of extensive retaliation by the villagers fueling their flight. Instead, they remain in their house, which marks a departure from their literary predecessors. The reason lies, perhaps, in the fact that the ghosts that haunted the Blackwood home were never doubles representing freedom or creativity—they were not remnants of the patriarchy. When we meet Merricat and Constance at the beginning of the novel, they have already completed the revolt that the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" could not: they have overthrown the social order and run the house as they choose. This becomes even more evident when the patriarch-like presence of Charles arrives because he is already distained as other and strange—Merricat determines he is a demonic and ghostly presence. The night after he arrives, she remarks to Constance: "He was a ghost" (S. Jackson, 1962, 88). Constance replies, "Then a ghost is sleeping in Father's bed" (*Loc.cit.*). Merricat calls him a ghost again and again: she tells her cat Jonas (*Ibid.*, 101), and after she

ruins her father's room so he can no longer inhabit it, she remarks with glee that "a demon-ghost would not easily find himself here" (*Ibid.*, 127). It is clear from this exchange that he represents an extension of their dead father; that image continues throughout his occupation of their house, from his sitting in their father's chair at mealtime (*Ibid.*, 100) to wanting to wear his brother's clothing and go through his papers (*Ibid.*, 119). To drive him out is to also drive out the ghosts of the patriarchal order that she thought she had expelled when she killed her mother, father and brother. Rejecting Charles from the house also has significance in a broader sense, as it should mean the triumph of Merricat and Constance's sisterhood over male-dominated society.

To Merricat, having killed her father, mother, and brother already ended their story; the house has become instead a receptacle for the vestiges of the homely presence of an imagined, strong lineage of Blackwood women. Their power is marked by the cellar with its preserved jams and vegetables, the kitchen garden from which Constance makes their food, and the kitchen where they cook. Unlike the drawing room, where breakables, tea cups and curtains all recall the necessity of the matriarchs to entertain guests (as induced by the patriarchs), the kitchen, cellar and garden also remain undestroyed at the end of the story, signaling their incredible power of survival. Merricat relates that the house's foundation, the cellar, is filled to brimming with food, which is part poison, part heritage:

All the Blackwood women had taken the food that came from the ground and preserved it, and the deeply colored rows of jellies and pickles and bottled vegetables and fruit, maroon and amber and dark rich green stood side by side in our cellar and would stand there forever, a poem by the Blackwood women. Each year Constance and Uncle Julian and I had jam or preserve or pickle that Constance had made, but we never touched what belonged to the others; Constance said it would kill us if we ate it (*Ibid.*, 61).

This basement, part curse, part blessing, is the immovable presence of a mythologized matriarchy. Just like Rebecca's presence has put Manderley into working order, so too have

the Blackwood women. Their power is undeniably potent and borders on the sacred: only Constance's food is good to eat, while eating all of the other mothers' concoctions would kill. Each jar is termed a "poem"—but these jars are all are unwritten. Further, they are sealed away, encompassed by a dark, womb-like space. They are not unlike the hidden poetry of Emily Dickinson, who chose to lock her poems away in drawers instead of trying to publish them all. The jars are a testament to both the nurturing and dangerous nature of the women: they are hidden away, but if left too long, they gain a murderous, vengeful power.

The cellar also recalls the importance of the subterranean to the Gothic mode, as well as to Bachelard's theory of space. Of the former, it should be noted that both the upper chambers and the lower chambers of the Blackwood house are evocative of the patriarchal order that Merricat seeks to destroy. Maurice Lévy reminds us that we should make a connection between these two spaces in the home as *unheimlich*:

Dans les romans qui nous occupent, on *parle* du spectre dans le Hall ou dans les étages supérieurs, on le *rencontre* au souterrain. On le rencontre aussi dans les ruines, vestiges d'architectures *jadis* verticaux, ramenées par la main de l'homme ou du temps au niveau du sol, et dont le rôle n'est plus que de dissimuler les entrées secrètes du sous-sol. C'est dans les profondeurs des prisons que l'on torture et que l'on tue, dans les <<appartements inférieurs>> que l'on découvre . . . (630).

In the novels discussed, one *speaks* of the ghost in the manor, or in the upper chambers; one *encounters* the subterranean. One also encounters it in the ruins, in the vestiges of ancient, *formerly* vertical architecture reduced by the hand of man or by time to the earth, and whose role is no longer to conceal the secret entrances to the underground. It is in the depths of these prisons that one tortures and murders; in the "interior apartments" one discovers [these crimes] . . . (630).

All haunting and crime recalls these "subterranean" depths, which invoke both the demonic and the crypt. When the house is crippled to ruins, it loses its ability to contain the uncanny forces within. Lévy's explication is apropos here, as Merricat's home necessarily conceals the "crime" (oppression) of the patriarchy against the Blackwood women, symbolized by the ferreting away of the generations of jams and canned goods. However, Lévy's point is also

subverted here—the recollection of the subterranean also prompts the realization that containment of the Blackwood women cannot prevent their power from taking on an eternal and mythic importance to the sisters. Similarly, it cannot prevent the revelation of that the familial structure in the Blackwood home was already destroyed by Merricat's murder, and was made further real by the burning of the house to a ruin.

It should also be mentioned here that the Gothic house is often built upon the dark spaces, symbolic of past generations that both support and disturb the homeliness of the house. According to Vidler, the house, "all cheer and peaceful industry" has its base in "its ability to encompass and overcome death," which is established by its foundations (62). Vidler states here that the house he refers to is built on catacombs and is therefore literally established on top of the dead; conversely, Jackson's Blackwood mansion is figuratively built on the dead, as the power of the Blackwood matriarchs is only stored through the basement remnants of their homemaking. Women are supposed to refine men's morals and affections; indeed, the Blackwood women do just that, providing food, entertainment and comfort to their families. But, as previously stated, the hidden nature of the jars in the basement also makes them the purveyors of death: "Constance it would kill us if we ate it" (S. Jackson, 1962, 61).

Even after the Blackwood Estate is burnt by angry villagers at the end of the story, it nevertheless remains a home; this is proof of the transformative power Merricat and Constance's sisterhood has had on the house, putting it in affinity with the generations of women who came before them. As mentioned previously, at the beginning of the story, we are told that Merricat's family owned two houses—the summarized house (the Blackwood house) that they now inhabit as their main dwelling and a winterized house (the Rochester house) whose deed and title were somehow forfeit when their parents got married. The latter is inhabited by a family named Harler. The lost Blackwood manse is the double of Merricat's

current home; lost to the social order of the village, in which she can play no part, she is unable to reclaim it. Thus, it is ever more important that she purify the Blackwood summer house to fit her own needs. The top floors, the parlour, and the dining room, all are burnt and uninhabitable, perhaps indicating that a hierarchy has been completely destroyed along with that part of the house: the dining room was the scene of the patricide, the parlour where the matriarchs entertained guests (a custom that Merricat disdained despite admiring the room itself), the upper rooms proof of where the family lived and slept (but also where Merricat was often punished by being sent up to bed without supper).

