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**HOUSES AND HORROR: A SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY OF SPANISH
AND AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS**

Clara Pallejá-López

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature,
The University of Auckland, 2010

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of haunted house fiction written by women in Spain and the United States from around 1900 onwards. It focuses on the aspect of sentience in buildings, establishing a connection between women's sociocultural history and transformations in the trope of the haunted house. This study highlights the vague presence of the haunted house in Spanish fiction when compared to American literature, and presents two reasons that might account for this circumstance. The first seems to be an overall discouragement of horror and fantasy in Spain that can be traced back at least to the times of the Spanish Empire. The second, which stands as the more important, is the particular situation of women in Spain, where a confluence of sociocultural factors upheld the values of domesticity for longer than in the United States, notably the repression enforced by the Franco dictatorship until 1975.

I posit that the presence of the house in horror fiction grows in relation to women's envisioning of the home as the source of their oppression, and that this process is further nourished by underlying inherited anxieties resulting from women's legacy of domesticity. In particular, this study maintains that the sentient house is consolidated in literature the moment that women's primeval need for home enters into conflict with a rejection of domesticity. In order to illustrate this theory, I review work by American writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Elia W. Peattie, Shirley Jackson and Anne Rivers Siddons, and compare their narratives to those of Emilia Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos, Mercè Rodoreda, Carmen Martín Gaité, Pilar Pedraza and Cristina Fernández Cubas in Spain. This thesis contends that Spanish horror literature presents belated but parallel transformations in the trope of the sentient house, which confirm the intertwining of this trope with women's culture across time and space.

To Jaime Pallejá Martínez, my father, and to María Elena López Benlliure, my mother.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I am able to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Jan Cronin, to whom I will always be indebted for her guidance, wisdom, dedication to my work, and, most of all, endless support. I would also like to sincerely thank my co-supervisor, Christine Arkininstall, whose encouragement was crucial, both when I began my doctoral studies and throughout the writing of this thesis. I also want to thank Mike Hanne, who coordinated my supervising team and followed the progress of this thesis over the last four years. Warm thanks must also go to Gwyn Fox, who kindly proofread my work with her characteristic prowess, insightfulness and humour. I am also very grateful to Wendy-Llyn Zaza for her generous support during the last days before submission.

I must also express my gratitude to the Spanish Department in the School of European Languages and Literatures at the University of Auckland. The Spanish Department warmly welcomed me as a colleague on my arrival in New Zealand, and years later supported me in my doctoral studies. I feel very privileged for having been part of this remarkable team.

I would like to mention that I am very thankful to the University of Auckland for fully financing my doctoral studies through a Doctoral Scholarship.

Lastly, I must express my deepest gratitude to Santiago Franco Aixelá, Vanessa Enríquez Raído and Frank Austermuehl. Their friendship, support, and reassurance have been of enormous value to me, especially during the writing of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the different treatment of the house in women's horror and fantasy fiction in the United States and Spain, proposing that house imagery in horror reflects aspects of the social history of those countries, which are directly intertwined with women's dynamics with domestic space. My contention is that there is a tight connection between women's legacy of homemaking and the representation of the house in women's horror fiction. This study originates in what I will argue is a crucial contrast between horror fiction written in Spanish and English. When reading English-language fantasy and horror written around the 1900s, I noticed a prominent presence of the haunted house, particularly in works written by women in the United States.¹ I also found that it was in women's fiction from the mid-twentieth century that the haunted house presents full sentience or awareness. In contrast with what I had appreciated in American women's fiction, the presence of the house in Spanish horror and fantasy remained surprisingly vague.² Furthermore, after searching for instances of haunted house stories, I realised that, excepting a limited number of ghost stories, in Spain there was a virtual lack of haunted house fiction, especially of narratives containing sentient houses. This thesis is the result of my efforts to account for this difference.

Due to its comparative nature, the literary part of this study is divided into two main blocks: the American section, and the Spanish section. The first section consists of an overview of haunted house stories written in English, focusing on

¹ Unless otherwise specified, I will use "American" throughout this thesis as an adjective referring to the United States, since this thesis majorly focuses on the literatures produced and read in this country.

² In my study, the use of the adjective "Spanish" refers to the nationality of Spain, and not to all works written in the Spanish language.

stories written by American women in the last century. Correspondingly, the second section reviews relevant works written by Spanish women writers.

This literary analysis is preceded by an exposition of the concepts of the house and horror that inform this sociocultural study of the haunted house. Thus, Chapter 1 sets up the study by reflecting on the psychological dimensions of the home. Since this thesis examines the representation of the haunted house in modern horror fiction, it is essential to understand what the house represents for the human mind. When considering the way humans see themselves in relation to their homes, there seems to be an exclusive and complex bond between people and homes that should be studied on different levels, as it is multifaceted and creates powerful emotional attachments. I will put forward evidence that houses, and in particular the idea of “home,” are of great importance to humans, and by extension, how houses in literature have potential as symbols to illustrate tellingly other implicit dimensions of the story. Given that the literary works analysed in this thesis fall within the category of horror fiction, a study of the subtexts of the narratives is particularly meaningful, since horror, as I will explain, plays on particular human anxieties which often have not assumed a full, articulate form.

The question of why the human mind experiences simultaneous attraction to and rejection of what appears frightening is one that has been considered repeatedly in the past and is known as the paradox of horror (Carroll 159). Oddly enough, it is part of the human mind to be curious about what is feared. Nightmares, horror entertainment, amusement parks and some sports work on this principle of the appeal of danger in order to deal with the fear. In this way, it is believed that danger and horror might have a therapeutic function for the human psyche, releasing tensions throbbing in minds and smoothing psychological pressure points. According

to this understanding, behind some nightmares stands a real conflict that is being confronted and dealt with by the unconscious. Similarly, amusement parks and a number of risk sports rehearse a physically threatening situation, providing the satisfaction that results from its successful challenge. This is an evolutionary strategy, derived from the evidence that all human beings descend from ancestors who successfully surmounted or escaped dangers.

If what was feared said so much about who we were, it would then follow that horror fiction would speak of the anxieties of the readers and writers of the text. Sigmund Freud's work opened the door for the consideration of such literature from this perspective in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919). Since Freud, parallelisms between horror icons and sociopolitical tensions have been repeatedly drawn, as for example the rise of the vampire at times of strong sexual morality and disease (King, *Danse* 84), or fear of aliens at the time of the Cold War (178), to name but two. Among these literary icons of horror stands the haunted house. My study ponders the paradox of horror in relation to the haunted house, considering that developments in the paradigm of the haunted house could be the result of tensions in the societies which produced them. In particular, if the house stands in such a prominent place in the human mind, it seems logical that, given women's historical connection with the home, the significance of the house in women's horror fiction would be doubly loaded.

Chapter 2 embarks on the literary analysis. It reviews major transformations in the trope of the haunted house in twentieth-century literature, and highlights the fact that most of the changes appear to be wrought by American women writers. The significance of the gender of the writers suggests that particular circumstances exclusive to women's sociocultural history and a legacy of domesticity might be

determinant in the literary transformations of the haunted house. Writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Elia W. Peattie and Edith Wharton show an increasing sensitivity to house imagery, which shifts the emphasis from the ghost to the building itself. I will suggest that this shift seems linked to the transformations occurring in these writers' societies. A limited presence of Catholic morality in the United States, and major political episodes such as America's involvement in World War I and participation in WWII, directly affected horror entertainment. More specifically, women's intermittent input as an active labouring force and the negotiations of domestic space in the 1940s and 1950s awakened contradictory feelings of need and resentment towards the home, which ultimately resulted in the appearance of the sentient haunted house in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* in 1959.

The position of Jackson's book as a turning point in the genre of the haunted house is confirmed in the work of subsequent male and female writers, where sentience remains a major component of their narratives. However, as *The House Next Door* by Anne Rivers Siddons shows in the 1970s, women writers appear to employ pure sentience as a literary strategy, while male authors tend to rely on more violent resources, demonology or human agents. This difference reinforces the theory that women's history of domesticity is intertwined with the haunted house and therefore with the appearance of sentient houses, allowing women to exploit architectural space for the purposes of horror narratives to a greater degree than their male counterparts.

If this much proves true about American women and the haunted house, it is then likely that the corresponding lack of such exploitation of domestic space in Spanish women's writing might also be connected to Spain's social history. Bearing in mind the different understanding of haunting observed in male and female

American writers, as will be explored in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 then prepares to focus on Spanish women writers in search of a similar correlation between women's position and the representation of the house in horror.

I will argue that Spanish fiction reveals a very limited exploitation of the house for the purposes of horror when compared to its American counterpart for two reasons. The first is the overall reduced volume of fantasy and horror in Spanish literature as a result of historical circumstances. The second reason pertains to the particular situation of women in Spain, where a convergence of politics, patriarchy and Catholicism resulted in women's attention being channeled more towards homemaking than in other European and American countries.

I therefore contemplate Spanish 'horror' works in the context of women's history, paying attention to the key differences in women's experience in the United States and Spain. In Spain there was a greater presence of Catholic censorship, which translated into a repression of Gothic forms of expression and an emphasis on domesticity. These factors presented women with an order revolving around homemaking, which they questioned to a lesser extent than their American counterparts. The writers of the early twentieth century who do present feminist concerns mostly overlook issues of homemaking and systematically focus on the male as the problem. In this way, it could be said that they do not show evidence of literary advances made by their American contemporaries, who had moved on to focus on the home as the problem. As an illustration of horror stories that do not appreciate the claustrophobic problem of homemaking but who do present an intuitive concern with space, I analyse works by Emilia Pardo Bazán and Carmen de Burgos.

As the twentieth century moves forward, political differences in the history of the two countries increase. Spain was not militarily involved in World War I and World War II, which prevented women from experiencing work outside the home. Well away from combat, American women had assumed the responsibility of physically running a country that was becoming increasingly prosperous: a real practice of independence from the home. In contrast, Spain remained neutral in WWI; and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) had provided no comparable opportunities, as during the war women had instead been occupied with simply surviving. In the traumatic aftermath of the Civil War, Spanish women were grateful if they had a roof to shelter them.

The war was followed by an international embargo and decades of the Franco dictatorship, which suppressed most of women's freedoms and rights. While it is true that major political advances for women had been achieved in the early 1930s in Spain, these were abruptly interrupted by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, when Spain was devastated. The sociocultural context of twentieth-century Spain prevented women from questioning where they stood in relation to homemaking and domesticity. The civil rights approved in the early 1930s during the Second Republic felt like a glimpse of theoretical rights which few women put into practice, and could not possibly permeate society in the way practical experience did in the USA. It is my belief that women's lack of direct experience outside the home, above any other circumstance, is what determines the differences in the respective texts.

While American women in the 1950s showed a tangible discontent, Spanish women did not make use of their awareness of the limitations of domesticity until much later. This accounts for the few Spanish horror texts that depict claustrophobic homes and houses. I examine the work of two writers, Mercè Rodoreda and Carmen

Martín Gaité, as representative of the post Civil War period. Rodoreda, who fled Spain after the war and remained in exile until late in life, exemplifies a woman who was not subject to the fascist indoctrination of the Franco regime. By contrast, Martín Gaité, slightly younger, stayed in Spain, experiencing both the repression and the state emphasis on women's domesticity. Even though neither Rodoreda nor Martín Gaité produced a standard haunted house story, the spatial imagery of their narratives denotes greater intuitions of architecture as a tool for claustrophobia than their Spanish predecessors, showing particular sensitivity towards dynamics of space. In the case of Rodoreda, architectural imagery is aimed at enhancing the trauma of exile, showing a progression towards Gothic imprisonment in later stories. Similarly, while still failing to produce a haunted house narrative, Martín Gaité's imagery manages to convey a feeling of claustrophobia and unhomeliness which is reminiscent of American writers over half a century earlier.

Although the works of both Rodoreda and Martín Gaité differ from those of their American counterparts, they confirm that there is a particular manipulation of house imagery inherent to women across time and space, and which has its roots in histories of domesticity. Their production proves, I will contend, that the particular circumstances in Spain interrupted what would have been a natural questioning of the values of domesticity. The concluding chapter of my thesis, Chapter 4, evaluates Spanish literature from the 1970s onwards in search of evidence that might confirm my theory regarding the belatedness of sentient haunted house narratives in Spain. If the scarcity of haunted houses in Spanish women's writing corresponds to the repression of both horror and women, it should then follow that after the political transition to democracy and the advent of women's full civil and social rights, Spanish literature would open to the Gothic and horror and to a re-evaluation of the

idea of home. More importantly, it would imply that architectural imagery crafted by women writers should show an awakening and a materialisation of women's responses to an inherited legacy of domesticity. Their awareness of prior entrapment would be manifest in their portrayals of the home, which would present signs of the contradictory feelings of rejection and need for the home observed in American women of the 1950s, and which would be exploited for the arousal of horror.

Indeed, I will endeavour to show that late twentieth-century fiction from Spain confirms the above assumptions by increasing the presence of the house in horror fiction and thus verifying the determining force of women's legacy of domesticity on representations of the house. For the first time, in the recent decades Spanish fiction presents a writer whose work can, at the very least, be labelled Gothic: Pilar Pedraza. Not only can Pilar Pedraza be classified as one of the first authors committed to writing horror fiction; she presents consistent portrayals of the house in which claustrophobia and architectural imagery become key for the purposes of the plot. For instance, confinement resulting in monster-women, which appeared as early as the nineteenth century in English literature, comes to full form in the work of Pedraza. I will review a selection of Pedraza's stories, highlighting how they echo much earlier narratives written within the American literary tradition. The second writer in whom I will claim to find confirmation of my theory of belatedness as a result of sociopolitical repression is Cristina Fernández Cubas, who places implausible architectural spaces centre stage in her narratives of fantasy and horror. My thesis concludes by identifying a late story by Fernández Cubas in which a building features unequivocal traits of sentience. Together, the works by Pedraza and Cubas show signs of the closing of the era of repression of horror fiction in Spain, and prove

fertile ground for an exploration of my hypothesis regarding a universal intertwining of women's social history with the narrative of the house in horror.

CHAPTER 1

HOME, FEAR AND THE HUMAN MIND

Twentieth-century research in the human sciences suggests that the house in narratives deserves further attention beyond being regarded as the setting of the story. The impact of the idea of the home on the human mind is believed to generate intense psychological and emotional attachments which determine the way people relate to space and organise reality. The first half of this chapter, thus, consists of a compilation of different insights into the concept of home, all of which converge into highlighting a primeval human need for the home. The most significant advance in the study of the house is likely to be the rise of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytical methods shifted the attention of psychology from what was more of a literal one-to-one communication between patient and therapist to the world of symbols and hidden meanings. For the first time, houses were studied as a gateway to the unconscious. Today, the analysis of houses has extended to other areas such as philosophy, architecture, sociology and lastly—most relevant to a study of the haunted house in fiction—literary criticism. As I progress, I will point out the relevance of these studies to the production of several theories of literary criticism, as well as to the ways of reading a text.

Given that this thesis examines the representation of the haunted house in horror fiction, in the second half of the chapter I review a selection of writings that have identified a connection between human anxieties, fear, and the way these can be traced in the horror text. In particular, I focus on the theories that explain the paradoxical appeal of horror as resulting from its therapeutic and evolutionary function. As I will indicate, this therapeutic function often works across wide

spectrums of people sharing similar anxieties, which is a point of great relevance when studying the latent tensions that might lie beneath women's haunted house fiction. Lastly, I conclude the chapter by pointing out recent scientific findings which, coinciding with the theoretical observations of collective anxieties, posit evidence of the genetic transmission of group fear, and specifically highlight an exclusive gender response to particular fears.

1.1 The Significance of Home to the Human Mind

Emotional response to a house is a common human trait which has received an increasing amount of attention in recent decades. Interwoven with the primeval need for shelter, seem to be other aspects which only recently are receiving deserved attention. Professor of Architecture and Landscape at Berkeley, Clare Cooper Marcus, carried out a twenty-year-long study of these relations. She describes these dynamics as follows:

[There] is a very simple yet frequently overlooked premise: As we change and grow throughout our lives, our psychological development is punctuated not only by meaningful emotional relationships with people, but also by close affective ties with a number of significant physical environments, beginning in childhood. That these person-place relationships have been relatively ignored is partly due to the ways in which we have chosen to "slice up" and study the world. (4)

Marcus found that behind the idea of "home" always stand profound human feelings associated with the intimate spheres of the person. To define the essence of what makes a house a home therefore remains elusive.

A justification of the emotional attachment to a house merely based on nostalgia for moments shared with other beings does not fully account for the curious question of the human/house bond. Feelings towards houses are often unconnected to people, in the same way that they are not necessarily directly linked to the amount of time spent in the building. To this end, there are houses that instantly feel welcoming and, at the same time, there are places which regardless of the occupants or the furnishings feel unhomely. Witold Rybczynski, professor of architecture and an architect himself, identified these emotional tensions in his clients, defining his experience as follows:

I had designed and built houses, and the experience was sometimes disturbing, for I found that the architectural ideals that I had been taught in school frequently disregarded—if they did not altogether contradict—my clients' conventional notions of comfort . . . I found myself turning again and again to memories of old houses, and older rooms, and trying to understand what had made them feel so right, so comfortable. (viii)

Like Rybczynski, other architects, developers and planners have recently started to take these compelling feelings into consideration, wondering which architectural features could meet the emotional needs of potential buyers in order to improve their sales. Significantly, the idea of finding the right house is not directly related to the wealth of the seeker. Some people can afford several houses but feel alienated in all of them, while others feel “at home” in strikingly modest houses. Some may be mystified as to why they chose an inappropriate house for their needs—too small or too big for example—, only to discover later that these houses reminded them of real or imaginary buildings from their past which still reverberated in their unconscious.

Since the 1970s, environmental psychology and sociologists have appealed to the concept of “dwelling” in an attempt to measure the liveability of a place (Flade 72). The findings point to an intimate connection between the person and the building, by which the subject personalises the living space with her or his own persona, transforming a generic house into an individual home (72). This happens because, for deeply engrained reasons, humans react strongly to spatial spectrums such as the dwelling, the home country, the region and the neighbourhood, these being “the spaces people fight for and grieve over” (Douglas Porteous 159).

The close association between the physical space of the home and the self is actually a determinant component of our society and is used by the social order in several ways. An example of its importance is the acknowledgement of the need to personalise space. Teenagers often display posters, photos, clothes, etc. in disarray, thus making a statement about identity by the way they (dis)organise their space, even though their identities might not be developed yet. This attitude of proclaiming the identity in what is one’s own private space is prolonged in the current obsession with home decoration and entertainment and the renovation of homes (Lewis and Cho 74). Examples of an institutionalised manipulation of the personalisation of space can be seen in the contrast between prisons and organisations like the army. When one is stripped of all freedom, the inmate is permitted to bring personally meaningful effects so that they help the assimilation of reclusion, in order to minimise potential conflict. Conversely, when society wishes to mould into a whole a group of individuals who do have the option of leaving anytime (army or religious orders, for example), this connection with the home is consistently precluded, and the attention of the group is deliberately focused away from personal items (Marcus 11). The prominent place of home in our society has also created social contradictions. For

instance, in many countries it is mandatory to have an official identification document, while there are no regulations about having a residential address. However, in these same countries a person without a fixed address is viewed suspiciously and in Western society, is labelled as “hobo” or transient. A lack of abode can be a serious, if not absolute, impediment to finding a job, voting, opening an account or, ironically, renting a place to live (Marcus 4).

There is further evidence of the human need for a healthy relationship with the home in that disturbances can result in psychological disorders. When the home does not feel right—as for instance, homes with a lack of privacy or homes that are remarkably isolating—the situation can adversely affect mental health (Ewans et al. 529-30). Common disorders are what Marcus labelled as “domocentrism” and “domophobia.”¹ Domocentrics are profoundly connected to their house, and this relationship becomes a substitute for and barrier to a healthy interaction with other people (Marcus 82). Domophobics conversely feel secure in open spaces; they experience anxiety and discomfort at the thought of spending time in a home or having a fixed address, and find it extremely difficult to feel “at home” anywhere. Both conditions stem from the same primeval need for a harmonious relationship with architectural space.

Marcus explored the reactions of people who had lost their homes, and concluded that generally this was an emotionally demanding experience, which required a mourning period: “When the home is lost, the loss of the house has to be acknowledged and grieved before our consciousness opens up to new possibilities,” (14). The most difficult loss scenario occurs when the building is destroyed. “Houses live and die. So do villages and city neighbourhoods. It seems a natural process. . . .

¹ Individuals who suffer from this condition have also been referred to as “philobats” by Michael Balint (228).

Unfortunately, individuals continue to develop attachments to buildings, . . . [and] so often these attachments come to grief when the objects of attachment – places – are destroyed” (Douglas Porteous 151). When houses are deliberately destroyed or assaulted by third parties, in what has been referred to as “domicide” (151), the occupants’ response to the attack has been noted as extremely intense. Similarly, when houses are broken into, people respond with a sense of violation and grief, as the house is felt to be part of the self. People whose houses have been burgled often scrub those houses as if their own physical bodies, as opposed to wood and bricks, had been breached (Marcus 243).

As all this evidence suggests, the relationship with the home seems to go beyond the past or present human interaction held within the premises. It occurs autonomously in a one-to-one emotional connection with the house itself that is not based on the human group. In this regard, it could be argued that to a certain extent, the home complements and expands the self. To trace the point where this identification with the home begins, it is necessary to appeal to developmental psychology. This area of psychology confirms that the feelings for the house, which originate in early childhood, are independent from the family group. When the child begins to acquire knowledge of the world, the child “recognises various objects by the sense of touch alone” (Piaget, *Space* xii). In the early years of life, thus, what is real is what is tangibly accessible, and is usually comprised of the home. The first home is linked to the person’s most fundamental identity and psyche because the two are undifferentiated. Given that early exploration of the world is based on “‘proximity’, corresponding to the simplest type of perceptual structurization” (Piaget, *Space* 6), the young child is not capable of distinguishing himself from his surroundings, which implies that the family home appears to be an extension of the

body in as much as the own self is an extension of the family house (Piaget, *World* 126). Furthermore, the child infers that all objects which present a certain measure of activity are in fact animated (174, 250). The home, thus, with constant activity such as opening and closing doors and windows, noises or lighting modification, is very much a living extension of the child, a seemingly animated first universe rather than a purely architectural structure. This deepest laid association between the home and the person is carried throughout life.

The leap from the home-world to the outer-world when children are old enough to attend school is a major mental milestone, in that they cross well defined physical boundaries and structures that separate home from the vast outside world in which they will later live. In *The Poetics of Space* (1958), the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard defines leaving the home as an enormous transition (7). While it is true that infants exit their home on a regular basis, their relationship with the world outside is purely contemplative and normally takes place from a pram or a car, without physical access to what they see before them. Following Piaget and Bachelard's ideas, it could be argued that most of the time there is no difference between what children see from the pram and what they see on the television in the lounge, and so to the child the outside world is not corporeal and equally fictitious.

The imprint left on the adult psyche by the childhood home is a permanent link to the childhood universe. It becomes a symbol of the lost comfort zone, where ninety percent of what was tangible was contained within the walls of the family home and safe. As the child grows older, traces of that connection with what was once understood as part of one's own self are likely to remain. The need for harmony with the place we inhabit is therefore explained by the fact that, at one time, it was constituted as part of the self and, for a long time, it was all that was real.

In the last decades, this earlier connection between the self and the home has in fact been used as a means to understand early human development. After several decades of worldwide travel studying different architectures from different cultures, architect and educator Olivier Marc noted that the way children see themselves is intimately related to their portrayal of houses, which become symbols for their emotional, mental, and even physical processes (Marc 76). Marc came to the conclusion that not only do houses represent the different cultures they stem from, but also that in all cultures, interestingly, the drawings of houses by children symbolise the individual human being. Furthermore, houses can stand as figurative representations of human trauma. Children will reach out to adults when they are in physical pain but are often reticent when it comes to talking about their emotional conflicts, as they fear their feelings might not be approved of by their elders. Marc describes this close link as follows:

[A]s he draws, the child is also constructing his self, disclosing to himself his own hesitations, obsessions, inhibitions or fears. . . . He is consumed by emotions which he lacks the experience to hold in check . . . [a]nd so the child draws himself as he draws his house; sad or smiling, open or closed, pleasant or aggressive, welcoming or forbidding, the houses take the form of so many facial expressions. At first the house he draws is symmetrical, as he is; sometimes it is a face, sometimes the representation of his whole physique, very often both. The house can be a face whose roof is a hat, or its frame may resemble the child's body. (76-77)

House drawings can represent permanent or durable states of mind, but they may also reveal a momentary condition or a fleeting mindset. In his research, this

architect came upon the circumstance that children who had a temporary physical condition would, until healed, depict the house accordingly. For instance, children with injured legs would draw leaning houses (Marc 77). Bachelard also notes the association between the house and the “psychic state” of the child in that the representation of houses “bespeak intimacy,” stressing that these drawings appear to illustrate the children’s distress (72).²

Considering the close association between home and person, it is not surprising that psychology appeals to this deep bond between humans and houses in order to understand the mind behind a representation of a house. The studies that link the house to the human mind first took place in the area of the interpretation of dreams. Initially, dreams were looked at as premonitions, and houses were often interpreted literally as sheltering structures. However, there are early records of houses being interpreted on a psychological level and analysed as symbols representing other aspects of the dreamer’s life.

One of the earliest records of the study of houses on a symbolic level is Artemidorus Daldianus’s study of dreams (second century AD). The diviner Artemidorus wrote the five-volume Greek work, the *Oneirocritica*, where he studied the symbolic potential of some objects. Allegedly, he was the first to formally identify the connection between the house and the human body in a section that he titled “The House, Image of the Self.” He realised that in one’s dream the house stood for the very person, thus reflecting activity going on in the psyche, therefore becoming part of the inner landscape (Marc 67). His writings expose an understanding of

² In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard comments on the work done by the psychiatrist F. Minkowska, who analysed house drawings by holocaust children, including those of children in hiding spots such as false ceilings or wardrobes, as for example the case of F. Steinkeller. The houses drawn by both holocaust victims and children in hideaways invariably reflected the feelings of the child at that moment. For more information see Bachelard (72) and the exhibition *Life in Shadows*.

houses and similar structures as an expansion of the human body, standing as symbols of a person's fear of physical vulnerability. He explains how a lack of a house would therefore indicate a lack of security: "[S]omeone dreamt that his wall had been broken through . . . all those things refer to the body" (Artemidorus 199). He goes on to amplify this description as "[a]ll objects that surround our person like, for example, a cloak, a house, a wall, a ship, and similar things, signify one another (199). Artemidorus's interpretation of the meaning of houses presents a psychological insight, as opposed to a merely premonitory precedent.

Artemidorus took the first step in a trend which would reach its peak in the emergence of psychoanalysis. One of the first psychoanalysts to expand on the interpretation of the house was Wilhelm Stekel (1868-1940). He associated the house with the body of the dreamer, reading houses in terms of sexual anxieties (Stekel 420), and also expanded on the significance of houses by equating a former home with a person's past. A person who, in dreams, lives in his old house, is a person who cannot face the present time: "He lives in the old house, that is to say in the past" (439). By reading the building chronologically, Stekel shows that the house can function as a projection not only of a person, but also of the person's past, highlighting the potential for the house to symbolise the individual in a different moment in time.

The turning point in the interpretation of houses as symbols takes place with Carl G. Jung (1875-1961). Jung's metaphor of the house as a symbol for the mind is possibly the most widely acknowledged to date:

I dreamed that I was in "my home," apparently on the first floor, in a cosy, pleasant sitting room furnished in the manner of the 18th century. I was astonished that I had never seen this room before, and began to wonder

what the ground floor was like. I went downstairs and found the place was rather dark, with panelled walls and heavy furniture dating from the 16th century or even earlier. My surprise and curiosity increased. I wanted to see more of the whole structure of this house. So I went down to the cellar, where I found a door opening onto a flight of stone steps that led to a large vaulted room. The floor consisted of large slabs of stone and the walls seemed very ancient. I examined the mortar and found it was mixed with splinters of brick. Obviously the walls were of Roman origin. I became increasingly excited. In one corner, I saw an iron ring on a stone slab. I pulled up the slab and saw yet another narrow flight of steps leading to a kind of cave, which seemed to be a prehistoric tomb, containing two skulls, some bones, and broken shards of pottery. Then I woke up.

(Symbols 42-43)

Jung interpreted this house as an image of his own mind, in which the different levels stood for layers of his consciousness or unconscious, reflecting as well the evolution of his psyche. He explained his dreams in the following manner:

It was plain to me that the house represented a kind of image of the psyche—that is to say, of my then state of consciousness, with hitherto unconscious additions. Consciousness was represented by the salon. It had an inhabited atmosphere, in spite of its antiquated style.

The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is the world of the primitive man within myself—a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness. The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the

animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before man laid claim to them. (*Memories* 184)

Later on in his life, Jung used this dream to illustrate the way the human mind works. Thanks to his analysis, we can now use these psychological principles when considering dreams about houses (especially the roof and foundations), to identify meanings corresponding to the various parts of the dreamer's psyche.

When Jung expanded this metaphor by making specific references to attic/cellar imagery, he made an insightful association between house imagery as a symbol for buried anxieties in the mind. He uses this polarized imagery to represent the conscious/unconscious and to illustrate the phenomenon of repression. Gaston Bachelard builds on this dual image by incorporating the notion of fear. Quoting Jung, he posits: "Here the conscious acts like a man who, hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, hurries to the attic and, finding no burglars there decides, consequently, that the noise was pure imagination. In reality, this prudent man did not venture into the cellar" (Bachelard 19).³ Subsequently, he builds on Jung's metaphor as follows:

In the attic rats and mice can make considerable noise. But . . . the creatures moving about in the cellar are slower, less scampering, more mysterious. In the attic, fears are easily "rationalized." Whereas in the cellar . . . rationalization is less rapid and less clear; also is never *definitive*. In the attic, the day's experiences can always efface the fears of night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls. (Bachelard 19)

³ Bachelard is citing Carl Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

In Bachelard's contribution, we can see where human anxieties would fit into the metaphor of the house of the human mind. Significantly, Bachelard positions anxieties not coming from the outside as in Artemidorus's or Stekel's analysis. Instead, they are placed inside the house, exemplifying the mind's processing of trouble by locking fears out in the lower layers of the mind, a place where they can remind the psyche of their presence so that they can be exercised and eventually exorcised. It is significant that anxieties and fears are visualised as part of the metaphorical house of the mind by Jung and Bachelard, revealing that such fears are part of what constitutes ourselves and what feels close or familiar to our experience. In 1919, Sigmund Freud presented a theory which precisely connected the idea of home with what is familiar and with horror. According to his theory of "the uncanny," what a person finds most unsettling is what touches or is related to the person's own home or what is most familiar: "this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed" (Freud 148). In this essay, he defines the word "heimlich" in his native language: "Heimlich, adj.: belonging to the house, to the family, or: regarded as belonging to it . . . 'intimate, cosily homely; arousing a pleasant feeling of quiet contentment, etc., of comfortable repose and secure protection, like the enclosed, comfortable house' (126-27). "Unheimlich," however, is defined as "what was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open" (132). Merging the two definitions together, Freud comes up with the following logic: "[The] word *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory, but very different from each other—the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden" (132). Here we see the same duality found in Jung's attic/cellar images.

The house therefore, is not entirely to be trusted, as it allows for the possibility that things which are safely hidden (in psychoanalytical language “repressed”), might to our horror unexpectedly reveal themselves.

In his theory of the uncanny, Freud posits that there is a unique quality about what is familiar to us, so that when it turns against us it becomes all the more disturbing and frightening. Freud proposes that our prior acquaintance with an object or place could be the precise property that makes the object/place particularly frightening to us. With regard to houses, the whole essay is presented in terms of familiarity with the family home, since the house emerges as the one entity/structure that hosts most of what can make us vulnerable. The house is at once what shelters us and conceals from the outside that which for various reasons should remain hidden. Most importantly, Freud’s theory of the uncanny once again acknowledges people’s feelings of trust and human attachment to the home, which account for the sense of disorientation and betrayal when the home revolts against us. Reminding the reader of Piaget’s observations about children and their surroundings, Freud notes that there are “particularly favourable conditions generating feelings of the uncanny if intellectual uncertainty is aroused as to whether something is inanimate or animate” since children make no sharp distinction between these two categories (Freud 140-41). When this happens, former pleasurable feelings of safety are transformed into unsettling emotions. A feeling of betrayal is triggered when something trusted becomes contemplated as an enemy; however, our former attachment to this new enemy prevents us from letting go.

Freud’s ideas, which linked the literal and the repressed, have had a decisive influence on literary criticism. If Freud’s theory revolved around what was included in the home and therefore was familiar, Maria Tatar has explored specifically the

uncanniness of buildings in a selection of emblematic houses in English fiction. She concludes that, indeed, what made them mysterious was precisely that the houses stood on the border between the familiar and the strange:

[O]ne obvious point of departure for a study of the uncanny is the home. If we begin by looking at some of the familiar places in literature, it may be possible to recognize just what makes them mysterious or eerie. What, in short, makes a house *unheimlich*, or haunted? It is precisely in the border area between the familiar and the strange—at the point where *heimlich* and *unheimlich* merge in the meaning to suggest the sinister or treacherous—. (Tatar 169)

Tatar's ideas about houses indicate that for an eery effect to be created there have to be conflicting forces. In other words, danger in a building alone does not create an effect of the uncanny; an effective haunted house story requires a balancing positive force. This might be familiarity, acquaintance with the occupants, or a trait with which the observer identifies or feels attracted towards.

The prominent place of the house in fiction highlighted by Tatar has been noted by other critics. The relevance of architecture for the understanding of the literary text is highlighted by Ellen Eve Frank, according to whom it is human nature for an individual to attempt to automatically place her or himself in relation to a building as part of that self's interaction with the environment. Because of this disposition, locations and buildings can function as spatial pointers, impacting on the reader's understanding of the literary work as a whole:

[Man] and the world are composed of the same elements which either are or have the illusion of being spatial-temporal, . . . he imagines his consciousness or experience to be bounded or located in particular

space, within white walls, bodies, time, while what is outside his personal realm he imagines to be boundless as he thinks the universe is boundless. Because of this structural correspondence, we may read all structures . . . with a mental ruler and a table of equivalents. . . . A building . . . is also a building of meaning. (Frank 6-7)

Indeed, it appears that the grasping of the spatial structure of a story is central to the construction of meaning. A story set in an undefined moment in time seems easier to seize than a story lacking spatial references, which, as a consequence, appears fluid and unstable. House imagery, which, as we have seen, figures prominently in the human understanding of space, functions as a psychic anchor when it comes to the creation of meaning.

The prevalence of architecture in fiction can crucially be discerned in children's literature. Recent studies have revealed that society trains children to focus on house imagery more than they or we might be aware. Together with the children's direct experience of the privileged position of the family home in Western culture, children's literature persistently presents house imagery. The internalisation of this imagery results in what could be referred to as an "over-susceptibility" to representations of the house which will accompany them all their lives. Psychologist Virginia L. Wolf carried out a study in which she examined children's literature about houses and its effects on the child reader. In her work, Wolf highlights the large quantity of houses in works written for children, and analyses the consequences for them as adult readers:

Images of home abound in children's literature. . . . In *Fairy Tales and After*, Roger Sale emphasizes the importance of snug and cosy places throughout the history of children's literature. . . . My impression is not

only that home is the dominant place in children's literature, but also that the house is the chief form . . . [this dominant place] takes. (54)

Once again following Piaget's ideas of oneness with the home, Wolf explains that "the celebration of place in children's literature is essentially a celebration of the self at one with the world" (Wolf 56). According to Wolf, as the child grows he is presented with fiction which is gradually distanced from the idea of a safe home, with stories revolving around the need to protect, find or recover a house, to finally and eventually reach the point at which it is understood that there was never the certainty of home initially perceived: the safe refuge once thought invulnerable is in reality subject to all sorts of threats and dangers. This leaves an increasing sense of nostalgia in the growing child which might be visualised as the "wake of home" (56). At this point, the child has to renounce the illusions of power, certainty and safety. Wolf believes that these are not forsaken easily, arguing that the longing for the childhood ideal of home remains, creating a particular receptiveness to this idea of home and therefore to house imagery in fiction:

For some time the original and the new perceptions of reality both exist within the child until the new finally wins out over the original. Although Piaget never says so, we know that this victory is never complete or final. Psychology tells us that the child survives within each of us, continuing to influence our dreams and our behaviour. So the infant's mythic experience of being at one with the world continues to haunt our imaginations, despite our adult awareness of its egocentricity. (55)

Wolf's theory further enhances the relevance of the depiction of houses in literature, as it adds to the underlying power of house imagery for the adult reader and writer. The profusion and gradual withdrawal of houses for young readers

creates a habit of actively searching for the house in the text, a situation that is prolonged into the adulthood both of the reader and of the writer. Readers will look for the house in the story with interest and nostalgia simply because that is what they were instructed to do when they were young. It is likely that on most occasions adult readers will be unaware of this predisposition and that their responses will take place on an unconscious level. In the case of the writers, this translates into significant recreations of house imagery in their literary creations. The need of the grown child to constantly search for a home is still present in the adult reader's mind, ready to find the home in the text or, in the case of the writer, to provide it and endow it with symbolism.

Wolf's account is meaningful for the purposes of the present study as it suggests that our reading processes are, to an extent, determined by this nostalgic effect of the "wake of home." Her ideas relating to a fear of losing the home might explain why the haunted house is a common subject in young adult fiction as it tackles a sensitive point where tension accumulates, in this case the fear of losing the shielding home, which children start to visualise as something that is actually possible. Reading children's haunted house fiction presents a safe opportunity to approach this fear. This fictional proximity to what is feared eases the tension in a way that implies no real threat to what children consider most precious: their home.

Having established the importance of the house in the human understanding of the world and of the self, I want now to set the scene for the intersection of the house with horror by considering how horror works for the adult reader/writer. If distortions of a safe portrayal of a home had this impact on child readers, it would then follow that this sensitivity could be prolonged into adulthood.

1.2 The Appeal of Horror

To argue that humans feel attracted to that which scares them might seem a contradiction. However, evidence shows that humans experience a certain degree of fascination for what they dread. The partial allure of what people perceive as a threat has fascinated many. In this section of the chapter and before proceeding with the analysis of haunted-house narratives, I will review some theories that account for horror's apparent appeal. In particular, I would like to bring attention to the fact that horror seems intimately connected with real concerns and anxieties of the population, and that the apparent gratification of exposure to disturbing narratives and imagery might have an evolutionary and therapeutic function for the deeper levels of the human mind.

In his study *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), the literary critic Noël Carroll questions this puzzling trait in human nature by connecting it to the readers and writers of horror fiction. He says “[t]he question is: why would anyone be interested in the genre to begin with? . . . [H]ow can we explain its very existence, for why would anyone *want* to be horrified, or even art-horrified?” (158). He presents the question as follows:

[M]any people—so many, in fact, that we must concede that they are normal, at least in the statistical sense—do seek out horror fictions for the purpose of deriving pleasure from the sights and descriptions that customarily repulse them. In short, there appears to be something paradoxical about the horror genre. It obviously attracts consumers. . . . (158-59)

This discussion of why people choose to expose themselves to the things they dread has stirred interest from a variety of fields which range from aesthetics, through the

purely psychoanalytical, to current cinema box office sales. Out of this debate, I have selected the most relevant contributions to my investigation into the tensions that lie beneath haunted house stories.

One of the first theoreticians to notice this apparent contradiction was Edmund Burke. In his account of the Romantic *sublime* in 1757, Burke draws a distinction between the 'beautiful' and the 'sublime' on the grounds that the sublime integrates both fear and magnetism in the eyes of the beholder, a combination that does not occur in the purely beautiful:

When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful, as we every day experience. (36-37)

Burke's study should be credited with identifying the element of magnetism that emerges from concrete real dangers to humankind. Burke comments:

Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous. There are many animals, who though far from being large, are yet capable of raising ideas of the sublime, because they are considered as objects of terror. As serpents and poisonous animals of almost all kinds. (53)

Indeed, this magnetism might be found in apparently mundane or commonplace things as long as danger is recognised in them. Burke's observation of venomous creatures would account for the visual appeal of snakes and tarantulas over eels and

crustaceans, which are animals of similar structure and movements, suggesting that it is the thrill of approaching a threat to life that humans find captivating.

While Burke's work succeeds in identifying the key aspect of the appeal of the dangerous, his study is mostly limited to the world of aesthetics and the visual arts. The first thorough study of horror would come in 1927 from the pen of one of the most important Gothic writers of all time: the American author H. P. Lovecraft. Interestingly, some of the most relevant studies on the theory of horror have been written by acknowledged horror writers, current examples being Stephen King and Dale Bailey. Lovecraft, in his work *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, pointed out that through fictional narratives humans can satisfy their curiosity about what they fear. According to Lovecraft, horror greatly appeals to a wish for knowledge. This is the evolutionary result of the primitive man organising the real world into the binary extremes of pleasure and pain. From this division others are derived, such as good and bad. Surrounding phenomena were classified into two possible categories: that which could be understood under the parameters of cause and effect, and that which escaped the understanding of the primitive mind. Within this latter group of the incomprehensible, religion captured the beneficial aspects: a whole set of religious rituals and promises of an afterlife worked soothingly on the human mind. However, religions inevitably left much of the vast unknown unaccounted for, and so the darker or more unpleasant aspects were absorbed by myth and supernatural folklore, some of which over the centuries crystallised in literature:

The unknown, being likewise unpredictable, became for our primitive forefathers a terrible and omnipotent source of boons and calamities. . . . The phenomenon of dreaming likewise helped to build up the notion of an unreal or spiritual world; and in general, all the

conditions of savage drawn-life so strongly conducted toward a feeling of the supernatural that we need not wonder at the thoroughness with which man's very hereditary essence has become saturated with religion and superstition. That saturation must, as a matter of plain scientific fact, be regarded as virtually permanent so far as the subconscious mind and inner instincts are concerned; for though the area of the unknown has been steadily contracting for thousands of years, an infinite reservoir of mystery still engulfs most of the outer cosmos, whilst a vast residuum of powerful inherited associations clings round all the objects and processes that were once mysterious, however well they may now be explained. And more than this, there is an actual physiological fixation of the old instincts in our nervous tissue, which would make them obscurely operative even were the conscious mind to be purged of all sources of wonder. (Lovecraft 13-14)

Lovecraft's definition of horror reverberates of Burke's concept of the sublime in that both stem from the idea of contradiction as the grounds for horror's appeal. However, Lovecraft's theory incorporates two new aspects. The first is that the magnetism would be explained by a need for knowledge. As he puts it: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown" (12). The second highlights the importance of the unconscious: not only do we find fearful that which we cannot understand, but also that which having been understood, still drags along the eeriness from earlier times before being brought into the light of reason. This vision acknowledges the existence of "obscurely operative" instincts, independent from the conscious mind, to which horror narratives appeal, provoking what Lovecraft describes as an "inevitable

fascination of wonder and curiosity” (14). With this declaration, he provided a mental area where the horror text was being operative, in a theory that incorporated aspects of psychoanalysis and physiology.

Burke and Lovecraft had both appealed to hidden areas of the mind to account for the attraction of horror. With the advent of psychoanalysis, a great deal of attention was addressed to horror fiction, where the focus of literary interpretation further narrows into finding connections with what is repressed or denied (Jancovich 12). Building on the theories of Lovecraft, psychoanalysis looks not only at what is dangerous or incomprehensible, but also at what is not approved or accepted. As was seen earlier, Freud opened the way for the study of the repressed in horror fiction in 1919 when he published “The Uncanny.” “The Uncanny” showed that humans have information stored in their unconscious that subtly and undetectably determines their actions. These fears, all the more powerful when connected to what we trust or love, would be highly operative beyond the level of personal awareness. Ernest Jones, one of Freud’s disciples, further developed Freud’s ideas by stressing the appealing aspect of horror and connecting it to latent wishes which have been inhibited—in particular, sexual desires. Jones’s study *On the Nightmare* (1931) is a methodical analysis of the main horror icons—specifically incubus, vampire, werewolf, devil and witch—in terms of repressed desires. To Jones, the appeal of horror lies in the fact that it is a “representation of the underlying wish . . . not permitted in its naked form, so that the dream is a compromise of the wish on the one hand, and on the other of the intense fear belonging to the inhibition” (78). Carroll builds on this equation, defending its suitability for the analysis of horror fiction, since it is based on the duality of attraction/disgust:

With its stress on ambivalence, a Jones-like, psychoanalytical theory of horror has the right structure for our purposes. It explains how audiences can be attracted to horror despite the ostensible disgust it enjoins. . . . But this disgust is, more importantly, functional. It exacts a little discomfort in exchange for greater pleasure. Nor could pleasure be secured unless this discomfort were exacted. (Carroll 170-71)

According to Jones, horror would present a therapeutic function not so much regarding that which is repressed but actually leaving room for the parts of the self which are not approved of. This includes both psychological aspects as well as the vulnerability and decay of the human body (170). In regard to the psychological “other,” it has to be noted that the turn of the twentieth century had flourished with plenty of narratives of horror in which, certainly, issues related to a darker idea of the self could be explored. Among these feature Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), R. L. Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). These transparent Victorian figures of horror welcome psychoanalytical interpretation. For example, the vampire Dracula integrates appealing/repulsive sexual dynamics at a time of sexual repression (Carroll 169-70). Jones’s theory could also account for the doppelganger in Wilde and in Stevenson in connection with issues of ego at a period in which the religious dichotomy of God/Devil was in decay and a re-evaluation of evil in human nature was required (47).⁴

⁴ The idea of a dark side of the self detached from any external influence had been present since the classics. In *The Republic*, Plato alluded to the human capability of committing all conceivable crimes under the adequate circumstances. Also, Jung developed the theory of the “shadow” in every human being. The shadow includes all of the suppressed aspects of the self. Jung encouraged people to embrace their shadow instead of denying it, in order to develop a healthier relationship with the self and to keep tighter control of it. For these and more studies of the negative side of the human psyche, see Abrams and Zweig.

Carroll is aware of the limitations of Jones's theories, as they fail to account for several icons of the horror genre (among these is the haunted house). Still, he acknowledges the psychoanalytical stress on disturbance (189), and suggests expanding the scope of Jones's theory from sexual anxieties to broader considerations, which would include a whole panoply of repression (172). As Carroll observes, "[t]he fascination of the horrific being comes in tandem with disturbance. . . . for those who are attracted to the genre, the fascination at least compensates for the disturbance" (189).

The study that possibly integrates most successfully all of the above considerations was carried out by the best-selling horror author Stephen King in his book *Danse Macabre* (1982). This non-fiction review of horror books and films studies the texts not only in the context of the readers' individual fears, but also in relation to the social, political and economic conditions of the times.⁵ King explains the way horror works on the human mind by recourse to two variables. The first is the psychological fear/physical revulsion variable. The second depends on how superficial, or alternatively internalised, the anxiety is on which a particular horror piece is working; the deeper the anxiety is held, the stronger the reaction of fear. For the first variable King differentiates between three possible levels in the horror genre: terror, horror, and revulsion—or "gross-out level"—(*Danse* 36, 40). He acknowledges

⁵ It should be mentioned that in 1974, Rafael Llopis published in Spain his review *Historia natural de los cuentos de miedo*, where he carried out a chronological study in the mode of H. P. Lovecraft's review. Llopis pointed out similar forces to those highlighted by King. In particular, by observing the nineteenth-century transition from the earlier Romanticism to the Victorian ghost story at such an incongruous moment of scientific and technological progress, Llopis comes up with the idea of horror acting as a device for release of ulterior tensions inherent to human nature. Thus, he proposes that the function of horror fiction is to work on the anxieties deriving from our daily lives, serving as a therapeutic emotional outlet both for the writer and reader. As Llopis phrases it: "Just by looking at the fact that horror did not disappear at a time when it could have easily done so, we see that the enjoyment of horror is much more anchored in human nature than it might seem. . . . Anxiety, filtered through the author's sensitivity, is expressed in images that . . . constitute an emotional outlet (Llopis 139-140).

that the finest of all three is terror. In this category, “it’s what the mind sees that makes these stories such quintessential tales of terror. It is the unpleasant speculation called to mind” in which “we actually see nothing outright nasty” (*Danse* 36). The second one, horror, King describes as “less fine, because it is not entirely of the mind. . . . [inviting] a physical reaction by showing us something which is physically wrong.”⁶ Monsters, supernatural creatures and decaying bodies would fit into this category of the visually disagreeable. Lastly, the lowest level would be related to injury, where viscera and physical aggression are made explicit (*Danse* 36).⁷

The second variable is constituted by the distinction between superficial and internalised anxieties. King attributes the effectiveness of a horror piece to how personally the reader has been touched, and so he divides fears between the superficial and the internalised. The superficial level is connected to the tripartite division mentioned above, ranging from psychological terror to revulsion, where the classifications depend on readers’ individual sensitivity to the visual or the psychological teasing. The other side of the equation, the internalisation, takes us on to a more potent and intimate level, where the work of horror is to search for what King defines as “phobic pressure points” (*Danse* 18). These are the most buried and secret fears of the reader, often related to the repressed:

[The work of horror] is looking for something beyond art, something that predates art: it is looking for what I would call phobic pressure

⁶ For the effect of repulsion towards imagery of what was once part of human life see the “Abjection theory” by Julia Kristeva. This theory argues that materials produced by the human body which would normally be tolerated, instantly become objects of repulsion when separated from the source of life. This would include the very human body. These feelings of abjection emerge from the reality of human proximity to mortality.

⁷ With the advent of cinema, splatter and slasher fictions have become an important part of horror entertainment as a result of the possibilities offered by audiovisual media. For more information on splatter and slasher films, see Gina Wisker 157, 78.

points. The good horror tale will dance its way to the center of your life and find the secret door to the room you believed no one but you knew of. . . . (*Danse 18*)

King believes that horror particularly arises when a sensitive point has been touched. The more secret or repressed the point, the greater the reaction in the reader or spectator. He explains the appeal of horror as a healthy, natural reaction, since the horror work is soothing the pressure of these conflictive points. These points accumulate primeval, repressed or unaccepted tensions, often because current society does not offer the possibility to release them any more. The horror story works on these anxieties by exercising matters which are unsuitable for open discussion: “[H]orror appeals to us because it offers . . . us a chance to exercise (that’s right; not *exorcise* but *exercise*) emotions which society demands we keep closely in hand. . . . [It] is an invitation to indulge in deviant, antisocial behaviour by proxy . . . to give in to our most craven fears [In the horror allegory] it’s okay to join the mob, to become the total tribal being, to destroy the outsider” (*Danse 47*). With this theory, King explains both the appeal of horror and its therapeutic function for the human psyche. By approaching a representation of danger rather than real threat, horror entertainment offers the possibility of dealing with a fear in an entirely safe way. As King playfully comments, “it might well be that the mass-media dream of horror can sometimes become a nationwide analyst couch” (*Danse 27*).

Crucially for this study, King presents the idea that, depending on the conditions, a group of people can share phobic pressure points:

[T]he horror genre has often been able to find national phobic points, and those books and films which have been the most successful almost always seem to play upon and express fears which exist across a wide

spectrum of people. Such fears, which often are political, economic, and psychological rather than supernatural, give the best work of horror a pleasing allegorical feel. (*Danse*18-19)

In his study, King traces back different blockbusters, putting them into the context of the societies that produced and received them. I will comment on two of the works referred to. The first is an analysis of the film adaptation of Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), which narrates the demonic possession of a little girl, and her mother's struggle to rid her of the devil with the support of the Catholic Church. As a subtext for this, King sees the expression of a social fear caused by a generation gap:

[*The Exorcist*] is a film about . . . that entire youth explosion that took place in the late sixties and early seventies. It was a movie for all those parents who felt, in a kind of agony and terror, that they were losing their children and could not understand why or how it was happening. It's the face of the Werewolf again, a Jekyll-and-Hyde tale in which sweet, lovely and loving Regan turns into a foul-talking monster. (*Danse* 196-97)

King further illustrates the relevance of his argument by comparing the dissimilar box office success of the film in America and West Germany, where *The Exorcist* did not do very well. The difference is explained by the fact that the social fears in Germany were more concerned with "bomb-throwing radicals" than they were with "foul-talking young people," accounting for the popularity of the film *Dawn of the Dead* (1979) in West Germany.

More relevant to the study of haunted houses is the second example: Jay Anson's *The Amityville Horror* (1977), where economic anxieties act as the pressure

point. The book tells the story of a middle-class family that, with much effort, buy a house only to learn that it is subject to evil forces. After many hardships, most of them related to wreckages in the property and scary supernatural manifestations, the family, incongruously late, decide to give up the house and leave for good (Bailey 50). King sees in this narrative's subtext the economic unease of the 1970s: eighteen percent economic inflation and "mortgage rates out of sight" (King 169). As Bailey comments in his study of the haunted house, by tackling the American middle and lower class' struggle to own property, *Amityville* was particularly effective among the members of those groups: it had touched "a raw nerve" (Bailey 47).

It appears to me that King's understanding of the paradox of horror accounts for all aspects at play in the enjoyment of horror. By introducing the concept of phobic pressure points, and by referring to popular horror entertainment as a nationwide "analyst couch," Stephen King seems to provide a coherent answer to the paradox: horror is an effective therapy. Horror is read to soothe pressure points that may not ache, but feel uncomfortable in our psyche:

Why do you want to make up horrible things when there is so much real horror in the world?

The answer seems to be that we make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones. . . . [W]e grasp the very elements which are so divisive and destructive and try to turn them into tools—to dismantle themselves. . . . The dream of horror is in itself an out-letting and a lancing. (*Danse* 27)

The thrill and unpleasant feeling works on mental strain by applying far from agreeable pressure on the tight area. In other words, it could be said that horror works as a mental massage on the strained unconscious. The difference between

the function of horror and that of escapist literature is the same as that between physiotherapeutic massage and a massage for relaxation: horror does not feel nice, but, in many cases, it works on the strained area, albeit an area that not all readers might have strained to the same extent. As King phrases it, “the horror story’s attraction for us is that it allows us to vicariously exercise those antisocial emotions and feelings which society demands we keep stoppered up under most circumstances, for society’s good and our own” (*Danse* 84). Horror lets pressure out, leaving us with a feeling of reintegration. The anxiety has been worked on, some tension has been eased, and we are whole, unhurt, and safe.⁸

King’s idea concerning pressure points shared by a particular spectrum of people, with similar responses and vulnerabilities towards a horror narrative, has particular relevance to this study of women and houses in horror. Complementing King’s ideas about group-specific anxieties is Elaine Showalter’s consideration of an exclusive culture of women. In her article “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” Showalter explains that women’s different way of experiencing the world has created an exclusive women’s culture, generated by “the aspects of female life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men” (262). As she explains, over the centuries, this shared experience would have generated a women-specific understanding of the world in which all women would participate:

[W]omen’s culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space. It is in the emphasis on the binding force of women’s culture that this approach differs from Marxist theories of cultural hegemony.

⁸ It should be recalled that public executions in the past were known to draw large audiences with no reward other than witnessing the death of another being.

Hypotheses of women's culture have been developed over the last decade primarily by anthropologists, sociologists, and social historians in order to get away from masculine systems, hierarchies, and values and to get at the primary and self-defined nature of female cultural experience. (260)

Showalter continues by relating women's culture to the reading and writing of the literary text. Then, commenting on Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Showalter exposes that women's fiction often has two alternative texts oscillating and simultaneously in view. The first would be the product of being part of the dominant culture, therefore shared by both males and females. Conversely, the second text would only acquire full signification for those members who were participants of the female or muted culture (263, 66). Although this second meaning might not appear immediately visible, it would always be there to be read when "the orthodox plot recedes" (266). In this sense, Showalter also highlights the fact that a woman writer not only partakes in the literary tradition of the male dominant culture, but also that "a woman writing thinks back through her mothers" in what is a second level of creating signification in the text.⁹

The outcome of merging King's understanding of shared anxieties with Showalter's observations of women's culture implies that women can share exclusive anxieties across time and space resulting from the part of their experience not accessible to men. When, as King indicates, these are exercised in a narrative, the results are a primary text and an additional subtext. The first text would be accessible to all readers as it is created within the dominant culture, while the subtext would resonate particularly with members of the muted culture. From the

⁹ Here Showalter is citing Virginia Woolf's words from *A Room of One's Own*, (Part 6).

woman writer's perspective, this subtext comes into being through existing and widespread anxieties. Similarly, from the reader's point of view, the text would gain additional signification from this same shared women's culture, working even therapeutically as a way of releasing accumulated tensions and fears. It is my impression that, as a result, women have a particular way of perceiving the house which has given rise to an understanding of haunting solely based on architectural awareness.