The symbolism of the *kitchen*, representative of Constance's sphere of "happy homemaking," and, in Merricat's opinion, the sphere of many "happy" Blackwood wives and mothers before her, is deeply connected to her ideal of mothering: that a true mother is happy and *willing* to provide for any and all of the needs of their children without ever punishing them. It is significant, then, that after the fire, Merricat and her sister decide to live mainly in the only room that is not burnt—the kitchen—and insist that they are "so happy" (S. Jackson, 1962, 214). While Constance and Merricat's mother wanted little to do with the preparation of nourishment in the household,¹²⁶ it seems Constance has always looked after the dietary needs of the family. Food here seems to be the main indicator of the ability to provide for one's family, especially good-tasting food prepared with a merry attitude. Dietary organization and nutrition may also be read as a "full acceptance of archaic and gratifying relationship to the mother" and of "a prolific and protective motherhood" (Kristeva, 1982, 115). If the reconciliation between mother and daughter can be achieved through satisfying the body's need for nourishment (*Loc. cit.*), it is certainly significant that their mother was more

¹²⁶ Uncle Julian says that he would rather chance arsenic than eat something that Merricat's mother cooked. See S. Jackson, 1962, 50.

concerned with keeping them out of the drawing room, where she entertained her guests than she was with the preparation of the food (S. Jackson, 1962, 33-34). After their mother's death, Constance and Merricat live almost all of their lives "toward the back of the house, on the lawn and the garden where no one else ever came," as if they no longer need to pretend that the other rooms of the house have meaning for them (*Ibid.*, 28). Although she had passed away, they try to keep the drawing room in exactly the condition they feel she would have wanted it kept. This perhaps also draws a parallel to the behavior of Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca*, recalling the ghosts of the past through actions that evoke nostalgia. Yet it is only for nostalgia's sake that they clean the room; they have no intention of using it ever again. Even before the destruction of the roof and upper rooms of the Blackwood home, Constance and Merricat have already turned their backs to the part of the house that faced the village and connected them to the patriarchal order that oppressed them; they went their "own ways behind its stern, unwelcoming face" (*Loc.cit.*). Here again we see personification of the home; its expression "unwelcoming" and "stern," like a parent or guardian upset with a child. However, Constance and Merricat go about their business "behind" its face, where it cannot see them; further, after the house has been burnt, it no longer has any of the rooms associated with any remaining ghosts of male influence from deceased family members. Their happiness, then, is also signifies how they have driven out the patriarchy and the greed associated with it.

The motif of the home in *We Have Always Live in the Castle* is one broken by both patricide from inside and flame from outside; one can only imagine that the happiness of the sisters is experienced within a microcosm of a mad world, caused by the destruction of both the traditional family structure and societal values. It may be said that "mother/daughterhood is . . . one of the most persistent ways that feminism has articulated women's alternative networks of communication" (Williams, 52). However, Jackson's novel has a more profound

statement to make about the image of home and its relationship to the family that lives inside it. Rather than mother/daughterhood, it is the nurturing of sisterhood that becomes privileged because it circumvents the social order and creates a narcissistic world in which Merricat will be cared for but never punished. Because Merricat murders her mother along with her father, and because there seems to be no prompting for the patricide, it is perhaps her aim to dissolve her identity entirely, as far as it was constructed upon identification¹²⁷ with/against her parents. Julia Kristeva points out:

Because of the decisive role women play in the reproduction of the species, and because of the privileged relationship between father and daughter, a woman takes social constraints even more seriously, has fewer tendencies toward anarchism, and is more mindful of ethics (1986, 268).

If this is true, then Merricat has totally abandoned her role as both daughter and woman by killing her family; furthermore, she has chosen to live in the remains of her burnt house with her sister. In lieu of the role of daughter and woman, Merricat chooses to return to her primary narcissistic state and allow her sister to provide for her needs. It seems a fitting metaphor that Merricat and Constance are the remnants of the family, and the kitchen is the remnant of the home. The motif of the home in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* has therefore become hopelessly entangled in the anxiety Merricat feels towards her family, and it is also mutilated as a direct result of Merricat's transgression against her family.

¹²⁷ This identification process is a key to individuation, the process by which one becomes aware that one is a unique individual. According to Lacan, there are two stages, the mirror stage by which the ego is created through imaginary identification (also constitutes primary identification), and symbolic identification, which gives rise to the formation of the ego-ideal. The latter also gives the subject drive to transcend the infantile aggressiveness of primary identification. See Evans, 82. Please note that this identification process is not to be confused with the aforementioned Jungian theories.

5.2.2 *The Haunting of Hill House*

In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor Vance, the main character, is called upon by a Dr. Montague to participate in a psychological experiment at a haunted house, Hill House. We are introduced to Eleanor by way of an explanation of her unhappy, unfulfilled life and the reason she was chosen for the experiment: once it rained stones upon her house, not unlike poltergeist activity. The doctor also invites another woman, Theodora, who seems to possess telepathic abilities. Luke, the nephew of the owner of the house, is told to go along as well as the doctor's wife, and the five of them travel to the house to begin the experiment. Jackson takes her time describing Eleanor's journey, as the steps Eleanor takes to arrive there provide important foreshadowing for the strange events that follow. These events, which center on Eleanor, are in fact witnessed primarily by Eleanor alone: strange smells and sounds, tactile sensations of otherworldly hands touching her, blood on her clothes which then disappears, and writing on the walls. While all seem to be evidence of paranormal activity, none could really be considered evidence of a haunting any more real than that of "The Yellow Wallpaper" because Eleanor is the only one who can see, hear, touch or smell them. As the five characters explore the house, they encounter several rooms that exhibit inexplicable qualities, such as the freezing temperature of the nursery doorway, the moldy smell on the staircase to the turret, or the doors that open and close by themselves. For the most part, the house just seems old to Dr. Montague and his wife, Theo and Luke. Eleanor and Theo take an extreme dislike to it at first, but it is Eleanor who, having never had a home of her own, starts to become increasingly comfortable in the uncanny environment the longer she stays there.