Without digressing too far from the literary focus of this thesis, I would like to extend this idea of shared inherited anxieties by drawing attention to recent discoveries in the world of biochemistry, which suggest that memories related to fear and the corresponding response to them might be transmitted from generation to generation. In the case of animals, this is not new, but the preferred term has been *instinct*. Entire patterns of behaviour in animals have been explained as a blurred combination of learning from other members of the group and genetic instincts. In these instincts, the possibility of genetic transmission of information did not seem to trouble anyone. Conversely, in the case of humans, the preference has been to refer to progress as the result of *intelligent learning*. Therefore, non-associative patterns of behaviour and other transmission of knowledge have been mostly overlooked.

However, humans do show behaviour that can only be caused by non-associative fears building up along generations. An illustration of this can be seen in neonates' startled response to loud noise, or the blinking of their eyes when objects suddenly approach (Marks 165). These basic responses have traditionally been regarded as instinct, but are in fact behaviour derived from traces of genetic memory. More complex non-associative fears are, for example, fear of animals, heights, or separation (167). According to this theory, some encoded fears are

passed on by our ancestors in a gene called stathmin, which controls both learned and innate fear (Shumyatsky et al. 697-709). Research shows that some fears “may remain dormant if individuals have no traumatic experience of the relevant situation, yet manifest quickly and persistently after subjects have undergone minimal vicarious or direct trauma” (Marks 165). Once activated, these fears provoke an inherited adequate response to what, for a predecessor, was a threat.

It has been observed that this input does not necessarily have to be experienced by each individual, but can instead be activated through association. Experiments carried out with primates demonstrate that their innate fear of snakes could be triggered by a minimum of vicarious input. When non-fearful lab-reared primates were presented with a monkey displaying fear of live and toy snakes, they were immediately conditioned to develop a persistent and strong fear of snakes. This fear response was learned even when the fearful model monkey was shown on videotape (Öhman and Mineka 6). However, when the snakes were replaced by rabbits in a manipulated video recording, the lab-reared monkeys showed no fear of the rabbits, demonstrating that the animals were responding through inherited knowledge about the shape of snakes and the consequences of their bite. It was concluded that different species developed and genetically carried memories of fear:

[There was a] blueprint for the fear module built around the deadly threat that ancestors of snakes provided to our direct ancestors, the early mammals. During further mammalian evolution, this blueprint was modified, elaborated and specialized for the ecological niches occupied by the different species.” (7)

The implications of this experiment for the paradox of horror and the enjoyment of this type of fiction mean that a horror text could well be working on

inherited anxieties that, although obscure to the individual—as no possible direct recollection could be traced to account for them—might nevertheless be functional. Furthermore, it appears that not only do humans carry this knowledge in their gene of fear, but also that gender-specific information is inherited from ancestors. Current research “supports the hypothesis that women may be more predisposed than men to learn the appropriate emotion for nonhuman animals that were recurrent threats over evolutionary time” (Rakison 442). In recent studies of infant fear of spiders and snakes (2009), it was observed that girls recognised threats that for boys were not evident. The study showed images of spiders, snakes, flowers and mushrooms, all accompanied by either a smiling or frowning human face. Different combinations were tried on both the male and female infants, with resulting data showing that “girls, but not boys . . . looked significantly longer when a novel snake or spider was paired with a different facial emotion” (442). When the same was done with harmless images of flowers and mushrooms, there was no difference in the response between boys and girls. The researchers see in this difference the evolutionary result of the different roles for males and females over the centuries, which exposed women to spiders and snakes during foraging or gathering food, with the consequent danger their bite implied for women and their children—both inferior in body size to males and therefore more vulnerable to venom. The results, therefore, suggest that infants possess a perceptual template that “prepares infants, particularly female infants, to attend to fear-relevant stimuli and learn the appropriate negative emotional response for them” (442).

It is not the intention of this thesis to carry out a biochemical or deep psychoanalytical analysis of the machinery of fear. Nevertheless, this last section of the chapter has aimed to suggest deeply-inbred nuances for different readings of

horror. If we consider the possibility that part of what humans fear might be inherited, the repercussions of the genetic transmission of encoded fears consequently affects the interpretation of the house in horror. Earlier in this chapter I explored the intimate and primeval human need for a home, and the extremely complex relationship between humans and their homes. As will be recalled, the home to the human psyche stands for a prolongation of the self, the first universe, a sanctuary, a shelter, and the structure that holds the loved ones, to name but a few. Recreations of attacks on a home or the notion of the home gone wrong would, according to the paradox of horror, work therapeutically on all audiences by helping humans deal with the fear of being homeless, a fear that, as I have just exposed, might be to a certain extent inherited from our ancestors.

However, when looking at the home, we see that women are presented with a double-sided scenario. On the one hand, women share the same needs for the home as their male counterparts. On the other hand, they appear to present a higher awareness and response to evolutionary harms specific to their gender, as the spider response experiment proved. In this way, it seems appropriate to question whether the house has historically presented as a specific hazard or anxiety for women. The answer to this question is self-evident. When considering, momentarily, the foundations of Western culture, it should be taken into account that Ancient Greece produced a literature to theorise and defend the social need to keep women at home as a result of their bodies. One of the first texts establishing this biological imperative is Xenophon's fifth-century BC treatise *Oeconomicus* (*The Economist*).¹⁰ This study at once naturalises and spatialises gender as he alludes to a deliberate functional creation of different sexes for purposes other than reproduction: "The gods

¹⁰ The original text used by Wigley is Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, trans. H. G. Dakyns as "The Economist," in *The Works of Xenophon* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897). This quote is from vol. 3, p. 229.

made provision from the first by shaping, as it seems to me the woman's nature for indoor and the man's for outdoor occupations" (qtd. in Wigley 334). This was to create a precedent which was to last until the late twentieth century in the Western world. In women's history, the home rises as a preeminent figure determining and restricting the lives of women. A survey of Western history is hardly required to demonstrate that the female relationship with the home has been a convoluted and traumatic one, subject to constraints of power.

Writers King and Bailey rightly point out the importance of real group fears underlying the impact of the literary work. When King refers to economic and political issues, and social phobias, he is referring to unconscious and conscious fears across wide spectrums of people (19). Similarly, Bailey's study of the haunted house highlights that "[t]he haunted house formula . . . consistently provokes questions about issues of class, culture, gender, and economy which are central to the lives of contemporary Americans" (54). Then, in relation to women as a group, Showalter suggests that women across time and space are united in a creative and interpretative community. Building on these theorists and incorporating elementary notions of evolutionary research, I suggest that women may carry something akin to a genetic negative blueprint regarding the idea of home and therefore houses, which would be the result of their history of domestic entrapment experienced across the centuries. Should this be the case, this blueprint would have been in permanent conflict with an also existent primeval need for a home, in what could be defined as unconscious contradictory pulls. Furthermore, the experiments with animals above provide extra information towards an understanding of why this rise of the presence of the house in women's horror has been triggered only recently. While infant girls carried much innate fear information, the research shows that fear would only be

developed after associative patterns were established, meaning that to a certain extent the full development of the phobia could be controlled and prevented by society.

Indeed, it seems fair to say that, when looking back at women's history, there has been a relatively effective control of women by a patriarchal system. As this control decreases along the twentieth century, it seems significant that it is at this precise moment when the presence of the house in horror is intensified in work by women writers. In the following chapters, I will pursue this suggestion in an attempt to evaluate the hypothesis that conflicting generational needs and fears have played a key role in women's haunted house narratives published in the last one hundred and fifty years.

CHAPTER 2

THE HOUSE IN AMERICAN HORROR FICTION

The “Bad Place” is part of the human psyche, and has always been part of mankind’s intuitive organisation of the world. It was born of early attempts to make room for the spirituality of the human condition, in combination with a lack of understanding of physics.¹ There have been haunted places stories ever since the ancient times: “magical” places where the intervention of the sacred or supernatural was particularly expected. Hauntings are recorded at least since Classical Greece and Rome (Grider 176).² Gothic literature comes to mind as the immediate referent for our current haunted house literary tradition, but in fact the haunted building has been part of Western literary conventions for thousands of years.³

Before the twentieth century, stories about hauntings normally revolved around ghosts or demons. The building itself was seldom placed as the entity causing the supernatural events. With the advent of Christianity and the reorganisation of good and evil in the figures of God and Satan, “magical” places were arranged in a bipolar structure in which the good places were related to the Christian God and acknowledged as sacred, and the bad places were connected to

¹ “Bad Place” is the name Stephen King uses to refer to locations of hauntings. In his study, he includes alternative structures to houses as settings for hauntings, such as hotels (King’s choice of setting in *The Shining*), railroad stations, and meadows, among others. King traces hauntings back to prehistory: “[P]robably all of it goes back to the caveman who had to move out of his hole in the rock because he heard what sounded like voices back there in the shadows” (*Danse* 299). Dale Bailey, in his study of American haunted house fiction, also uses King’s terminology to refer to the new type of haunting popularised in twentieth-century fiction (Bailey 16). Similar insights into early superstition associated with living space can be found in Llopis (13).

² Classical supernatural stories mostly revolve around spirits of the ancestors, rather than on non-human supernatural forces acting in the house. For more information on Classical haunted house stories, see Sylvia Grider and Debbie Felton.

³ The basic form of Gothic haunted buildings is recorded in literature as early as the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche (popularised in more recent times in the story “Beauty and the Beast”), in which Psyche is taken away by the magical wind Zephyrus to a haunted palace where natural physical rules do not apply and she is served by invisible spirits (Bettelheim 292, 306).

the evil forces and regarded as haunted or cursed. When applied to architecture, this meant that buildings which were not holy were sometimes envisaged as embedded with negative magic, and in these the hauntings were often attributed to once human ghosts and to demons. Ghosts were normally connected to evil either through their past deeds or as victims of third parties. Alternatively, hauntings were connected to Satan and hell. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Gothic literature popularised stories of haunted cursed castles, and several decades later the Victorian ghost story brought the idea of haunting closer to the commonplace bourgeois homestead, becoming a popular form of entertainment. From an amalgamation of all of these sources mentioned, popular superstition evolved into the current idea of haunted homes.

The term “sentient house” was employed in criticism in 1997 by Dale Bailey as a way to refer to intelligent buildings. Bailey’s innovative study, which reviews American haunted house fiction, distils a formulaic structure for popular horror entertainment which was consolidated in the 1970s (x). One of the most important components of his formula is the presence of a sentience that must be independent from ghosts. Other components include a sceptical family, an unsavoury history of the house that accounts for the haunting, an escalation of supernatural incidents which test the familial relationship, the discovery of the provenance of the events, and only two possible endings, which are either the destruction of the house or its survival to prey on other victims (6, 56).

As Bailey rightly identifies in his thorough research, the sentient haunted house—with a mind and a will of its own as opposed to a ghost or demonic agency—is a constant feature of contemporary haunted house fiction published in America. Such fiction subordinates or even dispenses with the ghosts in favour of an

awareness of the house. This sentience, Bailey maintains, evolves from the legacy of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. To Poe, in particular, Bailey gives the credit for creating the first sentient haunted house story, identifying the house of Usher as possessing "a revolutionary quality which will become central to the haunted house formula: the house is alive. It possesses its own malign will" (22).

In this chapter, I will build on the aspect of sentience identified in Bailey's formula and re-situate, via an alternative analysis of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), the realisation of the sentient house in the mid-twentieth century as the fruit of an evolution of anxieties to do with women's space. I base this assertion in the increasing presence of the house in horror narratives written by women since the late nineteenth century, a development which appears to be rooted in a conflict between women's primeval need for home and socioculturally compounded anxieties regarding domestic space.

After reviewing earlier haunted house fiction, I appreciated a particular step towards sentience in literature written by women, observing a treatment of the trope of the haunted house based on considerations of space and psychological attachments to a building, rather than on past or present physical aggression, ghosts, or demonic possession. I began by noticing that in nineteenth-century fiction claustrophobic homes became empowered to induce transformations in female characters, who became aggressive as a direct result of the claustrophobia.⁴ As I will show, my observations revealed that it was also in the work of women writers that

⁴ Examples of this are Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), the protagonist of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) and the mother of a family in Elia W. Peattie's "The House That Was Not" (1898).

the haunted house first showed full intelligence and intentionality and where it first sufficed to carry the weight of the horror narrative.

Trying to account for this gender-based differentiation in the written text, I have considered women's twentieth-century sociopolitical history in a quest to establish a correspondence between transformations in society and transformations in haunted house fiction. My study has encountered a series of sociocultural factors that I believe are responsible for the appearance of the sentient haunted house in the 1950s. Both haunted house fiction and women's recent history seem especially subject to change around the mid-twentieth century, suggesting a particular relationship between them. My interpretation of these transformations of the trope of the haunted house implies that the psychological tensions resulting from the convoluted dynamics between women and the home in the late nineteenth century and, more particularly, in the first half of the twentieth century are, to a greater extent than Poe and Hawthorne, the forebears of the sentient house.

In America, the late 1940s and 1950s mark a time of major change for women, from making up most of the labour force in the early 1940s to returning to homemaking when World War II ended, a development that will be dealt with in detail in the following pages. Having been culturally preconditioned to aim for homemaking and to love their homes, in this decade women were abruptly conflicted by a new degree of awareness of home as restricting freedom, and of homemaking as not an inevitable destiny. The moment this imposition of domesticity on women became part of the academic and social debate, the institution of homemaking was identified as the enemy hindering women's freedom. However, by identifying the home as the enemy, the feminist call against homemaking also positioned women in confrontation with their very homes. For reasons reviewed in Chapter 1, which are

independent from indoctrination into domesticity or affectionate bonds with other members in the household, this was a home that women very much still needed. Vital aspects of women's relationship with houses, such as a primeval need for shelter, became neglected.

In my quest to trace back the first appearance of the sentient house as a cognisant-born entity, I have found that this simultaneous rejection of and need for a home is a pivotal force in modern haunted house fiction. Horror arises at the intertwining of these two emotions in the depiction of characters who are seduced by the buildings yet blind to their destructive potential. These contradictory feelings must be addressed. The pillars of fear on which sentient house novels are built—the house as the antagonist coupled with attraction towards this antagonist—can only be explained through appealing to the mingling of need and hate. In consequence, I propose to view the sentient haunted house from a gender-orientated angle, integrating the negative aspects of the home derived from imposed domesticity with the simultaneous sense of the loss of a needed home, which was a side effect of the 1950s feminist call against homemaking. It is at this particular time that women horror writers, deliberately or not, endow the house with enough presence to develop full sentience, so that the home mutates into an uncanny Janus-faced entity. One face of the home stands for a domesticity that this generation is beginning to envisage as gender-based abuse; and rejection of domesticity is enhanced by the surfacing of a history of suppressed gender anxieties to do with generational captivity. The other face of the home, however, still bonds women to the house at a primeval level shared by any human being, male or female, one that goes beyond issues of domestic indoctrination. The type of haunted house horror we find in

contemporary narratives rises out of the inevitable need for a home and the inescapable destruction it carries.

Keeping the differentiation between the primeval need of a home and the indoctrination into homemaking clear, in the next pages I will address some of the best known haunted house fiction. I will point out the emergence of a pattern which demonstrates how women's sociocultural history and haunted house narratives have always been closely interconnected. Leaning on Showalter's ideas, I suggest that the understanding of home which derives from women's own sociocultural heritage is what provokes the appearance of sentience. Fiction written by women before the 1900s already reveals an intuition of psychological processes surrounding the home and homemaking. These will play a crucial role in the empowerment of the sentient haunted house as an appealing, autonomous enemy, which makes an effective horror antagonist, and ultimately facilitates the disappearance of ghosts. I will start by reviewing the earlier canonical haunted house narratives, which are frequently alluded to when analysing Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. I will follow the increasing protagonism/antagonism of the house, which was to culminate in the 1950s, when the primeval need for a home conflicted most forcefully with the prevailing ideology of domesticity. Among these texts, I will refer to one of the stories commonly addressed when looking at haunted houses and women: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) which is part of a trajectory whereby the figure of the ghost and the house merge into one. I will also suggest possible precursors of sentience in "The House That Was Not" (1898) and "The Room of the Evil Thought" (1898) by Elia W. Peattie, as well as in the story "Afterward" (1910) by Edith Wharton. The chapter then analyses Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and Anne Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door* (1978).

Once initiated by Jackson, the trope of the sentient house that takes an active part in the story would then be pursued by both male and female writers. However, if, as I suspect, women writers have all along drawn on a legacy of domestic claustrophobia for the literary creation of horror, it would follow that women writers would also be particularly successful at exploiting possibilities of psychological attachment to buildings which belong exclusively to women's culture. This is confirmed by the fact that while male writers use this new pattern, they persist in including violence and Satanism (e.g. in the writing of Stephen King, Jay Anson or Richard Matheson, and in film adaptations of Jackson's and Siddons's books) while women writers do not necessarily do so. This difference, which I will address again later on in this chapter, would account for the deployment of psychological processes and the accompanying treatment of space as a technique for the arousal of fear by women authors.

2.1 Early Approximations to the Sentient House in Fiction

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) has been argued to be the first "alive" house with a "malign will" (Bailey 22).⁵ Bailey supports his statement by reference to two key passages: the description of the first sighting of the building during which the narrator feels unwell, and Roderick Usher's feelings towards the family house:

I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows— . . . with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the

⁵ Like Bailey, Grider traces the trope of literary personification of houses to Poe's Usher building (183).

after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—(Poe 138).

Later on, the narrator listens to Roderick's ideas about the family building, which are described as follows:

[Roderick's] belief, however, was connected . . . with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones— in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around— above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence —the evidence of the sentience— was to be seen, he said, (and I here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none. (Poe 149)

Bailey is right in pointing to this story as one of the earliest references to sentience in a house—certainly the best known—, but I believe the sentience in this case gestures more towards an illusion of visual anthropomorphism in the gaze of Poe's character than at a genuine intentionality on the part of the house. I base this assertion on the fact that at no point does the house of Usher show awareness in the

events that occur within its walls. The house exhibits no capacity for action, merely presenting unhealthy mouldy living conditions for the family. Bailey argues that “[a]n obscure conjunction of architecture and geometry has endowed the house with a malign will and intelligence utterly distinct from any merely human revenant” (22). However, the story limits the extent of such sentience, sustaining it as an illusion. Moreover, the dismal atmosphere is not inherent to the building, but also applies to the setting: the tarn and its surroundings. While it is true that the term “sentience” applied to a house is coined by Poe here, there does not seem to be enough substantiation to take the sentience on any other level than the metaphoric. The narrator of the story interprets it in this manner, failing to validate Roderick’s impressions; and there is no evidence of him having changed his mind by the end of the story. Furthermore, Roderick Usher is literally described as a “hypochondriac” (Poe, “Usher” 146, 50, 53). Bailey describes the Ushers as “neurasthenic figures” (Bailey 21), and Roderick himself admits that he suffers from a “mental disorder” (“Usher” 139). The narrator dismisses Roderick’s ideas about the house as deserving no further comment.

The sequence of events does not authenticate Roderick’s fears. The story leaves no room for the possible intentionality of the house, along with the fact that it lacks supernatural occurrences. The episode of catalepsy of Madeline Usher or the collapsing of the building, which are the only two extraordinary events, are both explainable and even foretold in the narrative: Madeline’s condition is described as “frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character” (145) and is confirmed on the moment of burial (151). In terms of the collapsing of the house, the building’s structure is visibly damaged, probably by the humidity emanating from the tarn, as the narrator observes in the large crack along its wall.

As a result of this evidence, my conclusion is that “The Fall of the House of Usher” seems to be a story about the mental and physical decay of two siblings, the last of a lineage. While it should be acknowledged that Poe does shift an important amount of attention towards the house, which is highlighted by his choice of title, Poe does not substantiate the intervention of the supernatural, or the attribution of any action to the house other than having an insalubrious influence on the people exposed to it. Although I agree with Bailey in that Poe may act as a source of inspiration for a trope to come, I feel that “The Fall of the House of Usher” does not quite fulfil the requirements for a sentient house, such as manifesting a “malign will,” signs of “intelligence” or active revenancy.

In this context, I would like to bring into the discussion of anthropomorphism in literary hauntings “The Empty House,” a narrative written in 1906 by the British writer Algernon Blackwood.⁶ When compared with Poe’s passage describing the house of Usher, the Victorian English writer’s house actually offers a closer approximation to malignancy and intentionality. The story presents a powerful opening paragraph, in which a certain character to the building can be appreciated: a personality in which the observer can discern an evil intention, which was nonexistent in Poe’s Usher Manor:

Certain houses, like certain persons, manage somehow to proclaim at once their character for evil. In the case of the latter, no particular feature need betray them. . . . Willy nilly, they seem to communicate an atmosphere of secret and wicked thoughts which makes those in their immediate neighbourhood shrink from them as from a thing diseased.

⁶ This story is presumably not commented on by Bailey due to the nationality of the author.

And, perhaps, with houses the same principle is operative, and it is the aroma of evil deeds committed under a particular roof, long after the actual doers have passed away, that makes the gooseflesh come and the hair rise. Something of the original passion of the evildoer, and of the horror felt by his victims, enters the heart of the innocent watcher, and he becomes suddenly conscious of tingling nerves, creeping skin, and a chilling of the blood. He is terror-stricken without apparent cause. . . .

Wherein lay this marked, invisible difference is impossible to say. It cannot be ascribed wholly to the imagination, because persons who had spent some time in the house, knowing nothing of the facts, had declared positively that certain rooms were so disagreeable they would rather die than enter them again, and that the atmosphere of the whole house produced in them symptoms of a genuine terror; while the series of innocent tenants who had tried to live in it, and been forced to decamp at the shortest possible notice, was indeed little less than a scandal in the town. (Blackwood 5-6)

The narrator clearly refers to the “evil character” of the empty house: “Bare walls, ugly mantelpieces, and empty grates stared at them. Everything, they felt, resented their intrusion, watching them . . . the old building seemed to become a malignant Presence” (Blackwood 13). However, as in the case of Poe, Blackwood’s representation of the house does not reach the point of presenting the building as an evil entity *per se*. The initial apparent sentience dilutes as the story progresses, when the events that follow show that the eeriness is caused by the ghosts of a murderer and his victim, one of them acting as the antagonist to the overnighters

who witness the re-enactment of the tragedy. This pattern follows the classical notion of haunting caused by the impregnation of buildings by tragic human deeds.

As mentioned, although the haunting is ultimately caused by ghosts, Blackwood's opening passage takes an important step towards sentience since the building is initially presented as having some form of awareness. When compared to Poe, Blackwood's sentience is much more manifest, certainly more tangible than that of the house of Usher. Also, it bears a striking resemblance to the descriptive paragraphs of the full sentience shown by Jackson's Hill House in 1959.

An initially less striking but ultimately more relevant example of a precursor to sentience can be seen in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's earlier "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). Gilman (1860-1935) was an American activist for women's rights who wrote several works against the gender-determined imposition of domesticity. She held the American household design to be "the distorted end-product of a greedy, class-conscious society and the housewife to be society's victim" (Ogden 144). In her work *The Home, Its Work and Influence* (1903) she suggested an alternative to the conventional household, in which the family's main subsistence needs would be provided by shared facilities. Among these, she proposed kitchenless houses and communal child care.⁷ Her ideas on domestic space became employed in the service of literature when they were used in "The Yellow Wallpaper": the story of a nameless woman who has just given birth and is suffering from post-partum depression. She is sent to rest in a countryside house by her husband, a physician. She is confined to a room which looks like a nursery, with barred windows and covered by old yellow wallpaper. After some weeks of seclusion in this room in the

⁷ Gilman's ideas on communal facilities would actually be put into practice in similar facilities provided by the Roosevelt administration in the 40s. Such measures were taken to encourage American women to take up jobs outside their homes, as will be referred to later in the chapter (Ogden 162, Riley 108-16).

care of her sister-in-law and only the visits of her husband, she begins to distinguish the figure of a trapped woman behind the wallpaper. Freeing that figure becomes an obsession, ultimately leading her to tear the paper from the wall. The last lines describe how the woman is crawling around the room, claiming that at last she (speaking in the first person) has been released.

The story offers two main readings. A metaphorical interpretation makes of the story a vehicle for political complaint, interpreted as an allegory for the patriarchal structures to which women of Gilman's time were subject (Bailey 28). Gender related considerations—such as childbirth resulting in the narrator's isolation or submission to the dispositions of a husband—seem to go hand in hand with the haunting. Clearly, it was written by a political activist who had a message to convey to society; but what makes this story important is that the sociopolitical context facilitates a complete supernatural reading.

In the supernatural reading, the severe confinement to which the protagonist is exposed connects her to the ghost of another woman, presumably subjected to similar treatment. This ghost has been merged with the walls of the house,⁸ where she moves, crawls, laughs, and tries to tear open the paper from inside. This supernatural reading feeds on women's exclusive experience, which, of course, is also fed the political concerns of the writer regarding a legacy of domesticity. The result is a depiction of architectural space as the main contributor to stirring claustrophobic fear in the reader, even in readers who might not participate in the feminist cause, or who might fail to see the transparent allegory. By doing so, Gilman

⁸ This story can be read as a narrative of madness told by an unreliable narrator (Bailey 32). This reading is possible, but not coherent. Instead, I suggest the supernatural reading supported by the fact that the story has a first-person narrator with sufficient apparent lucidity to look backwards and cogently narrate her experience in the yellow room.

was one of the first authors who put women's legacy of a history of containment at the service of the literary creation of horror.

In Gilman, claustrophobia, home, and the structure of the house *per se* become key elements in the narrative of a haunting. These elements would later on become foundations for the sentience which was to take full shape in the 1950s. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is innovative in that there is no mention of past crimes or episodes of violence that might account for the haunting; the haunting therefore lacks what Stephen Mariconda defines as "backstory" (289), that is, a history of crime or demonology. Significantly too, the way the house is presented as actively entrapping the narrator in what seems to be a re-enactment of former confinements endows the house with whiffs of sentience, and presents the house in a pseudo-antagonistic position. In addition, the threat presented by Gilman interestingly lacks fear of bodily harm. A number of Poe's tales had made significant progress towards the use of claustrophobia in horror narratives, but these narratives of premature burials or other threats to life were invariably connected to bodily injury. Gilman removes this fear of aggression and uses the mere treatment of physical space as the only source for her horror. The oppressive atmosphere of the story is so powerful that although the nameless narrator, unlike Poe's tormented victims, is aware of the fact that she is to leave the confining place soon, this awareness is not enough to soothe the episodes of claustrophobia gradually overtaking her. By deploying the house as a metaphor for the institution of homemaking rather than connecting the house to bodily harm or demonology, Gilman succeeded in creating an effective horror story.

The supernatural reading of "The Yellow Wallpaper" marks a milestone in the evolution towards sentient houses by merging the trapped spirit and the house into

one. In my review of haunted house fiction, I have observed a movement in the relationship between ghost and building. This evolves from the building being subordinate to the ghost, to the fusion of the two, to eventually the ghost becoming subordinate to the building. While in Gothic literature the building was far from being homely and hosted supernatural entities and incidents, in the nineteenth century the building becomes more homely and the supernatural less exotic or extravagant. Gilman, by having merged the two separate identities of house and woman, brings closer the supernatural and the building, therefore taking a major step towards sentience. Not surprisingly, when Jackson takes up the genre, the building becomes an intelligent living creature itself. After Jackson's book, sentience becomes the norm, and part of the formulaic structure of most haunted house narratives written by either male or female writers. Even when later writers include ghosts, as Bailey points out, they will be subordinate to the dictates of the sentient house.

Gilman's accomplishment notwithstanding, the suggestions of sentience in "The Yellow Wallpaper" are vague and not very elaborate. They do not take advantage of the ambivalent need/rejection relationship between women and houses that is exploited by Jackson decades later. The author's political urgency for women to escape restrictive homemaking makes her neglect other aspects of the issue of 'home.' The result of Gilman's urgency is that the plot of the supernatural reading is a flat story of escape and rescue. This can be seen in the way the narrator shows no wish to remain in the premises and at no point declares any attraction towards the building, unlike future characters who present emotional and psychological attachments to the haunted houses.

Weakened as the horror potential of "The Yellow Wallpaper" might be by the explicitness of its allegorical political message, the presence of that allegorical

component suffices to suggest that this story is an early and transparent example of imposed domesticity used as literary tool put to the service of horror fiction. By drawing on a legacy of female claustrophobia, Gilman creates a piece in which two affects operate simultaneously: horror and political awareness. In the case of Gilman, both the literal and metaphoric readings have been made deliberately explicit and accessible for any readership, but with later haunted house fiction this is not necessarily the case, as I believe occurs with Jackson. It is possible that the political issues—the contradictions of home involving a nullifying imposition and a need—might be subordinate to the horror reading, yet simultaneously determinant of its reach and shape.

A second woman writer in whom I have distinguished the use of domesticity for the creation of haunted house narratives is Elia Wilkinson Peattie (1862-1935). Similar to Gilman, Peattie was a writer and a journalist. In 1884 Peattie became the first “girl reporter” for the *Chicago Tribune*. From 1901 to 1917, Peattie was the *Tribune*'s literary critic, while also publishing prolifically. She shared an interest in women's rights and feminism.⁹ Like Gilman, Peattie seems to draw on a legacy of women's domestic isolation as a tool to construct narratives of fear. I will look at two of her stories: “The House That Was Not” (1898) and “The Room of the Evil Thought” (1898). “The House That Was Not” is a narrative of entrapment close to “The Yellow Wallpaper.” In this story, claustrophobic isolation of a woman results in the haunting of a building itself. A newlywed young woman moves to the countryside miles away from anywhere else. The woman experiences sightings of a house in the distance. No matter how hard she tries to approach the house, it always remains far away. Eventually, she discovers that the occupant who had once lived in the house

⁹ Peattie tackled issues of domesticity in other texts that cannot be classified as horror. Some of these are a number of Peattie's early magazine short stories such as “A Mountain Woman” (1896), and *The Precipice* (1891).

in the distance had lost her sanity as a result of isolation, murdering her family and destroying the house. The ghostly house becomes a symbol of the eternal isolation of the murderous woman, both in her life on earth and in the afterlife.

Peattie's tale does not yet exemplify pure sentience: there is no evidence of the house having awareness, and the haunting is caused by the tragedy and not the other way around. Nevertheless, Peattie's story reveals the same creative process that had been recognisable in Gilman: the author's concerns with the problem of domesticity and physical isolation results in a particular portrayal of the haunted house that speaks of ghostly architectural prisons. In this story, Peattie takes a step forward towards sentience because she prioritises the supernatural reading over the allegorical political one. Contrary to Gilman, the political is used specifically for the purposes of horror. Peattie chooses not to focus on the feminist concerns, which are still there, but to instead focus on the haunting, illustrating what I believe is an increasing use of domestic claustrophobia as a tool for horror.

The second story by Peattie I want to draw attention to is "The Room of the Evil Thought," which narrates the occupancy of a property which includes a haunted room. When in this room, for reasons unknown, the occupants are overtaken by evil instincts. There is no backstory to why this might be the case, although, as Jackson will do later, Peattie provides an inconclusive history of the house and the previous owners. Some of the characters overtaken by this particularity are an aged lady and a young man. The mystery is never explained, but after surrendering to the evidence of the evil chamber, the owners ultimately have the room pulled down.

While the first story exposes the tight bond between women's history, domestic entrapment and the haunting of a building, I have included "The Room of the Evil Thought" in my study to illustrate the gradual progress towards sentience in

women writers. The lack of ghosts or identifiable devils, as well as the lack of backstory accounting for the haunting places, are typical elements of the future sentience by women authors. This story does not quite exemplify full awareness because the house or room does not show any manifestations of intelligence, unlike later texts. Also, there does not seem to be a connection between the room itself as an architectural structure and the phenomenon. The source could be in the fireplace as much as in the furniture or atmosphere.

Both of Peattie's stories denote an exclusive progression towards inexplicable sentience which appears to take place in the work of women writers. These stories present an innovative approach to the haunted house tradition as can be seen when compared, for example, to Peattie's compatriot Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, also from 1898. The negotiations of space depicted in Peattie's tales evidence how gender imprisonment and isolation grows to be a sensitive subject in America around the turn of the century. They also reveal how, in writers who had these concerns, the building becomes more important for the haunting in place of ghosts or demons.

The last sample precursor of sentience in fiction written by women is the story "Afterward" (1910) by Edith Wharton (1862-1937). Wharton had a prolific writing career, publishing twenty-two novels, over eighty short stories and several non-fiction works. She won the Pulitzer Prize with *The Age of Innocence* in 1920. Ever since the publishing of *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), Wharton showed an interest in architecture and living spaces. In this book she presents her ideas on the need for living spaces which feel homely and uncluttered, reacting against the heavy decorative styles of Victorian times. At the time of composition, Wharton is known to have declared difficulty in putting into words notions about living spaces that

appeared to be very clear in her mind (Benstock 83).¹⁰ The vagueness of the haunting presented in her work “Afterward” is reminiscent of her elusive understanding of decorative principles. It tells the story of Lyng, an English country mansion known to be haunted by a ghost whose sighting people simply say can only be understood “afterwards.” Initially, this riddle puzzles the American couple who have bought the property and who remain curious about the purported haunting, although they do not appreciate anything extraordinary about the place. They ask in the village, expecting to find out the identity of the ghost or reports about a tragic history for the building, but nobody can provide any details other than confirming the enigmatic reputation of the property. One day the husband goes missing as he is strolling with a visitor in the gardens, an acquaintance related to business back in America. Days after the disappearance, the woman learns that the visitor at the time was a ghost of a man who had committed suicide as a consequence of her own husband’s ruthless business practices on the day prior to his visit to Lyng. She then realises that her husband has most likely been a victim of the haunting of the house, only understanding the riddle afterwards, when it is too late. The ghost is not one but many, and any, since it is the very house that chooses them.

Wharton here presents a haunting which denotes intelligence and awareness in the building—traits which are arguably present in Gilman and Peattie—via the house’s deliberate study of the psyches of the occupants, and its power to materialise relevant ghosts. The haunting also appears to be solely linked to the house, independent of any past human tragedy, and autonomous from any human spirit: it seems to watch and conjure up any suitable ghost in order to target the occupants. Elaborating on Gilman’s shift of focus from the ghost to the house,

¹⁰ For details about the biography of Edith Wharton see Shari Benstock.

Wharton's haunted house story at last succeeds in thoroughly reversing the subordination of the house to the ghost.

A point worth stressing is that Wharton in this story prioritises the creation of a narrative of fear over her feminist agenda. Wharton shared with Gilman and Peattie an interest in feminist politics. She had explored feminist concerns in metaphorical fantasy stories such as, for instance, the parable "The Valley of the Childish Things." However, in "Afterwards" she makes use of architectural awareness (no doubt heightened by her feminist ideology) for the creation of a horror narrative and ostensibly leaves aside her political ideas. Feminist aspects, which still could be perceived in the story of the murderous woman by Peattie, are thus non-existent in Wharton. Furthermore, a deliberateness which is arguable in the evil room is explicit in Lyng's intelligent intromission in its occupants' lives and the consequent summoning of ghosts.

As the work of these three writers reveals, concerns with domesticity and early intuitions of sentience appear to be interconnected. Gilman merges ghost and building, and places the house as the antagonist, although still identifying the male character as culpable. Peattie also employs domestic isolation as the triggering force of a haunting that includes the entrapping building itself. In addition, Peattie's second story shows evidence of an understanding of haunting in which fear could be aroused without appealing to ghosts, demons, or massacres. Wharton, finally, presents a haunting in which the house shows signs of intentionality and control over the ghosts, but still falls short of Jackson's unequivocal sentience: Lyng lacks its own sentient presence, as is proven by the fact that it always acts through summoning human ghosts, and never interacts directly with its inhabitants.

I believe it is not a coincidence that these writers lived at a time in which the “Gilded Cage” ideology was being exposed, and compulsory homemaking was starting to be envisaged as a problem. By the same token, it cannot be coincidental that all three played an active role in the quest for women’s rights. This is why I believe it is necessary to explore the reality of the generations of women in the first half of the twentieth century to understand the importance of the sociopolitical context for the complex relationship between the development of haunted house fiction and the home and homemaking in the twentieth century. As Annegret S. Ogden writes in her analysis of American women’s feelings towards homemaking, “the Great American Housewife might be but a figment of our national imagination, a legend, even a ghost come to haunt us” (xiii).

2.2 Social Changes for American Women after The Wars: The Big Step

American socioeconomic history of women in the twentieth century presents convoluted negotiations of physical space in general and of the family house in particular. Factors such as world politics, immigration flows and domestic economics placed women in a dubious position regarding the house they lived in: “women were regarded as a flexible labour supply to be pulled out of the home when needed and pushed back in when not” (Riley 113). The fluctuation between inwards and outwards in this game of domestic catch and release tested women’s compliance with the traditional organisation of space to a point of no return. The changes in American society were to influence the way women in the rest of the Western world regarded domestic space. In this process, for many women the word “home” grew both semantically and symbolically to stand for all which restrained them from

gaining full access to the appealing opportunities that society would only allow them to glimpse periodically.

The increase of immigrants in the decades preceding the 1900s created a new profile of woman in America, which was to coexist with the accommodated upper-middle-class homemaker: the unprivileged worker. This working woman, who was often an immigrant herself or second generation immigrant, was progressively assimilated into American society, helping to break the taboo against working women (Ogden 136). When World War I called men to European battlefields in the first draft on 20 July 1917, many women were already experienced in running a home whilst complying with extensive working hours outside of it. They did an excellent job. Since these women were a small percentage of the population, a call was soon made appealing to fully dedicated housewives to help replace the male labour force deployed to Europe (Riley 68). These war years would be for most middle-class women the first taste of real employment other than domestic or basic services. Their efforts were acknowledged in the Nineteenth Amendment which settled women's right to vote in 1920.

As a result, the generation of the 20s flirted with greater freedom and working opportunities, but their expectations regarding marriage remained still close to those of their mothers, as they ultimately aimed to have families and keep homes.¹¹ However, as Ogden observed in her detailed study of two hundred years of women's homemaking in America, something had changed forever: these married ex-flappers kept a poignant memory of their younger years, and would eventually "grow restless or depressed . . . as they looked for the same kind of challenges in homemaking that they had experienced studying or working. Furthermore, for the first time in

¹¹ Apart from the right to vote, there was an understanding that clerical jobs were a positive thing for an educated girl prior to marriage. Also, the first birth control clinic was opened by Margaret Sanger in 1916 (Jensen 83, 215).

women's history housewives found themselves in competition with working women who were receiving recognition outside the home" (139). Their experience was the beginning of a progressive awareness of restriction of opportunities and physical movement which would culminate with the exposure of the lie in the *Feminine Mystique* in the 60s (1963).

The internalised traditional housewife role of these young housewives of the 20s was strongly encouraged by a multiplicity of minor factors that distracted them from pursuing careers outside their homes. Among these were a booming economy (which depended on their spending), film industries, and a new stress on beauty and youth. Manufacturers and advertisers very quickly realised it was these American women who decided where to spend over eighty percent of the family budget (Ogden 157). As would be the case in World War II, the United States mainland stood untouched by war in contrast to most of Western Europe. The British cousins of these women, who had shared similar ideas of suffrage, were struggling to pull Britain back together, and accept the high toll that WWI had taken on the male population.

The economic prosperity resulting from the war opened markets for many new products. The decade of the 20s brought a massive production of electrical appliances and retail in general. The electrical motor had been invented in 1892, but it was after WWI that home appliances multiplied. Advertising presented an increased range of equipment promising to relieve the burden of the housewife so that she would have more time and energy to spend on her family and herself. Ironically, this worked to the detriment of women's release from domestic chores. Appliances grew to be symbols of social status, adding extra domestic pressure by placing women in a position from which they had to watch and keep up with the

market. Furthermore, these appliances did not ease the amount of work to do in the house, since it brought back into the home labour which had long been displaced to external services, as for example baking and laundry tasks (Ogden 156).¹²

The 20s also brought two novelties into American women's lives which for the first time shifted part of the attention of women to themselves: the industries of movies and beauty products. The moving pictures portrayed domestic bliss as being at hand, presenting "romance and everlasting happiness [which] were proving to be untenable to both women and men on a daily basis" (Riley 87). Women compared their home routine to that of the characters in the movies, and found that they were not as happy as their fictional counterparts. The film industry initially worked as an evasion, providing distraction for young women from their possibilities outside the home. However, when women eventually compared themselves to their glamorous onscreen counterparts, films had the counter-effect of exposing what women saw as failure in themselves, increasing levels of female frustration.¹³ Movies implied an additional burden by incorporating into the domestic environment good looks and romantic marriages, encouraging women to strive for both physical beauty and romantic domestic bliss. If it is true that movies initially endowed marriage and domesticity with an unrealistic aura of glamour, they also increased women's tendency towards self evaluation when true life conflicted with their expectations, stirring latent anxieties.

¹² Ogden's study includes explicit detail: until 1925 most young women did not know how to bake bread, bakeries having tripled between 1900 and 1925 while the population had only increased by half. Many bakeries closed down when homes began to have ovens. Similarly, after the advent of washing machines, the formerly economic laundry places increased their prices fourfold, becoming a luxury for the wealthier layers of society. Ogden points out that a 1974 issue of *Scientific American* exposed that in the 70s the average middle-class woman was still spending as many hours on house work as her grandmother did (148).

¹³ Among these cinematographic icons stood Clara Bow (1905-1965), Greta Garbo (1905-1990) and Louise Brooks (1906-1985).

Beauty was now presented as something that could be attainable through cosmetics. The marketing of make-up, thus, was an invention of the 20s. By getting out of their houses, young middle-class women were exposed to the gaze of more men on a daily basis, and hence to a daily pressure to look pretty. A wish to be attractive to men had always been a priority to marriageable women as their future economic position could depend on it. However, after marriage, the Victorian woman had had a different set of priorities in the house, and all of them focused on other members of the household. Some of these were being a successful caretaker, hostess and a mother; all placed before her wish for youthful beauty. Since the 20s brought a much more active scene for young women, a new market was created in which for the first time beauty was presented as something that could be attained and maintained by purchasing artificial cosmetic products. These soon entered the domain of the housewives, who fell prey to the pressure of the advertising of the rising cosmetic industry and movie close ups of divas, which had been nonexistent in the former stage scene. The first American beauty pageant was held in 1921. By 1925, women had increased their spending on cosmetics from \$17 million to \$141 million (Riley 86-87). Beauty had become an additional domestic chore. Ironically, however, psychologically the duty of beauty contributed to the shift of the homemaker's attention from the care of others to the care of the self, with the consequent evaluation of one's own circumstances.

The generation of women who had married recently was growing restless with the burden of homemaking, and so they rushed to purchase all of the goods that society encouraged them to, sustaining the American economy as they cluttered their homes with new domestic appliances. For these women, consuming became the way to meet society's expectations (Ogden 156-57). In 1929 Christine Frederick

published *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, which explained how the economic welfare of the nation was dependent on the flow of goods, and how ultimately this flow was dependent on the purchases of the housewife. It explained how “Mrs. Consumer was susceptible to manipulation by advertising” (Ogden 158), creating a stereotype which was to persist into the present day.

It is ironic that Frederick’s text was published right before the 1929 Depression, when the spending of American families had to be put on hold until the mid 1940s. The 1930s were a tough time in which working women were sent home and housewives were made more responsible for the subsistence of the family than ever. Working women were urged or forced to give up their jobs so that men could have them instead, and this included typically female occupations. Aiming to encourage women to go back home, the 1930 U.S. census for the first time classified “homemaking” as a profession, making domesticity sound more like an active occupation for women.¹⁴ The semantics of the terms “housewife” and “homemaker” reflect a clear shift from passive neutrality to active agency: “house” merely describes an architectural structure, inhabited or not, in the same way that the word “wife” is a passive term which takes meaning from the notion of being the wife to somebody else. The “home” in “homemaker,” by contrast, has warmer connotations while “maker” grants agency to the creator or facilitator of the existence of this home.

In spite of the efforts of the government, many women initially resisted giving up their jobs. The Economy Act of 1933 stated that no family could have two members simultaneously holding federal jobs, which pushed married women back

¹⁴ Secretary of Commerce Robert Patterson Lamont’s “announced intention was ‘to give recognition to women in the home who hitherto, unless they had some moneymaking employment, were reported as having no occupation’” (Ogden 159, originally quoting “Census Will Classify Women ‘Homemakers,’ *The New York Times* (March 21, 1930).)

into the home against their will.¹⁵ This governmental initiative eventually set the example for private businesses. Movies portrayed appealing self-reliant and sophisticated women who inevitably would give up “thriving careers for the man of their dreams,” learning that “marriage and family were all that really mattered” (Riley 109). By 1939, twenty-six states had laws restricting jobs for married women (Riley 97-98). For the few women who managed to keep their job, “work in the thirties revolved primarily around the home and the child” (Ogden 160), or under meagre incomes since it was accepted that employers would pay especially low wages to women workers.

There was a sharp contrast in the lives of women between the 1920s and the 1930s. In the 1930s, there was no time for social activism. The few workers who had managed to keep their jobs were overworked under poor conditions and frowned upon. Simultaneously, the non-working housewives suddenly saw themselves with a huge responsibility put on their shoulders by society. They had been made in charge of the home economy in the 1920s, and now it was up to them to stretch the dollar in the 1930s. The same women who had married in search of the announced comfort of the commodities of marriage, suddenly found that the survival of their loved ones depended on how well they performed domestic chores. Work at home implied “keeping their families alive. Women no longer viewed canning, cooking and sewing as creative hobbies but as sheer necessities” (Ogden 160). Divorce became an expensive luxury for unhappy marriages, the rate falling around 43% between 1929 and 1933 (Riley 96). In the 1930s, then, many of the women who had chosen an alternative life to homemaking were forced to return to domesticity.

¹⁵ This measure had the unfortunate consequence that major political organisations such as the League of Women Voters or the National Women’s Party were reduced to one fourth of their size, as all married members were forced to resign (Riley 98).

The emphasis on homemaking was maintained until 1941, when the United States officially joined World War II. Understandably, the government then found it difficult to convince women to leave their homes and take up the jobs that men were leaving behind. It is hardly surprising that women found the government's appeal confusing and contradictory in relation to the past decade's policy of promoting and institutionalising homemaking. To overcome this collective hesitation, Roosevelt's team created the character of Rosie the Riveter, the counterpart of Uncle Sam. American women responded to the call by the million, increasing female labour by 50%. In 1940 around 11,970,000 women worked outside their homes, while in 1945 the numbers had increased to 18,610,000. The government helped by equalling wages for men and women. Aspects apparently as trivial as fashion were attended to by the government so that working clothes or women's army uniforms appealed to the new, beauty-conscious American woman (Riley 113-14). Furthermore, for the first time, the government provided efficient facilities for child care and a series of measures of domestic support such as easier access to precooked meals and nursery care, just as Gilman had urged society decades before. Apart from effectively providing these facilities, there was a key ideological change that should be highlighted: to fight housewives' initial apprehension of neglecting their homes, the government launched a psychological campaign which told women that making use of these services was actually favourable for the upbringing of their children. As Susie Orbach and Luise Eichenbaum observe, "The ideological thrust in that period was to persuade mothers that communal child care was beneficial at the same time as it allowed them to perform the highest service" (177).

When World War II ended in 1945, the American government urged women to return their jobs to men and once again to go back to their domestic duties in the

home. A woman was expected to “limit her activities to her home and leave the activities of the ‘outside’ world to men” (Riley 121). Although most women tried to comply with the instructions, it came as no surprise that psychologically they had reached a point of no return. In a time span of fifteen years, these women had been subject to schizophrenic dictates and expectations regarding their emotional and spatial relation to their homes. The government’s demands in 1945 presented again a 180 degree turn that this time was impossible to digest. After the war, many women continued working, some with the tolerance of society in the case of women in need, but most with the stigma of the bad mother or the “parasite.”

1946 presented the highest marriage rate ever. The American economy was again booming and salaries were higher than ever before. The government responded to these circumstances by developing a family-oriented urban design of residential areas adjacent to the cities. In suburbia, houses were reasonably affordable and many young couples opted in: “[f]or the first time in history more Americans owned their own homes than lived in rented premises” (Kaledin 11). They were also isolated from the lower classes and racial minorities, who had stayed in the city cores, therefore guaranteeing an acceptable social environment (Spiegel 189). Suburbia, with the consequent lonely and claustrophobic conditions it created for the housewife, was one of the main factors determining women’s unhappiness in the 1950s (Spiegel 201-02).

Between 1950 and 1960, the population in these suburbs grew at an impressive rate in comparison to the slow growth in the cities: 47% against 8.7% (Ogden 179). Encouraged by media, many women consented to the move, oblivious to the implications of bringing up a family while physically cut off from the diversity of

the city. It seems that the promise of domestic bliss erased the achievements of the former decades:

Without a regret for the independent spirit that had flashed out proudly in the twenties, thirties, and forties, women of the cold-war age happily allowed themselves to be whisked off to the suburbs. There they voluntarily traded loyalty to home and husband for financial security. (Ogden 172)

The new design of the suburban home isolated these women. Wives were bound to their own houses during the day to attend to the care of the children, and during the night to attend to the husband, ensuring the home was a haven of happiness, free of conflict, as she built the egos of the other members of the family (Ogden 177, 81). Since suburbia was aimed at the single nuclear family, very few communal living arrangements were established. Having no city parks or marketplaces, entertainment took place from house to house, moving from one home to another identical home. Extended family such as grandparents were excluded from the suburban developments. Young wives raised their children in a town comprised only of children and other women, while their husbands spent the day working in the city. As their sole means of expression, women were encouraged once more to maintain a healthy level of consumerism, returning to the ideas presented in the 1929 book *Selling Mrs. Consumer*. America was to revisit the trend of the 20s and to foster the consumerist mentality typical of capitalist societies. The shopping centre was placed conveniently accessible to suburbia, as the city market was too far now for the non-driving mothers. History repeated itself and the increase of appliances and services increased the housewife's work at home from fifty-two hours in the 1940s to fifty-four in the 50s (Riley 122).

After the honeymoon period with the suburban home and the family it contained, women in the early 1950s began to pay a high psychological price for trying to abide by society's fluctuating expectations. A combination of career frustration and the physical isolation of being cut off in suburbia to exclusively service the home developed into what was called "the housewife syndrome":

Keeping the house sealed against conflict—that was the major responsibility of the housewife of the late 1950s. Nevertheless, the dust of emotional conflict tended to settle unobtrusively in the cracks and corners of suburban homes and had to be dealt with around the clock. Irrepressible dissatisfaction, the old "housewife syndrome" that had surfaced in the late forties, had never gone away. Now, however, active efforts were being made to eradicate the feelings of anger and frustration, dissatisfaction and irritation that surfaced into her consciousness, despite all her efforts to deny them, during the course of the housewife's day. (Ogden 181)

There were alarming signs of disturbance in this homemaking role. Female alcoholism, divorce and drug taking increased dramatically in the fifties. The use of tranquillisers went from 0 pounds in 1955 to 1.15 million pounds weight in 1959 (Riley 125).

To understand how intertwined love and resentment were in 1950s housewives' relationship with their homes, it is necessary to bear in mind that the case of the housewife is the only example of restriction of physical freedom in which containment in a structure is maintained merely by the appeal to affective emotions. In the case of slavery, the subjection is exerted by force and power. Similarly, the inmates subject to imprisonment are contained by physical barriers. Those who

undertake domestic employment are motivated by wages. However, in the case of the housewife, their only trade off is the love they receive from those they care for, their children and their husbands, and this care eventually results in containment. Historically, women had been conditioned to attend to the home and to accept and love what it contained as there appeared to be no alternative. Following the first return to the home after WWI, consumerism distracted women by turning the home into their means of expression, and the home became their creation, their work. Up to the 1950s, it had been presented as “natural” for a woman to find self-fulfillment in the home, rewarded by mere love. When in the 1950s a growing awareness that it was the same home women loved that so imprisoned them, conflicting feelings overtook them, including guilt for resenting what they loved and felt obliged to enjoy.

The word “home” during the post-war years grew to stand for all the obligations which restrained women’s potential (proven in World War I and II): a combination of mother, wife and house-keeper duties in which the woman attended to all and no one attended to her. It is not surprising that the Women Bureau reported that 80% of women wanted to keep working after WWII (Riley 116). As women externalised signs of discontent, media and government appealed to science to justify the new domestic imposition. Plenty of purportedly irrefutable scientific studies assured the nation that domestic life for women was the best for the family unit and for the country. Psychiatrists such as Marynia Farnham, co-author of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), attributed women’s unease to their stubborn desire to pursue careers outside the home (Jensen 193). She also attributed unhappiness in adult life to a failed home in childhood, for which the former generation of women was to blame. The government took forceful measures and closed down the childcare centres after the war in order to push women back to

childrearing (Riley 116). To silence the general complaint, pedagogists such as Erik Erikson and Dr. Benjamin Spock recommended women's exclusive dedication to children to the bewilderment of the grandmothers, who watched astonished at how their daughters lived exclusively to spoil their offspring. Farnham warned that a woman should not "become career-minded to the detriment of her home, husband and children. . . . At the same time, she should not become so attached to her home that she is unwilling to leave it for other enterprises. . . [although i]f there is no current demand for her services outside the home, she should devote all her efforts to improving it in every way" (qtd. in Jensen 193).

In addition to all the factors mentioned above, international politics played an important role in the way women were encouraged to stay at home. In order to ensure the new social system based on consumerism and domesticity, the United States connected the figure of the housewife to the Cold War and national security. As early as 1947, sociologist Marynia Farnham and historian Ferdinand Lundberg had argued in *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* that "such problems of modern society as war and depression stemmed from women leaving their homes and families" (qtd. in Riley 122). The rise of the Cold War developed this idea. At the time of McCarthyism and the Red Scare, women's organisations were immediately targeted as associations suspected of communism. The government declared that treating women as mothers rather than as manpower was what separated America from the Communist world. It linked "women's traditional domestic roles to the nation's security. National leaders as well as popular culture proclaimed that women's role in the international crisis was to strengthen the family and raise new citizens emotionally and mentally fit to win the Cold War" (Hartmann 85). When in 1959 the Soviet Union made a worrying statement celebrating the education and productivity

of Russian women, Republican vice-president Nixon cunningly pointed out the increase of domestic appliances in the American home, adding: "What we want is to make easier the life of our housewives" (Hartmann 86). The Department of Labour was even more explicit: "The highest calling of a woman's sex is the home" (Hartmann 86).¹⁶ As can be seen from these declarations, women who aimed to leave the home not only were bad mothers and bad citizens: they were traitors to the nation.¹⁷

In 1958 Janet L. Wolff published *What Makes Women Buy*, a book very similar to the 1929 *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, updating the marketing companies and industry with the psychological changes the American housewife had experienced in a generation. Wolff warned industry about the loneliness women felt in their homes, surrounded merely by possessions and children, ironically those on which they had relied for fulfilment. She advised advertisers that the term "housewife" or "lady" no longer carried any prestige for society, as these terms carried connotations of precisely what women wanted to escape from: the home, and ageing. Instead, Wolff recommended the retailing of products which promised youth and beauty, or appliances which would offer a relief from chores and domesticity (Ogden 185). It is no coincidence that shopping centres were an invention of this decade (Ogden 171).

When considered all together, all of the aspects mentioned above show that by the end of the 50s the pressure under which women were placed had reached gigantic proportions. It is around this time, when Wolff was producing a text on how to take economic advantage of the domestic frustration of women, that Betty Friedan

¹⁶ Hartmann is here quoting Nixon's words from Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Rev. and updated ed. ([New York]: Basic Books, 1999). The Dep. of Labour declaration is by Undersecretary James O'Connell in 1960 (qtd. in Sealander 139-40).