The two most notably haunted spaces of the house are the walls, which get written on first in chalk and then in a blood-like substance, and the nursery, which as previously mentioned possesses a very strange cold spot on its threshold.¹²⁸ It is curious that the walls should be the most haunted, as people more often see ghosts disturbing contained spaces such as rooms, cabinets, hallways, stairwells and basements.¹²⁹ The walls possess the unique quality of being both part of the house and of dividing it into sections, which renders them a liminal space: they are neither interior, nor exterior, but between. In this space of the between, Eleanor's psychic ability manifests itself in words written on the walls, first in chalk and then, later in blood.¹³⁰ "All of them stood in silence for a moment and looked at HELP ELEANOR COME HOME ELEANOR written in shaky red letters on the wallpaper over Theodora's bed. . . . The smell was atrocious, and the writing on the wall had dripped and splattered (S. Jackson, 1959, 155). The significance of the writing on the walls is to be found in several elements of the scene. First, there is the fact that the writing is on Theodora's bedroom wall, and not Eleanor's, despite the fact that the words are directed towards Eleanor. In the story, Theodora functions as Eleanor's ideal in many ways—she is financially independent, she has a

¹²⁸ This cold spot is compared to that of Borley Rectory. Borley Rectory was considered one of the most haunted places in England (it burnt down). See Steiger, 378-387. The haunting of Borley Rectory, although later proven a hoax, is probably the most well-known of all documented hauntings. The Rectory was once known as "the most haunted house in England" and its fame reached its height in the 1930s. Shirley Jackson would have been a teenager at that point, and was already fascinated by the supernatural and Gothic literature. It is not a stretch to imagine that she read stories of Harry Price, the famous psychic researcher, and his study of the house, *The Most Haunted House in England*.

¹²⁹ For examples of haunted houses and apartments, see Steiger, 1-46. See also pp. 71-108 (on poltergeists and other house spirits) and 413-438 (haunted mansions and plantations).

¹³⁰ The bloody writing on the wall is reminiscent not only of fantastic fiction, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, in its wording, but also of Shakespeare, in that it is an apparition reminding Eleanor of her guilty conscience, just like Lady Macbeth trying to wash her hands clean of blood in *Macbeth*. Moreover, the haunting in Borley Rectory included writing on the walls that said "Marianne . . . please . . . get help," which is directly related to the chalk and bloody words written on the walls of Hill House. See Steiger, 378-387. See also Price, 93-95, in which Price describes pencil having been written on the wall as well as later messages sent through séances in the Blue Room. (One should note is not a coincidence that Eleanor's room in Hill House is named the "Blue Room" just like the room that was the focus of the haunting at the rectory.)

lover, she has an aura of confidence. For the message to be written on Theodora's wall, it may indicate that the house is attempting to tell Eleanor that by "coming home" (i.e. connecting psychically with the house) she may achieve the qualities that she desires in Theodora. Second, the words themselves suggest that Eleanor's home is either in the walls of the house, or someplace beyond them that only the house knows of. Third, the fact that the words are written onto the wallpaper recalls the figure in the wallpaper from "The Yellow Wallpaper" and its catalytic ability to induce the protagonist to commune with the space of the house in a way that would be perceived as madness. Finally, this last manifestation of the house's uncanny desire/ability to communicate with Eleanor and identify her feelings that she lacks a home is incredibly disturbing; a house should not possess such human qualities as empathy, desire, and communication. This scene represents the house in *The Haunting of Hill House* transcending the previous houses that discussed in this dissertation, as it presents the house as a sentient being.

The other remarkable uncanny space is the nursery, which recalls elements of the haunted narrator's room from "The Yellow Wallpaper," but goes a step further. In Hill House, it is described as the "heart of the house," which has "an indefinable air of neglect found nowhere else" in the house (*Ibid.*, 119). The idea that the nursery should be the heart of a house where "every angle is slightly wrong" implies also that the house is a double of other houses that have their angles straight (*Ibid.*, 105). It mimics them, but does it in an uncanny way, so that the occupants cannot find their way around the house. Indeed, Dr. Montague, Eleanor, Luke and Theo discover that they cannot easily find their way around the house, that the house confuses them, and that they seem to be constantly choosing the wrong doors to go through, which in turn puts them in a place that they do not actually want to be. While trying to get to the nursery, it seems like the house itself is trying to prevent the characters from

reaching it; however, upon arrival, the house seems to change its mind and accepts Eleanor for entry. Her acceptance denotes her role as the initiate, and the nursery as the liminal space that begins her journey of madness that will incorporate her psyche into Hill House's uncanny environment.

The nursery as the heart of Hill House is also important to the story because the house becomes a motherly haven for Eleanor. With the nursery at the center of her new "home," Eleanor can succumb to her narcissistic desire to commune with a motherly presence that actually comforts and cares for her. Her own relationship with her mother seems to have been one of abuse and difficulty, and ended in Eleanor nursing her for eleven years without respite—a fact that Eleanor deeply resents, as she feels she should not have had to act as a caretaker to her own mother (*Ibid.*, 6-7). Her connection to the house thus implies the house is a double of her mother. In doubling, as previously mentioned, the implication of death and persecution necessarily accompanies the shadowed form (de Mijolla, 434). Therefore, it is natural that when Eleanor becomes too strongly attached to the double (leaving behind her true mother) she also perceives the others to be persecuting her attachment to the house. Finally, when forced to leave behind Hill House, with what she has come to believe are homely comforts, the threat of death that haunts the double actually becomes a reality in Eleanor's suicide.

Eleanor's arrival at Hill House signals her empathy with liminal space: Hill House as a site of paranormal experiments, may be described as a liminoid object. It is presented as a place situated between this world and the next because of its history of death and unhappiness as well as its parapsychical associations. However, whether or not the house is actually the entrance of the liminal in the story is a point of some dissention. Downey points out the "ritual threshold scene in the form of a verbal argument with Mr. Dudley, the gatekeeper" (184).

Indeed, the scene of Eleanor's entrance to the grounds of Hill House holds value to the discussion of the liminal in the story. However, one might argue against that scene being the exact point of Eleanor's entrance into the liminal. First of all, she exhibited behavior that made her an outsider in her own family such as causing stones to fall on her house and having antisocial tendencies. Later, her mother and her sister aided in making Eleanor a social outcast by forcing Eleanor to be the mother's nurse. Second, as previously stated, she neither owns property, nor is financially independent, and is also not married, which means her place in society is outside the realm of expectation for a woman of her age and status. After her mother died, she ended up in a kind of limbo between being married or financially independent and being dependent upon her family—a liminal state. So while Downey's argument is true from a semantic standpoint, it is not exactly true for Eleanor as a character; she was already in a liminal state before her arrival at Hill House, which becomes important when considering the affinity that she develops for the house.

Moreover, in concentrating only on the space of the Hill House grounds as liminal, the entire journey, from Eleanor's stealing of the car to the opening of the gate, is neglected. The act of travelling may also be considered part of the "threshold" that should be crossed by the main character. While not literally a doorstep or gateway, journeying (brought out nicely by Jackson's use of the tune borrowed from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, "journey's end in lovers' meeting") can also be considered a liminoid phenomenon (Turner, 1978, 3). Liminality is not only about what is past the point of the threshold, but also of possibility:

The point of it all is to get out, go forth, to a far holy place approved by all. In societies with few economic opportunities for movement away from limited circles of friends, neighbors, and local authorities, all rooted alike in the soil, the only journey possible for those not merchants, peddlers, minstrels, jugglers, tumblers, wandering friars, or outlaws, or their modern equivalents, is a holy journey, a pilgrimage or a crusade. On such a journey one gets away from the reiterated "occasions of sin" which make up so

much of the human experience of social structure. (Turner, 1978, 7).

On a journey towards the sacred, a pilgrim who may not find other opportunities to depart from his or her homeland might find a reason to sally forth in search of new mental purpose. The purpose of Eleanor's journey thus seems to be similar; she needs to separate herself from an overbearing sister, the memory of her mother's death, and her own feelings that she is useless. Eleanor considers her time at Hill House something that would change her for the better: "The journey itself was her positive action, her destination vague, unimagined, perhaps nonexistent. She meant to savor each turn of her traveling, loving the road and the trees and the houses and the small ugly towns . . ." (S. Jackson, 1959, 17). She is already determined to make the pilgrimage. The unfamiliar is at first not uncanny, but full of positive possibility. The randomness of the solicitation, the lack of information about the experiment, all are good portents to her, because she is already an outsider in her city environment. Like the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" before her, Eleanor is ready to journey from the city to the countryside in search of her true, creative self.

Further, she decides to leave her home by convincing herself not only of the value of the invitation, but of the trustworthiness of the man who sent it, Dr. Montague. With his offer, her feelings of wanting to belong are validated; she is not accepted for herself in the city with her family, but her presence is necessary at Hill House with strangers. She says: "I might just go along to Hill House where I am expected and where I am being given shelter and room and board and a small token salary in consideration of forsaking my commitments and involvements in the city and running away to see the world" (*Loc.cit.*). The road she is told to follow, called Route 39, is a road chosen by Dr. Montague whose words are somehow made "infallible" and the road itself is like a "magic thread" leading her from her unhappy life to "where she wanted to be" (*Loc.cit.*). This is not unlike "The Yellow Wallpaper" narrator's

complete faith and trust in her husband, John, her brother the doctor, and their cure for her nervous tendencies. Both Eleanor and the narrator hope that new space may lead to an acceptance back into the social order.

The irony, however, is that her destination, the place of pilgrimage, is Hill House. Hill House is not a place “approved by all”—it is exactly the opposite. It is not a sacred space—it is the abject, the unclean—it is a receptacle of haunting, of feminine anxiety, and of fear. The house itself is rebelling against the definition of a home in the social order. Hill House is a nexus of female energy, a magic space, personified as “not sane” (*Ibid.*, 3). It is also unique to the other houses in the story, including Eleanor’s childhood home, whose description is vague and unimportant. Hill house is the maniac in juxtaposition to the commonplace, and it is determined to stay where it is until it is destroyed. Because of Hill House’s status as a haunted house and because Eleanor is not liberated as a woman, Eleanor’s actions are disapproved by those around her. Nevertheless, she commits to the journey, feeling that she will find relief from her guilt.

Jackson’s authorial voice intimates that Eleanor’s journey is not only made because she desires independence and reaffirmation of her identity as a heterosexual woman, she also leaves home because she can no longer deal with the guilt she feels at not living up to the expectations of those around her. Thus, she feels the need to repent. Turner also explains that pilgrims use the journey for “penance” (*Loc.cit.*). In Eleanor’s case, she desires to be forgiven for the death of her mother, or what she perceives as the murder of her mother. Her journey to Hill House is, then, both an assertion of independence and the realization of her desire to be free of her guilt associated with her mother-daughter relationship. Eleanor has done just that—she has left her realm of the familiar completely behind. Throughout her drive to Hill House the reader is treated to liminal cues—the (magic) cup of stars that she sees a little girl drink

from, the oleanders in the shape of a square that seem like a faery ring. All point to Eleanor's state of mind, of her awareness that she is going somewhere to be ritually cleansed, and by extension, aid her in finding acceptance from the society she so longs to join through heterosexual love and marriage. In this she is similar to Catherine from *Wuthering Heights*, marrying into a higher caste and to the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" because she desires conformity while contradictorily yearning for independence.

Hill House is not only a liminal space because it is the destination of Eleanor's unholy pilgrimage. It also recalls its predecessors, the castle of Udolpho in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and the summer house from "The Yellow Wallpaper." Radcliffe's castle Udolpho, with its vaulted ceilings and immense spaces that inspire feelings of disquiet consternation is a locus of "haunting" because of the transgressions of its owners—namely murder. Jackson's Hill House, with its history of familial strife and murder, is the natural descendant of Udolpho. Manuel Aguirre concurs that Hill House, with its "every angle slightly wrong" recalls the "irregularity" of Udolpho (92). Further, the intensity with which Eleanor notes the design of the walls and the fervor with which she imagines what might be lurking behind them reminds the reader of the romantic, creative notions of the Female Gothic protagonists who have come before. Eleanor describes the room she is told to stay in for the duration of the experiment, the blue room:

It had an unbelievably faulty design which left it chillingly wrong in all its dimensions, so that the walls seemed always in one direction a fraction longer than the eye could endure, and in another direction a fraction less than the barest possible tolerable length; this is where they want me to *sleep*, Eleanor thought incredulously; what nightmares are waiting, shadowed, in those high corners—what breath of mindless fear will drift across my mouth . . . (S. Jackson, 1959, 40).

It is not a comfortable room—it gives one chills and inspires "nightmares" and "mindless fear" with its shadows and corners. Eleanor is incredulous at its misshapen form. She cannot

imagine getting a good night's sleep in it, much less occupying it for the duration of her stay. In this, she is similar to the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper," who is disturbed by the nature of the wallpaper from her very first moments in her attic prison. While Eleanor is not being imprisoned by anyone, nor is she being prevented from leaving her room, the space has inspired in her a fear that will not allow her to rest. Like the Gothic heroines before her, she knows that her bedroom, and by extension, the house, will draw out aspects of her personality that theretofore had not been as dominant. These traits include her romantic imagination, which, before she arrived at Hill House, was suppressed by the logic of the city dwellers' mentality and the social structure of her family.