¹⁷ Treason could be taken to the utmost level and lead to execution, as the case of wife and mother Ethel Rosenberg proves. The communist Rosenbergs were accused of espionage and executed in 1953, leaving two small boys orphaned.

wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. Friedan, an educated housewife, contemplated the same scenarios as Wolff, but chose a different angle, as she wrote from the perspective of her own frustrating experience as a housewife. *The Feminine Mystique* shook American public opinion, exposing a manipulative scheme by the ruling ideologies: a scheme which Friedan believed forcefully drove women back into the family home and domestic duties. Friedan analysed 1950s fictional publications, marketing campaigns and popular entertainment and found a new “cult of true womanhood” as understood in the early 1900s. She denounced how women had been manipulated in their choices, and how the media burdened women who resented this return to domesticity with a sense of guilt:

[Friedan’s book] marked a turning point in the passive victim role that women had been accepting at the hands of the consumer industry. Friedan acknowledged that unhappy women made good consumers, but she exhorted these women to pull themselves out of the race and see what was happening to them. . . . Friedan accused the consumer industry of manipulating women into staying home to have babies they did not really want and to spend their lives buying products they did not really need. The basic message in Friedan’s book was that the supermother in the suburbs was nothing but an advertising dummy. But the dummy was held up by the giants of the consumer industry. To declare war on the supermarkets was to declare war on the American economy. (Ogden 186)

Betty Friedan’s book would become the key text for the 60s’ American Second Wave Feminism. Although the validity of Friedan’s points was self-evident and of unquestionable importance for the liberation of women, there are additional reasons

why her book had such an enormous effect. Society was hosting a contradiction since it was not composed only of women like Friedan herself. There was a new group of women who worked, and publishers were targeting them by offering magazines portraying alternative lives. These magazines were also read by the discontented housewives, increasing the conflict and their self-evaluation of their situation. In 1994 Joanne Meyerowitz, intending to complement Friedan, supplemented Friedan's analysis of women's fiction by pointing out that Friedan's review had been principally based on popular fiction, not taking into account the non-fiction articles of women's magazines from the 50s.¹⁸ Women who were trapped into domesticity were also reading those magazines, making them the true milieu which promulgated the enormous success of *The Feminine Mystique*. After the big drop-out of 1945, the number of working women outside of suburbia had been steadily increasing, from 27% of the workforce in 1950 to 32% in 1960 (Kaledin 63). Consequently, Meyerowitz affirms that the great success of *The Feminine Mystique* probably originates in the fact that it "reworked themes already rooted in the mass culture" (Meyerowitz 252). When Friedan articulated what a number of American readers had been aware of (the artificiality of the imposed return to domesticity), Friedan was not unveiling a concealed conflict: she was verbalising in an academically accepted form of discussion an issue that already existed in suburban homes. American women's exposure to alternative real-life roles in non-fiction magazines only stirred their anxieties and increased the schizophrenic relationship with their homes by placing a spotlight on a frowned-upon but possible escape.

¹⁸ Some of the magazines quoted by Meyerowitz are *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Readers' Digests* and *Coronet*. Joanne J. Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminie Mistique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) 230.

The existence of these magazines and the real stories they published reveal the already existing conflict experienced in the 50s by American women like Shirley Jackson, or Friedan herself. The fact that suburban women were aware of their seclusion is crucial to understanding how their experience impacted on the way they wrote the house in fiction. Of all genres and tropes, I suggest that the conflict undergone by American women is particularly linked to the culmination of the trope of the sentient house in horror. This conflict is a major difference when we compare American fiction to that of Spain. As I will show in the Spanish section of this study, there is no comparable trajectory in the sociocultural conditions of Spain, where the Franco regime controlled most publications and entertainment addressed to women. The different circumstances are reflected in the way women from the two countries wrote narratives of horror. In Jackson's fiction, this sociocultural conflict gives rise to the depiction of the haunted house and the portrayal of roles for women in *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959).

2.3 Shirley Jackson and the Two-Faced House

It is in the sociocultural context of the 1950s and also around the same time as Wolff and Friedan were working on their key texts that a third woman writer, Shirley Jackson (1919-1965), sometime before 1959, also sat down and wrote *The Haunting of Hill House*. Jackson's book is, I would argue, the first narrative of sentience in which the house really plays a center-stage intelligent role. I believe this sentience is the product of increasing sociocultural tensions revolving around gender negotiations and physical space, which reached their climax in the abrupt return to

domesticity in the 1950s.¹⁹ The feminist call against homemaking, which occurred around Jackson's time, had turned the idea of home into a heavily-loaded pressure point. The complexity of what "home" stood for at this time—a series of primeval needs embodied in the same entity that hindered possibilities—indirectly resulted in the culmination of an entity both feared and desired. This want arises from the will or the need to stay. Without the simultaneous existence of a threat and the genuine will to stay (derived from a need for a home), the narrative of horror would not work. This will to stay, conflicting with one's own safety, is the essence of a contemporary haunted house narrative. The sentient house arises when the awareness of the house's destructive potential meets women's need for a home.

Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" had presented a ghost which had become inseparable from the building, absorbed into the walls of a house which was at all times regarded negatively. With Hill House, Jackson openly places the building as the interactive antagonist, something not yet achieved by Peattie and only suggested by Wharton, who remains non-committal in her story "Afterwards." The amalgamation of noises and supernatural episodes in Hill House appear controlled by the house itself. There is no past massacre, no spell or curse, no demons or satanic rites, no putrid taint contaminating the building's structure or the health of its occupants as in Poe, or past ancestors' feud as in Hawthorne: it is the first house born evil for no apparent reason. It was born from the imagination of an educated woman of suburbia who was always torn between her domestic obligations and her need for her own privacy and space.

¹⁹ The nostalgia for the home in women writers is an aspect that other critics have noticed in the twentieth century. For example, an analysis of the ambivalence of the loss of home in the works of Isabel Allende and in the paintings by surreal artists is available in Allende's analysis by Gloria Duran. Although this critic does not focus on sentient haunted house fiction, her reflections of the unconscious attachment to the idea of home in women writers runs along the same lines as mine.

Shirley Jackson had studied journalism and English at university prior to her marriage, and had succeeded in publishing several fictional stories. Before the birth of her first child, her work was circulating at a national level in the magazine *The New Republic* in 1941. From then on, Jackson would do well in sustaining a writing career in combination with running a family of four children with practically no help from her husband, who worked in academia. She was known to her neighbours for her prowess as a housewife and a hostess, but also for taking every possible chance to sneak some time for her writing among her domestic obligations, the content of which was often thematically dark.

Just like many of her contemporaries, Jackson experienced contradictory feelings towards what American society presented as homemaking. In an interview in 1949 for the *New York Times*, the interviewer, Harvey Breit, described Jackson as radiating “an atmosphere of coziness and comfort... [looking] like a mother” (Breit, qtd. in Hall 107). She was perceived by her peers as what Bailey labels a “June Cleaver,” or the perfect housewife (25).²⁰ Her neighbours described her routine as follows:

She was more than dedicated, rose at 5:30 or 6:30 A.M. to fix breakfast for the family, taxied them to school until they were old enough to walk to school alone, saw them as part of the community, baked mountains of brownies for them, for volunteer fire department bake sales . . . encouraged the children to join Little League, the Scouts, etc. (Friedman 31)

However, Jackson did not find fulfilment in housekeeping, although she appeared to master the task brilliantly. In an autobiographical note for editorial

²⁰ June Cleaver was an emblematic character of the 50s TV series *Leave it to Beaver*. June was the embodiment of all of the qualities of the ideal suburban mother and homemaker.

purposes, she comments “I don’t like housework, but do it because no one else will. My older daughter and I are practically learning to cook together. . . . I don’t like laundry but I do that too” (Hall 105-06).

Jackson was frustrated by the obligations of homemaking, but as many women in her generation did, she went along with it. While she was a good mother and faced family life with humour and vitality, she resented the domestic impositions of her time. A writer for women’s magazines herself, Jackson must have been informed of the discussions held in the magazines pointed out by Meyerowitz, and must have seen herself caught in the same inconsistency as most American women of her times: what women were told was right and fulfilling and what actually felt right and fulfilling did not match. There were real women out there who were leading lives which did not correspond to the fictional characters of the propagandistic narratives exposed by Friedan.

Jackson found in literature a means of escape: an excuse to withdraw to a quiet space of her own. In contrast to her husband’s view on writing as a means for making a living, Jackson is said to have found the task therapeutic in some ways, describing it as the “only way [she could] get to sit down” (Breit, qtd. in Hall 107). Ever since her writing career matured with the early publication of the story “The Lottery” in *The New Yorker* in 1948, Jackson had accommodated three daily writing hours to the gaps left by her housewife duties (Friedman 28). However, the fact that she used writing as an escape from domesticity does not imply that she found in writing a rest. Jackson spoke of books and children on the same level, naming how many books she had in the same sentence as children, with statements such as “I have one more children than books, although I hope eventually to have more books than children” (Hall 105). She referred to her writings as if she was their nurturer in a

tone that almost sounds organic, as can be seen for example when she described her evenings: “50 per cent of my life is spent in washing and dressing the children, cooking, washing dishes and clothes, and mending. After I get it all to bed, I turn around at my typewriter and try to—well, to create concrete things again. It’s great fun, and I love it” (Hall 107).

However, her comical and highly successful non-fictional family chronicles *Life Among the Savages* (1953), and *Raising Demons* (1957) leave a sour aftertaste of entrapment in a life governed by children and books, and a wish for privacy. In the first of these, Jackson describes her family life in the following, hardly positive, terms:

This is the way of life we have fallen into, inadvertently, as though we had fallen into a well and decided that since there was no way out we might as well stay there and set up a chair and a desk and a light of some kind. . . . I cannot think of a preferable way of life except one without children and without books, going on soundlessly in an apartment hotel where they do the cleaning for you and send up your meals and all you have to do is lie on a couch and—as I say, I cannot think of a preferable way of life, but then I have had to make a good many compromises, all told. (Jackson, *Life Among the Savages* 1-2)

Jackson’s wishes for a place away from chores just as much as from books is echoed by the pain her character, Eleanor, feels at not having her own place. Perhaps not unrelated to Jackson’s routine and wishes for a place of her own is the fact that towards the end of her life she developed severe agoraphobic disorders

which kept her away from people and a normal life. She died of heart failure at the age of 48.²¹

The story that made Jackson famous, "The Lottery", is important to the study of *The Haunting of Hill House* because it offers a first glimpse of how Jackson felt about the role of housewife and mother. This story made Jackson famous instantly because it caused a commotion in American public opinion by describing a small town raffle in which every year a person is randomly picked to be stoned to death. A young mother and housewife is chosen by the ballot, and so the community, including the town children and her own family, proceeds to kill her while she complains about how unfair it all is. After the publication of "The Lottery," American readers demanded explanations of the brutality and sheer inexplicability of the story. Jackson always replied dismissively, claiming not to have had any ulterior motive at the moment of writing. However, Jackson's career suggests otherwise, as her work is known to address social injustices and the evil inherent to humans. As biographer Lenemaja Friedman comments, "Miss Jackson was always sensitive to social ills, and many of these problems became the subjects of her editorials" (23), championing "the case of the underdog and . . . expos[ing] prejudice" (25).

What I find interesting about this story for the purposes of my investigation is that Jackson claimed not to have any secret or political agenda at the time of writing "The Lottery," yet the story blatantly echoes complaints about social injustice and unfair communal expectations. If, as Jackson claimed, there was no additional significance intended, this story could be an early illustration of Jackson's drawing on

²¹ The theme of agoraphobia in Jackson and a study of this disorder in her works is explored in the thesis by Joyce Jackson Bender, "Shirley Jackson's Troubled Women: Agoraphobia and the Fiction of Fear," Oklahoma State University, 1994.

unconscious gender conflicts for the purposes of literary creation.²² I think it is very likely that similar mental processes in Jackson's creative mind were involved in the writing of *The Haunting of Hill House*. Enough references to homemaking and an overwhelming presence of the idea of home in this book place Jackson in connection with the literary legacy of issues of domesticity, traceable in the series of writers reviewed in this study. In Jackson's work, for the first time, the pressures of homemaking and the need for a home collide.

The home, both in its connotations of domesticity and in a strictly architectural sense, was a major interest for Jackson. Architecture and houses had in fact been a main interest in the Jackson family for generations (Friedman 17). Jackson was very interested in the darker aspects of houses. She enjoyed driving to see purportedly haunted houses to the amusement of herself and her children (Oppenheimer 222-24). She also wrote unsettling stories about abnormal psychology and claustrophobia, some of them bordering on horror, in which entrapment in houses and psychological ties to houses stood as the pillars of the plot, again revealing a particular intensity in the notion of home. Examples of this are *The Sundial's* character Fanny Halloran (1958) and the Blackwood sisters in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962) and "The Visit" (1950), in which a girl is literally absorbed into the tapestry covering the walls of a room. In these stories and novels, the need for a home or the emotional impossibility of letting go of a home are major forces of the narrative. Standing out dramatically amongst these narratives of entrapment is *The Haunting of Hill House*. What makes Hill House frightening is the psychological processes it triggers around the idea of home, as well as its unusual and claustrophobic structure, rather than the imprint of a past tragedy or demonic

²² Jackson often claimed not to know what her intentions were at the time of writing. When she was asked what she was trying to do, "Miss Jackson didn't quite know. 'I keep trying to think how I do it,' she said. 'That would explain it.'" (Hall 108).

intervention. I regard *The Haunting of Hill House* as the first full-blown model of a sentient house, and the Jackson narrative in which the psychological conflict between the need for a home and rejection of domesticity can be seen at its most compelling.

Jackson's first inspiration for writing a haunted house story had been an article describing an nineteenth-century scientific investigation of a haunted house. She declared the enterprise of writing "her own haunted house and her own people to study it" according to her own rules particularly exciting (Friedman 121). This was a long process in which she carried out extensive research, studying photographs in magazines and newspapers for the perfect setting. Incredibly, she chose the photograph of a house 3,000 miles away from her residence which, to her astonishment, she later found out had been built by her own great grandfather (Friedman 121). This circumstance, and other minor episodes such as writing during sleepwalking, contributed to her impression that this act of writing her haunted house story was somehow meant to be.

The Haunting of Hill House charts what happens when Dr. Montague, an academic with an interest in parapsychology, invites a number of people to stay in a purportedly haunted house in the countryside. The book opens with a powerfully descriptive paragraph of the house which states the house's animosity in capital letters in the first few words of the novel:

No LIVE organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, its walls continued upright, bricks met neatly,

floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone. (3-4)

Of twelve people invited to Hill House, only two materialise: Theodora, an attractive young woman who owns her own shop and lives with an unidentified flatmate with whom she has just quarrelled, and Eleanor Vance, a thirty-two year old insecure and dreamy woman who has spent the last eleven years taking care of a sick mother until her death three months earlier. Theodora, or Theo, has been selected because of her clairvoyant talent, something in which she is not particularly interested. Eleanor is invited for having unintentionally caused a rain of stones over her own house as a child, a few days after her father's death.

Eleanor has been living with her married sister's family for three months when she receives the invitation. She accepts it and takes the shared car against her sister's wishes. Eleanor feels resentment towards her mother and her sister for having kept her for so long as a caregiver. She also feels guilt for not having heard her mother calling on the night of her death. As she drives towards Hill House, the reader shares Eleanor's fantasies, which are evoked by the places she drives past. These include imagining the houses she drives past as her own, or being the princess in a fairy tale castle. Eleanor is the first guest to arrive at Hill House, a manor that she immediately finds hideous. After being admitted by the unwelcoming caretakers, the Dudleys, Eleanor lets go of her apprehensions in expectation of the other guests: Dr Montague, Theodora, and Luke, a member of the family of the current proprietors, who is to supervise the stay of the group.

The group is light-hearted during the first hours at Hill House. The caretakers warn them that they do not stay around after dark. As they lock the property when

they leave, no one can leave in the evening either. After a few hours in the house, Eleanor feels for the first time a sense of belonging somewhere, and the joy of having friends. That evening Dr. Montague tells them the history of Hill House. The house had been built eighty years ago by Mr Hugh Crain, who hoped to raise his children and grandchildren in a comfortable country house. However, in the arrival to the house, Crain loses his wife in a carriage accident. Left with two little girls, Crain remarries, but loses his second wife to a fall. His third wife dies in Europe of consumption, after which Crain closes down the house, never to return, sending his daughters to live with a relative. As they grow older, the two sisters quarrel about the house, more so when the oldest, who remained single, leaves Hill House to her companion, a village girl. After the pressure of the youngest to recover the property, the companion commits suicide in the library. Dr Montague also adds that there is a record of a death of a man falling from a horse twenty years back, and that every person who had attempted to live in Hill House had left prematurely, refusing to give any account of the reasons. However, he makes clear that there is no evidence of any supernatural events or major tragedies taking place in the house. Of the deaths which occurred in the family or grounds, none can be attributed directly to the house.

The first night in Hill House is peaceful, and all awake refreshed. On the second day they explore the building. The structure of the house is remarkably odd: the design seems to revolve around circular motifs and it lacks straight angles, which could account for all doors shutting on their own and the sense of disorientation of the occupants. The most striking room in the house seems to be the nursery: two grinning heads guard the entrance over the doorway, and in the spot where the gaze of the carvings meet, the temperature drops to unexplainable freezing levels. The library also appears somewhat extraordinary in construction, being a tower strangely

attached to the main structure of the house. For reasons they cannot understand, Eleanor cannot bring herself to walk into the library.

The second night brings the first supernatural event. A very loud pounding sound on the doors awakes the two women, who sleep in connecting bedrooms, while the two men had been driven outside in the belief that a stray animal had sneaked into the property. The pounding sweeps the house in search of the women and violently bangs the locked door when it finds their room. After babbling in indefinable voices, the manifestation stops. When the men return, they have not heard anything unusual apart from the screams of the girls. On the morning of the third day, the house singles out Eleanor by manifesting chalk writing on the wall that reads: "help Eleanor come home." Theodora and Eleanor blame each other for the writing; and their budding friendship is replaced by a competition for attention. Although the night is spent peacefully, on the next day Theodora discovers her room and all her clothes smeared with blood, and a writing above her own bed with the similar inscription "help Eleanor come home Eleanor." Accusations fly and dislike increases between Eleanor and Theodora, but tempers calm and Eleanor takes Theo into her own bedroom. That night, as they sleep, Eleanor wakes up to the indefinable voices, first babbling, then laughing. Holding hands in the darkness, the two women experience how the temperature of the room decreases as the babbling becomes a child's cry for help and a shriek. Eleanor then confronts the house in rage and the lights go on. She is astounded to discover that Theo had been asleep all along at too far a distance to have been holding her hand.

As Hill House gradually targets (and disintegrates) Eleanor's initial autonomy, Theodora's and Luke's behaviour seeks to alienate her, bordering on cruelty. Eleanor is often left to herself and is ignored in group conversations. As her illusions

of independence and sense of belonging in the group crack, the house takes the opportunity to absorb her, making her grow increasingly lonely. On an evening walk, the two women witness a ghostly picnic while they are followed by a terrifying presence in the garden that is never described. All these supernatural episodes test Eleanor's fragile self-reliance. The arrival of Mrs. Montague and her male assistant entertains the group for the next day. A true believer in spirits, Mrs. Montague proclaims her intention to cleanse the house through love and understanding, making use of a Ouija board. While these last two characters are to be ignored by Hill House, the initial group endures a severe evening of manifestations in which a pounding presence stalks outside of their room and furniture falls as they feel the house rock and shake violently. It is at this point that Eleanor declares her intentions to give herself up to the house.

On the final night, the group is sitting together in the lounge when Eleanor notices that she is the only one hearing footsteps and singing in the room. For the first time, instead of experiencing distress, she feels pride in being the one chosen by the house. Later on in the evening, Eleanor hears the voice of her mother calling, which triggers in her a frantic frenzy, running and laughing all over Hill House. When she reaches the library that used to terrify her, she is exultant, thinking "I am home, I am home" (232). She climbs up a rusty staircase known to be on the verge of collapsing. By then the others have reached her and Luke finds himself obliged to climb up the shaking stairs to go to her rescue.

On the last morning Dr. Montague tells Eleanor that she must leave at once. Eleanor begs to stay, claiming that the house wants her, but nobody listens to her: Dr. Montague out of concern, Luke out of disinterest, and Theodora out of pure dislike, all farewell her with what sounds like a hypocritical dismissal. Rebellious,

Eleanor steps down on the accelerator and crashes her car against a tree. The story finishes with the same opening paragraph describing the insanity of Hill House, and how whatever walked in the house, walked alone.

Ever since its publication in 1959, *The Haunting of Hill House* has enjoyed much popularity amongst its readers. Robert Wise turned the novel into a film adaptation in 1963, a script to which Jackson contributed and supervised. It has also been the object of numerous critical studies. The character of Eleanor in particular played a major role in the success of the story. Psychologically tormented characters were one of Jackson's main assets as a writer, depicting unusual patterns of behaviour as a result of her studies in abnormal psychology at university. Much of the grasping power of the book and a major driving force in the narrative arises from Eleanor's complex psychological relationship with a house which is presented as a sentient character in its own right, an innovation in the tradition of the haunted house story, and one that is likely to stay.

When reading *The Haunting of Hill House*, a number of critics have, quite rightly, looked to the author's ambivalent feelings towards homemaking. Bailey's overview of Jackson's novel in his study of haunted house narratives stands out as one of the most comprehensive, dedicating the chapter "June Cleaver in the House of Horrors" to Eleanor. Bailey rightly points out issues of domesticity as the major force in this book. I agree that domesticity was no doubt a major force for Jackson in the writing of this book. However, Bailey extends this reasoning to the character of Eleanor, arguing that she has completely absorbed the homemaking ideology of the 50s, and that she is the standard product of this time, even though a part of her may dislike the role. He believes that "[t]his feminine ideal of homemaker and mother so permeates the psychology of Eleanor Vance . . . that she can't conceive escaping"

(Bailey 33-34). Furthermore, Bailey identifies Eleanor as a June Cleaver type when he says that her “conventional side (her ‘mother’ side) . . . finds itself increasingly powerless to resist Hill House’s entreaties to embrace the patriarchy” (Bailey 42).

I want to suggest a modification to this reading. My sense is that evidence of Eleanor’s rejection of domesticity complicates a reading based on Eleanor’s capitulation to the ideology of homemaking. Hence, critics who follow that line of argument risk perpetuating the same historical trap for women that identifies needing a home and domesticity as the same thing. I suggest instead that the key to this text—and to other haunted house fiction to come after Jackson—is to read it as a story of homelessness and a lack of interest in domesticity. This reading implies breaking the association between homemaking and home that has been historically forced upon women. Desire for domesticity and the human need for a home are not one and the same, and only by appealing to this distinction can Eleanor’s simultaneous attraction towards Hill House and rejection of homemaking be understood. Undoubtedly, Jackson had been caught in the emotional bargain which connected the chores of homemaking to the loved members of the household and targeted women as responsible for the wellbeing of those loved ones. Like many women of her generation, she experienced ambivalent feelings towards domesticity, as several of her light-hearted magazine publications and family chronicles books prove.²³

An awareness of Jackson’s biographical information would place any researcher on the track of domesticity. However, while much of the criticism is right in pointing to Eleanor’s wish to have a home as her vulnerability to Hill House, it is not because of her desire to be a homemaker, but rather her acute need for a home

²³ Jackson wrote regularly for journals for female readership such as *Lady’s Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. See Hall, *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction* xiii. She also wrote two non-fiction comical books on domestic life: *Life Among the Savages* (1953), and *Raising Demons* (1957).

of her own. The drive to separate the need for a home from domesticity in this book highlights the historical conflation of the home with domesticity. More importantly, it reveals the horror that results when the need for a home conflicts with awareness of that conflation. Eleanor is clearly not depicted as standing in Jackson's ambivalent position or as trapped into filial affections. Eleanor merely wants a home as far away from domesticity as possible. The sociocultural implications of claiming that Eleanor was seduced by wishes for domesticity are very different to those of Eleanor needing a home.

Criticism has seen desires of marrying and homemaking in Eleanor and gone so far as presenting the group of researchers as a symbolic family. Tricia Lootens's "Whose Hand Was I Holding?" stands out as one of the main studies (Lootens 167), commenting on Eleanor's final surrendering to the house with the epitaph "Once more, a woman has sacrificed her own identity to hold her 'family home' together (188).²⁴ Notwithstanding the fact that Jackson clearly stood in this position of "sacrifice," the book has few references to Eleanor's wishes to become a wife, and none of becoming a mother. I would argue that if Eleanor was replaced by a male character, criticism would regard his portrayal as that of a confirmed bachelor. Maternity, one of the two pillars of the 50s homemaking mentality, remains surprisingly unmentioned by the two women in the story. Jackson gives the reader constant access to Eleanor's fears and wishes, but having a family does not emerge as one. Like Theodora, she appears oblivious and disinterested. In respect to her sister's marriage, Eleanor does not envy her sister's nuclear family. Instead, she actively dislikes all of its members and their dynamics. The family portrayed in a supernatural vision when Theo and Eleanor witness a nocturnal sighting of a picnic

²⁴ In the same line runs the study presented by Andrew Schopp (Schopp 265). In Bailey, the understanding of the group as a symbolic family features on page 25.

in the gardens seems to have clear narrative purposes. This sighting, which shows a family with small children under eerie sunlight, vanishes quickly when the women are assaulted by a horrific unidentified force, a symbolic image of the shattering of the utopia of the blissful nuclear family of the American fifties (176-77). As this evidence suggests, while her past of imposed domesticity might account for part of Eleanor's deficient social skills when interacting with those around her, a wish for domesticity does not seem part of Eleanor's complex psyche.

2. 3. a The Scission of Eleanor: A Representation of the American Schizophrenia

One very real dilemma women face is the tug of war between two opposing ways of life, one inside the home, and one outside. The working wife is often haunted by a feeling of guilt: Am I neglecting my husband and children? And the housewife no less often asks herself: Why am I here scrubbing floors and not out in the bright world of careers? Thus this worrying woman finds no solace in success, in business or marriage, in a culture which makes it easier for a man than for a woman to combine the two. (Jensen 191)

The duality represented by the characters of Theo and Eleanor's sister in Hill House echoes the female collective schizophrenia in the United States in the 50s referred to by Jensen. When recalling the two types of texts denounced by Friedan and Meyerovitz, the two characters of Eleanor's sister and Theo fit perfectly into the roles for women for whom the two types of publications were intended: the housewife, and the new independent working woman. Eleanor cannot fit into either role, yet both role models are forces pulling from opposite directions. The position of failure, where she stands, is doubly dramatic because according to society she is

doubly unsuccessful: she is torn between social expectations of her to marry and become like her sister, in which she is neither interested nor has she had an opportunity, and her true urge of having her own home as Theo does, a feat that she does not know how to achieve. She rejects being her sister, yet feels inadequate and awkward dreaming of being Theo. This double failure contributes to her position of vulnerability, leaving Eleanor at the mercy of the house.

A study of the early drafts of Hill House shows that the character of the coy Eleanor Vance started out as a confident working girl who, of all names, was initially called Theodora. In every draft, this early Eleanor became less and less self-sufficient, until she literally split into two women: the one who took the name and who would be the final character of Theo in the 1959 published novel, and the insecure and insufficient Eleanor, targeted by Hill House. Theodora thus works as a foil to Eleanor. Where Eleanor is plain, Theodora is attractive. Where Eleanor is insecure, Theodora is intimidating. Where Eleanor is dependent, Theodora is independent. Eleanor has been a caregiver all her life and therefore has no accomplishments, while Theodora has a remunerated occupation and appears also to have a social life.

Significantly, the one and only thing Eleanor keeps mentioning about Theo's life outside Hill House is Theo's apartment, as if other aspects were of no interest. While much criticism attempts to explain Eleanor's relationship with Hill House through recurrent references to homemaking, fewer studies focus on this homelessness, which I believe is the crucial aspect around which the tension of the book revolves. It is likely that Eleanor sustains herself by using the money from selling the family house where she used to live. The fact that she lives with her

married sister where she feels unwanted indicates that she cannot cover the costs of keeping her own home, a prospect about which she continually fantasises.

An analysis of Eleanor's psyche through her three fantasies on the way to Hill House reveals a rejection of domesticity and homemaking, and a deep wish for a place of her own. This difference between home and homemaking appears to be disregarded by most criticism. For instance, Bailey finds that of the "fantasies [in which] she indulges during her journey to Hill House . . . [m]ost involve home and homemaking" (Bailey 36). In my reading of the episode, while I can see the importance of home in the three fantasies, I have not found representations of domestic homemaking. In her first fantasy, Eleanor drives past a vast house, impressive with pillars and two stone lions at the porch. The description of the daydream regarding this first house extends along a very long paragraph in which I cannot appreciate housewifely aspirations. She imagines herself a respected lady in the village, living alone with only the aid of an assistant taking care of her (18). Critic Sue V. Lape reads the words "pillared and vast edifice" as patriarchal (Lape 112). I suggest discarding the customary cliché of associating towers and pillars with Freudian analysis of phallic imagery, and instead reading the pillared house as a symbol of power and success, based on the fact that this daydream belongs in a context of Eleanor dreaming herself respected in the village, self-sufficient, and living alone with a domestic assistant. This interpretation appears more congruent with the following daydreams. Her second fantasy is related to fairy tales: Eleanor drives past the wall of an oleander garden and dreams of being a princess returning home to break a spell in an enchanted palace. In the castle, a loving mother weeps with joy at her return, as all in the palace wake up to welcome her. This second fantasy, which in the text is developed in a long highly descriptive paragraph, is interestingly

interrupted when a prince enters the picture riding towards the castle in the distance. At this moment, Eleanor loses interest in her daydream and switches back to reality (20). This seems indicative of her lack of interest in romantic aspirations and clichés, which I will expand on shortly. Finally, her last daydream is possibly the most revealing of the three in terms of her interest in homemaking:

[S]he came to a tiny cottage buried in a garden. I could live there all alone, she thought, slowing the car to look down the winding garden path to the small blue front door with, perfectly, a white cat on the step. No one would ever find me there, either, behind all those roses, and just to make sure I would plant oleanders by the road. I will light a fire in the cool evenings and toast apples at my own hearth, I will raise white cats and sew white curtains for the windows and sometimes come out of my door to go to the store to buy cinnamon and tea and thread. People will come to me to have their fortunes told, and I will brew love potions for sad maidens; I will have a robin. . . . (22-23)

As seen, fantasy three again highlights her wish for her own place where she can be alone, and presents no family, husband, or domestic chores. Instead, she mentions brewing magic potions, a task more typical of a witch rather than a homemaker. Again too, she states her desire for privacy, which is enhanced by her elaboration of screening curtains.

Along these lines, Eleanor's homelessness is emphasised by Jackson herself. In her essay "Notes for a Young Writer" written in 1962, she refers to Eleanor's fantasies as follows:

I once had occasion to send a heroine on a long journey during which she expressed her loneliness and lack of home by imagining dream

lives in various places she passed; this daydream is climaxed when at lunch she hears a little girl at a nearby table ask for her milk in a cup of stars; the lonely girl thinks that what she too is asking for is a cup of stars, and when she finally finds her home she will drink from a cup of stars. (Jackson, "Notes" 242)

Significantly, when recalling her own work, Jackson does not mention family, domesticity, or homemaking, but instead highlights Eleanor's lack of home, and the fact that, when she finally finds her place, she would have reached her dream.

Critical attention has been paid to Eleanor's alleged wish of finding a prince. However, it should be noticed that the two particular instances in which Eleanor refers to a fairy-tale prince denote a playful disdain for romantic conventions. The first and most important allusion takes place in the second daydream on the way to Hill House, which is a homecoming fantasy about the return of a princess to her parents' castle. Interestingly, this daydream is interrupted the moment a prince shows in the background, which is precisely when Eleanor laughs and returns to reality. Bailey argues that the fantasies "involve home and homemaking . . . restoring the home to order, as a good housewife should—and marrying the handsome prince who lives there" (36). However, the text states that Eleanor is returning to her own parents' castle, and there is no allusion to marriage, since she discards the fantasy at that key point. Similarly, in a second mentioning of princes when Theo and Eleanor stroll near the brook, the way they refer to princes in disguise is in a joking manner, equating men with tadpoles and minnows, and forgetting about the topic soon enough (52). In my opinion, neither of the references corroborates a tendency for fantasies of romance in Eleanor, and they seem insignificant in comparison to the overwhelming references to her wish for a home of her own.

While the fairy-tale prince himself appears relatively unimportant in Eleanor's psyche, the role of the prince should not be discarded as promptly, and I will point out that this is used by Jackson to accentuate the attachment of Eleanor to the house. In order to substantiate Eleanor's alleged wish for domesticity mentioned earlier, a number of critical studies have positioned Eleanor searching for a partner both in Theodora—for this, they have relied in the gender ambiguity of Theo when referring to her flatmate—and later on in Luke. These studies have taken as the main argument the Shakespearian rhyme "Journeys end in lovers meeting / Every wise man's son doth know," which is used throughout the story.²⁵ The truth is that, although the rhyme becomes almost a leitmotif in the story, there is no particular behaviour in Eleanor in which one might discern any attraction or wish to start a relationship with either character.

The rhyme seems to be something that Eleanor has picked up in her long hours of reading to her mother, and which she does not remember clearly. The first words of the rhyme come into Eleanor's mind as she starts driving towards Hill House. At that point, she is incapable of remembering the full form of the tune: "Journeys end . . . far back in her mind . . . a tag end of a tune danced through her head, bringing distantly a word or two" (22). In particular, this line has been taken as evidence for an alleged platonic infatuation with Luke.

I would argue that Theo and Luke have as well been carefully arranged to symbolise potential ways of escape from Eleanor's loneliness and lack of economic sufficiency. Luke stands for the conventional way of escape by entering a marriage, while Theo represents the possibility of an escape through liberation and independence. In the case of Luke, romantic expectations are more on the side of

²⁵ This quote is original from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (II, iii, 44-45). It is a cheerful love song which celebrates the philosophy referred to as *carpe diem* in which life is the present moment and youth is celebrated.

the reader than Eleanor herself. The text shows that Eleanor has no interest in Luke in the same way that Luke at no point shows any interest in Eleanor. When Luke and Eleanor share their only intimate conversation in the book, their attitude is far from romantic towards one another. Seated on some steps in the garden, Eleanor experiences thoughts of self-pity such as “[n]othing of the least importance has ever belonged to me; can you help?” (165). After Luke directs the conversation towards himself, Eleanor contemplates his vanity, and delivers her line about lovers meetings. Luke does not listen. Eleanor sums up Luke as “[h]e is altogether selfish, she thought in some surprise, the only man I have ever sat and talked to alone, and I am impatient; he is simply not very interesting” (167). Later on, when looking back, she finds her conversation with Luke was a waste of time, justifying it as the result of a moment in which she was trying to prove that she “had a right to live too,” presumably comparing herself with Theo (173). My conclusion therefore is that Eleanor does not contemplate Luke as a potential husband at any point of the narrative. It has also been suggested that Eleanor might host motherly feelings (Bailey 33-34). However, Eleanor explicitly refuses to place herself in a mothering position, as she asks Luke “Why don’t you grow up by yourself?” (167) which, again, not only shows lack of interest but even slight irritation.

The character of Theo has been nominated as a second possible romantic interest (Lootens 167, 86-87). However, Theo appears to be the sister Eleanor has not had rather than a romantic possibility. The two women call each other cousins repeatedly in the first part of the book. Physically, Eleanor displays no wish to touch Theo. This is explicitly referred to both when Theo is applying nail-polish on Eleanor, and when Theo’s room has been covered with blood. Some critics have pointed out the fact that the gender of Theo’s flatmate remains unidentified as an indication of

Theo's lesbian tendencies (King, *Danse* 319). Regardless of this character's sexuality, in my reading I have not appreciated any homosexual undertone in the way the two women interact. Rather, I have seen an eagerness on the part of Eleanor to be accepted as a friend or even as a sister, and an obsession to be the centre of attention on the part of Theodora, with no relevant hints of a sexual attraction.

Theo, however, unlike Luke presents a real opponent for Hill House in her battle for Eleanor, since she is a dangerous influence, standing for a lifestyle and assertiveness clearly appealing to Eleanor. As with Luke, one of Theo's functions in the novel is to act as an initial element of hope, which the house will ultimately crush. Jackson ensures that Luke and Theo are identified by the reader as two potential escapes for Eleanor, and are well signposted by means of focalisation and internalisation into Eleanor's psyche. The existence of these initial hopes make Eleanor's ending all the more devastating. Hill House resolves any competition by isolating Eleanor from both Luke and Theo, thus blocking Eleanor's escape. By drawing Luke to Theo, the hope of Eleanor's escape through conventional marriage vanishes. As Lootens has pointed out in her study of the story: "the haunting's strategy of separating the guests seems to aim particularly at separating Eleanor and Theodora" (185). By placing the two women in confrontation, Theo still maintains her ties with her life in the outside world, while Eleanor conversely becomes isolated, reaching for sympathy from the only entity that shows any appreciation of her being, and ultimately succumbing to Hill House's call.

While Luke and Theo prove not to be romantic interests for Eleanor, I would still like to maintain the possibility of a key romantic part in the story, and propose the

very house itself as the character fulfilling this role.²⁶ If one views Hill House literally as Jackson described it—a vicious, intelligent being that is pouncing to trap within its walls whoever is within reach—and then one contemplates Eleanor as a neglected and dispossessed being craving for a home, I would suggest that the two, house and woman, appear well suited, even destined for each other. Indeed, their encounter would be the encounter of lovers meeting, and for Eleanor, a match made in hell.

The timing of the moments in which Eleanor remembers her line confirms the role of the house as a lover. I believe it is no coincidence that Eleanor first introduces the incomplete love line as early as she is embarking on her adventure and that Jackson keeps Eleanor struggling to remember its ending throughout her journey to Hill House. Significantly, Eleanor does not recollect its full form when she first meets Luke in chapter two. Rather, it comes to her mind precisely when she meets Hill House literally “face to face.” This is also the passage of the book in which the rhyme is most emphasised, and if anyone is placed in the position of being the lover from the beginning of the story, it is clearly Hill House:

[S]he thought that her deep unwillingness to touch Hill House for the first time came directly from the vivid feeling that it was waiting for her, evil, but patient. Journeys end in lovers meeting, she thought, remembering her song at last, and laughed . . . journeys end in lovers meeting, and she put her feet down firmly. . . . Hill House came around her in a rush. . . . (36)

²⁶ I am not the only reader to arrive at this conclusion. King finds the rhymes in the narrative ominous when connected to the relationship between Hill House and Eleanor. However, King defends that it is with Luke that Eleanor had begun to fall in love, hence the tension with Theo (*Danse* 326, 29). In his overview of the trope of the haunted house, Steven J. Mariconda also coincides in associating the rhyme with Eleanor’s side of the attachment for the house, by pointing out that “it is the house itself that Eleanor has come to love” (279).

There are major steps towards sentience in the line closing the quote above. The reference to the house's response to Eleanor, which is the first of many to come, strongly hint at the fact that the attraction works reciprocally; and this reciprocity is another sign of the house's sentience. Of all of Dr Montague's guests, Eleanor is the most attractive to Hill House, seduced on the basis of her main vulnerability: her homelessness. Not only has she nowhere to go, but also she is unwanted in the house in which she lives: her sister's. Hill House ensures it reveals itself as a home. The house writes and utters her name on repeated supernatural occasions, reaffirming her identity, and always promising a home.²⁷ In the last chapter, minutes before Eleanor's death, Hill House presents strong traits of intelligence described in a waiting mood that suggests that the two will be united:

[S]he could see the windows looking down, and to one side the tower waited confidently. . . . [S]he smiled brokenly up at the house, looking at her own window, at the amused, certain face of the house, watching her quietly. The house was waiting now, she thought, and it was waiting for her; no one else could satisfy it. "The house wants me to stay." . . .

Hill House watched, arrogant and patient. (240-42)

The magnetic pull attracting the two, which becomes a major force in this story, is only explicable when taking into account Eleanor's need for a place. It cannot be explained by merely appealing to an internalisation of domestic values, as suggested in the past, because a total lack of elements of domesticity governs Eleanor's days in Hill House, during which she behaves childishly. Similarly, the

²⁷ It is possible that Jackson's ghostly warnings on the wall are intentionally hinting at the English common expression "to read the writing on the wall" to refer to a prophecy announcing misfortune. This expression has its origins in the biblical passage of the Book of Daniel in which supernatural writing on a wall foretells the fall of the Babylon (Daniel 5:1-31).

prospects of staying in Hill House announce nothing that might promise homemaking, marriage, or children for Eleanor. The house lures Eleanor only on the basis of her primeval need for a place.

As the book draws to its end, Eleanor's ambitions have not changed: she is still wishing for the same aims of independence and shelter, and still showing a complete rejection of roles of carer, mother or homemaker. Jackson increases the pace of references to her homelessness towards the end, where the notion of home spirals and becomes omnipresent. To name but one more, in chapter seven the omniscient narrator describes how Nature itself pities Eleanor's homelessness:

Around her the trees and wild flowers . . . suddenly interrupted in the pressing occupations of growing and dying, turned toward her in attention, as though, dull and imperceptible as she was, it was still necessary for them to be gentle to a creation so unfortunate as not to be rooted in the ground, forced to go from one place to another, heartbreakingly mobile. (180)

Consistently, hours before she kills herself, Eleanor still reaffirms her initial need for a place of her own when she wishes for "peace, a quiet spot to lie and think, a quiet spot up among the flowers where [she can] dream" (195). These lines conspicuously reverberate with Jackson's dream of a hotel room, away from all her domestic chores and obligations. Unsurprisingly, when Eleanor is misled into believing she has found her place, she will not give that up. During her last evening's rampage, she exultantly proclaims herself to be home as she climbs up the library staircase (232). Lastly, minutes before dying, she wishes to be "walled up alive," as she declares "I want to stay here" (240).

To the reader, and to Jackson herself, the house is revealed as a Janus-faced entity that plays on Eleanor's dispossession. Eleanor's raving homelessness stops her from seeing clearly the terrifying other face of Hill House. From a sociocultural perspective, the mutation of the trope of the house into sentience arises from a clash between women's need for a home and rejection of the domesticity with which the home had become synonymous.

2. 3. b A Comparison and a Contrast between *The Haunting of Hill House* and Relevant Haunted House Narratives

In the preceding section I have explored *The Haunting of Hill House* in detail, highlighting evidence which exposes how the notion of need for a home is the narrative driving force and one that I believe plays a key part in the book's fulfilment of sentience. I will now compare this book to some of the best known haunted house stories prior to, contemporary with and after Jackson. This comparison aims to show crucial differences between Jackson and other writers, confirming the determining role of a history of domesticity and the need for home in the appearance of sentience. I will begin by addressing Gilman as the immediate predecessor where claustrophobia is used in literary horror. I will continue by reviewing *The House on Haunted Hill*, a film contemporary to Jackson which shows remarkably similar character, plot and setting arrangement, yet strikingly different relationships between the house and its protagonists. Lastly, I will move to subsequent haunted house narratives and films that employ sentience, in this case with the aim of pinpointing the significant differences in the treatment of the house by writers who have inherited an understanding of a legacy of domesticity.

The treatment of the haunting in Hill House stems from Gilman's gender claustrophobia in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and builds on it. Drawing on her own

experience, Jackson incorporates the necessary ingredients to endow the house with sufficient presence to carry the weight of the narrative of horror. A comparison and a contrast between the two texts reveal a series of similarities and differences which all revolve around the notion of home. These differences illustrate how the ambivalent feelings characteristic of the 1950s prove crucial for the transition from the ghost story to full sentience.

As mentioned, Showalter believes that prior writers participating in women's culture play a determining role in the final literary products (265). There are several similarities between Gilman and Jackson which expose their partaking in a shared history of confinement. Obviously, Hill House aims to absorb Eleanor, incorporating her into its own structure so that she will merge with it: the same as had happened with the woman in the wallpaper. From Gilman also, Jackson took the innovation of the unexplained haunting, which had displaced the stress from the building's history to the current interrelation between character and house. As Bailey points out, Gilman is one of the first writers who focuses more on the house itself "rather than the ghosts which may or may not be contained there" (28). I would add that Gilman's protagonist goes as far as ignoring the history of the house altogether, dismissing it with a half-line passing reference to its inheritors' squabble. Her character's attitude is very similar to that of the occupants of Hill House, who do not brood over the inconclusive information provided by Dr Montague, or struggle to connect past episodes to the current phenomena. The deaths occurring on the premises of Hill House, like those that will be observed in Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door*, appear to be attributed to a brand new building with no obscure history, thus differing from the haunted house tradition of violence or demonology. As the stories finish, both hauntings remain unexplained, and yet this does not seem to hinder the

narrative structures of the works. By shifting the focus, the result is a deeper reliance on the relationship between the supernatural house and the characters affected by it.

A third aspect in common between the two stories is that the hauntings present no direct physical threat to the protagonist. The stories favour entrapment over fear of aggression or death, and this shows the authors' awareness of the isolating and damaging potential of houses. However, there are significant differences in which Jackson's later sociohistorical position can be observed. The first is an instrumental difference. While Gilman had leaned on horror as a vehicle to transmit her very straightforward political message against domesticity, Jackson conversely draws on aspects of domesticity as tools to construct her narrative of horror. Also, a second important difference can be seen in the reliability of the narrator, which is questionable in Gilman's tale, and unquestionable in Jackson's. Gilman's story is solely told by a first-person narrator, the caretaker never confirming that she has actually seen the trapped woman. Jackson, instead, presents an indisputable haunting by making use of an omniscient narrator and a plurality of witnesses to the supernatural events. This external validation of the sentience of Hill House cancels out the possibility of delusions caused by home isolation, leaving little room for a rational explanation attributed to madness. Through it, Jackson reaffirms the existence of a destructive side of the house.

It is probably in the characters' emotional response to the respective houses that the focal difference between Gilman's 1891 story and Jackson's 1959 book lies. While one of the women sees an imprisonment in the haunted house, the other one sees a home. As noted, the narrator in Gilman feels no enjoyment in her stay in the yellow room, and is looking forward to the day she leaves the house. Furthermore, she sympathises with the trapped woman/ghost and wants to free her, not join her in

the wall. Conversely, Eleanor undergoes a reverse transformation, in which she feels increasingly comfortable in Hill House. Much of the effect of horror actually arises from this will to stay, and the peculiar psychological processes associated with it. These are incomprehensible to Eleanor's partners in the experiment yet understandable to the reader, who, through the internalisation that exposes Eleanor's psyche, witnesses in horror how she is misled to give herself to the house. The house retains her not only physically as in Gilman by the dictates of her husband: Hill House, alone, grows to be the object of desire of Eleanor's mind and heart. While Gilman's wish had been for women to access their rightful place outside the boundaries of homemaking, Jackson's Eleanor indicates the author's own conflict at not being able to let go of the need for what has increasingly been revealed to be detrimental.

The second work that I suggest brings insightful information about Jackson's book is a horror film contemporary with Jackson's text: *The House on Haunted Hill* (February 1959), by William Castle. A comparison with this film illustrates key points about Jackson's work and the development of sentient house narratives. The many more than suspicious parallelisms between the two stories offer the possibility of exploring what seem uncannily similar contemporary narratives from the perspective of a male and a female author.²⁸ The differences on the part of Jackson reveal underlying issues tightly connected to home, homemaking and domesticity, which I believe might have played a determining role in the shaping of sentience in Hill House.

²⁸ Whether Jackson saw this film or had the opportunity to read the script before release cannot be stated—it is unlikely she saw it before writing the book, since both were released in the same year, but it is not impossible, given that she was known to have a proactive interests in haunted houses. Should this have been the case, Jackson could have found in Castle's film a very immediate source of inspiration. Also, as she said she had done in the case of a nineteenth-century experiment, it is possible that she could have taken an elaboration on Castle's narrative as an exercise to rewrite almost the same haunted house story but under her own terms.

Castle's film is initially presented as a haunted house story. The leading character has rented out a reputedly haunted property to host a party for his wife. The house had been the setting for several murders in the past and so it has a reputation for being haunted. As in *Hill House*, the guests lack any means of communication with the exterior, and the doors are locked up at night during their stay. After a series of apparently supernatural manifestations and two murders, in *Castle* it is ultimately revealed that the incidents had been faked by the host, who was seeking revenge on his unfaithful wife.

The similarities of the character arrangement, the name of the work, and the plot between the two works are conspicuous. The two stories begin with a challenge to stay in a purportedly haunted house in wait for supernatural occurrences. Both present an older male organiser who has rented the property for the sake of the experiment—these are Frederick Loren, played by Vincent Price, and Dr. Montague in *Hill House*. In both, a particularly weak man, heir to the proprietorial family, stays in the house with the guests. The caretakers in the two stories are an uncommunicative old couple. These caretakers add fear to the stories by appearing in chilling moments in *Castle's* film, and by scaring the guests with their comments in *Jackson*. The two narratives also include two younger women protagonists, and a third secondary older woman—a gambling writer in *Castle's* film, and Mrs. Montague in *Jackson*. In both stories the women are arranged in a pair comprised by an attractive and sexually intimidating woman, and a plainer and shy counterpart. The beautiful woman is strong and independent—Theodora's counterpart in *Castle's* film is Vincent Price's wife. As in *Jackson's* text, the plainer woman in *Castle's*—Norah, a typist—is emotionally weaker, sexually unaggressive, and with no economic means. These plainer women characters are also the characters in both stories that are

targeted the most by the haunting. In Castle's film, this is most likely the result of the tradition of the eighteenth-century gothic heroine trapped in a castle, as the strong self-sufficient woman was not normally the centre of Gothic narratives. The only remaining characters in Castle's story are a psychiatrist, who seems to be a love interest for the host's wife, and a racing pilot, suggested love interest and certainly rescuer to Norah the typist, as he is the character on whom she relies continuously.

In terms of the houses, both buildings are curiously locked at night from the outside by the elderly caretakers when they leave, making escape impossible for any of the guests during the evening. Also, both are too far from other dwellings and lack technology for communication with the exterior. Evidently, both houses have names alike which refer to hills, and the two books' titles are made out of the same five lexemes arranged into different morphological categories.

While the parallelisms are many and obvious, it is the significant differences that I would like to highlight by way of illustrating key divergences at an identical sociohistorical moment and place depending on the gender and background of the author. For instance, it is interesting to observe that the house on Haunted Hill is placed on the top of a hill, while Hill House lies at the feet of a series of hills which "were piled in great pressing masses" (49). A possible interpretation for that move might be the aim for an enhancement of claustrophobia by Jackson which was unnecessary to Castle. King suggests in *Danse Macabre* that "houses might actually be psychic batteries, absorbing the emotions that had been spent there . . . [and that] the reputation of being Bad Places might be due to the fact that the strongest emotions are the primitive ones – rage and hate and fear," (King, *Danse* 297). According to this understanding, it would not be surprising that Castle relied on the fear of death of its occupants and a history of murders to frighten the audience,

disregarding the surroundings. Conversely, Jackson relies on the description of the setting for fear, presenting extraordinary structures such as circular disposition of rooms and corridors, or incorrect angles aimed to disorient its occupants and have doors shutting on their own. Not only does Jackson not rely on locks: she modifies conventional protocols of architecture so that the house distorts the perception of reality. Even before the supernatural episodes begin, the structure and setting of Hill House are already playing mind games with the characters. Accordingly, Jackson appeals to reversing the natural surroundings of the house to conspire in the stifling of the two girls, who comment:

“It’s altogether Victorian,” Theodora said. . . . “Anyone before them or after would have put this house right up there on top of those hills where it belongs, instead of snuggling it down here.”

“If it were on top of the hill everyone could see it. I vote for keeping it well hidden where it is.”

“All the time I’m here I’m going to be terrified,” Theodora said, “thinking one of those hills will fall on us.”

“They don’t fall on you. They just slide down, silently and secretly, rolling over you while you try to run away.” (50)

A further key difference between the two works lies in the women protagonists. Castle’s film does indeed present Norah as a June Cleaver, mother of a family, in need of money, passive, and constantly under the vigilance of a protective character. Unlike the host’s wife, and unlike Eleanor herself, the non-sexually aggressive Norah survives, possibly finding a partner in the pilot. However, Jackson dismisses this protective figure. By suppressing a love interest for Eleanor, this character is left all alone with the house.

The resolutions of the stories also present significant differences. In *Castle*, the haunting is explained in rational terms after the host confesses the hoax, the house being just a coincidental setting where many murders had been committed. This differs from *Hill House*, which remains unexplained, alive, and waiting as the book draws to an end. The story finishes in a loop narrative with inconclusive opening and closing paragraphs. Jackson does not resolve what exactly is wrong with *Hill House* apart from—significantly—that there is something in the very essence of the house. The death of Eleanor in what is described almost as a reunion with the house feels like closure to the reader because their intense psychological relationship had all along carried the weight of the story. As with all of the other differences between *Castle* and Jackson, the ending is also orchestrated to enhance claustrophobic psychological bonds and protagonism of the house.

Having contrasted the book with prior and contemporary works, lastly I would like to draw attention to haunted house narratives published after Jackson's novel. An overview of these works exposes confirmation of different patterns in women's treatment of the idea of home. Although after *The Haunting of Hill House* sentience became a common way of depicting the haunted house both for male and female authors, most male writers have adhered to the use of past mayhem or secondary characters to construct their narratives. Novels by male writers tend to show higher levels of violence. A quick overview of some of the top bestselling haunted house stories of the last decades—*The Shining*, *The Amityville Horror*, and *Hell House*—exposes how in their hauntings male authors tend to rely on the resources

mentioned to account for the phenomena in place of the psychological attachments to home exploited by women writers.²⁹

One example of this reliance on aggression is Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971). Similar to Jackson's text, it describes a heterogeneous team carrying out a scientific experiment aimed to prove the existence of the supernatural. This book relies heavily on Satanism, murder, torture and sexual crimes as causes for the haunting, and not so much on the house itself. This applies both to the past history of the house and to the narrative time of the research experiment. Eventually, a former owner of the house, the evil Belasco, is identified as responsible for the haunting, having committed most of the highly violent crimes in the premises, in particular one massacre in 1940. The book relies as well on graphic depictions of physical violence to create fear rather than presenting the house as a character or as a claustrophobic structure. The story includes no emotional or psychological attachments to the house and no will to stay. Although *Hell House* is initially presented with a certain degree of sentience and as a participant in the manifestations, it is gradually revealed to be subject to the spirit of Belasco and his crimes.

Similarly, Jay Anson's *The Amityville Horror* (1977), which was originally presented by the Lutz family as purported true events, makes initial use of sentience, but as the story progresses the presence of the building weakens to allow room for other entities. The genesis of the story is taken from a true episode of a family massacre that occurred in the premises in 1974. The fictional book presents the

²⁹ My criteria for selecting these three titles is in connection with their popularity. I have attempted to choose the best known or most successful works. The case of *Burnt Offerings* by Robert Marasco (1973) should be explicitly mentioned as it presents an approach to the sentience exemplified by Jackson. It narrates the story of a house that regenerates itself by absorbing the life of its tenants. Still, in this story the building is controlled by external, evil manipulators of victims rather than presented as an autonomous intelligent agency—these controllers are two brothers who own the property. In addition, rather than psychological magnetism, the tenants seem to be bribed into staying by material reasons, such as the increasingly luxurious condition of the house, or findings of hidden riches to lure them to stay, to name but a few.

addition of a cursed Native American Indian cemetery, and again Satanic manifestations. Sightings of ghosts and demons are numerous. These include the ghost of a woman in the kitchen, a ghostly friend for one of the occupant children, demonic sightings, supernatural manifestations targeting Church authorities, and animal sacrifices, among others. In *The Amityville Horror* the treatment of setting, space and claustrophobia is practically non-existent. Similarly, the book does not rely on emotional attachments to the property. Rather, the occupants of the house only regard it as an investment and place of residence.

A last example is Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977), in which the Overlook hotel appears to be alive and aware. Still, the reader soon discovers that its malignancy is the direct result of a large number of murders committed by mafia criminals and of suicides (*Shining* 445). The book offers graphic descriptions of some of these past murders and their otherworld manifestations. It includes a series of both sinful and innocent ghosts trapped in the premises, as well as animation of matter such as predatory trees in the hotel's topiary. In *The Shining*, King deliberately states that unlike in "Jackson's novel [where] whatever walked in Hill House walked alone . . . you wouldn't be alone in the Overlook hotel, oh no, there would be plenty of company there" (309). Claustrophobia is enhanced in the isolation of the hotel in the winter, but fear lies in the ominous surrendering of the main character to the ghosts' dictates to murder his own family, therefore relying again on bodily injury and physical aggression to achieve much of its fear.