In order to become more closely connected to Hill House, and thus to the liminal, it is necessary for Eleanor to invoke the spirits of the dead into communication with the living. Opening a direct channel to the essence of the house, represents another aspect of a threshold to be crossed before she is able to achieve her desires. Thus, it is apropos that Dr. Montague should want to perform a ritual to connect more closely with that liminal space, one involving a Ouija board. This object, related to the séance as well as the semi-religious movement of spiritism, is almost always used in a domestic, intimate location.¹³¹ It allowed the participants to transgress, to be reminded of obligations neglected, and even to articulate repressed feelings or ideas (Brower, 15). This is also the case in *The Haunting of Hill House*.

The paranormal events that occur in Hill House mimic literature on ghosts that Shirley Jackson may have read, with one very important difference: the hauntings have no specters, only apparitions and poltergeist-like activity. Furthermore, the purpose of the house's hauntings is unclear, which is rather unusual. According to R. C. Finucane's research into the

¹³¹ For information on séances, some of which used playing cards or Ouija boards to speak to the dead, see Brower, 14.

Society for Psychical Research (SPR), most hauntings have a specter and that specter has a purpose for appearing:

. . . they requested delivery of messages, advised where their bodies might be discovered, sought payments of old debts, satisfied vows to return, and reminded the living to keep their word. Finally, they also indicated where to find lost goods which . . . might not always be a treasure-trove (194).

In other words, hauntings are often purposeful to the ghost himself. Moreover, even “stuck” ghosts, which can be annoying, rarely attack or single out one person from a group to haunt. The exception to this is, of course, stories like “The Bell Witch” and that of Borley Rectory, which primarily concern poltergeist activity.¹³² The space of the house as a locus of the Gothic facilitates an inward struggle between the generations, parents and children, ghosts and living persons, but does not assign any winner except for death. As Dr. Montague states in the story, the house is pure evil: “It has enchained and destroyed its people and their lives, it is a place of contained ill will.” The house itself propels the Gothic plot forward; the house itself and the increasing number of uncanny events over the years together create a destabilized space that recalls only suffering and murder.

The effect of these ghostly hauntings is to render Eleanor’s social position more closely in affinity with the ghosts than with the other characters. Theodora works, Luke owns the house (and so is a property owner), and Dr. Montague is married—these others exemplify what Eleanor is not. They also exemplify ways for her to plug herself into the social order in an acceptable fashion. At first, she seems to cling to them, and the ideals they represent to her. But after it becomes clear that Luke has no heterosexual desire for her, and Theodora finds her

¹³² It is clear from Jackson’s writing that she was well-researched in haunted houses and psychical phenomena. It is self-evident because so many of the hauntings in Hill House echo those of famous haunted houses, such as the aforementioned Borley Rectory. Another example lies in the story of “The Bell Witch” is one in which a child’s hatred towards her father was ultimately responsible for his murder by the poltergeist activity. Eleanor’s story echoes “The Bell Witch,” as Eleanor feels ultimately responsible for her mother’s death. See Steiger, 109-116 for more details of “The Bell Witch” case.

to be insecure and dependent (and very much not her equal), Eleanor is bereft of her happy end. It becomes increasingly apparent that Eleanor is the perfect victim for the house—she has neither human affection, nor a niche in the social order. Thus, the destination of Eleanor's journey, Hill House, becomes her doorway into another order, that of the Gothic.

While the destruction of Rochester's house in *Jane Eyre*, Merricat and Constance's home in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* and the destruction of Manderley in *Rebecca* signals a passage from the patriarchal order to a new order, *The Haunting of Hill House* contains neither a burning manse nor a maimed or exiled patriarch. Instead, Jackson sends her heroine Eleanor hurling away from Hill House, still clinging to the identity she had formed in conjunction with the house until the very last moment of her suicide. *The Haunting of Hill House* therefore is not exactly in alignment with the opinion of its predecessors—that the social order might be circumscribed and a new home found. Eleanor's feeling that she had finally found home and friends in the Montagues, Theodora and Luke has proven false. There is no new social order for her. In that sense, her exile resembles that of Maxim and the narrator in *Rebecca*, with the exception that the romantic Eleanor, thrust away from the objects of her affections, cannot subsist as a character.

Shirley Jackson's works, like those of Daphne du Maurier, represent the homestead as an uncanny, sinister space harboring murder, apparitions, repressed desires, and unrealized dreams. Unlike the main character of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, Merricat, who takes control of her life and the lives of her family through both murder and antagonistic action, the protagonist of *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor, does not even pretend she feels in control of her life. Up to the novel's very last paragraphs, in which Eleanor commits suicide, she is heavily influenced by the opinions and desires of others: first by her tyrannical mother, then her castigating sister; upon arrival at Hill House, Dr. Montague decides her

schedule while his wife decides their mealtimes; Theo bullies her emotionally; and Luke manipulates her severely repressed heterosexual desires. Thus, going to and staying at Hill House, which was supposed to be Eleanor's liberating adventure, turns out to be a sojourn into a liminal space where Eleanor fails to liberate herself and takes the only other way out: death. Preceded by a crime of thievery and the guilt that she may have murdered her mother, her death may be seen as a New England response to a liminal state: one must either choose life and independence from her previous existence of her will subordinate to that of others, or perish in the attempt.

Works of the Female Gothic in the modern period demonstrate the fundamental anxiety that women felt towards their homes, and Jackson's works beautifully build upon that tradition through utilization of anthropological, psychoanalytical, and historical information. Her characters go against social norms, and the reader is swept along with them as they are rejected, persecuted, and risk death for their dissent. As previously mentioned, neither Merricat nor Eleanor are models for the new type of women that populated American cities and suburbia during the World War II and Post-War periods. Their respective plights recall a bygone era, perhaps even before the First World War, especially in Merricat's case. At the same time, it seems their surroundings function according to the rules of the Post-War period. While the wars should have made the gender system questionable—that is, it should have revealed that the roles men and women take on in society are taught, learned or constructed, not inherently present or organic—Jackson's novels force her readers to consider the fact that that was not the case.¹³³ In conclusion, Shirley Jackson's and Daphne du Maurier's works

¹³³ While during World War II, there was some latitude for women to work outside the home, especially if they were contributing to the war effort as nurses or factory workers, they were still responsible for housework. Further, propaganda during the war was subversive: "By casting nontraditional work into domestic images, propaganda implied that war workers had experience with nothing except homemaking and subtly undermined

exemplify the complicated relationship between female characters, the spaces they occupy, and society as a whole, while using the Gothic motif to reveal the chaotic reality that *no one* really belongs.

the idea that men and women could do the same work" (Honey, 95). In other words, even the advertising projected a double-standard. For a discussion of which jobs they could do and what kind of woman was "allowed" to go to work outside the home during the war period, see Weatherford, 161-76. For housewives who stayed home and the troubles they faced such as strict rationing that prevented them from getting staples such as gasoline, sugar, canned goods and coffee, see *Ibid.*, 200-219.