As was the case with Matheson and Anson, Stephen King followed ideas on the supernatural impregnation of the building in *The Shining*. This is inherited from the classic Greco-Roman tradition of ghosts of affronted ancestors. Narratives by male authors reveal what could be considered as a lack of interest in using the

sentient house as the sole tool for horror, even though these modern writers are posterior to Jackson's book. Their choice not to follow the same formula as Jackson is intriguing: not only was Jackson's book received very positively by critics, but the film adaptation performed well at the box office.

The fact that sentience tends to be only partially employed by male authors as a complement to more graphic aggression, as well as the fact that it has only been employed after Jackson's book in 1959, are indications that there is a connection between the cultural association of domesticity with women and the birth of the sentient house. I have concluded that the reason why male writers continue leaning on violence and demonology could be related to their lack of access to what I see as a women's legacy of domesticity. This lack would result in a limited mastery of the possibilities of the sentient house, derived from their different sociocultural understanding of the idea of home.

When looking at the overall picture of past, contemporary and posterior women writers to Jackson, the notion of home seems gradually enhanced. When compared to writers such as Gilman and Peattie, whose political claims and historical times blinded them to other emotional aspects of the home, Jackson exemplifies the culmination of a slow evolution that could be simplified into "the home going bad." Jackson shares the former writers' appeal to psychological and spatial tools, but goes beyond their earlier demands for freedom from domesticity. Jackson senses and recognises her personal need of a home and space, which is traumatically colliding with women's realisation of one's home as an enemy, arousing schizophrenic feelings of need and hatred.

Jackson's contributions to the haunted house genre, such as the increase of psychological dependency of the characters on the house, and the uncertainty about

what is it that is haunting the building, can be traced in the work of subsequent writers. As has been pointed out, in the succeeding works, most written by male authors, pure sentience has rarely been employed to the fullest of its possibilities and is normally complemented by other resources. However, in 1978 another book about pure sentience was published by the American writer Anne Rivers Siddons: *The House Next Door*. As I will demonstrate in the following section, in this narrative the mark of Jackson and the drawing on that legacy of hate versus need confirm the close connection between women's social history, their exclusive understanding of home, and sentience in the representation of the house in horror fiction as a result of the whole.

2.4 The Reaffirmation of the Pattern: Sentience in *The House Next Door*

Anne Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door*, written almost twenty years after Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, is a story about a haunted house which presents a very similar sentience. As we shall see, the context of the composition of Siddons's narrative presents similarities with Jackson's book, in that it points towards the involvement of issues of home and domesticity in the creative process. Anne Rivers Siddons could be referred to as a popular writer: she is the author of sixteen *New York Times* bestselling novels, most of which have been described as social melodrama (Bailey 79). *The House Next Door*, however, is a horror story, an uncharacteristic genre for Siddons, who is best known for exploring human interactions and emotions in her fiction. Siddons's acquaintance with her society's ways enriches the background of *The House Next Door*, her only horror story (79). By presenting her haunted house as embedded in a network of suburban relations which expose the vulnerabilities exploited by the supernatural house, Siddons

highlights particular social issues connected to society's expectations of women. I have found substantial parallelisms between *The House Next Door* and *The Haunting of Hill House*. When considering that these two American haunted house stories are possibly the two in which untraceable sentience is employed at its purest level, Siddons's book confirms the hypothesis posed in my earlier analysis of Jackson's text, which links the rise of the sentient house, women, and a legacy of domesticity.

The House Next Door is narrated by a mid-thirties, upper-middle class, married woman, Colquitt Kennedy. It follows the construction, the consecutive habitation by three different sets of occupants, and the later destruction at her and her husband's hands of what the Kennedys believe to be an evil, sentient house. After an insight into the couple's pleasant existence, the story takes off with the disruption of Colquitt's hedonistic suburban peace as she learns about the imminent development of her cherished adjacent section, a lovely spot with irregular terrain, trees and a brook. However, when the Kennedys meet the young architect Kim, they fall for the charms of the sketches of the modern house and Colquitt, in particular, develops a close friendship with the architect. The owners of the property are Buddy and Pie Harralson, a promising young lawyer in a prestigious firm in Atlanta, and his pregnant, childish and pampered wife. Pie has a strong connection with her father, who finances the building of the house after Pie falls in love with the architect's sketches. From the start, it is suggested that Pie's motivation for choosing this particular house is to prove her worth to her father and to gain general respect and admiration.

Trouble starts soon before the Harralsons move in, with Pie falling down the cellar stairs and miscarrying, from which she quickly recovers. After the couple finally

moves in, dead bodies of animals are found near the back entrance of the house, including Pie's new puppy. On the evening of the housewarming party, carefully planned by Pie to impress both her neighbours and her own father, the celebration is shattered by unexpected events: Pie's father dies from a heart attack after discovering Buddy Harralson sexually involved with a male colleague in one of the bedrooms. The marriage is broken and the house is put up for sale. By the time the Harralsons sell the property Kim has begun to develop apprehensions regarding his creation, most of which are grounded in his eerie incapability of designing anything else.

The second occupants are Anita and Buck Sheehan. While Buck is warm and approachable, Anita appears frail and absent. Through her friend and neighbour Virginia, Colquitt learns that Anita lost her father and brother in an airplane crash when she was a child, and had recently lost her only son when his helicopter crashed in Vietnam. The loss of their son drove Buck to alcoholism and to take a mistress. The discovery of this affair destroyed Anita's mental equilibrium, keeping her in hospital with a catatonic seizure for several months. After her recovery, the couple bought the house next door in the hope of starting a new life. As with Pie, it was Anita who fell in love with the house at first glance and insisted on moving there.

A strange episode disrupts the Sheehans's settling in their new home. One evening when Anita is alone in the house, she is severely shaken by watching a film in which a helicopter crashes during the Vietnam war. Although the neighbour Virginia corroborates having seen the film on Anita's TV when picking up her medication after her seizure, no war film had been screened on TV on that evening. Anita is never informed of this confirmation of her paranormal experience, and she conveniently discards it as the fruit of her imagination. However, soon after she

receives a phone call from her dead son announcing that he is returning home, which again shatters her mental stability. In the end, her witnessing of Buck's affair with their neighbour Virginia in Anita's own home drives Anita back into catatonia for good. Colquitt joins Kim in believing that something is wrong with the house when, during the Sheehans's tenancy, Walter comes close to murdering Colquitt and Kim as he discovers them kissing in the house next door. When recalling the incident, the three admit having felt overtaken by a strange, weird force. Soon after this episode, Kim, who is tormented by his lack of inspiration for which he blames the evil, malignant house next door, leaves for Europe.

The last occupants are Norman, Susan and Melissa Greene. Norman is presented as an unfriendly, abusive Jewish academic who has insecurity issues relating to his ethnicity.³⁰ He patronises his wife and is harsh to the eight-year-old Melissa. As soon as the family moves in things begin to go wrong. The child starts to suffer from digestive disorders. Susan, in turn, appears disoriented and inefficient, losing her formerly good administrative skills. As time goes by, minor unexplainable incidents become increasingly frequent, such as strange failures in the power supply, bizarrely stained clothes or items breaking on their own. All these little incidents seem aimed to provoke outbursts of anger in Norman, who becomes gradually abusive. During a particular Christmas party, Norman is openly rude to Susan when a power failure scares the sick child, who soils the floor. Public abuse occurs for a second time when Norman organises a large party to impress the academic and neighbouring community, and only two of the neighbours attend. Enraged, Norman accuses Susan of not having sent the invitations, although Susan thinks she remembers having done so. He then angrily reveals that he is not Melissa's father

³⁰ Bailey points out that the choice of name "Kennedy" could have been by no means a neutral one in the mid-1970s. It could be argued that the name 'Norman Greene' might be related to the traditional association between the colour green and jealousy and envy.

and that he had married an already pregnant Susan to benefit from her family's high status—at a moment in which she had been disinherited and left homeless by her own family. On that evening Susan kills both her husband and child and commits suicide.

The narrator is aware of all this, due to the proximity of her property but also as a result of warnings from the architect. After this accumulation of extraordinary episodes, the Kennedys decide to take action and contact the media to dissuade possible new buyers. Colquitt has already given up her job, and the new negative publicity causes Walter to lose his as well. However, what initially appears to be an act of generosity and the positive redemption of the hedonistic Kennedys, gradually darkens, as the Kennedys's obsession with their own crusade becomes the very vulnerability that the house employs to destroy them. The couple isolate themselves in their own house, which is vandalised by curious people, and their acquaintances shun them. As Colquitt ominously observes, "[t]he madness lay next door" (261).

In spite of all of their efforts, to the Kennedys's dismay, Kim himself returns from Europe with a fiancée and buys the property. He inexplicably now appears oblivious to the evil nature of the house and remembers nothing of his own warnings. The book draws to an end as the Kennedys, who have grown fixated with the idea that Kim is responsible for the malignancy of the house, murder him. The last chapter closes as the couple prepare to burn down the house with Kim's remains in it, knowing that they will somehow be killed in the process. Their sacrifice proves useless since the book's epilogue depicts the original sketches of the house having survived its destruction.

Siddons's haunted house story appears to rely on similar tensions related to the idea of home to those used by Jackson in relation to Eleanor, exemplifying her

characters' need for home as a main driving force in her women. As with Eleanor, the three women occupants reveal different reasons why they need that house as a home, and develop strong psychological and emotional attachments to the house which contrast with their male counterparts. Conspicuously, none of the women exemplify a desire to be a homemaker, although that role features prominently in the text, which portrays a society of non-working and suburban women, almost anachronistic to Siddons's time. As I suggest, Siddons appears to be drawing on the same legacy of domesticity that has historically conflated home and homemaking by specifically highlighting the need for a home as the vulnerability subjecting women to victimization by the house. Their dependency on their home appears to be, as in Jackson, in the service of the narrative of horror.

Writing almost twenty years after Jackson, Siddons belongs in a time when domesticity had ceased to be actively encouraged by governmental social policies and American women held jobs outside their homes. However, in spite of the time span and the major gender social advances of the 1970s, there are a number of textual details which again seem to reveal recurrent tensions related to women and home. The first relevant point is that all of the women occupants are unemployed. This immediately strikes the reader as peculiar, as it is not statistically representative of the American population in the late seventies. In 1978, 54% of women between 25 and 54 officially appeared as undertaking full time work (Cohen and Biaanchi 26), yet none of the women characters, apart from the narrator in the opening chapters, is said to hold a job. Siddons thus chooses to centre her attention on the 46% of the equation for the portrayal of both the three inhabitants and their suburban neighbours. Home seclusion ultimately affects the narrator herself, who gives up her

job and becomes obsessed by the haunted building, as do her female counterparts in the novel.

The second interesting aspect is the characters' psychological dependency on the house, which denotes confirmation of a particular trait employed by women writers in their characters' construction. As mentioned, Jackson performed a major transformation in the attitude of women captives victimised by their confinement by having the character actually wanting to stay in the house. Siddons, two decades after Jackson, reemploys the same technique based on an attraction towards a sentient house. She disregards the fact that women in the 1970s had gained greater access to career opportunities outside of the home, and depicts atypical women characters who show no signs of a wish for independence, and whose only aim is to be home, though not necessarily homemakers. Their compliance, just as Eleanor's, is structurally necessary in order to position them as propitiatory victims for the sentient house. Siddons, thus, confirms what Jackson had first exposed: the role of the need for a home, in conjunction with a legacy of domesticity, in the emergence of fully-formed sentience.

In the dialectics that Siddons maintains between occupants and house, I have detected a common denominator with Jackson's Eleanor: this need for a home, disassociated from homemaking. Siddons, who takes different angles in the way her three women need their home, places the three of them in a position which the society of the 1970s would understand as "housewife." However, they are described as childish or fragile beings in need of protection. In my opinion, in juxtaposing this fragility with the destructive capability of the house, Siddons is pointing to the same unresolved feelings of need and hate towards the home which arose in the 1950s and which are often overlooked.

Of all occupants, Pie Harralson might be the closest exponent of the traditional portrayal of the vocational housewife promoted during the 1950s. However, it is not long before the reader discovers that Pie is driven by ulterior motives which have to do with identity and power. Pie is ambitious, and the house is the step up to stand as an individual in front of her father and society, a place that will be a symbol of her own success. This is presumably the result of the way she has been brought up by her father, with whom she maintains a strange love/hate relationship that other characters soon identify with the Electra complex. As she explains: "I want something so fantastic that cars stop in the street just to look at it. I said . . . [to my father], when my house is built you're going to see a side of your baby you didn't even know existed. And this house *is* me, but definitely" (19-21).

Siddons immediately places homemaking, that is to say, caring for her husband and children in the nurturing space of the home, as a second priority for Pie. Pie's appreciation of Buddy lies in his promising career as a lawyer, which secures Pie's social position. Regarding motherhood, while Pie claims to want to have babies, she is oblivious to the responsibilities of childbearing or even of pregnancy, as those around her repeatedly note. Heavily pregnant, she dreams of going back dancing, which she incongruously intends to do two days after labour. Aware of Pie's attitude, her father is to provide her with a live-in nurse because he does not trust her with a newborn (33-34). It comes as no surprise that she is not emotionally affected by miscarrying and shows more interest in the upcoming house warming party. In fact, Pie herself confesses at one point her reluctance for the role of the homemaker when she tells Colquitt: "I sure won't be a prisoner" (33). The house, vigilant, consequently proceeds to disrupt all which was to promote that social status which Pie most desired. By the time the house is finished with Pie, she

has lost her father, her dreams of an ideal family, her marriage and what she longed for most: her house as a sign of American success. For Pie, the house ultimately grows to stand for her failure and shame.

The Sheehans show a similar arrangement in which the woman is the one that needs the house, the one psychologically dependent on it, and ultimately the one targeted and destroyed by the building. Anita Sheehan stands as a paragon of the need for shelter and care. The case of Anita is closer to that of Eleanor in the sense that she is alone, emotionally damaged, and in need of a place of one's own for retreat and recovery. As with Eleanor, Anita is not in the position of taking care of others, but is instead taken care of. Horror in the Sheehans's section lies in the contradiction that on the one hand Anita desperately needs the protective sheltering that the house is offering, but on the other hand it is the house itself that is inflicting severe emotional blows.

Anita's history shows a tendency to retreat to a physical cocoon to emotionally heal from the losses of her loved ones. Her catatonic seizures appear to be a symptomatic materialisation of her obsessive need to withdraw from the world. The house readily presents itself as a cocoon for recovery, seducing her in a way that is again reminiscent of Eleanor and Hill House, as Anita too perceives that the house wants her and needs her. As with Pie, the text states how Anita fell "in love with the house when she saw it and seemed so grateful to find it and so anxious to move in" (82). Then, she explicitly tells Kim how much she loves it, and how she felt it had been built just for her, as if it "had been waiting for [her all along] to come home" (96-97). She confides in Colquitt that her house needs her "to give *it* identity," which she describes as "a flattering feeling" (116). Anita adds that she feels as if the house "preens itself" when she walks down the street towards it (116). These lines show

how the house is tampering with her lost motherhood, as Anita deludes herself into believing the house wants her and needs her as an impatient and dependent child, again reminding us of Eleanor's need to feel wanted.³¹ By playing on this need and exposing Anita to her husband's desire for a different woman within Anita's very cocoon, the house ultimately destroys her.

The last occupants, the Greenes, serve as an illustration of homelessness and the need for shelter as a result of breaching the moral code. Once again, and closer to the dispossession of Eleanor, this homelessness is the vulnerability targeted by the house. Having been thrown out of her own home by her family, Susan needs to provide a home not only for herself but also for her child. The narrative function of her illegitimate child is twofold: she is the reason why Susan is homeless and the reason why she desperately needs shelter. The text states that the Greenes's money comes from her side, implying that Susan has regained access to her inheritance by marrying Norman, thus bartering abuse as a token for the recovery of a home. The house pinpoints both her need and her struggle to endure Norman's abuse, and uses this abuse to destroy the last dwellers.

Although the theme of domestic abuse in the household is not treated by Jackson, the case of the Greenes further evidences how solidly the trope of the sentient house is settled by the 1970s. When Siddons places the house as the final entity triggering a case of domestic abuse, she is shifting part of the responsibility for Norman's mistreatment of his family from Norman to the building itself. It confirms the autonomy the building acquires after Jackson's times, culminating in a shift of responsibility from the male to the building itself initiated in the 1900s.

³¹ This delusion of being needed by the house is not present in Matheson, Anson or King. Although the result of King's *The Shining* is that Jack Torrance's ghost stays in the hotel, the Overlook Hotel focuses on convincing Jack that his family should be punished, rather than attracting him to become one with the building.

When we reflect on the needs of Siddons's women—shelter, privacy, recovery, or even power—we find they all are in fact commonplace reasons why any human being, male or female, would seek a home. These are the same motivations seen in Eleanor, rather than indoctrination into domesticity. This is why it is so important to stress the significance of the absence of ghosts, demonic forces and above all a history of violence in the buildings depicted by women. Their absence reveals that it is the angst arising from the pull of the primeval need conflicting with the rejection of a legacy of domesticity that is productive of horror for these writers.

It has been argued that in *The House Next Door* the architect might be liable for the evil in the building. Colquitt's last minute suggestion that Kim is responsible for the sentience of the house could initially be seen as the unsavoury history that accounts for its malignancy (Bailey 86-87). When considering this possibility, I see instead overwhelming references to the building's own autonomous evil nature independent from Kim. Colquitt's suggestion of blaming Kim works effectively as an explanation of the unexpected decision of the Kennedys to commit murder and thus to destroy their own lives, falling victims to their obsession and Colquitt's own foretelling words "[t]he madness lay next door" (261). However, the identification of Kim as the source of evil does not seem congruent with the storyline. From the very start, the sentience of the building seems to work on an independent level from Kim, who seems to be, like the other male characters, an instrument of the house.

Kim's history tells us that he had not been able to build before or—although he claims himself inspired towards the end—after building the house next door, his only creation. The architect's earlier designs had seemed doomed to fail so, if anything, he seems to have been subject to the malignancy of the house by having his former projects truncated by a mysterious force. Kim designs a house for Pie

Harralson after having met her at a party, but he states clearly that it is the plot itself that dictated him what to build on it as if it was organic (28-29, 36). Kim's design is thus subject to the terrain, and not the other way around. Once a survey of the terrain begins, he is said to look at the lot as a menace, as if architect and land were measuring one another (18). When watching the sketches, Colquitt describes the drawing as if the house "grew out of the pencilled earth. . . . [S]omething that had started with a seed, put down deep roots, grown. . . . It looked—inevitable" (20). When describing what the building means to him, Kim clearly states his belief in the autonomy of the house and his submission to the dictates of architecture: "the site, the ground will tell you what to plant. The house should be its own boss, and [the clients] should live by its rules, not the other way around. It's up to them to . . . make it grow, as you say. This house *is* its own boss. It *does* ask the best of you" (29).

When the section next door is described, long before Kim enters the picture, Siddons does so by employing animal-like imagery such as having a ridge like a spine (10). When the works start, the imagery becomes strikingly organic. The initial preparation of the terrain is described with images of an animal giving birth. The brook in the section is described as having been tainted with blood, clearly referring to the water breaking during a birthing process (24). The red land is described as "bleeding flesh," and the terrain described as the "lovely woman-curves of the land" (25).

Once the house is up, Kim repeatedly shows evidence of not being connected with its malignance. In fact, he feels something evil and wrong in the house, something that he "did not put there," and tries to warn the Kennedys about it (69). Kim avoids entering the premises as much as possible. When he does and is possessed by the house in the incident in which Walter almost murders him and

Colquitt, it is Kim who reacts as an antagonist to the house and urges the Kennedys out of the building, frustrating the murderous intentions of the house, and explaining afterwards his theory that the house “is damned” and “greedy” because “[i]t takes the best” of people and destroys them (135).

There are multiple lexical references to personification of the building, such as that it sleeps, waits, shrugs, is content, observes and murders, amongst many others. Early in the story the relevant verbs tend to be preceded by modifications such as “seemed to” or “appeared to,” but as the story progresses Siddons removes the modification so that the language of the personification becomes as literal as it was in Jackson. Lastly, the epilogue clearly states that the sentience survives the destruction of Kim and is inherent in the design of the house itself, therefore revealing its independence not only of the architect but also of the particular plot of land. Hence, I do not see responsibility for the haunting lying in the character of Kim, other than in his indirectly being the final vehicle for the destruction of the Kennedys, and thereby fitting into the pattern of instrumental male characters. As in *The Haunting of Hill House*, the sentience of *The House Next Door* is pure: the house is born bad.

Both *The House Next Door* and *The Haunting of Hill House* have been turned into film adaptations. I have observed that the study of these films and TV series offers further proof of the different treatment of sentience by male directors and script writers, confirming a different understanding of sentience by women authors like Jackson and Siddons. As I will show, the film adaptations shift the emphasis of the original texts, and attribute the malignancy of the house to a particular character, which in the case of Siddons is, unsurprisingly, Kim the architect, and in Jackson is Hugh Crain. These adaptations differ from the original novels, in which attributions of

malignancy to a specific human character were merely vague suggestions, coming always second to the many references to the building's own awareness. *The Haunting of Hill House* has been adapted to the big screen twice, firstly by Robert Wise with the assistance of Jackson herself in 1963, and by Jan De Bont in 1999 with the assistance of David Self on the screenplay. Siddons's *The House Next Door* was adapted into a TV series in 2006 by Jeff Woolnough. The 1963 version of *The Haunting of Hill House* supervised by Jackson follows the novel faithfully: it does not point at Hugh Crain as responsible for the haunting and displays no graphic violence. However, the 1999 film posits Crain as the perpetrator of the haunting and incorporates the abuse of a large number of orphans—absent in the book apart from passing references to an austere upbringing of his own daughters. This film alters the book as far as to add a graphic decapitation of Luke, multiple spirits of children, and includes a final confrontation between the ghost of Hugh Crain and Eleanor Vance.

Similarly, while the novel *The House Next Door* refers repeatedly to the intentionality of the evil house and its inexplicable provenance, the TV series removes the uncertainty of the original text and explicitly places Kim as the willing perpetrator of the haunting, adding a final direct confrontation between Colquitt and Kim. These changes, implemented by the male director and contributors to the TV series adaptation, again shift the blame to a secondary character and away from the house itself, and are remarkably consistent with those revisions carried out in the 1999 adaptation of Jackson's book.

As can be seen, the differences between the original texts and the male adaptations all converge into one same pattern which appeals to other creatures, gore or a backstory as additional support to pure sentience. These alterations should

be addressed, as they once again illustrate the different male and female understanding of the haunted house. They should be pondered with Shirley Jackson's revision of the traditional pattern exemplified by William Castle's *The House on Haunted Hill*, when she constructed a symptomatic emphasis on the house. The 1999 adaptation of Jackson's book, the TV series of *The House Next Door*, and fiction written by male authors such as *The Shining*,³² *The Amityville Horror* and *Hell House*, all converge into one same pattern: these are all male authored texts, which suggests that pure sentience was born out of spatial constraints related to domesticity and female entrapment.

As a last aspect to consider, I would now like to appeal to the opening sections of this thesis, and draw attention to the similar unconscious mental processes involved in the writing of the two books. When reviewing the testimonies of the authors, I have found further confirmation of the determining influence of an inherited women's culture in the appearance of sentience. Both Jackson and Siddons stated that their goal was to write a ghost story but, intriguingly, neither did. In addition, the two refer to an unexplainable flow of ideas once the writing had started. My impression is that these two particulars are interconnected. The way the writing diverged from the initial intention of ghosts and drifted towards the house itself, and the way that once there the writing flowed, indicate that there were ulterior psychological sources feeding the writing of Jackson and Siddons. My suggestion is that it is no coincidence that the two books present analogous sentience because it is the writers' unconscious subscription to a legacy of domestic claustrophobia that endows them with an understanding of haunting in which the house can suffice as the primary source of fear.

³² The very name of the hotel implies personification, as in US English to overlook can mean to look from the above. The Merriam-Webster English dictionary defines overlook as: "to look down upon from above" and among other definitions also "to look on with the evil eye."

As addressed earlier, the haunting in *The House Next Door*, as *The Haunting of Hill House* years before, revolves around a building that is not—at least directly—troubled by ghosts. The nature of the hauntings described in both works lies exclusively in the houses' unexplainable sentience and malignance. Starting with Siddons, in an insightful comment that neither King nor Bailey have drawn attention to in their respective analyses of *The House Next Door*, Siddons reveals her initial intention as “I wanted to see if I could write a good ghost story,”³³ declaring her admiration for the ghost stories written by Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne or Charles Dickens (King, *Danse* 305). Paradoxically, the final result is a haunted house narrative that is entirely lacking in ghosts.

Recollecting her writing period, Siddons mentions *a posteriori* that she discarded the use of ghosts because they would not work in modern suburbia: “[I]t seemed to me that in this day of pragmatists and materialists, a conventional spectre would be almost laughable. . . . A traditional ghoulie would be laughed out of the neighborhood” (306). However, Siddons fails to realise that her observation hardly matches the facts: suburban conventional “ghoulies” and hauntings were clearly marketable around 1978, as the huge success of William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist* (book in 1971, film in 1973), *The Omen* (film, 1976), Jay Anson’s *The Amityville Horror* (book in 1977, film in 1979) or the slightly later film *Poltergeist* (1982) prove (the latter two in particular featuring ghosts and demons in suburban middle-class America). The fact that Siddons does not address or even realise this incongruity suggests that her choice to shift towards sentience might have taken place on an unconscious level.

³³ With regard to Siddons, it is the writer herself who provides the most thoroughly lucid analysis of her 1978 book in an interview that was originally published in the *Chattahoochee Review* in 1988. Most of this interview was reproduced by Stephen King in *Danse Macabre*, where he also discusses the story.

Remarkably, a similar scenario had previously arisen almost twenty years earlier with Shirley Jackson, who likewise had set out to write a ghost story, but instead produced what I believe is the first complete narrative of sentience. When Jackson recalled aspects of the writing of *The Haunting of Hill House*, her initial intentions to write about ghosts were clear:

I found it so exciting that I wanted more than anything else to set up my own haunted house, and put my own people in it, and see what *I* could make happen. . . .

I wanted to write a book about ghosts. . . . I was already doing a lot of splendid research reading all the books about ghosts I could get hold of, and particularly true ghost stories. (Jackson, "Experience" 201-02)

Later on, when Jackson had to pick a setting for the book, she was still focusing on the ghost as the centre of the narrative, as she mentions that she searched for “a house [that] looked like a candidate for a ghost” (Jackson, "Experience" 202). At one point in the process, Jackson even claimed that the idea of writing about ghosts was affecting her on an unconscious level, as it can be seen in the sleepwalking episode that set Jackson to write her story:

[I]t was abundantly *clear* to me that I had no choice; the ghosts were after me. In case I *had* any doubts, however, [one morning] I came downstairs and found a sheet of copy paper moved to the centre of my desk, set neatly away from the general clutter. On the sheet of paper was written DEAD DEAD in my own handwriting. I am accustomed to making notes for books, but not in my sleep; I decided that I had better write the book awake, which I got to work and did. (203)

Like Siddons, Jackson did not write about ghosts. As Jackson progressed in her work, an interesting and involuntary shift of focus occurred from ghost to house. Unlike Siddons, Jackson never addressed the incongruity between her declared intentions and the final product, seeming oblivious to the fact that the two did not correspond.

Furthermore, the authors' accounts of the writing process describe a similar and inexplicable flow of ideas which both Siddons and Jackson found extraordinary, and which appeared strongly connected to the unconscious. Jackson recalls how encountering an inspirational building in New York strangely impacted on her, compelling her to write:

[M]y nightmares had somehow settled around the building. . . . Let me just point out right here and now that my unconscious mind has *been* unconscious for a number of years now and it is my firm intention to keep it that way. When I have nightmares about a horrid building it is the horrid building I am having nightmares about, and no one is going to talk me out of it; that is final. (201)

Siddons similarly confesses an unexpected urge to write about a haunted house after a random encounter with a particular building. She watched a modern house go up in the section next to her own home, whereupon she wondered "what if" a modern house was the setting for horror instead of the traditional older edifice. The following words are reminiscent of Jackson's sleepwalking episode in front of her writing desk:

'The plot of the book emerged in one typewriter sitting almost whole and in infinite detail, as though it had been there all along just waiting to be uncovered . . . *The House Next Door* was plotted and whole in a day.' . . .

‘About a third of the way through it, the writing ceased to be fun and became something as oppressive to me as it was obsessive; I realized I was into something vast and terrible and not at all funny.’ (King, *Danse* 306-08)

At this point I would once more urge the reader to bear in mind theories alluded to in Chapter 1 which posit external inputs as stimulating inherited, frequently dormant, fears in the subject (Öhman and Mineka; Rakison). I am thinking specifically here of the experiments regarding exposure of primates and toddlers to potential threats. Both Siddons and Jackson were equally overtaken by an unfamiliar inspirational force that unexpectedly triggered a productive fear in them. Jackson too describes how her perception of reality was altered the moment she began to work on her haunted house: “[T]he minute I started thinking about ghosts and haunted houses, all kinds of things turned up to enforce my intentions, or perhaps I was thinking so entirely about my new book that everything I saw turned to it” (“Experience” 201). As can be appreciated, the parallelisms are striking. The two writers confess having been unexpectedly overtaken by an urge to write a haunted house story right after randomly coming across a striking looking building. After this initial input, the inspiration and energy of the two writers seem to be directed by a drive which they cannot fully identify on a conscious level and which takes them away from their initial intentions of writing about ghosts and instead centre on the house.

Judging from their own words, I propose that issues related to an understanding of home, derived from a legacy of domesticity, were pulsing in the unconscious of these writers. The early twentieth-century’s social changes had engendered a more intense awareness of the negative side of the home. However, as much as women wanted to break free from the unmasked monster who produced

homemakers through classical conditioning, women's need for a home still drew them towards the threat in what then became a two-faced home. These were contradictory pulls not experienced by male writers, and created what King would term one of the "pressure points" essential to the creation of true horror. The same lure of the two-faced sentient house does not extend to male writers, who welcomed this new sentience but continued resorting to further tools of violence and demons to complete a narrative of sentience that for them is incomplete.

The role of honour of horror icons tells us that only after presenting a duality or "two faces" can the monster take full place in the horror canon (King, *Danse* 65-100; Carroll 47). Some of the most consolidated dualities in popular icons of horror are, for instance, the civilised yet murderous Jekyll and Hyde, the werewolf's sides of human and beast, the zombie or monster of Frankenstein's double qualification regarding life and death, and the seductive yet destructive lure of the vampire. I believe it was not until Jackson constructed a text around a distilled need for home that the house could fully rise and occupy its place in the pantheon of horror popular culture. As she did so, she was granting life to a horror icon that up to 1959 had only been dormant, creating the first popular monster who, different from other iconic horror predators, is unmovable, luring its victims on a psychological level with a promise of protection and comfort combined with a threat of annihilation.

CHAPTER 3

THE HOUSE IN SPANISH FANTASY AND HORROR FICTION

Having reviewed the haunted house tradition in North America in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 explores the evolution of fantasy and horror narratives written by Spanish women in which the house occupies a prominent place. The different sociopolitical history of America and Spain offers an opportunity to explore the connection between the understanding of the idea of home and the narrative of the haunted house. In this comparison, I have found confirmation that across time and space, women's sociocultural position and the representation of the house appear to be linked, and that one determines the other. The portrayal of the haunted house seems especially reflective of women's various relationships with homemaking.

I will argue that the sentient haunted house narrative has made a tardy appearance in Spain because of two reasons. The first, which is unrelated to issues of homemaking, is the overall lesser amount of fantasy and horror fiction characteristic of Spanish literature. This affects my study because it reduces the number of narratives to consider. The second reason is the different situation of women in Spain, where a convergence of politics, patriarchy and Catholicism has resulted in women's attention being deliberately conducted towards homemaking.

Bearing in mind the different understanding of haunting observed in male and female American writers, as exposed in Chapter 2, I have focused on Spanish women writers in search of a similar correspondence between the position in which women stood in society and the house in horror. As I will elaborate, the situation in Spain presents significant variations that made an indelible imprint on a large number of Spanish women. All these differences converged into one consequence:

Spanish women maintained homemaking as something unquestioned and natural to women and for longer than their American counterparts. Some of the differences between the lives of the women in the two countries can already be traced in the nineteenth century. For example, the American territorial expansion and the earlier constitution of the USA as a nation indirectly produced some alternative roles for women in American society, such as that of the pioneer settler, which were not part of the reality of Spain. Other differences originate in the sources of repression by the Church and the government in Spain that were not endured in America. In the late nineteenth century, the Catholic Church controlled most of the education of children in Spain, thus indoctrinating the population into traditional homemaking values from a young age.

The most dramatic dissimilarities, however, result from women's different experience of war: In America, official involvement in the World Wars took place between 1917-1918 and 1941-1945. In contrast, in Spain the Spanish Civil War was fought between 1936-1939, with the subsequent Franco dictatorship lasting until late 1975. While American women had been subject to contradictory policies encouraging them to work outside and inside of the home, Spanish women lacked an equivalent experience, preventing a re-evaluation of homemaking from taking place. As I will develop in the section dedicated to the time of the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship, women in Spain were doubly targeted by the repression. After 1939 women were politically subjugated as citizens of the new regime, and were also instructed into homemaking through specific curricula designed by the government. Their indoctrination was not only academic but also reached the private areas of their lives. The government controlled all entertainment such as cinemas and television, and promoted young girls' reading of uplifting educational tales,

encouraging them to take role models from heroic female historical characters, such as Queen Isabella (Soliño 50). Hovering over this mechanism of control and ensuring its efficiency was the figure of the spiritual guide, reassuring the maintenance of this order (Scanlon 261). It should be remembered that at this time, American women were instead subject to various conflicting policies that encouraged them to work outside the home and enforced their enclosure within it.

Taking into account these two variables—that of suppression of horror, on the one hand, and an additional indoctrination of women, on the other— I have included in my study horror texts by Spanish women writers in which I have found a significant emphasis on spatial arrangements. While it is evident that the presence of the haunted house is reduced when compared to works coming out of America, I will show how the texts included in this chapter also expose the evolution of a feeling of unease about one's place and a development towards the fulfillment of sentience. In the same way that an undercurrent of fantasy and horror which survived the mechanisms of repression in Spain reveals the existence of an interest in horror and fantasy—perhaps not immediately visible but running along the mainstream literary canon—, Spanish women's fiction within this genre appears, as occurred before in American fiction, to reveal a pressure point that relates to domesticity.

This study endeavours to expose the troubling of place related to the home in fantasy and horror written by Spanish women. The stories referred to are survivors of a double repression of horror and of women's reevaluation of homemaking. This double oppression accounts for both the literature's less intense horror house imagery, and also its belatedness with respect to its American counterparts. The significant lacks and silences in the early Spanish stories and the rising unease to do with claustrophobia observed in the post-war narratives mirror aspects of the society

in which they were produced. Their belatedness corresponds to the fact that they were the product of a society in which women's social advances were themselves kept on hold.

The review that I present in the second half of this chapter highlights how the presence of architectural imagery and narrative claustrophobia increases as the twentieth century advances, exposing, as it did in the review of American haunted house fiction, existing tensions related to the home in the society producing the narratives. Although the very different political circumstances of Spain seem to put on hold the development of the haunted house narrative in Spanish horror, the evolution of house imagery observed in these narratives offers confirmation of hypotheses raised in the preceding chapter. They reflect, as they did in America, the social transformations in Spanish society. This progression thus confirms that women's relationship with the home plays a key role in the depiction of the house in horror fiction, making use of similar pressure points of women's experience across time and space.

The chapter addresses the work by four Spanish women writers of fantasy whose fiction presents early manifestations of a connection between horror and domestic entrapment. I will suggest that house imagery and domestic entrapment were not significantly employed as tools for literary creation until after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), contrasting with the case of America, where this is observable in the late nineteenth century. These four writers have been grouped in pairs, arranged chronologically. The first two writers, Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) and Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932), were writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, prior to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Most of their horror stories show a deep concern for women's civil and social rights, but do not

use house imagery for the emphasis of the narrative of horror, unlike their American contemporaries, who could merge the two. While Pardo Bazán's and Burgos's stories show a potential arrangement of architecture and spatial boundaries, house depiction is not arranged in synchronisation with the storyline, and lacks claustrophobic traits. Even in stories which directly deal with the issue of gender-confinement, these pre-war authors totally neglect the potential of house imagery, and limit themselves to bare mentions of the buildings. In these more feminist-oriented stories, spatial imprisonment appears subordinated to the action of male characters, who are invariably placed as the only perpetrators of the confinement. As a result, these texts lack any personification of houses or emphasis on the presence of buildings in the narrative, which constitutes an important difference from American writers of the same decades.

The second pair of writers, Mercè Rodoreda (1909-1983) and Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000), experienced both the years of liberal government of the Spanish Second Republic (1931-1936) and the Spanish Civil War. Rodoreda fled Spain and mainly wrote from exile, while Martín Gaité remained in Spain, enduring the repression of the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and the transition to a democratic government from 1975 until 1982. In their works, claustrophobia and spatial imagery take on a wider purview in which the stress of the narrative gradually shifts from the male character onto the building, thus enhancing claustrophobic imagery.

As a result of their direct experience of war and its aftermath, the Spanish Civil War conflict and the ensuing dictatorship are inevitably present in their stories and much of the symbolism in their narratives alludes to political issues. In the case of Rodoreda, spatial imagery is often symbolic of exile, homelessness and war. In Martín Gaité's texts, architectural imagery shows a deeper awareness of domestic

claustrophobia through stifling buildings which represent political repression and imposed domesticity, tightly intertwined. Their stories thus exemplify narrative use of their own personal experience with the home. Together, Rodoreda and Martín Gaité form a complementary pair constituted by fantasy fiction written free of censorship, and fiction written under a dictatorial regime, where homelessness and the imposition of home on women are respectively illustrated.

I believe that, while the oppressive force of the house is the product of prevailing ideologies of domesticity and therefore inseparable from a patriarchal system, the relationship between women and houses is the result of more complex factors than the house as a symbol of patriarchy. This more nuanced relationship includes what I see as an overlooked clash between a primeval need for shelter and hatred for a symbol of women's confinement. As a result, once the initial feminist objectives are dealt with, these factors begin to emerge in the narratives. The Spanish authors of this period, for reasons that I will discuss, were exclusively focusing on patriarchy as the core of the problem, while American authors were beginning to pay attention to anxieties derived from the institution of homemaking. The genre of horror, fittingly and as it normally does, welcomes these anxieties, slowly endowing the house with a more prominent presence, which eventually results in the house becoming the antagonist, rather than the male.

3.1. The Repression of the Fantastic in Spain: A Historical Overview

In the following section I propose to examine the sociocultural history of Spain while presenting neglected works of horror and fantasy since medieval times. When comparing the production of horror fiction from Spain with that from the USA, what immediately becomes evident is the fact that in Spain fewer fantasy and horror works

are written. This is the first issue that I will address in this section, as it accounts for the narrower field of study in Spanish fiction when compared to other countries.

Throughout Spanish literary history, it has repeatedly been claimed that the Spanish population does not have a taste for the fantastic and far less so for Gothic-like forms of entertainment. Indeed, it is difficult to come across much horror literature in Spanish fiction (Encinar 1; Nichols 33; Pérez 1-2).¹ However, the popularity of foreign writers, such as Poe in the past, or the more recent success of Stephen King and blockbuster horror forms of entertainment, seem to contradict this assertion. It appears that the official position and readers' interests are not mutually supportive. It might be worth reviewing the claim that the Spanish reader does not have a taste for horror and the fantastic, or at least consider whether or not that claim is in need of revision. As I will show, the survival of these genres in the underground and other evidence suggest that it is not simply a case of Spain never having been interested in horror, but rather that the absence of horror fiction may be due to a complex history of sociopolitical reasons and repression by the ideologies in power. This is an important point when looking at developments of the haunted house in fiction, since it exposes the vulnerability of Spanish fiction to mechanisms of repression, supporting the premise that transformations in the haunted house have likewise been put on hold by traceable factors. I believe that these are a confluence of circumstances which combine internal politics, the coming to awareness of the continent of North America, and most of all, the impact of the Catholic Church.

It was in the Renaissance that Spain parted with the rest of Europe after the demise of chivalry books and began to frown upon fantasy. Until medieval times,

¹ Other authors who have explored fantasy in Spain are Rafael Llopis and Alejo Martínez Martín.

tales of chivalry had been as popular in Spain as in the rest of Western Europe.² “Fantasy” and “reality” were not seen as absolutely exclusive of one another, with chivalry books clearly not regarded as “fantasy.” If fantastic literature is considered to narrate events that cannot be explained by the laws of the known natural world, the medieval fantastic was a hazy concept.³ For the average person living in medieval times, the unusual events and characters that the poems talked about in the *chansons de geste* or epics were just as real as those in the stories which were being reported from the battle fronts against the Arabs in Spain, or from the Crusaders from far lands. For example, Víctor Infantes, in his study of fantasy in Spain, explains how “to the medieval reader—or the listener—the wonderful and prophetic legend of the Cave of Hercules from Toledo is as real in all its fiction as the Carolingian or Breton knights, the genteel Don Dirlos . . . , Lancelot . . . [who were regarded in] those heroic and popular poems on the same level as [real people] such as Fernán González, Roger de Flor, o El Cid . . .” (Infantes 8).⁴ This confusion between the real and the imagined occurred both in the audience and in the writers and included many elements of pagan myth, particularly with regard to the enemy as anti-hero. Indeed, the medieval writer himself often wrote down fantastic episodes in the belief that he was reporting true facts. Reality and fiction were thus intertwined to such an extent that drawing conclusive theories in a contemporary analysis as to how medieval society regarded fantasy seems difficult.

In 1492 two major events took place that might be connected to the decline of the fantastic in the Spanish territory: the first was the expulsion of all religions other

² An example of the importance of fantasy and chivalry in Spain can be seen in the work *Amadis of Gaul*, which is believed to have been written in Spain (see Martínez Martín 23).

³ The critical discussion regarding the distinction of what is fantasy from what is not is a consolidated debate into which I do not intend to enter. I follow the criteria established by Tzvetan Todorov and Louis Vax, which simply pertain to what is not possible according to natural law.

⁴ To facilitate the comprehension of these quotations I have elected to provide my own English translations instead of the original quotations in Spanish, unless otherwise specified.

than Catholicism, an action that strengthened the alliance between Crown and Catholic Church. The second major event was the conquest and colonisation of the Americas.⁵ With regard to the first event, after the religious unification of Spain by the “Catholic King and Queen,” Isabella and Ferdinand,⁶ Spain was ruled by an axis of political power and the Catholic Church. Consequently, the supernatural was explained by appealing to the binary opposition of God/Devil,⁷ and representations of positive magic were explained by appealing to divine intervention. As Rafael Llopis puts it, the fantastic “was not fantastic [anymore], but sacred” (78). Evil no longer existed *per se*, but only as the polar opposite of the holy. As the Devil became the almost exclusive figure of evil, other secondary agents of wickedness disappeared to a great extent. What is important to stress at this point is that this bipolarisation contrasts with what was occurring in other countries. For instance, supernatural characters such as the witches of Macbeth, who not only are evil but also remain unpunished, become rare in Spanish literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, the Devil himself is spared, presumably to preserve the balance of the Catholic order. This prevailing ideology was enforced by the Inquisition, which meant that its precepts were far from being a mere set of rules for spiritual guidance: they were secured by a punitive system that took action against transgression. It could be argued that at the time the Inquisition had the monopoly on horror, both in its restrictive doctrines but also when considering the Inquisition’s standard procedures. Writers who were suspected of dwelling upon dark themes risked their

⁵ These two events mark the transition from medieval times to the Spanish Renaissance, or the period generally referred to as the “Spanish Golden Age” (XVI and XVII).

⁶ From 711 to 1492 most of Spain was ruled by the Arabs, with the exception of the most northern regions, where Christians gathered and gradually pushed back the Arabs in the *Reconquista*. In these centuries, Jews, Christians and Muslims co-existed in the Arab territories. Once the Christians completed the reconquering of the Peninsula, they demanded that all citizens either convert to Catholicism or flee the country.

⁷ The strong alliance between the Catholic Church and the Spanish crown in Christian land is believed to have its origins as far back as in the conversion of the Visigoth king, Recaredo, in 587 AD.

position, freedom, and occasionally their lives. Conforming to the main trend, therefore, was not a mere choice of style; it was a necessity.

The second major event that worked to the detriment of fantasy in Spain was the population's interest in territorial novelties. The mysterious New World attracted much public attention, with the Americas supplying exotic and fabulous elements previously provided by chivalric works. Fantasy no longer needed to be invented. Instead, it came from the reports of those involved in the settlement of the new continent. The travellers returned with colourful accounts of pyramids, different races of people, dangers, paradises and riches, among others.⁸ These accounts were more exciting and stimulating to the average Spaniard than the old medieval tales about sorceresses or dragons. The reports from the Americas were not necessarily accurate, as is apparent in stories such as the legend of El Dorado, or that of the mermaids around Cuba, as described by Columbus.⁹ Truthful or not, they were fascinating, making unnecessary the insertion of fantasy within Spain itself. Since these chronicles enhanced the glory of the expeditions, the Spanish Crown promoted the rumours of wonders overseas, so that funding could continue and new settlers would be encouraged. By pursuing their own interests, both Crown and Church channelled popular dreaming towards the New World and away from what they judged to be futile European fantasies of no interest for their political purposes.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, by the mid-sixteenth century, in Spain there was a serious social stigma attached to fantasy. Spanish intellectuals and writers openly condemned and ostracised fantasy, as in the case of

⁸ The stories about the New World came, firstly, from what were understood to be reliable sources and, secondly, they often came in written documents. The important presence of the Catholic Church in the New World implied that there were numerous educated priests who wrote down the events and sent them back to the metropolis. All this contributed to a feeling of authenticity regarding the accounts.

⁹ For further details on this reference see Julia Castillo 15.

the influential scholar Luis Vives, who was Mary Tudor's tutor in England (Castillo 11).¹⁰ In a study of the reading habits of the citizens of Madrid at the time, it is mentioned that “between 1566 and 1600 in the Spanish court ‘there was no author, translator or editor who would dare touch chivalry books’” (Castillo 12).¹¹ In the end, Cervantes delivered the final blow to fantasy in 1605 by writing *Don Quijote*, a mockery of chivalry books. These narratives, no longer wanted, were bound again and shipped for the entertainment of the American Indies, where they remained still popular generations later. However, by then Spain had found amusement in a new style of practical “knight”: the picaresque hero (Castillo 12-13), who could bring a smile with depictions of his utmost misery and poverty, which, once again, was convenient for maintaining the status of those in power.

Despite the circumstances outlined above, when looking under the rigid surface of the Spanish literary canon, a steady undercurrent of fantasy and horror has never ceased to exist. These works, often based on pagan superstition, were frequently written by the same celebrated authors of more realistic fiction. These authors’ insistence on writing within this openly criticised and unprofitable genre, traditionally in the shadow of realist narratives, reaffirms that the interest in fantasy has always been part of literary production in Spain. Some of the following are examples of these manifestations of fantasy and horror.

My first illustration is *Don Quijote*, which is considered the first attack on fantasy. There is one passage in which Sancho Panza is puzzled by the fact that

¹⁰ Luis Vives (1492-1540) was a renowned Spanish scholar and humanist, and a personal friend of Erasmus and Thomas More. Vives discouraged fantasy on the basis of its futility. Other leading writers in Spain, such as Garcilaso, Quevedo and Cervantes, criticised chivalry because their experience of war had differed greatly from the battles of chivalry books, which were seen as a set of pointless “lies” (Castillo 11).

¹¹Castillo here is quoting Spanish historian Pérez Pastor (1842-1908), who carried out a bibliographical study of the reading habits of Madrid in the sixteenth century in his work, *Bibliografía madrileña del siglo XVI* (1891).

somebody is at the time writing books about Don Quijote and himself, narrating very recent adventures that only the two of them could possibly have known about.¹² Surprised, Sancho and Don Quijote wait in excitement to learn about their own imminent future and the mystery of its written compilation. From a narrative point of view, this incident goes beyond Don Quijote's madness. Cervantes's wink to fantasy seems paradoxical. In a text that is regarded precisely as a critique of fantasy, it seems surprising, and one could say intentional, that the author includes a sequence of events that does not fit into the laws of nature. Also by Cervantes is one of the first texts about werewolves in Spanish literature, in his last book *Los trabajos de Persiles and Sigismunda* [*The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*] (1616), which tells the story of a man who comes very close to marrying a Norwegian werewolf sorceress.¹³ It appears that in an age of proclaimed rationalism, Cervantes was sneaking in his own claim in defence of fantasy.

Another example of early Spanish Gothic is to be found in the work of Lope de Vega (1562-1635), who, writing over 1,500 works, was one of the most important playwrights of the so-called Spanish Golden Age. He is the author of one of the first poltergeist narratives in Spanish literature, which features in his work *El peregrino en su patria* [translated both as *The Pilgrim* or *The Stranger in His Own Country*] (1604). It tells the story of a haunted inn where ghosts terrorise a pilgrim who seeks shelter for one night. In addition to Cervantes and Lope de Vega, a further example is Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), who also wrote narratives of fantasy and horror while justifying them as dreams, as reflected in his title, *Sueños* [*Dreams*], published in 1627. Best known to the English reader is the internationally famous figure of Don

¹² This episode occurs in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Second Part, written in 1615. A graduate from Salamanca University meets with them to inform them about the writer and the enormous success of the editions.

¹³ This story is included in Book Eight of Miguel de Cervantes's *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*.

Juan, the first version of which is *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* [*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*], written in 1630 by the Madrid-born priest Tirso de Molina. The ending of *El burlador de Sevilla* reminds the reader of literature written two hundred years later, presenting all the clichés of dark Romanticism. This sequence describes a gloomy dinner hosted at a churchyard by the statue of a murdered man, who ultimately will drag Don Juan to hell with him.

The Spanish undercurrent of fantasy survived even in political times when it would be expected to see fantasy wane. This is the case during the Enlightenment. The last half of the seventeenth century was marked by the slow rise of reason, which culminated in the consolidation of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The prevailing rationalism reduced the number of fantasy works produced in Europe. However, despite the characteristics of this time, which no doubt influenced Spain, fantasy had by then taken an independent and almost surreptitious form in the main literary trends that continue all the way to Romanticism. An example can be seen in the work by Diego de Torres Villarroel, *Vida* [*Life*] (1742), which relates the story of a haunted palace eventually vacated by its owners,¹⁴ or the story of mutancy about the “anfibio de Liérganes” [the amphibious Liérganes man] by Fray Benito Feijóo (1676-1764), which is included in his *Teatro crítico universal* [*Universal Critical Theatre*] written between 1726 and 1740 (Martínez Martín 77-90).

It is with the rise of Gothic literature that one of the most blatant examples of governmental repression of fantasy in Spain occurs when, in 1799, the Inquisition banned novels (Álvarez Barrientos 359; Turner and López de Martínez 38). While Spanish censors were suspicious of novels for countless reasons, Gothic novels in

¹⁴ This theme would be taken up in the twentieth century by Julio Cortázar in his story “Casa tomada” [House Taken Over] (1951).

particular were a major threat, since their themes often challenged the status quo.¹⁵ Presenting the old institutions as rancid and stale, they celebrated transgression, anarchy and passion, depicting a class mobility that was undesirable to the aristocracy. Most dangerous of all was the fact that Gothic fiction in general targeted the Church as, for example, in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Consequently, in 1799 the *Consejo de Castilla* or Spanish government banned novels altogether from Spain under a sweeping policy of morality, as the following extract shows: "Far from contributing to the education and instruction of the nation, novels only provide frivolity, ruining the taste of the younger ones . . . with no benefit for tradition" (Llopis 84). With this legislation, Spain isolated itself from its European Gothic and Romantic movements.

Despite the prohibition of novels, Gothic books were smuggled across the border from France, as this fiction was popular among readers. Unfortunately, the quality of such works was poor. The writers, often Spanish intellectuals in exile in France under precarious conditions, wrote texts set in unfamiliar northern lands, which they only knew through translating Walter Scott, frequently from a French edition (Llopis 85).¹⁶ It was only in 1830 that the king, Ferdinand VII, lifted the prohibition on novels, because he needed the support of the liberals and the publishing industry to remain in power.¹⁷ Then, hundreds of texts of dubious quality

¹⁵ Novels were much harder to control than theatre and spread more quickly. They were easy to pass on, very popular among the increasingly literate population, and were becoming less expensive. They gave priority to the storyline over stylistic matters such as verse structure, which made novels successful across a widening social stratum. In particular, novels were dangerous because they multiplied the possibilities for portraying the opinions and ideas of the characters—and therefore the writers—, which could now be presented without overloading the short stage play or the poem.

¹⁶ In Spain, these restrictions and the delay in the reception of the Gothic explain the diminished quality and number of Gothic works. The Spanish writers and translators in exile provided cheap labour for French editors, who were well aware of the Spanish prohibition of novels and demand for them (Llopis 85-86).

¹⁷ Although novels were now legalised, horror fiction after 1830 still had to obtain an approval. The Inquisition as such was abolished in 1834, when all supervision of literature was transferred to the censors. Censors carried on the task of the former institution, making sure that dark works would not

came into circulation, which did not help the development of the Spanish Gothic novel. This was a late start, since by 1830, Gothic and Romantic literatures were already in decline in Europe. Spain had missed out on participating in these major literary movements.

Amidst all the low-quality texts and foreign translations, one of the few Spanish Gothic texts that managed to earn a certain degree of recognition was *Noches lúgubres* [*Lugubrious Nights*], written in 1771 by José Cadalso (1741-1782).¹⁸ *Noches lúgubres* narrates the efforts of a man to disinter the corpse of a loved woman. Currently considered one of the paragons of Spanish Gothic literature, for a long time in Spain it was only published in newspaper supplements, even though this story was immensely popular among the lower and middle classes (Glendinning vii). Its exiled author, knowing the ways of the Inquisition, openly stated his lack of interest in pursuing publication in his home country. His judgement proved to be correct, given that, after a series of mutilations and alterations by the Spanish censors and Inquisition, *Noches lúgubres* was officially prohibited in 1819 (Glendinning lxxii-lxxiv).

This sociocultural climate explains the apprehension of authors when writing about certain subjects, even when the prohibition against novels had been lifted. Indeed, for Spanish writers, “it was very tricky to seriously deal with those forbidden

be published and filtering out what was considered inappropriate for developing good morals. For writers and publishers, the former fear of the Inquisition was thus replaced by an economic fear for those who made a living out of writing and publishing. However, evading this censorship became as simple as including a final line warning the reader against the doings of the characters. This marks the main opening to Gothic in Spain, when horrid or sacrilegious narratives could now be justified in terms of their didactic possibilities (Llopis 89).

¹⁸ Cadalso's *Noches lúgubres* was published posthumously as a series in the newspaper *El Correo de Madrid*, 1789-90, and published independently in 1798, a year before the prohibition. Once published in Spanish territory, it was repeatedly altered by the Inquisition. It has become known that Cadalso, who had been targeted by censors previously, declared that he would not pursue the publication of *Noches lúgubres* in Spain, mentioning that he would rather publish in London. In this matter, Glendinning and other critics have seen a veiled criticism of the control of the Inquisition. For details: see the letter of M.A. in Glendinning lxxii, lxxvii-lxxxiv.

themes” (Llopis 94). Not surprisingly, Spanish Romanticism was late and limited when compared with its European counterparts. The most important Romantic writers of the time are Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837), José de Espronceda (1808-1842) and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870).¹⁹

After the rise of Realism in the late nineteenth century in Spain, fantasy and horror works were particularly targeted, being criticised on the basis of their inferior quality. This rationale is biased, since most horror texts were written by the same authors acclaimed for their more realistic fiction. Consequently, relegated to the sideline, horror narratives by these Spanish writers have rarely been the object of study, and it is only recently that they have been rescued from forgotten editions and reclaimed, normally in specialised anthologies.²⁰ Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920) is one example of a writer who wrote fantasy and horror but who is generally known for his realistic fictional figures. In the first part of the twentieth century, Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) and Pío Baroja (1872-1956) should also be mentioned, as well as works by the women writers included in this study, Pardo Bazán and Burgos. These authors wrote horror stories that included icons of the Gothic such as the vampire, the ghost, the dead come to life, living paintings, or humans turned into statues, to name but a few. The last two authors notably stand out as writers of several stories of fantasy and horror at a time when their work was doubly dismissed on the basis of genre and gender, as I will develop shortly.