Conclusion

From the inception of the Gothic as a literary genre, the image of the home has been a central motif. In its initial manifestation of rambling castles with adjoining churches and graveyards, it provided a setting that evoked the memory of our feudal past: strict patriarchal hierarchies, widespread illiteracy, and mundane existence rife with superstition and fear. Faith was placed in the physical stability of the buildings that held the focus of the community: the castle and the church. Thus, the Gothic image of the home is imbued with nostalgia for an idealized medieval past, in which threatening elements circumscribe the laws of the church, the secular government, and even the physical and social world.

As it has easily metamorphosed with the change of ages, socio-political circumstances, and technology—first into the manor-house of the nineteenth century and later into the nuclear family home—the motif of the home has perhaps become even more important. From early Gothic fiction, with its sinister, grotesque castles and horrific plots unto modern fiction, in which children commit parricide, husbands and wives murder each other, and the family is the focus of insidious, eerie events, home continues to represent a hierarchy that the Gothic seeks to subvert.

Novels like Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* provide the cornerstone for the Gothic to deal with terror, whereas *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* provide the cornerstone for the Gothic genre to address the uncanny, a special brand of terror that relies on nostalgia,

repression and anxiety. As the prototype for the modern Domestic Gothic, *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* have been established as exemplary texts in several ways. First, the role that the home plays in *Wuthering Heights* is key in the subversion of the patriarchal order in the text: anti-hero orphan Heathcliff not only manages to inherit the Heights, he also becomes owner of Thrushcross Grange, both against the wishes of the legacy of the families who had lived there. Further, Heathcliff's role as Catherine's soul-mate elicits the motif of the double, which is essential to the uncanny, as defined by Freud. Heathcliff and Catherine, as doubles, disturb the canny image of marriage and happy family, as they neither marry each other, nor stop loving each other, even after death. Thus, *Wuthering Heights* is a fundamental example of how the Gothic mode affects the image of home.

In *Jane Eyre*, the love story takes place in only one of four houses that the narrator, Jane, inhabits during the novel. Jane, like Heathcliff, is an orphan. She herself is the intrusion of the Gothic in the story because she is not accepted as part of the social norm. After Bertha burns down the house and maims Rochester and Jane discovers her inheritance, the two may be seen on an equal footing that establishes a new social order. Without the tradition symbolized by Thornfield Hall and the patriarchal law it evokes, Jane and Rochester are free to marry. In juxtaposition to *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* demonstrates how fire and currency can remake the social order so that love triumphs in life instead of in death.

The poetry of Emily Dickinson further explores the concept of the uncanny home in her utilization of house imagery to describe a fundamental anxiety pertaining to home and a liminal placement for her speaker in regard to home. While it may be said that, having read *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, Emily Dickinson was influenced by the concept of the uncanny home present in these works, Dickinson's perspective of home differs from the Brontës' in several ways. Many scholars attribute Dickinson's preoccupation with home as an

effect of her reclusive lifestyle, but it is also valid to posit that her dual vision of house as both sinister and comforting is part of a larger literary trend and based in Female Gothic fiction. In Dickinson's poetry, the image of home is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time; and just like for *Jane Eyre*, her poem-houses both welcome and reject her. Moreover, the house, its furniture, corners, walls, windows and doors hold deep significance for Dickinson. In the larger context of the Gothic, Dickinson's poetry contributes a phenomenology of home. Further, it reminds us that the canny and uncanny exist alongside each other, and that the possibility for the familiar, comforting home to become sinister and secretive is always there.

Echoes of the liminal exhibited in Dickinson's poetry may be found in "The Yellow Wallpaper." As a turn of the century text, "The Yellow Wallpaper" provides insight into the changing image of home at the end of the Victorian era and the period of time leading up to World War I, as well as connects with the issue of the madwoman hidden away in the attic that was raised in *Jane Eyre*. Like the Gothic double of Jane in *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha, the narrator is trapped in one of the upper rooms of a mansion commanded by a husband who thinks he knows best how to treat her mental disorder. Unlike Bertha, who destroys her house, however, in the case of the narrator and her wallpaper woman double, the two women become one: the mad, Gothic version of the narrator's self. The house, although preserved, has become a locus of haunting, and the narrator's husband is rendered dumb with shock at the intrusion of the Gothic.

The concept of psychological haunting presented in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is carried through to later texts, especially Daphne du Maurier's pre-WWI Gothic novel *Rebecca*, which contains both numerous echoes of the madness and longing for individuality of the "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the anxiety with regard to home and homelessness present in *Jane Eyre*. Rebecca, like Bertha, is the image of the dark double in the story. But unlike Bertha,

Rebecca's presence haunts the text to the point that the reader feels the manor house has already become Rebecca's possession. The narrator's anxiety that Rebecca's perfection haunts Manderley constitutes an uncanny presence, which signals a new, more psychological aspect to the Gothic home in modern literature.

Finally, Shirley Jackson's post-WWII novels *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* and *The Haunting of Hill House* have afforded further examples of how psychoanalysis, architecture and the socio-cultural context of a novel contribute to its place in the Gothic canon and the way the motif of the house is presented. The house in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is a personified, sacred presence to narrator Merricat. It is the only remnant of a fortune lost under vague circumstances, a key problem in Gothic texts. Further, Merricat's use of totems to protect her home and refusal to leave its burnt-out shell at the end of the story demonstrate that, in her madness, she is the destroyer of the patriarchal order from within the home itself, putting her in affinity with Rebecca and Bertha.

In juxtaposition to Merricat, *The Haunting of Hill House* features a weak, hen-pecked heroine, Eleanor. This story's power is based in its potential to evoke terror in the reader and to force the reader to question whether the haunting and paranormal activity within the house is real or a figment of Eleanor's imagination. This uncertainty draws upon the idea of uncanny, as well as the heritage of Gothic, to frighten. At the end of the story, the house is still standing, but the characters have all either died or departed. *The Haunting of Hill House* is therefore an exemplary text of the Gothic house, personified, affecting the social order.

Stories like *Rebecca* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* particularly illustrate the centrality of the image of the home as well as that subversion in Modern Gothic literature. They also give special attention to women's changing role in society, their struggle for independence, and the anxiety it arouses between the previous generation of women (mothers)

and a new generation of women who desire more creative autonomy (daughters). Their reliance on a discourse of haunting evokes folk traditions and the symbolic order, and leads into situations outside the realm of the familiar; the undeniably uncanny events that take place shatter the ideal of stability that the home represents and recalls taboos associated with those traditions. These two stories also extend the discourse of the Gothic's argument concerning the rational order versus its destruction by identifying the images of family and home as stable structures within society and then seeking to subvert them. This subversion is fundamental to the Modern Domestic Gothic; framed against the mixing of social classes, the decay of the physical structure of the home, and the murder of family members, nostalgia for a previous era of more formally structured existence compounds into an almost tangible anxiety.

The Modern Domestic Gothic offers images of the externalization of anxiety concerning identity within the family unit and solutions to family strife such as the purging of domesticity with hate and the destruction of the physical home.¹³⁴ While earlier generations of authors purged Gothic excess and ghosts from their tales through such devices as the patriarchic institution of marriage, the re-establishment of the Rational order or the finality of death, the Modern Gothic seems to point towards a different solution for the elements disturbing the social order in the home. The difference, perhaps, lies in the realism associated with the monstrosity of female anxiety present in the text. The anxiety towards the home is a

¹³⁴ As recently as 2011, current scholarship has started to discuss the first decade of 21st century Gothic writing. For essays on the most recent gothic novels by contemporary authors, see Danel Olsen (Ed.), *21st Century Gothic: Great Gothic Novels Since 2000*. This book of scholarly articles contains more than 50 essays on modern gothic short stories, whose authors are predominantly still living. It also contains a list of "honorable mentions"—other gothic novels and novellas that were not included for examination in the collection but which remain significant to the genre. For a more informal reading of modern American Gothic, see Mark Edmunson's *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic*. Although Edmunson's book is primarily on the Gothic in cinema and pop culture, he connects it to literature of the 18th and 19th centuries with a few gaps in between. He skips between many works including those of Radcliffe, Bloch and Oates as well as real life figures like serial killer Ted Bundy and fantastic horror films such as Freddie Kreuger.

grotesque and irrational presence menacing the characters themselves, haunting them with guilt and fear. Yet its origins are not located in the fantastic; they stem from real concerns about society's social structure, lack of information in intimate relationships, and even psychological or psychosomatic syndromes. Unable to confront these issues directly, the characters in Modern Gothic challenge them by attempting to (and succeeding in) the destruction of the home, the family and/or the house.

The role of anxiety, arising from both history and nostalgia evoked by the Gothic, expresses the conflict between the ideal image of the family impressed upon us by society and the reality that that "perfect" identity is impinged upon by the love and the hate that co-exist in every human relationship. In other words, familial relationships are not and cannot be perfect because people are not perfect; yet the socio-cultural construction known as the nuclear unit is considered stable, even utopian. As we have seen in the writings of John Ruskin, the acceptable image of home in the 19th century was one of ideal comfort and patriarchal order: the woman was ensnared in the home, her job to make it a sacred space for her husband, who engaged in the outside world rife with perceived evils. The Gothic attempts to subvert such a definition of home and family imposed by patriarchal society. Further, it seeks to reveal the essential uncanny nature of the home as a place with a dual nature, both canny and uncanny. In revealing the uncanny nature of home, the house may become an epicenter of transgression, imprisonment, anxiety and uncanny or horrific events.

The driving force behind the disturbance of identity is the focus on the motif of the home invaded by "otherness," which remains an essentially Gothic expression in all of the texts discussed in close reading in this essay. That otherness appears in many forms, such as the orphaned protagonist or antagonist, or the house possessed by paranormal activity. Otherness has further implications in the text, as the character's realization of that their ideal

home is fraught with uncanny events and people may cause a break with reality resulting in madness, as we have seen texts such as “The Yellow Wall-Paper” and *The Haunting of Hill House*.

The disturbance created by otherness alerts us to the existence of a discourse of a fundamental anxiety: anxiety with regard to one’s place within the family, as well as one’s place in the social hierarchy. And anxiety, in turn, allows the author to explore “otherness” as well as internal conflicts concerning “gender, creativity and desire” (Horner and Zlosnik, 12). The expression of these internal conflicts is essential to the Female Gothic canon. One way in which those internal conflicts play out regards the construction of and loss of identity, a process in which the house is an integral part. Identity’s connection to house/domestic space/motherhood and feminine anxiety is another key idea that has developed alongside our discussion of uncanny and Gothic house.

As with Rebecca in *Rebecca* and Merricat’s mother in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* call forth a real, undeniable, infectious image of motherhood, we understand motherhood to be central to the uncanny events and haunting of the home in the text. Thus, with regard to literary constructions of the modern home, topics of further study should include manifestations of the image of the mother within the discourse of the Domestic Gothic, especially those concerning the dual image of woman as motherly and monstrous. Moreover, because of the central role the image of mother plays in these two stories, it is of interest to further explore the image of woman as one not only central to the home, but also to the social structure and its subversion. As throughout the Gothic canon, the matriarchy haunts the patriarchy in the discourse of the Domestic Modern Gothic; in order to make further conclusions about the manifestations of and symbolism in the Gothic genre in the modern period, it is therefore necessary to deeply consider this complicated and uncanny phenomenon.

Finally, by considering the “haunting” that takes place on the plane of the uncanny and its potential for murder and hatred, important facets of the relationships and struggles between men and women within the family as expressed in literature will become evident.

The anxiety arising from the struggle for individuation within the family structure presents a turning point in the explorations of familial relations in literature that seek to subvert culturally assigned gender roles, which necessarily connects Gothic texts across the world. Gender, therefore, presents an opportunity for the author to add plot developments that astonish or shock, even while they still appear to accept existing socio-cultural constructions. These developments run the range from uncanny, such as the psychic protagonists and mythical nature of stories. Each text with Gothic symbolism or themes in world literatures should be examined for its interconnectivity to the motif of the house so that further conclusions may be drawn about the importance of this motif throughout literature as a whole.