¹⁹ Bécquer wrote *Leyendas* [*Legends*], a compilation of supernatural legends, which demonstrate the dark aesthetics associated with Romanticism. *Leyendas* combines Spanish folklore with Arabian legends, as well as references to the French occupation in Napoleonic times. Translated into English, it is still in print today.

²⁰ Janet Pérez observes that, although Spanish Gothic and Romantic fiction was not comparable in volume to that by English writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, horror consistently attracted the occasional interest of subsequently acclaimed Spanish canonical writers. Pérez also reviews a number of possible factors that might have influenced this lack of interest in the Gothic genre in Spanish countries, such as the lack of an Industrial Revolution at the time (Pérez 126).

The last significant illustration of Spanish repression against horror and fantasy has to be placed in the not so distant Franco dictatorship. During these years, the government placed a strong emphasis on religion and tradition by censoring any criticism of Catholicism or the normative Spanish society (Soliño 57). The dichotomy God/Devil re-entered Spanish themes, absorbing most elements of fantasy and horror. Religious films portraying the lives of saints or miracles became frequent.²¹ To encourage a compulsive emphasis on domesticity, the government promoted easy, happy comedies with a religious undertone mainly addressed to a female audience, while for a male audience stress was placed on what were judged to be more masculine entertainments, such as soccer and bullfighting.

It is interesting to keep in mind that it is at this time that Magical Realism was peaking in Latin America. Without stretching an interpretation of history, the different directions that literature written in Spanish took in the two continents should be at least noted, since Magical Realism precisely incorporates the fantastic into the ordinary.²² In Spain, Gothic subjects, subversive by nature, were discouraged, while preference was given to morally educational themes. There was no room for morbidity. Darker narratives from only a few decades earlier were not convenient, when the general aim of the dictatorship was to obliterate the memory of the horrors of war and offer uplifting forms of entertainment. This policy of suppression of episodes of the war was to last for decades after the end of the dictatorship. The

²¹ One of the most popular examples of such films moulding children's psyches is Ladislao Vajda's *Marcelino Pan y Vino* (Spain: 1955). Meanwhile, world-popular icons threatening to the regime were banned, such as the earlier 1938 short film and Academy Award winner, "Ferdinand the Bull," a protest against bullfighting and belligerency (see Gabriela Villanueva). Even currently, the vast majority of the Spanish population is unaware of the existence of this character, as a result of decades of repression.

²² None of the best-known writers of Magical Realism are from Spain. They are all Central and South American. To name a few, these are Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), Juan Rulfo (Mexico), (Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Isabel Allende (Chile) and Alejo Carpentier (Cuba).

recovery of those times is now referred to as *memoria histórica* [historical memory] and is currently a subject of controversy in Spanish society.

As this brief historical review has exposed, it is likely that the apparent lack of horror fiction in Spain answers to specific sociopolitical circumstances, and particularly, to deliberate policies of suppression. However, the existence of all the horror texts mentioned above still does not account for why the haunted house paradigm evolved so slowly in Spain when compared to the major transformations taking place in North America, as developed in Chapter 2.

Therefore, in the following section, I will explore the possibility that the same tensions that affected literary transformations of the house in American literature—that is, a particularly intense relationship between American women and homemaking—could have also been at play in Spain. I have focused on works by Spanish women writers in which the house or spatial considerations are most relevant to the narrative. I have selected as a starting point the 1900s, because it is around this time that I appreciate significant alterations in the narrative of the haunted house in America. The chapter finishes as socio-political repression in Spain comes to an end in the 1970s, when it seems that Spain begins to show signs of shedding both the indoctrination against horror and fantasy and the discrimination against women.²³

3.2 Early Women Writers of Horror: Entrapment Focalised through Male Intervention

Emilia Pardo Bazán and Carmen de Burgos were among the first Spanish women authors who produced a significant body of horror narratives. Both present a

²³ Spain is currently one of the leading countries in the production of horror films (see note 1 in chapter 4).

use of narrative space that indicates an intuition of the gender-marked dynamics of outside and inside. However, their sociocultural circumstances determine that they do not use domestic claustrophobia as a tool for provoking spatial horror. To construct their narratives, Pardo Bazán and Burgos still merely position male characters as dictating the dynamics of space to passive female heroines, with characteristics more reminiscent of English Gothic heroines of the late eighteenth century. I believe this disregard for the horror possibilities of the house itself can be explained by two factors. First, these writers were influenced by the Spanish literary tradition, which, as has been noted, appears to have been marked by a stigma against horror. Secondly, their sociocultural circumstances, different to those of their American contemporaries make them focus on broader feminist issues. Therefore, in their stories the narrative potential of the house as a source of fear is neglected, because attention to the problem of homemaking itself is diluted.

This disregard of claustrophobic imagery in the writing of horror, when compared to that of American women like Gilman or Peattie, reveals that the authors had not yet established a series of associations between home and fear. When looking at the different societies, it can be seen that a series of aspects might have made a difference in portraying the house as a menace. In America, the closing of the American frontier is one of the episodes that offered women greater opportunities to prove their worth outside their home and for the subsequent revaluation of their duties, once finished. Since the frontier was not officially closed until 1890, for many women the demanding pioneer lifestyle offered them the possibility of being a physically productive force to the settling community. After settlement was finalised, their routine gradually moved indoors towards more traditional duties of homemaking. The probable restlessness experienced through this transition by

North American pioneer women, already visible in stories such as that of Peattie's prairie house, was an experience not shared by their Spanish contemporaries.

Similarly, another difference derived from the American territorial expansion was the institutionalisation of co-education for boys and girls since the early nineteenth century, almost a century earlier than it became the norm in Spain under the Second Republic. While in America boys and girls were sometimes still separated into different rooms, the growing tendency in the nineteenth century became what at the time was labelled as "identical education," which refers to one curriculum for both male and female students when separate spaces could not be guaranteed (Tyack and Hansot 1, 4). In contrast, liberal governments in Spain in the mid-nineteenth century maintained official segregation and different curricula in schools according to the gender difference (Gómez-Ferrer, "Introducción XIX" 21-22).²⁴ With the exception of the autonomous liberal *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (1876), co-education in Spain was not seriously considered until the end of the nineteenth century, and was not widely institutionalised until the Second Republic in the late 1920s.

In addition, girls were further moulded into the norm of domesticity by the Catholic Church. The 1851 concordat with the Vatican endowed the Church with power to supervise all religious and ideological education of children in Spain, with its consequent enhancement of traditional homemaking values (Fernández Valencia 445). As girls grew into adults, they were encouraged to remain docile and submissive partners to their husbands (Ríos Lloret 186). To assure the preservation of this order, the local priest would reassure the woman of the validity of this

²⁴ The Moyano Law (1857) established that coeducation was only to take place when there was no possibility of arranging students separately due to either geographical or economic reasons. It also established that girls were to learn tasks related to their own sex, drawing, and domestic hygiene (and not necessarily writing). In contrast, boys were taught subjects such as geometry, physics, commerce, agriculture and natural history (Fernández Valencia 436-40).

paradigm, thus acting as an ally to the husband in times of conflict (Gómez-Ferrer, "Ruptura" 160).

It is hardly surprising that, in this climate, the voices that rose to complain in fiction focused mostly on the male as the enemy, rather than on evaluating other side effects of patriarchy, such as the ways in which the prevailing order had biased their relationship with the home. Both Pardo Bazán and Burgos played an active role in the Spanish cause for women's rights through their writings and public appearances (Zavala 58-59), and coincide in their specific targeting of the male. Significantly, both authors had a limited personal experience of homemaking. The two authors had remunerated intellectual occupations and travelled extensively in Europe, where they had many opportunities to contrast the Spanish way of life with that in other northern European countries, where women were achieving important civil and social rights. Such experiences undoubtedly influenced their writings, bringing both to vindicate equalities enjoyed beyond the Spanish border. I now turn to summarise and comment on a number of Pardo Bazán's and Burgos's narratives to illustrate how architectural claustrophobia is disregarded consistently according to fixed patterns.

3.2.a Emilia Pardo Bazán: Early Narratives of Fear and Entrapment

Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) was one of the first Spanish women writers to gain international fame and recognition (Hemingway 1). She had a tremendous influence on the society of her time, both through her fictional and non-fictional works and also for her public appearances and involvement with current issues. A well-read and independent writer, she refused to submit to the moral dictates of her age, publishing extensively. She was the only child of a wealthy family in Galicia (northern Spain),

therefore enjoying the full attention of her parents and, more particularly, of her father, who encouraged her to read and write, and gave her a rich liberal education. An example of the principles of equality underlying such an upbringing can be seen in her father's following words of warning: "Mira, hija mía, los hombres somos muy egoístas, y si te dicen alguna vez que hay cosas que pueden hacer los hombres y las mujeres no, di que es mentira, porque no puede haber dos morales para dos sexos" [Listen, child; we men are very selfish, and if they ever tell you that there are things that men can do but women can't, tell them it's a lie, because there cannot be two moral codes for the two sexes] (Fernández Cubas, *Emilia* 45). This equality at home endowed Pardo Bazán with an awareness of the social situation of her own gender, a theme which is alluded to in several of her works, as I chart in the following pages.²⁵

Pardo Bazán's interest in horror and fantasy might well have been enhanced by the folklore of her native land, Galicia, one of the richest areas in superstition in Spain. As a little girl, she was allowed to spend much time in the company of servants, which gave her access to local oral traditions and legends. All her life, Pardo Bazán made an effort to keep this social mobility between the lower and upper classes, and in her adult life she would seek out the company of the lower classes in search of material for her writings.²⁶

Pardo Bazán's interest in horror and fantasy was later heightened by her access to European fantasy and horror fiction not available in Spanish translation. From 1817 she travelled extensively in Europe with her parents and her young husband, staying for prolonged periods of time in several countries. Her love of

²⁵ A review of her feminist essays and public speeches is available in the study by Adna Rosa Rodríguez and Joyce Tolliver.

²⁶ For an approach to Pardo Bazán's biography, see Cristina Fernández Cubas's *Emilia Pardo Bazán*, and Catherine Davies (78-96).

books encouraged her to learn the languages of the countries she visited, so as to read the local authors. Among those countries visited were England, Germany and France, where the fantastic had played a much more important literary role than in her native Spain (Pattison 1-22).

Her travels and encounters with foreign literatures made Pardo Bazán an avid reader who made a conscious effort to keep herself up-to-date with the international literary scene. She worked as a journalist and a dedicated novelist, which partially caused an early, discreet separation from her husband when she refused to give up her literary career. By 1908 Pardo Bazán's literary production had earned her the title of Countess, and in 1916 her achievements gained her the first Chair ever awarded to a woman at a Spanish university when she became Professor in Modern Romance Languages at the Central University of Madrid (Núñez Puente 22). Unfortunately, Pardo Bazán had to give up this position prematurely, since the academic community, both staff and alumni, refused to accept a woman lecturer. Pardo Bazán cultivated relationships connected with the world of literature also on a more private level, as she was a personal friend of important Spanish writers such as Benito Pérez Galdós and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. She remained productive and economically independent until her death in 1921.

Works by Pardo Bazán present a particular approach towards the twentieth century's paradigm of horror when compared to earlier writers. She exemplifies an evolution of horror from the magnificent locations of early Romanticism to more realistic settings. She also includes all social strata in her narratives, such as in "Vampiro." Following Stephen King's definition of what constitute the essentials of

horror literature, as presented in his work *Danse Macabre*,²⁷ it could be said that Pardo Bazán succeeds in most of the categories identified by King. Her stories cover most classic icons of horror literature such as ghosts, vampires, and the dead coming to life, but her work shows a surprising disregard of narrative claustrophobia and does not consider the haunted house. Far from being haunted buildings, houses in her horror stories are fortuitous locations that merely host supernatural events. Interestingly, she does not show signs of the connection between the imposition of domesticity and the house established by writers like Gilman.

Bearing this neglect in mind, I also intend to draw to the reader's attention the fact that Pardo Bazán is very much aware of the gender issue. However, unlike Gilman, for example, she shows a startling disassociation between her feminist awareness and the potential of architectural imagery for horror. In some of her stories she proves herself to be sensitive to the problem of entrapment for women, but this awareness is never registered in the house imagery of her horror stories. Her disinterest to use one for the benefit of the other illustrates how, in Spain, the home had not yet exposed its negative side when compared to America.

For the purposes of my argument, I have divided the stories by Pardo Bazán analysed in this chapter into two groups, depending on the aspects that they stress: horror narratives and feminist claims. Both types show a consistent neglect of house imagery and minimise the effects of the house on characters. The fantasy and horror narratives make practically no use of the idea of confinement within the house. When confinement does occur in the feminist allegories, again imagery of claustrophobia is disregarded, portraying an oppression exerted by a male character and the acceptance of her lot by a passive female character.

²⁷ The icons of horror identified by King in *Danse Macabre* follow traditional categories such as the vampire, the ghost or the dead returned to life.

I have selected what I believe to be some of the best illustrations of both types of narratives. The horror tales are “El antepasado” [The Ancestor], a story about a mutilation and curse, “Vampiro” [Vampire] and “La resucitada” [The Resurrected Woman], both of which are about the dead come to life or zombies. To illustrate Bazán’s feminist claims, which tackle women’s entrapment but do not feature domestic claustrophobia in itself, I have included the fantasy stories “El balcón de la princesa” [The Princess’ Balcony] and “La emparedada” [The Walled-Up Woman]. The six have in common a surprising disinterest in claustrophobic horror.

The starting point for my analysis of settings in Spanish horror narratives written by women is Pardo Bazán’s tale “El antepasado” (1899). The story starts with a young narrator who is placidly enjoying his summer holidays at the beach: an opening that is not conventionally Gothic. He befriends a young man who keeps his neck covered with a scarf at all times, even when swimming. Intrigued, after some days of holidaying together, the narrator snatches the scarf away to discover a large scar, as if the head had once been separated from the body. The scarred man then tells the story of the months preceding his mother’s pregnancy, when she was resting at a family holiday home in the interests of her future pregnancy. There, she had obsessively looked for the head of a decapitated ancestor, said to be hidden in the ruins of an old fortress where the family house had afterwards been built. This family house is described as a pleasant residence that retained nothing of its past, as a “casa grande, cómoda y apacible. Ya no queda allí ni rastro de los tiempos crueles” [a large, comfortable, and peaceful house. It no longer presents any trace of cruel times] (“El antepasado” 439). The woman, however, becomes haunted by the head that was never found, and is troubled by nightmares and visions. After months of searching, she unexpectedly discovers that the head had been hidden all along in

a box two steps away from her own bed. Nine months later, she gives birth to a scarred child and dies soon after.

“El antepasado” is a clear example of how house imagery and architectural claustrophobia are entirely disregarded by Pardo Bazán. The decapitated head, rather than a wider haunting that would include the building or the room, is the centre of the narrative of fear.²⁸ There is nothing in the house itself that might make it unwelcoming, dark or oppressive; it is not used as an extension of the morbid secret in the way it is described. As mentioned, the family home is a comfortable, renovated residence and its secret, the human remains, are independent from the architectural structure. Moreover, there is an absence of architectural claustrophobia. In fact, there is no confinement, imprisonment, or restriction of movement for the woman in the story.

When compared to Gilman’s almost contemporary “The Yellow Wallpaper” (written in 1891 and published in 1892) this absence of claustrophobia strikes the reader as peculiar, especially so because significant parallelisms between the two works can be appreciated. The two stories coincide in narrating episodes related to motherhood, which are somehow linked to the protagonists’ stays in houses other than their homes. In both stories, the decision to take the woman to a house where she can rest is made by their husband and male doctor, rather than it being the woman’s own. However, while the source of anguish in Gilman’s story lies in the structure of the house in which the protagonist is imprisoned, Pardo Bazán’s character seems happy in the residence where she is expecting to conceive. She leaves the building when she wishes to and does not feel physically constrained. The conflict experienced by the protagonist of “El antepasado” seems to be caused solely

²⁸ Nevertheless, as with many Victorian horror narratives, there is also room for a rational explanation, in that the scars may be the psychosomatic result of the mother’s obsession.

either by the supernatural curse of the head or by her own obsession about it. As can be appreciated, Gilman's awareness of the dangers of an imposed home confinement derived from motherhood contrasts with Pardo Bazán's complete disregard of the house as a potential device for fear. Although the arrangement of the two stories bears close resemblance, the way in which the relationships between the characters and the house are portrayed reveals Gilman's greater responsiveness to domestic entrapment, around which her narrative of fear revolves.

The analysis of house imagery in "Vampiro" (1901) again shows a surprising disregard of architectural imagery for the creation of an atmosphere of horror. This short story tells the tale of a wealthy, old man who marries a young girl of modest means, the niece of an Abbot, so as to drink her blood secretly and recover his youth. Through this procedure, recommended by an English healer, the man gradually recovers his vigour, ultimately preparing for a second marriage, while the girl weakens and dies only a few years after marriage.²⁹ Here issues such as class difference and gender relationships are tackled by refracting them through the conventions of a horror tale. The tension between the classes is seen in the Abbot's eagerness to procure a good home for his niece, and in the villagers' envy of the girl, whom they believe will soon be a rich widow. In regard to gender relations, the fifteen-year-old girl gives up her freedom and youth to take care of the impeded old man, with the marriage arranged on the grounds of a needy man buying himself a nurse. Here Pardo Bazán's criticism of the precarious position of women, particularly of women with no economic means, is evident. Lastly, there is the supernatural twist, which makes of the tale a vampire horror story, as the readers witness the decay and death of the young girl, attributed by the villagers to some obscure consumption.

²⁹ There is the possibility that the success of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in the U.K. in 1897, influenced Pardo Bazán's "Vampiro." Although *Dracula* was not published in Spain until 1962, it should be remembered that Pardo Bazán was a regular reader of English.

In "Vampiro" Pardo Bazán only uses house imagery as a tool to illustrate the economic status of the vampire and the seduction that wealth and prestige exerts over the young girl and her uncle, respectively. Rather than revealing oppressive claustrophobic attributes typical of horror narratives, the building is described merely in terms of the riches that it holds: "[D]entro de la hermosa mansión, abarrotada de ricos muebles y de cuanto pueden exigir la comodidad y el regalo, la novia creía soñar; por poco, y a sus solas, capaz se sentía de bailar de gusto" [(I)nside the beautiful manor, crammed with rich furniture and all that comfort and luxury could demand, the bride thought she was dreaming; there, alone, she believed herself almost capable of dancing with delight] ("Vampiro" 352). Although after marriage the woman's interaction with the villagers stops and her new life is led almost entirely in the house, Pardo Bazán provides no details about the manor or whether there are any physical structures that prevent the young wife from leaving the house. Finally, the story closes with the girl's burial in a sumptuous pantheon, as the vampire prepares to choose a new bride. Although the bride has given up her life to care for the aged man in the expensive manor, the portrayal of the house is only relevant from an economic perspective, in keeping with Pardo Bazán's criticism of unequal marriages undertaken for financial security. Architectural confinement is to be assumed rather than portrayed, as it is nowhere to be seen in the story.

Perhaps the most interesting of all Pardo Bazán's stories for a study of houses in horror is "La resucitada" (1908). It is a story rich in references to architectural boundaries and crossings, and includes all the ingredients for the perfect Gothic story of entrapment. However, "La resucitada" exposes better than any of the titles above how the writer ignored the potential of architectural imagery as a source of claustrophobic fear in horror. Its protagonist, Dorotea de Guevara,

mother of two and mistress of a large estate, wakes up in the family chapel after what seems to have been a cataleptic seizure. Full of joy, Dorotea leaves the chapel by using a secret key and hurries back home in the middle of the night, relieved that she woke up before being entombed in the crypt. However, her husband, children and servants all respond to her return with fear and disgust. Throughout the following days Dorotea perceives this rejection, just as she notices that she is not fully alive, by the tone of her skin and a faint bodily odour, which she tries to conceal unsuccessfully with different perfumes. In all other respects, Dorotea appears to be in good physical shape, having the same energy levels and healthy appetite as in earlier days. Her only concern is the coldness with which her husband and children treat her. After some days of contemplating the behaviour of her loved ones and looking out of the window, she resolves to disappear secretly by cutting a copy of the estate's keys and sneaking into the crypt herself. The story ends as she closes the crypt door and lies down on the stone slab.

“La resucitada” resonates with patriarchy's validation of women's worth and identity as depending on their roles as mothers and wives. Pardo Bazán makes use of a complex character who is at the same time loving, articulate, a mother, a wife, and a revenant. Conventionally, vampires are considered intelligent creatures in Western folklore, while the living dead are seen as intellectually vacant beings. As Marina Warner explains, “unlike the vampire who has will and desire and an appetite for life (literally), a zombie is a body which has been hollowed out, emptied of selfhood” (357). However, Dorotea unites traits of both: Dorotea challenges the conventional depictions of zombies and vampires by maintaining full emotional and intellectual capabilities after her death, without being a threat to others. Pardo Bazán thus fashions a character that has a desire to live what she has been taught a

woman's life should be, while external circumstances beyond her control deny her life under her new condition. In this impasse, rather than rebel or flee, she chooses death over a life distanced from her husband and children. This decision illustrates her emotional subjugation to patriarchy, poles apart from the rebellious reaction of Gilman's or Peattie's protagonists.

The arrangement of spatial imagery in this story is peculiar for its Gothic mood. It shows a striking lack of architectural claustrophobia, often characteristic of Gothic narratives of premature burials and resurrections. Dorotea comes and goes as she pleases, transgressing the boundaries of life and death, church, crypt and home. Surprisingly, when Dorotea wakes up confined in the locked chapel, she is more afraid of possible ghosts than of imminent burial in life: "Y de esperar el amanecer en la iglesia solitaria, no era capaz; en la penumbra de la nave creía que asomaban caras fisgonas de espectros y sonaban dolientes quejumbres de ánimas en pena . . . Tenía otro recurso: salir por la capilla del Cristo. Era suya: pertenecía a su familia" [She did not see herself capable of waiting for dawn in the lonely church; in the twilight of the nave she thought she could see the peeping faces of ghosts, and hear the weeping and wailing of souls in distress . . . She had an alternative; to get out through the Christ Chapel. It was hers; it belonged to her family] ("La resucitada" 143). Dorotea, readily, and almost too conveniently, remembers where to find a spare set of keys to a secret exit and promptly leaves the family chapel. She is quickly allowed into the premises of the palace and back into the family home. Later on, when tired of her life towards the end of the story, she again procures herself a new set of keys to enable a discreet disappearance.³⁰ Rather than spatial imprisonment, it seems that what Dorotea cannot escape is the touch of death that

³⁰ Dorotea's condition as heiress of the family property echoes Pardo Bazán's position as the sole heiress of a wealthy family.

keeps her loved ones away. Since her identity seems to depend entirely on being recognised and accepted by her husband and children, she voluntarily decides to move into the crypt, a parallel with the living death that she has experienced unacknowledged as a wife and mother.

Like other stories commented on previously, “La resucitada” conforms to the premises of horror narratives, this time exploring reanimation and decomposition. The particular disregard of the house imagery of entrapment might seem perplexing, not only because of how suitable it is for the purposes of a narrative of horror relating to premature burials, but also because gender containment is repeatedly dealt with in Pardo Bazán’s feminist parables, as I will soon discuss. However, I believe this absence corresponds fittingly to Pardo Bazán’s time and society, which prevented women from re-evaluating predetermined homemaking. The consistent disregard of house imagery in both her horror and feminist fiction reveals that Pardo Bazán still had not situated the home as a source of anxiety. The following two stories have been included in this study as proof of the disassociation between home and domestic entrapment that predominates in Spain in the nineteenth century.

Pardo Bazán took an active part in women’s issues, bringing up feminist concerns in a large number of her works, both non-fiction and fiction. Her essays expose the deficient education of women in Spain, calling for an improvement of the same since early childhood, in what Adna Rodríguez describes as “cravings for educating women” (198).³¹ Pardo Bazán maintained herself informed on the progress of women’s rights beyond the Pyrenees, and took it as her mission to transform Spanish conditions for women. She lamented the sharp contrast between Spain and Europe as follows: “Yo he procurado saber lo que se piensa en Europa

³¹ Several of Pardo Bazán’s articles addressing the problem of women and education are in her writings in *Nuevo Teatro Crítico*.

respecto a los problemas que entraña la educación y condición social, jurídica, política y económica de la mujer. Pues bien, cada opinión española que leo me deja fría, causándome un desaliento infecundo y amargo” [I have endeavoured to know what is thought in Europe about problems regarding education, and the social, legal, political and economic status of women. Well, each Spanish opinion that I read leaves me cold, producing in me a bitter, barren dejection] (Pardo Bazán, “La mujer” 501).

Some of Pardo Bazán’s fantasy stories target her concern about women’s situation. The feminist narratives that particularly appear to tackle the theme of the house place the male character as the absolute mediator between a woman and her space. Thus, confinement is presented as the result of a male guardian’s control of buildings, from which there is no possible escape. As Pardo Bazán’s feminist texts of confinement position the male as the absolute villain, the building remains innocent and inanimate, accounting for why there is nothing architecturally claustrophobic or oppressive in the buildings.

The two stories that I have selected to illustrate Pardo Bazán’s depictions of confinement, “La emparedada” and “El balcón de la princesa,” make very limited use of oppressive architecture. They also present fatalistic endings that offer no escape for the protagonist other than surrender, contrasting with more rebellious outcomes such as madness or murder, as was the case with Peattie and Gilman.

The first work, “La emparedada” (1907), is set in a pseudo-fantastic location in a Tsar’s palace. The Tsarina, a beautiful young woman, awaits the return of her husband in the palace, and wonders why the Tsar has lately seemed disgusted by her presence. When the Tsar returns, he bluntly confirms her fears, declaring his inexplicable disgust and hatred for the Tsarina, and ultimately announcing her

lifetime confinement in a convent cell. To her distress, the woman wakes up in a three-windowed cell with her hair shaven off, but still in possession of her jewels and crown. One of the windows faces a golden dome and the roof of a church, the second a flowery garden, and the last, a cemetery. After weeks of looking out the first two windows, the Tsarina spots a beggar walking close enough for her to cry for help. As she tells him her story and the unfair circumstances under which she has been imprisoned, the man responds with disbelief, discrediting her claims against the Tsar. He blames the woman for whatever her crime might have been and walks away from her window. The Tsarina, desolate, reflects on how easy it would have been for this beggar to free her by just throwing her a rope. Then, for the first time, she does lean out the window facing the cemetery, where she opens her arms as she realises that “[l]a libertad está allí” [freedom is there] (“La emparedada” 242).

While the imprisonment of the character is mentioned, the only architectural imagery employed to represent this imprisonment are the three windows, which symbolise the options available to women at the time: the oppression of the Catholic Church and its hold over women,³² the culturally imposed ideals of femininity that equate women with nature and beauty, and death as the only escape available to women who rebel or are rejected, irrespective of the apparent advantages derived from elevated social class. Pardo Bazán signposts males as responsible for confinement and disregards any oppressive imagery of entrapment. The innocent woman is imprisoned at the Tsar’s whim. The beggar’s refusal to help upholds a patriarchal order regardless of male class distinctions. In contrast, Charlotte Perkins Gilman in “The Yellow Wallpaper” had gone beyond who is to blame for the status quo of domestic entrapment, shifting the emphasis from male imposition to the

³² Spanish women have traditionally been subjugated by the Catholic Church as vehicles to preserve its supremacy (Scanlon 261).

confining domesticity symbolised by the dramatic nursery and the woman trapped in its wall. The entrapments portrayed by the two women writers reveal their different concerns: Gilman's attention was focused on the architectural structures, presenting alternatives that would bring a relief from homemaking, while Pardo Bazán was still aiming to convey a message concerning women's equality in Spanish society.

A similar narrative use of entrapment is related in Pardo Bazán's story of a captive princess, "El balcón de la princesa" (1907). Querubina is a young princess whose father keeps her prisoner in a luxurious tower. He believes her to be too precious for any suitor and too beautiful to be put into a convent. Unappreciative of all the riches surrounding her, the princess longs for the perceived freedom of the peasant women whom she sees from her tower. After confronting her father about her prerogative to be allowed outside, Querubina resolves to escape, which she does without any extra help by sliding down the balcony and cutting the bars of the iron fence with her golden nail files. Once free, Querubina happily approaches a blacksmith whom she had long observed from her balcony, who immediately takes her as his wife. The story ends with the princess' misery in her new life. Far from achieving a long-desired freedom, she finds that she has escaped her palace-prison only to place herself under much worse circumstances: "[A]ndrajosa, ahumada, maltratada, sujeta por el miedo y la vergüenza de su degradación, Querubina ponía a la lumbre la escudilla del bárbaro marido... Tal fue la libertad de la princesa" [dressed in rags, smoky, mistreated, held down by the fear and shame of her degradation, Querubina heated her barbaric husband's meal... Such was the freedom of the princess] ("Balcón" 234).

An analysis of the architectural imagery shows that neither building is described as sombre or oppressive. The tower is praised for its beauty, luxury, and

even entertainment. This castle has no particular walls or fortifications other than the average ones. Furthermore, Querubina is provided with amenities. As was the case with “La emparedada,” it is solely the prohibition of a male figure in control that is turning the castle against the princess. The king, although driven by different motivations, is similar to the Tsar in “La emparedada”: it is through his doing that the palace turns into a source of oppression, since there is nothing morbid or sinister about it. Structures serve the desires of male characters, who are the actual agents of imprisonment, in contrast to the house *per se*.

Attention should be paid to Pardo Bazán’s critique of social class in the stories, to the detriment of her possible enhancement of imprisoning structures. By including both upper- and lower-class male characters, Pardo Bazán makes a pronouncement on the lack of hope in the lives of women, regardless of their social status. “El balcón de la princesa” exposes and critiques the Gilded Cage ideology or the Angel in the House paradigm across strata.³³ Pardo Bazán openly condemned the ideology of the Angel in the House as harmful for the upper classes, stating that it was the “verdadero obstáculo para que la mujer se transforme, un obstáculo serio y temible” [real obstacle for the transformation of women, a serious, fearful obstacle] (qtd. in Núñez Puente 23). These ideologies had typically referred to the upper levels of society, since poor women or the working classes rarely lived as angels in their own home (Aldaraca 16). Through her texts, Pardo Bazán extends her critique of the lives of women, showing that entrapment by subjugation to a male figure occurs

³³ The Gilded Cage ideology denounced the unhappiness and reclusion of middle- and upper-middle-class women during late Victorian times. It glorified the figure of the good wife and mother who carries out her duties in the family home. Such an ideology is exemplified by Evelyn De Morgan’s painting *The Gilded Cage* (c. 1905-1910), which represents a wealthy young woman looking out her window at a passing group of dancing gypsy women. One of the gypsy women happily carries a child in her arms, a statement of alternative patterns of motherhood that do not require seclusion. Meanwhile, her older husband stares gloomily at the floor in discouragement. For a study of this painting, see Elise Lawton Smith.

uniformly among women. Moreover, her secondary male characters perpetuate the primary males' will of confining the women. The two pairs of males are arranged consistently to reinforce each other: the Tsar does not want the Tsarina around him, and neither does the beggar, who could have imposed his conditions on the Tsarina as a price for freeing her. Conversely, in the case of Querubina, both males want to make use of her: the King wishes to enjoy Querubina's company and beauty, locking her away in "a sanctuary" ("Balcón" 234), in the same way that the blacksmith abuses her as his companion. As can be seen, the emphasis in the two stories is more focused on male trafficking of women than it is on the relationship between women and the buildings they inhabit.

Querubina's lack of hope at the end of the story reveals how Pardo Bazán focuses on male dominance rather than on the house, of which the reader is not even given a description. Querubina is subject to the blacksmith solely through her fear of him as her husband. It could be assumed that the measures taken by him to prevent her escape were surely more inadequate than those at the king's tower. However, since she is subject to the man rather than the house, her imprisonment does not depend on walls and architecture. By the same token, in the castle Querubina had succeeded in overcoming several physical obstacles, driven by her belief that poorer women enjoyed greater freedom. The architectural structures arranged by the king cannot contain her and, after a confrontation with her father, she chooses to leave, giving the impression that she had always had the option to go. This intimation contrasts with the end of the story, with a resigned Querubina who has lost all hope. Shame at her social degradation and awareness that freedom is nowhere to be found are what restrain the princess at the blacksmith's house,

rather than locks and bars as in Gilman's text, or the spatial isolation of the home, as in Peattie's case.

Consequently, as noted, an overall consideration of Pardo Bazán's stories exposes a striking absence of the clichés of architectural horror commonly used for the enhancement of claustrophobia. Pardo Bazán focuses on direct male control as the only force determining women's confinement, portraying the houses as anonymous, neutral and aseptic constructions. This characteristic is possibly the result of an initial phase of feminism which positioned men as mediators between a woman and her home. At this stage, conflict and anger were directed more at the figure of the male than at the house, leaving the home and homemaking relegated to a secondary role, which accounts for their diluted presence.

This understanding, which is to a great extent determined by Pardo Bazán's sociocultural environment at a time in which homemaking was still being presented as something natural to women, can be traced in other writers of horror of her time. The work of Carmen de Burgos, the second author whom I will review in order to exemplify this era's lack of attention to house imagery, exhibits a similar emphasis on the figure of the male as the facilitator of the home, with an identical disregard of house imagery and architectural constructions.

3.2.b Carmen de Burgos: A Fear of Settling

Burgos was born in Andalucía in 1867. Although, like Pardo Bazán, she played an active part in the defence of Spanish women's rights, during the first part of her life she followed the social conventions of her time by marrying young in 1883. Hers was an unsuccessful marriage in which she was mistreated. This experience encouraged her to qualify as a school teacher in search of economic independence.

She abandoned her husband in 1890 and moved to Madrid with her only daughter,³⁴ where she worked as a journalist and a writer while still teaching. Like Peattie in the USA, she was the first Spanish woman to share equal responsibilities with male colleagues as a member of the editorial staff of the newspapers, the *Diario Universal* and *El Heraldo* (Zavala 88). Burgos became the first Spanish female war correspondent when she reported on the Spanish-Moroccan War (1909-1925) (Louis 5). In her lifetime, she also travelled extensively in Europe, and again worked as a war-correspondent during World War I. Among other achievements, she carried out the first survey on the Spanish population's opinion on divorce (Naveros and Navarrete-Galiano 78) and, like Pardo Bazán, fought for women's education (Bravo Cela 31). She also organised one of the first Spanish demonstrations demanding the right to vote in 1920 (Núñez Punte 43). Burgos died in 1932, a year after the liberally oriented Spanish Second Republic came to power. Her last words were dedicated to the Republic: "¡Muero feliz porque muero dentro del pleno triunfo republicano!" [I die happy because I die within the Republican triumph] (Castañeda 158).

Unlike Pardo Bazán, Burgos is a writer who, until recently, has been deprived of deserved recognition. Researcher Concepción Núñez Rey wonders why, when approaching the work of Burgos, "aparece siempre un interrogante: ¿por qué este olvido sobre semejante figura?" [a question always emerges: why has such an important person been forgotten?] (Núñez Rey 9). Not only did Burgos contribute greatly to the inclusion of women in Spanish politics; she also wrote pieces of journalism, non-fiction, and fictional works. In fact, she was the original writer of a story based on fact, *Puñal de claveles* [Dagger of Carnations], which was to be

³⁴ Burgos gave birth to three other children, all of whom perished in the first few months of life. For details about her children and Burgos's marriage years, see Concepción Núñez Rey.

rewritten by Federico García Lorca as a play under the title *Bodas de sangre* [*Blood Wedding*] (1932).

Following the criteria established earlier in my study, I have explored the stories by Burgos that are most representative of the horror genre. The texts selected are two of her darker narratives which show the most significant treatment of physical space. As mentioned earlier, these works share a peculiarity with those by Pardo Bazán: they portray all spatial arrangement in subordination to a male character, neglecting house imagery and architectural claustrophobia. These tales are: “La mujer fría” [The Cold Woman] (1923), and “El perseguidor” [The Pursuer] (1917).

“La mujer fría” narrates the arrival of Blanca, a woman of mystifying cold beauty, in the Madrid of the 1900s. The bourgeois and aristocratic segments of the city soon fall under the spell of her beauty and the mystery that surrounds her. She feeds this mystique by keeping her distance from everyone except Don Marcelo, an older member of the Senate and a doctor, whom she had previously met in Vienna. Marcelo reveals that Blanca had been born in a humble village in the Basque Pyrenees. She had married twice, on both occasions to members of the European aristocracy. Her large fortune allowed her to move from one European city to another in search of a place that she could call home, as she feels estranged wherever she goes, with people knowing her as “the cold woman.” Blanca attributes this epithet and the alienation that she experiences to her eerie white beauty and her extremely fair looks, as well as to the fact that her husbands and children are now dead.

After a series of visits from Don Marcelo, his young niece and her friends, Blanca attracts the affection of the niece’s partner. As the story unfolds, the lovers’ encounters reveal that Blanca suffers from a strange condition in which her body

temperature is much lower than normal, with her breath compared to the foul odour of decomposition. This smell is so intense that it makes it impossible for her suitor to kiss her lips without disgust for what feels like the breath of a corpse. Torn between his love for Blanca and her uncanny condition, her suitor appeals to Don Marcelo, who reveals a series of further details about her past, some of which Blanca herself seems to be unaware.

Don Marcelo relates that in Vienna Blanca was actually known as “la muerta viva” [the dead in life] (“Mujer fría” 46); other former suitors had noticed her corpse-like breath and her unnatural coldness, and had all disappeared after kissing her for the first time. Viennese psychics had explained her condition as that of the body of a dead woman lodging another spirit. Don Marcelo had come to know that Blanca had been born cold and looking dead. Her birth in the mountain village was followed by the mysterious death of both her parents through “[u]na enfermedad desconocida, que . . . creían producida por hechos demoníacos o brujos” [an unknown illness which . . . was believed to be caused by evil or witchcraft] (43). She had been raised by her aunts, who noticed how every animal avoided her and how every plant withered away at her touch. All these factors led to Blanca being subject to several exorcisms in her formative years, before her first husband took her away to Paris. After hearing Marcelo’s story, Blanca’s lover struggles to remain by her side. However, try as he might, the young man ultimately pushes her away in revulsion after a last effort to kiss her. The story ends as Blanca is left to her despair, incapable of understanding her own nature.

The plot of “La mujer fría” is clearly reminiscent of Pardo Bazán’s “La resucitada.” The half-death that Blanca endures is very similar to that of Dorotea de Guevara. Moreover, they share common symptoms, not only physically, but also in

the way their identity is dependent on others' affection. In this way, both Blanca's and Dorotea's primary urge is to be accepted by their loved ones, on whom their self-recognition and self-fulfilment depend. As a result, the two women appear incapable of starting a new life on their own, even though both are rich women of high social status. While they might appear half dead to others, these women experience no difference in their wellbeing, eating and feeling of normality. Their only distress derives from their craving for acceptance in either a maternal or a romantic way, clearly pointing to the roles of mother and wife against which the authors were writing in their feminist predicaments. As a result, the anxiety that plays a key part in the narrative is related to these roles and, consequently, claustrophobia and the home itself are neglected.

Blanca's lack of a home is determined by romance, with her travels starting anew every time she is rejected in love. Hence, initially, Blanca is removed from her home village by an older man. When he dies, she is no longer interested in her French home and moves to Vienna, where she remarries. The same sequence happens in her second marriage, after which Blanca again gives up her home in Vienna. Once in Madrid, it seems peculiar that, although the timeline of "La mujer fría" implies that Blanca is there for a considerable length of time, she does not take up a residence but elects to stay in an impersonal hotel. This hotel is described by her visitors as revealing an "extraño estilo de decoración, que no era de ninguna época ni se parecía a nada . . . [donde] los objetos más distintos se unían de un modo extraño para formar un todo armónico" [a strange style of decoration, which was not from any specific period nor resembled anything . . . (where) the most dissimilar items would bond in an extraordinary fashion, creating a harmonious whole] (25). As with Blanca herself, the guests visiting the hotel feel that it is difficult

to categorise the rooms where she lives. Indeed, Blanca's very identity seems to be made up of elements of all of the places in which she has lived. When shunning others is not enough, she changes cities, refusing to put down roots anywhere. Consequently, the homelessness and alienation that Blanca endures is in fact the consequence of her romantic encounters with different suitors. Ironically, it is Blanca's suitors that spread rumours about her particular nature. Without these encounters, her condition, of which she is well aware, could remain concealed from society. However, her obstinate attempts to find a partner doom her to roam the world homeless.

It appears that both Blanca's and Dorotea de Guevara's homes depend on the mediation and affection of a man rather than on their direct relationship with a place. I see in this excessive focus on the male, to the detriment of the home, a trace of the times in which both Pardo Bazán and Burgos lived, when home and homemaking had not yet been questioned to a great extent. As with all horror, these narratives of fear mirror the tensions that exist in Spanish society of the 1900s. Imagery of claustrophobic architecture as a tool for horror was yet to come.

A further example of physical space that is ultimately controlled by the presence of a male character is found in Burgos's story "El perseguidor". The initial spatial freedom of Matilde, a single and independent woman, is curtailed by her recurrent sightings of an omnipresent, mysterious, cloaked man. Matilde is stalked to the extent that she grows terrified and has to give up her independence. The plot of this story follows the same pattern as that in "La mujer fría": the connection between the protagonist and her settling in one place depends on a male character. If Blanca's homelessness was a direct consequence of her desire for a man, in this story Matilde's treasured freedom is sacrificed for one.

“El perseguidor” starts out with autobiographical elements, echoing Burgos’s childhood. The story opens on a Christmas Eve in Venice, where a young widow, Matilde, recollects, with a mixture of nostalgia and dislike, her upbringing in a small Andalusian city. She remembers how every year her father dragged her family to a house on the other side of the mountains, where he and his friends hunted for quail. Burgos deliberately describes in detail the dynamics of quail hunting: tricking the birds with false love birdcalls and shooting trusting females when they run to the mating call. Such descriptions give the reader an understanding of Matilde’s fears of being “hunted.” Young Matilde had hated those annual stays in what she describes as mouldy rooms in a solitary estate, where the days seemed never-ending and “insoportable” [unbearable] (“El perseguidor” 195).

In an attempt to escape her father’s dictates and the insularity of her home town in the south, Matilde had married once, only to become a widow soon after. With no desire to remarry, she spends her time travelling in Europe. Throughout her travels, Matilde has come to despise Spanish women, who expect nothing from their lives but marriage. She criticises their obsession with marriage and their inactivity, describing them as molluscs: “[N]osotras [las españolas] somos demasiado pasionales. Cuando nos inutilizamos para el amor, no nos queda más que esperar la muerte, al lado de la chimenea, rezando el rosario” [we (Spanish women) are too passionate. When we are no longer good for love, there is nothing left for us other than waiting for death, next to the fireplace, reciting the rosary] (201). The following quotation illustrates how Matilde has associated women’s aspirations to marry with her childhood memory of quail hunting. It reveals how, by keeping moving, Matilde believes that she will avoid being tied down again, thus safeguarding her freedom:

Las mujeres inglesas. . . . Quería ser como ellas. . . . [C]onservar su línea enjuta, sin la grasa común a casi todas las españolas; su agilidad, su independencia, y para eso emprendía constantes viajes, como si hubiese sorprendido que el secreto estaba en el movimiento, en la renovación continua, en no pararse para esperar al final. Había tal vez algo de huida al propio destino. Miedo a sujetarse en un momento de debilidad a los lazos de un nuevo amor o de un nuevo hogar, al engaño del reclamo de la perdiz. (201)

[English women. . . . She wanted to be like them. . . . [K]eeping their slender figures, without the fat common to most Spanish women; their nimbleness, their independence; and for this reason she constantly travelled, as if she had discovered that the secret lay in moving, in renewing oneself, in avoiding stopping to wait for the end. Perhaps in this attitude there was a little of escaping her own destiny. Fear of tying herself down with a new love or a new home in a moment of weakness, fear of being duped by the quail's mating call.]

On the particular night on which the story opens, Matilde is strolling through Venice when she realises that she is being followed by a mysterious man enveloped in a grey cloak. Escaping from this figure along labyrinthine alleyways and streets, she manages to find refuge back at her hotel. On her return to Madrid with her acquaintances and suitors, Matilde attributes the incident to her own loneliness and imagination. However, on her next trip, Matilde finds the same figure following her among the ruins of Pompeii. For the second time fleeing to her hotel room, on the way Matilde finds bizarre alterations in her surroundings, such as what seems to be an army of giant trees running to the sea. Once safe and locked inside, Matilde

cannot sleep but instead keeps guard next to the window. She is no longer able to appreciate the beauty of the view, watching out for the silhouette of the stalking apparition (214). A similar episode occurs once more in Switzerland, giving rise to increasing levels of terror in Matilde on each trip she takes. Eventually she grows frightened of staying in hotels and, on her next trip to London, stops at a friend's home. To her dismay and despite all her precautions, the man appears in a little park adjacent to her friend's house.

It is then that Matilde resolves to marry one of her suitors in Madrid, the same one that earlier on in the narrative she had despised for his inactivity and for never having left the city. The story closes as Matilde ponders whether the mysterious man was the ghost of her own loneliness. She reflects on how her new marriage and home have made the stalking ghost disappear. She now has to travel under the protection of a man with whom she shares a home: "Había ocultado a su marido la parte que, el deseo de verse protegida, tomaba en su casamiento, y al crearse su hogar libre, sereno, en el que no era la sacrificada, se sentía dichosa" [she had hidden from her husband the part that her wish to be protected had played in her decision to marry. Having created her free and peaceful home, where she was not the one sacrificed, she felt now happy]. To regain her physical freedom, Matilde has to give up her independence, incorporating a husband into her former lifestyle.

Matilde's refusal to be contained in a home, which is gradually eroded by a male character who stands for social pressure, constitutes the essence of the narrative. This patriarchal male determination of Matilde's space had been initially moulded by her father's hunting trips at the holiday house. Later on, this paradigm had been reinforced by her short marriage, increasing Matilde's feelings of entrapment. From these impositions of inwardness, Matilde had found an escape by

developing an urge to travel, through which she feels free and independent. When these travels are unexpectedly repressed by the ghostly man, who keeps pushing her indoors, Matilde irremediably surrenders her independence to marriage, in a fatalistic ending reminiscent of Pardo Bazán's work and which lacks the rebellious challenge of Gilman's or Peattie's women.

It is significant that the sightings begin after a moment of feelings of nostalgia. While the narrative had previously stated how strongly Matilde felt about the days at the holiday house, on that lonely Christmas Eve she incongruously shows signs of melancholy as she describes those days as "afable, patriarcal" [pleasant, patriarchal] (203). This is a key moment, because it introduces the part of Matilde that has been preconditioned by her society and which summons the shadow. From then on, the ghost has been conjured, embodying social dictates to which she is not conforming. This ghost will be nurtured by an additional component of guilt derived from the social pressure exerted by her Andalusian village and her acquaintances in Madrid. Culturally engendered guilt is so inbred in Matilde's mind that it takes over her independent life, chasing and pushing her indoors, and is only exorcised when she marries a new husband.

It might seem, as has been pointed out by Louis, that Burgos contradicts her own feminist ideas in her fiction, in that she "had to publish works that perpetuated a female stereotype . . . which is, paradoxically, entirely opposed to the vision of women portrayed in her feminist essays" (Louis 7). Some critics would argue that this paradox could be explained by Burgos's personal interest in reaching a particular audience, or by the constraints exerted by editorial demands. I suggest, instead, that there is actually no compromise on the part of Burgos, but rather a deliberate intentionality in the way she concludes both stories, since both women's

surrender to their dependency on men leaves a sour aftertaste. Blanca is devastated at the conclusion of the story, and the reader feels that the whole episode will take place again, somewhere else. Likewise, Matilde, a free spirit since childhood, loses her freedom, adjusting to mainstream marriage patterns. It is exactly the same passive hopelessness seen in Pardo Bazán's princess-characters, or in the resurrected woman.

When compared to the American texts, it can be seen how the Spanish gloomy endings portrayed either males or marriage as the antagonistic force. This feature illustrates the different focus of Spanish and American narratives of horror when tackling the issue of the house and women's space. In the Spanish fiction, the centrality of the male character results in a weak portrayal of house imagery. Burgos's neglect of the house is particularly intriguing, because she shows great attention to Gothic imagery and intertextuality to create an atmosphere of fear in her tales. These Gothic pointers are orchestrated to accentuate the gloom of the two stories. For instance, not only is Matilde obsessed with images of death, such as crosses along the road, but she is also fascinated by locations of tragedies, such as the ruins of Pompeii or the cemetery of the Tower of London, which conjure up visions of despair. Similarly, her escape in Venice is through winding alleys rather than the logical option of a wider passage. This attention to surrounding imagery contrasts with the minimal attention paid to the house.

While it is true that their narratives present the potential for tropes of architectural entrapment, Pardo Bazán and Burgos still focus primarily on issues pertaining to gender conflict rather than on the social understanding of home dynamics in itself. Appealing to the differences in the sociocultural factors that influenced the authors seems to explain why Spanish women writers focus on the

problem of male authority. The women characters in their stories show an unrealistic lack of a psychological or emotional need for a home, which is invariably mediated by a male character. I believe that this factor illustrates the particular anxieties of the writers, which revolved around men rather than around spatial considerations. In comparison, at this same time American writers were shifting the focus of oppression from the male to the home and were blaming the house for the restrictions that they were identifying.

I will argue that this disregard of oppressive architecture in horror fiction in Spain was to be prolonged throughout the following decades. Spanish women still had to experience a transformative period of temporary liberties during the Second Republic (1931-1939) and their subsequent re-confinement within traditional moulds under the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). Only after that regime would women writers shift their focus of oppression from the male and the patriarchal order to the culture of domesticity and, therefore, to the house. The first early appreciations of domestic claustrophobia do not appear until after the Spanish Civil War, and do not take full form until the end of the dictatorship. In the ensuing pages, therefore, I turn to outline the sociohistorical contexts of the Spanish Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War, and the Franco regime, periods that are essential for understanding the implications of Mercè Rodoreda's and Carmen Martín Gaité's deployment of architectural imagery, in which war and the indoors acquire an increasing importance.

3.3 The Second Republic and the Franco Dictatorship: From Freedom to Recontainment

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of marked political changes for Spain. At the turn of the century in 1900, Spain was an agricultural economy that

was slowly moving towards increasing industrialisation, particularly in the large cities such as Barcelona, Madrid or Bilbao (Carr 239). During World War I, Spain remained politically neutral, which implied a considerable economic push, causing a great demand for goods and weaponry at the same time as it freed Spanish industry from its foreign competitors. It was a time of general prosperity and immigration to the main cities. However, when the war finished in 1918, the highly productive Spanish industry no longer had buyers, and many factories had to close down. This slowdown in the economy brought unemployment and discontent, which ultimately provoked an uprising of the army in the coup of 1923. Consequently, between 1923 and 1930 Spain was under the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, who resigned in 1930 when he lost the support of the army as a result of general discontent with his restrictive policies. These years of dictatorship were followed by the conciliatory dictatorship of Dámaso Berenguer from 1930 to 1931, until the first democratically elected government in Spain brought the Second Republic to power in April 1931, and the king of Spain, Alfonso XIII, fled the country (Romero Salvadó 61-69).

The first period of the Republican government between 1931 and 1933 was a time of social advances and progress, under the presidency of Manuel Azaña. The Republic defended the interests of the working and intellectual classes (Fusi Aizpurúa, "República" 676-77). Among the sociopolitical measures taken, the Republic reduced working hours per week to a maximum of forty-eight, granted the vote to women, increased the budget for culture and education by fifty percent,³⁵ acknowledged and took into consideration the opinion of the trade unions, confiscated large extensions of land from the higher social strata to distribute them

³⁵ Between 1931 and 1933 the government built over 10,000 schools in Spain. See José María Jover Zamora, Guadalupe Gómez-Ferrer and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpurúa 682.

among peasants, gave priority to local rather than cheap labour to work the land, and granted independence to Catalonia in 1932.

Although the Republic brought major social advances, the Spanish Constitution of 1931 mostly reflected the interests of the socialists and the working classes, failing to consider more traditional sectors of the population and, in particular, the Catholic population, much of which was also working-class. The Republic was especially harsh on the Church, secularising education, taking away the salaries of the members of the Church and confiscating the Church's patrimony. Several bishops were expelled from Spain. The Republican government was also blamed when, in May 1936, a number of anti-clerical sectors of the population assaulted and burned religious buildings, such as convents and churches, and the government took no action to prevent or stop the incidents. The Republic also implemented unpopular changes that created powerful enemies in the army, such as reducing the number of officers by six thousand. The upper classes as well felt unjustly targeted when the Republic gave no compensation for expropriated land (Fusi Aizpurúa, "República" 677-80).

The failure of the socialist Republic was, to a great extent, caused by its lack of vision regarding its utopian policies. The protection of the rights of citizens enforced by the government was not sustainable under circumstances at the time. Employers could not make endless concessions for workers at a time when the whole Western world was suffering the consequences of the 1929 crisis of the American stock market (Fusi Aizpurúa, "República" 675). In fact, many employers in Spain had to close down their businesses altogether. Strikes increased dramatically: in 1930 402 strikes took place, 734 in 1931, and 1,127 in 1933, with several human lives being lost in incidents related to them (678). An unsuccessful military coup took

place in August 1932. The result of this social and political unrest was the victory of the conservative party, CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas) [Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right] in November 1933.

Between 1933 and 1935 a right-wing oriented government was in power in Spain. Much of the CEDA's victory was due to the fact that the socialist Republic had ignored the religious feelings of a very large percentage of the Spanish population. The way in which religion had been systematically portrayed as an enemy of progress by the Republic placed the religious population that supported a left-wing ideology in the difficult position of having to choose between the two. Also, it is believed that the victory of the conservatives was helped by the recognition of women's right to vote in the elections of November 1933 (686-87), since women were believed to be more traditional in their views. In these two years, some of the privileges of the Church and the aristocracy were returned to them. Unfortunately, the country was already too divided, with resignations and scandals taking place relatively often. The Parliament was dissolved in December 1935 and the Popular Front, a new government resulting from the amalgamation of left-wing parties, was voted into power in February 1936.

The 1936 elections show how dramatically divided Spain had become. The Popular Front obtained 34.3 percent of the votes, against 33.2 percent gained by the right-wing party, with the rest of the votes dispersed among minor parties. The new government had the almost impossible task of trying to reconcile the two major ideological blocks into which Spain had been split over in the last decades. In the months between February and the beginning of the Civil War in July 1936, insecurity

and disorder continued.³⁶ A number of politicians and advisors raised their voices, calling for an increase in the authority of the government so as to provide a period for the reorganisation of the country. Finally, a key incident that triggered the outbreak of war was the assassination of José Calvo Sotelo, the leader of the conservative party that defended the monarchy. Days after the assassination, a group of army generals rose up on 18 July 1936, beginning the Civil War (690-92).

Two-thirds of the army officers supported the uprising and its army, which called itself the *Nacionales* or Nationalists. The Nationalists also counted on the support of the elite Moroccan troops, 47,000 soldiers, and logistical assistance from Germany and Italy. Before offering their help, both Hitler and Mussolini made sure that the French and British governments were unenthusiastic regarding the elected Republic or even hostile to it, as in the British case. Democratic countries, led by the UK and France, preferred to carry out a policy of non-interference, signing an international agreement to that effect in 1936. Indeed, Britain and France, more concerned with the prospects of their economic investments through a solid rule under Franco, failed to grasp the threat of Nazi and Fascist groups to European democracy (Balfour 264). For Hitler, the Spanish war served as a testing ground for weaponry to be used soon after in World War II (Balfour 255). Meanwhile, in Russia, Stalin observed the impassivity of the democratic countries against the rise of fascism and decided to support the Spanish Republic (Balfour 256), sending armaments, advisers and 2,000 men (Fusi Aizpurúa, "Guerra" 699).³⁷ The

³⁶ José María Gil-Robles, the founder of CEDA, addressed the Parliament in June 1936, denouncing the social and political unrest by explicitly referring to 43 local general strikes, 160 assaults on religious buildings, 146 explosions and 269 deaths through political violence (Jover Zamora, Gómez-Ferrer and Fusi Aizpurúa 691).

³⁷ The support of Russia was not unconditional or based on credit, as had been the case with the German and Italian help to the Nationalist contingent. The Russian support was paid for in gold which had been kept in the treasury for centuries. It is estimated that the payment amounted to \$500 million in gold, almost two-thirds of the total \$788 million of the Spanish State Treasury at the time (Thomas 934).

Republican cause was also assisted by some 3,000 individual volunteers and 32,000 men from the International Brigades (Thomas 941), many of whom joined after the German bombing of Guernica in April 1937. The Republican army took until Spring 1937 to organise itself, which was a decisive factor in its loss of the war in 1939 (Fusi Aizpurúa, "Guerra" 695).

While Republicans and Nationalists were mixed in the different territories, the fighting lines were soon established: the centre and north-west of Spain, the Canary Islands and most of the Balearic Islands, Morocco and a small portion of southern Andalusia were Nationalist. On the Republican side stood Madrid, and the south and east of Spain. This division implied that those who lived in a territory occupied by supporters of the other ideology either had to fight along the lines of the reigning ideology or flee, with the consequent loss of property and relatives. Consequently, between 1936 and 1939 two governments co-existed in Spain: one was the self-established Nationalist government led by Franco, while the other was that of the democratically elected Republic. The Church, which had been particularly targeted by the Republican socialist government and was still the victim of Republican attacks, openly supported the Nationalists, labelling the Nationalist cause a "crusade" (Fusi Aizpurúa, "Guerra" 699).

The war lasted until April 1939. The number of political prisoners executed by the Nationalists after the war cannot be known with certainty, with numbers fluctuating between 23,000 and 200,000 from 1939 to 1945. Such a variation depends on whether the deaths of prisoners from famine, cold, or beatings are taken into account. To this number should be added the 159,000 civilians who were not detained in institutions or concentration camps but who died of famine or lack of medical assistance during the post-war years (Fuente 36).

When Hitler lost World War II in 1945, Spain, which had sympathised with the Fascist-aligned countries, was left out of the international community formed by what had been the Allied countries. Not having participated directly in the war, Spain was also excluded from the rebuilding programmes implemented in the losing countries. Instead, the United Nations recommended an economic and diplomatic embargo of Spain, which led most ambassadors to leave Spanish territory, while the Spanish/French border was closed. This isolation lasted officially until 1950, when the United Nations reconsidered their position, and in practice until 1953, when the United States signed a series of agreements offering political and economic help (Jiménez González 4; Lluch Villalba 19-21).

During the years of isolation from 1945 to 1953, the Franco regime exalted domesticity and patriotism, promoting the virtues and glory of a former Imperial Spain in accordance with its national ideals. Spain, destroyed and hungry, did not look to the outside but instead to its own tradition. Foreign fashions were silenced, as it was claimed that Spain “could supply itself with those ideas which were ‘originally home-grown’” in a cultural economy that mirrored Spain’s autarky (Richards 65).

This was a time when the censors persecuted and punished any expression of spoken or written political criticism. In particular, the regime censored perceived threats against religion, morality, and members of the Church and the regime (Abellán 19).³⁸ Writing critically became impossible unless it was by means of veiled metaphors. In the same way that Franco was inculcating a visualisation of Spain as a privileged home, home in fiction often stood as a prominent metaphor for a country under siege.

³⁸ The *Ley de Prensa* [Press Law] had already been approved on the Nationalist side during the war in 1938. On 24 May 1941 a Department for Popular Education was created, thereby endowing the censors with an efficient bureaucratic network to enforce the regulations. For further information on this point and other aspects of censorship, see Manuel L. Abellán.

Cancelling out the emancipating gender achievements of the Second Republic, the regime's propaganda encouraged women to run the home and not look beyond its boundaries. Michael Richards, in his consideration of the years following the Spanish conflict, describes the oppressive atmosphere of the time by highlighting how it affected an understanding of the home: "There was an orchestrated depoliticisation of social consciousness . . . denying a modern education to women. . . . As Spain retreated within, in order to 'purify' itself and search for 'redemption,' people were forced to retreat into the domestic sphere in an attempt to get by" (Richards 173). In a manner parallel to the glorification of the homeland addressed particularly to the male population, the dictatorship instructed the female population on their sacred duty of homemaking, aimed at keeping women in the domestic sphere. For women, the sum of these two variables of homeland and homemaking meant that women were doubly expected to shift their attention inwards. Home and homeland became two different levels of the same set of concentric circles of oppression, at the centre of which they stood as birth-givers, housekeepers, and second-class citizens.

I agree with Guadalupe Gómez-Ferrer when, in her analysis of the transition from the Second Republic to the Civil War and the dictatorship, she explains how Spanish women did not have enough time to assimilate or enjoy the civil and social freedoms granted to them, and much less so when considering that only five years of this nine-year period were free from war ("Introducción XX" 18-19). I see in this a major difference from American women. According to Inmaculada de la Fuente, Spanish women's awareness of their possibilities outside the domestic sphere was very limited when compared to that of women in countries involved in World War I, when women had reached the factories and universities (52). The regulations

established in the 1889 Spanish Civil Code, still enforced in 1930, considered married Spanish women to be judicially “under age,” placed in the same legal group as children, madmen, deaf and dumb citizens and foreigners. Women could not carry out any transactions without the permission of a male guardian (Yusta 107; Fuente 48). Under the circumstances, it was difficult for a true change in traditional roles for women and the way the two sexes interacted to take place (Gómez-Ferrer, "Introducción XX" 18-19).

As can be appreciated, the circumstances in Spain and America were very different. On the Fascist side, women's help was only welcome if it conformed to traditional womanly roles. On the Republican side, women did take more practical action, but always supervised and in collaboration with the men. Women in Republican territory had contributed to the productive force by taking up tasks that men could not attend to, such as driving public transport, running the postal service, and ploughing rural land. These women, and more particularly Communist and Anarchist women, were aware that the victory of the Nationalists would imply a return to homemaking and their loss of their political and social rights. They organised training courses for both typically male and female occupations, in the hope that these would help in the emancipation of women after the war (Scanlon 296-307; Carmona González 94). However, unlike in America, such efforts were carried out with the cooperation of men, who were never far away.

In addition, during the Civil War, Spanish women endured war in their own country, with all the destruction that accompanies such a conflict. Urgencies of survival were prioritised over political concerns. The chaos of war also wiped out much of Spain's infrastructure. This situation differs dramatically from that of American women, who, removed from the immediate chaos of the World Wars, were

left to prove how women could be a major productive force in the United States. After the war, while American women resented being sent back to the home in a country now prosperous that had remained untouched by destruction and that had a solid economy, many Spanish women were actually longing for a home and the domestic stability that the horrors of war had snatched away. It should also be taken into account that a large number of Spanish women were traditional in their customs, and although the Republic had given them great freedom, when Franco sent them back to homemaking they felt more at ease and offered no resistance (Fuente 52). For these women, the regime represented a return to normality.

In the aftermath of the Nationalist occupation, the widows and families of those Republicans executed were expelled from their villages (Richards 82). In the early 1940s, Spain did not have enough housing due to the bombings and immigration to the big cities. In 1944 these cities were lacking 360,000 houses, so people had to gather in suburban slums, where women were “ama[s] de casa de la nada” [housewives of nothing] (Fuente 54). Homelessness, therefore, became a major psychological wound for many Spanish women. If American women had a home towards which they felt ambivalent, a large number of Spanish women wished for a home that they did not have.

Moreover, post-war destruction and captivity altered the dynamics of space dramatically, contributing to a general feeling of homelessness that unsurprisingly had repercussions in the way in which home was regarded and missed. In 1940 there were 30,000 female political prisoners in jails or concentration camps. Apolitical women related to the defeated were incarcerated too as bait for the Republican resistance hidden in the mountains. For those other women who remained free but who were wives of male prisoners, a reversal of domestic roles

took place when they saw themselves free to come and go, while their husbands remained trapped inside prison (Richards 53).³⁹ These Republican wives witnessed, jealously, how their Nationalist counterparts enjoyed the placidity of a home and family life. As a result, Spain was severed not only into two halves determined by political ideologies but also by considerations directly applicable to the female sex: women who were glad to have a home, and women who wished for one. This division explains why, although the return to homemaking happened at different times (right after victory for the winners, and some years later for the losers) both groups slid back into their traditional role in a far smoother way than American women.

The Franco regime ensured the promotion of a social order based on domesticity by creating an educational department to indoctrinate women: the *Sección Femenina*. This was a women-oriented society created in 1934 by the *Falange Española* (an extreme right-wing political association). The *Sección Femenina* decreed that it was only acceptable for widows or single women to work outside their homes, and only in typically feminine areas, as teachers, secretaries or seamstresses (Fuente 38, 51). This segregation of women and men was justified by appealing to psychiatry, which claimed that women were psychologically “extraordinarily inferior” to men, being close to children and animals (Richards 64). Consequently, in 1945 the education of boys and girls was again separated into two different curricula (Fuente 42). Patriarchal codes that severely regulated the spaces allowed to women were enforced. Hence, women who were found out on the streets at night or trying to make a living on the black market, were often arrested and forced

³⁹ Richards narrates how women kept guard day and night outside the prisons. In La Coruña, for instance, “the women protested by staying day and night at the prison gates, effectively as a guard against Falangist killing expeditions to the cemeteries” (Richards 53).

to ingest castor oil or petrol, and had their heads shaven, as a punishment for infringing the moral code of the state (Richards 55).⁴⁰

To reinforce the regime's policies of homemaking, the Sección Femenina established a compulsory five-hundred-hour course, the *Servicio Social* [Social Service], for single and widowed women between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five, which instructed them on how to run a home. This course granted a diploma, which became necessary in Spain for graduating from university, the issue of a passport, membership of an association or centre, and working. Some of the topics covered were cooking, clothes-making, flower arrangement, National-Socialist politics, child-care and the Catholic religion (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 59-64). This course marked a profound difference between Spanish and American women after the war. While American women had merely been encouraged by the media and governmental discourse towards homemaking, in Spain the regime created an educational institution to inculcate the restrictive roles with which Spanish women were obliged to identify.

The period between 1939 and 1953—when Spain opened up towards North America—was a time of extreme isolation, with restrictions of information about the lives of women in countries with greater freedom. The few references to American women as equal to men that reached Spain presented them as “modelos ‘nada dignos de imitar’” [role models ‘unworthy of imitation’] (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 28). Women were told that Franco had not put them back in the home, but rather, that he had saved them from the ruthless “garras del capitalismo industrialista” [claws of industrialising capitalism] (*Usos amorosos* 52). Meanwhile, the United

⁴⁰ Prostitution, however, was not made illegal by Franco until 3 March 1956, as it was considered a necessary service in a patriarchal society. The Second Republic had already made prostitution illegal in a bill passed on the 25 June 1935. When the Nationalists won the war, this measure, and others directly applicable to women, such as abortion, contraception and divorce, were abolished (see Scanlon 322, 265).

States wondered at the repression imposed on Spanish women. Martín Gaité, in her analysis of the dictatorship years carried out in the 1980s, highlights a passage from an edition of the *New York Post* dated in the mid-forties:

La posición de la mujer española está hoy como en la Edad Media. Franco le arrebató los derechos civiles y la mujer española no puede poseer propiedades ni incluso, cuando muere el marido, heredarle, ya que la herencia pasa a los hijos varones o al pariente varón más próximo. No puede frecuentar los sitios públicos en compañía de un hombre, si no es su marido, y después, cuando está casada, el marido la saca raramente del hogar. Tampoco puede tener empleos públicos y, aunque no sé si existe alguna ley contra ello, yo todavía no he visto a ninguna mujer en España conduciendo automóviles. (*Usos amorosos* 30)

[The position of the Spanish woman today is the same as in medieval times. Franco has taken away her civil rights so the Spanish woman cannot own property, nor even inherit from her husband when he dies, since the inheritance passes to their male children or to the closest male relative. She cannot attend public places in the company of a man other than her husband, and after marriage her husband rarely takes her out of the home. She cannot hold public posts and, although I do not know whether there is a law regulating it, I still have not seen a woman driving a car in Spain.]

When considering all the factors listed above that affected Spanish women, it is difficult to share the tone of surprise of the *New York Post* correspondent when describing the situation in Spain. The trauma and numbing of Spanish women in

regard to the position they occupied in society is coherent with the confluence of variables shown: total isolation from the influences of democratic countries, political propaganda, destruction, fear and indoctrination, to name but a few.

In this way, the Franco dictatorship played a doubly crucial role in the way in which imagery of architectural claustrophobia is delayed in Spanish horror fiction. First, the repression of freedom of speech caused ideas of home and homeland to be used in a synecdochical manner that interferes with an analysis of a purer domestic architectural entrapment. When the house might stand as a symbol for unmentionable politics, it is difficult to isolate what is intended to refer to the oppression of homemaking in itself.

Secondly, the dictatorship interrupted the process of assimilation of the new sociopolitical advances that the Second Republic had granted Spanish women from 1931 to 1936. By imposing inwardness on all Spanish people, Franco isolated women from other foreign examples, which, by comparison, could have started a process of self-awareness decades earlier. Likewise, by preventing women from becoming part of the workforce outside their homes, he deprived them of a key practical working experience that the World Wars had twice offered to American women. As a result, while American women of the 1950s shared a general feeling of discontent after having experienced a substantial alternative outside their homes, for a large number of liberally oriented Spanish women the Second Republic merely stood as a glimpse of what, in theory, could have been.

When looking at the literature of the time, these disturbing circumstances are inevitably represented in much of that production. The veiled manner in which writers of the post-war years had to express themselves makes all the more powerful the tone of their narrative. The fantastic, standing for that which should not be

verbalised, makes of these stories compressed fragments of a disguised reality. As pointed out in Chapter 1, when the house can stand as a symbol and be indicative of so much (whether that be homeland, shelter, captivity or subjugation), house imagery becomes a privileged vessel of meaning for the human mind, reflecting the world around it. Mercè Rodoreda, writing from unoccupied Republican territory during the Spanish Civil War and later from exile, uses more explicit fantastic imagery. Carmen Martín Gaité, writing within Spain, presents a more subtle narrative, closer to a type of fantasy based on the uncanny. At any rate, both authors present oblique stories in which the dark fantastic acquires heavier tones in narratives resonant with trauma and fear. Amongst these fears, claustrophobia and spatial boundaries begin to acquire an autonomous and significant place in fantastic fiction.

In my analysis of these two writers I have considered Rodoreda's exile and Martín Gaité's remaining in the country as crucial aspects determining their treatment of domestic claustrophobia. First of all, their different treatment of the fantastic illustrates the discouragement of horror in Spanish territory. Rodoreda, away from official censorship, draws closer to fantasy and horror, while Martín Gaité, subject to control, moderates her narratives in more mundane settings.

Secondly, since both authors write after the liberal years, they show a more evolved understanding of home, with an increased distance from male characters and a more intimate relationship between the woman and the building—or the lack of it. From a psychoanalytical perspective based on the theories reviewed in Chapter 1, these writers exemplify the early stages of the activation of the fear of the house in Spanish horror fiction. This factor shows an evolution from Pardo Bazán or Burgos, and echoes similar progressions in America, only much later. I have traced whiffs of

the trauma of need versus hate of home in Rodoreda as a consequence of her exile, recognising passages in her stories which remind me of the need versus rejection tension present in America in the 1950s. Correspondingly, Martín Gaité, who remained to endure dictatorial repression, presents early signs of imagery of domestic claustrophobia, which remind me of Gilman's madwoman in the yellow room and Peattie's murderous mother in the prairie ghost house. Thus, the two Spanish writers form a complementary pair, which proves how directly transposed the writers' environment is onto the depiction of the house in a narrative of horror.

3.3.a Mercè Rodoreda and Exile: Fantasies of Boundaries and Displacement

Rodoreda was born in Barcelona in 1908, the only child of an accountant and his wife. By the time she was twelve, she had been taught to cook and sew. She married her mother's brother when she was twenty, and in 1929 gave birth to her only son (Arnau, *Rodoreda* 25-26). Soon after, Rodoreda began to feel trapped in her marriage and to use her writings as a means of escape. By 1933 she was a contributor to several radical Catalan periodicals and had written her first novel *¿Soy una mujer honrada?* [Am I a Respectable Woman?] (Fuente 380; Arnau, *Rodoreda* 25-27).⁴¹

When the Nationalist troops led by Franco won the Civil War in 1939, numerous intellectuals and artists fled Spain to find refuge in Europe and particularly in France, crossing the Pyrenees on foot. Rodoreda, who had already published four novels during the Second Republic, was one of the writers forced to flee. She left behind her son and husband, taking a new partner in exile, Armand Obiols. In

⁴¹ Although Rodoreda wrote in Catalan, I have chosen to use the Spanish translation of Rodoreda's works rather than the Catalan original, in order to facilitate greater reader accessibility.

France, Rodoreda found temporary refuge, which was to be disturbed by the Nazi occupation in June 1940, which she experienced fully (Fuente 388).

After World War II, Rodoreda remained in exile. She had originally left Catalonia due to political reasons, with her former radical journalism placing her in a position of *persona non grata* with regard to the dictatorship (Casals i Couturier 170). Later, additional circumstances prevented her from returning, especially economic concerns, since Rodoreda would have found it hard to support herself back in Spain. The life she led prior to the Nationalist victory had contravened the moral dictates of her country and time: moreover, it still did, as she was now the mistress of the married Obiols, who kept a family back in Barcelona. She refused to return to her duties of mother and wife back in Barcelona, visiting her only child on a limited number of occasions.

In 1946 Rodoreda settled in an apartment in Paris with Obiols, where the couple lived until they moved to Geneva in 1954, when Obiols began to work for the United Nations (Arnau, *Rodoreda* 66). Rodoreda's period of writing fantasy is marked by her move to Switzerland. During this time, she was influenced by the works of Jorge Luis Borges and, more particularly, by those of the Latin-American fantasy writer Julio Cortázar, who happened to work with Obiols in UNESCO and became a personal friend of the couple. While in Geneva, Rodoreda wrote *Mi Cristina y otros cuentos* [My Cristina and Other Stories] (1967), a volume of short stories rich in elements of the fantastic and horror.⁴² These texts show a greater use of elements of spatial imagery at the service of a narrative of fear than with earlier Spanish writers. This is possibly the result of Rodoreda's exposure to foreign literary

⁴² Rodoreda is best known for her realist fiction. Her most acclaimed work is *La plaza del diamante* (1962), which was translated into English with the title *The Time of the Doves*. The novel *Espejo Roto* (1974), translated into English as *A Broken Mirror*, is also regarded as among her best writings (see Carme Arnau 137-38).

tendencies more open to fantasy, away from Franco's repression (Encinar 1).⁴³ It is also likely that her direct experience of the period of liberalism enjoyed during the Second Republic made her more aware of house confinement, as well as rendering her more receptive to alternative forms of expression. Some of the tales from these years show influences from the works of Poe and H. P. Lovecraft, as well as a cinematographic style of narrative, the result of Rodoreda's passion for cinema and horror films (Arnau, "Los cuentos" xxvi; Bergmann 86). In these early stories too, Rodoreda often uses fantasy and horror in an allegorical way to refer to war. Rodoreda maintained this use of fantasy and horror in some of the tales included in her last collection of short stories, *Parecía de seda y otras narraciones* [It Seemed to Be of Silk and Other Stories] (1978), (Arnau, *Rodoreda* 124). This compilation, published after her return to Spain in 1973, shows an increase in the presence of spatial imagery, although this time not necessarily linked to a metaphorical meaning, as I will shortly comment on.⁴⁴

The inclusion of Rodoreda in my study is particularly important because her direct experience of the Spanish Civil War, World War II and exile places her in a unique position for an analysis of the portrayal of the house. When writing about houses and space, her traumatic experience makes her shift her narrative focus of attention from male oppression to the horrors of war and displacement. When compared to the earlier writers' understanding of home as mediated by a male, Rodoreda breaks the association of male-home-homemaking, a trait that, as I have

⁴³ Ángeles Encinar does not refer to the specific authors of fantasy that might have influenced Rodoreda. In general, in France and Switzerland, fantastic literature has played a more important role than in Spain. Among the leading authors of fantasy in France are Théophile Gautier, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Guy de Maupassant and Prosper Mérimée. Similarly, literature from Germanic countries abounds in fantastic elements, with authors such as E.T.A. Hoffmann (Prussia), Ludwig Tieck or J. W. Goethe (Germany).

⁴⁴ After Obiols's death in 1971, Rodoreda returned to Catalonia in 1973, where she built herself a rural house in which she spent the last years of her life in relative solitude, until her death in 1983.

explained, is essential for the appearance of sentience. Also, her narratives convey the tragedy of homelessness and dislocation, a very different experience to those of Pardo Bazán and Burgos, who travelled by choice. As explained earlier, undesired homelessness is a severely disturbing notion for the human mind, which endows Rodoreda's fiction with yet another nuance to explore in a study pertaining to house imagery.

Her depiction of houses in narratives of fear thus presents a marked evolution, both in comparison with previous writers and within Rodoreda's work itself. In earlier stories, it can be observed that Rodoreda begins by using architectural imagery as a metaphor for war and exile. However, her last stories are positioned closer to an independent horror genre in which the metaphor of war in the house can no longer be traced. While it is true that Rodoreda is still far from presenting the standard haunted house and much less sentient houses, the transition from her second collection of stories to her third exposes how the house gains narrative importance in the plot with the years, therefore enhancing the presence of the house itself.

In my study I have included a selection of fantasy stories from *Mi Cristina* and *Parecía de seda* which illustrate Rodoreda's use of narrative space and claustrophobia in connection to her major anxieties: her experience of war and exile. Given that my analysis aims to focus on confining claustrophobic structures, I have not included in my study what have been acknowledged as Rodoreda's most Gothic pieces, understanding "Gothic" according to the literary conventions that appeared in

English literature at the end of the eighteenth century, as well as graphically disruptive supernatural stories in the manner of Poe or Lovecraft.⁴⁵

With regard to exile, home and space as major forces in determining the events narrated, I will address “La salamandra” [The Salamander] (1967). This story reveals a pressure point in Rodoreda to do with homelessness. I will then turn to “Mi Cristina” [My Cristina] (1967) and the tale “En una noche oscura” [On a Dark Night] (1978), which allude to the inescapability of war, captured through a rich deployment of stifling spaces and indoor imagery relevant to claustrophobia. Lastly, I will argue that “La sala de las muñecas” [The Dolls’ Room] (1967) constitutes a paradigm of early haunted house stories in Spanish fiction through the inclusion of haunted, animated creatures. I highlight this narrative because it is one of the very few examples in which can be appreciated an intuition of house-contained supernatural events, independent of the presence of a human ghost.

Rodoreda’s story “La salamandra” is an intriguing story of a woman who, it is suggested, is a witch. A principal feature of the narrative is an overwhelming disruption of human and physical boundaries, shown through the woman’s choices of space, which do not follow the conventions of the village where she lives. The woman carries out the tasks assigned by her community, but she does not conform to the conventional lifestyle of her village, preferring a life in solitude, either in the privacy of the forest or alone in her home. Her alternative choice of spaces earns her the distrust of her community, and when she becomes involved with a married man she is punished, partially on the basis of her former unusual behaviour.

⁴⁵ For an analysis of the elements of classic Gothic in longer works by Rodoreda, see Pérez, “Contemporary Spanish Women Writers and the Feminine Neo-Gothic.” Her study looks at Gothic clichés in *Espejo roto*, *Cuánta, cuánta guerra*, and *La muerte y la primavera*. An example of Rodoreda’s narratives which follows more classical conventions of the Gothic is the short story “Una hoja de geranio blanco” [A Leaf of White Geranium], which reworks Poe’s tales “Berenice” and “The Black Cat.”

Although “La salamandra” is not set in any particular time, it can be assumed that it takes place in a semi-feudal society, judging from the protagonist’s duties in the village and descriptions of the rituals performed. It tells the story of a young, independent, solitary woman who is ostracised by her village and ultimately punished when she is seduced. This affair earns her the accusation of witchcraft, mostly due to the meddling of the man’s wife. The protagonist is burnt at the stake by the villagers, where to everybody’s surprise, including her own, she undergoes a metamorphosis into a salamander. The tale is told retrospectively by this woman-salamander, who never loses her human conscience, revisiting continually the ruins of her home and the village, and spying on her former lover in her animal form. In one of her visits she is attacked firstly by villagers and secondly by wild eels, losing a hand in this last attack. The story finishes as the salamander, hiding in her new home near the pond, reflects on her new condition.

I find this text innovative and suggestive of a new understanding of the house in horror, because while the protagonist needs the outdoors and her second home of the forest, she nevertheless very much still needs her former home, and suffers when she is dragged away from it, eventually lingering in the ruins and struggling to find shelter there. Although it is true that, unlike *The Haunting of Hill House*, this story does not revolve around a particular building, it shares with that novel the protagonist’s need for a home and the anguish of having nowhere to go.

In a way that reminds the reader of precisely the work that made Shirley Jackson famous, “The Lottery,” Rodoreda’s tale relates the burning of a woman by her co-villagers in a non-graphic manner, in which pathos and horror are not described in detail but left for the reader to grasp. However, Rodoreda takes her story a step further into the fantastic by including facets of the supernatural, an

innovative move in Spanish women's fiction to that date. The text also questions issues of liminality between such elements as the human and the animal, society and nature, the moral and immoral, and mortality and immortality, as the protagonist cannot be pigeonholed and fluidly transgresses a series of social and natural restrictions.

I will begin with an analysis of the fantastic elements, to move subsequently to an examination of spatial imagery and the idea of home in the story. The text offers two levels of fantasy: one obvious and the other suggested. The first level pertains to the woman's unquestionable metamorphosis into an animal. The second level entails the possibility of the woman being a witch, which remains uncertain, as the author is deliberately ambiguous when she refers to the character's abilities. Both the animal and the witch stand as metaphors for resilience and independence and, in the context of Rodoreda's circumstances, represent women who do not follow the dictates of their social group.

One of Rodoreda's intentions in "La salamandra" is to present a narrative of fear that overturns the traditional stigma of witches. In order to do so, Rodoreda retains a tone of dread, but does not present the witch as the stereotypical icon to dread and condemn, thus displacing evil from the witch onto the vengeful villagers. Persecuted in her own country, Rodoreda presents the witch as the victim and, just as Jackson did in "The Lottery," depicts the witch-hunt as the main source of horror. She also emphasises the woman's loss of personal space, in which home ultimately becomes a hazy concept.

This new visualisation of the figure of the witch, from an alternative, more positive angle, exposes Rodoreda's more elaborated position in the evolution of the dark fantastic in Spain. Rodoreda is deliberately vague when she presents evidence

of the protagonist being a witch. Such ambiguity is a characteristic trait in her fantasies, with readers “faced with making sense out of stubbornly contradictory textual signals that resist categorical evaluation and undermine their confidence in interpreting” (Rueda 201). At first, the woman moves with ease between her love for the forest and her home and village duties. The woman’s stubborn lingering in the forest contravenes spatial conventions for women, which eventually turn against her. Hints of the woman possessing supernatural powers are scattered throughout the story. The first hint appears as early as the second line in the story: “Como de costumbre, me rodearon las ranas” [as usual, the frogs surrounded me] (“La salamandra” 259), a comment which, to the attentive reader, strikes a note of surprise, as frogs react to a human presence by fleeing, as is the case when the man first appears: “Mas aquel día las ranas volvieron al agua de un brinco” [However, on that day, the frogs abruptly jumped back into the water] (259). This uncharacteristic behaviour of the frogs playing with the woman’s clothes is cleverly presented as ordinary for the protagonist, which supports a reading of her being unaware of her powers.

Subsequently, a series of hints are provided relating to the standard cliché of witches combining ingredients of nature to make potions and spells. For instance, the protagonist’s only tasks in the village are performed outside and are related to herbs. When she is alone, she is attracted to significant parts of the forest, such as dark areas, roots and willows, which in myth are trees for witchcraft.⁴⁶ The wife’s whisper of “witch” when discovering the lovers seems to refer to a pre-existing reputation derived from the protagonist’s mother, who was believed to be a witch,

⁴⁶ The myth of magic surrounding the willow tree likely arose from the properties of salicylic acid (aspirin) found in its bark. Its benefits are mentioned in writings as early as those by Hippocrates (460-370 BC), (DeKornfeld 60). In fiction, Book X of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* describes Orpheus carrying a willow to protect him in his journey to the underworld.

since elsewhere in the narrative the salamander-woman overhears a comment accusing her own mother of witchcraft: “[T]enían que haberme quemado cuando pequeña, junto con mi madre, que se elevaba con sus alas de aguilucho mientras el pueblo dormía. Que me tenían que haber quemado cuando todavía no me necesitaban para arrancar ajos y atar gravillas del trigo...” [They should have burned me when I was little, next to my mother, who used to fly with her eagle wings as the village slept. They said that they should have burnt me before I became needed to pluck garlic and tie up the wheat...] (261). From the protagonist’s words, and judging from the punishment that she herself is about to suffer on the pyre, it is intimated that the mother was also executed.

Another hint is related to how the woman keeps away from holy water: “Por fin la procesión se marchó y apenas se había secado el agua bendita que salí” [The procession left at last, and as soon as the holy water had dried, I walked out] (260). Furthermore, when taken to the public square, people mention that she is preventing the fire from being lit with her supernatural powers. Ultimately, there is the unquestionable fact that she does turn into a salamander rather than perish in the fire.

In the same way that the woman stands in an undetermined zone between witch and villager, an analysis of physical space exposes the protagonist’s highly unconventional situation, which challenges the boundaries of spaces traditionally occupied by women. From the start, she does not fit into the village in the same way as other women, like her lover’s wife. Her difference stems from her independence, in that she enjoys a lifestyle unencumbered by any authority, with a house of her own—here it should be recalled that Pardo Bazán’s or Burgos’s women still depended on a male for establishing a home. She enjoys a freedom of movement

that would not be the norm in a rural, feudal community, with her days balanced between her life in the forest and her place as a member of the village community. She has an occupation that gives her economic independence in that she helps the villagers with the agricultural tasks of collecting herbs and roots. In this regard, it is relevant that all the jobs she undertakes are performed outside. In a standard Spanish village of the time, other tasks, such as sewing and embroidering, washing, animal and infant care, and marketplace duties, would have been the norm for a peasant woman. Moreover, the protagonist is clearly not interested in socialising with the locals, sharing her house solely with a cat and preferring the solitude of nature. In this respect, too, she is not the average village girl, and it is probably for this reason in particular that she will be punished. In short, she is neither here nor there. As Rueda's analysis shows, she is "inside and outside the community, linked and yet alienated from it . . ." (213).

Despite her love for the outdoors, Rodoreda brings into this woman's equation a need for a home independent from wifely obligations. Her house provides basic shelter, being her refuge from the cold and the villagers. While it is not her prison, she does not enjoy being in it more than is necessary. When she is inside her home during the winter, she misses the forest "of the roots" badly, yearning for spring so that the leaves will again screen her from the villagers' sight: "[P]ensaba en el lago, y en los berros, y en las delgadas ramas del sauce. El invierno era oscuro y liso, sin hojas; tan sólo con hielo, y escarcha, y luna helada. No podía moverme, porque andar en invierno es andar delante de todo el mundo y yo no quería que me viesen" [I thought of the lake, and the watercress, and the thin branches of the willow. Winter was dark and monotonous, without leaves; only ice, and frost, and a frozen moon. I could not move, because walking in winter is walking in front of everybody and I did

not want them to see me] (“La salamandra” 261). At the same time, the woman needs and cherishes her home; when taken to the public square before the execution, the protagonist screams on being dragged away from her house: “[H]undieron la puerta a golpes de hacha. Y yo gritaba: me estaban sacando de mi casa” [They broke down the door with axe blows. And I screamed: they were taking me from my home] (261). Later on, in her new guise as a salamander, she immediately tries to find a home more suitable to her new condition, and soon refers to her mud hideaway by the lake as “home”: “Y paso a paso fui hacia el sauce, y hacia los berros y a mi casa de lodo en el agua” [and step by step I went towards the willow, and the watercress, and my mud home in the water] (265).

When the protagonist’s house is burnt down after her metamorphosis, she experiences nostalgia for her home in a way that differs from Burgos, whose protagonist’s nostalgia evoked patriarchal domestic bliss. As David Lowenthal explains in his study of ruins and the past, ruins stand as moribund artefacts with the power to recall the realm of what was once life (173). The ruins of her house stir feelings of vulnerability and exposure. As she rests in its ruins, she comments: “[C]uando llegué frente a mi casa descansé: sólo se veían ruinas y ortigas, y las arañas tejiendo incansables” [when I arrived at my house I rested: I could only see ruins and nettles, and spiders weaving tirelessly] (263).⁴⁷ This emotional conflict of having lost her place is why she lingers in the ruins of her old home. While it is true that in these lines can be seen the trauma of exile, in which one never fully belongs to the hosting country and never quite fits back into the home one (Bergmann 90), the way Rodoreda portrays the feelings of this character for her particular home goes beyond a mere metaphor for homeland. The poignant portrayal of her visits to the

⁴⁷ This type of nostalgia reverberates of the type analysed by V. Wolf in her analysis of the psychological effect of “wake of home” referred to in Chapter 1.

ruins of what was once her home convey a further more intimate loss of one's primeval place, portraying her homeless and exposed.

Rodoreda's story follows a circular form in that it begins in a lake, in water, and ends in the same lake. The anonymous woman of "La salamandra" begins her narrative watching the reflection of her body in a pond. In the closing of the story, she disturbingly watches her body too, as she sees her own torn hand sink into the dark waters after some eels have snatched it off. Both worlds have become balanced out—human and animal, villagers and eels—since both have first watched her and then attacked her. She stands between these two worlds without fitting satisfactorily into either. In neither of them does she have a home.

Consequently, space in this story serves to exemplify the character's displacement. This woman illustrates the refusal of some women to fit into the roles prescribed by their social group and, more so, to remain placed in the assigned spatial areas. Her choice of physical space generates a succession of horrific episodes, conveying the message that there is no place for the unconventional woman. It reverberates with Rodoreda's own choices and experience, and it is an earlier acknowledgment of the connection between women's need for a home and the house in horror. Rodoreda's brief experiences of homemaking were diluted in other major traumatic experience (i.e. war) and therefore she lacks a necessary ingredient for the creation of sentience, having the need but not the hate. Still, this story highlights aspects of women's experience related to the need for a home which have been observed in earlier American authors, and which I will show keep arising when reviewing literature of horror. By identifying this simple need for a home and making it still compatible with a reluctance to overstay indoors, Rodoreda achieved

major progress in the paradigm of the haunted house, preparing the ground for the key component of a conflict between women's need and rejection of their homes.

Rodoreda's short story "Mi Cristina," also published in 1967, uses physical space in an opposite way to "La salamandra." In "La salamandra," it is the woman's preferences regarding open space that to a great extent determine her tragedy, and the story conveys a feeling of homelessness and exposure. Conversely, "Mi Cristina" revolves around claustrophobic entrapment, with vivid descriptions of confinement. I have interpreted "Mi Cristina" as a metaphor for the Spanish Civil war and exile. However, I have included it into my study because, firstly, it again illustrates major progress with imagery of entrapment when compared to earlier writers. Secondly, at the end of the story, Rodoreda again presents ambivalent feelings towards the place of entrapment, which is an essential component for a narrative of the sentient house, and which, as I will evince later on, were rechannelled in the writing of her last story commented on in this thesis: "The Dolls' Room."

"Mi Cristina" presents an anonymous sailor, who, after his ship sinks in a tempest, is subjected to a terrifying entrapment in the interior of a whale.⁴⁸ Surviving for years, he names it Mi Cristina, after his lost ship. Initially he survives by eating a dead sailor and, later on, fish and the flesh of the whale itself. On one occasion, he manages to make his way out through the whale's barbs, only to be chased and swallowed again. In the course of the following years, he regularly injures the interior of the whale, until finally one day the giant fish dies near the shore. By now, most of the sailor's body is covered by a fine coating of a substance similar to mother-of-pearl. Although much of this coating is removed at a hospital, the side of his face

⁴⁸ In my study, I have followed selective criteria that look at the gender of the writers, and not the gender of the characters. I have done so because my intention is to trace psychological aspects of the authors with regard to their personal experience of physical space, and to the social understanding of women's place during their lifetimes. For this reason, the aspects I am investigating would equally be portrayed in male and female characters.

cannot be cleared without damaging his skin, so he remains physically marked through his experience. This earns him the name of “the pearl” in the village where he now lives. He is regarded with suspicion and is not provided with any official identity documents, although he asks for them daily. During the solitary evenings, the sailor watches the sea from a cliff, from which he nostalgically sees the whale in the distance, swimming in a silver sea, and imagines himself riding on its back, at peace, singing.

Rodoreda’s limited experience of conventional homemaking prevented her from exploring in depth the possibilities of domestic confinement, and therefore the haunted house. Nevertheless, she masterfully employs images of confinement for the purposes of conveying her metaphor of the horrors of war. “Mi Cristina” presents a series of Gothic elements, such as tempests, fear, blood, corpses, cannibalism, and unnatural body mutations, which place this story within the genre of horror fantasy. The story constitutes a forceful example of the use of claustrophobia with clear reminiscences of the myth of Jonah and the whale, offering a first-person narrative of a man struggling to make his way out of a confined space. His frustrated attempts to escape his entrapment escalate the distress of both protagonist and reader, intensified by a series of phrases related to imprisonment, some of which are as follows: “atrapado” [trapped], “enrejado de varillas” [a grille of long thin bars], “suelo . . . de goma tierna . . . y toda la pared se movía” [floors . . . of tender rubber . . . and the entire wall moved] (“Mi Cristina” 276), “varillas que se habían abierto como la puerta de una presa” [long thin bars that had opened like the gates of a dam] (279), “[q]uise abrir las varillas a golpes de tablón, pero no pude . . . [c]on un enorme trabajo salí por el rociador” [I tried to open the long bars by hitting them with

a plank, but I could not . . . (w)ith a lot of effort I got out through the breathing hole] (289).

There is a powerful contrast between the outside and the interior of the whale, which is described in a gloomy, sinister tone, with an abundance of terms referring to the dark, fetid chamber. These descriptions are arranged so that they contrast with glimpses of the clean outside, visible for the sailor through the barbs and the hole:

[C]on penas y fatigas, cayéndome y levantándome, llegué a un lugar extraño, oscuro, y al propio tiempo lleno de colores que no lo eran exactamente, fantasmas de colores, encendidos y apagones de azules y de amarillos y de rojos que se acercaban y se alejaban, colores que no parecían tales, que eran un fuego distinto del fuego y que no podría explicar, cambiantes y escurridizos. Llegaba un poco de claridad, una claridad delgada y enfermiza, y me acerqué a ella y vi la luna allá fuera por entre un enrejado de varillas.⁴⁹ (276)

[(W)ith hardship and pain, falling down and pulling myself up again, I arrived at a strange place, dark, yet at the same time full of vague colours, ghostly colours. Blues, yellows and reds shone and dimmed, approached and retreated, colours which did not seem colours, an inexplicable fire unlike any known fire, changing and slippery. There was a faint clarity, a thin, sickly clarity, and I approached it. I saw the moon, out there, through a grille of long thin bars.]

The narrative intensity of this passage contrasts with earlier works by pre-Civil War writers. Prior narratives of fear and confinement had primarily focused on an

⁴⁹ The narrative here also aims to draw attention to womb imagery. I will not deal with this aspect, which suggests that a new man has been born after the traumatic experience inside the whale. The colours, too, are highly loaded with symbolism: the Nationalist troops wore blue uniforms, while the Republican flag was a combination of yellow, red and purple.

oppressive male presence that controls space. As discussed, the entrapment described by Pardo Bazán in the story about the tsarina and the cell was limited to the description of mere walls and obstacles, highlighting the interaction between the characters rather than developing themes of structural oppression. In contrast, Rodoreda draws attention to the oppressive ambience, lending it to a political reading. The sinking of the sailor's ship can clearly be paralleled with the figurative shipwreck of Spain in the Civil War. The sailor swallowed by a monster-whale, who tries to survive by eating the dead body of a fellow mariner, constitutes an image of cannibalism, in turn a patent symbol of civil war. The new *Mi Cristina*, the unstable, sinking, lurching, bleeding and fetid whale, represents Spain in a war that carries the protagonist with it beyond his control.

All imagery is directed at enhancing the anguish of the inescapability of war. At one point in the narrative, the sailor manages to squeeze most of his body through the breathing hole, in a passage that seems to mark the ending of the nightmarish entrapment. Looking out at last, he contemplates the view, finding the mouth of two rivers. The two-coloured waters intertwine and separate, symbolising the two conflicting ideologies reigning in the war. Observing the colours, the sailor falls into a mesmerising trance, which is unexpectedly interrupted by the widening of the breathing hole and his sudden fall back into the whale, compared to falling "como una piedra" [like a stone] (277).

Likewise, the colours of the interior of the whale are also imbued with symbolism. The whale bleeds in two colours, white and red: "[Yo]le marcaba los días hundiéndole la hoja del cuchillo en el paladar que temblaba como si fuese gelatina, y de las señales le chorreaba sangre blanca y sangre roja" [I marked the days sinking my knife into its palate, which wobbled like jelly, and from the wounds

red blood and white blood would pour out] (279). This blood in two different colours echoes the popular way of referring to an ideologically divided Spain as “the two Spains,” both during and after the Civil War. The bleeding and the festering of the wounds inflicted by the sailor-narrator finally lead to the whale’s death. Although the sailor manages to escape from the dead animal, part of the sailor’s body is forever covered by mother-of-pearl, in the same way in which a person undergoing exile is also marked forever. Reminiscent of the salamander woman, with mixed feelings of nostalgia from his symbolic exile and the home known for years, the sailor looks down from a cliff at an idealised Spain that could not be, symbolised by the whale in the silver sea. He imagines himself riding on the whale’s back, in harmony, as both disappear on the night horizon.

Rodoreda’s “En una noche oscura” [On a Dark Night] (1978), published over ten years after the above story, in my opinion exemplifies a transition in which Rodoreda, still aiming to criticise war, succeeds in presenting a supernatural house in which claustrophobia and hermeticism play a key role in the narrative. It is important to consider both “Mi Cristina” and “En una noche oscura” because they show signs of transition from forceful physical captivity to psychological dependency on the entrapment. This is the story of a soldier who is based in a battlefield in a dry, barren region being occupied by his troops. On one night, the soldier inexplicably comes across a house by a river, a spot where the grass grows and a refreshing breeze blows. In this house lives a mysterious young girl, who immediately takes him as her lover. The soldier cannot help but wonder about a series of oddities regarding the house and the girl, such as the fact that the house cannot be found during daytime, or that there is no river running anywhere in the region. When asking the girl, she claims to have been created only to live during the evening, and to have

been forever waiting for his arrival. The house itself is most extraordinary, given that, instead of windows, it only has painted images of these on the walls, with the girl explaining: “Las ventanas de mi casa son de adorno. Ni claridad ni viento las atraviesan” [The windows in my house are purely decorative. Neither light nor wind penetrates them] (“En una noche” 295). This statement surprises the soldier, as from the outside he can actually see the interior of the house and the girl herself.

Falling under the charms of the girl, the soldier revisits the house every night, becoming a man torn between the daytime horrors of combat and destruction, and the evenings of comfort and love at the mysterious house. During the sections of the narrative that describe his days in the trenches, the reader learns that he had joined the war not out of political involvement but in search of adventure, although war has brought him to kill and destroy. He describes his trench companion, who grants him the courage to fight: “El alarido que lanzaba para matar con las palabras *patria, ideal, libertad*, me contagiaba valor” [the shout that he gave so as to kill with the words of *homeland, ideal, freedom*, infused me with courage] (295). All along, the soldier explains his war experiences to the girl, but the girl does not seem to understand his words.

One day, the soldier realises that, strangely, he knows the girl’s name without having been told it: Loki. He is surprised at this strange name, and even more so by the fact that he simply just knows it. This is not the only oddity about Loki, as she has no memories, not even knowing the meaning of the word “memory.” When questioned about the meaning of death, she chooses not to answer and remains suspiciously silent. Instead, the soldier realises that he can smell the scent of life in her breathing (299).

After a particularly fierce day, the soldier is badly wounded and put into the field hospital. He grows desperate, realising that the bandages will not let him wander to the house that night, so he resolves to remove them and go there anyway. However, he cannot move, and bleeds to death. As he passes away, his thoughts wander to Loki's house in search of her but, to his desperation, he cannot find her. He is left there under a sheet, dead but incongruously conscious, suddenly feeling the night very dark and aware of the bombing around him. The story closes as the night goes quiet and he feels a river near him.

Loki exemplifies all the fantasies and aspects of the soldier's desire: youth, devotion, innocence and, interestingly, a life completely indoors, constantly waiting for the soldier's return. The fact that she cannot even see through the windows does not seem to bother her. The eerie house where Loki lives a hermetic life appears to be the house of death. Like an enticing grim-reaper, the seemingly innocent Loki is feeding on the desperation of the man, who regains his strength for the battle by revisiting the house. Like a spider, she does not need to leave her trap. Therefore, she cannot see outside her windows; it is up to the prey to come to the light of the windows and enter her haunted house.

The name Loki itself is a revealing detail about the nature of the story. In the same way that the soldier draws attention to its originality, so should the reader question the author's choice, and even more so considering that Rodoreda's tales regularly present anonymous characters (Glenn 132). There are specific pointers set in the text by Rodoreda to question the strangeness of her name:

[Y]o pensaba en Loki. ¿Por qué este nombre y no otro, si yo tenía la más absoluta seguridad de que no era ella quien me lo había dicho? . . .

Loki... ¿Por qué en mi interior tenía que ejercer esta atracción un nombre tan absurdo? Loki... [. . .] era el amor verdadero, tal vez posible sólo . . . en medio de esta sensación de muerte. (298)

[(I) thought of Loki. Why this name and not another, if I was absolutely certain that she hadn't been the one to tell it? . . .

Loki... Why did such an absurd name exert such an attraction on my innermost being? Loki... [. . .] was true love, perhaps only possible . . . surrounded by this sensation of death.]

In fact, Loki appears to be named after the Norse god for confusion and deceit. Having lived in Switzerland, it is likely that Rodoreda had become acquainted with Germanic myths. Her choice of a name points to a reading in which the girl is endowed with an evil intentions. Thus, her name should be interpreted as a deliberate criticism of the misleading ideas that drive men to war. This theme is further exemplified by the information provided about the soldier: a man who had only joined the war in search of adventure and who wanted to prove something to himself. Fittingly, this man is ultimately led to death by the machine of war, represented by the ghostly house and woman, named after the deity of deceit.

Consequently, Rodoreda's story suggests two readings of the ghostly house: understood as a metaphor, the house is the comforting set of lies on which war feeds, necessary for the reaffirmation of the will of soldiers, and which ultimately destroys those involved in it. Secondly, on a literal horror reading, it is the lair of a deadly supernatural being, who initially is herself presented as a prisoner of the house but who ultimately is seen as one with the house. When compared to the stories above, "En una noche oscura" also shows a much stronger presence of the house, which on several occasions is explicitly mentioned as the referent the soldier

is looking for rather than the woman herself. This house and its occupant are portrayed in symbiotic harmony and form part of the same ghostly illusion. The house, being that of a predator, acts as an extension of Loki's persona, a spider web luring the soldier from the outside; the windows show him images of patriarchal homely comfort, with women devoted to the care of males. While it is true that domesticity and homemaking play a limited role in Rodoreda's fiction, I argue that the horror reading in this story denotes an awareness of issues to do with patriarchal women's roles that keep them indoors. Domesticity and patriarchal depictions of women are the bait used by Loki as revenant to lure the soldier to his death.

In this story Rodoreda once again exemplifies a similar evolution to that of American writers and recalls Peattie's feminist and horror readings in that she constructs a narrative with two oscillating simultaneous meanings: a metaphor against war and an independent horror story. These parallel evolutions in the two countries again follow a pattern of displacing the male from the position of intermediary between the woman and the house, and increasing the presence of the building. Such a development again suggests the existence of a generalised pattern in the evolution of the house in horror, while exposing at the same time that the overall belatedness of Spanish haunted house horror fiction is the result of very specific sociocultural circumstances.

The last story included in my analysis of Rodoreda's fantastic fiction, "La sala de las muñecas" [The Dolls' Room] (1967), is possibly her closest approach to the haunted house. This text should be credited with achieving two major advances. First, it is an independent horror narrative in which the house does not constitute a metaphor for war, exile, or gender politics, and where it plays an important role in what is the narrative of a haunting. Second, it presents a significant move towards

house sentience. While the house is not aware as such, it plays a prominent part as the enveloping host of another type of sentience, which I will prove to be closely related, and is highly significant when connected to the imposition of homemaking, symbolised through the doll.

The haunting presented in this story revolves around paranormal activity related to living dolls. The first half of the story, told by an anonymous narrator, offers background information on the upbringing and youth of Bearn, the male heir to a wealthy family. The second half narrates the specific episode around which the narrative revolves.

Young Bearn had been brought up and dressed in a highly feminine manner by a mother who had wished to have a baby girl. He had been raised in the house, and had been particularly encouraged to play and interact with a striking, dark-haired, life-sized doll as his only friend, and to treat the doll as human. Once Bearn grows into a young man, his mother puts the doll away in a glass cabinet in a concealed room, connected to the rest of the house by a secret staircase. She then cuts Bearn's locks, dresses her son more in accordance with his sex, and sends him out to travel the world and acquire life skills.

However, after his return, Bearn is seen to have an introspective and solitary nature, and is reluctant to interact with other people. He spends all his time in the doll's room, staring at and holding the doll until the early hours. As the years pass, Bearn's eccentricity increases, with him only leaving the room to enlarge his growing collection of dolls. By now, this collection also includes reproductions of literary and historical characters, with the majority of the dolls' names echoing tragic characters. Among these are Shakespeare's Ophelia, Portia, and the French queen Marie Antoinette. When Bearn's dedication becomes an obsession, his concerned mother,

who controls the house, locks the room up permanently. From that moment on, he will gain access to the room by means of a ladder, through the window.

The story focuses on one particular night when Bearn invites the anonymous narrator to join him in the nightly care of the dolls. As the two approach the manor, the narrator grows inexplicably anxious, feeling “una angustia que nada parecía justificar” [a distress that could not be logically explained] (“La sala” 226). After entering the locked room through the window, the visitor finds confirmation of rumours circulating in the village. The place is indeed crammed with different-sized dolls, some of which seem to enjoy a privileged status, being treated as if they were alive. In this respect, there is explicit reference to the large, dark-haired doll with which Bearn had played as a child, to a group of pretty life-sized dolls, and to a blonde doll that stands nailed to the floor in the centre of the room, supposedly to keep it from falling, according to Bearn. To the narrator’s unease, Bearn blocks the locked door with a large wooden plank to prevent his mother’s possible entry. As Bearn proceeds with the ritual of care for the dolls, the witness, astonished, observes that the three pretty life-sized dolls seem to respond to Bearn’s caresses, moving their eyes and blushing: “[M]e pareció que las tres muñecas le miraban y que la del centro . . . se sonreía un poco” [(I)t seemed to me that the three dolls looked at him and the middle one . . . smiled a little] (227). Initially, the narrator dismisses this occurrence as an illusion wrought by the candlelight. However, as the night progresses, his concessions to rationality give way to open statements regarding the supernatural, such as the following, when Bearn warns him to be quiet to prevent waking up the dolls: “[A]unque apenas se me oía, la muñeca aquella de cuando él era pequeño se despertó, y él dijo que ya se lo temía” [even though I could hardly be heard, that childhood doll woke up, and he said that he had seen it coming] (229).

After a series of similar incidents, the narrator urges Bearn that the two leave the room. However, their departure becomes impossible, as Bearn's mother has removed the ladder: "Es el castigo de mi madre . . . quiere que pase la noche con las muñecas" [It's my mother's punishment . . . she wants me to spend the night with the dolls] (231). After the narrator's logical suggestion of breaking the lock, Bearn sternly orders him not to. During that night, which is described as "interminable" [endless] (231), the narrator is awakened by an inexplicable unease, which he cannot relate to any physical discomfort. He describes this discomfort as follows:

No sé si fue un sueño, pero guardo el recuerdo de unas sombras difícilmente identificables que cambiaban de sitio sin que nunca lograra ver cómo se movían, de ruidos insólitos, gemidos ahogados como si las muñecas, rabiosas al no poder quedarse solas, se me acercasen con la boca llena de malas palabras, mordiéndose la lengua para no decirlas, bruscas carrerillas, junto a la pared, de puntillas. . . .
(231)

[I don't know if it was a dream, but I remember shadows difficult to identify, which changed places without my ever managing to see how they moved. With extraordinary noises, suffocated whimpers as if the dolls, angry at not being able to remain alone, were approaching me with their mouths full of bad words, biting the tips of their tongues to avoid saying them, making sudden little runs, along the wall, on their tiptoes. . . .]

In the morning, the two men leave silently when they see that the ladder has been replaced.

Shortly after this evening, Bearn's body is found under the window leading to the dolls' room, his abdomen stabbed with hair tongs. The narrator proceeds to open the locked door, where he finds blood everywhere and two elements that attract his attention: the blonde doll that used to be nailed to the centre of the room is now leaning over the window, with her feet exposing the torn nails. Also, Bearn's first childhood doll is lying on the floor with her legs torn apart. The room is sealed for good on the spot. The story concludes as the man envisions the dolls still there, covered by dust and cobwebs.

In the opening part of this study, I referred to the characteristic human disposition for imbuing the home with human attributes, in a delusion based on projecting one's own emotions and form onto a building. Through this emotional impregnation of matter, houses can be perceived to be welcoming, hostile, or disturbing. The literary trope of the sentient house is based on this imaginary perception of buildings which occurs at an early stage of human development.

If sentience can be conceived of as the intrusion of spirit into the world of the inanimate, following this rationale, dolls could be seen as inanimate matter under the guise of a human shape, and therefore as a counterpart to the sentient house. In this imaginary blurring of the liminality that separates the human and matter, it could be argued that humans impregnate houses with a delusion of animation in the same way that inanimate matter replies by intruding into the living world in human form. In fantasy narratives in which the doll is endowed with life, this connection becomes even tighter, since the sentient house and the doll-come-to-life would share the same essence. It is not uncommon for doll and house to work as a pair in horror.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This theme of entrapment in a doll's house has been explored in the last decades by several writers of fantasy, such as Joyce Carol Oates's "The Doll House" and Angela Carter in "The Snow Pavillion."

When this occurs and the doll shows signs of being unsettlingly human, the house often appears to act as a convenient host, setting the literary scene.

The sociocultural significance of dolls is heavily loaded. The doll works on the young mind in a similar manner to the illusion of sentience in a house. However, it is expected that the young adult will discard the doll. As Jessamy Harvey's study of dolls points out, "the blueprint for a doll is the human body . . . [and it] symbolises a human being" (22). In this way, the doll is used by society as a "tool to aid in the formatting of gender," and by patriarchy to pass on and generate feelings of domesticity and maternity (Harvey 21). It is a cultural text of girl's behaviours and aspirations, and intended to be an "agent of transformation" (Harvey 33). Harvey's analysis also reveals that the earliest commercialisation of dolls only dates from the mid-nineteenth century (22), which I find to coincide with the rise of domesticity and the Gilded Cage mentality. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that a girl's doll is the physical materialisation of her alter ego, whereas the boy's alter ego is actually his penis, an extension of himself. Building on de Beauvoir, Harvey contends that, for the female child, the doll appears as a foreign object that can act as compensation for her organic lack (23).