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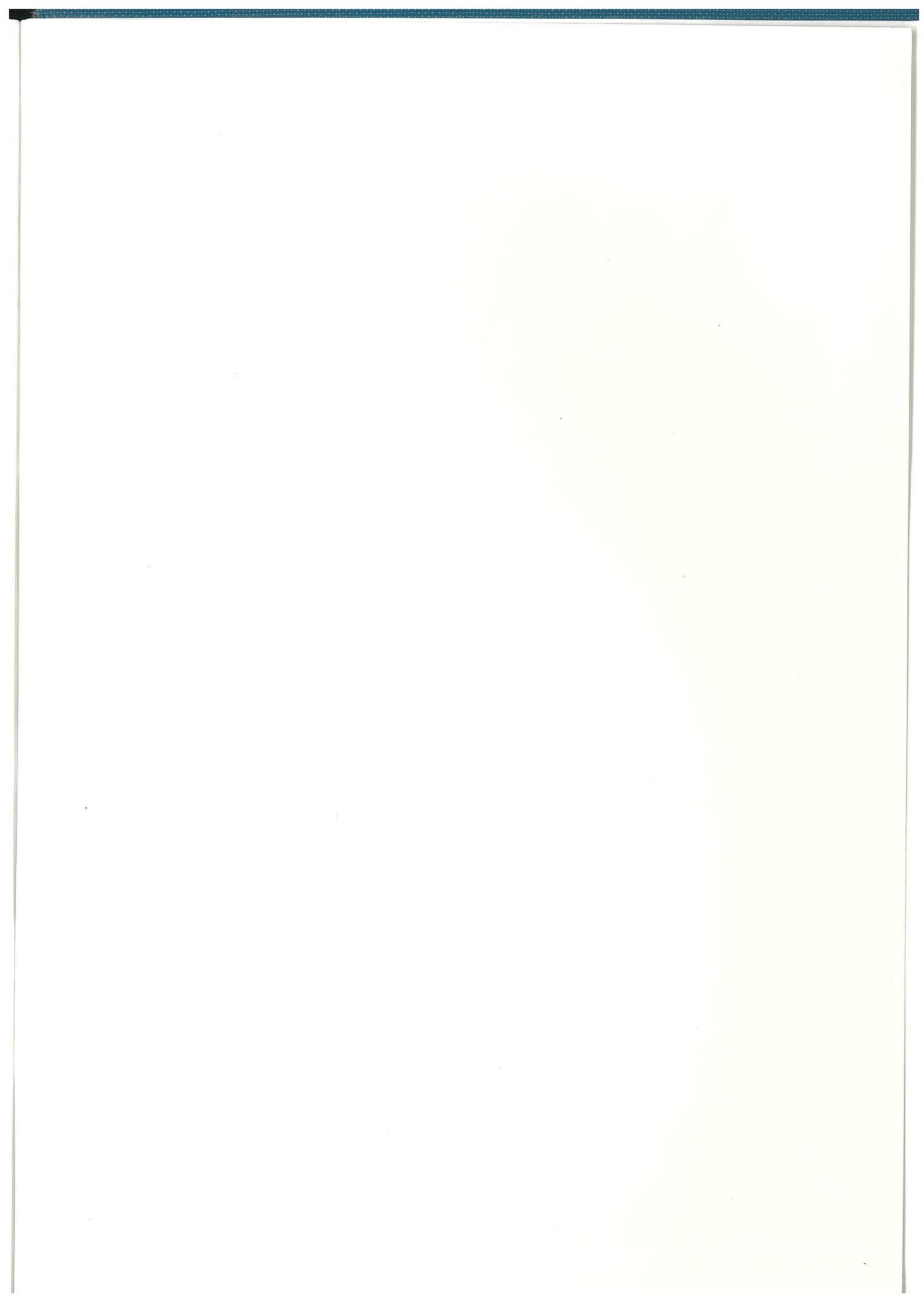
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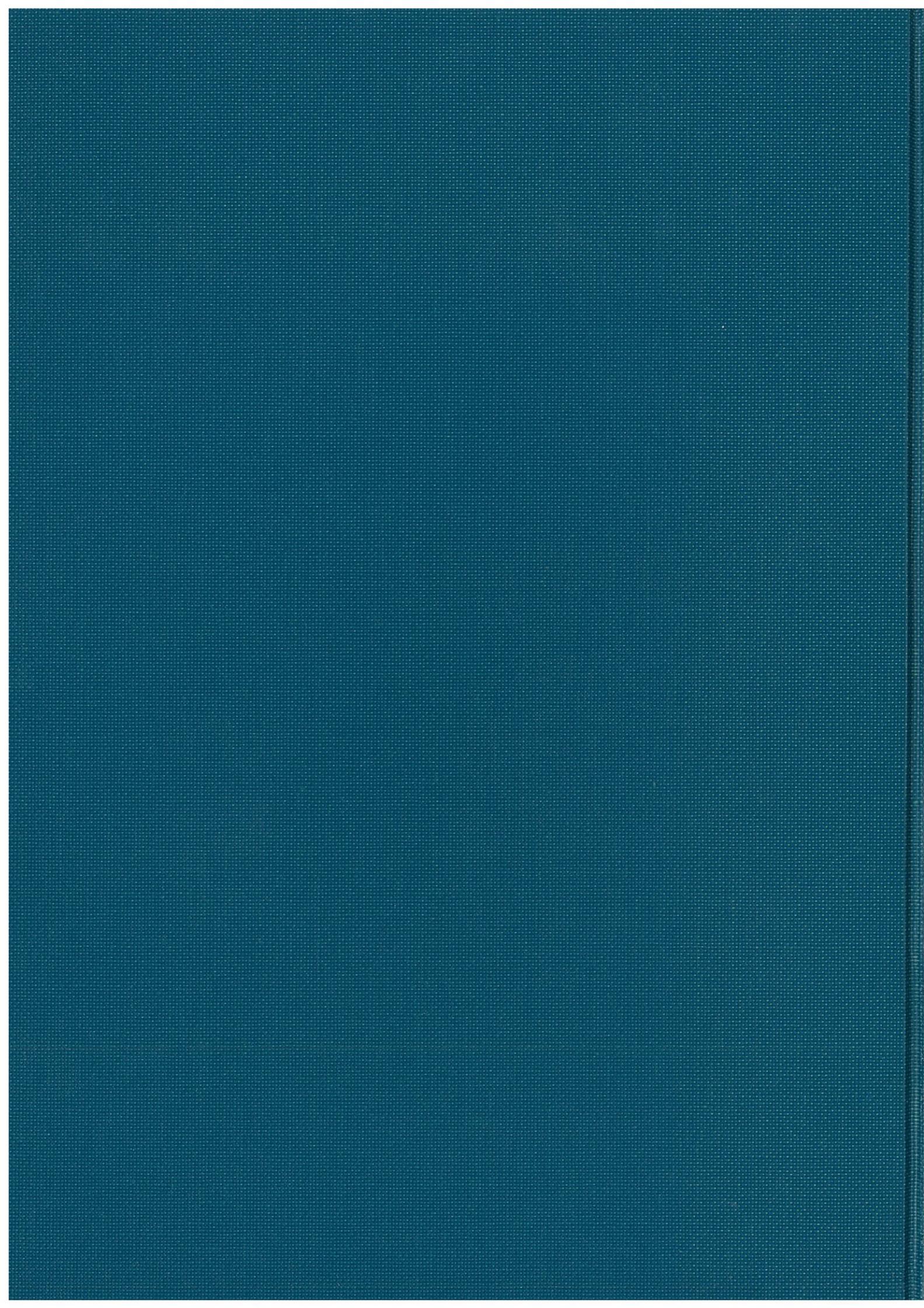
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