In Rodoreda's "La sala," the mother's sudden change of expectations for Bearn and her decision to remove the doll act on him as a castration of the alter ego that by now he has acquired. Bearn's confusion between his two incompatible gender markers and his extravagant treatment of the dolls culminates in an uncanny disruption of boundaries, with the dolls indeed coming to life. Bearn's own desire to be with them and be one of them creates a life-giving force in the secret room. In this way, Bearn's final hours carry an innuendo of sexual aggression resulting from his

confusion, as is implied by the favourite childhood doll lying on the floor with dislocated legs.⁵¹

The theme of a human being turning inanimate matter into a living creature has been recurrently tackled in fantasy throughout the centuries. One of the earliest examples in classical mythology is the legend of Prometheus, who fashioned humans out of clay. Another myth is that of Pygmalion, who, disappointed with real women, sculpts the woman Galatea. Pygmalion's constant treatment of Galatea as a real woman earns the pity of the goddess Aphrodite, who grants Galatea life.⁵² A third example of the illusory animation of dolls is the nineteenth-century story, "The Sandman," by E.T.A. Hoffmann (1816). Hoffmann's tale tells the story of a young man who falls in love with Olympia, a life-size automaton, which, after a series of incidents, drives the man to jump from a height, resulting in his death. Significantly, "The Sandman" was the text used by Sigmund Freud in his essay "The Uncanny" to illustrate his theories of the power of home and familiarity in the arousal of horror.

Rodoreda's details about the dolls convey further meaning to her story, in that the particular names for the dolls are all endowed with additional intertextual significance. Ophelia, for instance, echoes the Shakespearean character famous for being loved but neglected by a man ruled by an obsession, like Bearn. The name of Portia given to one of the dolls is also intriguing, because she is the female lead in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, who causes justice to be delivered in the dispute between Antonio and Shylock over a pound of human flesh. For this reason, it is probable that it is this the doll that plays a key part in Bearn's death, delivering justice. The reading suggests that she avenges her violated counterpart by walking

⁵¹ Marta Altisent's analysis (1575) sees in the violation of the doll a moment in which Bearn's life is transferred onto the dolls through the violation. I cannot agree with this reading, since there is multiple evidence of animation of the dolls prior to Bearn's death.

⁵² Regarding this myth, see Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Book X.

towards Bearn, digging the hair tongs into his stomach and possibly pushing him out of the window beside which she is found standing.

The house in “La sala de las muñecas” approaches the paradigm of the haunted house in that it holds, hosts and conceals supernatural incidents, which, as has been pointed out, are rare occurrences in Spanish fiction. The house also works symbolically as an illustration of Bearn’s own circumstances. Bearn becomes trapped in a doll-house-like structure in which boundaries are dealt with strangely and over which he appears to have no control, as with his identity. By not complying with his mother’s expectations, Bearn loses his territorial rights in his birth house and becomes an intruder in his own home. Contrary to the myth of Pygmalion, in which Aphrodite brings the couple together by granting Galatea life, the mother controls the house and moves the dolls into a room accessed with difficulty. When the mother locks the door of the room, Bearn strangely decides to access it through the window, rather than demanding the key or breaking the lock. The house is thus portrayed as a symbolic cabinet controlled by his mother, a parallelism enhanced by the way in which Bearn accesses the room through glass windows. His submissive attitude stops him from confronting his mother to request the key, in the same way that, when trapped in the room without the ladder, he refuses to break the lock to gain access to the outside. In a way, Bearn himself has been turned into a doll through the way in which his mother determines his movements in the house.

Like the former stories written by Rodoreda, this text pays significant attention to spatial settings and architectural structures. Indeed, I see in “La sala de las muñecas” the culmination of an increasing presence of buildings in Rodoreda’s narratives. As Marta Altisent’s analysis also notes, the room and its dolls acquire a protagonistic position, in which house and occupants blend into one sole entity

(1576). I also see this text as standing on its own as an independent narrative of horror, contrasting with fiction by Rodoreda in which clear metaphors for war or exile can be traced. Most importantly, “La sala de las muñecas” presents a more defined approximation to the conventional portrayal of the haunted house, displaying a complex spatial arrangement in the hosting of animated dolls with hidden secrets and doomed rooms. It also presents a certain degree of claustrophobia in the succession of locks and the entrapment of both Bearn and the narrator. Lastly, while it does not exemplify sentience, it does present an unequivocal instance of the animation of matter in the living dolls.

As the stories reviewed above demonstrate, Rodoreda’s narratives represent a major advance in Spanish fiction in the use of space for the enhancement of fear. They reveal a deeper understanding of house imagery for horror and fantasy purposes than those texts by Rodoreda’s predecessors. Nevertheless, while Rodoreda’s treatment of the fantastic is open and subject to fewer restrictions as a result of her exile, I have seen that her understanding of domestic confinement is limited when compared to that shown by writers who remained in Spain. In the next section I review two stories written by a contemporary of Rodoreda, Carmen Martín Gaité, who endured the patriarchal restrictions and repression imposed in Spain after the Civil War. As a result, her writings present a deeper connection with domestic claustrophobia than Rodoreda’s.

3.3.b Carmen Martín Gaité: Writing from the Homeland

The second author I have selected as representative of women’s fantasy and horror fiction for the Post-Civil War years is Martín Gaité (1925-2000). Differing from the case of Mercè Rodoreda, Martín Gaité lived and wrote in Spain. She thus

experienced the promotion of homemaking characteristic of the dictatorship. Martín Gaité is best known for her fiction, which she began to publish in the 1950s. For the purposes of my study, I have selected two of her shorter stories in which closed structures and claustrophobic imagery appear for the first time unequivocally in consonance with issues of home entrapment. Also, Martín Gaité's narratives move towards disassociating male characters from the imposition of oppressive buildings on women, as had been observed in the narratives by Rodoreda.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Martín Gaité was old enough to take notice of what was happening in Spain. She grew up and studied during the post-war years, belonging to a family who did not agree with Franco's ideals but whose comfortable position and political discretion granted them a certain degree of tranquillity. Later in life, Martín Gaité would witness the Spanish transition to democracy, therefore offering in her writings a valuable record of impressions of her sociohistorical times.

Born in 1925 in Salamanca, a university town in the interior of Spain, Martín Gaité was the daughter of a notary and a woman from Galicia, the region that the writer always considered her homeland. She and her two sisters were educated at home, since the schools in Salamanca were Catholic and their parents preferred a secular education for their daughters (Brown 20-21). Thus, during her childhood, Martín Gaité received a liberal education and read extensively. When the Civil War broke out in the summer of 1936, the family was still living in Salamanca, the city chosen by the Nationalists as their general headquarters. Young Martín Gaité learned of how family friends and relatives were executed by the Fascist troops. Although her father, never enrolled in a political party, was lucky to survive, the family lived with caution and a certain degree of fear. As Martín Gaité herself states,

“we were always told that we shouldn’t discuss his antimilitary opinions with anyone. The house became converted into a type of refuge . . .” (Brown 24).

The war frustrated the family’s plans of sending their daughters to a liberal school in Madrid. Instead, Martín Gaité attended secondary school and university in Salamanca, where she obtained a degree in Spanish language and literature. University exchange programmes offered her the possibility of studying in Portugal and France. Her travels changed her perception of Salamanca, which she came to see as “un ambiente demasiado conocido y limitado, que me aburría” [an atmosphere which was too familiar and limited, which bored me] (Fuente 191). In 1948, Martín Gaité took up residence in Madrid, where she came into contact with several of the writers who eventually would be referred to as the Generation of the 1950s. The repression under which Spanish women had to live, forced to attend classes on how to be a housewife and encouraged to read indoctrinating feminine books,⁵³ drove Martín Gaité to seek the company of male friends, as she found that there were few women with whom she could hold a conversation (Fuente 17). Amongst these writers were her old friend from Salamanca, Ignacio Aldecoa, Juan Benet, Luís Martín Santos, and Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, her future husband. After their marriage in 1953, the couple moved to Italy for several months. In Rome, Martín Gaité was further trained in homemaking chores by Sanchez Ferlosio’s relatives. Interestingly, it is around this time, soon after marriage, that Martín Gaité wrote her first short novel, “El balneario” [The Spa], a reflection on marriage, which earned her the first literary award in her career, the Café Gijón Prize, in 1954 (Brown 30).

⁵³ For further details on the separate indoctrination of girls into the limitations of homemaking, see María Elena Soliño.

After their stay in Italy, the couple settled in Madrid, which became a regular meeting point for their literary friends. Martín Gaité continued writing after marriage, occasionally resenting the way in which her colleagues sometimes referred to her work on the basis of her gender (Fuente 194-95). Martín Gaité had two children, one in 1954 and the other in 1956. She combined writing and motherhood until 1958, when she decided to “give up . . . domestic, maternal and literary duties, with a new spurt of interest in scholarship” (Brown 31). She took up writing again in 1970 after publishing her research work and separating from her husband, who was often discouraging in his criticism of her work (Brown 30). In 1978 she won the National Award for Literature for her novel on memory with fantastic elements, *El cuarto de atrás* [*The Back Room*].

Martín Gaité always included the houses where she had lived in her literary pieces, turning them into what Fuente has defined as “enclaves literarios donde lo nimio y lo misterioso confluyen” [literary locations where the trivial and the mysterious merge] (197). While it cannot be said that Martín Gaité wrote a haunted house narrative, in her fantasy and horror stories the arrangement of architecture appears particularly crafted as a determining force in the narratives. In the ensuing pages, I will analyse two of Martín Gaité’s stories in which I have seen this significant use of oppressive buildings, with elements of claustrophobia closely linked to the issue of marriage. These are “La mujer de cera” [The Woman of Wax] (1954) and “El balneario” [The Spa] (1954). Martín Gaité’s stories, I will argue, exemplify a major move towards sentience. In them, the house moves away from feminist agendas, going beyond being a mere symbol for patriarchal restrictions of space, to become a tool for horror. However, this horror reading, alternative and independent now from

the feminist reading, still arises out of an explicit link between entrapment and the patriarchal institution of marriage.

The first narrative, "La mujer de cera," tells the story of Pedro and his wife Marcela from the husband's point of view. Marcela is a housewife while Pedro is unemployed, spending his days in the company of his friends in waiting rooms and aiming to collect what seems to be unemployment benefit, thus revealing the couple's weak economic situation. On the particular day on which the narrative takes place, Pedro has unexpectedly received a considerable sum. As he arrives later on at the local bar to meet his friends, he is told that Marcela has phoned him, which is unusual for her. She had only phoned twice in the past: once after an abortion and another time when some men had called in searching for Pedro. Initially he is pleased to hear she called, because the couple had argued the previous night and this makes him feel in a position of power.

As time passes, Pedro grows anxious recalling details of the argument, such as when Marcela had retreated to sleep in the kitchen, announcing it was the end of their relationship. Deciding to go home, Pedro takes the underground, where he sees for the first time the ghostly "wax woman" seated next to him, staring at him intensely. She looks young but worn-out, and wears old clothes and broken shoes, which she deliberately shows to him. This woman is also carrying a bundle, inside which Pedro can see the decomposing, slashed body of an infant. Pedro walks away immediately, but he senses that the woman is following him. Frightened, he runs home to find that Marcela has indeed abandoned him. He reacts by rushing to the tavern in anger. However, in the street he literally bumps into the same woman, this time without the child in her arms. As he stumbles with the impact, the two hold one another: the woman is laughing, staring at him with the eyes of a maniac while Pedro

endures her fetid breath. He frees himself and joins his friends, spending all his money and becoming very drunk.

Late that night, he finds the same woman at home, seated in the hall of his apartment as she holds the bundle. This time the woman appears to be made of wax, since when he touches her, she is cold and slimy and she does not move. Pedro is too drunk to feel fear and retires to sleep, only to be awakened by creaking noises outside his bedroom door a while later. Too terrified now even to move, he hears the figure approaching him. He cries out in fright when the woman touches him, seconds before realising that the touch is Marcela's, who has returned.

"La mujer de cera" is a story of guilt and punishment that offers different readings.⁵⁴ Both this story and the following story by Martín Gaité included in this section, "El balneario," invite a political reading. In "La mujer de cera," the oppressive apartment where the two protagonists reside suggests the stifling life led in the post-war years, particularly by those who had lost the Civil War. The repression that the couple feels in the apartment can be read as symptomatic of the oppression of the regime. The precariousness of their lives is illustrated by the vague allusion to the men who had unexpectedly once called in looking for Pedro, the only other time Marcela had phoned. This mention points to the hypothesis that the couple might have been enduring financial difficulties or, more likely, political persecution.

My interpretation of "La mujer de cera" is mostly based on a supernatural reading from a psychoanalytical angle, exploring Pedro's guilt and his delusion regarding a physical space of which he was previously in control and which has turned against him. In this way, the mysterious woman thus could be explained as a

⁵⁴ My reading of this story considers the woman of wax to be a supernatural manifestation and a separate entity from Marcela. Different readings of the story might consider the ghostly woman to be the fruit of Pedro's unconscious guilt and the effects of alcohol, or a secret plot schemed by Marcela to terrify Pedro. I do not pursue these readings, since my thesis takes the accounts of the narrators as fact, not aiming to judge the narrators' reliability.

ghostly foil to Marcela, in the sense that she tacitly accuses Pedro of all of the neglect of his wife that Marcela does not. Where Marcela cries quietly, the wax woman laughs loudly in his face. Similarly, where Marcela withdraws to a room out of Pedro's sight, the woman stalks and assaults Pedro. The wax woman's punishment works on Pedro's own guilty conscience, to which the reader has access from the first scene at the bar, when he is remorseful of his attitude and decides to go home to join his wife.

According to the apparition's wordless messages, Pedro seems to be blamed for three major reasons. The first is his economic neglect of Marcela, visible in the threadbare clothing and broken shoes that the wax woman deliberately exposes to him in the underground, and contrasting with Pedro's regular money spending in the local tavern. The second reason seems to lie in the possibility that Marcela has undergone an abortion, which can be seen in the dead baby of the first and last sightings. This reading of the mention of the dead baby is supported by the fact that the baby has been stabbed.⁵⁵ Furthermore, according to details given in the text about the times when Marcela's only two phone calls had been made, during the termination Pedro had been insensitively drinking at his local bar. The wax woman's deliberate exposure of the dead infant therefore might represent an accusation regarding the loss of their unborn child. Finally, the third accusation pertains to the coldness with which Pedro treats Marcela, such as his deliberate absences when she is hurt, as on the very day of the story, or the way he has grown increasingly irritated by her crying, ordering her to hide and even cry in silence. Illustrations relating to this accusation can be seen in the way that the mysterious woman holds

⁵⁵ The Spanish word "aborto" can be translated in English as "miscarriage" and "abortion." The fact that the first sighting of the dead baby shows slashes in the body perhaps points to the interpretation of the word as a voluntary abortion performed by curettage (that is, by using a curved knife). Abortion in Spain was made illegal by a law passed on 21 January 1941, which ranked abortion as a crime against the state (see Richards 54 and Scanlon 322).

Pedro in their second encounter in the street, which is an intimidating reversal of all the physical rejection that Marcela has endured, and ultimately, in her final materialisation as a figure of cold wax.⁵⁶

An analysis of space and home in this story shows both a home that is un-homely and therefore avoided, and an increasing approximation to this home of a supernatural threat, which ultimately invades it. This text makes a double use of the fear of the uncanny exposed by Freud in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," which explains a particular type of fear as being the result of a combination of finding something familiar yet simultaneously strange. On a first level, the narrative plays on Marcela's own similarities with the wax woman through how Pedro immediately associates the two after his first encounter with the latter; as he claims, "a la mujer del metro la relaciono absurdamente con Marcela. Creo que son la misma, que me intentan desconcertar" [I absurdly link the woman in the underground with Marcela. I think they are one and the same, both trying to confuse me] (Martín Gaité, "La mujer de cera" 182). Here, by alternating the use of the singular and the plural in a way in which Pedro refers to the mysterious woman and Marcela, Martín Gaité is using doppelganger characterisation, enhancing the eeriness of the story. Right after having realised that they are one ("la misma"), Pedro strangely goes back to employing the plural, "intentan" [they try], instead of what logically should now be a singular form ("intenta" [she tries]).

On a second level, the narrative also works on Freud's idea of the sacredness of home and human vulnerability when the home is disrupted. Since Marcela is relegated to the home while Pedro is free to come and go as he pleases, the home,

⁵⁶ It is surprising that Lluch Villalba (61), in her summary and comment on this story, omits the couple's third and final encounter in the hall of their apartment. This encounter represents the climax of the unsettling approaches of the wax woman, and is significant because the story is named after this last sighting.

which is an unpleasant one, is more Marcela's domain. Nonetheless, the apartment seems to be unwelcoming, not only for Marcela but also for Pedro, in that it is described in confining and claustrophobic terms, and represented as a nauseating and stifling place that needs airing: "[Q]ue huele a cataplasma fría, a exvoto de cera" [smelling of cold cataplasm, of wax offering] (181).⁵⁷ In this way, the architectural space of conflict is disassociated from the male figure, unlike in the works of earlier writers, such as in Pardo Bazán's "La emparedada" about the tsarina, the tsar and the pilgrim. Since the ghostly woman and Marcela are somehow associated, Pedro cannot find refuge in his own home, as the wax woman is free to enter Marcela and Pedro's home, destroying any possibility of refuge for Pedro. The intertwining of the two Freudian fears related to both home and what is strangely familiar are what results in Pedro's unsettling terror, a type of narrative horror which is in turn powered by the increasing proximity of the wax woman to his house. This progression, which significantly begins with a train heading in the direction of his place of residence, continues in the surroundings of Pedro's apartment and culminates inside his own home. This sequence is, in turn, a reversal of Marcela's movement outwards, which is initiated in her locking herself in her bedroom to cry in silence, and continues with her final decision to leave the home.

This story bears some similarities with Burgos's "El perseguidor," in the way it portrays a ghostly figure hunting the protagonist across different locations until the protagonist collapses. However, "La mujer de cera" differs in its signification, presenting a step forward by offering more optimistic outcomes for the characters, and a disassociation of home and male. Burgos had presented a depressing outcome, as her character Matilde ultimately loses her freedom and is forced to

⁵⁷ "Exvotos" were small wax figures in the shape of parts of the body, which were left in churches by Christians to thank God for miraculous healings.

remarry in order to keep her mobility. Conversely, the stalking that takes place in Martín Gaité's tale results in Pedro understanding his wife's circumstances. Pedro's escape from the home, represented *per se* as rancid, stifling and gloomy even before the ghostly woman materialises, was a recourse he had selfishly kept for himself, and which by the end of the story he wants to share with his wife, stating his plans to take her out of her home and introduce her to other people:

No la he sabido ayudar; la he dejado arrinconada a sus fuerzas. ¿Cómo me puedo quejar de que se haya encerrado en cuatro ideas muertas, cada día más mezquinas; de que se refugie en los seriales de la radio? . . . He hecho lo más cómodo, escaparme yo y dejarla, no pensar en ella. . . . ¿Cómo habré consentido en apartarla de lo que para mí es una compensación de vivir, de lo que me aclara las dificultades y las miserias: Si ella conociera a [mis amigos] . . . se abriría al mundo. . . . ("La mujer de cera" 188)

[I have not known how to help her; I have flung her on her own resources, cornered . . . How can I complain about her shutting herself in with four dead ideas, pettier by the day; about her seeking refuge in radio soap operas . . . ? I have taken the easy way out, running away and leaving her, not considering her. . . . How could I have consented to push her away from what for me makes living worthwhile, what clears my mind of difficulties and miseries: If she knew (my friends) . . . she would open up to the world. . . .]

As highlighted in the analysis above, this story is a significant move towards endowing the home with claustrophobic, negative qualities independent of male action, as can be seen in the visualisation of Pedro as a victim too. This

disassociation, which enriches the persona of the home for the purposes of horror, is grounded on the inherent problems related to the patriarchal Western idea of homemaking.

In one of the plausible readings of this story, the home can stand for the pervasive oppressiveness of Francoist politics, with much of the Spanish population living in fear of political persecution and hunger. However, alternatively, it can also be read as a claustrophobic foil to the idyllic domestic bliss portrayed and promoted by the Francoist propaganda. Furthermore, when stripped of allegorical meaning to do with Francoist repression or feminist claims, "La mujer de cera" still stands on its own according to a fully independent horror reading, exemplifying how the house in horror fiction gradually matures in Spain.

I argue that this story is a major accomplishment in the trajectory towards sentience because the flat is placed in a pivotal position since Marcela's resentment towards Pedro is ultimately inherent to the apartment. Even though all the uncanny elements are linked to the figure of the wax-ghost, thus preventing the development of architectural sentience, Marcela's and Pedro's home is successfully placed not only as the cause of conflict between the protagonists, but as the force that seems to summon the arrival of the supernatural apparition.

The next and last story by Martín Gaité, "El balneario," denotes further progress towards sentience by removing entirely the figure of the ghost/monster and placing greater emphasis on the building. "El balneario" uses architectural claustrophobia in connection with issues related to the entrapment of marriage. The building in this text is described with organic imagery, conveying the idea that the protagonist is trying to escape the interior of a living creature. The surroundings blend with this organic building, contributing the narrative of imprisonment. Like "La

mujer de cera,” “El balneario” offers several potential readings. However, I wish to highlight its success as an independent horror story of spatial entrapment. Thus, while the story does facilitate a feminist interpretation, it also offers a self-sufficient narrative of architectural claustrophobia independent from feminist referents.

The structure of “El balneario” is divided into two halves in different narrative modes. The first part consists of the dream of a character named Matilde, told in the first person, while the final part of the story offers Matilde’s reality after she awakens from a nightmare. This second part is told by an omniscient narrator who moves from the focalisation of a bell boy to that of Matilde. The woman in the first half appears to be subject to and, to a certain extent, annulled by her husband, while in the second half she is single and free to move in space. In both parts, surrounding spaces run parallel to the plot. It is house imagery that creates the atmosphere of fear and entrapment in the first half. Similarly, in the second part the woman’s surroundings mirror her placid life, presenting a space that is not menacing and of which she is in control.

For most of the dream section of the story, the reader is unaware of its fictional status. It is only after a series of hints that unreal elements are revealed. The text begins with the description of the arrival by bus at a spa of a dependent, married woman and her husband, Carlos. As the bus approaches this spa resort, Matilde’s thoughts describe the place as oppressive and stifled amongst the mountains. The compound of different hotel buildings appears trapped and claustrophobic when contemplated from a distance. Carlos’s haughtiness towards Matilde is visible from the start, since he treats her in a critical manner and shows that he does not desire her company. All these factors provoke Matilde’s insecurities.

Carlos seems fascinated by the ruins of a water mill near the premises, where people were murdered during a war, and which is said to hold a curse that draws people to it to commit suicide. Immediately after their arrival, Carlos leaves for a stroll near the reputedly haunted mill. Back in the room, Matilde grows increasingly anxious while unpacking and, fearing that Carlos has succumbed to the curse, she leaves to search for him. This seemingly unexplainable anxiety is one of the first hints that points to a narrative of the fantastic.⁵⁸

Matilde's apprehension at being watched and disapproved of by the guests leads her to avoid the main exit of the hotel and look for an alternative access to the gardens. Her progress in the entrails of the building runs parallel to the narrative's movement towards the realms of fantasy and horror. Her struggles to find a way out constitute the most significant section of the story, as she searches along corridors, staircases, landings and a succession of swing doors, all represented in an increasingly surrealistic and oppressive mood as a labyrinth from which she endeavours to escape. Additional unhelpful, secondary characters add tension to Matilde's anguish, as in the case of children, who laugh at her in one of the underpasses, or a cleaner who questions Matilde's identity and misleads her, and is described as if attached to the wall: "[S]e desprendió de la pared" [she detached herself from the wall] (216). The building also presents distractions from her quest to save her husband, such as a hypnotic episode with other guests in a subterranean gallery of white marble guarded by two large bronze statues. There, Matilde is lured into what feels like an overtaking of her own will through enchantment. Hypnotised by the whiteness of it all, the steam, the faint light and the smell of sulphur, she joins other bathers seeming to perform an enchanted, circular dance on the white marble.

⁵⁸ A study of the series of hints is available in the analysis carried out by Mercedes Jiménez González (160-62).

By the time Matilde remembers Carlos's imminent danger and manages to exit the hotel, the story can no longer be considered realistic.

The narrative flows successfully into the fantastic by following a number of the conventions of the folk tale and medieval Arthurian tradition, and thus setting the mood for the mysterious.⁵⁹ Some of these chivalric clichés, which disrupt the initial balance between fantasy and reality, are the following: the disappearance of a secondary character who needs rescue—often a romantic interest, as is Carlos in this story—, an interdiction that has been violated—an enticing warning by the bellboy about the water well that simultaneously praises the setting—, the quest through challenging physical locations and boundaries, characters whom the hero fears or who present obstacles to the hero's progress, and lastly, temptations to distract the hero from her quest.

After overcoming all these elements with great effort, Matilde finds a way out of the oppressive structure. She walks out on a pitch-black night into intricate gardens, grounds which function as an extension of the labyrinthine building. By the time she reaches the outside, the story has turned into a horror narrative: with every step that Matilde takes, the ground feels as if it is sinking. Ghostly trees surround her like guardians, hidden breathing creatures pounce at her, and gigantic flowers with fleshy heads block her path, while emanating a suffocating scent that does not let her breathe (228). Lastly, hearing the noise of the mill, which resembles the moans of a prisoner, she reaches the “terrible molino en la noche” [terrible water mill in the night] (229), where she thinks the ghosts of the drowned reside:

Tal vez en torno a sus paredes, donde las aguas se agitaban,
aflorasen ahora, entre turbias espumas, las risas sin dientes de los

⁵⁹ See Vladimir Propp's analysis of the uniform patterns found in folk tales in Europe and arranged as “functions.”

ahogados; y estarían en corro las pálidas cabezas, levantados sus ojos huecos hacia los ojos huecos de las ventanas. Y llamarían con ello a todo el que pasase por allí. (228)

[Perhaps around its walls, where the waters swirled, would now surface amidst the murky foams the toothless laughter of the drowned; their pale heads forming a circle, raising their hollow eye sockets towards the hollow eyes of the windows. And they would call in this way to whoever might pass by.]

The dream part of the narrative finishes when Matilde hears what she thinks are the dragging feet of the ghosts of the drowned, bringing Carlos's corpse to her feet (229-30).

At this point the story abruptly jumps to a third-person narration when Matilde is woken up by the bellboy. It is then revealed that Matilde is single and therefore staying at the spa alone. A regular guest of this hotel, Matilde knows most of the other occupants and has her own group of friends, now waiting for her for a card game. She belongs to a well-to-do family and is acquainted with the upper class in several Spanish cities, which "le concede un notable privilegio sobre la mayoría de los veraneantes, que se rindieron a la evidencia de esta superioridad desde el primer día" [gives her a considerable social advantage over most of the holiday makers, who surrendered to the evidence of this superiority from day one] (243). Through the bellboy's focalisation, we also learn that, rather than insecure and quiet, Matilde is known for being affectionate (228). Still brooding about the nightmare, she notices the "other" Matilde in the mirror, who continues to fantasise about the non-existent Carlos in her darker mirror-room. The image is described as a different Matilde that stands for the insecure, anguished woman of her dream. After what

seems like a silent duel of gazes, Matilde laughs at the woman in the mirror and walks away from her towards the window, reaffirming her preference for her current life, in control of her space and life.

The mirror in this story is important, as it is placed as the true gateway into the entrapping building of the nightmare. Traditionally, mirrors in art have worked as a reaffirmation of the independence of women in regard to their husbands or society. In his cultural interpretation of artistic works, Bram Dijkstra explains how, in the late nineteenth century, “a woman’s glance in the mirror became representative of her perverse unwillingness to recognise that it was her natural, predestined duty to yield her ego to a man’s will” (135). Matilde’s mirror, however, is the reverse: a gateway to the metaphorical, fiendish house of her nightmare, which stands for the alternative route she could have taken if she had married. Matilde’s challenge to the woman in the mirror makes of her a foil to Burgos’s Matilde in “El perseguidor.” The gaze that Matilde directs at the other woman constitutes confrontation with a woman that she knows is also part of her persona: the result of her sociocultural environment.

As Matilde approaches the window and contemplates the view of the smooth, green mountains, all her surroundings now seem to agree with her current placid life. A momentary feeling of loneliness is interrupted by her friends’ calls to her to hurry and join in the game, so she makes haste to get ready. By the time she leaves her neat room, the ghostly room in the mirror has recovered its usual neutral aspect and Matilde is looking pretty in one of her best frocks.

Regarding Martín Gaité’s use of fantasy and horror, I find that the conflicting dream status and wakefulness of the dual structure support and enhance one another: the fantasy section is a twisted replay of Matilde’s real unstated frustration with being single. The dream also undermines the areas in which Matilde is at her

strongest, which is her social position. Thus, the dream exposes and reverses both frustration and strength, which otherwise would perhaps remain unacknowledged in real life. The dream shows Matilde how the line separating reality from fantasy is as thin as that separating serenity from anxiety, since a summer nightmare can alter her tranquillity and make her re-evaluate her life for a few minutes. Fantasy, and eventually horror, catches the reader unaware as much as they do Matilde in her dream, unsuspecting of the events to come.

Based on these dualities, vividly represented by Matilde and the woman in the mirror, I suggest a reading in which Matilde's nightmare offers the possibility of crossing through the looking-glass, experiencing what marriage could have been like. In this alternative imaginary life, she is dependent, insecure, inarticulate, fearful and, above all, subject to multiple physical restrictions, losing entirely her dominion over the spatial surroundings that she enjoys in singlehood, which become a constant source of fear and menace.⁶⁰ Indeed, the growing fantasy and horror atmosphere of the story solely originate in Matilde's fear and her own interpretation of facts, rather than in any concrete threats. The alteration of the dynamics of space, particularly with regard to buildings, increases in the dream until it leads to a horror ending, with Gothic elements such as curses, haunted buildings, and ghosts of drowned people.

Given that "El balneario" relies on entrapment and claustrophobia as major tools to build tension and anguish in the narrative, spatial imagery plays a crucial role in the story. From the very start, the setting is depicted along these lines, as the

⁶⁰ Julian Palley interprets this story as a realisation of the character's dissatisfaction with her "insipid life" (110). In the same line, Héctor Medina (193) is highly critical of Matilde, as he describes her as a "dreamy and frustrated spinster," escaping from her unsatisfactory routine. However, I interpret this scenario more positively. Matilde's real life is richer, happier and more in control than in the dream. The dream reveals a tendency to submit to a partner that the character controls, since Carlos's treatment of Matilde is disrespectful and inconsiderate and Matilde responds to this with increasing dependence.

narrator stresses that the location of the spa conveys entrapment and imprisonment. It lies between high mountains “que cerraban el cielo hasta muy arriba. . . . [Mirándolas aparecía] un afán, una esperanza por ver si se descubría horizonte del otro lado.” [which blocked out the sky for a great distance. . . . (Looking at them one felt) an eagerness, a hope for a horizon on the other side] (198). Similarly, the buildings are described as “[a]poyándose de espaldas contra otra ristra de montañas iguales. . . . Bien ahogado [el hotel] entre montes; no había salida. . . . Los edificios estaban absolutamente solos entre las dos paredes de montaña” [leaning back against another row of identical mountains. . . . (with the hotel c)ompletely stifled amongst mountains: there was no way out. . . . The buildings were absolutely alone between the two walls of mountains] (199).

The first glimpse of the hotel facade presents half-open windows with curtains that strangely do not move at all, as if they had been painted, or as if the rooms were airless, recalling Loki’s house in Rodoreda’s “En una noche oscura” (“El balneario” 200).⁶¹ The significance of windows in relation to women’s space has been analysed by Mary Ann Doane:

The window has special import in terms of the social and symbolic positioning of the woman—the window is the interface between inside and outside, the feminine space of the family and reproduction and the masculine space of production. It facilitates a communication by means of the look between the two sexually differentiated spaces. (138)

⁶¹ Window imagery is recurrent in Martín Gaité’s corpus, where windows stand for boundaries between restrictions inside and freedom outside. Window imagery was employed in the title of her book of essays, *Desde la ventana* [From the Window], and in her first novel *Entre visillos* [Through the Curtains], in which she describes the inconsequential lives of young women in a medium-size Spanish city in the Post-Civil War period, whose priority was to find a good husband (Fuente180).

Indeed, in “El balneario,” the windows indicate symbolic positioning. Their appearance of impenetrability announces the series of changes in Matilde’s reality that are about to happen, particularly an alteration of perception.

After crossing the threshold of the spa, the proportions of distances seem distorted to Matilde, as she comments on how walking on the white marble towards the elevator “se me hizo desmesuradamente larg[o]” [seemed immeasurably long] (“El balneario” 204). Left alone in her room, she finds it oddly quiet and strange, and tries to impregnate it with her personality by unpacking (209). When she looks out the window, the view again stirs feelings of claustrophobia, with the mountains so close that seemingly “se [le] venían encima y los iba a tocar con la mano, de tan estrecho como era el río. Sentía ganas de ver el mar o una llanura grande” [they were going to fall on (her) and (she) would touch them with (her) hand, so narrow was the river. (She) felt like seeing the sea or an open plain] (212). As she advances along the corridor, she feels uneasy, as if chased by a shadow (214). These corridors are described as never closing, “doblados a izquierda y derecha, en pedazos superpuestos, que parecían el mismo” [turning left and right, in overlapping pieces, seeming all the same one] (215). As Matilde is struggling to find an alternative access to the spa gallery, she is too shy to walk near other guests and asks the cleaner “attached to a wall” for an alternative route. Matilde’s determination fades when the lower passages appear increasingly labyrinthine and full of closed doors, making her feel “en un desamparo absoluto” [in a state of total abandonment] (219).

These feelings of abandonment and anguish become more intense as the images of imprisonment increase analogously:

Estas paredes que me aprisionaban. Y, a su vez, todo el edificio también estaba ahogado y prisionero, medio emparedado entre dos altas murallas de montaña, espesas, dominadoras como un entrecejo, que apenas le dejaban entre medias la rayita del río para respirar. Era muy poco sitio, y estaban demasiado cerca aquellas montañas. . . . Se iban a venir abajo; iban a derrumbarse sobre los tejados, a cegar las ventanas, a aplastarlo todo. . . . [Yo caminaba] por aquellos pasillos, por aquellos oscuros intestinos . . . [que] ahora mismo se podían desplomar. Estaba totalmente indefensa. En pocos segundos se consumaría el cataclismo y yo quedaría irremisiblemente sepultada en lo más hondo. . . . (222)

[(T)hese walls that imprisoned me. And, simultaneously, the whole building was also suffocated and imprisoned, half entombed between two great mountain walls, thick, domineering like an eyebrow, which hardly allowed the thin line of the river to breathe. There was very little space, and those mountains were too close. . . . They were going to give way; they were going to collapse on top of the roofs, to blind the windows, to crush it all. . . . (I walked) along those corridors through those dark bowels of the building . . . (that) could cave in at any moment. I was completely vulnerable. In very few seconds the cataclysm would be consummated and I would remain forever buried in the depths. . . .]

The entrapment is intensified through the deployment of imagery relating to consumption or ingestion. I have previously referred to a passage in which the lower corridors of the hotel are described in organic terms, like the bowels of the building. The threat of ingestion is already suggested in the opening of the story, when the

bus approaches the hotel. Matilde sees the fields rolling and rising, analogous to being chased by a creature: “[C]omo una marea persiguiendo el autobús. Detrás de él, detrás de él, detrás de él...” [(L)ike a sea tide chasing the bus. After it, after it, after it...] (193). The pouncing fields function as an anticipation of what later on will be the building’s symbolic ingestion of Matilde.

Further explicit imagery of ingestion by an organic building is seen when Matilde finds the corridor similar to “una boca sin iluminar” [a large mouth with no light] (220). She describes her progress in gloomy terms: “[A]ndando sombra adentro, por largos y silenciosos corredores . . . mis pasos se perdían sobre una raya de alfombra” [(W)alking into the shadows, through long, silent corridors . . . my steps lost on a strip of carpet] (220). The most explicit reference to ingestion occurs at the point when she compares her walking to being in the interior of a whale,⁶² crouching under black passages:

Era como viajar por el vientre de una ballena. Algunas veces, de mucho más lejos, como de por fuera de las paredes que me rodeaban, llegaba el sonido de una voz. . . . Desconcertaban estos ruidos: se escapaban, quebrándose; se me clavaba el doloroso deseo de escucharlos al aire abierto, en toda su lentitud. Entonces me acordaba de que andaba perdida en el interior de aquellos edificios blancos que había visto al llegar, de que fuera de este pasillo estaba la gente de la puerta, y el puente sobre el río, y el sol. Me estaba haciendo la ilusión de ir a alguna parte, de moverme, y tan sólo estaba comprendida en la órbita del gran edificio, tragada, buceando dentro de él, sin que mis

⁶² Once again, Martín Gaité’s story is reminiscent of Rodoreda’s narratives, here recalling “Mi Cristina.”

pasos tuvieran mayor importancia de la que puede tener la trayectoria de un grano de maíz en el estómago de una gallina. (221-22)

[It was like travelling inside a whale's belly. Sometimes, from much farther away, as if from outside the walls surrounding me, there could be heard the sound of a voice. . . . These noises were disconcerting: they escaped, fractured; the painful desire to listen to them in the open air pierced me, in all their slowness. Then, I would remember that I was walking lost in the interior of those white buildings seen on my arrival, that outside this corridor were the people standing at the entrance, and the bridge over the river, and the sun. I was deluding myself that I was going somewhere, that I was moving, and I was only trapped within the orbit of the great building, swallowed up, diving inside it, my steps of no further significance than the passage of a grain of corn through the stomach of a hen.]

After Matilde wakes up, there is a sudden reversal of the claustrophobic spaces, symptomatic of an understanding of space determined by marital status. Matilde's confidence had vanished in her dream of herself dependent on a husband. In the dream, she had acted strangely insecure, afraid of making a move: "Estoy sorda, emparedada entre cuatro muros de cemento" [I am deaf, entombed between four concrete walls] (192). At that time, she had described Carlos as "[un hombre] absorbente que me condiciona, que limita y atrofia mis palabras" [an absorbing man, who conditions me, who limits and stunts my words] (193).

However, when awake, Matilde is actually a self-reliant woman thanks to her own position, her family name, and her pleasant nature. Consequently, the same mountains that had earlier been described as sombre and threatening, are now

depicted as appealing, with fruit trees and children. The same oppressive mountains that in the dream Matilde had wished to scale in search of open spaces to ease her feeling of oppression, in the second part of the story are climbed for the mere pleasure of the walk and view. The tone, the vocabulary, the absence of drama when Matilde ignores the reference to the incident about the drowned person and her prosaic reference to a Spanish omelette all illustrate her level-headed nature:

[M]ontañas verdes y lisas, con montoncitos de hierba segada y árboles frutales. Hay dos niños arriba del todo. . . . [E]l año pasado subieron ellas allí de merienda, una tarde que se ahogaba uno en el valle, y después de las fatigas de la escalada, sólo se veían otros montes muy cerca de aquél, tan cerca que daban ganas de subírseles también. . . . Se cansó mucho aquel día y luego le sentó mal la tortilla de patatas. (240)⁶³

[(S)mooth green mountains, with mounds of cut grass and fruit trees. There are two children right at the top. . . . (T)hey went up there for a picnic last year, on an afternoon when somebody was drowning in the valley, and after the effort of the climb you could only see other mountains close to that one, so close that one felt like climbing them too. . . . She became very tired that day and later on the Spanish omelette gave her indigestion.]

Consequently, the way in which Matilde regards the mill in real life is far from the apprehensive portrayal of the dream, as is apparent in the following quotations. The first description presents the mill as a sinister and gloomy place: “[U]n viejo molino derruido, con sus ventanas desgarradas, sin mirar, como las cuencas de una

⁶³ The way in which this Matilde is more concerned with her digestion rather than the death of a human being in the valley appears to me a deliberate indication by the writer of Matilde’s practical and non-dramatic personality.

calavera.” [(A)n old ruined water mill, with torn windows, not looking, like the sockets of a skull] (198). In contrast, the second description is playful, describing it as an appealing and relaxing corner in the premises:

[S]e ve un paisaje verde y tranquilo, y es dulce escuchar el sonido del agua, que se vuelve muy blanca al caer por el pequeño desnivel. Al pie de la cascada hay un pequeño molino viejo derruido. El médico del año pasado, que era muy bromista, contaba . . . leyendas de aparecidos y fantasmas para asustar a las señoras. Pero ya se sabe que esas cosas son mentira; ellas le llamaban mal cristiano, por creer en agüeros y supersticiones. (249)

[One can see a quiet, green landscape, and it is sweet to listen to the sound of the water, which turns really white at the water-jump. At the foot of the waterfall there is an old mill in ruins. Last year, the doctor, who was a great tease, told . . . legends of ghosts and sightings to scare the ladies. But everybody knows those things are not true; they called him a bad Christian, for believing in curses and superstitions.]

As the second part of the story shows, Matilde is entirely in control of her space, being familiar with the spa and its guests. The building that oppressed her in the first part of the story is now a place she is in command of: there are no boundaries separating her from the other guests, since all windows and doors are easily opened. As with the mirror, the final closing of the door symbolises her choice over two strong possibilities: when Matilde closes the door of her bedroom to join her friends, she is choosing herself over the woman in the looking-glass.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ For an analysis of the symbolism of doors that schematises two possibilities, see Bachelard 222.

As with “La mujer de cera,” some of the issues dealt with in “El balneario” remind the reader of Burgos’s “El perseguidor,” whose protagonist, another Matilde, took a husband to escape the chasing shadow. Both women thus present similar paradigms, in that their serenity and relations to space are disrupted when the ghost of marriage intrudes into their lives. Further parallels that link the two stories are the protagonists’ privileged economic and social position, their freedom of movement in high society circles, and the appearance of an unreal male figure who turns the spatial dynamics against them and keeps them indoors. This reversal of their personal space can be seen in how, during her nightmare, Martín Gaité’s Matilde feels her surroundings closing on her and oppressing her in a similar way to that experienced by Burgos’s woman, who moves indoors to avoid the pursuer’s apparition.

However, it is the differences between the two stories that illustrate the tight link between the evolution of claustrophobic houses in horror and the sociocultural circumstances for women. Their different endings—Matilde seems content with her single life, while the victim of the pursuer succumbs to her anguish and marries—indicate that Martín Gaité was able to envision more alternatives, as opposed to Burgos’s fatalistic ending. In regard to the rising presence of the house, the heavily loaded imagery of entrapment in Martín Gaité’s text also denotes a shift in the emphasis of oppression from the male character to the building, which in Burgos’s tale was almost non-existent.

“El balneario” does not yet present a building with an awareness of its own, therefore standing in a belated position in relation to American narratives written at approximately the same time. Nevertheless, when considered in terms of the sequence of narratives mentioned in this chapter, it indicates an evolution towards

sentience similar to that which occurred in America. Even when the tale is compared to more recent narratives, such as the almost contemporary "La mujer de cera," it can be observed that the building no longer depends on a ghostly creature to arouse fear, as was the case with the wax woman. Instead, the text presents stifling organic imagery for the hotel and passing references to the personification of the water mill. The story, then, marks a literary transition from inanimate architectural matter to the breath of a rudimentary and passive dormant life in the structure of the hotel.

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to prove that, in women's writings of horror, the relationship between the characters and the houses they occupy appears to progress according to transformations occurring in society. I have suggested that the sketchy treatment of the haunted house in Spanish fiction is partially the result of a lengthy repression of the horror genre. However, taking into account the determining force of the legacy of domesticity in transformations of the haunted house paradigm in America, I also believe that its vague presence in Spain responds to differences in the lives of women already observable in the nineteenth century, with the result that the values of homemaking remained unquestioned for longer in Spain than in America.

I have signalled that early twentieth-century feminist Spanish writers neglect the use of house imagery in horror, focusing primarily on the male figure to account for architectural entrapment. In this aspect they differ from their contemporary American writers, who by that time were already exploring the possibilities of horror inherent in the house and inevitably implicating in that process their legacy of domesticity. As the twentieth century progresses, the dramatically different histories of the two countries prolong the differences portrayed in women's horror texts,

delaying all the more the Spanish writers' re-evaluation of home and therefore hindering the appearance of sentience.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Spanish female writers expose the claustrophobic tension of the post-Civil War years, in which the home acquires specific negative connotations for women. Unlike their North American counterparts, these post-war writers had lacked the practical experience of running their country and the subsequent enforced return to their home that I perceive as fundamental for the fulfilment of sentience in American women's writing. Nevertheless, the progress evident in texts by Rodoreda and Martín Gaité, although still far from achieving the full shape of the sentient house as presented by Jackson in the United States in 1959, announces similar transformations, once the times of repression in Spain draw to an end in the last part of the twentieth century.

I conclude this chapter by including a poem by Martín Gaité, "Certeza" [Certainty] in which I have found visual imagery of many of the concepts reviewed in this chapter. Its lines succinctly appeal to a past of entrapment, numbing, claustrophobia and indoctrination. They reflect the sour experiences of repression, but they also reveal hope for an alternative beyond the oppressive structure, as the narrator states her certainty that there is something else:

Habéis empujado hacia mí estas piedras.

Me habéis amurallado

para que me acostumbre.

Pero aunque ahora no pueda

ni intente dar un paso,

ni siquiera proyecte fuga alguna,

ya sé que es por allí

por donde quiero ir,
sé por dónde se va.
Mirad, os lo señalo:
por aquella ranura de poniente.

(Martín Gaité, *Poemas* 69)

[You have pushed these stones towards me
You have walled me up
so that I would get used to it.
But although now I might not be able
or might not try to take a step,
or even plan any escape,
I already know that it is through there
where I want to go,
I know the way to go.
Look, I point it out to you:
Through that narrow crack to the West]

CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SENTIENT HOUSE IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH FICTION

Two major consequences of the Franco dictatorship had been the discouragement of horror and fantasy, and the regime's emphasis on domesticity and homemaking. The transition from authoritarian times to a democratic government in Spain, formally begun in 1975, ended an era of governmental emphasis on homemaking, in decay during the last years of the regime as a consequence of tourism, foreign influence, and women's greater participation in the workforce.

As the times of repression draw to an end, Spanish literature appears to open towards Gothic forms of expression, showing an increase in the production of horror and fantasy. It could be argued that the eighties and nineties mark a rebirth, if not the first real birth, of horror entertainment in Spain, as it is during this period that a true scission of horror as a separate genre can be observed.

In this way, although during the seventies Spanish readers and audiences still buy much fiction and film entertainment from foreign markets—mainly North America—, a significant amount of domestic Gothic entertainment starts to be produced. This is particularly visible in the filmmaking industry, with an escalating release of Spanish horror films by the close of the century, and wide acceptance both in the domestic and international markets.¹ In fiction, writers such as Javier García Sánchez (Barcelona 1955-), Cristina Fernández Cubas (Barcelona 1945-),

¹ The majority of Spanish films with international impact have been directed by Jaume Balagueró (Lleida 1968-), Juan Antonio Bayona (Barcelona 1965-), Alejandro Amenábar (Santiago de Chile 1972-), Norberto López Amado (1965-), or the Mexican director Guillermo del Toro (Guadalajara 1964-), who often works with Spanish production and in Spanish sociohistorical settings.

Santiago Eximeno (Madrid 1973-) or Pilar Pedraza (Toledo 1951-) are among the contemporary authors who have demonstrated an interest in horror and fantasy. It should be stressed also that it is only recently that an emergence of writers and directors who exclusively work with horror has taken place. This is the case of Eximeno and Pedraza, whose fiction can almost invariably be classified as horror, in a similar way to the specialisation shown by writers such as Poe, Lovecraft or Stephen King in North America. As pointed out in Chapter 3, this dedication to the genre differs from earlier periods in Spain, when horror narratives were a minor part of the total oeuvre by a particular author, as was the case, for example, with Pardo Bazán or Rodoreda.

In the preceding sections, I have pointed out that the most significant transformations in the paradigm of the haunted house had been carried out by women writers as a consequence of their particular and more intense relationship with the home. I have also suggested that Spain's scarcity of haunted houses in women's writing responds both to a combination of the repression of horror and the severe segregation of women in Spain, with homemaking presented as natural to their gender, preventing the re-evaluation that was taking place in other countries.

My understanding is that subsequent to the dictatorship, when Spain officially opens to democracy and to the lifestyle of Western countries, Spanish women come to full awareness of the restrictions of homemaking and houses in previous decades. My contention is that this awareness of past oppression endows the house with negative qualities; when the house is envisioned as an enemy, rejection is the instinctive reaction. After this immediate rebuff, a sense of loss of one's place arises when women feel that, notwithstanding their past experience, they still need the home. I see the resulting tension between the resentment of the house and need for

that house as creating the conditions for sentience. A fuller awareness of Spanish women's relationship with houses and domesticity in the late twentieth century provides a Spanish counterpart for the push and pull into and out of the house that occurred in America around WWII (1941-1945), which is reflected in horror literature in 1959. Similarly, after the end of the dictatorship in 1975, an enhancement of house imagery and an increased presence of the house can be traced in the mid-eighties in Spanish literature, denoting similar re-evaluations of the notion of home.

After this date, for the first time, Spanish fiction presents a consolidated Gothic woman writer, Pilar Pedraza. Her stories and novels regularly include portrayals of the house in which claustrophobia and architectural imagery are aligned with the plot and characters, denoting an awareness of the house that prior writers had not fully demonstrated. Finally, works by Cristina Fernández Cubas exemplify a moment of arrival, observed decades earlier in America, when Fernández Cubas presents a use of architecture in which the narrative entirely revolves around a supernatural building. Her narratives stand out for her deployment of impossible and indeed paranormal architectural spaces, which are placed in starring roles. Furthermore, I would argue that her most recent work features buildings with unequivocal traits of sentience.

I believe that the growing reliance on architectural imagery by writers like Pedraza and Fernández Cubas mirrors a re-definition of the idea of home in Spanish society, derived from the political transition to democracy and the advent of women's full civil and social rights. Together, Pedraza and Fernández Cubas not only show signs of the closing of an era of repression of horror in Spain, but also confirm my hypotheses regarding the intertwining across time and space of women's social history with the depiction of the house in horror. In this way, their narratives verify the

determining force of women's legacy of domesticity on the portrayal of the house when the boundaries of the real are broken.

4.1 Pilar Pedraza: The Fulfilment of the Gothic Setting

Pilar Pedraza is one of the first Spanish twentieth-century writers who has taken the Gothic as the main literary style for her fiction. Pedraza has published ten works of horror and fantasy fiction and several non-fiction studies, and has been described as the greatest contemporary writer of horror in Spain ("I Congreso Internacional de Literatura Fantástica y de Ciencia Ficción"). She holds a doctorate in history from the University of Valencia, where she also lectures in Art History. Her fiction includes icons of horror such as the living dead, demonic possession, horrors from beyond the grave, cannibalism and monsters created in a laboratory (Villalba Álvarez 466). I have included Pedraza in my study because she exemplifies the maturation of horror fiction by women writers in Spain. Up to this point, horror texts by women tended to present transparent metaphorical readings that were often related to feminism. Pedraza, however, shows an immediate concern for horror which denotes different priorities, using her understanding of houses as a tool for the creation of the more literal horror text. As I will show, the narratives included in this study demonstrate a new awareness of the potential of the house in the construction of horror.

In contrast with prior writers alluded to in Chapter 3, who portrayed an insubstantial connection between their characters and the buildings, Pedraza renders the arrangement of architectural settings carefully to cultivate the narrative of fear. Setting and decoration play a major role in enhancing the particularities of the characters, offering vivid visual images, which induce the reader's fluctuation

between awe and revulsion. This factor denotes the increasing awareness in Spanish women writers of their surrounding space.

Pedraza's interest in buildings and their potential relevance to the plot is developed in her non-fiction study, *Fantástico interior* [Interior Fantastic]. In this book, she presents a compilation of literary extracts from works by well-known authors in which houses and architecture take on a protagonistic role in the narrative. Her introductory essay to this edition acknowledges the importance of buildings, describing the extracts as "páginas . . . que tratan del alma de las casas y de los objetos" [pages . . . that deal with the soul of houses and objects] (Pedraza, *Fantástico* x-xi). Pedraza believes that there is a bond between the people involved in a narrative and the spaces they occupy in what she describes as a "relación entre la subjetividad del autor o del personaje y su entorno, y el papel que juega este último en el relato" [there is a relationship between the subjectivity of the author or the character and his or her environment, and the part that the latter plays in the narrative]. In her horror fiction, this writer manifests this search for that metaphorical "soul" of the inanimate setting by proceeding in two directions, which are developed in two types of narrative.

The first group of narratives uses the buildings as extensions of the characters. In these, her characters live in structures that represent their own personalities, therefore acting as magnifying mirrors normally for the antagonist—in the stories included in my study the settings reflect a witch or a monster. The second type of story turns the buildings into claustrophobic prisons, in which the characters are portrayed as victims of more traditional depictions of imprisonment, for whom rage and madness become the only means of escape. In these narratives of entrapment, Pedraza revises the English tradition popularised by Charlotte Brontë's

character Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, and continued in Gilman's protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper." As I will point out, the rage of Pedraza's characters differs importantly from entrapments depicted by Pardo Bazán and the later Martín Gaité, and exemplifies a belated evolution, parallel to that which occurred in fiction written in English. I see in these similar evolutions of architectural imagery and themes evidence of a connection to a shared female cultural legacy of claustrophobia.

As will be recalled from Chapter 3, that there might be a collective experience shared by women writers, which might be a determining force for interpretation, is described by Elaine Showalter as "an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space" (260). I suggest that this connection is noticeable in the works of several writers of the haunted house. For example, as I will point out, I believe that Pedraza might be making use of claustrophobia in a similar way to American post-war women writers of haunted house stories when they dispensed with the ghost and violence.

In order to maintain consistency with the briefer format of narratives by other authors analysed throughout this study, I will look at space and houses in a number of Pedraza's shorter pieces of fiction. These are "Mater Tenebrarum" (1987), "Las novias inmóviles" [The Immobile Brides] (1994), "Anfiteatro" [Amphitheatre] (1985) and "Artículos de piel" [Items of Leather] (1992). This selection of stories offers both examples of architecture functioning as extensions of human characters, or as prisons in narratives of entrapment. The first two stories, "Mater Tenebrarum" and "Las novias inmóviles," are interconnected, sharing the setting and some of the same characters.

"Mater Tenebrarum" narrates the story of Ángela, a young orphan who lives in the streets of what seems to be a European city, set in an undetermined time

several hundred years ago. She survives in the slums through theft and petty crime, having a remarkable ability to sneak into off-limit places. Her area of expertise is to steal the remains of executed criminals, which are then normally employed in rituals of witchcraft. Her dealings with an old witch named Crisanta and a number of encounters with vampires and ghouls entice her to learn some black magic. Taking the witchcraft book from Crisanta on the day that the old woman dies, Ángela learns to prepare the “hand of glory”: an embalmed human hand that, when lit, opens all doors and lures occupants of houses to sleep. There are hints in Ángela’s story that she is a ghoul herself, since at one point in the narrative the girl and her dog die and are buried, only to appear later on as secondary characters in the chronologically posterior “Las novias inmóviles.” In this story, Pedraza provides explicit details on Ángela’s past in concordance with the first story, “Mater Tenebrarum,” so that the reader cannot help but wonder about the sequence of events and Ángela’s prior death when she reappears, which point to Ángela having become a supernatural creature.

“Las novias inmóviles” is a rewriting of *Frankenstein* faithful to Mary Shelley’s original 1816 storyline, in which the organs employed in the making of the creature, named Amador in Pedraza’s narrative, are of the finest quality and beauty.² The novella begins with Amador as a dying infant in a carriage wreck. He is stolen by a scientist, who in secret reconstructs the baby’s broken bones with gold throughout a long and painful procedure. Amador grows up in a home in which experimentation with human beings takes place every day, until the scientist is murdered by his own creatures. Only Amador and a large and unintelligent reanimated man, Custodio,

² As in Shelley’s text, Pedraza’s creature, Amador, is a highly sensitive and intelligent being, contrasting with the twentieth-century popular icon of Frankenstein’s monster. Shelley’s creature appears horrific not due to its distorted features or shape, but rather to an eerie aspect of the tissue and the suture after reanimation by Dr. Frankenstein.

survive the destruction of the scientist's house. The story follows Amador's life in the same city as Ángela, as he tries to understand his unexplainable attraction towards death and, particularly, dead women, which partially accounts for him taking a job as an embalmer. Amador eventually befriends Ángela—whom the reader already suspects is dead—and wins the attention of a mysterious but beautiful, dark lady who is described with a semblance of vampirism: Olimpia. No matter how hard Olimpia tries to seduce Amador, he cannot bring himself to touch her, presumably because he feels no attraction for living women. Ultimately this woman seduces Amador by feigning her death with a potion, thus triggering Amador's tragedy: proceeding to embalm her, Amador cuts her heart open, unaware that Olimpia was merely under the effects of a drug. He is sentenced to death, and all his social privileges are removed. Although he is rescued by Ángela, destiny catches up with him, in that Amador is removed from Ángela's protection and killed in a ghostly carriage wreck.

Every detail of the narrative, including its structure, is crafted to emphasise the inescapability of Amador's doomed nature, with the story exuding claustrophobia in every passage. He is trapped in the wreck to be subsequently locked in a laboratory for years. The house where he is brought up conceals kidnapped human beings in hidden windowless cells and trapped reanimated creatures in its cellar. When Amador escapes, his imprisonment becomes his own body, since he cannot help but seek the company of people close to death in an inescapable circle that prevents him from leading a normal life. Lastly, even the narrative structure itself presents a circular form which conveys a sense of claustrophobia and inescapability, as the closing of the story tells how he is doomed to perish in the way in which he was meant to die as a child.

“Mater Tenebrarum” and “Las novias inmóviles” provide good illustrations of houses that echo and enhance the monster living within, presenting extraordinary spaces that become symbolic extensions of the creature inhabiting them. Former writers such as Pardo Bazán, Burgos, Rodoreda or Martín Gaité had depicted characters who were unrelated to the spaces that they occupied, often being captives, fugitives or intruders. Pedraza instead puts the room at the service of the monster by turning it into an extension of its persona, demonstrating a new awareness of the potential of the house. For instance, Crisanta’s dwelling, a derelict tower exposed to the elements, functions as a projection of the unruly and unwelcoming nature of witches. As Carolyn Merchant explains in her review of women and nature in history, the violent unknown side of nature was compared to a disorderly woman, of which the witch became a symbol (Merchant xvi, 127). The witch is one of the female models identified and rejected by patriarchal culture. This rejection of the witch takes place by default and in opposition to the more positive figure of the aging mother. Traditional categories of female experience had divided women into androcentric models, such as the old mother who is a nurturer, or the young and attractive woman who is virtuous and a potential child-bearer. Models that could not be accommodated androcentrically were treated as deviant or simply ignored (Showalter 261). Among these figured the witch. Pedraza’s Crisanta embodies the anti-mother, the old woman who has not contributed by reproducing, but instead chooses the wisdom of nature for her own profit, a wisdom unsanctioned by a traditionally patriarchal scientific establishment. Crisanta is aged, alone, hostile, and soon to die, in the same way that her tower is an old, unhomely, and abandoned structure, with holes between its stones through which the wind sneaks and howls (Pedraza, “Mater” 21, 25). It stands on the verge of collapse, in what is described as

an ocean of silence, scented by a fig-tree—the tree of doom—and the rotting remains of a beast in the moat (Pedraza, "Mater" 40-41).

Pedraza's stories include secondary characters who further illustrate Pedraza's sympathy between architecture and creature. For my analysis of these houses inhabited by monster women, I have chosen two characters. One of them is the vampiric seducer Olimpia, Amador's admirer from "Las novias inmóviles." The second is a panther-woman from the story "Anfiteatro." The first, Olimpia, is presented as a self-reliant, intimidating, dangerous creature who sets her sights on Amador and does not give up her quest until her death. Her role as an aggressively attractive temptress, unsuitable for motherhood, is another example of unsanctioned roles that cannot be accommodated androcentrically. Olimpia's claustrophobic house is portrayed as an extension of the woman. From the beginning, they are identified through synecdoche. In a clear reference to vampirism, Ángela warns Amador about Olimpia's house when she advises him not to approach that place in case he catch something nasty (Pedraza, "Novias" 117). The house is red and dark, fenced and kept in twilight, just as the woman is dark, reserved and keeping away from light herself (109). Inside Olimpia's house, time itself seems to have stopped, with Amador describing time in the house as having become clogged and almost edible (114), intertwining images of the timeless life of the vampire with imagery of the consumption of blood.

This stifling house plays an important role by enhancing Amador's restlessness in a windowless room where Olimpia hosts a dinner for him (115). Although Olimpia is described as beautiful and sensuous, Amador cannot approach her, even after she confesses that she too might be a supernatural creature. In the

same way that Amador shudders at her touch, he cannot bear the oppressiveness of the house. He ultimately gives in to his claustrophobic feelings and flees in a rush.

The practice of orchestrating claustrophobic architecture for the enhancement of the monster, as I have pointed out, was overlooked by earlier Spanish women writers. It can also be observed in the narrative "Anfiteatro," which revolves around a panther-woman. "Anfiteatro" tells the story of a professor who, aiming to attend a conference away from home, takes the wrong train by mistake and unexpectedly ends up in a different village. As the local pension is fully booked, he is forced to seek shelter in a magnificent but dilapidated private palace. The disposition of the different buildings on the property gives away that these had been erected on the ruins of a Roman amphitheatre.

In the main house live three women: the owner, an older lady who welcomes the professor into her property, her servant, and the servant's daughter, a wild young girl whom he first sees carrying a bucket of fresh meat. After missing the train to his conference on the following morning, he receives a strange letter in which an anonymous woman begs him to stay and help her. This mystery and the hospitality of the owner of the palace entice the man to remain longer. The man learns that his host once had a daughter who died under mysterious circumstances, whose portrait he describes as depicting a beautiful young woman of feline beauty. Despite warnings from the servant, the professor gives up his conference, beginning correspondence with the mysterious writer of the letters, punctually delivered by the servant girl. Even though he has not been informed of any details, he offers the writer his help. Eventually, the little girl leads him into an old abandoned hospital, part of the amphitheatre structure, where in a secret dark room he meets the woman from the portrait. She begs him to kill her, since her Christian faith stops her from

committing suicide, but the professor declines. Just as he realises that her feline features are quickly turning into those of a panther, she jumps on him to devour him. He shoots her and the story finishes as the little girl finds both professor and panther-woman dead on the floor. The girl mourns her lady mistress, who will be walled up to conceal the secret, and thinks of eating the man over the next days.

The house and the panther-woman are strongly linked. The connection between the monster and the house is established as early as in the title, which refers to the Roman ruins over which the palace is built, a place where multitudinous spectacles were hosted during the Roman Empire. The word “amphitheatre” evokes confrontations between gladiators, prisoners and animals, as well as the feeding of Christians to the lions. This morbid past creates a looming atmosphere, in which recurrent references to the ruins anticipate the professor’s venturing into forbidden realms.

There is evidence to consider that the feline mutations in some of the dwellers might be the physical effect of the ruins of the amphitheatre underneath the palace. The fact that the servant girl is developing the same condition hints to the building provoking the mutations in the women, rather than to a genetic disorder in the family of the owners. In this way, the lady of the house, presumably inheriting the property through marriage at a later age, would not have been subject to the effects of the curse.

This doomed setting endows the story with a sense of inevitability, to which other accessory elements contribute. One of these elements are the three women in the house, who act like mermaids on an island. These women are foretold in the name of the village pension, *Las sirenas* or *The Mermaids*, clearly gesturing towards the alluring but fatal temptresses in Homer. In fact, in the narrative, the house and

the women merge to become agents of enchantment: “La magia de la casa y el encanto oblicuo de las mujeres . . . se unieron . . .” [The magic of the house and the oblique charm of the women . . . became one . . .] (Pedraza, "Anfiteatro" 184). The labyrinthine house, from which the professor gradually grows incapable of escaping, becomes symbolic of the intricate game of invitations, warnings and correspondence that entice him to abandon his obligations.

By using these intertextual pointers, Pedraza creates an ominous mood by means of which the reader is more aware of the looming danger in the house than the professor himself. An additional example of intertextuality refers the reader to Emily Bronte's ghost of Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*, when the ghost is trying to gain access to the house. In Bronte's opening of *Wuthering Heights*, the ghost of Cathy as a young girl knocks on the bedroom window of the guest, Lockwood.³ Lockwood holds the little arm and deliberately hurts the child. The uncanny nature of the servant girl in "Anfiteatro," who normally approaches the professor from outside his window, is foretold by a particular fragment in which Pedraza's professor becomes impatient and grabs the arm of the servant girl, intentionally hurting her.

Not only does the word "amphitheatre" evoke images of sacrifices; it also speaks of spectacle and audience, which clearly relate to the feigning and machinations of the women to lure the professor towards the panther. The palace acts like a stage where the professor's mystery drama is being performed to an audience of women who are both spectators and co-performers. As the professor crosses the garden and enters the old hospital near the palace, the narrative shows reminiscences of once gruesome combats between man and animal common in Roman times. His journey, which takes him across the former arena and into the

³ This incident is related in Chapter three of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* 20.

passages where the lions were once kept before the gladiatorial combats, places the character in a similar position to that of the victims of ancient times:

Frente a la casa, en lo que antes fuera el graderío del anfiteatro, se alzaba la mole oscura del antiguo hospital de la ciudad, ahora semiabandonado. La muchacha abrió una puertecilla de madera, casi oculta por un rosal silvestre.

Una escalera estrecha y muy empinada . . . les condujo a un largo corredor quebrado. . . . Mur vio argollas y cadenas de metal. . . .
(Pedraza, "Anfiteatro" 192-93)

[Opposite the house, in what used to be the grandstand of the amphitheatre, the dark mass of the old city hospital, now half-abandoned, rose. The girl opened a little wooden door, almost covered by a wild rose bush.

A narrow and very steep staircase . . . took them to a long crooked corridor. . . . Mur saw metal rings and chains. . . .]

Behind a reinforced door the professor finds a dark, perfumed door,⁴ the entrance to a space that feels very different from the rest of the house. It is in this room that he will meet the panther woman and where he will die, like others before him.

It is never made clear what the effects of the amphitheatre have been on the woman, who can only explain her nature as an error (194). However, the title of the narrative, the servant's similar feline nature, and descriptive details regarding devices to contain beasts, such as the disposition of chains and rings in the underpass, suggest that it is not a genetic disorder but instead the building exerting a mutation on the women born in the premises. My analysis of works by earlier women

⁴ In one of her essays exploring the aesthetic aspects of iconic characters, Pedraza remarks that in classical myth panthers were believed to mesmerise their prey with their perfume and captivating beauty (*La bella* 239-40).

writers exposed not only the insubstantiality of house imagery when connected to the creation of horror, but also dissonance between the monsters and the houses that they inhabited.⁵ Pedraza's houses show a deliberate synchronisation that fulfils and completes the characters, demonstrating an evolution in such narratives. The Roman ruins in this story act as insinuations of active architectural agency by inducing feline mutations in the women, thus demonstrating a new awareness of the potential of architecture in horror narratives.

As a last example of this interdependence of monster women and their architectural surroundings, I would like to draw attention to the character of the young witch Ángela. The spaces she occupies have also been carefully crafted by Pedraza to accommodate the particularities of her behaviour. As was the case with Crisanta, abode and person function as matching extensions of one another, in a way that is aimed at unsettling both the reader and other characters, such as Amador. When compared to Carmen de Burgos's living dead Blanca de Guevara, Ángela exemplifies the social changes that occurred in Spanish society by showing a character who has broken the bond between home as shelter and homemaking. Unlike Blanca, whose homelessness determined a painful roaming and excruciating loneliness, living dead Ángela is content with her unsettled circumstances.

In "Mater tenebrarum," Ángela lives in the streets, because it seems that she lacks material means for a place. She chooses unconventional shelters, sneaking into graves or pantheons in search of a bed for the night. Rather than seeking a home, she consistently intrudes on the boundaries of the homes of others. When Amador chases her in the city, he remarks on her eerie ability to trespass: "[Amador llego] justo a tiempo de detenerla antes de que entrara en . . . una vieja casa, en

⁵ The lack of synchronisation between house and monster could be seen, for instance, in the story by Pardo Bazán about the severed head, or in her vampire story.

cuyas entrañas hubiera desaparecido sin remedio” [(Amador arrived) just in time to stop her before she entered the entrails of a house where she would have inevitably vanished] (Pedraza, "Novias" 137).

The way in which Amador describes Ángela's breaking into the houses, through carefully crafted organic imagery such as the use of the word “entrails,” seems an intentional move by Pedraza to portray Ángela as a parasite, again using architectural imagery for rounding out her character. Her progress reverses the entrapment of the organic imagery exemplified by Martín Gaité's hotel. While Martín Gaité's woman was struggling to get out, Ángela is intruding.

In the second story, “Las novias inmóviles,” Ángela's financial situation has improved, but she does not take conventional shelter. Instead, when Ángela acquires sufficient economic means through illicit practices, she chooses to live in a dwelling that is presented as a gaudy lair, a cave under the leaky city walls by the morgue. The traditional binary opposition of wild/civilised is here challenged by Pedraza, who deliberately blurs boundaries to present Ángela's home as a hybrid space. Ángela's lair does have symbols of civilization illustrated by the bedecking of its interior in tapestries, mirrors, precious carpets and pillows, all of which create the effect of a mosaic in the candlelight (Pedraza, "Mater" 38). As her living quarters reveal, Ángela, who introduces herself with the words “[m]e llamo Ángela y no soy de ninguna parte” [(m)y name is Ángela and I am from nowhere] (17), has no intention of seeking the standard idea of home, even when she has acquired the means for it.

Ángela's refusal to have a permanent home and the spaces she chooses as shelter echo her wild and highly mobile, even morbid, nature. Once again, this character by Pedraza escapes traditional androcentric models of women's space. As

Showalter explains in the study quoted earlier, there is a part of feminine experience that remains beyond male access and therefore could be seen as a “wild zone,” an exclusively female territory of women’s culture and experience. This “wild zone” escapes comprehension of the spatial, experimental and metaphysical limitations of the prevailing androcentric culture (Showalter 262). Ángela does not fit into any of these androcentric paradigms, since her youth, beauty and choices make her an object of both desire and repulsion. On the one hand, Ángela is precociously sensuous and motherly with respect to Amador and Lupo the dog. On the other hand, she is deceitful, repulsive and shrewd.⁶

The crafting of Ángela’s relationship with space shows Pedraza’s awareness of the existence of two separate factors intimately linked to the house: a place of shelter and a place of homemaking. Pedraza identifies women’s primeval need of shelter and presents a character who, instead of finding shelter in a conventional home, as is the mainstream tendency in Western culture, survives by using animal-like hideaways, such as holes under walls or in the ground of the cemetery, or the cave where she hides Amador in the final pages of “Las novias inmóviles.” If certain horror narratives, such as Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, revolve around the simultaneous hatred of and need for home so as to portray schizophrenic dependencies on malignant buildings, Ángela’s character explores this same need from a different angle. As I have explained in Chapter 3, my impression is that the

⁶ Ángela challenges social assumptions regarding children’s innocence. One example can be seen in Pedraza’s intertextual allusion to the classic film *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale in 1931. This film includes a famous scene in which the monster is taken by the hand by a little girl. The two play together with flowers until the monster unintentionally kills the little girl. Based on this scene, Pedraza crafts a reversal of the film’s interaction between the creature and the girl. She describes how Custodio, the large reanimated man who accompanies Amador, “tenía entre sus manazas la garrita sucia de la florista Ángela y parecía estar diciendo algo tierno. Ella rió y se apartó” [(The giant) had between his hands the dirty little claw of Ángela, the florist, and he seemed to be saying something tender. She laughed and drew away] (“Las novias inmóviles” 117). This extract shows a shift in power dynamics, which favours the little girl Ángela, who controls the reanimated giant Custodio through of her callousness.

sentient house is the product of a conflict between a need for a home as shelter, and hatred for the restrictive roles associated with that basic need. With Ángela, Pedraza simply removes the association between that need of shelter and the concept of home. As a result, unlike Eleanor Vance or the tenants of *The House Next Door*, Angela cannot be absorbed by the sentient house because she simply does not need it.

It should be acknowledged that Ángela is an unrealistic character in that she defies aspects of the human psychological dependence on buildings reviewed in Chapter 1. However, as a fictional experiment, the paradigm she presents is interesting. Angela does not need a home, nor is she the prey of buildings. This scenario paradoxically confirms the link between a need for a home and vulnerability to the sentient house. She is beyond the reach of the psychological grasp of the sentient house. Instead, she moves at leisure in a surrounding space that she entirely controls.

Up to this point, I have discussed a number of stories by Pedraza in which architectural imagery functions as the extension of more or less monstrous characters (a relatively new development in Spanish horror fiction). In addition to these monster narratives, Pedraza also partakes in the tradition of narratives of women's confinement, as was the case with Pardo Bazán's writing. Pedraza again exemplifies major innovations in horror by employing architectural imagery of entrapment to create a claustrophobia that maddens and transforms captives in a way that was not used by earlier Spanish authors. Examples of such a measure can be seen in a number of passages from "Las novias inmóviles," as well as in the main plot of "Artículos de piel."

In English fiction, the nineteenth century opened up a new dimension to the representation of captive women in horror literature through the character of Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).⁷ Bertha contested the Gothic conventions of the victimised passive heroine in need of male rescue. Instead, Brontë portrayed an aggressive woman, whose madness becomes the empowering force by which a commonplace woman assumes a monster-like role.⁸ Ever since Classical times, literature has included examples of monster-women, as can be seen in, for instance, figures such as the Gorgons. Monster-women typically owed their powers either to possession by the devil, evil spirits, or close contact with the afterlife.⁹ In the case of the Gorgons, for example, the curse originated in divine intervention rather than in entrapment. What is innovative in Brontë's character and later on in Gilman's and Peattie's narratives is that women are transformed by their experiences of captivity, showing a menacing side and becoming semi-monsters that are, to a certain extent, created by the house.

Pedraza explores this theme of the madness produced by claustrophobia in "Las novias inmóviles." Amador witnesses how a woman is brought into his house by the scientist and locked up in the basement in a windowless room:

No podía soportar el desorden de su mente, sus gritos y su voracidad de perra. Hasta la cal de los muros se comía, arrancándola con las uñas. A veces se desnudaba y corría en cueros por los pasillos, golpeando las paredes con la cabeza y las manos, porque quería aire

⁷ This character is famously referred to as the madwoman in the attic in Sandra L. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's classic study of nineteenth-century Gothic.

⁸ Insanity and murderous behaviour as a result of marriage had already been used by Walter Scott in his 1819 novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, based on real events. In this text, female madness and murder attempts are the consequence of the trading of women through arranged marriages. While Scott's character Lucy descends into insanity and dies soon after, thus concluding the novel, Brontë's instead places Bertha's entrapment at Thornfield as prior to the narrative time, becoming one of the driving forces of *Jane Eyre*.

⁹ Examples can be seen in the witches of Macbeth, or the King Arthur's sorceress sister Morgan Le Fay.

y luz. Era como un cuerpo abandonado por el alma, pero estaba tan viva que bullía toda ella, se movía sin cesar y sin objeto. (92)

[He could not stand the disorder of her mind, her screams and her doggish voracity. She would even eat the lime on the walls, tearing it off with her nails. Sometimes she would strip off her clothes and run naked through the corridors, hitting the walls with her head and hands, because she longed for air and light. She was like a body abandoned by the soul, but she was so alive that the whole of her was in ebullient motion, moving restlessly, aimlessly.]

The woman brought illicitly by the scientist is reminiscent of Bertha both in her aggressive attitude and in her madness. The room where she is hidden away, craving for light and air, echoes the windowless room where Bertha is kept, and her roaming in the house reverberates Bertha's in Thornfield Hall.

The physical descriptions of Pedraza's and Bronte's captives also share many points in common. The vitality of Pedraza's madwoman echoes Bertha's own. In Chapter XXVI of Bronte's book, Bertha is introduced as an aggressive, animalistic being, making pacing movements in her windowless confinement:

In a room without a window, there burnt a fire guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. . . . In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with

clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Bronte 257-58)¹⁰

Bertha's attitude is clearly menacing: "A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind-feet" (258). This new type of angry captive woman, apprehended and developed in American stories such as "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The House That Was Not," responds to the trauma of entrapment with rage and violent behaviour. The captives in "Artículos de piel" and "Las novias inmóviles," who remain nameless like Gilman's character, remake the earlier English tradition by becoming themselves Frankenstein-like creations of the house. In this way, the house becomes endowed with the transforming power of creating a madwoman-monster.

Similar treatments of entrapment can be seen in the second story included in "Artículos de piel," which concerns the fascination of a woman narrator with human skin, and how she discovers that three antiques dated from the eighteenth century and kept in her family are actually articles elaborated with human tissue. The three pieces are the picture of a spider tattooed on the skin of a courtesan, an antique dildo and a book. The book relates the story of a woman who had been locked up in a tower by her father, a leather artisan, as punishment for her love for a traitor. The skin of this man is used to make leather items, including a drum. The woman is maddened with claustrophobia when she is confined in the tower, from where she sees the city being attacked and burnt to the sound of the drum made from her beloved's skin. The twentieth-century narrator ends the story by confessing her helpless haunting by the manuscript and by the spirit lingering in the items.

¹⁰ This is the scene of the disclosure of Bertha's quarters in the attic, when her brother, her husband and the caretaker break the news of Bertha's existence to Jane Eyre.

As can be appreciated, the description of Pedraza's captive runs along similar lines to that of Bronte's: "[H]iere con las manos y las uñas las paredes, y se lleva la cal a la boca sin darse cuenta, babeando" [(S)he wounds the walls with her hands and nails, and absent-mindedly puts the lime in her mouth, drooling] (Pedraza, "Artículos" 338). Soon after, the captive's desperation is portrayed as akin to madness: "[La lleva a] retorcerse como una posesa en lo alto de la torre, y jugar con el juguete infame forrado de otra piel o de la misma" [(It drives her to) writhe like a possessed woman at the top of the tower, and to play with the infamous toy covered with some other leather or maybe the same one] (340).

As is customary in Pedraza's fiction, in these two narratives she makes conspicuous use of intertextuality by both elaborating on prior Spanish narratives of claustrophobia and also drawing on foreign texts. Locked up by a patriarchal figure (like the Tsarina in Pardo Bazán's story), Pedraza's captive shows her anger by actively moaning, recalling the mysterious wailing in *Jane Eyre's* Thornfield Hall. The story contained in the leather book in "Artículos de piel" is described as "un lamento lacerante emitido desde un interior cilíndrico de piedra, una torre quizá" [a lacerating lament emitted from the interior of a stone cylinder, a tower perhaps]. As this quotation illustrates, the similarities in the portrayal of Pedraza's and Bronte's women are notable. The rage of Pedraza's women exemplifies the culmination of an evolution of increasing anger in Spanish women captives, echoing progress that occurred earlier in Anglophone fiction.

In effect, a comparative overview of this evolution in Spain with that observed in American horror fiction—understanding that the English literary tradition is the immediate referent for American literature—presents similar sequential patterns, which illustrate how women writers are participating in a continuum of female

experience. As mentioned before, claustrophobia is increasingly enhanced in Anglophone fiction as tensions about women's role in the home arise. Charlotte Bronte reveals an intuitive unrest with homemaking patterns, creating an imprisoned woman who responds with madness and anger. This implies a major change in relation to the passive, victimised, Gothic captives of late eighteenth-century literature. Bronte, however, eventually replaces Bertha with the socially adequate and disapproving Jane. Subsequently, American writers Gilman and Peattie exemplify a further evolution by portraying mad, angry women captives who are acknowledged and reaffirmed by their successors. In this way, the narrator in the yellow room follows the progress and validates the experience of the woman in the wallpaper. Similarly, Peattie's woman in the prairie shares the feelings of isolation of the murderous woman and is attracted towards the house on the horizon, again revalidating a former experience.

The theme of the woman imprisoned evidences a belated parallel evolution in Spanish fiction throughout the twentieth century. For instance, I have pointed out similarities between the dependent Gothic heroines of the late eighteenth century in England and Pardo Bazán's and Burgos's women, who abide by the control exerted by their male gaolers submissively and are ultimately resigned to their lot. Thus, the tsarina from "Emparedada" leans out the windows in sadness and hopelessness. Likewise, Querubina in "El balcón de la princesa" substitutes her tower for the blacksmith's house, a similar imprisoning structure, and abandons herself to her gloomy future. Charlotte Bronte's Bertha of 1847 is closer to Martín Gaité's wax woman in "La mujer de cera" decades later. Regardless of whether the waxy apparition is Marcela's alter ego or a separate entity, Marcela's confinement also results in an unsettling, menacing creature, illustrating how a semi-monster is

created by the house entrapment. Also, as is the case with Bertha by Jane, towards the end the monster is replaced by the more docile counterpart of Marcela.

By reacting violently, Pedraza's two characters expose an evolution very close to that seen in earlier writers in English. Gilman's, Peattie's and Pedraza's angry women diverge from Bronte's paradigm in that they present madwomen who are no longer balanced out by more docile doubles, but whose testimonies are instead validated by a sympathetic successor. The internalisation of the psyche of the captive woman by Pedraza's woman narrator offers disturbing imagery that, far from reverberating with Jane Eyre's disapproval of Bertha, shows the narrator's fascination and communion with the madwoman: "[T]oda esa piel, todo ese pellejo sangriento dando vueltas en su cabeza, que golpea contra el muro de su encierro al ritmo del instrumento de guerra, me enerva" [(A)ll that skin, all that bloody skin going around in her head, which she hits against the wall of her prison to the sound of the instrument of war, sets my nerves on edge] (337). Contrasting with the fear-provoking presentation of Bertha as an unappealing wild creature, Pedraza's narrator empathises with the captive's understandable rage. The way in which this trait of sympathy is discernible in the earlier Gilman's and Peattie's texts further illustrates the analogous but belated progression of Spanish horror fiction written by women.

Such a correlation between the two literatures corroborates Showalter's suspicions that female authors might be drawing on similar anxieties, which are here related to domesticity. I see in Pedraza's work confirmation that a correspondence exists between women's experience and the depiction of houses in horror, so that when particular anxieties are tapped by sociocultural changes, similar creative processes are triggered. The modifications exemplified by Pedraza's imagery are the

result not only of her work building on the narratives of her predecessors, but of the sociocultural context of the writer. Writing at the end of the twentieth century, Pedraza is subject to fewer constraints that stigmatise the horror genre. Most importantly, her historical positioning allows Pedraza to take a wider and more critical purview of the repressive dynamics of space for women in her country. The architectural constructions in her narratives denote an increased significance, by either complementing the character or inducing transformations in their inhabitants.

4.2 Cristina Fernández Cubas: The Arrival of Sentience in Spanish Fiction

I have so far presented Spanish narratives in which the buildings or the treatment of space is of significant relevance to the story. However, none of the aforementioned stories can be said to revolve about a building itself. Contrasting with the earlier appearance of the sentient house in the late fifties in America, Spanish writers still lack an awareness of the narrative potential of the house as an evil, destructive entity. While Pedraza has taken a key step by using the building to mirror and expand the character and to engender transformations in her women captives, she does not make use of the animation of architecture or intentionality on the part of the building. Unlike some of her occupants, her houses lack supernatural qualities, all fitting within the parameters of the laws of nature. It is Cristina Fernández Cubas who, in the 1980s, presents the building as the major force in many of her narratives of fear, where the supernatural effects derive, solely from the architectural structure. Secondly, the house in her stories takes on a protagonistic and destructive role, effecting at last a significant approximation to sentient houses in the manner of Shirley Jackson's Hill House.

Born in Barcelona in 1945, Fernández Cubas was influenced as a child by popular stories heard from her nursemaid, as in the case of Pardo Bazán. This storytelling developed her interest in fantasy and fiction, which would mark her future career. Although Fernández Cubas studied law, she worked as a journalist and, after 1980, as a writer. She has produced several volumes of short stories, novellas, plays and children's fiction that fit into the category of fantasy and horror. Her work has been translated into eight languages, and is currently studied in several universities as part of the Peninsular literature syllabus (Glenn and Pérez 11). For the purposes of my study, I have selected four stories that include elements of architectural fantasy and arranged them in chronological order. These are "Mi hermana Elba" [My Sister Elba] (1980), "El ángulo del horror" [The Angle of Horror] (1990), "El lugar" [The Place] (1994) and "La fiebre azul" [The Blue Fever] (2006). The stories follow a natural progression that begins with architecture of the fantastic in the early eighties in "Mi hermana Elba" and culminates in "La fiebre azul," the story of a hotel that distils the vulnerabilities of the occupants and entices them never to leave. The evolution of Fernández Cubas's work shows an increase in the malevolence of the constructions, which evolve from magical, neutral spaces into the indecipherable, disturbing spirituality of buildings that deliberately creeps into the occupants. Again, this is a characteristic that American horror fiction has recurrently shown since the convoluted negotiations of women's space in the mid-twentieth century, but which until Fernández Cubas is not significantly discernible in Spanish horror.

The first narrative by Cubas revolving around the effects of extraordinary buildings on the characters is "Mi hermana Elba." It tells the story of two sisters growing up in Spain in the fifties. These are the eleven-year-old narrator and the seven-year-old Elba, who are sent to a Catholic boarding school after their parents'

separation. Elba suffers from a mild disorder that makes her rather solitary and interferes with her speech, which is the reason why at school she is kept near her older sister. After a period of lonely adaptation, the narrator meets Fátima, an independent but popular girl who introduces her to the existence of magical spots of invisibility in the building. Fátima also informs the narrator of Elba's acquaintance with and deeper awareness of the magical spots, as Elba seems to know how to transport herself between them. The three girls become friends and spend the following year enjoying the magic of the hideaways of the building. Elba's abilities increase during the summer holidays, when she manipulates space at her family home, and learns to stop clocks by looking at them. However, after the holidays everything changes: Elba is taken away to an institution that will attend to her special needs. In addition, Fátima has grown into a young woman who does not care about magic anymore. In her loneliness at school, the narrator feels constantly the eerie telepathic communication of Elba crying out for help from the distance and pleads with her to leave her alone. Subsequently, the narrator loses interest both in her sister and in the alterations of space. During the next holidays at home, she avoids Elba's presence, which she finds irritating, even though she is aware of the pain that this is causing her younger sister. The story ends as Elba is found dead, having jumped off a balcony because of her elder sister's indifference.

This story is the first by Fernández Cubas to present extraordinary buildings as central to the plot. It has also been considered one of her finest pieces by critics.¹¹ Although still far from the idea of a sentient house, the space of the boarding house is presented as something incomprehensible, unsettling, and ultimately destructive for Elba. In Elba's wordless but unique control over time and

¹¹ Among other reviewers, Milagros Sánchez Arnosi and Concha Alborg have particularly praised the quality of this story (Fegley 319-31).

space, Linda R. Fegley has seen a clinging of the child to the semiotic in accordance with Julia Kristeva's paradigm (Fegley 325), whereby the semiotic constitutes a fluid, continuous reality before the child enters the symbolic world of language. Elisabeth Grosz defines the Kristevan concept of the semiotic as "*pre-signifying energy*," . . . which is "composed of non-signifying raw materials. . . . They defy unification, distinctive boundaries and social regulation" (42-43). In this way, Kristeva's paradigm locates the semiotic as preceding "all unities, binary oppositional structures and hierarchical forms of organisation" (43). Fegley sees in Elba's silence a refusal to enter the symbolic order of which a clock would be an exponent, given that it is an instrument created by society to structure time arbitrarily. Elba's unique yet incomprehensible relationship with space and time can be read as derived from her lingering in the semiotic. It could be said that it is her gift that kills her, in a way not too far from later narratives of haunting, in which, it could be argued, a more intuitive, semiotic understanding of the building is responsible for placing characters in the position of vulnerable victims. In a not entirely dissimilar connection between haunted buildings and characters targeted by the hauntings, Elba succumbs to her gift and her own intimate connection to the house.

I consider that "Mi hermana Elba" is a precursor of the darker stories of supernatural houses that appear in the nineties, and a first step in the Spanish evolution towards the animation of houses. Not only does this story revolve around supernatural spaces within a building, presenting paranormal incidents independent from human ghosts or demonic forces, which, as I have argued, are typical traits of male horror writing. It is also the first in a series in which a bonding between architecture and the supernatural proves fatal for the protagonist. Despite the

building not being presented as a wilful menace, the spatial alteration does target a particularly vulnerable character, ultimately destroying her.

The next story in my discussion, “El ángulo del horror,” also revolves around characters’ growing awareness of the hidden and harmful aspects of a house, as in the rest of the stories by Fernández Cubas contemplated in this study. The narrator Julia, once again a little girl, tells about her older brother Carlos, who has just returned from a stay in Britain. He behaves strangely, not eating and spending all day lying on a bed in a dark attic room. Julia observes that Carlos occasionally leaves his room to walk to the front gate and look up at the house in dismay. After some time keeping watch, she eventually manages to speak to Carlos in private.

Julia and Carlos had grown particularly close because they both experienced lucid dreams, and they suspect that their younger sister might share the same capability.¹² Carlos had never thought much of it, but on this occasion he tells Julia that in England he had had a dream in which he was returning home, only to find the house inexplicably horrifying: “[H]abía algo muy extraño en ella. Algo tremendamente desagradable y angustioso que al principio no supe precisar. Porque era precisamente *esta casa*, sólo que, por un extraño don o castigo, yo la contemplaba desde un insólito ángulo de visión.” [(T)here was something very strange in it. Something terribly unpleasant and distressing that at first I could not identify. Because it was precisely *this house*, except that, due to some strange gift or punishment, I was viewing it from a bizarre angle of vision” (“Ángulo” 109). He te describes the powerful effect this vision had on him: “Un extraño ángulo que no por el horror que me produce deja de ser real...” [A strange angle that is no less real for the horror it produces in me...] (109).

¹² In a lucid dream, the dreamer is aware that s/he is sleeping, and is often in control as well. For further information, see the studies on sleeping disorders by Dr. Stephen LaBerge.

Julia undergoes a small shock of denial after hearing how her brother feels, finding Carlos's room asphyxiating (110). Hereafter, she decides not to interrogate Carlos further, but instead become his ally and distract the family from his strange behaviour. When Julia eventually warns Carlos that he is to be sent to an institution, Carlos kills himself with sleeping pills. It is then, right by the body of her dead brother, that Julia begins to see her house and her parents from the same angle of horror that Carlos had spoken of. In her eyes, her father now appears to be a grotesque clown, his facial features suddenly resembling those of a skull covered with painted wax. Similarly, the formerly warm touch of her mother now feels slimy and creepy, making Julia shudder in disgust. Julia has learned to see the angle of horror of her home.

Distance plays an important part in this text, since it is Carlos's time away from the home, in England, that presents him with that alternative view of his own home. It is by trying to understand Carlos and displacing herself from her position of familiar comfort that Julia also learns to see the complementary negative side to her own home. The sensation of claustrophobia is intensified by the young age of the protagonists. For Carlos, the situation is practically inescapable because he must remain in the house until he is self-sufficient. This inescapability is more pronounced for the even younger Julia. The narrative suggests that, when Julia also perishes from a devastating awareness of the horrors of her home, the curse will move to yet another host, her younger sister.

This geographical distance from Spain experienced by Carlos in England also invites a political reading, according to which the house might be equated with to the fatherland. In such a reading, the new generation represented by Carlos, Julia and the little sister is capable of viewing the family home/fatherland through different

eyes. Although Jessica Folkart does not embark on a deep political reading, in her analysis of the story she observes that Carlos's vision has irremediably been altered by the shift of time/space, by a not only oneiric but also geographical displacement from the daily reality he knows in Spain (Folkart 210). He acquires what could be considered a critical vision of his house/nation, in which presumed sources of comfort and truths are questioned. The return to the home for Carlos is far from being reassuring. Instead, familiar figures reveal themselves to be disturbing mockeries of the protection that they once represented, symbolised by the father's grotesque appearance and by the mother's unsettling touch. It is possible that these allusions might refer to the government of Spain during the years of the Franco dictatorship, or even during the years of the Transition to democracy, dominated by a pact of silence regarding the Civil War and Franco regime. The no longer reassuring physical touch of the mother echoes the uncertainty and insecurity experienced by those who witnessed the decay of the regime and the crumbling of its self-proclaimed glory. Carlos's parents would have endured the Spanish Civil War as children, so their understanding of Spain, that promoted by the Franco regime, would have been passed on to Carlos. As Paloma Aguilar reflects in her study of memory in the Civil War, "[these were] the children of the victors or the defeated and they grew up under a regime that inculcated them with certain values that had to do with the legacy of the Civil War" (4-5). In this way, the pact of silence and delusion of wellbeing enforced in Spain during the decades after the war would have been transmitted to Carlos. However, distance has endowed him with a critical vision in which his former understanding of home, as transmitted by his parents and the media, is now contrasted with the revelation afforded by his "dream" overseas. The recovery of a lost or forgotten past, as Akiko Tsuchiya observes in her overview of

this story, always comes at a price, and the “return of the repressed” poses a threat to one’s subjectivity (Tsuchiya 100). Carlos’s return exacts a personal price, as it destroys him, just as it will destroy his sisters.¹³

The analysis of this story takes this study back to Freud’s theory of the Uncanny, which becomes once again relevant to the interpretation of the particular depiction of houses presented in these narratives of claustrophobia. In “El ángulo del horror,” Carlos’s anguish derives from the fact that it is his own home that is terrifying him. As a reversal of the siblings’ ability to control dreams and nightmares, the house and all it contains has opened a gateway into the real world to show Carlos an unfamiliar aspect that he finds menacing and horrifying. In what is actually a re-evaluation of conceptions about the home taken for granted, the former harmony and comfort of the home have been abruptly replaced by horror and fear. For Carlos, torn between the horrific new face of the house and the fact that it is nevertheless his home, this conflict results in his death. In an echo of Eleanor’s reaction to the news that she must leave Hill House, Carlos prefers to die in his home rather than be taken elsewhere. Here Fernández Cubas is basing the destructive side of the building on these conflicting contradictory feelings. In this way, she exploits the same dynamic between need and rejection that was employed by Jackson.

Regarding this particular story, it should be mentioned that information on the author’s creative process at the time reveals a determining significance to the unconscious of the writer. Both “El ángulo del horror” and Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* were the authors’ first horror story about houses, and both were inspired by a dream. In an interview with Kathleen Glenn, Fernández Cubas reveals that a dream provided her with not only an unknown feeling of anguish about a house, but

¹³ For more information on the recovery of historical memory or alternative consciousness through occupying position of an outsider witness, see Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub.

also with the title itself (Glenn and Pérez 17). As recalled, in the case of Jackson, a dream caused her to sleepwalk and scribble some words on a blank piece of paper.¹⁴ For both Fernández Cubas and Jackson, the ripe literary materialisation of the negative side of houses took place not through conscious verbalisation in the symbolic order by means of the written word, but through prior materialisation in the vaguer domain of dreams, a region closer to the semiotic. This circumstance supports the assumption that there are major imbedded psychological associations at work in what has been the birth of the sentient haunted house in modern women's fiction.

As Fernández Cubas's literary trajectory progresses, the houses become increasingly darker and claustrophobic. The third story that I include in my review is "El lugar," which, as the title announces, incorporates the notion of having "one's place." Like the other stories, it too revolves around a particular building. The narrator, a lawyer, tells the story of his brief marriage to Clarisa, an orphan obsessed with finding a place of her own. On their wedding night, as she shows signs of profound satisfaction and harmony with her new home, she announces her intention of stopping her studies, since in that house she feels that she has found her place: "Este es mi hogar. . . . Aquí está mi sitio" [This is my home. . . . Here is my place] ("Lugar" 103). The narrator perceives how extremely pleased she suddenly seems, almost fusing with the armchair in which she is seated and with the room, which looks like an extension of her own body: "Clarisa se había confundido con su entorno" [Clarisa had fused with her surroundings], seeming "diluida en su entorno" [dissolved into her surroundings] (102-03). During the following months, the narrator

¹⁴ The information available on Anne Rivers Siddons's creative processes also coincide in signalling her unconscious as the inspirational force in her writing of *The House Next Door*, to the extent that she felt no longer in control (see the analysis of this novel in Chapter 2).

wonders at Clarisa's complacency at being in the house and her obsession with the idea of "place":

El *lugar*, para Clarisa, era . . . la palabra mágica en la que se concretaba el secreto de la felicidad en el mundo. A veces era sinónimo de "sitio"; otras no. . . . Encontrar el lugar, estar en su lugar, poner en su lugar, hallarse fuera de lugar.... No había inocencia en su voz. Lejos del lugar—en sentido espacial o en cualquier otro sentido— se hallaba el abismo, las arenas movedizas, la inconcreción, el desasosiego. . . . Su lugar éramos la casa y yo, su marido. ("Lugar" 105-06)

[The *place*, for Clarisa, was . . . the magic word where the world's secret for happiness materialised. At times it was synonymous with "location"; at others it wasn't. . . . To find the place, to be in her place, to put in its place, to be out of place... There was no innocence in her voice. Far from the place—in a spatial sense or any other sense— was the abyss, quicksands, uncertainty, distress. . . . Her place was the house and myself, her husband.]

Clarisa's happiness ends on the day that she learns that her husband's family own a pantheon in which she is expected to rest some day. It is an impressive, lavish construction built over a hundred years ago by a domineering relative, Aunt Ricarda. This aunt had made a fortune in America and, on her return, ruled the family, decreeing that all its members were ultimately to rest in the pantheon. After learning of the pantheon's existence, Clarisa begins to fade. Her husband initially attributes her sadness to his clumsy words about family and deeds, reminding Clarisa that she barely knew her roots. However, as Clarisa worsens, it becomes clearer that her

concern is related to the very pantheon itself. In her illness, she mentions that she can feel the relatives inside waiting for the two of them. When she fearfully asks if she is indeed to be buried there, she gloomily comments that in the pantheon she would have to start all over again (124). Her husband realises that “Clarisa, intentaba por todos los medios recuperar [su lugar]” [Clarisa was at all costs trying to regain (her place)] (127), but cannot help her. Dying young, Clarisa is buried in the pantheon, but comes to visit her husband in his dreams. Initially she is lonely and afraid, but soon she starts becoming acquainted with what she now calls “the house,” which she describes as large and with many rooms for all the relatives that inhabit it.

The young widower falls into deep grief, which is worsened by the double lives that he leads in sleep and wakefulness. He begins to note a transformation in Clarisa: the more confident she is with those in the house, the less interested she seems in coming to visit him. Finally, he has to search for Clarisa himself, since she has stopped her visits altogether. He finds her in the pantheon, surrounded by all his relatives, laughing in a strident, distressing manner. She wears a mantle over her shoulders, and her bare foot is crushing an old watch that he himself had given her as a gift for a dead relative. She does not bother looking towards him anymore and, when he calls her, his own mother tells him not to disturb her. After this vision, the narrator ceases contact with his dead wife’s spirit and moves houses, closing the story by stating: “Clarisa había encontrado *su* lugar. Bien. Pero yo, desde ahora, estaba haciendo lo posible para asegurar el mío” [Clarisa had found *her* place. Fine. However, I, from this moment, was doing as much as I could to secure mine] (149).

This narrative is reminiscent of those by nineteenth-century Romantics in which love cannot be erased by death. These stories typically portray an

inconsolable widower experiencing visits from his recently deceased wife.¹⁵ Functioning according to two antagonistic forces—the love of the couple and the inevitability of death—, these narratives work on blurring the boundary between the two by somehow bringing the dead wife back to the realm of the living. Characteristically, they do not make a dangerous revenant of the dead woman but instead, an uncanny, supernatural presence. In “El lugar,” however, Fernández Cubas alters the Romantic two driving forces of love and death and distorts them into an alternative pair. She shifts the wife’s emotional driving force from want of love to want of place, and the separating force from death to pantheon. Paradoxically, in the same way that in the Romantic narratives the traditionally antagonistic love and death become almost one and the same, in “El lugar,” Clarisa’s place and the pantheon end up being one.

Once more, this story confirms the central presence of the buildings in Fernández Cubas’s stories. While the narrative shows no substantiation of Clarisa’s love for the narrator, it offers instead abundant references to her eagerness to find a place. When she realises that her new home might not be her final place, she loses interest in house, marriage and even life itself, and focuses all attention on her next stage: the pantheon. Once inside its walls, Clarisa undergoes a surprising transformation of empowerment, which is enhanced by very specific religious imagery in the closing of the story. Clarisa’s portrayal clearly evokes representations of the Virgin Mary in which she is shown childless, clothed in a cloak and stepping on a snake. Similarly, Clarisa is wearing an embroidered mantle and is significantly stepping on a watch, symbolising her triumph over time now that she has gained her place in eternity, as opposed to her fleeting achievements in her marital home. Also,

¹⁵ Such a narrative structure is the basis for a large number of stories by Poe—as for example “Ligeia” (1838) and “Morella” (1835). Also, it is reminiscent of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s “Vera” (1883).

the watch, intended for a deceased male relative, symbolises that she is not subordinate to any other authority in the pantheon, as she has not delivered the present and is proceeding to destroy it.

With regard to Clarisa's transformations in the other world, Folkart has seen a movement from the symbolic into the semiotic, as she points out that "just as Kristeva's paradigm opposes the feminine semiotic to the masculine symbolic, the domain of the dead in 'El lugar' inverts the hierarchies that govern the realm of life [so that] people who possessed qualities of aggression . . . hold positions of servitude in the pantheon . . . which simply inverts rules of patriarchal logic" (161). However, unlike Folkart, I do not see a step into the semiotic in Clarisa, as the narrative offers a mirror-like, symbolic reversal of the patriarchal order on the other side. Indeed, Clarisa's trajectory exposes the gratuitous association between a home as shelter and female homemaking that is created by a patriarchal society. While Clarisa's behaviour exemplifies the primary human territorial need of a place to call one's own, she simultaneously rejects the socially constructed feminine roles of childbearing and the caretaking of a family. The pantheon gives her greater self-assertion and an autonomous life.

Once again, Fernández Cubas's fiction takes us back to Jackson's work. The early Clarisa echoes Jackson's character Eleanor Vance, who is also submissive, homeless and eagerly dreaming of finding a home. Similarly, Clarisa is not interested in love or family, sharing an identical disregard for children. Like Eleanor too, Clarisa is consumed by her craving for a home and seduced by the darkness of a haunted house. Although the reader of *The Haunting of Hill House* is not informed of what Hill House will bring Eleanor after her death, there is no reason to discard the possibility that Eleanor may well find a similar empowerment to that of Clarisa, since Eleanor's

growing closeness with Hill House increases her determination, assertiveness and self-reliance throughout the novel. For both women, who suffer from what I call troubles of place, finding a place of their own implies finding themselves. Taking the legacy passed on by Bronte and Gilman, the resulting empowered woman is not compliant but, instead, has grown to be dangerous and intimidating. More specifically, she has come to control the haunted house in which initially she had merely been a docile guest.

It is in the last story, "La fiebre azul," that I have discerned the culmination of the evolution towards sentience in Spanish fiction, through its presentation of early signs of intentionality and intelligence in a haunted building. Set in a village in Africa, the story concerns a Spanish professional forger who is looking for material to sell back in Europe. He checks into the local hotel Masajonia, where he immediately feels immensely comfortable, describing his feeling as "una olvidada sensación de bienestar" [a forgotten sense of well-being] ("Fiebre" 12). However, before long he discovers that the hotel has a bad name among the native people. All the rooms are numbered seven and a mysterious word, "Heliobut," seems to be whispered with fear by the locals whenever the Masajonia hotel is mentioned. The white priest of the village warns the protagonist that "Heliobut" is "algo" [something], an unexplainable but evil "enemigo anónimo" [anonymous enemy] (13) that inhabits the Masajonia and normally attacks white people. Recently, it had maddened an Irish guest, who killed himself and several other people. Heliobut is much feared by the locals, including the caretaker, who under no circumstance stays overnight at the hotel. During the following hours the forger meets other guests and befriends a painter who suffers from insomnia. Later, as the narrator wanders around the lobby, he sees old photographs of the founders of the hotel: Elliot, Belinda and their children, an

amiable and happy family. As he walks back into the room he finds his own body somehow sleeping on the bed. Shocked, he observes the sleeper, who looks insignificant and shameful: “[Sentí una] vergüenza insufrible . . . [de] aquel pingajo impresentable en que me había convertido. . . . ¡Qué poca cosa era! . . . Yo no era nada” [(I felt an) unbearable shame for the insignificant unworthy dregs that I had become. . . . How insignificant I was! . . . I was nothing] (43). On the following morning he wakes up still in fright. He learns from his business partner that the founder, Belinda, was called Blue by the village, and that Heliobut is a local variation of Elliot-Blue, being the original name given by the locals to the hotel itself. Terrified, the forger closes the business and flees the village in haste.

Back home in Spain, circumstances have changed for him. As the experience at the hotel has gifted him with a new awareness of himself and his life, he grows suspicious of his wife and children. He can now see that they do not love or respect him, and so he develops a sheer dislike for all of them. The assistants helping in the kitchen notice his absent behaviour, mistakenly believing that he has been subject to some kind of curse: “-Al señor le han hecho algo –dijo en una ocasión la ecuatoriana que llevaba con nosotros varios años–. Una brujería” [“Something has been done to the señor” the Ecuadorian (lady) who had been with us for several years said on one occasion. “A spell”] (55). To make matters worse, his wife grows jealous when, in his dreams, the narrator keeps repeating the word “Blue” (57, 62). Uncomfortable at home, he decides to leave again on business, this time to China.

After a series of coincidences pointing to number seven and Africa during his trip—such as seating arrangements and the detouring of the flights—, he impulsively decides to go back to the Masajonia hotel. He feels guided by what he cannot tell is fate or providence, as he says: “[Era] la decisión más importante de mi vida. . . .

Ayudé a la fatalidad—¿o debería llamarla providencia?” [(It) was the most important decision in my life. . . . I helped fate—or should I call it providence?] (65). Once at the hotel, he bumps into the painter, who has undergone a similar revelation in the time that they have been away, not being able to paint or sleep away from the hotel. As the forger proceeds with the check-in, he sees that other secondary characters met on his first visit have been equally lured back by the hotel. The closing lines of the story state the narrator’s happiness at returning to the hotel, as the receptionist welcomes him back:

–¡Ajajash! –dijo Balik sin disimular su contento.

Apenas pude devolverle el saludo. Estaba emocionado.

–¡Ajajash –pronuncié tímidamente.

Y, por primera vez en mucho tiempo, me sentí en casa. (68)

[“Ajajash!” said Balik without hiding his happiness.

I could hardly return his greetings. I was overtaken by emotion.

“Ajajash!” I uttered shyly.

And, for the first time in a long time, I felt at home.]

“La fiebre azul” shows the culmination of a process of maturation towards the destructive sentience of haunted houses.¹⁶ Like Jackson’s Hill House or the house next door in Rivers Siddons’s narrative, the hotel studies the characters and seduces them by exacerbating and exposing their weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The quest for a home, as in Jackson’s narratives, is what identifies these characters as potential victims of the building. Just like Eleanor with regard to Hill House, Fernández Cubas’s story concludes with the narrator feeling that he has found “home.” Also, as in Jackson’s tale, the reader is aware of the ominous presence

¹⁶ “La fiebre azul” also invites a rich post-colonial reading, according to which the forgers and imported European characters contrast with the genuine locals and their deeper understanding of their land, and even of the particularities of the hotel.

looming over the narrator and the other occupants, with Fernández Cubas making repeated allusions to that “algo” [something] in the hotel. As in the case of Jackson’s and Rivers Siddons’s stories, there is no past tragedy, curse, or plausible explanation accounting for the existence of that something, which the natives call “Heliobut.” Fernández Cubas thus partakes in the tradition begun by Jackson, in which there is no traumatic or demonic history that might account for the curse. Instead, the building is simply haunted and aware, revealing signs of intentionality.

Consequently, “La fiebre azul” is, I argue, the height of a progression in Fernández Cubas’s stories that can be traced back to “Mi hermana Elba.” In “Mi hermana Elba,” supernatural spatial occurrences that are unrelated to ghosts or demonology, but which ultimately prove to be a negative force, constitute the main theme. The second story, “El ángulo del horror,” distils and exposes the terrifying occult face that home, family, or even the homeland might present depending on the angle of the observer, as the title appropriately suggests. Subsequently, “El lugar” portrays the transformations towards empowerment derived solely from finding a place of one’s own. Lastly, “La fiebre azul” emerges as the closest approach to a narrative of a sentient haunted house. It appears some forty years after Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, which was published in the United States at approximately the time that Spain’s democracy and freedom of expression were put on hold with the Franco dictatorship.

CONCLUSION

By exploring the different treatments of the house in women's horror and fantasy fiction in the United States and Spain, this study has confirmed the hypotheses presented in the opening pages of this analysis, which can be summarised as follows: that the clash between women's need for home and women's rejection of the domesticity, which grew to dominate their idea of home, has played a crucial role in the fulfilment of the trope of the sentient house.

In my efforts to account for the differing presences of the haunted house in narratives from Spain and the United States, I have found that the transformations in the trope can, to a large extent, be located in women's social history and, more specifically, in a women's culture that reaches across time and space. As seen in Chapter 2, the more limited role sentience tends to play in male-authored texts suggests a differentiation in the anxieties underlying their creations, most likely as a consequence of an alternative experience of the house and home. Ultimately, my literary analysis of women's fiction, in correlation with women's position in society, reveals the emergence of parallel trajectories in the United States and Spain across different time periods, in which similar stages in the portrayal of the house can be identified. Of all these stages, the realisation of the sentient house at critical moments in women's awareness of the legacy of domesticity stands out as the most remarkable.

The different sociocultural conditions for women in America and in Spain predict different portrayals of the haunted house in the two countries in the future. In the case of the United States, judging from the quick assimilation of the trope by male writers and its proliferation in popular entertainment, I believe the trope of the

sentient house is likely to have reached its point of consolidation as an icon of American popular horror. Sentience is now employed in a wide range of texts and genres, such as science fiction—the spaceship in the film *Event Horizon* (1997) is one example.¹ Conversely, I suspect that in Spain the genre of the haunted house, free from censorship at last, is likely to continue expanding and growing. Most significantly, after having studied the close bond between women’s social history and sentience, I believe that the case of Spain might present promising prospects for an analysis of sentience. The abrupt social changes that occurred in the 70s, when Spain had to catch up with the rest of the Western world, created different conditions which might inspire more striking portrayals of the haunted home than those observed in America.

In terms of the gender differences observed in the texts written by male and female writers, it is my belief that a different understanding of the trope is likely to persist in the coming decades, and probably longer. The research carried out in Chapter 1 exploring the primeval need for a home, gender-specific genetically encoded fears, and the remaining patriarchal impositions in many layers of Western society predicts unequal psychological responses to the idea of home in the future, and these will determine the final outcome of the house in literary and film products both in the United States and in Spain.

I would like to conclude by pointing out a curious difference between English and Spanish, which is that the word “haunted” has no equivalent in the Spanish language. The English term “haunting” defines paranormal activity in a determined space. “Haunting” differs semantically from related terms such as the negatively loaded “bewitched” or the positively informed “enchanted.” However, Spanish offers

¹ *Event Horizon* presents a haunted and sentient spaceship that destroys all of its crew and keeps their souls. The director Paul Anderson follows the male pattern of sentience attributed to devil agency or violence, since the ship had travelled to hell transported by a dark hole.

only the latter two possibilities to define a haunting: either “casa embrujada” [bewitched house, related to witchcraft], or else “casa encantada” [enchanted house, under the effects of a spell], this last being the term commonly employed. Both of the Spanish nouns “brujería” and “encantamiento” correspond semantically to the English terms “witchcraft” and “enchantment,” but there is no corresponding term for “haunted.” The *Oxford Spanish Dictionary* translates “haunted” as “embrujado” [bewitched] or “angustiado, obsesionado” [in anguish, obsessed] – all three are far from the English understanding in the context of horror, therefore exposing a morphological gap.

I would not discard the possibility that this lack might be one of the consequences of the historical deprecation of horror in Spain. It is likely this lack was noticed by the Argentinean writer of fantasy Julio Cortázar, when in 1951 he wrote his story “Casa tomada” [House Taken Over], refusing to describe poltergeist-like phenomena with the terminology of witchcraft or enchantment. Perhaps, as a result of the recent opening up to horror in Spain and what in my judgement appears to be the emergence of the sentient house in Spanish women’s fiction, the Spanish popular arts will provide their mother tongue with specific terms to describe both haunting and houses that seem to be alive.

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